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Poring Over the World at the Court. Coronelli's Globes and the Social Lives of Maps in France (1680-1715)

In the November 1683 issue of the *Mercure Galant*, Donneau de Vizé's society gazette, a new scientific development made quite a splash. The large cosmographical globes—one terrestrial and the other celestial—that Venetian monk Vincenzo Coronelli (1650-1718) had been making for King Louis XIV were finally "in their state of perfection" (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1683, 273). With this news, these two globes entered the world of the French Court before they were even displayed: this was the beginning of what I call in this paper their social lives. The *Mercure Galant* continued to report on the monk's output, and even publicized the launch of a subscription for the production of miniature versions of the King's globes (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1687b, 17).

This story echoes many similar episodes that took place during the 1680-1715 period, in which remarkably engineered pieces of cartography made waves in high society. These include Castlemaine's 1678 globe and the large Globe of Gottorf, completed by Olearius in 1664 and which was the object of diplomatic negotiations between Frederic IV of Denmark and Peter the Great, the Tsar of Russia, in 1713 (Vailly 2020). Yet it also relates to the broad circulation of less exceptional cartographic objects, printed maps and globes, among the European political, scientific, and economic elites of that time. It is the story of the mobilization of maps in social relations of multiple natures: a map may be used to educate a child, to plan a battle, to administer a territory or simply to show off one's good taste and knowledge to guests.

By focusing on the case of the French circulation of Vincenzo Coronelli's globe production, this paper sets out to examine the idea that maps have social lives; this could be seen as another way of addressing the contextualization of maps, by giving these objects agency. It approaches the concept of social life as a changing, constantly renegotiated set of uses allowed by these objects and of meanings inscribed in them (Appadurai 1988; Mason 2001; Russo 2013). These uses and meanings are jointly constructed by a variety of actors and spaces that need to be identified to propose a "biography of a thing" (Kopytoff 1988, 66), which is not limited to a history of the object but looks at history through the object and with the object (Riello 2009). Therefore, every actor interacting with the object (mapmakers, courtiers, students, administrators, etc.), as well as every space in the object's life (the mapmaker's workshop, the administrator's cabinet, the Court, etc.), should be subject to investigation. For the purpose of this paper, I

have limited myself to actors and places directly linked to Coronelli's case.

In the case of maps, the actors and spaces to be identified are threefold. A first step consists of questioning the nature of maps by observing their theoretical and practical conception process. This requires considering not only the cartographer, his scholarly and social positions, but also the theoretical and material choices made during the making of a map. The cartographer, indeed, has to negotiate with the customers' expectations and resources. In the case of Coronelli's globes, for example, their painting and stand could be adjusted to the buyer's demands and funds, whereas for the making of the Marly globes, Coronelli obviously had to carefully select the data on display to please the King (Vailly 2020, 19). This makes it possible to de-script the object, as Madeleine Akrich (2010) put it, i.e., to understand how the cartographer conceived the map so that it would fulfil specific functions and convey specific meanings. Secondly, it is necessary to observe the human actors who interact with these maps, insofar as they are capable of subverting the cartographer's script and give the object other meanings and make other uses of it. Lastly, globes must be situated within their *living milieus*, i.e., the geographical spaces in which they are located: an exhibition hall, a store, a storehouse, etc. (Vailly 2021). Existing in different places means being endowed with a variety of symbolisms and uses, and dealing with a range of different material conditions that may impact the social lives of maps and globes.

In this article, I accordingly posit that the idea of a social life of cartographic objects encompasses several realities, from their material and symbolic making to their exhibition and uses. Thinking from the basis of the object does not only entail reconstructing a biography, it means situating it within a far denser network of human and non-human actors that impact or intersect with the object's social life (Ingold 2011; 2012). It is precisely the complexity of the social lives of maps in the modern period that is the subject of this paper, which retraces the case of Coronelli's production. I will consider the ways in which these objects shape and are shaped by their social and political *milieus*. To achieve this, I draw primarily on tools from the historical anthropology of knowledge (Adell 2011; Jacob 2014), with a particular attention to places (in this paper, courts, libraries or cabinets) and practices (mostly making, collecting, using and discussing maps). These two notions allow us to get a better understanding of reception, as both places and practices can influence the way one reads or makes a map (Laboulais 2008; De Rugy 2018; Vailly 2021). I also draw on propositions by proponents of material and visual historians of knowledge and consumption with a focus on maps as actors, sources and subjects (Pedley 2005; Riello 2009). Lastly, I approach maps as parts of a social history of sciences and powers, which they equally materialize and contribute to constructing (Biagioli 1995; Castelnau-L'Estoile and Regourd 2005; Van Damme 2015).

To do this, I will mainly focus on the "Coronelli moment" of France's cartographic production (Hofmann and Richard 2012; Milanesi 2016; Vailly 2020), by following Coronelli's globes and their reception as these objects moved through France, starting from the subscription he initiated in 1686. This

moment is characterized by the commercial and critical success of the work of Venetian monk Vincenzo Coronelli in the world of map collectors, a trend resulting from the publicity on the two large cosmographic globes he made for Louis XIV. This is a particularly interesting juncture for the study of the social life of maps. Indeed, Coronelli drew his success from his work for the King: there was hype around his maps, which became a social phenomenon that circulated from Louis XIV to his subjects within a few years. This was a lasting fashion, which only began noticeably declining in 1712. The "Coronelli moment" was particularly timely: his output coincided with renewed imperialist ambitions and was presented as a conquest program. Additionally, the resounding success of Coronelli's maps allowed him to play a role in the "paper wars" that raged across Europe, and to defend Louis XIV against rhetorical attacks from various European nations (Rameix 2014; Claydon and Levillain 2015; Boitel 2016).

Coronelli's maps and globes were thus equally present in the collections of geography lovers and on the national political scene. They were one of the most notable manifestations of the social life of cartographic objects in the modern area, in terms of their echo in French civil society, between the urban worlds of map collectors and the King's Court.

