

L'Année PhiLanthropique

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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), anciennement Laboratoire montréalais de recherche sur la philanthropie canadienne, a été pensé en 2014 dans le cadre de la conception de la demande de financement du projet développement de partenariat CRSH intitulé « Innovation sociale, changement sociétal et Fondations subventionnaires canadiennes ». Ce financement a été reconduit en 2018 sous le nom d'« Évaluation du rôle et des actions de fondations subventionnaires canadiennes en réponse à l'enjeu des inégalités sociales et des défis environnementaux ». Depuis ses débuts, le Réseau constitue un lieu de recherche, de partage d'information et de mobilisation des connaissances des fondations canadiennes. Des recherches conduites en partenariat permettent la coproduction de nouvelles connaissances dédiées à une diversité d'acteurs : des représentants gouvernementaux, des chercheurs universitaires, des représentants du secteur philanthropique et leurs organisations affiliées ou des partenaires.

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), previously called the Montreal Research Laboratory on Canadian philanthropy, was thought up in 2014 as part of the conception of a funding request by the NRCC partnership development project called “Social innovation, social change, and Canadian Grantmaking Foundations”. From its beginning, the Network was a place for research, information exchange and mobilization of Canadian foundations’ knowledge. Research conducted in partnership allows for the co-production of new knowledge dedicated to a diversity of actors: government representatives, university researchers, representatives of the philanthropic sector and their affiliate organizations or partners.

The Network brings together researchers, decision-makers and members of the philanthropic community from around the world in order to share information, resources, and ideas.



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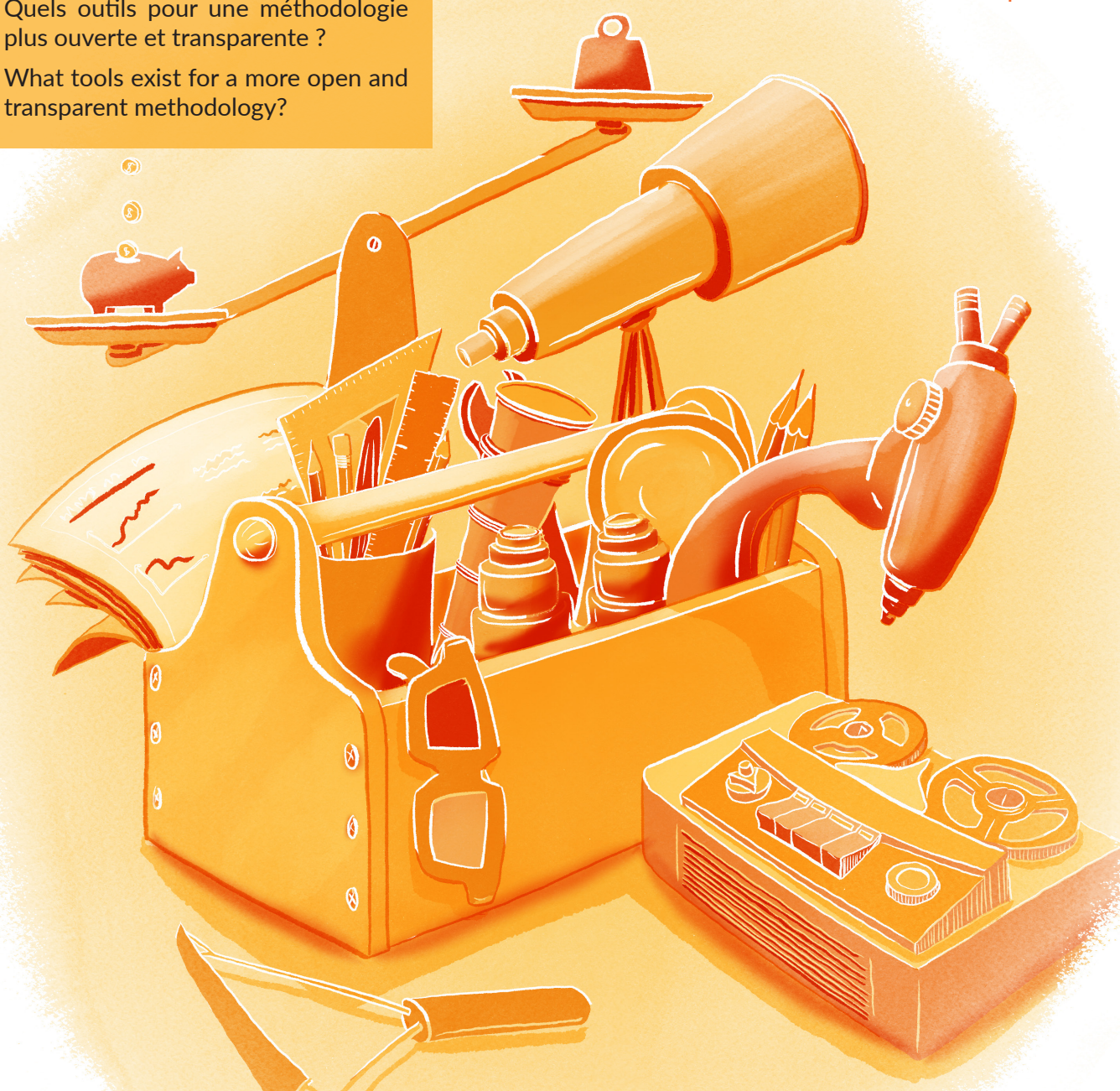
Canada

