The global vernacularisation of regional identities: cultural isomorphism at world fairs, 1851-1939

Storm, H.J.; Bruna, G.; Corporaal, M.; Cusack, C.; Os, S. van; Scholten, A.

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ERIC STORM

Introduction

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, world fairs increasingly focused on exhibiting the vernacular culture of rural areas, thus contributing to the definition of recognisable regional identities. Regional pavilions, dioramas with folkloric scenes and full-scale ethnographic villages could be encountered not just at major world fairs, but also at myriad national and regional expositions. The fierce competition in capturing the attention of the visitors at these large-scale events clearly favoured the growing prominence of vernacular culture. Extraordinary vernacular buildings, colourful folkloric traditions, striking artisanal products and typical dishes were used increasingly to symbolise both the region and the nation, leading to a focus on traditional heartlands – such as Tyrol in Austria, Andalusia in Spain or Dalarna in Sweden – on the one hand and a growing emphasis on the nation as a unity in diversity on the other. However, the way regional identities were represented was very generic. World fairs, in fact, constituted a global platform to learn how to represent a region's identity and thus had a strong isomorphic effect, meaning that increasingly equal – iso – forms were used. This chapter aims to show how the need to stand out clearly bolstered the role of vernacular culture at these international expositions, while pouring them into very similar moulds.

Since the 1990s, the construction of regional identities has been studied extensively.[1] Generally, these investigations were strongly influenced by nationalism studies, understanding the 'imagined community' of the region as a social construct, while focusing primarily on the period from the late nineteenth century onwards. Most scholars focused on the agency of the inhabitants themselves – mostly domestic elites – they were the ones who selected the building blocks to construct their unique regional identity. This was mostly done in national historiographic traditions, focusing on *Heimat* in Germany, decentralisation in France or the rise of peripheral

1 Joost Augusteijn and Eric Storm, eds., *Region and State in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Nation-Building, Regional Identities and Separatism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas and Eric Storm, eds., *Regionalism and Modern Europe: Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

nationalisms in Spain. This methodological nationalism was supplemented by a methodological regionalism, explaining the construction of regional identities merely from internal factors.[2] This internalist bias cannot just be detected in many regional case studies, but also in more ambitious overviews. Thus, in an already classical book, Anne-Marie Thiesse presented the rise of French regionalism as a "réveil des provinces" (awakening of the provinces), while explaining this revival primarily from the unique impact of the defeat in the Franco-Prussian War.[3]

The renewed appreciation for vernacular culture has also been studied primarily from a national or regional perspective in a rapidly growing number of case studies. Nonetheless, a few generic trends can be detected. The Romantic era, for instance, quickly disseminated a new fascination for folklore, rural traditions and fairy tales, best embodied in the collections published by Johann Gottfried Herder and the Grimm brothers. They presented vernacular culture primarily as a way to study the supposedly authentic character of the nation, the *Volksgeist* (folk spirit).[4] By the halfway point of the nineteenth century, many newly founded local associations and learned societies began to study the contribution of the region to the nation. As a result, regional particularities were primarily appreciated in relation to a larger national whole.[5] Only towards the end of the nineteenth century did the unique identity of each region receive more attention. This process has not only been linked to the emancipation of provincial society and the broadening of the membership of regional associations, but also to the rise of consumer society and the growing marketing of regional identities, primarily by entrepreneurs in the tourism sector and the agribusiness.[6] Several

2 Xosé M. Núñez Seixas and Eric Storm, "Conclusion: Overcoming Methodological Regionalism," in *Regionalism and Modern Europe: Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day*, ed. Xosé M. Núñez Seixas and Eric Storm (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 343–55.

3 Anne-Marie Thiesse, *Écrire la France: le mouvement littéraire régionaliste de langue française entre la Belle Époque et la Libération* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991) all translations are my own; see also: Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

4 Martin Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes* (London: Verso, 1995); Joep Leerssen, ed., *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

5 Stéphane Gerson, *The Pride of Place: Local Memories and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Georg Kunz, *Verortete Geschichte: regionales Geschichtsbewusstsein in den deutschen Historischen Vereinen des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Sören Brinkmann, *Der Stolz der Provinzen: Regionalbewusstsein und Nationalstaatsbau im Spanien des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2005).

6 Eric Storm, "The Birth of Regionalism and the Crisis of Reason: France, Germany and Spain," in *Region and State in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Nation-Building, Regional Identities and Separatism*, ed. Joost Augusteijn and Eric Storm (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012),

case studies, moreover, have made clear that world fairs played a prominent role in constructing clearly identifiable regional identities. Martin Wörner even provided an ambitious overview of the role of European vernacular culture at universal expositions during the second half of the nineteenth century.[7] Most of these studies on world fairs, however, are rather descriptive. Therefore, it remains unclear why vernacular elements rapidly gained prominence at these mega-events.

The aim of this edited volume is to show that transnational influences were vital to understanding the development of regionalism. This fresh approach enables us to overcome the inward-looking traditional interpretation, but a disadvantage of this new emphasis on transnationalism, cultural transfer and hybridity is that this is mostly applied in detailed case studies that implicitly argue that circumstances matter. As a consequence, they seem to produce a different outcome for each individual case, creating a very fragmented overall picture. Nonetheless, there were many similarities in the way regional identities were constructed throughout the world, both in timing and in form. In order to detect these similarities and patterns, we will have to adopt a very different approach. This chapter, therefore, examines regional identity construction as a global learning process by focusing on the representation of regions at world fairs. In order to do so in a systematic way, I will apply the concept of isomorphism.