To put this concept of the social life of maps to the test, I focus on Coronelli's globes in their living *milieu*: the French Court. Tracking the social and material lives of the globes helps to frame the complexity of the geographical practice in this specific "place of knowledge" (Jacob 2007, 19). Therefore, I look at the Court not only as a set of geographical places, but also as a network of diverse actors who were connected to royal power to various degrees. Observing this specific place allows me to analyze different contexts in which maps have real agency. Maps and globes played a role in the acquisition of a geographical culture, both utilitarian and driven by curiosity, which was a social and political imperative for many actors of French Court life. What is more, maps and globes were mobilized at the Court as central actors of the political and diplomatic life of the Kingdom of France; these objects became inanimate ambassadors of Louis XIV's imperialism. Finally, the possession, exhibition and use of maps and globes were channels of the dissemination of a social distinction model from the Court to the rest of the Kingdom.

Learning and Knowing about the World at the Court: Maps and Globes as Objects of Education and Entertainment

The Ancien Régime French Court's relationship to knowledge was structured by a double imperative. Court members had to be able to display a sense of curiosity and entertaining knowledge that could help them navigate conversations in Court society. They also needed to possess practical knowledge of territories to be able to wage war or to administer a given territory, and thus learn to read and use cartographical objects. This geographical practice at the Court was no Louis-Quatorzian exception, as several French kings supported cartographical endeavours throughout the centuries (Broc 1986; Pelletier 2001). There were, however, two new developments. First, Coronelli's cartographical production achieved notable commercial success, benefiting from the popularization of the

map-trade in Paris and the local support of the well-known map-seller Jean-Baptiste Nolin (Milanesi 2016; Pedley 2005). Second, cartography was officially integrated in the prince's education (Mormiche 2011, 2014). Coronelli's globes, which depicted the entire world as a place of imperial opportunities, were the perfect tool for Court members to demonstrate these abilities and taste, as well as learn new facts about the French endeavor in exploring and mapping the world. This first section accordingly approaches the social lives of maps from the perspective of the transmission of a corpus of geographical knowledge of the world, whose mechanisms will be analyzed.

Knowing About the World: A Social Imperative

Maps and globes circulated very widely among the historical actors of the French Court. Men of letters, administrators and officers of the crown discussed geography, exchanged maps, and commented on the new publications. The introduction of a new map or globe into Court society was a genuine social event. This was obviously the case when Vincenzo Coronelli's large cosmographic globes were completed and reported upon in the November 1683 issues of Théophraste Renaudot's *Gazette* and Donneau de Vizé's *Mercure Galant*. The latter was far more enthusiastic, pointing out that the globes were "in their state of perfection", and "the most advanced, the most curious and the biggest ever seen in Europe" (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1683, 273–74). While their completion was a landmark society event, globes were not the only ones to play a central role at the Court, and as such to experience a genuine social life. Exploring the landscape of cartographical production (both maps and their advertisements) will help to better understand the *milieu* in which Coronelli's globes lived their social lives.

The *Mercure Galant*, a society magazine that had a dedicated following at the Court, regularly published news related to cartographic objects (Brétéché 2015). It reported, for instance, on ongoing debates in the field, like when two scholars, Mariette and Tralage, clashed over their respective roles in the translation and updating of Coronelli's recent output (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1690, 127–36). It regularly included maps to accompany its reports on expeditions, going along with the tale of one of the most recent French war successes, as in the case of the Gorée and Tabago maps referring to the Maréchal d'Estrées victories in 1679 (more on this later) (figures 7 & 8) (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1678, 153–62). Most of the time, these were cheap and anonymously engraved maps, easy to reproduce and widely circulated They were not detailed enough to provide the reader with a precise geographical account, but rather helped to get a comprehensive snapshot of the battleground.

But the *Mercure Galant* was mainly concerned with advertising new publications by the most famous cartographers of the time. This review of new publications was often very detailed and echoed the most recent geopolitical events. The *Mercure Galant* summarized the distinguishing features of these maps, their novelty and their appeal, introducing the new productions into the social world. It sometimes mentioned technical and material dates and specified their intended use. Some maps were described as the perfect tool for a travelling nobleman, like the maps of Flemish cities issued by Nolin, which could be folded as "pocket books, which

is highly convenient for Officers" (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1692, 239). Other articles praised the ornateness of objects that would be a perfect fit in a cabinet of curiosities, including one advertising Vincenzo Coronelli's replicas of the Sun King's globes produced in the 1680s—these globes would be "more beautiful, more exact, more accurate, and more curious than any of the ones produced until now" (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1687b, 49). Collection methods were also often discussed, with an emphasis on the methods used by the printer or cartographer to make the map. The production of a new map was often clearly related to the outbreak of a conflict in the area being represented, as when Coronelli put out a new map of Hungary in August 1687 (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1687c, 328–29).The production and circulation of maps and globes obviously played a role in the "paper wars" that raged across Europe during Louis XIV's reign, as I will discuss further.

The *Mercure Galant*'s eagerness to report on new maps and to include maps in its issues reflected a broader attachment of many members of the French Court to the collection of cartographic objects. Maps and globes became objects of social distinction, allowing those who possessed them to showcase a sense of belonging to a scholarly and society "culture of curiosity" (Kenny 2004, 160; see also Daston 1995), characterized in part by a "way of knowing" (Pickstone 2000, 2-20) the world based on the practice of collection. These objects indeed symbolized a totalizing quest for knowledge and were closely bound with the very act of collecting curiosities from all over the world, as they allowed collectors to situate the objects on their shelves on a global scale (Vailly 2020). The intersection of the collection of *naturalia* and *artificialia* on the one hand and maps on the others is exemplified by two French officials, Michel Bégon (1632-1710) and Esprit Cabart de Villermont (1628-1707), who I will discuss further below.

