

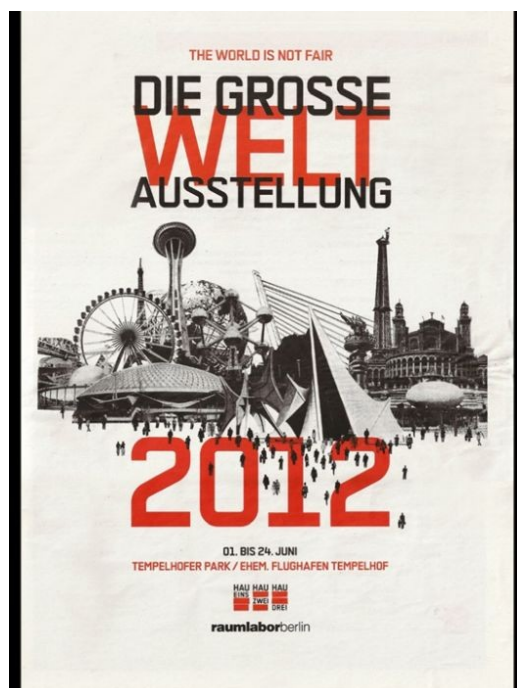
The Making of (Post)Colonial World's Fairs Coping with the Duress of the Past in Today's Representational Work

Alexa Färber

Abstract

This article explores the agency of (post)colonial professional self-positioning through globalised forms of representational work. It deepens our understanding of the constraints and duress from the colonial past involved in the making of (post)colonial world's fairs by analysing representational work related to the Moroccan contribution to Expo 2000. It shifts the perspective from the aesthetics of Expo contributions to the process of making aesthetic objects for such a world's fair. Stressing the specific limited and intensified temporality of representational work in the

historical context of world's fairs allows for insights into the aspirations of those who are engaged in this mode of project work. Taking an ethnographic perspective onto the working context in the Moroccan Expo office, I will show how the daily practice allowed for a certain 'nevertheless' when facing the duress of the colonial past, as described by Laura Ann Stoler (2016). Finally, the Moroccan contribution to Expo 2000 will be briefly discussed with respect to later and as yet unrealised pavilions.



1 Title of the magazine accompanying the art project "The Great World's Fair" on the former Tempelhof airfield, Berlin, organised by raumlaborberlin & Hebbel am Ufer, 2012 (courtesy raumlaborberlin & Hebbel am Ufer)

[1] In the summer of 2012, the architecture collective *raumlaborberlin*, in collaboration with the experimental theatre *Hebbel am Ufer*, opened the "The Great World's Fair" on *Tempelhofer Feld* in Berlin and proclaimed: "The world is not fair" (Fig. 1).¹ Working with a number of emerging and established artists, the organisers of this "world's fair" aimed to address urban and local controversies. With 15 "pavilions" (site-specific art installations), they wanted to participate in and re-energise the debate on the future use of the immense and historically significant inner-city area of *Tempelhofer Feld*, including its monumental former airport building constructed during the Nazi era. With this project, the architecture collective wanted above all to emphasise that "urban development with and for large-scale events is no longer timely [sic] and has usually taken place without regard for the history of a city and its inhabitants".² Aside from that local context the claim of the art project, disguised as a world's fair, was nevertheless universal: "The world is not fair!"

[2] Given the famous history of world's fairs as large-scale urban events it does not come as a surprise that their representational structure was neither *equal for* nor *fair to* all participants. During the 19th century, world's fairs quickly became agents of modernity, proclaiming progress as a universal 'fate', and thus reproducing inequality. Their "geographically and culturally

¹ This article is dedicated to Matthias Rick, architect and co-founder of *raumlaborberlin*, who died while preparing with great energy and warmth the "The Great World's Fair" on *Tempelhofer Feld*.

² "The Great World's Fair 2012", in: *raumlaborberlin*, URL: <http://raumlabor.net/die-grosse-weltausstellung/> (accessed July 18, 2020).

construed meta-narratives of supremacy were an integral feature of capitalism under the condition of colonialism".³ We can easily discern the semantic affordance of modernity as universal progress from their themes and titles: be it "Industry of all Nations" (London, 1851), "New Technologies" (Paris, 1878), or simply "Modern Life" (Brussels, 1897), "A Century of Progress" (Chicago, 1933/34) or "Man in the Space Age" (Seattle, 1962). The racialised representations that were realised within these material-semantic landscapes consisted of dominating and exploited societies, competing nations and dictatorships, corporations and amusement areas. Only in the 1980s were the semantics of progress more obviously questioned, with predominantly mediating and environment-related topics. Compared to their predecessors, they may lose their 'dramatic' attire and correspondingly, according to Fred Nadis, their 'appeal'.⁴

From analysing the aesthetics of Expos to researching representational work

[3] The first world's fair in Germany, Expo 2000 in Hanover,⁵ which serves as a focal point for this contribution, had been given the rather vague motto "Man – Nature – Technology". This trinity of concepts refused to follow a simple ideology of progress. On the contrary, 'nature' was proclaimed the unavoidable reference point for 'mankind' and 'technology'. This approach was underlined by an important "thematic area" that raised issues about the world's sustainable future (with exhibitions on "Basic Needs", "Environment: Landscape, Climate", and the "Future of Health") and numerous specialised events focusing on these concerns.⁶ Did these balanced claims of Expo 2000 – or indeed its successors, "Nature's Wisdom" (Aichi, 2005), "Better City – Better Life" (Shanghai, 2010), "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life" (Milan, 2015) or "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future" (Dubai, 2020) – show a way out of the unequal and unfair representational structure of such large-scale events, anchored as they were in imperialism and realised by colonialism? What kind of representational agency has been offered by world's fairs in the post-colonial era, especially to independent participants?

³ Tim Winter, "Shanghai 2010, in a Tradition of Mega-events, Nation-building and Modernity," in: *Shanghai Expo: An International Forum on the Future of Cities*, ed. Tim Winter, London/New York 2013, 25-43: 36.

⁴ Fred Nadis, "Nature at Aichi World's Expo 2005", in: *Technology and Culture* 48 (2007), no. 3, 575-581: 575 and 581.

⁵ Expo 2000 did not take place in the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany, but in Hanover, the rather pale capital of Lower Saxony. In the run-up to the World Expo, it won by a slim majority against the other World Expo applicants for the symbolic year 2000, and also met with strong resistance from the local population. Like many other contemporary world's fairs, Expo 2000 has had more of a local impact on infrastructure than on the national collective memory, or on creating any significant legacy with respect to the UN Agenda 21 sustainability goals that it was signed up to.

