

Peasants in Vienna: Ethnographic Display and the 1873 World's Fair

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Introduction: Culture at the Vienna Weltausstellung

AT MIDDAY ON THURSDAY, 1 MAY 1873, the Emperor Francis Joseph I officially opened the Fifth World's Fair in Vienna. Timed to coincide with the emperor's twenty-fifth anniversary, the fair aimed to confirm the status of Austria-Hungary as a major European power and as an advanced industrial and economic state. As the opening address of Archduke Karl Ludwig to the emperor asserted, the fair served to "direct the gaze of the world toward Austria and ensure the recognition of the participation of our fatherland in the promotion of the wellbeing of mankind through work and instruction."¹ Its significance was signalled by the presence at the opening ceremony of, among others, Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia, Edward Prince of Wales, and the Crown Prince of Denmark, with their spouses.

The fair was not the first industrial exhibition to be held in Austria-Hungary; similar events had already been staged in Prague in 1791 and in Vienna in 1835. However, following the model of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London and the Paris *Expositions Universelles* of 1855 and 1867, it was the first (and only) of the large-scale nineteenth-century world fairs to be held in the empire. The exhibitions of 1791 and 1835 had been primarily court affairs and were limited in scope. The 1835 exhibition, for example, had been held in the Hofburg, dominated by the display of objects from Emperor Francis I's imperial collection, and the majority of the other exhibitors were from Vienna.² The World Fair of 1873, by contrast, was a vast and spectacular event, conceived in competition with the previous exhibitions in London and Paris. Located in the Prater Park by the Danube, a vast rotunda and exhibition hall designed by Karl von Hasenauer (1834–1894), a prominent architect who had also played a leading role in the recent redevelopment of the Ringstrasse in Vienna, formed the main focus. The size of the rotunda, a steel structure some 80 meters high and with a diameter of 108 meters at its base, made visible the ambitions of the fair as a signifier of the status of Austria-Hungary and was deliberately designed to exceed the dimensions of all previous exhibition

¹Archduke Carl Ludwig as cited in *Das Vaterland. Zeitung für die Österreichische Monarchie*, 2 (May 1873): 1.

²Apart from Vienna, the only provinces with any significant representation were Bohemia, Venice, and Lombardy. See *Catalog der Erzeugnisse Oesterreichischer Industrie in der allgemeinen Gewerbs-Producten-Ausstellung zu Wien Im September 1835* (Vienna, 1835).

structures. The site, too, was vast; occupying 233 hectares, it was five times larger than the previous Paris exhibition held at the Champ de Mars.

In addition to the rotunda and central exhibition hall, the fair comprised 194 additional buildings, including an 800-meter long machine hall, an art gallery, and numerous pavilions by private concerns, ranging from the German arms manufacturer Krupp to the Vienna-based newspaper the *Neue Freie Presse* or the Styrian Wine Merchants' Association. Including Germany and Austria-Hungary, which were the biggest participants, there were twenty-three exhibiting countries, from Britain, France, and Russia to Hawai'i, Siam, Japan, and Persia.³

It is generally acknowledged that the fairs were a central part of the exhibitionary complex of nineteenth-century European culture.⁴ Providing "instruments for the moral and cultural regulation of the working classes," such fairs served the promotion of public order *internally*, tutoring audiences into appropriate forms of behavior, while also confirming the *external* position of the European states relative to each other.⁵ The Vienna Fair offered a clear symbolic presentation of the Habsburg state's geopolitical aspirations; having been forced by Prussia to renounce its hegemony over Germany in the 1860s, it employed the fair to give visual expression to the new political identity of the empire as a bridge between East and West. Hence, the Austrian and Hungarian displays in the main exhibition hall (the two halves of the monarchy exhibited separately) occupied the central place under the rotunda (along with Germany); the West wing housed Britain, France, Italy, America, and Brazil; the East wing, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, China, and Japan.⁶

Divided into twenty-six thematic groups, the fair covered all aspects of contemporary industrial and technical production, such as mining and the chemical and paper industries, but it also included a number of others, such as musical instruments or military and naval exhibitions. Although science and industry were central, as with all previous world fairs, the Fifth World's Fair also aimed to display an "image of the cultural aspirations of the present moment" ("Jetztzeit"), a significant innovation.⁷ This had been an aspect of earlier events, but the Vienna Fair was unprecedented in the scale and number of groups dedicated to contemporary cultural practice. In keeping with the general belief that "the world fairs should make visible the current state of culture and civilisation," themes of the fair included contemporary art, historic art and design, and religious art.

In addition, there were groups on "Education, Teaching and Training" ("Erziehungs-, Unterrichts- und Bildungswesen"), with an accompanying display devoted to the "Young Child," and a subsection specifically devoted to the education of women, with a pavilion of women's handiwork ("Frauenarbeit"), comprising the manufacture of artificial flowers, embroidery, lace-making, weaving, and papermaking.⁸ The theme of culture also included groups on "National House Industry" ("Die Nationale Hausindustrie") and on "The

³The full list of sections and exhibitors is listed in *Welt-Ausstellung 1873 in Wien Officieller General-Catalog* (Vienna, 1873).

⁴On the idea of the exhibitionary complex, see Tony Bennet, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London, 1999).

⁵*Ibid.*, 73.

⁶Elke Krasny, "Auf Spurensuche in der Landschaft des Wissens," in *Welt Ausstellen. Schauplatz Wien 1873*, ed. Gabriela Zuna-Kratky et al., 55–71 (Vienna, 2005). The German exhibition was also located under the rotunda.

⁷Aglaja von Enderes, *Catalog für die Ausstellung österreichischer Frauenarbeiten* (Vienna, 1873), 1.

⁸See Rebecca Houze, "At the Forefront of a Newly Emerging Profession? Ethnography, Education and the Exhibition of Women's Needlework in Austria-Hungary in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Design History* 21, no. 1 (2008): 19–40.

Effectiveness of Design Museums” (“Darstellung der Wirksamkeit der Kunstgewerbe-Museen”). Although it denoted a specific system of labor, in which the home formed the primary site of production, “house industry” was seen as virtually synonymous with design and the applied arts. The products of house industry had been part of previous fairs, but at Vienna they were, for the first time, exhibited as a specific group.

These groups enjoyed varying degrees of success in attracting exhibitors; although those on House Industry and Education secured large numbers of exhibits, the group devoted to design museums attracted only two submissions: one from the museum of the Stroganowski School of Drawing in Moscow and the other from the Bavarian Museum of Design in Nuremberg.⁹ Rudolf von Eitelberger (1817–1885), director of the Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna, had hoped that the fair would provide a showcase for his own institution for, as he noted, “the Museum expects the Fair will provide support and encouragement for all those areas of interest that are represented in the Museum, and stimulation for all branches of art, from artistic techniques to the improvement of taste, research into art, design, or art education, which the Museum sees as its responsibility to improve.”¹⁰

Although involved in the organization of the fair, Eitelberger was to be disappointed; the museum was not even granted a presence in the exhibition grounds and had to make do with mounting a display within the museum building, supplemented with weekly lectures by Eitelberger on various aspects of the fair.¹¹ As the correspondent for the *Deutsche Zeitung* commented wryly, “the Museum dazzles the Prater—with its absence.”¹² Other observers thought the museum’s exhibition had little impact; as the official Report on the Fair noted, it was “cobbled together in haste” and its “unintentional competition with the World Fair passed by without a trace.”¹³ The exhibition on the work of museums passed by largely unnoticed, but design had nevertheless become a major topic of debate, and the design exhibits at the fair attracted a significant body of commentary.¹⁴

This article examines in detail two other groups that fell under the rubric of contemporary culture: Group 19 on “The Bourgeois House and its Internal Furnishings and Decoration” (“Das Bürgerliche Wohnhaus mit seiner inneren Einrichtung und Ausschmückung”) and Group 20 on “The Farmhouse, its Furnishings and Appliances” (“Das Bauernhaus mit seiner Einrichtung und seinen Geräthen”). They are of particular interest on account of the light they cast on the internal cultural politics of Austria-Hungary; both provided the occasion for the expression of broader views regarding social and cultural identity and became the object of a widespread debate. Discussion addressed not only the relation between urban and rural society, but also the differences between the varying ethnic and linguistic communities of the monarchy, of which the farmhouse in particular came to function as an important symbol.

⁹The latter was not recorded in the Official Catalogue, but it was reported on positively in the daily world fair newspaper published by the *Deutsche Zeitung*. See “Das neue bairische Gewerbemuseum,” in *Deutsche Zeitung: Weltausstellungs-Zeitung*, 23 July 1873, 5.

