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## **Roles of Local Foundations in German Community-Based Initiatives: Devolving Criticism of Philanthropy to the Local?**

*Franz Koranyi*

Freie Universität Berlin



*Nina Kolleck*

RWTH Aachen University

Germany

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**Abstract:** This article explores perceptions of local philanthropic foundations situated in community-based initiative (CBI) policies that aim to achieve educational goals through the establishment of collaborative connections between schools and multiple local actors. Although roles of philanthropy in public education are controversial, scholars have yet to rigorously consider the specific local context of CBIs. We aim to help fill this research gap by investigating the main collective orientations that underlie actions of local foundations in German CBIs. Based on semi-structured interviews with chairpersons in a south German municipality, we examine patterns of experience and attitude through application of the documentary method. The reconstructed collective orientations allow for the identification of four primary roles of philanthropy in CBIs. Notably, the addition of an advocacy role relocates a phenomenon that was previously identified as a disruptive element at a (supra-)national level. These roles suggest potential for philanthropy to engage in local education

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policy-making. As such, they pose pressing questions that need to be addressed by public authorities and regulators.

**Keywords:** philanthropic foundations; institutional roles; community education; community development; administrative policy

### **Las fundaciones locales en iniciativas comunitarias basadas en Alemania:**

#### **¿Devolviendo críticas a la filantropía para el lugar?**

**Resumen:** Este artículo explora las percepciones de fundaciones filantrópicas locales situadas en políticas de iniciativa comunitaria (CBI) que buscan alcanzar objetivos educativos a través del establecimiento de conexiones colaborativas entre escuelas y múltiples actores locales.

Aunque los papeles de filantropía en la educación pública son controvertidos, los estudiosos todavía necesitan considerar rigurosamente el contexto local específico de los CBI. Nuestro objetivo es ayudar a llenar esa brecha de investigación, investigando las principales orientaciones colectivas que fundamentan las acciones de las fundaciones locales en los CBIs alemanes. Con base en entrevistas semiestructuradas con presidentes de un municipio del sur de Alemania, examinamos patrones de experiencia y actitud a través de la aplicación del método documental. Las orientaciones colectivas reconstruidas permiten la identificación de cuatro papeles principales de la filantropía en los CBI. Por supuesto, el aumento de un papel de abogacía se refiere a un fenómeno que fue anteriormente identificado como un elemento disruptivo en un nivel (supra) nacional. Estas funciones sugieren potencial para que la filantropía se involucre en la formulación de políticas educativas locales. Como tal, plantean cuestiones urgentes que necesitan ser abordadas por las autoridades públicas y reguladores.

**Palabras-clave:** fundaciones filantrópicas; funciones institucionales; educación comunitaria; desarrollo comunitario; política administrativa

### **Das fundações locais em iniciativas comunitárias baseadas na Alemanha: Devolvendo críticas à filantropia para o local?**

**Resumo:** Este artigo explora as percepções de fundações filantrópicas locais situadas em políticas de iniciativa comunitária (CBI) que visam alcançar objetivos educacionais através do estabelecimento de conexões colaborativas entre escolas e múltiplos atores locais. Embora os papéis da filantropia na educação pública sejam controversos, os estudiosos ainda precisam considerar rigorosamente o contexto local específico dos CBIs. Nosso objetivo é ajudar a preencher essa lacuna de pesquisa, investigando as principais orientações coletivas que fundamentam as ações das fundações locais nos CBIs alemães. Com base em entrevistas semiestructuradas com presidentes de um município do sul da Alemanha, examinamos padrões de experiência e atitude por meio da aplicação do método documental. As orientações coletivas reconstruídas permitem a identificação de quatro papéis principais da filantropia nos CBIs. Notavelmente, o acréscimo de um papel de advocacia se refere a um fenômeno que foi anteriormente identificado como um elemento disruptivo em um nível (supra) nacional. Essas funções sugerem potencial para a filantropia se engajar na formulação de políticas educacionais locais. Como tal, eles colocam questões prementes que precisam ser abordadas pelas autoridades públicas e reguladores.

**Palavras-chave:** fundações filantrópicas; funções institucionais; educação comunitária; desenvolvimento comunitário; política administrativa

## Introduction

Educational reforms constantly affect the roles played not only by principals, teachers, administrators, and parents, but also by chairpersons of community organizations. Internationally, an observed shift in policy focus towards increased autonomy of schools through decentralization (simultaneously with introductions of national curricula and assessments) (Edwards Jr. & DeMatthews, 2014; Keddie, 2014; Lubienski, 2014) has drawn particular attention to school personnel and their roles in education. However, following the argumentation of Díaz-Gibson, Zaragoza, Daly, Mayayo, and Romani (2017, p. 1040) such a reductionist approach “does not consider the interdependencies that exist between schools, districts, and the larger communities in which they reside.” A community perspective that considers the roles of all educational actors on a local level is needed since an extended educational approach has the potential to foster academic success (Lieberman et al., 2010) and broader child and family well-being (Casto, McGrath, Sipple, & Todd, 2016). It is therefore valuable to examine the modification and development of stakeholders’ roles in the context of community-focused policies such as those existing in various countries, including England (Cummings, Dyson, & Todd, 2011), Germany (Koranyi & Kolleck, 2017), Spain (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017), the Netherlands (Bakker, 2010), and the USA (Casto et al., 2016; Horsford & Sampson, 2014).

In this paper, the term *community-based initiatives* (CBIs) describes efforts to achieve educational goals through the establishment of local collaboration between schools and multiple agents, such as families, neighborhoods, municipalities, clubs, associations, libraries, and local foundations (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017; Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012). The organization, facilitation, and implementation of developmental efforts to combat educational challenges (including dropout rates, academic underperformance, youth neglect, childhood obesity, and youth crime) are often initiated by public administrations or private institutions. CBIs represent a comprehensive approach to societal challenges and are a global phenomenon; in the United States policy-makers have followed such an approach based on local networks of social, educational, and financial support for decades (e.g., Promise Neighborhoods policy; Horsford & Sampson, 2014), and their European counterparts have since caught on (e.g., Networked Learning Communities in the UK [Jackson & Temperley, 2007] or Community Educational Plans in Spain [Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017]).

CBIs are premised to have a major impact on who-is-who operations within a local context. Within the academic discourse, the rise of non-state actors is particularly emphasized. Alongside for-profit firms and businesses, “primacy and legitimacy” are given to non-governmental, voluntary, and philanthropic organizations (Ball, 2016, p. 560). More specifically, the involvement of philanthropists and their foundations is emphasized in the current international literature (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Ferris, Hentschke, & Harmsen, 2007; Kolleck, 2017; Lubienski, 2014; Lubienski, Brewer, & La Londe, 2016; Olmedo, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Scott, 2009; Thümmler, 2011). These analyses critically study philanthropic strategies and tactics to influence education policy, prominently engaging in (supra-)national networks. Such action—also described as disruptive philanthropy (Horvath & Powell, 2016)—has provoked profound criticism regarding the establishment of parallel structures for public goods. Relating to policy, advocacy efforts are particularly controversial since such activities aim at a “diffusion of economic mindsets and mechanisms reshap[ing] the relations between the existing actors in the field, changing their respective roles, authority, and autonomy” (Yemini, 2017, p. 2). Despite increasing attention given to and critical assessments of philanthropic endeavors, in the context of past and current CBI policies a

detailed analysis of the role of foundations to assess a potential devolution of criticism to the local has been lacking.

This article therefore sheds light on role allocation within the German case of CBI policies by introducing local foundations' perceptions to the research as qualitative data derived from interviews in a south German municipality. More specifically, we draw on the notion of collective orientations that we define as sets of guiding principles that emerge from actors' cumulative experiences and attitudes over time and space (Bohnsack, 2010). Theoretically drawing on sociological role theory, we concentrate on the process of role allocation within CBI social structures that are understood as formulated rules and available resources (King, 2017; Turner, 2001). Those social structures create the context in the form of expectations in which actors can choose and achieve potential roles. Focusing specifically on the process of allocation, the notion of collective orientations allows us to identify roles that foundations deliberately or subliminally aim to achieve. To better understand foundations' motives and rationales we address the following question: what main collective orientations of local foundations underlie their actions in CBIs?

