

Community organizing

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Community organizing is a process where people who live in proximity to each other^[1] come together into an organization that acts in their shared self-interest.

Unlike those who promote more-consensual community building, community organizers generally assume that social change necessarily involves conflict and social struggle in order to generate collective power for the powerless. Community organizing has as a core goal the generation of *durable* power for an organization representing the community, allowing it to influence key decision-makers on a range of issues over time. In the ideal, for example, this can get community-organizing groups a place at the table *before* important decisions are made.^[2] Community organizers work with and develop new local leaders, facilitating coalitions and assisting in the development of campaigns.



Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now protest (Richir).

Contents

- 1 Characteristics
 - 1.1 Grassroots action
 - 1.2 Faith-based
 - 1.3 Broad-based
 - 1.4 Power versus protest
 - 1.5 Political orientations
 - 1.6 Fundraising
- 2 What community organizing is not
- 3 History in the United States
 - 3.1 1880 to 1900
 - 3.2 1900 to 1940
 - 3.3 1940 to 1960
 - 3.4 1960 to present
 - 3.4.1 Loss of urban communities
 - 3.4.2 Emergence of national organizing support organizations
 - 3.4.3 Examples of community organizers
 - 3.4.4 Youth organizing
 - 3.4.5 2008 presidential election
- 4 History of community organizing in the United Kingdom
 - 4.1 The Community Organisers (CO) programme 2011 - 2015
 - 4.2 The Company of Community Organisers (COLtd)
 - 4.3 London Citizens
 - 4.4 Political analysis
 - 4.4.1 Intermediate institutions
 - 4.5 Institute for Community Organising
 - 4.6 Campaigns
 - 4.6.1 Citizens UK General Election Assembly
 - 4.6.2 Living wage
 - 4.6.3 People's Olympic Legacy
 - 4.6.4 Independent Asylum Commission
- 5 History of community organizing in Australia

- 6 Community organizing for international development
- 7 See also
- 8 References
- 9 Bibliography
- 10 External links

Characteristics

Organized community groups attempt to influence government, corporations and institutions, seek to increase direct representation within decision-making bodies, and foster social reform more generally. Where negotiations fail, these organizations quickly seek to inform others outside of the organization of the issues being addressed and expose or pressure the decision-makers through a variety of means, including picketing, boycotting, sit-ins, petitioning, and electoral politics. Organizing groups often seek out issues they know will generate controversy and conflict, this allows them to draw in and educate participants, build commitment, and establish a reputation for winning.^[3] Thus, community organizing is **predominantly** focused on more than just resolving specific issues. In fact, specific issues are often vehicles for other organizational agendas as much as they are ends in themselves.

Community organizers generally seek to build groups that are democratic in governance, open and accessible to community members, and concerned with the general health of a specific interest group, rather than the community as a whole. Organizing seeks to broadly empower community members, with the end goal of "distributing" power more equally throughout the community.

The four basic types of community organizing are grassroots or "door-knocking" organizing, faith-based community organizing (FBCO), broad-based and coalition building. Political campaigns often claim that their door-to-door operations are in fact an effort to organize the community, though often these operations are focused exclusively on voter identification and turnout.

FBCOs and many grassroots organizing models are built on the work of Saul Alinsky, discussed below, from the 1930s into the 1970s.^[4]

Grassroots action

Grassroots organizing builds community groups from scratch, developing new leadership where none existed and organizing the unorganized. It is a values based process where people are brought together to act in the interest of their communities and the common good. Networks of community organizations that employ this method and support local organizing groups include National People's Action and ACORN.

"Door knocking" grassroots organizations like ACORN organize poor and working-class members recruiting members one by one in the community. Because they go door-to-door, they are able to reach beyond established organizations and the "churched" to bring together a wide range of less privileged people. ACORN tended to stress the importance of constant action in order to maintain the commitment of a less rooted group of participants.

ACORN had a reputation of being more forceful than faith-based (FBCO) groups, and there are indications that their local groups were more staff (organizer) directed than leader (local volunteer) directed. (However, the same can be said for many forms of organizing, including FBCOs.) The "door-knocking" approach is more time-



Protest against fracking in Balcombe, UK

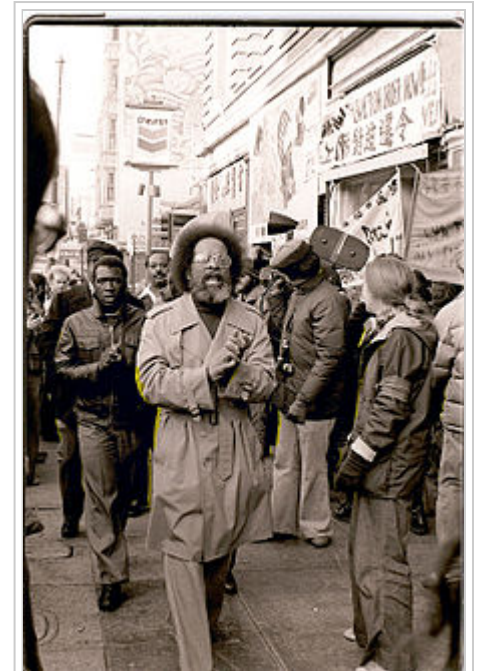
intensive than the "organization of organizations" approach of FBCOs and requires more organizers who, partly as a result, can be lower paid with more turnover.