⁶ See Martin Roth et al., eds., *Der Themenpark der EXPO 2000. Die Entdeckung einer neuen Welt*, 2 vols., Vienna/New York 2000. The "Themenpark" consisted of eleven individual exhibitions that were conceived by an Expo-team around cultural historian Martin Roth (1955–2017) and designed by established and emerging architects and artists, such as BBM, Toyo Ito, Jean Nouvel or Rajeev Sethi. See Alexa Färber, *Weltausstellung als Wissensmodus: Ethnographie einer Repräsentationsarbeit*, Berlin 2006 (= *Forum Europäische Ethnologie*, 5), 161-250.

[4] Ann Laura Stoler insists, in her comprehensive research on the structural presence of imperial history in today's societies, that colonial power relations endure in multiple ways.⁷ Although Stoler's argument relies on more existential areas of life, I would like to borrow her notion of "duress" in order to consider the lasting effects of the imperial history of world's fairs and their colonial representational order. I am particularly interested in how, long after independence, a former colony such as the Kingdom of Morocco engages with the balanced ideology and integrative internationalism of contemporary world's fairs, such as the Expo 2000 in Hanover. Morocco has a long history of contributions to universal exhibitions (since 1867) and a rather competitive engagement. Its participation in world's fairs has therefore distinguished itself from, for example, other Arab⁸ or African⁹ contributions in that it constructed an individual pavilion or stand, such as at Expo 2000. Morocco also stood out in terms of its high level of investment and expenditures (Sevilla, 1992),¹⁰ and excelled with respect to its high-profile locations (at Shanghai in 2010, its stand was close to the Chinese contribution), and the winning of medals (Aichi, 2005; Shanghai, 2010).

[5] This self-positioning involves, as I will demonstrate, diverse processes of comparative scaling that simultaneously structure and individualise the "collective"¹¹ that can be perceived as "Morocco". Such self-representation, making possible this complicated spatio-temporal collective, is what I call representational work.¹² Representational work in the context of world's fairs happens in negotiation with the host organisers, combined with speculation about the future

⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times*, Durham, NC 2016.

⁸ To the best of my knowledge there is only one study on the contribution of an Arab country to a recent world's fair published in English, French or German: Hart Cohen's analysis of the Saudi Arabia pavilion at Expo 2010 in Shanghai. He is interested in the extensive use of immersive media and their effect on "brand recognition". Hart Cohen, "Culture, Nation and Technology: Immersive Media and the Saudi Arabia Pavilion", in: *Shanghai Expo: An International Forum on the Future of Cities*, ed. Tim Winter, London/New York 2013, 155-169: 155.

⁹ The extremely interesting and complicated self-positioning of (official) Moroccan cultural representations with regard to its "africanity" is developed in: Jessica Winegar and Katarzyna Pieprzak, "Africa North, South, and In Between", in: *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture* 3 (2009), no. 1, 3-11, introductory essay to the special issue "Africanity and North Africa".

¹⁰ In Seville's Expo 92, the Moroccan pavilion was one of the biggest and most expensive constructions and acclaimed for its quality. See Penelope Harvey, *Hybrids of Modernity: Anthropology, the Nation State and the Universal Exhibition*, London 1996, 144. This was a benchmark, for better or worse, for the development of the contribution to Expo 2000.

¹¹ The notion of "collective" derives from an actor-network theory perspective exemplified by Anne Christine Trémon's exploration of representational work for the contribution of the city of Paris and the Île-de-France to a thematic section at Expo 2010 in Shanghai, or from Sophie Houdart's studies on Expo 2013 in Aichi and Expo 2015 in Shanghai. Anne-Christine Trémon, "Paris à l'Expo, l'universel à Shanghai", in: *Ethnographier l'universel. L'Exposition Shanghai 2010 "Better city, better life"*, eds. Brigitte Bapendier and Sophie Houdart, Nanterre 2015, 185-222: 188; Sophie Houdart, *L'universel à vue d'œil. Anthropologie de l'Exposition Internationale japonaise Aichi 2005*, Paris 2013; Sophie Houdart, "La foule à l'Expo", in: *Ethnographier l'universel. L'Exposition Shanghai 2010 "Better city, better life"*, eds. Brigitte Bapendier and Sophie Houdart, Nanterre 2015, 71-102.

¹² Färber (2006).

visitors; it is above all the result of the participant's assessment of their expectations for a world's fair, and subsequently which (state) organisation will implement them (e.g. a ministry of tourism, economy, culture or foreign affairs, or other corporations). Exploring the day-to-day practice of representational work, the main interrogation of this paper is whether the cultural legacies of colonialism are inscribed not only in what is being re/presented, but also in the way in which such a temporary representation is realised.

[6] In my ethnographic study of almost 20 years ago,¹³ I understood these strategies of representation as "mimicry", referencing Homi Bhabha's work on colonial authority and the creation of a "third space" of aesthetic articulation.¹⁴ However, the persistence of these powerful effects was clearly perceptible in Morocco's final contribution to Expo 2000. This was obvious to those who developed the country's participation in Expo 2000, as I also witnessed in my fieldwork in Rabat/Morocco. Thus I would like to complicate insights into the duress of the imperial order by analysing above all the 'making of' a (post)colonial contribution to a (post)colonial world's fair. In order to do so I examine the representational work that brings into being such an aesthetic contribution, which I deem to be project work. Stressing the specific limited and intensified temporality of representational work as project work offers insights into the expectations of those who are engaged in this mode of work. In this case it showed that it was less the aesthetic product of the work that counted and more the experience of their engagement and where it could hopefully lead. Therefore in this article I want to shift the perspective from the aesthetics of an Expo contribution to the 'making of' aesthetic objects for an Expo.

[7] I will first trace project work back to the historical context of world's fairs and show its intrinsic relation to the ideal of the entrepreneurial self. As an illustration of project work in (post)colonial times, I draw on my fieldwork in the Expo office in Rabat. Second, I will develop the concept of representational work as project work and clarify the ethnographic perspective it encompasses. With insights into the broader working context of the Moroccan Expo office, I will show how complicated the relationship between representational work and representation is in the daily working practice, in other words, the relationship between the making of a project and the outcome of the project, in this case the pavilion at Expo 2000. Finally the Moroccan contribution to Expo 2000 is briefly discussed with respect to later and as yet unrealised pavilions, in order to explore the agency of (post)colonial self-positioning and today's Expos as an "interesting laboratory for observing competing politics of identity"¹⁵. However, the main argument of this article is concerned with analysing the daily practice of professional self-positioning through globalised forms of representational work.

