



An overview by Lani Evans
A Report for the Winston Churchill Fellowship 2015

Acknowledgements

My exploration of participatory practice began when I had the opportunity to establish a grant-making organisation from scratch, a process that allowed me to reflect on my experiences as a grant recipient and consider alternative models of practice. The Thankyou Charitable Trust has now been operating as a participatory funder for four years.

This paper came about as a result of the Winston Churchill Fellowship, 2015. The Fellowship allowed me to travel and meet with a wide range of intelligent thinkers, radical philanthropists and participatory practitioners, primarily in North America and the United Kingdom. More importantly, the Fellowship allowed me to take time out of my day-to-day work to think, read and reflect.

I gratefully acknowledge the contributions made by many within this field. In particular, I would like to thank: Annette Culpan, Margy-Jean Malcom, Iain Hines, Yvonne Trask and Kate Frykberg for their kind and patient readings of my drafts; Giles Ruck for inspiring conversations on mountain tops; The Vodafone Foundation and the Thankyou Charitable Trust for allowing me space to experiment; Philanthropy New Zealand for encouragement and dissemination and to all of the interview subjects in Europe and North America. Special thanks to Nadia Van Der Linde from the Red Umbrella Trust, Katy Love from the Wikimedia Foundation, Ruby Johnson from FRIDA and Arianne Shaffer from the Kindle Foundation – you are inspiring.

I would also like to acknowledge my background, which inevitably frames for my thinking. I am a pakeha woman from a middle class, left-leaning family, full of teachers, academics and public services professionals. Their thinking has created the worldview that informs this paper.

And finally, I would like to acknowledge the limitations of this writing. It is by no means comprehensive and I am conscious that it leaves out many participatory methods of giving, and does not include indigenous models of giving and reciprocity. I hope to one day rectify this. In the meantime, I hope this first exploration sparks useful conversations.



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Introduction

“The most intractable obstacle to the proposition that modern, organized philanthropy can become a lively actor in a vibrant democracy is the culture-laden belief, often unconscious but seldom questioned, that possession of greater material wealth or professional expertise is necessarily accompanied by superior skills to make things better no matter what the circumstance. It’s simply assumed that people with these assets know more. This top-down cultural presumption extends to narrow beliefs about the identification, measurement, and evaluation of effective philanthropic practice.”

PETER PENNEKAMPⁱ

I am interested in philanthropy. I am interested in how we give, why we give, who we give to and how we can do it better. But I’m also interested in thinking about whether or not philanthropy hinders social change – are our decision making practices and our decision makers themselves, restricting our thinking and therefore our ability to make meaningful change? And if so, can participatory practices and modifications in funder behaviour help to alter that?

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Philanthropy, originating from the Greek word meaning “love of humanity”ⁱⁱ, was first coined by the playwright Aeschylusⁱⁱⁱ, in reference to the gifts Prometheus bestowed on humanity. With strong roots in philosophy and religious practice, philanthropy is a construct whose meaning has varied throughout history and within different cultural contexts^{iv}.

In a western worldview, one common definition is that of Lester Salamon, who describes philanthropy as “the private giving of time or valuables (money, security, property) for public purposes; and/or one from of income of private non-profit organizations.”^v In “Giving 2.0” Laura Arrillaga-Andreesenvi describes a philanthropist as “anyone who gives anything – time, money, experience, skills and networks – in any amount to create a better world”. These broad descriptions, in a very real way, turn us all into philanthropists - especially in Aotearoa New Zealand, one of the most generous nations in the world^{vii}.

For early western and many modern philanthropists, the concept of philanthropy is to use wealth to improve society by addressing the root causes of social ills^{viii}. In this paradigm, charity (which emerges in almost all religious traditions^{ix}) addresses symptoms, while philanthropy seeks to fundamentally change and improve the human condition.

Despite these ideals, there are many paradoxes and tensions inherent in philanthropy today. Much of philanthropy still behaves like charity, giving aid to symptomatic issues, rather than acting as a force for addressing and unpacking the systematic cause of social, cultural, creative and environmental ills. The National Committee for Responsive Grant-making estimates that only 15% of foundation funding is spent on social justice grant-making^x, defined as grants “that work for structural change in order to increase the opportunity of those who are the least well off politically, economically, and socially.”^{xi}

Current philanthropic practices often funnel power into the hands of a few individuals in positions of power, whose world views and cultural ideologies take precedence in all aspects of philanthropic endeavour^{xixiii}. These decision makers can, often unintentionally, help to maintain the status quo, by holding onto and thereby imbedding their own privilege, and by continuing to fund symptoms and interventions, rather than funding systemic issues and social movements.

And when philanthropic initiatives do become more strategic and shift their focus towards root causes, there can be a backlash from the charities they already fund about their responsiveness to current community need.

In addition, the structural components of philanthropic organisations often hinder the work of the organisations they choose to fund, by creating a competitive funding landscape that disincentivises collective action^{xiv}. Philanthropies demand robust and constantly changing accountability from grant recipients and increasingly pressure organisations to participate in revenue-generating activities to achieve a potentially unrealisable goal of “sustainability”, independent of the ongoing need for philanthropy. Meanwhile they themselves are under no obligation to provide transparency or accountability to the communities they influence and financial pressures for philanthropists are rarely an issue.

