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The flagship of Alliance Publishing Trust is this magazine, our quarterly print publication dedicated to the pursuit of independent coverage of philanthropy worldwide. You read it for opinion and analysis of trends and developments in the sector, interviews with leading philanthropists and foundations, and of course our in-depth special feature. Our mission to produce high quality and independent coverage of philanthropy is as strong as ever because we’ve changed the design and format of the magazine to make the content more accessible and easier to navigate. Many of you have asked for these changes under way. We hope you enjoy the new view.

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Charles Keidan
Editor, Alliance.
charles@alliancemagazine.org

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Jonah Wittkmapper, Nexus

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Alliance Editor
Charles Keidan

Editorial
New look philanthropy media

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Opinion & analysis

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Philanthropy and the media need each other. Working together can really make a difference in realizing our missions, writes Miguel Castro of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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A healthy democracy needs independent and trustworthy information. This is in dire peril. Philanthropy must help, write Bruno Sissors of Stanford University and Patrice Schneider from the Media Development Investment Fund.

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Special feature

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While philanthropic funding for journalism is growing, most of it comes from, and goes to, the US, reports Eric Karstens, grant consultant for the European Journalism Centre and other clients.

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The death and re-birth of journalism? In Latin America, it’s a bit more complicated, reports Gustavo Gorriti, editor of Di-Reporteros in Peru.

50 Time to rethink philanthropy journalism in East Africa

Anthony Watuba and Mandli Njoba of Hivos Hub East Africa argue that philanthropists need to invest in the journalistic ecosystem.

56 The opportunities and limits of foundation-funded journalism

Journalists should embrace philanthropy but proceed with caution, warns Barbara Hans, Spiegel Online.

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Rachel White discussed how philanthropic support is not just a lifeline for news outlets, it can open up new possibilities.

59 The fight against ‘fake news’?

Helping to re-establish trust in journalism is essential if its audience is to be retained. Jessica Clark of Media Impact Funders discusses what philanthropy is doing to help.

60 A Conversation about fake news that we need to have

How can you rely on funders, but guard against interference? The Conversation has a way to make it work, writes Misha Ketchell.

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Philanthropy needs scrutiny. Enlightened foundations should fund our sector’s media, urges Charles Keidan.
Letters

The September issue of Alliance magazine focused on diversity – or rather the lack of it – within philanthropic organizations, and contained some bold and provocative proposals. Our readers comment on the issues raised.

I congratulate Alliance for bringing even more global attention to these issues around diversity in philanthropy.

In this unprecedented political climate where the most basic rights are under threat, philanthropic professionals and institutions in the US must stand in solidarity with immigrants, the LGBTQI community, people of colour, women, people with disabilities and all those who intersect with these identities. For philanthropy, this means we must collectively advocate for equity in every corner of society. Equity in philanthropy is the investment of social and financial resources in policies, practices and actions that produce equitable access, power and outcomes for all communities. To move toward philanthropic equity, we invite you to shift your practice and embed equity into your work.

• Shift your investments to unrestricted resources in underinvested communities, bolstering the power of those communities to make self-directed social change.

The momentum for philanthropic equity is building. We saw this demonstrated at the recent CHANGE Philanthropy’s 2017 Unity Summit, in New Orleans, Louisiana, which, with over 700 participants, was the largest and most diverse convening of progressive funders in philanthropic history. More philanthropy-serving organizations are exploring equity in their programming, including partners like Grantmakers in the Arts, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, United Philanthropy Forum and Peak Grantmaking. All these organizations, and many more, are examining how their institutions continue the equity journey, internally and externally.

Carly Hare
Coalition catalyst, CHANGE Philanthropy

Now is the time to build a movement for philanthropic equity

Six finalists will be featured in a special Alliance supplement and funded to attend a global philanthropy conference in 2018. The winner will receive an additional £5,000 to use at their discretion.

Go to alliancemagazine.org/olga-alexeeva-memorial-prize to find out more and make your nominations.

Deadline for nominations is 19th December 2017!

Do you know an individual who has demonstrated remarkable leadership, creativity and results in developing philanthropy for progressive social change in an emerging market country or countries?

The prize is generously supported by:
Move beyond diversity – reframe power

We at National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) appreciated Alliance’s September 2017 issue highlighting the fact that communities served are not reflected in grantmaking programme staffs. The systemic inequities that perpetuate barriers to opportunities for communities of colour is not a new problem for US philanthropy, but we’re having more explicit conversations about why foundations haven’t been able to effectively address this issue in the face of a new administration where white nationalism has resurfaced in our political consciousness. We’ve written about this in response to the Charlottesville, VA attack.

But it’s important to note that beyond demographic data alignment between foundation personnel and the communities served, we need to shift the power dynamic between funder and grantee to promote meaningful change. This means funders must be intentional in building trust by sharing power and giving up control – to better listen and move away from a paternalistic approach in funding complex problems. This may require dismantling how decision-making works and moving it away from the ivory tower offices of a foundation.

At NCRP, we are writing a guide for funders to go beyond the diversity issue in grantmaking by re framing power. There are three pillars to do this: building power within communities through community organizing and advocacy funding; sharing power with community stakeholders to promote community-driven change; and finally wielding power through public leadership strategies that leverage a foundation’s role in advancing social justice movements. This includes recommending interventions to self-assess how we can go beyond inviting the usual suspects to solve a complex community issue. These strategies may seem straightforward and simple, but entrenched in the cultural norms set by foundations misaligned with community needs, they become extraordinarily difficult to execute well. We look forward to learning more from our international partners on this, and hope we can make better progress on equity grantmaking for social change than we have so far.

Jennifer Choi
Vice president and chief content officer, NCRP

Multiplying value, not dividing it

When I heard that September’s issue of Alliance magazine would spearhead the topic of diversity, to say I was pleased would be an understatement. But it was Bharat Mehta’s article ‘The glass ceiling: cracked but not dismantled’ and his words about the need to share power that struck a chord for me.

For the third sector, the goal is not to make a profit. We as an industry are driven by our moral compass and by making an impact in the world. Unlike other industries, the motivation behind diversity or hitting diversity metrics isn’t making money. It’s done because it is the moral thing to do.

However, according to research by Inclusive Boards – which found the largest charities have a smaller proportion of people from ethnic minorities on their boards than FTSE 100 companies – the third sector is still behind in terms of diversity. Given the underlying motivation for the industry as a whole, shirking capitalist ideals feeds into what Mehta was saying about sharing the power at the top, rather than wielding it.

Charities and social enterprises are traditionally risk-averse, which has contributed to the lack of diversity. Mehta’s article outlined concerns regarding the hiring process, and how we as a sector pluck from circles we know and use headhunters similar to ourselves. But if we did venture outside of comfort zones and in the process create safe spaces for healthy critique and feedback, we can begin to push forward and evolve.

Whether that takes the form of the measures suggested by Mehta – such as hiring individuals with direct experience with the issues we are combating or anonymous CVs – I believe that by approaching issues from the view of a shared economy, one in which both wealth and value are shared, we can address the core motivations of the sector and unlock channels to promote diversity. Only by tapping into experiences at every level and background will we multiply value, rather than dividing it.

Mike Buonaiuto
Executive director and founder, Shape History

... if we did venture outside of comfort zones and in the process create safe spaces for healthy critique and feedback, we can begin to push forward and evolve.
George Soros transfers $18 billion to Open Society Foundations

Hedge fund manager and philanthropist George Soros has given $18 billion to his Open Society Foundations, one of the largest transfers of wealth ever made by a private donor to a single foundation. It makes Open Society the second biggest philanthropic organization in the US, after the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Founded by Soros more than 30 years ago, Open Society promotes democracy and human rights in more than 120 countries. www.opensocietyfoundations.org

Brazilian Philanthropy Forum

More than 180 participants attended the Brazilian Philanthropy Forum in São Paulo. Organized by the Institute for the Development of Social Investment (IDIS), it brought together a diverse group of large companies, civil society organizations and wealthy families to discuss how to achieve sustainable development in Brazil. Discussions focused on questions such as ‘how to evaluate success in addressing complex social issues’. http://idis.org.br/forum/en

Extra grants help to expand work of Andes Amazon Fund

Two new grants will enable the Andes Amazon Fund (AAF) to work to conserve areas of land along the Amazon in Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, as well as to promote Peru’s national parks system and support local civil society organizations as they establish new groups of conservation advocates at both local and national levels. The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation has pledged a $5 million dollar grant to support biodiversity and conservation of endemic species. The gift was announced alongside an additional $10 million grant from the Wyss Foundation. www.andesamazonfund.org

DAFNE appoints new executive director

Max von Abendroth has taken up his new role as executive director of DAFNE (Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe). Based in Brussels, his appointment will allow DAFNE to strengthen strategic and mutually supportive relationships and enhance ‘the effectiveness of advocacy work for the foundation sector across Europe’, according to DAFNE chair Felix Oldenburg, CEO of the Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen in Germany. http://tinyurl.com/MA-DAFNE

New report from EVPA

EVPA has launched a new report: Financing for social impact – the key role of tailored financing and hybrid finance. It follows a nine-month study by EVPA Knowledge Centre working with a group of over 30 experts. The research looks at how funding can be shaped to meet the financial needs of the social purpose organizations (SPOs) and how actors collaborate in the venture philanthropy/social impact space to bring more resources to SPOs. https://tinyurl.com/EVPA-Impact

Turkey Giving Circles on the rise

The fifth giving circle organized by the Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV) in October saw 90 donors pledge €11,000. Three CSOs presented their projects to win the funding, including a plan to increase the number of free guide dogs available to visually impaired individuals, a series of workshops with disadvantaged children on human rights, gender equality and inclusion, and encouraging the production of electricity using renewable resources.

Giving circles are a relatively new concept in Turkey, and it remains to be seen if donors and CSOs can build a long-term relationship. http://tinyurl.com/TurkishGC

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Russian community foundation roundtable

CAF-Russia organized a round table event in London in September to discuss how the emergence of Russian community foundations has impacted the development of civil society, with local movements spreading across the nation. The first Russian community foundation was set up in 1998, and community foundations have since expanded out of established industrial centres into provincial areas. http://tinyurl.com/RussianCF

Global updates
Leading Saudi philanthropist arrested on corruption charges

A new anti-corruption body headed by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia has detained the founder of the Alwaleed Philanthropies, Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, the BBC has reported.

Among the richest men in the world, Alwaleed is the owner of Kingdom Holding, one of Saudi Arabia’s most important investment firms with stakes in companies including Twitter, Citigroup, Lyft, and the Four Seasons hotel chain. The Alwaleed Philanthropies aims to ‘ensure dignity and opportunity, regardless of culture, faith or location’ with emphasis on educating and protecting children, building social entrepreneurship and fighting disease. It also strives to empower women and youth. In 2016, Alwaleed became the first Muslim Arab to join the Gates-Buffett Giving Pledge, according to the foundation’s website. On signing the pledge, Alwaleed stated: ‘It is our duty as philanthropists to harness the very best of human nature... to make the biggest possible difference in people’s lives.’

Amidst corruption allegations, Attorney General Sheikh Saud al-Mojeb said the status of detainees would not influence ‘the firm and fair application of justice’. It is currently unclear what this means for Saudi Arabian philanthropy or for Alwaleed bin Talal.

Philanthropy-backed campaign tackles neglected diseases in Zimbabwe

The END Fund, a collaboration of global philanthropists dedicated to the treatment and prevention of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) that affect more than 1.5 billion people worldwide, has partnered with Econet Wireless, Higherlife Foundation, and the Zimbabwean Ministry of Health and Child Care. Millions of people in Zimbabwe received text messages regarding ongoing mass drug administration programmes for NTDs. On 30 October, the Ministry of Health and Child Care launched a new campaign to treat people with one or more NTDs. These mass drug administration campaigns are used to provide treatment to large populations at risk. More than seven million people have been targeted for treatment in 2017.

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince backs global drive to beat polio

The crown prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahayan, has pledged $30 million to help finish the job of eradicating the polio virus. An estimated $1.5 billion is needed to eradicate the disease completely. Major pledges also announced include $450 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, $75 million and $55 million from the governments of Canada and Japan respectively, $61.4 million from the European Union and £25 million from Bloomberg Philanthropies. The virus remains endemic only in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria, but poses a threat to other developing countries with poor access to sanitation and vaccines. This new push will go towards vaccination efforts, disease surveillance, and stopping the spread of the virus.

Beijing philanthropist commits $1.5 billion to conservation

Chinese philanthropist He Qiaonv has announced the largest-ever philanthropic commitment to wildlife conservation.

Her pledge, totalling $1.5 billion over seven years, will go towards establishing and maintaining wildlife reserves and conservation parks in partnership with the Chinese government. It will also involve a $20 million partnership with Panthera, a leading international wildcat conservation organization. The gift reflects a renewed commitment to wildlife restoration and conservation efforts among China’s philanthropists. It also reflects policy changes that are increasing public-private partnerships and charitable giving in China.