¹³ Alexa Färber, "The Making of Geographies of Knowledge at World's Fairs: Morocco at Expo 2000 in Hanover", in: *Geographies of Science*, eds. Peter Meusberger, David N. Livingstone and Heike Jöns, Dordrecht 2010, 165-181.

¹⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London 1994.

¹⁵ Ola Söderström, "Expo.02: Exhibiting Swiss identity", in: *Ecumene* 8 (2001), no. 4, 497-501: 501.

Traces of the future: entrepreneurial selves and project work at world's fairs

[8] With its project "Great World Expo – The world is not fair", a collective of architects like *raumlaborberlin* may denounce urban development through large-scale events and, particularly, the promise of progress of capitalist Modernism; yet it does not escape the usual economic conditions for creative work in the cultural sector. Project work is deeply inscribed into late Capitalism. It is characterised by a limited and intensified temporality, in which the idealised separation of work and leisure time once introduced by Henry Ford is nevertheless suspended. It is realised in teamwork and is ideally characterised by low hierarchies, which in turn allow working relationships and private relationships to coincide.¹⁶ Thus, *raumlaborberlin* also work together as colleagues and friends, they work on many other projects at the same time and develop future projects from the currently ongoing project. After all, project work carries with it a concept of creativity that is anchored and retrievable in the subject, and at the same time learnable and plannable.¹⁷ The creative exploitation of emotions, the analysis of defeats, and the moderation of conflicts as individual experiences are all inscribed into the idealised anthropological figure that emerges from this project work as the "entrepreneurial self".¹⁸

Glimpses of project work at a 19th century world's fair ...

[9] Both the idealised entrepreneurial self and project work as a real working condition can be traced back to the world's fairs of the 19th century. The popular *Revue illustrée*, in which various authors commented on the *Exposition universelle de Paris de 1889*, included a depiction of architect Charles Garnier (1828–1898) that is telling in this context (Fig. 2). The drawing decorated the end of an article by Émile Goudeau (1849–1906). Goudeau, himself a vibrant personality with various writing assignments, emphasised the entertainment value of the 1889 world's fair (which celebrated the centennial of the French Revolution) and how it consumed the time of everyone involved.¹⁹ This also seemed to apply to Charles Garnier, who is depicted as a somewhat confused

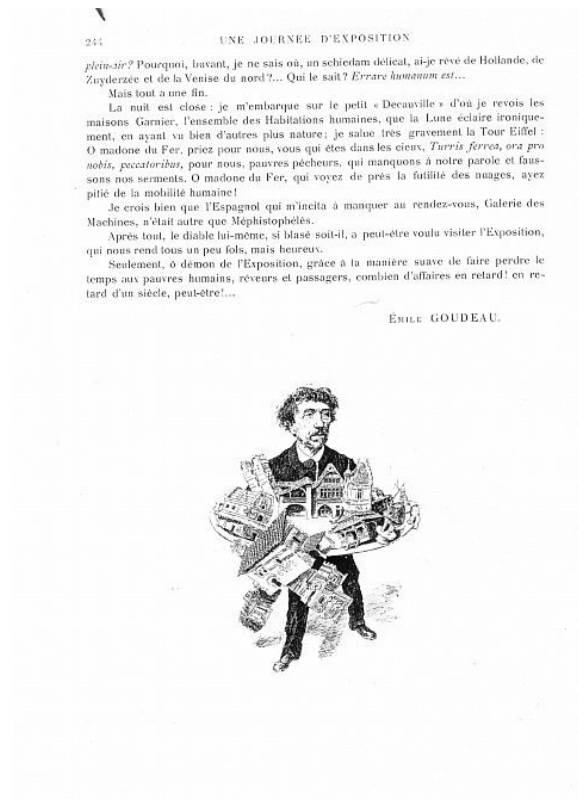
¹⁶ For a nuanced analysis of the development of project work and the entrepreneurial self, see Ulrich Bröckling, *Das unternehmerische Selbst. Soziologie einer Subjektivierungsform*, Frankfurt am Main 2007; Felix Klopotek, "Projekt", in: *Gouvernementalität der Gegenwart. Studien zur Ökonomisierung des Sozialen*, eds. Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann and Thomas Lemke, Frankfurt am Main 2000, 216-221; Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *Der neue Geist des Kapitalismus*, transl. Michael Tillmann, Konstanz 2003.

¹⁷ Bröckling (2007).

¹⁸ Cf. Bröckling (2007).

¹⁹ Émile Goudeau, "Une Journée d'Exposition (II)", in: *Revue illustrée*, 4th year, vol. 8 (1889), no. 92, 240-244. This article is the second part of a longer piece that focuses on the overwhelming and yet at the same time superficial attractions of the world's fair.

exhibition organiser. With difficulty he holds in one hand a potential model of his exhibition "L'histoire de l'habitation humaine", committed to the educational mission of the 1889 world's fair.²⁰



2 Architect Charles Garnier depicted as exhausted exhibition maker in the *Revue illustrée*, 4th year, vol. 8 (1889), no. 92, p. 244

The drawing's theme is the thin line between success and failure as subjectified in Garnier as the exhibition maker (architect, conceiver, organiser, and developer). An independent "maker" such as Garnier should be concerned about this conflation. Any possible overload and therefore the failure of a project could lead to a loss of credibility and, as a consequence, a loss of follow-up projects. As with any great undertaking, even if self-assessment and overestimation are a prerequisite for its initiation, the modern exhibition maker needs to take care to reconcile the high demands with an ultimately successful realisation of his project. Charles Garnier's portrait is,

²⁰ Charles Garnier was a consulting architect for the World Expo and was 61 years old at the time. Garnier actually wanted to build an open-air museum in the Bois de Boulogne; but he then 'limited' the project to the construction of 44 houses, which seems hard to believe from today's perspective. This complex undertaking, which was eventually realised at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, was supplemented by dioramas on the history of labor and ethnography and in many ways conveyed the racialised historiography of nationalism and progress. Cf. Alice von Plato, *Präsentierte Geschichte: Ausstellungskultur und Massenpublikum im Frankreich des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2001.

