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À propos du PhiLab | About PhiLab

Le **Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie** (PhiLab) a été créé en 2014 dans le cadre d'une demande de financement « développement de partenariat » obtenue du Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada (CRSH). Ce financement a été reconduit en 2018 pour six années par l'obtention d'une subvention « partenariat » du CRSH. Depuis 2024, PhiLab profite de financements octroyés par différentes fondations dont la Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon et la Fondation Mirella et Lino Saputo. Le Réseau pancanadien constitue un lieu de recherche partenarial, de partage d'information, de mobilisation des connaissances sur la philanthropie subventionnaire et de formation à la recherche. Les activités de recherche conduites en partenariat valorisent les connaissances auprès d'une diversité d'acteurs sociaux, d'agences gouvernementales, milieux universitaires et petits et grands médias. La valorisation des connaissances, via des outils de communication novateurs et accessibles, permet une diffusion élargie des connaissances produites ou déjà existantes. Le Réseau regroupe des chercheurs, des décideurs et des membres de la communauté philanthropique à travers le monde afin de partager des informations, des ressources et des idées.

The **Canadian network of partnership-oriented research on philanthropy** (PhiLab) was created in 2014 as part of a "partnership development" funding application obtained from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This funding was renewed in 2018 for six years by obtaining a "partnership" grant from SSHRC. Since 2024, PhiLab has benefited from funding granted by various foundations, including the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon and the Mirella and Lino Saputo Foundation. The Pan-Canadian Network is a hub for partnership research, information sharing, knowledge mobilization on grantmaking philanthropy and research training. Research activities carried out in partnership promote knowledge among a wide range of social players, government agencies, academics and small and large media. The valorization of knowledge, via innovative and accessible communication tools, enables a wider dissemination of the knowledge produced or already existing.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
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Canada

ÉDITORIAL | EDITORIAL

Credit : Michelle Riley

A year of lucidity in the face of conflict

By Elisabeth Robinot
Co-directeur of PhiLab
Publication co-director

Some years mark a turning point. The year 2025 is one of them. The authors who contributed to The PhiLanthropic Year 2025 wanted to question, highlight and nourish the fertile tensions, collective dynamics and academic reflections around a theme as sensitive as it is essential: **philanthropy in the face of conflict.**

Through this collection of articles, we have sought to draw up a living, plural and embodied cartography of contemporary philanthropy, seen through the prism of conflict: a philanthropy rooted in social realities, critical in its approaches, driven by a quest for impact, accuracy and learning. A common thread links the contributions: that of actors and institutions who, far from looking the other way, seek to understand, anticipate or respond to the multiple conflicts - geopolitical, social, ethical - that run through our times.

The stakes are high: conflicts transcend borders. They cross territories, structures and minds. They raise questions about the space, role and responsibilities of the philanthropic sector.

Understanding conflict on a global scale

A number of articles in this collection address the global and systemic dimensions of conflict.

Hilary Pearson, former President of Philanthropic Foundations Canada, reminds us that foundations are often reluctant to get involved in areas of conflict, for fear of politicization or lack of suitable tools. Yet by cultivating practices of listening, dialogue and resilience, she argues that philanthropy has a role to play in preventing and de-escalating conflict.

Professor Emeritus at HEC Montréal, Taïeb Hafsi's article offers a political and ethical critique of contemporary philanthropy, highlighting the risks associated with partisan international philanthropy. Using a nuanced typology - local or global, private or public, socio-cultural or political - he shows, with examples, how philanthropy can both repair and fuel conflicts.

Joshua Newton extends this analysis by exploring the impact of the rise of authoritarian neoliberalism on social philanthropy in the United States. Through privatization and social control, he shows how philanthropic actors become the targets of an ideological project aimed at weakening the public sector. In this context, he calls on foundations to take a stand, defend democratic values and actively support civil society.

Adam Saifer, co-director of PhiLab and professor at

the University of British Columbia, and Fahad Ahmad, professor at the University of Toronto, offer an analysis of the role played by institutional philanthropy in the legitimization and integration of right-wing populism in Canada. In this article, the authors propose four ideological mechanisms by which elite philanthropy facilitates the integration of right-wing populism ideas and beliefs.

From a Canadian historical perspective, Peter Elson, former co-director of PhiLab and now Professor Emeritus at the University of Victoria, shows how major crises, particularly wars, have shaped the tax and legal system of philanthropy in Canada. An invaluable dive into history, revealing the links between moments of crisis and institutional transformations.

Finally, Amina Wazoumi, a doctoral student in administration at Université de Sherbrooke, offers an article on the relationship between grant-making philanthropy and social movements. Her article explores philanthropic organizations' critiques of social and environmental movements, and vice versa.

Conflict between and within foundations

We then turn our attention to conflict at the very heart of the philanthropic sector.

