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Sciortino, Rosalia

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Rosalia Sciortino

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This article presents an overview of the evolving state of philanthropy in Southeast Asia, driven by global and local stimuli and shaped by often conflicting notions of charity, development, and business. Despite the lack of a strong enabling environment, new, 'home-grown' foundations and local forms of institutionalized giving continue to emerge. At the same time, changes in the donor landscape and shifts in philanthropic paradigms towards business-like and technocratic approaches affect how development causes are funded. In the process, gaps have begun to appear in how work by civil society organizations on human rights and social justice is funded; this may jeopardize more equitable and inclusive development.

Keywords: Charity; Development; Development Financing; Philanthropy; Southeast Asia

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INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia's economic growth since the 1970s has been so impressive that foreign aid donors have felt justified in reducing their assistance, declaring that these countries 'have graduated'. Yet poverty remains widespread, socio-economic gaps persist and are widening, and economic progress has failed to lead to sustainable social and environmental paths for the countries to follow. Encouraged by the growing role of philanthropic actors in international development cooperation and as partners in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda (see also Sciortino, this issue) some have argued that in Southeast Asia philanthropy also has a role to play in fostering more inclusive growth. In this view, institutionalized private giving combined or in substitution of public funding can help address developmental gaps or, at the very least, protect the most vulnerable groups. Others, however, contend that such giving practices are irrelevant to development needs and are in fact inherently linked to personal values and self-interest, create new dependencies, and are less accountable and transparent than government spending (Hayling, Sciortino, & Anand, 2014).

This debate on the benefits of philanthropy for development in Southeast Asia acquires particular relevance in view of the unprecedented accumulation of private wealth among elites and the growing public expectation that they contribute to society. As a greater number of more diverse philanthropic organizations are being established, there is interest in learning how these organized private sources are contributing to development and to what degree the early modern philanthropists' differentiation of philanthropy from charity as "improving opportunity rather than relieving immediate suffering" (Development Assistance Committee, 2003, p. 15) is pertinent to local giving practices. The rise in the last two decades of venture philanthropy with an emphasis on technocratic and business solutions to development problems through the likes of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), social entrepreneurship, and social impact investment, also poses questions about the degree of their adoption in Southeast Asia.[1] In a region where the demarcation of private giving and business has traditionally been blurred, how do corporate interests intersect with aspirations for social improvement in home-grown philanthrophy?

This article delves into these issues by giving an overview of local philanthropy in Southeast Asia, the global and local stimuli driving it, and the often contrasting notions of charity, development, and business that shape it. In examining the environment of philanthropy, I draw on literature as well as my own personal experience as a development practitioner in the region.[2] The emergence of local philanthropic institutions, their characteristics and ways of operating are discussed before highlighting the implications of shifting paradigms of philanthropy and the evolving donor landscape for development causes, and the beneficiaries associated with them. I conclude that gaps have begun to appear in the funding of civil society organizations working on human rights and social justice; this may jeopardize more equitable development and fostering inclusive societies.

A CULTURE OF GIVING

Southeast Asian cultures are supportive of giving and showing concern for others in a multitude of forms. In rural Thailand, for instance, water jars are traditionally placed outside people's homes for thirsty passersby, and shelter may be provided (Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium [APPC], 2001). The concept of mutual aid is also deeply ingrained in the cultural discourse of Indonesia and the Philippines, where it is called *gotong royong* and *bahaniyan* respectively and includes contributions of goods, services, and cash to others in times of need as well as of celebration (Velasco, 1996). Singapore, Brunei, and Malaysia also emphasize the spirit of *gotong royong* as part of their cultures and national identities (Remember Singapore, 2013). Vietnam has a long tradition of volunteering, providing mutual aid and communal assistance, as in the folk saying, "whole leaves wrap torn leaves" (Ninh, 2011). Remarkably, even as early as the 15th century, the royal court had introduced tax reductions for rich people who helped the poor. Later, the Nguyen dynasty called for private contributions to families affected by crop losses. Such good deeds were then recorded for posterity in monuments and posts granted by the courts (Vietnam Asia Pacific

1 Social entrepreneurship refers to both non-profit and profit organizations that apply commercial strategies to attain social and environmental outcomes such as microfinance, fair trade, 'triple bottom line' companies that besides economic gains also pursue social and environmental benefits, and, especially in Asia, cooperatives. Social impact investing is a new subset of the venture capital market that provides expansion capital to seek social impact and financial return (see further United Nations Global Compact, 2012)

2 I served as program officer in the Ford Foundation's Jakarta and Manila offices, regional director of the Rockefeller Foundation's Southeast Asia Office in Bangkok, and as regional director for Southeast and East Asia at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Singapore.

Economic Center [VAPEC] & Asia Foundation, 2011). Philanthropy also had an early start in what is now Singapore, where in the 18th century Chinese immigrants to Malaya provided funding for schools, health facilities, and religious institutions to help successive waves of migrants from extended kinship networks at a time when no government services were available (Coutts, 2014).

Across the centuries, religion has proven a powerful source of inspiration for people to donate. *Zakat,*[3] a religious tax in the form of alms-giving and *sadaqah* or voluntary donations, have been practiced since the arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia. In the 19th century, Arab immigrants who travelled in the region as merchants and spread their faith established *waqf*, or perpetual bequests of land or other assets, for religious, educational, or charitable purposes (Chung, Nasution, & Brown, 2010). Christian teachings have encouraged charitable behavior in the Philippines and Timor Leste since colonial time (Goh, 2005; Velasco, 1996). To this day, Buddhist believers located predominantly in mainland Southeast Asia strive to accumulate merit by giving donations to faith-based institutions and alms to the poor, while Hindu Balinese communities subscribe to the concept of social contributions or *datrta datrtva* (Public Interest Research and Advocacy Center, 2002, p. 8; Swearer, 2010).

State ideologies, too, inspire altruism. In Vietnam, nationalist calls mobilize private resources through government channels to address the needs of the country (VAPEC & Asia Foundation, 2011). In Thailand, loyalty to the king and his family fosters giving to royal foundations and development projects (APPC, 2001). More generally, across Southeast Asia people give for a variety of reasons: expressing a sense of belonging, strengthening ethnic and religious identities, manifesting social cohesion, enhancing social status, or building patronage and social networks.

The combination of these diverse factors results in high levels of generosity, as the World Charity Index has computed since 2010, employing three indicators: 1) helping a stranger, 2) giving money to a good cause, and 3) volunteering time. In 2016, of the seven Southeast Asian countries among the 140 countries surveyed, Myanmar topped the overall index for the fourth year in the row (see also Dove, this issue). It also ranked the highest in terms of monetary giving, with 91% of people who donated money in the last month. Indonesia was second globally with 75%, while Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia, ranked among the top twenty-five countries, with percentages of more than half of the population having given for a good cause (Charities Aid Foundation [CAF], 2016). It is interesting to note that donation levels do not seem to be a direct reflection of a country's economic conditions, with Myanmar being among the least developed countries of Southeast Asia, and Indonesia being less wealthy than Thailand, Malaysia, or Singapore.