From a philanthropic perspective, the additional involvement is of high relevance since education is the second most common service, engaging about 24% of German foundations (Priemer, Krimmer, & Labigne, 2017). We suggest that the increased engagement in CBIs potentially modifies existing and creates new sets of guiding principles for foundations. Given the multiple international cases of CBIs, this is also relevant for other national contexts. By referring to empirical and theoretical discourses on philanthropic endeavors in education, we seek to gauge the appropriateness of criticism of foundations taking part in CBIs. Particularly, our theoretical focus on the nature of role allocation by foundations in CBIs contributes to the international research on philanthropy in education. In our empirical account, we add to the body of research by providing qualitative accounts of motives and rationales that underlie foundations' orientations in CBIs. The gravity of potential (critical) implications for education makes this exploration highly relevant to the evaluation and adaption of existing policies.

In the next section, we describe the phenomenon of (German) community-focused policies in education and how these policies provide a scope of opportunity for private actors. Furthermore, we review the critical discourse on philanthropic involvement in education that potentially relocates to the local in light of our findings. Moreover, we introduce our theoretical perspective on role allocation, thereby referencing our main concepts: collective orientations and social roles. Methodologically, we present a distinctive approach to the data analysis based on the documentary method that emphasizes patterns of experience and attitude in communication. Next, we present results of our interview research in a south German municipality and identify main collective orientations. In our discussion, we interpret our results concerning foundations' roles in CBIs and finish by outlining implications for: (1) scholarly discourse on philanthropy in education, and (2) practical coordination in community-based education.

## **Literature Review**

### **CBI Policies in (German) Public Education**

Not only schools but also other actors including philanthropic foundations are affected by public policies and governance structures. Educational research on the influences of decentralization and (re-)centralization policies has "a particular interest in the balance between the national, regional and local level of decision-making and the role of communities and civil society organizations, both public and private, in the delivery of public services" (Hodgson & Spours, 2012, pp. 193–194). In the case of CBIs, at the local level policies magnify relationships built between organizations and

individuals, and involve families, neighborhoods, municipalities, health services, clubs, associations, libraries, and local foundations (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017). This approach is often described as *full*, *extended*, or *comprehensive* since it addresses not only educational, but also complex social needs through the engagement of multiple entities on the basis of trustful relations (Casto et al., 2016; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Shirley, 2009). CBIs restructure power relations by presenting opportunities for new participation at the local level.

**The German context for CBI policies.** The high relevance of CBI policies for the German context originates from jurisdictional divisions of authority in (school) education. More precisely, the sixteen federal states hold the primary authority for education, including responsibilities such as organization of school structures and curricula, recruitment of personnel and supervision; the so-called inner school issues (Million, Heinrich, & Coelen, 2015). In contrast, German local authorities (cities and counties) account for educational infrastructures such as school buildings, sport facilities, and their maintenance; the so-called outer school issues. While local authorities formulate and implement child and youth welfare policies, policy-making in (school) education privileges federal state levels (Duvneck, 2016). Against the backdrop of this separation of formal (i.e., school) and informal (i.e., youth welfare, sports, cultural, artistic or social activities) education (Tulowitzki, Duvneck, & Krüger, 2017), CBIs change (at least to some extent) rules of the game: they enable local authorities to cross the jurisdictional gap between inner and outer school issues, for example by deciding on the thematic focus of local, school-integrating networks.

**The policy of Regional Educational Landscapes.** As a national case of CBIs, we investigate the widespread emergence of Regional Educational Landscapes (German: *regionale, kommunale or lokale Bildungslandschaften*). In 2001 in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), German students achieved alarmingly below average scores in math, science, and reading that shook German education policy to its core. Whereas many responses aimed to reform both school structures and curricula, some approaches investigated learning environments outside school with extracurricular contents (Million et al., 2015). In 2005, the federal government published a guiding document on an extended concept of education (BMBF, 2005). This concept vastly broadened the definition of learning environments to include a wide array of community organizations that offer and fund non-formal learning including clubs, associations, and philanthropic foundations. The policy thereby aimed to optimize educational quality for children, adolescents, adults, families, and other groups in the country (Kolleck, De Haan, & Fischbach, 2012). The resulting policies of Regional Educational Landscapes were particularly supported by local authorities since they profit from an additional scope of action in school education (Association of German Cities, 2007; Million et al., 2015). More recently, federal (Federal Ministry of Education and Research), state, and some local governments along with large non-profits (German Children and Youth Foundation, German Youth Institute) funded various programs initiating CBIs. Such landscapes have thereby become a widespread phenomenon in German education policy (Koranyi & Kolleck, 2017).

Policies of Regional Educational Landscapes introduce long-term and formal structures and apply a collaborative approach that connects local educational actors and the community within a geographically defined area (Kolleck et al., 2012). The key idea consists of the establishment of networks that involve local community actors within education on the basis of trustful relations (Kappauf & Kolleck, 2018). While the German education system still separates schools and out-of-

school programs,<sup>1</sup> these networks aim to include all learning opportunities and to promote network-based collaborations between them (Duvneck, 2016). Structurally, the introduction of additional rules and committees supports such network-building activities. For example, a common structural element consists of steering committees that as a rule can make decisions on the emphasis of education within the geographic area (Koranyi & Kolleck, 2017). Finally, Regional Educational Landscapes span a regionally defined area that may vary in size, ranging from a region (e.g., including several cities and municipalities) to a local area within a single city. Most commonly, they correspond to local authority areas (e.g., city or municipality area; Tulowitzki et al., 2017).

Table 1  
*Overview of International CBI Policies*

Country	Policy	Description
England	Extended / Full-Service Schools	Interrelations between schools and out-of-school organizations provide before-and-after school childcare, support for parents, activities for children outside of school hours, educational classes for parents, and emotional and educational support for students (Casto et al., 2016; Cummings et al., 2011)
England	Networked Learning Communities	Collaborations between schools to strengthen capacity for continuous improvement through learning among school leaders, teachers, pupils, and their parents (Jackson & Temperley, 2007; Katz & Earl, 2010)
Germany	Regional Educational Landscapes	Interrelations between regional actors in education, including formal settings (e.g., schools), but also non-formal and informal ones, such as out-of-school organizations and neighborhoods (Kolleck, 2015, 2016; Koranyi & Kolleck, 2017)
Spain	Community Educational Plans	Collaborations between schools and multiple local agents to provide full and extended educational and social services (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017)
The Netherlands	Brede School	Educational interrelations between various important child and parent services like parenting support, child day care, health centers etc. (Bakker, 2010)
USA	Harlem Children's Zones / Promise Neighborhoods	Interrelations between local social, educational, and financial support networks through early childhood and family support centers, as well as after-school and college readiness programs (Horsford & Sampson, 2014)

<sup>1</sup>This separation results from daily structure; in the morning, children are in school whereas the afternoon is open for non-formal activities. However, this is changing due to the ongoing introduction of full-time/all-day schools (Tulowitzki et al., 2017).

**International comparison between Regional Educational Landscapes and other CBI policies.** From an international perspective, Regional Educational Landscapes are comparable with empirical examples of CBIs in other countries (see Table 1). Conceptual variations exist regarding the orientation to specific educational actors, particularly schools. While policies in the UK, such as Networked Learning Communities, focus mainly on schools and their school leaders, teachers, pupils, and their parents working together (Jackson & Temperley, 2007; Katz & Earl, 2010), Regional Educational Landscapes have a wider scope and “encompass the idea of a comprehensive cooperation between schools, non-formal learning organizations and political actors” (Tulowitzki et al., 2017, p. 117). The English policy of Extended Schools as well as Brede School in the Netherlands emphasize schools but are also open to before-and-after school childcare and activities, educational classes for parents, and emotional and educational support for families (Bakker, 2010; Cummings et al., 2011). The Spanish policy of Community Educational Plans aiming at establishing interrelations between schools and multiple local agents to provide full and extended educational and social services as well as Promise Neighborhoods based on the success of Harlem Children’s Zones are most similar to the policy of Regional Educational Landscapes in terms of their emphasis on community relations (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017; Horsford & Sampson, 2014). In summary, German policies of Regional Educational Landscapes are comparable to other international examples of CBI policies in relation to their emphasis on the local community level and their collaborative, network-based approach. CBIs thereby intend to foster local level resources and competencies for quality education and to involve a variety of educational actors (Emmerich, 2017).

