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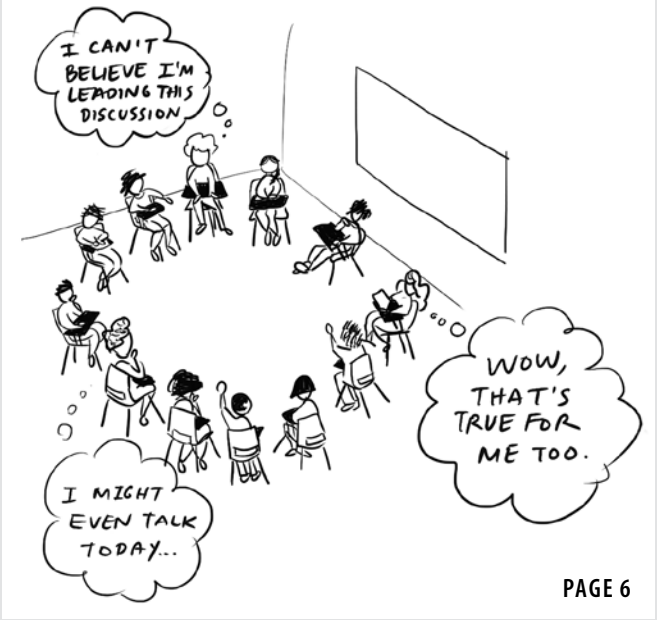
Summer 2020

Designing for a New World

Features



PAGE 6

PAGE 18

PAGE 22

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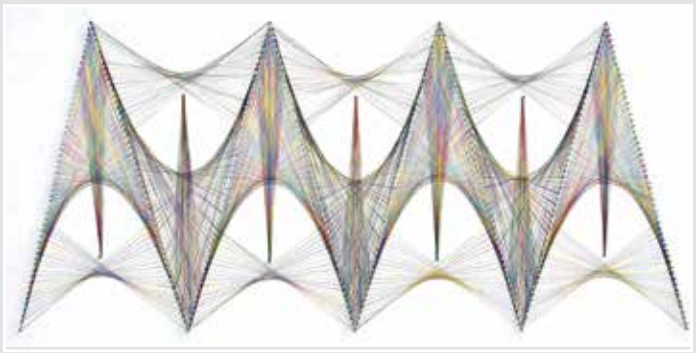

PAGE 42

PAGE 48

PAGE 56

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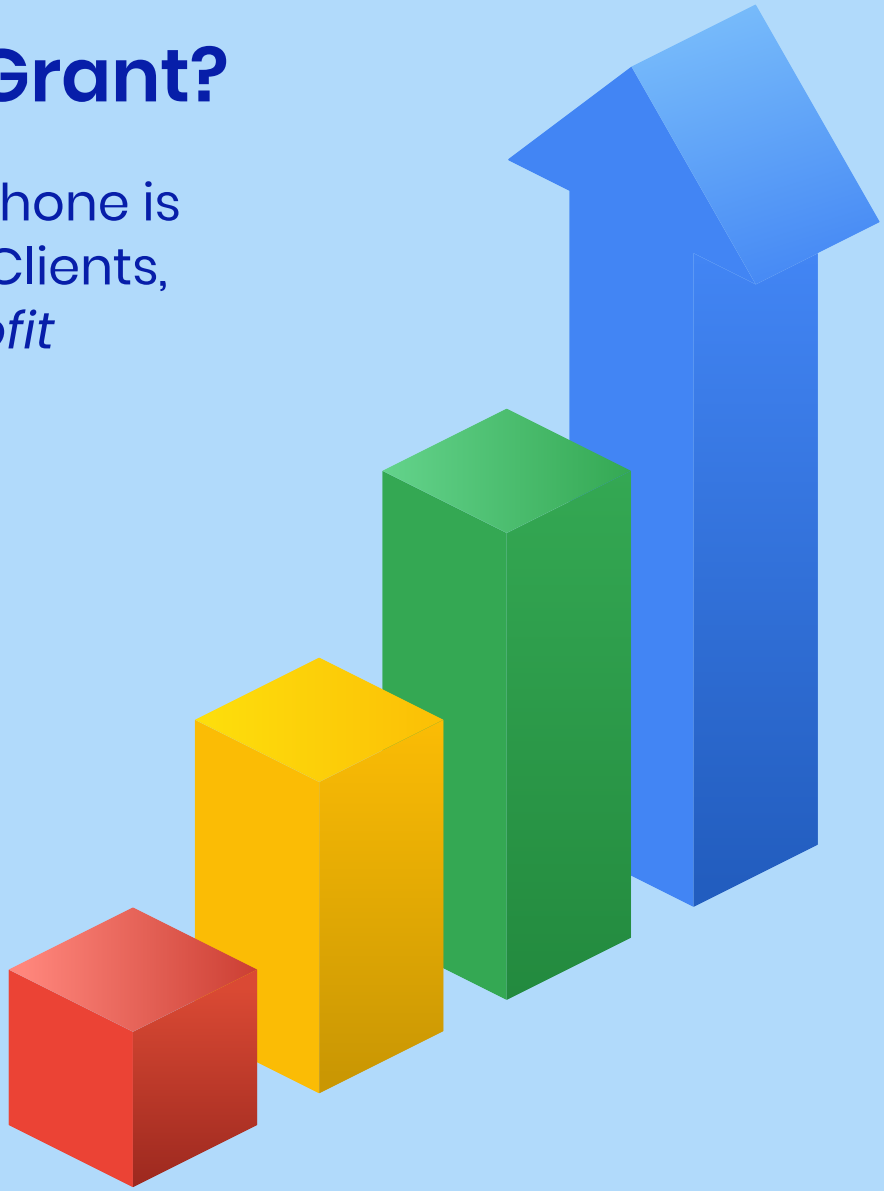

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Welcome

Dear readers,

This edition of the *Nonprofit Quarterly* was assembled during societal upheaval so massive it is like a rent in the universe. Since we published last, police in the United States murdered Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tony McDade, and Rayshard Brooks—and a father and son chased down and murdered Ahmaud Arbery, because, according to a Georgia Bureau of Investigation agent, the father "had a gut feeling that Mr. Arbery may have been responsible for thefts that were in the neighborhood previously." These amid very many others whose names the world is only just now learning, and many who may well never make it into international or even national news. Followed by a still-ongoing wave of brutal attacks by police on folks protesting police brutality.

And this on the heels of a pandemic that has overtaken the planet, bringing with it widespread unemployment and suffering that has occurred disproportionately among those already marginalized financially and socially. Those attending and counting the hospitalizations and deaths have observed that Black and Brown people are falling ill and dying in greater numbers; they are being laid off in greater numbers, too, even though they make up a strong contingent of those deemed "essential workers"—those putting themselves at greater medical risk than others.

Meanwhile, the country's unemployment figures are higher than they have been since the Great Depression; and, even now, as those figures start to improve overall, Black unemployment continues to rise. Add together the slow grind of the effects of systemic racism—with the lens focused by the rapid spread and response to COVID-19—and the ongoing murders of Black people at the hands of the police, and a tipping point has been reached. The very structures undergirding the nation are wrong, say the people in the streets—an immense population spanning race, age, gender, and socioeconomic background demanding justice and change.

It is not that the policing system is malfunctioning; it is doing what it was designed to do—and that is decidedly *not* keeping most folks safe. The calls to defund the police are a collective demand to completely deconstruct a framework that attempts of incremental adjustment over the years have barely dented.

At the same time, over the last few years we have been hearing similar—and growing—criticisms of the nonprofit sector, describing it as a comfortable "protective layer for capitalism" and as the "nonprofit industrial complex," obsessed with its own well-being even as the health of marginalized communities worsens. The nonprofit sector, including philanthropy, replicates the racial dynamics in the rest of society. It is time for a redesign.

The articles in this issue—only a small corner of the new "book" to be written—are all focused on shifting the lenses through which the sector must understand its work—starting with the organizations themselves. We open with an excerpt from a new book called *Ideas Arrangements Effects: Systems Design and Social Justice*, by Lori Lobenstine, Kenneth Bailey, and Ayako Maruyama. This book proposes that we must pare our arrangements back to disclose their

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original assumptions and design intentions, so as to understand why they are not working for us all.

The rest of the edition follows from that proposal: Cyndi Suarez takes on nonprofits as white-curated spaces; Rashad Robinson urges the need to change narratives to help replace those that keep wrongheaded assumptions alive in the minds of communities; *NPQ* editors discuss root metanarratives that dominate the sector; Ruth McCambridge reflects on the concept of mutuality as core to an equitable and thriving economy; Rodney Foxworth describes the basic assumptions that undergird our current economic systems; David Renz looks at the absurd insistence that the important aspects of nonprofit governance happen at the organizational level; and Chris Cornforth, John Paul Hayes, and Siv Vangen delve into the equally absurd notion that to be effective, collaborations need to be permanent and stable. We conclude the issue with another article by Suarez, in which she makes the point that "Racism is an actively silent design principle for exclusion in Western democracy, and deepening democracy requires actively designing against it." The articles are a mix of classic, updated, and new to illustrate how *NPQ* has been working to advance this critical conversation about the need to break old arrangements that exclude large portions of this country's population from having voice and a share in the fruits of our collective labor, and how this must be addressed by the larger sector.

A common chant at the moment, directed at the police in full riot gear pointing guns at peaceful, unarmed protestors, is "Who are you protecting?" We must ask ourselves the same question while rigorously interrogating every design, arrangement, assumption, and effect of our work in the civil sector.

The Nonprofit Quarterly

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Ideas Arrangements Effects:
Systems Design and Social Justice

by Design Studio for Social Intervention
(Lori Lobenstine, Kenneth Bailey, and Ayako Maruyama)

Ideas are embedded in social arrangements, which in turn produce effects. With this simple premise, this radically accessible approach to systems design makes a compelling case for arrangements as a rich and overlooked terrain for social justice and world building. When we're stuck looking for solutions within the realm of changing effects, we can get mired in quasi-solutions like police body cameras or smaller class sizes, which don't get us to challenging the larger arrangements, and keep those of us who care deeply about social justice too busy fighting over effects to get to the work of imagining profound new arrangements of justice or education. Designing social interventions can invite the greater public into questioning some of the arrangements at play, or co-composing entirely new ones.

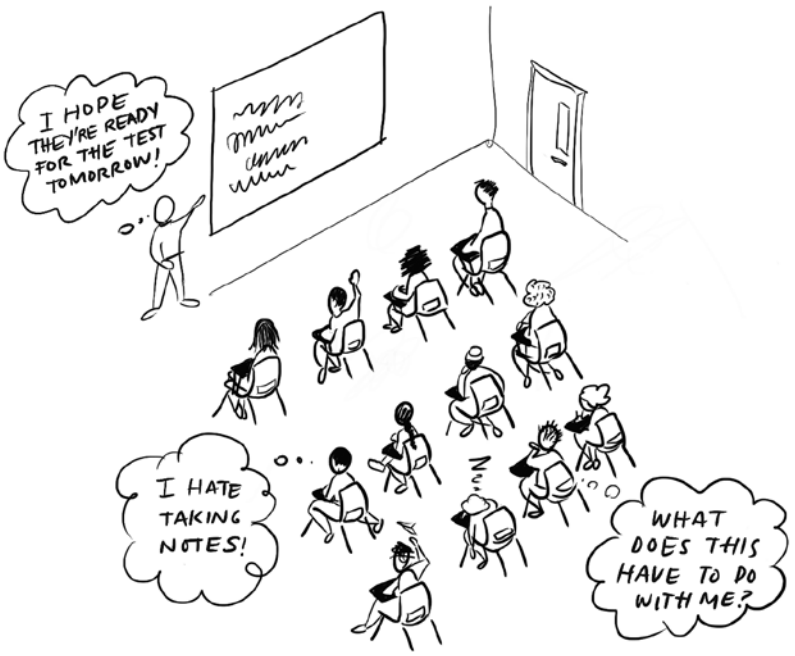
Editors' note: *This article was excerpted, with minor edits, from* Ideas Arrangements Effects: Systems Design and Social Justice (Minor Compositions, 2020). *All illustrations are by Ayako Maruyama.*

Activists, artists, philanthropists, young people, academics—all manner of folks—constantly battle injustices and negative effects in their lives and the lives of others. We take to the streets, to the Internet, to the voting booth, and more to fight for better outcomes. To the same degree, we argue vehemently about the ideas that underlie these injustices—from notions of public and private to ideas about categorizing our bodies, to all the "isms" that say some categories (and people) matter more than others.

But the arena for intervention that we at DS4SI want to make a case for is a less obvious one: that of the multiple, overlapping social arrangements that shape our lives. We believe that creating new effects—ones that make a society more just and enjoyable—calls for sensing, questioning, intervening in, and reimagining our existing arrangements. **Simply put, we see rearranging the social as a practical and powerful way to create social change.** And we want those of us who care about social justice to see ourselves as potential designers of this world, rather than simply as participants in a world we didn't create or consent to. Instead of constantly reacting to the latest injustice, we want activists to have the tools and time to imagine and enact a new world.

As Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim*

Design Studio for Social Intervention is dedicated to changing how social justice is imagined, developed, and deployed in the United States. Situated at the intersections of design practice, social justice, public art, and popular engagement, DS4SI designs and tests social interventions with and on behalf of marginalized populations, controversies, and ways of life. Founded in 2005 and based in Boston, DS4SI is a space where activists, artists, academics, and the larger public come together to imagine new approaches to social change and new solutions to complex social issues. Visit www.ds4si.org/writings/iae.



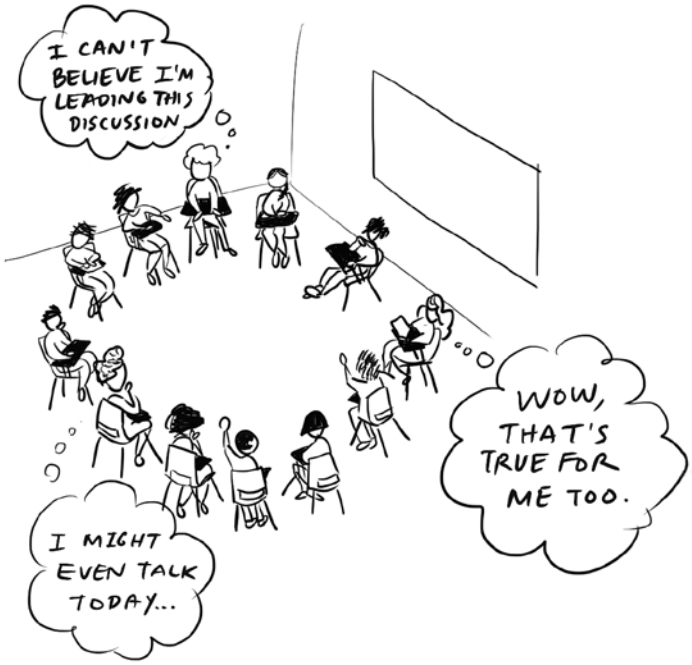
IDEAS

are embedded within

→ ARRANGEMENTS

which, in turn produce

→ EFFECTS



Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, wrote in her 2018 debut op-ed for the *New York Times*:

> Resistance is a reactive state of mind. While it can be necessary for survival and to prevent catastrophic harm, it can also tempt us to set our sights too low and to restrict our field of vision to the next election cycle, leading us to forget our ultimate purpose and place in history. . . . Those of us who are committed to the radical evolution of American democracy are not merely resisting an unwanted reality. To the contrary, the struggle for human freedom and dignity extends back centuries and is likely to continue for generations to come.[1]

With the weight of lifetime Supreme Court appointments or healthcare or climate change seeming to hang in the balance of our elections, it is easy to get stuck there. But as Alexander points out, our fixation with politics and policies as the grand arrangement from which all other forms of social justice and injustice flow serves to "set our sights too low."[2] When do we get to imagine the daily arrangements of "human freedom and dignity"?[3] We know this won't happen overnight. It takes time and investment for social arrangements to institutionalize and endure, and it will take time to change them. But it is critical that we try. And to do that, we need to be better at sensing arrangements, intervening in them, and imagining new ones.

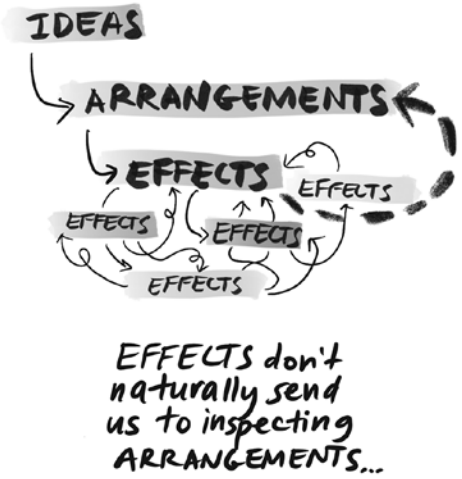
BREAKING DOWN IDEAS ARRANGEMENTS EFFECTS

Ideas are embedded within social arrangements, which in turn produce effects. One simple way to explain this premise is in the arrangement of chairs in a classroom. When we see chairs in straight rows facing forward, we believe the teacher is the head of the class and that knowledge flows in one direction—from the teacher to the students. In response to this, many workshop facilitators and adult-ed teachers rearrange the chairs into a circle, with the idea being that knowledge is distributed across the participants and could emerge from any place within the circle. The rows are one expression of ideas about how learning happens; the circle is another. The effects that rows or circles of chairs have on learning are important, but they are not the point here. *The point is that the arrangement produces effects.*

When we scan out from the common example of chairs in the classroom to the complex social arrangements of everyday life, the principle still stands: Ideas-Arrangements-Effects. They just get more intermingled and complicated. For example, arrangements like "work" flow from a myriad of ideas—weaving together ideas about value, labor, capitalism, citizenship, gender, etc. Effects of our current arrangement of "work" range from unemployment to burnout, from poverty to immigrant bashing, from anxiety to loneliness, etc. As activists, we often attend to the effects because they are urgent—fighting for an increased minimum wage to decrease poverty, for example. As social justice practitioners, we also think a lot about the ideas that often lead to negative effects—like how racism or sexism influences who gets the higher paid positions (or even who gets hired). But the underlying arrangement of "work" is often taken for granted.

To compound this, effects don't naturally send us to inspecting arrangements. They send us back to other similar acute experiences, rather than the distributed elements of arrangements. And if we do think about arrangements, they can seem daunting.

The rearranging of chairs is much easier to do than rearranging our conceptions of time, sociality, or other institutions that glue daily life together and give shape to our collective experiences. To make things more challenging, the older and more codified the arrangement, the farther it falls from the capacity to be perceived, let alone changed. These larger, sturdier social arrangements move into the realm of social permanence. For example, cars. We might argue for safer cars, greener cars, fewer cars, or driverless cars—but do we ever ask the question, "Are cars as a social arrangement still beneficial? And if not, how do we proceed?"



We believe that the I-A-E framework can both *deepen our understanding* of the social contexts we hope to change and improve, as well as *expand our capacity* for designing the world we truly want.

To begin, we will share some insights we've developed about each part of the I-A-E framework—ideas, arrangements, and effects—and then lessons we've learned for how the parts relate to each other and interact.

IDEAS

1. Ideas are big and sturdy.
2. Ideas are small and tricky.

ARRANGEMENTS

1. Arrangements are hard.
2. Arrangements are soft.

EFFECTS

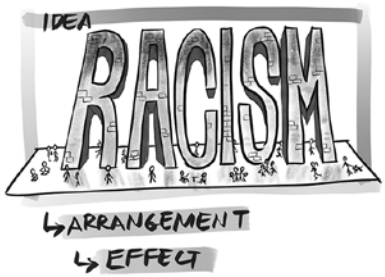
1. Effects are the big things we're always fighting against.
2. Effects are the little things we experience every day.

Ideas

Many times, as humans attempt to create change, we go back to the ideas behind the injustices we are trying to address. Whether those ideas are notions of democracy, justice, or race, we often get trapped in familiar discourses—complete with familiar arguments and even familiar positions and postures. (For example, when conversations about democracy get limited to Democrats and Republicans, or debates about education revolve around school budgets.) We argue heatedly and repeatedly about the big ideas, and we get trapped there without inspecting smaller ideas and what opportunities for change they could open up. The discourse itself becomes a trap. It rehearses itself and normalizes itself and ossifies the conversation, falling into well-worn grooves. It ceases to have rigorous curiosity, because to vary from the beaten conversation feels dangerous or odd. We want to look at ideas both big and small, both well inspected and largely uninspected, as we think about how they relate to arrangements and effects.

1. Ideas are big and sturdy.

Oftentimes, we jump right from unjust effects (achievement gap, gentrification, police violence, poverty, etc.) back to the big ideas that repeatedly produce them—ideas like racism, classism, homophobia, and sexism. Big ideas aren't limited to the "isms" of course; they also include long-held notions about freedom, progress, the American Dream, private property, gender, democracy, and many others.



Big ideas remain sturdy because of how they embed themselves in everyday life. This used to be more obvious than it often is today. For example, racist ideas in the 17th century were explicit in institutions like slavery, and then just as obvious in the later public infrastructures of "white" and "colored" water fountains and whites-only bathrooms in the South. While we no longer have slavery or whites-only bathrooms today, we clearly have racism raising its sturdy head in countless other ways. In addition, we have examples of other "isms" directly embedded in current arrangements today, such as transphobia and the renewed ban on transgender people in the military, or adultism and the age limit on voting.

We need to name "isms" when we recognize them, and we need to listen to others who recognize them when we do not. Using the I-A-E frame can also increase our repertoire for recognizing them as they embed themselves in the arrangements and smaller, trickier ideas shaping what we call everyday life.

Lee Russell. Oklahoma City streetcar terminal. 1939. Wikimedia Commons.

The ubiquitous "white" and "colored" water fountains of the past have been removed, but the countless ways that Blacks are targeted while doing daily things like driving, shopping, or resting show that racism continues to be a sturdy idea.

2. Ideas are small and tricky.

We deploy (and hide) our big ideas by embedding them in our beliefs about daily life—they become whitewashed, so to speak, as more "innocent" values, beliefs, and ways of life. They fall from the realm of critique and dialogue and into the realm of expectations and assumptions.

