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The Grand Louvre.

Regaining superstar status: The role of
organisational identity

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'The Louvre is the book in which we learn to read. We must not, however, be satisfied with retaining the beautiful formulas of our illustrious predecessors. Let us go forth to study beautiful nature, let us try to free our minds from them, let us strive to express ourselves according to our personal temperament. Time and reflection, moreover, modify little by little our vision, and at last comprehension comes to us.'

Paul Cézanne, letter to Emile Bernard, 1905

Abstract

A longitudinal research project, conducted at the Louvre Museum in 1996-1998 and in 2006-2008, has attempted to understand how organisational identity has been reconstructed. The Grand Louvre has undergone a 20 year modernisation project. If reputation and corporate identity of this great institution have changed after its modernisation, how do staff build and redefine the identity of the museum? How do they answer the question, 'Who are we, as an organisation?' Results show that this process took place at three levels: collective, group and individual. At the collective level, the catalyst for revisiting organisational identity was a latent crisis. The search for a new organisational identity was reinforced by the leadership of top managers. At the group level, a process of social categorisation based on group diversity produced first a conflicting and then a hybrid organisational identity. At the individual level, the new organisational identity was structured from semiotic markers such as space and language, from organisational identification movements and, more largely, from a cognitive, emotional and behavioural experience. The results of this research provide a comprehensive analysis of strategic management of this superstar museum.

Introduction

The last quarter of the century has been marked by a major development of cultural and artistic organisations and, in the first instance, of museums. From the 'middle-class' museum of the 19th century, conceived by a group of experts for a limited number of art lovers, up until the 1960s, the model of the museum remained unchanged. It represented a 'traditional' character, according to Weberian terminology (1971). Then a deep change took place, the traditional model grew blurred and museums became 'modern'. In North America, Europe, Australia, South-East Asia, the movement was part of widespread change, all countries underwent an increase in the standard of living and in the level of education. Museums then multiplied and diversified. Their infrastructures were renovated and developed, their activities extended, their image changed, their visitor numbers exploded, their personnel were well developed and varied, their management was rationalised and their organisation became more and more complex (Ballé, 1987, 1996). Engaged in a movement of cultural democracy¹ but subjected to significant financial constraints, the museums widened their market, integrated educational objectives, and in the space of one managerial era, became true cultural organisations (Zolberg, 1983; Selbach, 2000).

If the external identity (corporate identity) of museums clearly changed, how did their people, on the inside, redefine the identity of the 'organisation-museum'? In other words, how have they built, during this intense time of change, their new organisational identity? The organisational identity answers the question 'who are we as an organisation?' It refers to those features organisation staff members deem to be central, distinctive, and enduring about their organisation (Albert and Whetten, 1985). This representations² scheme is a subjective and intersubjective construction of these staff members regarding the identity of the organisation to which they belong (Gombault, 2000). The modernisation of modern museums, or according to Ballé (1996), of the 'post-modern' museum, has been marked by an identity crisis which created contradictions and paradoxes (Zolberg, 1983, 1986).

In particular, this evolution was questioned and even rejected by several art historians and curators in France (Recht, 1999, Aboudrar, 2000; Clair, 2007). However, while the sociology and arts management literature had already foreseen some aspects of the phenomenon, it has not been directly named and described in identity terms.

The first study³, conducted in the Louvre Museum between 2006 and 2008, within the framework of a Doctorate in Management Science (Gombault, 2000), enabled the study of this phenomenon, in this archetypal context, of a superstar museum⁴. The Louvre Museum has seen a strong change in its organisational identity, as a result of its huge organisational changes and because of the eventual change in its organisational image that resulted. To gain a longitudinal perspective, a second study⁵ started in 2006, with a planned final report for the end of 2008. This return to the Louvre field ten years later makes it possible to study the post-Grand Louvre development of the organisational identity of the museum.

Change in organisational identity of museums

The modernisation of museums led to a change of their external identities (reputation and corporate identity) and internal identity (image and organisational identity). American and French literature clarifies some aspects of the phenomenon however never deals directly with the question.

