

Power, control and national representation in modern architecture and exhibition design at Expo 58

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Abstract

At Expo 58, the first post-war world's fair, discussions on national representation were central in the production of architecture and exhibition design. These discussions involve several parties: the organizers of the event, the commissioners of pavilions, architects, engineers, interior decorators, artists, script writers, etcetera. "The pavilion" is composed of the edifice, its exhibition and exhibits and the texts and images used to explain the representation. With this pavilion, or the entire fair in the case of the organizers, commissioners aim at the public at large: fairgoers, but also the public in the homeland.

This text explores the functioning of power and control in the explicit representation of the nation in several projects at Expo 58 and discusses the nature of these representations, the processes of design and promotion, the authors involved and the issues at stake. To acquire insight in the discussions, this text claims, it is necessary to confront the diverging viewpoints of the authors and to include the reactions of the public and the press. In this post-war fair, most governments identified with modern architecture, but did feel the need to specify their nationality through architecture and exhibition design. At Expo 58, the various attempts placed national representation in modern architecture on the agenda of the public at large and the architectural discipline, evoking strong discussions. National representation in architecture and design became a collaborative creation of which the results were continuously discussed as outcomes of a "democratic" process. Still under the strong control of governmental institutions, in several remarkable cases, these commissioners were ostentatiously permissive of critical stances, which, in a later stage, were included in the national images.

*'We were afraid that, in this era, the internationalization of the means of construction would lead to an internationalization of architecture.'*ⁱ On the occasion of the presentation of the projects of the foreign pavilions Marcel Van Goethem, architect-in-chief of Expo 58, amplified on the doubts of the organizers of this first post-war international and universal exhibition. Van Goethem expressed the fear of the general planners: a fair of this size, large 200 hectares and assembling over 127 pavilions, was in need of a variegated architectural panorama if it wanted to animate its visitors and become a public success. Yet because of the diplomatic context of this BIE-recognized world's fair,ⁱⁱ the organizers of the exhibition only had limited control over the designs of the pavilions of the participants. By means of incentives and regulations, they attempted to diversify the architecture of the foreign pavilions. Hence one of the paradoxes underlying the modern architecture of Expo 58: although the promotion of a unified, peaceful world was one of its high goals, it was the

organizers' wish that this new, post-war world should not look monotonous and that cultural differences, their architectural consequences especially, should be expressed. At the presentation of the foreign projects, the organizers considered the overall panorama of architecture sufficiently diverse – much to their surprise, as Van Goethem claimed:

It was a revelation to me, when the plans came to me from the different countries, to see that every nation had manifested its national spirit in completely new techniques, without any form of uniformity. ... every country, by its form, by its colour, its materials and by its very implantation, indicates its national character.ⁱⁱⁱ

In the discussion of the expression of national character through architecture and design at Expo 58, two different kinds of commissioners should be taken into account: the organizers of the fair, but also the individual, and especially foreign, participants who had their pavilion developed by the designers of their choice. Both operate in a double context: they are part of the international panorama of the fair, in which diversification and recognisability are desired, but also of a national production with its own history and habits, aiming at a nation's positive identification with the project. A quick observation of the national pavilions at Expo 58 shows that several of them were interchangeable, at least visually. Other pavilions, realized often by architects referring to regional features, revealed the nationality of the commissioner more directly. Regardless of their visual recognisability, in guides and leaflets most pavilions forwarded a narrative that linked their modern architectural features to their post-war, modern identity and claimed to be "typical".

