
Dossiê: Patrimônio e Relações Internacionais

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Political Issues of the Louvre's Internationalisation

Questões políticas da internacionalização do Louvre

Cuestiones políticas de la internacionalización del Louvre

*Marie-Alix Molinié-Andlauer**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-2345-6789>

ABSTRACT: This article focuses on the internationalisation of the Louvre since the 2000s. A flagship of French culture, it is, along with the British Museum in London, the universal museum of reference. The French state, through successive governments, has mobilised the Louvre, that is, the institution, as an intermediary in international agreements. This museum and cultural institution then become a real stakeholder in international relations. Thus, the whole point of our remarks is to analyse the issues and controversies surrounding the close relationship between the Louvre and the French State. The Louvre, a renowned French museum and heritage site, is now multi-spatial. This model responds in part to a request from the French government to perfect the interplay of international influence. The internationalisation of the Louvre is thus understood not as the Louvre's reputation on an international level, but as the use of this heritage in international political strategies. By approaching this case in French international relations, we can first of all question the stakes of the transition from heritage to National Branding. In other words, to understand how in contemporary literature, heritage is transformed not only as a tool to retrace the past of a society, but also how it becomes an emblem that can be mobilised by States to claim a form of legitimacy from other States. The method, which is essentially based on interviews conducted within the framework of these, aims to answer two questions. What does the deterritorialisation of a national heritage such as the Louvre produce regarding international relations between the Louvre, the city

* PhD in geography from Sorbonne Université-Lettres and a researcher affiliated to the Research Unit “Mediation-Sciences of Places, Sciences of Links”, my research themes are articulated around two major themes: human geography and relations between sciences and society. Before preparing my thesis to understand the stakes of the internationalisation of a heritage such as the Louvre, I carried out several works in geography and sociology to question the representations and political stakes of bridges or to question the discourses of transhumanism in France. Several articles have been published alone or in collaboration, the main ones being: “From the Louvre Museum to the Louvre Territory?” published in *Géographie et cultures*, “LOPECST au travail. Enquête sur la genèse d'un rapport”, in *Histoire de la Recherche Contemporaine* (with Emilien Schultz). Keywords: Heritage, Museums, Arts, Louvre, Territorial Factory, Representations, Relationships, Epistemology, Territorial dynamics, Economy and territory, Geopolitical issues. E-mail: mariealix.molinie@hotmail.fr.

of Abu Dhabi and in relations between France and the United Arab Emirates, then the impact that the Louvre Abu Dhabi can have at the local and regional level.

Keywords: National Branding. Geopolitics. Louvre. Heritage. Controversies.

RESUMO: Este artigo enfoca a internacionalização do Louvre desde os anos 2000. Uma bandeira da cultura francesa, é, juntamente com o Museu Britânico em Londres, o museu universal de referência. O Estado francês, através de sucessivos governos, tem mobilizado o Louvre, ou seja, a instituição, como intermediário em acordos internacionais. Este museu e instituição cultural passa então a ser um verdadeiro protagonista nas relações internacionais. Assim, o objetivo de nossas observações é analisar as questões e controvérsias em torno da estreita relação entre o Louvre e o Estado francês. O Louvre, um renomado museu e patrimônio francês, é hoje multiespacial. Este modelo volta em parte a um pedido do governo francês para aperfeiçoar a interação da influência internacional. A internacionalização do Louvre é assim entendida não como a reputação do Louvre em nível internacional, mas como a utilização desse patrimônio em estratégias políticas internacionais. Ao abordarmos este caso nas relações internacionais francesas, podemos, antes de tudo, questionar os desafios da transição do patrimônio para o National Branding. Em outras palavras, entender como, na literatura contemporânea, o patrimônio se transforma não apenas como um instrumento para refazer o passado de uma sociedade, mas também como ele se torna um emblema que pode ser mobilizado pelos Estados para reivindicar uma forma de *legitimacy* de outros Estados. O método, que é essencialmente baseado em entrevistas realizadas no âmbito de um destes, visa responder a duas perguntas. O que a desterritorialização de um patrimônio nacional como o Louvre produz nas relações internacionais em nível do Louvre, a cidade de Abu Dhabi e nas relações entre a França e os Emirados Árabes Unidos, então o impacto que o Louvre Abu Dhabi pode ter em nível local e regional.

Palavras-chave: National Branding. Geopolítica. Louvre. Patrimônio. Controvérsias.