in my view, an early representation of exhibition making and how to deal with the challenges to the imagined entrepreneurial self in a project work such as a world's fair.²¹

[10] This suggestive visualisation of the 'excessiveness' of project work in the context of exhibition making also points to the fact that we know little about the day-to-day practice of making a world's fair.²² But we have hints as to the project-related intensity of creative work, which was apparently already valid for Garnier in the context of world's fairs and is recurrent in the realm of cultural production and beyond. Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, for example, points out the multifaceted tasks that faced the makers of Mexico's national contributions to the world's fairs of the late 19th century, when "politicians and technocrats [...] simultaneously were poets, writers, and historians – at best, truly men of letters; at worst, *picos de oro* (silver tongues), as historian Luis González characterized them".²³ Being responsible for the 'form' or 'style' of imagining the nation, how exactly did they 'manage'²⁴ this simultaneity of political, technocratic, poetic, and literary practice? How did these poly-professionals of a world's fair integrate their work on an exhibition into their everyday lives as politicians, bureaucrats, intellectuals and artists? Was it one project alongside others that gave shape to what Tenorio-Trillo believes in the case of Mexico to be a "postcolonial nineteenth-century nationalism"?²⁵

²¹ For a broader history of the "project maker", see Markus Krajewski, ed., *Projektmacher. Zur Produktion von Wissen in der Vorform des Scheiterns*, Berlin 2004.

²² However, these large-scale temporary exhibitions offered from the outset a wide range of professional entrepreneurial activities. As well as professional entrepreneurs from the amusements sectors, the boundaries of self-entrepreneurship blurred when engineers analysed world's fairs (Wolfgang König, *Der Gelehrte und der Manager. Franz Reuleaux [1829–1905] und Alois Riedler [1850–1936] in Technik, Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft*, Stuttgart 2014) and introduced their inventions, or others emerged successfully as contractors from competitions (e.g. architecture) or were consulted as freelancers and involved as experts in the work of representation (see Robert W. Rydell, "The Open (Laboratory) Door: Scientists and Mass Culture", in: *High Brow Meets Low Brow. American Culture as an Intellectual Concern*, ed. Rob Kroes, Amsterdam 1988, 61-74). Diverse interest groups work(ed) on a 'voluntary' basis at the world's fair so as to be represented. The participation of women's associations is particularly noteworthy here, as a recently published historical overview of the period up to 1937 demonstrates. See Myriam Boussahba-Bravard and Rebecca Rogers, eds., *Women in International and Universal Exhibitions, 1876–1937*, New York 2018, and especially the contributions by Anne R. Epstein, "A 'Reason to Act, an Ideal to Strive Towards': Women as Intellectual Organizers at the Paris Exhibition of 1900", 127-147; Gwen Jordan, "'After Mature Deliberation': Women Lawyers' Infiltration of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition", 85-104; Teresa Pinto, "Rewriting Portuguese Women's History at International Expositions (1889–1908)", 105-126; and Claudine Raynaud, "African American Women's Voices at the 1839 Chicago World's Fair", 151-174. Yet these historical studies primarily examine representative elites and rarely give insight into the day-to-day practice of such representational work.

²³ Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*, Berkeley u.a. 1996, 32 (see also Miriam Oesterreich's contribution to this special issue: "Folkloristic Cosmopolitanism: Mexico's Indigenist Architectures at World's Fairs and International Exhibitions", *RIHA Journal* 0311, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/riha.2024.2.92572>).

²⁴ Tenorio-Trillo (1996), 32.

²⁵ Tenorio-Trillo (1996), 243.

... and at a 20th century Expo

[11] During my fieldwork in the office of the *Commissariat Général* (CG) in Rabat for the contribution of Morocco to Expo 2000, I also witnessed the multiple commitments of different contributors, and in some cases excessiveness in the way they related to the Expo project. In the sober rooms of the CG's office in a well-situated neighbourhood in Rabat I could observe how the architectural project slowly took shape, how communication offices competed for contracts, how experts from universities and ministries or the chamber of commerce added their knowledge or interests to the project.²⁶ However, it was with the office manager that I was able to develop the most insightful working relationship. The brainstorming sessions, the exchange of news, but also the competition for information and the best ideas, gave me an impression of how project work was lived in Rabat and what kind of tensions this work produced in situ.

[12] Mr. Haddad²⁷ was a ministerial official on secondment to work for the Expo project. He fully embodied the tension of self-fulfilment and self-exploitation, which is crucial for creating the intensity and excessiveness of project work. The specific temporality of work, the way in which private and professional social relations intertwine, as well as the evaluation of possible failure and the projection of the future gain of this experience were all very present in his working practice and the way in which he reflected on it in everyday conversations. For the office manager, this temporary work "about the Expo", as he said in an interview, should provide a maximum of experiences to learn from, a motivation for all work he had done up to that point:

So, every experience has given me this ability to work on horizontal things [i.e., on things that broaden my horizon, editor's note], to become more and more interested, to find myself in an everyday life where it was a matter of researching information, a matter of completing what I knew; to understand what I knew, to understand what I had to do to place it in a more global context, namely Morocco – the transformations that are underway, whether political, social, [or] economic.²⁸

From the point of view of my interlocutor, his position as office manager and assistant to the Commissioner General offered him the opportunity to escape the daily routine of a ministerial official, albeit only for a limited period of time. On several occasions, he distanced himself from the work in the ministry, which seemed too repetitive and technocratic to him – "I don't learn anything anymore, every day is like the next, you know, in the administration you don't learn anything, you are only exploited. And that's not interesting." But his work should be interesting, and that was what the project in the 'Expo office' promised to be.

²⁶ Penelope Harvey pursued a similar perspective in her ethnographic study of Expo 92 in Seville: Harvey (1996); Sophie Houdart studied the making of the master plan for Expo 2005 in Aichi from the perspective of an anthropology of knowledge, Houdart (2013).

²⁷ All names are pseudonyms.

²⁸ Alexa Färber, interview with Mr. Haddad, Rabat, 17 October 1999. Besides participant observation, I conducted interviews during my fieldwork in Rabat with all relevant actors that took part in the development of the Moroccan contribution to Expo 2000. I asked them how they conceived the everyday work, how it was different from their regular work, and what their expectations were with regard to Expo 2000 and their own professional future.

