The AUB Neighborhood Initiative: Social Responsibility in a University’s Backyard

Tonnie Choueiri and Cynthia Myntti

Introduction

Some might find it surprising to see a chapter about a university in a book on corporate social responsibility (CSR). However, like businesses, many universities are now asking how they can be more socially responsible ‘citizens’ of their communities. Many of the same forces are at work in businesses and at universities to encourage new thinking and action on social responsibility, ranging from the basic utilitarian pressures to generate good publicity to the realignment of core business practices and relationships around clearly articulated ethical principles.

A cross-fertilization of ideas has occurred between the academic and business worlds. The growth of CSR worldwide has encouraged organizations of many types, including universities, to look within and reinforce or renew their own social practices (Leitão and Silva, 2007). So too the CSR discourse elaborated on by academics, such as those contributing to this current volume, has encouraged, even provoked, business leaders to consider explicitly the variety of CSR approaches they might adopt.

This chapter begins with a review of the literature on the social responsibility of universities. While much of this literature is North American, many of the contradictions and challenges faced by universities there will resonate in the Middle East. The chapter then presents the case of the Neighborhood Initiative at the American University of Beirut, which seeks to share the university’s intellectual
Tonnie Choueiri and Cynthia Myntti

resources for the public good in the district of Beirut just outside the campus walls. The case of the Neighborhood Initiative most closely mirrors what is called ‘strategic CSR’, and it highlights the issues that arise when adopting this approach to community engagement. The chapter then examines CSR through some new writing on social responsibility and place-making, and ends with some observations that can serve as reminders to both academic and business organizations.

The social responsibility of universities

Many of the world’s oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher learning have been known for their other-worldliness, removed and isolated from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, ‘ivory towers’ where scholarly activities are carried out undisturbed (Bok, 1982). Since the mid-19th century, however, universities have increasingly been challenged to become engaged, relevant and useful for solving their societies’ most pressing problems. As early as 1862, the land-grant colleges in the USA were created to contribute explicitly to the social and economic welfare of rural USA (Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 19; Howard and Alperovitz, 2010, p. ix). Since the 1960s, calls have increased to apply the same ideas to urban areas (Berdahl et al., 2011).

By their very mission, universities advance knowledge and provide new generations with an education that equips them for a productive life and prepares them to become active citizens in their societies and in the world. Universities alone can grant the degrees needed for certain careers, and their faculties possess exclusive knowledge based on years of research and reflection. From this privileged position comes responsibility. In a seminal work on the subject of universities’ social responsibility, Derek Bok, then president of Harvard University, made the case that, given their noble mission to advance society through knowledge production, universities have a duty to use their resources to respond to public needs (Bok, 1982, pp. 62–78).

Indeed, all three ‘pillars’ of academia – teaching, research and service – can be socially responsive and responsible. Many university campuses now promote service-learning, which refers to the mutual and experiential learning that occurs when students engage in volunteer or community work, benefiting the organizations or communities in which they serve and getting experience they could not gain in
classroom settings (Furco, 1996, p. 9). It is now possible to find more references to ‘engaged scholarship’, with special encouragement of community-based research directed at solving pressing societal problems (Harkavy et al., 2009, p. 151; Howard and Alperovitz, 2010, p. ix). And service can help to ensure that ‘the work of the academy relates to the world beyond the campus’ (Boyer, 1990, p. 75; Silka, 1999, p. 336). Reflecting on the service imperative, former Brazilian minister of culture, poet and singer Gilberto Gil has stated, ‘Universities, beyond an educational role for increasing knowledge, assume a civic role for disseminating values. In that case, the most important human value is solidarity’ (Leitão and Silva, 2007, p. 6–7, 10).