RESUMEN: Este artículo se centra en la internacionalización del Louvre desde la década de 2000. Un símbolo de la cultura francesa, es, junto con el Museo Británico de Londres, el museo universal de referencia. El Estado francés, a través de los sucesivos gobiernos, ha movilizó al Louvre, es decir, a la institución, como intermediario en los acuerdos internacionales. Este museo e institución cultural se convierte entonces en un verdadero actor de las relaciones internacionales. Así pues, el objetivo de nuestras observaciones es analizar las cuestiones y controversias que rodean la estrecha relación entre el Louvre y el Estado francés. El Louvre, un famoso museo y sitio patrimonial francés, es ahora multiespacial. Este modelo responde en parte a la petición del gobierno francés de perfeccionar la interacción de la influencia internacional. La internacionalización del Louvre se entiende así no como la reputación del Louvre a nivel internacional, sino como el uso de este patrimonio en las estrategias políticas internacionales. Al abordar este caso en las relaciones internacionales francesas, podemos en primer lugar cuestionar lo que está en juego en la transición del patrimonio a la Marca Nacional. En otras palabras, comprender cómo en la literatura contemporánea, el patrimonio se transforma no sólo como herramienta para remontar el pasado de una sociedad, sino también cómo se convierte en un emblema que puede ser movilizó por los

Estados para reclamar una forma de legitimidad a otros Estados. El método, que se basa esencialmente en entrevistas realizadas en el marco de un éstas, tiene por objeto responder a dos preguntas. ¿Qué produce la desterritorialización de un patrimonio nacional como el del Louvre en las relaciones internacionales entre el Louvre, la ciudad de Abu Dhabi y en las relaciones entre Francia y los Emiratos Árabes Unidos, y luego el impacto que puede tener el Louvre de Abu Dhabi a nivel local y regional?

Palabras clave: Branding nacional. Geopolítico. Louvre. Patrimonio. Controversias.

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The relationship between heritage and politics is not recent, since as Sébastien Jacquot explains (2012, 13) "heritage is a vector of stakes both in its existence, in its definition, and in its uses and addressees". Heritage is what one inherits; the choice to conserve and preserve it is a political choice. The consensus in UNESCO's definition of heritage shows that the common interest of humanity takes precedence over state and national decisions.

UNESCO World Heritage or UNESCO World Heritage refers to a group of cultural and natural properties of outstanding interest for the common heritage of humanity, updated annually since 1978 by the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a specialized agency of the United Nations¹.

This definition is in line with a positive internationalization of the controversial concept of the common heritage of humanity. In other words, it would allow an international understanding of the concepts of heritage and humanity.

Nowadays, the stakes around heritage are, beyond conservation and preservation issues, strategic issues at an international level, allowing categorisation of conflicts (Melé 2005; Jacquot 2012). The three types of conflicts would relate to the "appropriation of heritage, the modes of patrimonialisation and conflicts in heritage spaces, putting the actors at the centre and notably the modes of regulation" (Jacquot 2012 [Mélé 2005], 13).

Questions of interference in the way of preserving and patrimonialising can crystallise tensions that can impact on international relations. Indeed, for Koïchiro Matsuura (2006, 1045):

It has become customary in the field of international relations to associate culture and politics", as witnessed by the remarks made in May 2005 by the President of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Alpha Oumar Konaré, at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational,

¹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>.

Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): “The cultural struggle is also a political project aimed at giving a social content to the Union and building up a body of influence around Africa”².

However, while heritage seems to be a subject of consensus since the 1970s, we have seen the circulation of certain heritages, including museums, appear for economic and political reasons. It would appear that it is they are part of the strategies of influence of the Western States, which respond to the expectations of developed or developing countries.

The aim of this article is to understand how the internationalisation of the Louvre Museum is manifesting itself at different levels. For this purpose, after having established the literature review, we will explain the research questions and the method applied to this article, and will finally share the results of this research.

From Heritage to National Branding: literature review

Using Identity and Narrative in an International Context

Museums are indeed institutions that lie between “nationalism and cosmopolitanism [...] They are capable of representing an idea of the nation while at the same time telling a cosmopolitan, frictional discourse” (Ang 2016, 1). This ambivalence is quite visible in Jamie Gillen's (2014) paper when he uses the case of the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to explain the tension between the creation of a national narrative and the way the United States projects and shapes Vietnamese identity. Or, Rana Mitter (2009) who in her article highlights the behind-the-scenes of museums in China, also serving history and memory. Indeed, heritage and nationalism, as a political force, have special connections (Allen 2010).

In this sense, in Greece, the Ministry of Culture seeks to promote the Greek national narrative through heritage, which then becomes an internationally recognised and valued brand. “The official promotion of heritage by a state may project a symbolic sense of “imagining”: with national identity within a multicultural and heterogeneous world” (Kavoura 2012, 69). “Museums preserved and constituted people's past. They were places for the public to learn more about nations' histories and cultures” (Gervits 2011, 32). In some instances, the museum, as an institution, perfectly embodies the political stakes, especially when it comes to international visibility, cooperation, but also a certain hegemony in terms of culture (Grincheva 2020a).

In another case, the internationalisation of museums responds to the museum's concern to reach a wider public, but also to its ability to conform to world museum standards (Peyre 2018). In order to respond to this, significant financial resources and institutional support at different levels

² Translation proposed by the author.

are obviously required. The internationalisation of major museums is an opportunity for States to promote their Culture and Heritage in an international context of diplomacy. This is known as soft power or influence through the prism of Culture when “nation states have supported the international missions of museums to promote national cultural ideas and values abroad to pursue strategic geopolitical interests” (Grincheva 2020b, 89).

