Why UK asylum advocacy should take citizens' complaints seriously

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List of abbreviations

CS   City of Sanctuary
CSS   City of Sanctuary Sheffield
IAC   Independent Asylum Commission
RC   Refugee Council
RCO   Refugee community organisation

1 Introduction

> *And someone asks if we are a racist Brit, WTF is this country coming to, we don't have enough to go round as it is, so why on earth are they letting more in? We need to be thinking of our own, putting food on the table of legitimate British people, helping British men back to work, improving our housing, health and education issues, not allowing more rubbish into the country making things harder for us. FFS stop, or there will be trouble in this country like you have never seen before.*
>
> *Sun* reader comments online in response to an article titled 'Asylum seekers rocket by 27%'
> 21 May 2009.

The frustration of tabloid readers with the cost of asylum to the UK's welfare[1] system is often dismissed as bigotry among the pro-asylum lobby. In fact, there are compelling moral arguments for taking this frustration seriously. In the underprivileged neighbourhoods where asylum seekers settle, the limited welfare benefits they receive can still be enough to undermine any dwindling belief among local citizens that state membership means something (Dench et al 2006, Dunn 1996). Some moral theorists argue that this sense of insignificance can undermine important institutions like the welfare state and may threaten the safety or wellbeing of a state's residents.

On the surface of things, there is a moral tension between the rights of asylum seekers and the rights of citizens (Gibney 2004). There are strong moral arguments for why the state should be inclusive towards non-members; but there are also strong moral arguments for why the state must sometimes privilege members. Asylum advocacy organisations in the UK effectively voice their side of this argument, but usually fail to take the other side seriously. If they did so, they would spend more time constructively grappling with citizens' perspectives – a process I call 'engagement' – in a bid to minimise citizens' negativity about asylum seekers. Currently advocacy's tendency is to ignore citizens' perspectives and focus on voicing its own concerns from its own parapet. This thesis aims to restore renewed importance to the neglected engagement of citizens' concerns in UK asylum advocacy.

Engagement should be of higher concern for asylum advocacy organisations because the prioritisation of members and inclusion of newcomers are in fact not always at odds with one another. Members who feel that they matter to the community are more accommodating towards newcomers. In this sense, taking citizens' concerns seriously can actually serve the goals of asylum seekers. A more valued community can be a more hospitable community. It has more capacity to welcome newcomers without the members' sense of significance becoming undermined.

Citizens who feel under-prioritised are more likely to threaten asylum seekers' interests: first, through their overt hostility; and second, through their election of governments that support more exclusionist asylum policies. Recognising these truths, the co-chairs of the UK's Independent Asylum Commission (IAC) 'believe that unless public confidence in our asylum system is restored, the UK's future as a place of sanctuary is bleak' (IAC 2008: 6). Sales (2002: 458) observes how, in the 2001 general election, the British National Party gained 'a

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[1] I use a broad definition of 'welfare', covering provisions ranging from subsidised housing and healthcare to free education and unemployment benefits; essentially, every redistributive state mechanism designed to ensure a minimum level of social, physical and economic wellbeing for its residents.

significant minority of votes in a number of seats which they targeted in the Northwest of England, a result that was likely […] due in part to hysteria over asylum seekers.' UK politicians with an eye for longevity listen intently to their citizens' immigration concerns. If asylum advocacy organisations wish to see asylum-friendly politicians in power, they should make greater efforts to engage citizens' perspectives and not simply compete with them.

Definitions

I will use legal definitions of 'citizens' and 'asylum seekers'. Thus, by 'citizens' I mean legal citizens of the UK with all the obligations and rights that this entails. I will, however, explore case studies where 'citizenship' is crafted in other, non-legal terms. Expanding on a Refugee Council (RC 2011c) definition, I identify an 'asylum seeker' as someone who has arrived in the UK by legal or illegal methods and has applied to remain on the grounds that either (a) they meet the definition of a refugee[2] set out by the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, or (b) they will be 'subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' (Council of Europe 2010) if required to return to their country of origin. Denying asylum to migrants who are recognised as falling under one of these categories is prohibited by international and European law respectively. Many asylum seekers are therefore refugees according to the Convention definition, or are in a very similar predicament, but this has not been officially recognised by the state and so they do not enjoy the full rights that legal recognition of their status would confer (eg rights to greater welfare benefits and to seek employment). I focus on asylum seekers instead of other categories of migrants (like refugees) precisely because their immigration status is particularly tenuous. Such marginality adds weight to citizens' demands for prioritisation over them.

My critique of 'advocacy' may invite definition-oriented rebuttals so I will begin by offering my definition and then respond to some possible objections based thereon. I will not discuss all forms of advocacy. If, like Webb and Holly (1993, cited in Atkinson 1999), one pictures different forms of advocacy as sitting on a hard-to-soft continuum, then by 'advocacy' I mean that form more closely associated with 'the "hard end" of mediation and trouble-shooting' as opposed to 'the "soft end", where the emphasis is more on being a friend' (1993, cited in Atkinson 1999: 6). Authors widely agree that advocacy on the harder end of the spectrum involves an advocate party 'pleading the cause and/or acting on behalf of' (Butler et al 1988: 2) a disempowered party (both parties might be one and the same as far as I am concerned). The advocate uses the tools of representation, negotiation and persuasion to pursue a variety of outcomes, which include choice, justice, support, protection, access, social development and empowerment (Henderson and Pochin 2001). Butler et al emphasise the allegiance that underpins this process, insisting that 'Advocates owe those they represent a duty of loyalty, confidentiality, and a commitment to be zealous in the promotion of their cause' (Butler et al 1988: 2). Advocacy is not impartial.

Two broad objections may be raised to my bid to comment constructively on advocacy. First it might be observed that, since advocacy is partial, I should not expect asylum advocacy to engage citizens' complaints out of fair-mindedness, but only if it is in the interest of asylum

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[2] One who, 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it' (UNHCR 2010).

seekers. I agree; and I argue that it is in the interest of asylum seekers to engage citizens' complaints. Chapter 3 discusses positive examples of how this can be done.

Second, my constructive critique of advocacy might be challenged by an argument that the practice itself (except for self-advocacy) reinforces a power disparity between the advocate and the represented party. Hence, my bid to improve advocacy would merely be contributing to the clutter of controlling terms and initiatives that deny or inhibit the agency of asylum seekers and other forced migrants. Such a challenge would not be the first query of advocacy's 'sometimes contradictory or conflicting principles, such as protection and empowerment or control and autonomy' (Cambridge and Williams 2004: 97-98). I do not deny all tensions within the practice. In fact, in Chapter 3, I indicate such a tension in the work of the Refugee Council. However, the form of advocacy that I am encouraging – one that engages citizens – may in fact diffuse current concentrations of power. It largely focuses on an arguably submissive culture of hospitality (not protection) towards asylum seekers and on sharing power by building community together. Thus, I will proceed under the conviction that advocacy today can still be a valuable activity (while there are many pitfalls) and that it is worth improving. I leave others (eg Cambridge and Williams 2004) to discuss its value and the pitfalls at greater length.

Structural summary

Chapter 2 focuses on why hostile citizens' sense of neglect should matter to asylum advocacy. First it will establish that there is a widespread, real complaint among UK citizens that they are inadequately prioritised over asylum seekers where welfare is concerned. Second, it will show that a variety of moral theorists believe such complaints must be given considerable moral weight because of the heavy implications for human wellbeing and safety if they are ignored. It is therefore incumbent on asylum advocacy to engage hostile citizens' perspectives and influence them before UK asylum policies more closely align with such viewpoints.

Chapter 3 will argue that mainstream asylum advocacy organisations are doing very little to engage citizens' sense of neglect. As a case study it will use the Refugee Council whose example illustrates the lack of engagement among most of its peers. Aiming to be concise and constructive, it will examine two further organisations[3], City of Sanctuary Sheffield and Citizens UK, who provide positive examples of what engagement can look like. UK asylum advocacy needs to learn from these organisations' effective strategies for improving and safeguarding the rights enjoyed by asylum seekers.