Unlike existing FBCO national "umbrella" and other grassroots organizations, ACORN maintained a centralized national agenda, and exerted some centralized control over local organizations. Because ACORN was a 501(c)4 organization under the tax code, it was able to participate directly in election activities, but contributions to it were not tax exempt.^[5]

Faith-based

Faith-based community organizing (FBCO), also known as Congregation-based Community Organizing, is a methodology for developing power and relationships throughout a community of institutions: today mostly congregations, but these can also include unions, neighborhood associations, and other groups.^[6] Progressive and centrist FBCO organizations join together around basic values derived from common aspects of their faith instead of around strict dogmas. There are now at least 180 FBCOs in the US as well as in South Africa, England, Germany, and other nations.^[7] Local FBCO organizations are often linked through organizing networks such as the Industrial Areas Foundation, Gamaliel Foundation, PICO National Network, and Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART). In the United States starting in 2001, the Bush Administration launched a department to promote community organizing that included faith-based organizing as well other community groups.^[8]

FBCOs tend to have mostly middle-class participants because the congregations involved are generally mainline Protestant and Catholic (although "middle-class" can mean different things in white communities and communities of color, which can lead to class tensions within these organizations).^[9] Holiness, Pentecostal, and other related denominations (often "storefront") churches with mostly poor and working-class members tend not to join FBCOs because of their focus on "faith" over "works," among other issues. FBCOs have increasingly expanded outside impoverished areas into churches where middle-class professionals predominate in an effort to expand their power to contest inequality.^[10]



Cecil Williams at the I Hotel protest, January 1977

Because of their "organization of organizations" approach, FBCOs can organize large numbers of members with a relatively small number of organizers that generally are better paid and more professionalized than those in "door-knocking" groups like ACORN.

FBCOs focus on the long-term development of a culture and common language of organizing and on the development of relational ties between members. They are more stable during fallow periods than grassroots groups because of the continuing existence of member churches.

FBCOs are 501(c)3 organizations. Contributions to them are tax exempt. As a result, while they can conduct campaigns over "issues" they cannot promote the election of specific individuals.^[11]

Broad-based

Broad-based organizations intentionally recruit member institutions that are both secular and religious.^[12] Congregations, synagogues, temples and mosques are joined by public schools, non-profits, and labor and professional associations.^[13] Organizations of the Industrial Areas Foundation are explicitly broad-based and dues-based. Dues-based membership allows IAF organizations to maintain their independence; organizations are politically non-partisan and do not pursue or accept government funding. Broad-based organizations aim to teach institutional leaders how to build relationships of trust across racial, faith, economic and geographic lines through individual, face-to-face meetings.^[14] Other goals include internally strengthening the member institutions by developing the skills and capacities of their leaders and creating a vehicle for ordinary families to participate in the political process.^[15] The Industrial Areas Foundation sees itself as a "university of public life" teaching citizens the democratic process in the fullest sense.^[16]

Power versus protest

While community organizing groups often engage in protest actions designed to force powerful groups to respond to their demands, protest is only one aspect of the activity of organizing groups. To the extent that groups' actions generate a sense in the larger community that they have "power," they are often able to engage with and influence powerful groups through dialogue, backed up by a history of successful protest-based campaigns. Similar to the way unions gain recognition as the representatives of workers for a particular business, community organizing groups can gain recognition as key representatives of particular communities. In this way, representatives of community organizing groups are often able to bring key government officials or corporate leaders to the table without engaging in "actions" because of their reputation. As Alinsky said, "the first rule of power tactics" is that "power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have."^[17] The development of durable "power" and influence is a key aim of community organizing.

"Rights-based" community organizing, in which municipal governments are used to exercise community power, was first experimented with by the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF.org) in Pennsylvania, beginning in 2002. Community groups are organized to influence municipal governments to enact local ordinances. These ordinances challenge preemptive state and federal laws that forbid local governments from prohibiting corporate activities deemed harmful by community residents. The ordinances are drafted specifically to assert the rights of "human and natural communities," and include provisions that deny the legal concepts of "corporate personhood," and "corporate rights." Since 2006 they have been drafted to include the recognition of legally enforceable rights for "natural communities and ecosystems."

