CONFIGURING THE FIELD OF PHILANTHROPY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL-MISSION PLATFORMS:
A STORY OF FRAGMENTED STRUCTURATION AND DIVERGENT BOUNDARY WORK

Members of the jury:
Prof. Frédéric Dufays (HEC Liège - University of Liège, President)
Prof. Virginie Xhaflair (HEC Liège - University of Liège, Supervisor)
Prof. Benjamin Huybrechts (IESEG Lille, France)
Prof. Danielle Logue (UTS Sidney, Australia)
Prof. Johanna Mair (Hertie School of Governance, Germany)

Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in Economics and Management by Elodie Dessy
Regulating bodies

Resource-seeking org.

Resource-providing org.

Collective interest org.

Social-mission platforms

Individual donors

Corporate philanthropy

Regulating bodies

Others

Incumbents

Newcomers

PHILANTHROPY

The use of private resources for public purposes

LET'S SET THE SCENE...
FROM EMPIRICAL OBSERVATIONS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

✓ Identification of platforms by philanthropic organizations
  ➔ How do they interact with one another?

✓ Diversity of social-mission platforms
  ➔ How do platforms organize to foster interaction?

✓ Lack of mechanisms enabling action and interaction
  ➔ How is the field organized? Who structures it and how?
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

Two bodies of literature

1. Philanthropy studies
   - including latest evolutions
   - and platform research

2. Institutional theory
   - with a focus on fields theory

A global qualitative and abductive method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fieldwork timing</th>
<th>2017 → 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Data collection  | 42 semi-structured interviews
                  | 9 events observations
                  | 1 focus group
                  | 130 archival documents |
| Data analysis    | Chapters I and III – variant of grounded theory
                  | Chapter II – Comparative case-study design |
BELGIAN PHILANTHROPY AS A FRAGMENTED ISSUE FIELD

Flexible legal framework
Criticized collective interest organization

Issue-based nature
Philanthropy as essentially contested concept
Multiple interpretations + newcomers

Blurry field boundaries

Chapter 1
Resource-providing org.

Chapter 2
Social-mission platforms

Chapter 3
Collective interest org.

Individual donors
Corporate philanthropy
Regulating bodies
Others

Resource-seeking org.
GLOBAL STRUCTURE

Chapter I

Fragmented field infrastructure

Strategies to take a field-structuring position

TBF’s strategy

Integration strategic pattern

Divergence in incumbents’ strategies

Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers

TTF’s strategy

Differentiation strategic pattern

Newcomers’ heterogeneity

Chapter II

Meeting-space platform

Chapter III

Community-designing platform

Ecosystem-building platform

Differentiating newcomers

Softening of discriminating strategy

Integrating incumbents

Differentiating incumbents

Integrating newcomers

Crossed collaboration / opposition

Softening of discriminating strategy

GLOBAL STRUCTURE
CHAPTER I – FIELD INFRASTRUCTURE & FIELD-STRUCTURING STRATEGIES

- Fragmented field infrastructure
- Issue-based nature
- Blurry field boundaries

**Divergence in incumbents’ strategies**

**Strategies to take a field-structuring position**

- The Big Foundation’s strategy
  - Integration strategic pattern
- The Transformative Foundation’s strategy
  - Differentiation strategic pattern

**Newcomers’ heterogeneity**

- Meeting-space platform
  - Community-designing platform
  - Ecosystem-building platform

**Softening of discriminating strategy**

**Integration strategic pattern**

- Integrating incumbents
- Differentiating incumbents

**Differentiation strategic pattern**

- Integrating newcomers
- Differentiating newcomers

**Crossed collaboration / opposition**
Chapter II – Newcomers’ Heterogeneity

Fragmented field infrastructure

Divergence in incumbents’ strategies

Strategies to take a field-structuring position

TBF’s strategy

Integration strategic pattern

Issue-based nature

Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers

TTF’s strategy

Differentiation strategic pattern

Blurry field boundaries

Newcomers’ heterogeneity

Meeting-space platform

Affiliating strategy

Community-designing platform

Discriminating strategy

Ecosystem-building platform

Softening of discriminating strategy

Integrating incumbents

Differentiating incumbents

Integrating newcomers

Differentiating newcomers

Crossed collaboration / opposition
Divergence in incumbents' strategies

Newcomers' heterogeneity

Meeting-space platform

Integrating incumbents

Integrating newcomers

Differentiating incumbents

Differentiating newcomers

Crossed collaboration / opposition

Community-designing platform

Integration strategic pattern

Differentiation strategic pattern

Affiliating strategy

Discriminating strategy

Ecosystem-building platform

Softening of discriminating strategy

TBF’s strategy

TTF’s strategy

Fragmented field infrastructure

Issue-based nature

Blurry field boundaries
Chapter II – Newcomers’ Heterogeneity

Newcomers’ heterogeneity

- Meeting-space platform
- Community-designing platform
- Ecosystem-building platform