¹⁰*Mittheilungen des k.k. Museums* 4, no. 92 (May 1873): 349.

¹¹See *Mittheilungen des k.k. Museums* 4, no. 93 (June 1873): 373–77.

¹²“Die Bethheiligung des Österreichischen Museums an der Weltausstellung,” *Deutsche Zeitung: Weltausstellungs-Zeitung*, 24 September 1873.

¹³Carl Th. Richter, “Darstellung der Wirksamkeit der Museen für Kunstgewerbe,” in *Officieller Ausstellungs-Bericht* (Vienna, 1874), 20.

¹⁴Carl Lützow, ed., *Kunst und Kunstgewerbe auf der Wiener Weltausstellung* (Leipzig, 1875); Jacob Falke, *Die Kunstindustrie auf der Wiener Weltausstellung 1873* (Vienna, 1873); Julius Lessing, *Die Kunstgewerbe auf der Wiener Weltausstellung 1873* (Berlin, 1874).

This article considers the ways in which the presentation of peasant housing at the Vienna Fair and subsequent exhibitions in the late nineteenth century shaped and engaged with ideas in the Habsburg Empire about rural society and, in particular, about folk art and culture. The notion of the “peasant” underwent a significant semantic shift in the late nineteenth century; from being a social and economic category in the 1860s and early 1870s, the concept came to function as a signifier of ethnicity and became an object of ethnographic attention. Moreover, as the bearer of cultural and ethnic authenticity, the peasant also played an increasingly prominent role in political discourse; Keeley Stauter-Halsted has examined this phenomenon in relation to Galicia and the formation of Polish identity; but as this article demonstrates, this shift was a widespread development across the empire.¹⁵ The display of the peasant house at fairs and exhibitions, and the responses to such displays, illustrates well such changing definitions and understandings, which served as the focus of debates not just about cultural identity but also, crucially, cultural transfer.

The Bourgeois House

The bulk of the discussion in this article will consider the theme of the peasant house, but it is useful to examine its counterpart, the group devoted to the bourgeois house, as a means of bringing into sharper focus the differences in the understandings of the city and country. The aim of the group was, as announced in the Program of 1871, to depict the “attempts to breathe new life into the family home in new forms that correspond to modern conditions.”¹⁶ As such, it was intended as a “contribution to solving one of the most burning sociological questions.”¹⁷ The “sociological” problems alluded to included not only the poor quality of urban housing, where mass migration and urbanization were causing severe overcrowding, not least in Vienna itself, but also the changing function and nature of urban housing. Demand for space had led to an increase in land prices; consequently, “the rooms we use are becoming ever smaller, because a large dwelling is only possible for the wealthy or a sign of luxury and lavishness.”¹⁸

Modernization also had a severe impact on housing; mass migration had created a new class of inhabitants, tenants, with impermanent occupancy and differing domestic needs. The rise of the crowded tenement building—the so-called “*Mietskaserne*” (“rental barracks”)—has been well documented, and the exhibition indicated its topicality as a subject of debate.¹⁹ A decade earlier Eitelberger had intervened in this arena with a pamphlet, co-authored with the architect Heinrich Ferstel, on the topic of *The Bourgeois House and the Viennese Tenement*

¹⁵Keeley Stauter-Halsted, “Rural Myth and the Modern Nation: Peasant Commemorations of Polish National Holidays, 1879–1910,” in *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe*, ed. Maria Bucur and Nancy Wingfield, 153–77 (West Lafayette, IN, 2001); Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland 1848–1914* (Ithaca, 2001).

¹⁶*Special-Programm für die Gruppe XIX: Das Bürgerliche Wohnhaus mit seiner inneren Einrichtung und Ausschmückung* (Vienna, 1871), 2.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁸Carl Richter, “Das Bürgerliche Wohnhaus mit seiner inneren Einrichtung und Ausschmückung,” in *Officieller Ausstellungs-Bericht* (Vienna, 1874), 7.

¹⁹On the general conditions of urban housing in mid- and late-nineteenth-century Vienna, see Roman Sandgruber, “Das Elend des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Ökonomie und Politik. Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Roman Sandgruber, 261–73 (Vienna, 2005).

House.²⁰ Eitelberger's text coincided with the opening up of the old city center and the beginnings of building on the Ringstrasse that, he hoped, would provide the opportunity to reform the existing housing stock in Vienna. In particular, Eitelberger argued for the need to reclaim urban dwelling from the speculators and landlords who had driven the rapid rise of the multi-apartment tenement block, by reviving the medieval burgher's house.²¹

In part, Eitelberger was concerned about the aesthetic degradation that had occurred as a result of the imperatives of such speculation; he singled out for criticism the "false decoration, the frail terracottas, the ugly, fragile plaster ornaments, the constant need to restore the façades with whitewash" that characterized the tenement block, and that derived from the speculator's need to provide the buildings with a grandiose appearance at minimal cost.²² Although he expressed clear aesthetic concerns, Eitelberger's main preoccupation was the social and moral impact of such housing. Acknowledging that there would always be certain social groups that would rely on rented housing, such as "private and public servants, railway and factory workers," he nevertheless deplored the fact that bourgeois families were also compelled to lead (such) a precarious existence, "fearing twice a year that either their rental contract will be dissolved or that their rent will be increased."²³

Arguing that "everywhere the family is the basis of social order; personal property, having one's own house is the safeguard," Eitelberger and Ferstel had expressed their dismay at the destabilizing effects on society of the tenement block, which transformed the city dweller into an uprooted nomad.²⁴ That the proposed solution was a renewal of the bourgeois family house—and Eitelberger and Ferstel singled out the English cottage as a model for emulation—signified the limitations of their outlook, for they viewed the widespread problems of working-class urban housing in terms of the aspirations, values, and material circumstances of their own class. Nevertheless, their intervention was one of many similar expressions of concern.²⁵

In accordance with its primarily economic and social focus, the group exhibiting the bourgeois house was "not concerned with presenting a collection of ethnographic showpieces. There is to be no exhibition of the predominant types of current bourgeois dwelling to be found under different skies. Rather, it should be shown how it can be and is organised in the most practical way, taking into account climactic and local conditions, national needs and customs."²⁶ Consequently, the Program was emphatic in stating that the exhibitors should not dwell on the aesthetics of urban architecture: "The object of this exhibition should not simply be the house as a building; it should also be fully furnished."²⁷ As examples of the kinds of items to be included, the Program referred to kitchen design, new forms of heating and lighting, solutions to unspecified architectural problems, and projects that balanced functional and aesthetic demands.

²⁰Rudolf von Eitelberger and Heinrich Ferstel, *Das Bürgerliche Wohnhaus und das Wiener Zinshaus* (Vienna, 1860).

²¹On Eitelberger's intervention into architectural debate, see Carl Schorske, "The Ringstrasse, Its Critics and the Birth of Urban Modernism," in *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Culture and Politics*, ed. Carl Schorske, 24–115 (Cambridge, 1981).

²²Eitelberger and Ferstel, *Das Bürgerliche Wohnhaus*, 18.

²³*Ibid.*, 5.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 7.

²⁵The state of housing in Vienna also prompted numerous social reform movements that focused primarily on workers' housing. See Ákos Moravánszky, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture 1867–1918* (Cambridge, MA, 1998): "The Architecture of Social Reform" (409–42). See, too, Mitchell Schwarzer, *German Architectural Theory and the Search for Modern Identity* (Cambridge, 1995).

²⁶*Special-Programm für die Gruppe XIX*, 1.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 2.

