

All's Fair in Love and War

Imperial Gazes and Glaring Omissions
at the Expositions Universelles (1851–1915)

DANIEL R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN

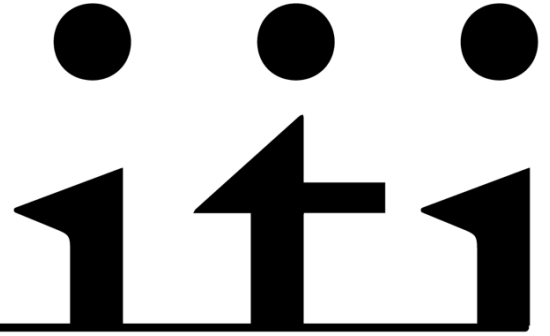
Zitiervorschlag

QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN, All's Fair in Love and War, in: cognitio 2021/1.

URL: cognitio-zeitschrift.ch/2021-1/Quiroga-Villamarin

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.4494091](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4494091)

ISSN: 2624-8417



All's Fair in Love and War

Imperial Gazes and Glaring Omissions at the Expositions Universelles (1851–1915)

DANIEL R. QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN*

Despite the ever-growing literature that turns to history in international law, few legal scholars have interrogated the tradition of Expositions Universelles, let alone reflected on their importance for the formation of imperial legal projects in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In this paper, I attempt to engage Science and Technology Studies with International Legal History, analyzing these World Fairs as prime spaces for the co-production of socio-technical imaginaries of global governance.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| I. Introduction | 1 |
| II. Traditional Historiographies of World Fairs | 5 |
| III. Exposing International Solidarity: International Law and the Politics of the Gaze..... | 7 |
| IV. Glaring Omissions: Who gets to Inhabit and Exhibit?..... | 11 |
| V. Concluding Remarks: In the Mirrors of Modernity | 13 |

* PhD Student and teaching assistant at the Graduate Institute, Geneva.
ORCID: 0000-0003-4294-4379,
daniel.quiroga@graduateinstitute.ch.

Historically, it is hardly a coincidence that both international law and comparative law become professionalized in their modern form in the late nineteenth century, at the height of Western imperialism. This era was also the period of World Fairs [...which] displayed diversity and difference in an objectified, inert form for the visual enjoyment of Western viewers, and they did so by bringing the world to the West.¹

Our definition pulls together the normativity of imagination with the materiality of networks: sociotechnical imaginaries thus are collectively held and performed visions of desirable futures (or of resistance against the undesirable) and they are also animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology.²

I. Introduction

When ANDREW DICKSON WHITE was tasked to write a report on the latest trends

¹ RUSKOLA TEEMU, China in the Age of the World Picture, in: Orford Anne/Hoffman Florian (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Theory of International Law*, Oxford 2016, p. 138 et seq.

² JASANOFF SHEILA, Future Imperfect: Science, Technology, and the Imaginations of Modernity, in: Jasanoff Sheila/Kim Sang-Hyun (eds.), *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, Chicago 2015, p. 1 et seq., p. 19.

in global higher education after the Paris *Exposition Universelle Internationale (expo)* of 1878, he concluded that there were only two major developments since the previous 1870 report.³ WHITE opted to leave one of the fields of advancement (the natural and physical sciences) to one of his colleagues, focusing instead on the other area of European scientific expansion: «public affairs». Indeed, he was particularly enthusiastic about the expansion of higher instruction in «history, political and social science, and general jurisprudence, including international and administrative law» across the leading European universities, and hoped this report would urge his fellow countrymen to catch up.⁴ Of course, WHITE was no stranger to the topic at hand. While he is now most remembered as one of the founders – and the first president – of Cornell University,⁵ WHITE also had a long career in the United States political establishment. He wasn't a stranger to international law either, for that matter. WHITE did not only serve as the US Ambassador to Germany and Russia, but also as the president of the US delegation to the Hague peace Conference of 1899.⁶ He even sat in the United States Venezuelan Boundary Commission⁷ and on the special commission of inquiry on the legal status of Santo Domingo which attempted to provide a legal justification for a potential US annexation.⁸

As a leading «educator, historian, and diplomat», WHITE wanted to satisfy a «great practical need» in the young republic, bringing the latest educational developments from across the Atlantic.⁹ He begins his report by noting the astronomic expansion of the instruction on public affairs in the German speaking lands. WHITE also notes that there are two main models on the rise: the *Tubingen structure* which prefers to centralize these studies to a new academic department of *Staats- und Cameralwissenschaft* and the *Leipzig approach* in which such studies are spread around different academic departments, in particular those of law and philosophy.¹⁰ What matters for this article is that these models gave ample importance to the teaching and lecturing of international law for the students of public governance. WHITE'S pages are filled with extracts of curricula in which international law was suddenly but furiously adopted during the late 1870s.¹¹ For instance, by 1878 the University of Vienna was teaching «International Law in Peace and War» and in 1778 Paris' *Collège de France* had opened lectures on both «International Law and Comparative History of Legislation». ¹² The jewel in the crown was the French «Independent School of Political Sciences» (now *Sciences Po*), which offered subjects on the «History of Treaties from the Peace of Westphalia to 1789», «Analysis of the Principal Treaties from 1648 to 1789», «International Law in General», and «International Law Resulting from Treaties and Consular Service». ¹³

These examples moved WHITE to advocate for the expansion of «the instruction given

³ WHITE ANDREW D., *The Provision of Higher Instruction in Subjects Bearing Directly upon Public Affairs*, in: Blake William (ed.), *Reports of the United States Commissioners to the Paris Universal Exposition Vol II*, Washington 1880, p. 349 et seq.

⁴ WHITE (Fn. 3), p. 351.

⁵ ENGST ELAINE/DIMUNATION MARK, *A Legacy of Ideas: Andrew Dickson White and the Founding of the Cornell University Library*, Ithaca 1996.

⁶ WHITE ANDREW D., *The First Hague Conference*, London 2015.

⁷ ODEEN ISHMAEL M. A., *The Trail of Diplomacy: The Guyana-Venezuela Border Issue*, Bloomington 2013.

⁸ WADE BENJAMIN/WHITE ANDREW D./HOWE SAMUEL, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry to Santo Domingo*, Washington 1871.

⁹ ADCOCK ROBERT, *Liberalism and the Emergence of American Political Science: A Transatlantic Tale*, Oxford University Press 2015, p. 116 et seq.

¹⁰ WHITE (Fn. 3), p. 353. I prefer to cite the original spelling instead of stylizing it to Leipzig, as this is the way it was found in the original source.

¹¹ WHITE (Fn. 3).

¹² WHITE (Fn. 3), p. 356.

