Feminist Philanthropy: a new era for the philanthropy field?

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European Research Network on Philanthropy (ERNOP) Conference

Copenhagen, July 13-14 2017

Abstract

In the context of global governance, and, specifically, debates about and reassessments of the scale and role of traditional aid by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors, the breadth and depth of the roles of philanthropic actors in the Global South has received particular attention from scholars and policymakers alike (Hay and Muller 2015 ; Witte and Marten 2008; Srvistava and Oh 2010; Morvaridi 2012; Youde 2013). The purpose of this paper is to focus on one type of philanthropic actor which has emerged and grown in recent decades: the women's fund. Drawing upon the analysis of semi-structured interviews with representatives of 16 women's funds, all members of the network of women's funds, Prospera, this paper will explore how women's funds explicitly align with a *feminist philanthropy*. In this regard, we set out to explore what meaning women's funds give to this notion of a feminist philanthropy and how it influences their operations, including their relationships with those to whom they give grants or seek to support in other ways; existing and potential funders; and other women's funds as part of their membership of Prospera.

Introduction

In the context of global governance, and, specifically, debates about and reassessments of the scale and role of traditional aid by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors, the breadth and depth of the roles of philanthropic actors in the Global South has received particular attention from scholars and policymakers alike (Hay and Muller 2015 ; Witte and Marten 2008; Srvistava and Oh 2010; Morvaridi 2012; Youde 2013). The purpose of this paper is to focus on one type of philanthropic actor, which has emerged and grown in recent decades: the women's fund. The specific focus will be on members of Prospera, a global network of women's funds, which operate in the Global South. Prospera defines women's funds as 'philanthropic organisations that work to realize the power of grassroots women, girls and trans*persons around the world.' What is more, Prospera has an explicit commitment to bringing together 'a community of women's funds to strengthen feminist philanthropy from the Global South."[i]

Drawing upon the analysis of semi-structured interviews with representatives of 16 women's funds, this paper will explore how women's funds explicitly align with a *feminist philanthropy*. In this regard, we set out to explore what meaning women's funds give to this notion of a feminist philanthropy and how it influences their operations, including their relationships with those to whom they give grants or seek to support in other ways; existing and potential funders; and other women's funds as part of their membership of Prospera. We suggest that women's funds, have carved out a niche as non-governmental philanthropic actors; that is, they have created spaces from which they frame philanthropy in a way that focuses on women, girls and trans* persons (see Prugl and Meyer 1999, p. 4; Rai 2004). We argue that the interviews provide important insights into how those who work within women's funds exemplify the 'double militancy' or 'double identity' associated with (feminist) professionals (Alvarez 1999; Beckwith 2000).

Beckwith (2000, p. 442) defines 'double militancy' as 'the location of activist women in two political venues, with participatory, collective identity and ideological commitments to both.' Similarly, the notion of a 'double or hybrid identity' is used by Sonia Alvarez (1999, pp. 185-186) to convey the dual roles and identities held by 'activist-professionals' in feminist NGOs, often conceptualised as intermediary organisations. Women hold professional positions and

thus are formally engaged in assisting others, though they see themselves as engaged (formally/professionally) in work, which is challenging subversive gender power relations. Thus, alongside their professional roles, they identify themselves as part of a wider women's movement of other feminists, including the women with whom, or on whose behalf they may formally work in a professional capacity. Double militancy has a number of implications: first, as Beckwith (2000, p. 443) notes, 'feminist activists have to negotiate their feminism within non-feminist organisations that nonetheless provide resources, contacts and scope for feminist activism.' In simple terms, activist-professionals have to find a way to work within organisations and as part of initiatives that they may, as feminists, seek to challenge and transform. Second, activist-professionals may seek to commandeer the political discourses to advance new meanings and perspectives on women and gender. Third, the combination of feminist activism and activist-professionals working within non-feminist organisations may create the impetus for the transformation of those organisations for feminist goals. Fourth, double militancy may serve as a catalyst for building coalitions with non-feminist organisations around particular issues or campaigns (Beckwith 2000, pp. 443-446).

First, the paper will set out in more detail the characteristics of women's funds and the wider network, Prospera, with a view to situating the growth and development of women's funds in the context of the global funding environment for women, girls and trans*persons in the Global South. Second, the theoretical context in which we situate the analysis of women's funds is outlined. Following an outline of the methodology, the findings are presented and then discussed. In this way, our aim is to show that the concepts of 'double militancy' or 'double identity' can be used to provide a critical appreciation of how women's funds negotiate and, indeed, problematize the questions of power and privilege; accountability and instrumentalized relationships that beset both the critical analysis of philanthropy and the funding of women, girls and trans*persons globally. Overall, the findings suggest that a feminist philanthropy is a dynamic, negotiated, reflexive, (geographically and thematically) multi-layered philanthropy rooted in relationships and, ultimately the transformation of the lives of women, girls and trans* persons.

What are women's funds?

As a response to a historical disparity and lack of funding for women-led projects to ensure and uphold women's, girls' and trans*persons rights, from the early 1990s onwards, women's funds solely focusing on funding women's human rights projects have surged

throughout the Global South. Inspired by pioneers in the United States and Western Europe, out of 28 women's funds created in this century, a total of 24 were established in the Global South over the past 17 years and have since become an intrinsic part of the global women's human rights funding architecture. In 2015, 37 members of this network mobilized $68.7 million dollars in revenue and provided 1,121 grants to women-led groups in over 190 countries (Prospera, 2017).

