

« Tous Unis Contre Le Virus » Alliance : A Field Analysis

**An original case study of transphilanthropic partnership
in emergency context**

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Abstract :

Philanthropic partnerships in emergency contexts remain an underinvestigated field of research due to the lack of empirical cases brought to discussion. Hence, in this paper we draw on Inter-Organisational Emergency Management (IOEM) and Strategic Action Field (SAF) literatures to shed light on the original “Tous Unis Contre le Virus” initiative, an alliance between three major philanthropic actors during the Covid-19 crisis from March to May 2020: the Fondation de France, the Pasteur Institute and the Fondation AP-HP. By limiting the case study to alliance partners, we intend to understand the alliance-building process from organisations’ and individuals’ point of view. Study shows that asymmetrical positions of actors in the philanthropic field partially explain their functional roles in the alliance. Furthermore, the fact that managers share aligned “cognitive frames”, and the gift transfers between foundations are additional clues in our in-depth comprehensive approach.

Key-words : Philanthropy, Covid-19, emergency management, alliance, organizational theory

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of Covid-19 has challenged modern societies, generating emergency responses never seen before: governments locked down 4,6 billion individuals in more than 60 different countries, international NGOs deployed homeland humanitarian support and original alliances in health sectors emerged, with firms, non-profits and public administrations cooperating in order to deliver urgent medical services¹. Managing these large *ad hoc* partnerships usually requires an intensive knowledge and experience in interorganizational cooperation for their leaders, as well as a fine sense of each partner's internal dynamics in order to reach the goals set for these alliances. In France, a peculiar form of interorganizational cooperation emerged from the Covid-19 crisis: three philanthropic actors, namely the Fondation de France, the Fondation AP-HP (Assistance Publique – Hôpitaux de Paris) hereafter FAP-HP, and the Pasteur Institute, teamed up from March 24 to June 30 in the “Tous Unis Contre le Virus” alliance. These three partners coordinated expertise and human resources in order to deliver medical devices, Covid-19 medical research programs and food distribution operations for the poorest (among many others).

Such an alliance is thus an intriguing case of interorganizational emergency management (IOEM) since, contrary to other cases found in the scientific literature, it involves philanthropic organizations only. Studying such an IOEM case raises two challenges: on the one hand, it raises a theoretical challenge. Most scientific works indeed focus on the kind of coordinated responses to immediate crises — such as natural or industrial disasters — that involve large sets of heterogeneous actors including international organizations, governments, public administrations, NGOs, corporate firms and communities. They often underline how harsh operational conditions and the unpreparedness of organizations can lead to a confused response. Rather than evaluating the successes and failures of the “Tous Unis Contre le Virus” alliance, our intent is to understand how it came to birth in such a difficult context. To do so, we draw on Strategic Action Field theory (Fligstein and McAdam; 2012) to picture the positions of actors in the French philanthropic environment and to explain why, setting aside their own circumstantial vested interests, they agreed to build and participate in such an alliance. On the other hand, it raises a methodological challenge. Emergency crises such as the Covid-19 outbreak are challenging for researchers in terms of data collection. There are only small opportunity windows for gathering real-time data, few chances for interviewing busy emergency operators who work in a context of great uncertainty as the evolution of the sanitary situation cannot be foreseen. To address these challenges, we collected data one month after the alliance ended, in order to reduce to a minimum the temporal distance between the event and the narrative reconstitutions by the stakeholders. Moreover, we chose from the outset to strictly delineate our study and inquiry, focusing solely on the process of alliance-building between the three partners. The collected data allows us to provide preliminary answers to the following question: *how did the three partners redesign their scope of actions to identify, channel and deliver the socially needed resources during the 2020 Covid-19 outbreak?* First, we identify the position of each philanthropic actor in the philanthropic field and their asymmetrical positions in “philanthropic intervention sectors” before the crisis. Then, we show how each actor redresses these field and sector imbalances by drawing on the resources of other organizations, this opportunity being enabled by the alliance-building process.

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LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL POSITIONING

UNDERSTANDING INTERORGANIZATIONAL EMERGENCY COLLABORATIONS IN A POLITICAL-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Case studies in interorganizational emergency management (IOEM) have proliferated over the past two decades. Most of the studied cases are institutional responses to natural disasters such as hurricane Katrina (Comfort; 2006, Whitaker *et al*; 2009, Butt *et al*; 2012, Older; 2016), or industrial catastrophes such as Deepwater Horizon (Diers and Eargle; 2012, Donohue; 2013) or Chernobyl (Geist; 2015), or even in geopolitical conflicts such as Afghan war (Rietjens *et al*; 2008). When leading these inquiries on interorganizational crisis management, authors face heterogeneous situations. Each case involves different sets of actors, embedded in complex and uncertain environments, with sometimes data collection difficulties (Roux-Dufort; 2007, Majchrzak *et al*; 2015, Moshtari and Gonçalves; 2017). Moreover, the literature remains equivocal when qualifying the “interorganizational” dimensions of collaborations: some cases depict public-private partnerships while others analyze collaborations with organizations of the same nature, without highlighting the specificity of each situation. In spite of this growing body of research, few analytical systematizations have been elaborated so far. Only very recently, political scientists Donald Blondin and Arjen Boin (2020) proposed a synthetic conceptual framework involving macro-level hypotheses. Drawing on collective action literature (Olson; 1965, Sandler; 1992, Keohane and Ostrom; 1994) and transboundary crisis management (Ansell *et al*; 2010, Backman and Rhinard; 2018, Laegreid and Rykkja; 2018) they identify eight factors incentivizing IOEM collaboration: 1/the level of politicization of the crisis, 2/disaster exposure, 3/ the degree of decoupling of the state and the crisis, 4/partners’ shared experiences, 5/the number of actors involved, 6/the organizational capacities, 7/the level of uncertainty, 8/the presence of leaders. Such a framework indeed provides key independent variables allowing us to understand the successes and failures of emergency collaborations.

One of the pitfalls of such attempts to draw general lessons from case studies is that such a framework does not justify the roles of each actor *within* the alliance, as if each partner would *a priori* know perfectly its role and position relative to others. A mere functionalist division of operational labor cannot apply in messy, emergency contexts in which goals cannot be clearly identified from the outset. To bridge the gap between the interorganizational emergency management (IOEM) research on the one hand and a comprehensive understanding of the position of organizations during an alliance on the other hand, we draw on Strategic Action Field theory (SAF). We argue that not only can it copy with “transboundary crisis management framework” as presented by Blondin and Boin (2020), but it also provides key concepts to understand the reasons behind the way actors position themselves in relation to others. Our intent is not to merely translate the “transboundary crisis management framework” into SAF terms, but to slide IOEM studies out of reductionist success-and-failure considerations as both frameworks appear complementary to us.