There are numerous ways to address these philanthropic problems, including practical changes to legal structures, adaptation of processes, changes to how, who and what we fund and, as Mitchell Kutney^{xv} postulates, changes to the culture and values of the philanthropic sector.

This paper aims to look at only one of these methods of change – participatory philanthropy. It will briefly examine the pros and cons of participatory philanthropic practice, as well as describing a range of models of practice, using case studies of organisations as a descriptive tool.

Why Participatory Philanthropy?

Participation is “the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in decisions that affect their futures.”

ARNSTEIN^{xvi}

Participatory practice in philanthropy is a way of actively engaging communities in decision making, of valuing people on the ground, as subject matter experts, as practitioners of the funded work, and as the end beneficiaries of services.

As a practice, participatory philanthropy has emerged from grassroots activism and assumes that better decisions will be made because of the knowledge and information contributed by communities and end-users. It is a response to, and a deconstruction of the power imbalance that exists within philanthropy and an unpacking of the privilege that funders and philanthropists experience.

As pointed out in a recent article *“By their nature, donors are people of economic privilege (though some did not grow up in those conditions). Many of us with careers in philanthropy also come from various forms of privilege or at least experience it now. Yet for centuries, privileged people have engaged in philanthropy that is, at times, less than effective. It’s clear that — in order to do philanthropy well — we must recognize and confront privilege.”*^{xvii} Participatory practice is a way of both acknowledging privilege and working towards removing it from the process.

When done well, participation can help people understand their own leadership and agency, enable decolonisation and empower individuals and communities. For funders who aim to enable social change, participatory practice provides a social justice framework that values lived experience and helps funders to bring their own values to life. If we are a disability sector funder for example, led by non-

disabled people, then we risk perpetuating the discrimination and marginalisation that community experiences – reinforcing the very thing our funding aims to end. Participatory practice models allow lived experience and community expertise into the room and promotes robust conversation and mutual accountability.

“The disability rights slogan is “Nothing About Us Without Us”. The most important right in the UN convention is participation of people with disabilities in decision-making that affects them.”

MATTY HART

Participatory practice also supports better decision making by bringing greater diversity into the allocation space. A 2014 study^{xxviii} found that 87% of boards and trustees were caucasian, 62% male, 2% LGBTI and 1% disabled. In the US less than 10% of board members are under forty and 75% of foundations have no diversity policy. These statistics are US based, and while the New Zealand context is different, a quick scan of the environment shows many similarities^{xxix}.

Diversity matters because it creates better decisions. Bringing varied worldviews and cultural perspectives into a room generates conflict, preventing 'group think' and forcing people to articulate and examine their assumptions^{xx}. Who is in the room also effects who we fund. Communities that have been historically excluded tend to receive less funding, in part because foundation boards tend to fund organisations that they know and trust. In her report “Public Power in Philanthropy” Jasmine McGinnis found that homogenous boards are less likely to fund nonprofits outside their existing professional and personal networks.^{xxi}

Participatory practice creates stronger connections across communities. The process provides participants with a clearer understanding of their sector, leading to a reduction in replication of services, the ability to fill gaps in service provision, the networks to collectively advocate for policy change and an enhanced sense of belonging. This sense of belonging can be particularly important for marginalised and vulnerable communities. Nadia Van Der Linde of The Red Umbrella Fund found that participatory processes generated strong relationships across the sex work sector, enabling honest discussions and the development of peer support and mentoring networks that lasted far beyond the grants.

Participatory practice also alters the power dynamics in relationships. If we decide together, then as a funder, I'm not doing *to* you anymore, I'm doing *with* you. Ideally this shift helps to redress the power imbalance^{xxii} that exists between giver and reciever and leads to a more robust and reciprocal relationship. Grant recipients are able to show weaknesses and discuss challenges, rather than presenting only the fundable lens^{xxiii xxiv}.

Private philanthropy uses (arguably) public tax dollars to impact communities in ways they have no mechanism to control, through the often generous tax deductions received by philanthropists. Foundations are not beholden to an electorate and the public rarely has any way of influencing who their decision makers are^{xxv xxvi}, yet larger foundations have the ability to influence public service sector initiatives^{xxvii}. Participatory practice can help by shining light on both the decision- makers and their processes.

Finally, participatory practice allows grant-recipients to better understand the challenges of grant- making. What does a good grant application look like? What are the legal and process restrictions and how does it feel to choose? These are all useful insights for non-profit practitioners.

The Downsides of Participatory Practice

Participatory grant making also has its downsides. Some funders have worry about the practical challenges of implementing large participatory projects on tight timelines^{xxviii} and how authentic community engagement can be for organisations that need to operate with agility and speed. Others contend that the concept of “local knowledge” is itself flawed and can be used to “conceal the underlying politics of knowledge production and use”^{xxix} - covertly keeping power in the hands of a few, and simply changing the mechanism by which that occurs (see Foucault^{xxx}).

