

their roles in increasing the attractiveness of the pavilion and sales. The main input into the content, structure and delivery of the national pavilions remained with the exhibition elites, a group women were excluded from.

Trajectories and developments

The displays in national pavilions were put together to show a desirable interpretation of the outside reality, yet they did not function in a vacuum and responded to the political and economic situation. The Czechoslovak organizers reacted especially to the global financial circumstances when considering whether to participate in the fairs. While the earlier pavilions in Rio de Janeiro in 1922 and Paris in 1925 were influenced by discussions of the main focus of the exhibits, the cost of the subsequent participation in Philadelphia, Barcelona and Chicago in the late 1920s and early 1930s, affected by the global economic downturn, became one of the major issues. However, the fact that the government ultimately always opted to invest money and energy in the national pavilion or section, despite the financial difficulties, speaks of the importance Czechoslovakia placed on participating in these events.

Throughout the interwar period, a set of regular exhibitors and features formed the basis of the national presentations. Companies like Baťa, Vítkovice and Pilsner provided not only the content but also materials and commodities which could be used for the construction and offset the overall cost of the participation. In cases like beer, they could also be consumed while the exhibition was open. The commercial side was habitually complemented by the visual arts which took the form of fine art and design displays with a representative function. Several references had their fixed place in the national pavilions, and they included the bust of President Masaryk and large-scale paintings of Prague and the Tatra mountains.

Crumbling façade

The case of Czechoslovakia at world's fairs therefore reflects the general attitudes of the world's fairs towards minorities, typical of other, often larger political entities. The pavilion might have been built from below by casual workers, members of the diaspora, and visitors, but it was Czechoslovakia, through its exhibition elites, that carved itself a space in the ranks of major exhibitors and