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How are youth philanthropy practices transforming the philanthropic field?

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Abstract:

How are youth philanthropy practices transforming the philanthropic field?

This question implies two assumptions. The first assumption is that the philanthropic field is changing. Since the early 2000s, some actors and organisations have considered the simple grant as outdated and promoted other philanthropic practices, which they thought as innovative, progressive and disruptive. In the literature, these supposedly new practices are said to emerge from different groups of actors, which are characterized as changemakers, and among others are young people. (GORDON, 2014; MAIR & HEHENBERGER, 2014) Which leads to the second assumption: youth involved in philanthropic activities spur transformations in the philanthropic field.

If youth are said to take part into the philanthropic field and are considered innovators, their concrete philanthropic practices have however been ignored by academic literature. As for grey literature, it has merely explored issues regarding youth motivations, fundraising and wealth legacy. (FALK & NISSAN, 2007) Only recently, studies have looked into initiatives coming from young people themselves. (BOKOFF & DILLON, 2014; MOODY & GOLDSEKER, 2013) From these studies are emerging several assessments and questions, but those have rarely been addressed by systematic academic research. Therefore, it is often complicated to understand how youth engage themselves, how they mobilize resources they can access, and how they put these at the service of public interest causes.

In this context, our research question revolves around two aspects: first, to identify philanthropic practices coming from young people; second, to question the potential transformative characteristic of their practices. On one hand, we rely on the literature on institutional change (BATTILANA, LECA & BOXENBAUM, 2009; LAWRENCE & SUDDABY, 2006), so as to conceptualize the notion of transformation. On the other hand, we produce a state-of-the-art about and around youth philanthropy. The paper presents the analytic framework allowing us to grasp youth philanthropic practices, and to analyse their transformative potential for the philanthropic field.

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