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Γεώργιος Σκαματντζούρας

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Γεώργιος Σκαματντζούρας

PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η παρούσα μελέτη εξετάζει τη συμμετοχή της Ελλάδας στη Διεθνή Έκθεση της Φραγκφούρτης κατά τη δεκαετία του 1950, αναλύοντας τον ρόλο των εκθέσεων ως εργαλείο δημόσιας διπλωματίας στο πλαίσιο της μεταπολεμικής ανασυγκρότησης. Το άρθρο παρακολουθεί την εξέλιξη του ελληνικού περιπτέρου από νοικιασμένο περίπτερο στα δύο πρώτα έτη (1952-1953) σε ιδιόκτητο, από το 1954 και εξής, εξετάζοντας την αρχιτεκτονική στρατηγική που συνδύαζε αρχαία ελληνικά στοιχεία με μοντερνιστικές αρχές. Ιδιαίτερη έμφαση δίνεται στη στρατηγική τοποθέτηση και προώθηση των ελληνικών καπνών, καθώς και τις συστηματικές αποτυχίες άλλων τομέων της ελληνικής οικονομίας. Η μελέτη αποκαλύπτει πώς η συμμετοχή στην έκθεση αποτελούσε σημαντικό στοιχείο της γενικότερης ελληνικής πολιτικής, στοχεύοντας τη δυτικοευρωπαϊκή ενσωμάτωση και τον οικονομικό εκσυγχρονισμό, παρά τους περιορισμούς που προέκυπταν από την εκθεσιακή της στρατηγική.

Keywords: International Exhibitions, Public Diplomacy, Nation Branding, Cultural Cold War, Greek-German Relations

Introduction

The post-war reconstruction of Europe in the 1950s witnessed not only the physical rebuilding of war-torn nations, but also the strategic repositioning of countries within the emerging Cold War framework through public and economic diplomacy. International exhibitions emerged as crucial platforms for this repositioning, serving simultaneously as showcases of national identity, vehicles for commercial promotion, and instruments of soft power projection. This paper contributes to the expanding scholarly literature on international exhibitions, building upon recent historiographical developments that have moved beyond traditional diplomatic history to examine the multifaceted roles of trade fairs in post-war European reconstruction.[1] Moreover, this study adds to the growing body of research on the cultural Cold War, demonstrating how seemingly commercial activities operated within broader geopolitical frameworks and contributed to the Western integration project that characterized the 1950s.[2]

The Frankfurt Trade Fair (Messe Frankfurt) occupied a particularly significant position within this landscape of post-war exhibitions. Having been vastly destroyed during the Second World War, the fair's reconstruction and rapid expansion in the 1950s symbolized both West Germany's economic recovery and its reintegration into the Western European community. By the early 1950s, Frankfurt had emerged as one of Europe's premier international trade venues, attracting participants from across the continent and beyond. For smaller European nations, participation in Frankfurt represented both an opportunity and a challenge: the chance to access German consumers and investors, but also the necessity of competing within an increasingly sophisticated international commercial environment. Thus, Greece's participation in the Frankfurt Exhibition from 1952 onward provides a compelling case study of how a peripheral European nation navigated these opportunities and challenges during the crucial decade of the 1950s.

The paper is structured in three main sections. The first examines the theoretical framework established by Dimitrios and Alexandra Moretis in their treatise "Εκθέσεις" (Exhibitions), analyzing their vision of international exhibitions as instruments of public diplomacy. The section analyzes the architectural evolution of the Greek participation from rented structures to the permanent pavilion, revealing how Greek organizers employed neoclassical elements within modernist frameworks. The final section examines Greek second products exhibited at Frankfurt, with particular focus on tobacco's strategic positioning and the systematic failures that characterized other sectors throughout the decade.

Through this multifaceted examination, the paper demonstrates that Greece's Frankfurt Exhibition participation represented far more than simple commercial promotion. Rather, it constituted a carefully orchestrated campaign of economic diplomacy designed to restore Greece's position within European commercial networks while projecting an image of stability and modernization essential for attracting Western investment and

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[1] See for instance: Molella, A., & Knowles, S. G. (2019). *World's fairs in the Cold War: Science, technology, and the culture of progress*. University of Pittsburgh Press. Hollengreen, L., Pearce, C., Rouse, R., & Schweizer, B. (Eds.). (2014). *Meet me at the Fair: A World's Fair reader*. ETC Press. Rentetzi, M., & Germanese, D. (2023). Science diplomacy on display: Mobile atomic exhibitions in the Cold War: Introduction to special issue. *Annals of Science*, 80(1), 1–9.