Although this type of community organizing focuses on the adoption of local laws, the intent is to demonstrate the use of governing authority to protect community rights and expose the misuse of governing authority to benefit corporations. As such, the adoption of rights-based municipal ordinances is not a legal strategy, but an organizing strategy. Courts predictably deny the legal authority of municipalities to legislate in defiance of state and federal law. Corporations and government agencies that initiate legal actions to overturn these ordinances have been forced to argue in opposition to the community's right to make governing decisions on issues with harmful and direct local impact.

The first rights-based municipal laws prohibited corporations from monopolizing horticulture (factory farming), and banned corporate waste dumping within municipal jurisdictions. More recent rights-based organizing, in Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Maine, Virginia and California has prohibited corporate mining, large-scale water withdrawals and chemical trespass.^[18] A similar attempt was made by Denton, Texas to restrict fracking was initially successful, but then overturned and further legislation passed to prevent Texas communities from enacting similar bans. ^[19]

Political orientations

Community organizing is not solely the domain of progressive politics, as dozens of fundamentalist organizations are in operation, such as the Christian Coalition. However, the term "community organizing" generally refers to more progressive organizations, as evidenced, for example, by the reaction against community organizing in the 2008 US presidential election by Republicans and conservatives on the web and elsewhere.^[20]

Fundraising

Organizing groups often struggle to find resources. They rarely receive funding from government since their activities often seek to contest government policies. Foundations and others who usually fund service activities generally don't understand what organizing groups do or how they do it, or shy away from their contentious approaches. The constituency of progressive and centrist organizing groups is largely low- or middle- income, so they are generally unable to support themselves through dues. In search of resources, some organizing groups have accepted funding for direct service activities in the past. As noted below, this has frequently led these groups to drop their conflictual organizing activities, in part because these threatened funding for their "service" arms.^[21]

Recent studies have shown, however, that funding for community organizing can produce large returns on investment (\$512 in community benefits to \$1 of Needmor funding, according to the Needmor Fund Study, \$157 to 1 in New Mexico and \$89 to 1 in North Carolina according to National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy studies) through legislation and agreements with corporations, among other sources, not including non-fiscal accomplishments.^[22]

What community organizing is not

Understanding what community organizing *is* can be aided by understanding what it *is not* from the perspective of community organizers.^[23]

- **Activism:** According to Edward Chambers, community organizing is distinguishable from activism if activists engage in social protest without a coherent strategy for building power or for making specific social changes.^[24]
- **Mobilizing:** When people "mobilize," they get together to effect a specific social change but have no long term plan. When the particular campaign that mobilized them is over, these groups dissolve and durable power is not built.^[25]
- **Advocacy:** Advocates generally speak for others who are unable to represent their own interest due to disability, inherent complexity of the venue such as courts and hospitals, or other factors. Community organizing emphasizes the virtue of trying to get those affected to speak for themselves.
- **Social movement building:** A broad social movement often encompasses diverse collections of individual activists, local and national organizations, advocacy groups, multiple and often conflicting spokespersons, and more, held together by relatively common aims but not a common organizational structure. A community organizing group might be *part* of a "movement." Movements generally dissolve when the motivating issue(s) are addressed, although organizations created during movements can continue and shift their focuses.^[26]
- **Legal action:** Lawyers are often quite important to those engaged in social action. The problem comes when a social action strategy is designed primarily around a lawsuit. When lawyers take the center stage, it can push grassroots struggle into the background, short circuiting the development of collective power and capacity. There are examples where community organizing groups and legal strategies have worked together well, however, including the Williams v. California lawsuit over inequality in k-12 education.^[27]



