Funding Regionally: How Private Foundations Can Set a Regional Planning Agenda

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Though the problems facing U.S. cities are increasingly regional in nature, traditional state and market institutions set up to address these problems are often organized along counter-regional lines. In this article I ask: Given the non-regional nature of these institutions, how can planners set a regional planning agenda? After examining the counter-regional pressures placed on most institutional actors, I conclude that private foundations are in a key strategic position to set this agenda. Basic goals that policymakers and grassroots leaders articulate for improving economic, environmental, and social conditions in their regions are discussed, and I attempt to re-frame these goals in terms of a regional funding strategy for foundations. In re-framing these goals, the potential for foundations to encourage collaboration between diverse grantees is highlighted, as are various strategies that foundations can use to help their grantees achieve these goals. Ultimately, the proper role for a private foundation interested in promoting regional equity and sustainability is to create a "language of regionalism" by promoting information-sharing between grantees with the most abstract vision for the region (policy institutes and universities) and grantees who are working on the ground (community-based organizations).[1]

> "The effective re-definition of regional areas – a scientific re-mapping of these areas and a political and cultural re-willing of them – is one of the essential preliminary tasks toward building up a cooperative and serviceable civilization."
>
> Lewis Mumford, The Culture of Cities (1939)

Introduction: Why Think Regionally?

The United States is a country of deep contradictions. For much of the past decade unemployment nationwide has been at an all-time low – and yet there are urban neighborhoods and rural counties where joblessness is over 20%. Americans consistently place the environment near the top of their policy concerns – and yet we drive enormous distances to work in increasingly high-emission vehicles. Technology has connected us to people and markets across the globe – and yet many low-income Americans still live in neighborhoods that are socially, politically, and economically isolated.

Nowhere are these contradictions more evident than in metropolitan centers and the areas surrounding them. Labeled "metro regions" or simply "regions" by many planners, these areas may encompass many municipalities, counties, and incorporated and unincorporated towns. One metro region may include several metropolitan centers that have bled into each other over time, such as Miami-Orlando-Tampa or San Diego-Los Angeles-Tijuana (Bromley and Daniels 2001). A region may be defined based on a market area for a newspaper, the fan base for a football team, or the geographic boundaries of a commute shed. But often regions are not so easily physically defined: unlike cities or counties, regions are not "pre-existing realities" defined by explicit political boundaries. Instead, they are perhaps better thought of as networks of relationships, organized in such a way as to "harness capabilities and integrate policies and programs; they are created, not discovered" (Foster and Meyer 2000). But most importantly, they are areas within which every social, economic, and political decision that is made in any one part of the region causes ripple effects throughout the rest of the region. In a sense, a region's boundaries are defined by the outer edges of these ripple effects.

Despite the increased nebulousness of regional boundaries, most economic and political institutions are still set up along traditional city/county lines. Furthermore, as regions have grown in size, the government institutions responsible for taking care of those regions have grown smaller. Numerous federal, state, and local policy choices have created this situation. Under President Reagan's watch, the 1980s ushered in an era of "small government," characterized by huge cuts in service activities that had traditionally been performed at the federal level. As the federal government downsized, states were forced to take on an increasingly active role in managing human services such as housing, transportation, health care, and workforce development, as well as environmental problems such as air quality and resource management. Not surprisingly, the delegation of these problems to the states, along with drastically decreasing federal financial support, has led to a situation wherein cities, suburbs, and unincorporated areas hotly compete for service dollars. At the same time, decades of "home rule" have concentrated municipal authority in the critical areas of education and land use planning, further hampering cooperation across regions (Barbour and Teitz 2001). Added to the mix is the fact that, though central city populations are shrinking or leveling off, many regional populations are growing and sprawling outward, meaning that local governments throughout the region must add new infrastructure and services. These increased costs come, of course, at precisely the same time that infrastructure and services funding is decentralized and decreased.

As government functions have been decentralized, they have also been privatized. On the one hand, an increasing number of state and local public services are now contracted out to private companies and non-profit organizations (Handler 1996). At the same time the private sector, and especially private foundations, have stepped in to try and fill some of the remaining gap between government dollars and citizen needs. Competition for both government and foundation grants is fierce, pitting cities against cities, non-profits against non-profits, and sometimes neighborhoods against one another.

Ironically, just as competition for public and private dollars is increasing, so is the critical need for cooperation across municipal lines to address regional planning issues. The economic conditions of post-Fordism have underscored this need more than ever (Barnes and Ledebur 1997; Rusk 1995). With increased mobility of capital and decreased transportation costs, businesses and jobs can move freely out of the central cities and locate in inner-ring suburbs where land is cheaper, or exurban areas where labor is cheaper. The workers who fill these jobs face ever-longer commutes, either from the cities (where very low and very high income residents often live), from outer ring suburbs, or from nearby metropolitan centers.