¹³ WHITE (Fn. 3), p. 356.

in the general principles of international law». ¹⁴ In his own words: «[i]n the development of this science lies much of the happiness for the future of the world; but there is an important practical interest. Though the injunction of the Father of his Country to avoid entangling alliances has sunk deep into the (sic) American mind, there can be no doubt that before our country shall have attained a hundred million of inhabitants, our diplomatic relations with other countries will require much more serious thought than now. It is not too soon to have this in view.» ¹⁵

Despite his relative salience in United States-ean politics, WHITE was merely but one of the 16 million attendants of Paris' 1878 *expo*. While his status as a commissioner for the state of New York gave him certain particular rights and duties, WHITE strolled like any other commoner through the *Avenue des Nations* and the *Galerie des Machines*, seeing the collection of technological and cultural achievements that Europe claimed as its own. Perhaps he was one of the many visitors of the new «indigenous villages», in which France for the first time exposed non-Western cultural artifacts from Indochina, Senegal, and Tahiti. ¹⁶ As a Germanophile, our diplomat duly noted the absence of the German pavilion, as tensions still ran high between this country and France after the war of 1870. In this context, the Paris *expo* provided, quite literally, a snapshot of the hopes, anxieties, and fears of the so-called «western civilization» of the late 1870s. It provided WHITE – and his fellow white spectators – with a mirror in which they could see the glaring reflections of their own progress. It created spaces for international solidarity in which attendants could see how the promise of technical and scientific

achievement could tame the wild beasts of violence and political strife.



Image I: Galerie des Machines in Paris (1889). ¹⁷

International law, of course, was an integral part of this promise. While much has been written about the dark entanglements of international law with the *mission civilisatrice* in the late 19th century, ¹⁸ there is a conspicuous silence in the literature regarding the role and function of the *Expositions Universelles* in this uneasy marriage. For instance, MARTTI KOSKENNIEMI'S historical analysis of the history of the international legal profession does not touch upon these particular spaces of international integration. ¹⁹ While MARK MAZOWER'S «Governing the World» has a chapter devoted to the role of science in the development of international cooperation, it does not mention the *expos*. ²⁰ GLENDA SLUGA and PATRICIA CALVIN'S edited vol-

¹⁴ WHITE (Fn. 3), p. 369.

¹⁵ WHITE (Fn. 3), p. 369.

¹⁶ FERRAZ DE MATOS PATRICIA, *The Colours of the Empire*, trans. Ayton Mark, New York 2013, p. 152 et seq.

¹⁷ «[Vue d'ensemble de la Galerie des machines \(1889\)](#)», No Author, from the project Paris: Capital of the 19th Century, Brown Digital Repository, Brown University Library. More images may be found at EDITORS, *Stereographs of Early World's Fairs*, in: *The Georgia Review* 1982/36(3), p. 538 et seq.

¹⁸ OBREGÓN LILIANA, *The Civilized and the Uncivilized*, in: Fassbender Bardo/Peters Anne (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law*, Oxford 2012, p. 917 et seq.; OBREGÓN LILIANA, *Peripheral Histories of International Law*, in: *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 2019/15, p. 437 et seq.

¹⁹ KOSKENNIEMI MARTTI, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870–1960*, Cambridge 2009.

²⁰ MAZOWER MARK, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present*, London 2013, p. 94 et seq.

ume on Internationalisms includes no mention of these fairs, even if they were growing strong under United States influence in the 20th century.²¹ Despite the ever-growing interest in international legal history, most contemporary scholarship focuses on the intellectual or conceptual history of international law.²² It seems that international legal historians, willingly or unwillingly, have proven MALGOSIA FITZMAURICE'S observation that «[international] lawyers frequently do not feel comfortable with science».²³ For the spectators of the fairs, however, this distinction was not clear cut yet; as WHITE shows, these *expos* gathered the best and the brightest advancements from all of sciences, be that engineering, the natural and physical sciences, or *Staats- und Cameralwissenschaft*. Alternating current, the general principles of international law, and iron & glass architecture were but one of many innovations offered to the general public (which, as we will see, was neither entirely «general» nor «public»)²⁴ One cannot forget that international protection of artistic and literary property was one of the many technical innovations that were argued and negotiated in the shadow of the 1878 *expo*.²⁵

For this reason, in this paper I argue that international legal historians can depart from the «well-worn paths» of the history of ide-

as.²⁶ Instead, I suggest we can learn much from the material turn in contemporary history²⁷ and from the history of science and technology.²⁸ In lieu of limiting ourselves to the study of doctrines, diplomats, and discourse, we could venture to the unexplored pastures of material infrastructures.²⁹ In this vein, I engage the growing literature on international law & materiality³⁰ with the work done on the anthropology of infrastruc-

²¹ SLUGA GLENDA/CALVIN PATRICIA, (eds.), *Internationalisms a Twentieth-Century History*, Cambridge 2017.

²² HOHMANN JESSIE/JOYCE DANIEL, *Material Pasts and Futures: International Law's Objects*, in: *London Review of International Law* 2019/7(2), p. 283 et seq., p. 286.

²³ FITZMAURICE MALGOSIA, *Whale*, in: Hohmann Jessie/Joyce Daniel (eds.), *International Law's Objects*, Oxford 2018, p. 539 et seq., p. 545.

²⁴ CRINSON MARK, *Rebuilding Babel: Modern Architecture and Internationalism*, London 2017, p. 22.

²⁵ SEVILLE CATHERINE, *The Internationalisation of Copyright Law: Books, Buccaneers and the Black Flag in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge 2009, p. 59.

²⁶ FASSBENDER BARDO/PETERS ANNE, *Introduction: Towards A Global History of International Law*, in: Fassbender Bardo/Peters Anne (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law*, Oxford 2012, p. 1 et seq. In this essay, I use the personal pronoun in my argument. While I understand this might cause discomfort in a traditional continental legal audience, I think this tension is productive. While there is comfort in using the third voice to cloak the author with the invisible cloak of an «objective voice», I think the criticism of (international) law & literature scholarship has shown the importance of taking pronouns seriously. For an introduction, see SCHLAG PIERRE, *The Problem of the Subject*, in: *Texas Law Review* 1991/69, p. 1627 et seq.; BOER LIANNE, *Narratives of Force: The Presence of the Writer in International Legal Scholarship*, in: *Netherlands International Law Review* 2019/66(1), p. 1 et seq., p. 18.

²⁷ LECAIN TIMOTHY, *The Matter of History: How Things Create the Past*, Cambridge 2017.

²⁸ JASANOFF SHEILA, *Reconstructing the Past, Constructing the Present: Can Science Studies and the History of Science Live Happily Ever After?*, in: *Social Studies of Science*, 2000/30(4), p. 621 et seq.

²⁹ KINGSBURY BENEDICT, *Infrastructure and InfraReg: On Rousing the International Law «Wizards of Is»*, in: *Cambridge International Law Journal* 2019/8(2), p. 171 et seq.