Women's funds based in the Global South and those who provide at least 50% of their grantmaking in these countries have created an international platform based upon a set of agreed values and principles that guide and reflect their commitments to feminist agendas and approaches. In 1998 the International Network of Women's Funds, currently known as Prospera, was established as a network of independent women's funds with the goal of strengthening the work of these philanthropic organizations to empower women, girls, and trans*persons to transform their lives and communities (Prospera, 2016). Placing a strong emphasis on the need for a robust feminist resource allocation movement that supports women, girls, and trans*persons with access and control to resources and opportunities to realize their human rights, and actively enjoy and participate in social justice, a set of core principles guide the Network's work and that of its members (Table 1, Prospera, 2016).

Table 1

a) Philanthropy is a shared responsibility and opportunity for each of us to give, to receive, and to make a difference. We see financial resources as an instrument of social change.
b) We share a commitment to the redistribution of wealth and financial resources to enable the full participation of women in all aspects of our society.
c) As women's funds, we share an intersectional feminist perspective within the framework of the universality of women's and trans* human rights.
d) We believe that listening to women and valuing their experience is critical. We believe that women themselves know best how to design solutions to the problems facing them. We trust and respect their ability. We have respect for women's voices and women's choices.

e) Member funds acknowledge that the world we live and work in is deeply divided and unequal in terms of access to resources both within and among nations. As funds based in different parts of the world, we acknowledge the unequal distribution of power, wealth, and resources and commit to working towards a just and equitable world.

Prospera members seek to do this in four principal ways: (1) they mobilise monetary funds, assets and skills, and provide direct grants to grassroots women's organisations and groups working to advance women human rights that operate on a local level; (2) they provide strategic support and accompaniment to women, girls and trans*persons groups and organisations to build their capacities and amplify their claims and voices; (3) they facilitate and encourage network building amongst the groups and organisations they support within their contexts, regions, globally and across issues; (4) they work with other donors at the local, regional and international level to advocate for better and more resources to advance women's human rights.[ii] Taken at face value, many women's funds bear many of the characteristics of organisations which have been variously labelled intermediary, support or bridging organisations (henceforth *bridging* organisations) (Brown and Kalegaonkar 2002). Bridging organisations have been defined as 'value based' entities that perform a range of functions, which revolve around the provision of services and resources to other stakeholders (ibid.; Sanyal 2006; Baruah 2015; Lee 1998). For example, a key function attributed to some of these organisations, which take a range of forms is to channel resources from international donors to the Global South (op. cit.). On the one hand, Sanyal (2006. p. 67) suggests that although bridging organisations may emerge as participants or serve as sources of information in social movements and transnational advocacy networks, they 'may be largely apolitical adopting political stands on an issue basis while lobbying governments and international organisations.'[iii] On the other hand, Alvarez's conception of 'double identity' (1999) and Beckwith's analysis of 'double militancy' (2000) suggest that there is the potential for the processes and positioning of organisations, especially feminist organisations to be more complex and dynamic than that suggested by Sanyal. In this paper, we contend that to categorise women's funds as bridging organisations in line with the definition above does not do justice to the feminist identity and politics that underpins their work and their whole purpose.

The timeliness and importance of analysing women's funds can be seen in the empirical context which documents debates about the funding environment for women's human's rights and the place of philanthropy in relation to funding for women's human rights.

Influenced among others by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), more recently the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the development agenda for 2030, a world call for greater resources to end poverty, improve life conditions, mitigate climate change and attain human rights for all has led to renewed and increased commitments from governments, the private sector and philanthropists alike (UNDP, 2017).[iv] Despite ongoing backlash against the advancement of human rights, including better coordinated attacks of anti-rights groups globally and what has been described as the co-option of key spaces for the protection and upholding of human rights (OURs, 2017), consideration of women's human rights and gender perspectives have been instilled in these development goals and international frameworks for action. This has led to the creation of new multilateral funding mechanisms as well as new private philanthropies, which, in turn, have made great strides in the implementation, execution and inclusion of a gender perspective and women's rights approach within their funding policies. As one of the latest examples of world-scale shifts, we can cite the announcement by the Canadian government to Canada's new Feminist International Assistance Policy (Global Affairs Canada, 2017).[v]

Notwithstanding the existence of new funding mechanisms and philanthropies with more comprehensive approaches to gender and human rights, women's rights organizations argue that there is still a need for more resources to support women's rights in the Global South (Esplen, 2013). As an example, GENDERNET and the DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics (WP-STAT) show that only 2% of the aid to the economic and productive sectors included gender equality as the principal objective, with $861 million dollars given in 2016 (OECD-DAC, 2016). This disproportion in funding flows and priorities evidences the disparity that continues to exist in terms of addressing women's, girls' and trans*persons' rights, but most importantly, it reinforces the need for spaces of influence to advocate and lobby for a comprehensive inclusion of women's, girls' and trans*persons perspectives. Consistent with the trends observed in bilateral giving, data from one of the most comprehensive studies to date tracking private foundation giving towards Human Rights, the research initiative on *Advancing Human Rights*, shows in its 2017 edition that for a total of 727 donors giving $2.7 billion dollars to advance Human Rights globally in 2014, only 20% of this money was directed to women and girls (IHRFG, 2017).