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[3] When discussing them collectively I will use the term 'organisations', while City of Sanctuary Sheffield is in fact a movement.

2   The citizen's complaint

> *It is ungenerous and frequently foolish for the existing denizens of these areas to equate the arrival of obtrusively alien groups with the least enviable aspects of their own situation: to see it in effect as a further and more dramatic token of the neglect and indifference of their own rulers. But they often have every reason to resent that neglect and at least some reason to fear that the new arrivals will in themselves, and simply by dint of being there, represent a further and direct injury to their own interests… (Dunn 1996: 155)*

In February 2011 the results of a Transatlantic Trends immigration survey[4] were published. Respondents from the surveyed countries[5] that offered state-sponsored healthcare were asked whether they thought that general 'access to healthcare' should be granted to

> (a) citizens;
> (b) citizens and legal immigrants; or
> (c) citizens and all immigrants, both legal and illegal.

In each country at least 50 per cent of respondents chose option (c) with one exception: in the UK only 21 per cent followed suit. Perhaps more surprising, however, is the fact that option (b) did not come close to absorbing the UK's dissenters. Twenty-five per cent said that only citizens should have access to state-sponsored healthcare, while nowhere else did more than six per cent of respondents hold this view. Asked about access to state schools, UK respondents stood out in comparable fashion (Transatlantic Trends 2011a). The survey showed that, among the countries surveyed, the UK has unusually strong ideas about the exceptional rights of citizens when it comes to healthcare and education.

A common complaint
Many UK citizens believe such rights are being neglected in favour of asylum seekers. In January 2008 a consultation of citizens' attitudes towards the UK's asylum system and the concept of sanctuary was launched by the IAC. The consultation found that 'the *majority* of those who responded and did not work for a refugee organisation were critical of the asylum system and felt aggrieved by asylum seekers and the government' (IAC 2008: 14, emphasis added) for a number of reasons. These included asylum seeker welfare 'scrounging', the preferential treatment of asylum seekers in housing allocation and public services, and a general excess of generosity towards these migrants (IAC 2008). Asylum seekers, for many British citizens, are usurpers of their entitlements.

As the Commission (IAC 2008) went on to show, some of this ill feeling is a case of misunderstanding. Asylum seekers, with a few headlining exceptions, are not prioritised over citizens. However, what of the complaints that citizens should be more prioritised than they are currently? Asylum seekers are, after all, supported by the taxpayer (they are not permitted to find paid work), something that can be especially hard for their low-income neighbours to accept. And there are important reasons for preventing too many taxpayers from reaching a stage where they are, or simply feel, insufficiently prioritised over those whom their taxes are supporting. In a book about London's East End, Dench et al describe some of their informants' feelings that immigrants' rights are 'given greater moral weight than those of

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[4] UK fieldwork carried out August-September 2010 (Transatlantic Trends 2011b).
[5] The United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

families who have been here for generations' (Dench et al 2006: 230). They ominously conclude,

> *The message that this sends them is that national resources no longer belong in any real sense to them as citizens of the nation, but are in the gift of the ruling class. So instead of feeling that they are at the centre of the nation, they feel more than just not championed by the elite, but actually pushed away by it. This is a prescription for mass civic insecurity.* (Dench et al 2006: 230-231)

There is a legitimate worry that, if citizens feel their state membership counts for nothing, then the loss of identity or the fall in civic participation that could result would be of serious consequence. This chapter will expand on these points: first, by capturing a flavour of citizens' sense of neglect and real complaints about welfare distribution; and second, by demonstrating that there are strong moral arguments for paying attention to them because of how they can negatively impact human wellbeing and safety.

Some asylum advocates would no doubt point out that the circumstances left behind by asylum seekers can be so severe that almost any cost that their basic subsistence imposes on citizens is worthwhile. This is a valid perspective; yet it is complicated by the argument that preserving citizens' sense of prioritisation is either of intrinsic moral value or, perhaps more persuasively, of practical moral importance for preventing disillusionment with liberal values, the demise of the welfare state, and the onset of even harsher asylum restrictions. In the next chapter I will suggest that, while these perspectives may appear to be in tension with one another, engagement can help to reconcile them.

A real complaint

To capture a flavour of citizens' demands for greater welfare prioritisation I will briefly examine reader responses to two newspaper articles published by online versions of the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail*.[6] The *Sun* article received 35 responses while the *Daily Mail* article appears

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[6] The response facilities of online newspapers offer an effective way to quickly capture the tone of readers' reactions to issues in their own words. They are optionally anonymous and easily accessible to the growing web-friendly portion of the UK's population. Unlike letters to the editor, they are not hand-picked and they are far easier to submit. Websites reserve the right to remove any posted material, but most posts appear to have been left alone in these cases (judging by their number and varying character). The result is a varied and sizeable overview of reader feedback.

My approach may be criticised because the articles to which the tabloid readers are responding are usually written to indulge their opinions. I agree that these articles and the resentment of readers perpetuate one another. However, I have steered away from articles about 'bogus' welfare claimants and taken care to select two that do not dictate the precise kind of resentment expressed. The *Sun* article discusses a rise in asylum seekers and a population out of control. A negative readership reaction was no doubt expected – perhaps even incited – but the exact reasons behind the negative reaction (including a threat to citizen welfare) were not dictated and indeed varied immensely. The *Daily Mail* article does focus readers on imminent competition for their welfare benefits. However, it does not offer or invite specific opinions on why migrants should or should not be entitled to welfare. It is these unsolicited arguments that I am interested in capturing, and not particular levels of rage or simple statements that migrants should not receive benefits. I wish to show that citizens are making real complaints that they are insufficiently prioritised over asylum seekers where welfare is concerned.

to have capped responses at 200. The general tone of comments is exasperated or bitter and many make exaggerations or unfounded claims. Numerous respondents include a political message in favour of, or against, certain parties or institutions. Yet amidst the anger emerge three threads of resentment about citizen neglect in welfare distribution: the first on the basis that some citizens are still living in deplorable conditions; the second on the basis that the system is overloaded and cannot support any more welfare claimants; and the third on the basis of sacrifices made for the state by citizens.

In May 2009 the *Sun* newspaper's website ran an article titled 'Asylum seekers rocket by 27%' (Wilson 2009). Among the responses by readers were the following comments, which point to the unacceptable living conditions of some citizens:

> *stop the benefits and the free housing and they will stop coming. We don't have enough jobs or houses for our legal citizens so how can we sustain this level of immigration.*

> *I am all for helping people out where we can, but what about our own people who are struggling below the breadline?*

> *I HOLD NOTHING PERSONAL TOWARDS ANY OF THEM BUT PLEASE, LETS REMEMBER AN OLD SAYING, CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME!!! CLOSE OUR BORDERS WITHOUT EXCEPTION FOR SOME TIME AND LET THE UNITED KINGDOM HEAL SOME OF HER WOUNDS AND LOOK AFTER HER OWN PEOPLE AND THE TAXPAYERS!*

> Anonymous responses by readers to Wilson 2009, same source

Each response argues that there is an unjust allocation of resources between 'our own' people and asylum seekers. Their anger is not directed at help offered to asylum seekers per se, but rather at help offered to asylum seekers in place of citizens when there is not enough to go round.

A 'full boat' argument is made by a number of respondents to an article run by the *Daily Mail* newspaper website in April 2011, titled '*Queue here for Britain: Meet the thousands of young men fleeing North Africa - with the UK (and its benefits) in their sights*' (Reid 2011). The inclusion of 'benefits' in the title invited a sea of responses with regard to UK welfare provision. Though the article only briefly mentions asylum, many of the featured young men would access benefits by seeking asylum in the UK. Some readers argued that the UK has run out of welfare resources:

> *Can someone please put up the "FULL" sign please..... Things are bad enough without adding these to the toxic mix liebour created. Any more and we could capsize! (Anon)*

> *We do not need more mouths to feed and more benefit claimers, we have enough home grown ones without importing a few more. … (LauraCa, Maidenhead)*

> *THE REASON FOR NON ENTRY NOTHING PERSONAL :-: WE ARE FULL UP AND HAVE NO MONEY IN THE POT TO HAND OUT ANY MORE (minnie, midlands)*

> Responses by readers to Reid 2011, same source

Ironically and exaggeratedly, the first respondent evokes imagery comparing Britain itself to the overloaded boats of asylum seekers teetering across the Mediterranean. The third

respondent adds a common caveat to their argument: they have nothing against outsiders; they are only concerned that the welfare system can expand no further.