Divergence in incumbents’ strategies

- Strategies to take a field-structuring position
  - TBF’s strategy
  - Integration strategic pattern
- Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers
  - TTF’s strategy
  - Differentiation strategic pattern

Issue-based nature

- Softening of discriminating strategy

Fragmented field infrastructure

- Blurry field boundaries

Blurry field boundaries

- Integration strategic pattern
- Differentiation strategic pattern

Integration strategic pattern

- Integrating incumbents
- Integrating newcomers

Differentiation strategic pattern

- Differentiating incumbents
- Differentiating newcomers

Softening of discriminating strategy

Crossed collaboration / opposition
Divergence in incumbents’ strategies

Newcomers’ heterogeneity

Meeting-space platform

Strategies to take a field-structuring position

Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers

Integrating incumbents

Integrating newcomers

Softening of discriminating strategy

Crossed collaboration / opposition

Integration strategic pattern

Affiliating strategy

Community-designing platform

Differentiation strategic pattern

Discriminating strategy

Ecosystem-building platform

Fragmented field infrastructure

Issue-based nature

Blurry field boundaries
NEWCOMERS’ HETEROGENEITY

STRATEGIES TO TAKE A FIELD-STRUCTURING POSITION

- TBF’s strategy
- TTF’s strategy

INTEGRATION STRATEGIC PATTERN

- Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers
  - Affiliating strategy
  - Discriminating strategy

DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIC PATTERN

- Softening of discriminating strategy

INTEGRATING INCUMBENTS

- Integrating incumbents
- Integrating newcomers

DIFFERENTIATING INCUMBENTS

- Differentiating incumbents
- Differentiating newcomers

CROSSED COLLABORATION / OPPOSITION

ISSUE-BASED NATURE

- Newcomers’ heterogeneity

MEETING-SPACE PLATFORM

- Community-designing platform
- Ecosystem-building platform

FRAGMENTED FIELD INFRASTRUCTURE

BLURRY FIELD BOUNDARIES

- Chapter III – Field Boundaries
**TBF’s Strategy** / **The Affiliating Strategy**

- **Divergence in incumbents’ strategies**
  - Strategies to take a field-structuring position

- **Newcomers’ heterogeneity**
  - Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers

- **Blurry field boundaries**
  - Meeting-space platform

- **Integration strategic pattern**
  - TBF’s strategy
  - Integrating incumbents
  - Integrating newcomers

- **Discriminating strategy**
  - TTF’s strategy
  - Differentiating incumbents
  - Differentiating newcomers

- **Affiliating strategy**
  - Community-designing platform
  - Ecosystem-building platform

- **Softening of discriminating strategy**

- **Crossed collaboration / opposition**
**Chapter III — Field Boundaries**

- **Fragmented field infrastructure**
- **Issue-based nature**
- **Blurry field boundaries**

**Divergence in incumbents’ strategies**
- Strategies to take a field-structuring position
  - TBF’s strategy
  - Integration strategic pattern
  - TTF’s strategy
  - Differentiation strategic pattern

**Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers**
- Affiliating strategy
- Discriminating strategy

**Newcomers’ heterogeneity**
- Meeting-space platform
- Community-designing platform
- Ecosystem-building platform

**Softening of discriminating strategy**

**Integration strategic pattern**
- Integrating incumbents
- Integrating newcomers

**Differentiation strategic pattern**
- Differentiating incumbents
- Differentiating newcomers

**Crossed collaboration / opposition**
**TTF's strategy / The Discriminating strategy**

- **Fragmented field infrastructure**
  - Divergence in incumbents' strategies
  - Strategies to take a field-structuring position
  - TBF's strategy
  - Integration strategic pattern

- **Issue-based nature**
  - Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers
  - Affiliating strategy
  - Differentiation strategic pattern

- **Blurry field boundaries**
  - Newcomers’ heterogeneity
  - Meeting-space platform
  - Community-designing platform
  - Ecosystem-building platform

- **TTF's strategy**
  - Discriminating strategy
  - Softening of discriminating strategy

- **Integration strategic pattern**
  - Integrating incumbents
  - Integrating newcomers

