

ABSTRACT

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Exploring the characteristics and motivations of community foundation donors: insights from Scotland

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Abstract:

Exploring the characteristics and motivations of community foundation donors: insights from Scotland

Over the last two decades, community foundations have become one of the fastest growing foundation form globally. With combined financial resources of \$63.3bn, they are emerging as a major force in philanthropy (Harrow et al. 2016). Despite a growing research and practice agenda aimed at developing better understanding of and for community foundations (see Global Fund for Community Foundations, 2017), work to-date has focused predominantly on developments in North America, community foundations’ originating context. Stronger insights on community foundations’ workings and characteristics from within European contexts are urgently needed (European Community Foundation Initiative, 2017).

Building on the wider research literature on donor motivation and donor types (Pharoah, 2016) and on community foundation development and capital (Graddy and Wang, 2008), our paper examines donors’ involvement and approaches to engaging with community foundations. Using an insider-outsider perspective approach (see Brannick and Coghlan, 2007) and focusing on developments in Scotland, the paper explores: community foundation donors’ characteristics and source(s) of wealth; their motivations and drivers for philanthropy; their rationale for and access to a community foundation as their vehicle of giving; and their mode,

capacity and propensity to give within this context. The analysis reveals eight distinct types of community foundation donors.

The paper makes three important contributions to academia and practice. From an academic perspective, it first of all contributes to strengthening our understanding of European community foundations and their workings. Secondly, it adds and complements existing research on and understanding of donors by highlighting similarities and differences of community foundation donors in comparison to other donor types identified within the literature (e.g. Ronney and Frederick, 2007; Schervish and Herman, 1988). From a practice perspective, the work aids in developing community foundations' work towards resource mobilisation and donor service activities.

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