The theme attracted only a modest level of interest. According to the Fair Catalogue, the house exhibits included only fifteen entrants from Austria, such as the Viennese builder Martin Keen's furnished mobile wooden house, or the models of workers' housing exhibited by the Constructors' Association for Popular Building ("Società Triestina Costruttrice di Efidici [sic] Popolare") in Trieste. Further submissions from Britain and the Netherlands also displayed prototypes of workers' housing, whereas exhibits from Japan, China, Tunisia, and the Catholic missions of China displayed models of typical local housing.²⁸ The limited number of submissions was a result, in part, of the lack of a clear differentiation between this group and others; interior furnishing was already accounted for by the theme of "House-Industry," whereas housing design overlapped with the theme of "Construction and Civil Engineering" ("Bau- und Zivilingenieurwesen"), to which many more exhibitors had contributed. The confusion was evident in other ways, too; according to the official report by the Prague-based professor of national economy, Carl Richter, the Jury had mistakenly awarded a prize to the Palace of the Egyptian viceroy, believing it to be a submission. The Catalogue of the Fair also listed a house from the Vorarlberg that had actually been exhibited as an entry to Group 20 on the farmhouse.²⁹

Richter was scornful of those items that were put on display: "The exhibition offered nothing that corresponded to the intention and mission of the group."³⁰ On the one hand, this was a result of the exhibitors' shortcomings, but the blame mostly rested with the organizers, Richter argued, whose intentions for the group lacked clarity. The Program referred vaguely to unspecified challenges presented by urban housing but gave no further indication as to what they might be. More serious for Richter was the fact that the organizers had missed the opportunity to address the real social problems that contemporary urban life and its consequences generated. Reprising in part Eitelberger's complaint about the destabilising effects of rented accommodation (the latter argued that "civil justice stems from house ownership"), Richter pointed to further changes that had occurred. Where once the house had sustained both the domestic life of the family and its economic activity, he noted, these different spheres had become separated into private and public spaces, with concomitant functional shifts in the home: "Large storerooms have become superfluous, cellars and basements have shrunk, and have become merely places for keeping objects for daily use. There is no more business activity in the individual household, for industrial organisation has replaced everything it once needed to produce for itself."³¹

The household as an economic site, expressed in the concept of "Häuslichkeit," had mutated into the personal space of the home, articulated in the notion of domesticity ("Wohnlichkeit"), which set the sphere of work and economic activity apart from that of private life. The exhibition organizers had failed to take these shifts into account, argued Richter, and this was in keeping with the more general shortcomings of cultural commentators in the face of current conditions of constant movement and speed: "Contemporary aesthetics, with its contented, dreamy call for art, which it so often demands of life, has very limited real value, that is to say, it is of value only for the 'upper ten thousand,' whose life is more happily established than that of the great mass."³²

²⁸ Apart from the Official Catalogue entry, there is no further information on these exhibits.

²⁹ Richter, "Das Bürgerliche Wohnhaus," 3.

³⁰ Ibid., 9.

³¹ Ibid., 7.

³² Ibid.

The Farmhouse

Subsequent writers who have concurred with Richter's judgements echoed his dismissive attitude toward the group.³³ However, this is of less interest, perhaps, than the insights generated by comparison with Group 20, the farmhouse, which offers a clear illustration of the differing discourses that were mobilized to understand urban and rural social conditions. The title of the two groups, with their common reference to forms of interior furnishing, suggested that they were to be seen as parallel. In all other respects, however, they were quite distinct.

The basic assumption, announced in the Program, was that the rural population was socially and economically backward. Hence, "not all levels of society have equal access to progress, and the often heard claim about the 'dependence of farmers on the old' shows that as a rule small landholders are, in comparison with other social classes, backward."³⁴ This was not the result of intellectual incapacity, the Program stated, but rather a result of the fact that their "dwellings are geographically dispersed." This meant that attempts to bring "progress" to the living conditions of the farmers and peasants always had limited effects. Coupled with the impoverished situation of large portions of the countryside, this meant that farmers and peasants were either unaware of innovations that might improve their circumstances or were simply unable to afford them. The Program also acknowledged that previous exhibitions had addressed a primarily urban audience, and it was therefore hoped that with this group the fair would rectify this deficit.

Where the Program for the bourgeois house had invited examples of practical solutions to contemporary problems, the Program for the farmhouse solicited exactly the opposite kind of exhibit: "The aim is not to show imaginary farmhouses, equipped with models or real examples of the latest inventions of impractical patent holders; rather, only practical items that have been preserved, good, useful things dispersed across the different lands, should be displayed."³⁵ In certain respects, this was in keeping with the logic of the argument that technological innovations were frequently either unaffordable or impractical for the majority of rural inhabitants and that therefore the exhibition should showcase objects that had stood the test of time.

The effect, however, was to transform the exhibition into a museum of rural life. Although many examples of domestic appliances were submitted, including plates, bowls, kitchen designs, a water filter, and a number of further unspecified objects (often described in the catalogue merely as furnishings and appliances—"Einrichtungen" and "Geräthe"), the exhibition was primarily devoted to farmhouse architecture. This included photographs, sketches, and plans of farmhouses, which were displayed in the Swedish and Norwegian sections, with an additional drawing of a "Transylvanian Saxon farmhouse" submitted in the Hungarian section. It also included models of farmhouses; Russia, China, and Japan all submitted models, as did Austria and Hungary. Furthermore, the exhibition included a "village" (Figure 1), a street with life-size buildings based on typical rural architectural forms found in Austria-Hungary.

These included a house from Michelsberg, a Saxon village in Transylvania (Figure 2), a farmhouse from the German enclave in Geidel in Upper Hungary (now Gajdel in

³³See Martin Wörner, *Vergnügung und Belehrung: Volkskultur auf den Weltausstellungen, 1851–1900* (Münster, 1999), 57 ff.

³⁴*Special-Programm für die Gruppe XX: Das Bauernhaus mit seiner Einrichtung und seinen Geräthen* (Vienna, 1871), 1.

³⁵*Ibid.*



FIGURE 1: View of the peasant “village” exhibited at the 1873 Vienna World Fair. The building with the large spire at the back was a Russian exhibit but, unlike the others in the picture, was not submitted as part of Group 20 on the Farmhouse. *Photo: Wien Museum. Reproduced with permission.*

North-West Slovakia) (Figure 3), a house from Upper Austria and a large Alpine farmhouse from Vorarlberg, a Hungarian “Szekler” house from Transylvania, a Romanian house from the Banat (Figure 4), a cottage from Galicia (Figure 5), and one from Croatia. Because there was a lack of examples from other countries—the site included houses from Russia and the



FIGURE 2: House from Michelsberg, Transylvania, exhibited at the 1873 Vienna World Fair. *Photo: Wien Museum. Reproduced with permission.*



FIGURE 3: Farmhouse from the German enclave of Geidel in Upper Hungary (now Gajdel in North-West Slovakia) exhibited at the 1873 Vienna World Fair. *Photo: Wien Museum. Reproduced with permission.*

newly German territory of Alsace, but these were exhibited under a different category—the display was in effect an exhibition of rural dwellings from across the Empire.

Arranged around a central “square,” the village obviously encompassed a wide variety of different kinds of dwellings. The most spectacular was the three-story wooden balconied



FIGURE 4: Romanian house from the Banat exhibited at the 1873 Vienna World Fair. *Photo: Wien Museum. Reproduced with permission.*



FIGURE 5: Laborer's cottage from Galicia exhibited at the 1873 Vienna World Fair. *Photo: Wien Museum. Reproduced with permission.*

house from the Vorarlberg (Figure 6); at the other extreme, the Polish laborer's house from Galicia was a modest single-story cottage. The houses were populated with representative inhabitants from the Crownlands of their origin, and these inhabitants displayed traditional rural craft skills to inquisitive visitors.



FIGURE 6: House from Vorarlberg exhibited at the 1873 Vienna World Fair. *Photo: Wien Museum. Reproduced with permission.*

The idea of erecting a “village” on the grounds of the fair was not an entirely new one; the Austrian entry to the 1867 Exposition in Paris had included an assemblage of buildings, informally referred to as the “Austrian Village,” in which the “characteristics of the different peoples of Austria would be reflected.”³⁶ The centerpiece of the village had been a beer hall selling lager from the Dreher brewery, and other buildings had included a typical Viennese bakery, a Hungarian tavern (“csarda”), a Tirolean hut, a worker’s cottage from Reichenberg (now Liberec) in Northern Bohemia, and what was planned to be a “Polish house for serving spirits produced in Galicia,” but which ended up as a stable accommodating the horses shown elsewhere in the Austrian exhibition.³⁷ The character of the 1873 display differed significantly from that of the Paris Exposition. Although the latter aimed at representing the diverse Austrian population, such representation was limited to the promotion of goods with a marked national or regional character, particularly food and drink; in the case of the beer hall, it met with great success. In contrast, however, the village of the Vienna Fair, forming part of the group on the farmhouse, was aligned much more closely with the museological impulse implicit in the formulation of the theme. It was not the original intention, but the Vienna exhibition was hence more clearly an “ethnographic” presentation than the village of the 1867 Exhibition.³⁸

Although the theme of the farmhouse was not a huge success in terms of the numbers of exhibits submitted, the village attracted a considerable amount of press and public attention, not least because it provided metropolitan Viennese visitors with an insight into the complex nature of the monarchy. One correspondent referred to the village as providing a “pedagogical moment,” adding that “I should be ashamed to admit that just a few days ago I knew so little about Geidel . . . today I even know that the people of Geidel are not only Geidellers, but that they are German-speaking Hungarians from the region around Pressburg [now Bratislava] . . . the surprise at coming across German speakers is naturally quite widespread.”³⁹ This latter comment was partly prompted by the fact that the official plan of the site listed the house as a “Slovakian house,” but it also revealed the correspondent’s lack of awareness that German-speakers lived in the region.