### **Involvement of Private Actors in (German) Public Education**

Within the discourse on changing policies in education, the involvement of private actors has been emphasized as “one of the most significant international trends” (Thümler, Bögelein, & Beller, 2014, p. 3). For Germany, Kolleck (2009, 2012) also recognizes an introduction of private actors into education, notably in the context of educational networks. In terms of non-profit organizations in Germany, education is the second largest activity area (Priemer et al., 2017). In comparison to other countries (such as the private school movement in the US; Mungal, 2016; Scott, 2009), historically non-governmental and non-profit actors in German education are less active in formal education, but extensively present in non-formal settings (Tulowitzki et al., 2017). While schools are state-dominated settings, non-profit organizations engage in out-of-school activities in areas such as arts, sports, or social experiences. Most recently, in the context of full-day/all-day schools, non-profit and welfare organizations are engaged in child care aspects during the day and organize additional activities. Continuing this path, CBIs potentially offer additional opportunities for the participation of non-governmental organizations, such as philanthropy.

Philanthropy in Germany has experienced rapid growth within the recent decades: seven out of ten German foundations (total 19,000) have existed since 1990. In an international comparison, German philanthropy developed historically in a close relation to the state (Adloff, Schwertmann, Sprengel, & Strachwitz, 2007). Furthermore, in comparison to the US for example, German philanthropy is strongly connected to the world of business, resulting in multiple corporate foundations that are still controlled by corporations (Thümler et al., 2014). Recent findings on philanthropy in Germany noted that education is a major activity area (24% of all foundations engage in education; Priemer et al., 2017). This is also due to the development of a state-dominated education system to a more open system: the *old* system restricted education to formal learning in schools and, thus, philanthropy focused on the delivery of additional financial support (such as

scholarships), thereby enabling alternative education for specific target groups not catered to by state education (Striebing, 2017). In the *new* system, however, a full-day approach involves a wider spectrum and creates room for non-governmental initiatives. In particular, Striebing (2017) points towards Regional Educational Landscapes as a symbol of this change in education philanthropy that follows a decentralized and collaborative logic.

### **Critical Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives on Philanthropy in Education**

While we can state that recent developments support the involvement of non-governmental and philanthropic actors, such activities are controversial. In particular, philanthropy engaging in the delivery of public goods and services is often regarded critically. In contrast, descriptions of charities emphasize enriching effects on society. Horvath and Powell (2016) take a theoretical stand on this perceptual divergence by outlining two distinctive types of philanthropy. Firstly, contributory forms are dedicated to either unmet public needs or minority interest through “experimenting with social programs that are later taken up by the state, providing funding for public missions, and building initiatives and institutions that serve a wide public” (Horvath & Powell, 2016, p. 89). These forms focus on increasing public goods and services; something that might be described as supplementary in nature. In contrast, disruptive forms “seek to claim control over a slice of the pie by offering an alternative” to already existing public goods (Horvath & Powell, 2016, p. 90). This is done through advocacy and agenda-setting that aim at both substantively shaping the discourse on social matters and at determining how and by whom these should be addressed. Values of disruptive philanthropy relate to competition and the belief that an economic logic of flexibility, scale, and scope is a key mechanism to address their aims:

For example, the state provides public schools, but forms of disruptive philanthropy aim to provide alternative schools and generate competition that challenge and undermine public schools. (Horvath & Powell, 2016, p. 90)

**Disruptive elements of philanthropy in education.** Although a dichotomous perspective runs the risk of black and white differentiations, previous research has notably pointed towards disruptive elements such as engagements in policy-making. Ferris et al. (2007) investigate foundations’ motivations for advocacy in education policy and find correlations with their goals and missions, a large scale and scope, as well as a willingness to engage in policy debate. Accordingly, research on foundations’ advocacy has so far primarily focused on large investors that are able to pursue their policy-making goals (Kornhaber, Barkauskas, & Griffith, 2016). Scholars have identified that such engagements lead to the promotion of particular policies such as school reforms like charter school expansion (Boyask, 2016; Edwards Jr. & DeMatthews, 2014; Scott, 2009; Woods, Woods, & Gunter, 2007) and teacher training such as Teach for All / Teach for America (Gautreaux & Delgado, 2016; LaLonde, Brewer, & Lubienski, 2015; Scott, Trujillo, & Rivera, 2016).

Research has furthermore emphasized networks and relations that foundations use to enter into education policy-making (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Lubienski et al., 2016; Olmedo, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). For example, Lubienski et al. (2016, p. 70) report that for the US, “networks funded largely by a relatively small set of venture philanthropists [highlight] the emergence of concerted efforts to shape not just policy but policymaking processes”. Similar tendencies are presented by Olmedo (2013, p. 583) in his analysis of UK philanthropic governance, stating that involvement includes “the conception, advocacy and negotiation of policy processes in all areas and domains of human activity”. Furthermore, Kolleck (2017, p. 10) states that German foundations engage in the education discourse to “gain or increase social influence, to be accepted as



legitimate actors in education, and to be perceived as competent and indispensable players in defining educational goals”.

**Criticism of philanthropic involvement in policy-making.** In light of these empirical findings, disruptive involvement in policy-making is highly controversial, at least regarding (1) promoted ideologies, (2) education structures, and (3) power relations. First of all, research suggests that engagements are oriented towards a market-based ideology, which is related to individual choice, privatization, and competition. Foundations are described as “elitist institutions, uninformed and unresponsive in communities” that promote consent to capitalist democracy (Harrow, 2011, p. 12). Secondly, reports suggest that recent developments have fostered parallel education structures in competition with established state delivery (Mungal, 2016; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). In other words, philanthropy operates education services for which the state holds a legal responsibility for delivery to its citizens (Yemini, 2017). Establishing a different mix of coordination and governance, governments seem to have lost their monopoly (Ball, 2016). Thirdly, as noted by Reckhow and Snyder (2014, p. 186), “criticism about ineffectiveness has been replaced by criticism that foundations are too powerful”. Since boundaries between responsibilities have become blurred, education philanthropy has been able to extend its influence on policy formulation and implementation (Harrow, 2011; Yemini, 2017). Gautreaux and Delgado (2016) observe such developments on a global scale and see philanthropists at the forefront—influencing and steering educational policies.

This criticism is directed primarily at foundations that have a specific degree of wealth, that operate on a (trans-)national scale, and that are rooted within specific ideologies (most of them stemming from an economic realm). To date, research has only marginally investigated the nature of local level foundations—which is particularly important when it comes to their roles in CBI policy. Empirical evidence on nonprofit organizations in CBIs is provided by Harris, Cairns, and Hutchinson (2004). Within this study, the authors highlight non-profits’ uncertainty about newly implemented local structures and point out that these organizations have “some degree of confusion about the nature of regionalism, about who the key players are and what their role comprises” (Harris et al., 2004, p. 529). These findings introduce organizational collective orientations as an analytical focus within the public policy context. Consequently, we suggest that the investigation of patterns of experience and attitude is highly relevant to an improved understanding of foundations’ roles in CBIs. Still, we do not know—due to a lack of research—whether criticism of disruptive patterns directed against their big siblings is also applicable to for smaller local foundations.

### **Role Allocation of Philanthropic Foundations**

Our theoretical perspective on role constitution—contributory or disruptive—is anchored in sociological theory. It understands roles as “cluster[s] of behavior and attitudes that are thought to belong together, so that an individual is viewed as acting consistently when performing the various components of a single role” (Turner, 2001, p. 233). Role theory is broadly divided into two strands: a structuralist focus on relations between context and role behavior, and an interactionist focus on relations between interactions of individuals and role behavior. From a structuralist position, “role players are guided by a set of expectations that are either internalized or experienced from external sources, or both, and are judged and judge themselves according to how well they conform to the expectations” (Turner, 2001, p. 234). In contrast, interactional theory assumes that “roles are continuously being remade in relation to relevant other roles” (Turner, 2001, p. 236).