The participatory process can be costly for participants^{xxxi} who are required to contribute their time, as well as emotional and intellectual effort. *“The discussions are really grueling and it takes a huge amount of effort for committee members. They sacrifice so much of their own time and effort to be present for what can be a really intense process. Another challenge for me is that I really want to facilitate the deliberations in a way that allows us to come up with a decision that everyone can stand behind. It is... well, it's a huge challenge, but it's also a powerful thing to witness.”* says Katy Love, of The Wikimedia Foundation

Capacity is also a concern, as the time commitment and depth of relationships with funded groups makes it difficult for smaller funders. With some groups, there may also be educational challenges that must be addressed. Jez Hall from the Participatory Budgeting group in England found that people who aren't used to being engaged in decisionmaking will often head towards shallow solutions in the first instance. *“Ask anyone what they want to fix in their neighbourhood and the first thing they'll say is 'clean up the graffiti or the dog poop on my street. Part of our job is to help people unpack their community needs and to understand the breadth and depth of the opportunity, not just take the first thing they say at face value.”*

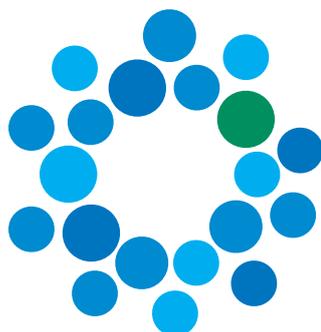
There is also the opportunity for funding and the community development aspects of participatory practice to be captured by the entrenched influence of local elites^{xxxii} and there are trust and conflict of interest issues to manage. One US based funder, who funds internationally, described the challenges they face when deciding who to include in their processes. *“It takes us a long time to establish relationships with people that we know we can trust. There are very real opportunities for individuals to divert funding to their friends and family instead of the communities in need.”*

Others find it difficult to align organisational mission with community direction of travel. *“There's this inherent tension... how do we accomplish our mission while still valuing what people bring and the solutions communities come up with, which might require a completely different lense. The balance is very tricky. I think that's why most funders don't go there. It makes funders lives easier to say we're going to figure out what we want to see and we're going to make that happen. Valuing what people bring to the table and figuring out how to mix that with your needs as a foundation - it's difficult work.”* Sara, Humboldt Area Foundation

Possibly the most confounding factor in participatory grant-making is the grant-makers themselves. Are we willing to let go of the power we hold? What would it look like and feel like to hand over power to the communities we are funding in a deep and supported way? And can communities handle it? Do we fundamentally believe that communities will do good if we give them the education, the tools and the opportunities? But perhaps a better question is, if we trust people, put good practice in place and let go of control and ego, how might we be able to deeply support change?

Models of Practice

Representative Participation



The representative participation model involves bringing in practitioners, sector experts or individuals with lived experience to add depth and knowledge to discussions and decisions. The representative idea emerges in many different forms – from a single participant to entire boards composed of subject matter experts.

The most common form of representative participation involves a single voice in the room. This model can add huge amounts of value but, if poorly managed, can be disempowering for the representative – especially if they are from a marginalised group. A US based youth funder^{xxxiii} seconded two African American teenage girls to a board of older, caucasian, professional men. The young women found themselves in a context that silenced them and, without an adult ally to create space for their voices and offer support, their contributions became tokenistic.

“Sometimes your goal is to do good and sometimes your goal is to appear to do good. How you bring representatives into the room will demonstrate the outcome you're after.”

ANONYMOUS INTERVIEWEE

This representative concept can also play out in the opposite direction. One social justice funder has created an allocation committee made up of community activists, with one donor participant seat. The donor representatives rotate through on a six monthly basis and are given education and support to ensure that they can participate in conversations and decision making appropriately, exemplifying the need to awhi and support representatives into their role.

It can be an incredibly valuable experience. Cathy Raphael, a self-described “serial philanthropist”, said the opportunity to sit on an activist-led board helped her to understand the breadth of the issue and the experiences of on-the-ground community workers. It led to increased financial contributions, helped her become more strategic in her thinking and provided the impetus to talk to her peers about their involvement as well.

Representative boards take another step forward, bringing a group of people from a sector together to make decisions. These representative boards have different structures and include different types of representatives – either those with external expertise (academics, activists and coal-face workers) or those with lived experience of the problem the funds are trying to solve.

The Three Rivers Foundation has a representative board that only includes those with current, lived experience. Teens for Change provides grants to youth led

organisations working on social justice and systemic change issues in Pittsburgh. Their decision makers are all 13-18 years old. There are currently fifteen decision makers on the allocation committee, supported by two other young people who operate as facilitators. The whole group is then supported by a foundation staff member who helps with logistics, steps in when the group requests and makes sure things are strategically aligned.

The Teens For Change model has been a huge success. Not only has it demonstrated the incredible passion, intellect and skills of young people, but it has influenced the wider community sector in the city. Other community and philanthropic practitioners in Pittsburgh said that since this process started, the youth development space is more cohesive, less competitive, has a louder voice and more training on offer in the community than any other sector.

