

Peace Philanthropy Learning Event

16 November 2016 | Peace Palace The Hague

'How can philanthropists effectively support systemic change that leads to peace and justice for all?'

Erasmus Centre for Strategic Philanthropy (ECSP) and the Carnegie Foundation/Peace Palace organized a Peace Philanthropy Learning Event on the 16th of November 2016. The aim of the event was to exchange ideas, acquire insights and share experiences on the unique challenges and opportunities that all those working in the field of peace philanthropy face. The participants included philanthropists, academics, policy makers, civil society organizations and corporations.

Two guest speakers addressed the audience: Angus Hogg, Chairman of the Carnegie UK Trust, and Julie Broome, director of Ariadne, European peer-to-peer network of funders and philanthropists who support social change and human rights.

Two cases introduced us to some of the challenges and opportunities of Peace Philanthropy: financing of anti-arms campaigns, by Dion van den Berg, representing PAX. And a combined case by Adam Berry from Porticus UK and Lisa Byrne from 'Rethinking Conflict' on partnering and learning in peace philanthropy.

The cases were followed by an 'Open Space'; round tables for which all participants could freely pitch ideas, to be discussed at the round tables. Over a dozen round tables were formed on all types of Peace Philanthropy related aspects, such as: partnering, learning on peace philanthropy, addressing root causes, peace philanthropy in the commons.

At the end of the day, Angus Hogg confirmed the interest of the Carnegie Institutions to continue the process of learning on Peace Philanthropy and to reconvene in 2018.

Partners, not pouches

The strategic role of philanthropists in peace

"Philanthropy is nimble", said our guest speaker Angus Hogg, Chairman of the Carnegie UK Trust, at the onset of the Peace Philanthropy Learning Event. "It is inventive. It tends to adapt effectively to the changing conditions on the ground". "Nimbleness and speed of philanthropy coexist with a proven ability to be patient and take an extraordinary long-term approach when appropriate." He then went on to quote a study on the efficiency of philanthropic versus public funding. In close to 80% of the cases, philanthropic funding had been more efficient. In addition, we see a pan-European shrinking of government funds for peace initiatives; Peace Philanthropy is thus gaining in importance.

But, how to engage effectively with philanthropists? This question was top of mind for many of the participants to the Learning Event. For NGOs, but also for academics, policy makers, and even for the philanthropists themselves. What can be done to make philanthropists' work most effective? Or, put

differently: ‘How can philanthropists effectively support systemic change that leads to peace and justice for all?’ – which, incidentally, was the central question of the Event.

Beyond the money

Both our guest speakers –Angus Hogg and Julie Broome, director of Ariadne, emphasized that organizations should not solely focus, however odd this may initially sound, on the money. The Carnegie foundation works on the premise: Treasure + Thought + Time = Impact. It is only after a collaborative process between philanthropist and project partner that the Carnegie foundation will invest its treasure in a project. Julie Broome, as well as many of the participants, also emphasized the importance of collaboration, of learning together, investing time and building a trusting relationship.

The presenters of the two cases that were discussed during the day, stressed how important a good relationship with a funder is. The first case, on funding of anti-arms campaigns, was presented by Dion van den Berg of PAX. The second by Adam Berry of Porticus UK. This case described why and how Porticus had decided to engage in Northern-Ireland, including its preparatory learning trajectory and partnering with local organizations. One of these organizations is ‘Rethinking Conflict’, represented by Lisa Byrne on stage. She had kindly come along to tell about the project and the partnering with Porticus UK.

For PAX, working with private funders has indeed resulted in more flexibility and less strenuous reporting demands – no “log-frame fetishism” as Dion called it. Instead, the investment made before embarking on a project is much higher: “There are serious talks before money comes to the table.” “We sit and talk, and we are scrutinized. ... But once we have an agreement, on a financial and strategic relationship, the reporting is relatively easy.” A more cynical person might expect this to result in sloppy reporting, or careless project management. But according to PAX, it leads to a constructive balance between flexibility and accountability that should serve as a model for other funders as well.

Strategic partners

Philanthropy has a unique role to play in peace work. Julie Broome: “With its access to knowledge, resources and centers of power, philanthropy is also well-positioned to design nuanced and balanced interventions.” PAX experienced this first hand: “They helped develop this idea. ... It really was a joint effort. The networking capabilities of the funder were very useful for our work.” ... “We could not have achieved these results without the partnerships with these funds.” Porticus UK explained how its partners allow it to be effective. Through their partners, they gained insights and learnings on what Porticus can do to help move the situation in Northern-Ireland from a negative to a positive peace. Participants to the round table-discussions discussed various ways, expected and unexpected, in which philanthropists can play a role in the area of peace and conflict (e.g. from supporting humanitarian interventions to impact investments).

Angus Hogg noted that: “The more individualistic a problem is, the less appropriate is government funding”. Julie Broome added: “As compared to bilateral state funding, private philanthropy can be more flexible, it is not tied to foreign policy aims, and therefore where and how one chooses to fund is not as constricted.” This was vetted by Lisa Byrne. She explained how private philanthropy plays an important role, especially in volatile situations, explicitly because private philanthropy is not so constricted. “It can

allow work to be undertaken that for various reasons needs to stay under the radar”, for example work with former paramilitaries. “It is not constrained by policy or political agendas, which is particularly important in a contested society, where for a long time the state was not seen as legitimate or respected by a certain section of society.” A statement that echoes Julie’s words: “Private donors are freer to work with the unusual suspects.”

Learning partners

The desire and need to learn more about one another and about Peace Philanthropy was clear throughout the day. Julie Broome, for example, spoke about learning as an iterative process, which “must include those whose lives you are wishing to effect”, and involves speaking to people you don’t agree with or like. It should include an “open dialogue with grantees to also know what their challenges are”. Porticus UK is doing just that. Through a multi-level learning agenda, its aims are to learn by doing, to gain a track record and to gain contacts and the trust of those contacts. Porticus’ grantees are an essential part of this learning trajectory. The need for mutual learning was broadly felt. Participants to one of the round-table discussions issued an explicit call for a more permanent learning environment on peace philanthropy, among others bridging the gap between academics and practitioners. Bringing together different actors for joint learning was said to be one of the priorities to bring the field to a next level.

More is to come

This Peace Philanthropy Learning Event was not a one-time event. The high turn-out, with close to a hundred participants and lively discussions made for a very interesting day. People met old friends, (re-) connected with colleagues, and made new friends. But more importantly, the call for more learning on peace philanthropy from so many people cannot go unheard. In his concluding reflection on the day’s events, Angus Hogg confirmed that the Carnegie institutions have a great interest in a broader support for ‘peace and justice dialogues’, facilitated by the Peace Palace, and the subject of learning on peace philanthropy. He indicated that an even more extensive gathering would take place at the Peace Palace in 2018. Against this background, ECSP has committed to set up a shared learning lab under the umbrella of SDG 16, on the topic of Peace Philanthropy.

Please do inform us of your interest to be kept informed or to become involved in the next phase via: info@ecsp.nl!

“We live in a time of uncertainty. In this context, philanthropy has a very key role to play. It can keep peace on the agenda, rallying those that continue to value peace and the resolution of conflict.

It can help promote the message that peace is of global concern; and that instability in the world impacts the domestic environments that the public is concerned with.” (Julie Broome)