International Funders for Indigenous Peoples

International Funders for Indigenous Peoples held its Pacific Hui in Otaki in New Zealand’s North Island.

The Hui, a Māori word for a gathering, brought together indigenous advocates and philanthropists from the Pacific and beyond. Their focus was to foster collaborative partnerships between indigenous advocates and environmental sustainability and healthy food systems.

‘Philanthropy needs to work with Indigenous Peoples, not do to Indigenous Peoples,’ said Chelsea Grootveld, a Māori board member of the J R McKenzie Trust, one of the oldest philanthropic entities in NZ. The trust has evolved from having no Māori board members to four today.

Indian giving rising, but not to social justice causes

Philanthropy is increasing in India, especially among young middle-class people. On the other hand, while social change is taking place in the country, it’s more often despite than because of philanthropy. These are two of the most striking findings of a report published by Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJIP) in association with WINGS, Alliance and the Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy at Ashoka University.

The study finds that ‘safe sectors’, with education prime among them, attract the bulk of donations from both institutions and individuals. Perhaps surprisingly, despite the 2014 CSR Act, the relative share of corporate contributions fell to 15 per cent in 2016 from 30 per cent in 2011, while individual donations have seen a six-fold rise in the same period.

Asian and the Pacific

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Philanthropy Thinker – Keeping faith with the promise of a private foundation
Lisa Jordan, senior philanthropic executive, assesses the ways in which foundations can make their capital count and the complications of measuring impact.

Philanthropy Thinker – Latin America: sharing philanthropy, not hoarding wealth
Florencia Roitstein, co-founder and director of Ellas: Women & Philanthropy, analyses why Latin American philanthropy is falling short and why the concept of ‘sharing philanthropy’ is urgently needed.

Interview: Michaela Wintrich
Michaela Wintrich of the Hamburg-based Hans Weisser Stiftung talks to Charles Keidan about her foundation’s work with refugees.

Interview: Lenka Setkova
Alliance Editor Charles Keidan sits down with Lenka Setkova, director and philanthropy adviser at the Coutts Institute, to discuss the Institute’s work and approach to mark the tenth edition of Coutts’ flagship Million Pound Donors Report.

Alliance Audio: The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals
Charles Keidan hosts a discussion with Dr Joanna Macrae, director of European partnerships at GiveDirectly; Dilhani Wijeyesekera, international development consultant at Comic Relief; and Ben Morton Wright, president and group CEO of Global Philanthropic, about philanthropy’s involvement with international development and the SDGs.

Latest from Alliance highlights

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- Rucha Chitnis, International Funders for Indigenous Peoples
  Goodbye crown meddling; hello Māori decolonizing development

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  Term limits are great for foundations

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Alliance Audio: The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals

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Foundation investments in arms and tobacco: Laura Starrk and Tim Ogden ask how much good must foundation programmes do to justify investments in companies whose products cause harm?

Adessium is an endowed foundation in the Netherlands, established in 2005 by commodities trader Gerard van Vliet and his family. Today, it spends approximately €18 million annually on programmes including marine conservation and efforts to promote open and democratic societies.

It is one of the ‘dark horses’ of European philanthropy, avoiding attention and declining all requests to be interviewed. Gerard’s interview with Alliance magazine is his first for any publication.

Together with his son, Rogier van Vliet, and managing director, Rogier van der Weerd, he talked to Alliance editor, Charles Keidan, about how Adessium came into being and, a decade on, where this remarkable philanthropic journey has taken them.

Gerard van Vliet (GvV) is founder, Rogier van Vliet (RvV) is chair, and Rogier van der Weerd (RvdW) is managing director of the Adessium Foundation.

I understand your business success was in asset management but what was the business?
GvV: My background started in cash commodity trading, in the grain and oil seeds sector. In 1987 I initiated a Commodity Trading Advisor company (CTA) which developed into quite a successful business. In 2002 I sold this company.

And that was the basis for the foundation?
GvV: When we decided as a family to sell, we realized that we would have a lot of extra money to manage and why would we want to do that when we already had more than enough? So it was a philosophical decision, and we thought ‘why don’t we use it – not for ourselves but to try to convert it into something positive for the community and the world in which we live?’.

Did running a very successful business together influence your thinking about how your philanthropic work would develop?
RvV: Keep your options open! is a typical trader way of thinking and that’s what we did in the early stages while we were trying to figure out what the foundation was going to become. It was difficult and good at the same time. You need a focus to give you direction, but on the other hand keeping our options open gave us the tools to look outside the box and try to understand what the landscape looks like. There are similarities between asset...

Deep Philanthropy
Interview:
Adessium Foundation
I'm very proud that we've managed to get to a point where – although we are still relatively young – we are now an established and relevant player, making optimal responsible use of the independence and degrees of freedom you have as a foundation.

And how did you decide those questions?

RvV: For me, the basic question is: what is philanthropy about? My answer is improving the quality of life, which is hard to mathematically ground. So helping two people with dogs might be as valuable as helping 200 kids in Africa. In the end, it's a mathematical ground. So helping two people with dogs might be as valuable as helping 200 kids in Africa. In the end, it's a combination of numbers and judging the intention. And the intention is the right thing, not the numbers.

GvV: It's crafting, crafting, crafting and of course a lot of discussions between us, the professional team and the outside world of well-intended initiatives and good stories. For me, the basic question is: what is philanthropy about? My answer is improving the quality of life, which is hard to mathematically ground. So helping two people with dogs might be as valuable as helping 200 kids in Africa. In the end, it's a combination of numbers and judging the intention. And the intention is the right thing, not the numbers.

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Two areas where you are relevant right now is ocean conservation and the environment, which is suffering degradation, and your work on public interest journalism. How did your interest in those areas come about and what impact does Adessium hope to have?

RvV: We always take the humble view that although it’s a lot of money, the yearly budget is still small considering what you would really need to make big changes. But I think the most important thing to do is to try to understand the root cause of the issue and how we can change it. You can clean up a beach for example, which is very visible, but maybe, say, waste management in some countries is really badly organized, or harmful use of plastics is not addressed by good policy – these are really the root causes of waste ending up in oceans.

So would you try then to influence governments and policies?

RvV: Yes, exactly. You need to get the right drivers for change. Sometimes it is governments, sometimes it is people and behaviour. You try to find the right organizations in the right position to press for change.

RvdW: To me, what’s very important is the willingness to be curious and to be open to looking for systemic solutions. Often, these are high-risk, high-impact initiatives. We have seen some tremendous successes over the past ten years, but we certainly have also supported initiatives that have failed. I think you have to accept that you can’t have a 100 per cent success rate. If you do, you may not be pushing hard enough for meaningful change.

Take the example of ocean conservation. It became clear to us when we were researching ocean governance that the way international waters are governed is highly problematic, but it’s also extremely difficult to improve given the complexity of international conventions and the fragmented attention for oceans in the UN system. An impulse was needed to create momentum for change. In collaboration with others – the Pew Charitable Trusts, Oak Foundation and others – we founded a Global Ocean Commission, as an independent body that could direct attention to the issue and suggest priority steps to be taken to improve the situation. Years later, we can look back and say that this effort contributed to the fact that there now is a Sustainable Development Goal on the Ocean (SDG 14). And there are negotiations presently going on at the UN to make it possible to protect certain critical areas beyond national jurisdiction. I agree we need to be humble, and we need to acknowledge the strong effort of many other organizations, but I think that joint and concerted effort made a real difference.

GvV: An ongoing concern is, or should be, are we addressing the most important needs of the society we live in, or are we doing hobby projects? It’s not cut in stone that what we are doing now we should be doing in ten years’ time. We don’t aspire to be an advocacy or campaigning group ourselves and prefer to take a constructive approach. We do not want to associate ourselves with people throwing tomatoes and stones, but with people who analyse problems, find a root cause, and look at ways we could contribute to solving them.

To take the example of ocean conservation.

GvV: Very early on, in 2008, we saw the potential of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ). We began to support it but we have no say about the content. A very important element of a free democratic society is that we are not misled with information. As continental Europeans, we have the feeling that the UK was misled on the question of Brexit, and it wasn’t a two-sided debate. But you cannot push the genie back in the bottle.

RvdW: I think this topic is also very defining of who we are as a foundation. It took quite some faith and commitment to fund ICIJ. The key concept of the programme is to enable a fair, well-informed and multi-sided process to get to legitimate democratic decisions. And of course, it connects very logically with the notion of funding investigative journalism.

How did your investigative journalism work come about?

GvV: We do our due diligence, invest in journalistic integrity and method, etc. Not all philanthropists may be acting in this way. We require journalism organizations to protect their editorial independence contractually. We set up a fairly high bar for journalism to try to make clear the different forms and intentions behind philanthropy.

Do you think that media scrutiny should also be applied to philanthropy because philanthropists are increasingly important players in public life?

RvV: What we are trying to achieve basically is greater public good. I think it is fine if that is challenged now and then, because if you become too big or institutionalized, there is always the possibility of misuse of power.

RvdW: I think it’s inevitable and I think it’s a good thing. We experience this also given that we’re a relatively influential player in funding civil society organizations in Brussels or media and journalism organizations. We’re sometimes asked: ‘why do you do that?’ There is a feeling that there must be a hidden agenda. And it’s quite interesting that it can be hard to get the message across that the intention behind it is to strengthen due democratic process, without pushing particular private or personal interests. But you need to be crystal clear about this, and translate that principle into all aspects of how you operate. For instance, we require journalism organizations to protect their editorial independence contractually. We select groups based on the highest standards of journalistic integrity and method, etc.

GvV: In the end, everything we support is without self-interest and, for me, that is what philanthropy should be.

Not all philanthropists may be acting on your broad notion of the public good, they may have a more specific viewpoint of the world.

RvdW: That’s why I think it’s a good thing for journalism to try to make clear the different forms and intentions behind philanthropy.
You’ve laid the foundations of very significant philanthropy in ocean conservation and public interest journalism, you’ve become more visible, you’ve got more clarity about what you’re doing – where does that take you in the next ten years?

GvV: It’s like in investments – looking ahead one month is difficult, but ten years is impossible. But my wish is that we stay professional and relevant. Some of what we consider relevant today may also be relevant in ten years’ time, but there will be other things and there should always be room for doubt. Sometimes I wonder about our focus. We are helping combat plastic pollution which is actually one of the most important problems of the world – shouldn’t we focus on it entirely? How can we be most effective, most relevant and really translate the grants we are giving into a benefit for the world?

Do you also think about that not just in terms of where you give your money but how much you give? Do you think about spending down? Or would that prevent you from being able to deal with long-term problems?

RvdW: On the one hand, I totally agree that spending down is a very interesting way of putting your money into society, but then, it’s been so difficult for us over the last ten to 15 years to create a position where we know who we are and what we are trying to do, it seems a shame to let that die and if you are able to be relevant in the years to come, then that is a great achievement.

GvV: Maybe the needs that people have now are more important than the needs they will have in the future. It’s too philosophical to come to a conclusion.

Some see it as a question of power – you have been able to accumulate wealth and power and philanthropy is about redistributing that wealth and power to the society that enabled it in the first place?

GvV: The challenge is to keep all the interests aligned and not create a little kingdom through the foundation. Checks and balances remain important, because in the end an endowment is to be protected, invested and spent as wisely as possible. You have to build into the structure the right incentives but you are dependent on those who follow you to remain faithful to the idea.

RvdW: I don’t think an institution should ever be kept going for its own sake. But what has been created is a vehicle that has unique characteristics, one of which is independence. This is critical because it allows us to take risks, to go against the current, and that’s going to be invaluable indefinitely, to me. I’ve no idea where we’ll be in ten years, but I very much agree with your answer: we need to avoid the trap of complacency, continue to push the envelope and ensure we remain relevant.

GvV: For a family involved in philanthropy, there is also the emotion attached to giving. We have purposely kept that at some distance, but it’s satisfying if you read from time to time what the team is doing, and you can say ‘we initiated that’ and see progress here and there, even though it takes a while sometimes to see it. It feels good and what you need in life, to continue what you’re doing, is confirmation now and then that what you’re doing feels good.
A quiet revolution is under way in philanthropy. There is growth in unexpected places, a proliferation of new organizational forms, increased scepticism about the Anglo-American model, and a fine balance between large opportunities and unprecedented threats. These trends point in one direction: the need for a new narrative for philanthropy.

The flowering of philanthropy

In the 2017 Barry Gaberman Lecture, given at each WINGS Forum, Atallah Kuttab described the ‘flowering’ of philanthropy. He noted the ‘revival and new models evolving in many regions’ with ‘social businesses, crowdfunding, and community philanthropy’ coming to the fore, together with ‘better understanding of local philanthropy including individual, family and corporate philanthropy’, and innovation in ‘faith-based funding like sadak or zakat whether in Indonesia or many Arab countries’.