The case of the Guggenheim Museum, present on different continents, illustrates this point in a certain context because it embodies “the complex process of neoliberal globalisation and political decentralisation” (Grincheva 2020b, 89). This museum of contemporary art is governed by American law, allowing American museums to manage their collections. In addition, the Guggenheim collection is a private collection which, depending on insurance, allows works to be permanently deposited in locations other than the New York museum. It is generally individual wills, often considered visionary, that bring institutions to reinvent themselves to correspond or initiate an impulse in a complex international context (Ritvala and Piekari and Franck and Granqvist 2017). Nowadays, some museums are transformed into a brand comparable to a multinational company negotiating to obtain this label in a new territory is a complex legal and political issue, which the case of the Louvre, and especially the Louvre's different levels of internationalisation from Paris to Abu Dhabi.

Connecting international relations and Louvre's internationalisations

By combining international relations and the internationalisation of the Louvre, it highlights different levels of decision-making. On the one hand, at the level of the Louvre, the museum has its own governance and depends on national or international networks that enable it to establish its status as a major international museum (Molinié-Andlauer 2019). On the other hand, the internationalisation of the Louvre can also be a collateral effect of French state policies, since “cultural diplomacy has traditionally been a strategic instrument of national governments to achieve foreign policy objectives” (Grincheva 2020b, 89).

One thinks in particular of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, a project jointly carried out by the French Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs and the UAE Department of Culture and Tourism on the other hand (de Font-Réaulx 2016; Molinié-Andlauer 2019). But there are also more ephemeral partnerships that are part of a cultural diplomacy project: this was the case between Japan and France (2018) or Iran and France (2018).

The Louvre's internationalisation is therefore based on the provenance of visitors, the actions implemented (excavations, exhibitions), the partnerships established with other major

museums (Louvre Atlanta between 2006 and 2009), the networks to which it belongs (experts) but also its “involvement” in France's foreign cultural policies. The internationalisation of the Louvre may only be idealised, especially when the analysis is placed in a globalised context. It is a Western institution, initially unique in the world, and today follows the economic model of the Guggenheim, a private museum whose collections are not inalienable, as those of French museums can be.

The case of Louvre Abu Dhabi: overview

The case of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, opened in 2017, shows another involvement that of the United Arab Emirates in globalisation which now involves architectural projects that are increasingly extravagant and ambitious (Ajana 2015), in order to combine the past with the times to come (El Amrousi and Elhakeem and Paleologos 2018).

In the last decade, scholars and policymakers have paid greater attention to the role of famous designers' pieces of architecture not only in regenerating urban areas but also in defining a positive and communicative image in the global economic competition among cities [...] this rationale assumes that the use of a well-known architect's name can give a competitive advantage to a city in many ways (Ponzini 2011, 251).

Their objective was to create an Emirati museum with an evocative name for 30 years (2007-2037) to enable the Emirati government to promote Abu Dhabi as a destination with world-renowned brands.

Couched within the entertainment and leisure package that visitors have come to expect in their totalising museum experience nowadays, this provides an interesting alternative to the sheer brawn of Guggenheim Inc. for the 21st-century art museum. There may be something here for institutions considering their own transformation, even if they don't quite match the Louvre's vital statistics or share its particular vision of the world (Stara 2015, 50).

But this case also shows on a regional and local scale how the establishment of a renowned museum transforms the surrounding area (Grincheva 2020b). Tensions may arise (the omission of Qatar on the map when the Louvre Abu Dhabi was inaugurated) but regional dynamics in terms of the attraction of the countries of the Arab-Persian Gulf are also emerging. The gradual transformation of the United Arab Emirates into a tourist destination is boosting tourism in the Sultanate of Oman, for example (Molinié-Andlauer 2019).

By choosing the Louvre to complete the picture of this cultural cluster, the Emiratis are also betting on the value of the brand and its “reputation”³. However, as T.L. Poulin points out, reputation is not just what the Emiratis are looking for; “as a cultural authority, but also around the tourism generated by the Louvre and the attention that would naturally arrive with the satellite

³ “Reputation can be defined as a shared, provisional and localised social representation, associated with a name and resulting from more or less powerful and formalised social evaluations”, (Chauvin 2013).

of the Louvre” (Poulin 2010, 3). This identity participates in the development of this country by proposing a discourse that serves the opening to the international.

Indeed, the Louvre's origin and early development promoted the country's newfound freedom, equality, and wealth, offering to the French people cultural knowledge as well as the ability to identify themselves as members of this powerful nation (Poulin 2010, 1).