The concept of isomorphism was introduced in the 1970s by the sociologist John W. Meyer from Stanford University as part of his approach, known as Sociological Institutionalism or World Polity Theory, to explain the surprising homogeneity of state institutions around the world. Meyer argues that after 1945, the institutions of the nation-state showed ever more similarities around the globe. All modern nation-states have a constitution defining both state power and individual rights; they have a cabinet system, very similar institutions for statistical record keeping, universal welfare

36–57; Patrick Young, *Enacting Brittany: Tourism and Culture in Provincial France, 1871-1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Kolleen M. Guy, "Regional Foods," in *Regionalism and Modern Europe: Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day*, ed. Xosé M. Núñez Seixas and Eric Storm (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 83–99.

7 Bjarne Stocklund, "The Role of International Exhibitions in the Construction of National Cultures in the 19th Century," *Ethnologia Europaea* 24, no. 1 (1994): 35–44; Marta Filipová, "Peasants on Display: The Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition of 1895," *Journal of Design History* 24, no. 1 (2011): 15–36; Daniel Alan DeGroff, "Artur Hazelius and the Ethnographic Display of the Scandinavian Peasantry: A Study in Context and Appropriation," *European Review of History* 19, no. 2 (2012): 229–48; Martin Wörner, *Vergnügung und Belehrung: Volkskultur auf den Weltausstellungen 1851-1900* (Münster: Waxmann, 1999).

systems, growth-oriented economic policies, standardised health care institutions, mass education systems with comparable curricula, etc.[8]

Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell further refined Meyer's theories by distinguishing three mechanisms of isomorphic change: coercion, mimesis, and normative pressure. Recently, Jens Beckert added a fourth mechanism: competition. Examples of coercive isomorphism by external powers are the imposition of democratic institutions on Japan and West Germany after the defeat in the Second World War. More subtle forms of coercion are exerted by international organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund–imposing uniform accountability mechanisms as a precondition to receive loans–or the European Union–formulating accession criteria for new member states. Mimesis occurs very often, when countries adopt certain institutional templates or practices from leading powers. Probably the most famous case is the Meiji Restoration in late nineteenth-century Japan, in which reformist politicians decided to mimic the principal nation-states in Western Europe and the United States by wholesale adopting state institutions, educational systems, law courts, army organisation, etc. The third mechanism of isomorphic change consists of normative pressure, which mostly operates through a process of professionalisation. This implies, for instance, requiring a standardised formal education for specific jobs, while all kinds of (international) professional associations establish shared models for professional behaviour and organisational norms. The emphasis on standard procedures, routines and a shared hierarchy of status is best visible in the medical profession, but can also be detected among civil servants, legal experts or people working in the financial sector. Beckert argues that competition should be considered as a fourth mechanism of isomorphic change. Companies and state institutions tend to adopt cost-efficient procedures, effective regulations and functional standards that have proven their worth elsewhere.[9]

In this chapter, I will argue that world fairs also had a strong isomorphic effect by imposing regulations for representing national and regional identities, enabling countries to learn from and compete with others, while stimulating a process of professionalisation.[10] Therefore, I will first provide

8 See for example John W. Meyer et al., "World Society and the Nation-State," *The American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 1 (1997): 144–81.

9 Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983): 147–60; Jens Beckert, "Institutional Isomorphism Revisited: Convergence and Divergence in Institutional Change," *Sociological Theory* 28, no. 2 (2010): 150–66.

10 See also: Eric Storm, "Introduction: The Study of National Identities at World Fairs – from Methodological Nationalism to Transnational Approaches and Cultural Isomorphism," *Studies on National Movements* 13 (2024): 5–35.

a brief overview of the role of world fairs, while showing how vernacular culture proved to be very attractive, rapidly gaining visibility. This continued until the 1920s and 1930s, when the focus of world fairs shifted towards cultural modernism, which moreover, coincided with the decline of international exhibitions as trendsetting events. I will then show how a process of isomorphism can be detected in the representation of regional identities. This will be illustrated with examples taken from the Panama-Pacific Exhibition in San Diego (1915) and the Ibero-American Exhibition in Seville (1929), two somewhat peripheral exhibitions at which regionalism largely determined the entire outlook of the exhibition.

Exhibiting Territorial Identities at World Fairs

The first world fair, the Great Exhibition of Works of Industry of All Nations, held in London's Crystal Palace in 1851, was a great success with over six million visitors and thousands of exhibitors from twenty-five different countries. Quickly, other world fairs were organised on almost all continents. Myriad regional and national exhibitions–which often also attracted millions of spectators–showed the latest trends to domestic audiences while preparing the ground for a country's participation in the next world fair. These exhibitions, thus, could be seen as one of the most important mass media of the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Their impact was enhanced through written and visual media. Guidebooks and catalogues provided ample information to the visitors, but also reached millions of armchair travellers across the world. Exhibitions, moreover, received extensive coverage in the press, in newspapers, illustrated magazines and specialised journals and increasingly also reached many people through souvenirs, posters, newsreels and documentaries. Their worldwide influence would only decline from the 1930s onwards when their role was slowly overtaken by specialised trade fairs and amusement parks on the one hand and by new visual media such as cinema and television on the other.[11]

At the Great Exhibition, the role of vernacular elements was very limited. In the Canadian section, for instance, one could admire skins, stuffed animals and canoes, while elsewhere artisanal objects such as chandeliers and clocks could be found. However, most craft products did not show any

11 Paul Greenhalgh, *Fair World: A History of World's Fairs and Expositions, from London to Shanghai 1851-2010* (Winterbourne: Papadakis, 2011); Marta Filipová, ed., *Cultures of International Exhibitions 1840-1940: Great Exhibitions in the Margins* (Farnham; Burlington: Routledge, 2015); Joep Leerssen and Eric Storm, ed., *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities: International Exhibitions as Cultural Platforms, 1851–1958* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

national or regional distinctiveness. The second world fair, the New York Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations of 1853-54, organised by a private enterprise, introduced an entertainment zone in order to attract more visitors. The Paris Universal Exposition of 1855–which, like all its successors, was organised by the national government–put more emphasis on agriculture and art, areas in which France excelled.[12] Thus, instead of becoming a rather dull industrial show, world fairs became spectacular mega-events targeting the masses, and this tendency would only augment in subsequent decades.