The North Star Fund, based in New York, uses a benching process. Grant allocation decisions are made by a board of community activists and practitioners, with an additional bench of “extras”. These “extras” represent subject matter expertise and can step in if applications pertain to their knowledge base, or if regular board members are unable to attend a meeting. This system allows the fund to ensure decisions always include specific expert opinion and they always meet quorum.



The mechanisms for bringing people onto these boards is also varied. The Wikimedia Foundation has a mixed model, where committee members join the board through two different processes. Fifty percent are invited onto the committee through a board selection and fifty percent through a democratic public election process. The board appointments work to ensure the skillset mix is correct and the public get to nominate the people they think best represent their voice. And they do – they have around 6000 public votes in each board election.

In New Zealand the Community Organisations Grants Scheme (COGS) also used a representative board structure to give out significant funding each year. COGS has 37 distribution areas around the country and boards are made up of community members nominated and voted on by their local communities. The funds provide essential funds to grassroots non-profit organisations and is administered by the Department of Internal Affairs, who provide secretariat support.

The Teens For Change fund was set up by the Three Rivers Foundation as fund for youth led projects that tackle the root causes of systemic injustice. The framework they use is a systems and intersectionality approach, the idea that societies are governed by systems that are set up to help certain people succeed and certain people fail. At Teens For Change the board members are all young people, aged between 13 and 18 years old, supported by a facilitator who is able to contribute institutional knowledge.

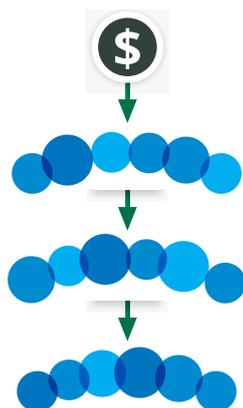
"First we try to educate and inspire the board members, examining, for example the difference between philanthropy for social change and the idea of charity. We look at what intersectionality is and how it effects us and our communities. Then we teach the practicalities, like due dilligence, how to read application letters, summaries and financials, how to look for inconsistencies."

The organisation has been operating for four years in the Pittsburgh area. They invest significant time in the education of board members, expanding their world views to ensure they make the best decisions.

"I think going in, I was very nonchalant. I mean, I knew about the distress of African-American communities in Pittsburgh, like oh wow we don't have great education, or access to transportation. But I didn't understand the systems that sit behind those things. Now I can look around the room and see how my male counterparts are treated or how other people might be treated based on race or social background. I can see that systems are set up in ways that dehumanize some people, and maybe even most people."

The young people make all of the funding decisions, using concensus -based decision making and like all boards, it takes time to get it right. "The first year everyone wants to fund everything. The second year you want to fund no-one. And finally, in the third year you're like, "Alright these are fundable places, these are the individuals that we would like to fund. So yeah, it takes practice."

Rolling Collective



The rolling collective model of participation engages all grant recipients in the process of both giving and receiving funding. It offers grant recipients the opportunity to become allocation committee members either during, or after their time as grantees.

This model of practice was pioneered by the Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres in 2003, as a feminist alternative to decreasing development cooperation, especially for social movements and grassroots organizations. They work specifically with women's rights groups who are seeking social and economic justice and believe that this model of practice helps to build opportunities for collaboration and collective action.

The Thankyou Charitable Trust, based in New Zealand, also uses the rolling collective model to make small, grass-roots grants in specific geographic communities. Each group of grant recipients becomes the allocation committee for the next round, allowing everyone to experience both sides of the funding table - to both do the work and also see and support a broader range of projects and organisations within their community.

"We're working in post code areas covering communities that generally have less than 10,000 people. The workers there know their place. They understand their communities in ways that we, as outsiders don't and we believe they will be a better judge of what interventions will create the best outcomes and really fulfill a community need. We see this as an opportunity to create connections between people, to empower communities and leaders, but also to educate them, about due diligence, about philanthropic processes and about the difficulty of having to choose."

CAROLYN TIMMS, CO-CHAIR OF THANKYOU CHARITABLE TRUST

There are challenges to this model, particularly around managing conflict of interest and ensuring that funds are not captured and held by particular subsets of the community sector. It requires clear communications, good policies and consistent facilitation to be effective, as well as enough time for relationships to be built between the funders and the communities.

We set up the Thankyou Charitable Trust in 2012 as a grass-roots funder for specific geographic locations. The impetus for the model came from a combination of frustration, curiosity and desire to use funding processes as a tool for social justice.

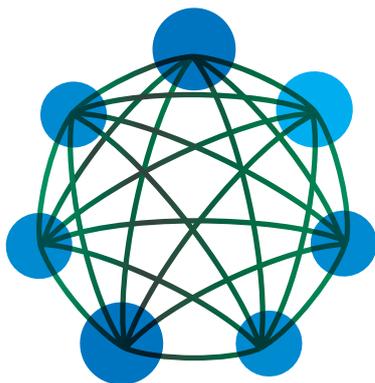
The frustration came from the invisibility of grant-making – as a community worker, I would submit applications, wait anxiously and then receive a response, usually without comment or context. The decision-making processes I was interacting with lacked transparency and accountability and as a result, I felt disconnected and invisibilised. With the Thankyou Charitable Trust we wanted to implement a process that demystified funding, that helped community practitioners understand what was going on in the decision making process and to give communities an opportunity to be heard and to learn.