Janadesh 2007 protesters seeking land rights

- **Direct service:** Americans today often equate civic engagement with direct service. Organizing groups usually avoid actually providing services, today, however, because history indicates that when they do, organizing for collective power is often left behind. Powerful groups often threaten the "service" wings of organizing groups in an effort to prevent collective action. In the nonprofit sector, there are many organizations that used to do community organizing but lost this focus in the shift to service.^[28]
- **Community development:**^[29] Consensual community development efforts to improve communities through a range of strategies, usually directed by educated professionals working in government, policy, non-profit, or business organizations, is not community organizing. Community development projects increasingly include a community participation component, and often seek to empower residents of impoverished areas with skills for collaboration and job training, among others. However, community development generally assumes that groups and individuals can work together collaboratively without significant conflict or struggles over power to solve community challenges. One currently popular form is asset-based community development that seeks out existing community strengths. The relationship between community organising and community development is however more one of nuance than total difference. There is much community development literature and practice which is very similar to community organising, see for example the international Community Development Journal. And certainly since the 1970s community development practitioners have been influenced by structural analyses of inequity and power distribution.
- **Nonpartisan dialogues about community problems:** A range of efforts create opportunities for people to meet together and engage in dialogue about community problems. Like community organizing, the effort in contexts like these is generally to be open to a diverse range of opinions, out of which some consensus may be reached. A study circle is an example. However, beyond the dialogue that also happens inside organizing groups, the focus is on generating a collective and singular "voice" in order to gain power and resources for the organization's members as well as constituents in the broader community.
- Power gained and exerted in community organizing is also not the coercion applied by legal, illegal, physical, or economic means, such as those be applied by banks, syndicates, corporations, governments, or other institutions. Rather, organizing makes use of the voluntary efforts of a community's members acting jointly to achieve an economic or other benefit. As opposed to commercial ventures, gains that result from community organizing automatically accrue to persons in similar circumstances who are not necessarily members, e.g. residents in a geographic area or in a similar socioeconomic status, or persons having conditions or circumstances in common who benefit from gains won by the organizing effort. This may include workers who benefit from a campaign affecting their industry, for example, or persons with disabilities who benefit from gains made in their legal or economic eligibility or status.

History in the United States

Robert Fisher and Peter Romanofsky have grouped the history of "community organizing" (also known as "social agitation") in the United States into four rough periods:

1880 to 1900

People sought to meet the pressures of rapid immigration and industrialization by organizing immigrant neighborhoods in urban centers. Since the emphasis of the reformers was mostly on building community through settlement houses and other service mechanisms, the dominant approach was what Fisher calls social work. During this period the Newsboys Strike of 1899 provided an early model of youth-led organizing.

1900 to 1940

During this period, much of community organizing methodology was generated in Schools of Social Work, with a particular methodological focus grounded in the philosophy of John Dewey, which focused on experience, education, and other sociological concepts.^[30] This period saw much energy coming from those critical of capitalist doctrines as well. Studs Terkel documented community organizing in the depression era, perhaps most

notably that of Dorothy Day. Most organizations had a national orientation because the economic problems the nation faced did not seem possible to change at the neighborhood levels.

1940 to 1960

Saul Alinsky, based in Chicago, is credited with originating the term *community organizer* during this time period. Alinsky wrote *Reveille for Radicals*, published in 1946, and *Rules for Radicals*, published in 1971. With these books, Alinsky was the first person in America to codify key strategies and aims of community organizing. He also founded the first national community organizing training network, the Industrial Areas Foundation, subsequently led by one of his former lieutenants, Edward Chambers.^[31]

The following quotations from *Reveille for Radicals*^[32] give a good sense of Alinsky's perspective on organizing and of his public style of engagement:

- *A People's Organization is a conflict group, [and] this must be openly and fully recognized. Its sole reason in coming into being is to wage war against all evils which cause suffering and unhappiness. A People's Organization is the banding together of large numbers of men and women to fight for those rights which insure a decent way of life....*
- *A People's Organization is dedicated to an eternal war. It is a war against poverty, misery, delinquency, disease, injustice, hopelessness, despair, and unhappiness. They are basically the same issues for which nations have gone to war in almost every generation.... War is not an intellectual debate, and in the war against social evils there are no rules of fair play....*
- *A People's Organization lives in a world of hard reality. It lives in the midst of smashing forces, dashing struggles, sweeping cross-currents, ripping passions, conflict, confusion, seeming chaos, the hot and the cold, the squalor and the drama, which people prosaically refer to as life and students describe as "society."*

1960 to present

The Civil Rights Movement, anti-war movements, Chicano movement, feminist movement, and gay rights movement all influenced and were influenced by ideas of neighborhood organizing. Experience with federal anti-poverty programs and the upheavals in the cities produced a thoughtful response among activists and theorists in the early 1970s that has informed activities, organizations, strategies and movements through the end of the century. Less dramatically, civic associations and neighborhood block clubs were formed all across the country to foster community spirit and civic duty, as well as provide a social outlet.