This text explores aspects of control and power in the representation of the post-war nation through modern architecture at Expo 58. Based on archival research and close-readings of contemporary texts, promotional leaflets and guides,^{iv} this text departs from the general finding that at Expo 58, discussions on nationalism in architecture and exhibition design were much alive. Deliberate positioning amidst the rising Cold War and lingering post-WWII tensions, both in an international perspective and in the homeland, became inevitable.^v The search for an expression of a national modern in architecture was a central question with the organizers: diversification between nations was their main goal. In the individual national pavilions, the issue of an identifiable national idiom was assessed in more absolute terms – national teams were unaware of the pavilions of their neighbours at the moment of design –

and most often through a “democratic” process of discussion and compromise. Notwithstanding the widespread conviction that modern architecture had found its worldwide dissemination and had evolved into a widespread expression of an internationalizing world, research on the processes of planning and on the reception history of several Expo 58 projects reveals strong controversies regarding the nature of the national modern in architecture and exhibition design. Eventually, what appears to be central are issues power of control: this no longer concerns issues on style or the possible choice for a modern idiom, but questions the status of individual, often vanguard architectural concepts in national representations and the attempts to turn them into a collectively supported national image. The full complexity of this process can only be assessed when the motivations of the organizers are confronted with a detailed analyses of the planning and promotion of individual national pavilions.^{vi}

Nationalist motives in the organization of an internationalist event

World’s fairs of the nineteenth and early twentieth century have been identified as vehicles of nation building by historians from various fields, like Robert W. Rydell, Paul Greenhalgh or Pieter Van Wesemael.^{vii} These authors focus especially on the large scale success stories of the organizers of the event, in political, social and spatial terms, linking the organization of world’s fairs with projects of nation building that rose in the mid-nineteenth century. The promotion and creation of modern national identity, as Greenhalgh indicated, had a double face: one towards the citizens of the organizing nation – providing objects of national pride and redefining the national – and one towards the international stage – promoting world peace, as ever, and striving for (cultural) supremacy.

At Expo 58, the organizers not only were involved with the planning and coordination of the entire site, but also with the more detailed, overall image of the pavilions assembled in the Belgian Section. Here, “unity” and “dignity” were central concepts in the organizers’ development of a coherent national image, who wanted ‘*to turn the Belgian Section into a representative oeuvre of our national unity, symbolized by what we call a “collective rhythm.”*’^{viii} In contrast to the eleven preceding Belgian world’s fairs, Expo 58 was the first Belgian fair that was promoted, financed and organized entirely by the Belgian state. One of Belgium’s motivations to claim the right to hold the first post-war fair, was its economic prosperity in the immediate post-war period: already in Spring 1947, long before its neighbouring nations, the “Belgian Miracle” was a feat: Belgian industrial production was

back on its pre-war level (1936-'38). Notwithstanding this economic success, the nation faced pervading social and political tensions which divided the country: the repression of wartime collaboration, the School Funding Controversy and the Royal Question divided the nation.^{ix} In hindsight, and based on the early declarations of the fair's organisers, Expo 58 can be considered as an attempt to restore the unity in the nation and to settle its young King Baudouin. When the commissioner-general, Georges baron Moens de Fernig, former minister and industrial patron, delivered his first report on the organisation of the fair, the event was set for 1956 and would be devoted to the 125th anniversary of the installation of the Belgian royal house. *'This occasion needs to be the foundation of the organization of the exhibition and is itself its immediate cause,'* Moens de Fernig wrote, *'I intend to supplement the title of the exhibition with the subtitle "125th anniversary of the royal family".'*^x

