



From  
Crisis to Opportunity

Private Sector  
Engagement  
Financial  
Sustainability in

The Restoration  
of  
Notre-Dame  
de Paris



From Crisis to Opportunity: Private Sector Engagement and Financial Sustainability  
in the Restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the financial sustainability of cultural heritage projects through the case of Notre-Dame de Paris restoration following the 2019 fire. Unlike France's traditional model of direct state intervention in cultural funding, the restoration project was primarily financed through private donations. This shift in funding structure raises questions about the long-term viability of introduce, or even rely on private support in heritage fundraising. Through documentary analysis on secondary data and semi-structured interviews, this research explores both the short-term benefits and the long-term challenges of this approach.

The findings highlight that while private donations provided immediate financial relief, they also require transparent governance, effective communication with the public, and thoughtful donor engagement. The Notre-Dame case demonstrates that financial sustainability in heritage projects involves more than securing funds, it requires building trust, protecting professional autonomy, and fostering inclusive, people-centered management practices. This study contributes to broader discussions on how public and private sectors can collaborate to support cultural heritage in contemporary social and financial contexts.

KEYWORDS: Financial Sustainability, Heritage Restoration, Notre-Dame de Paris

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Before starting this master's program, I carried a question with me: "*When does a researcher begin to have the confidence to claim their perspective?*" Over the past two years, my mindset, particularly toward research, has changed. What I write now comes from a very different place compared to what I would have written two years ago. It feels like I've begun to understand what research means to me.

I'm still afraid of being wrong, or *failing*, but the way I define those has changed. Rather than fearing error itself, I've come to see the pursuit of truth (that's the only word I can think of for it right now) as a journey with no destination. It's this endlessness that gives it meaning. The things I find are only steps along the path.

All I can do is make those steps as solid as possible, grounded in sound reasoning and sincere inquiry. As I would say in my mother tongue: 無愧於心。 A clear conscience in the work I do, especially in the field I deeply care about.

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Chu

Somewhere in between, Summer, 2025.



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## **1. Introduction**

This study focuses on the financial sustainability of heritage projects, using the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris (from 2019 to 2024) as a case study. It focuses particularly on the project's fundraising approach, which relies primarily on private donations. Unlike France's long-established state intervention model, where the government often directly oversees and subsidizes cultural institutions, including heritage sites (Poulot, 2020).

After the fire on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the French government took immediate action on announcing a public fundraising campaign. It appointed four organizations –Centre des Monuments Nationaux, Fondation de France, Fondation du Patrimoine, and Fondation Notre-Dame, to manage and collect donations. To further encourage giving, there was a generous 75% tax deduction introduced as an incentive for donations toward Notre-Dame (Archambault, 2022).

This large-scale fundraising effort has sparked debate, bringing attention to broader issues of underfunding in France's cultural heritage sector. There are critics regarding the state's prompt decision on bypassing conventional heritage funding procedures and management approaches. Did the applied strategy of introducing private funds into Notre-Dame's restoration project reinforce existing inefficiencies (Poulot, 2019)?

Additionally, donations from three of France's wealthiest families, Arnault (LVMH), Pinault (Kering), and Bettencourt (L'Oréal) also sparked considerable public attention. With a general societal distrust towards private funding in France (Archambault, 2022), the massive fundraising campaign involving not only private donors, but also big corporations indeed triggered various debates throughout the project. The tax deduction incentives reinforced the long-standing controversy about privileges for the wealthy in France, as well as concerns over the "impure motivations" behind such donations. Public questioned whether these large private contributions could potentially affect the wellbeing of cultural and symbolic value of Notre-Dame (Poulot, 2019).

In this context, the purpose of this research is to examine how private funding affects the fundraising practices in cultural heritage projects, by analyzing the employed fundraising strategies of Notre-Dame's restoration. Considering both the macro and micro level funding structure (Lin & Luo, 2023) of Notre-Dame de Paris was significantly shifted from state-funded



to relying heavily on private donation, this study also investigates the roles and impacts of private donors within the project. The main research question guiding this study is:

***What are the short-term financial impacts and long-term challenges of private donations in the restoration and management of Notre-Dame de Paris?***

Following an inductive, qualitative research methodology (Bryman, 2016), this research begins by constructing a theoretical framework in Chapter 2, which is shaped by the main research question. From this, three sub questions are developed:

- a. Sub Question1: To what extent do the private donations to the restoration project have an impact on the current ***financial sustainability*** of Notre- Dame de Paris?
- b. Sub Question2: What ***roles do these private donors*** play in the restoration project of Notre-Dame de Paris?
- c. Sub Question3: To what extent have these private donations influenced the ***management practice*** of Notre-Dame de Paris?

Sub Question1 focuses on assessing the immediate and short-term financial implications of incorporating private funding, while the others delve into longer-term issues. Specifically, Sub Question2 focusing on the evolving role of private donors, and Sub Questions3 dealing with the broader effects of private funding on the project's management strategies.

Chapter3 presents the methodology, research design, and operationalization process of this research. The research is structured into three discussion stages. Stage one is the contextual overview of Notre-Dame de Paris, which is delivered individually in Chapter 4. Stage two is presented in Chapter 5, addressing the three sub questions individually. Toward the end of Chapter 5, the final stage integrates the findings from all sub questions to answer the main research question in a comprehensive discussion.

Briefly conclude, by evaluating private donations and management strategies in the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris, this research aims to contribute to the discourse on sustainable heritage financing. It focuses particularly on how public institutions operating in a strongly state-led heritage management system might engage with private sector resources. The

goal is to explore how such partnership can support the long-term mission of cultural heritage management.

With this purpose in mind, the study seeks to identify what types of fundraising and management rationale could address common concerns about private involvement, especially in terms of maintaining transparency, balancing financial needs, and most importantly, safeguarding the long-term wellbeing of heritage sites.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

To investigate the financial impacts and challenges that private donations might have brought to the restoration and management of Notre-Dame de Paris, this research identified three parts of theoretical concepts: (a) Cultural capital and sustainability, (b) the sustainability in financing cultural heritage, and (c) the role of private donations in heritage management. Finally, a visualized theoretical framework will be presented to illustrate the conceptual relationships between these theoretical concepts.

### 2.1 Cultural Capital and Sustainability

Before delving into the sustainable financing of cultural heritage, it is essential to clarify the concepts of cultural capital and sustainability. In the context of sustainable development, three key pillars are widely recognized: ecological, economic, and social dimensions (Soini & Birkeland, 2014; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007). However, as discussions on cultural sustainability have developed, scholars like Soini and Birkeland (2014) have identified a growing trend toward recognizing culture as a fourth pillar of sustainability. Rather than treating culture as an independent pillar, they argue that it serves as a foundational element that enhances our understanding of social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Specifically, within the framework of cultural sustainability, the heritage perspective views culture as deeply embedded in both time and space, with *cultural capital* accumulating over generations (Soini & Birkeland, 2014).

In this study on sustainable financing and private donations for the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris, the concept of cultural capital plays a crucial role. Cultural capital can be examined from both the supply and demand sides of the market (Throsby, 1999). On the supply side, it represents the intrinsic value of cultural heritage and its contribution to heritages' sustainability. On the demand side, particularly in relation to individuals' *willingness to pay* (WTP), it significantly influences how consumers perceive and engage with cultural goods.

Before turning specifically to Throsby's economic-based interpretation of cultural capital, it is useful to consider the broader sociological framework provided by Bourdieu (1986). Bourdieu (1986) identifies three forms of capital: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital. Bourdieu (1986) conceptualizes capital as a structuring force in social class dynamics,



where all forms of capital can ultimately be converted from economic capital at varying costs. When formal capital transfers are restricted, hidden capital flows, especially in the form of cultural capital, become crucial in maintaining social structures. This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant for understanding the motivations behind private donations, which will be further explored in the later discussion on private donations. Now the attention is on the transformation between different types of capital.

Extended from this sociological point of view, Throsby (1999) proposed cultural capital as the fourth type of capital, in addition to the traditional economic perspective which covered only physical capital, human capital and natural capital, and proposed its implications in *cultural economics*. According to Throsby (1999 & 2000), tangible heritage can be valued in both economic and cultural terms. The economic value can be accessed through its physical existence as a building, while the cultural value, for example, might refer to its embodied history or tradition (Throsby, 1999). Additionally, individuals' willingness to pay might be higher for the embodied cultural content than for the physical entity alone, because some people might pay more for an item due to its cultural significance; this demonstrates how cultural value can contribute to economic value (Throsby, 1999). In this sense, cultural capital represents an asset that generates cultural value, which in turn may give rise to a flow of goods and services over time, creating commodities with both cultural and economic significance (Throsby, 2000).

In summary, the significance of cultural heritage in sustainability is tied to its inherent cultural capital. As discussed by Bourdieu (1986) and Throsby (1999 & 2000), cultural capital plays a crucial role in both the production and consumption of heritage, influencing its value and consumers' willingness to pay. This is why cultural capital is central to this study: when examining the sustainability of heritage financing, cultural capital serves as a fundamental element in designing indicators and analytical frameworks.

## **2.2 The Sustainability in Financing Cultural Heritage**

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage are widely recognized for their role in driving sustainable development (Blundo et al., 2017; Throsby, 2000; Rosetti et al., 2022). While benefits of cultural heritage are widely acknowledged, achieving sustainable financing for its preservation and development remains a significant challenge (Blundo et al., 2017; Eppich & Grinda, 2019).

Two aspects must be demonstrated when considering the sustainable finance of heritage, one is economic sustainability, and another is financial sustainability (Eppich & Grinda, 2019). Economic sustainability refers to the heritage project's ability to generate profits that contribute to the broader economic welfare. Financial sustainability is a more micro point of view that focuses on the heritage project's capacity to sustain itself financially over time (Blundo et al., 2017; Eppich & Grinda, 2019), as demonstrated in this research of Notre-Dame de Paris.

Eppich and Grinda (2019) define five categories essential to the financial sustainability of heritage projects, including: revenue identification, expenditure analysis, administration and reporting, strategic planning, and finally the alignment and support of the mission. These categories highlight the importance of balancing cultural and economic goals while prioritizing overall welfare and social sustainability in heritage management (Throsby, 2000).

Additionally, Eppich and Grinda (2019) also identified five key factors that enhance financial sustainability, including: supportive and open planning environment, financial knowledge and education, positive perception of finance, managerial autonomy, and public interest in the cultural heritage site. These critical factors also relate to broader sustainable development goals beyond heritage conservation. As people-centered approaches and participation are becoming essential to international heritage management regulations and guidelines (Rosetti et al., 2022). For instance, *The Paris Declaration* by ICOMOS (2011) advocates for integrating heritage into sustainable development, emphasizing its role in social cohesion, well-being, creativity, economic appeal, and fostering community understanding. With an aim to understand how participation is incorporated into global heritage policies, Rosetti et al. (2022) defined three roles of participations: as a right, it ensures equitable access to heritage and involves people in decision-making. As a driver, it supports heritage conservation, strengthens community resilience, and fosters peace by reducing conflicts. As an enabler, it ensures the sustainability of heritage through education, capacity building, and long-term planning.

The above literatures emphasize the importance of considering the external effects of financial practices, same in the case of Notre-Dame's restoration project. In line with this, the first sub question (Sub Question1) of this research is:

**To what extent do the private donations to the restoration project have an impact on the current *financial sustainability* of Notre-Dame de Paris?**

This sub-question is grounded in the concept of financial sustainability as defined by Eppich and Grinda (2019), and five key categories for assessing financial sustainability in heritage financing. By applying their framework, this research evaluates the fundraising approaches used in the Notre-Dame restoration.

## **2.3 Identifying Donors' role in Heritage Management**

### *2.3.1 Alternative Funding Sources*

Before delving into private donations, it is important to briefly review the funding approaches in the cultural sector. Lin and Luo's (2023) study explore how multiple motivations and values shape organizational behavior and decision-making. One key takeaway from their study is that funding structures for cultural organizations can be examined at both macro and micro levels. At the macro level, different funding structures reflect market environments under various cultural policies, while at the micro level, funding structures refer to the proportion of income derived from various sources (Lin & Luo, 2023). They identified three main funding sources: from the government, from the corporations (e.g., sponsorships), or from the general public, which includes individual donations, crowdfunding, ticket sales, and product consumption. Their research emphasizes that both external and internal factors, viewed from macro and micro perspectives, can influence the funding structure and management practices of organizations (Lin & Luo, 2023; Lund, 2010).

In the EU's context, studies reveal that most of the cultural heritage sites are heavily reliant on government subsidies (Eppich & Grinda, 2019). Due to the continuously decreasing budget from government funds, there is increasing discussions around alternative financial mechanisms for funding cultural heritage, along with the evaluations on their economics and financial sustainability (Blundo et al., 2017; Eppich & Grinda, 2019).

As defined by Lin and Luo (2023), alternative funding sources refer to any non-governmental, private funds, including those from corporations and the general public. Blundo et al. (2017) investigate three alternative funding methods for the cultural heritage, including *patronage*, *sponsorship*, and the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. Their study first differentiates between patronage and sponsorship by their motivations, practice, and the impact brought through their involvement (Blundo et al., 2017; O'Hagan & Harvey, 2000). Patronage is



typically seen as a philanthropic form of support, with no specific economic or commercial reward intended; while sponsorship refers to the transactional relationships where businesses provide financial support in exchange for promotional exposure and economics benefit (Blundo et al., 2017; Lewandowska, 2015; O'Hagan & Harvey, 2000). Additionally, Blundo et al. (2017) investigate the PPP model, which ensures direct returns for private investors, thereby enhancing cultural heritage through private investment while maintaining public ownership.

### *2.3.2 Philanthropy Motivated Patronages or Commercial Sponsors?*

Despite the potential offered by alternative funding sources, the growth of sponsorship and patronage has been limited due to their indirect returns on investment, as well as posing challenges to the autonomy of heritage management (Blundo et al., 2017; Eppich & Grinda, 2019).

Throsby (2000) highlights that, while cultural heritage is often perceived as a public good, its economic potential driven from cultural value also attracts private investment. This raises the question of whether corporate donations should be classified as purely philanthropic acts or as strategic investments in cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The transformations from economic capital to cultural and social capital are sometimes difficult to being legelized, and in such cases, hidden capital flows, i.e., cultural capital, become crucial in impacting social structure. This is again why, not only the case of Notre-Dame de Paris, but also the philanthropic motivation of patronage is questioned in cultural initiatives (Lewandowska, 2015; Wang and Holznagel, 2020).