Within this landscape, other concerns and tensions co-exist alongside with the shortage of resources available. Some of these are linked to women's instrumentalization by donor

agencies and by foundations (GGF, INWF, The Alliance of Funds, 2015).[vi] The type and quality of support offered by donors also remains a major worry for women's funds, women's rights organizations and groups; not only in terms of their sustainability over the long term but also regarding their own agency in implementing and executing the resources (Dobson, Carrasco-Scherer., 2015). Challenges linked to the *why* of the need to invest in women's, girls' and trans*persons rights from a gender and human rights-based approach still prevail, however, recent shifts signal a change towards the *how* these philanthropic investments should be executed for greater impact. In its latest report the OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) clearly recognizes the benefit of women's funds' approaches to social change through the provision of flexible financial support, allowing women's rights organizations to set their own priorities, respond to unexpected opportunities and cover operating costs (OECD-DAC, 2016). As discussed later in the paper, as one of the defining characteristics of women's funds, whose main priority is to respond to the needs on the ground by ensuring that the voices and ideas of women, girls and trans* persons are at the forefront of social change, this report indicates a major change in how bilateral donors are now seeing women's funds as key partners for development.

Overall, women's funds are concerned with a range of donors that form part of the funding architecture for women's human rights, but questions about the scale of philanthropy increasingly have relevance to them, arising out of an identified need for more funding for women's rights and a greater presence for philanthropies alongside more traditional funding mechanisms and donors. They are also concerned with the nature of funding too, specifically its instrumental character that is anathema to the broader agenda for change to the lives of women, girls and trans*persons that they seek to affect. The analysis of the empirical or "real world" context in which women's funds and Prospera have developed allows us to contextualise the academic debate about philanthropy, which reflects these themes of power, purpose and relationships which shape and inform the scale and role of philanthropy in the Global South.

Philanthropy: Power, Purpose and Relationships

Scholars examine the (often hyped) flow of philanthropic resources from the Global North to the Global South, and emerging trends in South-South philanthropy as well as analyzing the scale of giving and the roles of private philanthropic foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Hay and Muller, 2014; Srvistava and Oh, 2010; Pratt et al. 2012;

Adelmann 2003; Youde 2013; Moran and Stevenson 2013). Philanthropy is sometimes portrayed as a potential source of innovation as well as income, poised to address gaps left by a decline and withdrawal of DAC aid (Witte and Marten 2008; McGoey 2014). On the other hand, critical attention has been drawn to the "hyperagency" of philanthropists in the politics of social policy and citizen well-being globally:

"If agency is the capacity to make choices largely within the rules and resources that are socially given, hyperagency is the capacity to be a creator or producer of those rules and resources." (Schervish 2003, p. 2, cited in Nickel and Eikenberry 2010, p. 271).

As a private impulse, philanthropy may be subject to legal and regulatory accountability mechanisms in nation states, but politically, the public purposes it serves do not require justification. As such, the literature places questions about the power of philanthropists, especially of 'super philanthropy' (Hay and Muller 2014, p. 637), and to whom or what philanthropists are accountable front and centre of the analysis of their roles globally, including in the Global South. This literature also throws into sharp relief the fundamental contradiction that underpins philanthropy: that the need for philanthropic endeavor is rooted in the unequal distribution of and access to resources that marginalizes certain individuals and societies, thereby perpetuating the need for philanthropy. This notion of "need" is itself political as 'who gets to establish authoritative thick definitions of people's needs is itself a political stake' (Fraser 1989, p. 164, cited in Nickel and Eikenberry 2010, p. 274; Nickel and Eikenberry 2009).

Second, arguments that philanthropy should enable civil society to challenge structural inequalities are juxtaposed against the popularity of a focus on the funding of projects and individuals, rooted in technocratic, "innovative" solutions to problems – the so-called 'California Consensus' (Edwards 2009; Nickel and Eikenberry 2010; 2009; Desai and Kharas 2008). What is more, it has been argued that the language of philanthropy through *partnership,* as often used by foundations depoliticizes and neutralizes philanthropy in a way that masks fundamental questions about the values and motivations that underpin the purposes and, indeed, agendas it sometimes serves (Srvistava and Oh 2010, pp. 464-465; Edwards 2009). The apolitical positioning of philanthropy stands at odds with critical assessments of the hegemonic influence of philanthropy and philanthropic foundations (Vogel 2006; Arnove and Pinede 2007; Morvaridi 2012).