This flowering is producing new organizational forms. The key text here is Lester Salamon’s New frontiers of philanthropy. Salamon points to ‘a massive explosion in the instruments and institutions being deployed to mobilize private resources. Where earlier such support was limited to charitable gifts, a bewildering array of new instruments and institutions has surfaced – loans, loan guarantees, private equity, barter arrangements, social stock exchanges, bonds, secondary markets, investment funds, and many more’. This adds to the staple agencies of philanthropy (including foundations, giving circles, community funds and giving days).

At the same time, there is growing hybridity among traditional philanthropic institutions. We are seeing many different types that don’t fit established categories. Although the number of foundations continues to grow worldwide, the European Foundation Centre (EFC) now talks about ‘institutional philanthropy’ rather than ‘foundations’ because of the irregular nature of the field. Moreover, since the cultural norms of the US institutions do not apply in Europe, the EFC has adopted an empirical approach to studying the field using a ‘spectrum of philanthropy’. This involves looking at institutional philanthropy through the lens of six variables: public good, resources, use of assets, self-governance, practices and behaviours, and relevance.

Cultural adaptations

The desire to go beyond US models is not confined to Europe. In Reframing African philanthropy, Oksana Oracheva is general director of Vladimir Potanin Foundation.

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‘A quiet revolution is under way in philanthropy. There is growth in unexpected places, a proliferation of new organizational forms, increased scepticism about the Anglo-American model, and a fine balance between large opportunities and unprecedented threats. These trends point in one direction: the need for a new narrative for philanthropy.’

Does philanthropy need a new story?

The Anglo-American language of philanthropy can’t fully express the changing face of the sector.

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Does philanthropy need a new story? Oksana Oracheva is general director of Vladimir Potanin Foundation. Barry Knight is adviser to the Global Fund for Community Foundations.

A quiet revolution is under way in philanthropy. There is growth in unexpected places, a proliferation of new organizational forms, increased scepticism about the Anglo-American model, and a fine balance between large opportunities and unprecedented threats. These trends point in one direction: the need for a new narrative for philanthropy.

Try the following experiment. Type any search term containing ‘philanthropy’ into your search engine. The chances are that the first 20 results will come from Britain or America. This is because the language of philanthropy is dominated by an Anglo-American paradigm. However, global trends suggest that this is set to change and, for many people, it is high time. A universal finding from a review of the Olga Alexeeva Prize by the Vladimir Potanin Foundation is that the prize has stimulated a new narrative of philanthropy based on the experience of pioneers in emerging market economies. There is a wealth of new approaches that could change the way that we think about philanthropy.

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Cultural adaptations

The desire to go beyond US models is not confined to Europe. In Reframing African philanthropy, Halima Mahomed notes that the ‘traditional narrative on philanthropy is that the rich give to the poor, that it happens primarily through formal institutions, that it is equated with money and that the poor are passive recipients’. The reality of Africa, she says, ‘is very different, but in the absence of an organized philanthropy voice, this Anglo-American narrative was transferred and applied to how we understand philanthropy on the African continent’. There is a rich tradition of what philanthropy writer and researcher Alan Fowler has called ‘gifting’ based on cultural traditions such as ubuntu. Africans are now developing a narrative of philanthropy that they can call their own. At the 20th anniversary celebration of Kenya Community Development Foundation, chief executive Janet Mawiyoo called for a new people-led paradigm called a
Philanthropy is no longer the ‘durable development’ to rid Africa of a triad of aid, charity, and corruption that have combined to keep sub-Saharan Africa lagging behind most of the world.

The desire to move beyond northern definitions of philanthropy is also evident in other places. A study of philanthropy in India by Caroline Hartnell for Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJP) shows that growing among the middle class. Conventional notions of ‘donor’ and ‘beneficiary’ are being challenged with the idea that ‘no-one is too poor to give and no-one too rich to receive’. The messages coming from the global south call for a new behavior.

The #ShiftThePower campaign launched at the Johannesburg relaunch on Community Philanthropy in December 2016.

We need a new story. These examples, together with research under way at WINGS, suggest that philanthropy needs a new story. How do we find a framework for understanding this story? This is a difficult question both because of the lack of good data about philanthropy in many parts of the world and the complexity of what is occurring. Given the complexity, we cannot look in one place for the answers. Studying the behaviour of the foundation is too limiting because it is just one form among many and the variation between foundations is too great to yield meaningful conclusions. The giving habits of the rich are no guide either, because living donors apply a variety of approaches and instruments. The middle classes are increasingly involved, and the rise of community philanthropy is breaking down the stereotypes about giving among the poor. In addition, we need to be aware of geopolitical trends that affect the story of how philanthropy is organized within individual countries.

The so-called ‘closing space’ for civil society is forcing us to look at the role of philanthropy in providing external aid in those societies where the governments increasingly regard foreign action with suspicion. However, the term ‘closing space’ may be a misnomer since, as EFC chief executive Gerry Salole pointed out at the 2017 Grantmakers’ East Forum, legal restrictions are forcing philanthropy to be more creative about new forms and instruments. Such creativity may in the end lead to ‘opening space’ with a greater emphasis on harnessing the power of philanthropy within countries.

Perhaps the answer lies not in looking for a single story, but rather in searching for multiple narratives based on economic, historical, cultural and technological differences that hang together in a configuration. This complexity means that we need to view philanthropy as part of an ecosystem. This entails seeing individual organizations, actions and behaviour as part of a field that is interconnected, rather than merely the sum of discrete actions. This approach derives from the work of Ross Ashby, an early cyberneticist, who in the 1950s came up with the Law of Requisite Variety. This states that to deal properly with the diversity of problems the world throws at you, you need to have a repertoire of responses that is at least as nuanced as the problems you face. It follows that simple linear or logic models that trace simple philanthropic gifts through to positive social change are insufficient unless there is a full understanding of the context of the gift and the many forces that will affect its use. And yet, much of the current thinking about the value of philanthropy still derives from the ‘Fordist’ organizational models of the last century. Such models involve a top-down structure using command and control processes that produce standardized goods and services for passive beneficiaries. The growing egalitarianism in the field, combined with modern technology, means that people now work through an interconnected web of peer networks in which both funders and fundees are active partners in choosing what is done and delivered. Co-creation has replaced the production line.

New ways of working

To be in tune with the age, philanthropic interventions need to be mutually connected, responsive and adapt. At the same time, organizational arrangements must be transparent and fluid. While values, such as freedom, dignity and solidarity, may be timeless, everything else must be tested and adjusted in different contexts.

The recognition that philanthropy has too little money to solve social and environmental problems and that, instead, a mixed economy of multilateral funders, governments, social entrepreneurs, individual givers and socially-minded business is needed, has created what Judith Rodin, former president of the Rockefeller Foundation, writing in the Huffington Post, called an identity crisis. This perspective not only exposes the limitations of the traditional view of 20th century US philanthropy that private giving is a ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ as well as of traditional power-based relationships between them. A 2017 report by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors Scaling solutions toward shifting systems shows that ‘grantees who work with unrestricted, multi-year grant support and/or significant proportion of the resources they use. This entails not only working towards common goals, and putting together financial and other resources, but also sharing credit for achievements. There are clear signs of this approach gaining traction. Giving Tuesday, for example, is spreading quickly across continents and countries, bringing together diverse partners. In its inaugural year in Russia in 2016, more than 900 partners joined the initiative and organized more than 1500 across the country.

A distinctive contribution

So what is the distinctive contribution of philanthropy in the ecosystem? Again, there is no single answer to this question, but part of it lies in the unique freedoms that philanthropy enjoys compared with other actors. So long as it stays within the law and complies with its charitable objects, the use of private money gives philanthropy a licence to be creative. This means that it can become a partner and not just an aid-giver or service provider in a narrow sense. It can bridge multiple actors, including the state, in working together on complex social issues. Being financially independent and free from the constraints of the public sector, philanthropy can take risks to pilot good ideas, experiment with new models and bring in innovation. That means philanthropic institutions provide not just an aid to those in need but in partnership with those it funds, a means to search for solutions to the underlying complex problems. Philanthropy does not need to have all the answers but can be a spark to find and implement them in a creative way.

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What is philanthropy infrastructure for?

The featured topic of the June 2018 issue of Alliance will be the evolution of philanthropy infrastructure – the organizations underpinning philanthropy worldwide. As the world changes, how can infrastructure organizations help philanthropy navigate and keep pace with that change? Ahead of our infrastructure issue, we talk to a few protagonists in the debate and sketch out the likely ground to be covered.

What will be the effect of digital technology? How will infrastructure respond to the growth of informal giving movements? And in the super-information age, is the old model (of member services and an annual conference) dying?

In the face of it, the news for philanthropy is good. According to a recent CAF report, giving potential is likely to expand prodigiously over the next dozen years, especially in the global south. The Brookings Institute estimates the global middle class may swell by 2.4 billion people globally by 2030 and that their spending could almost double from $34 trillion to $64 trillion over the same period. These developments create huge opportunities for philanthropy, but it remains to be seen how well the field is positioned to exploit them.

Not enough infrastructure where it is needed…

Growth in philanthropy is likely to be focused on emerging economies so this is where infrastructure is most needed, according to the CAF report. In addition to educating donors and advocating for straightforward tax incentives, the report also urges aid agencies exiting a country to aim to leave in place an ‘enabling legal environment… and a philanthropy infrastructure and charity support bodies that can continue this work’. A 2017 report by global philanthropy infrastructure body, WINGS, suggests that infrastructure will have to be built from scratch. In most of the low- and middle-income countries featured in the CAF report, infrastructure is thin on the ground. WINGS also notes that North America absorbs a whopping 80 per cent of current expenditure on infrastructure. It concludes that infrastructure is lacking where it is most needed.

….and roles ill-defined elsewhere

In some places, though, it’s almost superabundant. Is there overlap…

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As infrastructure reaches a crossroads, should it be leading or serving the field?
and internal changes affecting their eye on what’s happening in asking, thinks Salole, is ‘who is supporters of infrastructure are observers think so. What adaptation to it? All three or maps the shape of the change it not be that infrastructure senses nature of the relationship? Should infrastructure will have to adapt and its world. Institutional philanthropy role in development; and increased towards giving domestic actors in emerging markets; the move non-institutional counterpart the even faster growth of its They note both the external and internal changes affecting philanthropy: the rapid growth of institutional philanthropy and the even faster growth of its non-institutional counterpart in emerging markets; the move towards giving domestic actors and private resources a greater role in development; and increased pressure to make a greater impact on the major problems of the world. Institutional philanthropy will have to adapt and its infrastructure will have to adapt with it. Or is this to mis-state the nature of the relationship? Should it not be that infrastructure senses or maps the shape of the change and then leads philanthropy’s adaptation to it? All three observers think so. What supporters of infrastructure are asking, thinks Salole, is ‘who is looking at the trends, who has got their eye on what’s happening in the external environment, what are the dangers and threats to the industry, who is going to help chief executives and boards navigate the next set of issues’?

Chertok and Bellegy agree and note the need for infrastructure organizations to move from ‘service model to leadership/ activist model… We need champions and thought leaders to foresee the common future for the philanthropic space and defend this future from external threats’.

However, this raises the question of the relationship of infrastructure organizations, particularly network organizations, to their members. It’s a complex one. Some support organizations are clearly service providers. It’s their whole raison d’être – consultants, advisers, etc. You pay them to do something and they do it. With membership networks or organizations, it’s less clear-cut. While network organizations do get locked into the idea of service provision to justify members’ dues and their own existence, this is seldom the main reason for joining them and it may well lead down a false trail.

As Salole notes, most infrastructure organizations are paid for by a handful of funders who set store by it. ‘It’s less “you give me this service”, more “I believe in the sector and that it’s important for infrastructure to exist”.’ He thinks it’s dangerous to see funding as paying for a service, since it leads away from the idea that what infrastructure organizations should be providing is ‘vision and creativity, understanding of the sector’.

Reliance on the few ‘believers’ can also exacerbate the problem of identity because, argues Salole, ‘they [infrastructure organizations] know that their survival depends on keeping those foundations happy, which means that they’re not as good at understanding what their role to their members is’. He sees therefore a real need ‘to figure out who is doing what’ and to ‘describe and typologize’ the various infrastructure bodies in terms of their roles – those that are issue-based, ‘trying to build momentum, or that are pioneering particular ways of working like EVPA (European Venture Philanthropy Association)’. Even where infrastructure is scarce, this can be an issue. For example, there are two networks in Africa that are trying to develop at the same time… the African Philanthropy Forum… and the African Philanthropy Network. Is there any attempt externally to understand what the difference is between them, who their members are?”

Does infrastructure have what it takes?
How prominent a role can infrastructure play? ‘There is an expectation that the infrastructure doesn’t become too visible and when it pushes too hard, thinks it’s in charge, tries to command, I think it can get into trouble,’ says Salole. Before there is another question to ask: given that their sources of supply are scarce and it’s a perennial complaint that they are under-resourced, are infrastructure organizations equipped to play that leadership role? Do they have or can they afford to buy the necessary skills? If they were to represent philanthropy in any cross-sector forum, would they have the resources to sustain such a role and be credible in it?