³⁰ ESLAVA LUIS/PAHUJA SUNDHYA, *Between Resistance and Reform: TWAIL [Third World Approaches to International Law] and the Universality of International Law*, in: *Trade, Law and Development* 2011/3(1), p. 103 et seq.; PERRY-KESARIS AMANDA, *The Pop-Up Museum of Legal Objects Project: An Experiment in «Socio-Legal Design»*, in: *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly* 2017/68(3), p. 225 et seq.; CHIAM MADELINE et al., *History, Anthropology and the Archive of International Law*, in: *London Review of International Law* 2017/5(1), p. 3 et seq.; HOHMANN JESSIE/JOYCE DANIEL (eds.), *International Law's Objects*, Oxford 2018.

tures³¹ to argue that built-environments can be places of concern for international legal history. To do so, after (I.) the short introduction already encountered by the reader, I will briefly sum the (II.) historiographical debates on the World Fairs. I will conclude this section by asking *where* international law can be found within the towering iron & glass structures of the *expos*. I answer this question by arguing that (III.) the fairs played a crucial role in the politics of international legal legibility, by rendering subjects and objects visible to the gaze of the (European) spectator.

But, just as it gives, the law can also take. Thus, I also explore the (IV.) omissions and blind spots hidden under international law's way of seeing in the late 19th century. Finally, I conclude that (V.) world fairs offer a unique vantage point reflection on both the promises of modernity and the black flowers of civilization.

II. Traditional Historiographies of World Fairs

While world fairs are a rather unexplored affair for international lawyers, the same cannot be about students of global and art history.³² World fairs have been extensively documented and hotly debated almost since their inception.³³ A bibliography compiled by scholars from Freie Universität Berlin and the California State University in Fresno duly noted that – in December 2006 – more than 1828 secondary sources were available

for researchers.³⁴ Moreover, massive physical and digital collections of primary sources may be found at the Smithsonian Libraries, the Universities of Chicago and Indiana, or the archives of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE).³⁵ In addition, *expos* are not confined to the past. Dubai prepares to host the «world's greatest show» in 2021, in which «buildings [will be able to tell] you a poem».³⁶

In this piece I will focus on the two waves of world fairs (1851 to 1889 and 1890 to 1915). Starting with the «Great exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations» held in London in 1851 until San Francisco's 1915 meeting, this «golden age of exhibitions» corresponds roughly with the period in which international law (and other disciplines) underwent a strong phase of formalization.³⁷ Historians of anthropology, for instance, are well aware of the importance of the World Congress of Anthropology held in parallel to the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.³⁸ Most importantly, this time also roughly corresponds to what ERIC HOBSBAWM called the «age of empire», which – at least for DAVID KENNEDY – was

³¹ LARKIN BRIAN, The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure, in: Annual Review of Anthropology 2013/42(1), p. 327 et seq.; ANAND NILKILHIL/GUPTA AKHIL/APPEL HANNAH (eds.), The Promise of Infrastructure, Durham 2018.

³² GEPPERT ALEXANDER/COFFEY JEAN/LAU TAMMY, [International Exhibitions, Expositions Universelles and World's Fairs, 1851–2005: A Bibliography](#).

³³ GEPPERT ALEXANDER/COFFEY JEAN/LAU TAMMY (Fn 34).

³⁴ GEPPERT ALEXANDER/COFFEY JEAN/LAU TAMMY (Fn 34).

³⁵ GEPPERT ALEXANDER/COFFEY JEAN/LAU TAMMY (Fn 34).

³⁶ BUREAU INTERNATIONAL DES EXPOSITIONS (BIE), [Expo2020 Dubai](#), (n.d).

³⁷ BOWKER GEOFFREY, Sustainable Knowledge Infrastructures, in: Anand Nikhil/Gupta Akhil/Appel Hannah, The Promise of Infrastructure, Durham 2018, p. 203 et seq.

³⁸ HOLMES WILLIAM., The World's Fair Congress of Anthropology, in: American Anthropologist 1893/6(4), p. 423 et seq.; HINSLEY CURTIS/WILCOX DAVID (eds.), Coming of Age in Chicago: The 1893 World's Fair and the Coalescence of American Anthropology, Lincoln 2016; SCHUSTER SVEN, The World's Fairs as Spaces of Global Knowledge: Latin American Archaeology and Anthropology in the Age of Exhibitions, in: Journal of Global History 2018/13, p. 69 et seq., p. 71.

one of the most relevant periods in the history of international law.³⁹

While historians largely disagree on many aspects of the fairs, one can trace a rough genealogy of the leading works in the anglophone context. Perhaps the first leading monograph was PAUL GREENHALGH'S *Ephemeral Vistas*, followed two decades later by his *Fair World*.⁴⁰ ROBERT RYDELL'S review of GREENHALGH'S *Vistas* laid the groundwork for later engagement with the issue, especially regarding the relationships between the fairs and American culture.⁴¹ More recently, ALEXANDER GEPPERT published another volume on the *fin de siècle* expositions.⁴² Despite their vivid differences, scholars generally agree that the first wave of fairs (1851-1889) revolved around the innovation in the files of engineering, the *fin de siècle expos* tended to privilege instead of architectural creation.⁴³

In any case, the marriage between technological innovation and aesthetical exploration was to become one of the defining features of the *expo*. As the fairs moved around different European imperial metropolis, this nexus between architecture and technology was also spread across over time and space, creating an idealized and artistic North Atlantic vision of modernity.⁴⁴ As GEPPERT puts it, «[a] 'Crystal Palace' could be found not only in London but also in New York, Munich, and Paris; a so called White City not only in Chicago but also in London; the notorious 'Rue de Caire' not only several times in Paris, but also in Chicago, London, St Louis[,] and Berlin.»⁴⁵

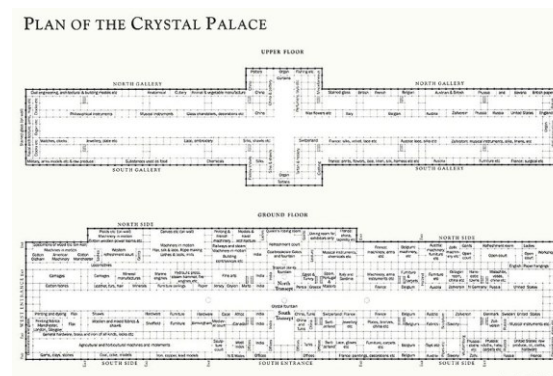


Image II: Plan of the Crystal Palace.⁴⁶

Therefore, the «Crystal Palace» seems like a suitable place to begin my summary of the history of world fairs.⁴⁷ Built in 1851 to house the first *expo* in London, this towering structure of iron & glass became one of the hallmarks of European architecture in the 19th Century. Due to its temporary nature, the Commissioners attempted to reduce costs. But as GEPPERT reports, «[t]his temporality did not hinder them, however, either

³⁹ HOBBSAWM ERIC, *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914*, New York 1989; KENNEDY DAVID, *International Law and the Nineteenth Century: History of an Illusion*, in: *Nordic Journal of International Law* 1996/65(1), p. 385 et seq., p. 391.

