

ISSN 0992-162X

SOMMARIO

*Esposizioni Universali in Europa. Attori, pubblici, memorie tra metropoli e colonie, 1851-1939*  
(a cura di Giovanni Luigi Fontana - Anna Pellegrino)

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1-2/2015

RICERCHE STORICHE



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RIVISTA QUADRIMESTRALE

ANNO XLV - N. 1-2 - GENNAIO-AGOSTO 2015



**Esposizioni Universali in Europa**  
**Attori, pubblici,**  
**memorie tra metropoli e colonie**

a cura di  
**GIOVANNI LUIGI FONTANA - ANNA PELLEGRINO**

 EDIZIONI POLISTAMPA

# ABSTRACTS

## ***To the greater glory of capitalism, by Donald Sassoon***

In the course of the 19th century industrial capitalism became increasingly the model to follow as an ever increasing number of countries tried to catch up with great Britain. yet intellectuals and novelists found very little to celebrate in capitalist development. It was commonplace to despise, in novels and plays, the desire to accumulate money. Heroes were seldom the kind of innovative entrepreneurs which were thought to be necessary for economic development. The World Fairs of the 19th century should thus be studied as one of the rare openly celebrations of capitalism and commerce. Even in these instances it was not capitalism *per se* which was celebrated but the idea that competition and commerce would require an era of peace. The First World war shattered even this justification.

Keywords: Capitalism, Commerce, Identity

## ***Science and technology in world exhibitions, by Antoni Roca Rosell***

Science and technology play a very relevant role in world exhibitions. Nevertheless, the perception of science and technology in society has changed dramatically over time. the awareness of the role played by science and technology in industrial developments led to the reformulation of other things such as the scientific education. As another consequence of the fairs, some collections were used to set up museums, in particular science and industry museums. Finally, it is important to add that these events offer an extraordinary opportunity to study the diffusion of technology and its integration in the world of agriculture, industry and communications. in that sense, the new orientations of history of technology provide very interesting approaches.

Keywords: History of science, History of technology, History of Education, Transnationalism

## ***Reshaping Legacies: Content and Meaning of Cultural Heritage at Universal Expositions, by Angela Schwarz***

Universal Expositions of the nineteenth century were unique as instruments of communication. they offered much more than the opportunity to showcase industrial products and technologies, as they gave room, among other things, to an ongoing process of shaping and reshaping individual, group and national identities. the content and meaning of cultural heritage as well as the very notion of culture or cultural heritage was redefined in this process. the paper shows that the term cultural heritage as applied to universal expositions includes more than a reference to obsolete or defunct things of the past. Moreover, what was to be part of the cultural heritage and a nation's self-image was to a considerable extent settled at these events, as exhibitors, officials, visitors and the media freely mixed local, national, international and transnational elements freely. this resulted in a great variety and succession of concepts.

Keywords: Heritage, Identity formation, National symbols, Transnationalism

## ***Some annotation about the birth of the "public". For a genealogy of the Society of the Spectacle, by Alessandro Simoncini***

This contribution provides a genealogical approach to the analysis of the emergence of the "public", as implied in the current society of the spectacle. It moves from an account on its original breakthrough in occasion of the Universal Expositions, and more precisely, it draws on the *Rapport sur l'exposition universelle* written by Napoléon-Joseph-Charles-Paul Bonaparte for the Paris Expo in 1855. In this essay i built on the crucial insight of Alberto Abruzzese in line with the key work of Walter Benjamin. Accordingly, in the conclusions the conceptual and operational relevance of the emergence of the "public" will be remarked for the very core of the spectacular reason to be developed.

Keywords: Public, Society of the spectacle, Paris Exhibition 1855

## ***Democracy and empires. Italy at the Paris Exhibition in 1889, by Anna Pellegrino***

The paper aims to analyse the world's exhibitions from the point of view of international relations, and not only from the point of view of the economic, social and cultural settings of participating countries. Italy refuses to participate to 1889 Paris for economic motivations officially; for an international relations strategy related to the historical situation and to Bismarck's assessments actually. The matter, very intricate, involves not only international relations, but also domestic issues linked to the national and political identities. The paper is organized in two parts. the first concerns italy's placement in the international theatre, The refuse's political and diplomatic reasons and the connected internal political topics. The second section concerns Italian newspapers and illustrated press compared with some of the most important European illustrated magazines.