The institutional modernisation of museums

Never have museums been built and renovated on such a large scale prior to the last three decades of this century. This museum 'boom' presents multiple facets (Ballé, 1996). Initially, the number of museums increased considerably between 1960 and 1990: from 2000 to 5000 in the United States; 1000 to 4000 in Germany; from 1000 to more than 2000 in France and Great Britain. Museums diversified by investing in new sectors, while becoming increasingly specialised. They were also decentralised. The symbolic value granted to art museums, and in particular to large collections like the Louvre, increased. The infrastructure of museums was reconsidered and redeveloped. Creation, extension, modernisation were the aims of the new museum identity, including: great national projects; work by famous architects; large public displays; creation of prestigious foundations, cultural associations and local movements. The collections grew rich. Interior spaces were refitted with exhibition spaces, work spaces and new services intended for the public including cafés, bookshops, souvenir shops, toilets, car parks. The public responded positively and this is demonstrated by large increases in numbers of visitors per year. The numbers are said to have doubled or even tripled over the last 10 to 20 years. The phenomenon has been described as 'the museum enters a quantitative logic' (Ballé, 1996, 311). The public was at the heart of museums' metamorphosis (Feldstein, 1991). The environment was tailored towards what they wanted and needed. Audience focused policies were developed. They comprised educational and cultural programs, sophisticated devices of experience and a string of new services, the function of which is improving the quality of the visitor experience.

The results confirm that the public attend more frequently. However, it should be noted that the social distribution of the visitors to the museum remains the same overall as previously. Audiences typically have a high level of education, social status and/or income. The main consequence of these developments is that the

public's image of the museum changed. The image of museums in Europe and the United States is no longer a high social class institution, an empty space, old fashioned and dusty, but rather is an institution of a society looking for democratic and egalitarian values (Bourdieu, 1969)—the modern, *clear* and *inhabited*⁶ organisation. In conjunction with the development of the museums, a powerful movement in the privatisation of collective services, coupled with the reduction of the public expenditure involved, was the handing-over of traditional modes of management. This was the case across the world, despite the diversity of museums in various nations, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Denmark, and more recently Italy or France. Modernisation involved professional redefinitions. The change required the organisation to develop knowledge of strategy and management. Emphasis on and awareness of the environment were reinforced and it was necessary to manage this relationship within each individual public museum. New products and services appeared, adapting new techniques. The functions multiplied and became similar to those of other organisations: production; control; finance; marketing; human resource management and so on. Procedures were rationalised. The museum, whether in the sphere of public or private management, became a standardised organisation (Bayart and Benghozi, 1993; Benghozi and Bagdali, 1998; Selbach, 2000). It was required to be run efficiently, show results, get people through the door and make them want to come back (Lankford, 2002; Gilmore and Rentschler, 2002).

This institutional change is apparent and can be singled out in France. The State has initiated it in accordance with a historic-political tradition which, from the Monarchy to the Republic, utilises public funding in the cultural field. In France, the State plays a great cultural role at a level unequalled in the world. If the Ministry of Culture Malraux rehabilitated the museum in the year 1960 by evoking it as the one place that influences the common person with the greatest ideas of mankind, then the State initiated the organisation change. It was President George Pompidou, creating the National Museum of Modern Art in 1970 in Beaubourg, which caused the first severance from this historic-political tradition. He did so on two counts: firstly, the industrial architecture of the museum is far removed from that of Art schools; and secondly, the museum is installed within an Arts and Multicultural Centre which has autonomous public legal status. President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing continued the movement of modernisation and began by consolidating the project in Orsay where they are to transform the city's station of Orsay into a museum of 19th century. Lastly, President François Mitterrand reclaimed the palace of the Louvre. Between 1980 and 1990, hundreds of building sites opened in France, funded by the State and with the scientific and technical support of its services. The local communities followed the movement. The collections in the museums grew rich thanks to the influence and assistance of the State. It devoted significant sums, both initially and continuously. It also adapted more and more procedures in order to aid the museums. The restoration, presentation, reproduction, diffusion of works increased in a spectacular way. The rise of visitor numbers to the museums, stimulated by cultural tourism, was incontestably high, with a growth rate of more than 73% for national museums between 1980 and 1993; with the overall rise of the national audience remaining relative⁷.

Consequences of identity

The introduction of commercial activities, the decline of official subsidies and the

increased search for self-financing led to the diversification and development of complexity of each individual museum mission. Their objectives, their public, and their production consequently led to the modification of their identity. The opposition of differing logic and the articulation of difference have caused conflicting ideas to be drawn about identity. Châtelain (1996, 139), in the wake of work by Chiappello (1993, 1991), showed the rhetorical and practical oppositions between art and management. She stresses 'the extreme importance of staff members' identity' in the formulation and the implementation of a museum's strategy.