Loss of urban communities



February 23rd 1908 Boys Selling Newspapers on Brooklyn Bridge



March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963)

During these decades, the emergence of an ongoing process of white flight, the ability of middle-class white Americans to move out of majority Black areas, and the professionalization of community organizations into 501(c)3 nonprofits, among other issues, increasingly dissolved the tight ethnic and racial communities that had been so prevalent in urban areas during the first part of the century. As a result, community organizers began to move away from efforts to mobilize existing communities and towards efforts to *create* community, fostering relationships between community members. While community organizers like Alinsky had long worked with churches, these trends led to an increasing focus on congregational organizing during the 1980s, as organizing groups rooted themselves in one of the few remaining broad-based community institutions. This shift also led to an increased focus on relationships among religion, faith, and social struggle.^[33]

Emergence of national organizing support organizations

A collection of training and support organizations for national coalitions of mostly locally governed and mostly FBCO community organizing groups were founded in the Alinsky tradition. The Industrial Areas Foundation was the first, created by Alinsky himself in 1940. The other key organizations include ACORN, PICO National Network, Direct Action and Research Training Center, and the Gamaliel Foundation. The role of the organizer in these organizations was "professionalized" to some extent and resources were sought so that being an organizer could be more of a long term career than a relatively brief, mostly unfunded interlude. The training provided by these national "umbrella" organizations helps local volunteer leaders learn a common "language" about organizing while seeking to expand the skills of organizers.^[34] The Midwest Academy, based in Chicago, provides week-long training in organizing nationally to organizers and leaders who are not part of these established national organizations.^[35] The Center for Third World Organizing provides training focused on "change efforts in communities of color." CTWO advocates a process in which those that are most impacted are leading the fight for social change. CTWO offers multiple trainings that provide the tools needed to become an effective organizer.^[36]

The distinction between an "organizer" who staffs a community organization and "leaders" who make decisions and provide the public face of their groups was increasingly standardized over these years, even in many organizations not linked to "umbrella" training groups as the Alinsky tradition became increasingly influential.

Examples of community organizers

Many of the most notable leaders in community organizing today emerged from the National Welfare Rights Organization. John Calkins of DART, Wade Rathke of ACORN, John Dodds of Philadelphia Unemployment Project and Mark Splain of the AFL-CIO, among others.^[37]

There are many other notable community organizers: Mark Andersen, Heather Booth, César Chávez, Lois Gibbs, Ella Baker, Huey P. Newton, Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Nader, Barack Obama, and Paul Wellstone.^[38]

Youth organizing

More recently has come the emergence of youth organizing groups around the country. These groups use neo-Alinsky strategies while also usually providing social and sometimes material support to less-privileged youth. Most of these groups are created by and directed by youth or former youth organizers.^[39]

2008 presidential election



Ella Baker, a famous community organizer in the Civil Rights Movement

Prior to his entry into politics, President Barack Obama worked as an organizer for a Gamaliel Foundation FBCO organization in Chicago. Marshall Ganz, former lieutenant of César Chávez, adapted techniques from community organizing for Obama's 2008 presidential election.^[40] At the 2008 Republican National Convention, former New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani questioned Obama's role as a community organizer, asking the crowd "What does a community organizer actually do?", and was answered with resounding applause. This was seconded by the Vice Presidential nominee, Alaska governor Sarah Palin, who stated that her experience as the mayor of Wasilla, Alaska was "sort of like being a community organizer, except that you have actual responsibilities." In response, some progressives, such as Congressman Steve Cohen (D-TN) and liberal pundit Donna Brazile, started saying that "Jesus was a community organizer, Pontius Pilate was a governor", a phrase produced on bumper stickers and elsewhere. Pontius Pilate was the Roman Prefect who ordered the execution of Jesus.

After Obama's election in 2008, the campaign organization "Obama for America," became "Organizing for America," and has been placed under the auspices of the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Organizing for America sought to advance the president's legislative agenda and played an important role in building grassroots support for The Affordable Health Care Act.^[41]

After the 2012 election OFA went through another transition and is now called Organizing for Action. This 501c4 organization focuses on training people to be community organizers and working on local and national progressive issues such as climate change, immigration reform and marriage equality.

History of community organizing in the United Kingdom

Citizens UK has been promoting community organising in the UK since 1989 and has established the profession of Community Organiser through the Guild of Community Organisers teaching the disciplines of strategy and politics. Neil Jameson, the Executive Director of Citizens UK, founded the organisation after training with the Industrial Areas Foundation in the USA. Citizens UK (formerly the Citizens Organising Foundation) established citizens groups in Liverpool, North Wales, the Black Country, Sheffield, Bristol, Milton Keynes and London. TCC (Together Creating Communities) in North Wales is longest established beginning in 1995. It has been independent of COF since 2001. London Citizens' forerunner TELCO was formed in 1996. Milton Keynes Citizens began in 2010. The others had a brief and glorious start lasting roughly 3 years when COF was unable to finance them any longer.

Together Creating Communities in North East Wales is remarkable in community organising in that its area of operation includes substantial rural areas. Its current membership of 40 groups includes churches, schools and the Wrexham Muslim Association as well as community groups. Amongst its actions, it has successfully prevented a waste incinerator being built in Wrexham, and in 2010 secured the appointment of a specialist nurse for Parkinson's Disease sufferers. It has held accountability meetings for Westminster and Welsh Assembly Elections in 2001, 2005, 2007, 2010 and 2011.