Some *Daily Mail* respondents draw attention to how citizens have earned prioritisation by making sacrifices for the state:

> *… we have had severe cut backs on almost everything, including our soldiers, sailors and airmen, BUT the country will find enough money to give BENEFITS etc to these new arrivals, for Gods Sake when are going to think of our own residents, many un-employed with NO chance of work, pensionsiers living on low income, young families struggling to make ends meet. (minnie, midlands)*

> *Send every single one of them back - otherwise we (those of us who have paid taxes into the UK for GENERATIONS) will find ourselves enslaved: We will be working until we drop to keep them and living in poverty ourselves (real poverty). (George Brown, Romford, Essex)*

> *For 42 years I have help fund the welfare state. […] I never expected […] [to] find myself unemployed, but it happened. After […] exhausting what money I had to keep myself, I finally swallowed my pride and applied for jobseekers allowance. […] I was told "you don't qualify because of your circumstances". […] I now know that our LIEberal authorities would rather give any entitlements I am morally due…to any Johnny-come-lately foreigners. BNP for me from now on. (Richard Cour de Lion, Birmingham)*

> Responses by readers to Reid 2011, same source

These three respondents focus on citizens' sacrifices in the areas of military service and taxation. The second respondent draws a history of sacrifice over 'generations' into the identity that he deems meaningful for staking his claim. The third believes that in his hour of need he is 'morally due' certain 'entitlements' after years of faithful tax contributions. For such citizens, current welfare allocations deny the extent of the state's debt towards their loyalty. The above protests illustrate the range and deep-seatedness of resentment beneath citizens' complaints about welfare prioritisation.

These complaints may be exaggerated and may not necessarily justify curtailing the rights of asylum seekers, but they are not simply snatched out of thin air. First, it is clear that asylum seekers do impose a short-term cost on citizens. While the support available to asylum seekers is minimal, it still comes out of citizens' pockets. Citing Leiner, Gibney explains,

> *Many economists believe that migration is generally beneficial for national economies. […] But no one denies that mass migration can also exact costs. At least in the short term, new immigrants may be disproportionately reliant on public services, such as language training, subsidised housing, education, health services (Leiner 1998).* (Gibney 2004: 71)

The short-term costs are not only real, they are significant. Asylum applicants are not permitted to work for twelve months after their application is filed (Refugee Council Information Service Online, RCISO, 2011b). Until an asylum applicant is employed or has received a decision, the UKBA provides accommodation, if necessary, and 'subsistence support equivalent to around 70 per cent of current income support levels (100 per cent for those under 16 years of age)' (RCISO 2011c). Free education is available up to the age of sixteen and often up to the age of eighteen (RCISO 2011a). Healthcare is available through the NHS to citizens and non-citizens alike. Under exceptional circumstances other particular

support is available to asylum seekers (RCISO 2011c). This can all add up for citizens. In 2003, for instance, 93,000 asylum seekers cost Britain just under £1 billion (Travis 2003, cited in Price 2009), or about £10,000 each. Successful asylum applicants often remain highly dependent in the short to medium term. A 2007 IPPR study found that 39 per cent of Somali immigrants in Britain claim income support (IPPR 2007, cited in House of Lords 2008). Many of these will have been asylum seekers at one stage.

Second, the direct costs of hosting asylum seekers in the UK fall more heavily on working class citizens (even if middle class tax contributions are higher). As Dunn reasons, while it is 'foolish' and 'ungenerous' for the neighbours of arriving aliens to blame them so extensively, these arrivals do, 'simply by dint of being there, represent a further and direct injury to their own interests...' (Dunn 1996: 155). Dench et al relate the 'intense competition' (Dench et al 2006: 225-226) over resources and state services faced by the working classes to the settling of the neediest immigrants in the same localities, such as London's East End. On the other hand, they explain, the middle classes often benefit from the cosmopolitanism that these immigrants bring to places like London (Dench et al 2006). So citizens' feelings that asylum seekers impose too great a cost on them build on an economic argument that is especially pertinent to the working class experience.

This being said, many would suggest that citizens' complaints are in fact more about perceptions of resource allocation, or about having no control over the reshaping of communities. Still, perhaps they are down to more general government failures, or an economic downturn, or media hype, or a growing sense of powerlessness, and asylum seekers have simply become scapegoats thereof. I believe there is some truth in all of these suggestions and I am not trying to offer a causal analysis of citizens' resentment here. I am only illustrating its scope, and showing that it is real: it builds on real issues, irrespective of the influences that exacerbate it, and should be taken seriously.

For some citizens, their frustration has boiled over into sweeping cynicism. Two tabloid readers comment:

> *They can have the UK, iam sick off this country let them all in let them destroy, let them transform this country into a 3rd world country let the rich and MPs feel the pain. (luke, london)*

> *let them all in, we can't be bothered about our sick and disabled so just let them in and to hell with everyone else. God how i hate this country and whats its doing to its own people (steve, bham)*

> Responses by readers to Reid 2011, same source

These respondents profess an eroding attachment to the state and its survival. It is this alienation and its potential repercussions that are the most widely cited grounds on which moral theorists argue for preserving citizens' sense of prioritisation over migrants.

The case for prioritising citizens
A surprising range of moral theorists make this argument. Their reasoning must undergo a level of extrapolation to make them all come to bear on the question of asylum seekers and welfare. Most are more focused on admission than on how immigrants should be treated when they get here; some are more focused on nations and others on states; some are more focused on immigrants and others on refugees. In this chapter, therefore, I will be distilling arguments and bending them to make a point. Some of the theorists considered would make exceptions to citizen prioritisation where refugees and asylum seekers are concerned, arguing

that they are a special case; but I leave asylum advocates to present these perspectives. My aim is to summarise the moral case for prioritising citizens.

Gibney (2004) helpfully categorises the theories that support citizen prioritisation. Calling them 'partial' theories, he juxtaposes them with 'impartial' theories, which oppose citizen prioritisation. Building on work by Nagel, he further argues that we should apply partial and impartial morality concurrently to asylum policy decisions. Gibney attributes real moral worth to both the impartial claims of asylum advocacy organisations and to the more partial arguments of dissatisfied citizens, emphasising that 'asylum exposes a profound *conflict of value* between the legitimate claims of citizens and those of refugees' (Gibney 2004: 259). Joppke provides a helpful illustration of this conflict of value in his account of the German asylum crisis:

> *The defenders of Article 16 saw the state in the first place obliged to human-rights principles, and only secondarily to the people who constituted it. A leader of the Social Democrats resisted becoming 'the instrument…of popular sentiment […]', warning that 'domestic considerations must not influence asylum policy'. […] By contrast, conservative critics of Article 16, not without complacency, saw themselves as acting on a popular mandate: 'My responsibility as a politician is to optimize the conditions for the people who live here. It is not my duty to treat all problems in the world equally.'* (Joppke 1998: 128)

Neither side of this political argument seems entirely wrong. Or, as Gibney would argue, both make legitimate claims, but with different moral foundations. This thesis aligns with Gibney's argument that different strains of morality concurrently come to bear on asylum policy decisions. Thus, it urges asylum advocacy organisations to recognise that their more impartial moral foundations are only part of the picture. Other valid moral perspectives place greater emphasis on prioritising citizens' concerns.

