



NISE Conference 2023: Nationalism and World Fairs

Starting with the London Great Exhibition of 1851, World Fairs have been an important platform to showcase countries and their economic assets in an increasingly commerce-driven international world order. As recent studies have demonstrated, the spectacular display culture of world fairs has served as a platform for national self-proclamations for empires, including their peripheral provinces and overseas colonies, existing nation-states, and emerging new, post-colonial countries. Its pavilions mirror changing tastes, moving between historicist grandeur, fairground arcade, vernacular traditionalism, technological futurism.

The interaction between national self-proclamation, the commercialization of culture and an emerging entrepreneurial world order: this will be the main focus of the conference to be held on **31 May – 1 June 2023**, under the auspice of NISE, in Vienna.

Venue

The conference will take place at the [Vienna University of Economics and Business](#), whose landmark modern campus is located adjacent to the famed Prater fairground, site of the 1873 Vienna World Fair.

Keynote Speakers

Eric Storm (Leiden University) and **Marta Filipová** (Masaryk University Brno) will honor us with their motivating and engaging presentations, challenging and inspiring the audience's thinking and knowledge on the topic of "Nationalism and World Fairs".

Keynote 1	E. Storm	Leiden University
The battle between culture and civilization. Competing perspectives at World Fairs, 1867-1939		
Keynote 2	M. Filipová	Masaryk University Brno
Magnificent failure' or profitable enterprise? Alternatives to interwar national pavilions		

Speakers

Speaker 1	K. Swerts	NISE / Antwerp University
(Con)touring the nation. Different Flemish perspectives on the Paris World Fair of 1937 and the German exhibition "Schaffendes Volk"		
Speaker 2	C. Lamont	University of Glasgow
Scotland, Cityscaping, and Cultural Memory		
Speaker 3	J. Galjer	University of Zagreb
Perception and reception of national identity in the mirror of World's Fair between 1920s and 1960s: The case study of Yugoslavia		
Speaker 4	E.A. Swift	University of Essex
Russia's Construction of National Identity at World Fairs, 1992-2022		
Speaker 5	B. Gabriels	University of Antwerp
"Balance sheet for a more human world". Constructing Expo 58, film and Belgium		
Speaker 6	S. Geven	University of Antwerp
Competition and cooperation: local and national stakeholders and the promotion of Belgium as a tourist destination at the World's Fairs		
Speaker 7	E. Degruyter	Ghent University
"Flanders Conquered the World's Fair." Media discourses and nation building during Expo'58 in Brussels July 6, 1958.		
Speaker 8	S.B. Schuster	Universidad del Rosario - Colombia
Between Science and Spectacle: Latin American Pavilions at the World Fairs (1867-1939)		
Speaker 9	S. Payaslian	Boston University
A Global Forum for Restorative Justice: Armenian Lobbying at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, 1915		
Speaker 10	F. Gross	Hannover University
From Vienna to Pennsylvania, and From London Around the World: World's Fairs and Transatlantic Serial Culture		

Programme

"Nationalism and World Fairs" Conference

31st May		1st June	
10.00	Conference opening by: Mrs. Oppitz, Vice Rector for Infrastructure and Digitalization	9.30	Opening of day 2 by J. Koll
10.05	Mr. Van de Borne -General Representative of Flanders in Vienna – Embassy of Belgium	Moderator 5 - J. Koll	
10.10	Conference presentation by J. Leerssen	9.45	Keynote speaker 2 - M. Filipová
Moderator 1 - J. Duyster i Borredà		10.45	Q&A
10.15	Keynote speaker 1 - E. Storm	11.00	Coffee Break
11.15	Q&A	Moderator 6 – J. Leerssen	
11.30	Coffee Break	11.30 - 12.00	B. Schuster
Moderator 2 - D. Staliunas		12.10 - 12.40	S. Payaslian
12.00 - 12.30	K. Swerts	12.50 - 13.20	F. Gross
12.40 - 13.10	C. Lamont	13.30	Closing remarks by J. Leerssen
13.15 - 14.00	Lunch break		
Moderator 3 - A. V. Wendland			
14.10 - 14.40	J. Galjer		
14.50- 15.20	E.A. Swift		
15.30 - 15.50	Coffee Break		
Moderator 4 – F. Zantedeschi			
16.00 - 16.30	B. Gabriels		
16.40 - 17.20	S. Geven		
17.30 - 18.00	E. Degruyter		
18.10 - 18.20	Closure day 1 by J. Leerssen		
19.30	Reception and Official dinner		

Abstracts

Keynote 1.