Manchester Changemakers was formed in 2007 and is independent of Citizens UK.

The Community Organisers (CO) programme 2011 - 2015

In 2010 the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government pledged as part of its commitment to the Big Society to train a new generation (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78979/building-big-society_0.pdf) of Community Organisers (CO) programme. This policy aim sat alongside a number of other policy objectives including The Localism Act (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf) all of which were designed to give new powers to communities to

take great control over their neighbourhoods, services and assets. In 2011 Locality (<http://www.locality.org.uk>) were awarded the Cabinet Office Contract (<http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/locality-wins-15m-community-organisers-programme/finance/article/1055870>) to train this new generation of Community Organisers.

The Cabinet Office commissioned Ipsos MORI and NEF Consulting to conduct the evaluation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-organisers-programme-evaluation>) of the CO programme. Evaluation work began in October 2012 and the main report (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488520/Community_Organisers_Programme_Evaluation.pdf), published in December 2015, summarises the final assessment of the programme.

This evaluation considers how effective the CO programme has been and the social impact it has achieved. It includes both primary and secondary data collection and analysis, including online surveys of programme participants, longitudinal community-based case studies (<http://www.corganisers.org.uk/stories>), and analysis of management information. As personal summary of the report was published in the Civil Service Quarterly entitled "Social change through local action (<https://quarterly.blog.gov.uk/2015/09/10/social-change-through-local-action/>)".

The Company of Community Organisers (COLtd)

A key commitment of the Community Organisers (CO) programme, was to build an independent legacy body that would sustain and develop Community Organising in England. Established in 2015, The Company of Community Organisers (<http://www.corganisers.org.uk>) is the National Training and Membership body for Community Organisers in England, delivering accredited training (<http://www.corganisers.org.uk/training?subject=Training>).

In December 2015, Rob Wilson MP in his capacity as Minister for Civil Society pledged to train a further 3500 community organisers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/giving-tuesday-2015-rob-wilson-speech>) between 2016 and 2020.

London Citizens

London Citizens began life in East London in 1996 as TELCO (the East London Communities Organisation) subsequently expanding to South London, West London and by 2011 into North London. London Citizens has a dues paying institutional membership of over 160 schools, churches, mosques, trade unions, synagogues and voluntary organisations. In the beginning small actions were undertaken to prevent a factory from contaminating the area with noxious smells and prevent drug dealing in school neighbourhoods. Over time larger campaigns were undertaken. Before Mayoral elections for the Greater London Authority in 2000, 2004 and 2008 major Accountability Assemblies were held with the main mayoral candidates. They were asked to support London Citizens and work with them on issues such as London Living wage; an amnesty for undocumented migrants; safer cities initiatives and development of community land trust housing. South London Citizens held a citizens enquiry into the working of the Home Office department at Lunar House and its impact on the lives of refugees and migrants. This resulted in the building of a visitor centre.

Political analysis

Community organising in the UK is distinctive because it deliberately sets out to build permanent alliances of citizens to exercise power in society. The UK analysis is that to understand Society it is necessary to distinguish Civil Society from the State and the Market. In a totalitarian Society all three may virtually coincide. In a fully democratic society the three will be distinct. Where the state and the market become predominant, even in a democracy, civil society is reduced on the one hand to voting and volunteering and on the other to consuming. This is very dangerous for democracy because the sense of citizenship and agency becomes feeble and ineffective. In other words, Civil Society becomes powerless. Community organising and the role of the professional Community

Organiser is working out how to take back power from the State and the Market by holding them accountable. The state and the market cannot operate without moral values and direction. It is not the role of the state or the market to determine those values. In a democratic society there has to be a genuine public discourse concerning justice and the common good. Problems with the global banking system in 2008 in large part arose because "light touch regulation" meant that there was no underlying moral system. The market was left to its own devices with disastrous consequences for the global economy.

Intermediate institutions

Community organising works because it organises people and money through the institutions which have the potential to engage in the public discourse about what is the common good. These are the institutions which can mediate between the family and the State – such as faith organisations, cooperatives, schools, trades unions, universities and voluntary agencies. Community organising builds these institutions into permanent citizens membership alliances which work together to identify issues and agree ways of introducing solutions. Community organising teaches the art of non partisan, democratic politics. Because community organising brings together diverse institutions which do not normally work together it is sometimes referred to as Broad Based community organising.