- **Differentiation strategic pattern**
  - Differentiating incumbents
  - Differentiating newcomers

- **Crossed collaboration / opposition**
Two strategies to configure philanthropy

Integration strategic pattern
- TBF's strategy

Differentiation strategic pattern
- TTF's strategy

Divergence in incumbents' strategies
- Strategies to take a field-structuring position
- Newcomers' heterogeneity
- Meeting-space platform

Issue-based nature
- Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers

Blurry field boundaries
- Fragmented field infrastructure
- Community-designing platform
- Ecosystem-building platform

Softening of discriminating strategy

Crossed collaboration / opposition

Integrating incumbents

Differentiating incumbents

Integrating newcomers

Differentiating newcomers
**Softening of the Discriminating Strategy: Partial Inclusion of Newcomers**

- **Fragmented field infrastructure**
  - Divergence in incumbents' strategies
  - Strategies to take a field-structuring position
    - TBF's strategy
    - Integration strategic pattern
  - Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers
    - TTF's strategy
    - Differentiation strategic pattern

- **Issue-based nature**
  - Newcomers' heterogeneity
    - Meeting-space platform
    - Affiliating strategy
    - Community-designing platform

- **Blurry field boundaries**
  - Differentiating newcomers
    - Ecosystem-building platform
  - Softening of discriminating strategy
    - Crossed collaboration / opposition
    - Integrating incumbents
    - Integrating newcomers
    - Differentiating incumbents
    - Differentiating newcomers
CROSSED COLLABORATION AND OPPOSITION

Divergence in incumbents’ strategies
Newcomers’ heterogeneity

Strategies to take a field-structuring position
Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers

TBF’s strategy
Affiliating strategy

Integration strategic pattern
Community-designing platform

TTF’s strategy
Discriminating strategy

Differentiation strategic pattern
Ecosystem-building platform

Softening of discriminating strategy

Crossed collaboration / opposition

Integrating incumbents
Integrating newcomers
Differentiating incumbents
Differentiating newcomers

Fragmented field infrastructure
Issue-based nature
Blurry field boundaries

Meeting-space platform

Integration strategic pattern

Blurred field boundaries
Issue-based nature
Fragmented field infrastructure

Crossed collaboration / opposition

Integrating incumbents
Integrating newcomers
Differentiating incumbents
Differentiating newcomers

TBF’s strategy
Affiliating strategy

Community-designing platform

TTF’s strategy
Discriminating strategy

Ecosystem-building platform

Softening of discriminating strategy

Integration strategic pattern

Blurred field boundaries
Issue-based nature
Fragmented field infrastructure

Crossed collaboration / opposition

Integrating incumbents
Integrating newcomers
Differentiating incumbents
Differentiating newcomers

TBF’s strategy
Affiliating strategy

Community-designing platform

TTF’s strategy
Discriminating strategy

Ecosystem-building platform

Softening of discriminating strategy

Integration strategic pattern
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

Contributions to...
- Philanthropy studies
- Platform research

Institutional theory & fields theory
- Divergent boundary work
- Fragmented structuration
CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHILANTHROPY STUDIES AND PLATFORM RESEARCH

Documenting the heterogeneity of incumbent philanthropic organizations

Divergence in incumbents’ strategies

- Strategies to take a field-structuring position
  - TBF’s strategy
  - TTF’s strategy

Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers

- Affiliating strategy
  - Community-designing platform
- Discriminating strategy
  - Ecosystem-building platform

Newcomers’ heterogeneity

- Meeting-space platform
- Softening of discriminating strategy

Integrating incumbents

Integrating newcomers

Differentiating incumbents

Differentiating newcomers

Crossed collaboration / opposition

A fine-grained understanding of social-mission platforms

Fragmented field infrastructure

Issue-based nature

Blurry field boundaries
**Divergent boundary work**

**Boundary work and field conditions**

- Fragmented field infrastructure
- Issue-based nature
- Blurry field boundaries

**Strategies to take a field-structuring position**

- TBF's strategy
- Integration strategic pattern

- TTF's strategy
- Differentiation strategic pattern

**Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers**

- Affiliating strategy
- Community-designing platform

- Discriminating strategy
- Ecosystem-building platform

**Meeting-space platform**

**Softening of discriminating strategy**

**Integrating incumbents**

**Differentiating incumbents**

**Integrating newcomers**

**Differentiating newcomers**

**Crossed collaboration / opposition**
CONTRIBUTION TO PHILANTHROPY STUDIES

Fragmented field infrastructure

- Divergence in incumbents' strategies
  - Strategies to take a field-structuring position
    - TBF’s strategy
  - Integration strategic pattern

- Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers
  - TTF’s strategy
  - Discriminating strategy
    - Softening of discriminating strategy

Issue-based nature

- Newcomers' heterogeneity
  - Meeting-space platform
  - Community-designing platform
  - Ecosystem-building platform

Blurry field boundaries

Integration strategic pattern

Differentiation strategic pattern

Further explaining oscillations between stability and change

- Integrating incumbents
- Differentiating incumbents
- Integrating newcomers
- Differentiating newcomers
- Crossed collaboration / opposition
Divergence in incumbents’ strategies

Newcomers’ heterogeneity

Strategies to take a field-structuring position

TBF’s strategy

Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers

Affiliating strategy

TTF’s strategy

Discriminating strategy

Softening of discriminating strategy

Meeting-space platform

Community-designing platform

Ecosystem-building platform

Integrating incumbents

Differentiating incumbents

Integrating newcomers

Crossed collaboration / opposition

Differentiating newcomers

Persistent fragmentation

Fragmented field infrastructure

Issue-based nature

Blurry field boundaries

Persistently fragmented structuration

Persistent fragmentation

Fragmented field infrastructure

Issue-based nature

Blurry field boundaries

Newcomers’ heterogeneity

Meeting-space platform

Community-designing platform

Ecosystem-building platform

Softening of discriminating strategy

Integrating incumbents

Differentiating incumbents

Integrating newcomers

Crossed collaboration / opposition

Differentiating newcomers
Fragmented Structuration

Persistent fragmentation

- Fragmented field infrastructure
- Issue-based nature
- Blurry field boundaries
- Divergence in incumbents’ strategies
  - Strategies to take a field-structuring position
    - TBF’s strategy
  - Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers
    - Affiliating strategy
    - Discriminating strategy
- Newcomers’ heterogeneity
  - Meeting-space platform
  - Community-designing platform
  - Ecosystem-building platform

Purposeful fragmented structuration

- Integrating incumbents
- Differentiating incumbents
- Integrating newcomers
- Crossed collaboration / opposition
- Differentiating newcomers

Softening of discriminating strategy

Persistent fragmentation

- Fragmented field infrastructure
- Issue-based nature
- Blurry field boundaries

Purposeful fragmented structuration

- Integrating incumbents
- Differentiating incumbents
- Integrating newcomers
- Crossed collaboration / opposition
- Differentiating newcomers
Divergence in incumbents' strategies

Newcomers' heterogeneity

Strategies to take a field-structuring position

TBF's strategy

Strategies regarding interactions with newcomers

Affiliating strategy

TTF's strategy

Discriminating strategy

Softening of discriminating strategy

Meeting-space platform

Community-designing platform

Ecosystem-building platform

Integrating incumbents

Differentiating incumbents

Integrating newcomers

Differentiating newcomers

Crossed collaboration / opposition

Persistent fragmentation

Divergence in incumbents’ strategies

Issue-based nature

Blurry field boundaries

Purposeful fragmented structuration

Ecosystem-building platform

Productive fragmented structuration

Persistent fragmentation

Divergence in incumbents’ strategies

Issue-based nature

Blurry field boundaries

Persistent fragmentation
1. Favoriser la création de processus collectif
   • par un rôle de créatrices de connexions pour les organisations philanthropiques
   • par le soutien à des organisations intermédiaires, telles que les plateformes

2. Encourager la collaboration entre plateformes et organisations philanthropiques
   • afin de développer et améliorer les outils développés par les plateformes
   • par l’expertise conjointe

3. Jouer un rôle structurant davantage concerté
   • par une collaboration renforcée entre organisations d’intérêt collectif et acteurs structurants
   • afin d’améliorer le service aux membres
   • afin d’accroître la visibilité du secteur au niveau politique
CONFIGURING THE FIELD OF PHILANTHROPY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL-MISSION PLATFORMS:

A STORY OF FRAGMENTED STRUCTURATION AND DIVERGENT BOUNDARY WORK

Members of the jury:
Prof. Frédéric Dufays (HEC Liège - University of Liège, President)
Prof. Virginie Xhaufclair (HEC Liège - University of Liège, Supervisor)
Prof. Benjamin Huybrechts (IESEG Lille, France)
Prof. Danielle Logue (UTS Sidney, Australia)
Prof. Johanna Mair (Hertie School of Governance, Germany)

Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in Economics and Management by
Elodie Dessy

Public defense – 26 October 2021