Indeed, SAF theory consistently articulates a number of core concepts, and cherry-picking them would be methodologically misleading. In this respect, below we briefly review the concepts of strategic action field, incumbent/challenger division, social skills, broader field environment, exogenous shocks and episodes and contention. Central in the theory is the concept of strategic action fields, which are defined as

“meso-level social orders in which actors are attuned to and interact with one another on the basis of shared understandings about the purpose of the field, relationships to others in the field and the rules governing legitimate action in the field.” (Fligstein and McAdam; 2012, p9).

Our intent is not to assume a priori the existence of strategic action fields in the “Tous Unis Contre le Virus” case. By cautiously collecting specific empirical evidence, we should pave the way to prove their existence. In order to do so, SAF theory raises empirical questions such as: is there an issue to be dealt with? Do the different actors have shared or competing understandings of the issue? By what kind of power relationships are the actors connected to each other? SAF theory thus creates a roadmap for inquiry, with other SAF concepts naming empirical building blocks to find out. In emergency contexts, SAF theory may provide us with an understanding of the cultural-political past experiences of both individuals and organizations—of how these experiences have framed actors’ shared understandings of a given emergency and how they respond to it; how internal conflicts can emerge and how they can be dealt with.

A first building block is the field incumbent/challenger division (Gamson; 1975). Incumbents are actors who hold a powerful position within a field, attested by a privileged access to material and symbolic resources needed to maintain the existing social order and hierarchies in the field. Challengers have, on the contrary, a limited access to these resources and intend to access incumbency positions. A second building block refers to “social skills,” meaning the cognitive capacities of individuals to share understandings of an issue and frame lines of action drawing on mutual cultural-political references. Social skills are close to the idea of “cognitive frames” allowing individuals to sort out doable and inconceivable solutions to the emergency crisis. “Cognitive frames” are Goffmanian “schemata of interpretations [Goffman; 1986] that allow individuals to organize their understanding of their environment” (Kaplan; 2008, p736). A third building block refers to the broader field environment, meaning the bundle of proximate, distant dependent or interdependent, non-state and state fields to the case study. A fourth building block refers to exogenous shocks generating contention within a field: emergency crises here provide heuristic cases since they often penetrate all segments of society at once. A fifth building block refers to episodes of contention, meaning the chronology of events tracing struggles for field incumbency between actors. A sixth concept of settlement categorizes a period where the actors’ position is stabilizing after episodes of contention. As we gathered evidence in the case study, we understood that the Covid-19 crisis provided a well-fitting situation of exogenous shock in the so-called philanthropic field. The positions of the three foundations within the philanthropic environment and their behavior was indeed a good illustration of episodes of incumbency challenges and related contention among actors. Our aim is thus to understand how well SAF theory can fit this empirical material. Besides, we acknowledge that some SAF features invite to project a static representation of social events: articulating dynamically incumbent/ challenger relative positions to “episodes of contentions” and external shocks remains a conceptual challenge. For instance, bringing to light the net impact of the Covid-19 shock on alliance building requires to separate longstanding organizational changes within organizations from situational ones, generated by emergencies. In order to cope with such difficulties, we ought to retrace each organization’ main internal discussion before the French national lockdown on March, the 16th. Restituting these debates, as articulated to Covid-19’s crisis increasing awareness in the organizations, helps to understand dynamical alignments in alliance-building.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

As a matter of fact, each foundation collaborated in order to deliver a philanthropic joint response to the Covid-19 outbreak. Thus, how did philanthropic organizations redesign their scope of action to identify, channel and deliver socially needed resources during the 2020 Covid-19 outbreak? Drawing on the existing SAF taxonomy, we analyze the “Tous Unis Contre le Virus” alliance-building process as a collective action at the intersection of multiple “philanthropic intervention sectors,” namely hospital staff support, medical research and poverty alleviation. Philanthropic intervention sectors are areas of expertise in which philanthropic actors routinely raise and fund philanthropic projects. As each philanthropic actor relatively specialized in one of these, they lacked resources of operational expertise and legitimacy allowing them to intervene out of their own dedicated philanthropic intervention sector. However, as all three foundations are embedded in the same philanthropic field, individuals within organizations share aligned “cognitive frames” and references of philanthropic response to produce. An important clue sustaining this idea is to be found in the executive managers’ representation of the alliance as a mutually beneficial operation, meaning for them a collective action putting aside each organizations’ interest in this competitive field and building a broader collective good. Thus, the alliance appears as the coincidental solution for two problems: ensuring that each actor is incumbent in the philanthropic field and gathering enough legitimacy to cross-intervene in other philanthropic intervention sectors. In other words, we draw on three hypotheses:

H1: *We hypothesize that philanthropic actors’ relative positions both in the philanthropic field and in “philanthropic intervention sectors” have a decisive role in distributing their roles in the alliance.*

7 Past experiences of emergency management, differences in the specialization of each foundation and objective traces of asymmetrical positions in the philanthropic field have led each foundation to dive into the alliance with different degrees of implication, generating a certain type of alliance architecture.

H2: *We argue that such distribution operates through exchanges of expertise skills and legitimacy gifts presented to the alliance’s central pot.*

Empirical evidence shows us that a number of services such as philanthropic engineering and media manpower are mutualized by the partners. Furthermore, each foundation thus accepts to share legitimacy by sharing the names of the other foundations and by mobilizing their social networks.

H3: *We think that executive managers in philanthropic organizations have aligned “cognitive frames” in an emergency situation, enabling them to propose and accept the alliance.*

We hypothesize that executive managers sharing professional experiments and conceptions of philanthropic work, understood as aligned “cognitive frames”, sort out doable and inconceivable solutions to the emergency crisis. By doing so, they bypass the formal division of work within-and-inter philanthropic foundations. As a consequence, they temporarily position their own organizations as incumbents in other strategic actions fields.

