

# JUNIOR SCHOLARS FORUM

Reimagining Civil Society,  
Philanthropy, and Social Innovation  
in a World in Crisis

19-20 June, 2025



**DEADLINE  
FOR APPLICATIONS  
FRIDAY,  
FEBRUARY 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2025**

**DATE:**  
Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup>  
&  
Friday, June 20<sup>th</sup>,  
2025

**HOSTED AT:**



ESSEC Business School  
Paris Cergy Campus  
France

**CO-ORGANIZED BY:**



## CONTEXT

Ten years ago, the **Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society (PACS)** organized the first edition of the **PACS Junior Scholars Forum**. The goal of the forum is to highlight exciting work being done by young scholars across the globe and to contribute to the development of their scholarship. It brings together emerging researchers, including PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty, working in the general areas of civil society and philanthropy to increase the sense of intellectual community and enhance the overall quality of research.

Meanwhile, in 2015, faculty members at **HEC Liège** and **ESSEC Business School** launched the **Doctoral Seminar in Social Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy (SEPHI)**. Their goal was to enable doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows to critically debate the literature and its theoretical underpinnings, learn about developing and crafting research papers in this field, strengthen ongoing research, and develop ties with emerging and senior scholars in a burgeoning research community. The SEPHI organizing team expanded to include colleagues from **emlyon business school** and **IESEG School of Management** and organized four editions of the seminar.

For this 2025 edition, Stanford PACS invited **ESSEC Business School's Philanthropy Chair** and **Social Innovation Chair** to co-host the next Junior Scholars Forum edition in France. Given our shared values and common objectives to nurture emerging scholars, we decided to all join forces to organize this event with the aim of reinvigorating research on all forms of private initiatives and organizations addressing collective challenges that neither governments nor markets can solve on their own.

# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS



## Theme & scope

We invite junior scholars (PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty) working and developing research in the general areas of civil society, philanthropy, and social innovation to apply for the 2025 Forum. We welcome applications from junior scholars in various academic disciplines: management, economics, sociology, political science, philosophy, history, and other fields in the humanities and social sciences.

Civil society traditionally refers to a political community of free and equal citizens participating in furthering common goals and interests. It encompasses various groups, communities, movements, and associations of citizens, distinct from state institutions and peacefully furthering democratic ideals. Civil society organizations and initiatives can take up many forms, but they are usually distinguished from for-profit firms and public authorities. A range of private initiatives occupy this vital space between business and government to provide social benefits and usher change in various causes through service provision, entrepreneurship, advocacy and policy reform, protests, social and political innovation, research, philanthropic funding, and much more.

Civil society is under attack in many places of the world. Illiberal and authoritarian regimes are on the rise and democracy has lost its moral superiority as a universal ideal. Entrenched social and economic inequities, environmental crises, geopolitical tensions and wars feed each other. Meanwhile, desirable futures and utopias are imagined and experimented everywhere as a response to these daunting collective challenges. Civil society is threatened and extremely active at the same time.

The 2025 Junior Scholars Forum encourages submissions related to academic research on these important topics. We are open to a wide variety of perspectives and topic areas including, but certainly not limited to, the following:

- Alternative ownership and governance models;
- Artificial intelligence, tech ventures and platforms “for good”;
- Collective social entrepreneurship processes;
- Corporate philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and other business initiatives;
- Cross-sector partnerships, collective impact, collaboration of multiple stakeholders;
- Decision-making processes and criteria in grantmaking foundations;
- Democratic organizations and the democratization of the economy;
- Elites, capitalism, and plutocratic tendencies in civil society;
- Hybrid organizations (e.g. B-Corps) and the challenges of hybrid organizing;
- Impact investments, social impact bonds, blended finance, and other hybrid funding;
- Impact measurement and management and its consequences;
- Legal and fiscal frameworks encouraging or impeding civil society;
- Political innovation and initiatives to foster democracy and political change;
- Social movements, protests, and advocacy groups;
- Systems thinking, systems change, and its funding challenges;
- Tainted money, dirty gifts, and the ethical dilemmas in fundraising;
- Trust-based philanthropy and the power asymmetry between funders and grantees.

## Objectives



The goal of the 2025 Philanthropy and Civil Society Junior Scholars Forum is to support junior scholars (PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty) working and developing research in the general areas of civil society, philanthropy, and social innovation.

Our objective is to increase the sense of intellectual community and enhance the overall quality of research, regardless of disciplinary boundaries. We want to highlight and support exciting work being done by junior scholars and to contribute to the development of their scholarship in the fields of management, economics, sociology, political science, philosophy, history, and other humanities and social sciences.

### **The seminar will enable junior scholars to:**

- Present their work and receive high-quality, tailored feedback from their peers and from senior scholars.
- Learn about exciting research being conducted by other promising scholars in different disciplines and fields.
- Participate in intellectual debates and conversations about the role and functioning of civil society, philanthropy, and social innovation.
- Create bonds and friendships that will last beyond this event.