This has two major impacts on the region as a whole. First, workers are very likely to live and work – and consume services and pay taxes – in different municipalities (Bromley 2001). Though this is not groundbreaking news – after all, bedroom suburbs have existed for over a century – the difference is that now the commute may be from suburb to suburb, city to suburb, or even city to city, rather than just the traditional suburb to city. Second, the suburbanization of homes and jobs leads to increased congestion, a strained transportation infrastructure, and reduced air quality in more suburban and rural parts of many regions (Barbour and Teitz 2001). In short,

> "[t]he dominance of suburbia has come at a heavy price: automobile dependence, worsening traffic congestion, dependence on foreign

> energy supplies, air and water pollution, and loss of open space, productive farm and forest lands, and wildlife habitat. Expensive new roads, schools, and sewer and water facilities must be built to service the new suburban development while aging infrastructure in the central cities is often allowed to deteriorate" (Bromley and Daniels 2001).

Low-income residents of the region especially experience these environmental and economic effects. Affordable housing has not followed jobs into the suburbs, nor has a wide range of social services. This is partly due to the localized nature of land use planning and the NIMBY phenomenon, and is partly the result of state and local fiscal policies, such as Proposition 13 in California, that make it more profitable for towns to favor sales and commercial property tax dollars over residential property tax dollars (Orfield 2001). The result is that inner-ring, industrialized suburbs are able to reap the benefits of low-skill, low-wage labor without paying the costs of providing services to those workers; at the same time high-income residential suburbs can guarantee a high level of services for themselves due to high property tax revenue and specialized local taxes. In the cities, meanwhile, residents pay high property taxes for ever-worsening and overburdened services (Orfield 2001).

"The effect of these policies is straightforward," write regional experts Bruce Katz and Joel Rogers. "They lower the costs – to individuals and firms – of living and working outside or on the outer fringes of our metro regions, while increasing the costs of living and working in the core. They push investment out of high-tax, low-service urban areas, and into low-tax, high-service favored suburban quarters, while concentrating poverty into the central city core and, increasingly, squeezing the working class suburbs in the middle" (Katz and Rogers 2001). Furthermore, they lead to anti-environmental policies such as sprawl, leapfrog suburban development, compromises in air and water quality, and highway construction at the expense of investment in transit or pedestrian/biking alternatives. Again, these negative environmental effects are most often felt in low-income urban communities, where hazardous waste facilities and power plants regularly dominate the landscape (Lejano and Iseki 2001). Another result is structural inequality, manifesting itself in the jobs/housing mismatch, in declining economic and political access for low-income families, and in striking educational inequity.

In a nutshell, every economic, social, environmental, and policy decision made in any one part of the modern metropolitan region has definite effects on every other part. The political lines that exist between cities and suburbs, suburbs and exurbs, or metropolises and rural areas are increasingly blurred. As economists Barnes and Ledebur argue, in attempting to develop a new theory of regional economic development, "there is no underlying local economic region of which the city and suburban governmental jurisdictions each comprise only parts. The jurisdictions are not separate economies; they are governmental overlays on the broader economic entity… [They] are parts of a larger economic whole" (Barnes and Ledebur 1997). For this reason, organizations that want to improve or change any one geographic part or specific aspect of a region must necessarily consider the overall regional effect of their efforts.

The problem facing planners is clear: we have a seemingly counter-regional institutional structure in place to solve a set of undeniably regional problems. Failing to address these problems using regional strategies may be not only ineffective, but also destructive – like "pouring water on a hot skillet, rather than turning down the flame" (Katz and Rogers 2001).

This is not a new problem for planners, who have long recognized the need for regional solutions to housing and land-use problems.[2] Linda Hollis has written that the idea of regional planning is now entering a "third wave" in the United States; the first wave characterized by sweeping plans to integrate cities and their close suburbs (such as the Regional Plan of New York and its Environs, written between 1921-1931) and the second by government mandates to plan regionally (such as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), or the Clean Air and Water Acts) (Bromley 2001; Hollis 1998). The third wave, so far, has focused less on integrating geographic areas than on integrating communities – encouraging collaboration and cooperation between people in different parts of the region in the hopes of developing shared strategies for change (Hollis 1998).

But none of these strategies, taken in isolation, can fully address the current disconnect between an increasingly decentralized institutional structure and increasingly regional set of planning problems. Instead, as Myron Orfield and other commentators have noted, the institutional structure *itself* must become regional in order for a regional planning agenda to succeed (Orfield 2001; Orfield and Rusk 1998). In this article I start at an earlier point and ask: Given the current institutional structure, what regional actors are in the best position to set that agenda? To answer this question I first look at the political science literature on agenda-setting, particularly the "regime theory" work most associated with Clarence Stone. I then analyze the current institutional actors interested in regionalism under this theory to try and determine who among them has the power and resources to implement a regional agenda. Finally, I use data from interviews that I conducted with a number of these regional actors to consider what a workable regional agenda might look like.

A note on methodology: This interview data was collected in the summer of 2001, when I worked as a regional planning consultant for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation in Menlo Park, California. Altogether I conducted thirty-three formal interviews (see the list of interviews at the end of this article), either by telephone or in person, with foundation staff across the country who had begun to put together regional funding programs and with various grantees of the Hewlett Foundation who were trying to expand their services to a regional level. I focused these interviews around three general questions: 1) What are the goals of your organization and how do they fit into a regional agenda? 2) What role, if any, should private foundations play in setting this regional agenda? 3) How should a regional grantmaking program be structured to be most effective in meeting the regional goals you've identified? I have two disclaimers: one, because I was affiliated with the Hewlett Foundation at the time of the interviews, some grantees or potential grantees may have answered differently than if I had been a wholly independent observer; and two, due to time constraints and the fact that the project was originally structured to help Hewlett develop a regional program based on existing grantees, I did not interview any local or state political actors other than ardent regionalist Myron Orfield, who is a state senator in Minnesota.