From the arid lands to the harsh climate of the Persian Gulf region, the Louvre was built in several stages. On Saâdiyat Island, a cultural cluster of international scope is planned. The greatest architects and their workshops are recruited to propose containers that are just as impressive as the development of the Emirati cities that defy time and gravity.

What it represents plays a major role in the attractiveness of Abu Dhabi (Stara 2015). In this sense, this universal and Abu Dhabian museum “represents an experimental trans-disciplinary design that includes continuity and discontinuity from tradition” (El Amrousi and Elhakeem and Paleologos 2018, 1). The circuit subtly imposed by the museography also requires a diplomatic and political reading of this museum. The sizes of the works follow one another in an established order and chronology that the museum's youthfulness makes sway. However, this vision is not entirely complete and accurate. A systemic analysis of the facts reveals that paradoxes emerge with this project, particularly in terms of branding and urban marketing (Ponzini 2011).

The establishment of this museum in the United Arab Emirates thus enables both the French State to ensure a military presence in the Arab-Persian Gulf (Boulanger 2011) and the Louvre Museum to enter into new partnerships with the museums of this region. These internationalisations are therefore joint with international relations.

Research questions and methodological approach

Research questions: a stakeholder for itself and French State

We have been able to see from current readings that the Louvre is a museum that is becoming international at different levels. In this article, we will go beyond these analyses by demonstrating that the internationalisation of the Louvre museum, which is intimately linked to the liberalisation of trade produced by globalisation and which serves:

- The economic interests of the French State and the Louvre Museum,
- France's geopolitical strategy in the Arab-Persian Gulf,
- The influence and attractiveness of the United Arab Emirates in the world,
- The Louvre Museum's international partnerships.

This strong link that has existed for decades between the Louvre and the French state partly explains the museum's involvement in national cultural diplomacy. What it embodies and what it

represents in the collective imagination, which is often restricted to a few masterpieces, only fuels visitors' desire to visit the museum. It therefore attracts and promotes France abroad. However, the constant decline in public subventions, therefore from the French State through the Ministry of Culture, obliges the museum to find other private resources to meet the international requirements of major museums. The paradox occurs at the level of the French State when the latter mobilises the Louvre Museum for geostrategic and economic purposes; the financing of French culture and more particularly of a unique French heritage is traded internationally. Thus, by locating the Louvre in Abu Dhabi, they hope for a “transfer of reputation” (Chauvin 2013, 26) to appear in the world as a country that is a vector of culture and turned towards the arts and knowledge. If we consider this, we see the possibility of a “Louvre effect” along the lines of the famous “Bilbao effect”. This translates into the way in which the uniqueness of the Louvre, i.e. the heritage that it is and the inalienable collections that make up its identity, is mobilised to “act” on territory under construction. Its evocation is less formal, and the questions focus more on the future and the temporalities of the project's implementation, in particular its viability, management, cost and the image of the Louvre Museum in terms of reputation.

This raises the question of what the deterritorialisation of the Louvre is producing for the benefit of international relations within a museum world that is undergoing a major turning point in terms of the actual definition of the museum. On a more local scale, the question is to determine whether the establishment of the Louvre in Abu Dhabi produces effects similar to the transformations of the cities of Bilbao (Guggenheim) or Liverpool (Tate Modern). On the basis of these findings, it must be assumed that:

- The location of the Louvre in Abu Dhabi fundamentally redefines the Louvre museum and its influence,
- The Louvre Museum offers its own museum and international model, different from the Guggenheim franchised model and independent of national and international policies,
- The “reputation transfer” of the Louvre brand has been impacted by international perceptions of the UAE and French cultural policy management since the 1980s,
- The very principle of universality associated with the Louvre is a geostrategic and controversial issue: the Louvre heritage is dissociated from the Louvre museum.

Methodological approach

The methodology of this paper is based on fieldwork completed as part of a thesis conducted between 2016 and 2019. The main resources are the semi-directive interviews conducted with advisors to the Louvre's President-Director between 2017 and 2018. They were supplemented by interviews conducted at the Louvre Abu Dhabi and Agence France Museums in 2018.

Archive work and analysis of the various reports written for the development of the Louvre abroad was also carried out. These include the study of the Scientific and Cultural Project (SCP) of the Louvre Abu Dhabi (not available online), the activity reports of the Louvre Museum (2007-2017) and the 2007 intergovernmental agreement (decree n°2008-879)⁴. An in-depth reading of these documents provides an understanding of both the ambitions of the Louvre Museum to open up and be present on the international scene in the world of museums, and the mobilisation of this museum by the French State as part of a diplomatic game of influence. An observation during the study day “24 hours ... at the Louvre Abu Dhabi”, on 17 and 18 November 2018, for the first anniversary of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, also provided an opportunity to understand the various French protagonists in the establishment of this museum in the United Arab Emirates.

The purpose of this method is therefore to understand the context in which the Louvre was established abroad. More precisely, it leads us to see how this implantation profoundly transforms the Louvre museum in Paris, the city of Abu Dhabi, and relations between France and the United Arab Emirates. Then, more generally, we question the role of the museum in the 21st century on the territories.