MÉTHODOLOGIE | METHODOLOGY

Quels outils pour une méthodologie plus ouverte et transparente ?

What tools exist for a more open and transparent methodology?

Artiste | Artist: Mélika





Research is empty without personal connection: Thoughts on developing a research methodology for philanthropy as a topic of investigation

By Emily Doyle, *PhiLab Atlantic Hub coordinator and post doc at the Grenfell campus of Memorial University of NL*



Emily Doyle is PhiLab's Atlantic Hub Coordinator. She is also a post doc at the Grenfell campus of Memorial University of NL.

'Philanthropy' can be contradictory as a subject of social science investigation. On the one hand, philanthropic contributions across the world, the country, and even across the street fuel good deeds that need doing. On the other hand, the source of the wealth and abundance that allows some to give, and others to receive is worthy of critical examination and research. This is why the concept of a philanthropic system or ecosystem appeals to me as it theoretically allows a researcher to understand the relationships that make up philanthropy. The question of how social scientists research systems brings us to another contradiction. Researchers are not separate from the social systems they study. How do you study the same system of which you are a part?

Three methodological tools which I used to study the school food system for my PhD research derive from systems thinking literature. They ask of the researcher to develop a methodology that is 1. Iterative; 2. Transformative; and 3. Interdisciplinary.

The underlying rationale for systems thinking in social systems is that it is clear the systems we live in need adjustment and improvement (transformation). The climate crisis is one tangible example which is not distinct from the evidence of harmful food systems and imbalanced social systems. It is easy to talk of these systems as if I stand outside them and not within them. That is where the need for an iterative process comes into a systems thinking inspired methodology. The researcher must come to understand their place in the system and further develop the research based on those learnings.

Iterative learning

For example, over the course of many years of trying to write about, to understand and to research the NL school food system, I came to see through conversations with my mentors that an important part of researching a system was learning about how I brought many assumptions and limitations to my understanding, discussion, and conceptualization of food systems. The place where I began as a researcher was from a white settler environmental justice mode of thinking, a place I arrived at having grown up in a wealthy family whose profits derived from a

family business which specialized in introducing new processed and packaged foods and medicines to this province. The education afforded me from these profits, and several other life events, led me to become conscious of and concerned about the way the foods we eat can connect us or detach us from the planet.