Local surveys confirm a widespread willingness to volunteer and donate, and a general preference for giving to individuals rather than organizations. However, patterns are dynamic and differentiate along socio-cultural lines. The biannual Individual Giving Survey (IGS) in Singapore found a decrease in the rate of people making donations in the previous year from 83% in 2014 to 76% in 2016, but a doubling of donations to institutions. Age and ethnicity were significant differentials,

3 There is a dissenting opinion that, being an obligatory taxation, *zakat* should not be categorized as charity or philanthropy (see Cogswell, 2002)

with Malay citizens more likely to donate and middle-aged people being the most prevalent donors (National Volunteer & Philanthropy Center [NVPC], 2015). In the Philippines, a 2006 study on individual giving found that 99% of the population had donated to various causes in some form (Venture for Fund Raising & Social Weather Station, 2006).[4] Interestingly, a greater proportion of the poor gives than the rich and this in higher percentages (Burgos & Quismundo, 2011). This is in line with findings in Malaysia and other parts of the region, as well as beyond, including the US and UK (Anderson, 2015; Cogswell, 2002; Ward, 2001). Not only are a country's economic development level and a person's income level poor predictors of individual donations in Southeast Asia, but – against a common expectation among philanthropy experts and practitioners – the norms and practices related to giving are hardly the product of enabling legal, fiscal, or regulatory systems, nor have they led to the formation of such comprehensive systems, at least for now.

AN UNCERTAIN ENVIRONMENT FOR PHILANTHROPY

The institutionalization of giving, or *philanthropization*, is a recent phenomenon in Southeast Asia. Most governments have started only in the last two decades to legislate efforts to give, allocate, receive, and report donations and regularize the non-profit sector, including philanthropic and charitable institutions, with the less developed countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Timor-Leste at an initial stage of experimentation. An exception is the Philippines, which stands apart for its very early appreciation of the role of the private non-profit sector in national development. Foundations were already acknowledged under Philippine law in 1906 while the country was an American colony, and later endorsed as part of democratizing reforms: Unique in the region, the 1987 Philippine constitution expressly recognizes the contribution of non-government organizations (NGOs) and other non-profit organizations, pledges financing to those that promote social welfare, and provides incentives for philanthropic contributions. Since then, fiscal schemes have been established to grant tax breaks for donations made to private foundations and other bodies devoted to non-profit causes, whether religious, scientific, or promoting welfare (Velasco, 1996). Receiving organizations also benefit from various exemptions, such as from income tax, duties, charges on foreign donations, and from donor's gift tax. These provisions are particularly generous for those who have acquired donee status from the *Philippine Council for NGO Certification* (PCNC).

Fiscal incentives together with attention to professional standards and non-profit organizations' autonomy and influence in formulating public policy have led to a highly professional philanthropic sector in the Philippines. Notable are umbrella organizations like the *Philippine Business for Social Progress* (PBSP), which was founded in 1970 and today comprises more than 260 member businesses that collectively fund development interventions. Experienced bodies, such as the *Association of Foundations* and the *League of Corporate Foundations*, advocate for the interests of their members, and programs and networks strengthen the field and corroborate emerging philanthropic

4 Remarkably, the Philippines did not do well in the last World Giving Index (CAF, 2016), but in view of the nature of the studies it is not possible to determine if such difference is due to methodology or the different time period.

approaches. For instance, the *Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia* (ISEA) and the *Philippine Social Enterprise Network* (PHILSEN) were established in the late 1990s with the rise of the social entrepreneurship movement (British Council, 2015).

Recently, Singapore, and to a lesser extent also Indonesia, have followed the Philippines in emphasizing the relevance of philanthropy and corporate engagement in development. Since the early 2000s, the Singaporean government has systematically worked to reduce its role as the largest funder of the non-profit sector either directly or indirectly through government-backed foundations, instead encouraging its growing concentration of billionaires to donate to service organizations. Policy innovations include giving tax deductions to government-selected charities and matching funds for donations in education and the arts. The government has also built support infrastructure, such as bank advisory services and capacity-building entities. The main ones are the *National Volunteer and Philanthropy Center* established in 1999 to promote and coordinate volunteering and philanthropy, and the *Community Foundation of Singapore* founded in 2008 to connect local donors with needy communities in the city-state.

Aware of burgeoning wealth in neighboring countries, the Singaporean government has promoted the city as a regional philanthropic center, building on its status as Southeast Asia's financial hub. Attractive conditions have been created to draw in international charities active elsewhere in Asia to establish their offices in Singapore, and for foreign individual donors to use the city-state's financial services. In 2011, *SymAsia* – an umbrella foundation managed by Credit Suisse – was granted charitable status for Asia's wealthy to channel their donations to elected causes (Sharma, 2013).

Financially savvy Singapore has also been quick to adopt venture philanthropy and to promote it regionally. The *Asian Venture Philanthropy Network* (AVPN) and *Impact Investing Exchange* (IIX) Asia are among an increasing number of impact investment firms and funds that aim to "connect the Wall Streets of the world to the backstreets of underserved communities" (Impact Investment Exchange [IIX], 2017) through financing of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Asia that pursue positive social and environmental outcomes as well as monetary gains (Šoštaric, 2015). Planning for the future, in 2016 the government together with the *Tote Board Foundation* founded the *Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise* (raiSE) to promote social enterprises and impact investments.

The Indonesian government has also taken new steps to capitalize on rising corporate wealth and incentivize private contributions to development initiatives. In 2007, Indonesia was among the first countries globally and the only in Southeast Asia to make CSR mandatory with Law 40/2007 on Limited Liability Companies, which obliges corporations exploiting natural resources to assign a percentage of their profits to charity or CSR-related projects (Gentile, 2014). In the same year, Law 25/2007 specified the corporate responsibilities of foreign investors, and a ministerial regulation set the percentage that state-owned enterprises ought to direct to nine sustainable development sectors, including partnership and financial aid (Tanaya, Gunawan, Pusaka, & Nugroho, 2016). Since 2010 the Indonesian government has also required listed companies to report on the effects of their activities on society and the environment. To sweeten these obligations, which a large part of the business sector sees as burdensome, Government Regulation 93/2010 provides annual tax deductions up to a maximum of 5% of net revenue earned during the previous fiscal year for spending in fields like disaster management, research, sports, education, and social infrastructure (Assegaf Hamzah & Partners [AHP], 2012).

Legislative reforms also extend to religious giving. Building on Law 38/1999, which first stipulated the management of *zakat* and validated the organizations, semi-public and private, to collect it, Law 23/2011 sought to exert greater government's control over financial flows and help semi-governmental bodies better exploit the *zakat* to achieve improved welfare in the country (Saidurrahman, 2013).