[13] The motivation gained from an 'interesting' job, which went hand in hand with a professional flexibilisation²⁹, whereby knowledge gained by experience was a major resource, was echoed by other collaborators on the project as well.³⁰ The labor-intensive conditions and the benefits of working for the Moroccan Expo project – the very temporality of their commitment – allowed for a self-distancing attitude towards their regular work but also towards the outcome of their current work. This leads me to the issue of the specific conditions of world's fairs as representational work.

The multiple commitments of (post)colonial representational work

[14] Project work, as described above, was undertaken more precisely as what I define as representational work.³¹ In my dissertation on Expo 2000 and in particular on Morocco's path to Expo 2000, the concept of representational work helped me to approach the everyday depths and inconsistencies of the making of a world's fair. Representational work opens up a research perspective on national self-representations at world's fairs and, above all, on the working practices from which these self-images emerge. In other words, the term is suitable for describing representation as the result of a specific day-to-day work within the "exhibitionary complex"³², both as a performative format of representation and as a practice that modulates the given representation (in this case, the exhibit) and is modulated by it. In the context of a world's fair, representational work as an everyday practice emerges within the above-mentioned conditions of time-limited and intensified project work. From this ethnographic-praxeological perspective, the result of a representational work – the pavilion as the representation of a nation, for example – cannot be distinguished from the mostly interdisciplinary, temporary teamwork, where a role model such as the entrepreneurial self has an impact on how the project is evaluated, what expectations are associated with the work, and how success and failure are experienced.

[15] At the core of research that evolves from this perspective are professional representation workers and what they do: they are professionals working in international Expo management, for the inviting nation as well as for the participating nation. Their working relations are multiple, temporary and more or less intense. Exchange revolves around the project, whether before, during or sometimes after. Not everybody is involved at all stages of the project in these exchanges.

²⁹ Richard Sennett's analysis of the flexibilisation of careers and working environments shows the biographical consequences in post-industrial societies. Sennett notes as a typical conflict of the "flexible human being" the temporary intensity and simultaneous noncommitment on the one hand, and an ideal of responsibility and stability pursued in private life on the other. This conflict was not discussed in Haddad's case. Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character. The Personal Consequences of Work in Late Capitalism*, London/New York 1998.

³⁰ Discussions with CG staff and consultants have confirmed this attitude to work and have expressed a positive attitude towards taking time out from their regular work and acquiring experience in temporary projects. See Färber (2006), 88-89.

³¹ Färber (2006).

³² Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex", in: *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, London/New York 1996, 81-112.

Multiple commitments beyond the built representation

[16] My ethnographic research in Rabat and Hanover in the years 1999 and 2000 gave me insights into how the given structure, legacy, and local German version of the world's fair in 2000 was perceived, interpreted, modified, and affirmed in the representational work of the Moroccan Expo office. In Rabat I was taking part in the day-to-day representational work and was welcomed as an intern who was simultaneously conducting research for her PhD on "how the Kingdom of Morocco becomes a pavilion on the Expo 2000".³³ The core group of the Moroccan Expo office consisted of five people: the *Commissaire Général* (a Secretary of State in the Ministry of Agriculture and at that time the designated Moroccan ambassador to Germany); the office manager (an agronomist, office manager in the Ministry of Agriculture and assistant to the Secretary of State); two accountants; and a part-time advisor on economics and international fairs. In addition, the Rabat office had eight permanent advisors. Two of these, both trained ethnologists, were civil servants from the Ministry of Culture and responsible for museums and cultural heritage. There were two geographers from Mohammed V University of Rabat, one an expert on migration and tourism and the other on water and sustainable development. The fifth permanent consultant was a political scientist and anthropologist from the University of Casablanca who specialised in religious social movements. The other advisors participating in the regular thematic meetings were a musicologist, a representative of the trade association, and a representative of the architect's studio (either the architect himself or his assistant). Almost everybody had contributed to Morocco's evolving civil society in recent years, whether in the realm of environmentalism, family and women's rights or the representation of minorities (e.g. the Berber population).³⁴ Their commitment to the social question encouraged a certain *esprit militant* (militant spirit) in the office, during meetings held there or on visits to collaborators.

[17] The meetings and their official minutes revealed the extent to which the team's discussions in the run-up to the fair were structured by interpretations of existing geopolitical hierarchies. Knowledge gaps were acknowledged as differentiating an ignorant general public from a reflective and smart guest country. These at least were the ideas contained in the guidelines written up mainly by the office manager.³⁵ He explained in the same interview:

³³ In the terminology of ethnographic fieldwork, the project work was the shared terrain that would stress the similarities between the subject, such as the office manager, and the researcher, i.e. me. In this we shared, as George Marcus would say, a certain complicity in everyday life. George E. Marcus, "The Uses of Complicity in the Changing Mise-en-Scène of Anthropological Fieldwork", in: *Representations* 59 (1997), 85-108.

³⁴ From the 1980s onwards the social question had become a central political issue. See Abdelkebir Khatibi, *L'alternance et les partis politiques: essai*, Casablanca 1998. In 1998, these shifts led to *alternance* (widely understood as broad change) in governance. Abderrahmane Youssoufi, a former political prisoner and still the leader of the socialist opposition party *L'Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires*, was appointed prime minister, and Islamic representatives entered parliament. The idea was to shape a political culture of dialogue, including the symbolic recognition of a whole generation of opposition politicians and the recognition of the growing impact that activities of the middle-class had had on building the country's civil society for twenty years.

³⁵ See Färber (2010), 169-170.

But above all else: How does Morocco want to be perceived? Because this question is very amusing. If it were France, I wouldn't have cared. If it had been Spain, well, good; but because it is Germany! Why? Because Germany is better than the others? No, I didn't say that. Well, the French know the Moroccans better, we know them better and there are matters that they sometimes know better than the locals ["les nationaux"]. This human rights affair with Serfaty³⁶ and the others. And also in economic matters. But the Germans ... that is a blank sheet. Do you agree?³⁷

The Moroccan team's perception of Germany as a "blank sheet" therefore meant that the self-representation of Morocco was developed – at least from the office manager's perspective – from the assumed prior (non)knowledge of the Western/German "Other". Yet this can only explain one dimension of a much more complicated and also contingent scaling process.