Community organising starts with the recognition that change can only come about when communities come together to compel public authorities and businesses to respond to the needs of ordinary people. It identifies and trains leaders in diverse communities, bringing them together to voice their needs and it organises campaigns to ensure that these needs are met. "Our answer is to organise people through the places where they have regular contact with their neighbours – faith institutions and workplaces and educational establishments. Our experience of practising broad based community organising across the UK has confirmed for us that the threads that once connected the individual to the family, the family to their community and the community to the wider society are fraying and in danger of breaking altogether. We believe these strands, connections and alliances are vital for a healthy democracy and should be the building blocks of any vibrant civil society.

"We believe in building for power which is fundamentally reciprocal, where both parties are influenced by each other and mutual respect develops. The power and influence that we seek is tempered by our religious teachings and moral values and is exercised in the fluid and ever-changing relationship with our fellow leaders, allies and adversaries. We value and seek to operate in the public sphere. We believe that UK public life should be occupied not just by a few celebrities and politicians – but also by the people themselves seeking a part of the action."^[42]

Institute for Community Organising

Citizens UK set up the Institute for Community Organising (ICO) as part of its Centre for Civil Society established in 2010 in response to growing demands for its training. The ICO is the first operating division of the Centre and was established to offer a series of training opportunities for those who wish to make community organising a full or part-time career and also for Community Leaders who wish to learn the broad philosophy and skills of community organising and who are in a position to put them into practice in their institutions and neighbourhoods. The Institute provides training and consultancy on a commercial basis to other agencies which wish to employ the skills and techniques of community organising in their institutions. The ICO has an Academic Advisory Board and an International Professional Advisory Body drawn from the global network of Community Organising Institutes in the UK (CITIZENS UK), USA (Industrial Areas Foundation) and Germany (DICO).

Campaigns

Citizens UK General Election Assembly

In May 2010 Citizens UK held a General Election Assembly at the Methodist Central Hall Westminster with 2,500 people from member institutions and the world media present. This event was three days before the election and proved to be one of the most dynamic and electric events of the election campaign.^[43] Citizens UK had negotiated to have David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Gordon Brown as the leaders of the three main political parties attend. Each candidate for Prime Minister was questioned on stage concerning their willingness to work with Citizens UK if elected. Each undertook to work with Citizens UK and come to future assemblies to give account of work achieved. In particular they agreed to work to introduce the Living Wage and to end the practice of holding children of refugee families in detention.

Living wage

In 1994, the city of Baltimore passed the first living-wage law in the USA. This changed the working and living conditions of Baltimore's low-wage service workers and established an example for other cities in the USA.^[44] In London it was a campaign launched in 2001 by London Citizens, the largest civil alliance in the Citizens UK network. The Living Wage Campaign calls for every worker in the country to earn enough to provide their family with the essentials of life. Launched by London Citizens in 2001, the campaign had by 2010 persuaded more than 100 employers to pay the Living wage and won over £40 million of Living Wages, lifting 6,500 families out of working poverty. The Living Wage is a number. An hourly rate, set independently, every year (by the Greater London Authority in London). It is calculated according to cost of living and gives the minimum pay rate required for a worker to provide their family with the essentials of life. In London the 2010-11 rate was £7.85 per hour. London is now being copied by other cities around the UK. As a result, Citizens UK set up the Living Wage Foundation in 2011 to provide companies with intelligence and accreditation. It also moderates the hourly rate applicable for the Living Wage outside London.

People's Olympic Legacy

When London announced it would bid to be the host city for the Olympic Games in 2012, London citizens used their power to gain a lasting legacy for Londoners from the billions that was to be spent. Following on from hundreds of one-to-one meetings and a listening campaign across member institutions, in 2004 London Citizens signed an historic agreement with the London 2012 bid team, which set in stone precisely what the people of east London could expect in return for their support in hosting the Olympic Games. The People's Promises, as they are known, demanded:

- 2012 permanently affordable homes for local people through a Community land trust and mutual home ownership;
- Money from the Olympic development to be set aside to improve local schools and the health service;
- University of East London to be main higher education beneficiary of the sports legacy and to consider becoming a Sports Centre of Excellence
- At least £2m set aside immediately for a Construction Academy to train up local people;
- That at least 30% of jobs are set aside for local people;
- That the Lower Lea Valley is designated a 'Living Wage Zone' and all jobs guaranteed a living wage

The Olympic Delivery Authority, the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games and the Olympic Legacy Company work with London Citizens to ensure that these promises are delivered.

Independent Asylum Commission

Citizens UK set up the Independent Asylum Commission in order to investigate widespread concern about the way refugees and asylum seekers were being treated by the UK Border Agency (now, UK Visas and Immigration). The report made a series of over 200 recommendations for change which are still being negotiated. This resulted in the

ending of the practice of holding children of refugee families in detention by the Coalition government elected in 2010.