As we seek to explore role allocations or “the attachment of individuals and categories of individuals to particular roles” within social structures of CBIs (Turner, 2001, p. 242), we refer mainly to the structuralist interpretation of role allocation. Accordingly, role allocation is guided by

sets of expectations inherent in CBI policy formulations. For example, foundations are expected to contribute to CBIs in the form of expertise or resources. However, there is potential room to maneuver within such expectations to choose and earn potential roles (i.e., actors can aim to achieve specific roles; King, 2017). We conceptualize this motivation to achieve a role through collective orientations, which are seen as guiding action of social groups (see Methods). To better understand motives and rationales of the social group of local foundations, it is important to explore their experiences and attitudes in CBIs.

Empirical international research on the theoretical construct in the field of non-profit, voluntary, and philanthropic organizations dates to the beginnings of academia's interest in the third sector (Gordon & Babchuk, 1959). Researchers have constructed different typologies aimed to represent the functional multiplicity of non-profits (Kendall & Knapp, 2000; Salamon, Hems, & Chinnock, 2000). Most comprehensively, Moulton and Eckerd (2012, p. 658) conducted a literature review that differentiates an "inventory of six unique roles". However, because their heuristic is mainly focused on service providing non-profit organizations, we seek to consolidate their typology with recent findings on foundations in education (Kolleck & Brix, 2016, 2017). Our comparison results in seven overarching terms that aim to assure the best fit to our research subject. Amongst others, these include: finance and operations, innovation, advocacy, relation-building, expertise, individual expression, and citizen engagement (see Table 2).

Table 2  
*Comparing Role Typologies of Non-Profit Organizations and Foundations*

Roles	Non-profit organizations <i>Moulton and Eckerd (2012)</i>		Philanthropic foundations <i>Kolleck and Brix (2017)</i>	
Finance and operations	Service delivery	Providing needed services not (adequately) provided by other sectors	Financial sponsorship	Providing financial resources not (adequately) provided by others
Innovation	Innovation	Developing new approaches to existing (social or public) problems	Initiation and support  Innovation	Catalyzing the implementation of (new) ideas; supporting other organizations or projects  Developing new approaches to existing (social or public) problems
Advocacy	(Political) advocacy	Engaging directly in the political process to influence public policy outcomes	Advocacy	Engaging (indirectly or directly) in the political process to influence public policy outcomes
Relation-building	Community building	Building reciprocal relationships and communities	Moderation  Network support	Mediating different social spheres through reciprocal relationships and communities  Building relations between actors (foundations or other non-profits) to create new alliances and solutions
Expertise	—		Expertise	Giving advice to other actors based on their acquired expertise
Individual expression	Individual expression	Allowing participants to express their values, commitments, and faiths		
Citizen engagement	Citizen engagement	Facilitating public education campaigns and participatory democracy		

*Note:* For detailed descriptions of comparison see Appendix.

## **Methods: Reconstructing Collective Orientations**

Our primary research interest was to reconstruct the main collective orientations of local foundations that underlie their engagement in CBIs. To this end, we applied an exploratory qualitative research design. We conducted interviews with seven chairpersons of local foundations in a south German municipality with about 230,000 inhabitants. We selected this environment on basis of its relatively lengthy engagement in multiple CBI policies and programs (starting in 2006) because we suspected that the foundations would have extensive experience to contribute. We based our selection of participants on an in-depth document analysis. Documents were mostly collected via official program websites and consisted of program descriptions ( $n = 4$ ), information material ( $n = 7$ ), official announcements (e.g., applications, press announcements;  $n = 3$ ), documentations and reports ( $n = 25$ ), evaluations ( $n = 1$ ), and PowerPoint-presentations ( $n = 6$ ). We read the documents with regard to philanthropic involvement in the CBI and coded for references to foundations. We then approached the chair of the regional association of 10 foundations who performed as a gatekeeper to a group of 10 foundations. Of these 10 foundations, one did not respond to our various attempts at contact, and two chairpersons identified themselves as not having experienced the developments relevant to this study. For detailed information on participants we refer to Table 3.

Table 3  
*Overview of Local Foundations and their Chairpersons*

Interviewee	Type of foundation	Mission / Focus	Operating modus	Function of chairpersons	Personal experiences	Professional background	Sex
S1	Public foundation	Nature; education for sustainable development	Operating	Manager	Since 2011	Forestry / engineering; public management	Male
S2	Booster club	Children and youth	Grant-making & operating	Manager	Since 2014	Social work	Female
S3	Corporate foundation	Poverty and social disadvantage	Grant-making	Donor	Since 2002	Economy	Female
S4	Private foundation	Social disadvantage	Grant-making & operating	Donor	Since 2007	Law	Male
S5	Public foundation	Youth services	Grant-making & operating	Manager	Since 2006	Social work; business administration	Male
S6	Private foundation	Integration and inclusion	Operating	Donor	Since 2004	Psychology; management	Male
S7	Community foundation	Education and youth empowerment	Grant-making & operating	Volunteer	Since 2006	Psychology	Male

## Data Collection

The interview design was inspired by a narrative approach in which the researcher aims at provoking interviewees to continuously describe their perceptions (Nohl, 2010). Narratives offer the opportunity to directly experience an interviewee's perceptions. In the semi-structured interviews, we therefore exclusively used open-ended questions: (a) how they would describe their regional activities, (b) how they were involved in the CBI, (c) how their daily routines developed in the context of their involvement, and how they perceived (d) structures of the CBI as well as (e) collaborations with other organizations within this context. Additionally, at the end of the last two interviews, we asked for feedback on preliminary findings from the previous five interviews. We presented those findings as eight hypotheses accompanied by short explanations and asked the interviewees to make a statement on whether they shared those impressions. This communicative validation ensured our adequate understanding of the interviewees' expressions (Kvale, 1995).

All seven chairpersons were interviewed once within the period from March to July 2017. To date, various programs have shaped the educational landscapes, starting from 2006 and thus having developed over more than 10 years (see Findings). Although not all interviewees had experienced developments from the beginning, all had a professional engagement over multiple years (see Table 3). As such, we expected their perspectives to describe a rich body of experiences. Interviews were conducted at professional (e.g., office) or private (e.g., favorite café of interviewee or living room/garden) sites. Except for the chair of the regional association who was approached to reach all other foundations, interviewees were not known to the researchers.