[18] If in the formative time of world's fairs "the creation of a national image was undertaken by those with power in reference to other national images, because only through this globalization did these images make sense",³⁸ the "comparative spectacle" ("spectacle comparatif")³⁹ of a world's fair has grown more complicated in (post)colonial times. It consists of multiple scales of self-enactment that are not absorbed by each other: the scale of international relations and the country's own national self-location therein; the scale of the local opportunities offered by the host country, which results in a self-positioning in the world's fair terrain with strategically chosen or accepted temporary neighbours; the scale of public and internal calendars of events, which entail diverse performative formats to help achieve different goals for the national participation. These multiple self-positionings culminate in an architectural space that represents the participating nation on a miniature scale;⁴⁰ yet this space only stands for certain aspects of the goals associated with the overall participation of a country.

[19] In the spirit of this relational understanding of the represented self, the Moroccan project was developed with regard to different scales based on considerations of the country's future global, international, and regional positionings, be it economically, culturally or socially. One of the participating academics expressed this multiplicity of expectations when talking about how he tried to introduce academic concepts into the thematic section of the stand at Expo 2000:

³⁶ Abraham Serfaty was in prison for 17 years as an opposition politician under King Hassan II, before he was expelled to France in 1991. After eight years in exile, he was able to return to Morocco in late summer 1999 at the instigation of King Mohamed VI. In many conversations with colleagues during my stay in Rabat it became clear that Serfaty, who had opposed Morocco's annexation of the Western Sahara, had become a symbol for the criticism of (Western) states and non-governmental organisations of human rights violations during the reign of Hassan II. See the illuminating analysis of the "Moroccan Equity and Reconciliation Commission" by Susan Slyomovics, "The Moroccan Equity and Reconciliation Commission: The Promises of a Human Rights Archive", in: *The Arab Studies Journal* 24 (2016), no. 1, 10-41.

³⁷ Alexa Färber, interview with Mr. Haddad, Rabat, 17 October 1999.

³⁸ Tenorio-Trillo (1996), 243.

³⁹ Brigitte Baptandier and Sophie Houdart, "Introduction", in: *Ethnographier l'universel: l'Exposition Shanghai 2010: "Better city, better life"*, eds. Brigitte Baptandier and Sophie Houdart, Paris 2015, 9-32: 12.

⁴⁰ See Houdart (2013); Trémon (2015).

*Well, there is a personal challenge, which consists of getting a little bit out of my theoretical working framework and working [instead] towards communication. That is an important thing. But there's also this idea, not only in view of an international exhibition, but perhaps also, if this theme [of the exhibition] can eventually be reproduced in Morocco later, that if it can travel within the country, then the stand, what is shown at the world's fair, can be shown in Morocco as a travelling exhibition, that would be extremely good, because that would be a basic means of communication with people. After all, what we are currently experiencing in the country is a lack of communication. A huge backlog in communication.*⁴¹

The high profile geographer had a clear idea of the scale needed for his Expo project to bear fruit. He understood that there was no chance of integrating these concepts into the pavilion itself, since the reaction to his 'seductive' proposals was rather ambivalent in working meetings: "Yes, séduisant, seductive as an idea, but they said, 'But concretely, how can you do that?' It's a seductive idea when you talk and think in a group, but to bring that into a pavilion?"⁴²

[20] The great motivation I witnessed in situ was only partly related to the preparations for the pavilion and its corresponding programme. I even observed a lot of internal criticism if not downright pessimism about the quality and relevance of the Moroccan Expo project. Although my interlocutors expressed excitement about the way of working (together) in the project,⁴³ they were skeptical about the success of their contribution, such as for example having an impact on future economic investment in Morocco or an increase in tourism. *Nevertheless* they did, when necessary, work 'day and night' – like the office manager who produced numerous, carefully elaborated protocols and papers. And even though these were only sporadically consulted by the other collaborators, he told me that he sacrificed weekends and worked to the edge of exhaustion to prepare them. This "neverthelessness" resonates with the decisions taken regarding the architectural project, the focal point of this national self-representation at Expo 2000, which I will describe as compared to subsequent pavilions in the next section.

Representing duress

[21] The architectural renderings of the future Moroccan pavilion at Expo 2020 in Dubai show a compact building constructed from cubes of different sizes (Figs. 3-4). The irregular facade has the allure and colour of an earthen material. There are no windows except in the cube on the top. This structure is arranged around an inner court with a couple of trees. One of the images shows a gangway that supposedly connects the bottom with the top, leading around the courtyard. It is no coincidence that the building's absolutely sober, almost impermeable external appearance resembles the external appearance of Morocco's contribution to Expo 2015 in Milan (Figs. 5-6):

⁴¹ Alexa Färber, interview with Mr. Bensaleh, Rabat, 18 October 1999.

⁴² As n41.

⁴³ Although in day-to-day practice there were recurring complaints about the content and the lack of acuity of individual contributions, several collaborators were impressed by the integrative way in which the CG brought people and ideas together and underlined the open atmosphere of these meetings, which they had not expected. See Färber (2006), 88 and 99.

The same architectural office, Oualalou + Choi, designed the building. These impressive constructions (in Dubai, 1,500 qm; in Milan, 1,300 qm) and their ambivalent, fortress-like allure clearly reference 'vernacular' architecture and claim 'authenticity' from the Berber *kasbah*.⁴⁴ Its appearances exude warmth (colour), soberness (non-ornamental), rootedness (material), and strength (volume/height) that, one could argue, meets the fantasies of an expected European public in Milan. But it is also a composition of diverse traditional architectural elements bridging the far West of the African continent and the Arabian Peninsula, so as to inscribe itself into a shared Arab aesthetic heritage for an Arab public in Dubai.