Such innovations are spreading throughout the whole region. For instance, encouraged by Indonesia's bold approach, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand are now attempting to institutionalize CSR by working to overcome companies' resistance to government interference. The *ASEAN CSR Network* (ACN) was also established in 2011 to promote CSR as an integral part of development in the region (ASEAN CSR Network, 2017). Other regional venues launched in the last decade to discuss emerging philanthropic approaches include the *Philanthropy in Asia Summit*, the *AVPN Conference*, and the *Southeast Asia International Islamic Philanthropy Conference*.

These advancements, however, have yet to create a comprehensive fiscal and legal environment for philanthropy. A recent study of the high- and middle-level economies of Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, acknowledges recent positive efforts and the possibility that the charitable sector in the region can progress in ways not even yet imagined, but somberly states:

> Overall, this study finds the environment for philanthropy in the region to be quite challenging. Tax policies are either neutral or ineffective in incentivizing philanthropy; opportunities for the charitably-minded to gain the skills necessary to address complex social problems are lacking; partnerships between civil society organizations and funders that enable the capabilities of each other are rare; and the data that would assist the nascent field in quickly prototyping and innovating are non-existent and to some extent resisted. (Anand, 2014, p. 7)

In particular, several constraints were identified: poor data availability and transparency; inadequate benefits related to income and inheritance taxes; ambiguous legal definitions and lack of policies specific to the sector, including no legal distinction between grant-giving and grant-seeking foundations (true even in the Philippines); poor enforcement of laws when they exist (as in the case of mandatory CSR in Indonesia); and limited learning opportunities for donors. The generally mixed attitude of philanthropists towards NGOs seen as playing an oppositional role, and government restrictions in controlling them, have also affected the development of the philanthropic sector, since NGOs are the typical grant recipients. As an example, most NGOs are unable to register as charities in Singapore and, therefore, remain excluded from the privileges tied to charity status, foremost being exemption from income taxes and being allowed to raise funds publicly (Anand, 2014).

These observations are echoed in the *Index of Philanthropy Freedom 2015*, the first-ever global report on legal and regulatory incentives and barriers to giving (Adelman, Barnett, & Russell, 2015). With the exception of the Philippines, all countries of Southeast Asia – as also in the rest of Asia – scored below the global average on the three main indicators: 1) ease of registering and operating civil society organizations; 2) tax policies for deductions, credits, and exemptions; and 3) ease of sending and receiving cash and in-kind goods across borders. The report points to the limited space for human rights groups and other NGOs to operate due to elaborate administrative and legal barriers, and to limitations on public gatherings and freedom of expression. For instance, Malaysia shows a tendency to employ domestic security and counter-terrorism laws against NGOs, while Vietnam makes it impossible for organizations working on human rights, anti-corruption, or other sensitive issues to register. Improvements were only recorded in Myanmar, where in 2014, revisions to the Association Registration Law liberalized the country's regulations for civil society groups. In a climate of renewed authoritarianism and shrinking civil society space across the region (Amnesty International, 2017), such restrictions can only be expected to become tighter. Rules and regulations also do not encourage cross-border (including intra-regional) philanthropy. The most apparent case is Singapore which, in spite of its eagerness to attract international organizations and donors, has an 80:20 ratio rule that prescribes that 80% of funds raised from the public must be used locally (Hayling et al., 2014). More generally, the report concludes that the environment for philanthropy in the region is underdeveloped and does not provide a favorable fiscal space for promoting donations or developing the nonprofit sector (Adelman, Barnett, & Russell, 2015).

EXOGENOUS PROMOTION OF LOCAL PHILANTHROPY: THE PARADIGM SHIFT

In spite of the uncertain environment and the enduring dominance of individual donations, home-grown foundations and other forms of institutionalized giving are multiplying. This is especially apparent in the wealthier countries of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, but even in the poorer countries, the philanthropic sector is gradually emerging. Proliferation drivers for local philanthropy include: ever increasing amounts of accumulated wealth; public awareness of growing socio-economic disparities; mounting pressure on the better off and corporations to contribute to sustainable development; government's backing down from providing public services and instead seeking partnerships with the private sector; and civil society groups' search for alternatives to the declining support of foreign donors (Johnson, Johnson, & Kingman, 2015). Most recently, new revenue opportunities promised by venture philanthropy have generated an unprecedented buzz for social engagement in the region.

An enabling role has historically been played by international, especially American, donors and foundations – foremost among them the Ford Foundation – that have promoted local philanthropy in Southeast Asia and other parts of the world since the 1980s. These foundations supported initiatives to build the philanthropic sector in the countries where they worked in the belief that "philanthropy has an important role to play in addressing human challenges and strengthening civil society" and that ultimately it would be more sustainable than foreign funding to tackle development issues (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 4; Johnson & Simmons, 2003). In later years, lower international aid levels earmarked for Asia (Bhattacharjee, Culshaw & Anand, 2004) strengthened the motivation to support local funding sources that could continue nurturing the non-profit sector after foreign donors withdraw (Alliance Magazine, 1998). Eventually, the focus became more normative as foundations shifted their emphasis "from encouraging a culture of philanthropy per se to promoting philanthropy that advances social change" (Johnson et al., 2015, p. 8). The Ford Foundation and like-minded foundations, for instance, increasingly promoted social justice philanthropy in which grant-making is directed at systemic or institutional change and the overcoming of economic and environmental inequities to expand opportunities for disadvantaged populations (see also Fauzia, this issue).

Along with these philanthropic concepts, practices and institutions originating in the West were also spread, as American foundations tended to replicate their experience. In Southeast Asia, like in other parts of the world, they aimed to create the conditions that, based on their own history, were considered necessary for local philanthropy to take off, including a clear legal framework, a tax structure providing incentives, an accountability system for grant-givers and grantees, sufficient institutional capacity, and sufficient resources (Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support, 2013). To realize this vision, they funded a wide variety of programs ranging from capacity building, research, and cross-country exchanges to the enactment of fiscal and regulatory reforms for the non-profit sector, the development of accreditation systems (such as PCNC), and the establishment of indigenous foundations and foundation-like entities.

Favored institutional models included community foundations that were considered suitable vehicles to connect local needs to resources, and – often as part of a donor's exit strategy – endowed grant-making foundations similar to American foundations working internationally. They were thus expected to be fully devoted to grant-making, to be operated by professional officers, and governed by an independent board. Their expenditures would be covered by gains from investing endowment funds, and their grants would operationalize a structured program strategy that would pursue specific development goals and would privilege civil society organizations as recipients of support. Telling examples include endowed foundations established in the 1990s through grants and debt-for-development swaps under bilateral programs with the US, Canada, and other partners, like the *Foundation for Philippine Environment* (FPE) and the *Foundation for Sustainable Societies* (FSS) in the Philippines; the *Indonesian Biodiversity Foundation* (Kehati) in Indonesia; and the *Development Cooperation Foundation* (DCF) in Thailand (Baron, 1997; Ong, 2010; Sabio & Jaegal, 2010). Later, governments in the region also initiated grant-making foundations with public funds, but operated and managed semi-independently by private boards of trustees. Even if these hybrid foundations do not fit the classic definition, it will become clear below that they have established nevertheless a significant presence in Southeast Asia and in the way they operate to this day best represent the imported prototype, including in their funding of NGOs, where governments allow it.