These administrative reports echo work from many sociologists who cite these characteristic tensions as a result of heterogeneity and ambiguity of the museum's objectives. Even if the word 'identity' is seldom used, the majority of the works describing identity conflicts between groups brings into play the identity of the organisation. Zolberg (1983) for example, uses the term 'contradictory optics' in the American museums of art that are gradually being substituted since the second world war, from the managers to the curators, in order to meet the need to answer the aesthetic requests of a multicultural public. These managers⁸ direct the museums toward an operation that is comparable to modern companies. Museum directors are less and less curators, thus strongly increasing tension between managers, curators and boards of directors (DiMaggio, 1983). These tensions come from a contest of legitimacy between divergent missions: missions of education and public policies on one side; and artistic missions on the other (Zolberg, 1974, 1983, 1986; Schwalbe and Baker-Carr 1976a). The modern museum faces a significant dilemma between adherence to satisfying aesthetic values and the production of a service for the society as a whole (Zolberg, 1983, 1986). These tensions can be found in their problematic coexistence within the organisation of different audiences. They, in turn, tend to develop into two museums: one intended to serve the general public; and the other intended to serve the amateur public—made up of the members of museum associations and contributors to the museum (Feldstein, 1991). In the same vein, Alexander (1996) observes the pressures that fundraisers exert on directors and shows that they integrate them and jointly satisfy them in 'multi-voice' actions, thus forming a plural identity for the museum.

Ballé (1996) emphasises identity tensions of contemporary museums while contemplating the paradoxes of their modernisation. Positive assessment of evolution does not exonerate them from many of their difficulties, but rather inherits their past, and comes about directly as a result of the implemented changes. Several contradictions appear: some show that cultural democratisation undermines the patrimonial vocation of museums while others disagree; the development of an event logic competes with the management of permanent activities; the widening of cultural activities, having required the recourse to new expertise. Various discourses conveying various definitions of the museum are juxtaposed in its centre; this diversity of frames of reference has resulted in the development of heterogeneous, sometimes paradoxical, strategies and policies. The creation of specialist museums in various fields of society introduced major divergences in the vocation of the museum. Economisation of the museums, as in the world of art and culture in general (Moulin, 1992), upset their financial balance, while at the same time producing opportunities (increase in resources, greater autonomy in terms of policy and administration) as well as vulnerabilities (dependence on the market, risks of financial crises, confusion between the ends and the means, reduction in official support).

Identity tensions are also found in the professional model of curators. In France there was a 'set of segmented options, even individual [options], with the detriment of a system of common features' (Oktobre, 1999, 371) demonstrating an identity crisis in France from 1980 (Oktobre, 1999, 2001), the same was seen in the United States and United Kingdom (Zolberg, 1983; Kahn and Garden, 1993⁹). Based on the 'traditional' model of museums, the profession of curator was split between fidelity with historical heritage (management of collections and institutions—the principal aspect of the role) and the changes of place and mission of museums (taking into account the requirements of management, diffusion, education, marketing and extension of the field of the museum to new objects). Analysing an episode of change, Oakes et al. (1998) explored the ideological effects of language and the practise of business planning in provincial museums and cultural heritage sites on workers in Alberta, Canada. The results show tensions between economic and cultural values, and how 'people in these organisations are encouraged to see themselves, perhaps for the first time, as working in businesses rather than working in museums that are run in a business-like manner' (Oakes et al., 1998: 73).

Literature is now reporting that 'museums have become more like commercial businesses' (Urry, 2002: 120). A shift in museum focus, from one of custodial and educational, to one of demand marketing and even to one accommodating tourism markets is described (Foley and McPherson 2000; Hooper-Greenhill 2000; Gilmore and Rentschler 2002). The museum has become less concerned with the power of objects and more concerned with image and consumer satisfaction (Gilmore and Rentschler 2002). This change in museum values and approaches to managing museums can clearly be seen in language and use of terminology (Oakes et al., 1998; Gombault, 2006).