A few examples of these "innocent" ideas include:

- How to dress (or eat, or speak) "appropriately"
- Who should be listened to, believed, or trusted
- How big your body should be or how loud your voice should be
- What healthy food is, what good food is, or what food you should (and shouldn't!) bring for lunch
- Who the audience is for public life and culture
- What and who is attractive
- What qualifies someone for a job
- What makes a neighborhood "safe" or "dangerous"

We know how to call out racism, but do we know how to intervene in "appropriate" or "trusted" or "welcome"? When the whites-only water fountain gets replaced by the whites-mostly coffee shop or beer garden, we only know how to point it out when a Black person is explicitly treated unfairly. We don't frequently challenge the numerous tricky ideas (consumerism, aesthetics, etc.) that whitewash those spaces in the first place.

The clearer we get on the specifics of the coming together of arrangements and the ideas embedded in those arrangements, the more ideas we might have for creating change, and the more site-specific and useful points of leverage we might find. We need to get better at understanding how big ideas have become ingrained in the operating system of everyday life—how something as seemingly innocent as being a fan of a major sports team (complete with its jerseys, rituals, parades, stadium, etc.) can stand in for tribal whiteness and manliness. When we can find the more subtle and tricky ideas expressed in the workings of our lives, we get better grips on the kinds of changes we can make.

How sturdy ideas like racism get embedded in tricky ideas like . . .

Arrangements

Arrangements give shape to our shared experience. They are all around us, at all sorts of scales, overlapping, creating both order and chaos as they flow over us and under our consciousness. Arrangements include the football season with its schedules, stadiums, and fantasy leagues; the highway with its cars, speed limits, and exits; the grocery store with its rows and stacks, prices, and cash registers; Christmas with its work holidays, shopping, wrapping of gifts, and assumptions of Christianity; the 9–5 day; the police; and the list goes on. We tend to participate in the arranged because it is our shared social container. And for the most part, we simply take it for granted. This is one reason we at DS4SI pay so much attention to arrangements. **They are a rich and frequently overlooked terrain for creating change.**

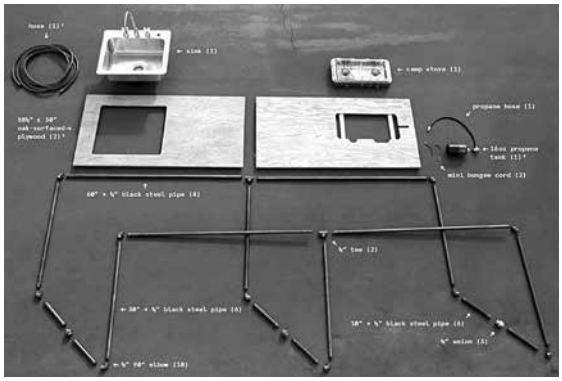
We can talk about such arrangements as "how the chairs are arranged in the room," which is what we call a "hard" or physical arrangement. We also talk about the chair itself as an arrangement for learning, as something that conveys that bodies should be passive while they learn. When we overlap that with how students are supposed to listen to their teachers or raise their hands before speaking, we start to point at what we call "soft" arrangements—which can be even sturdier than the chairs themselves, but harder to point to.

What soft and hard arrangements can you point to?

1. Arrangements are hard.

We have the architectural and industrial arrangements of built things like desks, buses, and cities. These are the easiest to point to but in some cases the hardest to rearrange (depending on scale). It is a lot easier to rearrange chairs than to rearrange a built environment. Hard arrangements range in scale from the toilet, chair, or bed, to airports, strip malls, and industrial farms.

We explored the hard arrangement of the kitchen in our intervention Public Kitchen. We wanted to point to how many elements of our daily lives flow from the assumption that everyone has a private home with its own kitchen. We wanted to explore how daily life could be more convivial and affordable if we had an arrangement like a public kitchen. We began with the question: If we had public kitchens—like public libraries—how would it change social life? What other arrangements—both hard and soft—would grow out of such an infrastructure?



Mobile Kitchen design and photography by Golden Arrows.

2. Arrangements are soft.

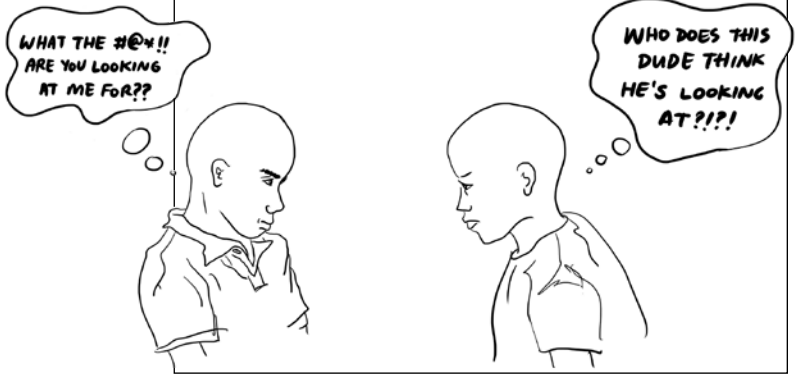
Soft arrangements are the less tangible arrangements—how routines, expectations, and long-held assumptions shape the everyday. They include routines like how the day is punctuated by breakfast, lunch, and dinner, or arrangements that put "girls"

and "boys" on different sports teams or in different bathrooms, or that there is such a thing as "normal" or "deviant," and we create arrangements like jail for the "deviant." A relatively new set of arrangements have cropped up on the Internet—from social media to online shopping to fantasy football, each with its own ways of shaping our everyday.

Since arrangements are both hard and soft, looking at and for social arrangements requires a fairly broad set of competencies. To make things more complex, arrangements are constantly intersecting and interacting. Think about two youths grilling each other. They are in the immediate arrangement of grilling, while simultaneously being in the hard arrangement of a school hallway, public bus, or street, in the soft arrangements of identity ("big brother," "butch dyke," "new kid"), or the multiple arrangements of hanging out with friends, heading to work, etc. In that sense, ***effects are emergent properties of multiple overlapping hard and soft arrangements***. When we want to fight effects like "youth violence," we would do well to look at multiple arrangements: the overcrowded bus or school hallway, the lack of youth jobs or affordable transit, and even the agreements embedded in the grill.

Creating new effects—the ones we believe will make life more just and enjoyable—then calls for questioning, changing, and reimagining multiple arrangements. Just as activists call for intersectional thinking in how we think of ourselves and our struggles, we believe we need to understand the intersections of multiple hard and soft arrangements if we are going to truly challenge social injustices.

In the Grill Project, we explored the soft arrangement of how youth feel that if someone looks at you hard (grills you), you have to grill them back.[4] It felt completely unchangeable to them. If they didn't grill back, they were a punk. We were trying to uncover and disturb the often dangerous daily arrangements and agreements about what it takes to "be a man" or prove your toughness (including for girls).



effects are emergent properties of multiple overlapping hard & soft arrangements

Effects

We use the term "effects" to talk about the impacts that ideas and arrangements have on our everyday life and larger world. These include the large-scale effects of injustices based on racism, classism, sexism, etc.—effects like the achievement gap, vast income and health disparities, and the underrepresentation of women in the U.S. Congress. They also include the more mundane effects generated by everyday arrangements like public transit, men's and women's bathrooms, Facebook "likes," etc.

1. Effects are the big things we're always fighting against.

Effects are dramatic. They are everything from climate change–related flooding to the police shootings of Black people. They stir up our passions. They make us want to act. Effects are the things that make the news on the one hand, and are the topics of our conferences and meetings on the other. Food scarcity, the opioid crisis, low literacy rates, school shootings (or closings), climate chaos, and gentrification all fall under the concept of effects in this framework.

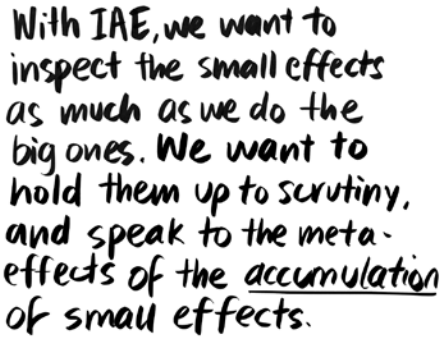
On a brighter note, as we look to create change and address injustice, success can show up in a variety of big effects, some of which we can hardly imagine. These could range from soaring success rates for students in fully resourced public schools, to zero police shootings in a city that disarms its police force, to an uptick in

Gross National Happiness (GNH), the index put forward by the small nation of Bhutan to contrast with capitalism's obsession with the GDP (Gross Domestic Product).[5]

2. Effects are the little things we experience every day.

We experience numerous effects all the time. We live them as good or bad outcomes of the arrangements of our world. They are the bus always running late, the stress of rent we can't afford, the water we can't drink, the lack of jobs for our kids, etc. They are the fight at school between kids who spent too long sitting in those rows, or the feeling of invisibility for folks of color in a city that whitewashes its public spaces and promotions. Conversely, they are the good mood after playing basketball in a public park, or the feeling of friendship after discussing your shared love of books with a fellow commuter.

With I-A-E, we inspect the small effects as much as we do the big ones. We hold them up to scrutiny, and speak to the meta-effects of the *accumulation* of small effects. What level of constant suspicion, surveillance, and disrespect adds up to the "toxic stress" that contributes to the higher rate of heart conditions in the Black community?[6] What combination of job discrimination, rent going through the roof, and widespread homophobia leads to homelessness in the LGBT population? While we dedicate protests, nonprofits, campaign speeches, and conferences to the meta-effects, how do we measure or make sense of the vastly different experiences we might have just getting to that protest or conference? *We posit that a deeper awareness of small effects will give us new ideas for interventions or even whole new arrangements.*



HOW I-A-E COMES TOGETHER *(and wiggles around)*

I-A-E is meant to be a useful framework for those of us looking for new ways to create change, be they new "levers" or points of opportunity, new approaches, or even new arrangements. We find it helpful in catching us when we default to familiar arguments or put too much weight on a particular candidate or policy. Here are a couple of ways that I-A-E helps us broaden our palette for understanding how to make and assess change.

Why I-A-E Rather Than I-P-E

Shaking the habit of thinking Ideas-People-Effects (I-P-E)

As humans, we are prone to thinking "I-**P**-E" or Ideas-PEOPLE-Effects. That means we tend to look for whom we can blame when we experience negative effects. This leads us to believe that effects emerge from the deficiencies of individuals, rather than flawed arrangements. Think about when you are waiting in line for a bus that's late, and everyone gets a little mad at everyone else. It is really easy to get irritated with the person who is talking too loud on the phone, or pushing, or who smells bad. But we tend *not* to ask the bigger questions about why there aren't more buses, why the roads are so crowded, or why more people can't walk to where they need to go.

It is this human propensity to think I-**P**-E that also leads us to blame individual people for their problems or ours: to blame parents for childhood obesity or individual cops for state-sanctioned violence. This leads us to "solutions" like healthy eating classes or police body cameras, rather than challenging the sturdy arrangements of our

industrial food systems or criminal justice system. It also makes us think that individual people can solve their problems, or ours—as if someone who learned how to eat and cook correctly had any more of a chance of solving childhood obesity than President Obama did of solving the problems of a democracy founded on slavery and capitalism.

When we use I-**A**-E instead, it helps us inspect how ideas about health and safety (and race and gender) become embedded in a multitude of arrangements—from the fast-food chains to the healthy eating class, from police forces to school-to-prison pipelines. It helps us both understand and question the intersections of those arrangements and how they define certain people as problems. *It helps us stop hating the player and start hating the game.* This is critical, because as arrangements age and join forces with other arrangements, they assume power as the given backdrops of our lives. Their survival becomes more important to themselves and others than the sets of people for whom they might not work. We can't let that discourage us. Using I-A-E can help us find new ways to challenge arrangements—and imagine new arrangements altogether—as methods that can lead to greater change.

How We Arrange Ourselves and Each Other

Inspecting the ways we collude with power

The ways we talk to each other, look at each other, think and feel about each other and ourselves are as much a product of ideas, arrangements, and effects as chairs, buildings, and other tangible arrangements of daily life. As we've said, arrangements are both hard and soft. For those of us concerned with social change, this means that social life—and the myriad of soft arrangements within it—is a rich terrain for intervention.

We can use the I-A-E framework to inspect the presuppositions embedded in our speech and thought habits just as we use it to inspect how ideas are embedded in exterior arrangements of everyday life. How we think and talk, as well as who we talk to and who we listen to, are arrangements that produce effects: they arrange and limit who we are and who others can be in our world.

We arrange each other every time we enact categories of social hierarchy, which means pretty much every time we interact. We arrange ourselves in small, quotidian ways with assumptions embedded in a title (Mr.? Ms.? Mx?) or the sense that no title is needed at all, or with assumptions about interests, parenthood, education, or sexual orientation. Speech patterns follow, as varied as the man-to-man greeting of "Did you see the game last night?" to the array of racial euphemisms, from "at-risk" to "underserved" to "diverse," to the functions of who speaks and who listens in our earlier example of chairs in rows in a classroom. These kinds of speech acts go unexamined in our larger social lives, but they are not innocent. What kinds of essentialist claims get reified and projected outward? Whose priorities are reflected in the implicated social arrangements?

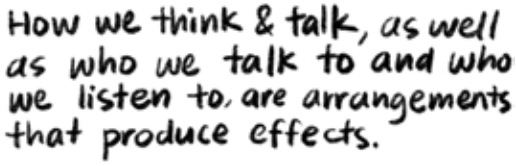
We arrange ourselves and each other in larger ways as well. When DS4SI came up with the idea of the Public Kitchen, people assumed we meant a soup kitchen. They immediately perceived it as a service, and in so doing, they arranged the always-other, always-needy people who would use it. Even after we created a space that brought people together across culinary talents and economic backgrounds, our funders asked, "Did you do a participant evaluation?," not realizing that the very act of asking people to fill out that form would have meant arranging them into a category of service recipient or program participant.

Similarly, when organizing groups speak of "their base," they risk falling into thought habits that arrange the very people they are fighting for and with. If we think of our base only as a source of power that we need to "turn out" or "build up," or as a mass of victims of oppression, are we also able to see them as nuanced individuals who might have very different ideas about our work, their neighborhood, the issue at hand, or even what we serve to eat?

Another way we arrange entire communities is by making generalized assumptions about their expertise. Take the notion that people are "experts on their experience." This can begin as a useful approach to youth work or community organizing: adults going to young people to truly ask them about their lived experiences, or organizers doing

"one-on-ones" to listen to what the community cares about. This is important work even if we used to be youths ourselves, even if we are from that community, etc. But it is also the work of arranging people, unless we listen for a vast array of expertise. Do we expect youth to want to organize around "youth issues" like education, or can they be fired up about housing or interpretation services? Do we only expect community members to be experts on the challenges of life in their community, or can we also see them as experts in carpentry, systems analysis, education, or acting?

To address these ways that we arrange ourselves and others, we have to get better at seeing where our current speech, thought, and communication habits collude with the world we are fighting against, collude with power. Sometimes it comes from overlapping arrangements—our arrangements of thought reinforced by positions of power: our role as supervisor, teacher, organizer, or service provider. When our work puts us in charge of people, knowledge, or resources, there are fixed choreographies that we slide into. We have to start with the realization that this is a familiar dance, and ask ourselves, "What is this choreography of interaction doing to us and others? What does it afford and deny?" These dances might be fun (or at least convenient), but they impose presuppositions that we might not want to enact. *If we are to imagine a new world, we must not only question the current one, but question how it has arranged our own habits of thought, speech, and interaction with others.*



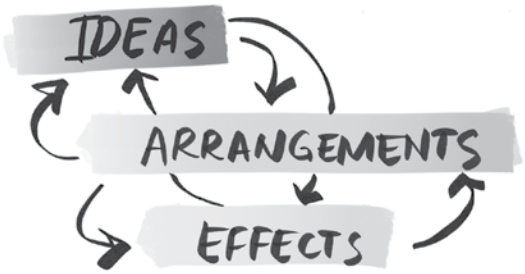
When I-A-E Is Multidirectional

Keeping an eye out for the nonlinear

I-A-E is a conceptual framework for understanding and engaging with each part of the equation—the ideas, the arrangements, the effects—as well as with the equation as a whole. It gives us a clearer sense of the entire terrain that we are intervening in, and with that, a wider set of options for creating change. That said, it is neither as clean nor as linear as it might appear. One thing we know about systems—both conceptual and literal ones—is that they can back up on you! So even as we keep in mind that "Ideas are embedded in Arrangements, which in turn yield Effects," we understand that the equation can go in all sorts of directions: Arrangements can yield new ideas. Effects can yield new arrangements, or even other effects. And so on. Here are a couple of examples:

E-A-I: Effects can generate new Arrangements, which in turn lead to new Ideas

Effects can provoke the addition of new arrangements to an already existing and unexamined set of arrangements. We can look back on our example of the arrangement of chairs as the primary learning tool in school. Sitting all day can lead some students to practically explode out of their young bodies—whether it's wiggling, giggling, jumping around, or even fighting.



These students who can't sit in their chairs and stay focused on the task at hand are frequently diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and prescribed medication like Ritalin or Adderall. Both the diagnosis and prescription were new medical arrangements added to the set of arrangements called chairs and school. We posit that there would be no diagnosis of ADHD if there was no social situation regulating and policing attention. However, the bodies which are out of compliance with the required means of demonstrating attention are more likely to bear the burden of the situation than the situation itself. "Fixing" out of line bodies with medication is easier for the school than the work of changing the arrangements out of which the effects emerge.

Now the arrangements of ADHD and Ritalin give us new ideas about people. Now we have a new type of person, one unable to pay attention or stay still. This idea is so widespread that the term ADHD is frequently used in pop culture, including laypeople diagnosing themselves or others. Ian Hacking refers to this as "making up people," and uses examples of new categories of people from "obese" to "genius":

> I have long been interested in classifications of people, in how they affect the people classified, and how the effects on the people in turn change the classifications. We think of many kinds of people as objects of scientific inquiry. Sometimes to control them, as prostitutes, sometimes to help them, as potential suicides. Sometimes to organise and help, but at the same time keep ourselves safe, as the poor or the homeless. Sometimes to change them for their own good and the good of the public, as the obese. Sometimes just to admire, to understand, to encourage and perhaps even to emulate, as (sometimes) geniuses. We think of these kinds of people as definite classes defined by definite properties. As we get to know more about these properties, we will be able to control, help, change, or emulate them better. But it's not quite like that. They are moving targets because our investigations interact with them, and change them. And since they are changed, they are not quite the same kind of people as before. The target has moved. I call this the 'looping effect'. Sometimes, our sciences create kinds of people that in a certain sense did not exist before. I call this 'making up people'.[7]

A-I-E: Arrangements yield new Ideas that perpetuate Effects

Another example of arrangements giving us new ideas about people comes from the infernal arrangement of slavery. The arrangement of slavery came from ancient ideas of power and plunder in war, but the perpetuation of it in the "modern world" relied on generating new racist ideas about Africans. Indeed, well over a century after the abolition of slavery, racist ideas created by whites to justify slavery continue to be perpetuated. As Christina Sharpe wrote in her book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, "Put another way, living in the wake [of slavery] means living in and with terror in that in much of what passes for public discourse *about* terror we, Black people, become the *carriers* of terror, terror's embodiment, and not the primary objects of terror's multiple enactments."[8] In other words, the racist ideas about Black people in the United States—including the idea that they are dangerous—has had the effect of making them less safe and more likely to be the targets of violence, incarceration, and even death.

So it is important to understand that I-A-E is not a formulaic route to action or linear order of events like cause and effect. It is a conceptual framework that can help us understand and act in new ways. To do so effectively requires us to keep our eyes out for its multiple variations and reconfigurations. It's tricky.

• • •

In closing, now that we've broken down what we mean by ideas, arrangements, and effects, we want to reconnect them. As we said at the beginning:

Ideas are embedded in social arrangements.

> *"I'm often asked 'Aren't tools neutral? Isn't it the intentions of users that matter?' As a semi-pro brick mason, I respond: I have seven different trowels. Each evolved for a specific task . . . I can't swap them out. If I forget my inch trowel and the building I'm working on has 1/4 inch joints, I'm screwed. How you use a tool isn't totally determined—you can use a hammer to paint a barn. But you'll do a terrible job. Tools are valenced, oriented towards certain ways of interacting with the world. Part of thinking well about technology and society is uncovering hidden valences and explaining how past development shapes a tool's present and future uses."*[9]
>
> —Political Scientist Virginia Eubanks

By using the I-A-E framework, we're asserting that ideas exist in the material world—in our trowels and classrooms and cars—as much as they exist in our cultural and personal worlds. Therefore, part of our work is to look at how ideas and beliefs are hidden in objects and situations, as well as the impact of the ecologies produced between these objects, situations, and ourselves.

Arrangements produce effects.

> *"Imagine a man who is sitting in the shade of a bush near a stream. Suddenly he sees a child running by and realizes the child is in danger of falling into the stream. The man leaps from behind the bush and grabs the child. The child says, 'You ambushed me!' But the man replies, 'No, I saved you.'"*[10]
>
> —Social Psychologist
> Mindy Thompson Fullilove

The effects of the confusion between the man and the child seem to be produced by the actions of the man, but we would argue that there's also the bush! When the boy blames the man, it is akin to our example of the bus riders blaming each other for the smelly, noisy, overcrowded bus. Too often we focus on those who are "doing" or being "done to," rather than notice or question the concrete arrangements—bushes, buses, trowels—that are themselves doing. These hard arrangements overlap with soft arrangements (like expectations or schedules), and these overlapping arrangements produce effects.

For those of us fighting large-scale negative effects—those that grab the headlines or make our daily lives unbearable—it is counterintuitive to turn our eyes and actions away from them. We argue not so much for turning away from effects, but for the possibilities for change that arise when we dig into the arrangements that produce them.

How do we shift our focus to arrangements? And what new opportunities for creating social change open up when we do? Through honing our abilities to sense arrangements, intervene in them, and imagine new ones, we will uncover new potential to build the world that we want.

Notes

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The Nonprofit Sector as White Space

by Cyndi Suarez

The nonprofit sector "is caught in its own narrative loop around racial inequity," writes Cyndi Suarez. "Now more than ever, as the U.S. dredges up submerged racial dominance narratives, with an attendant shift from implicit bias to explicit violence, it is critical for the nonprofit sector . . . to look squarely at these underlying master narratives of white space and Black space. We can begin by asking, "How do white leaders in the nonprofit sector use white space approaches to addressing public space as white space?"

Editors' note: *This article was first published online, on May 30, 2018.*

As daily scenes of Black and Brown people navigating white space unsuccessfully are captured in video and offered on social media newsfeeds, with the concomitant dominant narrative and counternarrative that is the comments section, the concept of "white space" crosses over from Black space into the public conversation about race in the U.S.