The contrast between the aims of the two groups devoted to the subject of housing, one on solutions to contemporary urban conditions, the other on tried and tested rural dwellings and implements, highlighted the growing disparity between the ways that village and city culture were described. Urban housing was the subject of a debate that was primarily oriented toward considerations of economic and social well-being, whereas the farmhouse came to be seen as typifying the cultural traits of its inhabitants. Where commentators such as Eitelberger or, later, Richter appealed to the putatively universal value of the family in their critique of the tenement block—both traced the roots of the family back to antiquity—the commentary on rural dwellings thematized cultural difference and invited cultural comparisons between the dwellings. In particular, there was a clear invitation to compare the German communities in the Vorarlberg, Transylvania, Upper Austria, and Geidel with the Romanians, Poles, and Croats. This was particularly encouraged by the fact that the former (to which can be added the house from the Alsace), although not stylistically uniform, were all large-scale, well-built, multistory structures, in contrast to the smaller buildings from the Banat, Galicia, or Croatia, which conformed to popular notions of the humble, small-scale peasant hut.

³⁶*Bericht über die Welt-Ausstellung zu Paris im Jahre 1867* (Vienna, 1869), I, 355.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Edward Kaufman, “The Architectural Museum from World’s Exhibition to Restoration Village,” *Assemblage* IX (1989): 20–39.

³⁹“Im Bauern-Viertel der Weltausstellung,” *Weltausstellungs-Zeitung des Floh*, 17 May 1873, 11.

The sense of difference between them was exacerbated by the fact that on display were different *types* of rural housing; the entry from Vorarlberg was a large-scale farmhouse typical of the wealthier peasantry, whereas the Galician cottage was, as the Official Report noted, “the only house at the World Fair to be covered with a thatched roof.”⁴⁰

An appreciation of the economic and class differences *within* rural societies was absent, however, in reviews and commentaries at the time, which concentrated on questions of ethnic and cultural difference. A sense of the distinction between German and “non-German” was prominent in the Official Report by Karl Schröer, for example, professor of German literature at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna, who included a brief history of the German farmhouse, as well as detailed descriptions of the individual buildings, although he did not devote a similar level of attention to the Romanian, Croatian, or Polish houses.⁴¹ Indeed, Schröer’s description of the “primitive” Romanian house indicated a generally dismissive attitude toward Romanian culture: “It is the only house by a people of Latinate origin. For sure, it is not from one of the Western Latin peoples who, quickened by Germanic blood, have achieved a higher level of culture.”⁴²

The observations of foreign observers echoed Schröer’s attitude, and the press played no small part in encouraging such attention to ethnic difference. An unnamed correspondent of *The Times* noted that the Galician cottage revealed “a highly primitive state of society,” although it should be noted that in his eyes the Vorarlberg house, with its extravagant furnishings, “taxed one’s faith in peasant prosperity.”⁴³ The satirical newspaper *Der Floh* (“Flea”), which featured a cartoon of the Galician cottage, also regarded it as evidence of the backward nature of Polish culture.⁴⁴

Croatian and Polish visitors feared that the exhibition cast their cultures in a poor light; as the Croatian art historian Izidor Kršnjavi plaintively asked, upon seeing the Croatian cottage, “Are we destined always to remain barbarians?”⁴⁵ The nationalist Polish journalist and historian Agaton Giller was critical of the Galician cottage, which presented the Poles in a poor light, “especially because nearby there were houses and cottages that were more highly decorated, more comfortable and better built.”⁴⁶ On the other hand, Giller was also critical of Polish correspondents who had called for an idealized house with no relation to actual rural dwellings, noting that it “was in keeping with the scientific meaning of the exhibition that they displayed a peasant cottage of a kind that we can all see in the villages, poor, humble and with a thatched roof.”⁴⁷ This stood in stark contrast to other houses, which had been designed solely to promote their respective regions or cultures for the exhibition, presenting idealized visions of rural life that bore no relation to reality. If anything, therefore, the

⁴⁰Karl Schröer, *Officieller Ausstellungs-Bericht. Das Bauernhaus mit seiner Einrichtung und seinem Geräthe* (Vienna, 1874).

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 5–8.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 30.

⁴³“Peasants and Foresters at Vienna,” *The Times*, 28 August 1873, 8. The correspondent also found the Russian house in the village (which was not, in fact, part of the group) “ridiculous,” adding that “it might pay for Barnum to purchase it for the Union, but to send it as a specimen of this class is simply an imposition.”

⁴⁴“Das polnische Bauernhaus,” in *Weltausstellungs-Zeitung des Floh*, 26 July 1873.

⁴⁵Izidor Kršnjavi, “Kako da nam se domovina odbogati?” (How can our homeland be enriched?) *Vienac* 6, nos. 20–21 (1874): 331. Thanks are due to Rachel Rossner for this reference.

⁴⁶Agaton Giller, *Polska na Wystawa Powszechna w Wiedniu (Poland at the Universal Exhibition in Vienna)*, (Lwów, 1873), 130.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

Galician exhibitors were at fault for taking at face value the Program announcement, he argued, offering an unadorned picture of peasant culture.

Other Polish commentators drew similar conclusions, and saw affinities with the Romanian cottage: “Here nothing about the building was corrected, nothing in the interior was improved or decorated in order that it might be better displayed in the World Fair. One can boldly claim that both of them offer a true image of the houses inhabited by peasants in these regions.”⁴⁸ Yet, there was also a sense that the exhibition was perhaps *too* honest: “Whoever knows Galicia will acknowledge that in almost every village there can be found several houses that are more beautiful and more richly adorned inside than the one put on display.”⁴⁹

Croatian and Polish observers were hence worried about the negative image presented. In the case of the Galician cottage, this was a result, in part, of the naivety of the organizing committee in response to the rationale of the group. Schröer’s official report confirmed the sense of difference among the Romanian, Croatian, and Galician cottages, on the one hand, and the German houses on the other, yet, surprisingly, also expressed anxiety about the latter. In the village layout, the Saxon house from Michelsberg, a solid stone-built structure, was placed next to the wooden house from Geidel, and this juxtaposition invited comparison of the state of German culture in different regions of the empire. Schröer’s language in describing their relative condition was nothing if not dramatic:

Those living in Transylvania have kept their communal way of life and have preserved the most elevated German customs (“Gesitig”), and have not lost the spiritual connection to their land of origin . . . the Germans in the heart of the Hungarian uplands, from where the other house comes, form a contrast. We are presented with the condition of a German with the same origin, but one with the condition of a German slave (“Helot”).⁵⁰

Repeatedly emphasising the importance of maintaining contact with the “motherland,” Schröer found it hardly credible that Germans could live in such “primitive” houses, most especially given the proximity of Geidel to Germany. This degraded state he attributed partly to the hard economic and physical conditions of the region, yet he also blamed the educational deficit, because of the lack of German-language schools: “Across the entire country of Hungary the 1,592,043 Germans do not have one single gymnasium, not one single secondary school (“Realschule”). The educated class are forced to become Magyars; the German is thereby condemned to slavery (“Helotenthum”).”⁵¹

Significantly, however, Schröer’s main worry was not that the Germans were becoming magyarized, but that through the loss of their own ethnic identity, they were becoming immersed in the culture of the Slovaks of Northern Hungary. Lamenting the fact that in even the more well-to-do houses in the Slovak towns the ethnic Germans no longer spoke their mother tongue at home, Schröer noted the consequences: “Removed from all aspects of education, these towns are stifled from mental sluggishness and imbecility.”⁵² This was in general keeping with the idea that “for the Slavic world dawn has not yet broken, it is still slumbering, probably also dreaming. . . . The Germans have been the force driving the world

⁴⁸Zygmunt Jaroszewski and Ludwik Dąbrowski, *Przegląd Wystawy Powszechnej Wiedeńskiej z 1873 r.* (Review of the Vienna Universal Exhibition of 1873) (Cracow, 1874), 6.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Schröer, *Das Bauernhaus mit seiner Einrichtung*, 9.