Nonetheless, the differences between national sections–showing primarily raw materials, machines, manufactures, scientific inventions and fine arts–were not very striking, and this was increasingly seen as a disadvantage. At the 1867 Universal Exposition in Paris, it was decided that countries could also build a national pavilion in which they could show objects that did not fit the ten groups and ninety-five classes into which the industrial production of humankind was classified, such as artistic treasures, archaeological finds or historical objects. Many peripheral countries, such as Japan, Siam, Egypt, Tunisia, the Ottoman Empire and Romania, used the opportunity to attract attention by building a pavilion in a characteristic exotic style, appealing particularly to the expectations of an international audience. France, which at the time tried to put the Habsburg Prince Maximilian on the Mexican throne, built an Aztec temple for Mexico, while the Imperial Maritime Customs Service, led by a British diplomat, represented the Qing Empire by constructing a Chinese garden with some typical buildings. Another curious example was the Swedish pavilion, which was a copy of the Dalarna farmhouse from which Gustav Vasa in the late sixteenth century had initiated the War of Liberation against Denmark.[13]

The new emphasis on amusement and the addition of national pavilions created a very favourable environment for exhibiting vernacular culture. In many cases, the most extraordinary, colourful and striking examples--build-

12 Florian Groß, "From the New York Crystal Palace to the World of Tomorrow: World Fairs as a Transnational Series," in *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities*, ed. Joep Leerssen and Eric Storm (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 84–106; Wolfram Kaiser, "Vive La France! Vive La République? The Cultural Construction of French Identity at the World Exhibitions in Paris 1855–1900," *National Identities* 1, no. 3 (1999): 227–44.

13 Wörner, *Vergnügung und Belehrung*, 21–57 and 191–210; Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 95–107; Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 44; Susan R. Fernsebner, *Material Modernities: China's Participation in World's Fairs and Expositions, 1876-1955* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2002).

ings, costumes or practices–were selected, and these generally proved to be very successful in attracting large crowds. Their popularity among the visitors did not just mean that these exhibits were commercially viable–through the sale of products or by charging additional entrance fees–but that they also were instrumental in drawing visitors to a wider (national) section or pavilion. As a result, these formulas were rapidly copied at later exhibitions, often becoming an indispensable element in successive world fairs.[14]

World fairs did not operate in a vacuum; there were frequent crossovers with museums and the world of entertainment. One exhibitionary practice that world fairs adopted from museums was the use of period rooms and dioramas, which were both very suited to show folkloric scenes. At the 1878 Universal Exposition in Paris, the Netherlands showed a Hindeloopen room, which had previously drawn attention at the Frisian Historical Exhibition in Leeuwarden. The colourful room with antique furniture showed life-size mannequins in beautiful traditional costumes preparing for a baptism ceremony. Instead of peeping into the scene from the outside, the public could enter the room as if they were visiting this family home in the Frisian town of Hindeloopen. This proved to be a great success, and the format was widely adopted in ethnographic museums and international exhibitions.[15]

National pavilions could also be found at most world fairs after 1867, and they were even systematised in the Rue des Nations (Street of Nations) at the Parisian Universal Expositions of 1878 and 1900. The former only showed characteristic facades, while in 1900, entire pavilions lined up along the Seine. Although initially Classicist styles and Historicist buildings dominated towards the turn of the century, Neo-Vernacular constructions became popular as well. Nonetheless, from the 1920s, Modernist pavilions rapidly became more popular, eventually entirely dominating the scene.[16] Another successful formula was the ethnographic village, which was entirely focused on vernacular culture. All buildings had an authentic feel and were

14 Wörner, *Vergnügung und Belehrung*, 237–303; Alexander C. T Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 101–34; Robert W. Rydell, "Self Becomes Nation: Sol Bloom and America's World Fairs, 1893–1939," in *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities*, ed. Joep Leerssen and Eric Storm (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 217–36.

15 Wörner, *Vergnügung und Belehrung*, 246–72; Adriaan A. M. de Jong and Mette Skougaard, "The Hindeloopen and the Amager Rooms: Two Examples of an Historical Museum Phenomenon," *Journal of the History of Collections* 5, no. 2 (1993): 165–78.

16 Wörner, *Vergnügung und Belehrung*, 21–49; Eric Storm, "The Transnational Construction of National Identities: A Classification of National Pavilions at World Fairs," in *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities: International Exhibitions as Cultural Platforms, 1851-1958*, ed. Joep Leerssen and Eric Storm (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 53–84.

inhabited by traditionally dressed villagers engaged in all kinds of characteristic activities, thus offering a lifelike environment in which the visitors were immersed in a different world. Already at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1867, Austria and Russia had built a village with typical buildings from various parts of the empire, inhabited by real peasants. This formula was repeated at the Vienna World Fair of 1873. Five years later, at the Paris Universal Exposition, one could visit a Street of Cairo and a Moroccan Quarter. The amusement sector of Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition contained no less than ten ethnographic villages, most of which were commercial ventures. They represented Germany, Austria, Ireland, Lapland, Turkey, China, Japan, Java and Dahomey, while setting a new standard for the future. Most of these ethnographic villages appealed to a sense of curiosity for faraway lands, but on other occasions, such rural ensembles primarily targeted a domestic audience. Thus, the Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition of 1895, Hungary's Millennial Exhibition and the Swiss National Exposition, both from 1896, the Romanian Jubilee Exhibition of 1906 and Italy's International Exhibition of 1911 all contained a large-scale ethnographic village with pavilions representing each of the countries' diverse regions.[17]