In work mentioned above, one sees that authors, without directly tackling the question of identity, approach it in an indirect way. Let us note however that if identity change and the conflicts which result from it are particularly prominent in the museums since 1980, it is because those involved have undergone development without precedent and an equally fundamental change to their own identity. They characterise cultural organisations in general, as seen in a lot of work: inter alia Adler (1979), DiMaggio (1987), Chiappello (1993, 1994, 1998), all types of cultural productions; Schwalbe and Baker-Carr (1976b), Castañer (1997) or Glynn (1998), in orchestras; Benghozi (1989) in the cinema; and Powell and Friedkin (1983) in public television.

The Grand Louvre revolution of museum organisational identity

The modernisation of the Louvre Museum during the so-called 'Grand Louvre project' led to a change in its organisational identity. This research has explored this process: how the Grand revolution provoked such a deep change in organisational identity that it caused an identity crisis in the museum and also how, as a result of this crisis, the people of the museum rebuilt a new organisational identity, thereby reconciling art and business.

Change and crisis of organisational identity

The Grand Louvre project was a major event for the museum (Gombault, 2002). From 1981 to 2001, it involved a fundamental reorganisation of the museum, costing more than €1.1 billion. The project provided the basis for a new museum for the 21st century, resolutely modern. It represented its second birth, 200 years after the first birth of the museum in 1793, a new era in its life cycle following a phase of decline that began in the middle of 20th century. This decline was principally due to lack of space, means and autonomy, which therefore caused the building to decay. The museum was also uncomfortable, without a principal entry point, reception, or services. Its minimalist approach to management and its organisation of work were unsuited to the environment.

The reorganisation focused on two elements: a new space and a new organisational structure. One major objective of Grand Louvre was to give the museum a key resource in its development: space. After several years of development, the total surface of the museum tripled, from 57 000 to 180 000 m². The Grand Louvre project reinvented and regenerated the space of the museum. The pyramid of the architect Ieoh Ming Pei became part of a monumental reception. The collections in the rooms were redeployed. The rediscovery of the kings' palace was made thanks to the significant work done in restoration. They installed museum slides, which brought about the creation of a singular visual space throughout the architecture of the Louvre.

In order to allow for the evolution of each structure of operation, careful management was required. Three key points drew out this new organisation: a new flow chart creating 16 services with various functions (including reception, museography, technical and logistics, communication, cultural activities, auditorium, finance, personnel); organisation around the seven existing departments of conservation; and a new legal statute giving the museum managerial autonomy of which it was previously deprived. New missions were defined in its statute that jointly related to conservation of the collections, scientific activities, public access, pedagogical activities, an auditorium, and upkeep of renovated buildings. The material and organisational recasting of the museum was a success. The museum experienced fantastic growth. It strongly developed its cultural production and as a result, the amount of visitors to the museum doubled, reaching more than five million on average over the period 1990-2000. This strong growth involved strong specialisation of skills, horizontal and vertical, making the organisation varied and complex. The traditional trades of the museum became professionalised. The technical activities of the museum revealed many new trades. This vitality was not free from managerial difficulties however. These

were concentrated into three points: relative autonomy; delicate piloting of the organisation in a temperamental social climate; and lack of human resources, which is becoming increasingly worse. However, despite these difficulties, the museum showed remarkable capacity in its adaptation to change and reorganisation, which in itself is evidence of the success of museum modernisation.

The Grand Louvre project brought about a change in the museum's organisational identity. This was caused naturally by the fundamental change in organisation, which therefore resulted in a change to its organisational image (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). As shown in Table 1, it is possible to distinguish every step of this organisational change which has been described previously: a major stage; the passage of one phase into another in the life of the museum; formation of a new organisation; change in the collective statute; fast growth; enrichment and diversification of activities within the museum. These all amount to a change in the organisational identity, according to Albert and Whetten (1985).

Table 1: Conditions of change in the organisational identity of the Louvre Museum (adapted from Albert and Whetten, 1985)

Major stage	Complete reorganisation of the museum 200 years after its creation.
Passage from one phase into another in the life of the museum	Maturity with a new launch and growth.
Formation of a new organisation	Reconfiguration of space, legal, financial, organisational constructs which form the Grand Louvre.
Change in the collective statute	Of a service external to the State, with administrative autonomy. A public establishment. Of a prestigious museum to the largest museum of the world in terms of its surfaces of exposure, its collections and its visitor numbers.
Fast growth	Investment of more than €1 billion. A total budget of more than €76 million. Increase in employees from 1000 to almost 1700 employees. Increase from 30,000 m ² of surfaces of exposure to more than 60,000 m ² . Increase from 57,000 m ² of total surface to nearly 180,000 m ² . Doubled amount of visitors to over 6 million per annum.
Redefinition and diversification of the activity	Creation of new services with new museum related and non-related activities. Thus, the activity or the trade of the organisation (Abell, 1980) is redefined by: creating a spacious environment; conservation of the public inheritance; changed relationship with the public; the presentation of works; pedagogy; the experience; and public policy in general. The business portfolio of the museum diversifies with musical of the 19th century programming, cinematographic programming, conferences in the new auditorium and an audio-visual and multi-media production.