North America absorbs a whopping 80 per cent of current expenditure on infrastructure.

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3. The meeting will take place in Barcelona, from 26-27 March 2018.

Fixed or fluid
Chertok and Bellegy would like to see the adaptation of infrastructure organizations to more informal means of giving and to the increasing convergence of philanthropy with other kinds of social investment. This would mean a corresponding widening of the definition of infrastructure. They suggest, for example, that groups like fundraisers’ associations should be covered by the term. It’s important, they argue, ‘to adopt a view of infrastructure that reflects the growing complexity and interconnectedness of the field… we should learn to think of it as an ecosystem rather than a number of organizations working in silos. Many would agree. But how would that ecosystem function? Would it be a “natural” system that regulates itself, or one that requires oversight, with some forum where the diverse elements of the system could come together to represent their views to each other, in other words, some meta-infrastructure body?”

Behind the digital curve
Stanford visiting scholar and data expert, Lucy Bernholz, draws attention to another looming problem: ‘Philanthropy and civil society are dependent on digital infrastructure in ways that the organizational infrastructure bodies don’t fully appreciate,’ she claims. This dependence allows the corporations who own the digital sphere and the governments who scrutinize it to exercise greater control over civil society. ‘If we don’t take on these issues head-on we will continue to be amazed at the rates of civil society closure and the ways in which that…”
The digitization of data affords greater reach – and to a different audience – and therefore greater potential resources for philanthropy.

is facilitated by the connection to government control... and the norms of a handful of tech giants based in either the US or China."

But there is an opportunity as well as a threat. The digitization of data affords greater reach – and to a different audience – and therefore greater potential resources for philanthropy.

Bernholz sees therefore 'a common need for infrastructure organizations that can advocate for and educate about the need for civil society and philanthropy to understand the constraints of their current - or aspirational - digital environments'.

It's hard to read the tealeaves online. According to Salole, the funders of infrastructure 'are expecting small flexible entities' to help them navigate emerging problems. But the idea of a network without a physical base, which conducts operations largely online and has only a skeleton staff, would be easy to oversell (it should be stressed that most infrastructure organizations are 'lean' to begin with). 'Leanness and virtual organizations can only go so far,' feels Salole. 'In the end, I don’t believe there is a real substitute yet for people having an opportunity to exchange good practice on a face-to-face basis.'

What people like most about EFC, he says, is the Annual General Assembly. 'They develop the peers they can run ideas against, that’s where they find support when they have difficult decisions to make, it’s where they read the tealeaves together and, so far, long-distance data doesn’t substitute for it."

Some questions need to be continually asked because the answer changes. Perhaps the one underlying them all for philanthropy infrastructure is how it can strike a balance between leading and serving philanthropy and whether, at times, there is any distinction between the two. Watch this space.
The worlds of philanthropy and media are colliding. Both sides have their work cut out to promote journalism in the public interest, build new models and restore trust. The wellbeing of civil society will depend on their success.
SPECIAL FEATURE: OVERVIEW

Why are the worlds of philanthropy and the media still so far apart? What could and should be done to bring them together and realize the promise of a reciprocal relationship? In this special feature, we look at the space where these two worlds collide, and what happens as a result. I argue that now, more than ever, philanthropy and the media don’t just need to work more effectively together, they actually need each other to fulfill their respective missions.

Today, the definitions of both philanthropy and media are being stretched. For example, is the purchase of The Washington Post by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos an exercise in philanthropy? For most people, it would be a clear no. However, it did save the publication from vanishing. Is the acquisition of a dominating stake in The Atlantic by Laurene Powell Jobs and her company, the Emerson Collective, an act of philanthropy? They argue it is.

Meanwhile, journalism today has many different faces and is delivered by many different types of organizations. News provision and storytelling is now, as much as ever before, committed to the betterment of the audiences it serves. But this is not new. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a co-founder of The Atlantic 160 years ago, established the mission of the organization as to ‘bring about equality for all people’, an ideal cited by Powell Jobs in her acquisition of The Atlantic.

But the context has changed. Political and social events happening across the world over the last two years have shaken our world. As Bruce Sievers and Patrice Schneider argue in these pages (p52), ‘civil society’s information base, its norms and its operating mechanisms’ are under attack, presenting ‘an existential threat to democracy’. If we had produced this special feature two years ago, the arguments would be different: consider today what both journalism and philanthropy need to contend with: hundreds of websites routinely spread misinformation and automated accounts known as ‘social bots’ are being programmed to spread fake news. Political processes have been damaged such as the peace accord referendum in Colombia, and elections in the Netherlands, France, and the US. Meanwhile, media manipulation is contributing to the shrinking of Eastern Europe’s democratic space, the fomenting of the far right in Germany, as well as fuelling conflict in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, Turkey, and shocks such as Brexit or the constitutional crisis in Spain. All of these events are heavily influenced by cyber-politics operating in real time, with real-time analytics, including social listening – the process of monitoring digital conversations to understand what individuals are saying about a topic. Regrettably, neither philanthropy nor the media have been ready or able to combat these sophisticated tools. At least, not yet.

Why did we not see it coming and prepare more for it? Should the priorities of philanthropists and their foundations, Philanthropy and media need each other. Working together can really make a difference in realizing our missions

...this latest political upheaval across the world has brought to light not just how unprepared philanthropies were, how reactive, how little we knew about these possible scenarios. But journalism was also taken by surprise.

...and this is not the first time.

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Philanthropies are pushed and push themselves in many directions. There are many urgent social needs, beyond confronting failing trust and growing misinformation.

In media, the story is the commodity and trust is the currency. If philanthropy is, at its best, at the forefront of the quest for social justice, then media is, at its best, at the forefront of halting the biggest abuses. At a minimum, it is capable of defining conversations and setting the agenda.

Columbia University’s Anya Schiffrin articulates better than anyone that ‘journalists have been calling attention to some of the same problems for more than a hundred years’. Their writing had significant impact and a wave of ‘committed and campaigning journalism’ always existed in moments where a ‘general climate of intellectual ferment and political activism’ called for it.

Yet, the media has gone through a massive transformation over the last decade, impacted by three distinct trends. First, the technological revolution has made us question most of our assumptions about what a media system looks like, how it is created, what it does, and to what effect. On top of that, a potentially even bigger wave of disruption – anchored in artificial intelligence, robotics, cognitive computing, and big data – is under way. The most noticeable casualty of this transformation is the funding model. Many in the industry were left feeling that they have no option but to resort to ‘clickbait’ to pursue advertising money, but advertising money wasn’t always there.

Second, and more importantly, the media industry lost its ‘north star’ in pursuit of its own survival. The survival of the industry took precedence over the mission of the industry to provide a service to society. There is no such thing as the news industry anymore’, laments Emily Bell in a report on Post-Industrial Journalism published by the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism at Columbia University. While this may be over-stating the decline, there is widespread agreement that a continuous disruption of the media industry has resulted in a market failure for public interest journalism and specifically news and information on the issues that were underreported at the best of times, and rarely covered regularly or in-depth.

The third crisis faced by the media is a decline of its credibility. A 2017 survey for the Reuters Institute’s Digital News Project showed that trust in media in the UK fell by 7 per cent compared to 2016. Meanwhile, Edelman’s annual report on trust found declines in public trust in the institutions of government, business, media and NGOs around the world, with the greatest drop for media. But not everyone is pessimistic. Barbara Hans, for example, writes (p56) about a real opportunity for media to ‘return to its true function in society and its vital role in democracy’.

What is behind this optimistic view? While media may be reeling, what is not dying is the authority and influence it exerts. Many agree that news media still matters in setting the agenda. It signals what is important to the public and what the public should be paying attention to, and is a mechanism that policymakers feel they need to respond to in order to retain legitimacy.

Time to pay more attention to audiences and impact

A few years back the mere notion of tracking impact made both philanthropies and...
media uneasy. Today, both are much more comfortable trying to figure out what works and what doesn’t. While for philanthropy, there is a responsibility to make the most effective use of every philanthropic dollar, news media, its survival may depend on its ability to understand if it is informing and engaging a growing audience, or effecting any change in the real world.

Measuring audience response to a journalistic story by counting page views and unique visitors is necessary but not sufficient. Questions of impact are at the core of the role that journalism ought to play. For parents in Texas who are worried about the best school choice for their children, The Texas Tribune has developed a search engine that allows them to explore and compare Texas’s state districts and public schools. In Kenya, thanks to the vision of The Star editor and the work of Code for Africa, the media now offers its audiences an opportunity to check if their doctors are as qualified as they claim.

Journalism matters, but the question that philanthropy asks is, what journalism matters most? Journalism now comes in many different shapes, but also new models emerge, such as The Conversation – “providing reliable information, working with academics and researchers, based on the premise that just as clean water is vital for health, clean information is essential for a healthy democracy” (p60) – investigative newsroom ProPublica, and mega collaboration projects such as the International Consortium of Investigative Journalism, among many other variations. However, the goals remain the same: to positively affect the societies they serve.

Philanthropy is not the answer to sustainability
The trap would be to believe that philanthropy is the answer to sustainability. As journalist Gustavo Gorriti notes (p48), “there is a great disparity between the consensus on the importance of free, investigative journalism for the health of democracy and the very small percentage of philanthropy allotted to support it.” If we look at the size and distribution of global philanthropy, we can easily conclude that the disparity exists.

Venture capital doesn’t invest substantially in media either – less than 7 per cent of all venture capital in Africa goes to support the media. Factors of philanthropy, such as social investment and impact investment, don’t yet have it on their radar, with a few notable exceptions.

When working with philanthropies, there must be mission alignment, not just an added revenue model, otherwise the partnership model doesn’t work.

Concluding thoughts
This special feature aims to highlight structural concerns in the relationships between the media and philanthropy. Alliance readers will encounter some challenges: from Gustavo Gorriti that “there is nowadays a measure of enlightened despotism in our relationship with foundations” (p48), Kevin Locker who set out ethical guidelines (p55) and Barbara Hans on the opportunities and the boundaries of cooperation (p56).

Like many others, we at the Gates Foundation adhere to guiding principles in our media funding: transparency, respect for the editorial and creative independence of grantees, and mutual respect for the editorial integrity of the content. This means that stories are covered based on editorial merit, and must be evidence-based and of value to the audiences they affect.

However, this special feature also hopes to point to what needs to happen to better work together in solving societies’ problems: seeking alliances to reach goals, achieve missions and fully shared commitments. There are challenges for all of us. Media needs to welcome change. It needs to do a better job at demonstrating value and evidencing why media matters. When working with philanthropies, there must be mission alignment, not just an added revenue model, otherwise the partnership model doesn’t work. For its part, philanthropy needs to step up and understand that first, without functioning media, civil society collapses; secondly, our goals can be achieved better by working with the media.

Most of all, we need to remind ourselves of the many moments when journalism really mattered. Re-reading Global Muckraking, 100 years of investigative reporting from around the world or Democracy’s Detectives: the economics of investigative journalism would be a great start. Media and philanthropy must respond to the challenges we face. Now is a critical time. A spirit of enquiry isn’t an option – it’s a necessity. ■

The media philanthropy space in 2017

Philanthropies now support media and journalism to a spectacular degree – some $1.3 billion annually between 2011 and 2015, a stunning amount by news industry standards. The authoritative source on the matter, the Media Grants Data Map, compiled by Media Impact Funders and the Foundation Center, indicates how charitable foundations distribute this bounty. More than two-thirds goes towards what could be described as services: awareness campaigns for social or other charitable causes (including international development), education, or otherwise information-oriented platforms.

Another fifth is awarded to the thematic cluster of press freedom, open access and technological innovation in media. That leaves on average just 17 per cent of the available funding for journalism in the narrower sense, that is, the production of independent journalistic coverage. In absolute figures, this translates into journalism grants worth more than $220 million each year – even more if we account for European and other journalism grants mapping worldwide that has not made it into the Media Grants Data Map yet. A recent study commissioned by the European Journalism Centre revealed that the UK market alone is estimated at close to $40 million annually.

Two reasons why the US gets the biggest share
And yet, charitable journalism funding largely remains a US affair – both in terms of donors and beneficiaries. More than 90 per cent of grant money flows to US-based organizations, with some 6 per cent of funds allocated to Europe, and only about 1 per cent to media outlets in the developing world.

The vast majority of foundations engaging in the sector are also based in the US. The reasons are two-fold. First, Europe has generally a less-developed philanthropy culture than the US. Second, it traditionally has strong public- or state-funded media and far-ranging media subsidy systems in place. Hence, potential donors habitually do not perceive media and journalism as particularly in need of extra funding, but rather focus their efforts on education, science and the arts. This may have changed recently, though – there is a noticeable European equivalent to the ‘Trump bump’ reported by ProPublica.