As Lewandowska's (2015) study points out, the traditional definition of sponsorship may no longer apply to art-business relations. Not only because sponsorships in art are often seen as philanthropic due to their limited economic returns, but also the "pure philanthropic motivation" of patronage is frequently questioned in cultural initiatives (Lewandowska, 2015; Wang and Holznagel, 2020). To define the role of private donations in this study is thus important, especially when considering the funding structure of the Notre-Dame de Paris conservation project. At the macro level, the substantial amount of private donations for the conservation of Notre-Dame de Paris was not part of the traditional governance model in the French heritage management context, where heritage conservation is typically centralized and directly linked to state intervention (Poulot, 2019). France has a strong emphasis on equality, as well as a public distrust of wealthy entities such as foundations (Archambault, 2022).

At the micro level, almost all funding for the restoration come from private donations, with a notable portion contributed by three of the France's wealthiest families, Arnault (LVMH), Pinault (Kering), and Bettencourt (L'Oréal), whose donations represent a significant share of the total (Poulot, 2019; Archambault, 2022). These private donations would traditionally be categorized as patronage because they are not tied to direct economic returns, formal sponsorship contracts, or explicit expectations of exposure (Blundo et al., 2017). However, these donations did generate visibility and extensive media exposure for the associated corporations, which is typically a feature of sponsorships. Here linked back to Bourdieu's (1986) sociology perspective of cultural capital. As mentioned, Bourdieu (1986) proposes that it is possible to transform different forms of capital; combining with Throsby's (1999) notion that the cultural capital can give raise to future economic value, it is reasonable that some doubt may raise regarding the massive amount of donations from the wealthiest (especially they all represent different cooperations). The line between philanthropy patronages and commercial sponsorships is blurred, as is their potential impact on the management of the restoration project and the heritage itself.

Accordingly, instead of focusing on the donors' motivations, it is rather important to investigate the donors' roles in the actual collaboration processes. This includes understanding the funding structure from both macro and micro levels (Lin & Luo, 2023; Lewandowska, 2015). With respect to this context, Sub Question2 is formulated as follows:

***What roles do these private donations play in the conservation project of Notre-Dame de Paris?***

This sub-question is based on the concept of donors' roles, which are examined through a variety of practices discussed in the literature above. While the primary focus is on actual involvement and not on motivations, it is possible that the interpretation of donor interest may arise as part of the analysis. However, due to data limitations, any discussion regarding motivation will be drawn only from the evidence collected during the research process.

### 2.3.3 *Shift from Sponsors to Partnerships*

In addition to the blurring line between patronages and sponsors, there are also some discussions about the evolving relationship from sponsorships to *partnerships* between cultural organizations and businesses. Comparing to the fix-term exchanges of patronage and sponsor relationships, which usually lead to limited long-term value (Blundo et al., 2017), partnerships move beyond financial transactions, emphasizing shared resources, co-creation, and long-term strategic collaborations (Lewandowska, 2015).

From the business perspective, scholars suggest that fostering a sustainable environment for the arts and culture sector may contribute to business's long-term development, both externally and internally (Lewandowska, 2015; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). For instance, Wang and Holznagel's (2020) study suggest that cross-sector collaborations with the culture sector provide strategic benefits for businesses, with partnerships having a stronger positive impact on corporate reputation among millennials than sponsorships. Lewandowska (2015) empirically compares the different impacts of sponsorships and partnerships on businesses' creative development, showing that partnerships have a greater impact on building positive relationships with external and internal stakeholders.

These multi-benefit and responsible features also significantly impact on the side of cultural organizations. Lund (2010) conducted a case study evaluating the transition from sponsors to partners, showcasing the ongoing practice of strategic collaboration as management strategies of cultural organizations. Through such strategic collaboration, cultural organizations can increase their autonomy, transitioning from a passive to an active role. This shift gradually develops through active engagement, including four stages: strategy setting, partner identification, optimization, and evaluation (Lund, 2010). More specifically, the partnership practice reflects a strategic shift toward a "win-win" model, in which both arts organizations and businesses share not only resources, but also risks and rewards (Wang & Holznagel, 2020).

Even under the sponsorship contract, partnership practices can still be critical to the success of sponsorships. A study by Casado-Molina et al. (2023) indicates that successful sponsorships require effective management, alignment with social expectations, and mutual benefits. Museums value sponsorships not only for cultural preservation but also for infrastructure development, while sponsors benefit from increased brand reputation and internal



improvements like employee motivation and innovation (Casado-Molina et al., 2023; Lewandowska, 2015).

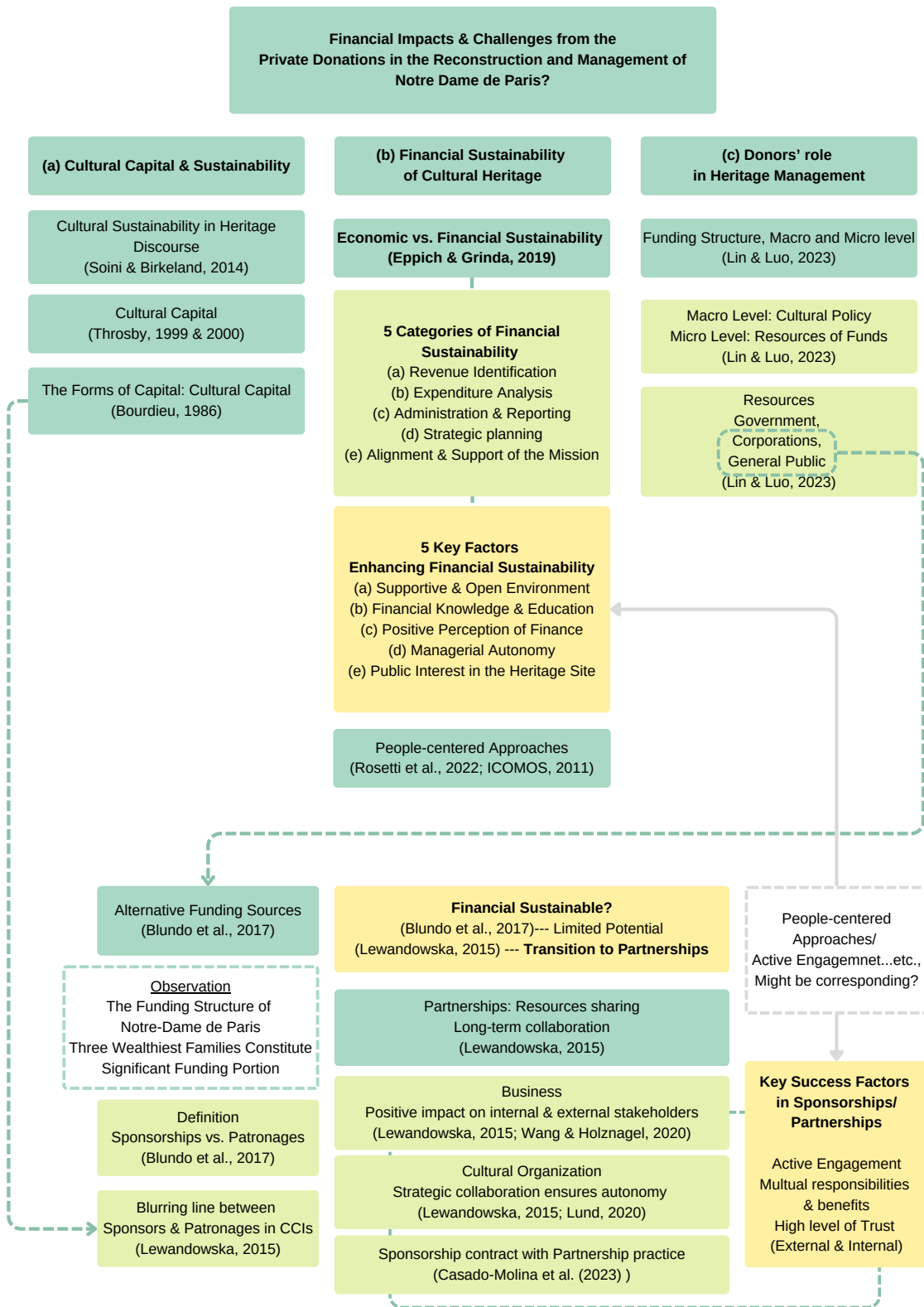
All the above literature emphasizes that partnerships practice involves a mutual sharing of risks, responsibilities, and benefits. They also require high levels of trust and common goals (Lewandowska, 2015; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). Trust is built through active engagement on both sides, and mutual adaptation is key to long-term success, reducing power imbalances and fostering equality over time (Lund, 2010). The importance of trust can also be seen externally, as Wang and Holznagel (2020) study point out, credibility is a key success factor, that target audiences assess corporate's reputation based on how well its commitment to collaborative responsibilities.

In conclusion, rather than passively receiving donations, heritage management can adopt active strategies in its relationships with donors. This leads to the Sub Question3:

**To what extent have private donations influenced the *management practice* of Notre-Dame de Paris?**

Expanding on Sub Question2, this question explores the nature of donor-organization relationships established during the restoration project. Drawing from the literature, three key aspects are examined from the perspective of the restoration project. The first aspect is *relationship management*, which considers how the project team manages relationships among various stakeholders, especially private donors, and how these interactions affect project governance and collaboration (Blundo et al., 2017; Lewandowska, 2015; Lund, 2010; Rosetti et al., 2022; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). The second aspect is *management autonomy*, which examines the level of decision-making independence within the project. Autonomy here not only refers to operational freedom but also to the ability to ensure the long-term integrity of the heritage site (Lund, 2010; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). The final aspect investigates the *trust and relationship quality* established between donors and project stakeholders (Lewandowska, 2015; Wang & Holznagel, 2020), with an emphasize on external trust of public confidence in the transparency and accountability of project management.

**Graph 1.** *Visualized Theoretical Framework*



### **3. Research Method**

This chapter presents a detailed explanation of the research methodology employed in this study. The research explores the short-term financial implications and long-term institutional challenges associated with private donations, using the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris following the 2019 fire as a case study. To address this objective, the study adopts an inductive, qualitative research strategy (Bryman, 2016) grounded in a single-case study design.

Beginning with the specific case of the Notre-Dame de Paris restoration and the public debates surrounding the involvement of private donors (Poulot, 2019), the rationale for using inductive reasoning lies in the research objective: to explore emerging patterns and dynamics within this unique case and, from there, develop broader insights about the role of private funding in a traditionally state-led heritage management system. Rather than testing a predefined hypothesis, the study seeks to build understanding from a real-world event (Bryman, 2016).

The case of Notre-Dame restoration is particularly valuable because it presents a critical incident, especially in French heritage management, where private sector involvement was introduced into a system dominated by public funding. Given the exploratory nature of these questions, a qualitative research strategy is most appropriate. According to Bryman (2016), there are sufficient reasons of choosing qualitative approach in this study. First, it aligns with an inductive view that theory is developed from the data rather than imposed beforehand. Second, this study values context-specific interpretation, particularly how individuals and parties act and experience with this specific context. Finally, it is based on the ontological assumption that social realities are constructed through interaction; thus, the dynamics between public institutions and private donors must be understood as socially produced, not as fixed or external phenomena.

From this point of view, a theoretical framework is developed through a review of key concepts in sustainable heritage management, along with reviews on the fundraising approaches in heritage and cultural sectors. This framework then informs the operationalization of research question, which also guides the qualitative data collection and analysis.

### **3.1 Research Design: Case Study Approach**

This research employs a single-case study design (Bryman, 2016), focusing on the post-2019 fire restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris. The selection of this case is based on its exceptional nature: the French national government responded rapidly to the disaster, initiating a series of institutional and financial measures. These include the launch of large-scale private fundraising campaigns, the establishment of an administrative body (RNDP) to oversee the project, and the passing of special legislation tailored specifically to the restoration of Notre-Dame. These developments represent significant departures from traditional state-funded cultural heritage management practices in France.

These structural and policy shifts underscore the suitability of the Notre-Dame restoration as an individual case study (Bryman, 2016). Most notably, the reliance on private donations marks a major deviation from France's traditionally state-centered model of heritage funding (Archambault, 2022; Poulot, 2019). As such, this case provides a rare opportunity to examine the implications and consequences of incorporating private financing into national cultural heritage projects.

Considering heritage management in France is largely centralized and shaped by national policies, this study also includes a contextualized review of French cultural policy and relevant legal frameworks. This contextual understanding is crucial for interpreting the broader policy landscape within which the Notre-Dame restoration unfolded.

With the above proposes, a case study approach can facilitate a comprehensive and multifaceted analysis, structured around three interrelated sub-questions derived from the theoretical framework. Through contextualized investigation, a case study approach enables the study to construct a more comprehensive data collection process and analysis framework, understanding the institutional and policy-related impacts of private donations in this cultural heritage restoration project, and reflect on its characteristics and conditions. Finally the scope of implication from this case study will be assessed.

### **3.2 Operationalization**

As a fundamental step in qualitative research, operationalization helps define abstract concepts into measurable indicators (Bryman, 2016). These indicators help guide both the data collection

process and the way the analysis is carried out for each sub-question. This research focuses on two main dimensions in the central research question:

- (a) Short-term financial impacts: This part looks at the fundraising strategies right after the fire, and the changes they brought to the management of the Notre-Dame restoration project. It examines how these immediate responses affected the project's implementation and progress, especially in terms of how the work was organized and carried out.
- (b) Long-term challenges: This part explores how sustainable the financial strategies are in the long run. It considers how the involvement of private donors has influenced management practices, strategic decisions, and governance. It reflects on the possible effects of private support on the cultural capital inherent value of the heritage site.

The two dimensions indicate that the collected data should demonstrate the developments of the funding and management strategies of Notre-Dame de Paris. To address the main research question systematically, the main research question is also divided into three sub-questions based on the theoretical framework:

- d. Sub Question1: To what extent do the private donations to the restoration project have an impact on the *current financial sustainability* of Notre- Dame de Paris?
- e. Sub-Question2: What *roles do these private donors* play in the restoration project of Notre-Dame de Paris?
- f. Sub-Question3: To what extent have these private donations influenced the *management practice* of Notre-Dame de Paris?

Each sub-question focuses on different concepts, which are further operationalized into measurable indicators to guide data collection. Table 1 below outlines how these concepts are operationalized into indicators and linked to their respective data sources:

**Table 1.** *Operationalization of Main Concepts*

	Concept	Indicators	Data Sources
SQ1	Financial Sustainability	Revenue Identification	Secondary Data & Interview
		Expenditure analysis	
		Administration and reporting	
		Strategic planning	
		Alignment & support of the heritage's mission	
SQ2	Donors Role	Patronage practice	Secondary Data & Interview
		Sponsorship practice	
		Partnership practice	
SQ3	Management Practice of Notre-Dame	Relationship with Donors	Secondary Data & Interview
		Management Autonomy & Strategy	
		Trust and Relationship Quality	

### 3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

This research combines documentary analysis of secondary data and semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative, contextualized data from various sources. The aim is to build a comprehensive understanding of how private support may have influenced both the restoration process and the management strategies of Notre-Dame de Paris.