Regime Theory and Agenda Setting

Who Has the Power?

It is a truth universally acknowledged, by political scientists at least, that money is power. Traditional studies of agenda-setting have focused on two actors – the state and the market – as the source of all money and thus all power. Whichever actor exercised control over any particular area would set the political agenda in that area. This simple formulation was complicated only by the fact that each side had some control over the other. For instance the state could regulate the market through taxes, tariffs, and antitrust laws, whereas the market could influence the state through special interest lobbying and campaign donations. Still, the dichotomy was fairly intact in political science literature for many years.

The regime theorists, most notably Clarence Stone, complicated this relationship. Instead of assigning functions to either the state or the market, Stone framed the question of agenda-setting as one of resource allocation: What resources do major institutional players bring to the table? How are these used? Though the state and market are still important in this analysis, they are not rigid categories. "The state-market division is centrally important, but not something I see as an axiomatic truth to be unquestioned. Instead, for my analysis its importance lies chiefly in the resource allocation that flows from it and how that works out under various conditions" (Stone 1998). Resources are central to agenda-setting for several reasons: 1) they pay for the information necessary for citizens to make choices about agendas, 2) they can be placed strategically to draw attention to certain agendas at the expense of others, and 3) once the agenda is set, they pay for its implementation. That is, resources both create and maintain agendas. "Available resources make some purposes more viable than others, but purposes can also serve as a call to action and as a means through which resources are mobilized and coalitions built, thereby helping to shape viable courses of action" (Stone 1998).

Therefore, who has the power to set a political or economic agenda depends both on *who* has the resources and on *where* those with the resources decide to invest their capital. This may seem obvious, but it plays out in crucially important ways. For instance, the privatization of government functions discussed above can be seen as a reallocation of power from the state to carefully chosen lower-level actors, who then have the ability to shape more localized political agendas. In turn, the lower-level actors compete for the state dollars by espousing agendas that are amenable to the resource-provider, the government. "Organizations, whether public or private, struggle for survival by gaining allies, acquiring resources, seeking legitimacy, and fending off rivals. Decentralization, deregulation, and privatization are all aspects of these processes. The allocation and reallocation of authority, either between units of government or between government and the market, is a principal method of managing conflict. It is not surprising that the more important stakeholders will prevail" (Handler 1996).

Meanwhile, decentralization has caused both government and market functions to become highly specialized, thereby decreasing the potential for active involvement of regular citizens in the agenda-setting process, while at the same time increasing the involvement of special-interest stakeholders. Karen Christensen (1999) has written about this increased "sectoralism" and specialization of government functions:

> [S]pecialization skews democratic access by casting political questions into relatively narrow sector terms and thereby deterring debate over basic issues, such as redistribution… General disinterested democracy has lost access, whereas special interest groups (sufficiently educated, motivated, and tied to their specialty) have increased access. The more technical sectors make public participation more difficult, because deliberations may be inaccessible, in sectors' jargon, and incomprehensible. The greater the specialization, the weaker the influence of general opinion. Thus, sectoral dominance over interest skews democratic access away from the general public toward special interests" (Christensen 1999).

Therefore, the power of the state to enact any particular agenda is heavily influenced by the power of special interest groups. As a result, "government cannot plan but can only react." This results in the kind of "piecemeal decision making" so often seen in local planning processes.

How do the special interest groups gain their power? Partly, as Christensen points out, by having superior information. Superior information, not surprisingly, comes from superior resources: "[O]ur connections and the resources they enable us to command can expand awareness and increase information about selected matters" (Stone 1998). These resources are provided to the special interest groups by both the state (through contracts and government grants, as well as non-profit tax status) and the market (through profits from business, as well as private foundation money).

If planners are interested in setting a regional agenda, then, we should focus on commanding resources and information so as to influence the state to make rational investments back into regional efforts. The irony, underscored by Christensen, is that access to the state is made possible through over-specialization, which is directly oppositional to a comprehensive regional agenda. There is still a need for some regional actor to set a broad policy agenda – to focus on "defining policy objectives for regional growth management" so that localized and/or specialized organizations can concentrate on the implementation of solutions to their own particular segment of the regional problem (Barbour and Teitz 2001).

The Regional Players: Who Can Set the Agenda?

To determine who among the regional players has the resources and information necessary to drive the regional agenda-setting process, we first need to identify those players. Based on over thirty interviews with foundation program officers and grantees during the summer of 2001, as well as literature gathered from organizations engaged in regional planning work across the country, I have identified the following actors:

Table 1: Potential Regional Agenda-Setters

The State Local, State, and Federal Government MPOs and other governance bodies	**The Market** For-profit Business Fixed vs. Mobile Capital Private Foundations
Non-profits	**Community Groups / Voluntary Associations**
Religious Institutions	**Media**
Unions	**Residents**
Universities and Research Institutions	

I have placed the state and the market at the top of the list, as these are assumed under regime theory to be the major sources of resources for all the other groups. In fact, an analysis of the interactions between these groups (see Table 2) shows that the state and the market are in fact critical resource-providers; they are also influenced by the voting power and purchasing power of the other groups.

