

Affiliation and community agency: The case of broad-based community organising in London

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Abstract

Both Sen and Nussbaum have emphasised the crucial role of affiliation in promoting freedoms. While Sen explores the importance of other-regarding concerns such as sympathy and commitment, Nussbaum talks about the ‘architectonic’ capability of affiliation. However, the capability approach has not yet fully explored the potential that affiliation may have in addressing human deprivations. This paper aims at addressing that gap. Drawing upon the case study of the Citizen Organizing Foundation, the paper argues that a sense of affiliation and community belonging is crucial in building effective public action. It examines the role that broad-based community organising plays in building a sense of community belonging, and in empowering people to take part in the decisions that affect their lives. It highlights that what motivates people to undertake public action is precisely their sense of belonging to communities, and that people act as a community and not as individuals. In that respect, the paper examines the close relationship between affiliation, responsibility and collective action. It also emphasises that if affiliation is crucial for effective public action to take place, affiliation has to be nurtured in specific communities. The paper concludes by looking at how these communities can be formed.

1. Affiliation and the capability approach: Amartya Sen

A common criticism of Sen’s capability approach is that it is too ‘individualistic’ - with insufficient focus on groups, and on the intrinsic links which bind people together. Sen’s response to such a critique has been to stress that his approach considers individuals as ‘quintessentially social creatures’ (Sen, 2002, p. 81). The thoughts, choices and actions of individual human beings cannot be separated from the particular society in which they live. Individual freedoms are unavoidably linked to the existence of social arrangements, and so freedom is itself a ‘quintessentially a social product’ (Sen, 1999a, p. 31). Sen has emphasized how much our relationship to others determines our identity (Sen 1999b, 2000). For example, a teenager who has grown up in a wealthy American suburb might be radically changed by a one month trip to Ethiopia where he encounters the local population.

While our sense of identity depends on this inescapable relatedness to others, Sen emphasizes that there is still a lot of room for individual choice and freedom: ‘The point at issue is not whether *any* identity whatever can be chosen (that would be an absurd claim), but whether we do have choices over alternative identities or combination of identities, and perhaps more importantly, substantial freedom on what *priority* to give to the various identities that we may simultaneously have.’ (Sen, 2000, p. 327) Despite having been transformed by his trip to Ethiopia, the American young man can still choose between becoming for example an aid worker (giving priority to his new identity emerging from his encounter with the poor) or a corporate lawyer (giving priority to the social pressures of his family).

The essentially communal nature of human identity has implications for the promotion of human well-being. Other-regarding concerns are crucial to overcoming poverty. Sen (1982) identifies two forms of other-regarding concerns which are particularly central: *sympathy*, where concern for others directly affects one’s own welfare, and *commitment*, where concern for others is independent of one’s own

welfare, (and one's choice is not motivated by its effects on one's own welfare). For example, one might help a destitute person because one feels unhappy and uncomfortable at the sight of this destitution. Helping the poor as a way of alleviating one's unhappiness and making oneself more comfortable, would then be a sympathy-based action. But one might also help a destitute person because one thinks that it is not fair for someone else to suffer from destitution while one is affluent. In that case one's action would be based on commitment (Sen, 1999a, p. 270).

The role that these other-regarding concerns play in development has been especially underlined in Drèze and Sen's analysis of participation in India (Drèze and Sen, 2002). If democratic decision-making is not to be a game where the voices of the powerful trumps the voice of the underprivileged, a sense of solidarity needs to be created between the most privileged and the underprivileged (e.g. intellectuals and higher social classes speaking on behalf of the underprivileged and defending their interests). A sense of affiliation, of feeling linked to another person (like someone from a high social class who feels linked, through for example his humanity, to a low caste) can be a powerful drive for undertaking action to relieve the sufferings of others. On Sen's account, actions based on other-regarding concerns seem to arise directly from the feelings of affiliation, as a response to an awareness of the fact that one's life and that of another are linked in a common destiny. In the case of sympathy, the action is based on the recognition that one's own well-being is directly affected by one's actions to help someone else. In the case of commitment, the action is based on the awareness that someone else needs help, and that one has the means to help that person. In both cases, it is the other person who makes irruption in someone's life, and calls for an action on their behalf.