⁴⁰ GREENHALGH PAUL, *Ephemeral Vistas: The «Expositions Universelles», Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851–1939*, Reprinted, Manchester 2000; GREENHALGH PAUL, *Fair World: A History of World's Fairs and Expositions, from London to Shanghai, 1851–2010*, Winterbourne 2011.

⁴¹ RYDELL ROBERT, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916*, Paperback ed., Chicago 1987; RYDELL ROBERT, *Book Review: Ephemeral Vistas*, in: *Technology and Culture* 1989/30(4), p. 1043 et seq.; RYDELL ROBERT, *The Fan Dance of Science: American World's Fairs in the Great Depression*, in: *Isis* 1985/76(4), p. 52 et seq.; RYDELL ROBERT W., *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions*, Chicago 1993; RYDELL ROBERT/FINDLING JOHN/PELLE KIMBERLY, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States*, Washington 2000.

⁴² GEPPERT ALEXANDER, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, New York 2013.

⁴³ GREENHALGH (Fn. 40), p. 158; HOFFMANN DONALD, *Clear Span Rivalry: The World's Fairs of 1889–1893*, in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 1970/29(1), p. 48 et seq.;

GANIM JOHN, *Medievalism and Orientalism*, London 2008, p. 90.

⁴⁴ JONES CAROLINE, *The Global Work of Art: World's Fairs, Biennials, and the Aesthetics of Experience*, Chicago 2016.

⁴⁵ Image II, taken from GEPPERT (Fn. 42), p. 3.

⁴⁶ [Contemporary plans of the Great Exhibition of 1851 at the Crystal Palace](#), London.

⁴⁷ Image taken from EDITORS (Fn. 17), p. 539.

individually or collectively, from acquiring meaning, founding traditions[,] and creating legacies in architecture, urban development[,] and media history that have far outlived the expositions themselves». ⁴⁸ Indeed, the use of iron & glass as cheaper alternatives for temporary structures eventually overcame the boundaries of the fair field, to become a major trend in European architecture. While this style came from rural horticulture, it gradually expanded to encompass the most urban of all buildings, like train stations and municipal governance structures. Unsurprisingly, in his unfinished *Arcades Project*, BENJAMIN studied the rise of iron & glass architecture as a proxy for the development of urban modernity in the 19th century. ⁴⁹

While this colossal building was eventually removed and reinstalled at Sydenham, it briefly «counted as a technological wonder of the world – a triumph of serial fabrication planned with military precision». ⁵⁰ While its 17,000 spectators would soon be dwarfed by the larger number of attendants of later events, it created a lasting high-water mark. It was convened by a Royal Commission in which «every great interest in the [s]tate» had a say, including leading protectionists, lords, commons, representatives of scientific institutions, and agents of the East India Company. ⁵¹ In this layout we see how this massive structure housed a plethora of national and thematic exhibitions. Indeed, this uneasy marriage between cosmopolitan and nationalist commitments would be one of the re-

curing tensions that would come to permeate both *expos* and the later global governance institutions of the 20th century. ⁵² It is not an accident that BENJAMIN DISRAELI'S (in)famous «maintenance of empire» was delivered precisely at the Crystal Palace in 1872.

III. Exposing International Solidarity: International Law and the Politics of the Gaze

On the detailed maps and plans, however, one does not see at first sight a «place» for international law. There is, of course, no pavilion dedicated to its general principles, no hall of peaceful dispute settlement, no palace of human rights. Then, how can we approach these sites from the vantage of international legal history? How can we render material space, and not only discursive formations, as a storyteller in our quest to understand the past, present, and future of global governance? ⁵³ In what follows, I do an eclectic reading of scholars from art history, museum studies, and science and technology studies (STS) to follow BENEDICT KINGSBURY'S call to arms for international lawyers to think «infrastructurally». ⁵⁴

An interesting point of departure is offered by TONY BENNETT, who draws from MICHEL FOUCAULT'S analysis of discipline to theorize the «birth» of the museum in the 19th century. In his view, this period of European history gave rise to the expansion of an «exhibitionary complex» which encompassed:

«museums of art, history and natural science; dioramas and panoramas; national and international

⁴⁸ GEPPERT (Fn. 42), p. 5.

⁴⁹ MERTINS DETLEF, *The Enticing and Threatening Face of Prehistory: Walter Benjamin and the Utopia of Glass*, in: *Assemblage* 1996/26, p. 6 et seq.; BENJAMIN WALTER, *The Arcades Project*, 1st paperback ed., Cambridge 2000; CHIESA LAURA, *Space as Storyteller: Spatial Jumps in Architecture, Critical Theory, and Literature*, Evanston 2016, p. 17–48.

⁵⁰ SLOTERDIJK PETER, *The Crystal Palace*, in: *Public* 2009/37, p. 11 et seq., p. 12.

⁵¹ SHORT AUDREY, *Workers under Glass*, in: 1851, in: *Victorian Studies* 1966/10(2), p. 193 et seq., p. 194.

⁵² TENORIO-TRILLO MAURICIO, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*, Berkeley 1996; RAIZMAN DAVID/ROBEY ETHAN (eds.), *Expanding Nationalisms at World Fairs: Identity, Diversity, and Exchange, 1851–1915*, London 2018.

⁵³ CHIESA (Fn. 49).

⁵⁴ KINGSBURY (Fn. 29).

*exhibitions; arcades and department stores, serving as linked sites for the development and articulation of new disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology) and their discursive formations (the past, evolution, aesthetics, man) as well as for the development of new technologies of vision.»*⁵⁵

JOHN BERGER famously analyzed another space that would merit inclusion into TONY BENNETT's idiom: the public zoo.⁵⁶ What might appear to be a simple operation (looking at the animal) is rather a complex exercise of *seeing* animals through the institutional framework of a 19th century public institution with deep connections to empire, enlightenment, and aspirations of civilization. Indeed, this reaffirms BERGER's perhaps most famous claim: what we see is quite influenced by *where* and *how* we stare.⁵⁷

While interesting, BENNET and BERGER's insights seem to say little about law. Indeed, one of the main challenges of contemporary work within law and the humanities is to bridge the gap between the latter's interest in material culture with the former's preoccupation with regulation or justice.⁵⁸ To do so, I engage with Foucauldian analysis of power, which has long insisted that power is exercised above and beyond the formal and institutional mechanisms usually associated with government in the west.⁵⁹ In fact, FOUCAULT has pointed out that material relays and spatial arrangements can have regulatory and disciplinary effects: perhaps the panopticon,⁶⁰ the guillotine,⁶¹ the clinic,⁶² or the

courtroom are some of his most famous analyses of these forms of power.⁶³ Built environments (as the clinic and panopticon examples show) were part of a complex *dispositif* of knowledge and practices which had regulatory (and, perhaps most importantly, disciplinary) effects on the subjects that therein inhabited.⁶⁴