#### 3.3.1 Sampling Method: Theoretical Sampling

This study adopts theoretical sampling, a form of purposive sampling commonly used in qualitative research (Bryman, 2016). Given that this research focuses on a specific case—Notre-Dame de Paris—and especially on the financial sustainability of its restoration project after the introduction of private donations, purposive sampling is a suitable approach. It allows the

researcher to select both data sources and interview participants based on the research objectives (Bryman, 2016).

Theoretical sampling means that sources are selected because of their relevance to the emerging theoretical insights. As described in qualitative research methodology, this approach is iterative, allowing the researcher to move back and forth between data collection and theory development (Bryman, 2016). One key factor determining this specific sampling method is the involving nature of this case study, that is, Notre-Dame case has a relatively well-defined timeline, from the fire in 2019 to its partial reopening planned for December 2024. This time frame offers a rich body of sources that reflect different stages of the project and illustrate how various actors were involved. These materials can be analyzed in an iterative way, making them well-suited for testing and refining the developing theoretical framework. This is a key function of theoretical sampling in this research.

The theoretical framework developed in the earlier stages of the study provides clear criteria for including or excluding both documentary materials and interviewees. These sampling criteria will be further explained in the following sections, which detail the procedures for documentary analysis and interviews.

### *3.3.2 Documentary Analysis through Secondary Data*

Documentary analysis through secondary data serves as the main data collection method for this case study. To understand the actual management and restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris, it is important to develop a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of the case. As Notre-Dame is a state-owned cultural asset, and the restoration project involves multiple stakeholders and administrative bodies, there is a wide and rich variety of secondary sources available. These sources help build a solid analytical foundation and support theoretical development (Bryman, 2016). While many of the relevant documents were available in English, some essential materials such as governmental reports and press releases, were available only in French. As the researcher is not a French speaker, translations of these documents were conducted using generative AI (ChatGPT, 2025). The documents analyzed in this research come from the following categories:

#### *(a) Policy and Strategy Documents*



These include official publications from the French government, such as reports and statements from the Élysée Palace, the French Court of Auditors, the Ministry of Culture, and the public agency responsible for overseeing the Notre-Dame restoration. In addition, annual reports from the four main foundations involved in fundraising provide important data on donation flows and financial planning. These documents help construct a reliable policy context and allow the researcher to evaluate official actions related to the management process (Bryman, 2016).

#### (b) News Content and Website Information

This category refers to non-official documents published on websites or in news articles (Bryman, 2016). The sources are more diverse and include public communications from official bodies, PR content from major corporate donors, and press releases or website materials from the four major foundations. These sources offer insights into public messaging, external reactions, and narrative framing around the restoration, giving a perspective that complements and contrasts with the official documents.

#### (c) Academic Articles and Publications

Although academic literature is not directly used for coding or thematic analysis, it plays a key role in offering theoretical insights and building the historical, social, cultural, and economic context of the Notre-Dame restoration project. It also helps identify major issues and criticisms that arose during different phases of the project, which strengthens the overall understanding of the case.

#### 3.3.3 *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were planned to complement the documentary analysis by offering internal perspectives from professionals involved in the Notre-Dame restoration project. These interviews aimed to capture insights that are not always evident in official documents, particularly regarding the practical challenges, decision-making process, and stakeholder interactions within the project.

The interview questions were designed based on three operationalized concepts identified in the theoretical framework (Financial Sustainability, Donor's Role, and the Management Practice of Notre-Dame). A semi-structured format was chosen to allow for consistency in

exploring these core themes while also offering flexibility to tailor the questions to each interviewee's specific expertise and professional background. This can help in collecting more relevant and meaningful information. The complete list of interview questions, along with the collected responses can be found in Appendix A, B, and C.

Regarding interviewee selection, the target interviewees were professionals from two key stakeholder groups: The first group includes members of Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris (RNDP), the public establishment for overseeing the restoration project. The second group are individuals involved in fundraising efforts, ideally from the four main foundations supporting the project. Nevertheless, professionals from other fundraising entities that have contributed to the Notre-Dame restoration were also considered, in order to capture a broader and more comprehensive range of perspectives.

There were some practical adjustments during the data collection process. Due to limited time and restricted access to private stakeholder contact information, interviewees could only be identified through publicly accessible and legally permissible contact channels. This approach aligns with essential research ethics standards, ensuring that participant privacy and consent were respected throughout the process (Bryman, 2016). Fortunately, the research gathered one semi-structured interview and two written answers from *three professionals*, each offering distinct areas of expertise, while meeting the interviewee selection criteria, as summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Information of Interviewees*

	Organization	Role	Expertise
Interviewee A	Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris (Management body of the restoration)	(Project) Contract Manager	Drafts contracts and technical specs, monitors project progress, ensures compliance, manages contract changes and issues
Interviewee B	Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris (International fundraising body specifically for Notre-Dame de Paris)	Academic Member of Board of Directors	Expert in French Gothic (13th–14th c.), modern architecture history Gives annual donor talks; attends quarterly board meetings (mostly via Zoom)
Interviewee C		Communication Director	Manages communication among stakeholders

These interviews provided valuable internal insights that supported the analysis of the project's financial, organizational, and governance aspects. Further minor adjustments to the data collection strategy were made during the process to accommodate the practical realities of access and communication with professionals:

- (a) Interviewee A preferred to respond in written French, which introduced a shift from planned semi-structured interview to a written format. This adjustment made the interview more closely resemble a *structured interview*, as the interaction was limited to predefined questions and written responses. Despite the shift from original research planning, this shift do have certain advantages, particularly the standardization of both question delivery and response recording, which helps reduce errors associated with inconsistent question phrasing and enhances the accuracy and ease of analyzing responses (Bryman, 2016). Another practical shift is the involve of translation process. As the researcher is not a French speaker, the translation into English was also done with Generative AI (ChatGPT, 2025) for both the questions and answers. To ensure the

accuracy of the translation, the researcher also consulted French speakers to review the output for technical and contextual precision.

- (b) The semi-structured interview with *Interviewee B* went smoothly as planned, and the interview was conducted in English. As a result, the researcher consider it is not necessary to specify anything here.
- (c) *Interviewee C* responded late in the process and had limited availability for a live interview. Therefore, the interview was also conducted in written form (same as *Interviewee A*), with questions focused only on key issues identified during the documentary analysis. Despite the limited format, the response was highly valuable. Interviewee C's answers provided targeted insights that helped verify and refine the emerging findings. This approach remains in line with the principles of theoretical sampling, where the data collected serves the purpose of supporting theory development (Bryman, 2016). Answers from Interviewee C are also in English, so there is no translation process involved.

### **3.4 Analysis Approach**

As mentioned earlier, the research draws on three main types of sources: Policy and strategy documents, news media and website content, and one semi-structured interview and two written answers collected from professionals involved in the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris. All these data are analyzed using thematic coding (Bryman, 2016), and evaluated through operationalization metrics introduced earlier. The thematic analysis refers here including the following steps:

- (a) Data familiarization: Gain a deeper understanding of the content through data.
- (b) Initial coding: Identifying meaningful segments of data relevant to each research question.
- (c) Theme development: Grouping codes into larger themes, and refining them to make sure they reflect the key ideas.
- (d) Theme analysis: Interpreting the themes to answer the sub-questions, focusing on financial impacts, donor involvement, and governance shifts in the Notre-Dame project.

These steps allow the research to identify key themes and patterns, and to provide meaningful answers regarding financial sustainability, the role of private donors, and the evolution of the management model. To be more systemic and to better cover different aspects of each sub questions, this research delivers three discussion stages:

**Table 3.** *Three Discussion Stages*

Stage One: Contextual Review
This is a contextual review of the Notre-Dame de Paris, delivered individually in Chapter 4. This includes a background study of the site itself and the French cultural policy landscape. This step serves as the foundation for the rest of the analysis, allowing the researcher to better understand the case and apply more precise coding later in the process.
Stage Two: Analysis of the Three Sub-questions
Involves detailed analysis and discussion of the data found to answer the three sub-questions defined in the theoretical framework. This is the most data-intensive phase, where the majority of the coding takes place. Each sub-question has its own coding board made by Miro (attached separately in Appendix D, E, and F). Data collected from interviewees are also coded and integrated into discussions in this phase.
Stage Three: Integrating Findings
Bring together the findings from the three sub-questions to answer the main research question. After analyzing each sub-question individually, the conclusions are combined and reviewed to give a full picture of how private donations have affected both the restoration project and the long-term management.

**Graph 2. Full Analysis Board<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> The detailed boards of each sub questions are in the Appendix D, E, and F.

#### **4. Notre-Dame de Paris: A Contextual Review**

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the historical development of Notre-Dame de Paris, offering a foundation for analysis through understanding its historic-societal framework and cultural significance.

##### **4.1 Historical and Cultural Background of Notre-Dame de Paris**

The origins of Notre-Dame can be traced back to the 4th century when the King of the Franks, Clovis, converted to Christianity and established Paris as the capital of his kingdom. He actively promoted the Christian faith throughout his realm, during when the first cathedral on the Île de la Cité was built, the Saint-Étienne Cathedral, which stood on the site now occupied by the forecourt of Notre-Dame (Bruzelius, 1987; Notre-Dame de Paris, 2019).

As Paris grew in political and religious importance, there was a need for a bigger religious structure. In 1163, under the lead of Bishop Maurice de Sully and with the support of King Louis VII, the construction of Notre-Dame de Paris began. The original Saint-Étienne Cathedral was demolished to make room for this ambitious project, which became one of the largest religious construction efforts of its time (Notre-Dame de Paris, 2019).

Besides its historical and religious significance, Notre-Dame went on to become a defining symbol of Gothic architecture. Its characteristics, such as flying buttresses, ribbed vaults, pointed arches, and the later rose windows—not only exemplified the Gothic style, but also represent the innovation of aesthetics and techniques from generations of builders and architects (Bruzelius, 1987; Murray, 1998). These features were developed and refined over centuries, through periods of transformation, damage, and restoration (Murray, 1998; Pouivet, 2023).

Notre-Dame de Paris was always belonged to the Archbishopric of Paris until the French Revolution (1789); since then the Cathedral and the church property were all “nationalized”. During the Revolution, she was considered a symbol of the Church’s wealth and power, standard for institutions the revolutionaries was fighting with. As a result, the Cathedral suffered severe damage and was even used as a wine warehouse for a period (Centre des Monuments Nationaux, n.d.; Notre-Dame de Paris, 2019).



After the Revolution, Notre-Dame was at risk of demolition. Public interest in its preservation was revived by Victor Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (*Notre-Dame de Paris*), published in 1831. The book sparked widespread appreciation for the cathedral, leading to a major restoration campaign in the 1840s led by architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (Centre des Monuments Nationaux, n.d.; Notre-Dame de Paris, 2019). In 1991, in recognition of her outstanding universal value, Notre-Dame de Paris was inscribed in UNESCO World Heritage Site as parts of "Paris, Banks of the Seine" (UNESCO, 1991).

#### **4.2 Ownership and Management Responsibilities of Notre-Dame de Paris**

To understand the complexities of Notre-Dame's ownership and management today, it is essential to consider her dual identity: as a religious site, where masses and other ceremonies continue to be held, and as a cultural and historical monument representing centuries of architectural, societal, and political change. The debate over the ownership and management of Notre-Dame, much like in other European countries, cannot be separated from France's long and intricate relationship between the state and religion (Foret & Riva, 2010).

A key principle here is *laïcité* (*secularism*), formally codified in the *1905 Law on the Separation of Churches and the State* (*Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Églises et de l'État*). This law asserts the neutrality of the Republic toward all religions while guaranteeing individuals freedom of belief (République Française, n.d.). As Foret and Riva (2010) explain, French 'laïcité' is fundamentally based on the neutrality of public space and the direct, unmediated relationship between the citizen and the state, reflecting a broader historical movement to limit the Church's influence on public life.

According to Article 12 of the 1905 Law, churches built before that year—including Notre-Dame—were officially transferred to state ownership (République Française, n.d.). While the building remains freely available for religious use, as specified in Article 13, ownership and maintenance responsibilities fall to the French state, specifically the Ministry of Culture (République Française, n.d.). Religious services are permitted under specific agreements, but the site is also protected as a 'monument historique', reflecting its dual role. In practice, this means Notre-Dame is state-owned, with the Catholic Church retaining the right to use it for religious purposes, while the state is responsible for its upkeep and any restoration work.

Turning now to Notre-Dame's role as a cultural heritage site, it is important to examine the administrative framework and legal foundations that govern her, to better understand her place within the broader structure of French cultural policy. France's cultural policy has deep historical roots, dating back to the monarchy, when culture was used as a key tool for reinforcing royal power—laying the foundations for a state-led system of cultural resource allocation (Collard, 2000). Even after the fall of the monarchy and the gradual transition to modern democracy, cultural policy in France has consistently remained under state control (Collard, 2000; Dubois, 2016). The establishment of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs (*Ministère des Affaires Culturelles*) in 1959 under de Gaulle's government—later renamed the Ministry of Culture (*Ministère de la Culture*)—marked the formal emergence of the modern concept of cultural policy in France (Dubois, 2016; Lebovics, 2011).

Since its inception, France's cultural policy has been characterized by strong centralization and a focus on promoting elite culture, aiming to democratize access by increasing opportunities to engage with it, rather than by fostering cultural diversity (Dubois, 2016; Lebovics, 2011). This approach has reinforced the symbolic dominance of what is considered "official culture" (Collard, 2000; Dubois, 2016). The underlying belief of this supply-side logic is that increasing access to high culture will naturally generate public demand. As a result, Paris—with its dense network of institutions, high media visibility, and steady visitor numbers—has consistently been prioritized in the allocation of cultural resources and funding (Dubois, 2016).

The state's deep involvement in cultural policy is further illustrated by the creation of the Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs (*Directions Régionales des Affaires Culturelles*, DRACs) in 1977. These bodies were established to implement national cultural policies at the regional level (Collard, 2000; Dubois, 2016). Although decentralization reforms in the 1980s granted the DRACs greater budgetary flexibility and administrative autonomy, Paris's advantage in terms of cultural symbolism and resource allocation has remained largely unchanged (Dubois, 2016). While DRACs act as regional advisors and coordinators of cultural administration, they continue to operate under the oversight of the central government.