Keywords: International relations, National identities, Political identities, Paris Exhibition 1889

## ***Comparing world's fairs of Europa and USA after the year 1900, by Guido Zucconi***

The year 1900 marks the transition between Europe and America that got a sort of ideal witness. North-American World's Fairs would be especially animated by a close relationship with the industry, especially the most innovative. Among these, stand out the examples of general Motors in New york in 1939 and Boeing in seattle in 1962. in the first case, under the sign of the winning motto "a car for everyone", stands Futurama, the great attraction of that world fair. in the second case, marked by the "space race", stands the space Needle, a tower 184 meters high, crowned by a revolving rooftop restaurant. Although futuristic and high-tech flavored, these fetish-objects are to evoke a journey not into science fiction, but into a possible future. After the failure of New york in 1964, Disneyworld (opened in 1971) will inherit the role and the large numbers that were previously featuring the World's Fairs.

Keywords: Innovation, Economic Policy, National identities, Political identities

## ***The Weltausstellung of 1873 in Vienna. Didactical programs and the multi-ethnic empire as a bridge between East and West, by Noëmi Leemann***

This article deals with the Weltausstellung of Vienna in 1873. It shows how the Viennese exhibition proved a turning point after the previous international exhibitions in London and Paris: 1873, the stakeholders propagated special programs with educational content and used the opportunity to create maps and statistics as exhibits. With the exhibition site as a metaphor for the Austro-Hungarian empire as a bridge between the East and the West and Vienna as its capital, they rather emphasized on making a political statement than on showcasing industrial and trade products. two examples, the reform of the Arts and Crafts production and the diplomacy concerning national economics, illustrate the ambition to integrate political networks and their objectives into the already established "exhibitionary complex".

Keywords: Weltausstellung of Vienna 1873, National identities, Political identities, Arts and Crafts

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Keywords: Weltausstellung of Vienna 1873, National identities, Political identities, Arts and Crafts

***World exhibitions: didactical projects towards real reform; advocates and catalysts of our modern urban society, economy and metropolis, by Pieter van Wesemael***

World exhibitions are didactical instruments in the hands of the upcoming elites who instructed the general public about the modernisation of their traditional world. In that respect world exhibitions were and still are crucial instruments in the formation of our modern urban society and culture. The nineteenth and twentieth century are the ages of the big reform movements for the improvement of our urban condition. Exhibitions were instrumental not so much in preaching textbook reforms but demonstrating practical and material solutions. To paraphrase the urbanist Ebenezer Howard: exhibitions are didactical projects towards real reform. They propagated the modernization of the urban economy through innovations of technology, of sciences and applied art. They contributed in the creation of new urban social orders – most notably in the emancipation of successively the industrial elite and later on of the industrial working classes. And they demonstrated new ideas, strategies and models of urbanism and urban architecture for the modern metropolis. This will be illustrated by an analysis of the very first world exhibition held in 1851 in London: the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations.

Keywords: Didactical projects, Reform movements, Modern urban condition, 1851

***The universal exhibitions: spatiality and politics of representation, by Giulia de Spuches***

How can we speak about modernity? The universal exhibitions are a good starting point. These spectacular spaces are a creation of nineteenth century western society; they are closed spaces. Such exhibitions do not show an inventory: they are places, they produce events. A key to understand the relation between cities and exhibitions is the montage. We face the problem of the whole and the parts. The aim of this paper is to show how spatiality plays a very important role in the 1931 International Colonial Exposition of Paris. I want to demonstrate how a disciplinary spatiality could be, in the thought of the élites, a good project both in colonies and in the marginal neighborhood of Paris. The 1931 Exposition displaying the couple power and knowledge aims to position people on the side of the power, as Bennett argued it is the rhetoric of power embodied in the exhibitionary complex.

Keywords: 1931 International Colonial Exposition of Paris, Spatiality, Representations

***Universal Exhibitions and the birth of museum of history of science and technology, by Paolo Brenni***

The interest for historical scientific and technical artefacts as attractive collectibles and important material witnesses for history of science and decorative arts is quite recent and began only around the early 19th century. The national and universal exhibitions of the second half of the century, were unique opportunities for presenting and display them and at the exhibitions historical instruments were proudly shown as precious relics witnessing the work of famous scientists or a pretended intellectual primacy of a nation, as masterpieces of applied arts, as antiquarian curiosities, and as objects for illustrating the scientific and technological progress. Instruments were lent by universities, astronomical observatories, scientific institutions as well as by private collectors. The presence of historical instruments at the "world fairs" largely contributed to increase their status and stimulated the institutions of permanent museums of science and technology.