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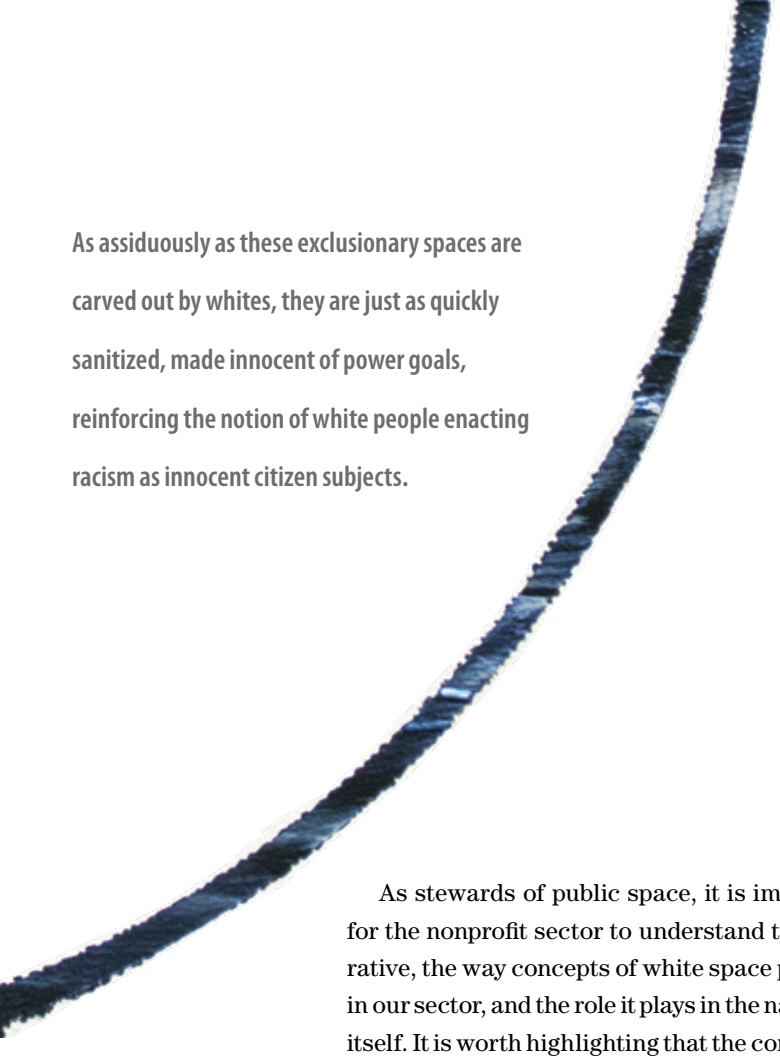
"Mesmerize" by Sean Ward/www.seanchristopherward.com



As assiduously as these exclusionary spaces are carved out by whites, they are just as quickly sanitized, made innocent of power goals, reinforcing the notion of white people enacting racism as innocent citizen subjects.

As stewards of public space, it is important for the nonprofit sector to understand this narrative, the way concepts of white space play out in our sector, and the role it plays in the narrative itself. It is worth highlighting that the concept of nonprofits as white space is not new to people of color in the sector.

In "The White Space," Yale Sociology professor Elijah Anderson defines both white space and Black space.[1] He writes, "For black people in particular, white spaces vary in kind, but their most visible and distinctive feature is their overwhelming presence of white people and their absence of black people."[2] Further, white spaces have an "implicit racial order—whites as dominant and blacks as subordinate."[3] In white spaces, Black people can only gain "provisional acceptance from the immediate audience."[4] In other words, Black people in white spaces repeatedly encounter the challenge to "pass inspection." White people in white spaces wield enormous and outsized power.

For Anderson, Black space in the U.S. is both the physical ghetto, Black dominant spaces that whites endeavor to avoid, and the iconic ghetto, "a highly negative icon . . . serving increasingly as a touchstone for prejudice, a profound source of stereotypes, and a rationalization for discrimination against black people in general."[5]

Further, as Jelani Cobb writes in the *New Yorker* article "Starbucks and the Issue of White Space," the U.S. now has "a Presidency that strives to make the United States itself feel like a white space."[6] The effect of this is that the generalized anxiety that people of color contend with in white space as part of their existence is now also becoming the norm for white people, albeit from a very different vector. A recent opinion piece in the *New York Times* by Mavis Biss, associate professor of philosophy at Loyola University, captures what may be a growing sentiment among white people when she writes, "When I observe my own everyday life in the wake of mass shootings, bombings, and vehicle attacks, I find that basic element of trust absent."[7]

Biss connects the loss of public trust, the sense of feeling safe from danger in public, with a shift in how people respond to difference. When "the public" is asked to keep an eye out for and report suspicious behavior, it triggers a fear frame for difference. She writes,

> Where the strange registers as dangerous and the feeling of being threatened sanctions pre-emptive action, public spaces become untrustworthy environments for those who are even slightly unconventional (or insufficiently white). Largely futile, conformity-enforcing vigilance undoes public space as a place for free exchange, for encounter with difference and for adventure.[8]

While attempting to name the role of race in this "growing lack of public trust," Biss demonstrates how pervasive race really is as an ordering of knowledge and experience and contributes to what postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak long ago labeled "epistemological violence," the infliction of harm through discourse. Her article does this in two ways. First, as Cobb writes in the *New Yorker* article, people of color never really felt this basic element of trust in public space, which in the U.S. is really white space.[9] With this apparently supportive assertion, Biss actually erases the other, Black, side of the experience.

Second, Biss appears to be writing for a white audience who, like her, may be feeling less safe. She is not writing for people of color, who appear in the article as objects to be defended, not as subjects whose experience can actually be part of the public "we." With this discursive move, she re-marginalizes the people she points out as marginal.

This leads Biss to call on the regulation of guns and point to the need to encourage political cooperation through a focus on building trust, which though necessary, still leave the underlying social structure of segregation that prevent trust building in place. Never mind addressing power. It's akin to using a white space approach to white space. As assiduously as these exclusionary spaces are carved out by whites, they are just as quickly sanitized, made innocent of power goals, reinforcing the notion of white people enacting racism as innocent citizen subjects.

This is how implicit bias becomes the preferred frame for dealing with racism, as Cobb notes, "Implicit bias disassociates racism from overt villainy and, as a consequence, engenders less defensiveness in the dialogue."[10] However, both the concept and practice of implicit bias nourish "villainy." They are both part of the same continuum, the set of strategies for managing race and racial conflict from a white dominant perspective. In systems thinking language, this would be akin to solving the problem at the same level at which it was created, which, as we know, does not bring systems change, but in fact reinforces the system while appearing, to the white person, to be making change. It is like the narrative loops so pointedly portrayed in the HBO show *Westworld*, a world created by white scientists-business moguls that allows white visitors to dominate their hosts without consequences.

Now more than ever, as the U.S. dredges up submerged racial dominance narratives, with an attendant shift from implicit bias to explicit violence, it is critical for the nonprofit sector, which is caught in its own narrative loop around racial inequity, to look squarely at these underlying master narratives of white space and Black space.

We can begin by asking, "How do white leaders in the nonprofit sector use white space approaches to addressing public space as white space?" Biss's revealing intervention belies how core it is to our sector's approaches, including those designed to address racial inequities. It is in the very framing of racial equity work, which itself is contested—diversity, equity, and inclusion (which has gained approval in the sector's own white space) versus racial justice, including reparations (the preferred approach of people of color). It shows up in who leads even in the design of racial equity change processes (usually it's the white leaders who have "inadvertently" designed their own organizations as white space). It is in the capturing of our work and sharing out into the world with a white frame for an audience imagined as predominantly white (mostly white funders and donors).

We can follow this initial questioning by tapping into the counternarratives of people of color, which are subordinate in white space but very much alive in Black space. This is fertile ground for nondominant approaches to the problem of white domination.

Notes

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Changing Our Narrative about Narrative:

The Infrastructure Required for Building Narrative Power

by Rashad Robinson

"**Narrative builds power** for **people**," Rashad Robinson reminds us, "**or** it is **not useful at all**."

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The culture of the progressive sector—as with all sectors—is rooted in stories. They are stories that convey values, mental models, assumptions, and identities, all of which ultimately guide our behaviors. Unsurprisingly, the most powerful stories that define the culture of our sector are not the stories about the issues we work on but rather the stories we tell ourselves about who we are (and aren't), and how we should (and shouldn't) act in the world to make change.

Narrative is now a big buzzword in the field of social change. That is more a testament to people wanting to understand narrative, however, than it is a testament to people actually understanding it. Evaluating our overall approach to narrative, as well as the specific narrative changes we have determined to achieve, comes down to a foundational question: What is our own narrative about the role that narrative strategy plays in social change—our own narrative about what it is, what it takes to do it well, and what's at stake in our success? We tell ourselves a story about storytelling, a narrative about changing narratives. What purpose is it serving? Is it the right narrative? Is it the one we need?

I believe we have the wrong narrative about narrative.

Because of that, we are often working against ourselves, whether by reverting to bad habits or willfully denying the hard work we actually have to do—much in the way that, when making choices related to our health, we might revert to what feels easier, more comfortable, and more familiar to do, even if it's

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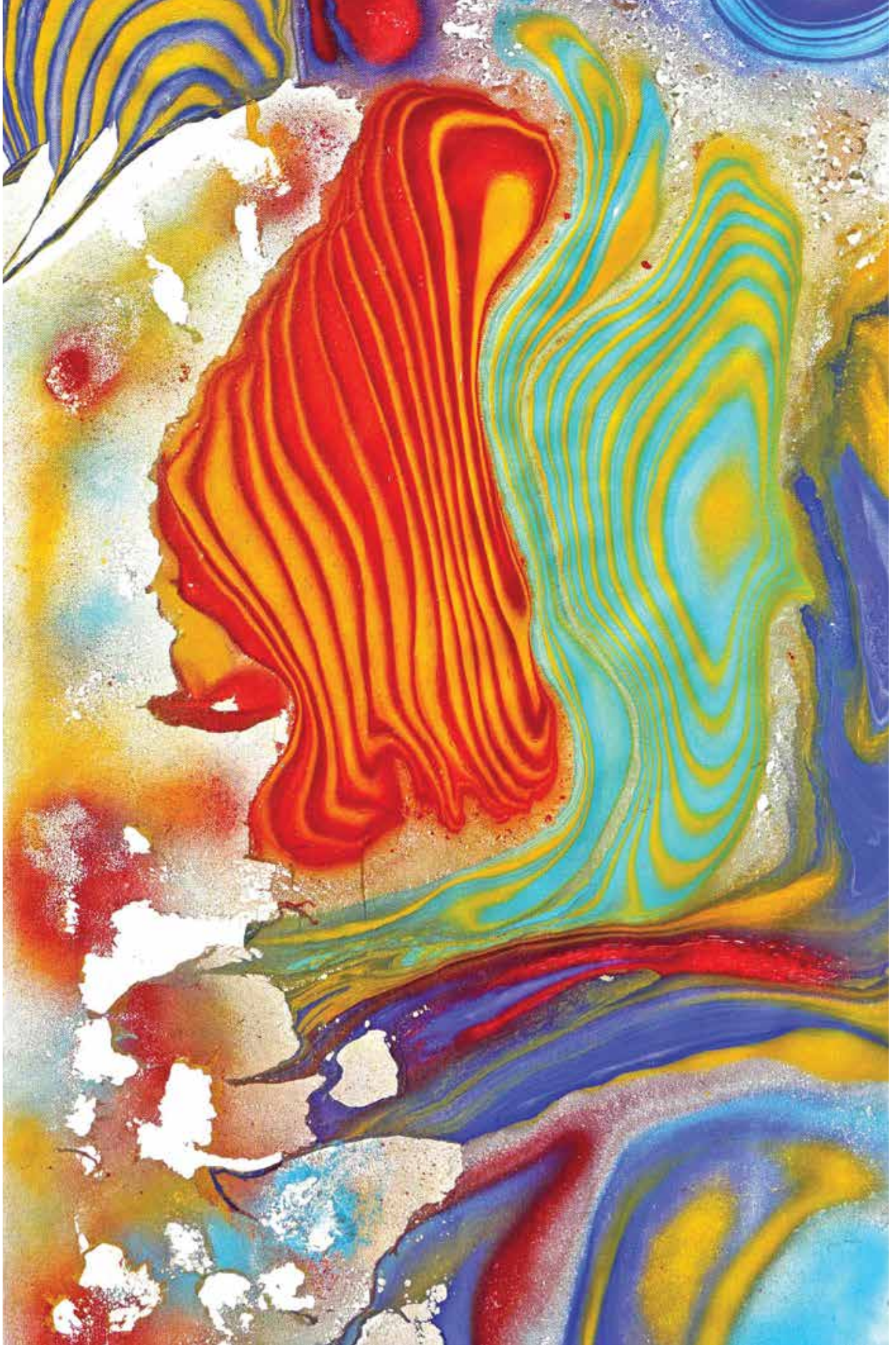
"PALETTE ORGY" BY SUMIT MEHNDIRATTA/WWW.SUMITMEHNDIRATTA.COM



not the healthiest thing to do or the thing that will actually yield positive health outcomes. We may say that our goal is to get healthier, but then we slide into the elevator instead of taking the stairs. What is the equivalent, in our narrative work and practice, of slinking into the elevator instead of taking the stairs, and pretending it doesn't matter?

One way we do it: going to consultants whom we "vet" mostly by way of the habit of having hired them over and over than by assessing whether or not their work stands up to scrutiny and has helped enable a win. Another way we do it: trusting the established "expert" voices in the room, often but not only white men, who cite the familiar conventional wisdom or tactical advice, rather than working to find new and more diverse experts with better ideas, and calling the question on the conventional wisdom. (It's hard not to default to the established experts we have, even though they have delivered a steady stream of losses, when they are the only people who have been given a platform and the only people let in the room.)

More ways we do it: trying so hard to turn every small success into a "model" that we can instantly use over and over; constantly setting our sights on the vaguely defined "moveable middle" in lieu of having a genuine and rigorously determined set of targets in mind; ignoring the expertise of people on the ground who have often made the right call on what would and wouldn't work; assuming that a poll showing that the majority of people "agree with us" lessens the work we have to do to make change, and that polls, surveys, and comms-led focus groups are the best way of learning about what people truly believe, what motivates them, and how we can expect them to respond.

It is going to be very hard to break the patterns holding us back. I say that as a leader in the country's cultural transformation with respect to LGBT acceptance and integration, during the period in which our successful strategies went to scale. And I also say that as a leader in the movement for racial justice today.

Leadership in narrative change, let alone social change, depends on the ability to break through our assumptions and defaults and forge new, better-informed practices.

That is—taking the stairs.

This paper presents a high-level outline of just some of the components of strategic thinking required to create the right story about narrative change within the progressive movement, with a focus on the components related to building the infrastructure we need to build what I call *narrative power*.

Three needs for change in our orientation stand out:

1. We need the ability to follow through on narrative and cultural dispersion and immersion—over time, across segments, and at scale.
2. We need actual human beings to serve as our main vehicle for achieving narrative change—people who are authentic, talented, equipped, motivated, and networked.
3. We cannot forsake the power of brands—the relationships responsible for the way that most people come to change their thinking, reshape their feeling, and redirect their behaviors.

Further below, I explain these needs in greater detail.

An important note: One critical aspect of building narrative power is building the infrastructure of accountability—i.e., being able to limit the influence of false and dangerous narratives propagated by the right wing and others, whether that necessitates challenging those narratives directly or challenging those who enable them to proliferate. Changing the rules of the media landscape is an enormous part of the work of Color Of Change and my previous work at GLAAD, and is a subject I discuss in detail often—but it is not the focus of this paper.

True infrastructure with respect to narrative is not about

maintaining a listserv for comms staff to align on rapid-response talking points and create more press releases;

or circulating more PowerPoint decks with superficial and unactionable observations created by opinion-focused researchers with a history of losing and selling out strategy for tactics;

or putting more PR firms in the position of speaking for us; or developing framing approaches uninformed by any real narrative or culture change experience; or staging more "convenings" at which frustrated leaders and staff members working in organizing and advocacy (including myself) come together and vent, in detail, about the short-sighted, race-averse, slow-to-change, culturally out-of-touch decision-making patterns of our peer and partner organizations throughout the progressive movement. That might be comms infrastructure, but it has nothing to do with narrative infrastructure.

Infrastructure with respect to building narrative power and achieving narrative change is not about those things. Narrative infrastructure is singularly about equipping a tight network of people organizing on the ground and working within various sectors to develop strategic and powerful narrative ideas, and then, against the odds of the imbalanced resources stacked against us, immerse people in a sustained series of narrative experiences required to enduringly change hearts, minds, behaviors, and relationships.

More fundamentally: narrative power is the ability to change the norms and rules our society lives by. Narrative infrastructure is the set of systems we maintain in order to do that reliably over time.

Narrative infrastructure helps us build power and achieve results at the level of a sector's or society's operating system, which then influences everything else that can and cannot happen in that system. Comms infrastructure takes place at the software application level, and its results are accordingly more limited. We need to change the way we do narrative change if we are going to use the power of narrative to change the rules of the systems and institutions that shape our society, shape public behavior, and thereby either fortify or attenuate injustice in our country.

One of the biggest mistakes we make as progressives when we think about infrastructure is actually leaving out—or redefining, to the point of total de-emphasis—the very idea of infrastructure itself.

Infrastructure and "capacity" are not the same thing,

at least not in the way most commonly discussed. When we mistake the latter for the former, we run into all sorts of trouble. The infrastructure to achieve follow-through, to the point of true dispersion and immersion, is not only about the capacity to do so—as if it were about resources and expertise alone. The capacity of a team to play a sport or put on a show effectively only matters if there is a larger infrastructure in place to make the games they play or shows they perform engage, and serve as meaningful stimulus to, millions of people.

We need a larger infrastructure for storytelling, if our capacity for storytelling will matter.

We can make videos and put them online, and have them reach a few hundred people—or even a million people—for a minute. (For the moment, even leaving alone the question of whether those videos have the most effective approach to content and framing, in service of our ultimate goals.) But we need to build the infrastructure that will make those videos known and loved and referenced by millions more people in a way that influences their lives. And we are simply not set up to do that in the way that corporations, religious organizations, and the right wing are set up to do it.

In the end, we can define narrative infrastructure as the ability to learn, create, broadcast, and immerse, and to do all four things strategically—both sequenced and integrated.

The challenge is that this kind of analysis—this kind of speech about narrative practice—often leads to a lot of nodding heads but rarely leads to enough moving feet. We drive ourselves neither to do things differently nor to do different things, both of which are critical. What is holding us back from doing the right thing is not the lack of analysis. Rather, we face a persistent set of internal cultural issues within our movement that are not effectively addressed, year after year.

Like any culture change challenge, we must first identify the incentives that normalize our status quo decisions, behaviors, and activities—the financial, emotional, and reputational incentives that keep the status quo practices in place: the pollsters, whose careers and summer homes depend on conducting and interpreting polling the very same way we always have done it, even though they have failed us (and not to mention that there are much better research solutions and practitioners out there); and the media consultants who direct our content and advertising strategies according to the conventional wisdom about which platforms (television) and which people (white people) yield the greatest return (though that "wisdom" has been disproven time and again, and those mistakes are often paid for by people of color).

So, while I hope this paper is helpful, it is no substitute for doing the work. It is only useful in catalyzing the work if it helps foster enough alignment among those with influence over a large enough set of progressive movement decision makers to make a difference in what our strategies and infrastructure look like.

NARRATIVE POWER

I must first confess my central bias, which is that the work of narrative is just one extension of the overall work of power. Narrative "product" is not narrative power. We do not need more ways to get our ideas on the record and archived online. Narrative power is not born of great content that no one watches, nor content we ourselves enjoy and think is right but has no social or political effect.

Narrative builds power for people, or it is not useful at all.

Nor is meaningful narrative change possible without real narrative power behind it. Narrative power is the ability to create leverage over those who set the incentives, rules, and norms that shape society and human behavior. It also means having the power to defeat the establishment of belief systems that oppose us, which would otherwise close down the very opportunities we need to open up to achieve real impact at the policy, politics, and cultural levels. Norms are powerful. Any challenge to norms, and any effort to forge new norms, must take a comprehensive approach.

Sometimes that means the power to connect two ideas that people hadn't connected before, which leads to a new set of emotional and intellectual conclusions that channel voices and efforts in a new direction. As an example: there was no connection between the moral weight of the civil rights movement and the political struggle over net neutrality until we made that connection. The ability of Color Of Change, Center for Media Justice, National Hispanic Media Coalition, and Free Press to connect those two ideas crowded out the influence of telecom companies over Black and Brown members of Congress who were initially leaning away from doing the right thing on net neutrality.

As another example: we will not have the power to change the rules that create poverty and sustain corporate control over our lives, unless we build the power to reshape the popular mental model that governs how people think poverty works. Poverty is not the result of bad decisions; rather, it is because of poverty that people are forced into making impossible and harmful decisions. In the popular imagination, poverty is the product of bad personal decisions, not bad collective decisions.

Therefore, many people believe that poverty is unfortunate (which creates no dissonance) without believing that it is unjust (which would create dissonance yielding intolerance and in need of resolution). It is only by believing that poverty is unjust—and that a just system will be good for everyone—that people will give consent to change; but we have not yet developed a coherent narrative about poverty's injustice that is motivating, nor a set of experiences that will be anywhere near compelling enough for people to internalize that new narrative and the mental model embedded within it. That is, we have not invested in the right narrative infrastructure, neither for developing the narrative itself nor for making it powerful.

Narrative power takes many other forms, and can be assessed by many other criteria that are not possible to address in this short essay. But my larger point is that narrative power is not merely the presence of our issues or issue frames on the front page. Rather, it is the ability to make that presence powerful—to be able to achieve presence in a way that forces changes in decision making and in the status quo, in real, material, value-added terms. (Knowing the difference between "presence" and "power" is a major rhetorical theme and strategic guide for both me and Color Of Change, which I address often in other venues.[1])

Another bias with respect to overall narrative strategy:

our goal in our narrative work must extend far beyond empathy; empathy alone is never enough.

Empathy cannot overcome norms alone, especially those sustained by a well-organized conservative opposition. Many assume that narrative change is about turning up the volume on the broadcast of our stories. In reality, it is just as much about changing the rules of cultural production, i.e., influencing other broadcasters' and platforms' narratives. And those rules are much less about ensuring or leveraging empathy as they are about capturing normativity, i.e., modeling in media the institutionalization of inclusion that we want to see in society, and changing the incentive structures of media makers to align with those practices.