International agencies also spearheaded the creation of national and regional networks, of which the most important was the Manila-based *Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium* (APPC). Building on a series of conferences, the APPC was launched in 1995 with the support of the Ford Foundation and other private and corporate donors in Australia, South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and the United States. As a network of grant-making institutions, the APPC aimed to promote local philanthropy and strengthen indigenous grant-making entities within each country. Activities included a human resources program run by PBSP; a research program entrusted to the Asia Foundation; and a program of networking and exchanges for staff and principals of philanthropic organizations (Alliance Magazine, 1998).

The exogenous strengthening of local philanthropy, with all its intended and unintended upshots, was eventually transformed by a drastic paradigmatic shift in the early 2000s with the establishment of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the global rise of venture philanthropy. Its business-derived and technocratic paradigm dismissed "the cultural, humanistic, and political sides of the equation" (Anft, 2015) directing grants towards technical aspects of agriculture, health, agriculture, entrepreneurship, and microfinance, instead of towards the 'soft' and less quantifiable fields, such as human rights, humanities, culture, and the arts (Feinstein, 2012). Following Thomas Friedman's (2005) view of the world as "flat", development problems and solutions were now conceived as 'global' and managed from headquarters. This challenged the kind of socially-engaged and contextual grant-making practiced in Southeast Asia by American and, to a lesser extent, by Japanese foundations such as the Toyota, Japan, and Nippon foundations. Even if these 'traditional' foundations did not fully adopt the more ideological tenets of the new paradigm and often kept to the old rhetorics, their modalities changed. Increasingly field offices had to relinquish their functions, and if not shut down in the name of efficiency (as was the case of the Ford Foundation closing its Thailand, Philippines, and Vietnam offices and leaving only that in Indonesia open), they have been left providing little more than logistical support with limited responsive grant-making in Southeast Asia (with the Rockefeller Foundation's regional office in Bangkok being a case in point.) With this reduced presence, direct grant-making to local, especially civil society organizations suffered as the new foundations not only had other priorities, but also chose to fund from a distance and through intermediary grantees in their countries of origin. This bias clearly emerges from a quick scan of the BMGF's grant database, which shows a scarcity of local institutions among grantees in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia.[5] Moreover, as Feinstein (2010, p. 92) summarizes:

> There is a corresponding devaluing of certain modalities of foundation support that were a hallmark of the old foundations, but do not fit well with the results-driven approach. These include, for instance, support for individual fellowships and scholarships, for which the Rockefeller and Ford foundations were famous; the building up of academic fields and departments; capacity-building grants including operational support for local institutions; and support for developing local philanthropy. None of these have great attraction in the new approach.

Direct promotion of home-grown philanthrophy diminished, and this affected organizations on the ground, including some high-profile associations like APPC, which was absorbed into the Asia Foundation's giving program *Give2Asia* in 2011 and eventually became inactive. Some organizations in countries where field offices

5 An exception in Southeast Asia is Vietnam, where the government received substantial amounts.

have survived may still receive funding, but at the lower level and for participation in global initiatives. For example, the *Philanthropy Association of Indonesia* (IPA), established in 2003 with Ford Foundation's funding, has come to represent Indonesia as one of the four pilot countries for the implementation of the *SDG Philanthropy Platform,* spearheaded by the Ford Foundation to foster greater local philanthropic involvement in the achievement of the SDGs (Filantropi Indonesia, 2017). An exception to this declining trend, deserving greater analysis, is the regional expansion of the Open Society Foundation (OSF) and its continued funding of those local foundations it helped establish such as the *TIFA Foundation of Indonesia* in 2000 (Darmawan Triwibowo, Director of TIFA, March 2017).

As old and new paradigms exist alongside each other, cross-fertilization of ideas and practices has become more diversified. Funding streams in the region originate from a wider range of international foundations including those subscribing to a more business- and less social justice-oriented model of philanthropy. Resources are channeled through more assorted layers of intermediaries, and for-profit organizations play a greater role in fostering local philanthropy of a different kind. In the late 1990s, CSR was introduced to Southeast Asia by locally-based multinational companies (MNCs) to ameliorate environmental and social damage caused by mining and the exploitation of natural resources. They, and Western-based MNCs through their local supply chains, served as a model for CSR programs of local companies in the region, to the extent that some have described them as "Western mimicry" (Amran & Siti-Nabiha, 2009, p. 358). The concept of venture philanthropy that originated in the UK and US has also found fertile ground in Southeast Asia, as exemplified in the previously mentioned Singapore-based AVPN, which is modeled after the *European Venture Philanthropy Association* (EVPA) and shares with it the same founder chairman (Asian Venture Philanthropy Network, 2017). More and more international banks, such as Credit Suisse and LGT Capital Partners, provide locally based services to philanthropists and impact investors and fund research on the philanthropic sector in Southeast Asia.

As part of the paradigm shift, social enterprises or simply enterprises that promise financial as well as social returns are now the privileged partners of external donors, and NGOs, when funded, are expected to provide operational services rather than advocating for social change. In parallel, efforts to promote home-grown philanthropy no longer target givers of all financial means and backgrounds. Taking center stage now are the extremely rich – starting from 'High Net Worth Individuals' (HNWI), who have more than USD 1 million in liquid financial assets, onwards up to local billionaires, such as in *The Giving Pledge*, which was initiated by Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffet in 2010 in the US and later expanded to emerging economies. Despite criticism as a public relations stunt culturally inappropriate for Asia (Wilkson, 2013), two Southeast Asian billionaires, Dato Tahir, chairman and CEO of the *Mayapada Group* and the *Tahir Foundation* in Indonesia, and Vincent Tan Chee Yioun, founder of *Berjaya Group Berhad* and chairman of *Better Malaysia Foundation* in Malaysia, have responded to the call to donate the majority of their wealth to philanthropic causes (The Giving Pledge, 2017). In 2013, the Gates and Tahir foundations made a joint commitment of USD 65 million each to the *Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria*, with 75% earmarked for Indonesia (Morrison & Bliss, 2013). This partnership continued in 2014 with the launch of the *Indonesia Health Fund* to attract private and corporate donations during the subsequent five years for better health care in the country, in collaboration with eight Indonesian "philanthropist tycoons" who pledged to donate USD 5 million each (Anh Ton, 2014). These developments are a strong indication of how much personal wealth has been accumulated in the region, and how it is being increasingly harnessed for philanthropy.