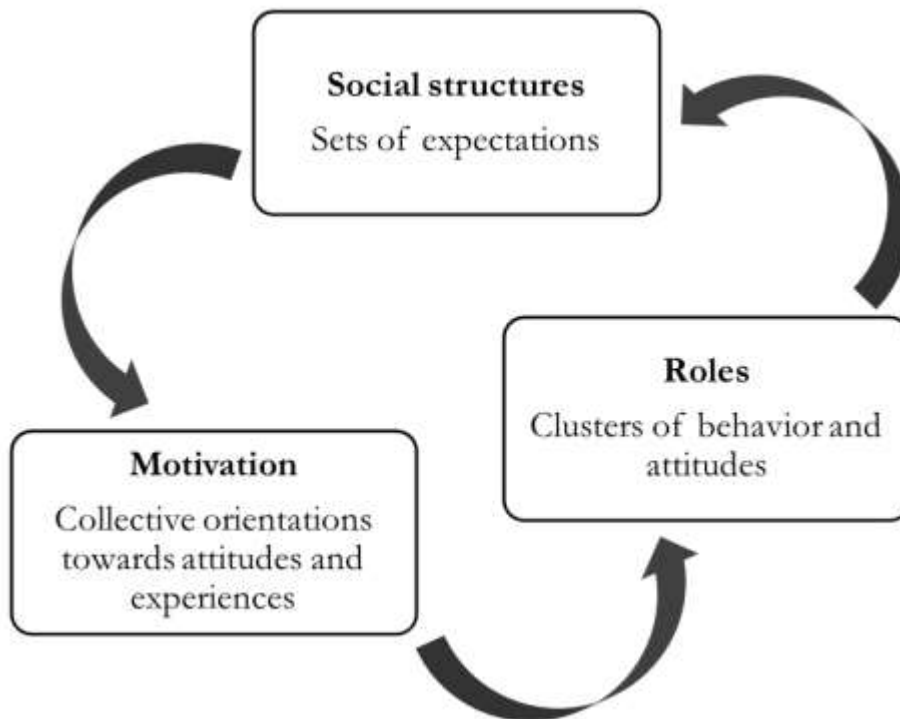


Figure 1. Relations of Social Structures, Collective Orientations and Roles

## Data Analysis

Our analysis of verbatim transcripts was inspired by the documentary method developed by Ralf Bohnsack (2014) and its application to qualitative interview research by Arnd-Michael Nohl (2010). This method observes stated information, description, evaluation, and opinion, as well as implicit meaning and knowledge. In other words, it recognizes a difference between meaning that is explicitly available to individuals and *documentary* meaning that is shared implicitly in common practice among several individuals (Nohl, 2010). The documentary method approaches this meaning in forms of *collective orientations* (sets of guiding principles that emerge from actors' cumulative experiences and attitudes) developed by a social group over time and space (Bohnsack, 2010). Such sets of guiding principles become practices and thereby construct the societal roles of a given social group (see Figure 1). For example, foundations gain collective experience in meetings and regional committees; thus, they develop a social orientation that guides their actions towards roles they aim to achieve. In accumulation, these activities create an association among local foundations: their relation-building role.

To make implicit meaning explicit, we thematically structured each transcript by headlining each theme and paraphrasing coherent expressions for each headline (phase of *formulating interpretation*). We then searched for common themes across the interviews along with their sequences of subsequent themes and compared those sequences (phase of *comparative sequential analysis*). In our case, similar sequences were of high interest since they located common sets of guiding principles of local foundations in the specific context. Next, we determined typical collective orientations based on our preceding comparison of sequential themes, paying special attention to the semantics of expression (phase of *semantic interpretation*). At this point, researchers must “detach from the actors' ascriptions of meaning” in order to gain “access to the practice of action and its underlying (process) structure [...]” (Nohl, 2010, p. 208). Thus, instead of addressing chairpersons' explicit descriptions of their participation in a CBI, we looked to uncover precisely how local foundations produced sets of guiding principles therein.

## Findings

In the following, we present the findings of our analysis of semi-structured interviews with seven foundations in a Regional Educational Landscape. Our theoretically grounded interest in identifying the roles of philanthropy in CBIs led us to the empirical investigation of collective orientations. In the first part, we provide a detailed description of the investigated CBI to contextualize our findings. Secondly, we elaborate on reconstructed collective orientations and provide empirical examples drawn from our transcripts. Notably, we aim to delve into the motives and rationales of foundations for engaging in this CBI.

### **The context: A Regional Educational Landscape in a South German municipality**

The Regional Educational Landscape was established over the course of a 10-year implementation process in a south German municipality, during which various programs were undertaken. From 2006 to 2009, the municipality took part in a pilot program financed by the federal government of Baden-Wuerttemberg and the Bertelsmann Foundation. This policy supported the implementation of steering structures and fostered collaborations between schools and out-of-school organizations (Emmerich, Maag Merki, & Kotthoff, 2009). In 2009, the municipality applied for the federally funded program *Learning Locally* (German: *Lernen vor Ort*), which established an educational management for supporting local

actors and helping to intensify exchange of knowledge and practice within the region (Lindner, Niedlich, Klausling, & Brüsemeister, 2017). It was financed until 2014 by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Association of German Foundations. Currently, the municipality participates in the federal state program *Educational Regions* (German: *Bildungsregionen*) and has done so since 2013. Similarly, this program aims to coordinate learning settings that engage a variety of regional actors (Landesinstitut für Schulentwicklung, 2017). Since 2006, several formal bodies and other structural elements have been established. These include: (1) a steering committee consisting of municipal representatives, the federal state, and other municipal institutions, (2) an educational office / management as coordinating unit, (3) thematic networks (education for sustainable development, migration), and (4) an advisory board / educational conferences (a formal body comprised of all educational actors in the region).

The involvement of local foundations picked up especially under Learning Locally (2009–2014) because a criterion for municipal applications was support from (at least) one local foundation. A small group of three to four foundations was approached by municipal representatives and, after agreeing on the terms of their participation, took part in the program's beginning. The foundations were invited to participate in the steering committee, thematic networks, educational conferences, and regular meetings with both coordinators of Learning Locally and municipal representatives.

During these regular meetings, local foundations found they shared common ground with one another. The second half of those initial meetings was structured to address solely foundation concerns, and from this, a separate set of regular meetings emerged which took place three to four times per year along with informal dinner meetings. They founded the *Regional Association of Local Foundations* (German: *Regionale Stiftungsverbund*), which described as a non-binding association of local foundations. After a foundational period with three to five organizations, the group grew to 10 active participating foundations by 2014. Another milestone was the delivery of financial support for a German language development project by all participating foundations in 2011. By making such grants, they demonstrated thorough utilization of the formed structures based on collective action presented in the next subsection.

### Main Collective Orientations of Local Foundations

Patterns of experience and attitude are reconstructed for a group of individuals in a specific context (Bohnsack, Pfaff, & Weller, 2010). For this article, we focused on narrative patterns of local foundations in the CBI described above. These sets of guiding principles were reconstructed from our data solely via the documentary method. We illustrate them with typical quotes from the transcripts, which we have translated into English for this article. Quotes should be understood as examples that illustrate our analysis of the transcripts.

**Social Orientation: “Foundations are now at the table.”** In line with the CBI policy's aim to establish networks, local foundations experienced an intensification of social relations and identified moments of “getting to know others” (S1, 124–130; S2, 049–050).

I'd say that this is a positive [...] effect of this project that [...] the foundations, for example in the Regional Association, are all at the table and potentially talk about what one does and what the other does. And [they talk about] whether one could potentially collaborate and whether a project is reasonable or not. Thus, [that is] something that intuitively



makes sense, [...], I'd say that the network component is the important factor perhaps. (S7, 188–196)

In the context of talking about the CBI, this quote exemplifies the importance of social relations. The chairperson expressed that “one”—indicating a generalization of local foundations’ perspectives—was now at the table and could get to know others. This describes how local foundations intensified contact with each other. There is an absence of pressure since they “potentially talk about what one does and what the other does” and “potentially” start a collaborative project, but that engagement is not mandated. In this context, foundations aimed at intensifying their mutual relations while protecting individual flexibility by not engaging in obligatory institutional structures.

The foundations’ motive is to increase capacities through more social relations: “Thus, often the most important things happen then during coffee breaks, I’d say. [Then] you can meet people who you know by sight, faces that you recognize” (S2, 245–247). As this quote illustrates, in the regional educational landscape, there are various opportunities for actors to orient themselves into contact with one another and meet local stakeholders face-to-face. Notably, events and conferences between regional players are emphasized as allowing foundations to socially orient and engage with others (S2, 526–528). As the following quote exemplifies, local foundations typically experienced exchange and collaboration:

Hence, I notice collective backing and support [...]. For example, if an educational actor, a school, a social organization applied for our funding and I noticed, oh no, that won’t match with our statutes [...]. But I already have another foundation in mind, I invite them [the applicant] to ask there. Or in our meetings, we inform [the other foundations] that this specific organization has contacted us and that I don’t know if they are good or bad or trustworthy. [We then ask the other foundations], do you know them? Did they approach you as well? (S2, 424–442)

By describing an example of her daily practice, the chairperson illustrated the directness of relations between local foundations (“already have another foundation in mind”; “do you know them?”). A trustful connection exists between foundations orientating themselves to establish an open and equal exchange as well as mutual appreciation (S5, 287–294, 345–347; S6, 271–274). Also, an implicit motive of mutual support is inherent and demonstrated by the improvement of funding strategies and collaboration, thereby reducing foundations’ uncertainties. The description emphasizes their interaction routine. Thus, regular meetings in the Regional Association or in informal settings resulted in a social relationship in which parties could exchange information, coordinate applications, and work together to give each other more flexibility and security in their daily work (S4, 183–204; S6, 253–255).