[2] See for instance: Bournazos, S. (2024). *Istoria mias mataiosis: To CCF kai o politikismos psychros polemos stin Ellada (1950–1967)* [The history of a frustration: The CCF and the cultural Cold War in Greece, 1950–1967]. Antipodes. Lialiouti, Z. (2019). *Ο «άλλος» Ψυχρός Πόλεμος: Η αμερικανική πολιτιστική διπλωματία στην Ελλάδα 1953–1973 [The "Other" Cold War: American cultural diplomacy in Greece, 1953–1973]*. Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis. Lalaki, D. (2018). *The Cultural Cold War and the New Women of Power: Making a case based on the Fulbright and Ford Foundations in Greece*. *Histoire @ Politique*, (35), May–August.

support during the volatile early years of the Cold War. The systematic analysis of archival sources reveals how exhibition participation functioned as a crucial component of Greece's broader Western integration strategy, complementing diplomatic cooperation through cultural and commercial channels.

Exhibitions as Instruments of Public Diplomacy: The Theoretical Foundation of Dimitrios and Alexandra Moretis

The post-World War II period marked a critical juncture for Greece's international positioning, as the country emerged from devastating occupation and civil war into the complex dynamics of the Cold War era. During this transformative period, public diplomacy became an essential tool for nations seeking to project their identity and values on the international stage. Within this context, the work of Dimitrios and Alexandra Moretis stands as a remarkable testament to Greece's strategic approach to public diplomacy through international exhibitions. Their comprehensive treatise "Εκθέσεις" (Exhibitions), published in 1946, provides not merely a technical manual for exhibition organization, but a sophisticated theoretical framework that positions international exhibitions as powerful instruments of public diplomacy and nation branding.

The Moretis book emerges as both a practical handbook and a philosophical manifesto for Greece's participation in the international exhibition circuit during the crucial post-war reconstruction period. At a time when Greece was seeking to establish its position within the Western alliance - a process that would be significantly supported by substantial American aid through the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan beginning in 1947 (Iordanoglou, 2020; Jones, 1997; Stathakis, 2004; Wittner, 1982) - the strategic importance of cultural representation abroad became paramount. The Moretis framework offered Greek policymakers a comprehensive approach to leveraging international exhibitions as vehicles for projecting Greek national identity, promoting tourism, and conducting what would later be recognized as "soft power" diplomacy (Melissen, 2005: 4-5; Nye, 2004).

Central to the Moretis theoretical framework is the conceptualization of exhibitions as direct channels of cultural communication that transcend traditional diplomatic boundaries. The authors articulate a vision where international exhibitions serve as "the most authentic and vivid means of contact and acquaintance between foreigners and Greece", positioning these cultural platforms as more effective than conventional diplomatic representation in reaching mass audiences (Moretis & Moreti, 1946: 82). This perspective reflects an early understanding of what contemporary scholars would recognize as public diplomacy's capacity to engage directly with foreign publics rather than merely government officials (Cull, 2008). Unlike traditional forms of diplomacy that might be limited to elite circles, exhibitions were conceptualized as spaces capable of engaging "the great masses of foreign peoples" (Moretis & Moreti, 1946: 82). This aspect of exhibition culture aligned perfectly with Greece's need to rebuild its international image following the devastation of war and occupation. The authors recognized that exhibitions could serve multiple diplomatic functions simultaneously: educating international audiences about contemporary Greek reality, countering negative stereotypes, and promoting Greece as a modern, culturally sophisticated nation.