Universities also model socially responsible behavior by how they conduct the business side of their operations. An institution’s policies and procedures on a wide range of activities – from hiring practices, working conditions and purchasing preferences, to public transport subsidies for employees and campus recycling and energy conservation – reflect its fundamental values (Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 28). The University of Pennsylvania, for instance, created an ‘economic inclusion‘ program so that its purchasing of goods and services could more explicitly benefit businesses in the disadvantaged area of Philadelphia where the university is located (Rodin, 2007, p. 130). Internationally, the Talloires global network of 200 universities and the COPERNICUS program of more than 300 European universities have committed signatory institutions to follow new and exemplary practices in environmental sustainability, among other practices (Leitão and Silva, 2007, p. 7; The Talloires Network, 2011).

Urban universities face particular problems that demand solutions. In the USA, for example, the decline of the old manufacturing centers in the north and north-east has led to urban poverty and decay around long-established universities. For these institutions, their very survival as a place attractive to excellent faculty staff and students requires urgent engagement and problem-solving with their urban environment. In other urban settings, universities are witnesses, and even inadvertent contributors, to gentrification, densification, congestion and other urban problems (Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 2).

The literature on a specific strain of socially responsible actions – university–community partnerships – identifies five main challenges that arise when universities choose to be socially responsible urban
neighbors. First, problem-solving requires collaboration; and within the university itself it almost always requires interdisciplinary collaboration. Although many academic leaders praise interdisciplinarity, too few incentives exist to overcome the barriers to such work. Urban problem-solving also requires collaboration between the university and its neighbors, and among actors in the neighborhood, such as businesses, non-profit organizations and residents. The experience of university–community collaborations in North America suggests that both sides must collaborate well internally in order to collaborate well together (Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 36). Similarly, this experience shows that university–community collaborations can lead to a restructuring of both the universities and the communities. And finally, while collaborations can be difficult, they have the capacity to expand the resources available and to bring about results that could not be achieved by either party on its own, or by other types of agencies (Silka, 1999, pp. 335–338).

The second challenge is priority setting. The key questions are: whose priorities count, and how are they determined? Often universities act without any substantial consultation and according to their own priorities: setting up practice sites for students, facilitating campus expansion, or increasing the safety of neighborhood streets to protect their students (Maurrasse, 2001; Rodin, 2007). Durable relationships, however, cannot begin with an agenda imposed by the university, or indeed by any particularly powerful constituency in the neighborhood. Urban neighborhoods are socially complex, rarely a homogeneous ‘community’, and do not hold one view of what is important to address first. Local needs and priorities must therefore be identified, paying meticulous attention to the process through which they are arrived at (Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 35). But collaborative priority setting is not easy. The University of Pennsylvania’s West Philadelphia Initiatives stayed away from public meetings and community visioning sessions to define the university’s priorities; they felt that this approach tends to raise expectations and create problems in collaborative relations between the university and its neighbors. Instead, the University of Pennsylvania let multiple interactions on multiple fronts suggest which issues were of greatest concern to both and how to go about responding (Rodin, 2007, p. 20).
The third, and related, challenge to universities wanting to help solve the problems of their urban environments is to find the intersection between the interests of the university faculty and neighbors’ needs and aspirations. The faculty is the intellectual soul of the institution, and it has the expertise needed for local problem-solving. The greatest force is created when this intersection is found. For example, imagine that neighbors of an urban university become angry and frustrated by traffic-related congestion in their streets, much of it caused by the cars of university students, staff and visitors. At the same time, the engineering faculty of the university has internationally recognized expertise in traffic planning. A university–neighborhood initiative to address neighborhood congestion promises to be a win-win venture. Derek Bok observes that when initiatives are at this intersection of interests, they garner the most support and create the most value (Bok, 1982, p. 77).

The fourth challenge relates to power disparities evident when a powerful university works with unorganized, disempowered neighbors (Myntti et al., forthcoming, p. 16). Ideally, universities should engage all their resources in ‘democratic, mutually beneficial, mutually respectful partnerships’ with their communities and to adapt their work and resources for the public good (Harkavy et al., 2009, pp. 149–151). The literature contains many illustrations of the opposite, where universities take advantage of their comparatively powerful position vis-à-vis their neighbors to pursue their own interests. A related problem is one of perceptions; neighbors often perceive the university to have a bottomless bank account to respond to community needs. In both instances, real partnerships can only emerge when the more powerful party takes care to listen and not to impose, and when trust and working relationships are built up over time (Adams, 2003, p. 573; Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 36). Ensuring an authentically participatory collaboration is a constant effort, but community buy-in and trust, as well as clear ongoing communication, are essential (Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 39).