FAMILY-CENTERED 'INDIGENIZATION' OF PHILANTHROPY

As capacity-building efforts from outside the region wane, the process of indigenization is accelerating regionally and nationally. For instance, after the demise of the APPC in 2015 Singaporean philanthropists Stanley Tan and Laurence Lien and Indonesian philanthropist Cherie Nursalim founded the *Asian Philanthropy Circle* (APC). This private membership platform aims to "advance a distinct Asian brand of philanthropy to accelerate the public good in Asia" and foster peer learning and collaboration among Asian philanthropists in order to maximize impacts (Coutts, 2015).

What this 'distinct brand' implies for Southeast Asia still needs to be fleshed out, but as noted in the previous section, it does not seem to require all of the key regulatory and fiscal elements generally considered necessary for local philanthropy to grow. It also appears that most home-grown organizations have not followed the path international foundations initially envisioned. As hinted above, most of the region's endowed foundations are government-backed rather than privately funded institutions, while individual and family donors generally operate through informal or corporate channels. Already in 1997, a study by the Asia Foundation identified these conditions as specific to philanthropy in East Asian, including Southeast Asian countries:

- There is great diversity in the types of philanthropic institutions and foundation-like entities in East Asia. Unlike the U.S., however, there are still very few private foundations based on individual or family wealth. . . .
- Most philanthropic entities in the region are corporate foundations or, even more commonly, corporate giving programs funded on an annual basis rather than endowed. . . .
- The emergence of several new kinds of grant-making foundations, which are at the interface of the public and private domains – those which are endowed with public funds but managed by at least semi-private boards of trustees. (Baron, 1997)

In relation to the scarcity of individual foundations, it has been argued that their establishment has been discouraged by cultural values that inhibit displays of wealth. Rich individuals are expected to be communal and prioritize their families, clans, or patronage networks to justify as well as build their social position rather than endow an independent organization (Baron, 1997). The fact that wealth is concentrated in the hands of ethnic Chinese, who must be cautious in the face of varying degrees of discrimination throughout Southeast Asia, may also have acted as a deterring factor, although it may also have had the opposite result of driving them towards philanthropy in order "to secure a social license to operate" (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DFAT], 2015, p. 23).

In the less frequent occasions when foundations are formally established, they are mostly family ventures, with funds coming from members of a single, often multi-generational family with strong ties to the family business. The UBS-INSEAD study on family philanthropy in Asia, which included Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, identified "ensuring the continuity of family values or creating a lasting legacy" as the most common cause for establishing a foundation (UBS Philanthropy Services & INSEAD, 2012, p. 17). Other considerations seen as key to the foundation as well as to the underlying business were developing family cohesion and enhancing leadership and management capabilities of younger generations. Less commonly enunciated pragmatic reasons were exerting influence for political or business purposes; patronage; and increasing standing in the community. Like the unstructured giving of prosperous individuals, these family foundations are also meant to meet communal expectations and, if in diaspora, maintain a connection to the country of origin, most often China (Hayling et al., 2014; UBS Philanthropy Services & INSEAD, 2012).

The institutionalization of what still remains a minority of philanthropic initiatives is a recent process. Of the 203 family foundations surveyed in the UBS-INSEAD study more than 75% were legally established after 1980, and about 60% after 1990. In Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, about 50% were only founded after 2000. This is in line with observations that intergenerational change is occurring and the younger generation is more inclined toward institutionalized philanthropy (UBS Philanthropy Services & INSEAD, 2012, pp. 13, 42). In this initial stage, Southeast Asian family foundations are operationally oriented and mix grant-making activities with direct implementation of programs. They also raise funds from other sources for their projects, thus becoming competitors with the very organizations they could be funding. When grants are provided, they tend to be ad hoc and given to persons and institutions known to the family. Often personnel and administrative systems from family business are used to simplify processes and economize resources. Some foundations will also make use of company profits and not only personal wealth for philanthropic engagements. Such was the case of 22% of the family foundations surveyed in the UBS-INSEAD (2012, p. 23) study, which reports:

> One has to be cognizant of the fact that in Asia it is hard to establish degrees of separation between family philanthropy and company philanthropy/CSR. Often what is seen as individual or family giving is 'company giving' now practiced through the establishment of company foundations and trusts. Funds flowing into these foundations include those of owners, investors, employees, and other stakeholders.

This intertwining of family foundations with family business is unsurprising in a region where "the family continues to be an exceptionally strong locus for business and philanthropic activities" (UBS Philanthropy Services & INSEAD, 2012, p. 16). Moreover it reflects a more general bias of the philanthropy sector in Southeast Asia towards corporate entities and giving programs and business-derived approaches.

CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY PERVADES THE LANDSCAPE

Institutional models reflecting the complex relationship between philanthropy and business vary from complete fusion to separation of business and philanthropic functions as can be seen in Table 1, with the great majority maintaining close connections between brand, funding, management, and focus of giving.

PHILANTHROPY AND BUSINESS INTERRELATIONSHIP MODEL		
Mode	**Mode of Action**	**Example**
Complete Fusion	The business is conceived and runs with the objective of social impact, but operates as a for-profit entity.	Today, in India, a family group runs an extensive network of for-profit educational and healthcare facilities that have made a substantial contribution to higher education in India. The group's corporate foundation also supports thousands of young Indians with scholarships.
Close Connection	**Brand** The family brand is leveraged across the business, social, and political sectors.	The Ayala Foundation is a foundation funded by the Ayala Corporation, the principal holding company of one of the largest Philippine family groups. The Foundation also solicits funds from other Ayala Group companies and from third parties. It also benefits from bearing the well-known family name.
	Funding Profits from the business sustain the philanthropic activities on a systematic basis.	The Tunaram Group in Singapore is involved in fast moving, consumer goods, and energy and infrastructure projects. Profits are used to support Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and family philanthropic initiatives in Singapore, other parts of Asia, and Africa
	Management The philanthropic activity is actively managed with the support of business executives.	One of the companies run by Thailand's Chearavanont family – the Magnolia Corporation – has a CSR program that is largely administered by company executives, who are also integral parts of the business side.
	Contributions The focus of giving is closely tied to the focus of business.	The founder of Bigfoot Entertainment – a film and media group with the most substantial operations in the Philippines – has established a foundation which provides education in villages in the Philippines through the use of film and new media.
Partial Separation	**Formal Separation, Crossover Benefits** The philanthropic activity is separately funded and managed, but may enjoy crossover benefits from the business.	Yusuf Achmed, the Chairman and Managing Director of one of the leading pharmaceutical companies in India, contributes to health care in developing countries.
	Formal Separation, Minimal Benefits The philanthropic activity is separately funded and managed, and crossover benefits are minimized.	A major Thai family is extremely private about its substantial philanthropic activities. The philanthropy venture does not receive funds from the business, has its own management, and is named differently from both the family name and the business name.
Complete Separation	**Principled Delinking** As a matter of principle, philanthropic and business activities are kept completely apart.	The personal foundation of an established Singaporean entrepreneur in the fashion, hospitality, and luxury industries operates on a distinct grant-making agenda while her business invests in CSR and sustainability initiatives.