I spent some time living in Montreal studying farm systems and connecting to grassroots food advocacy and returned to my home with a *mission* to reassess the food habits and lifestyles of people in this part of the world. In early versions of my research, I talked about the 'NL food culture' but it is more clear to me now how there is not only one NL food culture. The idealized food culture that I was attempting to conjure was one dating back about 100 years to the early 1900s when many people had to live off the land. They relied on the fishery for income, they gardened and kept animals, and harvested foods from the wild for survival. The strengths from this idealized image of NL food culture (from an environmentally conscious perspective) are the degree to which it was possible to survive in this place based on consuming naturally sourced meat and produce. Contrast that to another abstracted food culture, that of a contemporary Nlian who has turned their back on the environment as a source of food and now relies on the grocery store to buy commodified industrialized foods from elsewhere to serve their nutritional needs (or not).



However, this simplified dichotomy does not tell us all we need to know to learn, to think outside of disciplines and to transform into better food systems. A key piece of knowledge and truth missing from this account is a more grounded context of where these early settlers (my ancestors) came from, how they acquired land, how they related to the people indigenous to this land, how they removed people from their food culture and may have in part also learned/appropriated skills and knowledge from these people about survival. This history and truth are an important part of understanding identity and food systems in this province. As a researcher, I am still encountering the large task of figuring out how I move forward with meaningful connected research that helps move beyond assumptions and discover gaps to understand how to build better questions that allow society to better understand how to move forward.

Transformation

Today, I attempt to develop new research to study how food system advocacy in Atlantic Canada interacts with the philanthropic ecosystem. I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from a number of ongoing initiatives and advocates in this space. Last winter I attended [The Circle's Winter Feast](#) and learned of the way in which the Circle distinguishes between Indigenous philanthropy and settler philanthropy. In her description of Indigenous led philanthropy in [this podcast](#), Kris Archie describes her experience growing up with her family and community and sharing a salmon as being a model of philanthropy. It is through this example and through reading about Indigenous food sovereignty in Canada (Settee and Shukla, 2020), and more broadly about food advocacy in Canada, that I now understand how food is a powerful demonstration of philanthropy. Food, like money, is a resource that we need to collectively understand how to share and distribute. And in this country, at this time, we can't move forward in our understanding or shaping of food systems or philanthropic systems without confronting the truths and harms of colonization but also without engaging in introspection of our place in these systems.

In the opening session of the [2022 PhiLab conference](#), panelists implore the listeners to look at where we sit in the systems that we are trying to change and what roles and powers we have to do things differently. It is this type of questioning that leads me as a researcher to attempt to look at my process of moving forward in

this space with the ability to ask the right questions and engage in research that is sensitive to these understandings.

Interdisciplinary/ Combining multiple knowledges

So much of what we know as researchers gets defined and bounded by the disciplines in which we fit within the academic institution. Still being new to philanthropy research, I cannot claim to know enough about what is known. But, I do think that it is fair to say that one of the blind spots of current methodologies for the study of philanthropy in this country has been to not look at the place of the researcher within that same system. I believe future research of philanthropy will be enriched by an incorporation of truthful reflective accounts of where we as researchers fit within the system of philanthropy and the lessons we learn from these reflexive positions. I also believe that this is not an easy process. As I set out to build a methodology framed to be iterative, transdisciplinary and transformative I can only begin from a truthful account of what brought me to this place. My next step is to work from this place to build relationships with those who work within food systems and philanthropy in this region and to build research from this understanding with continued self and system reflection.



This has led me to investigate more about decolonizing methodologies which I am hoping to build in my future research projects. One specific publication by Ranjan Datta (2021), is “Community-led food resilience: A decolonizing autographic learning from an Inuit community”. What I appreciate about Datta’s research methodology is that it is focused not on other people’s learnings but what on what Datta is learning from other people. This for me as a researcher is a promising place to develop a methodology in this complicated space. It requires the researcher to spend the time to explain their place in the system of investigation and to also demonstrate the way in which being embedded in that system enables the researcher as a person to learn from people who live and work in that same system: how it is experienced and what can be done to improve.

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