

## Expos

The Enigma of Continuity – Thoughts.

When contemplating the long line of World Expos since 1851 you cannot help noticing that while sharing many features, each one is unique. Their longevity, the paradox of uniformity and variety and their stubborn insistence on not going away, is a true enigma of survival.

Expos have played an important role, first during the industrial revolution, then in the colonial era and in the promotion of Science; they survived the two great wars, thrived during the technological revolution and, at the outset of the information and the globalization age, they are still important.

In all these years there has been no lack of doomsayers, even amongst BIE members, declaring their imminent end. Time after time they have been proved wrong. In spite of the changing times and the adversities – or maybe because of them - Expos have continued to attract host countries and tens of millions of visitors. Of course, the themes have changed according to their times.

But what can be the reason for the continuity - the longevity – of these great events? Why did they not succumb to the march of time as so many other phenomena did in the last century and a half? Why did the revolution in communications not render Expos obsolete? Is this truly a puzzle, an enigma, or does the answer lie right in front of us?

Firstly, the organizers of these events must at the very outset have realized that they had struck upon a golden ore with a huge potential for public interest. The organizing states must have wished to transform the World Expos into a durable event - a permanent one.

Secondly, in the first eighty years Expos were organized without fixed time intervals and shared rules; this gave host countries a large degree of freedom to make its own rules. The result, I believe, is that by repeatedly using the most proven rules the format was slowly being perfected.

Thirdly, Expos replicated the most successful and useful features of the past: celebration of national days, appointment of Commissioners General, building of national pavilions, of thematic pavilions etc. This meant the gradual creation of a format that the public recognized and that became the Expos' hallmark.

Finally, during those first decades, Expos have effectively reflected the issues of their times, thus remaining attractive for the greater audiences,



Ole Philipson  
Ambassador, President of the BIE 1994 – 2000

and economically viable.

This total freedom, or anarchy, was to change. During the 1920's a group of countries decided that participation was a heavy economic burden due to the large number of Expos and the short time span between them. Thus, they commissioned a set of international rules to be drafted: the Convention of 1928 that created the BIE and the rules governing Expos.

Given the task of regulating an already hugely successful type of event the best thing to do was to build upon the results from the past. At the same time the authors must have realized the importance of maintaining the freedom of the host countries to choose the theme. As a result the BIE Convention combined successful past experiences with wise and foresighted ideas.

I dread to think what would have been of the Convention of 1928 had the authors decided to disregard the trials and errors of the past eighty years... I believe the answer to the enigma of the continuity of the World Expos is in the BIE Convention and its amendments.

A number of articles have contributed to the staying power of Expos. The educational aim of an Expo, stated in article 1, is as true now as ever. Expos are meant to and always have contributed to the progress of the world by giving the public more information.

Article 2 stresses the non-commercial character of the World Expos, a basic fact that often needs reminding. Article 3 and 4 define the duration of Expos and the intervals between them, and provide information about participation and other institutional aspects.

Practically all aspects of an Expo are covered by the Convention, which also leaves enough freedom of choice to host countries to ensure that each exhibition is able to "invent itself" anew.

Today, the demand for Expos is very strong indeed. Potential host countries show a growing interest in obtaining the right to host an EXPO, and participating countries are interested in taking part. Though the opportunity to host an Expo may be sought after today for other reasons than in the past, the event is as much in demand as ever and the long row of World Expos looks like it will continue well into the future.

### A QUESTION OF EXPOS

- 1° Which one was the first World Expo registered by the BIE?  
a) Paris 1931 b) Brussels 1935 c) Milan 1933
- 2° In what year did the BIE begin its activities?  
a) 1928 b) 1931 c) 1935
- 3° Which country is the Depository power of the 1928 Convention of Paris?  
a) Germany b) France c) Great Britain
- 4° Who was the architect of the Crystal Palace in the 1851 London Exhibition?  
a) Joseph Paxton b) Victor Steinbrueck c) Gabriel Davioud