If the organizers wanted to claim the successful reconstruction of the Belgian nation in front of the world, also the Belgian pavilions had to deliver proof of a powerful and confident host state. The architects of the organizers' Technical Service had designed an exhibition site composed of five sections following the nature of the participants.^{xi} The Belgian Section was most strictly regulated. Already in his earliest plans, the first architect-in-chief, Paul Bonduelle (1877-1955) had defined the succession of volumes and voids of which the Belgian Section had to be composed. Although he did not live to see his plan executed, the pavilions were constructed according to his scheme. Additionally, regulations for the use of colour – *'tones that have to lead to harmony and unity'*^{xii} – light and lettering for the façades were imposed in an attempt to create a visual unity in this section. Additionally, architects in the Belgian Section were encouraged to construct glass façades in order to show parts of the exhibition to the fairgoers passing by and to illuminate the street at night.^{xiii} The lettering on the façades in the Belgian Section was regulated in detail: font (Industrial Design), position, material and size were prescribed in an attempt to *'avoid a too directly commercial or advertising aspect. The universal exhibition of 1958 is not a commercial fair.'*^{xiv} In addition, the participants' choice for an architect and his design had to be approved by the organizers' Technical Service.^{xv} The organizers were able to impose these regulations because of the rather weak position of the Belgian participants. The Belgian industries were given large lots for free and some even received financial support for their pavilions, as it was most important to the organizers that *'in all sectors, the Belgian industry has present a valuable synthesis of its activities and that this should not harm our national economy.'*^{xvi} By the time the Belgian participants had to enrol for the exhibition, September 1955, Belgian economy started to get overrun by its neighbour nations and several sectors were unable to

invest in large pavilions.^{xvii} Moreover, the industries' temporary associations had little or no expertise to stage such large exhibitions, nor existing policies regarding the promotion of their collective production.



Figure 1. The Belgian Section of Expo 58, near the Belgium Avenue, seen from the Atomium. Collection of the dept. Architecture & Urban Planning, UGent. Photo by G. Willems.

The concept and outcome of the Belgian Section was considered a success by the organizers, but was criticized by several architects and architectural critics. Belgian architect Jean-Pierre Blondel tackled the whole concept of using town planning principles as tools of power of control:

They (the organizers) thought that the architect, freed from the classical styles (of the *modern style* of 1890) had no other goal than the unbridled expression of his plastic originality, and that certainly, adjoining buildings conceived by different authors would mismatch; that the remedy, the same used blindly by the Administration of urban planning for twelve years on, is the straitjacket. Height, size, form and color had to be imposed.^{xviii}

Other critics also, like Renaat Braem or Pierre-Louis Flouquet, pointed at the dullness of the architecture of the Belgian Section, not at all representative of the “true nature” and variety of contemporary modern architecture in Belgium. Foreign critics, like James M. Richards in *Architecture Review* referred to the section as a collection of clichés, devoid of ‘*architectural interest*.’^{xix}

Discussions on the national modern in the foreign pavilions

Commissioners of pavilions in the Foreign Section were free to work with the designers of their choice. Some nations had organized national competitions – like: Norway, Finland, USSR, Italy or the Vatican – while other commissioners worked with teams experienced in national propaganda, as in the pavilions of the USA or the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany or West Germany). Most often, the architecture of the pavilion was made part of a general narrative on national character forwarded in the official guides, catalogues, leaflets and reports on the pavilion. National representation in a pavilion comprised several, often intertwined, aspects: the architecture of the pavilion with its engineering aspects, the exhibition with its circuit and objects, and the texts and images that situated the entire representation. This pavilion was the result of an interaction between the organizers, commissioners and designers and was commented upon by the international and homeland press, fairgoers and the inhabitants of the nation. This communication of and by national images was rich in references and gave rise to discussions at several moments.

In contrast to the Belgian Section, pavilions of the Foreign Section were not subjected to other regulations than those involving timing and security and the obligation to build on 30% of the allotted site. To counter the organizers’ fear for a monotonous exhibition, the special building regulations also suggested that

it should be taken into account that this concerns a general and international exhibition of the utmost importance. The pavilions and palaces have to reflect an architectural character which, with respect to the indispensable freedom of expression, has to be inspired by the national spirit of every country.^{xx}