The fifth and final challenge is adequate institutional support for neighborhood problem-solving. Universities have to ensure that they have the internal institutional set-up that supports collaborations most, and assists in making things happen. A commitment to social progress is not simply an external pursuit; to bring about the most change, all the university’s resources must be involved: human,
academic, cultural and economic (Harkavy et al., 2009, p. 147; Howard and Alperovitz, 2010, p. x), and adjustments made to its organizational culture, structures, policies and day-to-day activities (Harkavy et al., 2009, p. 149). Having a centralized unit for outreach facilitates collaboration and coordination. It is also essential to have the practical, not just rhetorical, support of the administration. Presidents and deans set priorities. They can encourage problem-focused community based research by providing funding and other incentives. But to be sustainable over the long term, support must become institutionalized so that it persists despite changes of administration (Bok, 1982, p. 86; Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 36) (Figure 8.1).

Despite these considerable challenges, the literature on the social role of urban universities in North America suggests that they can and do have a substantial positive influence on their neighborhoods and cities. Universities and their affiliated medical centers (the so-called ‘Eds and Meds’) are place-based institutions with local, and often regional and national, influence (Harkavy et al., 2009, p. 151; Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 34). In a report to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Harkavy et al. (2009) argue that ‘Eds and Meds’ are vital for revitalizing US cities and communities. Their mission and economic interests compel them to care about their communities, and they have the resources to bring about change (Harkavy et al., 2009, pp. 147–148). University administrators are increasingly appreciating that the long-term strength of their institutions is inseparably connected to the stability of surrounding neighborhoods (Howard and Alperovitz, 2010, p. ix). Harkavy et al. propose that if government and universities pursue engagement

Challenges to university-community partnerships

1. Facilitating internal and external collaboration (between departments in the university, between the university and the community, and among community actors themselves)
2. Setting priorities (whose priorities to choose, and how to identify community needs)
3. Identifying the intersection between faculty interests and community concerns and aspirations
4. Ensuring an authentically participatory process
5. Cultivating real institutional support beyond rhetoric (all university resources must be involved, and structures may have to be adjusted)

Figure 8.1 Challenges to University–Community Partnerships
with cities correctly, the results could include an improvement in
the quality of life of urban dwellers and of learning, an increase in
the competitiveness of cities, and even a more democratic and just
society (Harkavy et al., 2009, p. 150).

The AUB Neighborhood Initiative

The American University of Beirut (AUB) was established in 1866 as
the Syrian Protestant College on a campus far outside the walls of the
city. In the succeeding century and a half, the city of Beirut enveloped
AUB. By the mid-20th century, the neighborhood surrounding AUB
was the city’s most glamorous and modern, combining a mix of
uses: residential, commercial, retail, educational and entertainment.
The Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) created physical destruction
and social upheaval everywhere, and AUB’s neighborhood was not
immune to these negative forces. Even now, a nagging juxtaposition
exists between AUB’s serene park-like campus and the congested and
run-down urban districts that surround it (Myntti, 2009).

Administratively, the districts of Ras Beirut and Ain Mreisseh that
abut the university are 2 of 12 such districts in municipal Beirut. The
population of municipal Beirut as a whole is estimated at nearly half
a million, which represents a quarter of the population of greater
Beirut (CAS, 2009). The districts surrounding AUB are, on average,
better educated than Beirut as a whole, have fewer families with
children and a higher proportion of older and one-person house-
holds. A recently conducted survey, however, suggests that pockets of
poverty and ill health exist next to affluence (Kaddour et al., 2011).