Keywords: scientific instruments, Museums, Collections

***Scientists at the World Exhibitions: the moving boundaries between science and technology, by Ana Cardoso de Matos***

The several exhibitions made during the second half of the 19th century were visited by many men of science who have moved there by their own initiative, by government nomination or on behalf of teaching establishments in which they taught. The main purpose of Portuguese scientists' visits to the exhibitions was to update knowledge in their professional area. They also wanted to contact with the most advanced technologies to assess the benefits that its implementation would have in Portugal in the development of the country. The recognition that some of these men of science had in the country, and even internationally, was crucial for their nomination as royal commissioners sent out to the exhibitions. In this article we tried to analyze the study visits made by Francisco Fonseca Benevides and Júlio Máximo de Oliveira Pimentel to the exhibitions, the reports they wrote and how they contributed to the transfer and dissemination of knowledge and skills in areas such as electricity and chemistry.

Keywords: history of science, technology transfer, Dissemination of science and technology, transnationalism

***World exhibitions constructing images: Latin America between presentation and representation, by Christiane Demeulenaere-Douyère***

As windows opened upon the world, international Exhibitions provide the public with representations often under the order of the ideal, especially when financial considerations are involved, prompting organizers to find "exotic" and successful attractions. Many countries needed to be presented at their best, because the stakes in economic, trade or diplomatic were very important. But this ambition involved them also to get sometimes locked into false representations and caricatures. Through the example of several Latin American countries (Mexico, Peru, Argentina...), this paper examines how the "image factory" is processing in international Exhibitions, the divergent strategies of the countries and the dangers and disappointments encountered.

Keywords: Latin America, National identity, Representations

***Images from an Exhibition. The medial experience, London 1862, by Giovanni Fiorentino***

Compared to the metropolitan show of the 1800's Universal Expositions, photography offers to the spectators the sight of the entire world at a glance. During the nineteenth century, a specific case discloses and shows all the media power of Culture industry. In London, the 1862 Universal Exhibition sells its image rights to the London stereoscopic and Photographic Company. The ephemeral spectacular nature of the exhibition setup collapses in front of the ubiquity, the reproducibility, the economy, the timelessness of the photography. The stereoscopic pictures made by William England as sole access, described later by Oliver W. Holmes on the "Atlantic Monthly", destroy the space and time limits of a unique and exceptional event, miniaturize and trivialize a coveted and distant public sphere, proclaim the birth of a bourgeois audience and prepare the ground for a mass visual communication.

Keywords: 1862 Universal Exhibition, Media, Photography, stereoscopy



***Phantasmagoria, mirrorings, battles of images. To the origins of the World's Exhibitions' social imaginary, by Luigi Tomassini***

The article analyzes the way in which the illustrated magazines in the second half of the XIX century contributed to create a widespread image of world's exhibitions. The world's exhibitions convey a series of imaginary related to technical and scientific progress, but also to the arts and other aspects of contemporary civilization. Another powerful imagery that becomes very strong since the 70s of the XIX century is linked to the colonial universe, seen as an inverse, but also like a mirror of the civilized world of the metropolis. In the beginning a pacifist and universalist message is very strong in the images arising from the Exhibitions; but, at the same time, there are also obvious symptoms of a rivalry: between the magazines of the main European countries there are and real battles of images. Finally, it is interesting to observe how the Exhibitions, which are undoubtedly visual devices, in turn are the object of other devices in the field of visual media. This leads to a competition and an amplification of the imaginary arising from the exhibitions phenomenon.

**Keywords:** illustrated magazines, Civilization, images

***The Great Exhibition. History of a mass escape, by Luca Massidda***

There are meetings that go down in history: that "immortalized" by the transparent click of the Crystal Palace is one of them. On the spectacular stage of the 1851 World Fairs, Queen Victoria and the direction of her Prince Consort put one in front of the other, for the first time in history with such a conspicuous and mutual visibility, the two great protagonists of modernity: the industrial production system and mass society. Without the determinant mediation of the exhibition staging the forced coexistence between these two lumbering figures of the nineteenth century would not have been possible. The strict discipline of the industrial system becomes spectacle, the troubled energy of the masses becomes public: it's the cultural device of the expos to invent the roles-playing game that will put under cover the industrial capitalism from the threat of its structural contradictions. At least until 1939. But perhaps even beyond...