**Explanatory Orientation: “Now we have a little bit more know-how.”** In the context of the CBI, local foundations experienced situations of intensified exchange and noticed their own improved expertise regarding funding and operating educational projects.

Before we — the [names of founding foundations] — founded the Regional Association, we simply made our projects on our own and received advice from Mr [counselor] from time to time. Well, and then

came these eight foundations [...] and so we are now certainly a little bit better positioned and have a little bit more know-how. (S4, 169–176)

This quote exemplifies the change in how foundations are building up their “know-how”. Compared to the status quo (“eight foundations”) there was only one source of information (counselor). The comparison of “before” and “now” expresses a typical experience of the involved local foundations. Local foundations obtained more knowledge by sending representatives to the steering committee who reported back and informed participants regarding developments in the region (S2, 446–448; S5, 310–315). For some foundations, thematic overlap additionally motivated their knowledge exchange (S6, 259–271). From this involvement, they gained access to more capacities in terms of information on professional practices, received applications, relations and contacts, and available financial resources. Another chairperson described this pooled information as having “high value in terms of content” (S7, 127–130). Based on their “know-how”, they assisted one another with the assessment of project applications, project quality, and funding practices (S2, 168–171; S3, 486–488). The main rationale for this explanatory orientation is the development of capacities in terms of information and knowledge. As reported with regard to social orientation, their behavior reduced uncertainties but also equipped foundations for a different form of engagement. They did not only accumulate knowledge in exchange amongst themselves but also orientated towards sharing their own expertise with others:

I'd rather wish for involvement in terms of expertise. We as a foundation meanwhile, based on our work, have knowledge on [...] certain institutions, so that we can advise. And so [we] could be asked for support in decision-making processes. I don't want to be a decider or influencer, but this is sometimes also simply a pity because you notice things certainly later and think 'why didn't you talk to us?' [...]. Because though we are independent and, we know many institutions [...]. I don't have any interest in supporting some and not supporting others, but one can use this independent expertise, and this [the involvement in terms of expertise] happens rarely. (S3, 572–584)

Foundations developed an advisory attitude; wanting the municipality to involve them in matters relating to their expertise. The above quote illustrates a resolute orientation, which is communicated as wishes (“I'd rather wish for”; “I don't want to”). This implies that foundations have not, up until the time of this study, been (consistently) recognized as consultants by the municipality and are not involved in the decision-making in a way that the interviewee would “wish to” be involved. The chairperson expresses her disappointment with situations in which the municipality neglected to communicate with local foundations. Furthermore, foundations are met with critique regarding their involvement (“I don't want to be a decider or influencer”; “I don't have any interest in supporting some and not supporting others”): In orienting towards consulting, local foundations experienced a paradox situation, where they want to be called upon but they do not want to directly influence decision-making. Still, involvement in the form of consultancy is motivated by an interest in being included in the decision-making processes within the community. Foundations perceive themselves as being less independent from general community efforts (especially efforts by the local authority) and want to participate in the arrangement of local conditions.

**Professional Orientation: “[We are now] partners with collective aims being pursued through collective projects.”** A specific form of collaboration is the coordination of foundations’ professional funding activities. Local foundations gain experience in collective funding, for example funding a German language development project (a project on German language development for migrant children and their parents during kindergarten; S2, 128–139). This project was introduced by the Learning Locally project team together with the municipality. It also involved the Regional Association from an early point, thereby resulting in the shared investment of a fixed amount by all foundations (S5, 078–080; S7, 154–157).

So, in the area of [name of the municipality] we have a Regional Association of local foundations, which we formed some years ago. [...] the [foundations] have completely equal standing — act on a completely equal level. There are no hierarchies and we make sure that the sums we invest in collective projects are also balanced and that we do not start — because there certainly are foundations that have a lot of money, but we actually care about presenting collective projects to the public and all are then carrying jointly. (S5, 183–191)

This quote exemplifies the Regional Association’s intention to fund projects together on an “equal level”, but also identifies problems by emphasizing the different financial circumstances of local foundations and attempts to do them justice. Whereas the chairperson immediately points to equality without hierarchy, this is qualified by the statement, “we make sure that the sums we invest in collective projects are also balanced” and the indication that the interviewee “actually” desires to involve all foundations in a balanced way. This exemplifies a typical negotiation experience, where existing differences (e.g., in terms of “a lot of money”) produce difficulties and having an impact on collective funding activities. However, positive collective funding decisions symbolize a rationale to advocate for projects that embody collective preferences. Interestingly, this collective funding enabled foundations to utilize communication channels and to consequently influence the public agenda (S5, 187–193, 347–353). Again, regarding the motive of enhanced capacities, with collective funding, projects can be funded longer and foundations can intensify other support (e.g., based on expertise) (S5, 079–085; S6, 229–235). Furthermore, collective funding offers small foundations the chance to be involved in more and bigger projects: “It is certainly nicer to have an improved financial strength, when you know that there are still people with millions who can produce some money” (S4, 196–198). A common metaphor for professional practice was the expression “through unofficial channels”, which indicated direct communication without any formal hurdles. As a result of this, foundations strive even more for collectively funded projects (S6, 225–229).

**Interest-Articulating Orientation: “We certainly have more influence now.”** Based on the exchange between foundations and collective funding practices, participants also experienced the formation of common opinions and their articulation in public debate. They developed a rationale of becoming involved in political and local authority decision arenas.

For example, with the [German language development project], the starting point back then was that the [name redacted] foundation [...] had the idea [...] that we could initiate this [project]. So, he [the chairperson] proposes this [idea] and we talk about it, and then you have to first

understand a little bit [about what this is]. The process is — it sometimes takes quite some time because everyone is caught in their own foundational proceedings. So, in a sense, you have to first understand [...] what this means [...] but then [you have] to say, no we are going to do this — we will do this together, it will work. (S5, 300–307)

Processes of foundations orienting towards each other initiated the formation of common opinions. In this quote, the chairperson narrates a generalized version of the negotiation process among the foundations about collective funding. He emphasizes the collectivity of this process in using “we”. Whereas a single foundation takes the initiative, the ideas are discussed collectively (“we talk about it”). The fact that this mediation process between individual and collective interests can be complex is indicated by the expression “but then [you have] to say no we are going to do this—we will do this together, it will work”. Beginning with having “to say no” may imply that the chairperson may have not considered funding the project under normal conditions. In the situation of collectivity, however, he developed the ability and interest to “do this”.

I think that [the Regional Association] [...] is certainly given more attention by the municipality, not by the population, but by the administration and politicians. So, we have collectively funded certain projects on purpose [...]. For us it was a strategic decision to collectively fund [the German language development project], in cooperation with the municipality, to be recognized as a group and of course to receive more influence thereby. Now, there are new projects involving refugee help [...] and we have collectively written a letter saying that we want to support [this project] [...]. We certainly have more weight [in decision-making] when acting as a group and this collaboration was, of course, significantly fostered by [CBI policy]. (S3, 429–442)

This quote illustrates how foundations have moved to articulate in public debate, a step that involved them orienting to become a pressure group. Chairpersons typically spoke about their perceptions as “we” and in turn separated themselves from other groups (“administration”; “politicians”). Experiences of collective funding and its associated publicity constituted an increased self-awareness among local foundations, along with a sense of how to take tactical action as a pressure group (S4, 196–204; S5, 746–757). Furthermore, the chairperson gives the example of collective funding to express “strategic decisions” used to articulate foundation interests to the municipality. For example, her expression “on purpose” illustrates bold reflective action taken in the regional educational landscape. This orientation is based on the motive to influence public agendas in the interests of local foundations.