Impact of international relations at the level of the Louvre and the city of Abu Dhabi: the role of influence by Culture and Heritage

Branding a city with a unique brand Museum: regional impact

The story of the establishment of the Louvre Abu Dhabi has not been an easy one. Whether it was the Parisian museum or the Agence France Museums, the question of setting up a Louvre in Abu Dhabi clearly shows how closely linked politics and heritage are in France. This can be dated back to the creation of the Pyramid of Pei inaugurated in 1989, and the various shifts associated with the transformation of the Palais du Louvre into the Louvre Museum. The Louvre depends on the “fact of the Prince”, i.e. it embodies a symbolic power on which the various successive French presidents base their national and international policies⁵.

⁴ Agreement “between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the United Arab Emirates on the Universal Museum of Abu Dhabi, signed in Abu Dhabi on 6 March 2007”: [https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000019417311&dateTexte=.](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000019417311&dateTexte=)

⁵ Interview with the scientific manager of the Centre Vivant Denon Vivant, Louvre Museum, conducted in March 2018.

Originally it was a request from the Emirati people, which was astonishing and destabilising since no one had in mind what they really wanted. In fact, they wanted to make a Louvre identical to the one in Paris, to build one from A to Z. At first, we thought they wanted some experts or opinions, but no they wanted to “have” a Louvre. The Louvre has taken responsibility for this, because it is a regalian tool at the service of the state, to respond as well as possible to their request⁶.

The Emiratis of Abu Dhabi wanted to distinguish themselves from what Dubai had to offer by accentuating their approach to the Culture, Heritage and History of the United Arab Emirates. Indeed, Dubai began its economic transformation some twenty years ago with the aim of beginning the urban and social transition from an economy based on the extraction of fossil fuels, a resource that is becoming increasingly rarefied, to a tertiary economy linked to leisure and tourism⁷. In a similar way, the urban project of Abu Dhabi (Abu Dhabi 2030) is also based on resorts to international standards with beaches as far as the eye can see, restaurants, villas and museums, places of knowledge and learning. They are being established on the Saâdiyat Island, considered as the Cultural district of Abu Dhabi.

In the 2010s, the intention is to move forward “by rake” to complete the projects of the Guggenheim, the Louvre and the National Sheikh Zayed Museum⁸. The Emiratis are employing Frank Gehry to design the architecture of the Guggenheim, Norman Foster (Foster & Partners) for the Sheikh Zayed Museum, whose architecture is a reference to the emirate's emblem: the falcon. But before knowing that the Louvre would be located near the other international museums, a request was made to the Jean Nouvel workshops to create this universal museum, wanted by the Emiratis, whose architecture would be a projection of what the West can have of the Arab world. From 2009 to 2016, the geopolitical context of the region is shaken by the Arab Spring. The Saâdiyat Island project is reviewed, the authorities choose not to rake ahead any further, i.e. one of the three major museums of the project had to be chosen and no longer envisage concomitant constructions. Preserving the Louvre as the spearhead of the Saâdiyat project made it possible to preserve both the exceptional character and the visibility expected by the Emiratis.

Unlike other projects based on renowned museums (Guggenheim, Tate Modern, Hermitage), the Louvre Abu Dhabi's project is to obtain a name strongly rooted in a city and a country. It is a heritage associated with the French centralised policy, since the Louvre Museum's partnerships abroad have generally been limited in time (a few months to three years), and were not intended to lead to a more “sustainable” structure. Secondly, the territory itself, i.e. the city of Abu Dhabi, was not in economic decline but in transformation inherent to the current context.

⁶ Remarks by Jean d'Haussonville, Director General, Domaine national de Chambord, during the “24 hours ... at the Louvre Abu Dhabi”, 17 and 18 November 2018, auditorium of the Louvre Museum, “The Louvre Abu Dhabi, history of dialogue”.

⁷ Interview with the AFM's scientific manager, conducted in March 2018.

⁸ Interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in September 2017.

This is why the cases of Bilbao, Liverpool and Lens are very different in many ways. What globalisation has produced in these territories is an abandonment of a single economic activity (mining, fishing) with no prospects for the inhabitants⁹. It is only when considering urban projects for the rehabilitation of these cities that the idea of betting on a cultural and museum infrastructure to transform them comes to mind.

Although the time frame for setting up museums and their architecture differs between these three cities, it is nevertheless noticeable that for the Louvre Abu Dhabi the investment is massive in terms of museums. Saâdiyat Island will host not just one iconic museum, but two international museums and two other national museums run by starchitects. Thus, the development model of the Louvre in Abu Dhabi, although it stems from a bilateral will, is part of a larger project alongside the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Museum, the Maritime Museum and the Zayed Museum, which was supported by the British Museum.