SHEILA JASANOFF has taken this point further, in her studies of the intersections between science, technology, and governmental power.⁶⁵ Aiming to strike a balance between the material and the discursive, she suggests STS scholars adopt the «idiom of co-production» to «avoid both social and technoscientific determinism».⁶⁶ Hence, she argues we approach FOUCAULT's panopticon neither as the material embodiment of an ideological punitive project nor as the categorial physical determinant that freezes social thought, but rather to interrogate the dialectical middle ground between the material and the discursive, the real and the possible and the built with the imagined. Along these lines, she later coined the term «sociotechnical imaginaries» to refer to the «collectively imagined forms of social life and order reflected the design and fulfillment of nation-specific and/or technological projects».⁶⁷

⁵⁵ BENNETT TONY, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics, Culture*, New York 1995, p. 59.

⁵⁶ BERGER JOHN, *Why Look at Animals?*, in: *About Looking*, New York 1991, p. 3 et seq.

⁵⁷ BERGER JOHN, *Ways of Seeing*, London 1972, p. 7.

⁵⁸ POTTAGE ALAIN, *The Materiality of What?*, in: *Journal of Law and Society* 2012/39(1), p. 167 et seq.

⁵⁹ VALVERDE MARIANA, *Michel Foucault*, New York 2017.

⁶⁰ FOUCAULT MICHEL, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Sheridan Alan, New York 1977.

⁶¹ FOUCAULT (Fn 60), p. 195 et seq.

⁶² FOUCAULT MICHEL, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*, trans. Sheridan Alan, London 1991.

⁶³ FOUCAULT MICHEL, *On Popular Justice: A Discussion with the Maoists*, in: Gordon Colin (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, New York 1980, p. 1 et seq.

⁶⁴ PIRO JOSEPH, *Foucault and the Architecture of Surveillance: Creating Regimes of Power in Schools, Shrines, and Society*, in: *Educational Studies* 2008/44, p. 30 et seq.

⁶⁵ JASANOFF SHEILA, *Ordering Knowledge, Ordering Society*, in: *States of Knowledge: The Co-Production of Science and Social Order*, London 2004, p. 13 et seq.

⁶⁶ JASANOFF (Fn. 65), p. 20.

⁶⁷ JASANOFF SHEILA/KIM SANG-HYUN, *Containing the Atom: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Nuclear Power in the United States and South*

I finish this theoretical excursus by coming back to the question of infrastructures. While the anthropology of infrastructures has mostly focused on the built environments designed for the provision of public services (such as roads, water, or electricity⁶⁸), there is no reason not to use their theoretical toolkit to study other built environments, such as *expos* or even international conference halls. Indeed, BRIAN LARKIN'S seminal definition of infrastructures as «built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space» is wide enough to encompass these palaces of world solidarity.⁶⁹ In fact, these massive structures were precisely built to celebrate the extraordinary globality of progress, aiming to connect millions of spectators with goods, peoples, and ideas from far beyond.

Let me illustrate this point with a children's book published in 1915, published right after the Panama-Pacific fair in San Francisco.⁷⁰ Narrated as a series of letters from a pair of sisters at the fair to their distant cousins at home, this book encapsulates the infrastructural nature of the *expo* system. In the preface, the girls imagine a fictional conversation between «Madame World» and «Uncle Sam» as anthropomorphized abstractions of the Globe and the US.⁷¹ After Uncle Sam's titanic feat of cutting through Panama to connect the east and west, Madame World concluded that a global celebration was in order.⁷² As fortunate attendants, the girls had the honor to attend a plethora of

regal installations, including the palaces of Mines, Machinery, Transportation, Fine Arts, Education, Liberal Arts, or Manufactures.⁷³ Moreover, without leaving San Francisco, they travelled around the world, highlighting their visits to Italy, Mexico, Japan, Canada, China and Sweden.⁷⁴

The jewel in the crown, however, was the canal installation, in which they climbed into

«[a] moving platform with chairs upon which we were seated, and given a telephone, through which we heard the lecture, and as the platform moved around the circle, carrying us from the Pacific to the Atlantic, we were informed as to each step in the great work of making the Canal, and shown exactly how it is now operated.»⁷⁵



Image III: Preface.⁷⁶

Pedagogically, this book aimed to transmit vivid images of the *expo* to the future generation of children who were not fortunate enough to have the possibility to attend. In fact, one must not suppose that the exaggerated language was only reserved for children's literature; a contemporary anonymous reader of *The North American Review* concluded that he had visited the fair 43 times and had not seen even a fourth of its beauties. The Editors concluded, adding that «[e]verybody who has seen it says that it is the most artistic and impressive ever made by mortals».⁷⁷ While these structures are now long gone, these contemporary reports give us a first-hand account of their role as infrastructures of globality, modernity, and civi-

Korea, in: *Minerva* 2009/47(2), p. 119 et seq., p. 120.

⁶⁸ HARVEY PENNY/KNOX HANNAH, *Roads: An Anthropology of Infrastructure and Expertise*, Ithaca 2015; ANAND NIKHIL, *Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Citizenship in Mumbai*, Durham 2017; MEITON FREDRIK, *Electrical Palestine: Capital and Technology from Empire to Nation*, Oakland 2019.

⁶⁹ LARKIN (Fn. 31), p. 328.

⁷⁰ GORDON ELIZABETH, *What We Saw at Madame World's Fair, San Francisco 1915*.

⁷¹ GORDON (Fn. 70).

⁷² GORDON (Fn. 70), p. 3.

⁷³ GORDON (Fn. 70), p. 9–42.

⁷⁴ GORDON (Fn. 70), p. 58–78.

⁷⁵ GORDON (Fn. 70), p. 83–84.

⁷⁶ GORDON (Fn. 70), p. iv.

⁷⁷ A SUBSCRIBER, *The Greatest of World's Fairs*, in: *The North American Review* 1915, p. 935 et seq.

zation *tout court*.⁷⁸ As GUIDO ABBATISTA and GIULIA IANNUZZI have argued, *expos* always functioned as Janus-faced time machines, conserving a modicum of the past of human experience (mostly in the pavilions of the non-European «barbarians»), counterposing it to scintillating visions of North Atlantic techno futurism.⁷⁹

In sum, I argue that one can understand *expos* as infrastructures of global governance. Their built environments co-produce, and are co-produced by, grand visions of what it means to be civilized and modern.⁸⁰ We can even understand these visions as «sociotechnical imaginaries» in which the social and the technological meld into a single project of governance. Turbines and good manners, notions of hygiene and modes of transportation, commodities and ideologies were but some of the many items displayed for the enjoyment of the burgeoning middle classes of the North.