Finally, the *type* of philanthropy that has been popularized in recent years gives expression to how philanthropy is enacted in practice. The phenomenon of philanthrocapitalism merges the principles and practices of business and venture capitalism with the voluntary giving of time and money (Bishop and Green 2008; McGoey 2014). The 'California Consensus' came to denote the philanthropy of the 'new' philanthropists, many of whom made their money in Silicon Valley and the dot.com boom. It came to be associated with an assertion that 'private aid is more effective than official development assistance and its framework for solving the problem of global poverty and food security is a network of public-private and philanthropic partnerships' (Morvaridi, 2012, p. 1192). Practices and approaches associated with venture philanthropy have advanced the evolution of the philanthropic relationship as the giving of resources (both time and money) from one party to another, to a principal-agent dynamic where the agent is accountable to the principal (Benjamin 2010; Saunders and Borland 2013). At the same time, the internet and social media have opened up, if not, it is claimed 'democratized' philanthropy by creating opportunities for those in need of money in the Global South to connect with those with money to give or loan in the Global North or Global South (Desai and Kharas 2010; Bajde 2013). Though part of an effort to mobilize a "movement of donors", this can be juxtaposed with wider concerns raised about a lack of donor support (and not just philanthropic donors) for movement building (Miller 2013, pp. 41-51). By and large, philanthropy is donor-driven and donor-controlled (Ostrander 2007). There is a lack of equity and give and take to the relationship, which is envisaged as part of the social relations approach to philanthropy. This approach problematizes the traditional, hierarchical character of philanthropic relationships to argue that though philanthropic entities such as foundations may be set up and governed by private citizens, they should find ways to be more publically accountable to the communities they work with and/or for (Ostrander 1999; Ostrander and Schervish, 1990).

Clearly, questions about the power, purpose(s) and relationships fostered by philanthropy are central to debates about the depth and breadth of its presence in the Global South. These debates are specific in their focus on well-known philanthropic foundations. The extent to which the growth of South-South philanthropy, led by BRICS nations may lead us to think about the reconceptualization of philanthropy, which has developed from a particular "Northern" perspective has been muted by some scholars (Srvistava and Oh 2010). However, there remains a lack of nuance in terms of the breadth of philanthropic actors engaged in the Global South and to what extent they may seek to challenge or re-imagine

the prevalent dynamics of philanthropy. This study of women's funds will help to begin to advance our critical understanding of philanthropy in the Global South in this way.

Methodology

This paper began as an exploratory study of women's funds derived from an interest in investigating how women's funds give meaning to the notion of a "feminist philanthropy." In this respect, the study was envisaged as a piece of qualitative research. Given the wide geographical locations of participants, online research methods were used (Blank et al., 2008). Semi-structured interviews were conducted between July and September 2017 with representatives of 16 women's funds of different sizes, age and scope (regional, country specific and located in the Global North). The interviews were carried out via Skype and recorded using software that facilitates this. Prospera agreed to act as gatekeeper for the recruitment of interviewees; publicising the research to members and encouraging them to participate. A transcription of the interview was sent to each participant to give them the opportunity for an initial review of the material.

Throughout the process, we became increasingly mindful of the relevance of feminist epistemological and methodological scholarship to the research. The epistemological and methodological positioning of the study became a process of reflection throughout the research and has shaped its development. First, it became clear that feminist epistemology is important for unpacking the notion of a "feminist philanthropy" and, perhaps somewhat unconsciously, had come to underpin the research. In her analysis of funders' approaches to monitoring and evaluation through a feminist lens, Ackerly (2009, p. 180) underlined how feminist interpretations of the power of epistemology draw attention to how stakeholders who have power over the allocation of resources, both political and economic, also determine the questions that are posed in the context of monitoring and assessment. As discussed in the previous section, this sense of who has the power to decide what philanthropy "is" through the enactment of particular programmes, agendas, approaches and relationships is also central to critical debates about philanthropy. What is more, this research is epistemologically grounded in a recognition of, and respect for the values espoused by women's funds, the representatives interviewed and, the host network Prospera (Porter 2012, p. 304). In her research with volunteers of Voluntary Service Overseas (VS0), Fenella Porter (ibid.) also attaches importance to the social construction of knowledge and political engagement as part of the research process. This reflects a broader recognition amongst

feminist scholars that our increased global connectedness both necessitates and creates opportunities for collaboration across disciplines and those at the coalface of struggles (Ackerly and True 2010, p. 470). Prospera became more than a gatekeeper and a firm collaborator in the study, opening-up the study to a process of dialogue and including the co-authorship of this paper. The study sought to create the space for participants to give meaning to this notion of a "feminist philanthropy." In this way, similar to feminist scholars, our approach to conceptualising a "feminist philanthropy" has been an immanent one, allowed to emerge from the representatives of the women's funds interviewed as part of the study (Ackerly and Attanasi 2009; Ackerly 2001). However, it is important to acknowledge that the research did do so in a very limited way, using only semi-structured interviews with single representatives of women's funds rather than multiple methods which, with hindsight could have further enriched the findings. Moreover, with reference to the feminist power of epistemology, there is a certain consciousness here that the voices of those who receive grants and/or participate in the range of activities facilitated by women's funds are absent from the research. This study makes no claims to be an empirical piece of feminist research but has much in common with some of the 'guiding principles' of feminist methodology (Fonow and Cook 2005, pp. 2213). The process has been deliberately reflective throughout and encouraged reflection amongst participants, all the while seeking to situate gender at the heart of debates about philanthropy and to explore the extent to which philanthropy for and by women is about transforming established conventions and approaches to philanthropy (ibid.).

