

Introduction Volume 12

JOEP LEERSSEN

NISE

Introduction

In the history of national movements, “intermediary structures” play a specific role. These determine the social intercourse between individual actors, often instigated at grassroots level and only in the second instance related to the institutionalized organisms arranged by local or national authorities. They include the associational life of the emerging public sphere, forms of sociability, but also press and publication activities emanating therefrom. The archival deposits left behind by these “intermediary structures” take up a specific place between the governmental and the individual or prosopographical levels, and form one of the most fecund conduits between social and political history. This is exemplified by the recent State of Nationalism survey on “Nationalism and the Social Policy Nexus”, included in this issue.

This present issue, and even more so the next one (#13) will present, next to various articles ranging from city life to WWI soldiers, articles relating to a very specific type of “intermediary structure”: the great trade exhibitions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These have long been recognized as one of the great display platforms of consumerist modernity; their formal language and typology is now being mapped systematically, as is their role in both bringing together and singling out nations and their self-selected characteristic “identities”. In their gestation, they are typically multiscalar, fluidly navigating the level (or the register) of the regional, the colonial, the imperial or the national, with the nation gradually emerging as the premier container of collective

identities in cultural and political as well as economic terms. This fluidity is made all the more dynamic because of the platform's vacillation between international, future-oriented modernity and auto-exoticist or nostalgic rusticism (which can take the form of auto-exoticist or ethnocentric folk villages and human zoos). NISE and its affiliates have explored these aspects in a conference – the first on-site one after a Covid interruption – held in 2023 at the splendid (and topically very congenial) Vienna University of Economics and Business. All participants will gratefully remember the generous support and organization of Professor Johannes Koll there.

There is an additional reason to mention the name of professor Koll with gratitude. For many years he has been on our editorial board, a colleague unfailing in his promptness, diligence and sound judgement. His schedule no longer allows him to serve on SNM's editorial board but we will keep him in mind as a shining example.

More papers from the Vienna conference will follow in SNM's next issue. In the present issue, we are happy to include an archival survey of the holdings of the Galician Royal Academy, and an exploration of the future of archiving in online and web-based environments.