Many incorrectly assume that the strategy behind the success of marriage equality was focused only on empathy—winning by focusing on the shared value of love—and not by maintaining a parallel focus on power. Focusing on increasing empathy and dignity for oppressed people was not enough to change the rules society lives by and end that oppression. When we were able to engender empathy among large swaths of straight people for gay and lesbian people who couldn't visit their partners in the hospital, they felt bad, they felt it was unfortunate, and they wanted to let those people have access . . . by granting civil unions. But they wouldn't think to go any further than that.

That's as far as empathy got us: seeing (some) LGB people's situation as unfortunate—not as unjust,

and wanting to solve a specific technical problem rather than change systems writ large, to create justice. It did not make them want LGB people overall to be powerful; it did not make them want to change the status of LGB people overall in society. (Let alone, trans people.) It did not defeat norms institutionalized by religion, culture, community, family, and the infrastructure of Focus on the Family, Concerned Women for America, and the right-wing TV and radio networks that are also tied into megachurch broadcast networks—ideas that had great power and could not be overcome by a shift in emotion alone. Empathy was important, but it was not enough.

To get to marriage equality, we had to focus on changing power dynamics, not just emotional dynamics, and pursuing both in an integrated way required a mature, strategic narrative approach.

THREE NEEDS, THREE INVESTMENTS

With respect to the infrastructure required for effectively building and leveraging narrative power, three points are critical as we think and plan together across the many movements that fall under the banner of the progressive movement.

Much of it comes down to investing in the abilities that will allow us to effect long-term change.

1. We need the ability to follow through on narrative and cultural dispersion and immersion—over time, across segments, and at scale.

If we become consumed with the goal of getting our issues on the front page (presence), rather than implementing our values and solutions in the real world (power), we miss the point of narrative's role in social change. It's not about getting a great headline, or getting a storyline in one television show, or getting a few million video views. Those are necessary tactical executions but are not themselves a narrative strategy, which we often mistake them to be. The work is not nearly over when we achieve those objectives.

We must equip ourselves to follow through by becoming both present and powerful, in a consistent way, in the lives of the millions of people whom we believe are essential for our success (i.e., target segments).

Once we've gotten our message out, we must doubly focus on getting our message in.

Meaning: we must follow through to ensure that we are immersing people in our worldview, giving them ways to express that worldview for themselves and to reinforce it and paint their world with it. That is, to constantly keep our ideas in circulation—looking for ways to tell the same story in different terms, time and again, endlessly.

That requires, among other things, investing in the underlying ideas and values beneath our issues, moving them through social and personal spaces that aren't explicitly political or focused on issues but are nonetheless the experiences and venues through which people shape their most heart-held values.

Detailing what an investment for each might look like is beyond the scope of this paper, but I can preview an example:

We know TV isn't where all our people are "living" and where they are most open to connection. So why do we put all our ads there? And why, when we do move campaigns online, do we maintain such an un-targeted and marginal approach? We need to learn, create, broadcast, and immerse as if we're serious, and at the level that both our target segments require and the channels through which we reach them require. (And why do people in Russia know how to play the game in our country better than we do, and invest in playing it more than we do?)

2. We need actual human beings serving as our main vehicle for achieving narrative change—people equipped, talented, motivated, and networked to effectively spread new and compelling stories throughout their networks and subcultures, as well as spreading the values and thought models they contain, in order to move those ideas into a "normative" position in society.

Without people in "narrative motion," we cannot achieve narrative change. We must remember that a few big clouds do not water the earth below them—millions of drops of rain do the watering.

We cannot let ourselves get lost in the clouds. We must ensure we are raining down on our culture and our narrative environment with the voices and actions of real people, in order to nourish that environment and facilitate the growth of the ideas we want to flourish in it.

There is a specific kind of infrastructure to bring about the cycles of rains and replenishment we need—to enable the widespread narrative immersion and mobilization we need—i.e., to make it rain. It requires investments in individuals and networks, both our core base and unlikely, presently un-activated groups.

The right wing beats us here almost all the time. They create echo chambers, as we know. But they also provide platforms, and create their own celebrities who are always on script and trained to build dedicated audiences, creating narrative networks that entangle millions and millions of people in extremely deep and immersive experiences that reinforce specific values, ideas, desires, and norms. Those audiences become motivated, empowered, and confident emissaries, taking on their families, their social and work communities, and other spaces far outside of the right-wing spaces in which they were first immersed in these ideas (and which they keep going back to for deeper and deeper immersion). It is tireless, expensive work that they do well. It is far beyond "comms." It is culture, it is business, it is community life. Progressives build our own islands, but they are rarely as big and populated, and we are not nearly as good at using them as a base for extending our reach and influence into the lives of those living on other islands that may be less explicitly political environments.

3. We cannot forsake the power of brands—the relationships responsible for the way that most people come to change their thinking, reshape their feeling, and redirect their behaviors.

We know from research that most people do not first decide on the issues they believe in and then figure out who among the leaders and forces of the world are the best vehicles for bringing those opinions and values to life. Rather, most people—all of us, if we are honest—first decide on the people we like or trust or feel inspired by, and then understand the world through them (as our lead interpreters), assuming that whoever they are and whatever they do works in service of the values we share (which they help define for us, perhaps even more than we define them for ourselves). That's the power of brand.

Put simply: brands are among the most compelling narratives we engage with.

A brand narrative is the story of a persona—real or fictional, individual or organizational. Nike has a brand narrative that drives people to engage with them in a certain way and think about their lives, and even life itself, in a certain way. And that brand narrative can influence people's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors much more than a doctor's lecture to a patient about health issues and performance—the very same "issues" Nike addresses through brand narrative. Democrats have a brand narrative, as do national and local organizations in our sector.

How well those brands are managed may affect how people think about issues far more than how well we manage issue narratives themselves.

Elizabeth Warren had a foundation and set of core adherents based both on what she believed and the actions she took in service of those beliefs. But her success as a powerful figure is a result of her larger brand narrative (i.e., who people think she is and want her to be), far more than her policy positions. Being who she is—i.e., her brand power—then allowed her to align many more people with her worldview orientation, belief system, and actions than she otherwise would have without that brand power. Millions more people. Bernie took the "gateway" approach of brand narrative to the next level, using his own persona to build brand power and channel the inchoate emotions, dreams, and vulnerabilities of millions of people into the formation of an intuitively "true" and culturally widespread platform for economic "revolution."

But because this happened without much of a grand strategy in place from a movement perspective—let alone a comprehensively designed one—we did not invest in the brand power of anyone else but these two white people representing New England.

We did not have (or put) the infrastructure in place to create brand narratives for people or organizations that could reach and attract the full range of Americans and American experiences and activate the networks of the communities essential to progressive success.

Even as they stood, Warren and Sanders did not do the things they could have done to increase their brand power among more Americans. But the real problem is that we did not invest—and consistently do not invest—in the people and organizations whose brand power can reach more people than the occasional break-out white Democrat or white pundit or white social leader can.

And when people of color are cut out of the progressive brand pantheon, progressives tend to get cut out of the political pantheon, and the great majority of Americans are cut short of the futures they deserve.

People have brand narratives, organizations have brand narratives, and even places and movements have brand narratives. Yet, across the political, cultural, and consumer realms, we invest almost nothing in brand power—and, frankly, are not very good at it even when we do.

It has always surprised me that when it comes to infrastructure, we focus so much more on framing and narrative development for the issues—whether policy issues or larger social issues—than on the narratives (i.e., brand narratives) that we know have far more sway over creating the kind of long-term bonds that catalyze metanarrative shifts and lead to the participatory behaviors we want.

• • •

Breaking patterns is hard, especially when it requires learning new things from new people and following new leaders, while we push ourselves to find better answers and ultimately embrace winning practices.

But the motivating question is simple: Are we happy? Are we happy with how we're doing narrative right now and the results we're getting, and are we willing to keep on doing the same?

If not, then we are going to have to make a change. It's going to be painful.

It's going to mean that some people who had expert status will not be able to keep it. It means that the inner expert in each of us is going to have to step back and focus more on learning what we need to change, than on the ideas and anecdotes, tools and recommendations we want to keep selling.

We need to build new narrative infrastructure (as part of our overall movement infrastructure) in order to build narrative power (as part of building our overall movement power). Without narrative power, we are not going to change the rules of society—our society's operating system—and shape society in the image of our values. Without taking a hard, serious look at what we are missing in terms of narrative infrastructure, we cannot truly say we are doing all we can do to fight for those values and the people they represent.

Note

1. See, for instance, Rashad Robinson, "Keynote Talk 2017: 'Are We Going To Get This Right?,'" Personal Democracy Forum, July 17, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnTjy0Yltc4.

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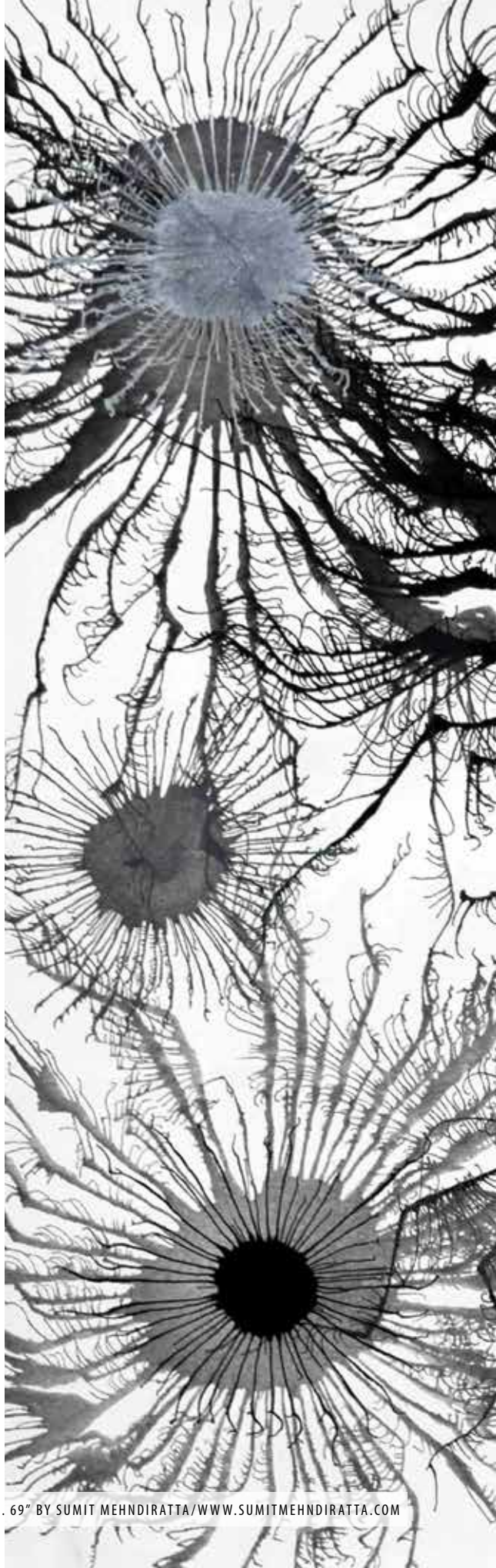
When Someone Steals Your Soul: Repatriating *Narratives* *in the* Nonprofit Sector

by the editors

"There is a reason why the words **narrative** and **colonization** keep popping up lately in movement circles. Until the narratives about the 'disadvantaged,' 'underserved,' 'dependent,' 'at risk,' 'opportunity' folks are shaped, relanguaged, and owned by those same folks, the tales told about them will be mostly absurd and will drain power from the building of a strong, sustainable, shared future."

Editor's Note: *This article was first published in the* Nonprofit Quarterly*'s winter 2018 edition. It has been updated for publication here.*

If we were to guess why so-called "elites" are so disliked by others, I might suggest that we look to the habit of defining the reality of others and making neat little rationalization packages that insult the protagonists, then creating prescriptions for their betterment, thank you very much. The comfortable do-gooder creates stories about why things are the way they are, and then decides that one or another intervention will be just the thing to turn the situation around. A book (or twenty) is written, creating a self-reinforcing field; and two or three generations later, the same people are thanking one another for their service, and basic dynamics of social and economic subjugation remain intact.



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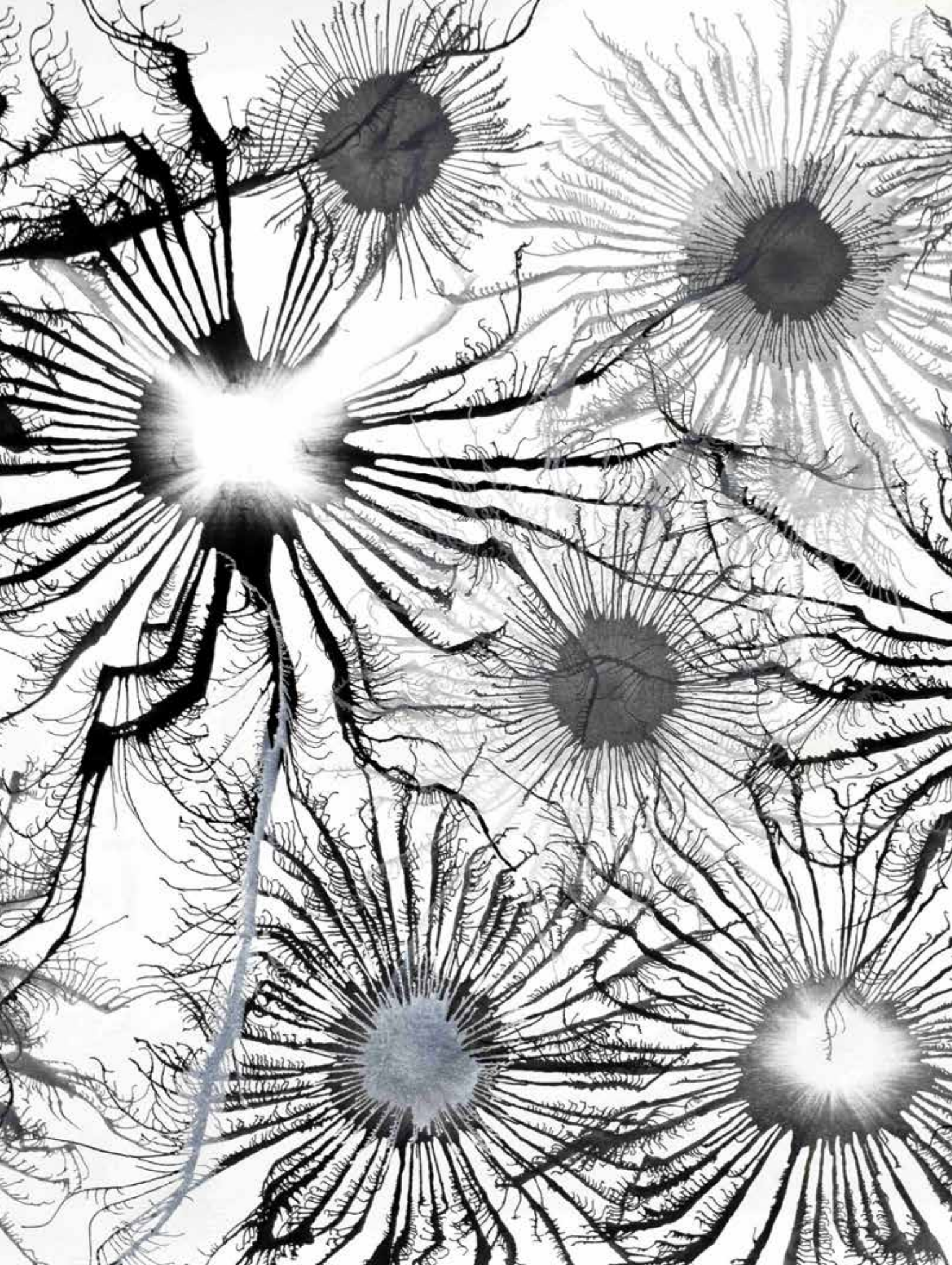

In short, those metanarratives are present to keep a system mostly intact in terms of making meaning of the world, even if the meaning that is being made does not conform to what we experience or want for our collective future.

Elites have cordoned themselves off, and their subjects are in the process of doing the same—much to the discomfort and surprise of those elites—and why not? What self-respecting person would allow herself to be diagnosed by another with no experience of her situation and with no consultation? Much of the philanthropic and nonprofit sector should be brought up on charges of experimenting, without consent, on human subjects. As Edgar Villanueva writes in *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance*: "Philanthropy, honey, it's time for an intervention."[1]

There is a reason why the words *narrative* and *colonization* keep popping up lately in movement circles. Until the narratives about the "disadvantaged," "underserved," "dependent," "at risk," "opportunity" folks are shaped, relanguaged, and owned by those same folks, the tales told about them will be mostly absurd and will drain power from the building of a strong, sustainable, shared future. As James Baldwin wrote in *The Devil Finds Work*: "The victim who is able to articulate the situation of the victim has ceased to be a victim; he, or she, has become a threat."[2]

Fifty years ago, it was normal for parents to spank their children—"spare the rod, spoil the child." Forty years ago, it was normal for the killing of a woman in a domestic violence incident to be referred to as a "crime of passion." The reason why both characterizations of interpersonal violence are no longer countenanced and legitimated in that way is because the narratives about them have been disrupted. In neither case did the behavior stand by itself; it was not only supported by descriptive language of the sort listed above, but that descriptive language brought the listener/reader back to other metanarratives designed to make sense of the world. Those metanarratives and their derivative phrases gain traction through repetition, as FrameWorks Institute's Mackenzie Price explains in a 2018 interview with *NPQ*—that is, repetition that varies with the narrator sufficiently to create a new common-assumption bubble.[3]

Color Of Change's Rashad Robinson talks about the need not just for a higher shared consciousness about the importance of narrative but also for an infrastructure to create and reinforce new narratives that explicitly build not just meaning but power (see "Changing Our Narrative about Narrative: The Infrastructure Required for Building Narrative Power," in this edition). In fact, there is almost no story you can tell that does not attach itself to another, larger story (a metanarrative) about what is and isn't considered "normal." Often it takes only a few words to recall the weight of the whole kit and kaboodle of the metanarrative—which may, in the case of family violence, involve a whole lot of patriarchal thinking.

The conceptual framework that holds that the man is the "leader" and protector of the family (and, by extension, the universe) may seem patently ridiculous in light of the realities we live, but when held up as the norm it is a powerful guide to meaning making (and compensation setting), even if we have to turn things inside out to make it all fit. Thus, you may have Dr. Phil declaring the need to "end the silence on domestic violence" while on the same show admonishing men to be the leaders of their families they were meant to be.

In short, those metanarratives are present to keep a system mostly intact in terms of making meaning of the world, even if the meaning that is being made does not conform to what we experience or want for our collective future.

In *Considering Counter-Narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense*, editors Michael Bamberg and Molly Andrews suggest that the power of these metanarratives is in their internalization, and thus "we become the stories we know."[4]

The only way we can extricate ourselves from living our lives in the shadow of or even inside of stories that are deadly to our sensibilities and potential is, they contend, to resist through counternarratives that contain as much or more complexity, depth, and meaning as the dominant narrative. This, they say, quoting Richard Delgado, is particularly important for those whose consciousness "has been suppressed, devalued, and abnormalized."[5] In other words, the rupturing of the dominant narrative must be a multidimensional effort and repeated

wherever the old metanarrative is being trotted out for a reinforcing run around the block.

Thirty years ago, we were still ensnared in a definition of family that required two genders strictly defined. Moving that notion took a resistance that was built over time and from many voices and images and stories.

In "Changing Our Narrative about Narrative," Robinson writes, "To get to marriage equality, we had to focus on changing power dynamics, not just emotional dynamics, and pursuing both in an integrated way required a mature, strategic narrative approach." And although Bamberg and Andrews believe that dominant narratives are less stable than they appear, challenging them is an exhausting and sometimes marginalizing enterprise for any one person. It requires a constant repudiation and negotiation of terms. Back again to Robinson, who writes, "We need actual human beings serving as our main vehicle for achieving narrative change—people equipped, talented, motivated, and networked to effectively spread new and compelling stories." This, he asserts, will move our ideas into the "normative" position.

But for those ideas to be worthy of moving into a more normative position, we must interrogate ourselves and what we support by omission or commission. Villanueva writes that often, in this sector, we accept our own behavior even when it conflicts with what we say we are working for. Specifically, he writes of philanthropy:

> *It is (we are) a period play, a costume drama, a fantasy of entitlement, altruism, and superiority. Far too often, it creates (we create) division and suffering rather than progress and healing.*
>
> *It is (we are) a sleepwalking sector, white zombies spewing the money of dead white people in the name of charity and benevolence.*
>
> *It is (we are) colonialism in the empire's newest clothes.*
>
> *It is (we are) racism in institutional form.*[6]

But back to the idea of colonization, which entails not just the attempted conquering of land and people but also national identities. In "Museums: Nonprofits in the Eye of the Perfect Narrative Storm," we talk about the role of those institutions in anchoring dominant narratives, and quote Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III of the Duala people in Cameroon, who runs AfricAvenir International, a Pan-Africanist nonprofit that calls for the restitution of artifacts taken without consent: "This is not just about the return of African art," he says. "When someone's stolen your soul, it's very difficult to survive as a people."[7]

Notes

1. Edgar Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018), Introduction.
2. James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* (New York: Dial Press, 1976).
3. "Reframing Narratives, Resetting Reality: A Conversation with Mackenzie Price of the FrameWorks Institute," *Nonprofit Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Winter 2018): 31–35.
4. *Considering Counter-Narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense*, ed. Michael Bamberg and Molly Andrews (Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing, 2004).
5. *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 60.
6. Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*, Introduction.
7. "Museums: Nonprofits in the Eye of the Perfect Narrative Storm," *Nonprofit Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Winter 2018): 48–59.

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On Mutuality and Reciprocity as Systemic Medicine for What Ails Us

by Ruth McCambridge

"In the end, we can conclude that the civil sector has acted lazily—to put it kindly—when it comes to addressing the dominant overarching definers of culture and economy, even when the effects they cause are chronic, generationally tragic, and right in their wheelhouse."

The economic/political framework of the United States needs to be changed, and it can be changed, because the time is ripe—there being at least as much of an impulse toward the common good among the populace as there is toward careless self-enrichment at the expense of others. This much has been proven by community responses to COVID-19 and subsequent mass protests against systemic violence perpetrated by the police but reflective of systemic racism that invades every aspect of society.