Gibney (2004) divides partial theories into two broad categories of moral argument. The first is *communitarian*, holding that group identity is of fundamental moral importance to our lives and that communities help to both shape and protect that identity. We are, therefore, allowed to exclude foreigners if they disrupt the community that preserves our sense of 'who we are'. The second category is *consequentialist* and argues that, while such identities may not be of fundamental moral importance, often 'just and egalitarian political regimes' (Gibney 2004: 32) are held up by a shared sense of national culture which, if undermined, might lead to the collapse of the whole regime. Preserving identity has no intrinsic worth, but indirectly is of such high value that it justifies excluding foreigners whose presence undermines it.

The communitarian argument
Towing the communitarian line, David Miller (2007) argues that national identity more closely resembles an intrinsically valuable relationship than an instrumentally valuable one, thereby justifying the exclusion of outsiders to protect it. He considers instrumentally valuable relationships, like syndicates, and intrinsically valuable relationships, like friendship, observing that 'the only duties that arise in the case of the syndicate are those inherent in the cooperative practice itself,' whereas friendship entails 'open-ended duties to support and help' (Miller 2007: 35). Acknowledging that nationality does serve some instrumental purposes, Miller insists that the duties of the relationship nevertheless more closely resemble those found in friendship than those found in syndicates, for instance. Nationality is first and foremost intrinsically valuable. It is only when compatriots believe this, and solidarity results, that there is instrumental value to nationality. Furthermore, argues Miller, people would still

'regret the loss of their distinct national identity, even if they were guaranteed the other goods that nationality makes possible' (Miller 2007: 38).

While most compatriots do not know each other, Miller insists that this is no different to the case of churches, professional associations or football clubs. These all create relationships of 'genuine value' (Miller 2007: 39) between members, he reasons, based on 'a set of shared understandings about what it is that they are members of, and what distinguishes them from outsiders' (Miller 2007: 38-39). What this means, for Miller's communitarian strain of partialist thought, is that prioritising insiders over outsiders may sometimes be justifiable for similar reasons (though perhaps not as strong) to why we recognise prioritising friends or family as justifiable when others' needs are much greater. While Miller might not take things so far, an extension of his reasoning could argue that, if a welfare system's inclusion of asylum seekers sufficiently undermines citizens' sense that they are part of a meaningful community, then the system should be adjusted in citizens' favour on the basis of their identity's intrinsic moral worth.

The consequentialist argument
Consequentialist partialists, by contrast, attribute no 'fundamental moral importance' (Gibney 2004: 31) to national identity. They are concerned with what would be the *consequences* if it disappeared. They see merit in the 'subjective cultural unity' (Gibney 2004: 48) of national identity because of the institutions it moves citizens to support (such as the welfare system). Gibney adopts this perspective in seeing

> states as justified in restricting entry only in order to protect the institutions and values of the liberal
> democratic state, defined quite broadly to include not only civil and political rights, but also the kind
> of social rights associated with a generous welfare state that ensure some degree of economic justice
> amongst members. (Gibney 2004: 83)

Unlike Miller's communitarian argument, Gibney's (2004) basis for exclusion is purely practical. To be morally justified, exclusion of non-members should only occur to protect values and institutions that other moral perspectives make fundamentally important in his eyes. How Gibney would treat non-members once they are here might be a different story. One extension of his reasoning could, however, argue for citizens' greater prioritisation in welfare distribution if their discontent with asylum seekers' allocation threatened to reduce their willingness to prop up the welfare system in the first place.

Walzer (1983) also adopts a practical view, holding that a world of distributive justice, in which the likes of welfare provision is possible, must be protected by bounded political communities wherein people prioritise one another. For Walzer, taking away borders and the prioritisation of citizens within them would not result in a fairer world, but a less fair one where neighbourhoods would close up and prioritise their own. The UK's national welfare system would become a neighbourhood welfare system and many would suffer as a result. Walzer sees national welfare as an achievement that he does not believe can be attained by a global state. For,

> it is only if patriotic sentiment has some moral basis, only if communal cohesion makes for obligations
> and shared meanings, only if there are members as well as strangers, that state officials would have
> any reason to worry especially about the welfare of their own people (and of all their own people)…
> (Walzer 1983: 37-38)

For Walzer (1983), a communal sense of national identity's intrinsic value and a collective sense of 'us' and 'them' are both impossible at a global level and essential ingredients of a state that cares for its entire population. He cites Britain's lack of empathy for the Irish during the potato famine of the 1840s as a somewhat dated example of communal cohesion's limits. 'Without some shared sense of the duty and the dues,' believes Walzer (1983: 68), 'there would be no political community at all and no security or welfare – and the life of mankind "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."' For Walzer, prioritisation is always going to occur at some level. Rather than lamenting that the state is not more inclusive, he focuses move positively on the number of would-be sufferers that the state system manages to care for. If welfare allocations began to threaten a state's communal cohesion, therefore, Walzer's reasoning might see greater citizen prioritisation as a practical necessity for sustaining the best of worlds that we know.

While less positive about the state institution than Walzer, Gibney (2004) considers the argument that citizen prioritisation will be necessary as long as we have no better replacement for the state. He explains how, born in the interest of Hobbesian self-preservation, the state must prioritise citizens to survive because this is what it was designed for. It is our answer to 'the question of who is responsible to whom in the modern world' (Gibney 2004: 211). Accordingly, he writes,

> *the claims of outsiders are assessed […] through a logic […] that is exceedingly sensitive to the potential damage to [the state's] own authority involved in forcing its citizens to incur costs for the sake of strangers.* (Gibney 2004: 211)

The only way to transcend this logic, argues Gibney (2004), would be to reach a place where we are ready for world government and where state survival is no longer an issue. He discusses how the state's responsibilities expanded over time from maximising physical security to also maximising economic security, and yet how its success in this new role remains pegged to 'the capriciousness of international markets' (Gibney 2004: 210). The result is that, in times of economic hardship, many states are pressured into reducing their economic benevolence towards strangers in a bid to clumsily uphold their newfound responsibilities to citizens (Gibney 2004). Accordingly, one might argue, greater welfare prioritisation of citizens in economic downturns is an unavoidable consequence of the way the world is run.

Even Singer and Singer (1988) and Carens (1992), while staunch impartialists, exhibit a degree of consequentialist partialism in their moral reasoning. For Singer and Singer there is no point in admitting more refugees once the hostility among residents reaches a level where it seriously threatens the peace and security of previously admitted migrants. For Carens, the tipping point for restricting immigration is when citizens' resentment threatens liberal egalitarian policies and institutions. For him, in 1992,

> *A glance at current European politics makes it clear that this threat is all too real. In several countries, extreme right-wing parties, using veiled and not-so-veiled racist and neo-fascist appeals, have gained ground, primarily, it seems, by making opposition to current immigrants and future immigration a key element in their platforms.* (Carens 1992: 31)

Presumably the Singers and Carens would justify reducing or terminating asylum welfare support for new immigrants at points similar to when they would exclude those immigrants, if not before.

Chapter conclusion

There are strong rebuttals against partialist arguments. In the case of asylum seekers, probably some of the most effective ones are of the following nature:

> *If you don't take me in, they say, I shall be killed, persecuted, brutally oppressed by the rulers of my own country. What can we reply?* (Walzer 1983: 49)

Yet addressing such counter arguments has not been my concern. I have demonstrated that, first, there is a widespread complaint from UK citizens that they should be more prioritised; second, this complaint stems from real discontent and is about real problems, regardless of the importance of asylum advocates' own concerns; and third, a variety of prominent partial and impartial moral theorists share a sense that, morally speaking, some circumstances justify further prioritising citizens at the expense of immigrants. Opinions vary on what these circumstances may be, but they involve citizens' exasperation with immigration reaching levels that are detrimental to either human wellbeing or human safety. This is why it is so important for asylum advocacy to engage citizens' perspectives instead of simply turning up its volume in response.

The need for engagement is urgent. The tabloid responses surveyed in this chapter illustrate some of the real anger that is building among UK citizens. Their complaint is widespread, as the IAC showed. A growing portion of the UK's population feels alienated and is moving to support right-wing parties with immigration policies that would be highly detrimental to asylum seeker welfare. If Carens' apprehensions about Europe were justified in 1992 then they should be justified concerning the UK today.