This process of fundamental change started the process of change in

organisational identity. It upset the 'interpretative schemes' of the organisation (Bartunek, 1984). The organisational identity integrated organisational change into two levels: in the common representations of all the staff members in the organisation's identity; and in the differentiated representations. Table 2 distinguishes common representations of identity where intensity or conviction is strong (Whetten and Godfrey, 1998). Their results are in **bold** and those which represent more continuity of the organisational identity, are not. It must be noted that the staff members may have voiced them before the Grand Louvre project began, even if their representations have since been reinforced¹⁰.

Table 2: Representations of the Louvre Museum: definition and organisation. Elements of continuity and change in common representations identity of the Louvre Museum

- 1.1 The largest and the most beautiful museum of the world**
- 1.2 An initiatory place, crowned, religious
- 1.3 A magic and dreamy place
- 1.4 A national heritage: historical and political place
- 1.5 A force of economic and cultural development**
- 1.6 A factory, a machine, a large ship, an animal, a monster, an anthill**

It is following organisational changes at the Grand Louvre that the museum became *the largest and the most beautiful museum of the World*¹¹ and *a force of economic and cultural development*. Item 1.6 is interesting because it shows the recurring metaphors used by staff members using their own definitions. These metaphors, varied as they are, are full of the metamorphosis of the museum. They were used to indicate features of the museum, which arose directly out of the organisational changes at the Grand Louvre.

The organisational changes of the Grand Louvre articulated opposing representations of the identity of the organisation whose intensity or conviction is lower than common representations. Table 3 presents the 'identity debates' directly caused by the change of the organisation.

Table 3: Representations of definition and organisation of the Louvre Museum (period 1996-1998). Organisational change in the heart of antagonistic representations of the museum's identity.

- 2.1 Modernity and archaism of the museum
- 2.2 The role of the museum is split between its two principal missions: conservation of works and their exhibition to the public
- 2.3 The Louvre has become an arts centre
- 2.4 The Louvre has become an enterprise

The Grand Louvre project instigated the self-questioning about the identity of the organisation (Albert and Whetten, 1985) by asking one question fundamental to its staff members: 'Who are we as an organisation?' Then several other questions were posed: 'Are we a resolutely modern museum or are we still a slow museum on certain points?'; 'What do we do?'; 'How do we grade our missions?'; 'Do we remain a museum or have we become an arts centre?'; and 'Have we become an enterprise?' The staff members of the organisation answered each question very differently and often in a radically opposing way.

Staff members did not tolerate the ambiguity and instability of their organisation's identity, referent of their own identity. The evolution of the organisation's identity under conditions of change caused them to question their representations of its identity, more or less forcing them to partially redefine these representations. The central, distinctive and stable characteristics of the organisation were not easily identifiable. This process of change in the organisational identity included a transitional phase (Kaës, 1979). This led to the paradox of change and stability (Czarniawska and Sevón, 1996). All of the central and distinctive characteristics that staff members considered stable, and for this reason, constituted the organisation's identity, changed. Thus, change in the organisational identity was made up of processes that appeared contradictory and difficult for staff members to apprehend. This paradox was strong in the case of the Louvre because the majority of staff members¹² lived through it. For some it began with the changes commencing in 1989, and for others it began with the changes commencing in 1996. Indeed, between the end of 1996 and 1998 when the changes were taking place, the Louvre Museum was constantly haunted by disruptions brought about by the end of the project and the commencement of a new stage: the post-Grand Louvre project. It was the beginning of a period of transition, which was being carried out with the last section of renovation and with the progressive rationalisation of the organisation designed between 1987 and 1993. Thus, if the change in the organisational identity was not taken well by the museum staff members in the traditional categories, in particular by the curators who felt dispossessed from the old Louvre, then the staff members in the new categories, recruited at the beginning of the project also suffered. They found it more difficult to accept the routines needed in a changing organisation. The tolerance for the paradox was weak which explains why the organisation experienced an identity crisis.

