

Experimental Design with YCISL Philanthropy

Colin Ong

Center for Sustainable Development & Global Competitiveness, Stanford University,
Stanford, CA 94305-4020, USA

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INTRODUCTION

An early prospective group organizer was a person from Credit Suisse who asked whether I could organize a YCISL workshop focused on philanthropy as part of an effort to help youth learn wealth management. The workshop didn't happen, but I did wonder how YCISL, with its no financial resources consideration, could embrace philanthropy for its positive and emotionally rewarding values. Recently, I came across web articles about foundations that give awards for the benefit of schools and healthcare (the specific starting point was the Anne & Kirk Douglas Recreation & Playground Awards which interested me because it related to youth and play). It was not really anything new – the wealthy giving money in HUGE amounts to organizations they wish to support. But it gave me enough push to make 2018 the year I would experiment with PHILANTHROPY as a YCISL platform alongside sustainability.

DOES PHILANTHROPY HAVE TO BE BIG?

Large philanthropic cash or cash-enabled donations and their “mega-donors” make for great news and PR. The Gates Foundation and Zuckerberg Foundation are two charitable foundations that made the headlines in 2017. But there is also philanthropy at smaller scales, but we don't spend much thought accounting for it. I remember dropping coins into a can on Poppy Day I downtown Singapore when I was in high school. Perhaps you have dropped a dollar bill into the Salvation Army Kettle around the end of the year. Or have you seen a list of donors in an event program or a non-profit organization's annual report? So philanthropy can occur at many different monetary levels.

CAN PHILANTHROPY OCCUR WITHOUT MONEY?

Think about Rory Sutherland's 2010 TED Talk “Sweat the small stuff” where he talks about "Stuff that has a big effect" and "Stuff that costs a lot of money" as axes in a graph. He points to the quadrant where big effect and low/no-cost meet and effective change becomes more achievable and sustainable. This perspective can be applied to philanthropy as well. Defining the philanthropic cause and setting the means to act for that cause in a no-(monetary) cost manner can result in more desirable effects and rewards.

HOW CAN SUSTAINABILITY BE TIED TO PHILANTHROPY?

In order to be sustainable, an effort should be fueled by renewable and massively available resources. These resources are usually right in front of us, and they do not involve permanent loss, if any loss at all. For example, if we were to behave philanthropically with our knowledge, would we be losing that knowledge? If we taught someone how to do something that we love doing and also makes someone else happy, then would we reap the rewards of philanthropy?

HOW DOES YCISL CONNECT TO PHILANTHROPY?

In 2018, we will add a philanthropy layer on top of our sustainability platform. It will be connected to our activities related to gratitude and positive thinking. We will ask students to think about the philanthropic aspects of their projects. How would philanthropy be incorporated? Would it be a philosophical basis for the idea or strategy? Or would it be a part of the external face of the project such that users are motivated by the philanthropic promise? We feel that philanthropy shares many of the reasons we have embraced sustainability in our youth program. Both philanthropy and sustainability are universal causes, and provide contexts in which we can brighten our personal stories.