If anyone needed anything else to reinforce the fact that the economic ethos of extractive capitalism has played itself out, the COVID-19 pandemic was there as a painful highlighter. In the midst of the pestilence, the rich once again got richer and the poor got even poorer and even more marginalized, and fell ill while doing their essential jobs. Not even a thin patina of a fair-shake narrative is left. And the immutable evidence of the effects of systemic racism continues surfacing everywhere: in the illness and death rates, in the job and business loss rates, and as always in the ongoing violence against Black people that has once again ignited calls—not just for police reform but also for justice in every aspect of our society.

So, what is the narrative that might replace the principle of sometimes pathologically heedless extraction?

Ruth McCambridge is the *Nonprofit Quarterly*'s editor in chief.

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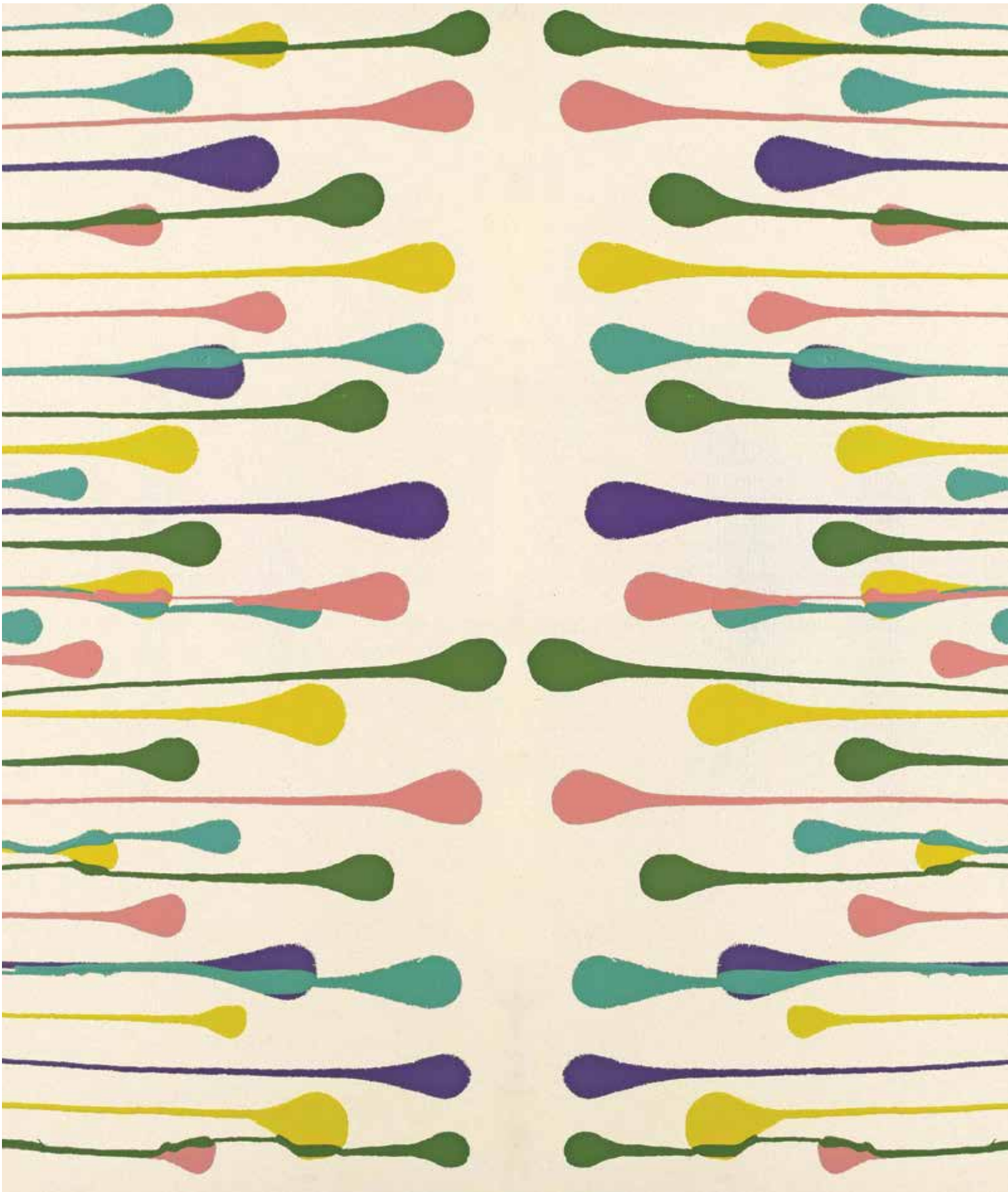

I would argue that reciprocity is as natural an urge as self-interest, which has exerted such a tenacious hold on our culture—and it is looking for avenues of organized action.

There is much in research literature that asserts that the notion of selfish self-interest is not an immutable rule of economic behavior but rather a chosen cultural assumption that establishes a landscape where antisocial behavior is encouraged. Choosing away from that and into an economy that promotes collective self-interest, available through cooperation and a cultural drive toward fairness and foresight, would, therefore, be a break with the central belief system of the U.S. economy. This requires that all of humanity see ourselves in common cause with each other and with our offspring many generations out. These notions are far from new, but they are not generally associated with the kind of colonialist mentality that now retains control of our economic and social imaginations. But, although it may mean a break with the central system that drives the U.S. economy, it is not out of step with the psyches of many—even the majority—of this country's residents, and that gives us a foothold.

Indeed, the central theme that has emerged from the recent pandemic—even over and above the confused incompetence of current leadership—is the essential worker who continues to hang in there for others and themselves even as things become dangerous. These are the people running toward the fire to find and help their neighbors. It is what many imagine this country to be at its core, but so clearly never has been—a place where we consider not only ourselves but also others in the actions that we take or refuse to take. That is the essence of reciprocity, and it is what is being ignored in the ethos of our economic system even as community after community calls for recognition of its human resonance, unifying value, and good sense. Reciprocity requires an understanding of interconnectedness and foresight as morality; it is about mutual dependence and action for the public good. It is what comes forward when no one is there to tell you what to do when there are common and immediate threats to safety. I would argue that reciprocity is as natural an urge as self-interest, which has exerted such a tenacious hold on our culture—and it is looking for avenues of organized action.

Pair that with the concept of mutuality, or mutualism, where we work with one another in a way that does not control or proscribe to build a future that makes most use of the hopes and dreams and intelligence of its inhabitants. These ideas are core to an active democracy, and they are largely missing from public discourse in any way other than a kind of fetishization of the quirky: the out-of-step caring impulse that is to be celebrated but not mutually expected.

Elizabeth Castillo addressed the concept of mutualism in her 2017 article "Restoring Reciprocity: How the Nonprofit Sector Can Help Save Capitalism from Itself."[1]

> Nature offers an excellent model to understand this principle. Organisms have three primary ways of interacting. *Parasitism* benefits one organism at the expense of another, such as a flea feeding off a dog. *Commensalism* benefits one organism with neutral outcomes to the other, such as a bird nesting in a tree. *Mutualism* benefits both organisms, and their exchange produces larger systemic benefits. An example is a bee gathering pollen from a flower, which enriches both. Repeated interactions among different bees and flowers lead to cross-pollination, in turn increasing biodiversity and *ecosystem resilience*.[2]

So, what if we refused to take parasitism as a given design principle? What if instead we took as a central assumption that addressing the needs and concerns of everyone was in everyone's own self-interest and was ultimately a more richly sustainable and liberatory way of life?

Over the last few months, global media have shown communities celebrating people who act as heroes even while the systems treat them as disposable. Indeed, communities tacitly benefiting from these systems have banged pots for essential workers but not necessarily extended those accolades to action by insisting that they be respected or supported in any reasonable way on a more permanent basis by new systems. The notion of the "essential worker" epitomizes

the dichotomy between what we need as a mutually beneficial nation and what these systems choose to reward.

Because while some have run toward the fire, others appear to be looking for any available plunder, in terms of additional power or treasure. Bill Gates, for example, has volunteered to remake the New York City Department of Education, despite the fact that his track record vis-à-vis such reforms is deplorable. Nonetheless, he has been welcomed into the "fold" where, in the midst of the chaos that is this country's educational system, rich white people make decisions for children they do not know. Working families might want to be included in such discussions, but not only has Gates been disinclined toward such inclusions in his past projects on education, many families are also in the position of having to work two or three jobs to survive. Jeff Bezos has made additional billions even while Amazon's workers are daily suffering dangerous working conditions for a pittance. Meanwhile, for those Americans not still working, a wave of evictions is headed their way as Bezos throws alms at programs addressing homelessness.

There has been much recently written about the function of philanthropy within a system that generates ever-greater injustice. In "How Liberatory Philanthropy and Restorative Investing can Remake the Economy" (in this edition), Rodney Foxworth writes:

> Curiously, philanthropy is used to address problems created by an economic system that engenders radical wealth inequality, thus making philanthropy necessary in the first place. That we live in what has effectively become a winner-take-all economy is not seriously in doubt. According to Credit Suisse, the wealthiest one percent now own 47.2 percent of the world's wealth. In the United States, the numbers are only slightly better, with the wealthiest one percent of U.S. households owning 39.6 percent of the country's wealth. In 2017, 82 percent of all new wealth created worldwide went to the richest one percent. In 2017, the world's richest 500 billionaires' net worth grew 24 percent to $5.38 trillion while the poorest 50 percent saw no increase in wealth at all. The world's billionaires saw their collective wealth increase by $762 billion, enough money to put an end to global extreme poverty seven times over.
>
> This massive concentration of wealth among the wealthiest comes during an era when worker rights are often perfunctory at best, an oxymoron at worst—a world where, despite talk of shared value, Wall Street maintains an unrelenting focus on shareholder returns. Further, according to *The Road to Zero Wealth*, a 2017 study by Prosperity Now and the Institute for Policy Studies, if the U.S. racial wealth gap remains unaddressed, Black median household wealth will fall to zero by 2053, while white median household wealth is projected to rise to $137,000 by that same year.

These statistics may have been worsened significantly by the pandemic.

All of this coincides with a trend toward structures associated with the so-called "sharing economy," including platforms and networks. Many platforms have also been captured by big corporations recreating systems where the few benefit as much as they can from the work of the many. But networks that emphasize mutual trust, reciprocity, real asset sharing, and the development of a sustainable commons have not necessarily gone the same way, perhaps being loose enough to avoid systems of control and exploitation. People are there, presumably, voluntarily, and they are at least arguably a part of governance as long as they choose to stay—if only by mere virtue of their ability to freely choose to stay or to go. Loose networks do not work for everything, but they have long been powerful as shapers and implementers of big society-changing concepts.

But how does one govern such loose structures, or impose the form needed to pursue a

Jeff Bezos has made additional billions even while Amazon's workers are daily suffering dangerous working conditions for a pittance. Meanwhile, for those Americans not still working, a wave of evictions is headed their way.

Over the past few years, as the virulence of race hatred has trickled down from the highest echelons of government, networks have developed and strengthened to address the political and economic disempowerment that feeds systems of dysfunction.

unified purpose? That, too, must call for both a certain amount of looseness and a reciprocity not only of goods but also of faith and energy. And all of that must be based upon a discourse that seeks always to be guided by principle, but be informed by the diversity of intelligence that makes up the world.

Essential workers should be centered in our economy; and racism and other forms of not just discrimination but also structural subjugation are in the way of any sense of solidarity. And here one must, again, look at the value of networks. Over the past few years, as the virulence of race hatred has trickled down from the highest echelons of government, networks have developed and strengthened to address the political and economic disempowerment that feeds systems of dysfunction.

It is a rule of systems that they abhor vacuums, so simply promoting that greed be abolished—regulated away—is not the key to remaking our economy and the social structures and culture that support it. The very organizing ethos must be replaced to remake the world as a place that nurtures life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all, but especially for those who have daily proven themselves invested in community. To make this happen, we must choose leaders who are unbendingly on the side of essential workers and their families.

In an interview in 2018 with the *Nonprofit Quarterly*, Douglas Rushkoff suggested that civil society organizations have core structural assumptions that are better suited to building businesses that attend to the common good and ensure that profit is rightly shared.[3]

> Think about it like this: if you had a furniture company, what if the thing that mattered most to that company was the quality and sales of the furniture? I know it sounds like I'm being ironic or strange, but that's not the way business works. What you care about is the company making revenue.
>
> Right now, the product of most businesses is the shares that they're selling to investors—and if the share price isn't going up, then an activist investor comes in and figures out how you can hurt the company in order to give more money to the shareholders. So, the object of the game becomes: How do we squeeze our suppliers? How do we fool our customers? How do we outsource our production? All to the detriment of the actual business.[4]

But Rushkoff admits there is work to do to remind people that the notion of the fate of the whole being in the hands of each individual is key.

> . . . all the cells in your body may not be conscious of the fact that they're all part of this one big body. They're just doing their individual jobs, and they have little walls. There are some membranes and permeability between them, but they might think—for as much as they think—"I'm just me." They don't think, "Oh, wait a minute, there's this thing called Doug that we're all part of." And I think of human beings the same way—that we're all part of this large team, this human organism. And even if we're not part of one organism, we'd better start acting like we're part of one organism, because we're sharing a scarce resource of planetary abundance. So, if we don't orient to the planet as a commons rather than a property, then we're going to continue to exploit it at our peril rather than maintain it for our collective benefit.[5]

In the end, we can conclude that the civil sector has acted lazily—to put it kindly—when it comes to addressing the dominant overarching definers of culture and economy, even when the effects they cause are chronic, generationally tragic, and right in their wheelhouse. Castillo argues that what is needed is for the basic organizing principles to be replaced.

> Value creation at its core is a process of values creation. It is therefore paramount that the nonprofit sector find its voice and articulate its values of equity and reciprocity. Nonprofits must become "sensegivers," helping commerce make

new meaning of its exchange practices. How exchange gets enacted (parasitically or mutualistically) reflects who we are as a society. It also determines what kind of soil we cultivate, expanding or limiting our future possibilities. If we want our country to thrive in the coming centuries, we must develop the wisdom and will to make reciprocity as America's guiding economic principle.[6]

So this is not just an exercise in conceptual gymnastics—a matter of removing this system and replacing it with that system. Rather it has to be a change of ethos. In his wonderfully nuanced article "Bridging or Breaking? The Stories We Tell Will Create the Future We Inhabit," john a. powell, director of the Othering & Belonging Institute at University of California, Berkeley, describes it as a belonging built on active bridging:

> Belonging requires both agency and power to cocreate. But true belonging means we are not just creating for our group(s), but for all. One of the major ways of promoting belonging is by bridging. Bridging requires that we create space to hear and see each other. It does not require agreement. As the neuroscientist Robert Sapolsky states, we recognize each other by recognizing our respective sacred symbols. Bridging is about creating compassionate space and practices where we can acknowledge each other's stories and suffering. We have to construct stories that allow space for others. Our story cannot just be about us in the narrowest way, nor can it reproduce othering by consigning an other to be just a villain in our story. At a deeper level, bridging is about co-constructing a larger *we*, with shifting differences and similarities. Through bridging, people experience being heard, being seen, and being cared for.[7]

Further on, powell writes:

> What I would say to people in philanthropy—and in movement building and civic engagement as well—is that while policies are important, the essence of the struggle is about who we are. For funders, you should be funding work to help people exercise this muscle. Don't only fund separate issues or separate groups.[8]

• • •

As this article is finalized, *NPQ* is watching the landscape of response to the latest incidents of police violence; over a three-week period, hundreds of localities have seen protests against police violence targeting Black people. Police departments and local governments are hearing calls to defund the police, and corporations have been weighing in—perhaps because they know that things must change—but they are weighing in while the president fights with Twitter about whether or not he is allowed to continue to lie and incite violence on social media platforms. Finally, organized philanthropy and the nonprofit sector have been largely silent to date—which has to change. It is well past time that the sector acknowledges that we all need the organizing power of a central national racial justice agenda and a conscious change of economic ethos.

"Bridging requires that we create space to hear and see each other. It does not require agreement."
—john a. powell

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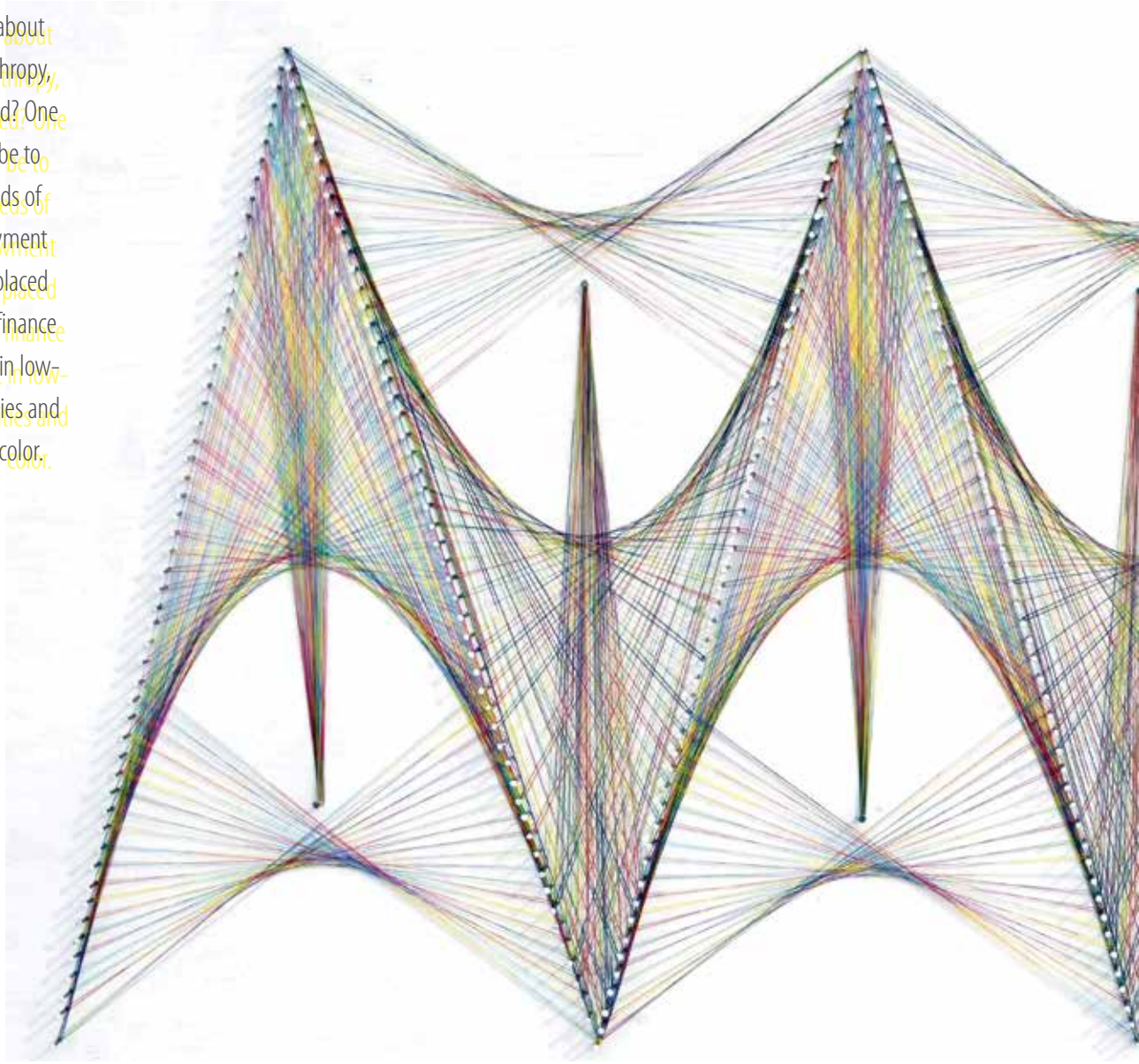
How **Liberatory Philanthropy** *and* **Restorative Investing** Can **Remake** *the* **Economy**

by Rodney Foxworth

It is easy to talk about liberating philanthropy, but what is needed? One key step would be to shift the hundreds of billions in endowment assets currently placed on Wall Street to finance direct investment in low-income communities and communities of color.



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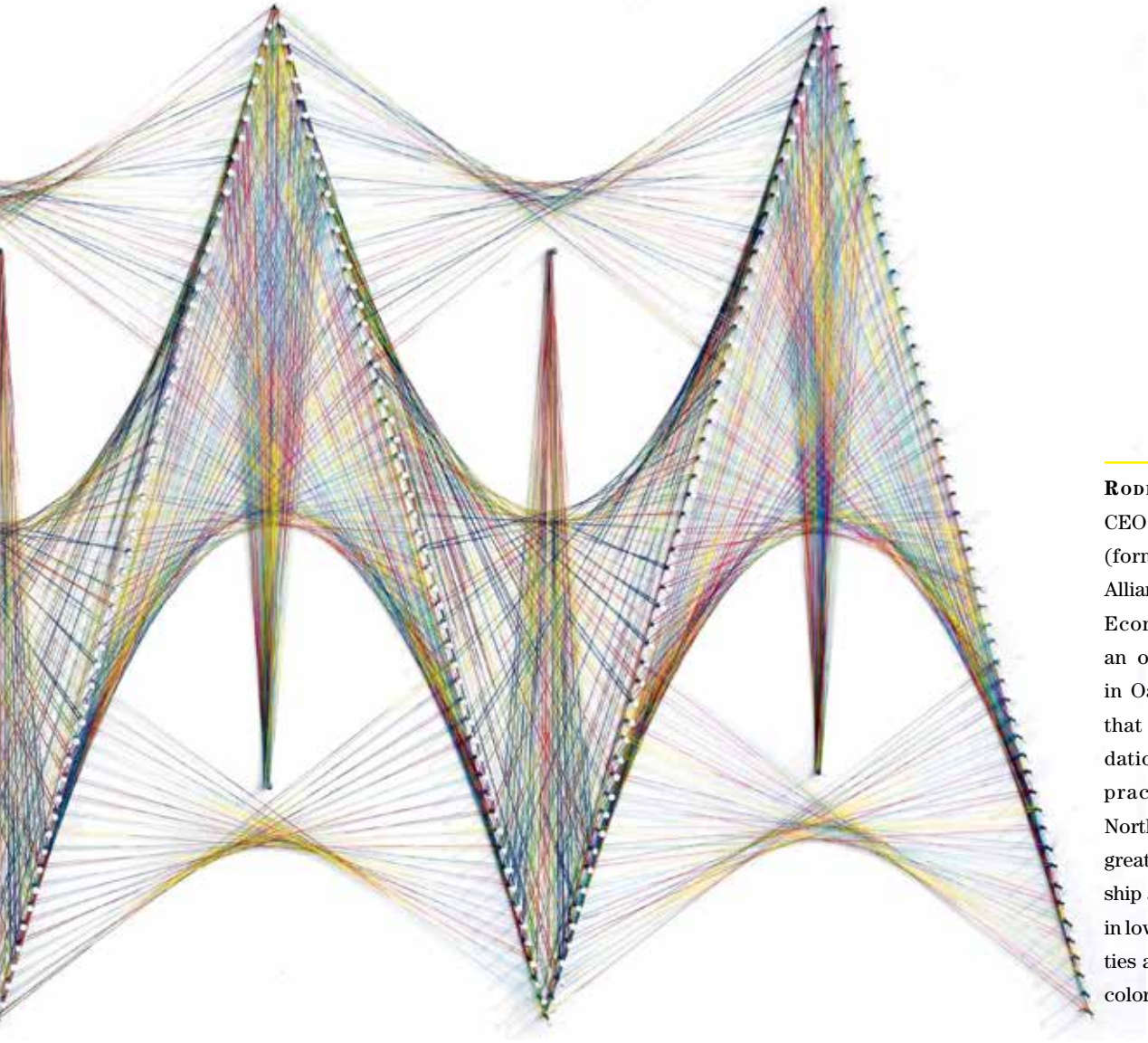
Editors' note: *This article was first published by* NPQ *online on February 28, 2019. It has been lightly edited for publication here.*

2018 USHERED IN A NEW LEVEL OF POIGNANT AND POPULAR CRITIQUE OF THE BUSINESS OF PHILANTHROPY, catalyzing widespread discussion and debate about philanthropy's role in perpetuating and exacerbating economic inequality and racial injustice. Books like *Winners Take All* by Anand Giridharadas and Edgar Villanueva's *Decolonizing Wealth* became essential reading and struck a chord throughout the social sector and mainstream society.[1]



Rodney Foxworth is CEO of Common Future (formerly the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies [BALLE]), an organization based in Oakland, California, that works with foundations and nonprofit practitioners across North America to foster greater business ownership and wealth building in low-income communities and communities of color.