Moral theorists' partialist consequentialist arguments are making their way into mainstream UK immigration discourse. Writing for *Labour Uncut*, Goodhart (2010) recommends that the party adopt an anti-immigration stance because the UK needs time to absorb the last fifteen years' arrivals. He argues,

> *Social democracy and a generous welfare state cannot survive in the long run unless there is a strong sense of a common life, of shared cultural references and experience. Rapid and high-level immigration weakens a sense of reciprocity […] and lowers trust between citizens.* (Goodhart 2010)

Goodhart's solution is of the glass-half-empty variety: reduce immigration so that community can survive. This thesis has a more optimistic proposal: build the community so that asylum can thrive. Yet asylum advocacy will certainly not build the community through increased government lobbying. Engagement is essential. In the next chapter I will argue that it rarely occurs; mainstream asylum advocacy prefers to exclusively and competitively promote the rights of asylum seekers. Where it does engage citizens over immigration, brittle communities can develop surprising elasticity.

3   Advocacy's response

Refugees are… funny, talented, sexy, groovy, sporty, spicy!
(Refugee Week 2011b)

Mainstream asylum advocacy rarely engages the complaint of British citizens that they should be more prioritised over asylum seekers. It does frequently address 'myths' about asylum seekers,[7] but this does not constitute the 'engagement' approach that I am promoting, which should be constructive rather than dismissive. I begin this chapter by analysing the advocacy strategy of the Refugee Council (RC), the UK's largest refugee and asylum seeker organisation (RC 2011a). This case study aptly illustrates the lack of engagement found among most advocacy organisations.

There are organisations that engage citizens' rights claims to a greater extent. Adopting a constructive tone, this chapter's case study selection is as much about raising exceptions to my argument as supporting it. I will review two further advocacy strategies: those of City of Sanctuary Sheffield (CSS) and Citizens UK. These organisations demonstrate valuable forms of engagement that should be in more widespread use.

While some asylum advocacy is more specific to asylum seekers' concerns (eg 'right to work' campaigns), other forms may fall under the umbrella of 'refugee advocacy' or advocacy on behalf of 'people seeking sanctuary'. In the following chapter, therefore, I will concern myself with all three categories where relevant to asylum seekers, alternating between terms depending on the advocate or author's focus. It is not always possible to judge exactly where these overlapping categories begin and end, but in any case, many refugees are asylum seekers at some point, and both groups are composed of 'people seeking sanctuary'. Furthermore citizens express concerns about refugees as well as asylum seekers (often not seeing any distinction). Neither refugee nor asylum seeker advocacy is engaging citizens enough and usually, where the one is succeeding, this is both helpful and instructive for the other.

Because of this neglect on asylum advocacy's part, I consider here its engagement of citizens' complaints about asylum seekers with respect to both welfare and other issues. Chapter 2 focused on citizens' complaints about state welfare provision. Yet, as I argue, advocacy organisations rarely engage these complaints and so in this chapter I am really just looking for any attempt by advocacy organisations to engage citizens' grievances.

In identifying case studies for this thesis I initially consulted a study by Statham and Geddes (2006), which indicated that the RC makes more political claims[8] relating to 'immigration policies with political relevance to British territory' (Statham and Geddes 2006: 267) than any other non-media British civil society actor. The study ranked the frequency of different actors' claims as reported in news sections of the *Guardian* newspaper from 1990 to 2004 and partly aimed to build 'understanding of which actors attempt to shape policies by public agenda-setting actions' (Statham and Geddes 2006: 252). While a little dated, it demonstrates the

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[7] For example, see National Assembly Against Racism n.d.

[8] 'An instance of political claims-making is a unit of strategic action in the public sphere. It consists of intentional and public acts which articulate political demands, decisions, implementations, calls to action, proposals, criticisms, or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors in a policy field' (Statham and Geddes 2006: 252).

extent of the RC's dominance in the non-media civil society category and provides strong evidence of its prominence in refugee advocacy circles. Further research revealed the breadth of the RC's advocacy methods, making it an attractive case study that would allow me to analyse a range of strategies at once and provide space to consider less conventional approaches thereafter.

Since the RC case study enables a strong critique of UK asylum advocacy, in completing the case study selection it was my aim to provide the strongest possible counter-argument to my claims. A number of organisations including Asylum Aid and Refugee Action were examined, but in the end there was not enough difference between their advocacy and that of the Refugee Council for my purposes. Other organisations like the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants or UNHCR have an almost exclusively top-down approach to advocacy in the UK, so a critique of their failure to engage citizens would be short and without occasion to highlight missed opportunities.

Following a wide review, City of Sanctuary Sheffield (CSS) and Citizens UK stood out as important case studies for three main reasons. First, both organisations value citizens' complaints and respond to them accordingly, offering important and informative counter-arguments to my critique about a lack of engagement. Second, both organisations are flourishing initiatives and I wish for this critique to be contemporary and relevant. Third, these organisations' approaches to advocacy are unconventional and add important diversity to the case study selection.

Analysis of the literature and websites of the three case study organisations was supplemented by interviews with a senior officer from each. The interviews served to nuance the case studies. They offered each organisation the opportunity to counter my views on their shortcomings and led to much fairer criticism of their advocacy methods, as well as more insightful consideration of their successes. Nevertheless, the data gathered for this thesis only allows rough analysis of these organisations' advocacy strategies. The main aim is to point out a gap in mainstream asylum advocacy's agenda and to suggest how it might be filled.

A short history of asylum advocacy

The last few decades have witnessed several shifts in asylum advocacy practice. Pupavac (2008: 278) describes how, until the 1990s, 'UK advocacy was dominated by lawyers around organizations like the Joint Council for the Welfare of Migrants using a political-legal lens to address immigration problems.' She (2008) mourns the refugee advocacy sector's subsequent move away from treating refugees as political subjects belonging in the political community, as she believes this approach secured more durable rights. Of course, the extent of refugees' and asylum seekers' political membership is contested. Yet Pupavac is not denying this. She (2008: 284) too wants to see a 'reluctant' refugee advocacy sector grappling with other perspectives in 'difficult political debate.'

Today, Pupavac (2008) explains, refugees are largely presented either as exceptionally talented or as trauma victims. These divergent depictions, she believes, lose control of their objective because 'exaggerated representations of refugees' contributions or asylum seekers' potential contributions deny the welfare burden implied by representations of refugees in a sick role' (Pupavac 2008: 291). When the extent of refugee contributions is called into question, there is little to sustain the empathy on which those cast as 'sick' rely. No more than a charitable expense, and with no political subjecthood to stand on, refugees are easily re-framed as an undeserving drain on resources (Pupavac 2008).

Meanwhile a new strand of advocacy is gaining momentum. One of its features is greater self-consciousness. It takes the focus off what refugees *are* and asks what citizens *ought to be*. Cultivating an environment of sanctuary, it suggests, is an important aspect of citizen identity. A second feature is greater concern and involvement with citizens. This may take the form of listening to citizens' complaints or of implementing projects that benefit them as well as asylum seekers. Pursuing joint causes helps build solidarity between asylum seekers and citizens. To some extent this new strand of advocacy constitutes a more practical and less legalistic return to emphasising belonging in the political community, which Pupavac sees as so important. It is this form of advocacy that I highlight in the case studies of CSS and Citizens UK as pioneering stronger citizen engagement.

Refugee Council

The Refugee Council (RC) identifies itself as a human rights charity working for the protection, respect and understanding of refugees and to ensure that they have 'the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities as other members of society' (RC 2011a). With funding revenue of £20.1 million for 2009/10 (to be significantly reduced for 2010/11) and just under 300 staff nationally (Mason 2011), this largely state-funded professional organisation is a strong voice for asylum seekers. It pursues its aims through four main areas of initiative: the direct provision of services; lobbying and campaigning; supporting community organisations; and working with partner organisations (RC 2011d). In each area the RC strongly represents refugees. However, it rarely engages the concerns of citizens. Jonathan Ellis, Director of Influencing and Advocacy, emphatically agrees that 'we need to do more' (Ellis 2011) on this front.

