

# L'Année PhiLanthropique

# The PhiLanthropic Year

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PhiLab

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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  
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## À propos de L'Année PhiLanthropique



Par : **Elisabeth Robinot et Adam Saifer**

Codirecteurs du PhiLab

Codirecteurs de publication

L'Année PhiLanthropique est une publication spécialisée dans la diffusion de connaissances scientifiques et professionnelles dans le domaine de la philanthropie et plus précisément de la philanthropie subventionnaire. La revue répond au besoin de rendre disponible, en français et en anglais, des connaissances principalement produites ou mises en valeur par des activités scientifiques réalisées au sein du Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie (PhiLab).

L'Année PhiLanthropique publie des travaux de nature scientifique ou professionnelle répondant aux exigences de base de l'édition scientifique. La revue dispose d'un comité de lecture et de politiques éditoriales qui assurent un niveau de qualité certain aux textes qui y sont publiés. Ces derniers prennent différentes formes – articles, chroniques, comptes rendus critiques – et s'inscrivent dans un créneau qui se situe entre les publications scientifiques formelles et informelles. Il s'agit donc de textes qui, tout en respectant les normes éthiques de la production scientifique et professionnelle, se veulent plus courts – une dizaine de pages – et plus légers (moins grande emphase sur les dimensions méthodologiques et plus sur les résultats ou l'analyse) que la moyenne des productions scientifiques.

Produite une fois par année (hors éditions spéciales), chaque numéro de la revue est pris en charge par une équipe éditoriale différente rattachée au PhiLab. L'équipe, en mode direction, est chargée de la conception, de la production et de la gestion d'un appel à contribution.

En publiant L'Année PhiLanthropique nous nous assurons d'agir en complémentarité avec une offre de publications scientifiques, ou visant le grand public, déjà existante. En se voulant accessible en ligne et offerte gratuitement, la revue ouvre la voie à la diffusion de contenus générés par ou découlant d'activités de recherche majoritairement conduites en partenariat avec des acteurs de l'écosystème philanthropique.

L'Année PhiLanthropique s'inscrit dans la stratégie globale mise en place par PhiLab afin de mieux faire connaître les réalisations et enjeux de l'écosystème philanthropique canadien tout en ouvrant la voie à sa mise en comparaison avec des pratiques existantes ailleurs dans le monde. Enfin, rappelons que la création de notre revue n'aurait pas été possible sans l'appui du Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada (CRSH).

Elisabeth Robinot, de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, et Adam Saifer, de la University of British Columbia (Okanagan Campus), sont les codirecteurs du PhiLab. À titre de codirecteurs, ils veillent à la réalisation et à la coordination des activités de recherche et de valorisation des connaissances inscrites dans les programmes de recherche menés en partenariat et soutenus financièrement par le CRSH et les partenaires du projet. Elisabeth Robinot est aussi la cofondatrice de l'Observatoire de la Philanthropie, une cellule d'études et de veille stratégique en philanthropie qui associe des chercheur-e-s de l'ESG UQAM, de l'UQTR et d'autres universités internationales.

## About The PhiLanthropic Year

By: **Elisabeth Robinot & Adam Saifer**  
Co-directors of the PhiLab Network  
Publication Co-directors

The PhiLanthropic Year is a journal that specializes in the transmission of scientific and professional knowledge within the philanthropic sector, and more specifically, grantmaking philanthropy. The journal meets the need of rendering available, in French and English, knowledge mainly produced by or highlighted by the scientific activities that take place within the Canadian Philanthropy Partnership Research Network (PhiLab).

The PhiLanthropic Year publishes scientific and professional articles that meet the basic requirements of scientific publication. The journal has a peer-reviewed committee as well as basic editorial guidelines that ensure a quality standard for the texts it publishes. These latter take on different forms - articles, chronicles, critical book reviews- and find themselves somewhere between formal and informal scientific articles. These texts, while respecting the ethical norms of scientific and professional publications, are shorter - a dozen pages or less - and lighter (less emphasis on the methodological aspects and more on the results or analysis) than your average scientific publication.

