



Internationalism, Imperialism, and the City: Hendrik Christian Andersen's World Centre of Communication

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In 1913, on the eve of the First World War, the Norwegian-American sculptor Hendrik Christian Andersen published a deeply influential, if idiosyncratic, book dedicated to the promotion of internationalism, global cooperation, and world peace. Titled *Creation of a World Centre of Communication*, it featured drawings of an ideal world capital that bridged all national, cultural, and religious divides. It was a city that celebrated human progress and global unity. As Wolfgang Sonne has noted (2003), the ideas behind it received warm praise from liberal governments, internationalists (e.g., Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine), nationalists, monarchists, and even fascists. Its admirers included the kings of Italy, Belgium, and Germany. The World Centre also attracted the interest of Mussolini, whom Andersen courted aggressively during the 1930s.

How is it that a city dedicated to internationalism could have been supported, even embraced, by nationalist governments? Why, conversely, would an avowed pacifist be prepared to collaborate with a militarist or autocrat? These are among the questions I seek to answer over the course of this paper. I will offer a close critical analysis of the World Centre – and the controversies surrounding it – in order to explore the links between nationalism, internationalism, and imperialism during the Belle Époque.

Biography

Nader Vossoughian is an assistant professor of architecture at the New York Institute of Technology. His research interests center on the relationship between politics, knowledge and the city. He studied philosophy, cultural studies and German literature at Berkeley, Swarthmore, and the Humboldt University (Berlin) before receiving his M.Phil. and Ph.D. in the History and Theory of Architecture from Columbia University.

His book, *Otto Neurath: The Language of the Global Polis* was published in 2008. He has recently contributed essays to *European Modernism and the Information Society* (edited by W. Boyd Rayward, 2008) ; *Otto Neurath's Economics in Context* (edited by Elisabeth Nemeth, et. al.2008), and *Josef Frank 1885-1967 – Eine Moderne der Unordnung* (edited by Iris Meder, 2008). His articles have appeared in *Bidoun*, *Metropolis*, *Design Issues*, *Volume*, *the Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* and *Transnational Associations*. He has curated among other exhibitions, "Urban Disobedience: The Work of Santiago Cirugeda," and "After Neurath: The Global Polis," the latter at Stroom den Haag in 2008. In 2009, he curated "The Global Polis: Interactive Infrastructures" at the Center for Architecture in New York.