The AUB Neighborhood Initiative was launched in 2007 to address
the problems of the city just outside its walls, including: congestion,
crumbling infrastructure, densification, a lack of greenery and pub-
lic space, gentrification, a lack of affordable housing and growing
income disparities.

In reaching out to Ras Beirut, the Neighborhood Initiative builds
on a long tradition of community engagement and service. From
its earliest days, AUB’s missionary founders inculcated the value of
service in the institution, and soon the university and its students
were providing medical care to the needy, education to the local
population and humanitarian assistance during war, famines and
other crises. From the 1930s, as Arab nationalism swept through the
region, AUB faculty and students were at the forefront of the push for secular national development, embarking on rural development, agricultural modernization programs and much more. This work moved from being conceived of as voluntary and extracurricular to a central dimension of student coursework and faculty research. During the civil war and in subsequent crises, AUB contributed heroically through its emergency medical services, public-health investigations, relief efforts for displaced persons and the reconstruction of damaged communities (Myntti et al., 2009, pp. 8–20; Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 34).

The Neighborhood Initiative thus draws on a long institutional history of outreach, and an academic mission of civic and social responsibility. The current AUB Mission Statement contains clear reference to social engagement:

Graduates will be individuals committed to creative and critical thinking, life-long learning, personal integrity and civic responsibility, and leadership.

The aim of the Neighborhood Initiative is to mobilize university resources, primarily its unique intellectual resources, for the public good of the neighborhood. But this is not a one-way flow of good works; the Neighborhood Initiative conceives that it being a socially responsible urban institution is mutually beneficial. AUB will increase its attractiveness to excellent faculty staff and students if its neighborhood, its place in the city, is attractive: lively, livable and affordable. And AUB’s teaching and research will be enriched and made more relevant by addressing the real-world problems confronting its neighbors in Ras Beirut. In a word, the Neighborhood Initiative recognizes that one of AUB’s greatest comparative advantages is its location in Ras Beirut, and also that its relationships to its place cannot be treated merely as background – they must be nurtured and ever invigorated.

The Neighborhood Initiative is located in the office of the university’s president, which gives it visibility and authority to work across the university’s many academic and business units. With a small staff of two, the Neighborhood Initiative does not itself conduct projects. Rather, it plays a support role to faculty and student-led projects and often collaborates with a sister initiative, AUB’s newly established Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service.
(CCECS). CCECS promotes service-learning and community-based volunteerism and research at AUB, with an academic emphasis but not a geographic focus. The Neighborhood Initiative has a specific place-making emphasis, and works with both academic and non-academic units, such as facilities, housing, business-services and security.

The research and outreach activities supported by the Neighborhood Initiative may be broadly categorized as improving the urban environment, enhancing community and well-being and protecting the diversity of Ras Beirut. The following are examples of ongoing projects:

**Improving the urban environment**

- The Neighborhood Congestion Studies respond to the problems of congestion and the conflict between pedestrians and cars at the southern edge of campus. Led by a multidisciplinary team of traffic engineers, urban designers and a social scientist, the project has involved a variety of stakeholders to develop its recommendations for action. Work to date has recommended widening sidewalks and creating drop-off zones, among other interventions. Current research is investigating parking options and the creation of a shared semi-public transportation system to serve the area.

- The Inclusive Neighborhood project brings together the CCECS, landscape design students and the social science faculty to address neighbors’ complaints about the poor walkability of Ras Beirut’s streets and sidewalks. It proposes a redesign of Jeanne d’Arc Street, a main neighborhood artery, into a model street that is accessible to all, including those with wheelchairs or strollers, serving as an example for the rest of the city.

- Greening the Neighborhood responds to concerns about the lack of green spaces, and is being tackled by civil and environmental engineering students and the landscape design department. They have designed rainwater catchment systems and roof gardens, to be placed on various residential and institutional roofs; the only solution in light of the absence of empty lots.