Findings

Drawing upon the concepts of double militancy (Beckwith 2000) and 'double identity' (Alvarez 1999), it is possible to illustrate how the ways in which the participants in this study give meaning to the notion of a feminist philanthropy are dynamic. Specifically, similar to the different ways in which double militancy has been addressed, as identified by Beckwith (ibid., pp. 443-446, see above) they involve the negotiation of four key tensions and the articulation of strategies to address the challenges these tensions represent.

(i) With origins in women's movements, women's funds have to negotiate their commitment to movements with the responsibility to manage the resources at their disposal well.

The women's funds interviewed as part of this study came into being in a variety of ways and at different times. In some cases, philanthropic actors such as the Oak Foundation, the

Global Fund for Women, Mama Cash; formal conferences such as the 5th International Conference on Women in Beijing or the Forums organized by the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) and informal meetings and networks, are described as sources of 'inspiration', support and, more practically in the case of foundations/funders, *including* established women's funds, as providers of funding. Notwithstanding the catalytic roles that these types of organisations and/or events played in many cases, all interviewees perceived the establishment of women's funds as a response to a need for funding that had originated *within* women's movements. For example, these quotations are typical of the sentiment and stories that were told of the origins of women's funds:

"So, X [name of women's fund] was also founded in response to that lack of funding and the need for new types of funding institutions, and really came out of the movement. It wasn't set up by people who had been working in foundations, but rather by women who were feminist activists and saw that there was a great need to figure out a new way to channel funding to these types of groups." (Interviewee 003)

The origins of women's funds in women's movements noted above becomes a source of tension when as grant makers, they make decisions that affect their peers. As will be discussed below, women's funds espouse a commitment to participatory or inclusive grant making processes, but their position as funder is still perceived in some cases as one of privilege. Hence, it is a source of tension:

"What was also complicated [in the early years of the fund] is to understand the position we had as a fund and as funders. This was also complicated because we had come out of the women's movement, all of us. We are activists and we are still very feminist and we are part of the women's movement when we think about ourselves but it's not the same having a fund or a women's organisation. And you are not exactly at the same place. Also, when you are with women's organisations, you have the place of the donor so you have to deal with that yourself, to accept it first, not only from others but from yourself. How are you going to accept that, yes, you don't have the money, you have to say no because there is not the money or the project is not very, very interesting and there is another one who [sic] is more [interesting] so you have to say no to the others." (Interviewee 010).

Conversely, in the same way that being embedded within women's movements creates tensions as a result of double militancy, tensions also arise from the distance from women's

movements that arises as women's funds become successful in raising money but, at the same time, more professionalised:

"[O]ne of our objectives as an institution for the next five years is to strengthen the feminist identity of the fund. It's always been a feminist fund and I don't think that's ever really been lost. The focus has always been on feminist groups, but we did feel as we were talking about what the direction of the fund should be now, we did start feeling that maybe along the way we started acting a bit more like a foundation. We've always prioritised grassroots feminist groups, so in that way that's always been the focus, but in the way the fund was functioning in relation to the women's movement, we felt like in some ways the fund had a larger budget, and hired more professional staff, that in some ways we had become more distant from the movement and so we are making a number of changes right now to bring back that spirit. … We are also trying to have more funding available, not just for grants to organisations, but to fund marches and feminist gatherings, and both things that we organise at X [name of women's fund] as well as things that are organised by other groups. So, just having a greater focus again, on organising and movement building and not just giving grants to individual groups." (Interviewee, 003)

What is clear from the quotations above is that the negotiation of the challenges and tensions of double militancy are subject to ongoing discussion and reflection. This doesn't mean that they are resolved but from the perspective of double militancy, it is possible to see how women's funds grapple with, and address head on the issues of power and accountability raised in broader debates about philanthropy. In only one case did an interviewee from a woman's fund (located in the Global North) distinguish herself from the label activist, suggesting that those the fund supported "on the ground" were the activists and the fund was the "microphone for their messages" (Interviewee 012). Double militancy appears to create a sense of accountability to women's movements, if specifically to women, girls and trans* persons and the groups to which they belong, but it is articulated in a way that is personal rather than as part of an alignment to a purpose or a cause. This is significant in the analysis of philanthropy where the "private" nature of philanthropy is often justified with reference to the "public purposes" it serves in relation to legal, regulatory and sometimes political legitimacy (Frumkin 2006; Fernandez and Hager 2014). What is more, the gendered power dynamics that underpin notions of the "public good" often go uncontested (Mansbridge (1998).

(ii) Women's funds have to negotiate their feminist commitments, including their commitment to a feminist philanthropy when fundraising from donors who may or may not be sympathetic to a feminist philanthropy.