Like goes to like
Non-profit recipients attract the better part of journalism-related grant revenues; less than 3 per cent of the total grants budget is funnelled directly into commercial news organizations. That figure is higher, though, if sub-grants made by non-profit intermediaries such as the European Journalism Centre are counted; indeed, existing rules and regulations may make it more difficult for charitable foundations to subsidize businesses than to fund fellow charities. Keeping the money within the tax-exempt ecosystem is the path of least resistance.

That said, the mutual reservations between foundations and commercial news outlets also indicate that their interests are not always perfectly aligned. Four domains of media and journalism as proxies of their own issue-driven campaigning. Catering to this demand comes naturally

While philanthropic funding for journalism is now considerable, most of it comes from, and goes to, the US

More than 90 per cent of grant money flows to US-based organizations, with some 6 per cent of funds allocated to Europe, and only about 1 per cent to media outlets in the developing world.
to similarly inclined NGOs, but not to general-purpose journalistic organizations. What the latter rather hope for is that foundations embrace the model of journalism, as one participating in the European Journalism Centre’s Journalism Funders Forum put it: journalism in the public interest as a purpose in and of itself.

Where issue-driven funders respect editorial independence, they enable quality journalism and give a boost to journalistic talent in and of itself.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that thematically targeted foundation funding, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s international support for development coverage, still goes a long way towards supporting a healthy news ecosystem as a whole. Where issue-driven funders respect editorial independence, they enable quality journalism and give a boost to journalistic talent in a way that the ailing industry itself is increasingly unlikely to afford.

Between 2011 and 2014, just 7 per cent of funding went into unrestricted operational support for journalism organizations (not counting expenses for the

Newseum in Washington, which is the single largest recipient of philanthropic journalism funding at an accumulated $231 million – ten times as much as ProPublica. The John S and James L Knight Foundation and the Ford Foundation are among the main donors in this space, helping organizations such as ProPublica, the Center for Investigative Reporting, and the Center for Public Integrity to perform their work independently and shielding them from the whims of the market.

Finally, this trend has also caught on in Europe. In Germany, the Brost Foundation has made a substantial investment into Correctiv, which could be described as the German ProPublica, and Schepflin Foundation has pledged almost $30 million to the creation of a future House of Non-Profit Journalism. In the UK, the Centre for Investigative Journalism and the Bureau for Investigative Journalism have received grants from, among others, the David and Elaine Potter Foundation, the Dutch Stichting Democratie en Media, and Adessium Foundation. Even inside the bloc of the European Union, most funding opportunities remain tied to domestic interests, although funders from the Netherlands in particular distinguish themselves by making cross-border grants.

Finally, one of the most remarkable aspects of this new development is that an increasing number of foundations without a background in news are coming into the picture. While unconditional journalism funding used to emerge almost exclusively from donors fuelled by old newspaper money (Knight and Brost are examples), the times are such that foundations with different backgrounds now come to appreciate the public value that lies in independent journalism, too. A great opportunity – but one for which journalism must step up to the plate as well.\n
The author thanks Sarah Armour-Jones and Media Impact Funders for access to their database and valuable advice. All figures are based on the author’s own calculations.

In profile

Selected media organizations backed by philanthropy

Malaysiakini

Malaysiakini in Malaysia was founded by Premesh Chandran and journalist Steven Gan in November 1999 as a space for uncensored journalism. It has become a significant news source in Malaysia, and claims to receive over 2.3 million page views per day on desktop and mobile. While it describes its political stance as independent, it is considered pro-opposition by mainstream media (most of which are government-owned). It describes its editorial policy as supportive of justice, human rights, democracy, freedom of speech and good governance. It is a letters section that hosts the opinions of readers of all races and religions and of various ideological backgrounds, creating an open arena for public debate. It features topics less debated in the country’s media such as migrant workers, AIDS and the racial quota system. The source of its income is a matter for debate. While the National Endowment for Democracy and others are contributors, CEO Premesh Chandran said in 2012 that foreign grants ‘form a small part of Malaysiakini’s budget’ and that it is 70 per cent owned by its co-founders. He said that the organization was ‘transparent about such partnerships’, and that editorial independence was not compromised by them.

ProPublica

An independent, non-profit newsroom, founded in 2007 on the basis that investigative journalism is critical to democracy, ProPublica describes its mission as exposure of ‘abuses of power and betrayals of the public trust by government, business, and other institutions, using the moral force of investigative journalism to spur reform through the sustained spotlighting of wrongdoing’. ProPublica covers a range of topics including government and politics, business, criminal justice, the environment, education, healthcare, immigration, and technology, and runs, among other features, a series on President Trump and his administration. Major foundation donors named on its website include the Skoll Global Threats Fund, Open Society Foundations, the Knight, MacArthur, Hewlett and Ford Foundations. ProPublica claims that ‘among other positive changes, our reporting has contributed to the passage of new laws; reversals of harmful policies and practices; and accountability for leaders at local, state and national levels’. It is also committed to transparent financial reporting.

The Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN)

GIJN is an international association of non-profit organizations that support, promote and produce investigative journalism. GIJN holds conferences, conducts training and provides resources and consulting. It sprang out of the 2003 Global Investigative Journalism Conference in Copenhagen and has since grown to 155 member organizations in 68 countries. In 2012, a secretariat was created to better manage its biennial conference and increase its capacity to support investigative journalism around the world. The executive director and secretariat report to the GIJN board, which consists of members elected by GIJN membership representatives. GIJN has received core support from the Open Society Foundations since its beginnings as a loose network in 2003, as well as from the Adessium Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Oak Foundation, the Reva & David Logan Foundation, and the Bay and Paul Foundations. In past years additional funding has come from Google and in-kind support from the Knight Chair in Investigative Reporting in the Journalism Department at the University of Illinois.
A number of foundations run programmes on the media in different parts of the world backing investigative journalism, maintaining journalistic standards in the digital age, increasing credibility of news and maintaining open channels of information to local communities.

**Adessium Foundation, The Netherlands**

The Adessium Foundation’s public interest programme aims to foster open, democratic societies including through support of cross-border and collaborative investigative journalism in Europe. There are three elements to the foundation’s media grantmaking. First, core and project support to journalistic organizations to tell stories of social importance and to promote innovation of journalistic content and distribution. Examples include the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (UK), Correctiv (Germany), and Investico (based in the Netherlands). A second element is support for a strong journalistic infrastructure. Examples include Journalismfund. EU and the Global Investigative Journalism Network, both of which, among other things, organize conferences where the European community of investigative journalists exchange ideas. Third, the foundation supports organizations that work to promote media freedom, rights to information and open data, such as Reporters without Borders and Access Info.

www.adessium.org/public-interest

**Open Society Foundations, US**

Widely recognised as a pioneering force in independent media, Open Society Foundations’ programme on independent journalism supports ‘a free and safe environment for journalism to flourish, while seeking to strengthen investigative reporting, innovative and quality information collected under difficult conditions and knowledge sharing in the field’ according to its website. ‘Difficult conditions’ include ‘autocracy, violence, repression, or poverty, or in moments of great opportunity, such as first democratic elections, peace agreements, or massive social mobilizations’. The emphasis of the programme is on those areas where journalism is one of the only sources of independent and reliable information, gained and disseminated on an ethical basis. It is the most wide-ranging of the initiatives featured here, operating in virtually all the regions of the world, except East and South-East Asia. There are four portfolios under the programme, split between direct support for journalism initiatives, the protection and safety of journalists, and the sharing of knowledge and good practice in the field.

www.opensocietyfoundations.org

**Independent and Public Spirited Media Foundation, India**

Set up in 2015, the Independent and Public Spirited Media Foundation (IPSMF) is a consortium of Indian funders including philanthropists Azim Premji and Rohini Nilekani. The foundation provides assistance to public interest media organizations. Grantees include LiveLaw, which publishes legal news, India Spend, which analyses government policy, The Wire, a news website published by the Foundation for Independent Journalism, and Better India, a site that publicizes stories of changemakers and innovations in various fields. According to Nilekani, the IPSMF is intended ‘to foster great reporting and coverage, especially in the digital space that allows for a deeper discourse in our democracy’. While grant amounts are not specified on IPSMF’s website it has, for example, funded the Foundation for Independent Journalism to the tune of INR3.7 crore ($570,000). Its support for independent media is a new departure in a country where mainstream print media and television firms are backed by corporate houses. None of the backers have a direct say in how the foundation is run, which is in the hands of board of trustees, chaired by journalist, T N Ninan.

http://ipsmf.org

**Humanity United, US**

Launched in 2008, Humanity United (HU) is part of The Omidyar Group, established by eBay founder, Pierre Omidyar. It has a strategic media programme that engages media partners, reporters and storytellers to raise awareness of important social issues. Its media engagement ranges from specific thematic areas like forced labour in palm oil production to more general reporting and investigative journalism into emerging conflicts and human trafficking. Humanity United supports The Guardian’s ‘Modern-day slavery in focus’ platform, which looks at all aspects of this issue, as well as the role that markets play in sustaining modern-day slavery to the failure of states and justice systems to tackle the issue effectively. It also supported the making of the film, ‘The Workers’ Cup, which details conditions in migrant labour camps in Qatar housing workers building the facilities for Qatar’s football World Cup in 2022. Meantime, the Omidyar Network itself has recently announced $100 million of funding to support investigative journalism, and the network of organizations building fact-checking tools; to Associated Press to increase its ability to debunk misinformation by doubling its full-time staff dedicated to fact-checking; and to the Reynolds Journalism Institute for its Trusting News project, which conducts experiments and trains journalists on ways to increase trust. Knight has also endowed chairs and funded the creation of academic centres in journalism at a number of US universities.

https://knightfoundation.org/programs

**Knight Foundation, US**

One of Knight Foundation’s four programme areas is journalism. Its main thrust is research, training and litigation, including in support of the right of expression and public access to information, and innovative approaches to the use of technology. The foundation has recently launched a Trust, Media and Democracy programme, which will provide $2.5 million to organizations improving trust in journalism and building stronger connections between journalists and their audiences. Among these will be grants to the Duke University Reporters’ Lab to launch an innovation hub that will expand the network of organizations building fact-checking tools; to Associated Press to increase its ability to debunk misinformation by doubling its full-time staff dedicated to fact-checking; and to the Reynolds Journalism Institute for its Trusting News project, which conducts experiments and trains journalists on ways to increase trust. Knight has also endowed chairs and funded the creation of academic centres in journalism at a number of US universities.

https://knightfoundation.org/programs

**Wellcome Trust, UK**

Wellcome Trust publishes Mosaic, a magazine dedicated to exploring the science of life launched in March 2014. Its focus is long, narrative, non-fiction articles about human health, medicine and science. The site also features shorter articles, videos, audio and infographics. Mosaic content is available to use for free under a Creative Commons licence. As a result, Mosaic stories have appeared in newspapers, magazines and books and on websites all around the world. Wellcome staff commission and edit the stories and original artwork, and manage the Mosaic website. The publication is editorially independent. While it covers subjects that fit with Wellcome’s mission and vision, it isn’t limited to featuring research that Wellcome funds. Mosaic’s contributors bring their own unique perspectives to their stories, which means that the views expressed do not necessarily represent those of Wellcome.

www.mosaicscience.com

**ZEIT Stiftung, Germany**

Launched by Zeit newspaper founder, Gerd Bucerius in 1971, Germany’s ZEIT Stiftung funds various journalistic initiatives, notably in Eastern Europe. The Donhoff Fellowship, for example, is an exchange programme enabling journalists from Eastern Europe to spend two months with a German media outlet. The project is co-financed by the Mercator Foundation and the German Foreign Office. In 2016, ZEIT Stiftung and Fritt Ord, a Norwegian Foundation, established the Free Media Awards – Supporting Independent Journalism in Eastern Europe. There are three annual awards worth €15,000 each available to journalists from Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia. ZEIT also awards grants to refugee journalists and supports an annual media conference.

www.zeit-stiftung.de/en
The following is a small selection of philanthropists who have exploited the potential power of media as part of a wider philanthropic or commercial arsenal:

### Pierre Omidyar

**Founder of eBay**

Pierre Omidyar has, in his own words, a maturing interest in supporting independent journalists in a way that leverages their work to the greatest extent possible, all in support of the public interest. And, I want to find ways to convert mainstream readers into engaged citizens.

Omidyar, who remains chair of eBay, is apparently very concerned about government-spying programs, as evidenced by his support for The Intercept, an online news website which he founded in 2010. More recently, Marshall has become one of the funders of UnHerd, a centre of journalism which he describes as having an ‘unwavering commitment to neutralising leftwing bias in the news, media and popular culture’.

Robert Mercer

Robert Mercer and the Mercer Family Foundation are significant supporters of media. Mercer is a major backer of the Media Research Center, which describes itself as having an ‘unwavering commitment to neutralising leftwing bias in the news, media and popular culture’. Through his hedge fund, Mercer has funded the self-styled media watchdog to the tune of over $10 million in the past decade according to an article in the UK’s Observer. Beginning as a computer scientist at IBM, Mercer went on to become CEO of Renaissance Technologies, a hedge fund that makes its money mainly through algorithms to model and trade on the financial markets. Initially a supporter of Ted Cruz, the 2016 US presidential race, he transferred his allegiance to Donald Trump, becoming his biggest donor. The Observer also claims that it was $10 million of Mercer’s money that enabled Steve Bannon to fund Trump’s right-wing news site Breitbart in 2012. Set up with the express intention of being a Huffington Post for the right, it is now a popular site with two billion page views a year and is the biggest political site on Facebook and on Twitter.