The urban equivalent of the ethnographic village–where one could not so much travel to exotic parts of the countryside, but to an idealised urban past–was the historical ensemble. This template was invented in 1884 at the International Health Exhibition in South Kensington, where twenty-five copied buildings represented "Old London", and simultaneously in Turin, where during the General Italian Exhibition, a "Borgo medievale" (medieval borough) could be visited. Like the ethnographic village, these historical ensembles were inhabited by traditionally dressed townspeople engaged in all kinds of typical activities, mostly of an artisanal nature. Their success was copied at almost all subsequent international exhibitions, leading to magnificent examples such as Old Edinburgh (1886), Oud Antwerpen (1895), Alt Berlin (1896), Ős-Budavára (1896), Gamla Stockholm (1897) and Vieux Paris (1900). Sometimes these historical pastiches represented the rich urban patrimony of a major region, such as Oud Holland (1895) or Vieille Flandre (1913).[18]

17 Wörner, *Vergnügung und Belehrung*, 49–145; Storm, "Construction of National Identities," 71–72; Luis A. Sánchez-Gómez, "Human Zoos or Ethnic Shows? Essence and Contingency in *Living* Ethnological Exhibitons," *Culture & History Digital Journal* 2, no. 2 (2013): e022.

18 Wilson Smith, "Old London, Old Edinburgh: Constructing Historic Cities," in *Cultures of International Exhibitions 1840-1940: Great Exhibitions in the Margins*, ed. Marta Filipová (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), 203–29; Daniela N. Prina, "The Belgian Reception of Italy at the 1885 Antwerp World Exhibition," in *Expanding Nationalisms at World's Fairs: Identity, Diversity, and Exchange, 1851-1915*, ed. David Raizman and Ethan Robey (London: Routledge, 2018), 54–55; Storm, "Construction of National Identities," 71.

In national pavilions, ethnographic villages and historical ensembles, visitors could encounter various vernacular practices enacted before their eyes. Artisans were engaged in traditional crafts, while people dressed in folkloric costumes played characteristic instruments, sang folk tunes or performed traditional dances. There were also large shows with historical enactments, such as in the commercial venture "L'Andalousie aux temps des maures" (Andalusia in the Times of the Moors) at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900. In the shadow of a life-size copy of the Giralda-tower – which could be mounted on a donkey – there was a large court where fights between Moors and Christians, caravan raids, flamenco spectacles and gypsy weddings were staged. The most famous of such shows was without a doubt Buffalo Bill's Wild West, which was hugely successful as a sideshow of the Chicago world's fair of 1893, going on various world tours.[19] All major exhibitions also had a variety of cafés and restaurants, many of which offered regional fare and typical beverages. Mostly the buildings were in a Neo-Vernacular style, while waiters and waitresses were donned in regional attire.[20]

Examining the advance of vernacular culture at world fairs, we can detect a clear process of isomorphic change. Templates such as the diorama, the national pavilion, the ethnographic village and historical ensembles were quickly standardised, while all participating countries highlighted the same aspects of their vernacular patrimony, such as traditional buildings, arts and crafts, regional costumes, folk tunes, traditional dances and artisanal food.

The four mechanisms of isomorphic change – coercion, normative pressure, mimesis and competition – can easily be applied to the growing standardisation of the representation of vernacular culture at world fairs. Probably the most important mechanism of isomorphic change at world fairs was *competition*. Countries and companies vied for the attention of the visitors. Thus, pavilions and exhibits had to be bigger, more attractive, colourful and extraordinary than the others. This had paradoxical consequences; countries and regions tried hard to distinguish themselves from others, but they all did so in a very similar way. Size, location and financial means were

19 Eric Storm, "The Canonization of the Artisan Around 1900," in *Networks, Narratives and Nations: Transcultural Approaches to Cultural Nationalism in Europe and Beyond*, ed. Marjet Brolsma et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 138–46; Luis Sazatornil Ruiz, "Fantasías Andaluzas. Arquitectura, Orientalismo e Identidades En Tiempos de Las Exposiciones," in *Andalucía. La Construcción de Una Imagen Artística*, ed. Méndez Rodríguez and Rocío Plaza Orellana (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2015), 135–37; Robert W. Rydell, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna the Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

20 Peter Scholliers and Nelleke Teughels, eds., *A Taste of Progress: Food at International and World Exhibitions in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2015).

vital, and participating countries tried to raise their budget, get the best location and build a larger pavilion than their neighbours.

In the highly competitive environment of these mega-events, however, more important than size was spectacle, either in appearance or performance. In order to attract visitors, exhibits had to stand out. This had important implications. For a domestic audience, national and regional pavilions or exhibits should represent their unique identity in a dignified way. However, the international public at world fairs had a strong preference for striking, quaint and extraordinary images and experiences. Ideally, they should also conform to existing stereotypes, such as those defined in other media, such as travel writing, plays or paintings. This is what Joep Leerssen has defined as the "typicality effect".[21] Spanish officials and elites, for instance, preferred to represent themselves as a modern, civilised nation, building a Renaissance pavilion that was only recognisable as Spanish by connoisseurs, whereas visitors craved for exotic stereotypes associated with Al-Andalus. Because of the fierce competition for attention, over time, the strong demand for the extraordinary was too strong to ignore.[22] Instead of profiling a country or region with parts of their heritage that were widespread and quite common or could provide a dignified image, the most exceptional and colourful building blocks were preferred, creating a world of nation-states with easily recognisable, unique identities. Hetero images, thus, often trumped auto images. Moreover, each of these nations consisted of a wide variety of regions, each of which had to be presented as unique and different as well.