METHODS AND DATA

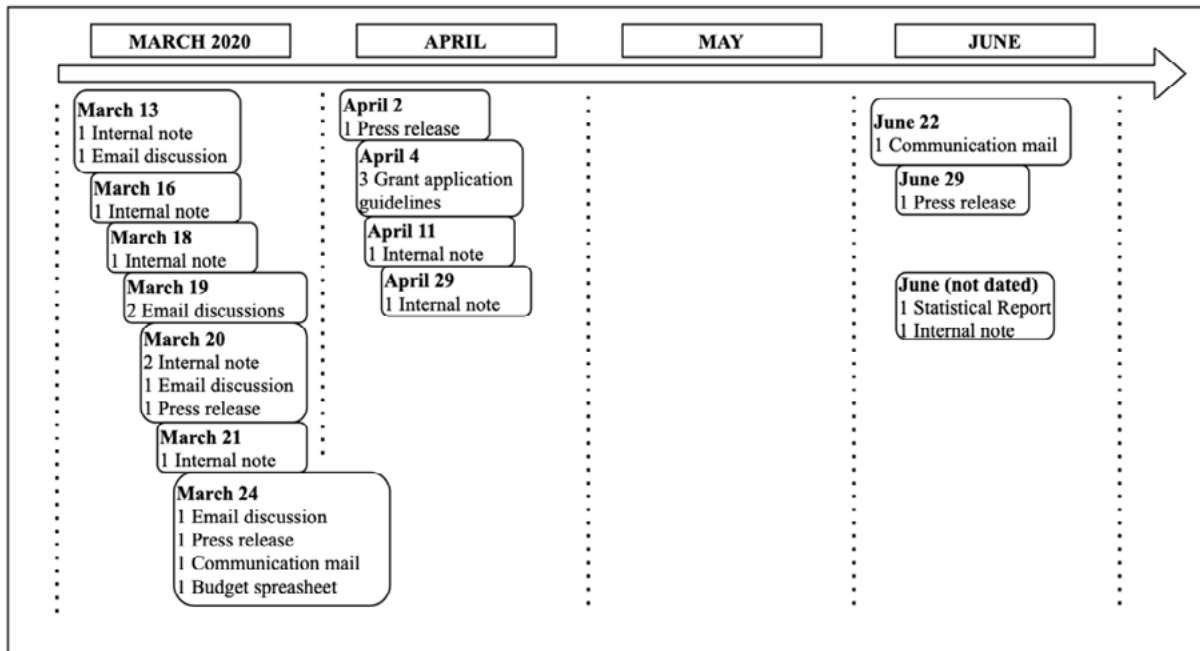
A great deal of literature reviews highlights the fact that IOEM inquiries are challenging in terms of data collection (Roux-Dufort; 2007, Majchrzak *et al*; 2015, Moshtari and Gonçalves; 2017). Partial data such as incomplete actor mapping, missing events or the unavailability of key actors for interview can seriously undermine research refutability. In particular, IOEM inquiries must deal with data collection issues. Inquiry settings may seriously hinder the possibilities for ethnographic work. As we intend to understand the cognitive frames of actors, both at the individual and the organizational-level of field analysis, we acknowledge that the lack of in-situ observations may undermine a comprehensive “all-inclusive” understanding of the chronology of events, which depends on the actors’ a posteriori reconstruction in interviews. However, we believe that our methodological precautions hold for the falsifiability of the inquiry and its replication in other contexts for several reasons. On the one hand, archival material can be confronted with interview verbatims, forcing us to sort out cross-validation evidence and unclear proofs. On the other hand, archival sources offer first-hand chronological data which can also be confronted with interview narratives.

In order to address these issues altogether, we devised three methodological landmarks: 1/ We see this case as an alliance-building process, not a comprehensive disaster response. As mentioned earlier, we are interested in the interaction between the three foundations only, the Covid-19 outbreak being an external shock 2/ While collecting data, we paid attention to temporality. 3/ We closely collaborated with one of the alliance partners in order to access all of them. This methodological choice holds several advantages but also involves biases, which require some development. Firstly, most IOEM case studies investigate comprehensive responses to massive disasters such as terrorist attacks, hurricanes, pandemics or industrial accidents: these operational responses involve a large set of private and public actors, making it difficult for researchers to capture the full picture. Here, we take an opposite stance: as the “Tous Unis Contre le Virus” alliance was publicly announced (Press Release [PR] Fondation de France, March 24th) and formal cooperation settled, we reduced the investigation scope to the three partners. As a consequence, actor mapping was delimited by the organizational borders of the foundations; this helped avoid the risk of setting aside a key stakeholder within the alliance. Secondly, the research project has been proposed to all partners twenty days after the formal ending of the alliance. Data collection occurred a month later, in order to reduce to a minimum the temporal distance between the event and the narrative reconstitutions by the stakeholders. We expect that time reduction between event and data collection can prevent a posteriori reconstitution of narratives from actors in interviews. Thirdly, the study has been designed according to three objectives, as defined in collaboration with partner and funder Fondation de France. The first goal of the study is to be descriptive: the inquiry aims at elaborating an empirically justified narrative in order to establish a chronology of events. The second goal is reflexivity: the inquiry should present relevant feedback to all alliance partners on a momentum in their organizations. The third aim is analytical: the study shows how the above-mentioned elements can be situated within current scientific debates. A total degree of autonomy has been a priori accepted by the partner in terms of data collection, theory-building and finding analysis.

On June the 23rd, a research proposal was elaborated and presented to partners, then between July 9th and 23rd, we collected two types of material. First, we interviewed fifteen philanthropic foundation managers from all three partners (Fondation de France, FAP-HP and Pasteur Institute). Due to post-lockdown sanitary conditions, all semi-structured interviews took place through teleconference. Second, as a complement to the interviews, we asked respondents to

collect a wide array of archival documents produced internally (see Figure 1), intended for colleagues or created for communication purposes: internal notes, mails, press releases, partnership convention, project listings. The great variety of material—coming from different foundations, with different production dates—offered objectivizing standpoints, allowing to compare it with interview verbatims.

Figure 1: Archival material collected (source anonymized)



1. ASYMMETRIES IN “PHILANTHROPIC INTERVENTION SECTORS” AND THE EMERGENCE OF A STRATEGIC ACTION FIELD

To understand the formation of a strategic action field in which philanthropic foundations evolve during the Covid-19 outbreak, it is worth considering their asymmetrical positions in the French philanthropic environment due to their seniority, donation support and the way their executive managers understand philanthropic work. Then, it is also worth considering how they specialized in certain “philanthropic intervention sectors,” meaning areas of expertise in which philanthropic actors routinely raise, fund and support philanthropic projects: social missions, medical research, public health service and poverty assistance. Asymmetrical positions of each foundation, both in the philanthropic environment and among intervention sectors, can be scaled on a gradient Incumbent/ Challenger (Gamson; 1975) as summarized in Figure 2.

In the section below, we show evidence of such positional asymmetries within the philanthropic environment and among sectors (1a), then analyze the actual effects of positions on crisis awareness and the way the actors positioned themselves within the alliance (1b).