3 Architectural rendering of the 33 meers high Moroccan pavilion for Expo 2020 in Dubai, by architectural studio Oualalou + Choi, Paris (courtesy O+C, Paris)

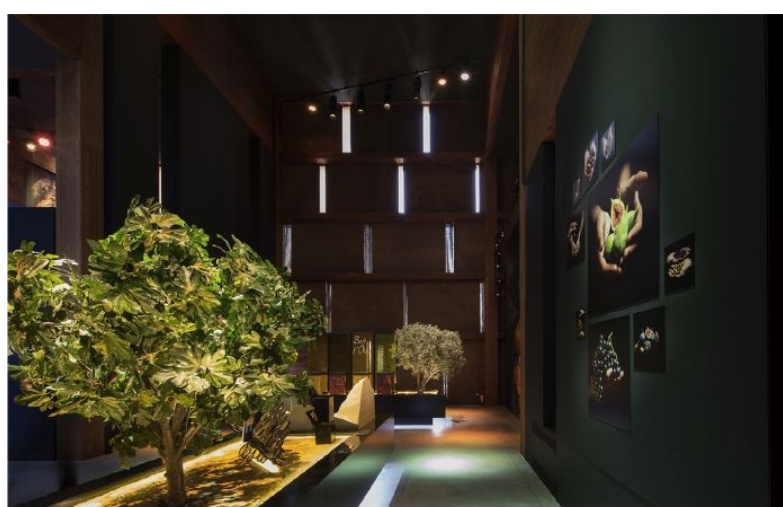
⁴⁴ See Christele Harrouk, "OUALALOU + CHOI Reveals Images of the Morocco Pavilion for Expo 2020 Dubai", in: *archdaily* (11 June 2020), URL: <https://www.archdaily.com/941341/oualalou-plus-choi-reveals-images-of-the-morocco-pavilion-for-expo-2020-dubai> (accessed July 17, 2020). For the interpretation of authenticity in official contemporary cultural representations from states of the Arab peninsula, and the translation of Western notions of urbanism into concepts of regionalised architecture, see Kornelia Imesch, "Authenticity as Branding Tool: Generic Architecture versus Critical Regionalism in the United Arab Emirates and in Qatar", in: *Critique of Authenticity*, eds. Thomas Claviez, Kornelia Imesch and Britta Sweers, Wilmington 2020, 251-263.



4 Architectural rendering of the Moroccan pavilion for Expo 2020 in Dubai, courtyard with ramp winding its way up from the ground floor to the top floor along the courtyard facades, by architectural studio Oualalou + Choi, Paris (courtesy O+C, Paris)

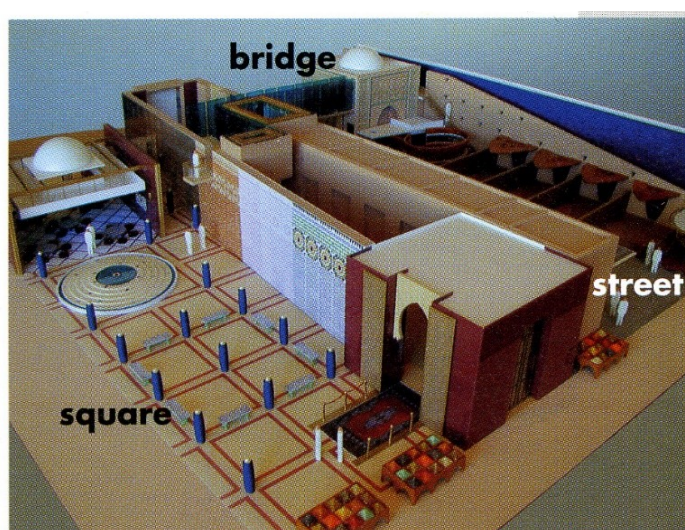


5 Moroccan pavilion at Expo 2015, Milan, by architectural studio Oualalou + Choi, Paris (photo © Luc Boegly)



6 Interior of the Moroccan pavilion at Expo 2015, Milan, by architectural studio Oualalou + Choi, Paris (photo © Luc Boegly)

[22] Twenty years earlier, when preparing to participate in Expo 2000 in Hanover, the opposite architectural gesture was voted for: a colourful, shiny and seemingly light construction that played out all sorts of ornamental decoration. Only the "museum" had an explicit entry and exit, whilst all other areas – a café, a street, a square, and the information area with its section of a *riyad* structure – were open, to be crossed from all sides and in all directions (Figs. 7-9).⁴⁵ This composition of elements articulated in diverse ways an underlying self-positioning as a connecting country: as a bridge between Europe and Africa, as a geographical link between North and South, as a cultural transition between East and West, as a land between Orient and Occident. These multiple situations of 'inbetweenness' as well as the oscillation between 'tradition' and 'modernity' formed the framework for the self-representation of a hybrid, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious country with the motto "roots of the future".⁴⁶



7 Architectural rendering of the Moroccan pavilion for Expo 2000, Hanover, by architectural studio Jamal Lamiri Alaoui, Rabat (reprod. from Expo 2000-leaflet)

⁴⁵ We find these elements in at least two other participations: in Aichi, it is unsurprising because the pavilion was headed by the same *Commissaire général* as in Hanover and constructed by the same architect, Jamal Lamiri Alaoui. In Shanghai, where Morocco gained a bronze medal in the category of medium-sized pavilions, both the CG and architect changed, but we still find the *riyad*, the palm trees, the street and the café. In my view, there were two major changes: one level of the pavilion was dominated by a huge video-screen (60 m × 4 m), which created an immersive space; and the visit was organised as a one-way parcours. The pavilion in Milan, which was headed by a female *Commissaire générale* for the first time, kept the idea of the parcours and created immersive, dark spaces via numerous video screens, and also addressed other senses, mainly the sense of smell.

⁴⁶ This vision is similar to other realms of cultural foreign politics in Morocco. Sophie Wagenhofer explains for example how the Moroccan government stresses the place of Jewish Moroccans in culture and society in order to prove "to be presiding over a tolerant, plural and democratic country". Sophie Wagenhofer, "Moroccan-Jewish Heritage Re-visited", in: *The Politics and Practices of Cultural Heritage in the Middle East: Positioning the Material Past in Contemporary Societies*, eds. Irene Maffi and Rami Daher, London/New York 2014, 252-269: 263-264.



8 Moroccan pavilion at Expo 2000, Hanover, view of *riyad*, bridge and street, by architectural studio Jamal Lamiri Alaoui, Rabat (photo by the author)



9 Moroccan pavilion at Expo 2000, Hanover, view of the square and the ornated wall of the museum section, by architectural studio Jamal Lamiri Alaoui, Rabat (photo by the author)

[23] There had been other options aside from this self-orientalising representation. In 1999, one of the competing architectural designs had envisioned a high-tech *kasbah*: a walkable cuboid, which from the outside looked like a fortress; it had a dark, smooth facade, no openings, just an entrance gate leading to a slightly ascending staircase. Inside, the block-like but finely wrought exterior was reversed: side-by-side screens would cover the walls, floor and ceiling. The screens were to show films about 'cultural traditions' but also environmental themes, accompanied by a sound installation. However, this was deemed to be a representation that lacked warmth and failed to show the real atmosphere of Morocco; it was too far from the anticipated visitor's expectations and was therefore discarded:

*There has been a vivid debate about the 'kasbah'. Two or three people thought it was a fantastic idea, the idea was fantastic! But the implementation was too 'techno'. It wasn't technical, it was 'techno' – only music, sound and image. Well, that is surprising, it is very surprising, but it did not correspond, it was a little sobering, a sober Morocco.*⁴⁷

Instead, as explained in one of the brochures for internal use,

*the stand of Morocco has to demonstrate a festive image, an image of colours and light. It's a convivial ambiance that the flaneur has to keep with him [sic]. Not being able to battle against the high-tech pavilions of the Western countries it is appropriate to lend/give Morocco a warm/cordial atmosphere in contrast to any cold and glacial demonstration.*⁴⁸

[24] We can interpret this stance as a strategic capitalisation of aesthetic Orientalism. This choice emphasises the agency of the representational elite in the Moroccan Expo office, their considerations based on comparison as a mode of scaling and resulting in negation, affirmation and infiltration as tactics: negation, by opting against "high-tech"; affirmation by going for an all-out orientalist allure; and infiltration by aiming to use other performative formats like conferences and concerts, so as to include alternative academic knowledge or even autonomous cultural positions.⁴⁹ These strategic options enable participants from formerly colonised countries to act as "cultural brokers" or diverse "interlocutors".⁵⁰ The practices of negation, affirmation and infiltration try to challenge a homogenising vision for the reproduction of the oriental "Other", and simultaneously articulate the dualisms of domination that are at work in the essentialised differences of the world's fair: the duality between (former) colonial states and (former) colonies, between East and West, North and South, or simply between host country and participants, between participants and visitors. As such, they are denominators of the duress of imperial difference.

Enduring work for fairness

[25] The sphere of world exhibitions is not fair, although in a (post)colonial understanding of world's fairs we greet a globalised right to the national pavilion. However, postcolonial agency to

⁴⁷ Alexa Färber, interview with Mr. Fatmi, Casablanca, 25 October 1999.

⁴⁸ Brochure *Expo 2000 Hanover [sic]. Stand du Maroc Août* (1999), 11, copy in the author's archive.

⁴⁹ The relevance of programmes at world's fairs for expressing ideas alternative or even subversive to architectural self-representations has, in my view, been systematically overlooked. There are early examples, where the performative format of conferences has acted as a space in which the diversity of attitudes and ideological standpoints was discussed (see n11). One example is the "International Congress on the Cultural Evolution of Colonial Peoples", which took place at the politically highly polarised *Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne* in Paris in 1937. Here, Leopold Senghor explained his controversial vision of an African cultural nationalism and humanism. See Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars*, Chicago 2005, 232-252, especially 239.

⁵⁰ See Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, eds., *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography*, Durham, NC/London 2002.

participate independently does not mean that one is able to present and promote oneself independently. This was certainly a theoretical assumption for the collaborators on the Moroccan Expo project; yet they nevertheless developed their ambitious contribution. Even more significantly, whilst dealing with the contradictions of this representational order, Expo 2000 offered an opportunity to shape to a certain extent one's own vision of the future of the country – or, as the office manager Mr. Haddad summarised the purpose of the Expo project:

So, we said that the world's fair is an opportunity for people, for everyone, for the whole country, to get together and say 'We've done this and that and achieved that in this area'. Agreed?! And that the future will be like that. So, you have to think together. That is the first purpose. The second purpose is to open up to the other, to make yourself known.⁵¹

[26] This 'nevertheless' is a crucial mode of relating to world's fairs as projects in representational work.⁵² This specific attitude encompasses representational work and its outcome in a highly contradictory way. The project-related and therefore temporary (work) experience is deemed to be an experience that could be useful for future projects and tasks, whereas the content produced with great verve becomes almost secondary. The temporal structure of project work also determines the temporality of (potential) progress and requires the necessary attitude to carry on, and hold on to the expectation of more and better projects in the future. As such this 'nevertheless' feeds into the duress of the colonial as described by Laura Ann Stoler: It adds to the *longue durée* and duress of colonial power-relations expressed through these normalised representations of the future. Yet these project makers, who are temporarily active on a global stage, negotiate post-colonial power relations in a more complicated way than the eye-catching pavilions suggest. It should be noted that the sensitivity to the historical dimension of today's worlds of representation, which goes hand in hand with the permanence of (post)colonial conditions, also means that even in these extremely privileged representational working contexts, there is little room for maneuver, or in other words, the agency to participate independently, to present oneself independently and to make oneself known is limited.

⁵¹ Alexa Färber, interview with Mr. Haddad, Rabat, 17 October 1999.

⁵² For how "nevertheless" might inform future research on world's fairs, see Alexa Färber and Elke Krasny, "Die Welt trotzdem versammeln: Auf der Suche nach Weltwissen für Weltausstellungen im 21. Jahrhundert", in: *Hamburger Journal für Kulturanthropologie* (HJK) no. 13 (2021), 271-281, <https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/hjk/article/view/1742>.

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About the Author

[Alexa Färber](#) is Professor of European Ethnology at the University of Vienna and specialises in urban studies, anthropology of knowledge and audiovisual research. She investigates the connection between city and promise, collaborative and project-based working practices, and develops different formats of making ethnographic knowledge public. After studying Islamic Studies and European Ethnology in Hamburg, Toulouse and Berlin, she completed her PhD at the Institute for European Ethnology at the Humboldt University in Berlin. From 2010 to 2018, she held a professorship at The HafenCity University Hamburg. She has published on the tangibility of the city (as editor of *Stoffwechsel Berlin. Urbane Präsenzen und Repräsentationen*, Berlin 2010), on "low-budget urbanity" ("Low-Budget Berlin: Towards an Understanding of Low-Budget Urbanity as Assemblage", in: *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 7 [2014], no. 1, 119-136), and on the city as a "promissory assemblage" ("How Does ANT Help Us to Rethink the City and its Promises?", in: Anders Blok, Ignacio Farias and Celia Roberts, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Actor-Network Theory*, London 2019, 264-272). In her long-term study "Cultural Institutions and Urban Promises in Paris: Reconstructing, Traversing and Disrupting Polarizations", she investigates the urban entanglements of the *Institut du monde arabe* and the *Institut des cultures d'Islam* in a historical-ethnographic perspective. Since 2010, she has been a member of the Franco-German research network "[Penser l'urbain par l'image](#)" and runs the blog "[talkingphotobooks.net](#)".

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