Published annually, each issue is taken in charge by a different editorial team that is connected to PhiLab. The team, from a management point of view, is responsible for the design as well as the creation and management of a call for contributions. By publishing The PhiLanthropic Year, we make sure to act as a complement to the existing offer of scientific literature and publications directed to the general public. By being available online and offered free of charge, the journal paves the way to the dissemination of content generated by or stemming from research mainly conducted in partnership with actors of the philanthropic ecosystem.

The PhiLanthropic Year is part of a global strategy implemented by PhiLab to spread awareness of the successes as much as of the issues of the Canadian philanthropic ecosystem while paving the way for comparisons with existing practices from around the world. Finally, let us recognize that the creation of our journal could not have been possible without the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).



Elisabeth Robinot, from the Université du Québec à Montréal, and Adam Saifer, from the University of British Columbia (Okanagan Campus), are the co-directors of PhiLab. As co-directors, they oversee the implementation and coordination of research and knowledge dissemination activities included in the research programs led in partnership with and financially supported by the SSHRC and the project's partners. Elisabeth Robinot is also co-founder of the *Observatoire de la Philanthropie*, a philanthropy research and strategic monitoring unit that brings together researchers from ESG UQAM, UQTR and other international universities.



## Beyond Response: Philanthropy, Crisis, and the Conditions That Produce Them

By Adam Saifer

*Co-director of PhiLab*

*Publication co-director*



Adam Saifer is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Management at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan. Prior to joining the Faculty in January 2023, he was a postdoctoral fellow with PhiLab, as well as the Director of PhiLab Quebec. Adam is an interdisciplinary scholar whose research draws on theories of capitalism, nation, and race to critically explore organizational phenomena in the nonprofit and philanthropic sector. His research is oriented around themes of social and economic justice, as well as research partnerships with community-led organizations.

“Crisis” is one of the most ubiquitous terms in modern philanthropic discourse. It is frequently invoked yet rarely defined. In recent years, for example, scholars have oriented their work around the COVID-19 crisis (e.g., Finchum-Mason et al., 2020; Hampton et al., 2024), the climate crisis (e.g., Monier, 2025; Morena, 2023), a crisis of democracy (e.g., Eisen et al., 2019; Reich, 2019; Stid, 2024), the refugee crisis (e.g., Alexander, 2020; Theodossopoulos, 2016), and a seemingly recurrent carousel of financial crises (e.g., Godfrey & Williamson, 2020; Osili et al., 2019). Likewise, pressing domestic social policy issues such as poverty, racial inequality, lack of affordable housing, and opioid addiction are increasingly characterized as “crises” in their own right to be acted upon by philanthropy (e.g., Francis, 2016; Ulrichs, 2026).

Against this backdrop, philanthropic practitioners have also turned inward, reflecting on their own practices and on philanthropy’s institutional role and legitimacy, in what some have come to see as philanthropy’s own “existential crisis” (e.g., McQueen, 2021; Mussadique, 2025). The proliferation of the term across such a range of domains invites a question that philanthropic discourse has largely left unasked: what do we actually mean by crisis?

The origins of the word “crisis” can be found in Ancient Greece, where it carried distinct meanings in legal, medical, and theological contexts (Koselleck, 2006). From the seventeenth century onward, the term expanded as a metaphor into politics, history, psychology, ecology, and economics, each carrying its own logic and, crucially, its own set of implied prescriptions for response. A political crisis signified a fundamental constitutional rupture that threatened the survival of a political order. Philosophers of history understood crisis as a unique temporal threshold after which history is permanently altered. Psychological frameworks recast crisis as a necessary and generative turning point in an individual’s identity formation rather than a purely pathological rupture (e.g., Erikson, 1968), while ecological thinkers introduced planetary thresholds, tipping points, and potentially irreversible changes to the biosphere (Moore, 2017).