1A. ACTORS’ ASYMMETRIES IN THE PHILANTHROPIC ENVIRONMENT AND IN “PHILANTHROPIC INTERVENTION SECTORS”

To get a precise sense of the positions of the foundations within the French philanthropic environment, it is worth noticing that the asymmetry is articulated by variables such as the foundations’ seniority, donation support and organizational maturity. All three actors are indeed philanthropic foundations by status: the eldest is the Pasteur Institute (130 years old), recognized as a Public Benefit Foundation in 1887 (JO; 1887). Second is the Fondation de France (51 years old), incorporated in 1968 and declared Public Benefit institution in 1969 (JO; 1969). Last is the AP-HP Foundation (4 years old), incorporated in 2016. Still, the Fondation de France demarks itself from the two others in its statutory social missions: while Pasteur Institute and FAP-HP are qualified as “operating foundations,” meaning they raise money to finance internal medical research programs, Fondation de France is a distributive foundation, meaning it finances operators rather than operating programs itself. It thus does not provide operational support of any kind. Due to its number of donor-advised funds foundations (over 900), it covers a wide range of programs as authorized by its by-laws (Fondation de France Status; 2015). Furthermore, as a non-operating foundation, it mostly provides funds to field non-profit organisations and occasionally operating foundations like the Pasteur Institute and the FAP-HP. Both the Pasteur Institute and the Fondation de France are comfortably positioned in the French philanthropic environment: the former collected 90m€ in 2018 (Pasteur Institute; 2018) while the latter raised 114m€ (Fondation de France; 2018), which puts both of them in the top 5% of the wealthiest French foundations (Observatoire de la Philanthropie; 2018) while FAP-HP has collected 18m€ since 2016. This is also illustrated by the fact that executive managers have a thorough understanding of the way philanthropy works—as evidence collected in our interviews show. In the detail, information collected about strategic orientations before Covid-19 outbreak highlight each institution’s organizational maturity and position in the field. For instance, Fondation AP-HP has been negotiating its Public Benefit endorsement status for two years, a key prerequisite to develop legitimacy and tax incentives in the French philanthropic field (Interviewee n°13). To sum up, each foundation evolves in a philanthropic environment from a different standpoint. It would be wrong to assume those as “maturity stages,” as social purposes and internal organizations differ greatly from one foundation to another. Each foundation indeed claims different philanthropic sectors of intervention.

In the sectors of medical research and public health support, asymmetries can be inferred from similar variables: the Pasteur Institute and the Fondation de France are indeed important national actors in medical research financing research issues such as rare genetic disorders, HIV and cancer treatments. Institutions such as the Pasteur Institute benefit from powerful positions in this sector, as they collect both public and private resources thanks to their Public Benefit status. The FAP-HP on the other hand, due to its recent incorporation and its strong tie to its shelter organization AP-HP, is less visible in this national landscape, even though medical research is the core of its social mission. On the contrary, FAP-HP is identified as a philanthropic arm of Parisian public hospitals. The foundation benefits from the legitimacy of its headquarters, whose name and individuals they share, at the price of a lesser autonomous strategic activity and looser ties to national scale intervention. In sum, albeit very young in the public health service sector, it enjoys a derived legitimacy in order to collect donations for medical research. Lastly, due to their social missions' status, Pasteur Institute and FAP-HP do not intervene at all in the poverty alleviation sector. Here, Fondation de France benefits from a longstanding expertise, an important number of dedicated programs and a public approval on these matters. Drawing upon the evidence described above, here is a schematic representation of each foundation's position in the three identified sectors is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Foundations' positionality in sectors and in the philanthropic environment: a canvas

Partner / sector	Medical Research	Public Health	Poverty Assistance	French philanthropy environment
Fondation de France	Incumbent	Challenger	Incumbent	Incumbent
Pasteur Institute	Incumbent	Challenger	Non-pertinent	Incumbent
FAP-HP	Challenger	(Derived) Incumbent	Non-pertinent	Challenger

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An important element to consider is that relative positions in fields and intervention sectors generate articulation issues among them within organizations. They thus imply internal debates how to either conserve such powerful positions or to reach those: these longstanding internal debates have been clearly expressed by top managers and differ from one foundation to another.

Before March 2020, such articulation issues have been dealt by designing longstanding strategic choices within foundations. Covid-19 outbreak shed light on these choices' relevance, forcing foundations to either rediscuss them internally or accelerate their implementation as predicted by path dependency theorists (Pierson; 2000, Kuipers and Boin; 2009).

For instance, Institut Pasteur's early awareness of coronavirus outbreak cannot be understood without considering that emergent diseases are the "Bayeux's tapestry" (Interviewee n°12) of the institution: since 2015, a dedicated "Outbreak investigation task force" has been created in order to centralize information and human resources for such emergencies (Interviewee n°14).

On the philanthropic side, Institut Pasteur managers underlined the undealt difficulties to raise money on “crisis-to-come” topics as they do not attract as many donors as intended. Articulations of field incumbency and challenging sectors are, in the Institut Pasteur’s case, objects of longstanding operational debates. Similar articulation difficulties are met in Fondation de France: since the foundation enjoys a powerful position in philanthropic matters, managers propose annually documents for ensuring this position. As an example, the managers of Fondation de France had engaged in developing two internal modernization plans. Firstly, transversal experts in the Social Mission (Département du Mécénat) department were writing a wide scope report titled “Revue des Programmes” in February 2020 (Interviewee n°3). This document was designed to take stock of the ongoing social mission strategies and to redesign them according to transversal axes. Secondly, the actions of regional branches have progressively been acquiring a certain level of autonomy since 2016, as shown in pilot programs such as “La Mécanique des Idées” in Mulhouse, “Hors Piste” in Hautes-Alpes, “Vendanges d’Idées” in Gironde (Interviewee n°4). Such relative empowerment of regional, experimentation-based innovations, constantly negotiated between headquarters and local branches, has not been comprehensively integrated as a formal strategic plan even though it was a “hot topic” at the beginning of year 2020. Here again, articulation between field incumbency and sectorial outreach challenges are subject to internal discussions: debates over processes of intervention sector’s modernization were not yet arbitrated when the Covid-19 outbreak started. Finally, similar articulation issues exist in the FAP-AP, as its executive director underlined: “It’s been two years’ internal discussions about how to intervene on other topics than medical research [...] we wanted to endorse the foundation as RUP (Public Benefit Status) for public health and not only research” (Interviewee n°13). After 4 years of existence, new philanthropic purposes have emerged, and they are tied to the organic tie connecting FAP-HP to its mother institution. Here, the constatation of the minor position in the philanthropic field is the motor for extending the foundation’s scope of intervention. Obstacles such as the necessary Public Benefit endorsement were being negotiated with public actors at the outbreak inception.

These debates over field and intervention sectors’ articulations show that rather than the reflexive stories presenting Covid-19 as an opportunity for organizational change, the disease shed crude light on internal problems for each organization. The transformations of these problems into an opportunity and its actualized form (an alliance-building process) is the result of an alignment of top managers’ understanding of the foundations’ role in the wider crisis response.