**Keywords:** Capitalism, Metropolis, Cultural history

***Cristoforo Colombo between Italy and Spain: Poetics of appropriation and identity in the visual arts at the Universal Exhibition in Philadelphia (1876), by Manuel Viera de Miguel***

Italy and Spain find in Columbus a solid foundation of their historical legitimation. One claims his birth, the other one, his adoption. Thus, both nations try to appropriate an element of prestige and international recognition. The vindication of Columbus becomes rivalry, particularly when the world's fairs move to America. At the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, the United States exemplified the prosperity of the «New World» where European principles had founded continuity and new vigor, this is, a promise of future. Subsequently, the exhibition afforded a unique opportunity to be placed at the genealogical origin of contemporary civilization. In this respect, the monument to Christopher Columbus erected by the *Columbus Monument Association* or the Spanish and Italian paintings representing different moments in the life of the navigator, as well as other images provided by art and exhibition literature, testify to the interest shown by both countries in the appropriation of Christopher Columbus.

**Keywords:** Christopher Columbus, Philadelphia 1876, Visual Culture, Italian identity, Spanish identity

***Beyond the 'human zoos'. Exoticism, ethnic exhibitions and the power of the gaze, by Guido Abbattista***

This essay dwells on the concepts of 'human zoos' and 'living human exhibitions', in order to show that the first was a particular case of a larger family of cultural practices in early modern and modern Europe, where the appropriation of human 'others' was inspired by the will to exercise the 'power of the gaze'. Human aliens were repeatedly and often voluntary victims of abduction from their countries of origin and public exhibition in several different venues in European cities according to widely diffused practices of 'public othering of the human body', which was made available to the observation of the Western gaze. The great nineteenth-twentieth century world expositions offered one of the most influential contexts for such ethno-shows, innovating the pre-existing performances in several ways, in particular by taking over the 'human zoos' format. It would be partial however to interpret the latter only in terms of the obvious aspects of 'animalisation' of human 'others' and racism. Public exhibitions of living humans 'other' were in fact complex performances involving ideas of civilizing and Christianizing tasks and occasioned unexpected reactions on both sides of the exhibitions, so that to reduce the latter to a mere expression of power and racist domination means to miss important aspects of the complex relationship between exposé and exposed.

**Keywords:** Cultural history, World exposition, Ethnic show, Anthropology, Race, Racism

***Italy at the International Colonial and Overseas Exposition, Paris 1931, by Maddalena Carli***

On 6 May 1931 the International Colonial and Overseas Exposition (*Exposition coloniale internationale et des pays d'outre-mer*) was opened in Paris. Among the temporary constructions erected at the Bois de Vincennes, three represented Italy. These three were: the reproduction of the basilica built by the first Roman Emperor of African origin, Septimius Severus, at Leptis Magna; the pavilion dedicated to the territories possessed in the Aegean; and the pavilion inspired by Futurism, entitled *Italia*. For many years overshadowed by the importance of the Overseas Exposition held in Naples in 1940, the Italian presence at Paris 1931 was an important proving ground for the fascist colonial unconscious, four years prior to the Ethiopian venture and in a context of international significance such as that offered by the French capital in the inter-war period. My contribution reconstructs the history and analyzes the building and outfitting of the pavilions along with their symbolic dimension, in the belief that they constitute evidence of the profound modifications that were taking place in the politics of exhibiting both the regime and the extraordinary success enjoyed in the thirties by the cult of Rome.