Today, the Ministry of Culture is organized into a central administration, three main types of bodies, and various decentralized services that implement its work: the Regional

Directorates of Cultural Affairs (DRACs), Public Establishments (EPs), and Services with National Competence (SCNs) (Ministère de la Culture, 2024). Their roles are as follows:

- a. **Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs (Directions Régionales des Affaires Culturelles, DRACs):** The Ministry of Culture develops and implements national cultural policies across France through the DRACs, and through the Directorates of Cultural Affairs (DAC) in overseas territories. The DRACs serve as regional branches of the Ministry, primarily responsible for enforcing national policies at the local level. Each is led by a regional director appointed by the Minister. For example, before the 2019 fire, the maintenance and preservation of Notre-Dame were overseen by the DRAC Île-de-France, the official body responsible for protecting and restoring cultural heritage throughout the Paris region. Funding for these efforts was allocated primarily by the central government.
- b. **Public Establishments (Établissements Publics, EPs):** EPs are entities that have a certain degree of administrative and financial autonomy. Their missions include specialized operations such as exhibitions, restorations, and large-scale projects. Although supervised by the Ministry of Culture, they maintain significant independence in managing their affairs. Following the Notre-Dame fire, the Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris public establishment was created as one such body. These establishments can be either administrative (e.g., the National Library of France) or industrial and commercial (e.g., the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine). In both cases, they fulfill public-interest missions while operating with relative independence from the Ministry's central administration.
- c. **Services with National Competence (Services à Compétence Nationale, SCNs):** SCNs occupy a position between central and decentralized administrations. Their responsibilities are national in scope—unlike decentralized services—and cannot be delegated to regional levels. However, they differ from central services in that their missions are operational. While they are under ministerial authority, they benefit from a degree of autonomy. An example is the Centre des Monuments Nationaux, which manages major national heritage sites.

**Table 4.** *The Organization Structure of French Ministry of Culture*

Type of Body	Function	Autonomy Level	Example
Directions Régionales des Affaires Culturelles (DRACs)	Implementing cultural policies at the regional level.	Low Autonomy	DRAC Île-de-France
Établissements Publics (EP)	Operating and managing large-scale projects or institutions.	High Autonomy	Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris
Services à Compétence Nationale (SCN)	Providing technical services and carrying out national-level missions.	Mid Autonomy	Centre des Monuments Nationaux

To conclude this chapter, Notre-Dame de Paris embodies a complex set of values that extend beyond her status as a state-owned heritage site and Catholic church. As previously discussed, she holds significant cultural, social, and economic value, which explains her global prominence and the public interest surrounding its restoration.

Culturally, Notre-Dame symbolizes France’s historical and religious heritage. Architecturally, she stands as a landmark of Gothic innovation, representing centuries of artistic and technical achievement (Bruzelius, 1987; Murray, 1998). Socially, the cathedral has played a central role throughout French history making her a key element in the construction of national identity (Centre des Monuments Nationaux, n.d.; Notre-Dame de Paris, 2019; Pouivet, 2023).

Economically, Notre-Dame’s symbolic status generates substantial value. As one of the most visited sites in Paris, she contributes significantly to tourism and the broader economy (Throsby, 1999& 2000; Gombault, 2020). She also represents the centralization of cultural governance in France, demonstrating how the state allocates resources and authority in managing national heritage (Collard, 2000; Dubois, 2016; Lebovics, 2011).

Understanding these multifaceted values is essential for analyzing the broader implications of private funding, institutional roles, and management practices discussed in the next chapter. Clarifying Notre-Dame's legal status, ownership structure, and governance framework provides not only necessary context but also an analytical foundation for interpreting collected documents and interview data.

## 5. Analysis and Discussion

The Analysis and Discussion starts with each sub-question and later returning to the main research question for a comprehensive reflection.

### 5.1 Evaluating Impacts of Private Donations on Financial Sustainability

The focus of this section is on the first sub-question: *To what extent have private donations impacted the financial sustainability of Notre-Dame de Paris?* The analysis adopts the definition of financial sustainability proposed by Eppich & Grinda (2019), using five key indicators as the analytical framework.

#### 5.1.1 Revenue Identification

April 15, 2019, the same evening when the fire broke out at Notre-Dame de Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the launch of a reconstruction plan (Élysée, 2019a) through the Élysée Palace. Just two days later on April 17, the Ministers of the Interior and Culture jointly released a set of immediate response measures (Élysée, 2019b). In response to this emergency, the French government enacted emergency legislation specifically for Notre-Dame within two months, the *Law No. 2019-803*, passed on July 29, 2019 (République Française, 2020). Law No. 2019-803 not only granted exemptions from urban planning and environmental regulations for the reconstruction project (Okahashi, 2022; Poulot, 2020), but also clearly laid out the objectives of the restoration, the fundraising mechanisms, and the financial and administrative framework.

A fundamental issue in the restoration of Notre-Dame is identifying sources of funding. Although a large volume of private donations poured in from around the world shortly after the fire, this outpouring also revealed a deeper issue of long-standing under-funding (Gombault, 2020; Poulot, 2020). Before the fire, Notre-Dame was under the management of the French Ministry of Culture and received only about €2 million annually for maintenance and restoration. This amount accounted for less than 5% of the total €50 million allocated to all 86 cathedrals across France (Gombault, 2020). Considering that Notre-Dame attracted millions of visitors each year, such limited funding clearly could not support her long-term preservation and repair needs.

This concern was also confirmed by interviewees. Interviewee B, a representative from the fundraising organization *Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris*, pointed out that the organization had already been established in 2017 with the goal of addressing the cathedral's lack of financial resources. Even before the fire, professionals were already aware of the serious funding gap for her maintenance (see the Interview Summarize in Appendix B). Not only with Notre-Dame, as Interviewee B states, the French government is responsible for maintaining thousands of historical buildings, "*It's an overwhelming and expensive responsibility.*"

In addition to public subsidies and private donations, financial sustainability in the heritage sector also includes other revenue streams, such as ticket sales (Eppich & Grinda, 2019). However, due to French policies on the management of religious heritage, most visitors to Notre-Dame entering for free (Gombault, 2020), thus the site generated little self-sustained income.

On the night of the fire, the Fondation du Patrimoine announced a national fundraising campaign on X (formerly Twitter) (Fondation du Patrimoine, 2019). Shortly after, the Minister of Culture released a statement outlining the donation framework: the government established a centralized platform through which four public-interest foundations were authorized to collect donations. These were: the *Centre des Monuments Nationaux*, the *Fondation Notre-Dame*, the *Fondation du Patrimoine*, and the *Fondation de France*.

Of the result, the fundraising campaign triggered by the fire opened diversified financial channels for Notre-Dame beyond public funding alone. This development has had a positive impact on its financial sustainability. Although debates surrounding the role of private donations continue, it is undeniable that this event has sparked profound policy and societal reflection on the funding structures of cultural heritage and has led to institutional innovation.

### 5.1.2 Expenditure analysis, Administration and Reporting

The focus of expenditure analysis is to trace the actual flow of funds and assess whether the financial resources have been used effectively. As previously discussed, the 2019 fire exposed long-standing governmental shortcomings in fire prevention and heritage maintenance. These included inadequate preventive measures and insufficient site safety protocols. Such issues not only pointed to a lack of long-term investment in Notre-Dame but also revealed weaknesses in how funds had been managed and allocated (Gombault, 2020; Poulot, 2020).

Before the fire, Notre-Dame was under the supervision of DRAC Île-de-France, the regional office responsible for the protection and restoration of cultural heritage in the Paris area. In response to the scale and urgency of the reconstruction effort, the French government established a new dedicated agency in 2019: the Public Establishment for the Rebuilding of Notre-Dame de Paris, *RNDP* (Établissement public Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris). Compared to DRACs, this public establishment (EP) operates with greater autonomy and a more specialized structure. Its responsibilities include detailed project management, operational decision-making, and authority over funding allocation and evaluation. These roles are clearly defined in *Decree No. 2019-1250*, issued on November 28, 2019 (République Française, 2019).

Under this institutional design, the restoration project for Notre-Dame could proceed according to a clear and systematic division of labor, effectively improving resource allocation efficiency, which would have been difficult to achieve under a system entirely dependent on government funding (Eppich & Grinda, 2019). As a member of the public institution, Interviewee A provided a detailed explanation of the funding planning and allocation process for the reconstruction:

*“The restoration of the cathedral after the fire has been entirely financed by donor money. The overall endowment was subject to a projected planning by reconstruction phase (Phase I: securing, Phase II and Phase III: restoration) and by type of expenditure (site installation, organs, upper parts, interiors, etc.). This planning was presented and approved each year by the board of directors, a body composed of expert members from the relevant institutions.”* (Full written answer included in Appendix A)

Interviewee A further emphasized: *“The budget and its expenditures are monitored by an audit and investment committee, an ad hoc committee, a donors’ committee, and the Court of Auditors.”* This highlights another essential indicator of sustainable financial management: Administration and reporting (Eppich & Grinda, 2019). The operational design of the Public Establishment reveals a collaborative structure involving various stakeholders and robust oversight by external professional bodies and committees. For example, the French Court of Auditors (Cour des Comptes) published a special public report in 2020 on the conservation and restoration of Notre-Dame. This report included an overview of the donations received and offered recommendations on project management. A follow-up report published in 2022 evaluated progress on construction, budget execution, and the reopening strategy.



Foundations responsible for collecting private donations have also made efforts to ensure transparency. Fonds Cathédrale de Paris, for instance, published its annual accounts from 2019 to 2023 on its official website. Similarly, the Fondation de France released a report titled *Notre-Dame, One Year Later* in 2020. These efforts to openly share financial information was aiming to support better oversight and providing the public with valuable insight into how funds are being used and their overall impact.

### 5.1.3 Strategic planning, Alignment & Support of the Heritage's Mission

Among the indicators for assessing financial sustainability, strategic planning encompasses areas such as income and expenditure planning, risk assessment, and the development of revenue-generating opportunities (Eppich & Grinda, 2019).

To achieve the president's 5-year goal to "rebuild Notre-Dame," the government created a dedicated public institution, Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris (RNDP) to oversee the project, and appointed former Chief of the French Army General Staff, Jean-Louis Georgelin, as its head. This decision underscored the state's view of the reconstruction as a strategic national mission (Poulot, 2020). The urgency of the timeline also shaped the institutional design for fundraising and resource mobilization. In response to the financial emergency, Law No. 2019-803 introduced a temporary tax incentive: donations made before December 31, 2019, specifically for Notre-Dame's restoration, qualified for an increased tax deduction from 66% to 75% (République Française, 2020, June 15). This incentive applied exclusively to Notre-Dame and was clearly intended as a policy tool to accelerate fundraising efforts. Interviewee A shared that the management approach of this restoration project is "*typical of large-scale projects such as the construction of a new metro line.*" The management strategy is comprehensive, with a very large budget, which was not a common practice in heritage related project, since the budget was usually smaller.

However, the reconstruction efforts also raised critical questions and sparked controversy. Does the accelerated timeline compromise the thorough assessment required for cultural heritage restoration? Might political deadlines take precedence over proper preservation procedures? Why was a tax incentive granted exclusively to Notre-Dame donors? With so many wealthy individuals and large corporations contributing, could their influence outweigh broader public

interests? (Archambault, E. (2022). Gombault, A. (2020). Le Monde. (2019, April 16). Poulot, D. (2020).) These concerns align with a key sustainability indicator proposed by Eppich & Grinda (2019), that is, whether management and financial strategies support and remain consistent with the heritage site's mission.

Despite the controversies aroused through the fundraising strategies, the RNDP's structure reflects attention to management and project evaluation in support of heritage's cultural mission. In addition to oversight from various regulatory bodies, the RNDP established several committees based on different cultural value dimensions. For example, the Scientific Committee consists of experts in historic architecture, religious art, restoration, and related fields. This committee is responsible for reviewing and guiding restoration decisions, working closely with both the Ministry of Culture and the Archdiocese of Paris (Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris, n.d.). As Interviewee A confirmed, like other historic monuments, *the restoration of Notre-Dame was approved by the National Commission for Heritage and Architecture (CNHA) and overseen by various expert committees*. The project remains independent of donor influence and follows the principles set out in the Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964).

Concluding current findings, from the early stages of the restoration project, the French government has applied strategic planning to achieve short-term financial efficiency while also tried to upholding its commitment to the heritage mission through institutional design and expert involvement (Blundo et al., 2017). Though not perfect, they demonstrated efforts to strike a balance between these priorities. As a globally renowned religious and cultural landmark, Notre-Dame's "superstar" status grants it exceptional visibility and public appeal (Gombault, 2020). Precisely because of this, the restoration is subject to intense public scrutiny. All aspects, including fundraising strategies, fund allocation, goal setting, and implementation must align with its cultural mission, particularly the short-term goal of restoring Notre-Dame.

Even though the cathedral has reopened to the public now, significant restoration work remains. Interviewee B pointed out that, there is a concern of the consistency of future fundraising and financial support toward Notre-Dame de Paris. Therefore, it is essential to look beyond short-term financial strategies and consider long-term sustainability, which will be further explored later. The next two sub-questions address one of the most debated aspects of this global fundraising effort: the role of donors in the restoration project, and the management practices of private fundings.

## 5.2 Shifting Funding Structures in the Restoration of Notre-Dame

Following the first sub-question, this section addresses the second sub-question: What roles do private donations play in the restoration project of Notre-Dame de Paris? Which will focus on the controversies surrounding the massive inflow of private donations after the public fundraising appeal for the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris, particularly the role played by major private donors.

Before analyzing the donors themselves, it is necessary to first consider the two levels of the funding structure, including the macro level that refers to national cultural policy and institutional frameworks, and the micro level of the composition and sources of project financing (Lin & Luo, 2023). Prior to the 2019 fire, Notre-Dame was managed by the DRAC under the Ministry of Culture and received approximately €2 million annually for maintenance and restoration (Gombault, 2020). After the fire, the French government established RNDP to oversee the restoration project and appointed four foundations, this marks a macro-level shift in the funding structure (Lin & Luo, 2023). Additionally, new tax incentives were introduced to encourage donations (Conseil d'Etat Commission Permanente, 2019 April 23), further altering the macro environment. These macro level changes influenced the composition and scale of financial resources on the micro level. According to Interviewees A and B, *most of the funding for Notre-Dame's restoration after the fire came from private donations*. While the government has indicated that some public funds also contributed, official reports demonstrate that private donors provided the overwhelming majority of the financial support.