Despite underlining the crucial roles of other-regarding concerns in overcoming poverty, Sen's capability approach has not yet widely explored the role of this affiliation in removing the many unfreedoms from which people suffer. His work on the notions of sympathy and commitment has mainly been done as a critical response to the assumption of self-interest as the sole human motivation underpinning a great deal of economic theory. Much more could certainly be said about the crucial role played by these other-regarding concerns in development, and how these other-regarding concerns could be nurtured. Before exploring this in the context of one of the most deprived area of Great-Britain, East London, we will examine how affiliation and other-regarding concerns have been dealt with in the version of the capability approach developed by Martha Nussbaum.

2. Affiliation and the Capability Approach: Martha Nussbaum

Among her ten central human capabilities, Nussbaum (2000, pp. 78-80) places the *capability* for affiliation, that is 'a) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another (this includes freedom of assembly and political speech); b) Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others (this includes non-discrimination).' She describes that capability as 'architectonic' – that is, the capability which infuses all the other central human capabilities. The 'capability for affiliation' refers to the *ability* one has to live with and toward others, to show concerns for others, to be treated with respect and dignity, whether or not one choose to do so. Insisting on the architectonic role of the *capability* for affiliation, Nussbaum implicitly reaches the same conclusion as the one

regarding the other architectonic capability, the capability for practical reason. Even though it is the actual *function* of practical reason which makes a life fully human, Nussbaum explicitly argues that we should focus on the *capability* for practical reason as the adequate political goal rather than on the actual functioning or exercise of practical reason. If someone freely chooses not to exercise his or her capability for practical reason and let his or her life guided by a sect guru, that freedom of choice should be respected, and therefore governments should not make sects illegal (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 131). Given this insistence on the centrality of capabilities for functionings rather than the functionings themselves, Nussbaum would thus probably reach the same conclusion regarding the capability for affiliation. Even though it is the actual function of affiliation which matters, such as living with and towards others, being treated with respect and dignity, showing concerns for others, Nussbaum would insist that it is the capability for such states of beings and doings which should be the adequate political goal. If someone freely chooses not to be treated with respect and dignity (for example in the case of masochism), should the government interfere and force that person to give up masochist games? Or if someone chooses not to show any concern for others, by living a selfish life of individual pleasures and avoiding taxation by having his money in an off-shore bank, should that person's choice be interfered with?

Nussbaum's capability approach seems to have some tensions, like does Sen's, between a theoretical emphasis on the centrality of choice (capability for affiliation), and an empirical emphasis on the centrality of affiliation, instead of the capability for affiliation, in development. We saw that the importance of other-regarding concerns in Sen's capability went beyond the importance of freedom. For example, it was not an individual choice for the economic elite to be concerned with the lives of the poor, it was a moral requirement of a just and fair society. In her writings on emotions (which have somehow been separated from her writings on the capability approach), Nussbaum too seems to go beyond individual choice when dealing with the importance of affiliation-related emotions. This is especially salient in her dealings with the emotion of compassion.

Identifying compassion as the basic social emotion, Nussbaum (1996, 2001: chapters 6-8) attributes the following three characteristics to the emotion of compassion: the harm inflicted to the other needs to be serious (it involves the recognition that the situation matters deeply); an implicit conception of human flourishing is necessary for compassion to emerge; and finally the harms that the person suffers from are not deserved. Nussbaum (1996, p. 37) argues that the emotion of compassion is an 'essential bridge to justice' because it 'makes us see the importance of the person's lack and considers with keen interest the claim that such a person might have'. Here, in the case of compassion, the person encounters a person who suffers. On the basis of that person's conception of human flourishing (for example on the basis of his conception of a good human life constituted by being treated with respect, being well-nourished, being healthy, etc.), the person becomes aware that the other person s/he encounters is lacking of what constitutes a good human life (or is lacking what is that person's due by virtue of being a human being), that he or she suffers from that lack, and that such lack is totally underserved. The emotion triggered by that encounter enables that person to take action to put an end to the lack that the person encountered is suffering. It is the feeling of affiliation, of showing concern for another person, rather than the capability for affiliation, should one chooses to feel concern or not, which is of crucial importance. The French

philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1992, pp. 191-2) refers to the term 'solicitude' to describe 'the feelings that are revealed in the self by the other's suffering, as well as by the moral injunction [to end that suffering] coming from the other'. As we will discuss further below, there is a direct link between the functioning of affiliation and the moral injunction or moral responsibility to act for others.