⁵¹Ibid., 17.

⁵²Ibid., 18.

since the fall of Rome.”⁵³ Hence, although a significant cause of the “enslaved” status of the Germans of Geidel was the policy of magyarization of the Hungarian government toward its minorities, Schröer’s comments indicated his much deeper anxieties over the cultural degeneration of the Germans as a result of their contact with the Slovaks.

Ethnography and Empire

The farmers’ village prompted observers to express a range of deep-seated fears and prejudices not simply about the relation between both the city and the countryside, but also about the different peoples of the Habsburg monarchy and their different levels of civilization. The fact that Schröer felt able to voice such views in an official publication of the fair indicates how widely held such views were, even if they were not formally sanctioned. The village may have been the most striking instance where visitors were invited to draw cultural comparisons of this kind, but other themes had a similar ethnographic coloring.

A museological and ethnographic conception also underpinned the logic of Group 21 on “National House Industry.” Not only were the objects displayed supposed to be representative of national cultures, but in addition, as the Program stated, the objects of house industry possessed “many traditional, in some cases ancient, artistic motifs that recall long-gone artistic periods and styles, and are thus important from an historical point of view.”⁵⁴ These included numerous displays of folk costume, in many cases including life-size figures.⁵⁵ Other exhibits, too, were presented in ethnographic terms; the centerpiece of the Hungarian exhibit for the group on the Army and the Navy (“Marine und Heerswesen”) was a diorama of life-sized figurines dressed in the uniform of the Honved—the Hungarian militia. As a proud assertion of national identity and martial traditions, it stood in striking opposition to other exhibits to the group, which focused on technical innovations, including an entire pavilion occupied by Krupp displaying its latest military technology.

This was consistent with a wider Hungarian strategy toward the fair. With its primarily rural economy, Hungary opted to emphasise its cultural attributes, rather than to engage in a fruitless attempt to compete with the more advanced industries of Britain, France, or even Austria.⁵⁶ It was notable, for example, that although the overall Hungarian exhibition was smaller than that of Austria, its submission to the “National House Industry” group was considerably larger, comprising some 617 exhibits, in contrast to the Austrian display of 52 items.⁵⁷

The multiple ethnographic displays at the world fairs have frequently been interpreted in the light of the imperial and colonial projects of the European powers. Many fairs were explicit exercises in the legitimation of colonial rule; as Paul Greenhalgh has commented, “displays of colonial peoples legitimized imperial conquest across a remarkably broad spectrum, justifying European expansion without troubling the minds of the spectators with economic

⁵³Ibid., 31.

⁵⁴*Special-Programm für die Gruppe XXI: Die Nationale Hausindustrie* (Vienna, 1871), 1.

⁵⁵On the role of costumes in Vienna and other world fairs, see Wörner, “Das Ursprüngliche, Nationale, Eigenthümliche.’ Die Tracht,” in *Vergnügung und Belehrung: Volkskultur auf den Weltausstellungen, 1851–1900*, 145–90.

⁵⁶On this topic, see Amália Kerekes and Peter Plener, “Die teuersten Schaufenster der Monarchie—1873, 1885, 1896,” in *Leitha und Letha. Symbolische Räume und Zeiten in der Kultur Österreich-Ungarns*, ed. Amália Kerekes, Alexandra Millner, Peter Plener, and Béla Rásky, 69–89 (Tübingen and Basel, 2004).

⁵⁷See *Welt-Ausstellung 1873 in Wien. Officieller General-Catalog*, 142–43 and 212–20.

or military factors.”⁵⁸ The Vienna Fair can be seen as a precursor of the later world fairs such as those staged in Paris in 1889 and 1900, or the Exposition Coloniale of 1931.

The peasant village at Vienna can be placed alongside such instances, for it made visible long-standing assumptions of a cultural hierarchy among the various groups of the empire. This was exacerbated by the clear contrasts offered between the more affluent houses that represented the Austrian heartlands (Vorarlberg, Upper Austria) and those from the so-called “peripheral regions” (“Randbezirke”) of Croatia, the Banat (on the Balkan border), or Galicia. Some historians have drawn parallels between the relation of the imperial center to the peripheries in the Habsburg Empire, on the one hand, and the French or British treatment of their colonies, on the other.⁵⁹ Just as the colonial subjects of France, Britain and, later, Germany became the object of a formidable apparatus of ethnographical study, so, too, it is argued, groups such as the Croats, the Romanians, the Ukrainians, or the Slovaks became the subject of ethnographic discourses.

Despite such suggestive similarities, however, Austria-Hungary differed quite markedly from the pattern of the Western European colonial powers. Even if the peripheral regions of the monarchy, particular to the north, east and south, functioned as semicolonial territories—the only proper Habsburg colony was Bosnia-Herzegovina, which came under Austrian administration in 1878—the analogy with other European states has to be treated with caution. As Andrea Komlosy has argued, the relation of center and periphery was multilayered and complex.⁶⁰ After the Ausgleich of 1867, the monarchy had *two* centers, but although Vienna may have been an economic, cultural, and political center, Budapest, and indeed Hungary, were economic peripheries. In contrast, Bohemia, which was a political “periphery,” was economically the most advanced Crownland of the empire, with the highest rates of literacy and, after Lower Austria, the highest per capita income. Galicia had, after 1868, substantial local political autonomy, and although economically tied to Vienna in certain respects, which regarded it as a source of raw material, Galician workers were as likely to seek employment in Germany (or overseas) as in the empire, and hence their relation to Austria cannot be seen *entirely* as one of dependency on the imperial center. And as recent research on the Galician oil industry indicates, the Crownland enjoyed a substantial degree of local control over such a valuable resource.⁶¹

Moreover, in contrast to the classic model of imperialism, there was also no single dominant national group; German language and culture occupied a hegemonic position, but the monarchy continuously resisted German nationalism. Karl Schröer’s comments on the cottage in Geidel and the towns of Northern Hungary make clear that it was a concern for nationalists that at a local level Germans did not occupy the position they thought was naturally theirs. Although the Italians were economically privileged, Italian nationalism, although dominant in Trieste, was suppressed elsewhere, like all other nationalist movements. Hence, in Dalmatia, Italians formed the cultural elite, yet the Monarchy saw

⁵⁸Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1851–1939* (Manchester, 1988), 85.

⁵⁹“[Austria’s] imperialism was—not least from the perspective of the world fairs—that of the state center versus the peripheral regions. In relation to the latter it was possible to develop a claim to hegemony, particularly in the field of ethnographic representation, similar to that of the colonial powers over their extra-European possessions.” Felber, Krasny and Rapp, *Smart Exports* (Vienna, 2000), 52.

⁶⁰Andrea Komlosy, “Innere Peripherien als Ersatz für Kolonien? Zentrenbildung und Peripherisierung in der Habsburgermonarchie,” in *Zentren, Peripherien und kollektive Identitäten in Österreich-Ungarn*, ed. Endre Hárs, Wolfgang Müller-Funk, Ursula Reber, and Clemens Ruthner, 55–78 (Tübingen and Basel, 2006).

⁶¹See Alison Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

itself as protecting the other inhabitants of the region from Italian domination and, after the unification of Italy in the 1860s, was nervous about the dangers of irredentist claims by the new Italian kingdom on its Adriatic littoral. There was also no shortage of internal criticism of the magyarization policies of the Hungarian government, for it was held to be responsible for alienating Croats.⁶² Finally, as Pieter Judson has argued, although the empire did not recognize national groups as collective bodies, this did not equate with official systematic discrimination against individuals of particular linguistic or ethnic backgrounds.⁶³

The drawing of analogies between Austria-Hungary and other European imperial states hence obscures the specific conditions of the Habsburg monarchy, and this difference can also be seen within the domain of ethnography. If, on the one hand, the peasant village at the Vienna Fair and the responses to it can be compared to the intermingling of nationalist, ethnographic, and colonial discourses across much of the rest of Europe, the ideological matrix from which Austrian ethnography emerged was nevertheless quite distinct.