All three of these projects will move into challenging implementation phases in the coming year.
Enhancing community and well-being

- The Ras Beirut Well-Being Survey, a participatory social, economic and demographic survey of neighborhood households, addresses the lack of current information about the well-being of the population of Ras Beirut. The multidisciplinary research team, from public health, sociology, anthropology and economics, engaged neighbors at every stage of the research. Public presentations held at different locations in Hamra shared the findings and solicited feedback on possible interventions.

- The University for Seniors (جامعة الكلار) responds to the aspirations of older neighbors to stay intellectually challenged and socially engaged. Older people can become members of the University for Seniors, contribute to its governance and lead most activities, such as study groups, public lectures and educational trips.

Protecting the diversity of Ras Beirut

- The Neighborhood Initiative is represented on the president's Housing Task Force, and actively contributes to the Housing Strategy Study. Investing in affordable housing in the neighborhood is a major plank in the evolving AUB housing strategy.

Each of these projects is the result of, and developed through, the Neighborhood Initiative's broad and multifaceted facilitation. This facilitation begins with continuous, mostly informal, contact with a wide variety of neighbors to keep a ‘finger on the pulse’ and understand their most important concerns. Unlike the university neighborhoods written about in North American literature, Ras Beirut does not have community development organizations or representative neighborhood groups that the university might reach out to and work with. So the process of engagement involves painstaking and systematic contact with individual businesses, residents, local government officials and leaders of the neighborhood’s religious institutions.

Second, the Neighborhood Initiative keeps abreast of faculty and student interests. It is crucial to know where in the university to find the relevant expertise for addressing local problems, and to ascertain which faculty and students would be willing to devote their energy to Ras Beirut issues. AUB could never address every problem
in the neighborhood, but finding the crucial intersection of concern, expertise and interest provides a focus.

Third, the Neighborhood Initiative, with a grant from an international foundation, provides seed funding to new activities. In this sense, one of its roles is that of catalyst for activities on and with the neighborhood. These funds typically support modest research costs, research assistants, meeting refreshments and communication materials. And although modest, they make a difference by encouraging a neighborhood focus and a respectful, participatory approach.

Fourth, the Neighborhood Initiative advocates for the neighborhood in high-level policy reform at AUB. For example, the university is in the process of revising its support to the faculty for housing. The Neighborhood Initiative has encouraged the university leadership to employ innovative strategies for providing more affordable housing in Ras Beirut. The neighborhood is gentrifying; that is, its character is changing through the demolition of run-down residential buildings, the displacement of long-time residents and the construction of new luxury towers catering to a global financial elite. By investing in real estate to increase the supply of affordable housing in Ras Beirut, the university would be responding to the needs of its faculty and at the same time helping to protect the economic diversity of the neighborhood. This is a perfect example of a mutually beneficial, or win-win, approach.

Fifth, recognizing that the faculty and students have many other pressing commitments and limited time to give to neighborhood work, the Neighborhood Initiative provides them with various forms of logistical support. These range from making introductions, keeping meeting minutes, writing needed correspondence, securing required permissions, producing copies, researching further funding options, organizing consultations with residents, businesses, developers and government officials, and, when the time comes, strategizing about implementation and facilitating the desired changes. Because the faculty is not used to dealing with implementation issues, and because of the problematic nature of public jurisdiction in Lebanon, the help provided by the Neighborhood Initiative is vital (Myntti et al., 2009, p. 24) (Figure 8.2).

Taken together, the roles played by the Neighborhood Initiative facilitate the connections between the university and its neighbors, between the ‘town and gown’, and make things happen. Writing
The AUB Neighborhood Initiative:
1. Stays informed of neighborhood needs and aspirations through continuous informal contact
2. Keeps abreast of the interests and expertise of faculty and students
3. Provides seed funding for new neighborhood-targeted projects and activities
4. Advocates for the neighborhood in high-level policy forums in the university
5. Provides diverse logistical support (anything needed) to teams of busy faculty and students

Figure 8.2 The AUB Neighborhood Initiative

about these functions in the North American context, Reardon (2006) noted how critical the need was for 'boundary crossers'; universities that do not create the institutional space and offer support for boundary crossers can expect to have a limited effect on their neighborhoods.