In their attempt to foster the participants' interest in the architectural aspects of their representations, the Commissioner General launched his proposal for the *Challenge d'Architecture de l'Exposition Universelle*.^{xxi} The jury, composed of Belgian architects and fair officials, awarded the *Grand Prix* of the architectural competition to the architects Josef Hrubý, František Cubr and Zdeněk Pokorný for their Czechoslovakian pavilion.^{xxii} Eastern Block Czechoslovakia had erected a highly popular,^{xxiii} modern pavilion, which, at first sight, did not feature the regional or traditional references to the organizers' desired "national spirit." In contrast, the pavilion illustrated Misha Black's observation that '*very few exhibiting countries (which) have succeeded in designing buildings whose nationality is immediately recognizable.*' Moreover, '*The ubiquity of the present international style restricts quick appreciation of the differences in the national application of this style.*'^{xxiv}

Notwithstanding the apparent slippages between words and image, or architecture, in the discussions on the creation of a "nation inspired" pavilion, the role of the commissioner of the pavilion was crucial. It was the commissioner who defined the question, chose the architect, hired collaborators and paid for the project. In several questions – in the competition brief or in the assignment for the architects – his assessment of national character was explicit. Yet national character only rarely was coupled to style or the use of national materials – like the use of wood, for instance, in the brief to the Norwegian pavilion.^{xxv} In the competition brief for the USSR pavilion, it was understated that the new directions on architecture forwarded by Khrushchev had to be demonstrated, as it called for a pavilion expressing '*power and clarity of ideology.*' The edifice's construction type had to be '*contemporary and progressive*' and enable '*rapid erection and disassembly.*'^{xxvi} In other pavilions, like those of the USA or FRG, it was the choice for a specific oeuvre or architect (resp. Edward D. Stone and Egon Eiermann with Sep Ruf) which reflected the architectural concepts of the commissioner. A returning demand was the creation of an architecture that displayed specific characteristics of the people, as in the Finnish and Italian pavilions. The Finnish exhibition had to present the Finn as being '*of a completely natural simplicity, courteous and hospitable*' and cultivating '*the perfection of the body. Additionally there is a deep and pure urge to mental values ... This penchant explains the high value of his creations in the artistic and scientific field.*'^{xxvii} The Italian commissioner called for a pavilion that demonstrated an image of a '*present and dynamic culture, as a people in action rather than a "state" or "nation"*'.^{xxviii} National character was considered as an aspect of modern culture, an understood binding characteristic of a people or a building policy of a government. The vagueness of the description invited designers to develop a metaphorical approach to

the commission and often allowed sufficient freedom to embed the pavilions in their individual oeuvres.

Although a detailed analysis of the architectural implementation of nationalism in some of the most exemplary pavilions at Expo 58 is beyond the limited scope of this text,^{xxix} what needs to be considered with respect to the use and display of power and control, is the collaborative nature of the projects. Architects collaborated with engineers, exhibition designers, script writers, graphic artists, sociologists, politicians and industry magnates, all driven by proper motivations and scopes. Also, a central concern with most commissioners was how to address the public: the pavilion should appeal to fairgoers, countrymen and anyone reached by the mass media on the fair and its pavilions. The most lively discussions took place when problems were expected or experienced in the general public's reaction regarding issues of identifiability (homeland) or (international) diplomacy.



Figure 2. Exhibition court of the UK pavilion at Expo 58. Collection of the Department of Architecture & Urban Planning, Ghent University. Photographer G. Willems.

In pavilions like those of the USA or the UK, popular visual language and street culture were, in different ways, central in the exhibitions' concepts. Installations in the British pavilion