1B. DIFFERENTIATED CRISIS AWARENESS IN ORGANIZATIONS AND THE EXECUTIVE MANAGERS’ SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLES OF FOUNDATIONS IN IT

Asymmetrical positions of philanthropic foundations in public health and medical research sectors generated chronologically differentiated assessments of the Covid-19 outbreak as an emergency crisis. In other words, the reception of information chronologically follows the asymmetrical sector positions of the foundations. Notwithstanding temporal delays, size and magnitude of the crisis are apprehended homogeneously by executive managers across foundations. They identify socially needed goods and services thanks to internal communication processes: delivering hospital devices, funding medical research projects and supporting fragile populations. Chronologically, the Pasteur Institute was the first to take alarm in January, followed by the FAP-HP and the Fondation de France in March. On the 6th of January, an emergency steering committee on the Covid-19 outbreak is settled at the Pasteur Institute. Many factors can explain such vigilance: first of all, an emergent disease strategic plan has been put in place in 2019 (Interviewee n°14). Second, the Pasteur Institute has had quarters

in China since 2004, allowing first-hand information to circulate smoothly to French headquarters. Third, the foundation accumulated considerable knowledge from previous Coronavirus outbreaks (SARS-CoV in 2002, MERS-CoV in 2012). Between January 20 and January 30, the staff of philanthropic organizations prepared an emergency fundraising for medical research (Interviewee n°14). On February 2, the fundraising campaign was made public under the name “Urgence Coronavirus”. Similarly, FAP-HP managers have been warned early of the potential impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on the staff of Parisian hospitals and on clinical research. Close ties with hospital managers and the high level of integration of the philanthropic organization within the hospital administration allowed for smooth circulation of such critical information (Interviewee n°13). Indeed, as soon as March 8, a first emergency steering committee was settled, gathering hospital directors, an appointed emergency manager and medical team directors. In this meeting it was decided that the FAP-HP must raise at least 2m€ for medical research activation. On March 12 a communication campaign was designed and made public as “Fonds d’Urgence Covid-19 AP-HP.” On the other hand, as early as March 12th, the Fondation de France managers internally signal the potential dangers of the Covid-19 crisis. However, contrary to Pasteur Institute and FAP-HP teams, the Fondation de France’s top managers did not enact any in-house fundraising campaign like “Urgence Coronavirus” or “Fonds d’Urgence Covid-19” before March 24.

Another important finding is that at this point, during the 2nd week of March, each organization has identified the issues at stake in this crisis. Here, we argue that head executive managers formulated a similar interrogation: how can major philanthropic actors legitimately deliver the socially needed goods and services in this context? As presented above, such needs have been identified by organizations through internal communication processes but a strategic plan for donation collecting and resource delivery was not yet in place at the Fondation de France. To us, two factors can explain why these executive managers framed the delivery issue similarly: 1/ they depend on the same pool of financing resources 2/ they share a common interpretation of philanthropic work. Firstly, as a number of interviewees note (Interviewee n°5, 8, 9, 14), philanthropic donations in an emergency context is a highly competitive market. Remembering past experiences of international disaster relief campaigns, they describe the generosity of donors as valves that open widely for a short amount of time, every philanthropic collector fighting to attract donors. Secondly, all three executive managers argue against the idea of a “hierarchy of causes” (Interviewee n°5, 14) in the context of the Covid-19 outbreak. Such a narrow-minded mentality, they say, would mean that each operating collector monopolizes public generosity for their own cause in an emergency context, without considering the bigger picture. For instance, executive directors often mentioned the “Alliance Urgence” cooperation as a countermodel. Alliance Urgence is a longstanding cooperation gathering six emergency operating NGO mutualizing fundraising activities and allocating them according to a distribution key defined in advance. Each NGO delivers similar goods and services, though they specialize in specific issues or populations (Alliance Urgence; 2020.)

While the asymmetrical positions of the foundations and the executive managers aligned understandings of what is at stake in the Covid-19 crisis may explain why each organization expresses interests in intervening, it does not fully capture why they cooperate and why the alliance itself has this specific architecture. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of alliance-building and functioning, one has to revisit the respective players’ positions, the timeline of the crisis and the way it provided opportunities for the players involved.

2. CHRONOLOGY, BOUNDARIES, RULES AND DOWERS PRESIDING THE ALLIANCE

Analyzing the alliance-building process in the “Tous Unis Contre le Virus” project requires to get a sense of what the asymmetrical positions of organizations in sectors produce in the philanthropic environment and how each organization’s vested interests align in an emergency context. As each foundation specialized in one of the three philanthropic intervention sectors, while more or less seeking opportunities for intervening in other sectors, the Covid-19 crisis appears as a triggering event generating opportunities for each foundation to enlarge its philanthropic intervention scope. In detail, asymmetrical positions in the philanthropic environment and among sectors become salient during the outbreak and executive managers’ aligned understandings of philanthropic work enable an alliance-building process. The Alliance emerges as an opportunity for each partner to “trespass” in another sector to become incumbent for a limited amount of time. To do so, each partner participates by mutualizing symbolic and operational assets.

Empirically, two elements help unveiling such intertwined relationships. On the one hand, a detailed chronology of the choices the executive directors made in weeks preceding the Alliance’s public announcement shall illustrate how each organization’s asymmetrical positions enable opportunities for alliancing (a). On the other hand, foundations transferred a share of their legitimacy capital from each “philanthropic intervention sector” in the form of a “dower,” meaning here operational or symbolic participation to the alliance, by instrumentalizing the FAP-HP. Understanding the shared “cognitive frames” of the executive managers in this context illustrates why the alliance took such form and not another. It also enables to understand why executive managers believe in the alliance’s capacity to put aside for a moment competitive strategies specific to each organization and serve the common good (b).

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2A. ONE WEEK BEFORE THE ALLIANCE: WHEN FIELD POSITIONS BECOME SALIENT

Now let’s introduce evidence starting with the Fondation de France’s internal debates preceding the alliance. As mentioned earlier, the Pasteur Institute and the FAP-HP had already released public fundraising campaigns “Urgence Coronavirus” and “Fond d’Urgence Covid-19 AP-HP” respectively on February, the 2nd and March, the 13th, both funding medical research support. On the other hand, doubts in the steering committee at the Fondation de France delayed the launch of the fundraising campaign. In-depth presentation of such doubts helps to get a sense of what was at stake within the Fondation de France steering committee between March 12 and March 24. Three definition problems have been reported in interviews and archives: 1/ defining the intervention scope of the foundation, 2/ defining operational processes and departments in charge 3/ defining a communication strategy compliant with the Fondation de France’s public image, all of them transparent in the chronology below.