The battle between culture and civilization. Competing perspectives at World Fairs, 1867-1939

Eric Storm. Institute for History, Leiden University.

With the introduction of national pavilions at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1867, world fairs implicitly adopted the nation-state perspective: The world, as presented at the fair, now consisted of equal nations, each with their unique heritage and culture. However, from the start world fairs were also framed as a peaceful contest: The participating countries vied with each other about their contribution to human civilization. Impressive machines, scientific inventions and fine arts gave proof of the level of civilization achieved by each individual country, while colonial sections and historical overviews – such as Charles Garnier's History of Human Habitation of 1889 – charted how humankind had progressed from 'primitivism' to 'civilization'. Unfortunately, the construction of national identities and the discourse on civilizational hierarchies have been studied in separate research traditions. In my paper, I aim to show how both phenomena interacted at the global platform of the world fairs. The egalitarianism of the nation-state based international order and the hierarchical suppositions related to imperial perspectives did not exclude each other. In order to stand out many countries used the most extraordinary and attractive aspects of their indigenous heritage, while at the same time worrying about being portrayed as backward. Colonial pavilions, on the other hand, while supposedly underlining the need for a 'civilizing mission', also focused on the unique aspects of the territory's culture, thus implicitly defining the identity of future nations.

*Eric Storm is senior lecturer General History at Leiden University. His research focuses on the construction of regional and national identities and he has a strong interest in cultural history, tourism and world fairs. Among his books are *The Culture of Regionalism: Art, Architecture and International Exhibitions in France, Germany and Spain, 1890-1939* (2010). He also co-edited *Regionalism and Modern Europe: Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day* (with Xosé Núñez Seixas; 2019); *Writing the History of Nationalism* (with Stefan Berger; 2019) and *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities: International Exhibitions as Cultural Platforms, 1851-1958* (with Joep Leerssen 2022). Currently he is finishing a monograph, entitled *Nationalizing the People: A World History of Nationalism*, to be published by Princeton University Press.*

Keynote 2.

‘Magnificent failure’ or profitable enterprise? Alternatives to interwar national pavilions

Marta Filipová. Masaryk University Brno.

Not everyone shared the image of success promoted by national pavilions at world’s fairs. The Czechoslovak participation in the interwar period was always a result of extensive negotiations between different interest groups of the various ministries, industrial representatives or designers. The Czechoslovak pavilion at the 1937 exposition in Paris, for example, was highly praised and awarded multiple prizes, yet in Czechoslovakia it received harsh criticism.

The Czech industrialist and owner of the global shoe manufactory, Jan Antonín Baťa, called it a ‘magnificent failure’ as the pavilion did not give proper justice to business and fell for cheap, artistic avant-gardisms. Frustrated by the failures of the state in promoting the nation and its companies, Baťa offered a solution for a better Czechoslovak pavilion for New York’s World of Tomorrow in 1939. A combination of commerce and entertainment, the pavilion reflected the industrialist’s understanding of the relation between a successful company, the state and the world’s fair.

Baťa ran much more than shoe production, he built a town where the company’s first factory was founded and he also owned a vision of the future of his workers and the entire state. As a company, Baťa also put up their own pavilions at world’s fairs in Brussels and Paris presented not only their products, but also a happy community of workers whose work life, past time, education and health were well looked after. By the late 1930s, Baťa built factories, towns and culture of living, not dissimilar to those of Ford, Pullmann and similar giants. They also shared an interest in using the world’s fair as a useful tool for displaying and promoting the company worldview.