But, again, where can we find law amongst this massive sea of material culture? Displaying, I argue, should not be taken as a given. The exercise of displaying, of exhibiting, would be fundamental for the organization of formal academic knowledge in the late 19th century.⁸¹ Unsurprisingly, FOUCAULT's analysis of the medical profession interrogates the relationship between the architecture of the clinic and the rise of the «medical gaze».⁸² For him, the disciplinary gaze can have «the paradoxical ability to *hear a language* as soon as it *perceives a spectacle*».⁸³ When the doctor sees an ulcer, for instance, she hears

the voice of her colleagues and peers, instructing her to *view* the disease as a particular diagnosis (which, in turn, requires a specific prognosis).

International law, like beauty, perhaps resides then in the eye of the beholder.⁸⁴ KENNEDY reminds us that when a public international lawyer looks at the window, she or he sees «a world of nation states» whereas trade lawyers often see «a world of buyers and sellers».⁸⁵ But seeing is not an easy or natural exercise; it required institutions where the eye could be trained to see, categorize, and discriminate. World fairs, as GEPPERT shows, played a fundamental role in the development not only of BENNETT's exhibitionary complex, but also of transnational exhibitionary networks.⁸⁶ While more silent than Edison's phonograph and more subtle than the electrical current, the legal gaze was one of the many innovations that emerged from the *expo's* mechanisms of comparison. JULIA MOSES, for instance, tracks how the fairs were not only protagonists in the emergence of European awareness on national mechanisms of social security, but also permitted different countries the opportunity to showcase and contrast differing regimes of workplace security.⁸⁷ North Atlantic solidarity was not only exhibited, but also disputed and contested.

Material culture, in other words, offers an interesting viewpoint into the politics and

⁷⁸ JOHN TRASK, The Influence of World's Fairs on the Development of Art, in: *Art and Progress* 1915/6(4), p. 113 et seq.

⁷⁹ ABBATISTA GUIDO/IANNUZZI GIULIA, World Expositions as Time Machines: Two Views of the Visual Construction of Time between Anthropology and Futurama, in: *World History Connected* 2016/13(3), p. 1 et seq.

⁸⁰ LATOUR BRUNO, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Cambridge 1993.

⁸¹ BENNETT (Fn. 55).

⁸² FOUCAULT (Fn. 62).

⁸³ FOUCAULT (Fn. 62), p. 108.

⁸⁴ Here I expand on a shorter argument made elsewhere, see QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN DANIEL R., Book Review: International Law's Objects, in: *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 2021/21(1), p. 236 et seq.

⁸⁵ KENNEDY DAVID, One, Two, Three, Many Legal Orders: Legal Pluralism and the Cosmopolitan Dream, in: *N.Y.U. Review of Law & Social Change* 2006/31, p. 641 et seq.

⁸⁶ GEPPERT (Fn. 42), p. 4.

⁸⁷ MOSES JULIA, Policy Communities and Exchanges across Borders, in: Rodogno Davide/Struck Bernhard/Vogel Jakob (eds.), *Shaping the Transnational Sphere*, New York 2015, p. 60 et seq., p. 70.

technologies of international legal viewing.⁸⁸ Suddenly, it confronts us with what international law prefers to hide: «a mode of legibility structured by international law which [is both] the *effect of* and the *enabling condition for* [...] international legal regulation».⁸⁹ While international law has been a relative newcomer to the growing trend of visual jurisprudence,⁹⁰ SOFIA STOLK/RENSKE VOS have recently highlighted the centrality of law's spectacular and aesthetical dimensions in its quest to ground authority.⁹¹ Architecture and built environments are fundamental to (international) law's procedures of legibility. In their own words,

«[v]iewed through a legal sightseeing lens, we see concrete materiality as that which makes international law tangible for its audience and constituency. Thus, you can actually touch a building of an international institution, visit it, sometimes even access it, be part of its space, or experience its boundaries.»⁹²

⁸⁸ QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN DANIEL R., Beyond Texts? Towards a Material Turn in the Theory and History of International Law, in: [Journal of the History of International Law 2020](#).

⁸⁹ DEHM JULIA, One Tonne of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (1tCO₂e), in: Hohmann Jessie/Joyce Daniel (eds.), *International Law's Objects*, Oxford 2018, p. 305 et seq. Italics in the original.

⁹⁰ DOUZINAS COSTAS/NEAD LYNDIA (eds.), *Law and the Image: The Authority of Art and the Aesthetics of Law*, Chicago 1999; DAHLBERG LEIF, (ed.), *Visualizing Law and Authority: Essays on Legal Aesthetics*, Berlin 2012; GOODRICH PETER/HAYAERT VALERIE (eds.), *Genealogies of Legal Vision*, Abingdon 2015; MULCAHY LINDA, *Eyes of the Law: A Visual Turn in Socio-Legal Studies?*, in: *Journal of Law and Society* 2017/44, p. 111 et seq.; PHILIPPOPOULOS-MIHALOPOULOS ANDREAS, *Law Is a Stage: From Aesthetics to Affective Aesthetics*, in: Christodoulidis Emiliós/Dukes Ruth/Goldoni Marco (eds.), *Research Handbook on Critical Legal Theory*, Cheltenham 2019, p. 201 et seq.

⁹¹ STOLK SOFIA/VOS RENSKA, *International Legal Sightseeing*, in: *Leiden Journal of International Law* 2020/33(1), p. 1 et seq.; STOLK SOFIA/VOS RENSKA, *Law in Concrete: Institutional Architecture in Brussels and The Hague*, in: *Law and Humanities* 2020, p. 1 et seq., p. 7.

⁹² STOLK SOFIA/VOS RENSKA (Fn. 91), p. 4–5.

IV. Glaring Omissions: Who gets to *Inhabit* and *Exhibit*?

But, if international law's materiality can render certain things visible, it can also render them invisible. If law can see, it can also *glare*. Technological and architectural arrangements are charged by political strife and contention. In his seminal text «Do Artifacts have Politics», LANGDON WINNER shed light on the way technical arrangements can produce exclusionary forms of ordering, using the example of the New York road development that built low-hanging overpasses to prevent racial and social integration.⁹³ World fairs, like any other sociotechnical imaginary, encapsulate not only the bright and optimistic dreams of European solidarity, but also some of its darkest exclusionary practices.⁹⁴ Along these lines, historians have long debated how the creation of a single North Atlantic vision of modern unity was predicated on the creation of a non-northern, barbaric *other*.⁹⁵ While some got to *inhabit*, others were merely but part of an *exhibit*.



Image IV: Howard University Graduates (1900).⁹⁶

⁹³ WINNER LANGDON, *Do Artifacts Have Politics?*, in: *Daedalus* 1980/109, p. 121 et seq.