Table 1. Philanthropy and Business. (UBS Philanthropy Services & ISEAD, 2012, p. 4).

The rare corporate foundations that are established as separate entities still continue to promote brand loyalty and strengthen the corporate reputation of the 'mother company' through the use of logos and brand names and by engaging in project areas relevant to their corporate interests. Not many have endowments or yearly budgets, and resources are often allocated following requests from the company management and board members. This, compounded by the lack of public disclosure laws, makes it difficult to estimate their size, but it appears that most initiatives are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. A few, however, have annual funding budgets in the millions of dollars (see Table 2), with some of the largest even surpassing those of locally based international foundations. For instance, the Ford Foundation's budget for Indonesia in 2015 was USD 14 million, and thus less than that of the Tahir Foundation and the Chairul Tanjung Foundation, which each had budgets of USD 19.7 million in that financial year (DFAT, 2015, p. 5)[6].

Indonesia	Tahir Foundation	USD 19.7 million (FY 2015
	Chairul Tanjung Foundation	USD 19.7 million (FY 2015)
	Sampoerna Foundation	USD 14.9 million (FY 2015)
Philippines	The Ramon Aboitiz Foundation	USD 11.7 million (FY 2014)
	Ayala Foundation	USD 8.4 million (FY 2015)
Vietnam	Kind Heart Foundation of Vina Group	USD 11.4 million (FY 2015)

Table 2. Annual Funding Budgets of the Largest Company-Related/Company-Owned (Mostly Family-Based) Foundations in Selected Southeast Asian Countries FY 2015 or FY 2014. (DFAT, 2015, p. 5).

In spite of their growing significance in the home-grown philanthropy sector, corporate foundations still do not match the resources and reach of religious and faith-based institutions (see section below). Moreover, they generally have less spending capacity than government-backed yet autonomous grant-making foundations, which, as previously mentioned, feature prominently in Southeast Asia. For instance, in Singapore, the two largest operations are the government-backed *Tote Board*, which was established in 1988 and gives out annual grants from gaming surpluses ranging between USD 357 million and USD 714 million per year to vulnerable communities, and the *Community Chest*, with annual funding of about USD 57 million to voluntary welfare organizations. Only then comes the largest private foundation, the *Lee Foundation* of the Lee Group, which since its creation in 1952 through 2015 donated a total of about USD 714 million to various causes (Chan, 2015). In the Philippines and Indonesia, the already mentioned environmental foundations based on debt swaps are among the largest grant-givers, with endowments topping millions

6 Figures in this section are given for indication purposes only.

of dollars and a large grantee base mostly composed of NGOs. In Thailand, the *Thai Health Promotion Foundation*, an "autonomous government agency", has annual revenue of about USD 120 million derived from a 2% surcharge on excise taxes on tobacco and alcohol (ThaiHealth, 2017), which makes it the largest funder, especially of civil society organizations, in the country.

In assessing the financial relevance of corporate philanthropy, we should also note that the bulk of it is channeled through a wide range of often informal business-related philanthropic initiatives undertaken by the company itself. An increasing number of local companies have adopted CSR as a model of philanthropy that is also effective for risk management purposes and as a branding and marketing tool, and this includes the numerous state-owned enterprises expected by law or society to follow responsible business practices. Conducive factors have been the greater availability of training and support, having to comply with global market requirements, and, in some countries, pressure from NGOs. Government intervention has also been crucial. In Indonesia, after the enactment of the CSR Law, self-reported engagement increased from 27% of 376 listed companies in 2008 to 94% of 486 listed companies in 2013 (Tanaya et al., 2016). In Thailand, fiscal incentives have been a primary motive for Thai companies to adopt CSR, followed by cost management and government pressure. As early as 2003 it was noted that their level of CSR penetration was higher than among international companies in the country and in comparison to domestic companies in neighboring countries (Chambers, Chapple, Moon, & Sullivan, 2003) – a trend still observable today. Whether due to carrots or sticks, between 2001 and 2013, CSR boomed in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand while it started to grow in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. At the time, Myanmar was out of the picture, but after its opening to the outside world CSR has been gaining ground there, too (see Dove, this issue; Liong, 2013). This expansion, however, says nothing of the quality of reporting, performance, or the comprehensive nature of the approach. A recent review of CSR in Asian, including Southeast Asian, economies observed an inclination to 'give back' to communities through financial donations and non-cash contributions, with too little attention being paid to accountability and the enactment of gender, ethical, employment, and environmental standards in business practices (Sharma, 2013). This resonates with a recent regional baseline study on the topic that concluded: "Unfortunately, the existing trends of CSR in Southeast Asia (e.g., 'voluntary', 'top-bottom', and 'philanthropic') are insufficient means for businesses to respect human rights" (Thomas & Chandra, 2014, p. 7).

Social entrepreneurship and social impact investment are also proving popular in Southeast Asia, especially among younger generations of philanthropists (UBS Philanthropy Services & ISEAD, 2012, p. 52). The number of social enterprises initially started as non-profit organizations and now operating as businesses is growing. Long-standing examples in Thailand include the *Population and Community Development Association*, which provides diversified services from environmental and health programs to microcredit, and the *Doi Tung Development Project*, which is involved in high-end tourism, handicrafts, and organic food. Their footsteps are followed by a myriad of small and medium businesses concerned with the environment, fair trade, and healthy lifestyles (Chhina, Petersik, Loh, & Evans, 2014).

Gradually, new-generation social enterprises have emerged that are fully for-profit, but committed to pursuing social goals. In business speak this is presented as aiming for a double (financial and social) or even triple (financial, social, and environmental) bottom line. For instance, the Social Enterprise Quality Index (SEQI) developed by PHILSEN in 2009 set out criteria for "doing well" in terms of business performance, "doing good" in terms of social performance, and "doing just" in upholding the environment, cultural soundness, and gender equity (Ballesteros & Llanto, 2017). Although it is still to be proven the degree to which this multiple bottom line can be achieved and to what extent social enterprises can be accountable, effective, and profitable, they have gained the trust of venture philanthropists, foreign and local private investors, and corporate foundations (DFAT, 2015). A sign of widespread regional interest was the launching of the USD 36 million *DBS Foundation* in Singapore in 2015 to mark the city-state's 50th anniversary with the official mandate to champion social entrepreneurship. Since then, it has provided capital to 80 social enterprises in Singapore, India, Indonesia, China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (DBS Foundation, n.d.)

Through these various philanthropic forms, a multitude of causes are funded. Generally, giving by corporate and family foundations concentrates on education (especially to construct buildings or provide scholarships) and, to a lesser extent, on medical care, preferably hospital buildings and helping to provide treatment for underprivileged groups, on community development in the area surrounding the company, and on ad hoc responses to disasters or community events. Contributions to arts and culture, human rights, gender equity, and the environment are minimal, although younger philanthropists seem more interested in such causes than their parents. CSR activities do support arts and culture, but more generally focus on mitigating environmental impacts and meeting social needs. Compelled to deliver that multiple bottom line, social enterprises opt to provide services or undertake other profit-making social welfare activities in their field of choice. A 2014 study in Singapore found that 56% of social enterprises provided services (including business-related), 10% were engaged in food and beverage, 10% in education, 8% in trade, and 6% in other fields (Prakash & Tan, 2014, p. 13).