Perhaps most significantly, the Moretis book articulates an early theory of what contemporary scholars would recognize as nation branding, presenting international exhibitions as platforms that combined cultural authenticity with strategic messaging well before such practices were formally conceptualized in academic discourse (Anholt, 2007;

Dinnie, 2022; Fan, 2010; Viktorin, C., et al., 2018: 9-11). The authors demonstrate acute awareness of Greece's need to manage its international image strategically, balancing references to its classical heritage with evidence of contemporary progress and modernization. By exhibiting its classical past in international exhibitions, Greece not only affirmed its cultural heritage but also rendered its ancient tradition a strategic resource, capable of supporting its political and diplomatic objectives on the world stage (Balasis, 2014: 52). The legacy of ancient Greek civilization was thus, actively mobilized as both a symbolic asset and a concrete instrument for shaping Greece's international standing (Chourmouziadis, 2000: 167). Greek exhibitions should "advertise ancient monuments alongside our contemporary national life, our folk art, our seas, mountains and spa towns" while simultaneously demonstrating "that Greece is a modern and civilized state" (Moretis & Moreti, 1946: 82-83). The Moretis framework recognizes that a compelling national image – as articulated in international exhibitions – must integrate a broad spectrum of elements, reflecting the multifaceted nature of nation branding as described by Fan (2006: 7-8). This sophisticated approach to cultural representation reflects the complex challenges facing post-war Greece as it sought to position itself as both heir to ancient civilization and modern European nation (Tsoukalas, 1999; Tziovas, 2008: 292). The authors' emphasis on exhibitions as "thermometers of civilization" reflects contemporary anxieties about Greece's perceived position within the Western World (Moretis & Moreti, 1946: 90δ). By positioning Greek participation in international exhibitions as evidence of civilizational achievement, the Moretis framework responds to broader questions about Greece's relationship to European modernity that had characterized Greek intellectual discourse since independence. (Chrysoloras, 2019: 7-48)

The authors also emphasize the economic dimensions of cultural representation, arguing that exhibitions serve essential functions in promoting Greek tourism and export industries. They recognize tourism as a potentially crucial component of Greece's economic recovery, describing exhibitions as "the most vibrant means to sell this merchandise abroad" (Moretis & Moreti, 1946: 82). The Moretis' economic framing of exhibitions as tools for tourism promotion aligned with the Greek government's post-WWII national reconstruction strategy, which explicitly positioned tourism as a pillar of economic recovery (Alifragkis & Athanassiou, 2018). Furthermore, the connection between Greece's international exhibition participation and the promotion of export industries became even more pronounced in the 1950s, as the Greek government actively sought to leverage these platforms to expand its export markets and integrate into the postwar international economy.

The Moretis book provides a comprehensive organizational framework for Greek participation in international exhibitions that reveals the understanding of both logistical requirements and symbolic considerations. They outline detailed procedures spanning everything from initial invitation receipt through final exhibit repatriation, demonstrating the complexity of international cultural representation. This systematic approach marks the deliberate transition envisioned by the Moretis from the ad hoc and amateur methods of the pre-war Greek participation in international exhibitions to a model of professionalized management and execution.

Particularly significant is the Moretis' emphasis on architectural and design considerations in pavilion construction. They frame exhibition organization as "a technical and primarily architectural problem" requiring "bold and pioneering rather than orthodox architecture" (Moretis & Moreti, 1946: 170). This aesthetic philosophy positions Greek pavilions as cultural statements designed to embody national character

through architectural expression. However, a subtle tension emerges between their architectural purism and their pragmatic recognition of exhibitions as tools for state propaganda. Although the Moretis tend to underplay the overt political dimension of state-sponsored architecture, they simultaneously acknowledge that the ultimate beneficiary is the state, which gains international recognition by showcasing its progress through these same pavilions (Moretis & Moreti, 1946: 157). This paradox reveals an unspoken political dimension: the "pioneering architecture" they champion become both an artistic manifesto and a soft power instrument, allowing Greece to assert progress and modernity while maintaining plausible deniability about overt political messaging. The pavilion's materials and forms thus operate on dual registers – as aesthetic innovations and coded national advertisements.