### Sir Paul Marshall

Co-founder and chair of one of Europe’s largest hedge fund groups, Marshall Wace, Paul Marshall’s media and public activity goes back to 2004, when he co-edited The orange book, reclamining liberalism, with MP David Laws, which sought to reaffirm the fundamental underpinning of the UK’s Liberal Democrats. The Orange Book set the stage for a distinctly more rightwards and free-market shift, eventually paving the party’s entry into coalition government with the Conservatives in 2010. More recently, Marshall has also become one of the funders of UnHerd, a right of centre news website which promises to focus on ‘the important things rather than the latest things’. According to its 90-minute Conservative adviser and Times journalist Tim Montgomerie, ‘its journalists will be given the time and will possess the skills to dive deeply into their subject areas. Together they will challenge out-of-date, incorrect and even dangerous thinking on economics, politics, technology, religion and the media’. In 2016, Marshall committed £30 million to the LSE to found the Marshall Institute for Philanthropy and Social Entrepreneurship, which aims ‘to increase the impact and effectiveness of private action for social good’.

### Jeff Bezos

Je Bezos

It might not be out of place to mention Jeff Bezos in this list, though his purchase of the Washington Post in 2013 was not a philanthropic initiative - at least, not expressly. The founder of Amazon claims he bought the newspaper because he wanted to make it into a more powerful national - and even global - publication, and that The Post was well suited to be a watchdog over the leaders of the world’s most powerful country. Since his takeover, the Post’s readership has grown and its content has become more suitable for the digital world, according to Business Insider UK. However, the path to newspaper ownership provides a commentary on the tensions between business and philanthropy. Fredrick Kunkle, who writes for The Washington Post’s Metro desk, castigated Bezos for expressing a desire to increase his philanthropic efforts despite a record of ‘treatment [his employees] poorly’. In a piece published in the Huffington Post, he accuses Bezos of cutting retirement benefits, freezing a company pension plan and holding severance payments hostage by requiring outgoing employees to drop any legal claims to receive payment. Kunkle’s article also notes Amazon’s history of dodging taxes, its mistreatment of workers, and its ruthlessness toward even the smallest competitors have been well documented.

### Evgeny Lebedev

Evgeny Lebedev

It’s in fact the former team of Alexander and Evgeny Lebedev who own both the Independent and Evening Standard newspapers in the UK, in addition to the London Live TV channel. Evgeny Lebedev is a philanthropist and has supported a number of causes including the protection of elephants and Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital in London and, through the Independent’s website, has campaigned against modern slavery. But while they have put an estimated £200 million into British newspapers, the Lebedev’s ownership of the two newspapers is by no means a piece of philanthropy. The Evening Standard, in fact, though close to bankruptcy when acquired, now makes a profit according to an article in The Spectator.

A prominent part of London’s social scene, Lebedev divides opinion. Those who like him draw attention to his business acumen, his willingness to put money into what seems a dying business, even for its sartorial sense. On the other hand, his detractors point to the offensive whimsicality of the mega wealthy for sale. According to Forbes in 2016 as the fifth richest person in the world. It might not be out of place to mention Jeff Bezos in this list, though his purchase of the Washington Post in 2013 was not a philanthropic initiative - at least, not expressly. The founder of Amazon claims he bought the newspaper because he wanted to make it into a more powerful national - and even global - publication, and that The Post was well suited to be a watchdog over the leaders of the world’s most powerful country. Since his takeover, the Post’s readership has grown and its content has become more suitable for the digital world, according to Business Insider UK. However, the path to newspaper ownership provides a commentary on the tensions between business and philanthropy. Fredrick Kunkle, who writes for The Washington Post’s Metro desk, castigated Bezos for expressing a desire to increase his philanthropic efforts despite a record of ‘treatment [his employees] poorly’. In a piece published in the Huffington Post, he accuses Bezos of cutting retirement benefits, freezing a company pension plan and holding severance payments hostage by requiring outgoing employees to drop any legal claims to receive payment. Kunkle’s article also notes Amazon’s history of dodging taxes, its mistreatment of workers, and its ruthlessness toward even the smallest competitors have been well documented.

### Laurene Powell Jobs

Laurene Powell Jobs

In July this year, Laurene Powell Jobs, Silicon Valley entrepreneur and philanthropist, acquired a majority stake in The Atlantic magazine, which she called ‘one of the country’s most important and enduring journalistic institutions’. It was founded by American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson, after whom another of Jobs’ initiatives is named. The Emerson Collective uses entrepreneurship to advance social reform and support educational causes. This is not her first foray into the media. In the past, she has taken a minority stake in Hollywood studio Anonymous Content and has supported non-profit journalism through investments in the Marshall Project and ProPublica. David Bradley, from whom she acquired the stake, will continue as chair of The Atlantic’s parent company, Atlantic Media. Jobs is not buying a share in a lame duck. According to one source, digital advertising now accounts for 80 per cent of revenue. The company altogether attracts a monthly audience of 33 million and makes $10 million per year.

### Mark Zuckerberg

Mark Zuckerberg

Zuckerberg is not a philanthropist who acquired tech media company, but someone who became rich from the Facebook – a philanthropist – by creating one. In 2012, he floated Facebook for $16 billion. His wealth is now estimated at $74 billion and he was ranked by Forbes in 2016 as the fifth richest person in the world. Today, Facebook is central to the story of philanthropy and media as a platform for news, views and content, and is used by two billion people around the world.
The pernicious effects of misinformation on democracy are now generally seen, but if efforts to support an independent media are to be successful, they need greater coherence.

Something decisive changed in 2016 in independent media support. It wasn’t a recognition that philanthropy is important to sustaining independent media. That has been recognized for many years as seismic technological and economic shifts have transformed the advertising support that used to underpin the business model of traditional journalism. A small but vital cohort of foundations have been responding to those concerns ever since. A vital coterie of foundations have responded to those concerns – including in the US, Turkey, Hungary and Poland – was another. An acknowledgement by tech giants like Facebook that their algorithms had no solution to the viral dissemination of misinformation and that humans – journalists and fact-checkers – are needed to assure some semblance of trust in the dominant information platforms that humanity increasingly uses to access its information provided another spur to reawaken support in this area.

There has been a marked response from several foundations, most notably at the time of writing, the news that George Soros is transferring $18 billion to his Open Society Foundations, whose Independent Journalism Programme has been one of the most vital supporters of independent media internationally. Other foundations spending or reorienting this area – including the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the Omidyar Foundation, Fondation, MacArthur, Rockefeller and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundations. Regrettably, there are very few substantial non-US foundations in this area.

But the challenge confronting media support is not just money. It is also strategy. A friend of mine leaders in both democratic and non-democratic regimes – including in the US, Turkey, Hungary and Poland – was another. An acknowledgement by tech giants like Facebook that their algorithms had no solution to the viral dissemination of misinformation and that humans – journalists and fact-checkers – are needed to assure some semblance of trust in the dominant information platforms that humanity increasingly uses to access its information provided another spur to reawaken support in this area.

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The death and re-birth of journalism? In Latin America, it’s a bit more complicated.

There is in the United States a publication with an ominous masthead and an intriguing motto. The first view, paper Death Watch, the second: ‘Chronicling the Decline of Newspapers and the Rebirth of Journalism.’

I belong to a generation of journalists that has lived through this truly existential era. As a Latin American baby boomer I well remember the epic deadlines at neurotic newsrooms, with the frenzied clatter of typewriters expressing the intensity of collective thinking, especially when game-changing scoops were in the works.

In comparison, the non-profit digital investigative journalism outlet where I am now editor has a tiny newsroom staffed by a few smart millennials and a fitness-conscious dinosaur. There is no longer the sound of thinking, but a sense of compressed flow and once the scoop is ready, the return key distributes it at once; and a few minutes later the social networks, the other media, the readers begin to react to our content and we to interact with them. Our reach is so small that you wonder if we are living not the rebirth, but the reinvention of journalism… ‘up to a point,’ Lord Copper, as they said in, well, Scoop.1

My nearly eight-year old publication, IDL-Reporteros, owes its existence and subsistence to philanthropy – to foundation grants to be precise. We compete yearly with a fast-growing field of other publications for funds that do not seem to grow at the same rate. We have to be better every year in order to survive. But this is only part of the problem we face in this new, fast-changing, hard to predict ecosystem.

There is nothing wrong, in principle, with being funded by philanthropy, especially if your work is good and necessary. After all, some of the crucial works of western culture were made possible by the patronage of enlightened despots. The thinkers and artists thus supported lacked – to use a code-word in today’s foundations – ‘sustainability,’ but in the midst of often precarious and even dangerous circumstances, they had the means to create, and create they did.

There is nowadays a measure of enlightened despotism in our relationship with foundations. There are trends of thought, as happens elsewhere. Perhaps the most durable one is to waste publications from their funding as soon as possible. They are expected to find other forms of income, and to show they are trying, the sooner the better. Some of these attempts are moving, others are funny, a few are moderately successful. But the whole process begs a question: wasn’t the reason for the existence of these non-profit journalistic publications (mostly investigative) the fact that in the traditional (or legacy) media, investigative journalism was being sacrificed for systemic decadence, distorted markets, and brainless cost-cutting to keep profits?

There are other problems as well. Some foundations might change their fields or interest from one year to the other; others might want to fund only investigations or stories in specific areas and no more, thus taking editorial decision out of our hands and making glorified consultants out of us.

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Time to rethink philanthropy journalism in East Africa

If we consider that journalism is about freely exchanging information based on news, views or ideas, then the context within which journalism is practised matters. In East Africa this context is challenging. Intimidation and harassment of journalists is rife. Critical media outlets are being shut down on flimsy grounds and others are required to self-censor, pandering to advertisers. Punitive media laws targeting journalists and media outlets have been enacted. Poor organization among journalists and feeble self-regulation attempts haven’t helped the situation.

In essence, this context has contributed to an increasingly weak media where ‘survival’ is taken root. Self-censorship, pandering to commercial and political interests, the sacking of critical journalists and closure of media outlets continue to undermine the existence of an independent and free media in the region. We hold that a conducive working environment, an enabling legal and policy environment, and support for freedom of expression are some of the prerequisite conditions for great journalism. These conditions are not mutually exclusive for those supporting media development in Kenya. A 2006 BBC World Service Trust pan-African research report on the African Media Development Initiative outlines sector-wide approaches. In our view, the approaches cited in the CIDA report haven’t been effective due to their short-term nature and have largely dwelt on two aspects within the media ecosystem – professionalism and content production. Philanthropists need to support alternative media outlets to disseminate critical media content, especially where media capture by politicians and commercial interests is pervasive as it is in East Africa. This has generally been on account of ownership. For instance in Kenya, a 2012 Internews study on media ownership established that politicians and their associates own or have controlling stakes in a large number of media outlets in Kenya. This ownership largely increases the extent of political influence in those outlets’ management and content. Commercial interests, on the other hand, ensure that ‘negative’ content on large corporates is censored. Corporates have pulled advertisements from media houses that run ‘negative’ content.

Unfortunately, based on our experience with philanthropists, a holistic approach to media development seems to be the least desired by most of them, largely due to limited resources, inadequate knowledge of key issues affecting specific media ecosystems, and the desire to influence media content and advocate for specific issues. Success in this approach is seen from the number of articles published and the number of journalists trained. We believe that such efforts are short-term in nature. Though useful, this kind of support is geared towards developing a media adept at articulating such issues and strengthening only one aspect of the media system.

In Kenya, considerable investments have been dedicated to the training of journalists to become better subject matter specialists. Other philanthropists have focused on supporting the establishment of media outlets, especially community media in Kenya, while others have focused on the safety and protection of journalists. Though well meaning, these efforts are mostly short-term, opportunistic, disjointed, at times duplicate other efforts and don’t always reflect an understanding of the root challenges facing the media ecosystem especially in Kenya. It is our contention that philanthropists need to start paying attention to the aspects of the media ecosystem where their support can be most effective.

Having implemented sector-wide media development programmes in Kenya and Tanzania we have learned that philanthropy-backed journalism that solely focuses on one aspect of the media ecosystem is unlikely to be effective in the long run since addressing the structural issues facing the sector takes a long time and requires more resources. Although at times successful, support to ‘quality media content production’ is often unsustainable, especially in a fast-changing media context. Support to journalism and media in general is meaningful when philanthropists collaborate to support a long-term sustainable media ecosystem.