A sense of this can be gleaned from a comparison of two texts published in the 1850s; Wilhelm Riehl's essay "Ethnography as a Science" ("Volkskunde als Wissenschaft") published in 1859 and Karl Czoernig's 1857 study on the *Ethnography of the Austrian Monarchy*.⁶⁴ Riehl, a founding figure of ethnography in Germany, asserts unequivocally that "ethnography is unthinkable as a science if the idea of the nation does not form the center of its scattered investigations."⁶⁵ For Riehl, the primary function of ethnography was to legitimate the idea of the nation, to promote the imagined community of the people, and this was in keeping with his wider notion that "the more clearly a nation gains consciousness of itself, the higher it . . . achieves historical recognition."⁶⁶

Czoernig's *Ethnography* adopted a completely opposed trajectory. Published by the central bureau of administrative statistics, of which Czoernig was also director, the *Ethnography of the Austrian Monarchy* was above all an exercise in demographic mapping. This work carefully analyzed each region of the monarchy in terms of the ethnic and linguistic origin of its inhabitants, and it provided a detailed historical overview of settlement and migration patterns of linguistic groups. The project reached two fundamental conclusions: First, that each territory of the monarchy was culturally and linguistically heterogeneous and, second, that this situation had lasted for centuries. No individual group could claim exclusive rights to a particular region or land.

Published in the aftermath of 1848, to which it makes frequent reference, Czoernig's *Ethnography* was closely aligned with the legitimizing ideology of the Habsburg dynasty, which sought to promote the identity of the empire as cosmopolitan and diverse. Furthermore, in addition to the appeal to dynastic loyalty, the presentation of the demographic facts suggested that any disentangling of individual ethnic and linguistic groups was utterly unfeasible. As Peter Stachel has argued, resistance to the idea of national cultures, and promotion of the multinational state, was a defining feature of Austrian

⁶²As Karl Czoernig noted, "When the legal stipulations were introduced in Hungary with too much zeal, leading to the voicing of complaints on the part of the non-Magyars in the Hungarian motherland, there arose a nationalist sentiment in Croatia, which, under the name of Illyrianism, soon opposed magyarism." Czoernig, *Ethnographie der Österreichischen Monarchie* (Vienna, 1857), III, 115.

⁶³Pieter Judson, "L'Autriche-Hongrie, était-elle un empire?" *Annales. Histoire, Science Sociales* 63, no. 3 (2008): 563–96.

⁶⁴Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, "Die Volkskunde als Wissenschaft," in *Culturstudien aus drei Jahrhunderten*, ed. in W.H. Riehl, 205–229 (Stuttgart, 1859); Czoernig, *Ethnographie der Österreichischen Monarchie* (as in n. 56).

⁶⁵Riehl, "Die Volkskunde als Wissenschaft," 328.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 216.

ethnography.⁶⁷ This idea, which became a *leitmotif* of the Viennese Anthropological Society founded in 1870, was developed further into a notion of the hybrid nature of the peoples of the empire and the conviction that “it is not possible to regard the nations currently co-existing simply as racial unities.”⁶⁸

The difference between Riehl and Czoernig ultimately highlights the difference between the political narratives of Austria and Germany. In both cases, ethnography was cast as a state enterprise. Michael Haberlandt, a key figure in the formation of ethnography as an academic discipline in Austria, described it as a “service for the fatherland.”⁶⁹ However, the differing political objectives of the two—the construction of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state, on the one hand, and the maintenance of an ethnically diverse dynastic empire, on the other—left their imprint on the nature of ethnographic discourses.⁷⁰ The most explicit programmatic statement of the ideological orientation of Austrian ethnography can be found in Haberlandt’s introduction to the first volume of the *Zeitschrift für Österreichische Volkskunde*. Here, Haberlandt declared that “We are not concerned with nationalities,” adding that “due to Austria’s colorful ethnographic composition it is self-evident that the study of peoples should be comparative in approach.”⁷¹ The approach he espoused was not, however, driven merely by the contingencies of the demographic makeup of Austria; it also had scientific justification. Comparative study revealed the widespread reliance on similar artifacts, ideas, and customs that “went beyond national borders, forcing us to acknowledge a deeper principle of development than that of nationality.”⁷²

For all his efforts at promoting a transnational comparative ethnography, Haberlandt was nevertheless faced with powerful currents that ran in the opposite direction. The topic of the farmhouse provides a useful measure for gauging the subsequent development of Austrian ethnographic discourses after 1873 for, from the 1880s onward, it came to be seen as an important index of racial, cultural, and geographic specificity.

Numerous publications linked individual building types to specific cultures or ethnic groups (and levels of civilization), and these became increasingly nationalistic toward the turn of the century.⁷³ In 1891, Rudolf Meringer (1859–1931), a professor of linguistics at the University of Graz, published a study of *The Farmhouse and Its Furnishings*, which was an explicit exercise in Germanic ethnography.⁷⁴ Likewise, in 1897, the historian Anton Dachler (1841–1921) published an analysis of the farmhouse in Lower Austria that not only distinguished between Franconian and Bavarian farmhouse types (for which he used the archaic and nationalistically tinged term “Bajuvarisch”), but also interpreted them in narrowly tribal, racial terms.⁷⁵

⁶⁷Peter Stachel, “Die Harmonisierung national-politischer Gegensätze und die Anfänge der Ethnographie in Österreich,” in *Geschichte der Österreichischen Humanwissenschaften*, ed. Karl Acham, 323–67 (Vienna, 2002).

⁶⁸C. Langer, “Programme für ethnographische Untersuchungen insbesondere auf dem Gebiete Österreichs,” *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft Wiens* 13 (1883), 133. Cited in Brigitte Fuchs, “Rasse,” “Volk,” “Geschlecht.” *Anthropologische Diskurse in Österreich 1850–1960* (Frankfurt, 2003), 160.

⁶⁹Michael Haberlandt, “Zum Beginn!” *Zeitschrift für Österreichische Volkskunde* 1 (1895): 1.

⁷⁰On the history of Austrian ethnography, see Karl Pusman, *Die “Wissenschaften vom Menschen” auf Wiener Boden (1870–1959). Die Anthropologische Gesellschaft in Wien und die anthropologischen Disziplinen im Fokus von Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Wissenschafts- und Verdrängungspolitik* (Berlin, 2008).

⁷¹Haberlandt, “Zum Beginn!” 1.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³On this development, see Reinhold Johler, “Ethnisierte Materialien—‘materialisierte Ethnien’,” in *Das entfernte Dorf. Moderne Kunst und ethnischer Artefakt*, ed. Ákos Moravánszky, 61–94 (Vienna, 2002).

⁷⁴Rudolf Meringer, *Studien zur germanischen Volkskunde. Das Bauernhaus und dessen Einrichtung* (Wien, 1891).

⁷⁵Anton Dachler, *Das Bauernhaus in Niederösterreich und sein Ursprung* (Vienna, 1897).

At times the farmhouse could provide the pretext for strong social and cultural prejudices. One notable example was a study of Romanian peasant housing in Bukovina by Elias Weslowski, director of the technical college in Kimpolung (now Câmpulung Moldovenesc) in southern Bukovina.⁷⁶ In this study, Weslowski mobilized many of the widespread tropes identified earlier, in which the economically backward state of the peripheral regions of the empire offered clues to their racial and cultural character. Providing an outline of the basic material, forms, and functions of peasant housing in Bukovina—in which he also lumped together gypsies and Romanians, since the former also spoke Romanian—Weslowski highlighted various domestic customs and beliefs that provided ample evidence, he argued, of their primitive nature.

Above all, they seemed entrenched in a premodern mentality, for “in spite of the significant cultural advances of the past decades, Romanians are full of superstitions and belief in spirits, especially those who are cut off living in the mountains.”⁷⁷ Hence, “it should be mentioned that amongst the Romanians there is so much bigotry (“Bigotterie”) that on festivals and Sundays they neither cook nor bake,”⁷⁸ and Weslowski listed a series of such superstitious beliefs, such as the idea that “a young girl who eats on the threshold will encounter misfortune and will not marry,” or that an owl hooting on the roof of a house signifies that one of its occupants will die.⁷⁹ It says much, of course, about Weslowski’s prior assumptions about Romanians that he was willing to take such traditional lore—he lists some thirty-three examples in total—at face value.

Studies of peasant culture bolstered beliefs about a national or even racial hierarchy in the monarchy, and the rural farmhouse became a visible signifier of essentialized notions of identity, despite the efforts of Haberlandt. At the same time, however, folk and peasant culture—including local vernacular building—were appropriated by “subaltern” groups that recuperated the meaning of folk culture, and the peasant house in particular, as evidence not of backwardness, but of ancient tradition and continuity with the past, and hence of historical legitimacy. This produced a debate consequently over the sources and value of folk culture. An instructive example can be seen in the ethnographic village in the Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition staged in Prague in 1895 and the responses to it.