by James Gardner and designers of the Royal College of Arts under the supervision of Hugh Casson comprised, among other things, a lion-and-unicorn composition, an open air library, an open air theatre interior or a prominent fountain with colourful mermaids carrying umbrellas. Humour was deemed an important tool in the communication of British character and a welcome alternative to the many educational displays in the exhibition. Yet homeland critics judged the displays as too idiosyncratic, '*perhaps slightly puzzling to those who read neither Punch or The New Yorker*',^{xxx} or even unfit to represent Britain abroad because of its lack of seriousness. '*Much whimsicality and an emphasis on the 'amusing' and odd which is more suitable for home consumption than for export*,' Richards concluded in *The Architectural Review*.^{xxx} In the USA pavilion, American popular culture was central in the installations by Bernard Rudofsky,^{xxxii} but also, again, humour and self-criticism. Rudofsky testified shortly after: '*it is surprising how few nations thought of laughter as a means of communication*'.^{xxxiii} Rudofsky had composed a whimsical, critical summary of Americana. He did not want to stage the goods and commodities of capitalism, but invited visitors to take part in the American culture of freedom and wealth, to feel American for a moment. The "soft sell approach" developed by the USIA team was much appreciated by European visitors, but heavily criticized by Americans, even by the Congress. The overall approach, but especially the 'Unfinished Work' exhibit^{xxxiv} on social tensions and some of Rudofsky's details were interpreted as "a Cold War defeat." Eventually, president Eisenhower sent George V. Allen, head of USIA, to investigate the Brussels pavilion. Following Allen's report some alterations were made on the exhibition, but the overall architectural concepts were never questioned, on the contrary, '*from both an architectural and engineering point of view*' the pavilion was evaluated as '*brilliant*'.^{xxxv} In the foreign architectural and general press also, the American pavilion was much appreciated.

In the FRG and Italy also, public controversy arose on the occasion of Expo 58. More than contemporary popular culture, national heritage and building traditions were central in these discussions, and this because of their absence (FRG) or predominance (Italy). From an organizational point of view, both pavilions were opposites: the FRG pavilion was conceived by a loosely joined, experienced team with connections in the *Deutscher Werkbund*, the *Rat für Formgebung* and, for practical matters, NOWEA,^{xxxvi} all experienced in the precarious issues of representing and promoting post-war, separated West Germany and collaborating closely with the commissioner. Such was not the case in the Italian pavilion, where the architects^{xxxvii} invited to the closed competition joined in one team and developed their concepts largely in opposition to the commissioner. Eventually, the exhibition was designed

without reference to the architectural concepts. At the opening of the fair, the Italian government even publicly denounced the pavilion: '*The government pushes the responsibility of the scandal of the expo over to the architects.*'^{xxxviii} This was due to practical matters – the pavilion was not ready at the opening of the fair – but also to architectural choices: the project was conceived as a Mediterranean village, an “typical” Italian place for people to meet. As such, the deliberately controversial design with detailed vernacular references appeared to contradict the image of a post-war, modern, resurging Italy.



Figure 3. Alleyway in the Italian pavilion at Expo 58. Collection of the Department of Architecture & Urban Planning, Ghent University. Photographer G. Willems.

Although the exhibition inside the pavilion was a rich display of modern Italy, the overall image of the “old, poor village” was dominant. While the pavilion was a public success at the fair, the Italian press was scandalized: the pavilion was as an '*elegy for a regressing and reactionary Italy, barely fleeing from a nervous breakdown for it has been too preoccupied with tuberculoses and famine.*'^{xxxix} The reactions in the homeland against this “failure” were that aggressive that the commissariat felt obliged to publish a defence in the conclusive report on the Italian participation.^{xl} Foreign contemporary architectural critics also were troubled by the architects' statements on “coerenza” and “continuità” and interpreted the

