

“Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life” The theme is the king of Expo 2015

Since the immense and entirely unexpected success of London’s 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works and Industry of All Nations, international exhibitions have been marked by thematic specialization, attracting visitors in search of knowledge and inspirations.



Over the past twenty years or so, anthropologists, geographers and historians have been joined by experts in communication studies in trying to come to terms with the significance of Expo’s theme for the modern world.

Their answer: the theme was and is the king of the Expos and it always will be.

Expos were and still are educational networks of global proportions. For this reason, millions of people use them for personal cultural development, starting from a focal point connected to their daily life.

Italy and the city of Milan had in mind this fundamental idea choosing “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life” as the theme for Expo 2015.

Pursuing the twin goals of food security (good food and good water) and food safety (having enough to eat and drink) is a way to educate to the fundamental principle of sustainable development.

So the theme chosen for the Exhibition of 2015 would not only contribute to the improvement of the general living standard of all the people, but also have positive consequences for the growth of human capital.

In the end the theme “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life” will produce through education the ultimate understanding and cooperation between the people, the territories, the associations and the Nations of the world.

Italy - Milan Expo 2015 Planning Committee



A word from the President

World and International Exhibitions are marked, since their beginning in the 19th century, by an aspiration for progress, which is embodied in emblematic works.

In this beginning of the 21st century, in this world perceived as global at any moment, thanks to new technologies of communication, on a planet of 7 billion human beings, progress becomes more delicate and more problematic.

The grand exhibitions to come, through their themes—the city of tomorrow, the alimentation of the planet, the protection of our oceans—reflect these new concerns around the current challenges of humanity.

The question today is on the concrete role –the practical influence– that World and International Exhibitions will have on the treatment of these subjects.

Already, by displaying on its theme the best practices selected by a jury, the exhibition of Shanghai introduces an innovative initiative by allowing for a comparison of experiences and of solutions coming from everywhere on the question of the amelioration of cities.

Moreover, the exhibitions will have to work on these subjects with states but also with new actors who have the field experience, NGOs, foundations, and enterprises, directly related to the theme. Beyond this, the World and International Exhibitions should be a stimulus for awareness-raising and for a planetary reflection on the chosen theme by a retransmission of debates and of their conclusions.

By choosing themes of contemporary relevance, which concern the majority of the countries in the world, the candidate states and organizers draw their inspiration from a character of the BIE that is today more and more universal, who, with 154 member states, brings together the majority of the states of the planet.

For the International Exhibitions Bureau, it seems to me that it is also time to initiate an evolution. This evolution will make of it an authority, who not only has to supervise the technical organization of the exhibitions, but must also assume a role that is more political, in the noble sense of the word—that is to say, by ensuring the judicious treatment of the selected themes which concern the governance of the planet of tomorrow.



Jean-Pierre Lafon, President of the BIE

Progression

The BIE Newsletter

THE THEME MAKES THE EXPO

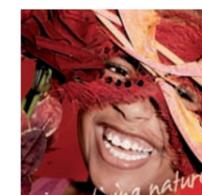
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To instruct and delight

How themes make an Expo

If you line up the visitor numbers of successive world exhibitions then superlatives fall short: six, fifteen, thirty and even sixty million.

These people, of course, come to expos to meet one another and to enjoy each other’s cultural contributions in concerts, shows and celebrations: to delight.

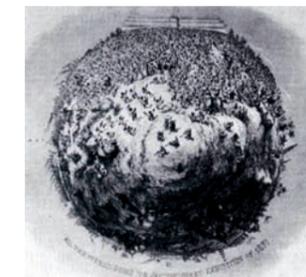
But of course entertainment was not the main motive of the six million visitors, amongst them a substantial element of working people looking to spend their scarce pennies on an excursion to the Great Exhibition in London (1851). In the nineteenth century, the world exhibitions represented a key instrument in emancipation, education and the evolution of the bourgeoisie and (at first hesitantly) the working class: to instruct.