The resource breakdown in Table 2 illustrates that the major financial resources in the regional context are provided by the state and market/foundations, via grants to organizations. Residents also provide resources through purchasing and voting power, but these are tiny amounts of money in comparison to what the state and market can allocate. On the information side, media and research institutions provide most of the resources, but the dissemination of this information (and perhaps the subject matter as well) is dependent on the state and the market. Interestingly, unions and religious institutions seem to emerge as the least dependent on the state and market while maintaining some influence over these actors; this may prove important later in our agenda-setting analysis.

So we concede that the state and market do indeed control the resources, and thus potentially the regional agenda. And yet we have seen that the state is constrained in setting this agenda, both by its decentralized structure and by its vulnerability to narrow special interest goals. (The one exception is Metropolitan Planning Organizations, or MPOs, which are set up specifically to deal with regional issues. However, most MPOs are politically weak in comparison to established state and local governments.) The market in its purest form – that is, for-profit business – is likewise constrained by

Table 2: Resource Relationships Between Regional Actors

Regional actor	Resource (gives $ or information) to…	Influenced by…
State	• Itself (federal grants to state; state grants to local; fed/state/local grants to MPOs) • Market (service contracts; corporate welfare) • Non-profits (grants, tax status) • Community groups • Universities/research institutions • Residents	• Market, unions, non-profits (campaign contributions) • Media (reputation) • Residents (votes) • Universities/researchers (provide information)
Market	• Itself ($ put into foundations) • State (campaign contributions; also direct investment in some services such as schools) • Non-profits, community groups, universities/researchers, media (foundation grants) • Residents (secondary beneficiaries of grants) • Media (advertising)	• State (regulations) • Residents (purchasing power) • Media (reputation)
Non-profits	• Residents • State (campaign contributions) • Community groups	• State • Market/Foundations • Media • Universities/researchers (provide information)
Community groups	• Residents • State	• State • Market/Foundations • Residents (reputation)
Religious institutions	• Residents • State (voting power, contributions)	• Residents • Market/Foundations
Unions	• Residents • State (campaign contributions, voting power)	• Residents • Market/Foundations • Media (reputation)
Universities, Researchers	• All other groups (provide *information*)	• State, Market/ Foundations (grant $) • Media (reputation)
Media	• All other groups (provide *information*)	• Market (ad $) • Residents (purchasing power)
Residents	• State (campaign $, votes) • Market, media (purchasing power) • Unions, religious institutions, non-profits, community groups (direct subsidy)	• All other groups

its legal obligation to put profit maximization above all other concerns. Though businesses can allocate small amounts of money to charity or public policy activities, this cannot come at the expense of individual shareholders.[3] Therefore, though both state and business can help underwrite some specific policies, they are not in a good position to take the long-range view necessary for setting the overall regional agenda.

Private foundations, on the other hand, are in exactly this position. Though foundations can be seen as a kind of subset of for-profit business, as they are usually connected to high-level corporate executives and their families, they are not similarly constrained in their spending. Nor are they constrained by geographical boundaries, term limits or elections. For this reason, they are well-situated to drive new and unusual policy programs:

> "[P]rivate philanthropic institutions are structurally equipped to act in constructive ways not readily available even to the best agencies of government. They can experiment with diverse approaches to social problems, without fear of being voted out of office if any particular program undertaken in good faith and with careful preparation nonetheless fails in the end. They can make their own failures a source of knowledge to government itself about what it would be wise to avoid in its policies – just as they can provide government with a model of a successful social test that can be written for the nation as a whole" (Commission on Foundations and Private Philanthropy 1970).

Theoretically, foundations can put huge amounts of resources over long periods of time into projects that do not need to reap financial rewards. Theoretically, foundations are capable of setting the regional agenda.

Foundations and Regionalism

Before asking the question of whether we *want* foundations to take this role, we first need to ask if they are even interested in it.

Traditionally, foundations interested in urban issues focused on inner city "problem" areas without attempting to address the broader regional dynamics that have created inequalities. These programs operated at the neighborhood (rather than city or regional) level, usually stating "community building" and "capacity" as broad program goals (Aspen Roundtable 2001). The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation-funded Neighborhood Improvement Initiatives are a good example of this approach. Though such programs often achieve real gains in improving individual neighborhoods, there is increasing evidence to show that focusing on isolated pockets of poverty out of context may in fact serve to reinforce isolation. For one thing, poor neighborhoods are no longer located solely in the central cities. Today these communities are spread out all over the region: in the cities, in older suburbs, and in rural areas. What they have in common is their isolation – less often geographical than political, social, and economic – from the rest of the region (powell 2001).

At the same time, low-income communities are subject to, and heavily impacted by, the same forces that shape the regions surrounding them. They are connected to the region through transportation networks, housing needs, and labor and retail markets. Their environmental problems – significantly loss of open space and declining air and water quality – do not respect neighborhood or municipal boundaries, though negative impacts are generally felt most strongly in low-income areas. In short, the neighborhoods that foundations have traditionally treated as discrete projects are actually embedded in a broader regional context of "historical structures, economic and political factors, cultural assumptions, social dynamics, and organizational relationships," as well as integrated environmental systems (Aspen Roundtable 2001).