An organisational identity crisis started to occur during the process of change in the organisation's structure and continued through the resulting phase. An organisational identity crisis can be interpreted as the expression and resolution of the paradox in organisational identity change. In staff members' eyes, in the context of organisational change, the subjective representations of the central, distinctive and stable characteristics of the organisation appeared confused, mimetic and unstable. The change of structure develops resonance¹³ within an individual's representation of this identity (Amado, 1990). The crisis collectively affects the majority of people within the organisation rather than a few; in that case the crisis would be individual not organisational. In the Louvre, this identity crisis, located in the central period of the study between the end of 1996 and the beginning of 1998, occurred at the same time as the deconstruction of the sense of the organisation's identity and at the same time as feelings about an attack upon this identity were being experienced. The two processes, cognitive and emotional, are closely dependent. To quote Erikson (1968): the museum experienced 'a painful or uplifted identity consciousness'.

If the organisational identity is defined as the collective representation of the central, distinctive and stable characteristics of the organisation (Albert and Whetten, 1985), the crisis seemed here to be collective representations of confusion, trivialisation and discontinuation of organisational identity characteristics.

The first element, the confusion of the museum's identity, was observed through weak homogeneity, great complexity and also in the abstractedness of the organisation's identity. This reveals varied definitions of its identity which were arranged into four poles of tension: the modernity and the archaism of the museum; the conservation of works and the way in which they are displayed to the public; whether the Louvre did or did not become an arts centre; and finally, whether the Louvre did or did not become an enterprise. In other words, it was the modernisation, the competing missions, the diversification and the rationalisation of the museum that caused confusion about its identity, and the resulting frustrations of feelings regarding unity and consistency in the organisation's identity.

The second element, the debasing of the identity of the museum, is based on a report about the Louvre's imitation of an enterprise. The changes of the Grand Louvre led the staff members to contemplate whether the Louvre is in fact, still quite distinct from other organisations. They queried whether or not it had become *an arts centre, an entertainment centre, a tourist centre, an industrial company, a factory or a services trade*. Therefore, the feeling of distinction and uniqueness of the organisation's identity was disturbed.

The third element, the discontinuity of the organisation's identity, arose owing to the fact that certain organisational changes were perceived as ruptures by its staff members. They lacked a sense of continuity. The ruptures were perceived at the beginning and at the end of the project; that is at the beginning and at the end of the radical change which has affected the museum. Psychological suffering was experienced by its staff members.

An organisational identity crisis arose in a latent way at the Louvre, but nevertheless produced a phenomenon which can be interpreted within this framework: a tormented organisational climate; stress in the organisational closing¹⁴ and of differentiation, quasi-structural characteristics of the cultural organisation; exacerbated and conflict-provoking group identity strategies.

The construction of a new organisational identity

Like any crisis (Pauchant and Mitroff, 1995), the organisational identity crisis of the Louvre, although it had disturbing effects in the organisation, was not regressive in itself. It had a revealing and effective function (Morin, 1994) because it mobilised elements of reconfiguration and of recrystallisation¹⁵ of a new organisational identity (Ashforth, 1998; Kaës, 1979). It was the stage of the construction of organisational identity, which allowed organisational learning.

The crisis seemed to be the issue of collectively negotiating the organisational identity. During the crisis, representations of the organisation identity were decrystallised. The process was conflict-provoking, organised around 'organisational identity coalitions' (Gombault, 2000), that is, gatherings of staff members crystallised around a particular conception of the organisation's identity, an ideal-type that represented and/or militated for this particular conception within the organisation.

Four principal coalitions arose in the construction of organisational identity of the Louvre: the 'patrimonial museum' coalition, structured around works; the 'cultural democratic' coalition, structured around the public; the 'technical managerial' coalition, structured around the functioning of the organisation; and the 'social civil servant' coalition, structured around the employees. However, negotiation was creative. It allowed the museum's identity to be recognised and asserted in its revolution.

Initially, staff members recognised that the museum, which presented a monolithic identity, had developed a hybrid identity in the process of modernisation. Its plural missions made its identity evolve into a plural organisational identity. This hybrid identity was ideographic: each group represented one of the identities of the organisation. The construction of the new organisational identity involved the mutual acceptance of these various involved groups. The members recognised, then, that the museum must evolve from a normative type identity to a more utilitarian type.