Lobbying and campaigning

The RC's lobbying and campaigning efforts are largely top-focused. They subdivide into the overlapping categories of campaigning, research, influencing policy, working in parliament, and working with the media (RC 2011f). The organisation describes campaigning as 'how we bring the issues that matter for refugees to the notice of both the public, *and the people who we are trying to influence*.' (RC 2011f, emphasis added). The importance of local campaigning work is recognised, but with a view to 'keeping the pressure on MPs and others who need to be reminded about our work and the problems facing our clients' (RC 2011b). The focus is on being heard by the government and not on engaging local opinions.

The RC's Talks Team initiative in Leeds is a rare exception in this regard. Asked for an example of how the RC directly engages working class citizens, Ellis cites this project which 'raises awareness about the reality of seeking asylum' (RC 2011o) and seeks to personalise the experience by sending refugees to institutions (eg schools, health services, community groups) (RC 2011o) in areas more hostile towards them. 'The people sympathetic to refugees have actually met refugees,' explains Ellis, who praises the project's recorded influence on perspectives as 'stunning' (Ellis 2011). CSS and Citizens UK do similar work in schools and there seems to be consensus around the importance of altering perceptions in this manner. The initiative gives citizens the opportunity to air grievances and be engaged within familiar frames of reference by refugees themselves.

Another recent, positive campaigning shift by the RC towards engaging citizens has been over language use. In the wake of organisations like City of Sanctuary and Citizens UK, the RC is noticing a need to use language that links citizenship to positive treatment of migrants fleeing persecution. Ellis (2011) points to some of the promotional material being produced for Refugee Week that emphasises the contribution of refugees towards creating British icons (such as fish and chips). He wants to make people understand that refugee protection is not a

niche or left-wing issue, but central to British heritage. One aspect of the Nazi threat that Britain stood against, he stresses, was how it 'victimised Jews and gypsies and the marginalised and the vulnerable.' Ellis wants to put national pride back into protection.

Such language techniques are only embryonic at the RC. Yet they are important in how they promote the protection of asylum seekers and refugees with reference to the same principle of national solidarity to which citizens refer when complaining about asylum welfare. In this case there is a danger that the particular choice of terminology could backfire. The emphasis on 'protection' could have the damaging side-effect of casting refugees and asylum seekers in a role subordinate to that of their 'protectors'. Their effective 'rescue' might imply that they should be 'grateful' for what they get and place them (much to Pupavac's despair) at the mercy of citizens' wavering good will. Nevertheless, by using a 'British' frame of reference, the RC implicitly gives citizens comfortable grounds on which to support greater protection of asylum seekers. Together with the Talks Team initiative, this is one of the best examples of how the RC is beginning to give thought to the engagement of citizens' complaints.
The RC's research initiatives, on the other hand, give little acknowledgement to the wider citizenry's perspective. 'To ensure that our research has the widest possible impact.' it explains, 'the Refugee Council seeks to build bridges between researchers, policymakers and practitioners' (RC 2011h). The RC also cultivates a strong ethic of doing research informed by refugees, refugee community organisations and refugee agencies (RC 2011h). Notably absent from this network are ordinary citizens. The result is a wide research base that fails to take realistic consideration of citizens' highly relevant perspectives. Every research paper published on the RC website in the last five years appears to focus on some aspect of the refugee or asylum seeker experience and how or why this should be improved. Topics range from healthcare to education and from border control to bail hearings (RC 2011i). None, however, appear to consider or grapple with the circumstances or discontent of local citizens in areas where refugees and asylum seekers settle. Asked if the RC has any such literature, Ellis says that the best thing he has seen is a document by a partner organisation on social housing, which confirms that asylum seekers do not get preference in the process.

The RC's work with parliament and the media underscores its prioritisation of top-down campaigning, and mainly consists of valuable fire-fighting activities. Its policy paper library (RC 2011e) chiefly contains responses to government initiatives affecting refugees at the national level. The RC (2011m) tries to 'ensure that in every relevant debate and new piece of legislation, the voice of the asylum seeker and the refugee is heard.' It sees its work with parliament as vital owing to the amount of legislation that has been passed in recent years affecting refugees and asylum seekers, often negatively. Similarly the organisation's media relations initiative recognises the frequency of negative and misleading media coverage of asylum and refugee issues and believes one of its most important roles is to counter these depictions. It provides the media with accurate information, comments on breaking news stories, positive stories about refugees and asylum seekers and case studies of refugees and asylum seekers relating their experiences (RC 2011n). There can be little doubt as to the importance of the RC's parliamentary and media work. Yet, focused on damage control, it does little to engage citizens' perspectives.

Working with partner organisations and supporting community organisations
At the national level, the RC (2011g) partners with other organisations in five projects that focus on UK refugees and asylum seekers. These are predominantly about providing access to information or resources for refugees and asylum seekers (eg The Basis Project), or, in the case of Refugee Week, celebrating their contribution to the UK and promoting understanding of their experience. Ellis explains how the organisation is slowly developing a 'more refugee-

led, more grassroots-led' (Ellis 2011) approach to advocacy, remarking, 'all of the campaigning that I've seen that's been successful is about empowering communities to do it' (Ellis 2011). Moving from representing others' interests to equipping them to represent themselves is a positive initiative. For the community organisations supported by the RC, however, this entails enabling refugees and asylum seekers to assert their interests in the community and is not about preparing them to better engage citizens' concerns.

The Basis Project is a national 'flagship project of Refugee Council and Refugee Action that aims to help strengthen and develop refugee community organisations (RCOs)' (RC 2011j). One area where engaging citizens' perspectives might be valuable is the Project's work with other voluntary sector organisations to improve the environment of RCOs (RC 2011j). Regrettably the initiative focuses exclusively on being heard, not on listening: helping other organisations 'improve their understanding of RCOs and increase RCOs' access to funding and mainstream support' (Basis Project 2011). At both the national and the local level, the RC's work with other organisations prioritises the empowerment of refugees and helping communities to understand them. There is little evidence that anyone is listening to communities in return.

The RC provides a good example of mainstream asylum seeker advocacy in the UK today: strong representation of interests, but a weak agenda for engaging citizens' competing perspectives. To a certain extent, I argue that this critique is applicable to all large refugee or asylum seeker advocacy organisations in the UK. Advocacy organisations and citizens are talking past one another, each brandishing their respective entitlements in an arms race of claims, instead of taking the other's perspective seriously and constructively engaging it. Next I will consider two unusual organisations which push back against this criticism.

City of Sanctuary Sheffield (CSS)

Comparing the RC with the City of Sanctuary (CS) movement, CS Development Officer Sarah Eldridge reflects, 'You know, it's an organisation – they're doing things for other people; whereas City of Sanctuary is the people' (Eldridge 2011). Endorsed by the RC, the CS (2011a) movement is not an organisation (although it has small coordinating offices); it is driven by member organisations who are committed to promoting a positive notion of sanctuary within their city. When these organisations achieve a critical mass, their city may be eligible for official 'City of Sanctuary' status. Thus, CS aims to promote a new culture of hospitality in cities and a pride in being a place of safety for foreigners who have fled for protection to the UK. Beginning in Sheffield in 2005, the movement is now in sixteen other cities, towns or London boroughs and spreading quickly. I will focus on City of Sanctuary Sheffield (CSS) as the movement's oldest and arguably most developed branch.

CSS is engaging citizens, refugees and asylum seekers in new and innovative ways. Adopting a soft, positive approach to advocacy, the movement targets 'middle ground' negativity towards sanctuary seekers among those citizens who 'are maybe open to persuasion,' with the aim of creating a strong enough culture of welcome so that extreme exclusionists find their views marginalised and do not impact the wider outlook of citizens (Eldridge 2011). Eldridge (2011) believes there is more mileage in this approach on a small budget than in spending large resources on a few, more extreme individuals. The value of CSS's 'middle ground' influence is affirmed by the IAC, which recommends its expansion (IAC 2008).