The sequence begins when managers within the Fondation de France take heed of the size and magnitude of the Covid-19 crisis to come: many reported the national announcements of schools closure on March 12 as a decisive signal. At that date “Transversal experts” from the Social Mission department (Direction du Mécénat) start collecting information from lower-range officers (Interviewee n°2, 3, 6). The next day (March, the 13th), a steering committee (the Task Force) is set up gathering the Comité de Direction (CoDir) composed of the Executive Director, chief officers of Social Missions and Communication, and three “trans-

versal experts.” Task Force committees are routinized procedures in emergency intervention cases. Experts present a note in which they identify emergent social needs and an operational solution in line with the Fondation de France’s processes: they would create a “Solidarité Coronavirus” program coping with health issues (medical research and hospital staff support,) social life (elderly, low-income families, extreme poverty) and culture-employment precarity. All of these belong more or less to pre-existing programs in the organization. To that end, they would subsidize operating non-profits and provide individual financing help, communicating on the necessity to provide long shot support to many different publics, as the Fondation de France is the foundation “of any and all causes.” Nevertheless, the members of the CoDir do not agree with the experts’ proposal. One of the points they make is that the foundation’s message cannot be heard because of the overall context: schools are closing, the lockdown is announced on March 16 and for these reasons public generosity is focused on supporting hospital staff (Interviewee n°5, 9.) Between March 13 and 19, experts regularly urge the members of the CoDir to start both an intervention and a fundraising campaign. On Monday 16, they sent a second note to Executive Direction, on the 18th they proposed an accelerated process for subsidy attributions, on Thursday 19 they shared a shortlist of immediately fundable projects. In daily meetings, the Executive Director asks for a more detailed review of intervention axes, an arbitration between urgent/non-urgent projects to fund, and validates an intervention based on available cash flow and a targeted project, but still not a fundraising campaign. On Friday the 20th, national media France Television representatives contacted the executive director with a 4-hours prime time offer for the next Tuesday, the 24th: the television show aims to raise funds for public hospital staff support. Such a communication opportunity shakes the steering committee: there is an urgent need for a fundraising campaign. But how can the fondation “of any and all causes” de France legitimately interfere in this specific cause for fundraising? In the CoDir meeting on March 20, members acknowledge that the gap between such an urgent issue and the public image of the Fondation de France cannot lead to a unilateral fundraising campaign on this topic. Decision is made to intervene with private equity funds, and a wide-ranging fundraising campaign is made public the same day (PR Fondation de France, March 20th.)

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Internal debates in the Fondation de France illustrate how individuals within the organization progressively construct a shared (not consensual!) understanding of what is at stake in the Covid-19 crisis. They answer several problems, defining the scope of intervention, the operational division of labor within the organization, and the position of the foundation regarding French donors. Alternance of hierarchical command and collegial decisions pace the week and partially explain this outcome: indeed, a conflict between “transversal experts” and top managers about the intervention scope capacity and legitimacy is finally arbitrated by the latter, while managers fully define operational division of labor within these limits. However, such mechanisms do not explain why these choices are made. Here, seeing the Fondation de France as embedded in a philanthropic SAF helps understand such choices. As the Fondation de France top managers have a sense of assets and weaknesses of their organization within the philanthropic ecosystem in emergency contexts, they warn lower-range managers of their concerns. On the one hand, the organization can provide a wide-range intervention on existing programs. As a 51 years old sheltering foundation, it has accumulated a lot of operational expertise for national fundraising in emergency context. The past experiences of fundraising teams, such as the 2013 typhoon in the Philippines, the 2015 French terrorist attacks, the Nepal earthquake, and the emergencies in the Antilles in 2017 provide considerable knowledge accumulated throughout years. On the other hand, these resources do not match the needs formulated in the media proposal and by transversal experts on the issue of hospital staff support. Deficiency of legitimacy and expertise in hospital staff support matters,

compared to other players in the field who already started fundraising campaigns, such as FAP-HP, inhibit their ambition to intervene unilaterally. Similarly, in the medical research sector, despite their 30 years old programs, almost none of them deals with emerging diseases while the Pasteur Institute is internationally recognized on these issues.

During the weekend (March 21st and 22nd) the Fondation de France's executive director discretionary contacts both executive director of AP-HP Martin Hirsch (not the related Fondation, FAP-HP) and the communication director of the Pasteur Institute. Sharing both her concerns and the television prime time opportunity, she proposes that the foundations ally under a same banner, "Tous Unis Contre le Virus." From Saturday 21 to Monday 23, the three directors plus the Fondation de France Development and Communication directors define the boundaries of the alliance, its rules and dowers. As demonstrated above, asymmetrical positions in the philanthropic environment and foundations' specialized areas of intervention mark their distance from one to another, while showing their desire to "trespass" sectorial boundaries. During the weekend, executive managers elaborate the scope of intervention and the division of philanthropic labor along foundations. The Fondation de France executives show proactiveness and leadership in the debates, by presenting the work done by the Fondation de France during the preceding week: squaring intervention around three axes which are hospital staff support, medical research and poverty assistance, simplifying grant-making attribution processes in order to deliver funds quickly. Her condition is that the allocation formula does not divide revenues between foundations, but according to priority intervention sectors in three tiers. She also suggests that the Fondation de France be the philanthropic operator, meaning that the foundation would undertake the operational cost of donation reception and attribution according to the allocation formula. In other words, "philanthropic engineering" operations of donor prospecting, guidance, administrative formalities, would be done by Fondation de France staff. Operationally, it also means that financing channels circulate from the Fondation de France to operational teams, without entering the accounts of the FAP-HP and the Pasteur Institute. In other words, the FAP-HP would mostly participate by publicizing the alliance in the media and through communication channels, at the expense of their own fundraising campaign.

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2B. TRANSFERS OF LEGITIMACY, FOUNDATION INSTRUMENTALIZATION AND SHARED COGNITIVE FRAMES

Executive managers found in other foundations legitimacy they did not hold in their own organizations. As a result, the "Tous Unis Contre le Virus" alliance appears as a catalyzer allowing the Fondation de France and the AP-HP executive managers to exchange sectorial intervention legitimacy (in the hospital staff support sector) and upscaled intervention legitimacy (from Paris region to national). To do so, they instrumentalize one of the partner foundation (FAP-HP) to enable legitimacy redistribution. A bundle of factors explains how these exchanges take place at the alliance inception. We identify three explaining factors and geared evidences. 1/ Legitimacy transfers operate through exchanges of dowers, meaning here operational and symbolic gifts presented to the central pot. 2/ Executive managers instrumentalize FAP-HP as a receptacle for these transfers and ensure incumbency in the philanthropic field. As the AP-HP manager is a key national player in hospital management in the context of Covid-19, it articulates ties between regional and national intervention scales. 3/ Each executive manager shares references to past national emergencies such as HIV crisis (1983-1995) and infer normative statements about philanthropic emergency management from these experiences: they refuse a "hierarchy of causes ideology" which would involve sifting through urgent and non-urgent problems according to donors' generosity injunctions, understood here as an independent variable.