They also emphasize the theatrical and experiential dimensions of exhibition design. Comparing exhibition organization to theatrical production, they argue that the process involves two distinct phases: program development (comparable to script writing) and technical implementation (comparable to staging and set design). This staged approach mirrors the text's emphasis on resonant meshing, where exhibition environments must create 'harmonious matches' between physical design elements and visitors' embodied cognition to achieve meaningful perceptual completion (Moretis & Moreti, 1946: 172-173). Just as theatrical productions rely on narrative coherence to guide audience immersion, effective cultural representation both in international exhibition pavilions and museums requires designers and curators to engineer sensory cues that amplify visitors' energy and focus. This reflects Moretis' understanding that exhibitions must balance creative vision with technical execution, much like a director transforms a playwright's text into embodied performance (Roppola, 2012: 168-173).

The book also reflects awareness of international competition in cultural representation. The authors recognize that effective participation in international exhibitions requires understanding of comparative national strategies and audience expectations. This competitive framing of public diplomacy demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the international cultural field as a site of symbolic struggle between nations (Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017: 485-488).

Far from being merely a technical manual, the Moretis' book articulates a comprehensive vision of international exhibitions as instruments of public diplomacy and nation branding. The authors' sophisticated understanding of exhibitions' multiple functions – diplomatic, economic, educational, and symbolic – demonstrates remarkable prescience regarding the role of cultural representation in international relations. The theoretical and technical framework developed by Dimitrios and Alexandra Moretis provided Greek policymakers with essential tools for navigating the complex landscape of cultural Cold War. Taking into account that the Moretis were the main architects of the Greek pavilions until their resignation in 1969, their emphasis on authenticity, accessibility, and strategic messaging established principles that would guide Greek cultural representation abroad for decades. As Greece prepared to participate in major international exhibitions, the Moretis framework offered both practical guidance and philosophical justification for viewing public diplomacy as essential to national interest.

The enduring significance of the Moretis contribution lies not merely in its practical applications but in its recognition of culture and national identity as legitimate and powerful instruments of international relations. Their work remains valuable for understanding of smaller nations' public diplomacy efforts and how they can leverage

cultural resources to reach their economic goals and project their values on the global stage.

The Architectural Evolution of the Greek Pavilion at Frankfurt

The Greek participation in the Frankfurt Exhibition during the early 1950s was characterized by a pragmatic and somewhat improvised approach to the design and construction of its pavilion. This approach aligned with the architectural idiom developed by the Moretis architects, who had created a style based on the introduction of elements of the classical Greek orders into simple, modern buildings and ephemeral constructions (Kizis, 2014: 109). In both 1952 and 1953, the Greek state opted to rent rather than build a permanent structure, a decision that reflected both financial constraints and the uncertainty of Greece's long-term commitment to the fair. The archival material reveals that the process of setting up the Greek pavilion was fraught with logistical challenges and last-minute arrangements, which occasionally impacted the quality and coherence of the exhibition.

The "rented" nature of the pavilion was not merely a matter of leasing a pre-existing space; rather, it involved the assembly of a temporary structure using materials and components procured. This approach led to a somewhat eclectic architectural result, as the pavilion had to be adapted to the available materials and the constraints of the pre-existing structure. The strange way in which the pavilion was constructed—as noted in the archival reports—was a source of both pride and frustration for the organizers. On the one hand, it demonstrated the ingenuity and adaptability of the Greek team; on the other, it highlighted the limitations imposed by limited resources and the absence of a dedicated, purpose-built space.

The 1952 pavilion displayed simplified classical proportions - clean geometric lines that evoked ancient Greek temples without elaborate ornamental details (Newspaper Kathimerini, 13/3/1952). This restrained approach reflected both practical constraints and an aesthetic philosophy combining classical heritage with contemporary European design sensibilities. The photographic evidence (Fig. 1) reveals a structure that, despite its improvised assembly, already demonstrated Greece's emerging architectural strategy.

Fig. 1: The Greek pavilion at the 1952 Frankfurt Trade Fair. Dimitris and Alexandra Moretis Personal Archive.

Despite significant resource constraints in 1952, both Antonios Chaviaras in his technical supervision role and Dimitris Moretis demonstrated the Greek state's unwavering commitment to creating a pavilion that would distinguish itself from the competition through superior design quality. The construction memorandum explicitly stating that materials used for the pavilion would be taken back by the developer who was also responsible for the deconstruction of the pavilion (Interessengemeinschaft fuer Messe und Ausstellungsbau GMBH, 1952; Moretis & Moreti, 1953) - a cost-saving measure that reflected the financial limitations of the Greek participation. Nevertheless, the interior arrangement and decoration were handled by the Greek team with particular attention paid to the artistic and architectural aspects, which were praised by both Greek and German observers, as the Greek pavilion stood out for its "artistic character", a quality that was often lacking in other commercial exhibition buildings (Tsimikalis, 1952).