There was also a social justice element to the rolling collective model. As an articulate, well-educated pakeha woman, I have a similar education, language and world view to many of the people making funding decisions: I can tell you the story you want to hear. Because of that, my projects would get funded – even when they weren't providing the best outcomes for the community. With the Thankyou Charitable Trust, we were trying to find a funding mechanism that would value a more varied set of cultural understandings, that would get around the barriers of language and social capital and that would enable us to work in communities that we weren't familiar with by engaging people locally.

The trust works with place-based communities, defined by postal codes and selected by levels of deprivation and trustee capacity. We put out a call for funding applications and our board members decide who receives the first round of funding. After that first round our trustees no longer have a decision making role, our job is to facilitate the conversation and provide logistics support, but all of the decision making is community led. Each round of grant recipients become the next allocation board for the next funding round and our accountability process is a pot-luck dinner party, where grant recipients, local decision makers, other funders and our trustees come together to hear the stories of the grantees, share our aspirations and generally network in a whanau-based environment.

We have seen some beautiful consequences, like groups sharing resources and grant recipients giving their funding to other applicants, because they see and value the work of others. I believe this grant process helps to strengthen community connection and acknowledge local leaders. The process allows us to get out of the competitive mindset, learn more about who is operating in our area and engage our own generosity.

Closed Collective



The closed collective model of participatory funding is most appropriate when there are funds to be distributed to a particular community of interest/sector in a particular geographic area. It is most effective when the scope has very clear boundaries that include and exclude appropriate organisations.

Closed collective models bring all of the organisations working in space together to discuss trends, opportunities and gaps and collectively decide the best use of funds. All of the participants receive an agreed financial donation at every allocation and then use consensus based decision making to allocate the remainder.

The closed collective aims to create the space and opportunity for groups working in the same sector to work together and build relationships. It supports both the fund holder and the organisations themselves understand the overall context they are working within and it highlights where there are replications or gaps in service provision. It also refocuses the funding process on the end user, not the needs of organisations, or the needs of funders.

This process helps to reduce competition. Cha and Neilson^{xxxiv} found that increased competition tangibly decreases the community benefit generated through funding and that financial frustrations are cited as the leading cause of community organisations CEO burnout^{xxxv}. A highly competitive funding environment, as noted by Jez Hall^{xxxvi}, actively disincentivises collaboration, while a collective decision-making process that includes all voices encourages it..

The key components of this method of practice are:

1. All appropriate organisation should have the opportunity to be involved;
2. The conversations are facilitated by a consistent, impartial individual
3. There is a financial incentive to participate;
4. Being in the room is a requirement for receiving funding;
5. Accountability is primarily to each other (and thereby the sector) not to the funders.

The Twigger Trust in Christchurch is one example of a closed collective. They receive endowment funds to work with women at risk of domestic violence in the Christchurch area. All of the organisations who work in that space are included in the collective and get together twice a year to talk about their practice, the changes they're seeing in the sector and their current and anticipated funding needs.

It all came out of a legal disagreement over where these funds should go. The Public Trust were constantly being taken to court and complaining about these rowdy community groups and I said, well, why not just get them to make the decisions. And that made sense and so we did it and now, 20 years later I don't think they (the Public Trust) can believe that this really little bit of money is enabling so much policy development amongst the sector, enabling so much collaboration between the sector, enabling service provision to be more fine tuned than it was previously because people don't need to duplicate, because they know what other people are doing.

KATHERINE PEET, FACILITATOR.

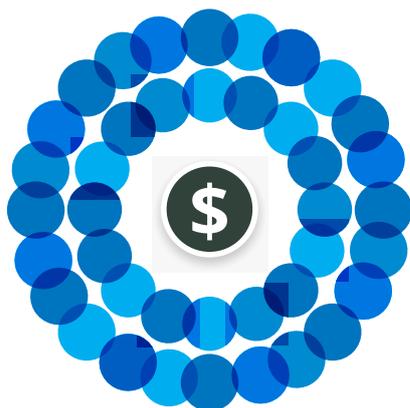
For the Twigger Trust funding process, The Public Trust provides a facilitator who holds institutional knowledge and ensures that the group adheres to the intentions of the fund. All of the collective participants receive an agreed amount of funding as part of the process. For the remaining money, the group works together to collectively allocate the funds based on what they see as current needs and sector priorities. Accountability is to each other – part of the meeting cycle includes each organisation reporting back on what they have done with the funds previously received.

Organisations enter the collective via an application process and exit the collective if they are no longer working in the areas outlined by the fund criteria. The group reviews the fund criteria at the beginning of each year to ensure that the parameters remain relevant in an ever-changing community context.

With the Twigger Trust, we've created an environment where there is not that competition angle in terms of the funding. The relationships are better and the services are better and in the end, I think the conversations we have and the relationships we've built are far more important than the money.

KATHERINE PEET, FACILITATOR.