This paper asks what happens when a company adopts the role of the state in presenting a national identity. While Baťa’s efforts to take over the vision of the ideal national pavilion can be explained by his entrepreneurialism, they can also be seen as part and parcel of more general emphasis on individualism, technocratic idealism and even increasingly radicalised nationalism of the 1930s.

*Marta Filipová is Research Fellow at the Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, where she works on an ERC funded project *Continuity / Rupture: Art and Architecture in Central Europe, 1918-1939*. She holds a PhD from the University of Glasgow (2009) and has been working on the questions of national art and design and the politics of display. She has published the monograph [Modernity, History and Politics in Czech Art](#) (Routledge, 2020) and edited the volume *Cultures of International Exhibitions 1840-1940. Great Exhibitions in the Margins* (Ashgate, 2015). She has authored a number of articles in peer-reviewed journals, most recently [“The Theatre of Exhibitions: Czechoslovakia at the International Exhibition in Paris, 1937,”](#) *The Journal of Design History* (2022) and [“‘Highly Civilized, yet Very Simple’: Images of the Czechoslovak State and Nation at Interwar World’s Fairs,”](#) *Nationalities Papers* (2021). She is a trustee of the Design History Society and a member of the editorial board of the journal *Art East/Central*.*

(Con)touring the nation. Different Flemish perspectives on the Paris World Fair of 1937 and the German exhibition "Schaffendes Volk"

Kas Swerts. NISE / University of Antwerp.

When peace returned in Belgium in 1918, the tourist association 'Touring Club de Belgique' (TCB) was eager to restart its activities. Relying on the extensive membership assembled since its foundation in 1895, the Club turned into an influential vehicle of national fervor: excursions, guidebooks and maps encouraged Belgians to honor their homeland by exploring its regions. The Touring Club explicitly performed as the mouthpiece of the entire, unified Belgian nation. Its aspirations, however, were audaciously challenged from 1922 onwards, when the Flemish Tourist Association (Vlaamse Toeristenbond, VTB) was founded. The VTB adopted methods and strategies of its counterpart, but not without fine-tuning them. While officially not politically involved, the ambition to teach Flemish people how to travel was an ideological one, though this ideological ambition was regularly met with opposition from the VTB's members themselves, highlighting the complexity of this Flemish tourist association during the interwar period.

This essay will further delve into these competing perspectives in the VTB by focusing on two different international exhibitions that took place in 1937 and which the VTB promoted via its different channels: on the one hand the Paris World Fair, and on the other hand the Nazi-German exhibition 'Schaffendes Volk' that took place in Dusseldorf in 1937. The different promotions and initiatives of the VTB, and the way the members themselves reacted to these endeavors, sheds a light on the competing tourist (and ideological) perspectives that dominated this Flemish tourist association during this period, and on the way world fairs and other international exhibitions played a role in the goals of this tourist association. Moreover, by highlighting the sometimes competing and contrasting perspectives in this tourist association, this essay will highlight how the VTB (similar to other tourist associations), rather than extending one distinct national identity, induced the development of myriad national identities in its organization.

Scotland, Cityscaping, and Cultural Memory

Craig Lamont. University of Glasgow.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Scotland was being fashioned according to the successes and ambitions of empire. The success of Walter Scott's novels on the continent, and the massive growth of Scottish cities – none more than Glasgow – during the expansion of heavy industry and imperial trade, created fantastical visions of Scotland. These visions were played out during International Exhibitions in both Edinburgh (1886, 1890) and Glasgow (1888, 1901). There were also large Scottish Exhibitions (Edinburgh, 1908; Glasgow, 1911), and an Empire Exhibition (Glasgow, 1938). Throughout this (roughly) fifty-year period, Scotland was exhibited to the world as a geographically and culturally compressed nation. Memories of the religious upheavals of the 16th and 17th centuries were sanitised, and the enlightenment of the 18th century was at times only duly noted. In turn, the imaginative construction – or 'cityscaping' (Fuhrer et al, 2015) – of Glasgow and Edinburgh during this period has had a further impact on the cultural memory of Scotland and its place in the United Kingdom and Europe. This paper will examine this complicated relationship by unpicking the subtleties of these exhibitions, as sites of memory/ lieux de mémoire. By drawing on recent studies on Scotland, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, it will be shown that the influence of these World Fairs has been more long lasting than we have acknowledged.