Lastly, a more widespread practice deserves mention: the reading of maps among members of the Court. The diaries of Philippe de Courcillon, the Marquis of Dangeau (1636-1720), help the historian to track the uses of maps at Court. We learn for instance that the King's *lever* or *coucher*, that is, the everyday-life Court ceremonial, could include moments of plan- and map-reading. The King's men had to be able to read cartographical objects, not only for literary pleasure, but also for military purposes. However, the divide between these two practices was somewhat unclear. For example, Dangeau mentions a map-reading session held on April 17th,1704 by Louis XIV alongside Madame de Maintenon in his private apartments, where they studied a "beautiful map of Germany and the maps of all Portuguese cities" (Dangeau 1856b, 9: 488). Yet, such studies in which they indulged ostensibly for curiosity and leisure purposes were ambivalent, as they partly concerned maps of the military campaigns in which Dangeau had taken part in the early 1660s. This ambivalence reflects the second meaning of the practice of map-reading at the Court: military planning. Dangeau also evoked that role, reporting a visit from Louis II Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain, the Chancellor of France, with whom Louis XIV studied "a nautical chart of the banks from Oostende to Calais" one evening in August 1702, in an attempt to figure out how to rescue a privateer of the French Crown during the War of the Spanish Succession

(Dangeau 1856a, 8: 465). In these two examples, maps appear to have had an intense social life at Court, especially in times of war. This would partly explain the success of Coronelli's globes both in Marly and in private cabinets: the King and his men needed to know how to use maps.

An Education in Geography

Dangeau's account reflects the importance of a key imperative—that of getting an education in geography. A member of the Court not only had to be familiar with maps and globes, but also had to be able to use them effectively, especially if he was a man of war. Geography was therefore not limited to a general knowledge of the world, of its natural history and of the societies inhabiting it; it had to involve a practical knowledge of the field (Binois and D'Orgeix 2021; Vailly 2020). This ambivalence is characteristic of the social lives of Coronelli's globes at the French Court, which played the role of witnesses to the good taste and education of their owners, but also were crucial tools in planning international actions. It was certainly in part for such educational purposes that Louis XIV decided to exhibit the two giant globes made by Coronelli between 1681 and 1683, which he had received as gifts from Cardinal d'Estrées, at his Marly palace in 1704. He needed his heirs to be trained in geography. The role of globes in tutoring was not self-evident, however: they were first praised for their beauty and precision, not their usefulness for teaching the principles of geography. This role of maps and globes as tutors must accordingly be contextualized and detailed before we return to Marly's case.

Geography was thus cited by several pedagogy books as a central discipline in the education of princes and young noblemen. Princes were expected to possess advanced technical knowledge of geography, since they had to lead armies, guide sieges and administer territories. They also had to display a general knowledge of the world both for geopolitical and diplomatic reasons and to live up to their status of protectors of the arts and sciences (Vailly 2020). This knowledge drew on a dialogue between cabinet geography and actual practice in the field (Cornette 1993; Decalf 2019).

What was true for the prince also was, to a lesser extent, for the rest of the Court. Young noblemen had to prepare for military duties, which involved being able to use maps in the field. They had to understand coordinate systems, scales, and to handle different types of maps, as suggested by the geography manuals of the day. The Court's young women also received an education in geography, and even in astronomy, but it consisted primarily in acquiring a superficial command of the science per se (Deias 2020; Vailly 2020). As Pierre Ortigues de Vaumorière wrote in his *Art de plaire dans la conversation* [The Art of Pleasant Conversation], women were expected to stick to human and natural geography and not to concern themselves with mathematics (1701, 320).

To achieve this mastery of geographical knowledge, cartographic objects were needed—in the words of French geographer Guillaume Delisle, "these globes and these maps place countries before our eyes and represent them for us in a way that approaches what they are in the world; and what we see with our own eyes makes a far greater impression on us than what we hear" (Delisle 1746, 10-11). In

France, during the eighteenth century, many geographers like Delisle advocated for the use of maps in the teaching of geography in the broader sense: the shape of the world, the human societies that inhabit it, and the mathematical operations related to the use of maps. These geographers' approaches often started from the terrestrial globe. The globe's advantage over other cartographic objects, indeed, is that it heavily engages the hand, the touch, the senses of those learning the true forms of the Earth. This process had to be complemented with individual maps, allowing the learner to get closer to the surface of the Earth, and to have a more precise knowledge of its regions, and offering the opportunity to vary scales depending on the needs of the lesson.

Some pedagogues in turn gave cartographic objects a central role in the teaching of geography for young men from good families. Towards the end of the period under study here, in 1716, the scholar Nicolas Lenglet du Fresnoy (1674-1755) published the first volume of his *Methode pour étudier la geographie* [Method for the study of geography], which presents geography as primarily a "science of the eyes" that can be learned through the joint study of books and maps (Lenglet Du Fresnoy 1716, 1). To Lenglet du Fresnoy, maps had the advantage of simplicity and ease of use, allowing those who read them to quickly acquire knowledge on the shapes of the world and the populations inhabiting it. This would have to be followed up by intensive mathematics drills, pertaining, in particular, to the use of terrestrial globes, for instance to calculate the distance or time difference between two points (figure 1). The frontispiece of Lenglet du Fresnoy's 1716 textbook shows three young people engrossed in the contemplation of two terrestrial globes, reflecting the central role of learning in his vision.

Figure 1
A geography lesson. Frontispiece from Lenglet du Fresnoy's *Méthode pour apprendre la géographie*, 1716, Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k97864140/f9.item.