CSS' advocacy strategy is citizen-centric. Eldridge muses,

> *When people ask me what I do I usually say I work with refugees […] and when I think about it I suppose at City of Sanctuary […] my primary partner is not refugees, it's local people; […] I work with local people to encourage them to be more welcoming and think creatively about how they can be hospitable to refugees.* (Eldridge 2011)

In a radical departure from the RC's advocacy strategy, CSS focuses on the power of local people to relieve its concern for refugees and asylum seekers. Two important ways in which CSS encourages local people to be welcoming are by increasing their self-reflection and increasing their involvement with newcomers.

The self-reflective aspect of CSS's work is its primary focus and encapsulated in its core vision of changing the way people see themselves and their city. CSS's emphasis on being hospitable citizens who welcome those seeking sanctuary naturally counteracts complaints that citizens are not sufficiently prioritised. By situating its counter-cultural perspective within the same, citizen-centric frame of reference instead of reciting the entitlements of asylum seekers, CSS pursues a considerably more effective advocacy strategy where winning citizens' hearts and minds is concerned. In joining the movement, a city must collect resolutions of support from local groups and organisations which

> *include a commitment to welcoming and including people seeking sanctuary in the groups' activities, and evidence of practical efforts to build relationships between those seeking sanctuary and local people.* (CS 2011b)

CSS's practical membership encourages citizens to see affording sanctuary to asylum seekers as reinforcing their own identity, turning Miller's identity-based argument for exclusion on its head.

As the resolutions of support demonstrate, CSS's other core strength is involving citizens and people seeking sanctuary in common projects and exchanges of hospitality. Highlighting commonality of experience is an important theme in CSS's advocacy strategy. Eldridge explains, 'The way we would tackle or respond to any comments [that a citizen's needs should be prioritised] is to show the common ground between people like that who are feeling insecure and asylum seekers who are feeling insecure' (Eldridge 2011). One activity that helps communicate this message is the gardening project of member organisation SAGE Greenfingers. Having supported people experiencing mental health problems since 2002, it now includes a number of people seeking sanctuary in Sheffield (CS 2011a). In a video about CSS, John Lawson, Project Manager for SAGE Greenfingers, explains,

> *What I really like most about this organisation is how asylum seekers have mixed in now with white working class. I can't remember any animosity, any racist comments; what you've got is a lovely sharing of ideas, and respect for each other. And to be part of that process is something I'm really, really proud of – and pleased with.* (CS 2011a)

By promoting regular interaction and the sharing of ideas between asylum seekers and working class citizens, some of CSS's members create unusual forums where greater understanding and perspective can be gained by both parties. Furthermore these members enjoy how the process reinforces their own identity as hospitable citizens.

CSS's bringing together of citizens and people seeking sanctuary can stretch as far as soft levels of mediation which acknowledge and address citizens' complaints more directly. The movement's manifesto stipulates that

> *A City of Sanctuary will be one in which: […] Conflict resolution and mediation services are available to communities experiencing tension over asylum-seekers and refugees.* (CS 2011c)

Eldridge (2011) notes that, in spite of these aspirations, conflict resolution and mediation were not originally a key part of CSS's work, but have begun to be such in the last six to twelve months. She describes how, in response to harassment of Karen refugees (of primarily Myanmarese origin) in Gleadless Valley, CSS brought together a number of organisations, including MESH Community Cohesion Services (MESH), to address the problem. A community event based around food was held in Gleadless Valley in November 2010 with various individuals and organisations contributing in different ways. MESH staff attended and were sat at each table to foster conversation. 'There were a lot of eyes opened at that event,' remarks Eldridge (2011). West Indians welcomed newcomers to the area as former newcomers themselves; a white, working class, single mother expressed surprise at finding common ground with Karen neighbours; and some of these new neighbours acquired a taste for Yorkshire puddings. Eldridge hopes that, as the Karen get to know their neighbours, they can rely on them for resolving problems and will feel more supported in the community. A further community event was held in May 2011 and more were planned (Eldridge 2011).

CSS's reason for being is to make the UK a hospitable environment for outsiders. It achieves this by constructively engaging citizens' complaints instead of talking past them with rights rhetoric. I have emphasised two of its engagement initiatives, the first being a competing notion of citizen identity and the second being its provision of forums where citizens can become acquainted with asylum seekers towards whom they may harbour grievances. The strength of CSS's asylum advocacy is rooted in its citizen-centricity, both practically and ideologically.

Citizens UK

The same is true of Citizens UK, while its vision is decidedly distinct. Citizens UK is a professional guild of about thirty community organisers (Citizens UK 2010b). They aim to build the capacity of communities, including diaspora communities, to exercise more power within a democratic context. In other words, they want to maximise the impact of civil society's voice. Citizens UK does not want to run the state or the market, but it does want a state and market that are more accountable to civil society (and it therefore refuses state funding). To make this happen it strives for a more organised civil society that can better impress its demands on the well-organised structures of the state and market (Cox 2011).

The institutions with which Citizens UK works (it only partners with institutions) amalgamate into organisations, London Citizens being by far the largest. The campaigns of these organisations range from high-profile undertakings, like the Campaign to End Child Detention, to more local protests, like that initiated by a pregnant, destitute asylum seeker in Middlesbrough who was fed up with walking a 12-mile round-trip every week to report to the local authorities (Cox 2011). Citizens UK have been very effective at equipping partner organisations to bring about change in recent years, and both Citizens UK and London Citizens now have a reputable portfolio of funders (Citizens UK 2010c). Following its rocky start in 1989, due to a perceived shortage of trained organisers (Citizens UK 2010d), the guild is breaking new ground with respect to participatory democracy in the UK.

Citizens UK does not see itself as an advocacy organisation, according to Lead Organiser and Director Jonathan Cox. Its 'iron rule' is 'never do for somebody what they can do for themselves' (Cox 2011). It might rather say that it equips communities to practice better self-advocacy. The campaigns initiated by partner organisations are, from its own detached perspective, simply tools with which to help develop power and leadership (Cox 2011). Nevertheless, while its focus may be on improving self-advocacy, aspects of how the organisation engages citizens' grievances towards asylum seekers do constitute a form of citizen-centric asylum advocacy. Here I focus on two important contributions of Citizens UK to asylum advocacy: first, its constructively overt recognition of citizens' concerns about asylum; and second, its softening of citizens' concerns by equipping them to build their power together with asylum seekers and other immigrants.

Valuing citizens' concerns

In 2005 South London Citizens, a chapter of London Citizens, produced a report on what is now the UK Border Agency titled, 'A Humane Service for Global Citizens'. Citizens UK[9] decided to act on the report's final recommendation, which was an 'independent citizens' enquiry into the implementation of national policies on asylum' (IAC 2008: 7). So in 2006 the IAC began 'the largest inquiry on this issue ever undertaken' (IAC 2008: 8). While the report was far more than a listening exercise, most interesting for this thesis's purposes is the portion of the IAC that listened to citizens' concerns about asylum on an unprecedented level. As mentioned in Chapter 2, it found that 'the majority of those who responded and did not work for a refugee organisation were critical of the asylum system and felt aggrieved by asylum seekers and the government' (IAC 2008: 14). Two of the reasons given were:

- Asylum seekers are here to steal jobs and scrounge on welfare;
- Asylum seekers get preferential treatment in the allocation of housing and public services. (IAC 2008: 14)

A consensus also emerged that the asylum system is 'too generous to asylum seekers' (IAC 2008: 16). Valuably, the IAC juxtaposes these findings with the widespread lack of understanding about 'asylum' among respondents. A far more open attitude to the notion of 'sanctuary' was found: 'People believe strongly that it is a good thing that the UK provides sanctuary to those fleeing persecution' (IAC 2008: 15). The Commission's study highlights the weightiness of terminology and its usefulness for refugee and asylum advocacy. Citizens UK subsequently helped initiate a campaign, Citizens for Sanctuary, which pushed for the implementation of the IAC's recommendations.