pavilion as a choice to ‘*abandon modern constructional technique and, indeed, all that we mean by “modern architecture,”*’^{xli} or as an ‘*incomprehensible*’ monster ‘*that discourages all criticism.*’^{xlii} Similar strong public and press reactions were published also in the FRG, albeit for different reasons: the German representation was deemed to courteous and detached from German tradition: ‘*Boredom with Sauerkraut*’ headed the popular magazine *Bild-Zeitung*,^{xliii} Generally speaking, the most frequent accusation was that the West German delegacy was not nationalist enough and neglected the “true German” spirit: ‘*if they only had remembered our states and their folk art, and, ... they could have twined a garland of German beer and sauerkraut.*’^{xliv} Yet this attitude of restraint was a central concept in the FRG pavilion. This “*Haltung der Zurückhaltung*”^{xlv} advanced that it would be experienced as inappropriate by the international public to victoriously celebrate the FRG’s “*Wirtschaftswunder*” or to stress post-war recovery. A “human”, un-victorious architectural idiom was deemed key to the German participation. *Life and Work in Germany* became the official leitmotiv of the exhibition, following the exhibition concept of *Werkbund* president Hans Schwippert. This first post-war display of the FRG was marked by a persistent transparency – a lingering metaphor for democracy in the contemporary debate on the representation of the FRG^{xlvi} – transparency in the exhibition, in the organization and, of course, in the pavilion by architects Egon Eiermann and Sep Ruf.



Figure 4. The FRG pavilion at Expo 58. Collection of the Department of Architecture & Urban Planning, Ghent University. Photographer G. Willems.

Notwithstanding German criticism, the precision and consistency of the architectural project led to some of the most extolling evaluations in the architectural press. *Architects' Journal* referred to it as 'one of the highlights of the Exhibition'^{xlvii} and *Architectural Forum* deemed it 'probably the most coolly refined entry at the fair.'^{xlviii}

Power and control in national architectural representation

'The fear to see an internationalization of architecture, under the influence of new techniques, has not come true. It was in a happy confrontation that the most modern of processes were expressed in an architecture that reflects the national characters.'^{xlix} Also in the memorial book on the architecture of Expo 58, the organizers maintained their claim on the nation-inspired differences in the foreign pavilions. Most of these pavilions – 75% or 30 pavilions – were presented by their commissioners as samples of a post-war, national modern.ⁱ The choices regarding the idiom of this modern architecture were made by their architects, following their own oeuvre and contemporary discussions on post-war national architecture and design, in which often also the commissioner of the pavilion was involved. Pavilions like those of the USA, FRG, Finland, or even Japan or Norway, revealed a welcome departure from one of the problems Sert, Léger and Giedion had sketched in their *Nine points on Monumentality*, namely that 'The feeling of those who govern and administer the countries is untrained and still imbued with pseudo-ideals of the nineteenth century.'ⁱⁱ In the second half of the fifties, several nations had invested in the development of advanced national propaganda, in which architecture and exhibitions played an important role. Such had not been the case in Belgium, although the government was engaged in large scale projects in the centre of the capital.ⁱⁱⁱ Several of the architects involved, like Maurice Houyoux and Marcel Van Goethem, held important positions in the Technical Service of Expo 58. Their projects shaped the architectural face of the Belgian Welfare State in the heart of the capital and in the temporary projects for the prestige areas at Expo 58. On both occasions, their "monumentalism" was criticized in the Belgian architectural press.

What the Expo 58 projects mentioned above shared, is their demonstrative nature: their architecture, exhibition, exhibits and general attitudes or concepts were explicitly presented by the commissioner as "typical" of the nation. In more than one way, they illustrated how the national pavilions had shifted from a fixed, formal representation of governmental institutions to more open, debatable displays of the nation. In addition, these are also buildings that, in the words of Sert, Léger and Giedon, offered 'more than functional

fulfilment. They (the people) want their aspiration for monumentality, joy, pride and excitement to be satisfied.¹ⁱⁱⁱ On different scales, using a variety of media and often demonstrating a diversity of cultures, the national image was created through metaphors, experiences and exemplary objects. Architecture was a strong medium in this “proof” of nationality, yet its formal language was often largely dissociated from the national discourse: architecture testified of a nation’s choice for modern architecture, but also incorporated a narrative on abstract characteristics like transparency and modesty (FRG), unity and dignity (Belgium), freedom and richness (USA), refinement (Finland), etcetera. Only when architects linked these narratives with references to traditional building features in their modern pavilions, the nationality of the commissioner became most clear.