The other processes of isomorphic change were less ambiguous in nature. *Coercion* was primarily limited to the guidelines imposed by the central organisation of a world fair or to metropoles taking decisions for their colonies. At the Paris Universal Exposition of 1878, for instance, countries were required to construct their section of the Rue des Nations in a characteristic style. In Chicago's Century of Progress International Exposition of 1933, pavilions in historical or vernacular styles were prohibited in favour of modernist buildings.[23] *Normative pressure* as a consequence of a process of professionalisation was widespread. As world fairs were serial events in which many organisers, architects, impresarios, business people, museum officials, showmen, arti-

21 Joep Leerssen, "Trademarking the Nation: World Fairs, Spectacles, and the Banalization of Nationalism," in *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities*, ed. Joep Leerssen and Eric Storm (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 31–52.

22 Manuel Viera, *El imaginario español en las Exposiciones Universales del siglo XIX: exotismo y modernidad* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2020), 133–269.

23 Wörner, *Vergnügung und Belehrung*, 28; Lisa D. Schrenk, *Building a Century of Progress: The Architecture of Chicago's 1933–34 World's Fair* (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2007).

sans and musicians participated several times, they set professional standards to which newcomers generally adhered.[24] *Mimesis* also occurred frequently. Most governments produced extensive reports, not just when they organised a world fair themselves, but also when they participated in an international exhibition abroad. They tried to learn from their own failures, while signalling promising innovations that could be found elsewhere at the fairground as a source of inspiration for the future. Museum officials, entrepreneurs and other professionals, moreover, were keen to explore fresh opportunities, especially those that had been a success. Thus, the template of the Hindeloopen room was quickly copied, and so were Chicago's ethnographic villages.

These four mechanisms of isomorphic change operated within the context of the existing international order, which was ingrained in the entire setup of world fairs. The main participants were countries, while private exhibitors were mostly also divided according to nationality, as the large exhibition halls were divided into national sections. Thus, in general, the governments of the participating countries, or imperial authorities in the case of colonies, organised or coordinated the contribution of their nation or empire. This meant that vernacular culture, even if it was structured around regions, was almost always represented in a national context. This was also generally the case for ethnographic villages organised by private entrepreneurs. Even colonies were part of the international order, and implicitly they were presented as nations in the making.[25] This implied that regional identities were subsumed under a larger national identity and that vernacular culture was used to show the regional diversity of the nation, without threatening its fundamental unity.

However, there were some exceptions. Several world fairs or large-scale exhibitions were organised in "stateless nations", in peripheral regions or by cities. Major cities in "stateless nations", such as Antwerp and Ghent in Flanders, Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland and Barcelona in Catalonia, were particularly active on the exhibition front. They mostly aimed to present themselves as active participants in modern, industrial civilisation.[26]

24 Groß, "The New York Crystal Palace"; Geppert, *Fleeting Cities*, 261–79; Sadiah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

25 See for instance: Sharon L. Hirsh, "Swiss Art and National Identity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in *Art, Culture and National Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, ed. Sharon L. Hirsh and Michelle Facos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 250–87; Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

26 Craig Lamont, *The Cultural Memory of Georgian Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 169–91; Ignasi de Solà-Morales, *La Exposición Internacional de Barcelona 1914-1929: arquitectura y ciudad* (Barcelona: Feria, 1985).

There were also many provincial cities–such as Cork, Wolverhampton, Nancy, Valencia, Naples and Lemberg/Lviv in Europe or Omaha, Buffalo and Seattle in the United States – that organised a major exhibition. Sometimes, these exhibitions were meant to underline the modernity of the city and its surroundings. This was, for instance, the case with the International Electro-Technical Exhibition in Frankfurt am Main, held in 1891, or Newcastle's North-East Coast Exhibition of 1929.[27] On other occasions, the emphasis was more on tradition and vernacular heritage, which was the case with San Diego's Panama-California Exposition of 1915 and Seville's Ibero-American Exposition of 1929 and which will be analysed in the next section.

Vernacular Culture and Regional Identities in San Diego and Seville

How then did the peripheral cities of Seville and San Diego deal with the mechanisms of isomorphic change, the typicality effect and the self-evident context of the international order? Both expositions had their origins among the local business elite, which around 1910 aimed to put their city on the map and boost the local economy. Their proposals were quickly taken up by the city council, which moreover hoped to use the opportunity for a major restructuring of the urban landscape. In both cases, the organisers decided to avoid the Beaux-Arts Classicism, which had been the preferred style for official pavilions at world fairs until then, in favour of an architecture that fitted the local climate, geography and historical traditions. At both expositions, the pavilion in a characteristic architectural style was the main template that was adopted from earlier world fairs. Both also had one ethnographic village, while within the pavilions, artisans showed their traditional skills. The organisers mostly used experienced professionals for the organisation, the design of the buildings, the layout of the venue and for the shows that could be visited.

San Diego was a modest city in Southern California that expanded rapidly in the late nineteenth century and was proud of its roots in the late Spanish colonial era. The Panama-California Exposition was organised to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal, and according to the official request for federal support, its aim was to "portray the romance, history and beauty and native arts of the Great Southwest and of Latin America".

27 Thomas Großbölting, *"Im Reich Der Arbeit": Die Repräsentation Gesellschaftlicher Ordnung in Den Deutschen Industrie- Und Gewerbeausstellungen 1790-1914* (Munich: De Gruyter, 2008), 290–92 and 351–56; Michael Barke, "The North East Coast Exhibition of 1929: Entrenchment or Modernity?," *Northern History* 51, no. 1 (2014): 153–76.