Open Collective



The open collective model allows all interested parties to participate in decision making – including grant applicants. It assumes and expects a high level of integrity from voting participants and provides a high degree of transparency and community accountability. The Lafayette Practice has published several papers that describe and analyse the work of open collective participatory grant-makers in detail, including the recently published “Letting the Movement Decide”, “Who Decides?” and “Funding Free Knowledge The Wiki Way”. These are all invaluable resources for anyone interested in exploring open participatory practice.

The Wikimedia Foundation, operates in a global context, allocating a significant amount of funding. In the 2014-2015 financial year, the organisation gave away more than \$7 million of funds using participatory practice, but their work wasn't always open: *The Wikimedia Foundation's first grants were not participatory; they were handled and decided by a few staff in isolation. But that was very contrary to the ethos of our wikiworld, where everything is done in collaboration.*” said Katy Love, who manages the funding at Wikimedia. The organisation now employs some of the most sophisticated and transparent practice on a large scale, as described here in the Lafayette Practice report:

“The Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking process is uniquely designed to reflect the ethics, methods and agreements that are core to the overall Wikipedia model. Proposals are workshopped on public wikis and improved by volunteer editors. Decisions about which proposals to fund and how much funding to offer are made publically on wikis, in cooperation with volunteer committee members, Board members and staff, and with input from the larger community.

The Wikimedia Foundation has the largest peer-reviewed participation of its kind in the world... and just as anyone can become a Wikipedia editor, anyone who edits Wikipedia can make a proposal to the Foundation.”^{xxxvii}

The WikiMedia Foundation is a great model of an organisation challenging itself to change it's practice and model the values it's espousing – and, by engaging it's community in the process, it's developed a sophisticated, inclusive and constantly evolving philanthropic model.

Please note – this section, with the exception of the final quote, was taken directly from “Letting the Movement Decide – FRIDA Grantmaking Report” published by Lafayette and FRIDA Young Feminist Fund. The work they produced was thoughtful, nuanced and far more eloquent than anything I could produce.

“FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund was created by young feminist activists, their allies, and key organizations, namely, Association of Womens Rights in Development (AWID) and Central American Womens Fund (FCAM), from the women’s movement to fund brave activism led by young women, girls and trans youth.

The fund uses a model of participatory grantmaking in which the young feminist activists who apply for grants decide together who will receive funding - the first application of this model in a global context. FRIDA’s funding model is designed to fuel emerging leadership, respond dynamically to the rapidly changing on-the-ground realities of the most impacted communities, offer transparency of both process and outcomes, shift traditional power dynamics in philanthropy, and function as a hub of learning and knowledge development for broader feminist and philanthropic communities.

FRIDA uses a participatory grantmaking process that puts decision-making in the hands of young feminists themselves as agents of change, and aims to shift traditional power relations between funder and grantee. After applicants submit their proposals, a clear set of priorities guides the eligibility screening process led primarily by FRIDA’s Global Advisory Committee. Once proposals pass the eligibility test, they move into the voting stage led by applicants themselves, with applicants unable to vote for themselves. This means that applicants who meet the selection criteria vote on other applications in their region, in their language, and collectively decide where funding goes.

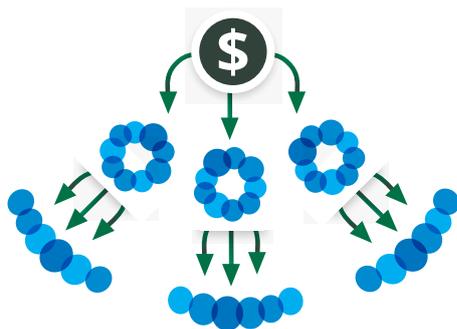
The voting results are then tallied and staff/advisors conduct a due diligence process to confirm the accuracy of nominated grantee applications. The final selection of grantees is announced, and grants are paid to groups. From here, successful groups participate in welcome calls, mid-point check-ins and a final review over the course of the one-year grant period. All groups have the potential to submit a renewal proposal.

Grantee feedback to FRIDA’s application process is positive, with applicants praising the ease and uniqueness of the model.^{xxxviii}

“Reviewing the applications is work but we’ve found that people are really happy to be part of the process because it allows them to see the variety of project and initiatives taking place like across the region. It’s an investment in their own learning. We receive applications from climate, crime and justice, sex and reproductive rights, LGBT rights etc. and by reading the applications, groups get a cross movement understanding and an opportunity to see more diverse strategies and issues. It’s a richness that they can’t get anywhere else.”

RUBY JOHNSON, FRIDA

Direct Transfers



Direct cash transfers work as participatory practice by removing the organisational middleman from the conversation. For the funder, the only criteria is a pre-determined level of poverty – no funding applications, no criteria for expenditure, no accountability reporting – they simply remove the non-profit agency or community organisation and go directly to the individual with lived experience, allowing them to decide where donations effecting their lives will be spent.

The concept of direct cash transfers as a poverty alleviation tool began post world war one with cash redistribution programmes run by European governments. This method of redressing the effects of inequality, considered ‘an alternative to more traditional and paternalistic approaches to social assistance’^{xxxix} regained popularity in the late 90's with Brazils Bolsa Familia programme, a successful and highly controversial programme begun under the auspices of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso^{xl}.