**Keywords:** International Colonial and Overseas Exposition Paris 1931, Arts and Politics, Fascist identity.

***The whole world in Paris: the Arabs visit the International Exhibitions (1855; 1889; 1900), by Cristiana Baldazzi***

The aim of this work is to view the Universal Expositions through the eyes of the Other; according to Arab sources: the travel accounts of Egyptian, Tunisian and Syrian-Lebanese intellectuals and the second part of one of the first modern Arab novels which is set entirely against the background of the 1900 Exposition in Paris. This perspective allows us to examine not only the image of the East that had been conjured up in the West in its various guises (Arab pavilions, cafés, *kermesse* and belly-dancing) but also the way in which this image is perceived by those directly concerned. A comparison between the Western image of the Arab world and the Arabs' perception of such an image shows that in large part, the two attitudes coincide. There are, however, some sporadic but significant exceptions which are apparent in the phantasmagoric exhibition where, paradoxically, in the play of mirrors between the presentation of the Other and the perception of self, the Arab visitors seem to have a clearer understanding of the divergence between representation and reality: the Egyptians felt themselves to be extraneous to their pavilion.

**Keywords:** Travel Literature, Nahda, Universal Expositions, Ahmad Zaki, Salim Bustrus, Muhammad al-Muwaylihi

**«Penser la grandeur»: Colonial exhibitions of Portugal and Italy between the two world wars, by Nadia Vargaftig**

international exhibitions of the interwar period tried to bring back to life the golden age of this practice, previous to World War I. They also tried to assert the validity of the domination of Europe on other continents. In this context, fascist Italy and Salazarist Portugal contributed to the spreading of this discourse, in an attempt to promote and to legitimize their empires and their political regimes. This article aims to compare Portuguese and Italian colonial exhibitions, to identify the conformity – even the conformism – and the originality of national imperialist discourses, compared with the other European powers. It also aims to underline the methodological interest of an approach of international and *universelles* exhibitions in connection to a closer network of national, local and overseas exhibitions and fairs, allowing to identify the circulations of practices, images and discourses.

Keywords: Fascism, Salazarism, Colonial exhibitions, Overseas fairs

**Milan 1881-1906: representation of modernity and popular modernization, by Ilaria M.P. Barzaghi**

The core of my paper lies in the representation of modernity, as it is shown in Milan in 1881 and 1906, above all through the images created to describe the 1881 National Industrial Exhibition and the 1906 International Exhibition, which were published by the popular illustrated press addressed to non-specialised readers. The modernity, which is mostly on show in the non-specialised mass-media, is more specifically concerned with “images of modern life” (that is peculiarly urban life), as recounted by Baudelaire, than with the glorification of scientific and technical, notably industrial and mechanical, progress. There were precise reasons for this “euphemistic” representation of modernity without all its contradictions and social dangers: above all, a strong concern about the political risks of frightening the middle and upper classes, that had on the contrary to be involved in the national project of modernization.

Keywords: industrial and international Exhibition in Milan (1881-1906), Modernization, Representation of modernity

**The big exhibitions from the industrial metropolis to the glocal-city. The experience of Milan from the National Exhibition 1881 to the World Expo 2015, by Stefano Di Vita**

The large exhibitions, which are expressions of the industrial and modernist culture, have their origins in the second half of the Nineteenth century in order to celebrate the scientific and technological advances in the field of national productions. While the following development of a service economy and society, that is part of a broader process of globalization, has produced an intense change in the meaning of these events, which have become tools of urban change and territorial marketing, the economic crisis, that is currently ongoing in European countries, is suggesting the rethinking of their urban development pattern. This paper therefore aims at observing this evolution through a comparison between the 1881, 1906 and 2015 Milan Exhibitions according to their political and economic meanings, their settlement choices and spatial impacts, the relations between events and their post-events, as well as the connections with the development of the Milan Trade Fair.

Keywords: Urban history, Milan, Territorial marketing

**Industrial exhibitions in Italy before the unification (1805-1860), by Sergio Onger**

Industrial exhibitions arrived in Italy with the armies of Napoleon. They were initially attempts to promote agriculture, trade and industry of individual cities or some regional states. The idea of organizing exhibitions on a national scale was not conceived until early 1845, at the annual Conventions of Italian scientists. The Great Exhibition of 1851 gave new impetus to these initiatives. Despite the low participation of the Italians, both as exhibitors and as visitors, the echo of the event reached the national public opinion and paved the way to profound changes in the exhibition models followed until then. This report aims to reconstruct this path analytically, focusing on the actors that were directly involved in the preparation of exhibitions (governments, chambers of commerce, academia, arising agencies for the promotion of technical innovation), on the different types of display and on the composition of the attending audience – ranging from the professional to the merely curious visitor.