The success of this approach to learning explains the triumph of maps and globes, which became central actors of social life at the Court, in geography education. Multiple objects could be mobilized and circulated at the Court: atlases, standalone maps, globes, card games and

snakes and ladders boards. Their different forms of materiality induced an array of gestures that shaped and constrained learning practices. World maps allowed people to see the entire world all at once; globes had to be used with a handbook; and the reader of an atlas had to make the effort of connecting its pages (Jacob 1992). Louis XIV had been exposed to such objects since he was a child. Cardinal Mazarin had for instance ordered a geography game from the artist Stefano Della Bella, on which the four parts of the world and their most prominent countries were personified by women donning the attributes of said countries, complete with short explanatory texts (figure 2). The game came with a world map that allowed the King to locate these countries on the global scale, which required going back and forth between the country cards and the map. Subsequently, Louis de France (1661-1711), the Grand Dauphin, was trained in geography using a custom-made collection of maps and globes, a library that mainly included books by Thévenot, and the help of a private tutor (Mormiche 2014). Likewise, upon the death of Louis XIV, the future Louis XV received a geography education under the supervision of the geographer Guillaume Delisle (Mormiche 2011).

Figure 2
The Four parts of the World, in Della Bella's *Jeu de la geographie*, 1644. Bibliothèque nationale de France. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105222579.

Coronelli's globes can be seen as precursors of this educational reformation of the French monarchy. The Marly globes were housed in two of the castle's twelve pavilions, which were previously used as accommodations for the King's guests (figure 3). These globes were quite certainly used as tools for the geography and astronomy education of Louis XIV's heirs. In his diaries, Dangeau mentions several visits by the Petit Dauphin, Louis de France, Duke of Bourgogne, at the celestial globe pavilion, where he enjoyed learning about astronomy with the help of scholars from the Royal Academy of the Sciences (Dangeau 1857b, 11: 100). It is very likely that similar visits were made to the terrestrial globe pavilion, since the teaching of geography was considered central to the training of a prince that was slated to succeed a King at war. The materiality of these titanic spheres obviously limited their use: their surfaces were so vast that technical implements were needed to look at them, such as scopes, and their contents had to be transcribed by hand (Bentz 2012; Jacob 1992; Vailly 2020). Still, their gigantic size allowed Coronelli to include a considerable number of texts and images, which made it possible to use them for teaching a variety of disciplines: an ethnography-tinged human geography; a natural geography of rivers, mountains, plants and animals; a historical geography of conquests and battles; and a few fundamentals of navigation (Vailly 2020). The globe also came

with multiple other elements that allowed for deeper geographical work: instruments, wall maps and loose-leaf maps—a genuine geographer's library (Bentz 2012). At a time when France's colonial ambitions were growing, knowledge of the geopolitics of the modern world appeared crucial, and Coronelli's terrestrial globe was an effective way to gain it.

Figure 3
The globes at Marly, in Robert de Cotte's *Plan du pavillon du globe terrestre,* 1704, Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France.
https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55005614w/f1.item.

The hypothesis positing that the pavilions served as places of training for Crown heirs is also supported by a remarkable fact. Beginning in November 1712, Dangeau reports on the King's sudden disinterest in his globes, until plans to remove them, which would only be implemented two years later, were announced (Dangeau 1858, 14: 267). This disinterest coincided with the successive deaths of most of his direct heirs, including the Petit Dauphin; as if, without any children left to educate, the globes could no longer be of use to the Court.

Maps and Globes as Court Diplomats

The Court of France, especially in Louis XIV's era, was primarily a space where the King exercised his domination, over members of the Court but also over visitors to Versailles and Marly. In this process, maps were objects of social distinction at the intersection of arts and knowledge that signaled the sovereign's wealth and political and scholarly power. In this way, maps and globes at the Court became ambassadors of royal propaganda. This use is particularly interesting in that it allows us to confront the object's script and the environments in which it was exhibited, shedding light on its symbolic and usage values.

The Political Making of Maps

Maps and globes play a role in royal diplomacy especially at two high points in their social life. The first is, of course, their conception and publication. When the cartographer is working on an object, he considers his patron and the place where the object in question will be exhibited. Cartographic objects can be conceived as heralds of royal power, displaying certain facts or elements of knowledge and concealing others (Harley 1988). For instance, when Vincenzo Coronelli worked on his large globes for Louis XIV, he made a number of material and theoretical choices that would impact the social lives of these globes and make them diplomats *by nature*, destined to spend their social lives in close proximity to royal power, at the Court of France.

This was especially the case when he worked on the terrestrial globe, which was meant both to represent Louis XIV's temporal power but also to suggest opportunities of conquest to the King.

To symbolize this grand project, Coronelli represented an allegory of the four parts of the world near the Southern Pole on the globe, where Europe was depicted in regalia, dominating the other continents. This first allegory echoes a second, complementary one: an allegory of the Arts and Sciences personified by their muses, placed under the protection of a bust of Louis XIV crowned with a laurel wreath by a group of *putti* (figures 4 and 5). These muses include Geography, Astronomy and Navigation, working together to devise new ways of exploring and representing the world—a clear reference to the interdependence of the three sciences, which complement and improve one another. By inserting such an allegory, Vincenzo Coronelli emphasized the King's key role in championing the sciences, even though that role may have been largely overstated (Dew 2015). Coronelli's symbolic discourse on the science-power connection comes across clearly: the light of the Sun King's wisdom is what made the map possible. The terrestrial globe itself is the sum of this wisdom, being the material result of advances in navigation, astronomy, geography, mathematics, and history.

Figure 4
Detail from Coronelli's great terrestrial globe, four parts of the world, "de Marly," 1683, Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Figure 5
Detail from Coronelli's great terrestrial globe, the arts and sciences, "de Marly," 1683, Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

In addition to this allegory, other features represented on the surface of the terrestrial globe even more directly reflect the connection between science and power. Visual choices and indications informing the public on European colonization efforts are for instance largely informed by Coronelli's goal, which was to please the King. The enemies of the French crown

are thus depicted as bloodthirsty colonists that burn and rampage indiscriminately, whereas Louis XIV's forces bring peace and prosperity (Vailly 2020). Some of the scientific options picked by Coronelli have similar reasons, such as the choice of a prime meridian for the globe, running across El Hierro. Here the Venetian cartographer followed a 1634 ordinance by Louis XIII, and in doing so, adopted a French vision of the geographic coordinate system (Coronelli 1693, 211).