Perception and reception of national identity in the mirror of World's Fair between 1920s and 1960s: The case study of Yugoslavia

Jasna Galjer. University of Zagreb.

By taking the performative context of world fairs as a starting point, the proposed paper aims to examine how national identity of Yugoslavia, first as a kingdom during the 1920s and 1930s, later as a socialist state after WWII, was imagined, constructed and promoted in relation to the paradigms of tradition and modernity, democratization and societal modernization. In the given period of time, world exhibitions became a specific (self)representational paradigm that integrated differentiated aspects of cultural politics in an idealized „model“ of the world, mediating complex and conflicting visions and power relations on the global scene.

Arguing that the world fairs functioned as a powerful vehicle of propaganda, the paper would focus on the roles of the world fairs as sites of mediation and promotion of the modernism, as well as in mapping transfers of cultural production. Including multiple aspects of world's fairs (political, urban/architectural, anthropological, sociological, technological, commercial, popular, and representational), it would investigate the impact of the world fairs on the emergence of alternative narratives, from openness and cosmopolitanism to Cold War Modern. Special attention would be paid to the consequences of nationalist movements in Europe on the tendencies to "invent" national traditions at world fairs. While the centres of global power were using personifications of the nation at world fairs to present totalizing images of national identity, ethnically diverse and socially fragmented Yugoslavia could not. Attempting to neutralize this national hybridity, the organizers of Yugoslav participations at world fairs used the contemporary „culture of display“ to construct a narrative of coherent identity. Thus, Yugoslav pavilions at World Fairs from Barcelona 1929, Paris 1937 and New York 1939, to Brussels Expo '58 and Montreal 1967, performed not merely as containers for the national display but as places representing symbolic meaning for the nation they represented. Questions arise what role did the aesthetics and architectural language of Modernism play in mediating Yugoslav national identity in different political contexts? What strategies were applied to display distinct identifications in relation to the Central European and later global politics of non-aligned state? The argument presented here entails the dialogue between models and types as a continuity of modernist architectural language. The proposed paper would explore the key roles played by architecture of national pavilions in self-representation of the Yugoslav national identity at world fairs. The discursive space of world fair, from the concept and content of display, to the architecture of the pavilions, is analysed as a manifestation of the continuity of modernist tradition. Its transformations are examined by giving an account to the influence of state politics, due to essential changes of economic conditions, social and ideological structure. "The politics of display" (Macdonald 1998) is discussed as integral element of visual and intellectual strategies applied to form identifications in the of field inter-related transfers of ideas and ideologies in globalised sphere.

The intention is to contextualise the specific forms of these transfers discussed in relation to their historical, cultural, social and aesthetic inter-relations. Thus, I intend to contribute to the critical redefinition of the complexity of roles played by world fairs in constructing representational models of Modernism as a conceptual code of national identity.

Russia's Construction of National Identity at World Fairs, 1992-2022

Eugene Anthony Swift. University of Essex.

This paper will examine the evolution of Russia's use of world fairs to reshape its national identity and create a new national brand after the end of the Soviet Union. At Expo 92 Russia occupied the pavilion planned to house the Soviet Union, where a regular performance of the ringing of church bells signalled the return of the Orthodox Church as a key component of Russian national identity. Between 1992 and 2000, Russian world fair pavilions in Seville, Lisbon, and Hannover echoed earlier Soviet pavilions' emphasis on technological achievements, especially in the cosmos, but since Shanghai's Expo 2010 Russia has been developing an expo brand that celebrates both its historical achievements and its aspirations to be a world leader and good neighbour in working to solve global challenges such as food security. At the most recent world fair, Expo 2020 Dubai, Russia signalled its leadership of the "Russian world" with a multi-coloured double-domed pavilion that, in the words of Sergei Tchoban, its German-Russian architect, reflects the idea that Russia is part of the global community but also "an integral and huge world in itself, with a completely unique cultural charge." Russia's participation in world fairs will be placed in the context of its other activities in the realm of public diplomacy, and the paper will conclude with a brief assessment what the Russian case suggests about the limitations of national branding using the platform of the world fair.