Let’s introduce these factors separately. First of all, each foundation proposed dowers to the central pot during the weekend (as presented in Figure 3). On the one hand, the Fondation de France offered its operational services in order to centralize donation receipts and allocate them to projects according to axes. Moreover, they proposed to identify the two other foundations as partners for the television prime time on March 24. Finally, they also present three financed interventions: 1/ 700k€ divided among seven national hospitals all over the country, financed thanks to a donation already targeted to medical devices (Interviewee n°3, 5, 8). 2/ a 300k€ donation to the Croix Rouge logistics (Interviewee n°3, 8, 9). 3/ a 30k€ donation to “Lulu dans ma rue” helping fragilized populations since lockdown. On the other hand, FAP-HP was able to share its media manpower, composed of medical practitioners from hospitals who were under the media spotlight at that time. Similarly, Pasteur Institute shared its media manpower in order to publicize the alliance. In sum, operational-material exchanges are doubled with legitimacy transfers: the Pasteur Institute and the FAP-HP, by putting the alliance to their communication forefront, would let the Fondation de France operator enter their philanthropic intervention sector. So, how does the alliance benefit these partners? Let’s recall two top managers’ professional backgrounds, Martin Hirsch (AP-HP) and Axelle Dav-ezac (Fondation de France) to understand how they pilot the alliance and what benefits they ensure by alliancing.

Figure 3: Foundations’ dowers to the alliance

Fondation de France	FAP-HP	Pasteur Institute
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Philanthropic engineering - France TV Prime Time - Three financed interventions (Lulu dans ma rue, Croix Rouge, medical devices) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media coverage - Ongoing medical research projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media coverage - Ongoing medical research projects

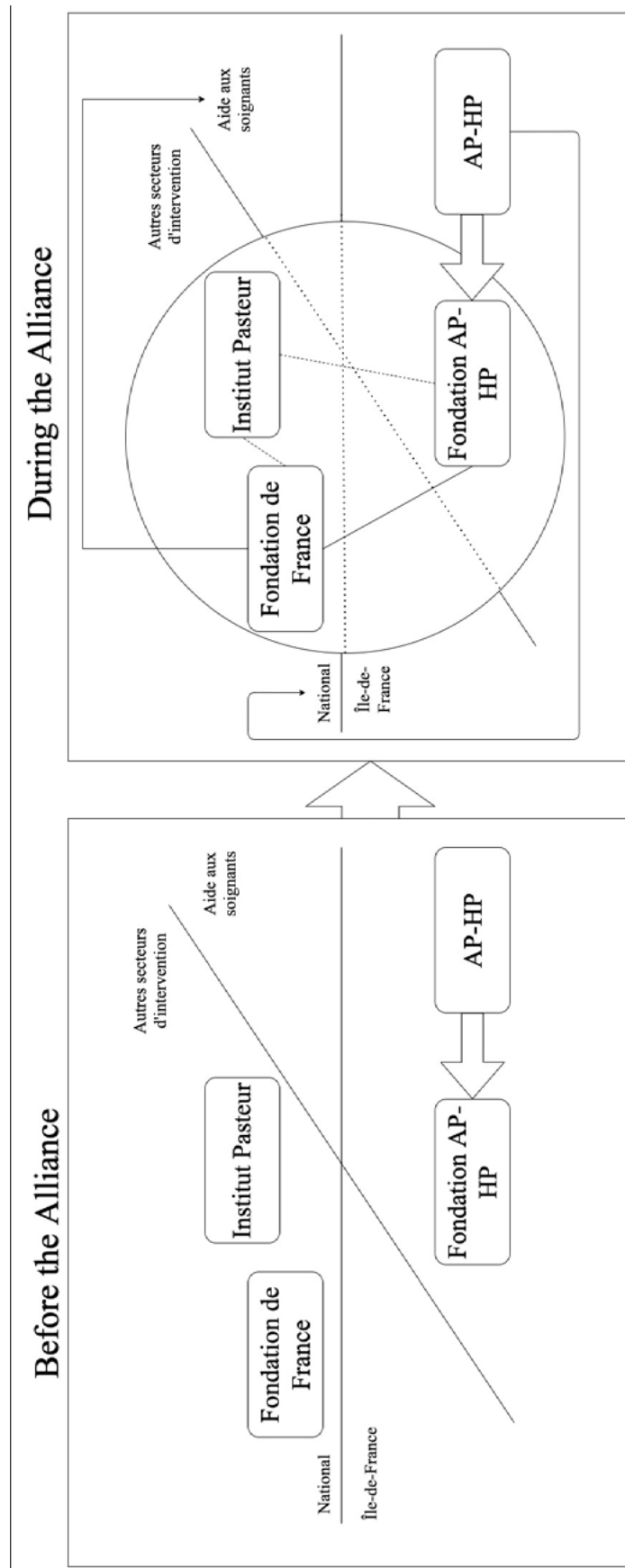
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AP-HP executive manager Martin Hirsch takes profit from the Fondation de France’s national audience in order to upscale the FAP-HP’s philanthropic intervention. In other words, both the AP-HP and the Fondation de France executive managers instrumentalize FAP-HP as a place for legitimacy transfers: AP-HP doctors would be able to talk on the behalf of every French hospital in the media, while the Fondation de France representatives would take responsibility for financing medical devices, thanks to the FAP-HP alliance participation. Such transfers of sectorial and scale legitimacies cannot be understood without picturing the national political role of the AP-HP executive director. As a former minister (2007-2010) and having worked in various national and European administrations (Conseil d’État, AFSSA, HALDE, EFSA, EMA) Martin Hirsch holds a fine knowledge of French political institutions in the public health sector and the AP-HP’s position among them. As an emanation of Parisian public hospitals, the AP-HP covers a small portion of the French territorial health administration, while concentrating 10% of overall French medical beds (De Lacour; 2020). Such distortion is historical in France and has been recalled in numerous studies of the French Public Health system (DREES; 2017, Labaye; 2020). As a consequence, one can hypothesize on how M. Hirsch noticed the potential for upscaling during the Covid-19. As Paris was one of the most exposed zones nationally, combined with important hospital carrying capacities,

narration elements for putting AP-HP as one of the principal actors fighting against the Covid-19 outbreak were combined. The publication of the AP-HP's role in French Covid-19 outbreak in the international medical journal *The Lancet* dated from May 25th follows suit (The COVID19-APHP Group; 2020). All of these elements show how the AP-HP executive director instrumentalized the FAP-HP as a means to translate the institution's Public Health assets into something decipherable in the French generosity grammar on a national scale, through the alliance, as illustrated in figure 4 (page 19).

On the other hand, Axelle Davezac profits from FAP-HP derived legitimacy in the public health intervention sector to ensure Fondation de France's incumbency in the philanthropic field. To do so, she accepts to undertake operational burden of the whole alliance in exchange of partners' commitment to leave donation channeling in Fondation de France's hands. With a 20-year background in automotive industry (Peugeot-Citroën, Johnson Controls...) as chief financial officer, she reoriented her professional career toward the philanthropic sector in 2005 as executive manager of national charities financing medical research (Cancer Research Association), and administrator of philanthropic advocacy associations (France Générosités [2007-2013], IDAF [2011-2015]). From these past professional experiences, she holds a two-sided knowledge of financial engineering in the corporate and non-profit sector, as well as an important social network at the intersection of these two worlds. Control over donation channels already provides some degree of legitimization. Firstly, upon donors, since they must identify and address their gifts to one single organization and therefore enjoy the Fondation de France 'customer care' and their philanthropic engineering *savoir faire*. Secondly, upon other foundations in the philanthropic field, managing such (expected) volumes of philanthropic money in emergency situations is a real opportunity for showcasing this know-how. Bearing in mind the "shelter" organizational model of Fondation de France, based on the creation and support of donor-advised funds, the strategic choice of undertaking operational charge becomes evident. However, considering only underlying strategic interests of taking responsibility for this burden would betray reasons why both of these two top managers engaged in allying. Their two biographical descriptions also show that they have shared understanding on the wider environment in which philanthropic actors evolve and the philanthropic sector's purpose and role in it.