The field of philanthropy must wrestle with its complacency in the systemic accumulation and concentration of wealth. Philanthropy needs a liberation.

As Giridharadas, Villanueva, and others make compellingly clear, not only is philanthropy the product of wealth inequality, philanthropy—deliberate or not—thrives in an environment that perpetuates privilege, white supremacy, and entrenched power. Perhaps most significantly, institutional philanthropy often reinforces economic exploitation and extraction. Philanthropy, like extreme poverty, is simply a byproduct of social, gender, racial, and economic injustice.

Curiously, philanthropy is used to address problems created by an economic system that engenders radical wealth inequality, thus making philanthropy necessary in the first place. That we live in what has effectively become a winner-take-all economy is not seriously in doubt. According to Credit Suisse, the wealthiest one percent now own 47.2 percent of the world's wealth.[2] In the United States, the numbers are only slightly better, with the wealthiest one percent of U.S. households owning 39.6 percent of the country's wealth.[3] In 2017, 82 percent of all new wealth created worldwide went to the richest one percent.[4] In 2017, the world's richest 500 billionaires' net worth grew 24 percent to $5.38 trillion while the poorest 50 percent saw no increase in wealth at all. The world's billionaires saw their collective wealth increase by $762 billion, enough money to put an end to global extreme poverty seven times over.[5]

This massive concentration of wealth among the wealthiest comes during an era when worker rights are often perfunctory at best, an oxymoron at worst—a world where, despite talk of shared value, Wall Street maintains an unrelenting focus on shareholder returns.[6] Further, according to *The Road to Zero Wealth*, a 2017 study by Prosperity Now and the Institute for Policy Studies, if the U.S. racial wealth gap remains unaddressed, Black median household wealth will fall to zero by 2053, while white median household wealth is projected to rise to $137,000 by that same year.[7]

The demography of the United States is changing: People of color will be the majority within a generation and already are in public schools nationwide. Meanwhile, wealth—and the power, protection, and access that come with it—continues to be extracted from and denied to communities of color and other marginalized communities.

Our global economic system clearly benefits the 2,208 billionaires[8] and 36 million millionaires[9] in the world, but literally billions are left behind. When it is the case that, even in the wealthy United States, so many are headed toward zero or even negative wealth, what is philanthropy to do?

The field of philanthropy must wrestle with its complacency in the systemic accumulation and concentration of wealth. Philanthropy needs a liberation—a movement to redress these systemic failures and restore equity. In order to liberate philanthropy, a number of justice-oriented organizations have developed concrete and actionable steps for philanthropy to take.

One such organization is Justice Funders, an Oakland-based foundation affinity group. They have developed a Resonance Framework, which offers foundations clear, step-by-step guidance.[10] The framework they apply, which is based on the Just Transition concept, requires foundations "to acknowledge the impact of the extractive economy on marginalized communities, repair the harms of our long history of exploitation, and reject the continued accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few."[11]

To make liberatory philanthropy a reality, foundation leaders must take a hard look at how they manage and invest their endowments. Federal law only stipulates that foundations give away 5 percent of their endowments each year (though, in fact, even this number can be reduced, since staff and consultant expenses are included in that 5 percent).[12] The other 95 percent of foundation endowments is generally invested in Wall Street to ensure that philanthropic largess remains in perpetuity. Foundations can no longer treat the investment of their endowments separately from their grantmaking. The level of inequity in this country is rising quickly; the stakes are too high.

As nonprofit consultant Nwamaka Agbo has indicated, there is a different approach, which she calls "restorative economics."[13] This is an approach that is "rooted in relationships with social movements in a way that democratizes the ownership of wealth, land and resources . . . where

communities are making decisions around who has access to those resources."[14]

According to the Foundation Center,[15] there are nearly 86,000 charitable foundations with more than $890 billion in assets.[16] The *Chronicle of Philanthropy* recently reported that of the fifteen largest U.S. foundations, only Ford, Kellogg, Kresge, and MacArthur have committed part of their endowments to align with their missions.[17] But even with these foundations, their assets by and large are still not invested in alignment with their missions.

Rather than pursue investment returns that prioritize perpetuity, what if foundations invested their assets in ways that deliberately addressed inequality? What if foundations divested from Wall Street altogether and instead invested in local economic enterprises that are building wealth in communities of color and low-wealth communities?

The goal for foundations should no longer be to accumulate wealth, further enabling wealth inequality to persist. Foundations must fundamentally change their way of operating by redistributing wealth, democratizing power, and shifting economic control to communities. This requires a shift in our underlying assumptions about the role of capital and our underlying approach to philanthropy.

To date, the most popular and mainstream forms of impact and mission investing—while hopefully generating both financial returns and social impact—fail to examine how wealth accumulation, capital supremacy, and concentrated power perpetuate injustice and inequality. Impact investing is often described as a way to transform healthcare, housing, and other fields; but is it possible to dismantle the systems that create wealth inequality while upholding the power structure of those same systems? Philanthropy is uniquely positioned to take on these challenges. An opportunity exists for philanthropy to stretch beyond the status quo in impact investing and examine impact investments more deeply.

The Resonance Framework pioneered by Justice Funders offers principles and practices to guide foundations to move from a worldview of extraction—in which the preservation of wealth and power is prioritized over the needs of people and the environment—to one of transformation, in which wealth is redistributed, power is democratized, and economic control is shifted to communities in a way that is truly regenerative for people and the planet.

The Heron Foundation, a $275 million private foundation, illustrates how change is possible. Heron began to move away from extraction in 2015, after it discovered it was investing in Corrections Corporation of America (CCA)—now known as CoreCivic—the largest operator of private prisons in the United States.[18] Heron's mission is to help people and communities move out of poverty, and the foundation's investments in private prisons contradicted its mission. As a result, Heron created a set of metrics for evaluating investments in its portfolio for community, social, and environmental impacts—what the foundation calls "net contribution."[19]

There are other reasons to feel hopeful. Heather McLeod Grant and Alexa Cortés Culwell of the philanthropic advisory firm Open Impact point out in an article titled "Making Better Big Bets" that, "As a sector, we've invested decades—and trillions of dollars—in social innovation, experimentation, and learning. There is no reason to start from scratch."[20] Institutional philanthropy has invented some powerful tools that, if managed and deployed with a liberation and restorative framework, have potential to make the level of impact that we need.

One tool that could be mobilized are Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs). This is not the place to discuss the pros and cons of DAFs, a topic that *NPQ* has covered at length over the past few years.[21] But despite their faults, DAFs can also be an effective tool for aggregating and redeploying capital.[22] Imagine, for example, a DAF that invests nonextractive capital in projects that leverage philanthropic investment for perpetual community wealth building—nonextractive capital for fostering equitable, economically empowered communities. By converting the DAF model into a community-advised fund, you could catalyze equitable and inclusive business development—while also ensuring that donor-advised dollars are deployed in a timely manner. My organization Common Future (formerly the Business Alliance

Impact investing is often described as a way to transform healthcare, housing, and other fields; but is it possible to dismantle the systems that create wealth inequality while upholding the power structure of those same systems?

for Local Living Economies [BALLE]), is currently exploring the launch of just such a model.

But my group is far from the only one seeking to transform philanthropy and investing. One of the most remarkable examples is the Buen Vivir Fund, an investment project founded by Thousand Currents, an organization that has supported self-determination in the Global South for over thirty years. The concept of *buen vivir* comes from Latin American indigenous movements and means "right living," or life in balance with community, natural systems, and future generations. The Buen Vivir Fund and its partners, including NoVo and Swift Foundations, invest directly in grassroots economic change. Buen Vivir Fund follows principles of the Resonance Framework:

- **Distribution of power and decision making**: Those who invest financial capital into the Fund and those with on-the-ground expertise and experience are equal voting members.
- **Rethinking risk**: Loan terms shift risk away from grassroots groups because financial investors can more easily shoulder it.
- **Solidarity**: To support the Fund's sustainability, borrowers make a contribution back to the project of their choosing, based on their project's success, and growth is passed forward as investment into the next group or project in the Fund.

Still, in order for solutions like the Buen Vivir Fund to flourish and shift the status quo, philanthropy must act boldly and swiftly. Two critical questions remain:

- "Can foundations be liberated to build a more just and equitable economy?" and
- "Is philanthropy ready to create a world where it is no longer needed?"

To create the equitable future we want, we need to be honest about what got us to, and keeps us in, this place of radical and widening economic inequality. If we truly want to live in an equitable society, those of us with power must give some of it up—and foundations are ideally positioned to model the way.

If we truly want to live in an equitable society, those of us with power must give some of it up—and foundations are ideally positioned to model the way.

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Reframing Governance III

by David O. Renz

Are boards irrelevant? While many in the nonprofit world have been increasingly vocal in expressing concern that nonprofits are not developing different forms of governance, the form has changed on its own. Now that the larger and more substantive aspects of governance decisions have increasingly moved to realms outside of the organization, nonprofits must examine how to reorganize to be effective stewards in this new context and strategize about how they might better interact with networks to meet key community aspirations.

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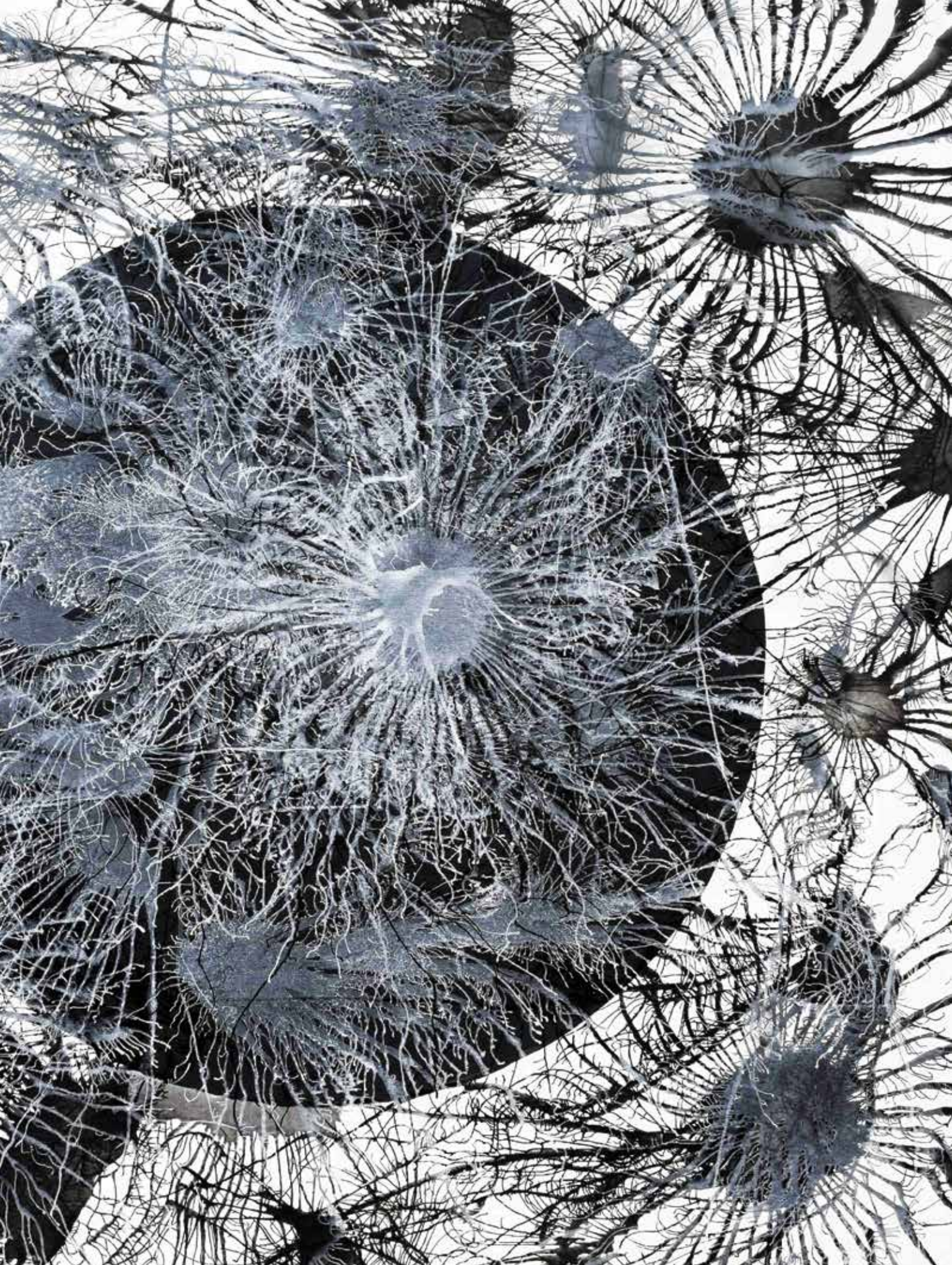

Editors note: *This article is the third edition of "Reframing Governance," which was first published in 2006, and updated in 2012.*

The article "Reframing Governance" was initially published in the *Nonprofit Quarterly* in 2006 to identify and discuss the implications of what I then perceived as a new form of nonprofit governance emerging in our communities—a form of governance that operated beyond the level of individual boards in individual nonprofit organizations and was reshaping many dimensions of nonprofit governance. I was intrigued with the growth of multiorganizational nonprofit initiatives emerging to address complex community issues and needs that outstripped the scale and significance of the usual forms of partnerships and collaborative initiatives, and, in particular, highlighted the emergence of a new level of governance integral to them. This phenomenon has continued to grow and elaborate exponentially as increasingly larger networks of public-serving organizations (nonprofit and governmental)—often labeled cross-sector collaborations[1] or collective impact initiatives[2]—emerge to address in new and more powerful ways the most complex and wicked of our communities' compelling needs and problems. Further, fueled by the rapid expansion of a myriad of increasingly sophisticated digital technologies and applications, these initiatives have become nearly ubiquitous across all continents. But what does that mean for today's nonprofits and boards and governance?

The scale of these problems has outgrown the capacity of our existing freestanding organizations to respond—sometimes in terms of size, but especially, and more important, in terms of complexity and dynamism. Therefore, we've organized or developed our response at yet another level: the network. In the new mode, individuals and organizations are the units by which services are delivered, but such service delivery is designed, organized, resourced, coordinated, and accounted for (in other words, governed) by the overarching network of relationships (among organizational leaders) that crosses and links all participating organizations and entities. Sometimes formal and sometimes more ad hoc (as in social movements), similar dynamics have emerged in many parts of the nonprofit policy and advocacy domain, where different organizations' actions are orchestrated by a coordinated governance process that operates largely beyond the scope of any particular board, even as it deploys lobbying resources from various individual organizations.

The New Nonprofit Governance Model

Governance is a function, and a board is a structure—and, as it turns out, a decreasingly central structure in the issue of new or alternative forms of governance.

Don't get me wrong—boards are still important in organizational governance. But, for many key community problems and issues, they're not always appropriate as the unit of focus. Governance processes—processes of decision making concerning action, based on and grounded in a shared sense of mission, vision, and purpose—include the functions of setting strategic direction and priorities; developing and allocating resources; adopting and applying rules of inter-unit engagement and relationships; and implementing an ongoing system of quality assurance that applies to all constituent organizations. In many key areas, these processes have moved above and beyond any individual nonprofit organization. If organizations do not work as an integral part of this larger whole, they don't get to join or stay in the game.

Why don't we see these developments, even when we're looking directly at them? Because we're still prisoners of the hierarchical, control-oriented paradigm of conventional organizing—we continue to look for a central leader, whether a person or a unit. But the new governance does not look like anything we expect (even though we talk about these issues quite often). Consider these changes:

- No individual or entity is always in charge (though some certainly have more influence than others). In fact, allowing any one entity to regularly be in charge is often resisted.
- The structure continually evolves and changes (though its general characteristics remain consistent).
- We have been "trained" to focus our attention on boards rather than on governance.

Governance is not about organization; it's an essential function in addressing a particular issue or need in our community.

For so long, individual organizations have been the default unit to address problems, and we assumed that it would always be this way. But now, more than ever, single organizations do not appropriately match the scale required for the

David O. Renz is Professor Emeritus of Nonprofit Leadership and the director of the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership, the leadership education, research, and outreach center of the Department of Public Affairs in the Henry W. Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

most critical and substantive community issues and problems. It has become increasingly necessary to develop alliances and coalitions—extraorganizational entities—to address the multifaceted complexity of these critical needs and issues. And the most successful systems we've developed to govern these alliances reflect the same scale and complexity as the alliances themselves.

These systems of leadership embody the nature of social movements, with the fluidity and responsiveness that characterize the most effective of these movements. As anthropologist Luther Gerlach describes them, emerging systems of governance have the following characteristics:[3]

- **Segmentary:** They comprise multiple groups and organizations, each of which is only one segment of the whole that works to address the issue at hand.
- **Polycentric:** They have multiple centers of activity and influence to advance progress in addressing the cause of the whole, though each does its own work.
- **Networked:** The multiple centers of activity are linked via a web of strategic relationships, and an important source of the organizational power of this web comes from the informal relationships that exist among those in leadership roles in the various centers of activity.
- **Integrated:** These networks are connected by a core but evolving ideology that crosses organizational (and even sectoral) boundaries, as those who work to address the full range and complexity of an issue go wherever necessary to engage in their work.

In some cases, integration comes via those who hold a formal position in one organization (e.g., a staff position in a government agency), but who also serve in other organizations (e.g., a board member in a nonprofit agency or a leader in a relevant professional association). All these organizations play certain roles in addressing the particular issue or problem, and no single entity has the authority to direct these efforts (e.g., individuals working in AIDS prevention units or health agencies, but who are also active in advocacy organizations for HIV and AIDS prevention).

New Models of Authority and Accountability

In such networked settings, it has always been true that generative leadership and strategy are handled at the meta-organizational level; the individual organizations (or cells of operation) handle the frontline action or delivery of services (i.e., operations).

This structure is consistent with and fuels the accomplishment of an interorganizational entity's mission, vision, long-term goals, and strategies (all of which are the domain of governance). For these domains of community action, it is no longer about the "networked organization"—it is about the "network as organization."

These systems of organized (but not hierarchical) influence and engagement link multiple constituent entities to work on matters of overarching importance and concern. In this environment, the boards of individual organizations are guided by and often become accountable to the larger governance system. The frame of reference is larger than the constituent organization.

If you're in one of these new systems of governance, your board has less strategic room to move. You're dancing to the tune of a piper (or, more likely, multiple pipers) beyond your organization's boundaries.

In other words, the governance of your work occurs largely beyond or outside your organization's boundaries (and your organization does not really have the level of sovereignty formerly assumed).

Does this mean that boards of individual agencies are no longer relevant? No, not any more than any one program in a multiservice human-service agency is automatically irrelevant because it is part of the larger whole. The board is necessary, and, at its level, it offers critical value. But it's not the only level of governance that exists—nor is it the overarching and highly autonomous entity that historically had the luxury of being in charge. It's just not the only level anymore.

At their best, such governance systems demonstrate the ideal characteristics of an effective governance entity. They demonstrate resilience, responsiveness, fluidity, and an organic connectedness to the community and its changing needs. They exhibit processes of mutual influence and decision making that are more fluid but no less real than those in conventional hierarchical organizations.

So what has changed alongside this new governance?

Governance is most usefully understood from the perspective of the theory and research on interorganizational relations and, especially, the work to explain the dynamics of networks and organizations as integral but not autonomous units within networks.

What was once understood as boundary spanning has become boundary blurring. It's increasingly hard to tell where one organization's work ends and another's begins, and the degree to which success can be measured is always referential to a larger whole.

Individual organizations are fundamental cells of activity and accomplishment, but their individual behavior and results are not adequate to explain what has been accomplished at the community-problem level. Fueling and enabling the emergence of this new governance is the growth in strategic alliances operating at various levels of loose or tight ties, of permanence and impermanence, and of intensity—and in the number of organizations whose capacity has evolved to engage in collaborative alliances, with the mutual investment and shared control of resources, and the sharing of risk.

All the above dynamics pose great challenges for accountability. Appropriate accountability must focus on the community level (not on an individual organization); accountability systems must include but cannot be limited to the constituent organizations and their internal management and decision-making structures.

New Challenges

This evolution in governance makes sense from an organizational theory perspective. It is a fundamental tenet of organizational theory that an effective organization's design will align with and reflect the key characteristics of its operating environment. Thus, if an organization's operating environment (including the problems it must address) is increasingly dynamic, fluid, and complex, the appropriate organizational response is a design that is dynamic, fluid, and complex.

These new levels of organizing (for which the "new governance" is emerging) have all the elements of an "organization," but they can be confusing. Their elements just don't look like our conventional organizational elements. Their operating imperative demands that they differ, so the successful model of organization and governance needs to be different as well.

