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> ICOR

**RESEARCH  
SEMINAR**



EMPOWERING CHANGEMAKERS FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

## **“PHILANTHROPY FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY”**

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### **ABSTRACT**

For the past eight years, there has been a rising interest for systems change among social sector practitioners aiming to tackle entrenched social problems. Relatedly, criticism has targeted grantmaking foundations for failing to support “changemakers” engaged in systemic approaches due to inappropriate funding practices. Recommendations for funding systems change and shifting the status quo in philanthropy are surging. However, we know little about foundation executives’ representations and practices regarding systems change. In this exploratory study combining in-depth interviews (n=15) and a survey (n=101) with leaders of large French foundations, I reveal important gaps between a marked interest for systems change and current funding practices. I present six key obstacles and discuss the challenges of diffusing systems change philanthropy more widely, in particular among certain foundation types.