For instance, according to the report by the National Assembly on the implementation of Law No. 2019-803 (Mette, 2022), the total amount of donations and pledges collected for the national subscription reached €846.4 million as of September 30, 2021. Of this, €831.7 million had already been received or contractually committed (Mette, 2022). For instance, the report by Fondation du patrimoine (2024) stated that 98% of its donors for the Notre-Dame restoration were private individuals, with donation amounts ranging from €1 to €100,000 and an average of €114. The foundation raised €225 million in total, accounting for 70% of all donations collected for Notre-Dame, excluding contributions from the three largest family patrons (Fondation du patrimoine, 2024).

Compared to the modest public funds Notre-Dame received annually before the fire, the post-fire private donations represent a dramatic increase, even if they were in response to an

exceptional crisis. A closer look at the fundraising reports of all four authorized foundations confirms that private contributions make up the overwhelming majority of the restoration funds. This case demonstrates a significant shift in the funding structure of Notre-Dame de Paris's restoration project, which is toward a dominant reliance on private donations.

### 5.2.1 *The Role of Donors*

This section addresses the central focus of the second sub-question: the role of donors in the Notre-Dame restoration project.

According to the literature, donors can generally be categorized into three types based on their intended purpose and the effects of their actions: patronage, sponsorship, and partnership (Blundo et al., 2017; Lewandowska, 2015; O'Hagan & Harvey, 2000). In the case of Notre-Dame, many private individuals fall into the category of patronage, seen as acts of philanthropy, with no expectation of direct economic or commercial return. Interviewee B shared three main motivations of donors from their organization, including the *global emotional response triggered through live broadcast when the fire occurred*, *faith* (since Notre-Dame is also a religious building), and *Notre-Dame's characteristic as a globally familiar icon*.

However, the "pure philanthropic" nature of these donations has been questioned, particularly because of the government's introduction of temporary tax incentives. Data from Cour des Comptes (2020) on the movement of donations shows that most contributions were made shortly after the fire and before the tax benefit period expired. This timing has raised public suspicion, especially regarding major donors, with some critics arguing that the donations served as a way for the wealthy to reduce their tax burdens (Archambault, 2022; Gombault, 2020; Okahashi, 2022; Poulot, 2020). Notre-Dame is considered state owned within France's cultural policy framework, such tax incentives bring into question the trade-off involved in distributing public resources, which ultimately affects individual benefits and rights within the country (Gombault, 2020; Okahashi, 2022).

Two pieces of evidence can help counter the assumption that all donations were made purely for tax advantages. The statement from the Conseil d'État Permanent Commission (2019) clarified that while only donations made to the four designated foundations were eligible for the 75% tax reduction, since this distinction, though *unequal*, was time-limited and justified by the

broad public interest in efficiently managing donations through these official channels. Therefore, it did not violate the principle of equality before the law. Additionally, National Assembly (Mette, 2022) revealed that many individual donors, including major corporate donors such as LVMH and Kering, did not claim the tax reduction at all.

These findings enhance the credibility of private individuals' philanthropic intentions. However, the role of major donors still requires deeper analysis. Cultural capital embedded in heritage assets can generate future economic value (Bourdieu, 1986; Throsby, 1999 & 2000); together as Lewandowska (2015) argues, the line between philanthropic patronage and commercial sponsorship often becomes blurred in cultural initiatives. This ambiguity raises concerns about the potential influence of major donors on both the management of the restoration project and the future interpretation of Notre-Dame herself, which will be the focus of the next section.

### *5.2.2 Evolving Forms of Support: From Sponsorship to Partnership*

It is important to know that Notre-Dame de Paris had already been facing underfunding issues before the fire. In fact, the Ministry of Culture and the Fondation Notre-Dame had established a partnership agreement with external sponsors already before the 2019 fire, in order to address this problem (Cour des Comptes, 2020). This shows that the government's openness to private financial support was not only a reaction to the fire, but part of a longer-term approach.

After the fire, many businesses made financial contributions, sometimes under the label of sponsorship, and sometimes framed as partnerships. One notable characteristic of their practices is that, both before and after the fire, these private supports were managed with the involvement of foundations. The fundraising campaign following the fire, an even clearer division of roles was established: the four foundations were in charge of fundraising and donor relations, but they did not participate in how the funds were spent or in the governance of the public body overseeing the restoration (Cour des Comptes, 2020). Instead, the Public Establishment (EP) *Etablissement public Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris* (RNDP) was responsible for managing the restoration itself and communicating with the public, while the foundations acted as the main interface for donors (Mette, 2022).

This role separation helped ensure transparency and accountability, while still allowing space to recognize donors publicly. For example, the Fondation de France (2019) published an

annual report that included corporate logos and expressions of public gratitude. This can be seen as a typical example of sponsorship, where companies gain visibility in exchange for their financial contribution (Blundo et al., 2017; Lewandowska, 2015). However, since the foundations did not take part in the actual restoration process, there is no direct evidence that these sponsors influenced the decisions or execution of the project. Also as Interviewee B shared, *major donors seem more concerned about acknowledging their generosity rather than using their money to influence restoration outcomes*, showing a more sponsorship kind of mindset. Accordingly, there is little tensions between the projects' mission and donors.

In addition to financial donations, there were examples of *in-kind support* from companies. The following three examples illustrate the diverse ways sponsorship and partnership have been practiced throughout the Notre-Dame project.

a. **In-kind Sponsorship: Support Beyond Money**

One of the most notable examples of in-kind support came from the French Timber Industry and the organization France Bois Forêt, which donated 2,000 oak trees necessary for rebuilding the cathedral's wooden roof structure (Mette, 2022). These trees were essential for reconstructing the timber frame using traditional techniques. This collaboration also led to an important outcome: the project received PEFC project certification, which confirmed the sustainability of the materials used.

This effort involved a wide network of participants, from public and private forest owners to processing companies, who all worked together under the shared goal of supporting the restoration while maintaining the environmental, economic, and social balance of French forests. This example shows how in-kind sponsorship can bring not only practical support, but also long-term, sustainability value to heritage restoration (ICOMOS, 2011; PEFC, 2024). Compared to one-time monetary donations, in-kind contribution is more aligned with the idea of *partnership practice*, as it goes beyond financial exchange (Casado-Molina et al., 2023; Lewandowska, 2015). It focuses on shared resources, co-creation, and long-term strategic collaboration (Lewandowska, 2015).

**b. Partnership Contract: From Donors to Stakeholders**

Another example that reflects a shift from sponsorship to partnership is the case of high-profile donation pledges from Mr. Bernard Arnault (LVMH) and Mr. François and Mr. François-Henri Pinault (Kering). Rather than making one-time donations, these corporate leaders pledged long-term financial support over several years, in cooperation with the Fondation Notre-Dame (Fonds Cathédrale de Paris, n.d.). What is more significant is that they also joined the Restoration Monitoring Committee, as stated in the agreement signed with the Ministry of Culture.

This case shows one of the strongest forms of partnership: the donors not only provide funding, but also take part in project governance and supervision (Lewandowska, 2015; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). Their participation helps ensure transparency in budgeting and supports the implementation of strategic decisions. As Wang & Holznagel (2020) explain, such partnerships involve shared responsibilities, risks, and benefits, including being open to public criticism and evaluation of their impact. In this way, corporate donors are no longer just supporters; they become stakeholders with responsibilities in shaping the outcomes of the project.

**c. A Fundraising Strategy Centered on Connection and Shared Purpose**

In addition to the diverse forms of collaboration between major corporate sponsors and foundations, partnership practices can be observed in the fundraising strategies employed by the foundations, particularly in their efforts to build a sense of community among donors. This approach not only reflects the principles of partnership on shared purpose (Lewandowska, 2015; Wang & Holznagel, 2020), but also serves as a strategic method to encourage long-term donor engagement and loyalty through diverse participation (Rosetti et al., 2022).

A notable example comes from Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris, which is one of the major international fundraising organizations dedicated to the cathedral's restoration. According to Interviewee B, *the foundation has established a donor community program called the 1163 Society*, named in honor

of the year the first stone of Notre-Dame was laid (Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris, 2020). This society acknowledges and celebrates the significant contributions of its donors, framing their participation as part of a historic and collective effort to rebuild the cathedral (Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris, 2020).

Donors can join the 1163 Society by contributing at various levels, each offering tailored recognition and benefits. At the highest tier, the *Quasimodo's Circle*, with donors who give over \$10,000 not only receive all the benefits of the lower tiers, plus invitations to exclusive VIP events and personalized communication, with certain benefits negotiated individually with the foundation (Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris, 2020).

Interviewee B noted that the 1163 Society's outreach strategy has been *very proactive and comprehensive*, using direct mail, digital platforms, and their website to engage and expand their donor base. The foundation's 2024 report highlighted that around 5,500 donors contributed through direct mail campaigns within the 1163 Society, resulting in approximately 7,000 individual gifts. Of these, about 1,400 donors were official members of the society. Interviewee C added that the 1163 Society was designed as a way to show appreciation toward donors, *offering them a little exclusive content that makes all the difference* (Full written answer included in Appendix C).

Beyond the structured giving tiers, the foundation also builds personal and professional connections among major donors. Interviewee B mentioned that one of their high-level donor events was held in New York, with attendance priced at \$5,000 per seat. These gatherings bring together top contributors and board members, such as representatives from Bank of America, creating opportunities for both social and professional networking. As Interviewee B emphasized, "It's not only personal connections, it's also business or professional connections."

These cases illustrate diverse strategies goes beyond one-time donations by fostering long-term, trust-based relationships and offering incentives to supporters. It reflects the essence of partnerships, which emphasize not only the sharing of resources but also co-creation and



community building grounded in mutual values of Notre-Dame, as well as the shared benefits and sustained commitment between stakeholders (Casado-Molina et al., 2023; Lewandowska, 2015; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). Furthermore, it exemplifies a people-centered approach to heritage management by promoting active public participation (Rosetti et al., 2022).

### **5.3 Developed Management Practices**

Building on the previous analysis of both macro and micro level funding structures, this sub-question brings the two perspectives together to address the third sub-question: How have private donations influenced the management practice of Notre-Dame de Paris? Through examining the management practices involved in handling private donations during the restoration project of Notre-Dame de Paris after the fire. Whether they were private individuals offering monetary, one-time support, or corporations involved in longer-term sponsorships or partnerships, their participation required a different kind of management practice compared to state-funded heritage projects.

These differences are important as they reflect not only new forms of resource mobilization but also new expectations in terms of transparency, communication, and stakeholder engagement (Blundo et al., 2017; Casado-Molina et al., 2023; Lewandowska, 2015; Lund, 2010; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). The restoration of Notre-Dame presents an interesting case to observe how private funding has reshaped the way cultural heritage is managed, both in terms of organizational structure and public accountability.

#### *5.3.1 Relationship with Donors: From Passive Giving to Active Participation*

The fundraising campaign for Notre-Dame de Paris marked a shift in how the French public related to heritage support. Traditionally, French citizens contribute taxes to the state, leaving decisions about budget allocation to the public sectors. However, in this case, they were invited to make voluntary donations specifically for Notre-Dame's restoration. This transformed their participations from passive taxpayers into active donors (Rosetti et al., 2022). Such a shift illustrates an example of introducing market-like mechanisms into the support of cultural heritage (Throsby, 1999 & 2000).

Being more specific, voluntary donations reflect a willingness to pay for a specific cause, highlighting a more intentional form of engagement (Bourdieu, 1986; Rosetti et al., 2022). Additionally, donors are given some flexibility in choosing how their contributions are used. As noted by Interviewees A and B, while donors do not participate in the restoration project's decision-making, *they can choose to fund specific elements such as a particular chapel, or notable furnishings choir stalls*. Interviewee A further explained that, in such cases, *the team may be asked to estimate the cost of restoring the selected object, allowing the donation to be allocated accordingly. This ensures donors know exactly what their contribution is supporting*.

From a policy perspective, Notre-Dame's restoration was originally the responsibility of the national budget under France's cultural framework. However, the large-scale national fundraising campaign introduced a tax incentive system to encourage donations. While this approach helped mobilize funds, it also sparked debate around the idea of trade-off between public interests (Gombault, 2020; Okahashi, 2022). Some citizens who did not donate questioned how the donated money was being used, whether the tax deductions were justified, and if these decisions truly served the public interests (Gombault, 2020; Okahashi, 2022; Poulot, 2020). This concern demonstrates a wider awareness of how public resources are managed. As a result, even those not directly involved in the donation process have taken a more active interest in the flow of funds, forming an unofficial power of public accountability alongside formal institutions. This growing attention from society supports the financial sustainability of cultural heritage by encouraging greater transparency with continues evaluation (Eppich & Grinda, 2019).

Similar logic applies to the partnership practices between the project and companies. The restoration of Notre-Dame featured a variety of sponsorship and partnership models with businesses. This showed that collaboration with the private sector (in this case, businesses) could serve as more than a financial substitute for public resources, it could also play an active role in heritage management (Blundo et al., 2017; Lewandowska, 2015; Lund, 2010; Rosetti et al., 2022; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). In many cases, companies that contributed to the fundraising gained public recognition, which was often linked to whether they fulfilled their promises and supported the project's success (Wang & Holznagel, 2020).

This visibility created both incentives for companies to remain committed and accountable. In turn, it fostered closer ties between corporate sponsors and the restoration project, creating a mutually beneficial relationship. These dynamics encouraged mutual

monitoring, strengthening the shared responsibility between public institutions and private actors (Blundo et al., 2017; Lewandowska, 2015; Lund, 2010; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). Additionally, Interviewee B suggested that the case of Notre-Dame may represent a shift in paradigm, where the success of private donor involvement could inspire other individuals or corporations to support future heritage projects.

### 5.3.2 *Management Autonomy: Balancing Legal Boundaries and Operational Needs*

The concept of Management Autonomy in this context not only refers to the increased decision-making power following the transfer of the Notre-Dame restoration project from the regional cultural services (DRACs) to a dedicated public institution (EP), but more importantly, to how the involvement of private funding has reshaped the autonomy of Notre-Dame de Paris. It transformed the project from being a passive receiver of state funds to a more proactive governance structure with greater authority and strategic control (Lund, 2010).

As previously analyzed, when donors and the Notre-Dame project share common goals, interests, and even risks, this creates new forms of accountability. These dynamics have helped enhancing transparency of decision-making and a clearer relationships between stakeholders (Blundo et al., 2017; Lewandowska, 2015; Lund, 2010; Wang & Holznagel, 2020).