Aware of earlier world fairs in the United States and the plans of their main competitor in San Francisco, the organisers clearly sought to emphasise the regional distinctiveness of their project.[28] The initial plan was to use the typical style of the Spanish mission buildings, such as the one that was dedicated to San Diego de Alcalá in 1769 by Father Junípero Serra. However, according to Bertram Goodhue, the main architect of the exhibition and an expert on colonial architecture in Mexico, the mission buildings had been merely a minor, vernacular part of a much larger colonial heritage. Thus, he preferred to use the more spectacular Spanish colonial architecture of Mexico as the source of inspiration for the main pavilions of the exhibition, as it was more suited to attract the masses. In an illustrated book on the exhibition, Clarence Stein, Goodhue's assistant, argued that the colonial architecture had not been imposed integrally by the metropole, but had been adapted to the New World, primarily by indigenous artisans employed by the colonial administration. Stein therefore asserted: "During three centuries these Aztec and Mextizo [sic] artisans developed a style of artistic workmanship that combined not only the crowded–almost Oriental–splendor of Aztec carving and love of rich coloring, but much of the best of the artistic inheritance of the Spanish masters".[29]

Thus, Spanish Colonial Baroque was used for the impressive California Building at the main side of the California Quadrangle, while the minor buildings surrounding the other sides were done in the more austere Mission Style (figure 1). The location of the exhibition in the new Balboa Park, with a spectacular bridge over the canyon as the main entrance (figure 2), added to the fairy-like outlook of the exhibition grounds. A brochure, published in 1914, boasted that San Diego would host "the most different exposition you ever saw". However, it was not an arbitrary fantasy. The anonymous author asserted that the Spanish conquistadores and padres had planted the seeds of "civilisation" on American soil before the Dutch and English even set foot in New England.[30] Using the cultural heritage of neighbouring Mexico, moreover, was not a sign of irredentist tendencies. The organisers in San Diego were proud of their "own" exceptional heritage

28 Matthew F. Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 1–80, quote 26.

29 Clarence Stein, "A Triumph of the Spanish Colonial Style," in *The Architecture and the Gardens of the San Diego Exposition*, ed. Carleton Monroe Winslow et al. (San Francisco: Elder, 1916), 12–13.

30 *Panama California Exposition* (San Diego, 1914).

Fig. 1: Bertram Goodhue, California Building, Panama-California Exposition, San Diego 1914 (Source: postcard, with permission of The Wolfsonian – Florida International University, Miami).

that, according to them, deserved to be recognised as a crucial part of the national patrimony of the United States.[31]

New Mexico had also appropriated the Mission Revival Style for its pavilion at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, organised in St. Louis in 1904. However, another exhibit from New Mexico had attracted more attention: the Cliff Dwellers, a kind of ethnographic village with Pueblo Indians. The archaeologist Edgar Lee Hewitt, the first director of the newly founded New Mexico Museum, drew his conclusions and began to promote the Pueblo Style for the redevelopment of Santa Fe. In subsequent decades, this would prove to be a huge success, providing the city with a unique and attractive profile. Hewitt was also responsible for New Mexico's contribution to the

31 See also: Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs*, 109.

Fig. 2: Official guidebook of the Panama California Exposition in San Diego 1915 (Source: Official Guide Book 1915, cover).

Panama California Exhibition, and he commissioned a pavilion that mixed the terraced forms of the Pueblo Style with the balconies and towers of the Spanish missions (figure 3). The official guidebook of the exposition justified the choice, arguing that "the Spanish settlers used Indian ideas and Indian materials", further implying that the Santa Fe or Pueblo Style was a unique contribution to America's regionally and ethnically diverse cultural heritage.[32] Hewitt also closely collaborated with the Santa Fe Railways and local Native Americans to organise a large ethnographic village at the Panama California Exposition: the Painted Desert (figure 4).

32 *Official Guide Book of the Panama California Exposition San Diego 1915* (San Diego: 1915, n.d.), 31; See also: Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 91–92, 112–31.

Fig. 3: Rapp, Rapp and Hendrickson, New Mexico Building, San Diego (Source: Wikimedia).

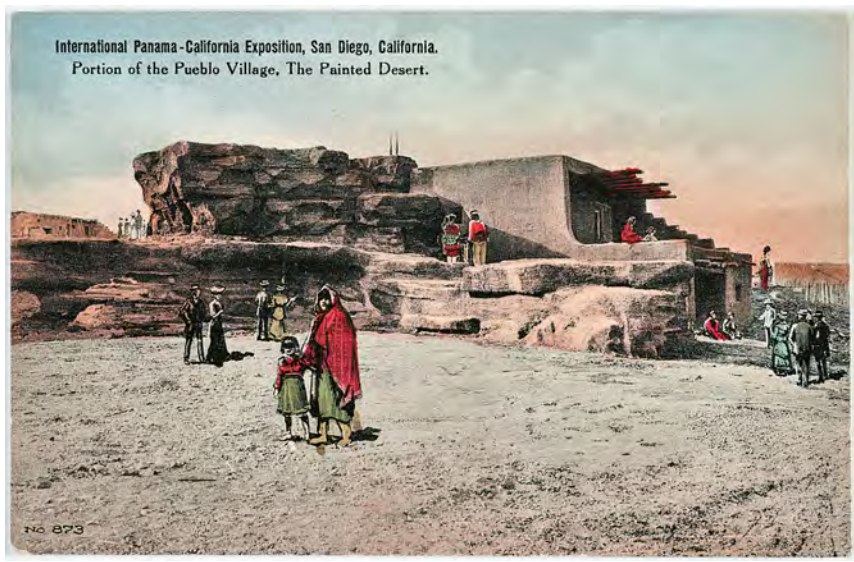

Fig. 4: Postcard, International Panama-California Exposition, San Diego, California. Portion of the Pueblo Village, The Painted Desert, 1915 (Source: Published with the permission of The Wolfsonian – Florida International University, Miami).