Corporates have been known to pull advertisements from media houses that run ‘negative’ content, hence further limiting their independence.
A healthy democracy needs independent and trustworthy information. This is in dire peril. Here’s how philanthropy can help

**Models: The crisis of civic media**

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**Free private associations, independent philanthropy, the rule of law, and endowment support**

In the 21st century, digital media is a critical source of information, enabling public discourse and the exchange of ideas. However, the rise of digital media has also led to the commodification of news, with commercial interests often taking precedence over the public good. This has eroded the independence of civic media, which is essential for a healthy democracy.

A system of free expression is fundamental to a healthy democracy, allowing for the free flow of ideas and information. However, the rise of digital media has led to the commodification of news, with commercial interests often taking precedence over the public good.

1. Beyond Disruption, Skoll Foundation Institute for the Future, Kettering Foundation, Center for International Media Assistance/National Endowment for Democracy

**A leading example is the Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) that has mobilized over $163 million of impact capital over 21 years – including capital from foundations - to invest in media companies in countries where access to free and independent media is under threat.**

While independent news organizations are often commercial enterprises, they can be much more than that. Social impact investors are increasingly interested in ways of deploying capital to protect the civic role of the media and sustain its vital function in democratic life.

A leading example is the Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) that has mobilized over $163 million of impact capital over 21 years – including capital from foundations - to invest in media companies in countries where access to free and independent media is under threat. This model has been geared towards emerging democracies, the civic media situation in western democracies justifies the exploration of similar impact investment models there.

Crucially, both of these approaches meet the second problem noted above, that of insulating the content of the work from funder influence. A fundamental challenge for philanthropic funding of media organizations is the need to create a firewall between the donor and content. This relates not only to ideological or political influence, but also to general subject matter choice. Donors can justifiably exercise overall oversight of quality and reach, but their further intervention would undermine the journalistic independence of media organizations. It is vital that funders adhere to a maxim similar to that typically applied to grants for university endowments: such an intervention would undermine the charitable purpose of the grant.

There is no magic formula for such an approach. Whatever model is chosen, philanthropy should experiment with a variety of approaches that meet the two requirements of sustainability and independence. There is no magic formula for such a complex problem. It is not that there is no solution to the problem of media disinformation and its discontents. The solution is to ensure the independence and editorial integrity of the media, to promote transparency in the funding of media organizations, and to shield editorial independence from outside influence.
Who owns a media company, and why and how they own it are crucial questions in journalism. Over the last 30 years, digital disruption has caused media business models to struggle and sometimes fail. As a result, CEOs and boards of directors are faced with decisions that might benefit revenue but not necessarily the integrity of their journalism outlet – for example, native advertising or selling user data. These decisions depend on the parameters set by shareholders. But what motivates shareholders in media and journalism companies? This question is as relevant for legacy media as it is to media start-ups looking for impact investors.

The future of media ownership – and a vision of the role foundations and philanthropy could play – is encoded in the DNA of Amsterdam-based Stichting Nederland, takes the form of a publishing company De Persgroep and the Amsterdam-based Stichting Amsterdam, which we also do through our regular grant programmes, is important for protecting public-interest journalism. Taking a leap of faith by financing innovative ideas and experiments is another increasingly crucial strategy, as is networking and sharing knowledge with other funders and investors.

Becoming mission-driven shareholders of a media company, however, is a relatively unexplored method but recent examples, such as Gerry Lenfest and the Philadelphia Foundation, the Media Development Fund and Fund and the Emerson Collective and The Atlantic, show that this can be a productive model too. SDM is currently mapping other cases and researching the feasibility of other innovative models.

As philanthropists move increasingly into financing media, both funders and beneficiaries need clear guidelines. A traditional advertising model for media continues to shrink, the role of philanthropic funding in journalism has reached a new moment of importance. In September 2017, the New York Times even announced that one of its newsroom leaders was moving into a new role, helping the paper ‘seek philanthropic funding for ambitious journalism’. Yet unlike the advertising departments – which over a century developed clear lines of ethical practice to ensure separation from editorial or even public broadcasting – the role of the road for the growing role of non-profit funding of new digital journalism, and even partnerships with traditional commercial outlets, is less certain.

The key to avoiding problems is to think through what they might be ahead of time and then to be as transparent as possible with the public about how you operate. Following criticism that a series of on pension funds was too close to funders’ interests. Media outlets in our sample – which had a higher representation of newer non-profit media, many of them digital natives – were often too willing to say yes because they needed the funding. Moreover, few media outlets had written guidelines or ethics policies, which meant they were operating, and fundraising, ad hoc.

We then gathered 18 scholars, non-profit media executives and representatives from nine funding organizations to hammer out two sets of principles; one for funders and another for non-profit media. Three key notions emerged. News organizations ‘should have written policies that establish... principles of editorial independence, transparency and communication’. Funders ‘should be transparent (with the public) about the media they are funding, and they should expect media partners to report their sources of funding’. They should likewise ‘articulate their motivations for funding journalism and explain what would constitute success in meeting their purposes’.

These principles should be a starting point for those in the field. Honolulu Civil Beat, a non-profit local news outlet backed by Pierre Omidyar, is one organization to adopt these principles. We encourage everyone to take them even further, specifying their own rules. If we have learned two things in this research, it is these. The key to avoiding problems is to think through what they might be ahead of time and then to be as transparent as possible with the public about how you operate.
The opportunities and limits of foundation-funded journalism

Journalists should embrace philanthropy but proceed with caution

Journalism, it is said, is in crisis. But that isn’t strictly accurate. Journalism is actually beset by at least two different crises: a funding crisis and a credibility crisis. Philanthropy can help solve both, but it needs to observe certain conditions.

Both crises have a variety of impacts on the newsroom, both of existential importance and both have a lot to do with each other. Yet before this article joins the currently omnipresent chorus of lamentation, I would like to emphasize that the crises facing journalism likewise represent its greatest opportunity – to return to its true function in society and vital role in democracy. Recent months have produced telling examples of where the roots of the crises facing journalism are to be found. The media has too often been wrong and it has too often been caught off-guard: by Brexit, by the election of Donald Trump in the US, and by the rise of the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party in Germany. We journalists were too convinced that we knew better and didn’t spend enough time actually on the scene. We weren’t curious enough. Our curiosity is why we enjoy the privilege of immersing ourselves in different worlds in order to provide access to them for others. And it is this privilege – the time for in-depth reporting – that is the first thing to be sacrificed to the financial pressures we face.

Foundation-funded journalism must understand this situation – it must understand why many publishing houses are in the condition they’re in. Therein lie the opportunities and the risks of a cooperation. Such funding can only be successful if both crises are taken into account: the funding crisis – the shortage of personnel and resources in addition to plummeting subscriptions – and the credibility crisis – the difficulties associated with reaching readers and the challenge of approaching them across increasing numbers and varieties of platforms with journalism produced by an ever-shrinking newsroom. Philanthropists must understand that a cooperation with the media is a per se rooted in a dilemma. The media wants to, indeed must, retain its autonomy when it comes to choosing which issues to focus on and what stories to run – indeed, it is this independence that appeals to philanthropists in the first place. It is also why it is vital that philanthropists recognize and respect the independence of the media. In short, the lure of foundation funding cannot be allowed to endanger the media’s credibility. Were that to happen, such a cooperation would prove to be counterproductive: for both the publishing houses and for the foundations. After all, they too are dependent on the quality and independence of the media with whom they cooperate.

To ensure a successful cooperation, there are a few things that must be observed:

- Funding results in dependencies, a situation of which all those involved in such a cooperation must be aware. The focus should not be on denying this dependency, but on safeguarding against it as far as possible.
- The parameters are important and must be openly discussed by both sides, publishers and philanthropists, prior to launch. Mediation by organizations such as the European Journalism Centre can be helpful, because it relieves both partners.
- Philanthropy is an opportunity to deepen reporting in a specific field that is already viewed as important, and not to shift focus to an issue that wasn’t previously covered. Why? Because determining which issues to report on is one of the tasks of journalism and an expression of journalistic independence.
- Prior to any cooperation, media outlets must ask themselves: is this project a good match for us? Would we have sought to realize this project even without a funding partner? If so, why haven’t we done so thus far?
- Philanthropists should not limit funding to content. When it comes to storytelling formats, the development of data analysis software or similar examples, funding can ultimately result in an open-source tool from which other media can also profit. That, in turn, demonstrates the sustainability of such funding because it helps develop the infrastructure necessary for independent journalism.
- It must be simple: the effort required for the administration of foundation-funded journalism shouldn’t be greater than the return.
- Be realistic about what you will get. The amount of funding provided includes administration costs.
- Be realistic about what a newsroom can deliver. The end-product doesn’t always have to look like ‘Snowfall’. Large projects threaten to become overly complex, which can overwhelm those involved – and their results are often not sustainable or transferable.
- Milestones are necessary. The process is not a one-way highway. Benchmarks should be identified and examined to ensure that the cooperation is still working – and what might need to be fixed.
- Transparency is imperative: if a journalistic project receives outside funding, that must be clearly indicated in the published product.

With journalism facing a funding crisis, cooperation with philanthropists can:

- Deepen coverage; allow for the implementation of long-term projects;
- Make costly trips possible;
- Facilitate cooperation with other European media outlets; and
- Generate lessons for such cooperation moving forward. That holds true for media outlets both small and large. But cooperation with philanthropists cannot lead to a situation in which journalism becomes dependent – because funding that doesn’t also increase a media outlet’s credibility isn’t worth it. Not for the journalists nor for the philanthropists. Not for readers nor for democracy.

Below: The media did not foresee the rise in popularity of the right-wing AfD (Alternative for Germany) party in Germany.
Safeguarding The Guardian

Philanthropic support is not just a lifeline for news outlets, it can open up new landscapes.

At a time when challenges to media independence pollute and distort the news landscape and traditional revenue models continue to erode, independent media organizations are thinking innovatively about how best to fund high-quality independent journalism. At The Guardian we are pioneering a new model in which philanthropic support is part of the mix.

The Guardian has long roots in philanthropy. In 1936 the Scott family put its fortune into trust to preserve the publication, its independence and its editorial values in perpetuity. The Guardian has one shareholder - The Scott Trust - we have no billionaire owner, nor are we driven to pollute and distort the news to preserve the publication, its freedom to produce the kind of high-quality journalism that readers seek and respect.

The underlying premise of all our journalism is that it should be supported by philanthropy. This is not just a lifeline for news organizations, it is the bedrock of these partnerships is a shared sense of mission and purpose around some of the most persistent and challenging issues of our time.

Building on this strong track record, we have established theguardian.org which has tax-exempt status in the US and is overseen by an independent board. This new organization allows us to broaden and diversify philanthropic support, through a mixture of partnerships and grantmaking that will help deliver the hard-hitting storytelling and independent journalism that our readers seek from us. Support from philanthropy is a small, but important, way in which we are able to ensure deep and sustained coverage of topics at the heart of The Guardian’s editorial agenda.

Why should partners work with The Guardian to advance story-telling and reporting that drives discourse and impact? It’s not simply a case of our independence, stature, and reach. We’ve made our name thinking innovatively about news landscapes and traditional revenue models continue to erode, and we work with philanthropic partners in transparent and responsible ways.

In collaboration with The Guardian and other partners, theguardian.org will work to advance and transform public discourse around some of the most pressing issues of our time, drive and amplify the impact of The Guardian journalism, and develop partnerships across academia, non-profits and other media that share theguardian.org’s aims. Of course, receiving support from philanthropy does not mean that we would ever shy away from criticizing philanthropists or private foundations when warranted, and indeed we have done so in the past on numerous occasions.

Helping to re-establish trust in journalism is essential if its audience is to be retained, but can foundations establish their brand fides with the public?

A round the world, policymakers, scientists and journalists are grappling with an epidemic of bad information: propaganda, biased claims, hoaxes and more. The deluge of falsehoods is further amplified by social sharing among partisans and a digital news environment that rewards clicks over comprehension.

For funders, this communications environment is toxic not only for an informed citizenry, but because reliable information and rigorous journalism are central to achieving many philanthropic goals. That’s why many foundations have turned their attention to understanding the problem and supporting solutions.

At Media Impact Funders, we’ve been working with a cohort of foundations on combating misinformation. One of these is the Hewlett Foundation. Together we’ve organized a series of three webinars, each of which examines research and projects related to different interventions: each of the content production end of the process, on distribution via social platforms and on media consumption.

The role that online platforms play in distributing information is relatively neglected, however, these platforms are now finding ways to work in collaboration with funders, journalists and academic researchers to improve information quality. For example, the Google News Lab was a founding partner of First Draft News, a global coalition of journalism, human rights and technology organizations dedicated to improving reporting standards and online information. Twitter and Facebook have also signed on. Funders of the project include the Craig Newmark Philanthropic Fund, and the News Integrity Initiative, which itself is a consortium of foundation and tech industry leaders based at City University of New York.

But platforms can only do so much to filter or label false information. Ultimately, people need to trust the information they get in order to act upon it and foundations are supporting new ways for outlets and reporters to engage audiences and build that trust. This was the subject of the first webinar in our series. Among those represented were the Democracy Fund, the Trusting News project, Outlier Media, the Solutions Journalism Network and the Membership Puzzle Project.