Mounted as a pageant of Czech and Slovak culture, the exhibition celebrated not only the achievements of Slavic “high culture,” with sections on music, literature, and the visual arts, for example, but also foregrounded the diverse character of Czech and Slovak folk culture. A centerpiece was a large-scale village that featured a range of buildings that were meant to exemplify regional architectural styles and building types, such as the blacksmith, the tavern, or the church, and populated by life-size mannequins and, in some cases, men and women from villages, who demonstrated traditional rural skills. The principal narrative of the exhibition was the demonstration of the existence of autochthonous folk and high cultural traditions that owed nothing to other surrounding cultures. In Bohemia and Moravia, this meant that of the Germans, whereas for the Slovaks, it meant Magyar culture.

In certain respects, the ethnographic presentation in the exhibition echoed the ideas of Dachler and Meringer, only on this occasion it focused on Czech and Slovak, rather than German, cultural and ethnic identity. The farmhouse was a prominent part of the display,

⁷⁶Elias Weslowski, *Das Rumänische Bauernhaus in der Bukowina* (Vienna, 1912).

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 36.

which included a number of specific regional types of farmhouse.⁸⁰ There were, however, dissenting voices. German nationalist commentators, for example, railed against the exhibition's exclusionary focus on Slavic cultures, which, despite reassurances to the contrary, fed nationalist anxieties about German marginalization in Bohemia.⁸¹ More significantly, however, others who were sympathetic to the overall project nevertheless criticized its attempt to interpret varying types of vernacular peasant architecture as specifically "Slavic." Michael Haberlandt, for example, was struck by the degree of similarity between the Czech folk architecture of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia and that of their German neighbors. For Haberlandt, the fact that the exhibition completely ignored such affinities had to be designated a "serious scientific flaw."⁸²

Other observers reached similar conclusions. Rudolf Meringer noted, "There is no primal Slavic ("urslavisches") house, no Czechoslovak house. There is just the well-known Franconian house, from top to bottom, with its furnishings; much has been lost, but there is as good as nothing that could be found only in the Czech house. I no longer believe in the Slavic house."⁸³ Meringer's point was not, despite the tone of his comment, to argue for the derivative nature of Slavic building, confirming its dependence on Franconian, and hence German originals. Rather, he concluded that both Czech and German building types could clearly be traced back to a common Central European ancestor that *predated* the formation of separate national cultures. Analysis of peasant housing demonstrated, therefore, precisely the opposite of the aims of the exhibition organizers, namely, the extensive cultural borrowings *between* the differing linguistic communities of Central Europe.

A comparison of the villages in the Prague Exhibition and the Vienna Fair of twenty-two years earlier provides an informative index of how the meanings of peasant culture had shifted and developed in the final decades of the nineteenth century. In Vienna, the primary focus of interest had been economic and sociological. Its starting premise had been the economic and technological disadvantage of the peasants, its aim being to foreground those imaginative adaptations of tradition that best sustained rural life. If such objectives were undercut by the contemporary responses to the village, this indicates the extent to which already in the 1870s peasant culture was interpreted as a signifier of ethnicity. But if rural vernacular art and architecture came to function, in the late nineteenth century, as tokens in a debate about cultural identity, there were still significant other voices.

Alongside Haberlandt's stress on the international character of the "peasant house," the art historian Alois Riegl mounted a strong criticism of the "nationalisation" of folk art and of its employment as an instrument of cultural self-assertion by the numerous peoples of the empire. In his 1893 analysis of folk art and house industry, Riegl dismissed folk art and design as relics of a superseded stage of economic development.⁸⁴ In addition, he argued that

⁸⁰The exhibition catalogue included detailed ground plans and elevation drawings of the building types. See F. A. Šubert et al., *Národopisná Výstava Československá v Praze 1895* [*The 1895 Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague*] (Prague, 1895), Plates 1–10.

⁸¹Concluding its dismissive account of the exhibition, which it interpreted as a politically motivated anti-German undertaking, the nationalist daily *Reichenberger Zeitung* commented that "no German concerned with national honor" would wish to have anything to do with it. *Reichenberger Zeitung*, 18 May 1895, 1.

⁸²Haberlandt, "Die Ausstellung in Prag II," *Wiener Zeitung*, 11 September 1895, 3.

⁸³Rudolf Meringer, "Die čechisch-slavische ethnographische Ausstellung in Prag, speciell in Bezug auf das čechische Haus und seine Geräthe," in *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien XXV* (1895): 104–05.

⁸⁴Alois Riegl, *Volkskunst, Hausfleiss und Hausindustrie* (Berlin, 1894). Riegl's study has been examined in depth by Stefan Muthesius, "Alois Riegl, *Volkskunst, Hausfleiß und Hausindustrie*," in *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work*, ed. Richard Woodfield, 135–50 (Amsterdam, 2000); and Georg Vasold, *Alois Riegl und die Kunstgeschichte als Kulturgeschichte* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2004).

far from being the source of cultural and ethnic identity, folk art and culture was often derivative, based on forms borrowed from the circuit of international high art.⁸⁵ Where the latter was a source of perpetual renewal and innovation, folk art was often linked, he argued, to social, cultural, and economic stagnation.

Impact

In the eyes of many contemporaries, the Vienna Fair was a significant failure. The critic Ferdinand Kürnberger referred to the fair as “our second Königrätz.”⁸⁶ The reasons for this judgment were many, but the principal ones are well known. On 9 May, eight days after it opened, there was a stock market crash that inaugurated the long economic crisis of the 1870s and the 1880s. In addition, in July there was an outbreak of cholera in Vienna that killed nearly 3,000 people and prompted many to stay away from the city. The projected 20,000,000 visitors failed to materialize; eventually, a total of some 7,250,000 attended the fair. This was no small figure, but because the expenditure on the fair had been predicated on much higher numbers, it incurred debts of around 19,000,000 guilders. Participation in the fair was also not universal across the empire. The refusal of the organizing committee to accede to the demand for a separate exhibition space for Bohemia led to a boycott by Czech nationalists.⁸⁷ The Czech-language press was also dismissive of the event; it was criticized as unrepresentative and as an exercise in German nationalism.⁸⁸

More recent studies have provided a more positive assessment. Until 1873 the world fairs had functioned primarily as a stage on which Anglo-French political, cultural, and economic rivalries were played out. The Vienna Fair, with its much more expansive vision, opened up the World Expositions to a much wider range of possibilities. Hence, in addition to their displays in the main exhibition hall, Persia, Egypt, Japan, and China, for example, erected substantial pavilions that were the object of approving commentary that made no small impact. Exposing the Austrian public to a wide range of non-European artifacts and images for the first time, the fair played an important role in provoking interest in the “exotic” and was a formative influence on the rise of *japonisme* in Austria.⁸⁹ As the design critic Julius Lessing commented in retrospect, “at that time Vienna was swamped with the products of the Orient,”⁹⁰ and the subsequent popular appropriation of Japanese art prompted critical responses in various quarters.⁹¹ A considerable trade in “exotic” goods also took place, and as Lessing noted, Viennese buyers took advantage of the fact that, as a result of famine,

⁸⁵On Riegl's attitude to folk art, see Matthew Rampley, “Art History and the Politics of Empire: Rethinking the Vienna School,” *Art Bulletin* 91, no. 4 (2009): 447–63.

⁸⁶Cited in Karlheinz Roschitz, *Wiener Ausstellung 1873* (Vienna, 1989), 170.

⁸⁷See H. Hallwich, *Nordböhmen auf der Weltausstellung in Wien 1873* (Reichenberg, 1873), 1, 25.

⁸⁸See, for example, “Světová Výstava ve Vídni,” (“The World Exhibition in Vienna”) *Národní Listy* (3 May 1873); “K otevření světové výstavy,” (“On the Opening of the World Exhibition”) *Moravská Orlice* (2 May 1873).

⁸⁹Conversely, the fair had a significant impact on the course of Japanese through Notomi Kaijiro, who came to Vienna and introduced the mass production of ceramics on the basis of his encounters with European design. See Fujita Haruhiko, “Notomi Kaijiro: An Industrial Art Pioneer and the First Design Educator of Modern Japan,” *Design Issues* 17, no. 2 (2001): 17–31. On Japonisme in Austria, see Johannes Wieninger, *Verborgene Impressionen. Japonismus in Wien, 1870–1930* (Vienna, 1990).

⁹⁰Julius Lessing, *Das halbe Jahrhundert der Weltausstellungen* (Berlin, 1906), 22.