The traditional foundation approach has been reinforced through a general societal shift away from broad-based political organizing and toward community-based non-profits as the site for social change (interview with Don Elmer). In response, foundation grantmaking processes helped to create a particular kind of non-profit, focused primarily on providing direct services to a small number of local residents. "The nature of funding opportunities was such that newly emerging groups . . . were pushed toward providing 'hard services' at the expense of change-oriented activities" (Fink 1990).

Therefore, some of the nation's largest family foundations are beginning to explore the idea of grantmaking at the regional level. This shift in focus is still only really evident in the foundations' internal processes, where program staff and boards are thinking seriously about changing funding strategies to expand beyond the neighborhood level. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, for instance, has embarked on a strategic planning process aimed specifically at "reducing poverty in lower income communities in urban, suburban, and rural areas by investing in sustainable growth and equitable development in metropolitan regions" (Hewlett Foundation 2001). The Ford Foundation has recognized that although "most foundation sponsored anti-poverty interventions in the last 20 years have been place-based and not policy directed," it is clear that foundations must now think of communities as "part of metropolitan and regional political economies [influenced by] regional practices that determine the geographic distribution of work and residential activities, services, and political representation" (Hamilton 2000). Going a step further, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has expanded its Program on

Human and Community Development to include funding for regional projects, including research on "urban reinvestment and regional equity," the development of a "regional learning forum to educate citizens about regional planning and public policy decisions," and "advocacy work and public education related to regional transportation infrastructure policies and investments," among others.[4] In a similar vein, the McKnight Foundation recently announced a new "regional grantmaking focus," including a $1 million grant to "reduce traffic congestion and protect open space in the Twin Cities."[5] The Packard Foundation is approaching the problem slightly differently, by investing $200 million in four counties surrounding Monterey, funding a number of organizations – including the Monterey Board of Supervisors – in order to create a regional vision for the future of Fort Ord (interview with Mark Valentine).

So far, most of these foundations (with the exception of McKnight) are reluctant to label their new grantmaking focus "regionalism." Instead, they are expanding existing program areas, such as community development, economic development, or environmental justice, to encompass a broader range of grants. This strategy often leads to overlapping grants, or "cross-programmatic initiatives." This is important because it indicates that individual Program Officers at the foundations are getting on the regional bandwagon and shifting their foundations accordingly. These Program Officers have a great deal of power. Because foundations are not elected bodies, they are really only held in check by their own boards and staff. Because the boards are generally made up of members of the business and philanthropic community who may not have expertise in the foundation's particular program areas, the real authority to make substantive changes within the foundation is held by the Program Officers (POs). When I spoke to POs from the Hewlett, Packard, Ford, MacArthur, McKnight, and Surdna Foundations in the summer of 2001, they were clearly thinking regionally. One PO, who had started his philanthropic career as a program assistant working on community grants, said to me that he had since come to the "inevitable conclusion that problems existing at the neighborhood level can't necessarily be solved at the neighborhood level" (interview with David Harris). Another PO put it this way: "The reality of community development is that neighborhood work is dependent on the macro-economy." He went on to underscore the need for foundations, rather than grantees, to keep the big regional picture in mind: "The problem is that you have to make grants regionally but not call them regional grants; otherwise you're forcing your grantees to do more than they're capable of doing" (interview with Dan Bartholomay). Other POs echoed this sentiment: "The only possibility of systemic change is larger than the community – you're more likely to be able to deal with equity issues, especially at a regional scale, by working with the entire system. But your grants may not have a regional focus; they may just be part of that bigger picture of change" (interview with Hooper Brooks).

Creating a Regional Agenda

Foundations, then, are in a key strategic position to set a regional agenda and they are interested in doing so. But are there grantees willing to give foundations this kind of power? Somewhat surprisingly, nearly all of the other regional actors whom I interviewed in the summer of 2001, including members of non-profits, community organizations, unions, and religious institutions, agreed that foundations were the rational leaders in setting a regional agenda. Foundations, it was stated to me over and over again, have discretionary funding, flexible timelines, and established connections to hundreds of organizations through prior grants. Though they cannot create the puzzle pieces, they can put them together into the "bigger picture of change" envisioned by the program officers. In the words of the Commission on Foundations and Private Philanthropy, "In contrast to virtually all other institutions, [foundations] have pools of funds that are not committed to sustaining ongoing, normal activities. This leaves them free to respond quickly and significantly to new, unmet needs. It also leaves them free to take the longer view, to sense the revolutions of the future, to understand earlier the causes of tomorrow's problems" (Commission on Foundations and Private Philanthropy 1970).

Yet lower-level regional actors are careful to emphasize that while foundations have the responsibility to take the long view, their primary function should be to facilitate coordination among smaller stakeholders who can then fit themselves into the broader regional plan. That is, foundations should set the agenda, but organizations at the ground level should set the strategy for achieving that agenda.