Crisis has also played a constitutive role in the development of economic thought, with each major intervention redefining not only what crises are but what they demand in response. Classical economists like Ricardo and Mill viewed crises as real but self-correcting, requiring patience rather than intervention. Marx rejected this entirely, insisting that crises were structural contradictions of capital accumulation destined to recur with increasing severity. Bagehot shifted the frame from correction to containment, arguing that central banks should flood the financial system with emergency lending during panics rather than wait for markets to stabilize on their own. Keynes went further, calling for active counter-cyclical state intervention to sustain demand and prevent crises from becoming depressions. Hayek and Friedman inverted this logic, arguing that government intervention was itself the source of economic instability. Their prescription—cutting public spending, privatizing state functions, and leaving markets to self-correct—became the dominant policy response to crisis from the 1980s onward (Harvey, 2007). Each register, in other words, encodes a theory of cause and a theory of remedy. The difficulty is that contemporary crises routinely implicate all of them at once.

The term “polycrisis”—first developed by French philosophers Edgar Morin and Anne Brigitte Kern and subsequently popularized by historian Adam Tooze (2022)—captures this reality: multiple crises governed by seemingly distinct logics interacting in such a way that the overall impact exceeds the sum of its parts. Contemporary crises illustrate how political, psychological, ecological, and economic dimensions are mutually constitutive rather than merely concurrent. The War in Iran offers a vivid illustration: a humanitarian catastrophe simultaneously triggers a global economic crisis as Iran closes the Strait of Hormuz, with disproportionate impact on Global South nations dependent on energy exports; generates political crises in Iran, the US, and Gulf States; accelerates ecological destruction through bombardment and the destruction of oil refineries; and reshapes domestic political priorities in distant countries, including Canada’s pivot toward pipeline expansion. The rise of AI illustrates that this entanglement is not confined to geopolitical conflict. Here, we see rapid but bubble-prone economic growth concentrated in a handful of companies; structural job displacement through automation; the massive ecological footprint of data centres; algorithmic

amplification of polarization, misinformation, and psychological distress; and a fundamental crisis of democratic legitimacy, as transformative decisions affecting everyone are made by a small group of tech oligarchs unaccountable to the public. These intersecting crises are not exceptional; rather, they are characteristic of the present conjuncture.

Philanthropic intervention necessarily occurs at this intersection. The contributions gathered in this special issue take up these questions from a range of disciplinary and regional perspectives. Many examine philanthropy in its more familiar register as a responder to crisis, mapping how foundations, donors, and civil society organizations have mobilized in the face of humanitarian emergencies, democratic backsliding, ecological disruption, and economic precarity. Others push further, asking what it would mean to respond not just to crises as they present themselves, but to the conditions that produce them.

But the special issue also asks more pointed questions of the philanthropic sector itself: what is philanthropy’s relationship not just to crisis response, but to crisis itself? Philanthropic endowments invested in markets may actively contribute to the environmental destruction, labour displacement, and inequality that the same foundations seek to address through grantmaking. The capacity of private institutions to redirect public tax expenditure toward causes of their own choosing raises fundamental questions about democratic legitimacy. Namely, is this a symptom of a crisis in democracy, or a potential corrective to it? Philanthropy may function as a safety valve, absorbing the social pressures generated by crisis just enough to forestall the structural change that would address root causes. Philanthropy is thus not only a responder to crisis but potentially a symptom of it, and in some configurations, a perpetuator of it.

The contributions gathered here do not seek to resolve these tensions. What they offer instead is a more precise vocabulary for naming them, and a more honest reckoning with what it would mean for philanthropy to respond not just to crises as they appear, but to the conditions that produce them.

Lastly, thank you to all the contributors—the researchers, practitioners, community members, artists, activists, and editors—who made this issue of the PhiLanthropic Year possible.

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# L'Année PhiLanthropique

## The PhiLanthropic Year



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