Figure 4: Sector boundaries and alliance breakthrough



We call this sense of the “bigger picture” shared by all three executive managers “cognitive frames” (Kaplan; 2008) allowing them to work together in the alliance. In this paper, it has been previously argued that despite the foundations’ asymmetrical positions, the executive managers share a common understanding of philanthropic work. In this sense, executive managers’ cognitive frames have important implications in their perception of the alliance as a win-win situation. By win-win situation, we mean actors’ definition of the alliance as a collective action putting aside each organizations’ interest in this competitive field. Indeed, all executive managers underlined how they perceived the alliance as a silo-breaking initiative, enabling new forms of cooperation between organizations traditionally competing for donors, and how such a way of doing was new for the three foundations. For instance, the FAP-HP executive underlines how *“we must find a common ground, the largest common denominator, because we’re three to make concessions. We must keep in mind the length of view on these topics: To what extent what I’m doing is useful for the common good?”* (Interviewee n°13). Similarly, Fondation de France executive manager underlined how the situation necessitated to play collectively: *“I’d find incoherent, in the face of the virus, putting everyone in danger, that we’d let everyone think that we were trying to protect our own shop. In fact, it was common sense to say, we must play together because everyone is concerned.”* (Interviewee n°5). It also has been demonstrated that they share an aligned understanding of their foundation’s role during the Covid-19 crisis. Most important, there is evidence regarding each manager’s definition of their philanthropic intervention sector. For instance, the Fondation de France Executive manager does not feel comfortable intervening for hospital staff support matters as stated previously (Interviewee n°5). Similarly, the FAP-HP executive manager would not intervene nationally: as AP-HP institutions cover the Paris region only, the foundation could not intervene on a national scale on the behalf of all French hospitals. Thus, the alliance was an operational response to the Covid-19 crisis, thanks to aligned understandings of philanthropic work, and different assessments of the role of foundations in the crisis.

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On top of that, we argue that executive managers share common references and representations of what an emergency crisis management *should not* be. Interviews indeed show how the HIV crisis experiment (1983-1995) forged a strong reference (a “HIV Culture” [Interviewee n°14]) in this matter. During that sequence, all the executive managers who worked in the medical sector expressed their disapproval of the “hierarchy of causes” mentality as it had been observed during the HIV crisis. They describe this approach as a product of philanthropic competition for donors’ generosity, which causes philanthropic operators to stress the importance of their cause at the expense of other ones in order to capture the lion’s share of generosity. They cite examples of the outcomes of such mentality during the HIV crisis such as the conflicts preceding the creation of Sidaction (Interviewee n°13) in 1994. HIV references acted as a countermodel in “Tous Unis Contre le Virus”, a referential frame allowing each executive actor to sort out doable and refutable solutions for alliancing. It is why alliance partners agree on an allocation formula built along intervention axes and not foundation portfolios. Similarly, it explains why they agree on communication release in just two days. From a SAF perspective, these shared understandings of the issue and the modes by which a joint response can be constructed illustrate the importance of past asymmetrical positions of each organization in the philanthropic field. On March, the 24th, the executive manager of the Fondation de France presented the “Tous Unis Contre le Virus” alliance on a Television prime time gathering 1.36 million viewers (7% of the total TV audience). Earlier the same day, the three foundations published a joint press release justifying their partnership and presenting the main axes of the fundraising campaign (PR Tous Unis, March 24th).

CONCLUSION

The temporal density of events in emergency crises cannot justify messy analyses. To wrap up our results, we found how the asymmetrical positions of the Fondation de France, the FAP-HP and the Pasteur Institute, both in the philanthropic field and in philanthropic intervention sectors, shaped the architecture of the “Tous Unis Contre le Virus” Alliance. The fact that each executive director shares a common understanding of philanthropic work and their organization’s role in this environment gives clues on the emergence of a strategic action field. Interactions between them, especially the instrumentalization of the FAP-HP in the alliance borders, also give a sense of how actors cooperate in order to further compete. The role of the Covid-19 crisis as a triggering event is decisive to understand how the sequences follow each other: the emergency context allows individuals to behave in a way they never had before and the crisis enables many forms of justifications.

Little has been said about the way the alliance was implemented. However, an important part of the gathered material helps understand how the alliance-architecture has deep implications at different levels. In the next step of our research, we will build on this paper’s findings to elaborate on the changes of routines and processes at the Fondation de France due to the rules and functioning of the alliance. Studying these aspects would allow us to capture particularities of the management of organization in the lockdown context. Finally, given the importance of the three players of the alliance, and the magnitude of their investment in the alliance, it seems legitimate to us to consider this private-private partnership as a form of “contributory philanthropy” as opposed to “disruptive philanthropy” that undermines the public sector (Horvarth and Powell; 2016). This would lead us to an in-depth analysis of the public-private partnerships created for processing grant attributions in the medical sector for instance.

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ANNEX: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Fondation de France

<i>Name</i>	<i>Work position - Department</i>
Virginie Ballif n°1	Direction juridique
Vincent Bodin n°2	Responsable du département Marketing et Grands Comptes
Claire Boulanger n°3	Expert Conseil Solidarités Nationales et Éducation
Jean-Damien Collin n°4	Délégué général, Fondation de France Grand-Est
Axelle Davezac n°5	Directrice générale et directrice du mécénat
Muriel Kopelianskis n°6	Responsable du Département Développement Territorial
Sabine Lenglet n°7	Directrice de la communication
Karine Meaux n°8	Responsable Urgences et Solidarités Internationales
Frédéric Théret n°9	Directeur du développement
Nathalie Sénécal n°10	Expert Conseil Santé et Recherche
Martin Spitz n°11	Expert Conseil Solidarités Internationales, Urgences, Économie sociale et solidaire

Fondation AP-HP

<i>Name</i>	<i>Work position - Department</i>
Patrick Chanson n°12	Directeur de la communication
Rodolphe Gouin n°13	Directeur général

Pasteur Institute

<i>Name</i>	<i>Work position - Department</i>
Jean-François Chambon n°14	Directeur de la communication et du mécénat
Frédérique Chegaray n°15	Responsable Collecte et Mécénat

Philanthropy and Social Sciences Program

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