Irrespective of the focus, there are few cases of the kind of philanthropy oriented towards structural change, as US foundations used to promote in local philanthropy. Among the few examples active in the public arena is the Singaporean Lien Foundation's 'radical philanthropy', which explicitly aims to get at the roots of problems in elder care and end-of-life care, child education, and water (Lien Foundation, 2017). The majority of foundations, CSR initiatives, and social enterprises are willing to work on ameliorating social and environmental problems with some intervention in economic processes, but they avoid engagement in political processes, policy reforms, or governance and human rights support. As a recent report concluded: "One finding that can be generalized across the region is that few philanthropic organizations engage in policy-related discussions or activities" (DFAT, 2015, p. 7).

Some relate this stand to a heightened concern for reputational risks and potential conflict with the government and other parties that may also affect their business interests. As a result, NGOs may not be funded or may see their funds decline if they engage in advocacy for structural change. This was the case for two leading women's organizations in Malaysia that lost corporate funding for women's health and shelter when they started challenging human rights abuses and advocating for socio-economic reforms (Cogswell, 2002, p. 118). Others note that philanthropists' hesitancy does not extend to using personal influence and connections, and at times funding, to advance their own agenda or the priorities of their company. Still others argue that the mixing of corporate and social development purposes may not always serve the public interest as illustrated by the philanthropic activities of tobacco companies and related foundations, like the *Sampoerna Foundation* in Indonesia (Sciortino, 2015; Tandilittin & Luetge, 2015), and that it may even obstruct needed reforms:

> Elites' control of political, economic, social and cultural power can also be a barrier to change. In countries like the Philippines and Indonesia, a small group of families control large sections of economic activity, which means they provide many millions of jobs. But they may also restrict access to resources, such as land ownership, through their efforts to protect their business interests. Some of the most significant philanthropic contributors may also be those standing in the way of important economic and political reforms. (DFAT, 2015, p. 7)

These and other possible reservations about the genuine motivations of CSR and more generally corporate philanthropy contrast with the broad trust enjoyed by religious organizations and their being upheld as the 'good Samaritan' in society, though they may not necessarily be more transparent in their practices.

IN BETWEEN CHARITY AND PHILANTHROPY

Religious institutions can be seen as the precursors of institutionalized giving in Southeast Asia. As early as the 16th century, the Catholic Church launched its charitable legacy in the Philippines. During the Spanish occupation, gifts received from the wealthy were channelled to *obras pias* or charitable foundations for the sick or for orphans, as well as to finance maritime trade and other activities that would benefit the Church and its endeavours. Centuries later, during the American colonial period, Protestant missions started charitable activities and funded orphanages, hospices, hospitals, schools, and universities, at times with substantial support from American philanthropists like John D. Rockefeller (Angara, 2016). Christian charities and their networks of hospices, hospitals, and schools were also established in other parts of the region following the spread of European mercantile and colonial interests (Goh, 2005). In Muslim Southeast Asia, the early *waqf* funds established in the 19th century contributed not only to the building of mosques and burial grounds but also to the construction of urban infrastructure still visible today, as in Malaysia's Georgetown and Singapore (Brown, 2013; Nagaoka, 2016).

This faith-based giving tradition continues to figure prominently in Southeast Asia in terms of numbers of religious organizations, the level of donations they receive, and the extent of the funded and implemented activities. In Singapore, of the 2,217 registered charities in 2015 more than the half, or 1,290, were religious charities, trailed by charities promoting welfare (383), health (134), education (121), arts and heritage (137), community (87), and sports (59) (Ministry of Culture, Community, and Youth, 2016). In the Philippines, the Catholic Church and its religious orders form the largest non-profit organization in the country with an unmatched network of funded or affiliated organizations including health and educational institutions, schools, media agencies, and community groups (Cariño, Fernan III, Martinez, Barlis, & Tupas, 2001; Fernan, 2002). In Thailand, for the majority Buddhist population temples are the locus of philanthropy both in terms of giving as well as receiving, distributing a large part of the collected donations to a variety of social causes, including care to AIDS patients and for community development activities (Wattanasiritham, 2007).

Mosques play a similar function in Muslim communities across Southeast Asia. They collect and distribute donations, religious taxes, and manage the assets of *waqf* endowments for assistance to surrounding communities, also in countries where Islam is a minority religion. For instance, in Singapore there are more than 100 registered *waqf*, and in Thailand, diverse Muslim ethnic groups all have their specific *waqf* to fund religious, educational, and welfare institutions, buildings, and activities for their communities (Brown, 2013; Brown, 2014; Prapertchob, 1991). Aside from traditional charity forms centred in mosques and Islamic boarding schools and few foundations started by wealthy Muslims, in the last two decades professional Islamic philanthropic organizations have emerged, which are specifically devoted to the management of financial resources for socio-economic purposes. They have revitalized investments of cash *waqf* and introduced more efficient collection systems for *zakat* and *sadaqah*. The most progressive among them have adopted development-oriented theological interpretations of *zakat* enabling wider funding of non-religious causes and the financing and implementation of a variety of development and relief programs. An illustration of the recognition of the relevance of Islamic philanthropy regionally is the awarding of the *Ramon Magsaysay Award* – viewed as the Asian equivalent of the Nobel Price – to the first and largest professional Islamic philanthropic organization in Indonesia, *Dompet Dhuafa* (DD), in 2016 for its contribution to addressing social problems since its establishment in 1993 (see Fauzia as well as Latief, this issue).

The substantial resources of this wide range of faith-based charitable and philanthropic organizations typically do not come from institutional grants. Unlike in the U.S., in Southeast Asia family and corporate foundations, even when motivated by religious convictions, do not prioritize funding to religious causes. Among the exceptions are the *Buddharaksa Foundation* of the Chearavanont family and the related DT Group in Thailand, which has an explicit focus on religion and funds Buddhist schools, monasteries, and nunneries (Thai Giving, 2017), and the *Nanang Felicidad T. Sy Foundation*, related to the SM Group, which is directed at endorsing Catholicism. Generally, however, religious institutions are critically dependent on cash and in-kind donations from individuals and families, and only secondarily count on income-generating assets and, increasingly, payments from social services. To give some indications of the sums involved: The approximately 40,000 temples in Thailand receive about USD 2.83 billion annually in individual donations (see Phaholyothin, this issue). In Indonesia, DD is considered the largest philanthropic organization nationally in terms of donations, having collected in 2015 a total of voluntary contributions and *zakat* taxes equivalent to about USD 23 million (Dana zakat dominasi, 2017). In the same year, the overall total of *zakat* collection by entitled semi-public and private institutions reached almost USD 3 billion and the annual potential amount is estimated to be hundreds of times higher (General Directorate of Taxation, 2016).