Previously, experience of collaboration with the municipality was limited and orientations were directed to partners like social workers or teachers (S3, 216–221). In this regional educational landscape, foundations recognize that the collective support for projects and initiatives within the realm of their interests is taken into consideration by local politicians (S3, 458–461; S7, 205–211). This may potentially influence the power structures within community-based education. However, foundations’ participation in decision-making is limited to indirect means. By and large, they collaborate with educators within the context of their professional activities (funding and operating projects in education). Therefore, working towards a “political sense of mission” was perceived as highly divergent in

comparison to their daily practices of funding and operating local projects (S4, 267–276; S6, 456–468). In summary, we provide an overview of collective orientations in Table 4.

Table 4  
*Main Collective Orientations of Philanthropic Foundations in CBIs*

Collective orientation	Pattern of experience and attitude	Motives
Social orientation	Foundations experience intensified contact with other actors, particularly other foundations. They develop a collaborative attitude of trust and mutual respect.	Foundations build up relations and networks, thereby receiving more information. Foundations want to extend regional educational opportunities by collaborating with other communal actors.
Explanatory orientation	Foundations experience situations of intensified knowledge exchange and notice that they themselves have a high level of expertise regarding funding and operating educational projects. They develop an advisory attitude aimed at collaborating with the municipality.	Foundations exchange information and knowledge to reduce uncertainty in operations. Foundations engage in public policy formulation and implementation to participate in the arrangement of local conditions.
Professional orientation	Foundations experience situations of collective funding, including negotiations and decision-making within the Regional Association. Their collective attitude motivates an extensive approach to professionalism.	Foundations foster capacities through collaborative projects; e.g., more or different projects are possible. Foundations can influence public agenda by collectively funding or advocating for specific projects.
Interest-articulating orientation	Local foundations gain experience in regional coordination and municipal decision-making. Based on their expertise and collective funding, they develop a participatory attitude aimed at articulating their interests in public debate.	Foundations become aware of their political relevance as a collective actor. Foundations aim at influencing public agendas in the interest of local foundations.

### **Discussion: Towards an Orientation-Based Understanding of Role Allocation**

Although roles of philanthropy in public education have received major attention, scholars have not, until now, rigorously considered local foundations' collective orientations (sets of guiding principles that emerge from actors' cumulative experiences and attitudes) in the context of CBIs. We explored narrative patterns developed by chairpersons since 2006 in a south German CBI. Referring to sociological role theory, the analysis of collective

orientations within this policy context allows for the identification of roles that foundations aim to achieve. Relating to the critical discourse on philanthropy in education, we were particularly interested in the contributory or disruptive direction of role allocation in CBIs. In the following, we discuss and catalogue reconstructed collective orientations in relation to our role typology (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Relating Main Collective Orientations to Roles that Foundations Aim to Achieve in CBIs*

Collective Orientations			
Social	Explanatory	Professional	Interest-articulating
construed as			
Relation-building (dominantly contributory)	Expertise (dominantly disruptive)	Finance and operations (contributory and disruptive)	Advocacy (dominantly disruptive)
Roles			

### Relation-Building Role

Local foundations showed intensive *social orientations* towards other actors, particularly other foundations, in the region. This orientation was supported in the CBI context, where several formal bodies and networks aimed to establish social connections between various actors. Accordingly, we construe this orientation as an indicator of the *relation building* role. This relates to previous findings that foundations create a community of similarly interested and collaborative organizations (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Kolleck, 2017; Lubienski et al., 2016; Olmedo, 2013) who develop trust and mutual respect (Kappauf & Kolleck, 2018). This role is of a rather contributory nature since it emphasizes collaboration with other actors and relies on a rationale to improve funding strategies and to reduce uncertainty based on intensified social relations between other foundations. A further rationale is the development of additional educational opportunities based on collaboration with other communal actors. Consequently, foundations playing this role become more present in the local coordination of education and extend their scope of action. In relation to other actors (e.g., other charities or education projects), developments of the inter-foundational network substantially boosted foundations' capacities.

### Expertise Role

Through participation in the CBI, the foundations we studied developed specific expertise and compiled their knowledge. Following this *explanatory orientation*, they organized thematic inputs for network meetings, engaged in action coordination for the steering committee, and undertook collective project funding. This finding is congruent with reports on the intensified engagement of philanthropy in education policy (Ferris et al., 2007; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Saltman, 2010). We propose that explanatory orientations indicate an *expertise* role, as foundations orient themselves to share expertise with others. They then perceive themselves as advisors who should be consulted in specific contexts. This role is of

a rather disruptive nature since foundations (aim to) engage in public policy formulation and implementation by emphasizing their knowledge in education. Thereby, they become more influential in decision-making and influence the arrangement of local education.

### **Finance and Operations Role**

We also noticed an extended *professional orientation* towards collective funding. This orientation included process development for coordination, inter-foundational opinion formation, and group action. We propose that such orientations relate to the *finance and operations* role. Our examination indicates that this role may extend to collaborative project funding that we categorize *prima facie* as contributory since it transforms foundations' professional practices and effects conditions—particularly for small foundations—within which they might fund and operate projects independent from education provided by the state. Implications are therefore comparable to the relation-building role (i.e., foundations extend their scope of action and develop capacities). As indicated by the underlying orientation, this role implies a professionalization of philanthropic practices.

### **Advocacy Role**

The rationale of the finance and operation role can however be seen in relation to advocacy: by collectively funding projects within a CBI, foundations influence the political agenda. This relates to the most significant finding of an *interest-articulating orientation*. While local foundations used to only marginally participate in regional political arenas, they gained experience by articulating interests derived from their involvement in this CBI. Local foundations are recognized as a group (within the Regional Association), relating to both social and professional orientations. Furthermore, based on their activities as experts (based on the explanatory orientation), collective grant-writers, and project operators (both based on the professional orientation), they gain opportunities to indirectly influence regional decision-making in the sense of an *advocacy* role (Kolleck & Brix, 2017; Moulton & Eckerd, 2012). They become agents of their interests and apply a variety of tactics to take part in agenda formulation (Reckhow & Snyder, 2014).

Accordingly, the disruptive phenomenon of philanthropic engagement in education through advocacy that has previously been identified mainly at the national level relocates to the local level. It is not only national operating and financially strong foundations that engage in advocacy (Ferris et al., 2007), but also small and local foundations with potential to develop this role within CBIs. In line with reports that identify orchestrated policy networks and philanthropies as legitimate experts, local foundations take on comparable roles in CBIs (Ball, 2008; Ball & Junemann, 2012; Lubienski et al., 2016; Scott, Lubienski, & DeBray-Pelot, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

CBI policies affect the roles of local actors within educational coordination. Our results confirm that those policies allow for an intensified engagement of community actors in education. Processes of devolving authority have created different governance structures in Germany. These structures are primarily based on a network approach, thereby allowing public and private actors to participate locally in the realm of education. We urge that close attention be paid to the profiteers of these networks. Theoretically focusing on role allocation, our findings indicate that foundations used this opportunity to both engage with other local actors and to form an association of philanthropic actors to coordinate their actions (relation-building role). Secondly, they gained knowledge through the exchange with

other actors and perceived themselves as consultants in educational matters (expertise role). Thirdly, foundations engaged in collective funding activities giving them the opportunity to realize different projects, but also to vouch for their interests (funding and operations role). This mix of collective orientations enabled local foundations to articulate their interests within local political debate (advocacy role). Education policy does not only relate to schools but also influences the perceptions of other stakeholders, in this case modifying and developing local foundations' roles.