The Bolsa Familia model provides families in poverty with a monthly cash stipend on several conditions, including that their children attend 85% of school days. By 2003, the programme was working with 5 million families and 8.6 million children, but Bolsa Familia was beset by problems from the beginning – high implementation costs and a lack of due process that lead to targeting errors, omissions and duplications. Despite this, the programme succeeded in creating the desired outcomes, spurring a growth in direct transfer programmes.

Innovations for Poverty Action conducted randomized controlled trials to look at the efficacy of direct transfers as a philanthropic model of social change. The trial found:

- Recipients increased asset holdings by an average of 58%
- Had an average 28% increase in annual income
- Demonstrated a 42% reduction in the number of days that children went without food
- Found recipients showed self-reported increases in life satisfaction
- and there was no evidence of increases in crime or drug and alcohol abuse^{xli}

There are a number of other research projects that have also found positive medium-term outcomes. De Mel, Suresh, McKenzie and Woodruff^{xlii} found that men provided with one-time cash transfers in Sri Lanka had an increase in income of between 64% and 96% over the following five years. Another found that four years after youth received grants, they earned 41% more on average than those who had not received grants.^{xliii} However the data collection is complex and these studies have drawn criticism from academics and practitioners who have questioned the way the results have been communicated and the (general) premacy of immediate benefit over the longer term ROI and impacts on well-being^{xliiv}.

Chris Blattman^{xlv}, economist, blogger and cash transfer sceptic points out that much of the growth described by the research so far is simply a short-term burst for entrepreneurial individuals, rapidly curbed by the underlying, systemic problems of bad infrastructure and poor financial pathways. "If a poor person is enterprising, and their main problem is insufficient capital, terrific. If that's not their problem, throwing cash will not do much to help.... The root of the problem is political instability, economic uncertainty, and a country's high cost structure, among other things."^{xlvi} Direct transfer programmes also risk government abdication of responsibility – in Brazil the Bolsa Familia programmes fantastic short-term results are thought to be contributing to a government reduction in social spending^{xlvii}.

Direct giving programmes inarguably have a positive, in-the-moment impact on peoples lives, but do they encourage individual action at the expense of collective action? What would happen if these funds were given to the community to spend collectively, with a more holistic focus? Without a layered and nuanced range of support structures and services, direct cash transfers can improve baseline indicators and address immediate needs, but may prove unable to solve long-term issues.

In the book "Just Give Money to the Poor" Barrientos, Hanlon and Hulme state that "Direct transfers to households in extreme poverty enables them to access services and link up to growth," but that is predicated on the existence of goods, services and infrastructure. It is not just money that pulls people out of poverty. It is education, transportation, stable government, the existence and availability of health care services, a safe and healthy environment, a lack of discrimination and a raft of other social and environmental factors. As an alternative to traditional, top-down direct service development models, it has huge merit and could be a real game-changer, but it can only be of long term significance if rolled out in conjunction with strong community development, infrastructure development, political improvement and other broader systemic changes.

Give Directly is a US based organization that provides unconditional cash transfers to people living in poverty. They currently work in Kenya and Uganda and provide funds of approximately US\$1000 to households over a 9 month period, delivered to mobile phones via SMS. Give Directly selects it's regions of operation based on a combination of poverty data and logistics (specifically proximity to current base of operations). All households within the selected areas are able to access funds if they meet a range of eligibility criteria. The organisation currently distributes around \$1 million per month.

Aid programs have not been a raging success and so it might be time to take a step back and watch what people do with this money and understand their priorities and learn from them about what it is that they need. Because you can observe what they need by what they buy. That's useful data and an important insight. I don't think that we've reached a point in history where we know more about what poor people need than what they themselves know. Poor people are very knowledgeable about their own lives and from our far removed distance, we're not.

CAROLINA ROTH, GIVE DIRECTLY.

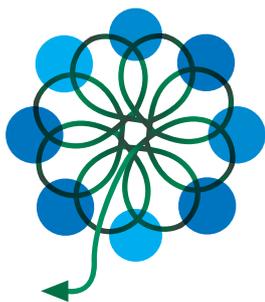
GiveDirectly was founded in 2008 by a group of economics Phd candidates. Their cash transfer programme is unconditional, which helps to reduce implementation and accountability costs and avoids many of the problems experienced by Bolsa Familia. In addition, GiveDirectly uses direct cash transfer via M-PESA, a mobile phone based money transfer system launched by Vodafone in 2007^{xlviii}. This has allowed them to develop efficient pipelines, process a large number of grants and scale rapidly.

Give Directly puts it's strongest focus on efficacy and on self-determination. Much like Peter Singers^{xlix} effective altruism movement, their theory of change is focused on the idea that money should be used to provide the most measurable outcomes for the most people in the most need. The organisation aims to ensure their programmes have consistently low implementation costs and consistently high impact and they are doing that incredibly well.

"I think that the cash transfer is a beautiful union of effective process and a really humble attitude. This is an evidence based intervention that is also extremely respectful to the recipient and lets them retain control and agency in their own lives."