At the end of the fifties already, industrial production no longer was capable to identify a nation, as Italian semiotician Umberto Eco remarked after visiting the Montreal 1967 fair: ‘In contemporary expositions ... standardized industrial production ... no longer differentiates one image of civilization from another. The only solution left is symbolic.’^{1iv} And also: ‘In an exposition we show not the objects but the exposition itself.’^{1v} Moreover, as Belgian critic Libert Vanderkerken has observed: in the multitude of Expo 58, people did no longer watch the many objects on show but visited the fair to have witnessed the ‘*spectacle of hundreds of thousands of people meeting from all corners of the world.*’^{1vi} Observation, comparison, identification, social contact and divertissement were among the main goals of fairgoers. What was remarkable in several pavilions at Expo 58 – USA, FRG and Italy most clearly – was a shift with respect to the display of power and control over the design. It was not always the architectural expression of the power of a nation which had altered, but the way in which power and control were used in the process of the conception of and communication on the pavilion. In several pavilions, architects or exhibition designers took up critical, sometimes even deliberately controversial stances vis-a-vis their commissions and commissioner. Yet notwithstanding the high stakes and the strict control over the projects, these designers were capable to air and shape their ideas. Some of them were censored, but all worked within the consent of the commissioner, who integrated these alternative views in the official communication. A similar permissive, albeit slightly tempering attitude towards criticism was adopted in the confrontation with the negative reactions in the press. These attacks were incorporated in the official reports, press releases or commemorative publications. Most often, they were accompanied by refutes or excuses, but the discontent was also forwarded as an implicit proof of a living national image, under discussion, as a show of democracy in which the homeland public participated. Several

post-war architectural representations at Expo 58 were treated as potential images, demonstrating the differences and discussions on nationality, which often contrasted the organizers' desire for a recognizable national imagery.

The strength of several pavilions in the mass event of Expo 58, was that their representations of the nation evoked strong reactions in different fields: among the collaborators, in the specialized press, in the general press, in the homeland, worldwide. The representation of the nation was a dynamic image: discussed, charged, constructed and dismantled. Modern imagery was the same idiom used by both democratic and fascist states, in the East and West Blocs, etcetera. The positions chosen by governmental commissioners and developed by designers, not only were experienced, but also judged by the public at large. Popularity polls quantify the preferences of the visiting masses – 41.5 million – but their appreciation is far more difficult to measure. The architecture of the pavilions provoked strong reactions in the homeland press, often devoid of the diplomacy and enchantment that mark visitors' reports. As a result, the national images presented by the pavilions became public discussions. Within this international event, nationality, carried by national propaganda, became a vital aspect of post-war representation. Flexible and abstract in the official narratives, the national became captured in images and spatial experiences in the architecture and exhibition design, shaped by the designers' contemporary oeuvre. Far more than the abstract metaphors of a nation, the architecture and design of its pavilion, offered a palpable core for the public debate on post-war nationalism, largely beyond the control of governments and propaganda masters.

All translations from French, German and Dutch text are by the author.

i Van Goethem, M (1956 ?), 'Allocution prononcée par M. Van Goethem, architecte en chef', in *Journées de contact des commissaires généraux étrangers. Deuxième session. 21 et 22 Novembre 1956* Commissariat Général du Gouvernement, p. 39.

ii The *Bureau International des Expositions* (BIE) regulates the organization of world's fairs since 1928.

iii Van Goethem, 'Allocution prononcée', p. 39.

iv Most of the research is part of the author's Ph.D. research, published as Devos R 2008, *Modern at Expo 58. Discussions on post-war architectural representation*, Faculteit Ingenieurswetenschappen, Ghent.

v An overview of this taking of positions is given in: Crowley D. & Pavitt J. (eds.) 2008, *Cold War Modern. Design 1945-1970*, V&A Publishing, London.

vi Studies in architectural, design and general cultural history have dealt with some of the most well-known pavilions at Expo 58, like the FRG or USA, but tend to focus especially, if not solely, on the consistency of the propaganda efforts in these pavilions. The conflict in the US pavilion is described most recently in Castillo G 2010, *Cold War on the Home Front. The Soft Power of Midcentury Design*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/London, pp. 144-148. A recent brief evaluation on the FRG pavilion is given in Aynsley J 2009, *Designing modern Germany*, Reaktion Books, London, pp. 156-161.