As the Neighborhood Initiative passes its fourth birthday and looks to the future, some lessons from the literature on strategic CSR are worth applying at AUB regarding its work with its neighborhood. Prime among them is recognizing the ways in which a social responsibility agenda can and should shape the way an organization operates, from corporate culture to daily operations (Heslin and Ochoa, 2008, p. 129). For example, how can AUB promote environmental responsibility and accessibility in its neighborhood if it does not follow these norms itself? Similarly, strategic CSR warns organizations to be focused, to harness the power of their institutional type (Porter and Kramer, 2011, p. 64). Businesses are businesses, not charities, and universities are neither charities nor governments. The lesson is: choose projects carefully and do not attempt to perform roles that should be filled by others. Finally, strategic CSR encourages companies to take a long-term view of success, not focus on short-term costs, and get out ahead of industry trends and regulations (Heslin and Ochoa, 2008, p. 126; Porter and Kramer, 2011, pp. 64–69). Recognizing that AUB currently has few regional peers in its neighborhood-focused outreach is a reminder that both validates and further challenges the Neighborhood Initiative.

CSR and place-making

A recent addition to the CSR literature examines the role of institutions in place-making. This has particular relevance to the analysis
of the AUB Neighborhood Initiative in this volume, as the initiative’s center of attention, and its strength, is its local focus, and we believe this can be an inspiration to companies. Locations have traditionally been viewed by companies and by management literature as ‘backdrops’ for corporate operations (Thomas and Cross, 2007, p. 33). Today, just as universities are increasingly looking out into, and engaging with, their neighborhoods, companies stand to benefit from including a local perspective in their social responsibility practices. According to Thomas and Cross (2007), ‘place’ is composed of three realms: the material, the natural and the social. The material realm refers to the built environment and the economy; the natural realm refers to the natural environment; and the social realm refers to the full spectrum of human interactions and the patterns that shape the relationships between individuals and institutions. They propose a definition of CSR ‘that defines corporations as agents, whose actions, values, behaviors, and strategies contribute in myriad ways to the social construction of places’. They theorize about the impact of organizational strategies and behaviors on the places in which corporations are located, and suggest that this lens could facilitate a comprehensive evaluation of CSR activities undertaken (pp. 34–35).

Thomas and Cross have developed a provocative typology of organizations and their relationship to place. Two viewpoints exist, which reveal not only how corporations see themselves in relation to place but also ‘the meaning they give to place, which then influences their goals, contributions to place, and all variety of behavior’. One viewpoint conceptualizes corporations and their success as interdependent with the well-being of place; the other conceptualizes corporations and their success as independent of place. Organizations of the first type consider themselves as responsible for the material, natural and social realms of place; view their success as intimately tied to the greater well-being of place; and proactively seek opportunities to invest in their place. Organizations of the second type, on the other hand, see themselves primarily as economic agents and occupants of place. Their primary responsibility is to their shareholders, not to the places in which they are located, and generating jobs and tax revenues is their main contribution to place. As a result, they may ignore the social and natural resources of their place, often to their own long-term detriment (p. 40).

The following table elaborates this typology by categorizing organizations into four different approaches to place, how they
conceptualize themselves as agents and then what this means for corporate behaviors and strategies (Thomas and Cross, 2007, pp. 41–42) (Table 8.1).

Thomas and Cross (2007) push the differences between these four to the extreme of caricature, but the contrasts are nonetheless revealing. Transformational organizations see themselves as change agents in their communities, and responsible for their well-being. Their organizational culture emphasizes collaboration, mutual learning, openness to change and building partnerships. Their policies and practices protect the environment, neighborhoods, cultural heritage, local economy and other local resources. They are often ahead of industry trends and regulation, and their actions are not solely aimed at public relations. At the other end of the spectrum, exploitative organizations value place for the resources – economic, social, cultural and political – that it can provide. Their mission is to maximize profit, and they are likely to leave a place once the return is not as lucrative as anticipated (pp. 45, 51).