As discussed earlier in the paper, women's funds have a pragmatic need for resources that has to be reconciled with engaging donors, both philanthropic and other types. These donors may invoke the types of practices they seek to challenge, and, indeed, display a reticence to the "feminist" identity of women's funds. Thus, strategies are needed to deal with this tension, principally, adapting the message and language used whilst not compromising core values and ideas:

"[W] are very strong on our beliefs and values, we don't want to betray them, but for the greater good in some instances we have to simplify the language. This is our approach. And this approach has been developed through many trials and debates and discussions and even arguments.. [W]e see our role in X [name of country] as a bridge. Most of our grantee groups are the groups that do not have the capacity to write proposals in the English language and even they do not have the capacity to formulate their ideas in a structured way. So, we see our role as a bridge that helps these women to receive funding for those important issues that they have or their ideas and plans that they have. And we decided that we should have some sort of flexibility to be able to bring more." (Interviewee, 015]

The representatives interviewed described how the process of fundraising also provides an opportunity to change minds and challenge stereotypes, making fundraising in the words of one interviewee a 'constructive dialogue' (Interviewee, 007):

"[Funders] might actually come with reservations on some aspects of the work that you do, and I think our rule is also to negotiate from a very strong point of knowledge, but also a very strong point of conviction, in terms of why we do what we do, and our stance around that. There is nobody who is going to force us to stop doing what we are doing. We can engage in other issues, but that does not necessarily mean that because of our association we drop some of the areas that we believe are critical." (Interviewee 007)

Part of this strategy may involve re-thinking relationships with donors and the types of relationships women's funds want to cultivate with donors:

"[We try] to cultivate again the same relationship we have with our grantees, with our donors, as much as we can. Like a partnership. So, we can tell them when stuff if not going well, or

they can tell us, just a bit more of a critical, like a space of shared learning. So, we try… and absolutely, like a lot of the funders we have now, are incredibly responsive to that, and I think they are also seeking that transformative relationship with us. It's been really good. We also do some individual fundraising, and again, similar, trying to cultivate more of a relationship. It's not just about giving money, but it's more of a co-creation, and seeing our funders as part of our community." (Interviewee 005)

The salience of efforts to alter the terms of fundraising have been highlighted by feminist analyses of funding. Previous studies of funding to Central and Eastern Europe for women and girls underlined how 'power differentials' shaped 'contradictory' and 'ambivalent' funding relationships and the imposition of Western concepts and ideas (including about feminism) underpinned the funding dynamic (Roth 2007, p. 466; Ghodsee 2004). What is more, addressing questions about power and unequal access to resources within the existing funding architecture for women's human rights is perceived to be of importance to the sustainability of transnational feminist and women's rights movements (Naples, 2002). In their position as fundraisers, women's funds set out to challenge this power dynamic – often cautiously, it has to be said – as funding is essential to their functioning and survival. However, interviewees also stressed that although they placed an emphasis on dialogue and working with donors, there were instances where they had to refuse a potential funding opportunity where it conflicted with their values and politics.

(iii) Women's funds use the processes that underpin philanthropic grantmaking to mitigate a principal-agent or instrumentalized funding dynamic.

The research did not set out to encourage 'navel gazing' amongst interviewees about what a feminist philanthropy means to them. Rather, it sought to encourage them to articulate how this commitment to a feminist philanthropy influenced, if imbued their governance and daily operation. As this interviewee suggests:

" [I]t's an ongoing discussion of weighing up the politics that guide the decisions we make, and what's pragmatic, and what we need to get some stuff done. Making sure that we are reflecting on how we operate as a funder, and how we are a feminist fund, and we are not just every other donor, and it's very important how we communicate. … We also cultivate relationships of trust with our grantee partners. We similarly work from a very intersectional lens, from who we hire, who we fund and the political framing and language that flows through our communications." (Interviewee 005)

Throughout the interviews, the articulation of how meaning is given to a feminist philanthropy reflected the emphasis on the processes which shape the way in which women's funds function internally as well as how they work with the women, girls and trans* persons to whom grants are awarded. In this respect, "partners" was the preferred terminology.

"[I]n very activity or every kind of event we put the women's rights and feminist principles as our primary basic values we will promote. So, we explicitly define our organisation as feminist. … [W]e consult with women activists and leaders. It is not that we know what they need, it is more about them and what they prioritise and what they think is important to them. So it is everyday consultation and everyday partnerships. … Secondly, we see women as leaders. … [We include] those women who do not have opportunities to equally participate not only at national and local levels in conversations overall but even within the women's movement. …" (Interviewee 015)

As discussed earlier, a certain self-consciousness about the link between power and money pervades women's funds and attention to this in the grantmaking process appears to be one way in which this dynamic is challenged. One interviewee suggested that this was how the organisations sought to "live" its feminist principles: for example, having criteria which limited grantmaking to self-led groups – "we only fund groups that are led by the people who are the ones who are facing the injustices and proposing and shifting toward more just practices or policies or laws or behaviour" (Interviewee 001). The implementation of feminist principles is believed to be integral to the formation of balanced or "equal" relationships with grantees:

"We're always moving towards something, of course. So, that process is in itself significant. There is meaning in that process and the process usually involves people making decisions, people consulting others about decision-making and recognising where decisions are made and where power is held in that decision-making process." (Interviewee 001]

By and large, the approach to grant making reflects the social relations approach, discussed earlier in the paper. As such, it is not an approach that has been developed by women's funds and it has been used by other actors, including women's funds such as the Boston women's Fund in the United States (Ostrander 2004) and intermediaries (Le Comte and Krishna 1997). But, the approach is situated within a wider vision of transformation and

dynamic enough to change as feminist movements change as the attention to questions of intersectionality (see Ackerly and True 2010, p. 469) below attest:

"I think the mere fact that we are very flexible in terms of understanding and appreciating women's realities, and some of the challenges that they go through on a day to day basis. That might not necessarily be understood by a big funder whose interest is to push resources and get empirical evidence. Sometimes that is very hard for some of the women's organisations to be able to showcase at short notice, or within a year, because most of the work that we are doing is process oriented, because basically what *we* are trying to do is to dismantle a structure… *We* are trying to change people's mind-sets, we are trying to change their attitude, and that takes time. We are very understanding of these processes." [emphasis added] (Interviewee 007)

"[A]s feminism has taken up more issues of racial justice or economic justice and begun to have those conversations, X [name of women's fund] has also strengthened its grantmaking, [so that it is] really at the intersection of those different issues." (Interviewee 014).

