

# Does the intelligence of museums have a price ?

## *The new deal in cultural engineering*

**Thursday, June 3rd 2021 - 6pm / 9pm**

***on platform ZOOM***

Will cultural engineering play an increasingly important role in the reconstruction of the museum of the future? Much linked at the outset to a (cultural) regional development policy, its initial ambition was to provide cultural facilities to all the regions in France, as a means of reaching the whole population. The first "cultural engineering" agency was created in 1986.

The scope and issues have evolved, but many of the questions that museum professionals were asking themselves remain relevant. In his « Que sais-je ? » on the subject, Claude Mollard<sup>1</sup> recalls that André Malraux would have been against cultural engineering: money seemed secondary... Fifty years later, there is no doubt that: « culture is an essential element of social and democratic development, but also an economic one »<sup>2</sup>.

In mid-2021, after 15 months without revenue, the question of the economic balance of museums is on everyone's mind: the UNESCO<sup>3</sup> points a drop in museum revenues of up 80% compared to 2019 and, notably in the United-States, 13 % of museums will not reopen. In France, the « whatever it takes » approach has prevented the museum bankruptcies that unfortunately occur in many parts of the world. However, the activation of potential sources of revenue is emerging as an imperative, and first and foremost the development of the museums' skills. Two years ago, the report of the Cour des Comptes on the « international valorisation of the engineering and cultural brands: the case of national museums » already urged the institutions to « strengthen their entrepreneurial strategy ». The Senate Finance committee then noted that it was « difficult to know whether museums are maximising their share of this market. »

What are the challenges today ? What role do these activities play in the post-crisis reconstruction of the museum? What leverage should be put in place? What ethical issues do they raise?

As we know, in museums, « there is a tradition of international cooperation without economic valorisation »<sup>4</sup>. Even though museums were strengthened by the autonomy they acquired by becoming public institutions in the 2000s, the major ones have engaged in development policies, particularly internationally, which certainly go beyond the framework of bilateral cooperation. The State has incited national museums to position themselves in the face of a strong and growing international demand in which France is « well placed because of the richness and interest of its collections ». The successes are here : with the Louvre Abu Dhabi at the head, the transitional Pompidou centres in Malaga, Brussels, Shanghai as well as Rodin, Picasso, Orsay, Universcience... in a variety of forms: sale of ready-made exhibitions, co-production of exhibitions, consulting services, derived products. These actions contribute to a dual objective of an international influence and the generation of own resources (estimated between 1% and 16%)<sup>5</sup>.

Beyond these renowned experiences, our debate will seek to understand the potential - and perhaps the limits - of cultural engineering : these examples may lead one to think that it only concerns the international level, as a market and/or an issue of « cultural diplomacy », but the share of cultural engineering operations on the territory shows that this activity has its place within the borders. In addition to exhibitions and « brands », all the skills and know-how of museums are also concerned: from simple consulting to direct management of a cultural project of varying scope, including management and governance, co-construction or artwork management, etc...

Consequently, the question of cultural engineering takes on another dimension in the museum that is recovering from the crisis. Professionals are justified in questioning the perimeter of what can be valued while respecting the values that constitute their identity..

This is the debate we want to have, which will take place in the middle of the museum reopening calendar. Proposing these exchanges from ICOM is strategic in a period of intense reflection on the definition of museums, the updating of the code of ethics and the international questioning of the museum model. The issue of cultural engineering goes beyond the recomposition of museum budgets. It concerns the identification of the proper skills of museums and the qualifications of their professional... The Senate committee also emphasised that training operators must play a full role. The co-production of this debate with the Institut national du patrimoine once again makes a perfect sense.

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<sup>1</sup> Mollard Claude, L'ingénierie culturelle. Presses Universitaires de France, « Que sais-je ? », 2020, 128 pages. ISBN : 9782715402850. DOI : 10.3917/puf.molla.2020.01.

URL : <https://www.cairn.info/l-ingenierie-culturelle--9782715402850.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Agnès Saal « Proposer les savoir-faire français à des pays portant un projet culturel », Expertise France.

URL : <https://www.expertisefrance.fr/actualite?id=814711>

<sup>3</sup> Les musées dans le monde face à la pandémie de Covid 19 : <https://www.icom-musees.fr/sites/default/files/2021-04/2e-rapport-unesco-musees-monde-face-pandemie-covid-19.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Philippe Barbat interviewed by the Senate committee, page 8.

- Information report n°568 on behalf of the Senate Finance Committee on the investigation by the Cour des Comptes into the international promotion of engineering and cultural brands, page 8

URL : <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r18-568/r18-5681.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Estimations juin 2019, Sophie Moati, President of the third chamber of the Cour des comptes, in the information report n°568 on behalf of the Senate Finance Committee, page 15

## Openings

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- **Charles Personnaz**, Director of Institut national du patrimoine
- **Juliette Raoul-Duval**, President of ICOM France

## Speakers

- **Anaïs Aguerre**, Founder and managing director of *Culture Connect*
- **Michèle Antoine**, Director of exhibitions of Universcience
- **Hervé Barbaret**, CEO of Agence France-Muséums
- **Laurence Chesneau-Dupin**, Chief curator of Heritage and director of LCD conseil
- **Jean-Hervé Lorenzi**, Economist and founder of the Cercle des économistes
- **Claude Mollard**, Special advisor to the president of the Institut du monde arabe
- **Antonio Rodriguez**, President of ICEE - ICOM's international committee for exhibition exchange
- **Agnès Saal**, Senior official for equality, diversity and the prevention of discrimination, head of the International Cultural Expertise Mission, at the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Culture

**Summary** of the evening by **Christian Hottin**, Head of studies, curatorial department, Institut national du patrimoine

**The session will be held in English, French and Spanish.**

### Link to the event:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85817258647?pwd=cWtoVWNIWWJQVjEzMWhTcnpqYld4UT09>

**Reunion ID:** 858 1725 8647 - **Code :** 407670