In a village with Pueblo houses, Native American showmen and artisans earned their money by weaving rugs, pounding out copper or giving folkloric performances for large crowds. The celebrated Pueblo artisan María Martínez and her family were also present. She collaborated closely with the staff of the New Mexico Museum to reinvent the indigenous earthen-

ware that had been excavated around Santa Fe.[33] Thus, even the re-invented vernacular traditions of Native Americans, who still suffered widespread marginalisation and discrimination, were appropriated as another attractive part of the country's regionally diversified heritage.

Seville's international exhibition had to be postponed several times. Finally, it only opened its doors in 1929. Moreover, it was held at the same time as the International Exhibition of Barcelona, so some form of coordination was needed. A central theme of both exhibitions was art, in which Spain excelled, but Barcelona also focused on industry and sport. Even though industry and commerce were not absent in Seville's Ibero-American Exhibition, in line with the Andalusian context, more emphasis was put on history, agriculture and cattle breeding. Seville hosted pavilions from Portugal, the Americas and the few remaining Spanish colonies, whereas Barcelona welcomed European countries. Both exhibitions had one ethnographic village: Seville had a Moorish neighbourhood, while Barcelona housed an impressive Spanish Village.[34]

Like in San Diego, the Sevillian organisers argued that the exhibition should be in harmony with the climate and character of the city. However, they were also averse to associating Seville with flamenco dancers, bullfighters and other stereotypical images traditionally linked to Andalusia. Instead, they preferred to provide a dignified and sanitised image of the city. Nonetheless, they made many direct and indirect references to the impressive heritage of Al-Andalus, which, like the references to the Spanish colonial patrimony in San Diego, served as an exotic source of inspiration for a spectacular exhibition. The organisers commissioned Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier with the task of redesigning the Maria Luisa Park where the exhibition would be held, while taking into account local traditions. Thus, the experienced French designer took his inspiration mostly from the gardens of Andalusia's most famous Moorish palaces. The main architect, Aníbal González Álvarez, promised to apply "un tradicionalismo regional" (a regional traditionalism) to his designs for the main exhibition pavil-

33 *Official Guide Book*, 14; Bokovoy, *The San Diego World's Fairs*, 114–38; M. Elizabeth Boone, *"The Spanish Element in Our Nationality": Spain and America at the World's Fairs and Centennial Celebrations, 1876-1915* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020).

34 Eduardo Rodríguez Bernal, *Historia de La Exposición Ibero-Americana de Sevilla de 1929* (Sevilla: Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 1994); Solà-Morales, *Exposición Internacional de Barcelona*.

Fig. 5: Aníbal González Álvarez, Pavilion for Industry and Decorative Arts
(Source © ICAS-SAHP, Fototeca Municipal de Sevilla, Serrano archive, 1929).

Fig. 6: Aníbal González Álvarez, Plaza de España
(Source © ICAS-SAHP, Fototeca Municipal de Sevilla, Serrano archive, 1929).

ions.[35] Nevertheless, he did not slavishly copy the well-known monuments of Al Andalus, as had already happened at several earlier world fairs outside of Spain. His attempt to develop a new Sevillian regionalist style was best visible in his Neo-Mudéjar Pavilion for Industry and Decorative Arts (figure 5) and the exhibition's centrepiece: the Plaza de España (figure 6). The latter, an impressive elliptical building, was a kind of synthesis of the highlights of Spanish architecture from the Renaissance and Baroque. A canal with four bridges and beautiful ceramic decorations heightened the attractiveness of the ensemble. However, his profuse use of brick, tiles, wrought iron, and glazed ceramics can be explained by his wish to revive local artisanal traditions, most of which originated from Al-Andalus.[36]

Thus, the similarity with San Diego is striking. Even though organisers in Seville and San Diego aimed to give an original twist to their exhibition projects, they both adopted tried and tested templates and they both used the most outstanding building blocks of their local heritage to create a recognisable overall product, using primarily attractive vernacular elements and exotic architectural traditions that could even be appropriated from a neighbouring country, an exotic distant past or a disdained indigenous group. Clear examples of the typicality effect. But the mechanism of competition can also be detected. San Diego rivalled with San Francisco and earlier North American world fairs, while Seville had to compete with Barcelona. The Latin American countries that participated in the Ibero-American Exposition also felt the urge to stand out. The main problem was that they all shared a similar Spanish colonial heritage from which most of them drew inspiration for the design of their pavilion. Thus, Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia and Cuba opted for a Neo-Colonial style. By selecting a Neo-Californian building, even the United States adopted the same formula. Nonetheless, each of them tried to give their pavilion a national flavour.[37]

The most remarkable national pavilions, however, were those that selected a different source of inspiration. Peru and Mexico – like New Mexico – made use of their rich indigenous heritage to give their pavilions an

35 Alberto Villar Movellán, *Arquitectura del regionalismo en Sevilla, 1900-1935* (Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1979), 167–81 and 191–238, quote 234; Rodríguez Bernal, *Historia de la Exposición Ibero-Americana*, 86–94 and 146–61; Manuel Trillo de Leyva, *La Exposición Iberoamericana: la transformación urbana de Sevilla* (Sevilla: Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 1980), 58–90.

36 Rodríguez Bernal, *Historia de la Exposición Ibero-Americana*, 86–94 and 146–66; Trillo de Leyva, *La Exposición Iberoamericana*, 58–90; Villar Movellán, *Arquitectura del regionalismo en Sevilla*, 250–54, 274–85 and 418–27; See for earlier Moorish pavilions: Sazatornil Ruiz, "Fantasías Andaluzas."