Sylvain Lefèvre, professor at ESG UQAM, looks at the refusal of donations made with “dirty money”. This decision is often perceived as an individual one, but he believes it can be a collective, political and meaningful act. By questioning the origin of funds, some organizations are asserting an ethical stance in the face of the acceptable and, above all, the unacceptable.

From a complementary perspective, Michelle Riley explores the ethical tensions surrounding humanitarian photography. While a powerful image can mobilize and raise funds, it can also be experienced as a form of exploitation. The author suggests ethical avenues for achieving a balance between impact and respect for human dignity.

Jean-Marc Fontan, former co-director of PhiLab, presents a series of charts illustrating the types of tensions, conflicts, contradictions and how they are affecting grant-making foundations. Secondly, strategic modalities for adaptive and evolutionary management conclude this article.

Finally, Jonathan Deschênes, professor at HEC Montréal, sheds light on a little-explored angle: the negative effects of volunteering. Fatigue, disillusion and emotional overload: these risks do exist. To prevent them, he suggests providing adequate support for volunteers and rethinking commitment structures.

Interviews to broaden perspectives

Next, in this issue, PhiLab's editorial team wanted to diversify formats, which led to the production of five interviews and an article covering the experience of hosting the PhiLab podcast. A wide range of topics are covered: impact investing, philanthropy in the face of emerging conflicts caused by the climate emergency, the role of NGOs and also those left behind such as pets in times of crisis.

The first was conducted by David Grand-Poitras, a doctoral candidate in Sociology at UQAM, with Ms. Alice Chipot, former director of the Regroupement pour la responsabilité sociale des entreprises (RRSE), on the role of institutional investors in the face of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict beginning in October 2023. How have Quebec players reacted to this conflict? What measures has the RRSE taken? These were the main questions Ms. Chipot answered.

In the second interview, Laurence Croteau, research professional and communications coordinator at PhiLab, asks Éric St-Pierre, former director of the Trottier Family Foundation, about the climate emergency. What are the philanthropic community's responses to this issue? The conflict of causes to fund is real! What can be done? Thanks to the Climate Champions Initiative launched in 2024, the philanthropic community is getting organized. Mr. Trottier clearly outlines the challenges encountered and those still to be met.

The third interview was conducted by Diane Alalouf-Hall, Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at UQAM. She spoke to Karine Meaux, Head of Emergencies at the Fondation de France. Is there a real boundary between emergency humanitarian aid and development aid? What are the roles of local players and international NGOs today? It seems that the old top-down vision of “helping the poor” is no longer appropriate. Ms. Meaux explains the logic of horizontal partnerships, which allow local expertise to be heard in the face of today's humanitarian crises.

In the fourth interview, Katherine Lacefield,

founder of Just Be Cause Consulting and former Communications Coordinator at PhiLab, highlights the often-neglected plight of animals in conflict and disaster, and how philanthropy can play a vital role in protecting their well-being. Adam Parascandola, vice-president of Humane World for Animals' rescue team, shares lessons learned from decades of international rescue missions in natural disaster and conflict zones such as Ukraine, Syria, Gaza and Sudan. What are the consequences for those left behind?

In the fifth interview, I spoke with Mr. Thierry Delvigne-Jean, Head of Programs at UNICEF Canada. Although UNICEF is a UN agency, a significant part of its resources come from the philanthropic sector (companies, foundations, the general public). Drawing on his experience in the field, Mr. Delvigne-Jean presents UNICEF's strategy, which aims to act before, during and after crises, thanks to its ongoing local presence. What role can foundations play in the field?

Joey Mac Intosh offers a personal perspective on his experience hosting the PhiLab podcast over the past two years. He presents a podcaster's guide to creating ethical content with the broader aim of spreading a message through a podcast

Finally, in this issue we take a look at the latest books addressing matters in the field of philanthropy. To this end, I feature a review of Hillary Pearson's book « À quoi sert la philanthropie », published this fall by McGill-Queen's University Press.

Léo Bérenger Benteux offers us a critical essay on Timothée Parrique's book « Ralentir ou périr. L'économie de la décroissance ». He approaches the book from three angles: the rejection of growth, the path of degrowth and the post-growth project.

Saouré Kouamé, professor at the Telfer School of Management, presents the collective work « Philanthropie et développement de l'Afrique », published this winter under his direction.

Finally, Carleton University professor Susan Phillips offers a review of the new book she co-authored with Diana Leat and Alexandra Williamson, “Philanthropic Response to Disaster”.

Conclusion: a pivotal year, a work in progress

This collection is neither a fixed overview, nor a manual of best practices. It is not intended as a definitive answer to the question of philanthropy's place in the face of conflict. It is an invitation to think differently, to create links, to question what needs to be questioned, and to see philanthropy in motion - not in a state of agitation, but in a collective, lucid and proactive process, ready to listen, to learn and to act.

The year 2025 may not be the year of the great changeover. But it is, without a doubt, a year of courage and clarity. And that already deserves to be hailed.

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Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie

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