

16th EASA biennial conference [New anthropological horizons in and beyond Europe](#)

EASA2020 – P003: **World Fairs, Exhibitions, and Anthropology: Revisiting Contexts of Post/Colonialism [Europeanist Network]**. Convened by Hande Birkalan-Gedik (Goethe Universität-Frankfurt), Patrícia Ferraz de Matos (Universidade de Lisboa) and Andrés Barrera González (Universidad Complutense de Madrid); discussant Benoît de L'Estoile (CNRS, Ecole normale supérieure). <https://easaonline.org/conferences/easa2020/panels#8444>

Thursday 23 July, 08:30-10:15 and 11:00-12:45 (Lisbon/London time)

The panel aimed at illuminating “world fairs and other great exhibitions in the past and the repercussions they may still have on ‘contemporary exhibitions’, particularly considering the role of anthropology and the contexts of post/coloniality.” Geographically, the papers spoke to different parts of the globe: Portugal, France, Brazil, Argentina, Spain, Turkey, and Russia.

The panel was introduced by two of the convenors, Patrícia Ferraz de Matos and Hande Birkalan-Gedik. Patrícia Ferraz de Matos chaired the first session. Based on the work of German anthropologist Robert Lehmann-Nitsche on exhibited Argentinean indigenous groups, Diego Ballesterio (Universität Bonn) analysed the use of fairs and exhibitions as a privileged space for “field work” for the scholars of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Argentina (1898-1904). Nicolas Freeman (Goldsmiths, University of London) introduced “A Critical Historiography of Argentina” from the “International Centennial Exposition to 2001” and proposed that the Buenos Aires’ International Centennial Exposition (1910) laid the foundational moment not only of the nationalist state and a capitalist economy but also of the systematic use of genocide as a political tool. Hande Birkalan-Gedik presented a paper on a non-canonical, nineteenth century Ottoman travel report, titled “La rue du Caire at the Exposition Universelle (1889): Ahmet Midhat’s Orientalist Twist on Muslim Morality and Gender.” Mariam Kerimova (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences) talked about “The Ideas of Slavic Reciprocity and Unity of the Peoples of Imperial Russia at the First Ethnographic Exhibition of 1867 in Moscow,” which presented a different context of the history of anthropology, and of other exhibitions in Europe and USA, and highlighted the frequent relations between exhibitions and the creation of museums after them.

The second session was chaired by Hande Birkalan-Gedik. In this session, Pegi Vail (New York University) analysed the trajectory of cultural display, from early public exhibitions of humans in world fairs and museums to the cinematic representations of world cultures, popular travelogues and expedition films of the 20th century and their enduring influence in contemporary tourism. Patrícia Ferraz de Matos reflected on the presence of women in photographs and other representations such as drawings, posters, postcards, exhibition catalogues, newspapers and magazines, which were disseminated in the context of the Portuguese colonial expositions. Juliana Ladeira Coelho (University of São Paulo) analysed press reports about Balinese performances as an entertainment for the public, as well as a device used to display an “effect of authenticity” to the Paris Colonial Exhibition of 1931. Marina Cavalcante Vieira (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro) discussed the journey of a group of Botocudos, presented in the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro in 1882 and later in England and the USA, examining the transformation of narratives and representations between the Museum's official exhibition and its London and American versions.

At the end of each presentation questions or comments followed. After all presentations, specialist in the subject Benoît de L'Estoile, the panel's discussant, articulated all presentations and made an in-depth analysis of some aspects that were later taken as the basis for the open discussion. The final debate was animated, and it was concluded that the tensions presented in the colonial contexts continue to raise questions and generate fruitful arguments. Between 25 and 35 people were in attendance.