“Balance sheet for a more human world”. Constructing Expo 58, film and Belgium

Bjorn Gabriels. University of Antwerp.

The Brussels World's Fair, held from 17 April to 19 October 1958, was the first event of its kind after the Second World War or, to formulate it in the more techno-optimistic contemporaneous discourse: the first of the atomic age. Expo 58, as it was called, can be regarded as the pinnacle of the Belgian post-war reconstruction and promoted Belgium as a modern consumer society that was fully immersed in the nuclear age, symbolized by the monumental Atomium. At the same time, the project was part of the World's Fair tradition of national self-promotion on a global scale, with a certain ambiguity in the juxtaposition of regionalism and internationalism. Belgium was adept at this: six world exhibitions were organized there between 1885 and 1914, two more followed during the interwar period, and Expo 58 was the first one to pick up the threads after the horrors – including some nuclear – of the Second World War. On this stage for cosmopolitan ideas of unity, countries from across the globe used the World's Fair as an instrument in their Cold War politics.

Film, too, played a role in this soft power spectacle. It had been present at the exhibitions since its earliest inception. In the post-war era, the moving images of film and later video gained traction in the display culture eyeing the visitor's attention. During Expo 58, a film festival was organized with international guests, renowned connoisseurs tried to determine the best film of all time, and – among other large-scale film installations in the pavilions – Walt Disney presented the 360° spectacle *The USA in Circarama*, a recreation of the emigrant journey to the American Promised Land.

Expo 58 also generated great activity among a variety of Belgian filmmakers, in fictional entertainment as well as documentaries. For some of the most productive Belgian colonial filmmakers, such as André Cauvin and Gérard De Boe, Expo 58 would mark an endpoint. Only months after the Fair in Brussels had finished, the January 1959 riot on the streets of Leopoldville (now: Kinshasa) would contribute to the Congolese independence movement. In June 1960, Congo – the country that had provided the uranium that catapulted Belgium into the atomic age – had its independence.

Like the 'primitive' Congolese village presented at Expo 58, colonial films – including the internationally successful CinemaScope documentary *Les seigneurs de la forêt*, initiated by King Leopold III but not finished in time for its intended release at Expo 58 – offered a view that largely neglected Congo's geopolitical role in Belgium's Late Colonialism. Studying a multitude of transnational, national and subnational identity discourses, this paper will try to analyze how films (especially from Belgium) reflect and shape the complex balancing act between these discourses and the Expo 58's theme “Balance sheet for a more human world”.

References

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Competition and cooperation: local and national stakeholders and the promotion of Belgium as a tourist destination at the World's Fairs

Silke Geven. University of Antwerp.

The first world's fairs appeal to the imagination and almost have a mythical status, but for most participating countries it was just a form of good marketing. It was not only an opportunity for a country to promote its newest technologies, economic enhancements, educational system, science and art, but also to sell itself as a tourist destination. From the 1980s onwards, these world's fairs were examined from various academic disciplines and attention was also given to the tourist component of these fairs. Previous research on tourism promotion at the fairs focused on the countries that participated or organized the world's fairs or the cities in which the exhibition took place. What is still lacking, however, is research on the cooperation between local and national stakeholders at the world's fairs with the goal to promote a country as a tourist destination. Belgium is an interesting case because rivalling identities between the local and national, but especially regional (Flemish and Walloon), led to different ideas about how the country should be sold to foreign and domestic tourists at those world fairs.