This reflects people's inclination to give to religious institutions, when they donate to organizations rather than to individuals in their community as is commonly the case. In the Philippines of the 86% of households that donated to organizations in the period 1999-2000, 73% gave to churches and 29% to social services, with a minimal percentage going to, in decreasing order, culture and recreation groups; education and research; local neighbourhood groups; health groups; and development and housing. Most of the recipients focused on the surrounding communities, while less than 10% of households gave to advocacy and NGOs with broader mandates. As the study concludes, people prefer to give to those that address local concerns, while "organizations that go beyond the purely local and towards more abstract and policy type issues tend to attract less individual giving" (Fernan, 2002, p.2). Likewise, in Indonesia, a 2006 study of Islamic philanthropy by the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University found that while 94% of the Muslim population gave to religious institutions, only 11% donated to environmental groups, 11% to women's organization, and 3% to human rights organizations (see Fauzia, this issue). A 2012 survey of giving in five provinces across Thailand[7] found that temples are the most frequent beneficiaries of giving to organizations (93%), followed by educational institutions (83%), hospitals and health organizations (74%), community organizations (65%) and royal-affiliated projects (49%). The same survey also found that temples are perceived as the most trustworthy and effective charitable organizations, followed by royal-affiliated projects (Assumption University in Chhina., Petersik, Loh, & Evans, 2014, p. 92).

Even if widely trusted by the public, religious organizations do not always have transparent financial and management systems, and there have been highly publicized occurrences of corruption and mismanagement such as the mega-church scandal in Singapore, or the USD 20 million temple embezzlement case in Thailand (Farley, 2017; Lesley, 2015). Like corporate and family foundations, religious organizations tend to provide only scant information to the public on the funds involved and even less on their use and impacts. There are worries, also at the government level, that accumulated resources are not always promptly disbursed and assets remain unproductive.

Concerns have also been raised on the sectarian inclination of religious institutions. While many do work for the broader society, there is a tendency to employ resources to advance the congregation's well-being, or to proselytize. Christian groups have a long tradition of promoting their faith through educational and health activities (Goh, 2005). In Thailand, temple assistance mainly concerns the Buddhist community, and mosques' resources focus on Muslim communities (Prapertchob, 1991). For Malaysia, Cogswell (2002) notes that despite legal requirements and official statements that stress inclusive philanthropy, most charity and philanthropic institutions, and especially religious ones, are organized according to the ethnic and religious lines of Buddhist-Chinese, Muslim-Malays and Hindu-Indians with giving mostly directed to "the religious or cultural preservation of the ethnic group of the donor" (Cogswell, 2002, p. 107).

7 The survey locations were Greater Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, Chonburi, and Songkla.

In recent times, fears have also surfaced about the rise of fundamentalism in the region and the financial support channelled by international (as well as national) faith-based donors. After 9/11, the focus has mainly been on Islamic humanitarian organizations and on trying to differentiate those that may use aid to finance Islamist groups from those that seek to alleviate suffering and foster economic development (Ibrahim, 2014). Some attention is also given to trans-border connections among extremist Buddhist movements and foundations in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand (Arora, 2014). In Singapore and the Philippines, links of conservative local Christian groups with those in the US and the external funding of mega churches and evangelization efforts have been questioned. Donations also flow the other way around; for instance, in Indonesia there are often fund-raising campaigns for humanitarian issues that have been politicized by radical groups such as the persecution of the Rohingya community in Myanmar and the Palestine cause.

A more general point of debate concerning religious organizations in Southeast Asia as in other parts of the worlds is whether they engage in charity or philanthropy. Indeed, much of their work is ad hoc and focused mainly on religious activities and otherwise on alleviating the suffering of the poor, orphans, disabled people, and other vulnerable groups. Although many also contribute to more sustainable community development, including education, health, and welfare, it can be generalized that for religious communities, like their corporate counterparts, structural change is rarely part of their agenda.

CONCLUSION

In a region undergoing rapid and unequal economic growth, accumulated wealth is increasingly being used to ameliorate the underprivileged conditions of those lagging behind. In spite of the uncertain fiscal and legal environment, home-grown philanthropy is flourishing compounded by cultural traditions, religious aspirations, and corporate interests. Institutionalized giving is predominantly organized in family and corporate initiatives, semi-autonomous foundations funded by government sources, and faith-based institutions. An assessment of the extent of their overall contribution to Southeast Asia's development is challenged by the lack of detailed information on the available financial resources and how they are used. There is sufficient evidence, however, to conclude that their contribution is valuable in enhancing the welfare of individuals and families through the provision of social services and education and for the relief of immediate suffering.

Other sectors receive less attention; in particular, philanthropic and charitable funding shows scant appreciation for the importance of the arts and humanities and the 'soft' sides of development for society. With the enthusiastic adoption of venture philanthropy in Southeast Asia and further blurring of philanthropy and business, this lack can be expected to remain if not expand in the years to come. Given the authoritarian trend in the region, home-grown philanthropy also seems to deny a place to human rights advocacy and the pursuit of structural change. Religious giving caught in between charity and philanthropy is generally not geared towards transformative processes and often does not propose an inclusive approach. Sectarian and extremist trends in all faith denominations deserve further research to better understand their implications. Albeit for different reasons, the currently validated models of CSR, social entrepreneurship, and social impact investment, by their very nature, do not appear promising for a social justice agenda.

In the past, international foundations provided support to more critical causes, but with a decline in foreign aid and a paradigm shift toward a more technocratic and business approach to philanthropy, the level of funding from such sources has dropped and can be expected to decline further. As I argue in another paper (Sciortino, 2016), this does not imply that humanistic and social justice approaches are no longer relevant. On the contrary, with the acceleration of regional economic integration and the strengthening of fundamentalist and nationalist discourses, questions of equitable and inclusive development are more pressing than ever. This article thus leaves unresolved how efforts to address these questions can be resourced and how can concerned civil society groups find alternative sources of funding to remain vibrant. Experiments are underway to broaden the donor base with crowd-funding and electronic platforms, but it is too early to judge their value for advocacy and human rights NGOs.

This article also brings us to reflect on whether giving that focuses on profit and corporate branding – without aiming at bringing about structural change – should be seen as just another form of doing possibly more accountable business, rather than philanthrophy. This all suggests that moving past the rhetoric on partnership in attaining sustainable development goals will require a more emancipatory brand of Southeast Asian philanthropy. At the moment, however, that looks more like wishful thinking.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Rosalia Sciortino is Associate Professor at the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Visiting Professor in the Master in International Development Studies (MAIDS), Chulalongkorn University, and founder and Director of SEA Junction (www.seajunction.org). Formerly, she served as regional director for the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Singapore and for the Rockefeller Foundation in Bangkok, and as program officer in the Ford Foundation's Jakarta and Manila offices.

▸ Contact: rosaliasciortino@yahoo.com

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