In terms of civic pride but also in terms of vocational education for adults, the first fairs were at the beginning the only international podia for exchange of practical experience and knowledge concerning the transition from craft and guild to industrial production. This was clearly expressed in the title of the first world exhibition: ‘Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations’. This core message was equally clear expressed in the didactic setup of the exhibition: the exhibits in the Crystal Palace were arranged according to the logic of the industrial production process. From the raw materials section, via machine production to standardized mass products in order to finally pause at the section on applied art. The theme of industrialisation also came across loud and clear in the way the innovations were explained: in the machinery section entire machine fleets were demonstrated in operation to show the public how wool could be spun and woven, or paper produced, at amazing and unprecedented speed and precision.

The more the exhibitions were aimed at the general public

in the decades to follow, the more explicitly their messages were articulated in themes and the more manifestly they were concretized in the exhibition didactics. The exhibition ideology is formulated far more explicitly in themes like: A Century of Progress or Progress and Harmony for Mankind. And these themes are in turn far more elaborated in the exhibition didactics through a cohesive network of lead theme expositions. Under the motto Building the world of tomorrow with the tools of today an enormous globe appears at the heart of the exhibition in 1939, in which the general public is quite literally “multi-sensorially” immersed into this vision of the future: a gigantic scale model combined with panoramic film shows a day in the life of tomorrow from sunrise – the new dawn – to sunset. The expo is then broken down into the various life spheres of the consumer/citizen and each of them is heralded in by means of a theme exposition provided by the organizers: in the spheres of living, working, mobility, food etc., they illustrate how new technical, scientific and aesthetic insights and methods lead to new products that will improve and enhance the life of everyone tomorrow.

In other words, the theme is of vital importance for an Expo. It is the most important way to articulate its social relevance and thus draw the masses to the exhibition, where they undergo the unique didactics of the expo: being collectively and physically immersed in a common experience of new and socially shared insight and belief in a better world tomorrow. And of course this demands the materialization of the theme in the exhibition didactics: the network of lead theme exhibitions, conferences and publications. The reverse is also true: without a theme, an exhibition is socially irrelevant and thus makes itself superfluous.



The poster of 1851: the whole world goes to the Exhibition of 1851



The Big Model

Important Events

- 12 December, 2008 - 12 March, 2009 Exhibition Paris, Conciergerie
« Paris and its World Exhibitions-Architecture, 1855-1937 »
- 30 January, 2008 - 6 March, 2009 Cycle of Conferences Paris, Petit Palais
- 13 February, 2009 Conference by Vicente González Loscertales Paris, Petit Palais
« Les enjeux des expositions universelles »
- 2 June, 2009 BIE General Assembly Paris



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Editorial

By offering a new theme every time, each Expo is a new proposition and a new perspective on the world, on culture and on education.

A theme-centred approach, combined with broad scope, a multifaceted nature and the force to attract a very diverse audience, makes Expos unparalleled events capable to energize communities, catalyze ideas and drive the brand of a country.

I cannot stress enough the ability of the theme to drive each Expo's innovative capacity. In this new century where World Exhibitions are fully embracing their role as educational and communication instruments, the theme becomes an opportunity to develop projects that are shared by the world's communities. As a result, Expos provide a new platform for international cooperation.

While the theme makes the Expo, it is also true that the Expo makes the theme.

As content for a venue such as the Expo, a theme can be developed and presented in an infinite number of forms, each providing a different perspective and each reaching a different audience. From pure entertainment to high level cooperation projects, from artistic endeavours to academic achievements, from technological innovation to cultural change, each theme is articulated, deconstructed, exhibited and promoted in as many ways as there are participants showing their contribution on the subject.

The growing importance of the theme also reflects a major shift in the culture of Expos as it pertains to the role of participants. Historically, participants were "presented" by the organizers who looked for the exotic and the cultural curiosity; today participants expect and are expected to show themselves through their own initiatives, with the theme becoming a vehicle of their national identity.