This networked dynamic also reflects an increasingly democratic mode of organizing—at its best, it ties the action (whether provision of services or community mobilization) more closely than ever to the community to be served (and that community's members will be actively engaged in the governance processes in play). Further, this dynamic does not pay as much attention to sector boundaries as it does to the capacity to do the work.

Thus, the organizations in the networks addressing complex community problems are likely to include individuals and ad hoc groups, governmental organizations, and even for-profit businesses, in addition to nonprofits. The mix of organizations depends on the assets they bring, where assets are defined by the nature of the problem and the needs to be addressed. One of the challenges of this emerging form of governance is that it moves the locus of control beyond any one organization. For better or worse, no single entity is in charge, and any agency that thinks it can call the shots will find its power over others muted.

Interestingly, this includes governmental entities that may still act like they are in charge. The fact that an agency has a legal or statutory mandate to address a problem does not give it any real control over the messy problems that these governance systems have emerged to address. No urban redevelopment agency, for example, has ever had the capacity to resolve its urban community's problems without bringing other entities into the game, and, increasingly, other entities have demanded a substantive role in the decision-making process. Part of the power of this new governance is that it can better accommodate and engage this shared-power dynamic. Some individual organizations' boards have

begun to adopt this model. But these boards and organizations work at the network level, such as membership organizations comprising all the service providers in a particular domain of service (e.g., the coalition of all emergency service providers in a given metro region). These entities have been created to bridge and cross boundaries, and boards have the explicit charge of providing leadership across agency and sector boundaries to address specific community issues.

Most nonprofit boards don't look like this because they have not seen the need. Further, most could not conceive of it—it seems too far out! But as a result of this new mode of governance, even individual agency boards now need to rethink how they should be designed and consider how they will do their work as a part of (rather than trying to actually be) the new governance design. Where might you find this new level of governance? When you look for it, using this new perspective, you'll actually find it in operation in many domains of nonprofit work. In many metropolitan regions, for example, we find networks of organizations that have joined together to address the complex and dynamic challenges of community health—including, most recently, COVID-19.

They have their own boards, but they also have a regional planning and funding structure that overarches individual structures. This overarching structure sets priorities and coordinates the work of individual agencies, including providing the venue and organizing the processes for making regionwide decisions about fundraising, marketing, and programming.

Commonly, each of the key participating agencies' boards sends representatives to sit on the overarching entity's board (often these representatives are a mix of board members and chief executives). But the overarching entity's board also includes members from outside these operating agencies, such as members of the community at large (e.g., local-issue activists) who have equal standing with agency representatives.

We see similar dynamics in many other areas of political and programmatic action: in urban redevelopment, in neighborhood revitalization, and in emergency services. In all these areas, overarching governance systems make strategic, community-level decisions that form the basis upon which individual agencies develop and implement their own plans and operations.

New Leadership and Accountability Models

Valuable as it is, we must acknowledge the unique challenges for accountability that this new dimension of governance poses. It's hard enough to hold a typical nonprofit board accountable for its organization's performance and impact—it is even more difficult to implement systems of formal command-and-control types of accountability for this new level. The more diffuse and fluid nature of these designs makes them inherently hard to control (which is why relational influence is so important). In reality, the locus of accountability for this new level of governance must exist "above" the individual nonprofit—at the community level—yet many philanthropic and governmental funders and regulators are likely to hold individual nonprofit agencies accountable for such community-level performance and impact. And they will often be frustrated in their attempts to do so, because there is too little leverage at the level of the individual agency. This challenge becomes especially confounding in light of federal and state legislative

discussions about nonprofit accountability and regulation, essentially all of which treat the nonprofit organization as the primary unit of control.

Clearly, this new mode of governance has significant implications for the next generation of nonprofit board work. The ability to perceive this new level of operation is unique, requiring a multilevel systems perspective and a different (albeit increasingly evident) "mental model." It requires different kinds of knowledge, skills, and abilities. This is the work of leadership, not management. So it is essential for its participants to become proficient in a different kind of leadership, particularly in the capacity to network, to build multifaceted relationships across boundaries and among diverse groups of people, and to effectively exercise influence in the absence of formal authority. (In his book *On Leadership*, John Gardner aptly described this as "exercising nonjurisdictional power."[4]) As Peter Senge et al. explain in their 2015 article "The Dawn of System Leadership," such leaders grow to balance short-term, reactive problem solving with long-term value creation, and to recontextualize organizational self-interest; they "discover that their and their organization's success depends on creating well-being within the larger systems of which they are a part" as they catalyze collective leadership.[5]

• • •

This is such an interesting time in the evolution of nonprofit governance and our understanding of the work of nonprofit boards. While some still bemoan the absence of anything innovative or cutting-edge in the world of nonprofit governance, the reality is that we have already grown a new generation of adaptive nonprofit governance—one that is more effectively aligned with and responsive to the requirements of the organizations that come together to address the most dynamic and complex needs and challenges confronting our communities. Indeed, this new generation of governance inherently involves a changing mode of community leadership, as society moves from hierarchy to networks as the prevailing mode of organizing to meet the demands of a new time. And in this evolution lie the seeds of responsive leadership and governance in service to our communities. This is the future of nonprofit and public-service governance.

Notes

1. John M. Bryson, Barbara C. Crosby, and Melissa Middleton Stone provide an excellent review and discussion of the research on the public sector–nonprofit forms of such collaborations, in their 2015 article "Designing and Implementing Cross-Sector Collaborations: Needed *and* Challenging," *Public Administration Review* 75, no. 5 (September/October 2015): 647–63.
2. As initially popularized by John Kania and Mark Kramer in "Collective Impact," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 36–41.
3. Luther P. Gerlach, "The Structure of Social Movements: Environmental Activism and Its Opponents," in *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties*, eds. Jo Freeman and Victoria Johnson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 85–98.
4. John W. Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York: Free Press, 1989).
5. Peter Senge, Hal Hamilton, and John Kania, "The Dawn of System Leadership," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 28.

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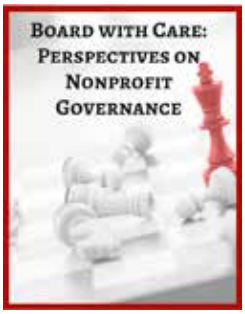

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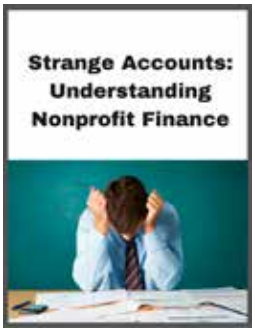

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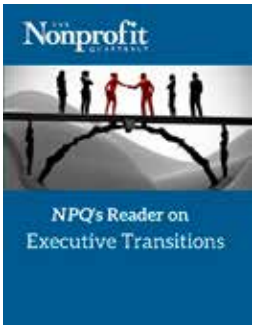

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Windows of Collaborative Opportunity: Considerations of Governance

by Chris Cornforth, John Paul Hayes, and Siv Vangen

For collaboration to function well, organizations must keep an eye out for resulting internal tensions and challenges. These are not necessarily a sign of dysfunction; in fact, quite often they are windows of opportunity leading to needed changes in governance and structure.

Editors' note: *This article was adapted from "Nonprofit–Public Collaborations: Understanding Governance Dynamics" (*Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly *44, no. 4, 2015), with permission. It was originally published in the* Nonprofit Quarterly*'s spring 2018 edition.*

Given the complexity of many social, environmental, and economic problems facing communities, nonprofit organizations are increasingly collaborating with public authorities. But the power dynamics of such arrangements can be extremely complex and fraught with institutional interests, as representatives of the various collaborating parties shift over time with changing political and other realities. The literature on such collaborations often does not do justice to what this means for the governance and life cycles of these efforts. In this article, we propose a conceptual framework that seeks to explain the formation, governance, and life cycle of public–nonprofit collaborations.

As is noted by Melissa Stone and Jodi Sandfort, "research on nonprofit organizations does not fully consider how the policy environment shapes organizational operation and performance and shapes how actors act strategically to advance their organizational interests."[1] And, in 2006, David Renz suggested that, in fact, many governance decisions are made at a meta level—above the realm of any single nonprofit board—in the funding and policy environments.[2] Thus, Renz writes, understanding governance as merely board activity is shortsighted and limiting; he advocates a new focus on interorganizational governance processes that occur as organizations work together to address social problems.[3] Such collaborations can be relatively long or short term, and they ordinarily contain power dynamics that must be worked out. But

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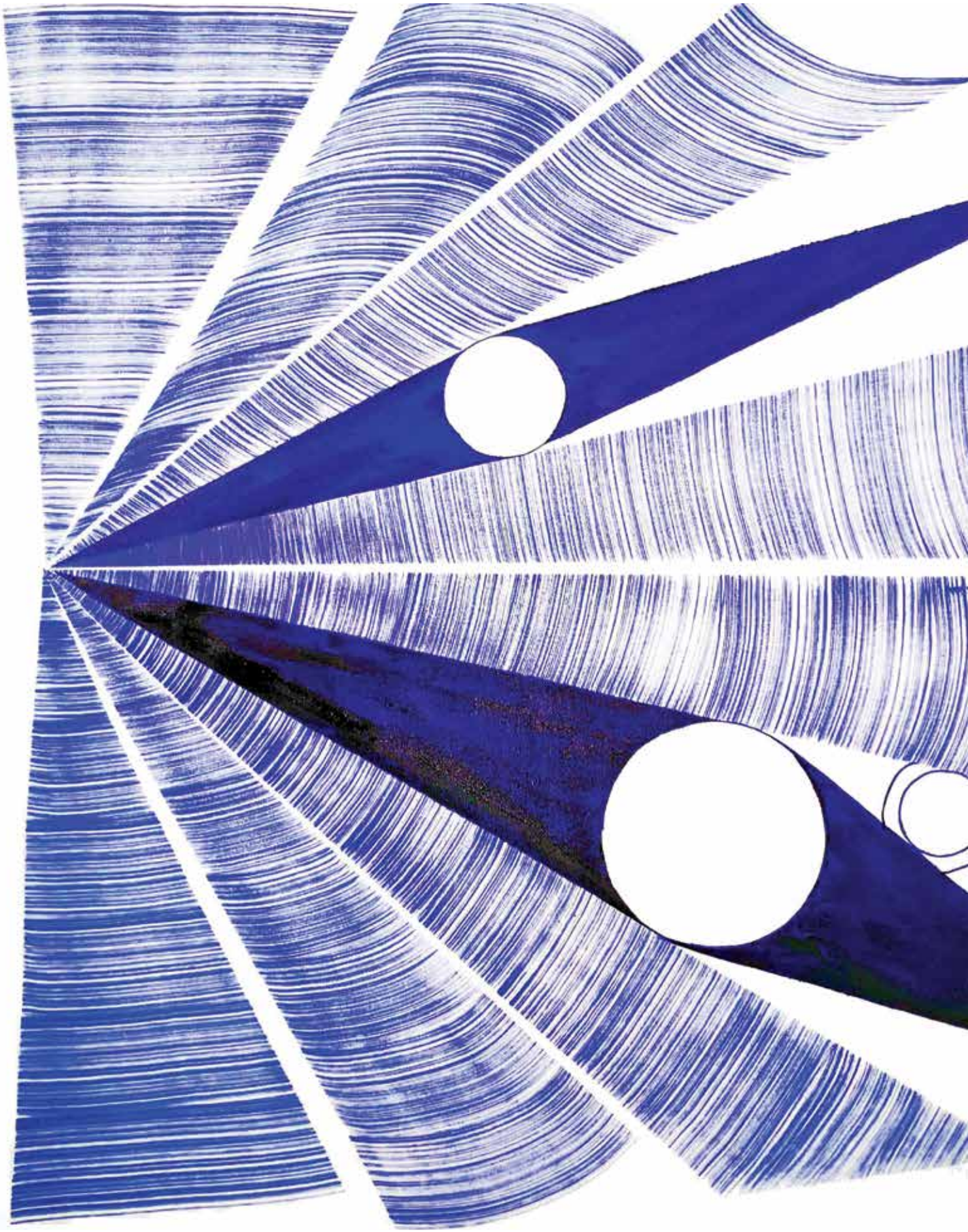

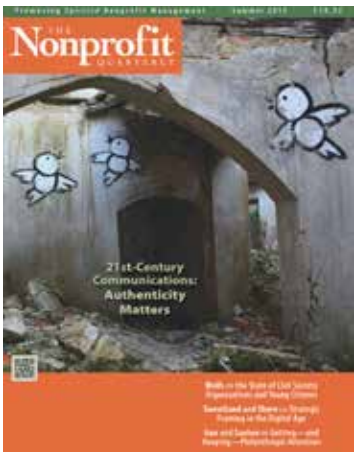

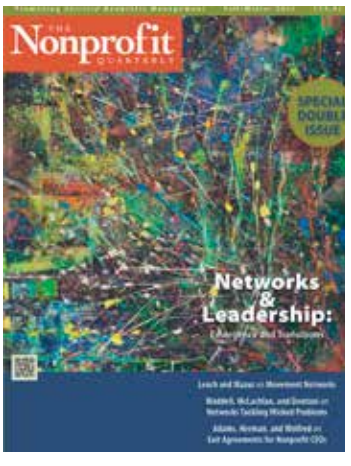

when the collaboration mixes public and private organizations, other issues often emerge having to do with changing institutional interests and tenures. This leads us to consider what the factors are that lead to the formation of public–nonprofit partnerships, how they are governed, and the influences on their life cycle.

We base our observations here, in part, on a longitudinal case study of a public–nonprofit collaboration in the United Kingdom. This partnership was aimed at neighborhood regeneration in deprived areas of one United Kingdom city.[4] The head of the regeneration team, an employee of the city council, initiated the collaboration and acted as a key coordinator. The research examined the development of the collaboration from its inception, focusing particularly on an attempt by the team director to redesign its governance structure.

Defining Terms

Many terms have been used to describe configurations of organizations that voluntarily agree to collaborate. This is confusing and impedes conceptual clarity. We use the terms *collaboration* and *partnership* interchangeably to refer to a formalized joint working arrangement between organizations that remain legally autonomous while engaging in ongoing coordinated collective action to achieve outcomes that none of them could achieve on their own. When the number of participants exceeds two or three, *network* is also often used, and there is little definitional distinction made.

The term *governance* is even more elusive. It is rooted in a Latin word meaning to steer or give direction, but it is used in a number of different ways, both within and across disciplines and entities. In fact, one of the more useful ways of distinguishing between different usages involves the level of analysis at which the concept is applied.[5]

In this article, however, we focus exclusively on the interorganizational level, examining how collaborations between organizations are governed. Keith Provan and Patrick Kenis argue that the governance of networks is important for their effectiveness, although this topic has been neglected in research.[6] They state that a focus on governance involves the use of institutions and structures of authority and collaboration to allocate resources and to coordinate and control joint action across the network as a whole. Unlike organizations, networks must be governed without the benefit of hierarchy or ownership.[7]

Building on these definitions, we propose that the governance of collaborations entails the design and use of a structure and processes that enable actors to set the overall direction of the collaboration, and that coordinate and allocate resources for the collaboration as a whole and account for its activities.

Public collaborations are often highly dynamic and even chaotic, as they must respond to complex and changing policy environments and deal with internal paradoxes and tensions.

The Challenge

Within organizations, governance structures and processes are shaped by legal and regulatory requirements. The governance of collaborations is more elusive, as they are often established without any clear legal form or body in charge, and the relationships between partners are subject to change.[8] Public collaborations are often highly dynamic and even chaotic, as they must respond to complex and changing policy environments and deal with internal paradoxes and tensions.[9] The governance structures of collaborations are therefore more fluid than in organizational contexts, changing in response to internal and external drivers, as well as to participants' attempts to manage inherent tensions.[10]

A complex and changing national policy and economic environment can lead to changes in the opportunities for collaboration at the local level, changing the priorities of public partners, perhaps altering their commitment to the collaboration, and even leading to its decline or demise. Nonprofit organizations must remain aware of these potential dynamics and risks when engaging in public–nonprofit collaborations.

To provide a framework to better understand the formation and life cycle of public–nonprofit collaborations, we tested and refined an existing conceptual model developed by Douglas Lober, Lois Takahashi, and Gayla Smutny.[11] They extend John Kingdon's seminal work, which explains the formation of public policies in terms of the opening up of policy windows and the actions of policy entrepreneurs.[12] These windows are assumed to both open and, after a while, closed, so the framework assumes a temporal

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dimension. Lober, Takahashi, and Smutny argue that the formation of collaborations can be similarly explained in terms of opening up collaborative windows that can be exploited by collaborative entrepreneurs. Takahashi and Smutny extend the model further to explain the short-lived nature of many collaborations. They suggest that "initial governance structures emanating from particular collaborative windows and entrepreneurs limit their adaptability and portend their short-term demise."[13]

Collaborative Windows, Collaborative Entrepreneurs, and the Formation of Collaborations

To explain how policy windows are formed, Kingdon proposes that three largely independent, temporal streams run through the political system: a *problem stream*, a *policy* (or *solution*) *stream*, and a *political stream*. The problem stream consists of issues or situations that interest groups identify as "problems" to be addressed. The policy/solution stream consists of policy proposals advocated by various groups to address the problems. The political stream consists of various influences on the political system (e.g., public opinion, the media, and elections).[14]

Kingdon argues that whenever these different streams converge, a "policy window" opens, presenting an opportunity to adopt new policies. For this to happen, however, policy entrepreneurs (either individuals or groups) must recognize that the window has opened and have the skills to exploit the opportunity and gain support for their proposals.[15]

In trying to understand the formation of collaborations, Lober adds a fourth stream—the *organizational stream*—that encompasses changes in organizational and industry behavior regarding the issues being addressed. He also suggests that the political stream needs to be broadened to include social and economic factors affecting the issues to be addressed (hereafter called the *PSE stream*). According to Lober, convergence in these four streams can create the conditions for forming a collaboration (i.e., a collaborative window rather than a policy window).[16] For this to happen, however, the opportunity must be exploited by collaborative entrepreneurs. For Lober, as well as for Takahashi and Smutny, the collaborative entrepreneur resembles the policy entrepreneur. Collaborative entrepreneurs act as the catalyst for forming collaborations by working across organizational boundaries to join organizations and identify solutions to problems.

The neighborhood regeneration partnership we observed was formed in 2009. The problem stream was that both national and local governments in the United Kingdom had long recognized that some neighborhoods suffer multiple deprivations. In 2008, the city council's neighborhood regeneration strategy recognized that the deprivation in those areas was growing in scale and intensity. The PSE stream contained several strands favorable to neighborhood regeneration, including an existing national strategy for neighborhood renewal, which emphasized the role of local public authorities in tackling deprivation, and a growing public awareness of the negative impacts of increasing inequality. The policy/solution stream within the city council was influenced by various complementary policies—for example, a sustainable communities strategy that emphasized the need to tackle problem areas in the city. The organizational stream consisted of a wide range of public and nonprofit organizations that operated in the various deprived neighborhoods across the city. The city council's head of regeneration acted as the collaborative entrepreneur, mobilizing contacts across various public bodies and nonprofit and community organizations, and generating new resources to bring organizations together to tackle the problem.

The neighborhood regeneration program was launched with a three-tier governance structure composed of neighborhood steering groups, to lead change in each of the deprived areas; a performance group, consisting of representatives from various partner organizations and heads of relevant services in the council, to provide overall direction and monitor the performance of work in the neighborhoods; and a sponsor group, consisting of senior executives from relevant public bodies, businesses, and nonprofits, to provide strategic challenge and accountability.

Collaborative entrepreneurs act as the catalyst for forming collaborations by working across organizational boundaries to join organizations and identify solutions to problems.

Governance Arrangements and Life Cycle of Collaborations

Takahashi and Smutny extend Lober's model beyond the formation stage to include the operational stage of collaborations. They argue that collaborative entrepreneurs "initiate alliances among . . . partners using specific initial governance structures that fit with the participants and the features of the collaborative window."[17] They further suggest that this initial governance structure seriously constrains the future adaptability and resilience of the partnership, because "organizational inertia and the time-consuming process of collaborative governance" make these structures resistant to change.[18] They suggest that collaborative entrepreneurs and other partners in the collaboration may not "have the skills to maintain, sustain, or adapt the collaborative partnership's initial governance structure to changing temporal and spatial conditions after the collaborative window closes."[19] They therefore propose that features of a collaboration's formation contain the seeds of its demise in a relatively short time, as initial governance structures fail to adapt. For nonprofit organizations and community groups, understanding what lies behind the dynamic nature of collaborations and their governance arrangements might help them advance their goals when collaborating with more powerful public authorities.

For nonprofit organizations and community groups, understanding what lies behind the dynamic nature of collaborations and their governance arrangements might help them advance their goals when collaborating with more powerful public authorities.

Our research suggests that the model developed by Lober and extended by Takahashi and Smutny needs further refinement. First, our research suggests that the four streams comprising the collaborative window are not independent, as stated in the previous models, but interdependent. In particular, once the collaboration is formed, changes in the political, social, and economic stream may influence both the solution and organizational streams. For example, the regeneration partnership was affected by several important changes in the collaborative window that occurred in the period of 2009 through 2012. The global financial crisis of 2008 led to cuts in public expenditure, which in turn led to cuts in the budgets of the council and other public bodies involved in the partnership. This impacted the organizational stream, as it led to cuts in the regeneration team and the resources available for neighborhood regeneration, and a decline in the commitment of some of the other public partners. The government also relaxed some restrictions on local councils, allowing them to resume building public housing. This impacted the policy/solution stream, as efforts of the council's regeneration team began to focus more on a major public–private partnership to redevelop one of the deprived neighborhoods.

Second, the model is overly pessimistic about the ability of collaborations to change their governance structures. While changing the partnership's governance structure was not easy, changes did occur, often driven by internal tensions and challenges arising from the different expectations and goals of participants and a tension between efficiency and inclusiveness. Particularly in the performance group, there were tensions over the purpose of the group—whether it was there to monitor the performance of the neighborhood steering groups and manage risk or to provide a forum to discuss problems and issues. The large size of the group also led to concerns over the efficiency and effectiveness of the group, with some participants feeling it had just become a "talking shop." Eventually the group was allowed to wither away, and the council's regeneration team took over responsibility for coordinating the work across the neighborhoods.

While some neighborhood steering groups continued to be active despite the decline in support from the regeneration team, the regeneration program was not extended to new neighborhoods as originally planned. In our view, the changes in the four streams, which influenced the priorities and commitment of different partners to the collaboration and the resources available to achieve its plans, were more important to the collaboration's long-term future than were difficulties encountered in changing how it was governed.