- vii Rydell, RW, Findling JE & Pelle KD 2000, *Fair America. World's Fairs in the United States*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington/London; Greenhalgh, P 1988, *Ephemeral vistas, the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, Manchester University Press, Manchester; Van Wesemael, P 2001, *Architecture of Instruction and Delight. A socio-historical analysis of World Exhibitions as a didactic phenomenon (1798-1851-1970)*, 010 Publishers, Amsterdam.
- viii Hendrickx-van den Bosch J 1955, 'In de Belgische Afdeling: eenheid en urbanisatie', *het bestek*, no.1, p. 51. Hendrickx-van den Bosch is architect-in-chief of the Belgian Section.
- ix On these tensions, see: Witte E, Craeybeckx J & Meynen A 1997, *Politieke geschiedenis van België van 1830 tot heden*, Standaard Uitgeverij, Antwerp.
- x On July 21 1831. (Moens de Fernig G), *Algemene wereldtentoonstelling Brussel 1956. De Commissaris Generaal der Regering. Verslag*, 1 March 1952, p. 2. Brussels, State Archives, Fund Expo 58, no. 2.03.04.
- xi Namely: the Belgian, Colonial, Commercial, Foreign and Mundial Sections.
- xii *Réunion des Architectes des collectivités érigeant un pavillon dans la Section belge*, March 4 1957. Brussels, State Archives, Fund Expo 58, no. 4.08.15.
- xiii In this case, part of the electricity costs were paid by the organizers.
- xiv *Instructions sur les inscriptions et enseignes des pavillons de la section belge et de la section du congo belge et du ruanda-urundi*. Brussels, State Archives, Fund Expo 58, no. 3.50.25.
- xv On the selection of architects and on the various mechanisms of control by the Technical Service, see : Devos R, *Modern at Expo 58*, pp. 195-287.
- xvi *Procès verbal de la réunion du comité consultatif économique tenue le 21 novembre 1955 à 11h*, Brussels, State Archives, Fund Expo 58, no. 4.08.10.
- xvii Letter by Moens de Fernig to Jean Rey, Minister of Economic Affairs, 19 October 19 1955. Brussels, State Archives, Fund Expo 58, no. 4.08.10, Aide à l'Industrie.
- xviii Blondel, J-P 1959, 'Architecture, exposition, urbanisme', *Rythme*, no. 26, p.14. Blondel realized several pavilions on the fair site.
- xix Richards JM, 1958, 'Expo 58', *The Architectural Review*, vol. 124, no. 739, p. 76.
- xx "Titel III Bouwwerken. Inleiding" of A1. Speciaal reglement der bouwwerken (Brussels: Commissariaat-generaal der Regering, 1956), 14. Brussels, State Archives, Fund Expo 58, no. 3.50.25
- xxi *Trophée de l'exposition universelle et internationale de Bruxelles 1958*, undated preparatory note, 6 p. Brussels, State Archives, Fund Expo 58, no. 3.50.30. Concours. Dossier général.
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- liii Ockman, p.29
- liv Eco U, 1998, 'A Theory of Expositions', in *Faith in Fakes. Travels in Hyperreality*, Vintage, London, p. 296.
- Iv Eco, 'A Theory of Expositions', p. 299.
- Ivi Vanderkerken L, 1958, 'Brussel 1958', *Streven*, no. 3, p. 205.