Despite her writings on compassion, Nussbaum, like Sen, has not extensively explored the role of affiliation in resisting injustice and overcoming poverty - in other words, in freeing people to live lives they have reason to choose and value. The experience of broad-based community organising in East London provides a powerful example of how affiliation can be powerful in promoting social justice. In the following section, we will provide a description of such organising - before exploring its implications for our understandings of individuals, community and affiliation.

3. Broad-based community organising: A brief description

Broad-based community organising involves building an alliance of congregations, schools, trade unions and other voluntary associations to work together on issues of common concern. It was pioneered by Saul Alinsky in the slums of Chicago in the 1930s. Alinsky's aim was to help the poor organise in a way that changed the balance of power. His work involved building a 'relational culture': encouraging people in neighbourhoods to share their stories, and identify the ways in which they believed their areas needed to change. When people were in relationship, with common concerns, they were in a position to challenge those with the power to deliver change (be that environmental improvements, better pay for workers, or improved public services.) The typical technique of broad-based organising was to bring together the (often divided) communities living in a particular neighbourhood, on the basis of their shared 'self-interest'. While the campaigns were on specific, winnable issues, the wider aim was to build a local alliance with an ongoing set of relationships of trust and commitment - where each successful campaign not only brought a tangible result (such as improved social housing, or higher wages) but developed grassroots leadership and the alliance's power.

The characteristics of Alinsky-style organising include (McLeod, 1988, p. 12):

- *Relationships*: At the heart of his approach is the 'one-to-one' meeting, where the organiser or grassroots leader seeks to build relationships within his or her community, and with those who exercise power over it.
- *Financial Independence*: The expenses of the organisation, including the organisers' pay, was raised as much as possible from dues paid by the membership - never by state funding.
- *Research*: 'Problems', once identified, need to be turned into tangible demands that can be won. The local alliance therefore learns to identify changes that can be won, and those (councillors, MPs, business leaders, hospital executives) with the power to deliver them (usually called the 'targets' of the alliance's action. It also needs to be sure that it has sufficient power to persuade the targets to accede to its demands.
- *Tension*: A key tenet of Alinsky's approach is that power is never handed over without a struggle. Dramatic tactics might be used to apply moral or practical pressure to the 'target' of an action. They would be legal and peaceful - but seek to embarrass the 'target' - often into living up to his or her own rhetoric.
- *Assemblies*: The power of the local broad-based alliance was that it had organised

people, and organised money. Regular assemblies would bring thousands of members together, to hold the 'targets' of an action to account. This was participatory democracy in action - grassroots leaders calling elected officials and business and governmental managers to account on issues of local concern. Often, a deal would be brokered in advance of the assembly - but it would be the knowledge that he or she would be faced by thousands of organised local residents that would focus the mind of the 'target'.

- *Leadership Development*: A leader, in the terms of community organising, is someone who develops the leadership of those around them (through one-to-ones) and becomes confident in speaking out in public life (e.g. at assemblies). Organising constantly sought to identify and develop new leaders, and each corporate action would be followed by *evaluation* - so that lessons were learnt, and action was focused and effective.

Since 1980, the work of the Citizen Organising Foundation (COF) has sought to adapt and apply this approach in the United Kingdom, building an alliance between trades unions, residents associations, schools and faith communities. The concerns that COF's work seeks to address are the poverty experienced by inner-city communities, and the measurable decline in engagement in both local civil society and national politics.

COF now organizes in the UK's two largest cities, London and Birmingham. These are also cities with a great diversity of faiths and cultures. Its broad-based organisations in each city are alliances of dues paying institutions - including mosques, Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostal and Free churches, Buddhist and Sikh Temples, schools, trades unions, student unions and community centres. As we shall see later, the diversity of the alliance's membership is one of the primary attractions of organising for those who engage in it. What is distinct of broad-based organising in the UK is that it has built its alliance around congregations of faith. Christian churches, and in particular Roman Catholic churches, remain the largest single grouping within its London and Birmingham affiliates.

In the last eight years in London (initially in East London, and now in the South and West of the city), actions have been concerned with the state of local hospitals; emissions from a pet food factory and the closure of local banks. Three actions dominated London Citizens' activities in 2004.