The Democracy Fund has been working closely with the Rita Allen Foundation and the Knight Foundation to untangle the complex dynamics of misinformation, and to resource both editorial and technological solutions. In the spring, they jointly announced an open call for applications to a related Prototype Fund. And in September, Knight announced a new Trust, Media and Democracy Initiative (see p43) which includes that prototype fund and other initiatives.

While all of this coordinated activity bodes well for finding ways to re-centre facts in our digital discourse, there’s a looming question. In a highly polarized moment, can the public trust foundations to be the custodians of truth? To answer this, foundations will need to look not just at the sometimes dubious practices of journalists, platforms, government-sponsored trolls, or lax news consumers, but at their own. Some of this thinking has already started – for example, see the American Press Institute’s Guide on philanthropic funding of media and news, which drew insights from funders about how to preserve journalists’ editorial independence while still holding true to philanthropic goals. Given the shrinking public trust in all institutions, bolstering faith in foundations will continue to be a challenge.
A Conversation about fake news that we need to have

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How can you rely on funders, but guard against interference? The Conversation has a way to make it work

Anyone looking for evidence that public discourse can’t handle complex ideas need look no further than the rapid demise of the term ‘fake news’ in 2017. After the 2016 US presidential election, BuzzFeed journalist Craig Silverman co-opted the term to attack media outlets, such as CNN and the New York Times, whose reporting he disliked. ‘Fake news’ morphed into a term of derision, casting a fog of confusion and tainting all media outlets with unreliability.

If you’ll indulge on America for just a moment longer, the journalist Kurt Anderson recently wrote a terrific article in The Atlantic describing his country’s unique and longstanding preference for fantasy over reality. ‘How America lost its mind’ is a rigorous history of American magical thinking that ends with a call for ‘new protocols for media hygiene’ and a grassroots movement to address the problem.

The Conversation is a global network of media websites that has been in the vanguard of such a movement since it was launched in Melbourne in 2011. Its mission is to work with academics and researchers to provide reliable information to a broad public, based on the premise that just as clean water is vital for health, clean information is essential for healthy democracy. It now operates in the UK, US, France, Africa, Canada, Indonesia, New Zealand and Australia. It is now read by more than 5.8 million users a month directly and more than 35 million via re-publication of its articles on other media websites.

The funding relationship and independence
The Conversation is funded by universities, readers and foundations so its newsworthy articles can be provided free to those who need them most. It is an organization well placed to work with philanthropists. It adopts policies and processes that ensure funding relationships are transparent. Every academic author has to disclose all relevant sources of funding. The Conversation also prominently acknowledges its university and philanthropic funders, both to give credit where it is due and to make it clear to readers we have nothing to hide. As others in this issue have pointed out, a crucial issue is philanthropic funding of media is the distinction between financial dependence and editorial independence. Editorial policies create a clear boundary between funders and the editorial decision-making process. A detailed profile also lists each academic’s publications and qualifications so readers can assess for themselves the academic’s expertise.

Working closely with many foundations and universities, this brand of quality journalism provides essential context to help people make sense of a complex and confusing barrage of information. Along the way it aims to help political leaders make better decisions and provide essential insights into our environment, our culture and our history. One day it might even help put an end to fake news – however you define it.

‘Fake news’ morphed into a term of derision, casting a fog of confusion and tainting all media outlets with unreliability.

Philanthropy needs scrutiny; enlightened foundations should fund our sector’s media

Charles Keidan
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Philanthropy associations and consultants can’t either. While they do provide direction and in some cases leadership – Vikki Spruill of the Council on Foundation’s calls for greater diversity is one such example – their primary task is to serve members and clients. Philanthropy scholarship can make an important contribution. But academic knowledge is under-developed and too weighted towards business schools, which tend to be naturally partial to philanthropy.

So what about the popular media and the philanthropy media? Sadly, popular coverage lacks curiosity about the field’s institutions, systems, dynamics and people. This might change now that prominent titles like The Washington Post, The Atlantic, and London’s Evening Standard are owned by philanthropists, while others like The Guardian and Spiegel are funded by professionally-run foundations. But while these developments will increase interest in philanthropy, they could make objective coverage harder, not easier, notwithstanding efforts to ensure safeguards between funding and editorial content.

So if no one enjoys absolute independence, how can independent coverage of philanthropy be sustained?

Here, the philanthropy media has an important role to play. For over 20 years, Alliance has told the story of global philanthropy under the astute guidance of my predecessor Caroline Hartnell. Today, our special features and columns aim to give readers original and challenging thinking. Meanwhile, in the US, newcomers like Inside Philanthropy pen crisp, and sometimes, cutting analysis, as do stalwarts like Non-Profit Quarterly, Stanford Social Innovation Review and Chronicle of Philanthropy. But Alliance, for one, could do more if it had more resources. And it could say more if it had more independence.

Avoiding self-censorship in my editorial judgement is a daily hazard. Exactly how critical should we be towards the field that sustains us? Foundations give us the funding and sponsorship we need to survive – just enough to do our job but not enough to be fully independent. Bruce Sievers and Patrice Schneider suggest that the culture of non-profit philanthropy media – the creation of endowments to provide a regular income stream, a measure of financial stability, and some much-needed intellectual and editorial freedom. But it takes a special kind of foundation to enable journalism that takes a critical eye to its work. Yet the field’s long-term wellbeing will be served by backing the infrastructure and eco-system of philanthropy journalism that would be particularly suited to a non-profit philanthropy media – the creation of endowments to provide a regular income stream, a measure of financial stability, and some much-needed intellectual and editorial freedom.

A more informed debate would enrich all sides by giving the public and practitioners alike greater insight into philanthropy’s potential and limitations. At present, philanthropy lacks the mirror it needs and deserves.
The Philanthropic Mind – Surprising discoveries from Canada’s top philanthropists
Chuck English and Mo Lidsky

Reviewed by Michael Alberg-Seberich

This book is an express introduction to private philanthropy in Canada – a country that, so far, has not been on the radar in most works on private giving. Fundraising and marketing adviser Chuck English and investment adviser Mo Lidsky interviewed more than 40 Canadian donors for this book. They use these interviews as a basis for observations on donor characteristics in general, advice for fundraisers on how to appeal to such donors, and recommendations for donors on their giving. This is an ambitious goal for a relatively short book of less than 150 pages.

The authors identify 19 topics concerning the philanthropy of high net-worth individuals, starting out with ‘You can’t judge the philanthropist’s playbook by its cover’ and closing with ‘Philanthropists are just people’. This language indicates an advisory tone.

The uniqueness of The Philanthropic Mind is the qualitative base. The authors have woven their interview material deeply into the well-written text. One third of the book is material deeply into the well-written text. A good example is the chapter ‘It’s all about the right person’, in which several interviewees describe the importance of who actually asks them for a major gift. In ‘How not to get the gift’ donors openly talk about mistakes in their giving, as well as their experiences with fundraising professionals.

Most chapters end with references to (academic) research on, for instance, why people give or why donors burn out. Other chapters end with brief stories that contextualize, for instance ‘The mystery of marketing material’.

For a reader not from Canada or North America, the book raises a couple of questions. Most of the donors interviewed talk about gifts to universities, hospitals and large art institutions – prime recipients of private giving in Canada. In addition, most of the donors have taken on roles as fundraisers for such institutions. The openness with which authors and interviewees discuss this practice may be a starting point for greater reflection on the societal effects of this practice in further publications.

The Philanthropic Mind may have taken on too big a task. It is, in the end, a book for fundraising professionals. It certainly speaks to them when it describes the ‘point that is at the heart of this book’ as ‘fundraisers will only be successful when they approach the philanthropist with the thoughtfulness and sensitivity he or she deserves’. For other readers the book gives an insight into Canada’s overall culture of philanthropy.

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To order www.thephilanthropicmind.com

Smart risks: how small grants are helping to solve some of the world’s biggest problems
Edited by Jennifer Lentfer and Tanya Cothran

Reviewed by John Harvey

Smart risks: how small grants are helping to solve some of the world’s biggest problems has an unusual origin story. One of its editors, a passionate writer herself, put out a call to colleagues to join a writers’ collaborative for international grantmakers, its aim being two-fold: to use creative writing as a tool for learning about global philanthropy, and to document the impact of ‘small grants’, a topic not well covered within mainstream philanthropic and development literature.

The result of this endeavour is a new publication that should be of great interest to the global philanthropy community. In all, more than 20 individuals with a combined development-related experience of over 125 years contributed. Documenting their many lessons learned – often after disappointment and failure – is indeed an important contribution to our sector.

The ‘smart risks’ of the title vary somewhat from author to author, but the common ground among all is making a contrast with conventional development aid and global philanthropy, the editors state that ‘Smart risks start “where people are” and support the local processes that build upon communities’ unique strengths, resources and ideas. Smart risks also require trust in the analysis and strategies of grassroots partners and the courage and humility to accept that the best solutions often come from the ground up.’

As every author shares, such letting go is much easier said than done. The book’s chapters document numerous impediments: bureaucracy, a Western preference for linear processes, an inability to trust, intellectual and cultural arrogance, ‘obsessive measurement disorder’… the list of challenges is indeed long.

While all authors assert the primacy of local leadership, some acknowledge that outsiders can, under the right circumstances, bring value. Among the assets highlighted are the ability to connect and convene, to bring models and lessons learned from elsewhere, and to ask questions that insiders may not be able to.

The book’s chapters are, for the most part, case studies, anecdotes, and stories. Not surprisingly given the book’s origins as a creative writing collaborative, the writing style is non-academic and somewhat journalistic, chapters often opening with a personal scene-setting paragraph. A number of text boxes scattered throughout add practical advice and are strong additions to the main chapters.

The book’s subtitle, referring as it does to ‘small grants’, is not ideal. While all the chapters happen to describe experiences with small grants, what is most important in the stories is not the how much, but the how: the ways in which enabling a local community’s strengths, resources and ideas best guarantee success. Indeed, one quite refreshing chapter pushes back on the cult of small grantmaking: ‘There are times when small is too small. Where communities have historically been under-resourced, it is important and strategic to guard against over-romanticizing small grants and sacrificing impact.’ My hope is that this subtitle doesn’t dissuade larger grantmakers from picking up this book. Truly, the key learnings in this worthwhile publication are as vital to the Gates and Wellcome Trusts of the world as they are to the smallest of grantmakers.

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Book reviews
Convenings debate non-profit journalism

Claire Hoffman of the Goldhirsh Foundation writes:

Over the last six months, I’ve participated in two panels on non-profit journalism and philanthropy. I see non-profit journalism as a response to two related crises. The first is the proliferation of news outlets on the web, which is threatening the business model of traditional media outlets. In the last year, a second crisis has surfaced, a crisis in the credibility and independence of the press itself.

The first panel – organized by the Synergos Global Philanthropy Circle – met in March, at a time when a recent Gallup Poll had found that only 32 per cent of Americans trust the media, the lowest figure in the history of such polling. In these circumstances, how can philanthropists support an empowered, intelligent press? An idea that surfaced from the panel was voiced by Steve Coll, dean of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. He suggested that part of the erosion of trust in media is that much of it comes from coastal cities and is not representative of the country. In response, ProPublica has recently asked for proposals from smaller news organizations to fund a year-long, ProPublica-style investigative project in their town.

The next panel was staged by The Philanthropy Workshop in July. It centered more on emerging philanthropic efforts, including NewsMatch – a collaboration between the Democracy Fund, the Knight Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation that provides up to $3 million in matching funds to support non-profit news organizations – and InterNews, which helps refugees arriving in Greece to get information critical to their survival, alongside the news they receive on their mobile phones from other local news sources.

Both these conversations underscored that independent non-profit journalism is important in the social change tool chest to educate and empower people.

http://tinyurl.com/Hoffman-NPJ

Conferences

Dates for your diary

Confluence Philanthropy’s 8th Annual Practitioners Gathering
13-15 March 2018 Berkeley, California US

Jewish Funders Network International Conference
11-15 March 2018 Tel Aviv, Israel

Dasra Philanthropy Forum
24 February 2018 Mumbai, India

March 2018

Diaspora philanthropy

Heightened levels of migration, significantly greater movements of capital across borders, the engagement of younger and newer philanthropists and social entrepreneurs, and technological innovation are re-shaping diasporas worldwide, and creating new configurations of diaspora philanthropy. In this special feature, Alliance editor Charles Keidan and guest editor Mark Sidel of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) highlight the new terrain of diaspora philanthropy, and profile voices, thinking and philanthropic action from diverse diaspora communities around the world.

Coming up in Alliance Extra...

• Philanthropy Thinker Krystian Seibert on funding in indigenous communities and He Jin on the proliferation of foundations in China
• CAF’s Rhodri Davies and journalist Fran Yeoman react to our special feature on philanthropy and the media
• Announcement of the finalists of the 5th Olga Alexeeva Memorial Prize

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