In fact, the Louvre model in Abu Dhabi should be understood not only as National Branding, but also as a marketing brand of a more global whole to establish Abu Dhabi as a renowned tourist destination in the region. Indeed, since the liberalisation of trade and the democratisation of air travel, the cities of the Arab Persian Gulf have become major international hubs where passengers make stopovers. Kuwait, Doha, Dubai and Abu Dhabi are airports that redistribute transit passengers between Europe and South East Asia. The objective of the United Arab Emirates was that, beyond transit, the country should be promoted so that passengers would become tourists. Thus, a whole communication effort was set up in the airports around the opening of the Louvre in Abu Dhabi and its surroundings¹⁰. This approach, which is very different from the communication of the Louvre museum in Paris, enabled the Parisian institution to demonstrate that these two museums, although the name and the experts may be the same, were very distinct entities with different prerogatives¹¹:

- For the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the aim is to introduce a population to museum culture and attract visitors to the territory. Indeed, the events, workshops and conferences offered by the Louvre Abu Dhabi are equivalent to those of any museum; they tend to make it a cultural reference point for the city in the next thirty years of the intergovernmental agreement (2007-2037) that correspond to a generation. This

⁹ Interview with the scientific manager of the Centre Vivant Denon Vivant, Louvre Museum, conducted in March 2018.

¹⁰ Interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in September 2017.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

generation will be able to be satisfied with a reputable museum and thus have access to the best of culture, the Louvre Museum¹².

- For the Louvre Museum, this means managing visitor flows and continuing to promote the museum's collections to different types of public¹³.

The Louvre's multi-spatial setting contributes to its redefinition. The monetisation of the brand allows the Louvre to rethink its structure and its welcome policy and the city of Abu Dhabi to benefit from the reputation of the name “Louvre”. But what are the impacts of these actions?

French International relations: the impact of Culture and the impact on Culture

Since the signature of the bilateral partnership in March 2007¹⁴, the French cultural scene has been highlighting the political stakes and the “international relations” dimension of this agreement (Des Cars 2009, 59)¹⁵. These polemics question the real involvement of the French State in the management and conservation of heritage, particularly in terms of means (Cachin and Clair and Recht 2006). They also highlight the fact that major museums must respond to a geostrategic (we already saw the establishment of a French military base) and diplomatic state policy by taking a market value (cultural and university institutions, the Louvre and the Sorbonne). While in 2007, the creation of the Agence France Museums had not yet been mentioned, they introduced it to question the future of this project. They seek to “detail” the project, question the management and then present the repercussions in terms of the public.

This agency, the only one of its kind at the time, acted as a link between French expertise and the various funding sources¹⁶. The decrease in public subventions from the Ministry of Culture has made it necessary for the services of the Louvre Museum to resort to patrons and partnerships with private institutions and companies. Within the museum, this translates into the rental of spaces and events financed by large groups such as LVMH¹⁷. The Louvre's project in Abu Dhabi provides a filigree opportunity to reconsider the French cultural landscape through the funding planned over

¹² Jean-Luc Martinez, President and Director of the Louvre Museum, said “What must be pointed out is the confidence of the UAE authorities who believe that we are the best in our field”, during the “24 hours ... at the Louvre Abu Dhabi”, 17 and 18 November 2018, Louvre Museum Auditorium, “The Louvre Abu Dhabi, history of a dialogue”.

¹³ Interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in July 2017 and reports 2014-2018.

¹⁴ Agreement “between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the United Arab Emirates on the Universal Museum of Abu Dhabi, signed in Abu Dhabi on 6 March 2007”: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000019417311&dateTexte=>.

¹⁵ Interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in September 2017.

¹⁶ Agreement “between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the United Arab Emirates on the Universal Museum of Abu Dhabi, signed in Abu Dhabi on 6 March 2007”: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000019417311&dateTexte=>.

¹⁷ Interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in September 2017.

30 years¹⁸. This funding will obviously go partly to the Louvre museum, but also to the Ministry of Culture and the French State¹⁹, since “the Emiratis are attracting France and the Louvre to show their interest in France”²⁰.

Assisted by Agence France Museums to build up the Louvre Abu Dhabi's collection, the staff has to manage the loans of varying lengths from the thirteen French partner museums, then the frantic pace of the four temporary exhibitions produced each year, to attract the public again and again within the framework of the bilateral partnership²¹. These experts enabled the Louvre Abu Dhabi teams to understand how the art market works when the investment is made within the framework of a museum institution. The rhythms of the Louvre Museum and the Louvre Abu Dhabi are different as well as their visibility. The transformation of the Louvre Museum now involves not only the actions of the Louvre Abu Dhabi but also those of the Louvre in Lens²². This regional branch also responds to the internationalisation of the Louvre and plays a discreet role in international relations, as shown by the hosting of the exhibition on the margin of the signing of the partnership between Iran and France (2018).