The theme, which makes Expos unique, makes Expos extremely challenging because it highlights the key requirements for a successful event: a concerted organization, a strong vision for the future and ultimately the ability to interpret each participant's identity through a novel lens.

Vicente González Loscertales
Secretary General of the BIE

Why should we organize an Expo on the theme of sustainable development ?

It is necessary for this theme to be better spread and shared by all. Three values define it.

The protection of the environment first of all: this means promoting ecological protection by emphasizing, for all citizens, the safeguarding of biodiversity. But it is also necessary to organize a development that is reasoned; that is to say, one that integrates long-term concerns of the respect of resources and the natural capital of the future generations.

Finally, it is appropriate to act with respect for the « social justice »: this idea is very broad and refers, depending on the case, to the expression of the opinions of citizens, to the respect of the principle of equity or to the protection of social link. But how to become aware of these three objectives in a balanced way? The first response is to reconcile them and to search the possible compromises between diverse public policies.

In a more ambitious way, we could also attempt to directly merge the different processes of development, environment and participation. We thus promote « integrated actions. » This refers notably to the purpose of the Agendas 21 – national, regional and urban. In sum, sustainable development means – through these different processes – creating another state of mind and a new vigilance in the face of growth, and thus promote unprecedented norms of action. This is something of a work of collective learning to which an Expo could strongly contribute.

What does sustainable development strive for? It proposes to various actors in society, politics and the economy to first change their reflexes and to collectively lead a work of pedagogy. An Expo must today focus on a strong theme that concerns all of us: this is indeed the case for sustainable development which is a way of considering problems in an integrated way and to act on them in a way that goes across the usual division of competences and responsibilities.

Jean-Pierre Gaudin

Professor of Political Science at IEP of Aix-en-Provence

It's The Theme Which Brings Success

A glorious past does not make for a glorious future.

Expos played a major role in breaking down national isolationism and helping societies to understand the achievements of other countries. That was a brilliant achievement but it is not sufficient in the modern world. Our lives are dominated by discussions about this strange word « globalization » but the problem is that nobody understands it - is it understandable? - but some how people seem to be very much in favour or very much against it. But the challenges of the modern world and the interdependence that makes it both an exciting and at times a frightening place, requires that we break it down into intelligent themes so as people can connect with the issues at stake in our global village. For expos to be successful they need to be based on a theme which connects to people and their preoccupations and then to the diversity of country practice in responding to it. This makes for a rich and enlightening explanation of our global interconnectedness.

The recent Saragossa expo on water illustrates this brilliantly. Water is a problem for all countries in the world even those with lots of it. But by showing how it can be protected and valued in different countries we help people to understand about one of most important global challenges. More important we help societies to understand that no one country is an island!

The Shanghai exhibition has a major job to do in this regard. With more than 50 percent of our populations living in cities - and this figure is growing - cities will be the cause of many of our major problems for the planet and we must also hope that they will be the incubators of solutions to these problems.

All countries will share their part of these problems but by concentrating on the theme of Liveable Cities the expo will help in meeting the challenges of explaining global interdependence in a meaningful and accessible manner.

Chris Brooks, Professor at Sciences Po Paris



The THEME is the spark*

Today's world expositions are windows on an important global era, reflecting a central outlook of society.

Most of the Expos' settings stem from specific themes which in most cases profoundly mirror significant topics that are current, aspirational, and hence bear vast implications to society. The World Expositions today achieved great distinction in establishing thematic programmes that deliver regional economic enhancements and result in greater understanding between nations; through cultural, scientific and technological exchanges. For example, the recent Expo Zaragoza 2008 reflected the global importance of water availability. WATER - a theme, many observers feel will be the most important issue facing humanity this century, far exceeding that of energy and climate change. Hence the Expo Zaragoza 2008 theme reflects this importance and campaigns for the creation of an international agency to address water.