When Coronelli was working on this terrestrial globe, he knew that it would be gifted to the King, and that it should accordingly suit the Court. The cartographer believed that the globe was going to be exhibited at the Court of Versailles, as he hastily assumed in his 1684 *Epitome Cosmografica*. Coronelli even went so far as to insert an engraving representing the King's sphere as he imagined it to be exhibited in Versailles into the printed versions of the large globes he began circulating in 1689 (figure 6). On this engraving, the gestures of the human actors who gravitate around the globe are interesting to observe: a character that can be assumed to be Louis XIV is showing an ecclesiastic, possibly Cardinal d'Estrées, his globe on display. Others are holding instruments allowing them to point and measure. Coronelli clearly expected that the globe would be used for demonstrations, spectacles, revealed to the Court by the King and his scholars as part of a scientific show-and-tell (Saule and Arminjon 2010; Lamy 2017). This is also the role described in the text of the dedication that Cardinal d'Estrées had Coronelli inscribe on the terrestrial globe (figure 6). Thus, already at the development stage, the terrestrial globe was conceived both by its patron and its creator as a tool fulfilling an equally scientific and political role, which was to support the Sun King's discourse on the legitimacy of his territorial claims, at a time when his colonial efforts were ramping up (Pritchard 2004).

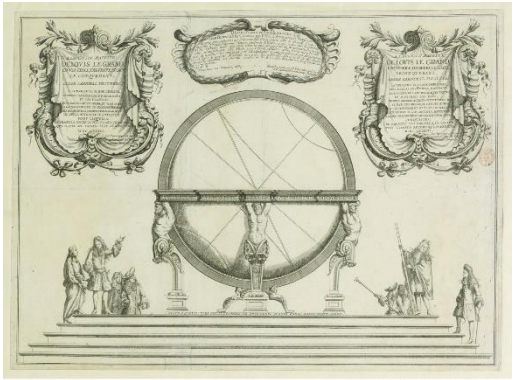

Figure 6
Coronelli's plan for his terrestrial globe, in Coronelli's terrestrial globe from 1689, Venice. Bibliothèque nationale de France. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55000009q/f1.item

While Coronelli's large terrestrial globe cannot be ignored by anyone looking at the French case, it should not make us overlook the numerous occurrences of other, more modest maps and globes that played a similar role of ambassadors throughout their conception and circulation process. The *Mercure Galant* again gives us a good indication of this phenomenon. The society gazette indeed notoriously played a social and political role in the circulation of news of the world at the Court of France: its wide circulation helped in the dissemination of royal propaganda, to such an extent that it was even mocked in the Netherlands by critics of French international politics (Brétéché 2015). Its accounts of the royal mil-

itary campaigns are particularly remarkable in this respect: the texts, narrated by an army man to a woman of the Court, came with maps meant to clarify their contents. Take the case of the campaigns of Marschal Jean II d'Estrées, the brother of Cardinal César d'Estrées, who led a royal fleet to conquer the Island of Gorée, and then Tabago in November 1677. The story was the subject of a report in the March 1678 issue of the *Mercure Galant*, complete with two maps that made it easier to grasp for readers (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1678, 138-67). They were engraved with little in the way of detail, and therefore easy to reproduce, which made it possible to make the news of Jean II d'Estrées's resounding victories circulate faster. But these maps also provided the readers with a straightforward narrative of a battle in which every French move was the result of a strategic mastermind who made no mistakes. This can be seen on figures 7 and 8, where the only military actions represented are crucial French actions. Counterattacks and acts of Dutch resistance were erased from the maps, and the description of a ship marked "O" on the Tabago map (figure 8) served to strengthen this narrative of weak and coward Netherlandish leaders and warriors by implying that their only act of war consisted in fleeing. The *Mercure Galant* thus served as one of the key actors of royal propaganda during the paper wars that raged across Europe, and likewise an important part of the social lives of maps whithin the Court of France, taking part in these paper wars in their own ways.

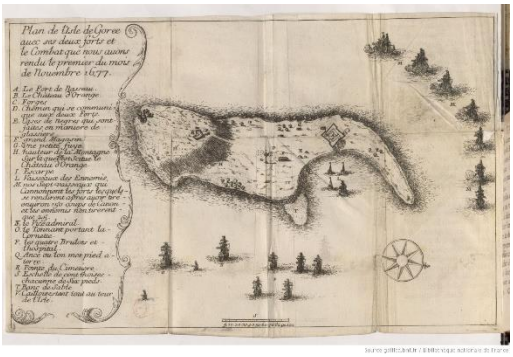

Figure 7
The battle for Gorée, in Donneau de Vizé's *Mercure Galant*, March 1678. Bibliothèque nationale de France. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4227089r/f190.item.

Figure 8
The battle for Tabago, in Donneau de Vizé's *Mercure Galant*, March 1678. Bibliothèque nationale de France. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4227089r/f203.item.

It is of little surprise that these two battles were mentioned on the surface of Coronelli's great terrestrial globe, as a testimony of the long-lasting lives of these *Mercure Galant* maps in the Court's geographical cultures. Indeed, as Coronelli was at work on the Marly globes in Paris, he gathered lots of material from the King's library, spoke with courtiers and

exchanged maps and letters with other noblemen of the Kingdom. Coronelli's cartouche describing the battle is surprisingly close to Donneau De Vizé's *Mercure Galant*: One can easily imagine that he came across these *Mercure Galant* maps, or that he at least heard about the battles from his patron Cardinal d'Estrée, the Marshal's brother. The globe appears here as a "centre of calculation" (Latour 1987, 215), gathering various data on the known world and redistributing it among the courtiers, playing the role of an ambassador of plaster and paint for Louis XIV.

