

**New smartness and the making of geographies of knowledge at the world's Fair: Morocco's participation at Expo 2000 in Hannover** – *Alexa Färber (Anthropology), University of Berlin (Germany)*

From the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century world's fairs had not only been sites that successfully demonstrated national identity through industrial and cultural production. In the age of the birth of mass culture these events also led to transferring representations of the world "as such" structured by hierarchical relations between nations, empires and colonies, centre and periphery, cultures and knowledge. This world could be seen on one site by a large public, while at the same time large professional exchange between politicians, industrials, scholars and artists were taking place at a great scale.

Today these events evoke rather limited public interest: The host country or city expects local development from the investment in infrastructure and gain of symbolic capital. The guest countries are not only confronted by this restricted local agenda, the competition for attention on the site is enormous, and their contribution as well as the entire event remain more or less unrecognised "at home".

Nevertheless, if one turns from the product, the exhibition and the exhibits, to what might be called the representational work, the geographies of knowledge that are at work at the world's fair become visible in their historical depth, their ambivalence and social relevance. Thus, in this paper I would like to propose to look closer at the representational work of one participating country, Morocco, in order to show how a small multidisciplinary group of scholars, civil servants and an architect shaped what became "Morocco – roots of the future" at Expo 2000 in Hanover. Based on fieldwork at the office that prepared the Moroccan contribution to Expo 2000 and on the analysis of the exhibit, it is argued that a large part of this participation was structured by anticipating Expo 2000 as a framework structured by what was interpreted as geo-political hierarchies. Therefore, the project team's first assumption stated that it would be impossible to put forward an image that would step out of this given interpretational framework. The following representational work consisted in analysing which would be – in the gaze of a western public that was expected to ignore most of Morocco's

reality – the plausible “technologies of nationhood”. Thus, what had been perceived as an asymmetric relationship between “the north” and “the south”, was translated into a media-correspondance with respect to the disposal of technology and converted into the still performative orientalist imaginary. The restricted use of technology and the stress on creating an orientalist atmosphere became the main tools to convert information and differentiated messages – produced in the realm of projectwork – into the exhibit. It is argued that the “new smartness” (Andrew Ross) that was prevalent in the knowledge production in Morocco became (voluntarily) invisible in this context.