

ABSTRACT

European Research Network On Philanthropy
8th International Conference Copenhagen, July 13-14, 2017

Producing the common good

Philanthropic investments practices in 20th century Denmark

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Keywords:	Philanthropy, citizenship, common good, processual ontology, history
Topic:	Morality and ethics of giving
Research method:	Qualitative
Geographical focus:	Single country (European)
Type of article:	Research article

Abstract:

In this paper the classical understanding of civil society organisations belonging to a distinct empirical sector located outside state and market (Rosenblum & Post, 2001) ensuring the common good (Putnam, 1995) and creating citizenship often as a counterforce to both state and market (Cohen & Arato, 1992) will be challenged by proposing a processual ontology, stressing that social entities come into existence, when social actors link boundaries together (Carlile, 2002, Abbott, 2016). It will re-examine the dynamics between entities and boundaries by looking for the civil society of its organisations not the organisations of civil society (Abbott, 1995) through; 1, how boundaries are linked together (Latour, 1993, Callon, 1980). 2, how and what is separated through these boundary drawings 3, which effect this has on how and according to which specific practices they produce the common good and citizenship. This will be studied through an exemplary Danish historical case of the Egmont Foundation 1920-2014, showing how philanthropic conceptual, organisational and investments practices produce specific versions and visions of civil society. Raising the question of which mobilization of future avenues and re-distribution of power relations is entailed. The article will first critically discuss the potentials of practice theory (Nicolini et al. 2003, Orlikowski, 2002, Gherardi, 2011, 2016). Second, it will highlight how the boundary drawing produces the social entity of civil society, by pointing at how philanthropic endeavour throughout history has invested in the common good and civil society. The article focus on three periods 1920-1956, 1956-1979, 1979-2014. It will show first, how the boundaries between civil society, state and market is blurred and messy. Second how different and changing philanthropic

investments practices took part in producing distinction between state, market and civil society both through conceptualizations enabling categories of citizens to contribute to the common good by providing for themselves and theirs and on the other hand through organisational forms of investments and partnerships. The contribution is twofold; First, showing the historical import of philanthropic investment practices and second, how a processual practice approach to the study of philanthropic investment can provide a useful approach to study the becoming of civil society and its effect on the re-distribution of power relations in society.

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