The impact of culture in this case is to develop international diplomatic relations, promote new cultures and benefit from an income. “The name of the Louvre is rented, but not the Louvre, the brand belongs to the French State, and this allows the Louvre to live and to compensate for the decrease in subsidies, we must not forget that the money comes to feed this republican heritage. France's interest in having a Louvre in Abu Dhabi is obviously financial. The gain is in the order of 1 billion euros, including 190 million for the organisation, 400 million for the brand and the rest for the expertise”²³. At a more local level, culture participates in the development and dynamism of territories.

¹⁸ Agreement “between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the United Arab Emirates on the Universal Museum of Abu Dhabi, signed in Abu Dhabi on 6 March 2007”: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000019417311&dateTexte=> and interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in September 2017, completed by the interview with the AFM's scientific manager, conducted in March 2018.

¹⁹ Remarks by Jean d'Haussonville, Director General, Domaine national de Chambord, during the “24 hours ... at the Louvre Abu Dhabi”, 17 and 18 November 2018, auditorium of the Louvre Museum, “The Louvre Abu Dhabi, history of dialogue”.

²⁰ Statements made by Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, former culture minister, as part of the 24 hours ... at the Louvre Abu Dhabi, 17 and 18 November 2018, auditorium of the Louvre Museum, “The Louvre Abu Dhabi, history of a dialogue”.

²¹ Interview with the AFM's scientific manager, conducted in March 2018 and SCP of Louvre Abu Dhabi.

²² Interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in September 2017, completed by the interview with the AFM's scientific manager, conducted in March 2018.

²³ Agreement “between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the United Arab Emirates on the Universal Museum of Abu Dhabi, signed in Abu Dhabi on 6 March 2007”: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000019417311&dateTexte=> and interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in September 2017.

However, international relations based on national branding also have an impact on culture, sometimes creating controversies²⁴. Thus, the controversies surrounding the internationalisation of the Louvre Museum are on several levels. They range from discussions about the inalienability of French museum collections and the museum's location within the capital to the transfer of powers to territories that have a reputation of their own. Moreover, the controversies are also at the level of the debates that question the international deployment of the Louvre museum to satisfy international relations between France and the United Arab Emirates. This attachment leads to questions about the role and challenges of heritage in the 21st century.

The first point to be highlighted would be that in Paris, the Louvre Museum is difficult to be part of the city, both in terms of architecture and representation. This difficult link between the city and the museum, which the institution is aware of through its policies for welcoming the public, makes it necessary to rethink the way in which the Louvre museum could occupy the territory²⁵. But this occupation cannot be achieved without the financial resources that accompany social and cultural projects, and expansion (including Louvre-Lens). Aware that this other Louvre abroad may be prejudicial to them, the Louvre Museum provides a highly political discourse centred on the orientations of the Parisian museum and its regional branch.

Actually, we are not looking, but if customers are interested, we will see. We weren't applicants for the Louvre in Abu Dhabi, it was the Emirati people who came to see us and wanted to have our expertise, it's a co-construction process. Initially, their project was to have a pinacothèque with a few paintings and that's it. We studied this together to end up with a universal museum project²⁶.

In this equation, which includes the Louvre Museum, the French State and the United Arab Emirates, we can see that the French State's stranglehold on “its” heritage serves above all as a strategy to influence and shield its international policy and de facto international relations. The Louvre, in addition to being a National Branding, is becoming an international or even a Universal Branding, based on French know-how and the reputation of the Louvre, which now circulate and become appropriated by other instances.

The impact on culture of cultural diplomacy with the case of the Louvre shows that there is now a dissociation from what the Louvre is. A distinction is made between the Louvre museum, which is dependent on its collections, the Palais du Louvre, which is the heritage that cannot be relocated, and the Louvre brand, which is materialised by the circulation of expertise, a few

²⁴ « In the controversy, “it is always a question of creating the conditions to take as a witness, or even as a resource, the public of a debate. This public can be virtual, or represent posterity or universality: the presupposition of its existence opens the space for the manifestation of truth” » (Fabiani quote by Lemieux 2007).

²⁵ Interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in July 2017.

²⁶ Interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in September 2017.

masterpieces and universalist discourse in the sense of the museum's accessibility and the period of the collections.

Perceptions of the Louvre's Influence on the Territories and as a Heritage

Internationally renowned, the Louvre has 75% foreign visitors²⁷, making it the world's leading museum in terms of attendance. What it represents abroad, i.e. art, culture, knowledge, the Emiratis are looking for it. The reputation of the Louvre Museum thus serves the territorial development of Abu Dhabi, and its establishment in the Middle East is causing a shift in the focus of the institution, transforming this same reputation. The process of internationalisation is then reconfigured, no longer starting from a single point of radiation (Paris), the Louvre as such is a polycentric network, whose different poles serve to enhance the reputation of the brand and the territories that host it. The international dimension is once again present, revealing a multi-spatial Louvre system.