37 Amparo Graciani García, *La participación internacional y colonial en la Exposición Iberoamericana de Sevilla de 1929* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2010), 178–207, 313–56, and 372–88.

exotic twist. In the case of Peru, architect Manuel Piqueras Cotolí clad a typical Baroque colonial palace in indigenous decorative forms, mostly inspired by the pre-Colombian ruins of Tiwanaku and Chavín de Huantar, which thus were redefined as a kind of national heartland (figure 7). The courtyard was decorated with typical columns, stepped zig-zag frames and statues of characteristic animals, such as condors and lamas. The Mexican pavilion, designed by Manuel Amábilis Domínguez, was inspired by the indigenous civilisation of the Toltec Empire, more specifically by the impressive ruins of Uxmal and Chichén Itzá in his native Yucatan, another new regional heartland (figure 8). In an illustrated book on his masterpiece, he argued that the heritage of "nuestros más lejanos abuelos" (our most distant grandfathers) had been unjustly ignored by the country's elites. However, these remains were still alive among the popular classes, and like Stein in San Diego and González in the Plaza de España, he hoped to revive the traditional arts and crafts. According to him a "sedimento inalienable de la raza" (inalienable sediment of our race) was "en el corazón y en los dedos del indio, que tejía sus telas con los iris y matices de sus abuelos y pintaba sus ingenuidades encantadoras en su cerámica, en los templos de sus pueblos, en los muros de sus humildes moradas, en los bordados y en las labores de sus trajes típicos" (nested in the heart and fingers of the Indian, who weaves the fabrics with the colours and hues of his grandparents and painted enchanting and simple motifs in his pottery, in the temples of his villages, in the walls of

Fig. 7: Manuel Piqueras Cotolí, Pavilion of Peru
(Source © ICAS-SAHP, Fototeca Municipal de Sevilla, Serrano archive, 1929).

Fig. 8: Manuel Amábilis Domínguez, Pavillion of Mexico
(Source © ICAS-SAHP, Fototeca Municipal de Sevilla, Serrano archive, 1929).

Fig. 9: Juan Gutiérrez Martínez, Pavilion of Chile
(Source © ICAS-SAHP, Fototeca Municipal de Sevilla, Serrano archive, 1929).

his humble dwellings, in the embroidery and needlework of his typical costumes).[38]

The wish to stand out was very prominent in Chile as well. The architect of the national pavilion, Juan Gutiérrez Martínez, designed a "cold" building inspired by the snow-covered Andes peaks, which enabled the country to distinguish itself particularly from its tropical neighbours (figure 9). In order to attract European immigrants, the Chilean ambassador in Spain even argued that the authorities should put much emphasis on the moderate climate of the country, which was perfectly suited "para el desarrollo de la raza blanca" (for the development of the white race). In order to stand out, the most extraordinary aspects of a country's natural patrimony could also be used. Thus, in the case of Mexico and Chile, salient aspects of the indigenous heritage and the natural patrimony of some of the most outstanding regions were used to represent the nation on an international stage, redefining them in the process as ethnic or natural heartlands. Even though the outcome supposedly was uniquely tied to a particular nation, in fact all countries and regions suffered similar pressures to define their territorial identities and they responded in very similar ways by looking for the most extraordinary aspects of their cultural and natural heritage, while adopting generic templates and forms that had proven their worth at earlier occasions.[39]

Conclusion

The construction of regional identities undoubtedly was a global process that gained pace during the second half of the nineteenth century. Even though each region supposedly had a different and unique identity, processes of regional identity formation showed many transnational similarities. Although domestic actors had some leeway to craft their own territorial identities, they were also severely restrained by participating in a global quest for regional authenticity. This collective learning process of how to best construct a credible and attractive territorial identity can be apprehended by focusing on world fairs. International exhibitions, first of all, were instrumental in producing a rapidly growing interest in the vernac-

38 Manuel Amábilis Domínguez, *El pabellón de México en la Exposición Ibero-Americana de Sevilla* (Mexico: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1929), 21–22; see also: Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs*, 200–241; Graciani García, *La participación internacional y colonial*, 127–78 and 207–32.

39 Sylvia Dümmer Scheel, *Sin tropicalismos ni exageraciones: la construcción de la imagen de Chile para la Exposición Iberoamericana de Sevilla en 1929* (Santiago de Chile: RIL, 2012), passim, quote 169.

ular culture of the regions. Because of their quaintness, expressions of vernacular culture were very successful in drawing the attention of the crowds. This implied that territorial identities were increasingly constructed, not through their contributions to a cosmopolitan high culture, but – and this was particularly true for rural regions – by using their vernacular heritage.

However, this chapter has also shown how "heritage" had to be defined. The mechanisms of such a definition or selection process functioned in very similar ways around the globe. Pushed by the highly competitive environment of the world fairs, organisers were under strong pressure to select the most extraordinary, colourful and spectacular building blocks of their vernacular heritage, even if they had a questionable reputation at home, such as the Islamic heritage of the Moorish invaders in Southern Spain, the vestiges of Spanish colonial conquerors in Mexico and the United States or the "primitive" traditions of the Native Americans that had barely escaped annihilation at the hands of the European settlers. The isomorphic mechanism of competition led to the typicality effect: all regions and countries suffered heavy pressure to show themselves to be unique.

However, they did so by employing very similar means. Aspects of vernacular heritage at world fairs were primarily shown through successful templates, such as the diorama, the pavilion, the ethnographic village, traditional arts and crafts and typical performances. The personnel, moreover, consisted increasingly of experienced specialists, such as impresarios, architects, showmen and women, artisans, etc., who adopted the transnational professional standards that began to dominate the world of exhibitions throughout the globe. Moreover, the international system was not just taken for granted by almost all decision-makers, participants and visitors; it also provided the framework for most international exhibitions, thus subordinating regional identities to larger national or imperial identities. We may therefore conclude that the construction of regional identities was not merely caused by an "awakening of the provinces", nor by myriad individual transfers within transnational networks, but primarily by global isomorphic mechanisms that operated within the established international framework.

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