(iii) Commandeering the discourse about philanthropy to give meaning and perspective to a feminist philanthropy.

The jurisdiction of women's funds varies: some have roots and operate from the North making grants to other women's funds and directly to women's organisations and groups. Others work across a number of countries in a regional context whilst others are country-specific. Philanthropic actors typically feature as funders of social movements or networks of activists/organisations, such as in the case of principled issue networks (Sikknik 1993). Foundations and other philanthropic actors, such as community foundations also work as part of networks and this activity is not unusual in the world of philanthropy.[vii] All of the interviewees and the women's funds included in the study were members of Prospera which bears many of the characteristics associated with principled issue networks.

'These networks differ from other forms of transnational relations, such as epistemic communities or transnationally organized interest groups, in that they are driven primarily by shared values or principled ideas – ideas about what is right and wrong or instrumental goals.' (Sikknik 1993, p. 412)

Women's funds seek to present a particular perspective on philanthropy for women's human rights and to change the discourse about the need for philanthropic giving for women's human rights, within particular contexts and as part of the Prospera network. The interviews suggest that, as part of the network, they find support and camaraderie in this endeavour, but the principal challenges they face are altering the discourses about philanthropy (or lack thereof) within specific country and regional contexts.

As members of Prospera, a sense of being part of a collective endeavour rather than being in competition with each other for scarce resources emerged from the interviews:

"[I] think that the good thing about it [relationships with other organisations and funds] is that we share a political commitment, that we share a common vision of what is our goal. … The gain is in terms of not only, on the one hand mobilising resources collectively, on the other hand, being able to mobilise resources for women and girls, and … being able to work politically in a collective way to advocate for women's rights and the advancement of women's rights and general justice. I think that is unquestionable. " (Interviewee 011)

The connections formed by the interviewees with other women's funds were often mentioned as an opportunity for learning, as well as more informally for friendship. Looking outwards to networks can often be the only or one of few opportunities on offer to women's funds:

"[A] national foundation [such how this women's fund is described] is a very new beast in X [name of country]. So, we feel very lonely because we are a national foundation that we don't have a community of national foundations here. … We are part of a women's movement. But because of our role as grantmaker, there is a certain distance between us and women's organisations. We are partners but … we are not the same completely because of different work priorities. In many instances, because again foundations or funds are so new to X [name of country], other women's organisaions, our grantees, our potential grantees, women leaders, women activists, they see us as an NGO. … so they use the same criteria for our assessment as they would use for other women's NGOs and, of course, for that we fail. " (Interviewee 015, p. 11)

As stated above, opportunities for learning can be informal but some larger women's funds located in the Global North may play a role in providing monetary resources and other assistance for the development of newly and enhanced capacities of established women's funds.

As philanthropic organisations which combine fundraising and grantmaking, and seek to do so from a perspective which draws attention to, and seeks to address questions about power in funding relationships, the extent to which women's funds seek to grow philanthropy in specific geographic areas was also explored as part of the interviews. Through their professional roles in women's funds, but their simultaneous commitment to the women's human rights movement, representatives from women's funds spoke firstly, their efforts to introduce philanthropy, and specifically, to champion a discourse about feminist philanthropy for women's human rights:

"[P]hilanthropy is really quite new in X [name of country], specifically rights based philanthropy. So, X [citizens of country] are quite generous and give to people asking for money on the street, or they give to more kind of charity based, or church based organisations to help people in need, but the idea of giving to an NGO, like a feminist fund to invest in longer term solutions is a pretty new concept." Interviewee 003)

"I do believe we have a role and we can make a big difference in growing philanthropy … like in countries where philanthropy is emerging. Especially in pushing against a way that philanthropy is happening there because there is still a charity model that we have to push against as well as the business sort of approach to it where they talk in a different language around returns on investment and venture capitalism … " (Interviewee 006)

This is also the challenge for international funds with "headquarters" in countries where cultures of philanthropic giving are well established:

"[W]e use the term democratising philanthropy because we believe that the $10 gifts and the $10,000 gifts are just as important in many ways as it is really about growing the available resources and reaching out to more people to raise awareness about women's rights. Also, we see one of our primary goals as being able to educate women to become philanthropists …."

But, finally, there is also a challenge to the notion that just because a philanthropy that is not a Western philanthropy does not exist, this doesn't mean that it does not exist at all:

"[M]y departure point would be from a perspective that philanthropy already exists in X [continent]. The philanthropy I would say, the structured philanthropy of monetary value that the west is very well known for, is something that might not necessarily be recorded in X [name of continent], but nonetheless in ways that are different, but in ways that are also responsive of the situations that we find ourselves." (Interviewee 007).