⁹¹See, for example, Jacob Falke, “Contra Japan,” *Mittheilungen des Mährischen Gewerbe-Museums in Brünn* 4, no. 5 (1886): 61–64.

Persia and its neighbors were offering *objets d'art* at a greatly reduced price in a desperate attempt to raise capital: “Beautiful old Persian carpets could be bought for a third of the price of poor quality European work.”⁹² Perhaps the most substantial consequence of the fair in this regard was that it prompted the establishment in 1875 of the Oriental Museum in Vienna, directed by Arthur von Scala, which later merged with the Museum for Art and Industry, and formed the basis for its substantial collections of Japanese, Chinese, and Islamic artifacts.⁹³

Such exchanges echoed the wider European appropriation of other cultures and hence anticipated in certain ways the colonial displays of subsequent world exhibitions. Yet, the fair also provided a platform for many countries beyond Europe to present themselves as modern states. As Krasny has stated, “countries and regions which, hitherto, had been the topic of conversation solely because of their exotic or rural flair, were taken seriously as political and economic zones of the future.”⁹⁴ The fair also played an important role in furthering Austrian economic, cultural, and political objectives and opened up important new economic and diplomatic links, not least with the Meiji dynasty of Japan.⁹⁵

Following on from the Austrian village in the 1867 Exposition in Paris, the farmhouse village of Vienna played a significant role in confirming the place of such displays in subsequent fairs staged both in Austria-Hungary and elsewhere. The Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition of 1895 was perhaps the most ambitious such event—and the Vienna Fair was cited as an important model for the later Slavic village—but there were numerous other such spectacles staged within the empire. The Agricultural Fair held in Trieste in 1882 or the Galician regional World Fair staged in Lemberg (today L'viv) in 1894 both included ensembles of buildings in a peasant or “folk” style, as did the 1886 exhibition in Budapest and the Millennium Exhibition staged in the Hungarian capital in 1896. The Vienna Fair was thus the first occasion when cultures were represented by structures built in a vernacular style. Moreover, it was not only in the peasant village that regional and national architectures were on display. The pavilions of Japan, Egypt, or Persia, for example, were also based on stereotypical national architectural forms and structures. However, in contrast to the peasant village, these pavilions drew on high cultural traditions; there were no displays of the peasant dwellings of Persia or North Africa. Increasingly, however, as vernacular culture and folk art were taken up as wider emblems of national identity, this distinction collapsed, and the vernacular building embodied in the farmhouse was transformed into a national pavilion presenting the whole culture.⁹⁶

The first step in this direction was taken in the 1878 Exposition held in Paris, in which an “Avenue des Nations” was created, where countries were encouraged to erect structures that reflected a national architectural style. The Austro-Hungarian contribution (there was a

⁹²Lessing, *Das halbe Jahrhundert der Weltausstellungen*, 22.

⁹³On the Oriental Museum, see Johannes Wieninger, “Er brachte viel eigenartiges und notwendiges mit. Arthur von Scala als Mittler zwischen Ost und West und die Grundlegung der Asiensammlungen des heutigen Museums für angewandte Kunst, 1868–1909,” in *Kunst und Industrie. Die Anfänge des Museums für Angewandte Kunst in Wien*, ed. Peter Noever, 164–74 (Vienna, 2000).

⁹⁴Krasny et al, *Smart Exports*, 67.

⁹⁵Roschitz, op. cit., p. 175 ff. On the relation between Japan and Austria-Hungary, see Peter Pantzer, *Japan und Österreich-Ungarn. Die diplomatischen, wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Beziehungen von ihrer Aufnahme bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna, 1973).

⁹⁶On the transition from the one to the other, see Martin Wörner, “Bauernhaus und Nationenpavillon. Die architektonische Selbstdarstellung Österreich-Ungarns auf den Weltausstellungen des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* XLVIII, no. 97 (1994): 395–424.

single structure for the empire) assiduously avoided any reference to local vernacular forms and consisted instead of a neo-Renaissance facade that reflected the monarchy's persistent adoption of a cosmopolitan image that refused to identify with any one of the individual linguistic and cultural communities of the empire. The general Program, however, indicated the wider shift toward the nationalization of architectural form. This coincided with a vigorous debate during the 1870s and 1880s regarding which architectural style could provide the most appropriate visual identity for the monarchy. Prominent writers such as "Bernini the Younger," the pseudonym of the Viennese art critic and historian Albert Ilg, argued forcefully for the central role of the neo-Baroque as able both to provide continuity with the past and also to embody the imperial cosmopolitanism of the present.⁹⁷ Ilg also held to the canon of high culture as providing the most appropriate visual language of representation.

At the Chicago Columbian Fair of 1893, however, Austria was represented with a re-created street from "old Vienna" that presented the capital as an imagined sixteenth-century city characterized by its local architectural forms.⁹⁸ This was in keeping with the overall aim of the empire's contribution to the Chicago Fair, which was to acquaint Americans with Austria and its culture and thereby promote its national characteristics. This also signified an important shift, in that the empire was no longer presented in terms of its scientific and technical advances, but rather within a framework shaped by notions of heritage and ethnic identity.⁹⁹ This trend achieved its climax at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1900. Here, there were separate Austrian and Hungarian pavilions; the former was a neo-Baroque structure consistent with the imperial architecture of Vienna. The Hungarian pavilion, in contrast, consisted of a pastiche of motifs drawn from castles, palaces, and churches that were held to exemplify Hungarian national architectural identity. Observers, including the German art critic Julius Meier-Graefe, noted the contradictions and tensions that emerged from this juxtaposition, and the sense of disunity was exacerbated by the inclusion of a separate pavilion for Bosnia-Herzegovina, which mobilized a third visual language to present the distinctive cultural and historical inheritance of Austria's only colony.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

The Vienna Fair was one of the most ambitious attempts to present a coherent image of Austria-Hungary and to promote it as an advanced European state, at a time when its position had been brought into question by the military and political setbacks of the previous two decades. Although small-scale in comparison with other themes, the two groups on urban and rural dwelling at the fair revealed important dimensions to the cultural politics of the last third of the nineteenth century. The fair attempted to address these themes in primarily economic and social terms. Although poorly defined, the relation between the city and the countryside,

⁹⁷Bernini der Jüngere, *Die Zukunft des Barockstils* (Vienna, 1880). On Ilg, see Peter Stachel, "Albert Ilg und die 'Erfindung' des Barocks als österreichischer 'Nationalstil,'" in *Barock—ein Ort des Gedächtnisses*, ed. Moritz Csáky, Federico Celestini, and Ulrich Tragatschnig, 101–152 (Vienna, 2007).

⁹⁸On the notion of "old Vienna," see Wolfgang Kos and Christian Rapp, eds., *Alt-Wien. Die Stadt, die niemals war* (Vienna, 2004).

⁹⁹Felber and Krasny, *Smart Exports*, 92.

¹⁰⁰Meier-Graefe observed of the Hungarian pavilion, "a hybrid of castle, monastery, palace and fortress, but not a building for exhibiting. The fact that such buildings can arise due to the vicissitudes of history changes nothing about the minimal value of this combination." Meier-Graefe, *Die Weltausstellung in Paris 1900* (Paris and Leipzig, 1900), 28.

and the issues raised by each in turn, was framed in terms of economic development and the difficulties posed in trying to respond to the challenges of modernization. However, this approach was undercut by a recoding of the difference between city and country in ethnographic terms. Although the city was the site of modernization and its problems, the countryside was the locus of tradition, in which the putative failure to adapt to technical, economic, and social change was seen as an index of *cultural* development. The village hence became the object of an ethnographically informed museology.

At successive fairs *after* the Vienna Weltausstellung, this shift in emphasis became increasingly marked; and from being one small theme within a much larger narrative of social, cultural, and economic progress, rural architecture—and wider rural visual culture—became a key index of national difference and identity. Yet, it is an indicator of the complex nature of the discursive space of Austria-Hungary that this very notion was also contested, not in the name of a competing nationalism, but by a cosmopolitan questioning of the reduction of visual forms to ethnic and national origins. The national codification of visual culture in late-nineteenth-century Central Europe has been well documented; the Vienna Fair constitutes a significant episode in the history of that process.¹⁰¹ However, it also points to an alternative conceptual framework that made ideas of cultural transfer and borrowing central. The evolution of that conception, in particular in Habsburg Central Europe, has hardly been explored; examination of the many discourses produced by the farmhouse suggests ways in which it might be developed.

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¹⁰¹See, for example, Nicola Gordon Bowe, *Art and the National Idea* (London and Dublin, 1993).