History of community organizing in Australia

Since 2000, active discussion about community organizing had begun in Sydney. A community organizing school was held in 2005 in Currawong, involving unions, community organizations and religious organizations. In 2007, Amanda Tattersall, a union and community organizer, approached Unions NSW to sponsor the initial stages of a new community organizing coalition called the Sydney Alliance. She had learned about community organizing from interest in coalitions between unions and community organizations (<http://powerincoalition.com>), reading Saul Alinsky and spending time with a variety of community organizations in the US and UK.



CHOGM 2011 protest gungahlin-96

By November 2007, thirteen organizations had agreed to sponsor the building of an Alliance in Sydney, including the Uniting Church Synod, the Jewish Board of Deputies and six unions. By November 2008, twenty two organizations had joined, including the Archdiocese of the Catholic Church. By mid-2010 it was 28 organizations. The Sydney Alliance (<http://www.sydneyalliance.org.au>) launched on 15 September 2011 with 43 organisations and is supporting the establishment of other community organizing coalitions across the country.

Community organizing for international development

One of Alinsky's associates, Presbyterian minister Herbert White, became a missionary in South Korea and the Philippines and brought Alinsky's ideas, books and materials with him. He helped start a community organization in the Manila slum of Tondo in the 1970s. The concepts of community organizing spread through the many local NGO and activists groups in the Philippines.



Bartlett-Ranking BGD(2004)

Filipino community organizers melded Alinsky's ideas with concepts from liberation theology, a pro-poor theological movement in the developing world, and the philosophy of Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire. They found this community organizing a well-suited method to work among the poor during the martial law era of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Unlike the communist guerrillas, community organizers quietly worked to encourage critical thinking about the status quo, facilitate organization and the support the solving of concrete collective problems. Community organizing was thus able to lay the groundwork for the People Power Revolution of 1986, which nonviolently pushed Marcos out of power.

A 1974 manual summarizing some of the Filipino experience of community organizing *Organizing People for Power* actually became quite popular in the South Africa, among activist groups organizing communities in Soweto.

The concepts of community organizing have now filtered into many international organizations as a way of promoting participation of communities in social, economic and political change in developing countries.^[45] This is often referred to as participatory development, participatory rural appraisal, participatory action research or local capacity building. Robert Chambers has been a particularly notable advocate of such techniques.

In 2004, members and staff of ACORN created ACORN International which has since developed organization and campaigns in Peru, India, Canada, Kenya, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Honduras, the Czech Republic, and elsewhere.

See also

- Category:Community activists
- Astroturfing
- Community education
- Community film
- Community practice
- Community psychology
- Critical consciousness
- Conscientization
- Critical psychology
- Homeowner association
- Humanism
- Large-group capacitation
- Organization workshop
- Political machine
- Relational meeting
- Union organizer
- Virginia Organizing

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11. Again, see Swarts book cited above for general information on FBCOs and their differences from grassroots groups like ACORN,
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14. Robert Putnam (2003), *Better Together: Restoring American Community*, Chapter 1; William Julius Wilson (2001), *Bridge Over the Racial Divide*, pages 85-93.
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External links

- COMM-ORG: The On-Line Conference on Community Organizing and Development (<http://comm-org.wisc.edu>) — Includes archives of original research, links to organizations and other resources, and an ongoing listserv.
- Idealist.org Organizing Guide (http://www.idealists.org/resource_guides/guide_organizing_intro.html)— Description of what community organizing is, what community organizers do, and good links for more information.
- Industrial Areas Foundation (<http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org>)
- West/Southwest IAF (<http://www.swiaf.org>)
- Metro-IAF (<http://metro-iaf.org/>)
- Maria Mottola, Tenant Organizing Manual (<http://www.tenant.net/Organize/Lenox/lh-title.html>)
- David Walls, Power to the People: Thirty-five Years of Community Organizing (<http://www.sonoma.edu/users/w/wallsd/community-organizing.shtml>)
- Charles Dobson, The Citizen's Handbook (<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook>)
- Aaron Schutz, Online Introduction to Community Organizing Course (<http://www.educationaction.org/online-organizing-course.html>) — Designed not to teach practice but instead to introduce novices to the way organizers in the Alinsky tradition "think."

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- ACORN International/Community Organizations International (<http://www.acorninternational.org/>) A network of organizing groups led by Wade Rathke.
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- Building the Big Society (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78979/building-big-society_0.pdf)
- A plain English guide to the Localism Act (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf) published November 2011
- Evaluation of the Community Organisers programme (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488520/Community_Organisers_Programme_Evaluation.pdf) (England), IPSOS MORI, December 2015
- The Company of Community Organisers (<http://www.corganisers.org.uk/>)

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