This recognition and the assertion of the evolution of the organisation's identity pushed the members to search for a new definition of this identity. The new definition was a partial redefinition. As seen in table 4, certain elements were preserved: the Louvre—even if more broadly it could be seen as a cultural establishment—remained a museum and retained the sovereign, magic, dreamy dimensions that it comprises. Other elements were added, of which the most central was not negotiated since all members proposed it spontaneously: the Louvre became *the largest and the most beautiful museum of the world*. This negotiation related mainly to the operating mode of this *largest and most beautiful museum of the world*. Beyond their divergences, the members negotiated and agreed on a common minimalist framework of definition in the new representation of the organisation. This was: *a public enterprise* which is to say that this powerful organisation existed to service the public.

Table 4: Representations of the Louvre Museum: definition and organisation. The negotiation of a common minimum framework for definition of the museum's new organisational configuration

2.4.5 The ideal model: a public enterprise

- 2.4.5.1 A union of people with means
- 2.4.5.2 An enterprise in the public's service
- 2.4.5.3 A logic of cultural profitability
- 2.4.5.4 Publicly funded, although is often in search of other sources of financing
- 2.4.5.5 Rigorous management organised like an enterprise

Although the members did not all define 'enterprise' in the same way, they nevertheless agreed on common denominators. These were: a union of people with means; an enterprise servicing the public; a logic of *cultural profitability*, rather than of economic and financial profitability; the search for new sources of financing complementary to public funding; and the requirement to have an effective organisation with rigorous management. These common denominators were certainly not free from ambiguities and could be sources of conflicts. Thus, *the cultural profitability* may be an expression which indicated the effectiveness of cultural actions. When used by services staff the phrase meant: that objectives related to the reception of public (frequentation, pedagogy, diffusion) were achieved, even if the actions were showing a deficit. However, when used by curators the phrase meant: that objectives in terms of conservation of the museum's works (acquisition, publication, exposure) were reached, even if there was a deficit in the museum's activity. Similarly, if the museum was *in the public's service*, how was this public defined? An educated, initiated public, as understood by curators, or a mass audience of consumers?

Nevertheless, this evolution of organisational identity contained remarkable advances. Initially, the members became aware that the museum had resources: *people and means*; its need for efficiency: the logic of *cultural profitability*; and its structure of financing which remains public but is diversifiable. Then, the members all agreed that this new enterprise was in the public's service. The key to the Louvre's future 'organising' (Weick, 1979) undoubtedly lay within this aspect of the evolution of the definition, despite divergences on the precise meaning of the concepts of 'public' and 'service'. It is interesting to note that although the dimension of public utility was little mobilised by members during the organisational identity crisis, and furthermore was not integrated into the previous configuration of the organisational identity, it is now core to the new organisational identity. It became a major feature in its evolution. It therefore seemed that the quest to improve the performance of the organisation was not contrary to the concept of public utility, and that even, the two dimensions appeared complementary, the first serving the second. The new organisational identity was thus tied around the relativity of the traditional patrimonial function of the museum, which was increasingly centred on the public.

The organisational identity crisis allowed for transcendent learning. It caused the evolution of the definition of organisation identity. The progressive recrystallisation of the organisational identity was exercised mainly around the functioning of the organisation and its opening to the environment, rather than around the contents of its production. It did not focus on the diversification of the production of the Louvre. This maybe because the most central element of the new definition of the organisation identity—the *largest and the most beautiful museum of the world*—on

which all members agreed, was not negotiated. It integrated it implicitly: the concept of museum changed and with it the nature of the museum's production. The two conceptions of the museum—conservation of works on one side, cultural activities on the other—had not yet found their synthesis in the organisational identity of the Louvre. It was the mode of organisation and the opening to the public, which gradually recrystallised the organisational identity. To the question: 'Who are we?' the members answered: 'We are the largest and the most beautiful museum of the world', knowing that the concept of museum had changed, and 'We are a powerful organisation in the public's service'. The crisis of organisational identity allowed the members to negotiate and to agree on this second facet of the organisational identity. This transcendent learning involved cognitive and behavioural learning. The reference frames and the actions of the museum increasingly took into account the organisation and the public, so much so that they made strategic axes of them.

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