### **Devolving Criticism of Philanthropic Involvement in Policy-Making to CBIs**

These findings support reported tendencies of power transfer toward non-state actors (Lubienski, 2014) and a shift to governance in and by networks (Ball, 2016). Based on the theoretical differentiation between contributory and disruptive forms, some (although not all) reported criticism relocates to philanthropic engagement in CBIs. While roles of relation-building as well as funding and operations are rather contributory elements (i.e., additional and supplementary funding and operations), collective funding and the expertise roles lay the groundwork for disruptive advocacy engagements. Those major tendencies correlate with the criticized establishment of parallel structures and network-based involvement in policy-making and advocacy (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Lubienski et al., 2016; Olmedo, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). Still, we find that criticized methods and ideological cores are not present in this CBI. Foundations learned to articulate their interest, however, they did not perceive themselves as competitors of public education efforts as reported elsewhere (Mungal, 2016; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). In the sense of charity, foundations also orientated towards those more contributory roles as being supplementary or complementary to federal state and local authority education. Relating to the critical discourse on involvement in education policy-making, endeavors towards advocacy within the CBI are symptoms of a philanthropy that is targeted towards altering existing public education. However, we suggest a deviation from critical voices on philanthropy in national and global policy-making because local foundations lack the strong orientations of paralleling and competing with the local authority that at the (supra-)national level seems to be evident in many countries.

### **Limitations**

Our research approach advocates for a community-based perspective on education policy reform. We are aware that the presented research provides valuable yet limited insight into the complex picture of coordination within CBIs. A major contribution was our methodological approach for reconstructing foundations' experiences and attitudes as expressed in interview material. Our research methodologically allowed us to better understand meaning implicit in local philanthropic foundations' actions in this CBI. Still, we focused on a single municipality and consequently analyzed a relatively small sample size with seven interviews. In addition, by interviewing one chairperson of each foundation our analysis does not account for the perceptions of foundations' employees and associates. This limitation was necessary to delve deeper into the data and identify more profound dimensions of actors' narratives that other qualitative approaches would not have allowed. This intensive reconstruction required a significant amount of time. For future research (1) the sample could be extended to include local foundations active in other Regional Educational Landscapes. Furthermore, (2) it could be compared to other actor groups in Regional Educational Landscapes. Results (3) might be tested for validity through



quantitative survey studies in respect to the total population of local foundations in Germany and other countries.

### Practical Implications and Future Research

Regarding the implications of our findings on empirical philanthropic engagement in CBIs, we suggest that there are effects on both foundations' activities and policy-making. Foundations' activities relate to roles of relation-building as well as funding and operations. Foundations extend their scope of action, develop further capacities by relying on social networks, and professionalize regional practices. Furthermore, the political engagement implies that foundations become more influential within communal decision-making based on consultation as well as advocacy efforts. Community development in education potentially profits in so far as foundations could enrich communal coordination as independent (from profit gaining/democratic procedures) institutions, thereby consulting for socially just and high-quality projects and local developments. Still, decisions based on foundations' expertise might be viewed critically due to a lack of legitimacy. We therefore urge the identification of public regulations and rules of governance that moderate participation processes and guarantee fair policy-making in CBIs.

This article is neither a general critique nor a commendation of philanthropic involvement in education. Rather, we find it important to emphasize both enriching implications (such as contributing valuable and innovative ideas and adding resources as well as specific initiatives targeted at the socially disadvantaged) and critical implications (such as a lack of democratic legitimation). In relation to our object of research—local foundations—CBIs must be regarded as an encouraging development, and organized philanthropy is well advised to continue support and involvement. Contrary to this, from a municipality's perspective, CBIs pose questions: how can local decisions be democratically legitimized? And how can local decision-making engage networks without directing complete decision-making power to these networks? We conclude that further investigation of CBIs should focus specifically on governance and mechanisms to improve transparency of all actors, including private foundations and public municipal administrations, in local communities.

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## Appendix

### Comparing Role Typologies of Nonprofit Organizations and Foundations

#### Finance and Operations

Theoretically and empirically, nonprofit organizations are mainly described as *service providers* that offer products and services to consumers and clients. They act as alternative or additional providers to government or for-profit organizations and engage in areas such as health, welfare, and education. This role relates to the *financial sponsorship* role played by philanthropic foundations, but instead of services or products, foundations offer financial support for projects and programs (Kolleck & Brix, 2017). Similar to nonprofits in general, this grant-writing can be in competition or complementary to for-profit or government funding, however the capital of foundations is relatively limited compared to state resources (Thümmler et al., 2014). Furthermore, foundations engage in operative activities, like organizing their own events and projects (Thümmler, 2017). Similar to being service providers, the role of finance and operations is a key competency of philanthropic institutions.

#### Innovation

Non-profit organizations are *innovators* that develop, test, and implement new approaches to (social) problems (Salamon et al., 2000; Shier & Handy, 2015). They utilize their independence from both profit-seeking and governmental accountability. In this way they are unencumbered by constraints faced by other sectors, thereby creating possibilities for innovation (Frumkin, 2002). This motive is particularly present in descriptions of philanthropic roles (Thümmler, 2011). Alongside this same core meaning, for foundations, the role of innovation is extended to include foundations as *supporters and initiators* of new ideas, where the development of an innovation itself is undertaken by other organizations (Kolleck & Brix, 2017). Thus, they are regarded as catalysts of idea development that coordinate and support interested actors who implement independent ideas.

#### Advocacy

Nonprofit organizations playing the role of political *advocates* want to influence the outcome of public decision-making (Mosley, 2013). They may also be asked to inform policy on the basis of their knowledge and experiences. Non-profits become agents of particular interests and apply a variety of mechanisms to take part in agenda formulation (Buffardi, Pekkanen, & Smith, 2017). Indeed, this role is identical for foundations: they can also aim to directly and indirectly lobby for their interests, thereby influencing decision-making and policy formation (Kolleck & Brix, 2017; Striebing, 2017). Beside direct contact with policy makers, foundations employ various indirect strategies such as funding research or funding nonprofit organizations related to their interests, they can also provide and increase their capacity to provide expertise in workshops and networks (Ferris et al., 2007; Ferris & Harmssen, 2009).

#### Relation-building

NPOs serve groups of individuals or organizations that come into contact with each other, thereby establishing ties and accumulating social capital (Frumkin, 2002). This *community building* points to social aspects that non-profit staff and members may encounter during their activities such as sports, arts, or folklore societies (Moulton & Eckerd, 2012). Comparably, philanthropic foundations also aim to build *support networks* by fostering



community between individuals and between organizations (Kolleck & Brix, 2017). Furthermore, philanthropic foundations can act as *moderators* that build communities between other organizations by providing neutral ground for stakeholders and mediating various interests of different social spheres (Adloff et al., 2007; Striebing, 2017).

### **Expertise**

Despite a high degree of correspondence, we identify a minor gap between typologies in nonprofit organizations and foundations. One role is added to the spectrum that encompasses the *expertise* of foundations used to consult other actors in their surroundings. Foundations can give advice to others on the basis of their knowledge and experiences in funding initiatives and projects. For example, they create and implement pilot programs, thereby deriving data and lessons that can be distributed among other stakeholders (Kolleck & Brix, 2017).

## About the Authors

### **Franz Koranyi**

Freie Universität Berlin

f.koranyi@fu-berlin.de

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9066-6097>

Franz Koranyi is a Ph.D. candidate in the Institute of Educational Research and Social Systems at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. His research interests encompass: Extended education, out-of-school learning, non-profit organizations & third sector in education, and educational administration policy. Franz earned a M.A. in Civil Society, NGO and Nonprofit Studies from University of Kent, UK and a B.A. in Public Management & Governance from Zeppelin University, Germany.

### **Nina Kolleck**

RWTH Aachen University

n.kolleck@fu-berlin.de

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5499-8617>

Nina Kolleck is Professor at the RWTH Aachen University in Germany. There she heads the Institute of Education and Heterogeneity and conducts research projects dealing with topics around inclusion, heterogeneity, educational networks and collaboration, reforms and innovations, educational governance, trust, motivation, sustainable development and quantitative as well as qualitative Social Network Analysis. Her academic career included research stays at the University of California, Berkeley, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, University of Caen and the University Politecnica Salesiana in Quito. Having gained third party funding and scholarships from different institutions and funders she currently holds grants from the German Research Foundation (DFG) as well as the Mercator Foundation, the German Ministry of Education and Research and the Max Planck Society. For her research collaboration with Miri Yemini she has been awarded with ARCHES (Award for Research Cooperation and High Excellence in Science).

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