Western foundations have been criticised for spreading particular values and ideas, including particular models of philanthropy (Arnove and Pinede 2007; Arnove, 1980). There is much to learn about the philanthropy gaining prominence in the Global South (Srvistava and Oh 2010). In a practical sense, for country based women's funds, opportunities for "in country" fundraising are limited. The challenge they face is to advance a particular view of philanthropy that is both political and transnational: it has roots and models in the North, but unlike community foundations, it is not a model that has been a product of "transfer" (Daly 2008). Rather, its diffusion has been more organic and from within transnational activity which has involved a range of actors, from philanthropic foundations, to women's rights advocates. This means that making a case for women's funds and the culture of giving that also needs to change to grow giving to women's rights needs to be balanced with respect for existing cultures of giving and avoid replicating the imposition of ideas and models.

Discussion

A feminist philanthropy is not a static, rigidly defined concept. It is an ongoing process of negotiation and reflexivity, rooted in the 'double militancy' (Beckwith 2000) or 'double identity' (Alvarez 1999) of women's funds. The review of the literature underlines the centrality of discussions about power to philanthropy, linked to the de-politicisation of notions of the "need for" philanthropy. In this regard, the first point to be made is that the power a women's fund has as a philanthropic actor, as a "gatekeeper" of resources is one that is negotiated and reflexive: it is seen as something to be mitigated. The literal emergence and growth of women's funds is derived from the identification of a need for more financial resources for women's human rights. The interviews suggest that this was not an imposed need determined by those with hyperagency, but a need identified from within women's movements in different contexts. From the point of view of double militancy (op. cit.), it is possible to see how the need for women's funds is dynamic and political. It is manifested in the negotiation of accountability to women's movements from a position of relative privilege as funder in an effort to redress the power that underpins the need for philanthropy in the first place.

The position of women's funds as 'interpretive agents' (Porter 2012) of need has led them to further mitigate the philanthropic funding power dynamic with attention to a grant making process that emphasises the agency of women, girls and trans*persons in defining what that need is. This approach is akin to a social relations approach, which has been used by other

philanthropic organisations. However, notions of “partnership” are given meaning and remain politicised through the alignment of the women’s fund’s values and principles with the transformation of women’s human rights. This stance and this approach is key to the public legitimacy of women’s funds (ibid.) and it is fundamental to how they negotiate the perils of accountability and power associated with philanthropy, within their commitment to a feminist philanthropy and feminist movements. As a final question in the interviews, participants were asked if, in three words, they could articulate what a feminist philanthropy meant to them. The responses differed but the sentiment remained similar throughout: “collective power”, “transformation” “solidarity” “trust” “radical” “responsible” – “a philanthropy that puts itself out of business”. Changing the discourse is salient to what women’s funds do. They are engaged in this within the contexts in which they operate and/or are located in their efforts to sow the seeds of cultures of philanthropy for women’s human rights. They also recognise the need to do this collectively as members of Prospera. Being part of the Prospera network of women’s funds, and broader feminist movements matters to the representatives who took part in this study. The interviews suggest that in addition to giving meaning to a feminist philanthropy within their organisations and the contexts in which they operate, women’s funds are simultaneously negotiating their collective identity as part of a *transnational* network of women’s funds. This is a values driven philanthropy, that with an explicit commitment to a feminist philanthropy is political, but also a niche which allows questions about the powers, purposes and nature of philanthropy to be framed within countries, regionally and globally in terms of women’s human rights.

Conclusion

In this paper, we set out to explore the notion of a feminist philanthropy and to allow the representatives of the women’s funds we interviewed as part of this study to give meaning to this notion. As discussed above, the hyperagency and capacity of ‘super philanthropy’ and foundations has received much critical attention. At the same time, the values and motivations of philanthropy have been examined in the context of debates that notions of “partnership” that dominate the roles of philanthropic actors in the Global South have become depoliticised and neutralised. Finally, linked to this, there have been concerns about the instrmentalization of funding and the dominance of principal-agent or donor-driven dynamics to philanthropic relationships. Women’s funds have emerged and grown in this environment where there have been calls for philanthropic actors to play more of a role in the Global South. What is more, they have developed from a recognition within women’s movements of a need for more and better funding for women, girls and trans*persons. As

outlined in Table 1, as members of Prospera, the women's funds that participated in this study commit to a set of principles which are broadly contradictory to many of the trends that we have seen in recent years. What is more, a commitment to a feminist philanthropy is key to Prospera. Our study has shown how women's funds give meaning to this notion of a feminist philanthropy and how through processes of negotiating tensions and challenges of power, accountability, purpose and relationships, they are at the forefront of an effort to re-imagine philanthropy for women, girls and trans*people. For policymakers and funders, including philanthropic funders, this matters for how we articulate expectations of philanthropic activity and give meaning to it in the Global South. For scholarly analysis, the study underlines the importance of giving attention to the range of philanthropic actors who are engaged in the Global South, particularly to their values and motivations and the processes that underpin what they do. Questions of scale, power and purpose need to proceed in a nuanced way to full advance our critical understanding of philanthropy in global governance.

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