The first action in 2004 centred on the elections for Mayor of London. London Citizens mobilised its members for a 1800-person assembly in May in central London. At this event, the candidates for Mayor had to respond to direct and focused questions about the organisation's 'People's Manifesto'. This was a list of quite specific proposals (on areas such as Living Wage; affordable housing and safer neighbourhoods) which had come out of tens of thousands of conversations within member institutions - and then an internal Assembly in February 2004, where local leaders decided on which issues to focus. All the leading candidates for Mayor agreed to the key demands. This included a commitment to bring a 'Living Wage' of £6.70 per hour to all those employed by the Greater London Authority and its associated institutions - and their subcontractors. Commitments around affordable housing mean London Citizens is now working with City Hall to pioneer community land trusts, giving people a long-term stake in their neighbourhoods.

The second campaign concerned London's 2012 Olympic bid. London Citizens were deeply sceptical of the bid process - experience over several months

leading to a suspicion that the aim was to ‘tick the box’ of community support, whilst key decisions were made elsewhere. East and South Londoners have experience of large-scale projects such as Canary Wharf and the Millennium Dome attracting huge Government funding, without the promised local benefit. Consequently, London Citizens evolved a set of ‘People’s Guarantees’ to ensure the aspirations of the 2012 bid were grounded in reality. These were pledges such as a Living Wage for all who worked on the Olympics and their preparations; a local labour clause with training opportunities; and the earmarking of much Olympic accommodation for social housing after the Games. By July 2004, the communities in London Citizens had had no direct answers on the ‘People’s Guarantees’. They were aware that the only stage at which local people had real power was when they could give or withhold support for an Olympic bid. At a consultation event in central London, a team of London Citizens leaders confronted 2012 Bid leader Lord Coe face to face. They made clear that community support would depend on concrete commitments. In November, the outcome of these negotiations was the public signing of an agreement by Lord Coe, Mayor Livingstone and a representative of London Citizens. The agreement addressed the key issues of a ‘Living Wage’, affordable housing and local training, which London Citizens had raised. London Citizens’ case had been that the bid’s prospects with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) could only be strengthened by the extent to which it was shaped and owned by local people.

The third campaign, in South London, concerns the way clients are treated at the Immigration and Nationality Directorate office. Again, this action has emerged from the ‘one-to-ones’ going on in member communities, and the action is currently at the ‘research’ stage. A ‘People’s Enquiry’ has been set up, with a group of independent commissioners (public figures from the worlds of faith, academia and law) who will make recommendations in the autumn. Currently, testimonials from across London Citizens’ membership are being fed into this process through public hearings and confidential forms.

With COF’s annual budget running to only £400,000, an impressive amount is being achieved on relatively slender resources. While the proportions differ in its early years, a fully-fledged citizen organisation will have 20-25% of its budget raised through dues paid by member institutions. The rest comes from charitable foundations - with no funding from the state. COF’s organisations bring into common action a diverse alliance, for a very specific purpose. ‘Wedge issues’ (e.g. sexual ethics) on which a broad-based consensus cannot be achieved are not engaged with. A Catholic parish, as well as being in London Citizens, might be involved with the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. A student union, also in London Citizens, might be campaigning in a diametrically opposite way. The broad-based organisation focuses only on the issues around which consensus might be reached, and does not provide a forum for debating and resolving any of the more divisive issues. Citizen organising also roots political engagement in the neighbourhood - and so is more effective in organisations with a strong geographical base.

Drèze and Sen (2002, p. v) define public action as ‘policy and governance, on the one side, and cooperation, disagreement and public protest on the other’. In London Citizens, people can effectively engage in cooperation, disagreement and public protest in order to generate social change. In that respect, it is crucial to have total independence from government funding. This not only ensures the freedom to enter in adversarial politics with the government, but also ensures accountability between London Citizens and its member institutions.

4. Community organising and affiliation

In February 2005, fieldwork was carried out among London Citizens communities (in East London, the organisation is known as TELCO Citizens, and in South London as South London Citizens). The methodology that was followed consisted in focus discussion groups and in semi-structured interviews with members of the Citizens Organisation. During the fieldwork, TELCO held one of its smaller assemblies, at which teams were commissioned in each member church, mosque or other group to deepen the relationships within that particular body.