This politicised and conscious internationalisation triggers a recentralisation of the institution on its reference territory, which is Paris. In Abu Dhabi, the Louvre is at the heart of a gentrification project (El Amrousi and Elhakeem and Paleologos 2018) to build a “cosmopolitan” social space, which could lead to a “clash of cosmopolitanism” (Krebs and Mermier 2019, 295-296), as much ink has been spilt over its construction.

The deployment in this region of the global challenges the authors who integrate a post-colonial approach. We can read that the establishment of a Louvre in this region is only a resurgence of a certain form of colonialism (Poulin 2010) by using the concept of “universal museum”. Indeed, it is noted that it remains a “mission to cultivate the global populace in the old-fashioned manner of western art historical narratives - because the pieces may be global but ‘chronology’ or the idea of a universal 'humankind' are distinctly western concepts” (Stara 2015, 50).

By introducing the Louvre Abu Dhabi as a universal museum, the message sent to the museum world from the French side is “we can shift our perspective on the world”²⁸ and actively participate in rebalancing the circulation of works of art. For the Emirati people, what is sought in the establishment of this museum and the setting up of a lasting partnership is what the museum

²⁷ “9,6 millions de visiteurs au Louvre en 2019”, <https://presse.louvre.fr/96-millions-de-visiteurs-br-au-louvre-en-2019/>. *Trad.* 9.6 million visitors to the Louvre in 2019.

²⁸ Interview with the AFM's scientific manager, conducted in March 2018.

and French culture represent. So we find ourselves faced with ambivalence in the speeches, which explains the tensions inherent in the creation of this Louvre in the United Arab Emirates.

The change in management of the Louvre Museum in April 2013 is then highlighted and explains the developments that the Louvre must undergo. A more social museum, more refocused on its territory and attentive to visitors from Paris and Lens²⁹. But this refocusing on French territory was only possible, however, through its international deployment. The Louvre's new geography is profoundly redefining the institution. The different Louvres offer new ways of experiencing the museum, which differs in every respect from the Guggenheim model, which applies a systemisation of these different museums. The links between the three Louvres are changing the brand's reputation. An action at the Louvre Abu Dhabi or the Louvre-Lens has repercussions (positive or negative) on the Louvre museum³⁰. The transfer of reputation operates in both directions and deserves to be more thorough afterwards.

In this case, international relations result in the circulation of cultural goods, expertise and brand at short notice to serve other political agreements with the United States, Iran, Japan and United Arab Emirates. International relations related to the Louvre thus serve both the internationalisation of the museum and the internalisation of the French state.

Conclusion

We made several hypotheses at the beginning of the article that suggested that 1) the relocation of the Louvre to Abu Dhabi would help redefine the Louvre Museum. 2) The Louvre would present its own model of a multi-spatial museum institution. 3) That a transfer of reputation would be observable and that 4) the principle of universality would become a geostrategic and cross-cutting issue. These hypotheses were intended to answer the two questions concerning the interest of the deterritorialisation of the Louvre in international relations and the effects at the local level of the establishment of the Louvre in Abu Dhabi.

Throughout the demonstration of this article, we were able to validate several hypotheses. The first is validated even though the Louvre Abu Dhabi is recent. The intergovernmental agreement has allowed the Louvre Museum to obtain funding over a period of 30 years, thus offsetting the decline in public subsidies. The Louvre Museum has been transformed by these means (restoration of rooms, works of art, partnerships, work in the reception hall, investment for the local public - digital and media actions).

²⁹ Interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in July 2017.

³⁰ Interview with advisor to the Louvre's President-Director, conducted in September 2017.

Secondly, the Louvre Museum is indeed presenting its own model, since the Louvre Abu Dhabi is not a French museum, but an Emirati museum that has been called "Louvre" for 30 years. For the time being, this partnership is not intended to be developed internationally. The effects may be similar to other pre-existing models of multi-spatial museums, but the initial requests are very different.

The question of the transfer of reputation remains to be developed. In the very short time available for analysis, yes, we can see that there are reciprocity effects, but this analysis must be carried out over a much longer period of time in order to be able to measure them truthfully.

Finally, the question of universality and the model of the universal museum show the existing tension of this concept. This was not the aim of this article, but the current stakes around the restitution of works in their country of origin and the current critical literature on the concept of the universal museum clearly show a strong and oriented polarisation of what the term "universal" means. This bilateral agreement promoting the universal museum of the Louvre Abu Dhabi positions the United Arab Emirates as being in a logic of domination similar to the Western countries of the early 19th century. Here again, there are still many elements to be dealt with in order to deepen this subject.

What we can retain, however, is that the deterritorialization of the Louvre strengthens its international image while serving (geo)political and local interests in the development and transformation of a particular region and city.

It is also reflected in the question of the circulation of goods on different time scales (short and long). The lending of works is part of diplomacy of the significant influence that France can afford. Finally, it translates into the transformation of heritage into a commercial and coveted object for countries whose cultural referential remains France.

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