Belgium organized eleven universal exhibitions between 1885 and 1958, three in Antwerp (1885, 1894 and 1930), five in Brussels (1888, 1897, 1910 and 1935, 1958), two in Liège (1905 and 1930) and one in Ghent (1913). In this paper, I want to shed more light on the competition and cooperation between local and national stakeholders at those world's fairs. Who were those stakeholders at a local and national level? What image of Belgium did they sell to attract tourists? What media techniques did they use to promote that image? Through an examination of a diverse corpus of sources, such as newspaper articles, reports of the city council of the city of Antwerp and ephemeral objects from the collection 'Flying sheets' of the city of Ghent, this paper will show how local growth coalitions of different Belgian cities used the World's Fairs to promote their city to an international audience.

"Flanders Conquered the World's Fair." Media discourses and nation building during Expo'58 in Brussels July 6, 1958.

Elias Degruyter. Ghent University.

The "Flemish Day" at the first post-war World's Fair in 1958 in Brussels was a success. According to participants, Expo '58 marked a turning point in the history of the Flemish movement, which again dared to take the initiative after a period when it was scorned for its role in the collaboration during World War II. However, empirical research into its significance for the Flemish nation-building process is scarce. Did this success herald the beginning of the massification of the Flemish movement? How could a renewed Flemish consciousness be reconciled with the Belgian-patriotic and internationalist sentiments that the expo exuded?

This presentation will examine the discourses of Flemish newspapers on the "Flemish Day" at Expo '58. Through an analysis of catholic, socialist, communist, liberal and Flemish-nationalist media, the national frames of reference of different ideological pillars are studied from a historical perspective. The discourse analysis thus highlights the role and place of the 1958 World's Fair in the historical shift from a "small", dominated Flemish nation towards a successful mass movement which would successfully challenge the Belgian nation-state.

Between Science and Spectacle: Latin American Pavilions at the World Fairs (1867–1939)

Sven Schuster. Universidad del Rosario, Colombia.

Beginning in 1851, Latin American countries sought to project the image of a “modern nation” on the international stage of the world fairs, combining universal notions of progress and civilization with country-specific elements. However, despite the rhetoric of international understanding and peaceful cooperation prevalent at the fairs, these events were also pervaded by the geopolitical realities of the time. Latin America’s ambivalent position between the European colonies and the great powers became especially visible in the facades of their national pavilions, introduced at the 1867 Paris fair. Either they could obtain recognition by celebrating the “authentic” through pre-Columbian-style buildings –thereby risking marginalization for their “exoticism”– or they could emulate “European civilization”, while risking cultural invisibility, as was frequently the case with pavilions inspired by the neo-classical canon. In this presentation, I will give an overview of Latin American exhibition architecture between 1867 and 1939, when the world fairs became the most influential mass- gathering events. Besides the official perspective, as reflected in catalogues and government reports, I will focus on the agency of certain individuals, material aspects, as well as processes of negotiation and knowledge transfer. Thus, even pavilions designed and built by foreigners were never mere imitations of European moulds, but more likely the product of complex negotiations within a “space of global knowledge”; i.e., the globalized cultural system of the world fairs with its numerous international congresses and various kinds of transnational encounters. Therefore, as I will demonstrate in this presentation, Latin America’s national pavilions were not necessarily a “great exposition phantasy”, as can be read in a large part of the literature on Latin America at the world fairs, but in many cases the result of decidedly scientific endeavours.

“A Global Forum for Restorative Justice: Armenian Lobbying at the Panama–Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, 1915”

Simon Payaslian. Boston University.

This paper situates the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco (Feb. 20-Dec. 4, 1915) as a global site for transnational ethnic activism and lobbying the international community. Armenian lobbying at the 1915 San Francisco fair offers an excellent example of the pursuit of restorative justice by a transnational ethnic community at the national and international levels. Further, underscoring the geopolitical dimension of the Armenian case, this study also develops a geopolitical conceptualization of restorative justice. Businesses and governments from over forty countries (including the Ottoman Empire) participated at the world fair. One pamphlet referred to the Exposition as a “world university,” as the fair aimed to raise the human spirit and world civilizations beyond and above national frontiers. While the San Francisco fair was taking place, World War I had already caused much bloodshed and destruction, and the Armenian communities in the Ottoman Empire were in the process of being annihilated as a result of the Young Turk government’s genocidal policies. The Armenian lobbyists sought to convince government representatives attending the Exposition in San Francisco to employ diplomatic and military powers to cause the cessation of the deportations and massacres. Justice required that the Allied powers heed the urgent call, the Armenian lobbyists maintained. Justice also required full Allied support for the creation of an independent Armenia to free the survivors from Ottoman rule.