The Marly Pavilion or the Centrality of Diplomacy

The second high point of the social lives of maps and globes at the Court of France is their exhibition and use. The intentions of the cartographer or of the editor of the *Mercure Galant* are indeed not enough in of themselves to turn cartographic objects into central actors of royal diplomacy. These maps needed to circulate, to be used, commented on, and displayed to be actors of Louis XIV's policy. This exhibition stage accounts for much of the social lives of maps.

Where the Court is concerned, the example of Coronelli's globes also yields insights into the different junctures of the social lives of maps. After a long preparatory phase, due partly to the technical challenge inherent in exhibiting two globes with a diameter of four meters each, the globes were finally displayed at the palace of Marly in 1704. This was a very deliberate choice: since its completion in late 1683, Marly had gradually become the nerve center of Louis XIV's personal and absolute power (Ringot and Sarmant 2012). Originally a spot for recreation, Marly became the King's main command base, and a small, strategic Court space. Access to Marly was conditional on the King's invitation and was a highly sought-after favor. Thus, opting to display the globes in Marly, by turning two residential pavilions into exhibit halls, sent a strong political signal: the Sun King contemplated and ruled the world from the confines of his palace, and controlled access to this cosmographic knowledge.

The exhibition stage was especially crucial in that it put Coronelli's cosmographic globes at the center of an equally scholarly and political scientific show designed to allow Louis XIV to project his power in front of a selected few members of the Court, granting them with the honor of accessing strategic knowledge on the known world (Bensaude-Vincent and Blondel 2008; Thébaud-Sorger 2015). This apparent paradox of a limited exhibition of royal power sheds light on the value of geographical knowledge in general, and of Coronelli's globes in particular, at the Court. As objects of prestige, they had to be displayed; but as sources of critical knowledge, they also had to be hidden from undesired visitors. Marly was therefore the obvious choice for the King to reconcile the two imperatives.

Everything was arranged so that the pavilion that hosted the globe would become one of the key places of the Court. It was extensively renovated; its structure and decor were refashioned in anticipation of the globe's arrival, and it became a genuine "cabinet of geography" (Bentz 2012, 239). The globe was placed at the center of the pavilion, like a geographic

library around which everything else revolved. The pavilion guard François Le Large himself emphasized the lavishness of this set-up, notifying Coronelli in a 1710 letter that "the entire setting for the globe and the decoration of the room are very rich and in very good taste, and perfectly match the globe's magnificence" (reproduction in Hofmann and Richard 2012, 113-115). A few years later, Coronelli himself had insisted on the remarkable material qualities of his production and engineering, most particularly the Louis XIV globes, which could be "moved with just one finger," in his book *Epitome Cosmografica*. The venue's lavishness was therefore meant to reflect the objects, and to make a show of scientific knowledge for the King's purposes. The globe was the focal point in the room, a spectacular mechanism that allowed the "King machinist" to command the attention and admiration of members of the Court through its technical and aesthetic prowess (Apostolidès 1981, 148). Perched atop a flight of marble stairs, the globe towered over the room on its massive base (figure 3). Here, François Le Large's words also give us a sense of the corporeal, almost humanized dimension of an object becoming an actor. In the detailed report, he wrote to Coronelli on the inscriptions and illustrations featured on the surface of the terrestrial globe. The guard wrote that without this painstaking work, "the globe would be, strictly speaking, a body without a soul" (reproduction in Hofmann and Richard 2012, 113-115). Its exhibition made the globe a genuine character of Court life.

These efforts to feature the terrestrial globe in a scientific show at the service of royal diplomacy were fruitful at least until 1712, as two sources suggest. The first source is the manuscripts by the guard François Le Large. Indeed, when the globes were installed in Marly, Louis XIV faced an unforeseen issue: due to the size of the globes, the inscriptions covering their surface could not be read. He therefore tasked François Le Large with transcribing all inscriptions on the terrestrial globe so that he could read them and present the object to his guests. Le Large's work on the inscriptions was likely completed around 1710, and the King appeared to be satisfied with it, as Le Large wrote Coronelli: "every time the King comes to the Globe, the first thing he asks for is this book, […] which provides fodder for conversation during the time he stays to watch the globe" (reproduction in Hofmann and Richard 2012, 113-115). This is one of the first mentions of the King's frequent visits to the terrestrial globe, made alone or with company, in which case he was able to demonstrate the extent of his knowledge to his guests.

However, Le Large, who came from a modest family, did not participate in all Court activities, and as such was unable to give us more detail on the social lives of the globes. The Marquis de Dangeau's diaries are more informative. In his many notes on his life in Marly with the King, it transpires that the globe pavilions were hotspots of Court life, and that they were sources of aesthetic pleasure and political conversation. The terrestrial globe pavilion especially appears to have become a major center of command when important news, particularly of a military nature, was announced. On August 8th, 1704, as the War of the Spanish Succession raged, the King shared with his Court news of the unsuccessful attempts by prince of the blood Louis-Alexandre de Bourbon, Count of Toulouse, to stop the English fleet of George Rooke in the

Mediterranean. The King read the Count of Toulouse's letter at the foot of the terrestrial globe; Dangeau reports that a strategic discussion on follow-up efforts to the attempt ensued (Dangeau 1857a, 10: 90). In these discussions the globe helped in picturing an overview of the situation. The pavilion was also a place to which the King and members of his inner circle brought ambassadors and foreign kings. A few years after the failure of the Count of Toulouse, on August 12th, Louis XIV hosted the King and Queen of England in the globe pavilions (Dangeau 1857a, 10: 94). The King mobilized the spectacle of science to serve his interests and assert his military power in the face of those who his armies would fight the next day at the Battle of Hochstadt. Visits to the pavilions continued at least until 1712, according to Dangeau's writings. The terrestrial globe was one of the actors of Louis XIV's foreign policy: by making the pavilion a central venue for diplomatic visits, the King brought Vincenzo Coronelli's work to the era's paper wars, in which it served as a witness to the expansion of his empire.