⁹⁴ CARDON NATHAN, *A Dream of the Future: Race, Empire, and Modernity at the Atlanta and Nashville World's Fairs*, New York 2018.

⁹⁵ SAID EDWARD, *Orientalism*, New York 1979.

⁹⁶ [Law graduating class at Howard University, Washington, D.C. \(1900\)](#), No Author, American

Feminist scholars, for instance, have highlighted the way these «public» spaces operated on the premise of the exclusion of women,⁹⁷ banished into the relative obscurity of the private realm.⁹⁸ GREENHALGH notes that special places for women eventually turned from «arenas for the discussion of rights to comfortable bazaars, where the unequal status quo was accepted and even lauded.»⁹⁹ The association of technology with masculine virtue that still resonates in our contemporary age of «tech bros» was forged slowly but surely in the ovens of the international expositions.¹⁰⁰ Race, particularly in the American fairs, was another issue of division and exclusion.¹⁰¹ These *expos*, however, also offered a stage for African-Americans to reach out to international solidarity. For instance, W.E.B. DU BOIS, then a professor of sociology at Atlanta University, curated the (sic) *Exposition des Nègres d'Amérique* at the 1900 Paris expo.¹⁰² In it, DU BOIS wanted to offer «an honest, straightforward exhibit of a small nation of people, picturing their life and development without apology or

gloss, and above all made by themselves».¹⁰³ With pictures and graphs, DU BOIS set out to dispel racist assumptions about the nature and destiny of his «nation», and reaffirm the dignity of his people. For instance, in this displayed image, DU BOIS wanted to exhibit the recently graduated cohort of lawyers from Howard University, which posed as if they were graduates of Eton itself.

But the fairs' ambivalent «dynamic of difference» which both invited and rejected the others of Europe from the family of nations can be best seen in its treatment of non-European peoples.¹⁰⁴ As LOREN KRUGER has shown, the «white cities» and «crystal palaces» were built only after the spoliation (both literal and symbolical) of the «wretched of the earth».¹⁰⁵ Just as mestizo international lawyers had to carefully thread the line between civilization and barbarism, semi-peripheral nations *expo* collectors had to *creolize* their identities, catering both to European and local visions of nationalism.¹⁰⁶ Japan, for example, struggled to comply with (European) expectations of being ultra-modern while at the same time maintaining its (invented) traditions.¹⁰⁷ For all of their

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

- ⁹⁷ BLAND SYDNEY, *Women and World's Fairs: The Charleston Story*, in: *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 1993/94(3), p. 166 et seq.; BOISSEAU TRACEY/MARKWYN ABIGAIL (eds.), *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs*, Urbana 2010.
- ⁹⁸ SCOTT JOAN W., *Sex and Secularism*, Princeton 2018.
- ⁹⁹ GREENHALGH (Fn. 40), p. 183.
- ¹⁰⁰ OLDENZIEL RUTH, *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women, and Modern Machines in America*, Amsterdam 1999.
- ¹⁰¹ BURKHART GILBERT, *Whose Fair? Experience, Memory, and the History of the Great St. Louis Exposition*, Chicago 2009.
- ¹⁰² BINI ELISABETTA, *Drawing a Global Color Line: «The American Negro Exhibit» at the 1900 Paris Exposition*, in: Abbattista Guido (ed.), *Moving Bodies, Displaying Nations: National Cultures, Race and Gender in World Expositions: Nineteenth to Twenty-First Century*, Trieste 2014, p. 39 et seq. Despite of its problematic connotations, I prefer to reproduce DU BOIS' original phrasing.

- ¹⁰³ DU BOIS W.E.B., *The American Negro at Paris*, in: *American Monthly Review of Reviews* 1900/XXII(5), p. 575 et seq.
- ¹⁰⁴ ANGHIE ANTHONY, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, Cambridge 2005.
- ¹⁰⁵ KRUGER LOREN, «White Cities», «Diamond Zulus», and the «African Contribution to Human Advancement»: *African Modernities and the World's Fairs*, in: *TDR* 2007/51(3), p. 19 et seq.
- ¹⁰⁶ BECKER LORCA ARNULF, *Mestizo International Law*, Cambridge 2014; OBREGÓN LILIANA, *Between Civilisation and Barbarism: Creole Interventions in International Law*, in: Falk Richard/Rajagopal Balakrishnan, Stevens Jacqueline (eds.), *International Law and the Third World: Reshaping Justice*, London 2008, p. 111 et seq.
- ¹⁰⁷ SAE YAMAMOTO ET AL., *From The Representation of «Japan» in Wartime World's Fairs' Modernists and «Japaneseness»*, in: *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 2014/26, p. 104 et seq.; RANGER TERENCE, *The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa*, in: Hobsbawm Eric (ed.), *The*

spectacular ambitions, the displays of Empire were quite incoherent and capricious.¹⁰⁸ Neither truly British nor entirely independent, India had to contend with being a nation without nationhood in spaces which were – at least nominally – destined to showcase the industries of all nations.¹⁰⁹

V. Concluding Remarks: In the Mirrors of Modernity

In many ways, our current «romance» between international legal history and the history of ideas isn't particularly surprising. Our traditional assumption is that (international) law is a textual practice, in which written argumentation and reasoning are the hallmarks of advocacy.¹¹⁰ In fact, in many traditional circles, judgments, treaties, and official statements are studied like «holy writs».¹¹¹ Hence, the methodological tools of intellectual history seemed to offer powerful instruments for lawyers to understand the movement of meaning of concepts across space and time. Ever since the famous «turn to history» of the early 21st century, international lawyers have frenetically adopted the methods of the so-called «Cambridge

School» of Intellectual History and the Koselleckian framework of conceptual history to retell and question the history of their discipline.¹¹² This turn, however, hasn't been without controversy. In the last decade, much ink has been spilled on the differences between the practice of historians *vis-à-vis* that of (international) lawyers, especially regarding the question of context. While some historians claim that international legal history committed the major sin of anachronism, certain lawyers fought back arguing the «legal craft» always required anachronism.¹¹³

To avoid such «Byzantine debates», I suggest international legal historians should take a

Invention of Tradition, Cambridge 2012, p. 211 et seq.

¹⁰⁸ MILLER BONNIE, The Incoherencies of Empire: The «Imperial» Image of the Indian at the Omaha World's Fairs of 1898–99, in: *American Studies* 2008/49(3–4), p. 39 et seq.

¹⁰⁹ BRECKENRIDGE CAROL, The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1989/31(2), p. 195 et seq.

¹¹⁰ HOHMANN JESSIE/JOYCE DANIEL, Introduction, in: Hohmann Jessie/Joyce Daniel (eds.), *International Law's Objects*, Oxford 2018, p. 1 et seq.; WERNER WOUTER, Framing Objects of International Law, in: Hohmann Jessie/Joyce Daniel (eds.), *International Law's Objects*, Oxford 2018, p. 57 et seq.