The discussions and interviews evolved around three key questions: 1) What is the motivation to join the community organisation?; 2) What is the major benefit of the existence of community organisation; and 3) Why joining a community organisation and not a traditional political party? When asked about their motivation to join the London Citizens, the most overwhelming response was the possibility of doing things *together*, and making changes in the local community *together*:

It's your community, you are here, you can make changes, otherwise, who else is going to make the changes needed? [...] My motivation to join South London Citizens Organisation is to make changes. But for this, you need to get together. [...] We can do things when we are together, when there's unity. As an individual, you cannot do much, but together you can do things. And people know local needs. (focus group, parish of St Matthew's, Brixton)

The importance of affiliation, of this sense of 'being and doing together' is crucial at each stage of the work of broad-based community organising. It is not the individual who is trying to make changes on behalf of his or her community, but the whole community who participates in the changes. These words of a woman who is a member of Telco through her parish, best describe the functioning of broad-based community organising: "First, we acknowledge the problems of the local community together. Second, we address these problems together. And third, we take actions together to solve the problems. We take actions united around a common cause."

At the Telco general assembly, the opening address by the guest speaker, the Rt Revd Thomas McMahon (Catholic Bishop of Brentwood), summarised the whole ethos of broad-based community organising: "It is better together. [...] We are responsible together. [...] We can bring more transformation in this world if we can do it together." This theme was sustained by key speakers from a range of faith and community organisations.

Broad-based community organising has significantly expanded the freedoms that people have reason to choose and value - such as the freedom to walk on the streets without fear, the freedom to be adequately sheltered, the freedom to earn a decent living, the freedom to live in a clean environment. As well as reducing the monetary poverty of the families living in its neighbourhoods (through the Living Wage campaign), it promotes the freedoms that local people have reason to choose and value. And most importantly, community organising increases people's agency; their capacity to shape their own destiny. A Roman Catholic priest summarises Telco's achievements as follows: "That Telco makes people economically better off is very small. One of the biggest achievements of Telco is that people have a sense that they can make a difference rather than letting things happen for them."

Broad-based organising stands in contrast to approaches to faith congregations

which see them as potential mechanisms for delivering services (Bretherton, 2005). Organising aims to mobilising people so that they, themselves, can make changes in the local community - from the zebra crossing in front of the local school to the living wage campaign. But this sense of becoming agent of one's own life cannot be disconnected from the community to which the individual belongs:

The greatest benefit of London Citizens Organisation is that people who would otherwise not come together have come together. Different groups come together (Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Muslim, atheist, communist) and work together for the common good. What we would miss the most if this didn't exist is meeting people from different cultures and working together with other people. (focus group, parish of St Matthew's, Brixton)

The subject of such empowerment is not simply the individual, but the wider community. In that sense, it is not as much the agency of individuals which matters, but the agency of the community, the capacity of individuals to act *as a community*. Membership of a broad-based organisation is open to organisations and not to individuals. It is only through the group, through belonging to an organisation (such as a congregation, union, or school) that one is able to participate in broad-based organising. Likewise, leadership in a broad-based organisation is defined as the ability to engage and mobilise others: it is an inherently relational activity.

The fieldwork documented above indicates the importance of affiliation to those participating in broad-based organising. People engage in organising for a variety of reasons, which may begin with self-interest (a desire, say, to have a better park - and a realisation that only corporate action will achieve this), but the interviews make clear that sympathy and commitment are both important motivators. One churchgoer described her involvement with Telco as a way of "promoting justice for the underprivileged, and doing this with people of my own Church and others, as a community..." It would be hard to make sense of the amount of time and energy any of these unpaid leaders devote to the community organising on a crude account of 'self-interest'.

5. Community agency in organising

Having established the central role of affiliation in community organising, we now turn to the question of whether we can do justice to the phenomenon with an account based solely on individual agency. Sen (1999a, p. xi) has stressed that it is *individual agency* which is 'ultimately central to addressing these deprivations', that is, the inability of individuals to act and bring about the changes they have reason to value. In the case of broad-based community organizing, we believe seems that group agency is more significant.

One could obviously object that the community is only the sum of its individual members: it is only *because of* these individuals that actions can take place, and only *by* these individuals that such actions are performed. And one could argue that broad-based community organizing is successful in generating social change because of its individual leaders, and the personality of key leaders in local organisations. This reductionist view of community is unsatisfactory - not least because it fails to take account of the role of the community in the forming of rational adults, able to make choices, and assess the reasons for different freedoms. Concerns around formation are coming increasingly to the fore within citizen organising. In particular, Christian and Islamic congregations are deeply concerned by the local impact of global capitalism: both economically (as low pay, insecure jobs and long

working hours put a strain on family life) and culturally (not least in terms of advertising and the entertainment industry). In April 2005, Rowan Williams highlighted these concerns in a lecture to the Citizen Organising Foundation:

Children are not brought up, are not educated or inducted into human society just by one or two people. The whole of the social complex of which they're part makes them the persons they are. And that is true whether we like it or not, whether we notice it or not. When a culture ignores or sidelines the question of what it actually wants to produce, what kind of human beings it actually wants to nurture, when it assumes indifference, it still educates. That is to say it still shapes a certain kind of person. And if that turns out to be not quite the sort of person we would like to see in huge quantities, well, we might have guessed. (Williams, 2005)

Alisdair MacIntyre offers a three-stage argument that that our identity is necessarily grounded in a wider story - a story which necessarily emerges within a community. Firstly, he claims that individual human actions are only intelligible within a coherent narrative of the person. If a life is to be more than a sequence of individual actions and episodes, there will need to be a narrative - an ascription of purpose and direction to events.

We live out our lives, both individually and in our relationships with each other, in the light of certain conceptions of a possible shared future... There is no present which is not informed by some image of some future, and an image of the future which always presents itself in the form of a *telos* - or a variety of ends or goals - towards which we are either moving or failing to move in the present. (1981, pp. 215-6)

For our lives to be oriented towards some such *telos*, we will have to learn what counts a good and valuable - worthy of our pursuit. This is an inevitably social process. Whilst it may be intelligible to bring children up in a way that enables them to question the moral assumptions of their parents and culture, one cannot bring them so neutrally that *all* their values are freely chosen. Language is *learnt*: if children are not given any guidance as to what counts as 'goodness', they will be unable to attach any meaning to the word. In my quest for a meaningful and good life, it is my community that provides the essential bearings:

The story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity... [T]he self has to find its moral identity through its membership in communities such as those of the family, the neighbourhood, the city and the tribe... Without these moral particularities to begin from, there would never be anywhere to begin... (1981, pp. 220-221)

A sense of affiliation, of mutual belonging is crucial to the existence of certain communities. The sharing of stories; the transmission of a vision of the human *telos* (one under constant review and critique), and co-ordinated action upon such a vision are all characteristics of a vibrant moral and spiritual traditions (MacIntyre 1981, p. 222). Conversely, Nussbaum (2001) emphasises the crucial role of such social institutions in constructing feelings of compassion, feelings of awareness of undeserved sufferings, in societies. The congregations in London Citizens both require, and help to sustain, affiliation. They understand themselves to be places in which formation occurs - not simply by default, but by the conscious nurturing of a relational culture:

COF works with a clear sense of what adulthood involves, and it trains and campaigns with this in mind. My hope is that it is part of the process of change we need in moving towards a culture which is capable of nurture because it's capable of responsibility and of conversation. (Williams, 2005)

The economic context also has an important role in shaping people's sense of mutual concern and their degree of affiliation. Stewart (2002) outlines the deep influence of liberalization and market-oriented policies in the 1990s upon the mode of

functioning of groups, and argues that group members behaved in a more self-interested and market-oriented way than in the post-war era where Keynesian and social welfare-oriented policies prevailed. Economic policies can thus contribute to the formation or the absence of such sense of group awareness.

Again, we see a two-way relationship between community organising and the context. Organising does not simply aim to shelter people from the social fragmentation caused by the *laissez-faire* capitalism, rather it seeks to challenge the destructive practices of the marketplace. A prime example of this occurred in the early stages of Telco's Living Wage campaign in 2002. Following high-profile direct action on HSBC, its Chairman Sir John Bond agreed to meet key Telco leaders to discuss their demands for a Living Wage for all subcontracted cleaning and catering staff at his bank's new world headquarters in Canary Wharf. Sir John outlined the many ways in which HSBC was supporting community projects - and Bishop Thomas McMahon responded that 'what we are looking for is justice, not charity'. McMahon's remark highlighted the role of community organising, not simply in ameliorating the unjust and individualising effects of the market - but in challenging them at their root.

6. Conclusion

As we indicated at the beginning of this paper, the capability approach has not yet widely explored the role of affiliation in removing the many unfreedoms from which people suffer. Broad-based community organising provides an example of citizens acting together on the basis of both sympathy and commitment, to expand the capabilities of residents of some of Britain's most economically deprived neighbourhoods. The institutions which constitute TELCO and London Citizens also illustrate - in their being and in their action - the role of community agency. Both in the role they play in human formation, and in their campaigns to challenge the negative impact of *laissez-faire* capitalism upon such formation, they illustrate that an adequate account of personhood and agency has an irreducibly corporate dimension.

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