CAROLINA ROTH

Crowd Funding



Crowdfunding is a method of philanthropy and fundraising that utilizes social capital and social networks to raise money for enterprise and for non-profits projects and entities. Crowd-funding can take place as a live-action event such as those run by The Funding Network, or, more commonly, via an online platforms. The power of the crowd is also used by community organisations as a way of increasing the reach of organized digital civic actions and more recently, through crowd-lending and equity crowd funding.

As an online experience, crowd-funding is relatively new with the first million dollar plus projects funded in early 2012. Donors Choose, a crowdfunding platform for teachers, launched in 2000 and was arguably the first public-good crowd funding platform. Since then, numerous civic crowdfunding intermediaries have launched with ability to raise large sums of money. Fred Wilson, a prominent venture capitalist, calculates that if Americans used just 1% of their investable assets to crowd fund they would release a \$300 billion surge of capital (The Economist). Crowd funding differs from traditional individuals donation forms in that it usually has an end goal, communicates with donors throughout the funding process and provides them with graduated rewards for their involvement.

Crowdfunding creates a space for organisations to engage in dialogue with their philanthropic public, can provide validation for community sector workers and can assist in collaboration, reducing the feelings of patch protection and the competitive nature of current funding paradigms.

There are benefits for the donor as well. Participation can increase knowledge and understanding of the issues in their community, offer users the ability to donate to causes that provide individual altruistic fulfillment and may help them to feel part of their community and feel ownership and empowerment around a project or a cause. It also democratises philanthropy and makes it clear that you don't need to be wealthy to contribute.

"Many social problems seem too large for any one person to make a difference. Making a donation gives the donor personal power over a complex issue that is much larger than himself".

Motivations for giving are also related to interpersonal connections between the giver and the requester and factors that influence giving include sympathy and empathyⁱⁱⁱ, guiltⁱⁱⁱⁱ, happiness^{iv} and identity^v. Schwenbacher and Larralde^{vi} found that people derive value from the feeling of being part of something entrepreneurial and feel able to live vicariously through the process – that giving to projects, causes and ideas that they like actually makes their lives more exciting.

There are a few downsides to crowdfunding however. Firstly, crowds follow crowds and funders are twice as likely to support a project that had reached 80% of its funding total, as opposed to those who had raised only 20%. More significantly,

crowdfunding capital disproportionately flows to the same regions as traditional sources of funding^{lvii} perhaps due to the skillsets and social networks of those utilizing the service in it's fledgling days, alongside complementary assets and access to capital for follow on financing.

The predicted rise in crowdfunding of civic projects is also a double-sided coin. Sites such as Citizeninvestor and Neighbor.ly increase community participation in infrastructure development decisions, from parks and playgrounds to streetlights. But this method of civic development also has the potential to increase inequality as wealthier neighbourhoods will be able to self-fund projects that others must forego.

Fundamentally, crowd funding is a positive for the community sector because it allows community organizations to control the tool and communities to control the funding. It fundamentally shifts the power dynamics around fundraising, allowing community organisations to raise funds in a manner consistent with their values. It helps organisations avoid 'the funding burden', the financial costs incurred when applying for grants^{lviii}. require projects or ideas to meet with the often overbearing demands of grant-makers and it works to develop relationships that promote better community development and engagement.

Conclusion

When I began this research, I wanted to know if our decision making frameworks restricted our ability to make meaningful change. My observations suggest that we could be doing better, and that any process allowing "...the have-not citizens, presently excluded from political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in decisions that affect their futures lx will be beneficial, in multiple and varied ways.

For communities and community workers participatory practice works to: increase connection; reduce replication of services; close gaps in service provision; build peer mentoring networks and a sense of belonging; help practitioners better understand the landscape they operate in; and create opportunities for collective advocacy.

For Funders, it can help: make grant making more strategic and effective through better decision making; put social justice values into practice; educate grant recipients so their applications are better and more appropriate; provide leadership opportunities; leverage grant-making opportunities for community development; and build branding through community champions.

And for end users it can: help to legitimise their knowledge and expertise; provide opportunities for leadership; increase the relevance of service provision and allow their voice to be heard.

To create these benefits, for ourselves and for the communities we serve, we need to make some changes to our practice and our perspectives. Participatory philanthropy requires us to address issues of transparency and privilege in our sector. It requires us to examine our own assumptions and beliefs about the communities in which we are funding. It requires learning and iterations, it requires more time and, to ascertain the appropriateness and the best models of practice, it needs more investment in robust research and evaluation. Most importantly, it requires us to trust communities and individuals, to believe that they will do what they believe is best, for the communities in which they live and work.

I challenge each and every funder to take 10% of their allocation funds and put them into a participatory practice model. What difference could it make to the landscapes around us?

Imagine the relationships that would be built, the things we would learn about the communities we work with, and about ourselves? If we spent five years, committing a small portion of our funds to participatory processes, what would it change? What would it change for communities and practitioners to see us trust them? What would it change if we provided the space, the opportunity and the support for them to decide together? What would it feel like to say "we are willing to risk this over a number of grant cycles, we are willing to learn, to establish an evaluation framework, to built for improvement and to include all people as participants."

Philanthropy was always supposed to be the radical disruptor, able to take risks to innovate solutions. What are we waiting for?

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