



Culture - A symbolic or economic success factor for urban development planning?

Case study - Abu Dhabi

Analysis of the cultural development initiatives of the city of Abu Dhabi

Summary of the major points of the culture-based development project in Abu Dhabi.	
Origin of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Abu Dhabi's economy is currently based on oil and it is proving necessary to find another source of economic development in order to build life 'after oil'. Culture is one of the cornerstones of post-oil development.
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1,432,900 inhabitants, a third of the United Arab Emirates' entire population. Between 2001 and 2006, the population increased on average by 4.57 % per year and a similar rise is expected until 2010, at which point the Emirate will be home to 1.75 million inhabitants. ▶ The vast majority of the population (82 %) is made up of foreigners of more than 100 nationalities. The most prominent communities comprise Pakistanis, Indians, Egyptians, and also Lebanese.
Surface area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 67,340 km², the equivalent of approximately 80% of the United Arab Emirates' total surface area.
Context and history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prior to 1958, the date when oil was discovered, Abu Dhabi suffered from an under- developed economy, with a dependency on local fishing. ▶ Today this rich Emirate controls 10% of the worlds' oil reserves (the wealthiest of the seven members of the Federation of the United Arab Emirates) ▶ Abu Dhabi's GDP reached 100 billion dollars in 2006 (+ 21.7 % compared to the previous year) ▶ The main source of sovereign funding behind the Emirates, the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), equipped with 875 billion dollars, is the biggest in the world.
Stakes of cultural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In November 2004, Abu Dhabi made highly significant investments in order to progress from oil to life after oil. ▶ Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The desire to promote the country's image ▪ To open up to the world ▪ To diversify its knowledge base ▪ To develop strong links with new countries above and beyond the existing links with England (with France, for example, to promote the French-speaking world) ▶ Two major levers : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultural engineering (importing knowledge and 'star' museums) ▪ Top of the range tourism
Summary of the major points of the strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Extensive program coordinated on several levels, including cultural, to create a cluster and a dynamism in order to advance development: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Museums 2) Knowledge economy 3) Media 4) Events management 5) Leisure activities (football, theme parks, race tracks) ▶ A 5 year strategy designed in collaboration with UNESCO, in close partnership with local experts.
Key players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whilst a Ministry for Culture that officiates at the Emirates Federation level does indeed exist, Abu Dhabi also has its own Authority for Culture & Heritage (ADACH) which includes the Cultural Foundation, National Library and Centre for tourism (ADTA).

Conditions to be put into place: a 5 year strategy led by a powerful organisation

The Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) is the institution responsible for preserving Abu Dhabi's heritage and culture. Established in October 2005 as an Abu Dhabi governmental authority, it is governed by a council of administration presided over by H. E. Sheikh Sultan bin Tahnoun Al Nahyan. The **ADACH was set up as part of Abu Dhabi's cultural development strategy.**

- ▶ On an international level, ADACH plays a role in **strengthening intercultural dialogue**, through developing projects which encourage sharing cultural traditions. This body **invests all its resources locally** in preserving architectural and archaeological capital and in the development of the arts, music, literature and international cinema.
- ▶ The **objectives** are:
 - 1) Safeguarding, controlling and improving **national heritage**;
 - 2) Developing **creativity** in the fields of art and culture;
 - 3) Funding the development of **cultural expression and cultural knowledge**;
 - 4) Enriching **intellectual production, supporting fine arts**, and making Islamic and Arabic heritage more accessible **on a national and regional scale**.

To purchase expertise recognised worldwide with a view to creating a local knowledge economy: To develop high level university training courses and expanding cultural and linguistic openness beyond the Anglo-Saxon world

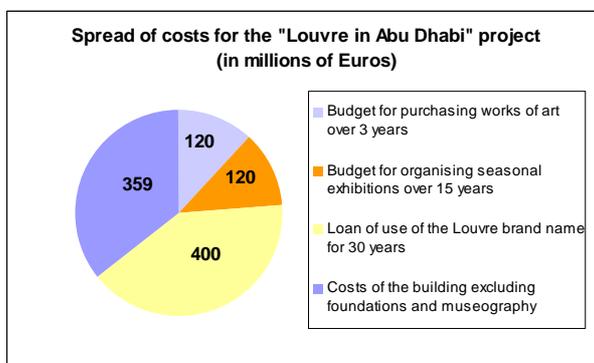
- ▶ Since 2006, Abu Dhabi has hosted a **branch of the Paris University, the Sorbonne**. Opening a branch of a prestigious French-speaking university underlines the United Arab Emirates' aspiration to develop high level university courses and to expand cultural and linguistic openness beyond the Anglo-Saxon world. In accordance with the terms of the international agreement, the University's Council of Administration is made up of three French and three Emirate members. The council is chaired by the president of the Paris-Sorbonne who has the casting vote. The University operates under the aegis of the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) which allocates its annual budget. The prestigious French university already offers eight courses in social sciences and in law to some 300 students. The schooling is mixed, which is a first, and the French teachers provide the same teaching as in France itself.
- ▶ Following an agreement signed with the Centre of Excellence for Applied Research and Training (CERT), a body controlled by the Abu Dhabi Ministry of Higher Education, the **University of Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ) in Lebanon, is set to create a branch in the Gulf Emirate**. The Saint-Joseph University will set up a branch of its school of translators and interpreters there, an institute for teacher training, as well as training in actuarial affairs. These courses, which will be followed by several other courses, will be taught in three languages: Arabic, French and English.