For example, public concerns were raised regarding the flow of donations, especially on two points: the service fees charged by the four foundations, and whether it is justified to use donations (intended for the restoration) to cover the operating costs of the managing institution – RNDP. According to Article 2 of Law No. 2019-803 (République Française, 2020, June 15), the scope of donations is limited to:

- a. *The conservation and restoration of the Notre-Dame Cathedral, which is a state-owned historical monument, and its furniture, if also owned by the State.*
- b. *The initial and continuous training of professionals with specific skills required for the restoration project.*

In practice, a portion of the donations collected for the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris was used to cover management costs, which led to public controversy. This was particularly sensitive because the French government initially assured the public that the donation collection process would be free of charge (Mette, 2022). However, the four main

fundraising foundations faced high management costs due to the overwhelming public response in practice. It was recorded that Fondation du Patrimoine processed 20,000 checks in April 2019 alone, leading to over €529,000 in expenses for that year, covering salaries, online donation platforms, and tax receipt processing.

While initially criticized, the Court of Auditors later stated that these costs were acceptable, if clearly communicated. Although the agreements lacked consistency across organizations, the collection and management expenses reached 0.8% of total donations, which was relatively low compared to other campaigns (Mette, 2022). To improve transparency and accountability, a formal Framework Agreement was signed on July 29, 2019, between the Ministry of Culture and the principal fundraising bodies. This agreement clarified the permissible handling fees and ensured that the majority of private donations would directly support the restoration project.

Another most debated issue is the use of donations to pay for the annual €5 million operating cost of the public institution RNDP, which went beyond the donation scope defined by the law. Additionally, this completely debudgeting operation (there was no public budget toward the operation of RNDP) appeared to be highly questionable given the normal operation of a public institution (Mette, 2022). The Court of Auditors raised concerns, like other operators responsible for ensuring the project management of buildings own by the State, the public institution should benefit from an annual subsidy for public service charges to finance its operation. Relying fully on donations for day-to-day functioning could lead to financial instability. There was also disagreement among the main fundraising bodies. While Fondation du Patrimoine supports using part of the donations for overall project management, Fondation de France believes donations should strictly fund restoration activities.

Although the legal framework defines donation use quite narrowly, the realities of implementing such a large and complex project have led to broader interpretations, especially concerning administrative and operational needs. This situation has triggered legal and ethical debates and highlighted a tension between formal rules and practical necessities. In this context, public accountability, enhanced by the involvement of external donors, has brought these issues into the spotlight. This pressure has encouraged the public institution to adopt a more active and strategic management approach, involving continuous evaluation and optimization (Blundo et al., 2017; Lund, 2010; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). The evolving relationships with donors and

other stakeholders, while complex, ultimately contribute to maintaining and even strengthening the autonomy of the heritage management, as decision-making is increasingly guided by shared responsibilities, transparency, and long-term planning.

### *5.3.3 Transparency and Trust: Awareness, Effort, and Relationship Building*

The most significant management practices that emerged from Notre-Dame de Paris' restoration project is the growing awareness and effort to increase transparency and build trust—both internally and externally. This applies not only to fundraising and financial distribution but also to how knowledge of heritage restoration is disclosed to the public. Public trust influences the willingness to donate, and partner trust determines the strength and longevity of strategic collaborations. Therefore, trust is not only important, but must be actively built and maintained throughout the entire project. This trust is developed through continuous engagement and mutual adaptation, which, over time, helps to support a more equal and sustainable partnership (Lund, 2010).

After the Notre-Dame fire, many discussions around the restoration were triggered. Public conversations helped to raise awareness and knowledge about cultural heritage restoration in general. The controversy around private fundraising also led to increased supervision documents, public reports, evaluations, and educational resources. These efforts were not only important for financial transparency, but also essential in improving the public image of private donations.

As mentioned, the donation was collected by foundations while the allocation of funds and the management of the project was RNDP's responsibility. Such structure enables Notre-Dame's teams facilitate diverse relationship management strategies depending on their target audiences. Briefly saying, the foundations are responsible for managing relationships and communicating with donors, and the public institution (RNDP) can focus on the communication with the public.

Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris, for example, not only provides financial reports but also maintains a dedicated page with regular updates on the restoration project (Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris, 2022). Similarly, the Fonds Cathédrale de Paris website publishes articles on

project progress and introduces corporate partners, helping donors understand both the process and the key supporters.

As the managing body, RNDP offers public updates from a more technical and professional perspective. It presents the materials and techniques used and curates educational content to engage the public. Most recently, it provides a free, printable exhibition kit containing official information and detailed explanations about the restoration process and project management, which is free of charge for public to access through their website (Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris, n.d.-c). In 2024, they distributed an educational kit called *Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris*. Aiming for young audiences aged 12 to 17, this kit was designed to introduce them to the restoration project and the various trades involved. Through 13 engaging activities, it explores key themes such as timber frame restoration, project planning for the 2024 reopening, and restoration techniques (Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris, 2024).

**Figure 1.** *Mallette pédagogique Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris.*

From *Rebatir Notre-Dame de Paris*, by R. Toussaint, © Rebatir Notre-Dame de Paris, 2024.  
Retrieved from <https://rebatirnotredamedeparis.fr/activite-culturelle/mallette-pedagogique>

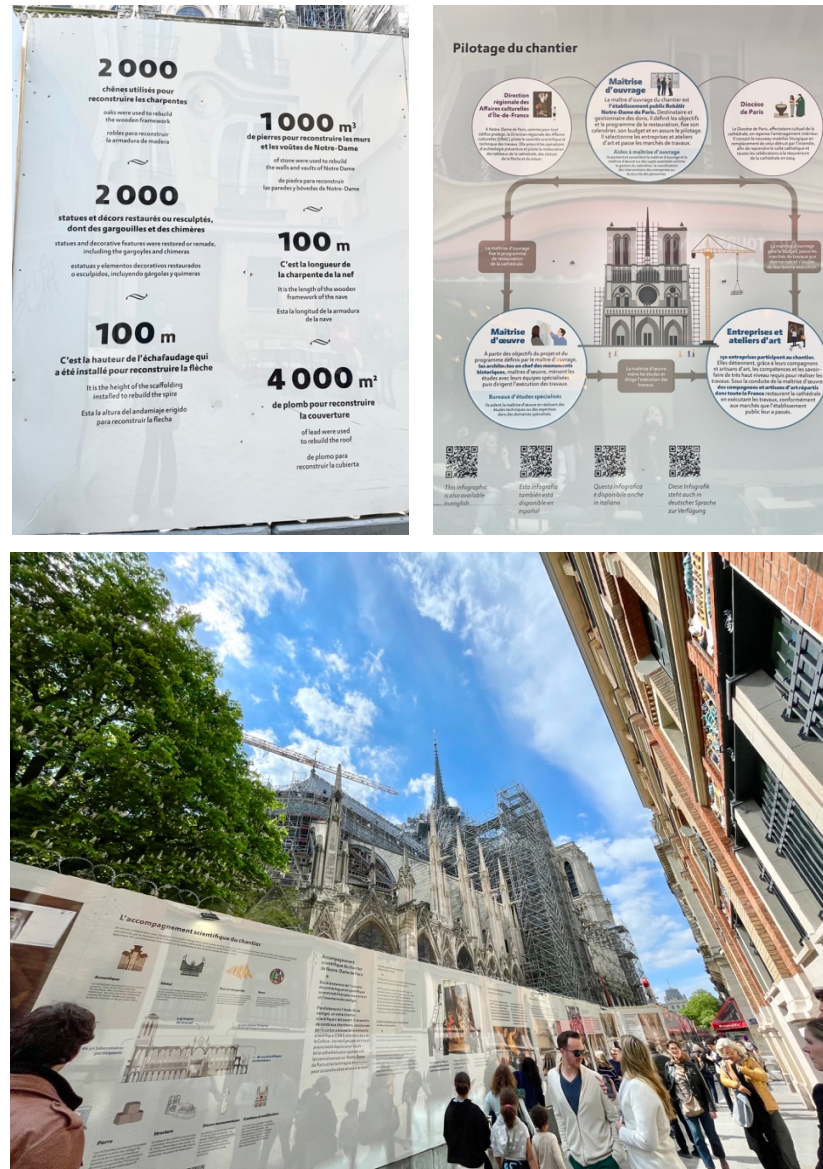


The possibility of being financial sustainable brought by private funding, is not only about gaining new resources and the growing body of donors but involves the development of

long-term relationships. To maintain donor confidence and secure stable funding, it is essential to provide clear financial reporting, transparent updates, and the most importantly, evidence of project impact.

Walking around Notre-Dame, visitors can view outdoor exhibits that explain the complex techniques, craftsmanship, and challenges involved in its restoration. Looking up, the cathedral still stands tall, surrounded by scaffolding. On weekdays, workers in safety vests continue their efforts. Could there be a more powerful demonstration of progress? Beyond legal and financial documents, content that communicates the project's goals, professional and cultural significance, and public value, which all rooted in the cultural capital of heritage is vital (Throsby, 1999 & 2000). Making restoration details accessible allows donors to see the tangible outcomes of their support and the preservation of Notre-Dame's cultural value. This transparency fosters trust, encourages engagement, and builds a foundation for long-term financial commitment.

**Figure 2.** Outdoor exhibition surrounding the Cathedral. Photograph taken by the author, 2025.



## 5.4 Cultural Capital in Action: People-centered Practices in Heritage Financing

Back to the main research question: What are the short-term financial impacts and long-term challenges of private donations in the restoration and management of Notre-Dame de Paris? This final section summarizes the key findings and reflects on the broader implications of the case. Especially linking back to the third sub-question, which focuses on the management practice of facilitating diverse strategies with *trust building* and *facilitating cultural capital* as fundamental.



Controversies emerged around the restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris touching on issues that go far beyond heritage management. These topics echoing back to the importance of balancing cultural and economic goals while ensuring social sustainability and the general well-being of the heritage site (Throsby, 2000). These debates are closely connected to a contemporary issue in heritage management: how to integrate cultural capital into sustainable development, and maintain the long-term wellbeing of heritage sites within today's frameworks (Soini & Birkeland, 2014; Throsby, 1999 & 2000)?

As people-centered approaches and participatory practices been emphasized in heritage management practices nowadays (Rosetti et al., 2022), the case of Notre-Dame de Paris strongly reflecting on the Paris Declaration (ICOMOS, 2011), which calls for including cultural heritage in sustainable development strategies by emphasizing its social, economic, and creative roles, as well as its contributions to social cohesion and intercultural understanding. Notre-Dame de Paris serves as an ongoing and real-life example of these contemporary paradigm. Drawing from Eppich and Grinda (2019), five key circumstances are helpful for understanding how financial sustainability was enhanced.

#### *5.4.1 Supportive and Open Planning Environment*

This refers to creating an environment that supports proactive financial planning, as well as an open environment of discussion and criticism (Eppich & Grinda, 2019; Rosetti et al., 2022). Rebâtir Notre-Dame de Paris (RNDP) was established to carry out the massive restoration plan, allowing more professional division of roles and higher decision-making efficiency. This structure serves as the fundamental of effective budget planning and implementation.

According to Interviewee A, the project was organized in phases, making financial planning more transparent and manageable. Annual budget reviews by professional committees further enabled structured planning and flexible adjustments. The diverse forms of private support (including in-kind sponsorships and partnerships) and strong public accountability mechanisms ensured that financial decisions were monitored (Blundo et al., 2017; Lewandowska, 2015; Lund, 2010; Rosetti et al., 2022; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). While not all concerns were fully resolved, this two-way feedback loop demonstrates a strong alignment with this factor.

#### *5.4.2 Financial Knowledge and Education*

This factor is about improving the understanding of financial matters (Eppich & Grinda, 2019). Although there is no strong evidence of a dedicated financial education campaign, public attention to donation transparency pushed the restoration actors to take more action in sharing financial information, which again showcase the power of participation (Rosetti et al., 2022).

The four major foundations involved in fundraising oversee financial reports, donor communications, and project updates in line with their missions. Furthermore, the Court of Auditors released public audit reports in 2020 and 2022 to clarify key controversies and offer guidance for financial improvements. The number of institutions involved, including RNDP, the four foundations, and the National Assembly, also increased the diversity of accessible financial data (Eppich & Grinda, 2019; Rosetti et al., 2022). It is also important to note that the use of private funds extends beyond the physical restoration of the cathedral. These funds support educational and training initiatives aimed at developing restoration professionals (Mette, 2022). This investment not only ensures the continuity of specialized heritage restoration skills but also allows young professionals to gain valuable insights into the financial and managerial dimensions of large-scale heritage projects, thereby benefit in the long-term sustainability.

Toward public education, RNDP provides educational materials and exhibitions to help understanding the restoration project in different aspects. This not only delivered the diverse value of cultural capital (Throsby, 1999 & 2000), but also raises public awareness of the professional, reality side of involved in heritage restoration, to understand and think about the real costs (Rosetti et al., 2022). If RNDP could further convert its budgeting experience in Notre-Dame de Paris into educational or promotional resources, this could possibly become a great asset for both future fundraising and the broader field of heritage management.

#### *5.4.3 Positive Perception of Finance*

This refers to fostering trust in diverse financing models and recognizing them as valuable and necessary for heritage preservation (Eppich & Grinda, 2019), also highlights the importance of considering participation as an enabler ensures the sustainability of heritage through education, capacity building, and long-term planning (Rosetti et al., 2022). In the case of Notre-Dame, there

was a notable shift in perception in private support. To encourage emergency donations, the French government introduced a generous tax incentive early on, a double-edged strategy.

While it potentially boosted donations, it also raised concerns about equity, as the benefit applied exclusively to Notre-Dame. Critics questioned whether this favored wealthy donors and corporations who gained both tax advantages and reputational benefits (Bourdieu, 1986), potentially influencing public perception and even the cultural value of the cathedral (Archambault, 2022; Lewandowska, 2015; Poulot, 2020; Wang & Holznagel, 2020).

Such concerns are common when private funding is involved in heritage projects. However, the Notre-Dame case shows that cultural value can be safeguarded through careful management and clear structural boundaries (Casado-Molina et al., 2023; Lund, 2010; Wang & Holznagel, 2020). For instance, the foundations involved in fundraising do not participate in restoration decisions, preserving the RNDP's professional independence. The in-kind sponsorship from France's forestry sector also illustrates a model of ethical and sustainable private support. Instead of rejecting private funding due to potential risks, it is more effective to develop mechanisms that balance cultural integrity with financial sustainability, especially since even a "superstar" heritage site like Notre-Dame faces funding gaps (Gombault, 2020).

#### *5.4.4 Managerial Autonomy*

This factor refers to an institution's ability to exercise financial and managerial autonomy (Eppich & Grinda, 2019). The RNDP was established to replace the earlier, more restricted structure under DRACs, granting the Notre-Dame restoration project greater independence in planning, budgeting, and oversight.