In conclusion, we posit that collaborations of all kinds—but particularly public–nonprofit partnerships—need to be aware of how changes in the collaborative window are likely to affect the partnership and may lead to its decline. In addition,

these collaborations are likely to face important internal tensions and emergent challenges that must be addressed by those who govern and manage the collaboration. Some of these tensions may appear as a battle between efficiency and inclusiveness, or may seem to be about goals and ways of working, but the truth is that they are part and parcel of the effort and not necessarily a sign of dysfunction. They do have to be managed skillfully, but they quite naturally can be expected to lead to changes in governance structures and processes. In the end, however, understanding that there are windows of opportunity for some collaborations will help nonprofit participants in the cases where that is necessary, recalibrating and redeploying their efforts to greatest stead while not losing the potential of future collaborative windows and partners.

Some of these tensions may appear as a battle between efficiency and inclusiveness, or may seem to be about goals and ways of working, but the truth is that they are part and parcel of the effort.

Notes

1. Melissa Stone and Jodi Sandfort argued for theory and research that take into account policy fields in the strategic actions of nonprofit organizations. One advantage of using and refining the model developed by Lois Takahashi and Gayla Smutny to make this link is that it can then acknowledge the influence of changes in the political, social, and economic streams (including relevant policies) on opportunities for collaboration. See Melissa M. Stone and Jodi R. Sandfort, "Building a Policy Fields Framework to Inform Research on Nonprofit Organizations," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 38, no. 6 (December 2009): 1054–75.
2. David O. Renz, "Reframing Governance," *Nonprofit Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 6–13.
3. Ibid.
4. To protect anonymity, the name of the city where the research took place and the names of actors in the collaboration have not been revealed.
5. Jan Kooiman, "Social-Political Governance: Overview, reflections and design," *Public Management: An International Journal of Research and Theory* 1, no. 1 (March 1999): 67–92.
6. Keith G. Provan and Patrick Kenis, "Modes of Network Governance: Structure, Management, and Effectiveness," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 18, no. 2 (April 2008): 229–52.
7. Ibid., 231–32.
8. Melissa M. Stone, Barbara C. Crosby, and John M. Bryson, "Governing public–nonprofit collaborations: understanding their complexity and the implications for research," *Voluntary Sector Review* 1, no. 3 (November 2010): 309–34.
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A Cult *of* Democracy—

"There is a sense that things are breaking down," writes Cyndi Suarez, "and the world no longer makes sense." For many if not most, of course, the world has never made sense—and as Suarez points out, what we are in fact experiencing are the death throes of the dominant narratives undergirding the world's corrosive systems.

by Cyndi Suarez

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In the United States and globally, there is much concern about both the devolution of democracy and the resurgence of racism and xenophobia. There is a sense that things are breaking down and the world no longer makes sense. But these challenges are intertwined and what are actually dying are the dominant narratives undergirding them. The bold-faced resurgence of some of their most extreme characteristics, while very dangerous, is also a testament to this final battle.

In 2019, as white supremacists balance entitled anger and outsized fears—deciding it is time to be more explicit (again) about the underlying goal of domination through an outright offensive for a white ethno-state, fearing the rise of people they consider different—we are still hailing too many firsts: the first Black woman, the first gay, the first Muslim, the youngest. These leaders are running and winning because things are increasingly not working for more and more voters. Inequality has risen. Most people can't afford to cover basic needs like food, housing, education,

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"Composition No. 126" by Sumit Mehndiratta/www.sumitmehndiratta.com

Toward *a* Pluralistic Politics

and healthcare. And the earth is dying. The overarching task now is to construct a new narrative.

FIRST POINT: We urgently need a new narrative.

Democracy has been broadly defined as "a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections."[1]

Even though many wonder why democracy looks the way it does today, for some of those who study democracy, it comes as no surprise. Many, like Chantal Mouffe, professor of political theory at the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of Westminster, are calling the current state of democracy in the West a "populist moment."

In her new book, *For a Left Populism*, Mouffe argues that this moment has been brought to us by the centrist policies of neoliberalism, which sought to hide conflict and different political interests in the midst of increasingly plural democracies with a "blurring of the frontier between right and left."[2]

Mouffe contends that the rise of right wing populism reflects a break in the story as non-elite whites seek to recoup what they perceive as decreasing political and economic power. She proposes what she frames as a new democratic project for our times—the left needs to offer a democratic alternative that also *overlaps* with the political interests of the excluded "other."

To do this, we must center what Mouffe calls "the *affects* of democracy."[3] Our identities are comprised in large part by the groups with which we identify; in other words, our identities are built upon our emotional connection to other people. The new narrative must take into account that politics is not only what we think, but what we feel. The left, she says, must focus on offering new political identities that support pluralism.

SECOND POINT: The new narrative is about the deepening of democracy; to enact it, we must evolve identities that not only make us think but also care about the collective.

Where Mouffe goes wrong is in her admittedly controversial claim that pluralistic democracies must engage as legitimate all of the demands made by its populace, even the xenophobic. While "these will be fought with vigor," the "right to defend those ideas will never be questioned."[4] Instead, she argues, we must focus on the democratic aspirations that exist across perceived political differences.

Mouffe makes the mistake many liberals make when she assumes a level playing field.

Michael G. Hanchard, Africana professor at the University of Pennsylvania and director of the Marginalized Populations project, in his new book, *The Spectre of Race: How Discrimination Haunts Western Democracy*, describes how, rather than being new, Western democracy has always contained multiple regimes based on difference, known as racial democracies or ethno-regimes. The problem is that they are also unequal.

An understanding of this submerged history and its forces may lead us to conclude that this populist moment of mobilization against elites is also yet another half loop in the cycle of Western democracy that seeks to subordinate a portion of the social body for the benefit of the political elite, which in the West has been historically defined racially as white. Hanchard, having taken the time to understand this submerged narrative, starts not with an unexamined assumption but with a studied claim: that the practice of Western democracy has been one in which, from the beginning, "difference, figured as race, was rendered politically salient."[5]

For Hanchard, tracking the organizing effect of race on the development of Western democracy hinges on the distinction between the *ethos*, or ideals, of democracy and the *ethnos* (the prevailing idea about who is the "highest, typical human being" in a nation) of its institutions and practices.[6]

He traces the concept of ethnos back to classical Athens, considered the font of Western democracy, where "Slavery was rationalized as a necessary institution that allowed citizens to fully participate in civic life without material constraints."[7] Aristotle articulated the tension this produced for the legitimacy of the developing institution of democracy. Hanchard notes, "Contrary to many of his peers, Aristotle questioned the justification for slavery and was concerned about its corrosive effects upon both the slaves and citizens in classical Athens."[8]

Ethnos shows up as a claim of racial homogeneity and superiority in heterogeneous societies; it articulates difference (gender, geographic origin, race, culture), and then creates political institutions and practices to manage this difference in order to secure privileged access to social resources for a political elite.

The dual nature of Western democracy was embraced and further articulated by the main colonial powers in their day-to-day management of the colonies and responses to the anticolonial movements they engendered. Hanchard outlines this arc for us when he writes, "The most robust, long-standing democratic polities in the contemporary world—France, Britain, and the United States—have been housed in societies that have profited from slave labor, empire, and colonialism."[9]

Hanchard's main claim is that Western powers didn't just shape racialized peoples and colonized regions; this history of racism and colonization also shaped Western democracy.

In the colonies, where whites were physically outnumbered, the political elite developed racialized divide and conquer tactics. Hanchard explains, "Tactics devised and utilized to manage subject populations in a colonial territory, or even within the metropole, became part of the strategies of containment in the domestic sphere in the post–World War II period, evidenced in the following areas of governance: immigration, policing, and counterterrorism policies, and in the monitoring of dissent."[10] He concludes, "The legal, juridical, and institutional empowerment of citizens has been dynamically related to limiting second class citizens or prohibiting noncitizens from access to citizenship, as well as certain key economic and political institutions."[11]

Hanchard's main claim is that Western powers didn't just shape racialized peoples and colonized regions; this history of racism and colonization also shaped Western democracy.

Clearly, in the United States, the project of deepening democracy needs to overlap with the project of centering anti-racism.

From its inception, Western democracy has always been a balancing act of inclusive institutions and practices for those deemed legitimate and a different exclusive set for the illegitimate. Hanchard notes Hannah Arendt's observation on the problem: "Racism deliberately cut across all national boundaries, whether defined by geographical, linguistic, traditional or any other standards, and denied national-political existence as such."[12]

Thus, not only are ethno-regimes not level playing fields, inequality is a consistent feature of ethno-regimes in that their institutions and practices *produce* inequality.

The logic behind this approach is that the more difference is acknowledged in politics, the more elites consider politics to be impossible. In practice, it turns out that the opposite is true: the less difference is acknowledged, the more the need for politics. Hanchard brilliantly outlines the massive project that it was (and is) to create dual (or trial—citizen, second class citizen, and noncitizen) regimes. The resources required to sustain it are vast and widespread.

The *Atlantic*'s Ibram X. Kendi writes about the effort put into these regimes in the United States: "trace the issues rending American politics to their root, and more often than not you'll find soil poisoned by racism."[13] Kendi spells out how racism affects the very rules of democracy.

> Those people of color not imprisoned or deported are robbed of their political power by other means . . . In the old days, before the Voting Rights Act, states and counties suppressed voting by men and eventually women of color through property requirements, literacy tests, and poll taxes—while tacitly condoning employer intimidation and Ku Klux Klan violence. Now states and counties suppress voters through early-voting restrictions, limits on absentee and mail-in ballots, poll closures, felon disenfranchisement, and laws requiring voters to have a photo ID.
>
> Voters of color who can't be kept from the polls are herded into districts where their ballots, in effect, don't count . . . When the Supreme Court stripped federal preclearance from the Voting Rights Act in 2013, it removed one of the last antiracist policies from federal law.[14]

How can those positioned as illegitimate engage democratically across difference—especially while legitimizing xenophobia, as Mouffe proposes we do—when the very act triggers the white polity to erode their democratic rights? Instead, as Hanchard demonstrates, "many aspects of social inequality have political roots."[15] Contrary to Mouffe's assertions (and her goal of building pluralist democracies), not only is xenophobia not compatible with democracy, in a system where racism has served as an actively silent design principle for exclusion, it must be actively named and designed against.

Kendi concludes,

> [O]nly an embrace of antiracism can save the union. Antiracist ideas are built on the bedrock of racial equality. They recognize that any observed disparities between groups are the product not of hierarchy among races but of racist systems that create and perpetuate inequities. Antiracist policies seek to close the gaps in rights, resources, and opportunities that racist policies have opened and maintained.[16]

THIRD POINT: Racism is an actively silent design principle for exclusion in Western democracy, and deepening democracy requires actively designing against it.

Clearly, in the United States, the project of deepening democracy needs to overlap with the project of centering anti-racism. This, in spite of everything, is actually not controversial. A recent study—by Ian Haney López, author of *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*, and Anat Shenker-Osorio, author of *Don't Buy It: The Trouble with Talking Nonsense about the Economy*—found that "Democrats can prevail by telling a story that ties together race and class, calling out the right's exploitation of racial anxiety as a tactic to divide and distract."[17]

Stories like this one:

> No matter where we come from or what our color, most of us work hard for our families. But today, certain politicians and their greedy lobbyists hurt everyone by handing kickbacks to the rich, defunding our schools, and threatening seniors with cuts to Medicare and Social Security. Then they turn around and point the finger for our hard times at poor families, Black people, and new immigrants. We need to join together with people from all walks of life to fight for our future, just like we won better wages, safer workplaces, and civil rights in our past. By joining together, we can elect new leaders who work for all of us, not just the wealthy few.[18]

Using focus groups, studies from four states, and an online national survey of 2,000 adults, Haney López and Shenker-Osorio found that stories like this that address both race and class together beat right-wing stories and "standard left-of-center, race-neutral" ones.[19] They note, "Overt mentions of race outperformed colorblind statements in rebutting conservative talking points."[20] They conclude,

> Here's the secret: The race-class message describes racism as a strategy that the reactionary rich are using against all people. By moving away from conversations about racial prejudice that implicitly pit whites against others, the race-class message makes clear how strategic racism hurts everyone, of every race. It signals to whites that they have more to gain from coming together across racial lines to tackle racial and economic injustice than from siding with politicians who distract the country with racial broadsides.[21]

Hanchard observes that "the exclusion of certain populations from participation in a polity [is] based on superficial differences that are perceived as irreconcilable."[22] And this is the dominant narrative that wants to die. Luckily, many in the United States appear to be ready for a bigger politics, if we can only step up to the challenge. The new narrative is about universalizing democracy.

We do need to develop new political identities, Mouffe is right about that. These need to help us manage what Hanchard identifies as the "first form of inequality"—perceptual discrimination.[23]

FOURTH POINT: The drama in the story, the hero's challenge, is to overcome the negative affects of political differences with a bigger narrative in order to universalize democracy across acknowledged difference.

Luckily, much has already been done to guide and anchor such efforts. For example, at the levels of rights, any legitimate, pluralist democracy should seek to comply with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[24] which includes additional articles from the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, starting from the assumption that "the existence of racial barriers is repugnant to the ideals of any human society."[25]

In terms of institutions and practices, French political thinker and historian Alexis de Tocqueville's description of key elements of the democratic character of the U.S. associations that proliferated in the 1800s are often recalled in efforts to remember our earlier forms. They align along the following:

- Structures for deliberation
- Processes for transparency and accountability
- Stewards of rules and procedures
- Practices that ensure access and leadership development
- Products that capture shared practices[26]

As for political identity, the *Atlantic*'s Yoni Appelbaum, in a recent series on democracy, writes of that earlier time, "Democracy had become the *shared civic religion* of a people who otherwise had little in common. Its rituals conferred legitimacy regardless of ideology."[27] (Italics mine.) He concludes, "There is no easy fix for our current predicament; simply voting Trump out of office won't suffice. To stop the rot afflicting American government, Americans are going to have to *get back* in the habit of democracy."[28] (Italics mine.)

Luckily, many in the United States appear to be ready for a bigger politics, if we can only step up to the challenge. The new narrative is about universalizing democracy.

This is the new democratic project—rising to the challenge of pluralism, democracy beyond political regimes, beyond the bounds of state politics to everyday life.

Hanchard does us the favor of clarifying this narrative when he writes,

> Alexis de Tocqueville, a commentator on democracy in the United States, did not consider the Indian question or the Negro question to have significant import for the practice of United States democracy. [Gunnar] Myrdal and [Gustave de] Beaumont [Tocqueville's friend who accompanied him on his journey to the United States], on the other hand, perceived racial discrimination of *US African Americans as a clear barometer of democracy* in an otherwise egalitarian democracy.[29] (Italics mine.)

Like Tocqueville, Beaumont wrote about democracy in the United States, including the central role of race, but his writing never became popular.[30] This is, perhaps, not surprising. Hanchard points out,

> Democracy is only one form of political rule that has tolerated, in fact benefited from, inequality, but it is also the only form of political rule for which inequality poses challenges to its ideological legitimacy.[31]

Hanchard points to Latin American political theorist Guillermo O'Donnell—whose political thinking acknowledged the plurality of Latin American societies (which developed democracy from a history of colonial rule and authoritarian regimes)—as someone whose work may have something to offer toward the expansion of Western democracy at this moment. He describes O'Donnell as someone who "understood the installation of democratic institutions and practices as neither immanent nor cyclical but the result of political mobilization against authoritarian, oligarchic, and other forms of nondemocratic rule."[32]

Further, O'Donnell understood the political identities that enact these regimes. Hanchard writes, "Antidemocratic politics and social inequality produced social and political behaviors and cultures of arrogance among elites, on the one hand, and subservience and resignation among popular groups, on the other."[33] Countering these suggests potential axes for new, pluralistic political identities.

In *The Quality of Democracy*, O'Donnell concludes,

> Today, efforts to win citizen rights are coupled with pressures for the democratization of the state and social opportunities. The people living in these countries—more than the theoreticians—have discovered that democracy must be seen as a permanent, day-to-day conquest and an order that is perfectible through citizen action.[34]

Given Western democracy's history of political exclusion, O'Donnell identifies *agency* as a "grounding factor of democracy," connecting "democracy, human development, and human rights."[35] For him, political identity orients around the human being as agent. "The enacting of agency requires the universalistic attainment of at least some basic rights and capabilities."[36]

O'Donnell takes into account contestation, or conflict, in democratic practice, and highlights the need for what he called "an enabling institutional milieu for the struggles usually needed in order to inscribe need-claims as effective rights."[37] Thus, pluralistic democracy is not given, but asserted—constantly enacted by people who practice acting as if they had rights.

This is the new democratic project—rising to the challenge of pluralism, democracy beyond political regimes, beyond the bounds of state politics to everyday life. We need to stop harking back to some better days of democracy and think about what we have to move forward to, observing the artifacts that need to be carried forward and envisioning the ones that have not yet been realized.

Democracy must be held more dear than fear or hatred of difference.

FIFTH POINT: The bigger narrative must help create a shared civic religion, at every step, day after day—a cult of democracy.

We need to move beyond uniting the left as a response to the so-called united right. As my friend and organizer Nijmie Dzurinko recently posted on Facebook, "The task is not to unite the left. The task is to unite the bottom." To unite the

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bottom, we must actively design against political exclusion.

Our main job is to guard against inequality in the political regime and in our organizations. But we should go further—we should be able to harness difference.

How does our sector serve as a nourishing field for the building of a pluralist democracy, especially when we have our own ways of constructing and managing the "other"? How do we, to use Hanchard's frame, contribute to making our society less ethnocentric and more ethos-centric? (Hint: We can start with our own organizations.) How do our own institutions and practices serve as the playing field for democratic decision making and shape political identities that enact pluralism?

Many like to think of these as different projects, but they are not. Civil society is the training ground for democracy—to think otherwise is a blind spot in our work for social justice. Our main job is to guard against inequality in the political regime and in our organizations. But we should go further—we should be able to harness difference. Humans are part of nature and nature doesn't have a problem with diversity. In fact, it thrives on it, and we should too.

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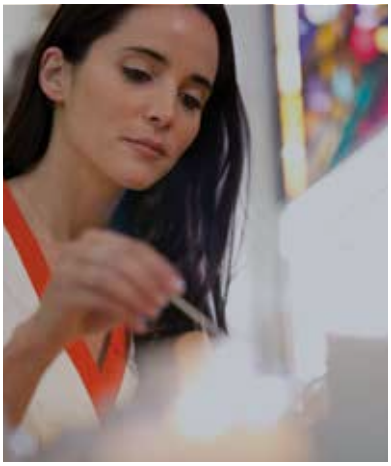

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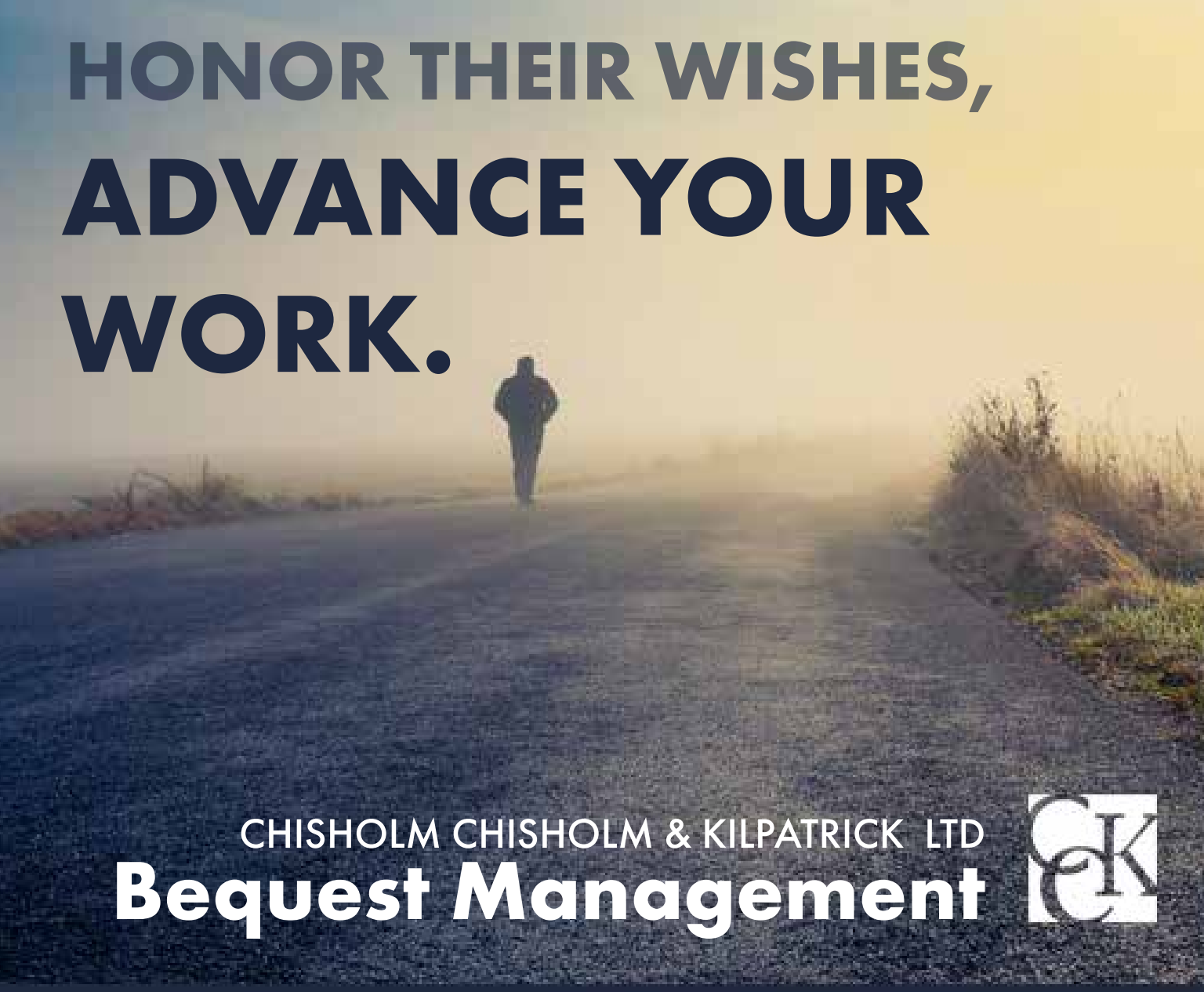

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