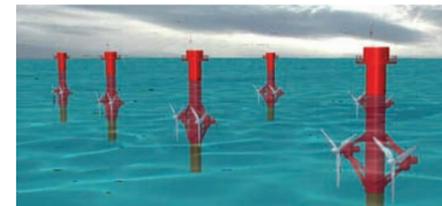


Fig.2 Expo Yeosu 2012, "The Living Ocean and Coast" – A futuristic scene of underwater turbines exploiting the flow in the ocean for energy production.

Future expos, Expo Shanghai 2010, the first in a developing country, deals with cities - the places which support 55% of people on this planet – and a major contributor to emissions and consumption. Expo 2010 Shanghai has the theme « Better City, Better Life » will explore the full potential of urban life in the 21st century

(Fig.1). Urban evolution and the prospect of future urban life, in a changing climate, is a subject of global interest. This expo will hence, examine new approaches to human habitat, lifestyle and working conditions, and will address the important notion of eco-living and sustainable development in urban settings.

In addition, Expo 2012 Yeosu Korea has the theme "The Living Ocean and Coast" linked to Diversity of Resources and Sustainability. It aims to explore specific issues that are at the centre of improving our understanding of the value of the ocean and the coast. The theme will stress the importance and function of the ocean and coast and will address the repercussions of its degradation through human activities and propose appropriate ways of utilising the ocean for the present and future prosperity of all. The Yeosu Expo 2012 will provide an opportunity to enhance the international community's perception of the function and value of the ocean and coast, share knowledge on the proper use of the ocean and coast and recognize the need for cooperation in the marine sector (Fig.2).

In recent times, the "Expo Theme" has stemmed from human-centred development, encompassing economic, social development, innovation and cultural interactions at various levels of society. An Expo is a grand international gathering with the "theme" at its focus, offering an unsurpassed opportunity for diverse discourse and the promotion of practical solutions for humanity. In essence, the theme is not only an important aspect in the selection process but also reflects the



Fig.1 Expo Shanghai 2010, "Better City Better Life" – A Shanghai scene.

the expo is held. At the end of each expo a declaration is made which gives accountability of the process and a judgment on the theme. The declaration is a milestone in history which epitomises the ideas of the theme reflecting on its aspirations, leaving a legacy not only for the future expos but more importantly for future generations. Hence it is the THEME that sparks the Expo.

Professor A S Bahaj

The University of Southampton, Sustainable Energy Research Group, School of Civil Engineering and the Environment, Southampton, United Kingdom

The theme creates the story

The Floriade is a World Horticultural Expo. In 2012 the central theme of the Floriade is "Be Part of the Theatre of Nature, get Closer to the Quality of Life".

Quality of Life stands for sustainability, an essential part of the Floriade 2012. Besides that, we want to emit with our theme that the expo will be an experience. We want to show our visitors, in an attractive way, the relationship between horticulture and social cases that are current today, like sustainability.

The theme is a guideline for the development of our exposition. It has a great influence on the arrangement of the park. The theme leads our participants, the exhibitors, in the right direction. Because of the theme, they know what the requirements are of a participation.

We have divided the central theme in five core themes: Green Engine, Education & Innovation, Environment, Relax & Heal and World Show Stage. Finally you will see the central theme all over the expo, in the materials, food concept, in the cultural program and in the entertainment.. Everything is connected to each other. The theme tells the story.

A good theme can create a dialogue. For the media your theme can be an occasion for much publicity. We don't sell tickets. We sell the best memories!

Paul Beck, Managing Director of the World Horticultural Expo Floriade 2012 - Venlo, Netherlands - www.floriade.nl



EXPO x EXPOS - Next steps :

- mid-July/end of August 2009 Aichi, Japan - Nagakute, Site of Expo 2005 – Guest House
- mid-September/end of October 2009 Osaka, Japan - Iron & Steel Pavilion of Expo 70



The Travelling Exhibition finished its presentation at the Atomium of Brussels on January 18th, 2009. It welcomed more than 68 000 visitors, out of which approximately a hundred were guided visits.