To develop Abu Dhabi to become a worldwide magnet for tourism and culture by using their contemporary museums to their best advantage

- ▶ The greatest architects in the world have responded to the appeal made by the authorities to **create a cultural island**. Saadiyat Island, situated 500 meters offshore from Abu Dhabi and extending 27 km², will, in ten years, be a cultural zone; the project, which could cost 20 billion Euros, plans to establish four museums and an enormous theatre, surrounded by hotels and marinas. This approach is based on the view that it is strategic **to revitalise an area, to open museums and to play the knowledge economy card rather than aiming to relocate heavy industry**, in the same way as the Centre Pompidou-Metz (opened in 2008), the Louvre in Lens (2010) and the Guggenheim in Bilbao (2007). These initiatives recognize the **importance of the contemporary museum in terms of the globalization of culture and in terms of stimulating its new economy**.
- ▶ In a **bold gesture in architectural terms**, the **four museums** which will be built on this island are:

 - the Louvre, entrusted to the French architect Jean Nouvel,
 - the Guggenheim – the largest ever built, after the one in New York and the one in Bilbao in Spain -, dedicated to modern art and entrusted to the Canadian architect Frank Gehry, who designed the one in Bilbao,
 - the Maritime museum, designed by the Japanese architect Tadao Ando,
 - A Live Art Centre for which the master builder is the Anglo-Iraqi Zaha Hadid.
- ▶ **The Louvre and the Guggenheim, two institutions with a worldwide reputation**, have agreed to take part in this globally unique and original project:

 - Towards the end of the 1980s, Thomas Krens, president of the Guggenheim Foundation, developed a strategy that has been systematically implemented since that date: namely cultural franchising which has seen the **creation of branches of the Guggenheim** in Las Vegas, Berlin, Venice and Bilbao, with other projects also up and running in Abu Dhabi, Guadalajara (Mexico) and Hong-Kong. The Guggenheim foundation offers its know-how, access to its collections and the right to use the **Guggenheim brand for twenty years** (averaging a cost of 55 million for Abu Dhabi). On the other hand, **Abu Dhabi is responsible for all investments** (purchasing land, constructing buildings, funding to create its own collection).
 - The agreement signed by the French and Emirate authorities is innovative with Abu Dhabi purchasing **cultural engineering services**: French experts will become the Abu Dhabi museum's curators and will deliver several seasonal turnkey expositions each year (**expertise-transfer**). They will help Abu Dhabi to create its **universal museum**, which will be entitled to use the **Louvre "brand" for thirty years**. For the first ten years, with eleven other national museums, the Louvre will lend **hundreds of works for a maximum of two years**, in rotation, to the Abu Dhabi Louvre. Abu Dhabi is committed to investing every year in order to create its own collections (**creating a heritage from scratch**). As payment for these services, France will receive 1 billion Euros, of which the cost for transferring the Louvre brand is 400 million.



To build a media zone to act as a window to the rest of the world

Abu Dhabi's media zone, christened Two Four 54 in reference to its longitude and its latitude, will occupy 250,000 m² along the seafront. Currently under construction, this zone, when complete, will create jobs for approximately one thousand people and will enable Abu Dhabi to have a real showcase on a world scale.

- ▶ The project is based on **four fundamental principles**: a **training centre** for young Arabs wanting a career in multimedia, **incubation and investment funds** in the multimedia projects, **access to production and postproduction facilities**, the marketing of content, and **assistance to relocating companies**. Partners include CNN, the BBC, Reuters and the Financial Times. Abu Dhabi is positioning itself to become the **new Hollywood in the desert**.
- ▶ For this reason, CNN has opened an office in the United Arab Emirates. CNN International will broadcast its programs live from its new production centre in Abu Dhabi to the United Arab Emirates.
- ▶ A **new company, Imagination Abu Dhabi**, has already been launched by those key players in Abu Dhabi, whose goal is to invest a billion dollars for the production of 40 films over the next five years, in partnership with the most influential Hollywood and Bollywood firms, with a view to putting Abu Dhabi in a strong position in the film industry.
- ▶ The multimedia market in the Middle-East should experience double-digit growth over the next five years.

To develop leisure activities to attract affluent members of the public

- ▶ A **theme park project**, dedicated to the Warner Brothers Studios has been announced.
- ▶ The Emirate also has a "Ferrari World" underway which from 2009 will incorporate a **Formula 1 circuit**. Abu Dhabi will host a Grand Prix as of 2010.
- ▶ The Emirate has also entered the football world by acquiring **Manchester City**. The Abu Dhabi United Group for Development and Investment, a group of private investors led by Sheikh Mansour ben Zayed al-Nahyane, Minister for Presidential Affairs and brother of the Head of State of the Emirates, was responsible for this purchase.

To stage high quality events as leverage to increase the area's appeal.

- ▶ After Madrid, and before Tokyo at the end of 2008, Toronto in 2009, then Helsinki, Saint-Petersburg, New York and finally Sydney in 2011, Abu Dhabi welcomed for fourteen weeks **the biggest exhibition ever hosted in the Arab world dedicated to Pablo Picasso**. 195 masterpieces hired from the National Picasso Museum in Paris for 3 million Euros, were on display to the public across more than 1,000 m² of exhibition at the heart of the Emirates Palace.
- ▶ In the same hotel, no less than **three exhibitions** were enjoyed by visitors at the beginning of that same year: the presentation of the mock-up models for future museums (on Saadiyat Island), a collection of artefacts of Islamic art originating from Iran and Iberian-American paintings.

- ▶ Other events staged since the end of 2007 have included the **large modern and contemporary art exhibition, Art Paris-Abu Dhabi**, comprising a collection of almost 3,000 works by Picasso, Matisse, Chagall and Giacometti. Then, in early 2008, a **Festival of cinema**, an international book festival, an **arts and music festival with the London Philharmonic Orchestra** and the Bolshoi Ballet.

An illustration of the effects of these initiatives: 65,000 visitors attended the Picasso exhibition (more than the previous exhibition devoted to Islamic art)

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Sources

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