Universities, like corporations, can also view themselves and their futures as either interdependent with, or independent of, their surrounding neighborhoods (Axelroth and Dubb, 2010, p. 34). As AUB expands and deepens its connections to Ras Beirut through its Neighborhood Initiative, it is useful and indeed inspiring to aim to be a transformational agent. This is the ultimate hope of a socially responsible institution.

Conclusion

Socially responsible universities and companies can have a powerful, positive impact on the places where they are located. Both have particular strengths and resources that are vital for tackling today's problems. And they can learn from each other.

Corporations can learn several important lessons on social responsibility from the discourse of universities. Perhaps the most important lesson has to do with how thematic priorities are set. The literature on university–community partnerships suggests that the strongest and most durable of them emerge out of a process of listening rather than imposing. At AUB, for instance, the Neighborhood Initiative has taken great care to take note of the concerns of neighbors, set its priorities accordingly, and then identify university talent to respond. The greatest challenge, and greatest potential synergy, comes from
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place agent identity</th>
<th>Value of place</th>
<th>Cultural characteristics</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Change agents</td>
<td>Cultural and environmental entity, interdependent systems</td>
<td>Team-focused, collaboratively minded, values shared learning</td>
<td>Invest cultural and economic resources towards the well-being of place</td>
<td>To orchestrate organizational and place well-being, community collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributive Investors, contributors</td>
<td>Social network, resource</td>
<td>Community supporters, philanthropic/benevolent, paternalistic</td>
<td>Give to place via fundraising, sponsorship, and leadership without a specific accounting of how it benefits the organization</td>
<td>To participate in achieving place goals that build social and cultural capital which are consistent with the organizational mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Participants</td>
<td>Social, geographic, and economic commodity</td>
<td>Competitive, instrumental</td>
<td>Instrumental giving to place is based on specific and identifiable benefit to organization</td>
<td>To participate in achieving place activities/events that satisfy an organization's investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploitative Independent agents, industry-centric</td>
<td>Social, geographic, and economic commodity</td>
<td>Profit-oriented, manipulative, arrogant, ignorance</td>
<td>Exploit environmental, human, and cultural capital for corporate profit, limited giving (financial &amp; volunteerism to local organizations</td>
<td>To achieve organizational goals at the expense of place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

finding the intersection between the concerns of neighbors and the passion and expertise of AUB faculty and students. The experience of universities also underscores the importance of committed leadership at the highest levels of the institution, and the need for both rhetorical and sufficient practical support for socially responsible projects.

Universities also have much to learn from socially responsible corporations, particularly in the area of strategic institutional benefit. For companies, the mutual benefit principle means much more than the immediate ‘bottom line’. It is about a realignment of mission and operations, a clarification of ethical principles, and creating new ways of working that encourage innovation and creativity. The improved bottom line follows. Although non-profit institutions such as AUB do not consider the ‘bottom line’ in the same way that companies do, powerful parallels do still exist. The Neighborhood Initiative has learned that its activities are not just about ‘doing good’ for Ras Beirut, but rather about being good for the neighborhood and good for the university. By reaching out to the neighborhood, AUB strengthens its core academic mission by increasing the relevance of research and teaching. Students have the opportunity to develop innovative projects and theses, ones that win awards and resonate with prospective employers. The faculty gains new knowledge and local examples for use in teaching and in publications.

Finally, the well-being of universities and companies is connected to the well-being of their places. From a purely pragmatic point of view, place affects the availability of talent at present and in the future. Creative, skilled employees, world-class faculty staff and smart students are attracted by a high quality of life in a healthy and vibrant neighborhood. This chapter suggests that if an organization sees itself as a change agent in its community, and creates an organizational culture emphasizing collaboration, mutual learning and openness to change and building partnerships, their outreach will have concrete and visible effects on the environment, neighborhoods, cultural heritage, local economy and other local resources.

References