From the Court to the Kingdom

The model of the Court was not confined to the palace walls; it influenced and determined other spaces of geographic practice in the Kingdom of France. In this section we shift to the national level, examining spaces that were connected to the Court of France through the cartographic output of Vincenzo Coronelli. In this third context, cartographic objects were plunged in a different *living milieu*, carrying uses and symbolisms shaped at the Court with them (Biagioli 1993; 1995; 2006; Moran 1991). They were actors of the dissemination of the Court model of geographic practice in the Kingdom of France.

Coronelli's Argonauts: An International Trend

The private collections of the networks of well-read administrators and members of the Court in the late years of Louis XIV's reign were indeed other spaces in which maps and globes lived intense social lives. To highlight the ability of cartographic objects to convey models from the Court to the rest of the Kingdom, this part adopts a micro-historical lens to the dissemination of the so-called 110cm globes produced by Coronelli between Paris and Venice after the foundation of his geographical society, the *Accademia degli Argonauti*, in 1684 (Milanesi 2016). Conceived as a subscription network, the Academy allowed Coronelli to market cosmographic globes derived from those he had made for Louis XIV in Paris (Hofmann and Richard 2012). Coronelli's choice was an original one: in the seventeenth century, the subscription model was generally only used for printed books, not maps (Pedley 2005). Also, the large globes, which were completed in 1683, had not yet been shown to the public, even though Coronelli was likely counting on an exhibition in Versailles in the spring. He could, however, draw on the reputation he had acquired during his years in Paris, on a network of friendly scholars, and on the publicity of his work in society publications to ensure that his subscription would be a success, and a driving force of the social lives of Coronelli's globes in the late years of Louis XIV's reign.

These miniature globes served as a fleet of ambassadors of royal policy, as they reused most of the propaganda material Coronelli had carefully selected to please

Louis XIV. Coronelli made sure to mention that these 110cm globes were replicas of the King's globes, which suggested that the same sources and methods would be used in the production process. The worldviews these globes conveyed were in fact the same, although their actual contents differed—what mattered was Coronelli's discourse on the nature of these objects (Török 2012; Vailly 2020). This subscription can effectively be seen as the dissemination of a scientific trend initiated by the Court of France, giving Coronelli's globes a new role to play: spreading royal propaganda in private collections. Owning a pair of Coronelli's globes became a marker of social distinction and of belonging to Court society, witnessing the good taste and education of their owners, members of a community of intellectuals that had formed around the King: the *Accademia degli Argonauti*.

In France, the *Accademia degli Argonauti* had 76 members in 1687, in institutions such as the Sainte-Geneviève library, including both ecclesiastics and secular scholars (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1687b, 17–40). There was a wide array of collectors with different social backgrounds, offering as many possible social lives to Coronelli's globes, extending from the Court of France to the remainder of the Kingdom's administrative elites. Among the secular elites, the phenomenon was particularly noticeable. Dukes and peers of France, such as the Duke of Noailles or the Duke d'Estrées, stood at the top of the social hierarchy of the list of subscribers. The entire administrative structure of the Kingdom was then featured, from advisors working in Paris to members of regional parliaments. A few scholars, including Jean-Dominique Cassini, are also on the list, as well as a bookseller from Aix-en-Provence. This list of subscribers is all the more interesting in that it was reproduced by the *Mercure Galant*, which itself also contributed to this trend by spreading the news. The *Mercure*'s announcement came with a subscription form complete with instructions: paying 16 Louis d'or in eight monthly installments to the Treasurer of Royal Savings (1640-1720), who had developed a friendship with Coronelli when the cartographer worked in Paris (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1687b, 41–45).

Like the globes themselves, this list of Argonauts was effectively a tool of social distinction. Two points of detail in the *Mercure Galant*'s 1687 transcript attest to this. First, some subscribers are mentioned as having paid the entirety of the subscription in a single installment, which makes them stand out from the others in that they were able to pay a high price all at once (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1687b, 30). Secondly, after a long explanation of the subscription process, the editor of the *Mercure Galant* included an addendum to the list of Paris associates, noting that "the Society is growing day by day" (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1687b, 46). The goal here was to showcase the success of Coronelli's undertaking. The monk himself participated in this *mise en scène* by featuring the list in many of the printed books he produced. At a time when the giant spheres still lay dormant in crates at the hôtel particulier of Cardinal d'Estrées, news of their completion had already largely circulated in circles of geography enthusiasts who could now get closer to Louis XIV by imitating his role of champion of the arts and sciences through the subscription.

Lastly, Coronelli's globes also played the role of international ambassadors of

Louis XIV, transporting the Franco-centric model of the world far beyond the Kingdom's borders. The list indeed showed that the globes were sold all over Italy, the cartographer's country of origin, and even in more faraway places. Two pairs of globes were put aside for the Reverend Father Antoine Verjus (1632-1706), a Jesuit, to be taken to China and Siam, which reflected the Society of Jesus's efforts to serve as an actor in the global diplomacy of science and knowledge (Romano 2016). The *Mercure Galant* had actually already reported on the dispatch of geographic instruments, maps, and globes by the 1685 French embassy to Siam, underlining the role of maps and globes in Louis XIV's international diplomacy (Donneau de Vizé et al. 1687a, 192). A later version of the list, published by Coronelli in 1688 in *Impresa dell'Accademia degli Argonauti*, a catalog of the members and studies of his academy, shows that the Coronelli model was also exported to England, Germany, Poland and even Constantinople.

Provincial Social Lives

The Court model was not solely disseminated among the Kingdom's most prominent princes and foreign kings, as the list of the Argonauts shows. Thanks to the list, I was able to retrace one of the richest social lives of a pair of 110cm globes, owned by the intendant of the King's galleys Michel Bégon in Rochefort. The correspondence between Bégon and his friend Villermont, another subscriber of Coronelli's academy, allows us to retrace a highly detailed history of the globes on the move. This history directly connects the Court of France with spaces often considered as peripheral, but which are in fact just as central to this analysis of the social lives of maps.