Identifying the goals of these lower-level regional actors and the relationships between these goals at the regional level, and facilitating the strategies necessary for reaching a regional solution to these integrated goals, is a formidable task. And yet it is exactly this task that many grassroots regional actors would like to see foundations tackle.

The Regional Strategy Chart: One Way to Design a Regional Program

In this section I have attempted to produce a model of how foundations can organize the current work being done by organizations and government agencies around the country, including their existing grantees, into a comprehensive regional strategy. Professional organizers will immediately recognize the inspiration for this model as the Midwest Academy's "Strategy Chart," which is essentially a way to break down campaign strategies into smaller, "winnable" pieces in order to keep the interest and involvement of stakeholders (Bobo et al. 2001). The Midwest Academy model focuses on identifying goals of a campaign and then finding strategies that can directly address those goals. The model then further breaks down these strategies into specific activities and identifies potential allies and opponents who might be important to consider in carrying out those activities.

In refining this model to focus on creating a regional agenda, I included the goal, strategy, activity, and allies/opponents pieces of the Midwest Academy model. However, I added three extra pieces of special importance to the funders who I interviewed: potential indicators, pre-conditions for a successful outcome, and potential foundation role in achieving the goal. My final categories were as follows:

Goals: Long-term changes which the program expects to make (e.g., poverty reduction, economic self-sufficiency).

Strategies: Specific approaches to accomplish goals (e.g., policy research, direct service provision, advocacy).

Activities: Specific processes and/or events that illuminate the strategy (e.g., case management, vocational training, community forums).

Potential Allies/Opponents: Actors who might be expected to support or oppose the listed strategies and activities. This is a first step to thinking about potential coalitions to work toward the broader goals.

Indicators: Measures, for which data are available, which help to quantify the achievement or result.

Pre-Conditions for Successful Outcomes: This category is meant to indicate those places where one goal is only possible with the achievement of another. Fiscal equity, for instance, may only be achievable with the creation of a regional governance system, though the two goals can be pursued in tandem.

Foundation Role: These are preliminary thoughts on where a private foundation could get involved to work toward broader regional goals. I expand on this below.

Using these categories, a foundation can create a "Regional Strategy Chart" for each of its grantees (or can, as one interviewee suggested to me, ask the grantees themselves to create the charts in their grant applications). It can then compare these charts to identify shared goals, strategies, activities, allies and opponents among grantees, and can connect grantees to each other to collaborate on these projects. Data resulting from these collaborative projects can then be taken by funders to higher level grantees such as universities and institutions, which can then conduct research that actually addresses the needs of ground-level organizations and activists. In this way, a foundation can put together the puzzle pieces that make up a comprehensive regional agenda.

Table 3 provides one example of a Regional Strategy Chart for the goal of creating affordable housing.[6] Other goals that I identified from my interviews include:

- Economic Access/Power for Working People
- Creating "Language of Regionalism"
- Better Neighborhoods (aka "Enhance Community Well-Being," "Quality of Life," or "General Livability")
- Neighborhood Stability (aka Less Displacement)
- Educational Equity
- Environmental Equity (aka Environmental Justice)
- Political Access/Power
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
- Urban Density
- Open Space Preservation
- Better Air Quality
- Fiscal Reform/Fiscal Equity

As can be seen in Table 3, each of these goals is inextricably tied to several others – for instance, in this chart, achieving the goal of creating affordable housing depends on residents' ability to live near their workplaces (which relates to the goal of urban density), and the goal of increased government funding for housing (which relates to the goal of increased political access for low-income residents). Each goal is a puzzle piece; the Regional Strategy Model allows a foundation trying to set a regional agenda to understand how those pieces fit together and what shared strategies can be used to advance the overall regional agenda.

Structuring a Regional Grantmaking Program

After I asked interviewees to define the essential goals and strategies that must make up any regional planning agenda, I asked each of them how they thought private foundations should structure their grantmaking programs in order to achieve this agenda. As I mentioned earlier, I did not ask interviewees a standard set of questions. Instead, I focused each conversation on one primary issue: the proper role for private philanthropy in the world of regionalism. What follows are their key observations, framed as concrete suggestions for foundations thinking about setting the regional agenda.

Key Observations

> **Observation 1**: Private foundations need to articulate broad goals for their regional programs and must make these clear to all potential grantees. However, foundations should not attempt to articulate specific goals for each grantee; grantees should be expected to generate these and explain their relevance to the larger program.

When stating its broad goals, a foundation should make sure that these are issue-based, not process-based. For example, “more affordable housing in the region” is a goal; “develop regional leaders” is not – though it could be a part of a grantee’s strategy. David Harris from the MacArthur Foundation (just beginning its own strategic planning process around the issue of regionalism) makes the point that a foundation’s goals need to speak to issues that are of importance to a broad range of people, both urban and suburban, in the region (interview with David Harris). The McKnight Foundation, in its emerging regional process, has set out concrete goals, such as increasing public understanding of the importance of Smart Growth (interview with Dan Bartholomay).