Keywords: Italy, industrial exhibitions, 19th century.

**The exhibition of 1861 in Florence: the joys and sorrows of a debut, by Andrea Giuntini**

Florence hosted in 1861 the first great national exhibition in the Leopolda railway station, having experienced for a long time in this field. This event, better than many others, was mirroring Italy at the time of Unification with its several expectations. The intervention, based on a large amount of sources – newspapers, catalogues, archival documents, XIX century literature – deals with the economic and organizational one, that one relating to the economic contents, the political and symbolic founding event and finally the architectural one.

Keywords: Exhibitions of 1861 in Florence, Unification, Railway stations.

**Productive excellence and mastery craft: the beginnings of the Italians in the World Exhibitions, by Paolo Colombo**

The historical developments of the great Exhibitions can be seen as an extremely useful lens through which looking deeply into the contemporary history, from the 19th Century to the present days. Throughout the various editions, the “Arts & Crafts” have always represented a substantial part of the exhibitions; a part that was able to embody the true spirit of these world fairs. Unfortunately, the peculiar role played by the craftsmanship within the great Exhibitions has been too often forgotten by the historical literature. Since its first appearance on the World fairs’ stage in the 1860s, the craftsmanship of the newborn Reign of Italy revealed its vocation toward the international excellence. In a certain sense, it is possible to say that the Italian excellence in the production of handmade goods was alive even before Italy became a Unitary state. From the unification, though, this peculiar vocation would have gained strength, a fact that still shows us how politics can support the greatest talents of a country.

Keywords: Art Craft; Nation state; made in Italy; handicraft; tradition

**The globalization of taste. Universal exhibitions and foodstuffs, by Stefano Magagnoli**

This paper aims to analyse as “geographically localized foodstuffs” (the typical products) finds large space in the display window of the Universal Exhibitions of the XIX century; “international shows” very successful and in which it’s represented the best of the world industry in the field of technological innovation. The typical products that are shown at the Exhibitions are obviously in search of new consumers, within the big process of markets expansion that take place between the XIX and the XX century. With a particular attention to the Italian case, this paper examines as the industrial production of the “geographically localized foodstuffs” – that allows to serialize and standardize the production – constrains to innovate the goods, to increase their quantity, and answer thereby to the progressive expansion of the demand engendered by the widening of the markets.

Keywords: Universal Exhibitions, typicality, industrial Avatar

### ***The exhibitions of the fiftieth anniversary of the Unification of Italy, by Silvano Montaldo***

The celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of United Italy materialized themselves into a great apparatus, whose centers were the two international exhibitions in Rome and Turin, but the entire peninsula was involved over a period for three years, from 1909 to 1911. In the same period, Italy also participated officially to the exhibitions of Brussels and Buenos Ayres. The celebratory euphoria resulted in a significant deficit in the accounts of exhibitions, which will be investigated in subsequent years by the inquiries conducted by government and parliament, from whose acts, hitherto inadequately used, the essay proposed here begins. The careless management of the funds raised through public and private funding is evident, but also the political problems of the celebratory event, the involvement of the Royal family and the leaders of the whole nation, the conflict between the personalities involved, the characteristics of the two main exhibitions.

Keywords: World Exhibition in Italy 1911, Italian history, Political history

### ***Evolution of global economy as seen through the history of World Expos 1851-2015, by Ivan Prostakov***

A very important aspect of the recent history of our civilization is the birth and evolution of the global economy and the complex interweaving of tradition and innovation. This has been reflected in World Expos. The very first Expos were designed to affirm the power of their host countries – Great Britain first and France later – at a moment of increasing industrialisation and free trade. Over the years, the role World Expos could play in the positioning of a country on an international scale was rapidly understood by other nations such as the US, Japan or China, who successfully hosted their own Expos in order to establish themselves as world powers. An Expo is also a window on the world and a great tool to share knowledge, for the host but also for participating countries. These events that were until recently mostly reserved to European countries have become a truly global phenomenon. Their geographical scope is growing and dozens of new countries, mostly from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific, have become members of the *Bureau international des Expositions* (BiE) in last two decades. World Expos remain a versatile and useful instrument for their development of and for their inclusion in the global economy, which confirms the vocation of these events to mark time in history.

Keywords: global economy, tradition, innovation, transnationalism