This autonomy was further supported by the clear separation of responsibilities—fundraising is handled by foundations, while restoration decisions remain with RNDP. Donors and foundations do not influence the decision-making process. However, the RNDP's autonomy and the overall stability of the project still faced challenges, particularly due to the risk of reduced state funding. When the controversy arose regarding RNDP's operational costs were also covered by donations, public interest in how funds are used created an additional level of oversight.

As Rosetti et al. (2022) note, meaningful participation can empower institutions, helping them avoid being passive recipients of top-down decisions. In this case, the RNDP's autonomy enabled it to function with authority, secure adequate support, and remain accountable to the project's mission (Eppich & Grinda, 2019).

#### 5.4.5 *Public Interest in the Cultural Heritage Site*

This factor highlights the importance of maintaining active, long-term public engagement with heritage, rooted in its role in sustainable development, social cohesion, and any other ongoing topics of contemporary era (Eppich & Grinda, 2019; ICOMOS, 2011; Rosetti et al., 2022).

In the case of Notre-Dame, public interest has been exceptionally strong. Beyond regular updates, donor recognition walls, and social media engagement, the restoration has sparked widespread discussion, ranging from fire safety in historic buildings to debates about restoration vs. conservation, tax policies, elite philanthropy, and whether to rebuild the cathedral exactly as it was or introduce new designs (Gombault, 2020).

These public debates should not be seen as distractions, but as valuable opportunities to engage the public and connect heritage with broader social and economic issues (ICOMOS, 2011). Notre-Dame is a strong example of how heritage restoration can intersect with contemporary life. Even as public attention may fade over time, linking heritage to current conversations helps maintain interest and ongoing dialogue, which is an essential strategy for ensuring long-term public involvement (ICOMOS, 2011; Rosetti et al., 2022).

A key concern remains, *how will fundraising be affected if people assume that Notre-Dame is already fully restored?* Keeping the momentum of public interest and support alive is still a major challenge. As Interviewee B pointed out, there is still work to be done to keep people engaged and invested. One possible approach could be creating spaces for public dialogue, such as forums, where people can come together to discuss the project's progress and its wider significance.

To conclude, private donations played a key role in helping Notre-Dame quickly overcome its short-term financial crisis. More importantly, through continuous dialogue, critique, and adaptation, the project is evolving into a resilient and forward-looking model for managing private funding in cultural heritage. At its core, this model emphasizes adaptability to

contemporary social expectations, integrating people-centered approaches and participatory practices within a modern framework. As such, the Notre-Dame case offers a valuable reference for future discussions on the financial sustainability and social responsibility of cultural heritage management.

## **6. Conclusion**

Although this research is focusing on the “financial sustainability” of private fundraising model of Notre-Dame restoration project, it chose not to frame “financial sustainability” as the main research question. It is because believing that heritage management strategies must develop in response to the life cycle of a site, societal shifts, and changing interpretations of cultural value. Through examining the framework of French cultural policy and focusing on the post-fire restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris, the study explored how private funding, often considered a supplementary resource, can possibly becoming a central pillar of heritage financing.

### **6.1 Research Limitations**

Several limitations must be considered in this research. First, the study is shaped by the researcher’s academic background, which focuses primarily on the socio-economic dimensions of cultural heritage. As a result, the research emphasizes how financial mechanisms and cultural capital interact but does not explore technical financial details such as project-level accounting or cost management in depth. A study grounded in public finance or architectural project accounting could better address this issue.

Secondly, although the research examines Notre-Dame’s restoration from cultural, financial, and social perspectives, it lacks technical insights from heritage’s architectural viewpoints, especially when the restoration and conservation of cultural heritage usually involve massive scientific and architectural knowledge. Critical elements such as restoration techniques and materials are outside the scope of this study but are essential for a complete understanding of heritage restoration.

Finally, language also posed a limitation. Some documents and one interview were originally in French and translated using AI tools. Limited access to native French speakers may have restricted data quality, especially when dealing with professional terminology and sensitive cultural context.

### **6.2 Contributions of this Research**

Despite these limitations, the research offers meaningful contributions. The fundraising campaign for the restoration, did open diverse financial channels beyond traditional state funding for Notre-Dame. The involvement of private donations was accompanied by the intense public

attention toward this massive project, raising expectations for transparency and accountability. In response, detailed expenditure management and regular reporting became vital tools to maintain, and aiming to enhance trust and engagement. This case marked a notable shift in donor roles: from one-time givers to long-term partners in cultural stewardship, pointing toward a more inclusive and participatory model of heritage finance.

Nevertheless, the actual sustainability of completely relying on private funds is still questionable, since one key issue now facing Notre-Dame is how to sustain donor interest and financial momentum over the long term. As interviewee B shared, the reopening of the cathedral may foster a false sense of completion, despite significant restoration work continuing behind the scenes. Still, the Notre-Dame project has catalyzed a shift from passive donation models to more active, engaged partnerships—requiring careful management of legal constraints, public expectations, and institutional responsibilities.

The use of tax incentives as a fundraising strategy exemplifies this tension: while many donors ultimately did not claim deductions, the mechanism revealed both the possibilities and the complexities of policy-driven philanthropy. Going forward, such tools could be more effectively employed through clearer regulatory frameworks. The high visibility of Notre-Dame also fostered a broader and more informed public discourse about the true costs of restoration, the logistics of donation management, and the value of professional expertise. These developments contribute to a deeper understanding of cultural heritage finance and support a shift toward more sustainable practices.

These findings align with the people-centered heritage management approach. Financial sustainability is not merely a question of securing funds, but of cultivating a culture of knowledge sharing, participatory governance, and embedded values. It involves creating spaces where diverse voices, including donors, professionals, and the public, can all contribute meaningfully to heritage conversations. As Interviewee B reflected, *the collective response to Notre-Dame's restoration evokes the spirit of the 15th century, when communities rallied together to build cathedrals, not only with resources, but with care, commitment, and belief in shared cultural purpose*. In that sense, Notre-Dame's restoration is not just a technical achievement or financial case study. It is a living example of how cultural heritage, when approached with transparency, inclusivity, and adaptability, can inspire collective ownership and long-term resilience.

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## Appendix A: Translated Written Answer of Interviewee A

### Research Aim

This research is being conducted as part of the data collection process for a Master's thesis. You are invited to participate in this research project, which aims to explore the financial sustainability of heritage projects through the case of the Notre-Dame de Paris reconstruction. The objective is to examine both the short-term financial impacts and the long-term challenges associated with private donations in the rebuilding process and the future sustainability of the cathedral.

### Notice

Before answering the questions, please make sure to **read and sign the consent form for this interview.** There are no apparent physical, legal, or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You are not required to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

### *Background and Role*

1. Could you briefly describe your current responsibilities in the Notre-Dame de Paris restoration project, particularly concerning the interior restoration as well as the management of furniture and storage?

My role is that of a field “contract manager” engineer. I participate in drafting contracts and technical specifications for the works. During the execution of the works, I monitor progress and ensure compliance. I manage the companies' contracts (additional works with work orders and then amendments, lifting of reservations) within the scope of the works allocated to me. My mission was to completely empty the cathedral to avoid hindering the progress of the works. I therefore found various storage sites depending on the sensitivity of the furniture that needed to be stored. I had one of our storage sites adapted to store the remnants and stones from the construction site. I organized the relocation of the furniture.

As part of the interior restoration works of the cathedral, I monitored and supervised the progress of works concerning masonry, sculpture, wall painting, carpentry and parquet flooring, marble flooring, and statuary.

2. Before your current position, you were involved in administrative and financial management within the operations department. Could you tell me more about these responsibilities and how they supported the overall project?

At the operations management office, I assisted the engineers with the financial management of their works. I managed the restoration operations of movable objects for all the cathedrals in the Île-de-France region, including Notre-Dame de Paris.

### ***Funding and Financial Aspects***

3. From your experience, how has the overall project funding been organized?

The restoration of the cathedral after the fire has been entirely financed by donor money. The overall endowment was subject to a projected planning by reconstruction phase (Phase I: securing, Phase II and Phase III: restoration) and by type of expenditure (site installation, organs, upper parts, interiors, etc.).

This planning was presented and approved each year by the board of directors, a body composed of expert members from the relevant institutions. The budget and its expenditures are monitored by an audit and investment committee, an ad hoc committee, a donors' committee, and the Court of Auditors.

4. Have there been significant changes in the way funding is allocated to the interior restoration or to furniture-related operations since the initial phases of the project? If so, how have these changes impacted your work?

No, there have been no changes.

5. From your experience, have the sources of funding (such as private or national support) influenced the way resources have been allocated to the interior or furniture restoration? If so, could you provide an example?



No, there is no difference; donors' money is managed in the same way as public funds. The restoration of a historic monument in France is led by a chief architect of historical monuments, whose project is approved in advance by a national commission for architecture and heritage, which maintains its independence and autonomy with respect to funding, in accordance with the Venice Charter. A private donor is not entitled to give their opinion on how to restore national heritage. That would be counterproductive and would go against restoration ethics, which aim to preserve the monument's integrity for transmission to future generations.

### ***Role of Donors***

6. Have donors (individuals, companies, or foundations) influenced certain elements or processes of the interior restoration, the furniture, or the overall reconstruction project?
  - o If so, could you provide examples of this type of support?

The influence of donors lies solely in their capacity to finance works.

For example, in 2018, before the fire, we were able to restore the paintings in the Sainte Geneviève Chapel thanks to Polish funding. Without this funding, we would not have been able to clean this chapel for several more years. Indeed, the priority of public funding is focused on works that prevent any significant future damage to the monument (structure, waterproofing) rather than on aesthetic works.

7. In your field of work, have you noticed any differences in the level of involvement or expectations of different donors (for example, companies, foundations, or individuals)?

Not being in direct contact with donors, I cannot answer.

8. Have you encountered cases where donors' preferences influenced decisions regarding how certain parts of the interior were restored or presented?

No, see the answer to question 5.

## ***Management and Governance***

9. In your field of work, have you observed any specific management or decision-making strategies in the context of the Notre-Dame de Paris reconstruction?

Yes, absolutely; this management approach is typical of large-scale projects such as the construction of a new metro line. The management strategy is comprehensive, with a very large budget. However, in heritage work, we don't usually have this kind of approach because we work on old buildings in phases, as the budgets are much smaller.

10. Have administrative or reporting procedures related to the restoration of the furniture or interior developed to take into account donor involvement or external partnerships?

Not at all. However, the management of donations themselves can be earmarked for the restoration of a specific object. We may be asked to estimate the restoration work for an object such as a chapel or notable furniture (pulpit, choir stalls, etc.) so that the donation can be directed specifically toward that work. This allows the donor to know exactly what their donation has funded. (See Mr. André Finot in my response to question 14.)

11. Based on your experience, do you think private donations could play a greater role in future heritage restoration projects in France?

Private donations are playing an increasingly important role in the budget for heritage restoration. They are going to become more and more essential, as the current economic situation is not favorable for increasing the share of the national budget allocated to heritage works. However, the funding model for national monuments is still far from what we see in the United Kingdom.

## ***Closing Remarks***

13. *Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with the Notre-Dame de Paris project?*
14. *Are there other professionals or departments you would recommend I contact for further information?*

***Thank you so much for your time and thoughtful responses!***

It is an invaluable opportunity to gain insights from professionals who have made such a meaningful contribution to this remarkable project.

Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any further questions or concerns.

## Appendix B: Organized Interview Transcripts: Interviewee B

### Research Aim

This research is being conducted as part of the data collection process for a Master's thesis. You are invited to participate in this research project, which aims to explore the financial sustainability of heritage projects through the case of the Notre-Dame de Paris reconstruction. The objective is to examine both the short-term financial impacts and the long-term challenges associated with private donations in the rebuilding process and the future sustainability of the cathedral.

### Notice

Before answering the questions, please make sure to **read and sign the consent form for this interview.** There are no apparent physical, legal, or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You are not required to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

### Background and Role

1. Could you briefly describe your role within the Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris and your involvement in its fundraising efforts?

Interviewee B is an art and architectural historian, involves in the organization as one of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris. Unlike most other board members, who come from business, banking, or development sectors, Interviewee B is the only academic/historian on the board.

Interviewee B contributes through giving annual talks to major donors. In 2023, he presented on Notre-Dame's relationship with medieval Paris. In 2024, he spoke about the interior layout and architectural sculpture of Notre-Dame. He also attends quarterly board meetings, with at least one (typically in October) held in person in New York, while others are conducted via Zoom.

2. In what ways has Friends of Notre-Dame contributed to the funding, management, or public engagement aspects of the restoration?

The Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris has contributed about \$53 million since 2017 (11:23). The organization was initiated by Andrew Tallon, a Columbia University scholar and pioneer in laser scanning technology for architectural documentation. He noticed the cathedral was in poor condition, with stones degrading. The French government, responsible for its maintenance, is chronically underfunded. So Andrew started the Friends of Notre Dame to raise supplemental funds. After the 2019 fire, their work intensified.

The board functions include oversight of organizational strategy and operations, engagement in fundraising strategy and donor relations, and support of public engagement through events and lectures for donors. Donations are transferred several times a year to RNDP, the French agency overseeing the restoration. Interviewee B remarked (11:23) that board meetings review finances and donations.

3. As a board member with a scholarly background, how do you see your role in bridging academic insight with the mission of fundraising and advocacy?

Interviewee B has brought scholarly insight into donor events, often surprising attendees with historical details, such as the complexity and layered nature of the cathedral's construction. Interviewee B mentioned (47:39) that people were surprised when he explained that the current building includes significant 19th-century elements.

Interviewee B sees his role as educating donors and helping to maintain an understanding of the building's historical depth, while also acknowledging the emotional and religious connections that many supporters have.

### ***Funding and Strategic Perspectives***

4. From your perspective, how has the overall funding structure of the Notre-Dame restoration developed since the 2019 fire?

Private donations have largely funded the entire restoration (59:52). The French government has not contributed funds to the restoration of Notre-Dame.

5. How has Friends of Notre-Dame adapted to or helped shape these changes?

They contribute to fundraising for Notre-Dame mainly from the United States. Including direct mail and digital campaigns, in 2024 alone, they received about 5,500 donors through direct mail and over 4,000 gifts via digital platforms, totaling around 10,000 contributions. There are donor levels, including the 1163 Society (donors of \$250+), which had about 1,400 members (22:35).

6. What do you see as the main strengths and challenges of the current fundraising model, particularly in the context of a monument as symbolically significant as Notre-Dame?

Interviewee B sees the centralized control of restoration by the French government helps insulate the process from donor influence (50:40). A major challenge he identified (1:25:15) is sustaining donor interest now that people believe the restoration is "done." This perception could impact future fundraising.