- 5° Which Expo inaugurated both the moving sidewalk (conveyor belt) and the subway in its city?  
a) Paris 1855 b) Paris 1889 c) Paris 1900
- 6° At which exhibition were the first ice cream cone and hot dog introduced?  
a) Saint Louis 1904 b) Liege 1905 c) Brussels 1910
- 7° How many countries participated in the Sevilla Expo 1992?  
a) 112 b) 122 c) 132

Answers: 1. b; 2. b; 3. b; 4. a; 5. c; 6. a; 7. a

### Important Dates

- 10 May** : Administration and Budget Committee
- 24-26 May** : **Tangier, Morocco.** International Symposium Tangier 2012. Routes of the world and intercultural dialogue
- 31 May** : Information and Communication Committee
- 1er June** : Rules Committee
- 4 June** : Executive Committee
- 18-19 June** : 141st BIE General Assembly
- 25-2- June** : **Rome, Italy.** International Symposium Milan 2015
- 27-29 June** : **Wroclaw, Poland.** International Symposium Wroclaw 2012. Global and Local Economy of Leisure



**CONTACT**

34 Avenue d'Iéna  
75016 Paris  
Tel : 01 45 00 38 63  
Email : [bie@bie-paris.org](mailto:bie@bie-paris.org)  
[www.bie-paris.org](http://www.bie-paris.org)

© BIE

# Progression

## The BIE newsletter

### THE CONTINUITY OF EXPOS

#### SUMMARY



2  
Around the Theme



Montreal '67



3  
Foundations and Expos



Italy: a Long-term Commitment to Expos



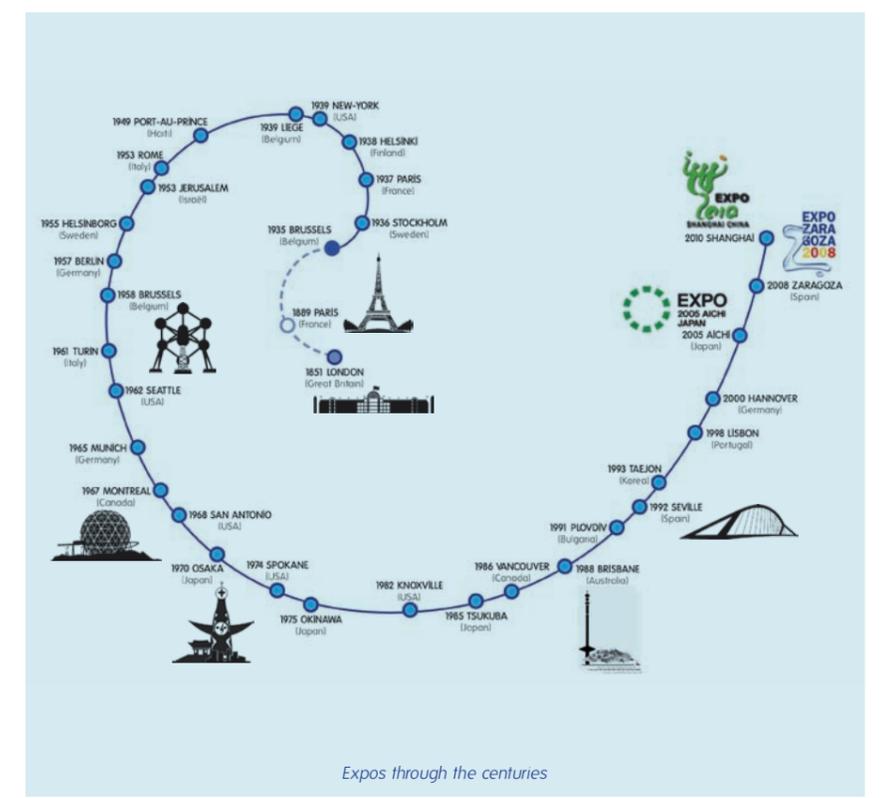
4  
Expos: The Enigma of Continuity – Thoughts

## No Expo is an Island

One of the powers of Expos is in the numbers. Not only the number of visitors, the number of participant countries, the number of innovations. A four digit sequence that, following the name of an Expo city, captures an era: Paris 1937, Brussels '58, Sevilla '92, Lisboa '98, Hannover 2000, Aichi 2005.