Bégon and Villermont were geography enthusiasts and exchanged maps along with letters. They also sent each other packages that contained a variety of curiosities from outside of Europe for their respective private collections. Their passion for geography was thus the primary impetus for taking part in the subscription. Villermont, who lived in Paris, acted as an intermediary for Bégon, including taking care of the monthly installments they owed Coronelli for the engraving of the globes. This was a significant expense even for an officer of the Crown like Bégon, who complained to Villermont: "the setting of Father Coronelli's globes [is] exceedingly costly," but "it is a chalice we need to drink, and no expense should be spared to acquire the most perfect ones possible" (Bégon 1925, 310). This suggests that scholarly interest was not their only reason for subscribing. For Bégon, exhibiting a pair of Coronelli's globes in his cabinet of curiosities meant proving that he belonged to the social and cultural elites of the Kingdom of France. Ultimately, it meant that Bégon's name appeared among the "Associates of Paris" among those of princes of the blood, marshals, and cardinals.

This social role played by the globes in the construction of an image is not only a theoretical and symbolic one in the case of Michel Bégon. The intendant valued his globes enormously, especially the terrestrial globe, and they were central features of his cabinet of curiosities. A letter to Villermont, dated July 7th, 1701, gives us a glimpse into the social lives of Coronelli's globes when they were exhibited at Bégon's place (Bégon 1930, 73). In the letter, Bégon mentions a discussion he had with an explorer who was looking to organize a new expedition to the New World, Mathieu Sagean. The latter, who

had recounted a previous expedition to America in his *Relation des Avantures de Mathieu Sagean*, sought favors from Bégon so that he would be able to return to America. The globe played a key role in Bégon's decision, he tells Villermont he "verified the account of this man by the name of Mathurin Sagean, dictated in Brest to the secretary of Mr. Desclouseaux, in the presence of Mr. du Magnou, with before our eyes the globe of Father Coronelli, on which we submitted to him, during four or five sessions, all possible objections," after which he decided to grant Sagean the favors he had asked for (Bégon 1930, 112). The explorer, however, turned out to be a liar, and his deception was revealed in August 1702, after Bégon had allowed him to pass through North America in January (Bégon 1930, 115–28). Thanks to the globe, the intendant had found a few inconsistencies in Sagean's account, but he had chosen to brush them aside. Sagean had indeed corrected these inconsistencies while talking with Bégon and accused the transcriber of his *Relation* of having introduced mistakes into the text. The globe could have helped Bégon in detecting the lie, but Sagean was a skillful impostor, able to play around Bégon's scientific arguments and integrate these arguments in his discourse, as the revealer of another man's failure.

What Michel Bégon's case also shows is that chance events may occur in the social life of a globe or a map and change its uses and meanings. As he was having the globes moved to a different room, the workers carrying the globe scratched it and part of its surface became illegible (Bégon 1930, 187). Bégon thus had to fix the globe—otherwise it would be useless. Yet, since he did not live in Paris, he again had to rely on Villermont to serve as an intermediary. The process was slow and complex, spanning the months of February to May 1703. Bégon first had to secure copies of the damaged plates, and then find workers with skills in the restoration of cartographic objects, which was difficult outside of Paris. He wrote to Villermont that "being reduced to live in a province, in many respects one has to content himself with the workers that one finds there" (Bégon 1930, 195). This episode shows the impact of the *living milieus* of cartographic objects on their social lives: in some cases, they constituted a threat to their very integrity, and accordingly to their roles as actors of history.

Conclusion

The social lives of Coronelli's globes gradually changed until the late years of Louis XIV's reign. Their removal from the pavilions of Marly in 1714, the death of the King in 1715 and that of a disgraced Coronelli in 1718 dampened this success, and this Court fashion eventually ended. One of the landmarks of this decline was the first edition of Lenglet du Fresnoy's 1716 *Méthode pour étudier la géographie*, in which he recommended the globes by Guillaume Delisle, which are "far more accurate than those by Father Coronelli, which caused such a sensation around the world" (3: 439). In the 1736 edition of his *Méthode,* Lenglet even relegated Coronelli's globes, along with most of his maps, to the status of mere curiosities, whose "beauty and agreeableness" remained, but were now considered to be of no scientific value (Lenglet Du Fresnoy 1736, 1: CXLV). The globes entered new social lives. The Marly pieces were lugged from warehouse to warehouse after the death of Cardinal d'Estrées in 1714. Too old to be accurate and too expensive to be updated, they were

slowly forgotten until their rediscovery in 1980 and their final exhibition in Paris in 2005 (Hofmann and Richard 2012). They are now considered as heritage objects, the remnants of an outdated worldview and of a sociopolitical system whose days are now over. The smaller globes met the same fate. As their owners' cabinets were slowly dismantled, and the globes sold to public collections, they ceased to be objects of social distinction and became heritage.

The conclusion to the case of Coronelli sheds light on the perpetually changing, plural, instable quality dimension of the social lives of cartographic objects, here mobilized by different historical actors to fulfil different purposes in geographically remote but socially connected *living milieus*, informed by trends in politics and knowledge as well as chance occurrences. The case of Marly's large cosmographic globes is a paradigmatic one: built by Coronelli to celebrate Louis XIV, they disappeared upon his death and were eventually rediscovered in the 1980s and then restored and exhibited in 2005 at the French National Library (BNF), where they now live new lives as heritage artefacts and national treasures.

As we put the concept of the social life of objects to the test, it is my view that this example shows that the term needs to be used in the plural. Here, by closely examining practices and offering a historical anthropology of knowledge, I hope to have shed light not only on the uses of these objects, but also on how they informed the behaviors of the actors who possessed or used them. In other words, exploring the social lives of objects is a way to avoid the pitfall of describing binary relationships between actors and unchanging objects, and to consider objects as mutable and liable to evolve.

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