7. Do you think this fundraising approach, centered on large private donations, could be successfully applied to other heritage sites in France or internationally, or is Notre-Dame a unique case?

Interviewee B suggests (37:43) that while Notre-Dame is uniquely iconic, the model could inspire similar efforts. Interviewee B sees Notre-Dame as a possible paradigm shift, potentially encouraging corporations to support local heritage projects (1:08:37).

### ***Role of Donors, Management and Governance Changes***

8. What do you believe motivates major donors—both individuals and corporations—to support the restoration of Notre-Dame?

Interviewee B pointed to the emotional impact of the fire, which was globally felt and prompted widespread empathy. Interviewee B also cited religious motivations, particularly among Catholic donors (36:07), and the cathedral's cultural symbolism.

9. How would you characterize the role of major corporate donors such as LVMH, Kering, and L'Oréal?
- Would you describe them more as patrons, sponsors, or active partners in the project? They are more like sponsors, not active partners. They provide financial support but do not influence design or liturgical elements. The restoration is centrally managed to prevent such influence.
  - Do different donors have varying levels of involvement or influence, and what tends to shape that dynamic? Some donors target specific projects like organ restoration (29:02). And as mentioned, Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris is essentially the active arm for fundraising, transferring donations to the RNDP while helping to maintain a boundary, so that the restoration team isn't influenced directly by donor demands.
10. In your experience, have any tensions emerged between donor expectations and the project's overarching vision or values? If so, how have they been navigated?
- Tensions have been minimal. There was one donor requested permanent recognition (like a plaque), but this was declined. Instead, a collective benefactor list will be displayed, like museum practices (26:05).
11. Do you see broader implications from this case for cultural heritage policy in France, particularly concerning the role of private funding? (see 12~14)

### ***Future Considerations and Sustainability***

12. In your opinion, should private donations play a larger role in the long-term management of cultural heritage?
- Interviewee B think it will be interesting to see what the impact of this. The Notre-Dame case could motivate other corporate and private contributions (1:08:12), especially given the chronic underfunding of public maintenance.

13. Could they serve as a sustainable alternative or complement to public funding at the national or EU level?

The Notre-Dame case may challenge the idea that heritage upkeep is solely the government's responsibility. It will possibly motivate other private donors or corporations to support other projects. Successful private corporate donations might motivate support for other projects (e.g., Imagining Michelin supporting restoration in its hometown) (1:08:37).

14. Do you foresee any financial, governance, or cultural risks associated with an increasing reliance on private funding? How might these be mitigated?

Interviewee B acknowledges risks will arise if donors try to influence restoration methods. The key is maintaining a clear separation between fundraising and restoration decisions. However, guidelines like the Venice Charter are not legally binding, so integrity depends on governance structures.

### ***Closing Remarks***

15. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience with the Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris and the project?

The restoration has revitalized scholarly interest in medieval architecture. He likened the experience to medieval church committees, where clergy debated priorities and funding (1:23:38). This modern board blends faith, affection for Notre-Dame, and practical dialogue.

16. Are there any other professionals or institutions you would recommend I speak with for further insight?

### ***Thank you so much for your time and thoughtful responses!***

It is an invaluable opportunity to gain insights from professionals who have made such a meaningful contribution to this remarkable project.

Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any further questions or concerns.



## Appendix C: Written Answer of Interviewee C

### Research Aim

This research is being conducted as part of the data collection process for a Master's thesis. You are invited to participate in this research project, which aims to explore the financial sustainability of heritage projects through the case of the Notre-Dame de Paris reconstruction. The objective is to examine both the short-term financial impacts and the long-term challenges associated with private donations in the rebuilding process and the future sustainability of the cathedral.

### Notice

Before answering the questions, please make sure to **read and sign the consent form for this interview**. There are no apparent physical, legal, or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You are not required to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

1. To begin, could you briefly describe your role at Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris and explain how your organization collaborates with Fondation Notre Dame in the fundraising process?

I am the Communications Director of Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris. This American charity raises funds to restore the Cathedral. Fondation Notre-Dame, a French charity of the Paris Diocese, mainly raises funds for charitable work and aiding those in need.

2. Does Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris primarily rely on long-term, recurring donors, or do most contributions come from one-time gifts?

Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris has more than 50,000 donors. The majority of these donations are one-time gifts, with slightly less than 10% of donors contributing more than once.

- If there is a group of long-term donors, how does your team maintain and strengthen those relationships over time? (Such as improving donor engagement, trust-building, etc.) Visit them in the US to say Thank you. It's essential.

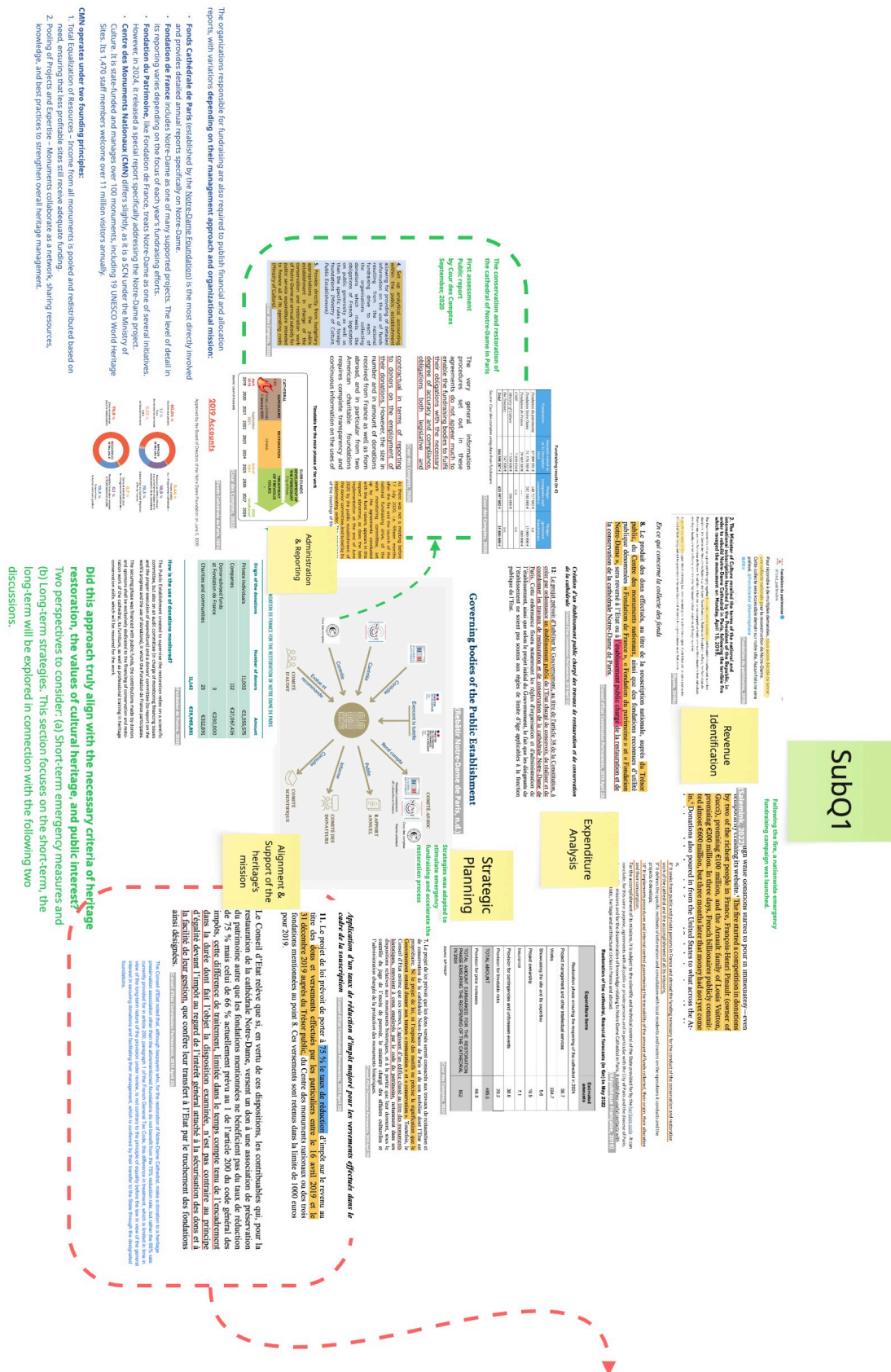
- The 1163 Society is a fascinating example of donor tiering and strategic fundraising. What was the rationale behind its creation, and how do you think it contributes to enhancing donor engagement? We created it as a way of thanking donors and giving them access to a little something extra. As we can't go to the US too often for reasons of cost, we offer them a little exclusive content that makes all the difference.
3. Have there been instances where donor expectations conflicted with the overall vision or priorities of the restoration project? If so, how did Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris address those situations?
- The main problem lies in managing foreign sponsors. In France, we have our own habit of offering something in return for a donation of a certain amount. In the U.S., we don't make that distinction, and we're used to having access to certain things behind the scenes. So it wasn't so easy to make a French public institution understand that it would have to offer us a little more exclusivity, especially as our patrons made the effort to come from very far away.
4. It has been mentioned that some donors can designate specific elements of the cathedral they wish to support. Could you explain how such targeted donations are managed and communicated from your side? First time we did that was with the statues of the spire which were removed four days before the fire. After their restorations, they were exposed at the Cité de l'Architecture museum, near the Eiffel Tower. There were the names of the donors on the cartels of the statues. In the future, we are working on a solution of naming some parts virtually.

***Thank you so much for your time and thoughtful responses!***

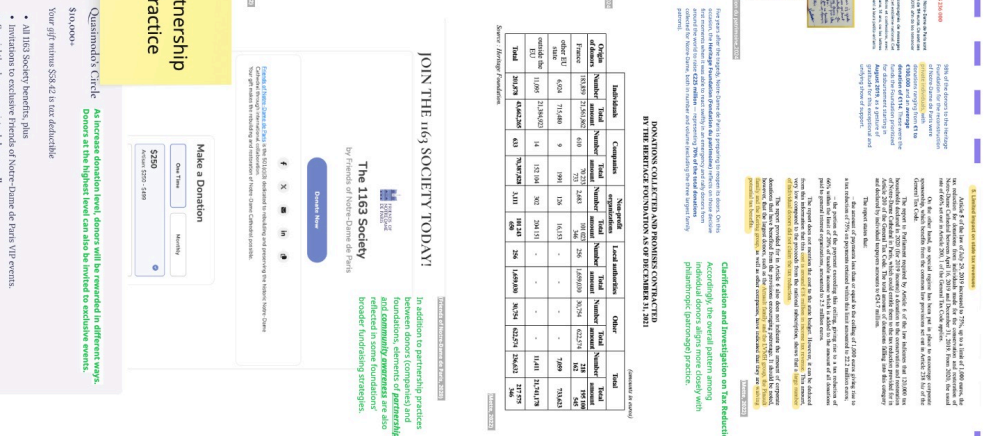
It is an invaluable opportunity to gain insights from professionals who have made such a meaningful contribution to this remarkable project.

Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any further questions or concerns.

Appendix D: Analysis Board of Sub Question 1



## SubQ2





The restoration project, a well-organized, educational content.

are diverse types of information, well-organized, educational content.

10 types of information:

- 1. Information about the project
- 2. Information about the project
- 3. Information about the project
- 4. Information about the project
- 5. Information about the project
- 6. Information about the project
- 7. Information about the project
- 8. Information about the project
- 9. Information about the project
- 10. Information about the project

10 types of educational content:

- 1. Educational content
- 2. Educational content
- 3. Educational content
- 4. Educational content
- 5. Educational content
- 6. Educational content
- 7. Educational content
- 8. Educational content
- 9. Educational content
- 10. Educational content

10 types of educational content:

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- 2. Educational content
- 3. Educational content
- 4. Educational content
- 5. Educational content
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- 7. Educational content
- 8. Educational content
- 9. Educational content
- 10. Educational content

**Appendix G: Declaration Page on Use of Generative AI Tools**

**Student Information**

Name: Meng Chu, Chen

Student ID: 693734

Supervisor Name: Dr. Frans Brouwer

Master Thesis Title: From Crisis to Opportunity: Private Sector Engagement and Financial Sustainability in the Restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris

Date: 13th June 2025

**Declaration:**

**Acknowledgment of Generative AI Tools**

I acknowledge that I am aware of the existence and functionality of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which are capable of producing content such as text, images, and other creative works with limited user input.

GenAI use could include, but is not limited to:

- Generated content (e.g., ChatGPT, DeepSeek, Quillbot)
- Writing improvements, including grammar and spelling corrections (e.g., Grammarly)
- Language translation (e.g., DeepL)
- Research task assistance (e.g., finding survey scales, qualitative coding, debugging code, Gemini Deep Research)
- Using GenAI as a search engine tool to find academic articles or books. (e.g. Perplexity AI)

For any GenAI task, 1) it must be permitted by the course and 2) you are responsible for verifying the accuracy of the outputs used in any submission. Improper use of sources obtained from GenAI could constitute academic fraud.

Also, 3) the requested prompts/logs (under Extent of AI Usage below) may be either screenshots or textual copies. The appendix can be included as part of the main submission or submitted as a separate document. Check with your lecturer.

☒ I declare that I have used generative AI tools, specifically [ChatGPT (May 14th 2025 version) [GPT-4o]], in the process of creating parts or components of my thesis. The purpose of using these tools was to aid in generating content or assisting with specific aspects of the assignment.

☐ I declare that I have NOT used any generative AI tools and that the assignment concerned is my original work.

Signature: [digital signature]

Date of Signature: [Date of Submission]

### **Extent of AI Usage**

☒ I confirm that while I utilized generative AI tools to aid in content creation, the majority of the intellectual effort, creative input, and decision-making involved in completing the assignment were undertaken by me. I have enclosed the prompts/logging of my GenAI tool use in an appendix.

### **Ethical and Academic Integrity**

☒ I understand the ethical implications and academic integrity concerns related to the use of AI tools in coursework. I assure that the AI-generated content was used responsibly, and any content derived from these tools has been appropriately cited and attributed according to the guidelines provided by the instructor and the course. I have taken necessary steps to distinguish between my original work and the AI-generated contributions. Any direct quotations, paraphrased content, or other forms of AI-generated material have been properly referenced in accordance with academic conventions.

By signing this declaration, I affirm that this declaration is accurate and truthful. I take full responsibility for the integrity of my assignment and am prepared to discuss and explain the role of generative AI tools in my creative process if required by the instructor or the Examination Board. I further affirm that I have used generative AI tools in accordance with ethical standards and academic integrity expectations.

Signature:

*Meng Chu Chen*

Date of Signature: 13th June 2025