Large private foundations should be aware that they have the luxury and, therefore, the responsibility of keeping the big picture in mind at all times. Every grantee will be working on a different piece of the regional puzzle; only the foundation can fit those pieces together. To this end, the broad goals should be constantly revisited and refined by the foundation as the regional program evolves and the region

Table 3: Sample Regional Strategy Chart

GOAL	**Affordable Housing**	
Strategies	• Increase government funding for affordable housing (related goal: Political Access) • Encourage housing close to work centers (related goal: Urban Density) • Encourage pro-density, pro-housing thinking at local/regional level (related goal: Language of Regionalism) • Encourage transferable development rights for regions trying to meet fair share housing requirements (related goals: Fiscal Equity) • Create coalitions between cities to promote regional housing strategies • Involve potential residents in local land use decisions (related goals: Political Access, Economic Access) • Decrease housing discrimination • Create "opportunity-based housing" – develop affordable housing in areas with decent child care, transit access, and employment opportunities (powell, 2001) (related goal: Urban Density) • Rent control for those who prefer rental housing, such as new immigrants and seniors (related goal: Political Access)	
Activities	• Inclusionary zoning requirements (also leads to density) • Housing trust funds • Resident preferences for local development (involves potential residents pre-development) • Involve regional allies from labor, non-profits, business in housing battles at local level • Create a regional list of people who need housing—present this at all planning commission meetings regionally • Create education campaigns about using "testers" to prevent housing discrimination • Involve residents in fair share housing discussions • Start local and regional rent control campaigns • Legalize in-law and add-on units • Create incentives to developers to build affordable housing, such as density bonuses, barrier reduction, car-free housing, linkage fees • Talk to businesses about employer-assisted strategies for worker housing	
Potential allies/ opponents	Potential Allies: • Non-profit developers • Potential residents of housing (hard to define/organize) • Unions (especially municipal workers such as teachers, police, fire) • Local business • Some local/regional/state leaders (including neighboring counties)	Potential Opponents: • NIMBYs (people already living in community/neighbors) • Some for-profit developers • Some unions such as building trades • Some local/state politicians (esp. on rent control issues) • Property rights groups
Possible indicators	• # units built • % affordable developments in region • % affordable units in new projects • $ added to federal/state/regional/local pie for affordable housing	
Preconditions to successful outcomes	• Available land for development/redevelopment • Organized local actors to combat strong NIMBY presence	
Foundation Role?	• Funding for housing discrimination "testers" and related education campaigns • Capacity building for media work and organizing around housing issues • Funding for affordable housing developers • Funding research on the need for affordable housing, and on economic strategies for cities struggling to provide housing (including tax sharing ideas); making research available to grassroots organizations • Sharing successful strategies across regions (work with other foundations to identify successful strategies) • Encouraging collaboration between grantees with similar goals	

changes. At the same time, grantee goals should also be evaluated periodically to ensure that they fit into the broader foundation picture. Foundations should consider asking grantees to work out a Goal/Strategy chart similar to those used above, in order that both the grantee and program staff are clear on the relationship of the grantee's project to the program objectives (interviews with Angela Blackwell, Kalima Rose, and Gabriel Metcalf).

> **Observation 2**: Everyone at the foundation, especially the board and program staff, needs to have signed off on the broad goals of the regional program. These goals should be consistent with the overall foundation mission and with the goals of each program within the foundation. For this reason, internal communication within and between the programs, and between staff and board, is crucial.

This point is especially important in light of the fact that Program Officers at many foundations have term limits, which can result in radical changes in program direction when a new PO comes on board. If program goals are stated at the outset and made transparent to everyone inside and outside the foundation there will be fewer upsets when new program staff is hired. This builds institutional strength as well as trust between the foundation and its grantees.

> **Observation 3**: Private foundations need to come at any regional program from both top and bottom; in other words, from both the community and the policy levels.

In order to be full and active participants in a regional program, community-based organizations need to have the internal strength to come to the table with powerful regional actors such as politicians, business leaders, and organized labor. To this end, private foundations must focus on building the capacity of these organizations, especially in the areas of media, communications, outreach and organizing, and access to relevant and current research (interviews with Nick Bollman, Denise Collazo, Andrea Buffa, and Stuart Cohen). At the same time, foundations should encourage research and policy work around regionalism and ensure that this information is disseminated to the groups doing the work on the ground level so that grantees' goals and strategies can evolve along with the overall regional field.

There are several theories about how to bring these two sides of the regional project together. Some foundations believe that they should focus on re-granting to intermediaries, such as community foundations, who can then provide a bridge between the foundation staff and the community based organizations. The Mott Foundation provides a good example of this type of program (interview with Ron White). "Regional anchors" – that is, organizations that already have the capacity to operate at the regional level and, therefore, can focus on building collaborations with other groups – may also be good intermediaries (interviews with Angela Blackwell and Kalima Rose). Some observers believe that "anchors" is the wrong word, and that foundations should focus instead on regional *drivers*: organizations that have a broad enough issue focus that they can provide an umbrella for other groups who may focus on different issues, but who still fall within the general set of values held by the driver. An example might be a regional driver focused on education, an issue that encompasses transit (access to schools/work), housing, health care, etc. (interview with Craig Howard).

Observation 4: Foundations need to recognize that different regions will demand different program structures.

