

The Foundation Review

Volume 7
Issue 3 *Place-Based Philanthropy- Open Access*

10-2015

Editorial

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Recommended Citation

Brady, S. (2015). Editorial. *The Foundation Review*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1261>

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EDITORIAL

DEAR READERS



The research is clear: place matters. Where a person is born and lives has an impact on many life outcomes and not always for the better. In response, funders in recent decades have used the strategy of place-based initiatives to bring much needed resources into communities. These initiatives can create challenges to the local ecosystem and power dynamics of the communities they are meant to support. The recent resurgence of interest in place-based grantmaking efforts has highlighted the need to understand best practices and lessons learned to answer the challenges and complex dynamics that such initiatives can create.

In response, we at the Aspen Forum for Community Solutions in partnership with the Neighborhood Funders Group convened over 100 leaders in the field for *Toward a Better Place: A Conversation about Promising Practices in Place-Based Philanthropy*. At this convening, representatives from foundations with decades of experience with investing in place shared success, failures, pitfalls and advice. Some of the lessons shared included that funders need to address issues of power, equity and trust while understanding the local change ecosystem. Also, when investing in place funders need to make a shift from grant-maker to change-maker and learn to be open to different pathways to success. This work should be approached with a humble nimbleness that does not presume that the funder has all the answers, be willing to invest in good work that may already be happening in the community and coordinate with other funders who may be working in the same place. The key is that success in place is rooted in relationship and trust. This takes time and funders must be willing to make a long-term commitment that resources the work of building relationships.

This issue on Place-based Philanthropy grew out of a conversation at the *Toward a Better Place* convening. We are pleased to co-edit the issue and be a part of the process of bringing it to conclusion. It contains articles written by field leaders who are invested in transforming communities and building infrastructure that allows people and places to flourish and thrive. Contents include:

Castillo and Titus's article describes the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovations' use of the principle of "Resident Ownership of Neighborhood Change" to partner with residents to transform an underserved neighborhood in San Diego into a LEED-certified neighborhood and vibrant cultural destination.

Easterling and Milesen offer a case study of the work of the Encourage Community Foundation to highlight the opportunities and considerations for foundations as they deal with the challenge of shifting the culture of a community in crisis without destroying the community's autonomy.

Greco, Grieve, and Goldstein share the results of the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation's evaluation of the impact and influence of the Foundation's grantmaking in communities over a 10 year period from 2003 to 2013.

Aronson examines ways that a prize can be a powerful tool for social change, and outlines recommendations for funders considering this mechanism to enhance their impact. She uses the Boston Foundation's leveraging of Collaborate Boston to support interorganizational and cross-sector collaboration as an example.

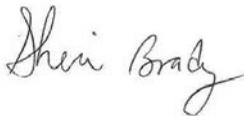
Kilmurray's article considers participative, place-based philanthropy in contested communities drawing on the work of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and the Dalia Association in Palestine.

Philpart and Bell's article highlights a framework for community change that is emerging from efforts focused on boys and men of color.

Vega provides a book review of David Peter Stroh's *Systems Thinking for Social Change*, which aims to remind the sector that in our efforts to do good we often get so caught up in the immediacy of finding a solution that we misunderstand or put off the need for long-lasting systemic and structural change.

Each of these articles demonstrates the importance of long-term investment in place that allows the people in the place to be active participants in the transformation of their community. Thank you to the authors and the subjects of these articles for their efforts and for taking the time to share with us their lessons and experiences.

Regards,



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