The IAC's listening campaign pioneered citizen engagement in important ways. First, explains Cox (2011) (who co-authored the IAC reports), it 'enabled people to […] have a more mainstream and mature debate about stuff, and to win those arguments …' In consulting public attitudes the IAC challenged people to substantiate their complaints but found that people were very rarely able to do this. Furthermore a thought experiment put to citizens about being on a boat challenged them to think through how they would treat asylum seekers and yielded very different results to the predominant attitudes they had expressed in surveys (Cox 2011). Recognising the value of such discussion, the IAC recommends greater dissemination of 'balanced information from an impartial source' so that the public 'can engage in informed debate about the concept of sanctuary and the asylum system' (IAC 2008: 18).

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[9] At the time Citizens UK was known as the Citizen Organising Foundation.

Second, the reports generated from the listening campaign took citizens' concerns seriously. Cox emphasises:

> *We were really clear about return; the sector has to wise up on return. You know, if you believe in sanctuary, and honestly believe in sanctuary, then you have to have some mechanism by which people don't get it […] there has to be a way that people are humanely and safely returned to the country of origin.* (Cox 2011)

The IAC recognised that sanctuary could only be a valuable concept if it retained a degree of exclusivity. It saw that public support for affording sanctuary would be far higher if it was felt to be happening in a controlled manner. In response, the reports push for more demonstrably fair and effective border control, in addition to swift, humane removal for those who are refused (IAC 2008). Such recommendations are hardly new, and are far easier to make than to implement, but what I wish to highlight is how they grant moral worth to citizens' perspectives.

The IAC also recommends a series of measures to make communities feel more in control of local immigration processes (Cox 2011). These proposals include providing more high-quality information to the settled communities in asylum dispersal areas and devising more effective strategies for local authorities, the UK Border Agency and the voluntary sector to communicate with these communities about asylum (IAC 2008). The IAC (2008: 18) further suggests earlier encounters and involvement between locals and new arrivals and encourages setting up 'sanctuary welcoming groups' to help bring this about. In short, its reports juxtapose a strong valuation of sanctuary with a strong valuation of citizens' concerns surrounding the process. By commissioning the IAC, Citizens UK promoted a form of engagement with strong asylum advocacy properties.

Empowering citizens
The second important contribution of Citizens UK to asylum advocacy is its recognition that a lack of power is contributing to settled residents' hostility towards asylum seekers and its initiatives for helping both parties to build their power together (Cox 2011). Some of the vehicles through which this is achieved include campaigns focused on the wages, housing and safety of London residents, as well as on the Olympic Committee's investment in London's East End (Citizens UK 2010a). By helping citizens and asylum seekers find a voice together on these issues, Citizens UK very practically engages some of the powerlessness that exacerbates citizens' complaints about a lack of prioritisation. It facilitates constructive outlets for citizen grievances where relationships are actually built with the immigrants that originally bore the brunt of such complaints. Cox sees much of citizens' frustration with asylum seekers as owing to a pecking order in which they are 'only big enough to attack the people immediately below' (Cox 2011). With echoes of Dunn he explains how these citizens are

> *…people whose lives are often vulnerable themselves, probably having a pretty shit time of it, and are under the influences of pretty strong media pressures […] – but also are angry about things, and see changes in their community that they don't feel part of.* (Cox 2011)

Cox reports how time and time again respondents to the public consultation said that they were not against offering sanctuary but that they were against their street 'suddenly turning from […] a settled community to […] being half asylum seekers within the space of six months' (Cox 2011). It is not a 'white vs. minority issue' for Cox (2011), who notes that often the strongest hostility towards new arrivals is from those who arrived last. He believes instability is fundamental and finds that once people begin seizing power alongside asylum

seekers in the context of institutions then animosity is dispelled through relationships and the exchange of stories and experiences (Cox 2011).

Like City of Sanctuary, Citizens UK brings together asylum seekers and citizens in collective projects, challenging more legalistic notions of what it means to belong in the political community. For Citizens UK these projects focus on joint concerns about real needs, fostering relationships and solidarity in the process. The IAC, meanwhile, usefully engaged citizens' concerns by listening to them, and validating many, while pushing back against others. It furthermore encouraged greater engagement of the communities where asylum seekers settle. While such commissions are too expensive to repeat often, the campaign that it sparked and other collective power-building activities are not. As citizens participate in these, Cox believes that their frustrations towards others diminish. Citizens UK takes seriously Dunn's (1996: 158-159) conviction that these frustrations are in fact 'a cry of pain […] linked not to power but to impotence.'

Chapter conclusion

CSS and Citizens UK use innovative forms of asylum advocacy that boil down to two broader themes of engagement. First, they challenge misgivings about the neglected entitlements of citizens within the same, citizen-centric frame of reference. That is to say, rather than arguing about asylum seekers' rights they challenge notions of what a citizen *ought* to be. CSS focuses on a hospitable notion of citizen identity; Citizens UK, by virtue of its name and membership, redefines who is 'in' and who is 'out'; and the IAC pushed back against respondents in its public consultation concerning how insiders should treat outsiders. These initiatives, I propose, can answer Goodhart's exhortation to find a new language for addressing asylum anxieties 'that transcends the thin and abstract language of universal rights on the one hand and the defensive, nativist language of group identity on the other' (Goodhart 2004).

Second, both organisations come alongside citizens by listening to their complaints, acknowledging their insecurity and making their involvement in activities a priority. The understanding is that through citizens' growing solidarity with asylum seekers and, from the IAC's perspective, their growing sense that they essentially matter, some resentment towards asylum seekers will be dispelled. Feeling that one matters no doubt also depends on the community's achievements. For example, through its victories the Living Wage Campaign (Citizens UK 2010e) helps reduce citizens' sense of need and grow their sense of power. If neither result was attained then perhaps citizens' frustrations would be channelled elsewhere again. But as long as CSS and Citizens UK initiate inclusive and effective campaigns and movements, where citizens and asylum seekers work together to address common needs or challenges in their lives, they offer a compelling model of how mainstream asylum advocacy organisations could better engage citizens' grievances.

4   Conclusion

UK citizens' complaints of being insufficiently prioritised over asylum seekers build on real feelings of neglect. Asylum advocacy in the UK needs to take these complaints more seriously. This is not because the citizen's complaint is necessarily more valid than the asylum seeker's complaint. Rather, a variety of moral theorists believe that, if enough citizens feel neglected, then their resulting pessimism can have strong, negative implications for human safety and wellbeing. Where the threat is severe enough, they would justify even stronger immigration restrictions – a view that is circulating in UK immigration discourse.

More constructive engagement with citizens' perspectives can help to reduce their sense of neglect and the threat of harsher asylum policies. Using the RC as an illustration, I have argued that such engagement is largely absent from mainstream asylum advocacy, with small-scale exceptions. I have pointed to CSS and Citizens UK as examples of organisations where stronger engagement initiatives can be found and from which others might learn.

I believe that there is much scope for creativity in the area of engagement. The examples I have evaluated suggest that initiatives building community around a common cause or concern of both citizens and asylum seekers have significant mileage. Initiatives like the IAC, which listen to individual grievances, can be effective tools for engaging citizens' perspectives, but cannot be regularly repeated due to their costliness.[10] Fostering new kinds of community around a common vision for change is a more sustainable initiative. The thriving City of Sanctuary movement, which runs on a shoestring, is testament to this.

The examples of CSS and Citizens UK show that there is scope for meeting some of the needs of citizens and asylum seekers simultaneously. These needs are not at odds with each other to the extent that most asylum advocacy strategies suggest. When citizens have a sense that they matter, they are far more accommodating towards asylum seekers. Goodhart (2004) has argued that

> *it is the task of a realistic liberalism to strive for a definition of community that is wide enough to include people from many different backgrounds, without being so wide as to become meaningless.*

Asylum advocacy should respond by striving for a community that is ever more meaningful and thereby ever more inclusive.

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[10] Who is Your Neighbour? in South Yorkshire is another example of a project that directly engages the complaints of hostile citizens 'by providing safe spaces for dialogue around racism and faith based prejudice' (Together for Regeneration 2011). Again, however, the project is costly for the number of people that it engages.

5   References

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