# ORGANIZING TEAM

## Faculty

### ESSEC BUSINESS SCHOOL:

- **Anne-Claire Pache,**  
Chaired Professor in Social Innovation; Associate Dean for Global Strategy and Sustainability.
- **Arthur Gautier,**  
Chaired Professor in Philanthropy, Associate Dean for Chairs.

### STANFORD UNIVERSITY:

- **Walter W. Powell,**  
Jacks Family Professor of Education, and (by courtesy) Sociology, Organizational Behavior, Management Science and Engineering, and Communication.
- **Johanna Mair,**  
Professor of Organization, Strategy, and Leadership; Academic Editor of the Stanford Social Innovation Review.
- **Lisa Overbey,**  
Associate Director of Research and Scholar Programs, Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society.

### HEC LIÈGE:

- **Virginie Xhaufclair,**  
Professor of Business Ethics and Philanthropy.
- **Frédéric Dufays,**  
Associate Professor of Social and Sustainable Entrepreneurship.

### EMLYON BUSINESS SCHOOL:

- **Nevena Radoynovska,**  
Associate Professor of Strategy & Organization.
- **Christof Brandtner,**  
Associate Professor of Social Innovation.

### IÉSEG SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT:

- **Benjamin Huybrechts,**  
Professor of Business & Society.

## Management & Staff

### ESSEC BUSINESS SCHOOL:

- **Tiffany Besnard,**  
Assistant, Social Innovation Chair.
- **Jennifer Rodrigues da Silva,**  
Assistant, Philanthropy Chair.
- **Félicie Goyet,**  
Pedagogical Coordinator, Social Innovation Chair.
- **Clare Woodcraft,**  
Executive Director, Philanthropy Chair.



## Target audience

We want to provide an inclusive and nurturing experience for different levels of seniority and experience among junior scholars. The Forum will be limited to **30 participants** (10 organizing faculty, 10 early-stage junior scholars, 10 advanced junior scholars) and no parallel sessions will be organized. We propose two separate tracks to solicit applications:

### 1. The early-stage track (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year PhD students)

A group of **10 early-stage PhD students** (who are in the first three years of their PhD programs) will be selected from a competitive pool of applicants, based on a short paper or long abstract.

Early-stage PhD students will be invited to present their work in a supportive, 2-hour session organized in thematic roundtables. They will benefit from constructive and intimate feedback from more advanced junior scholars as well as senior faculty members working on similar topics.

### 2. The advanced track (final year PhDs, postdoctoral students, assistant professors)

A group of **10 advanced junior scholars** (including PhD candidates nearing the job market, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty) will be selected from a competitive pool of applicants based on a specific research paper.

Each junior scholar will present their work in a dedicated, 1-hour session and benefit from two discussants (a senior faculty member and a fellow junior scholar working on similar topics) as well as questions and feedback from the whole group of participants.

## Submission details

Interested candidates should send their **research material** and an **academic CV** in attachment to an **email motivating** their participation.

- **For the early-stage track** (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year PhD students): please send an **extended abstract** (1,000-3,000 words) outlining your ongoing research and what you would most like feedback on.
- **For the advanced track (final year PhD, postdoctoral students, assistant professors)**: please send a **full-length paper** not currently published (we accept manuscripts under review or undergoing revisions) on which you want to receive detailed feedback.

Applications should be sent before **Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025** to [jstf@essec.edu](mailto:jstf@essec.edu). We will accept as many applications as possible, up to 20 participants.

Applications will be carefully reviewed by the organizing faculty team. Please send your application as soon as possible. Decisions will be communicated to applicants by **Monday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025**.

The contact person for all applications is Ms. Tiffany Besnard and can be contacted at [jstf@essec.edu](mailto:jstf@essec.edu).

## Practical details

The Philanthropy and Civil Society Junior Scholars Forum will be held **on Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup> and Friday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025**. A welcome reception will be organized on the evening before the Forum starts (Wednesday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025).

The Forum will take place on the main campus of **ESSEC Business School** (3 avenue Bernard Hirsch, 95021 Cergy-Pontoise), in the **greater Paris area (France)**. The welcome reception and the partner hotel will be in Paris, and a private shuttle will be available to participants to go to and from the ESSEC campus.

**Full funding** will be provided to all selected participants for accommodation (2 nights in Paris), meals, and participation fees. Funding for travel expenses will be provided to participants who need financial support. The organizing team will contact them to take care of travel reservations.

For PhD students interested in validating **ECTS credits** for the Forum, it is possible to receive a course certificate issued by HEC Liège, Liège University, provided that the course evaluation is positive. Students who wish to receive the ECTS validation should mention it in their email when applying for the Forum. They will then receive more information regarding the final evaluation, consisting of the submission of a full paper and the presentation of their research project.

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