¹¹¹ JENNINGS ROBERT, The Role of the International Court of Justice, in: *British Yearbook of International Law* 1997/68, p. 1 et seq. I am indebted to Bianchi for this reference. See BIANCHI ANDREA, *International Law Theories: An Inquiry into Different Ways of Thinking*, New York 2016, p. 248.

¹¹² SKINNER QUENTIN, Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas, in: *History and Theory* 1969/8, p. 3 et seq.; KOSELLECK REINHART, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, Stanford 2002; on the turn to history, see QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN DANIEL R. (Fn. 88).

¹¹³ For the former, see HUNTER IAN, *Global Justice and Regional Metaphysics: On the Critical History of the Law of Nature and Nations*, in: Dorsett Shaunnagh/Hunter Ian (eds.), *Law and Politics in British Colonial Thought*, New York 2010, p. 11 et seq.; BENTON LAUREN, *Beyond Anachronism: Histories of International Law and Global Legal Politics*, in: *Journal of the History of International Law* 2019/21(1), p. 7 et seq.; for the latter, see ORFORD ANNE, *The Past as Law or History? The Relevance of Imperialism for Modern International Law*, in: Toufayan Mark/Tourme-Jouannet Emmanuelle/Ruiz Hélène (eds.), *International Law and New Approaches to the Third World: Between Repetition and Renewal*, Paris 2013; ORFORD ANNE, *On International Legal Method*, in: *London Review of International Law* 2013/1(1), p. 166 et seq.; ORFORD ANNE, *International Law and the Limits of History*, in: Werner Wouter/De Hoon Marieke/Galán Alexis (eds.), *The Law of International Lawyers: Reading Martti Koskenniemi*, Cambridge 2017, p. 297 et seq.; KOSKENNIEMI MARTTI, *What Should International Legal History Become?*, in: Roth-Isigkeit David/Kleinlein Thomas/Kadelbach Stefan (eds.), *System, Order, and International Law: The Early History of International Legal Thought from Machiavelli to Hegel*, Oxford 2017, p. 381 et seq. For an attempt for find a middle ground, see FITZMAURICE ANDREW, *Context in the History of International Law*, in: *Journal of the History of International Law* 2018/20(1), p. 5 et seq.

break with the history of ideas (just as HALLEY once suggested taking a break with feminism¹¹⁴) and explore instead other methodological approaches to the international legal history. To be clear, I am not suggesting that intellectual history lacks any critical potential. I have myself used this type of approach to raise questions about the contingency of the international legal order.¹¹⁵ However, I have become increasingly concerned that the apparent widespread adoption of one technique of doing history may have eclipsed other alternative ways of approaching historical work. Material history (and in particular, the historical interrogation of infrastructures, commodities, and artifacts), in my view, offers a promising way forward.¹¹⁶ SYDNEY MINTZ' pioneer history of sugar, to showcase just an example, offers an interesting picture of how a single commodity became the focus of competing projects of world-ordering.¹¹⁷ Another instance may be found in SVEN BECKERT'S recent analysis of cotton as a protagonist in the intertwined history of empire and capitalism.¹¹⁸ More ambitiously, the BBC together with the British Museum attempted to retell the whole history of humankind in 100 objects.¹¹⁹

But built environments and infrastructures, such as the *expos*, are fascinating and relatively unexplored spaces for international legal history. Sadly, for mainstream approaches to

international law, international spaces seem to be uninteresting venues. While spectacular activities might unfold in it due to the appearance of great lawyers, the room itself seems like an empty recipient, devoid of any political implications. Even if our discipline has grown increasingly sensitive to the spatial turn, the analysis of international legal spaces has been mainly limited to the «new terrain» of international courts and tribunals.¹²⁰ While important, these institutions do not exhaust the full terrain of all the *loci* that we have come to understand as *international*. In fact, a promising research agenda would be to study precisely the architectonical and geospatial mechanisms involved in the production of globality.

In a time of climate crisis, this emergence of critical infrastructural studies is but part of a wider trend of anthropocentric critique in the humanities that attempts to rethink how to confront the «Anthropocene and the modernity that made it».¹²¹ The *Expositions Universelles*, with their protagonist role in the creation of sociotechnical imaginaries of electricized and fossil-fueled civilization, offer us a prime site to see our reflections in

¹¹⁴ HALLEY JANET, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism*, Princeton 2008.

¹¹⁵ QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN DANIEL R., «An Atmosphere of Genuine Solidarity and Brotherhood»: Hernán Santa-Cruz and a Forgotten Latin American Contribution to Social Rights, in: *Journal of the History of International Law* 2019/21(1), p. 71 et seq.

¹¹⁶ QUIROGA-VILLAMARÍN DANIEL R., (Fn. 88).

¹¹⁷ MINTZ SYDNEY, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, New York 1986. See also FAKHRI MICHAEL, *Sugar and the Making of International Trade Law*, Cambridge 2014.

¹¹⁸ BECKERT SVEN, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*, New York 2015.

¹¹⁹ MACGREGOR NEIL, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, London 2012.

¹²⁰ ALTER KAREN, *The New Terrain of International Law*, Princeton 2014; DURANTI MARCO, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the Origins of the European Convention*, Oxford 2017; DE SILVA NICOLE, *African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights*, in: Hohmann Jessie/Joyce Daniel (eds.), *International Law's Objects*, Oxford 2018, p. 95 et seq.; LITWIN DANIEL, *Stained Glass Windows, the Great Hall of Justice of the Peace Palace*, in: Hohmann Jessie/Joyce Daniel (eds.), *International Law's Objects*, Oxford 2018, p. 463 et seq.; SOMOS MARK/GOSTWYCK-LEWIS MORGAN, *A New Architecture of Justice: Dan Kiley's Design for the Nuremberg Trials*, in: *Journal of the History of International Law* 2019/21(1), p. 104 et seq.; On the spatial turn in international law, see LANDAUER CARL, *Regionalism, Geography, and the International Legal Imagination*, *Chicago Journal of International Law* 2011/11(2), p. 557 et seq.

¹²¹ BOYER DOMINIC, *Infrastructure, Potential Energy, Revolution*, in: Anand Nikhil/Gupta Akhil/Appel Hannah (eds.), *The Promise of Infrastructure*, Durham 2018, p. 223 et seq.

the mirror of modernity. Famously, when a reporter asked M.K. GANDHI what he thought about western civilization, he replied that he thought it seemed like a good idea.¹²² Only further engagement with these daunting palaces of modernity will confirm if he was right.

¹²² LAL VINAY, *Gandhi's West, the West's Gandhi*, *New Literary History* 2009/40(2), p. 281 et seq., p. 281.