Each date is much more than a marker of time: it is a bridge between periods that each Expo is capable of encapsulating and interpreting. One Expo embodies the lessons of the other, while creating the premises for the next one. Each new period is different, although progress is not made through rupture, but rather by

capturing the questions that most matter at a time: originally it was technological progress, then scientific innovation and today a more humanistic vision of progress, where the dialogue that takes place aims at making our planet a welcoming place for future generations.



*Erratum - In the Newsletter N° 04, page 2, the text "Participating to Shanghai 2010" the photos and the names of the authors have been inverted. Ambassador Hua is the author of the first article, Mr. Zhou Hanmin of the second.*



Vicente González Loscertales  
Secretary General of the BIE

Carmen Bueno  
Specialist in the design and communication of Expos

John McGregor  
Founder and Executive Director Foundation Expo '88

## Expos' continuity into the 21st century

Although each Expo is exceptional and unique, they all form a single tradition that has continued for over a century. They have persistently upheld their mission to educate the public, while offering countless innovations and diverse visions for a better future for the planet. As proof of their success, 18 people visited Hanover 2000, 22 million Aichi 2005, over 10 million are expected in Zaragoza 2008 and around 70 million in Shanghai 2010.

So what is the secret of their continuous presence into the 21st century?

Expos reflect the needs of contemporary society and have demonstrated an extraordinary ability to capture the moods of their time. They have provided exceptional moments in history to showcase human progress in technology, society and culture. Because they celebrate universal values such as cultural diversity, tolerance and the respect for nature they resonate with a vast global audience.

Ensuring the longevity of Expos is at the core of the BIE mission. The BIE encourages a continuous cooperation among Expos, so that they may learn from one another and continue to share practices. This Newsletter is dedicated to decoding the secrets of Expos' continuity.

## Around the Theme

Can we identify a common thread between the themes of different Expos? And classify them based on their theme? Can we speak of a progression in the theme of Expos?

At the beginning, Expos were mostly fairs dedicated to the technological progress of their era. For decades, Expos had a universal mission, an informational one, as windows on progress. It seems clear that Expos, deprived of this mission by the media, evolved more towards a function of meeting and universal reflection on the great themes of their time.

But, as soon as we look deeper, this criterion becomes less clear. Those who witness the great Expos of the first era show a great interest in all types of questions: ethnographical, social, artistic. In parallel, when we revisit the most recent Expos, technological innovation remains one of the most important memories.

This observation does not mean that the theme of Expos has not evolved. Expos become witness of their time: while electricity has been the inspiring muse of Expos at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, with the diversification



Expo Aichi 2005

of its applications and its popularization, environmental themes become the actors in the Expos at the beginning of our century.

This is a subject of great complexity and, interestingly, almost unexplored: we miss an analytic history of World Expos that goes beyond the descriptive axis; a comparative analysis of their themes and of the way to develop them. This reflection is, in our opinion, fascinating and necessary, not only to better understand the past but to increase our understanding and definition of the Mission of Expos in the global society.

## The World of Expos, Expos around the World

Beginning in June, the BIE will restart its series of conferences *The World of Expos, Expos around the World* dedicated to the general public, cultural centres and universities.

Next date :

- Institut Français du Nord, Tangier, Morocco: 24th May 2007 à 7:00 pm
- Théâtre Municipal de Pau, France: 4th June 2007 à 7:30 pm
- Mairie de Paris 10ème, 13th June 2007 at 8:00 pm

Additional information available at the BIE.

The 7 sub-themes of "Man and his World"

1. Man the Explorer
2. Man the Producer
3. Man the Creator
4. Man in the Community
5. Man the Provider
6. Labyrinth
7. Habitat 67, Man in the City

## Foundations and Expos – Past, Present and Future

Foundations are an 'impartial government', where people can speak the truth and seek respite and refuge, in the name of goodwill and mutual understanding. In this sense they share a common bond with the World Expos and Games sectors both commemorating and celebrating markers in time, and the expectation of greater times.