Vahan Cardashian led this lobbying effort at the San Francisco Exposition. A graduate of Yale Law School, Cardashian had served as chief of the Ottoman Chamber of Commerce, Council to the Ottoman embassy, and as High Commissioner of the Ottoman Pavilion at the 1915 San Francisco world fair. Cardashian, however, resigned from his posts in protest over the Turkish atrocities committed against his family and compatriots. While he resided in the United States, members of his family were murdered in the genocide which claimed one and a half million Armenian lives in the Ottoman Empire. Cardashian had warned several top officials in the Wilson administration of the intensifying crisis in the Ottoman Armenian communities. At the 1915 Exposition, Cardashian met with Senators William J. Stone (MO), Albert Baird Cummins (IA), Oscar Wilder Underwood (AL), James Deval Phelan (CA), and James Walcott Wadsworth, Jr. (NY). The Armenian lobbyists at the San Francisco fair argued that justice required that the Allied powers for moral, legal, and geopolitical reasons extend all forms of assistance to the surviving Armenians and to liberate them from Ottoman rule. In the end, however, the lobbying efforts at the 1915 San Francisco Exposition failed to produce the desired result. The San Francisco world fair, similar to other similar world fairs, were designed to promote products and markets and imperialism, rather than serve as forums for the cessation of crimes against humanity. The Ottoman genocide against the Armenian people continued until 1923, causing the unprecedented Armenian national catastrophe and the dispersion of the survivors throughout the world.

From Vienna to Pennsylvania, and From London Around the World: World's Fairs and Transatlantic Serial Culture

Florian Groß. Hannover University.

This paper reads world's fairs as a transnational series that developed within the emerging popular culture of the 19th century. On the surface, world's fairs are primarily characterized by the exhibition of ground breaking technological innovations (e.g. safety elevator, telephone, television) and the ostentatious display of national prowess through the original and inventive design of fairgrounds and pavilions. This creation of innovation and originality, however, needs to be seen in the context of a serial logic of varying repetition, in which each instance of novelty stands in a recursive relationship to what was created before -and after.

Therefore, this paper proposes to read world's fairs in relation to each other rather than discrete events and exemplifies this by a connected reading of, among others, the 1873 Vienna world's fair and its direct transatlantic 'sequel,' the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Both fairs showcased memorable 'firsts,' both in terms of exhibits as well as fair design (e.g. the 'Old City' sections pioneered in Vienna or the introduction of pavilions in Philadelphia, itself the first 'official' U.S. world's fair), yet are connected by a serial logic of varying repetition as well as competitive outbidding. Through close readings of the fairs along these lines, I will identify and analyze the connections that exemplify world's fairs as a transnational, popular, and serial form of cultural and capitalist self-fashioning that developed in reciprocal relationship(s) between various countries *inside and outside* of Europe.

In addition, the transnationally serial logic of world's fairs exemplifies central tensions at the heart of the medium's construction of national identity. World's fairs constitute a global, serial cultural phenomenon whose respective instances assert national specificity- "cultural icons for the nation's hopes and futures," as Rydell put it -at the same time that their national(ist) agendas dissolve within transnational modernity. Read this way, world's fairs exemplify how their attempts at expressing national supremacy have always already called into question "the idea of contained, national cultures in favor of a more dynamic, transnational picture" (Böger).

Contact

All information related to the conference can be found at the event site, here: <https://nise.eu/nationalism-and-world-fairs/>

For any further enquiry, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@nise.eu

Organisation

This international conference is organised by [NISE – National movements and Intermediary Structures in Europe](#), in cooperation with the [Vienna University of Economics and Business](#), and counts on financial support of [ADVN- Archive and documentation centre for national movements](#) and the [representation of Flanders in Austria](#).



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