The very definition of a region depends on the issues that it faces. That is, the boundaries of a region are created less through geography than through demographics, economic and environmental conditions, and relationships to the cities within them and the states without. Therefore, if a foundation decides to focus on a specific region, it should define its broader program goals according to the needs of that region. On the flip side, if a foundation decides to focus on a specific issue within the regional context, it should choose a region that is heavily affected by that issue. "[T]he eventual boundaries of the region should grow naturally out of the inhabitants' perspectives, values, and the activities proposed to be facilitated" (Foster and Meyer 2000).

Observation 5: Foundations play a key role in creating a language of regionalism.

A common theme addressed in nearly all the interviews was the need for a "language of regionalism" – a way to increase public consciousness about the interconnections between issues such as housing, transportation, and land use, in order that individuals might begin making personal choices with an eye toward regional sustainability. Foundations are in a key position to facilitate such public discussion. Some ideas for foundation investment in this area include: funding policy and research and making this research publicly available through the Internet or other means; funding data-driven studies such as GIS models and surveys and making the results available to grassroots organizations; capacity-building for organizations to do media and communications work; working with other foundations to coordinate broad regional goals, and also to facilitate dialogue and coordination between grantees working on similar issues; and generating publicity about the foundation's program goals (interviews with Nick Bollman, Bruce Katz, and Myron Orfield).

Conclusion: Drawbacks of Foundation Power and Next Steps

What the above observations indicate is that many regional actors believe that foundations are in a key position to articulate a regional agenda, but at the same time these actors are concerned about the tendency of foundations to exert control over the implementation of this agenda. This fear is well-founded. The very factors that put foundations in such a good position to fund long-range regional efforts – the discretionary funding, the lack of state control, the absence of elections – are also the factors that make them potentially destructive forces of nearly unchecked power. Looking at the chart of regional players in Section II of this paper, it is clear that the only real check on foundations is the media – foundation money being one step removed from both state regulation over corporations and individual purchasing power. Because foundations are private entities, their internal processes are not open to the media, and therefore this check on their power is relatively weak. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the greatest check on foundation behavior is the conscience of its board and staff; this is not exactly comforting to anyone committed to representative democracy! Furthermore, as some observers have noted, foundations have close ties to business that may impede any truly progressive thinking. They are traditionally hostile to labor unions, which are among the most important "anchors" for any solid regional platform.

More ominously, giving foundations the power to set policy agendas may take this responsibility away from the state. As discussed at the beginning of this article, public funding for crucial services is shrinking, as successive levels of government delegate responsibility downward to local entities or outward to private contractors. Foundations are luckily able to fill some of this "civic vacuum,"[7] but in allowing foundations to step in are we taking away government accountability for these services?

If so, this is frightening on two levels: first, as noted above, foundations are in no way representative and cannot be counted on to distribute resources equitably. Second, foundation money is a mere drop in the bucket compared to the resources that governments can put into service provision. As an example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the richest private foundation in the world, spends approximately $1.7 billion on education grants (one of its five program areas) each year.[8] In comparison, President Bush has requested $53.1 billion for the 2004 Department of Education budget.[9]

Clearly foundations should not, nor are they in a position to, take over traditional government functions. What is evident from my research and interviews, however, is that they should, and are in a position to, articulate a broad, long-range agenda for thinking regionally – something that the government, given its current localized and specialized structure, cannot do. If foundations are sensitive to the needs of other regional actors, they will see that their proper function is not to replace government but to exist alongside it and make it more effective. By serving as a conduit of information between policymakers, researchers, and community actors, foundations can help these regional players become more educated, engaged, and active in promoting a regional agenda. By helping to build the capacity of small organizations so that they have more access to the media, foundations can help the public see the links between community issues and macro-economic, macro-political, and macro-environmental forces. When the language of regionalism spreads to all the players within a political system, each of those players can exert its particular influence over the state to make rational, pro-regional choices. Only then will the state change its own structure to become more pro-regional; only then will the regional agenda have fully succeeded.

Endnotes

1. The author would like to thank the program staff at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation—specifically Paul Brest, Michael Wald, Renu Karir, Alvertha Penny and Michael Fischer—for their invaluable insights into this project, which was started during a summer working at the Foundation in 2001. The work product from that summer was an internal foundation report called "Thinking Regionally," copies of which are available from the author (kate@kategordon.net).
2. Excitement over "regionalism" crops up in the planning literature about every generation. See, e.g., Charles H.W. Foster & William B. Meyer, *The Harvard Environmental Regionalism Project, BCSIA Discussion Paper No. 2000-11* (Environment and Natural Resources Program, Kennedy School of

Government, Harvard University: 2000) which compares discussions of regional approaches to environmental problems in the 1930s to more recent regionalism debates.

3. All fifty states have a provision similar to Maine's section 716: "The directors and officers of a corporation shall exercise their powers and discharge their duties with a view to the interest of the corporation and of the shareholders."

4. John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, *Program on Human and Community Development*, available at http://www.macfound.org/grants.

5. Funders' Network press release to members, June 13, 2001.

6. Regional strategy charts for each of these goals are included in the author's report to the Hewlett Foundation, "Thinking Regionally: Existing Efforts and Funding Strategies," which is available from the author.

7. Stone, *supra* note 12.

8. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation website, available at http://www.gatesfoundation.org.

9. Department of Education website, available at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/Budget04/index.html.

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