Foundation Expo '88's role mirrors this. It is the celebratory entity commemorating on the one hand the 1988 Brisbane World Expo, held for the 1788-1988 Bicentennial of Australia celebrations. It also commemorates the past, present and future Australian representations on the World Expos stage - both as a host, and as a participant. The Foundation follows the guiding precepts of the BIE-established Assembly of Expo Cities and Regions (A.V.E.), in developing our unique and common World Expo knowledge.

The Foundation works hard at lifting the overall commemorative, heritage legacy, and celebratory presence and goodwill of World Expo '88. It takes these efforts higher to a further level: re-engaging with our participants, recognizing and furthering our Exhibition's heritage, and putting into action plans for the future. These plans continue and extend our goodwill and other obligations in the global fish pond that interconnects the text, images, sounds and experiences of the new eGlobe world, and equally, they will foster the tan-

gible and intangible wonderful outcomes of that most important objective of any Expo - in the words of Osaka '70 chief architect, Kenzo Tange, 'personal exchange'. I hope you will join us in this important task.

Foundation Expo '88 : <http://www.foundationexpo88.org>



The legacy of Expo '88, Nepal Pavilion

Antonio d'Apice, Delegate of Italy at the BIE

## Italy: a Long-term Commitment to Expos

Italy has always demonstrated the will to adhere to the spirit and the principles of Expos and can show continuity in participation since the second half of the 19th century.

Participating to an Expo means to commit to show the best of one's country - the goals achieved in the different industrial sectors, the accomplishments in the scientific and cultural world - and to put them at the disposal of humanity. It also means to encounter people with different traditions and principles in a collaborative environment that teaches respect and tolerance.

Not all Expos can witness the introduction of revolutionary achievements (think about Paris 1900 that coincided with the introduction of the combustion engine and of electricity). However, looking closely, each Expo is a milestone in the difficult path towards progress.

Tsukuba 1985 saw the birth of flat screen TV and the application of

robotics to homes. Vancouver 1986 prefigured the strong development of high speed travel of which the Japanese offered a valid example with the presentation of the magnetic levitation train. What to say then about grand project of recovery of large urban areas, as done, for instance, with Lisbon 1998? This project, together with a wise usage of European funds, gave the Portuguese the possibility to regenerate the area around the river Tago by creating a new ultra modern neighbourhood conceived to facilitate socialization and designed by the great names of modern architecture.

Italy is also proud to have been the organiser of great Expos in Milan in 1906, in Turin in 1911 and the so called "Colombiadi" in 1992 to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America, coinciding with Expo '92 Sevilla. The rich series of exhibitions organised by the Milan Triennale beginning in 1933 should not be forgotten. It is in this spirit of continuity of a well consolidated tradition that Italy is now a candidate to organise the 2015 World Expo in Milan.



The pavilion of Italy in Sevilla '92



The pavilion of Italy in Lisboa '98



The pavilion of Italy in Aichi 2005

Yves Jasmin, O.C.  
directeur de la publicité, de l'information et des relations publiques d'Expo 67.

## The great theme of Montreal 1967: "Man and his World"

Expo 67 made the visitors aware of the true meaning of Saint-Exupéry's quote... « To be a man is to feel that through one's own contribution, one helps to build the world ».

One of the first realizations of the Montreal 1967 was to bring together twelve recognized thinkers to establish the broad outlines of "Man and his World" chosen as a theme for Expo 67.

All participants enthusiastically welcomed the theme, which was abundantly illustrated in the individual pavilions and in the gigantic thematic pavilions of Expo 67. One of the seven sub-themes was the Labyrinth, a realisation of the National Film Board of Canada, designed to make us reflect on the battles that each of us has to carry out to overcome one's hesitations.

Québec was still at the beginning of what has been called the Quiet Revolution, coming out of political and religious "dark ages". The revelations of the Expo have brought a new momentum to its fifty million visitors, amongst whom were the million of children they brought.

For the quality of these presentations, Expo 67 generated many vocations in the domain of knowledge, of culture, of design, of architecture, without counting the creation of new companies and talents that still flourish today.