Despite these efforts, the improvised nature of the pavilion's construction sometimes led to practical difficulties. For example, the late arrival of exhibits - a recurring problem in the early years -, which were received up until the eve of the exhibition's opening, meant that the interior decoration and arrangement had to be completed at the last minute, occasionally resulting in a less polished presentation (Moretis, 1952a, 3). Nevertheless, the Greek pavilion was generally well received, with the number of visitors described as "satisfactory" and the overall impression considered positive (Moretis, 1952a, 9).

The 1953 pavilion followed a similar pattern, with the Greek state again renting a foreign pavilion, which they modified through exterior renovations using rented materials to adapt it for Greek national representation (Tsimikalis, 1953). The report highlights the continued challenges of late deliveries and the need for rapid assembly. However, the 1953 exhibition also saw some improvements, particularly in the internal arrangement and the quality of the exhibits. The Greek team, led by the architect Mr. Moretis, managed to create a harmonious and visually appealing display, which was noted as being "superior

to the previous official participation of Greece in the spring exhibition of 1952" (Tsimikalis, 1953).

Visual documentation from 1953 shows architectural refinements that better articulated the fusion of ancient and modern elements (Fig. 2). The pavilion's façade maintained classical proportional relationships while incorporating modernist principles of simplified surfaces and functional clarity. This architectural synthesis effectively communicated Greece's cultural identity—rooted in antiquity yet embracing post-war European reconstruction ideals.

Fig. 2: The Greek pavilion at the 1953 Frankfurt Trade Fair. Dimitris and Alexandra Moretis Personal Archive

The financial pragmatism of the rented pavilions was evident in the construction arrangements, where cost-saving measures were built into the very framework of the project. The construction memorandum explicitly stipulated that all materials used for the pavilion's construction would be reclaimed by the developer, who was also contractually responsible for the complete deconstruction of the pavilion at the exhibition's conclusion. This arrangement allowed Greece to achieve its ambitious aesthetic goals while maintaining fiscal responsibility, as the temporary nature of the materials did not diminish the pavilion's capacity to showcase Greek national identity through careful attention to architectural details, the strategic use of traditional motifs, and the integration of modern design elements. The experience of these early years also provided valuable lessons for the Greek organizers, who would later advocate for the construction of a permanent pavilion to ensure greater consistency and professionalism in future exhibitions.

By 1954, the Greek state had recognized the limitations of the rented pavilion model and decided to invest in a permanent structure on the Frankfurt exhibition grounds. The decision to build a permanent pavilion reflected both the growing importance of the Frankfurt Exhibition for Greek exports and the desire to present a more coherent and professional image to international visitors. Its construction was a significant milestone for the Greek participation in the Frankfurt Exhibition. The new building was designed to reflect a simplified neoclassical style, incorporating elements of ancient Greek architecture while also embracing modernist design principles. Despite time constrains, the result was a pavilion that was both visually distinctive and functionally effective, providing ample space for the display of Greek products and creating a welcoming environment for visitors (Koumbos, 1954).

The permanent pavilion's architectural character, clearly visible in contemporary photographs, exemplifies this synthesis (Fig. 3). The building featured reduced classical elements—simplified pilasters or entablatures that referenced ancient Greek templates without literal mimicry. Clean lines, unadorned surfaces, and geometric clarity reflected modernist influence, while proportional systems and symmetrical composition maintained distinctly Hellenic characteristics. This architectural vocabulary projected Greece as both culturally rooted and progressively modern. The deliberate evocation of ancient Greek temple architecture served as a powerful assertion of cultural authority, allowing Greece to position itself as the authentic source of Western civilization's foundational architectural language. In the competitive arena of international exhibitions, where nations sought recognizable symbols to distinguish themselves, the temple form provided Greece with an unassailable claim (Tsimikalis, 1956). The temple-like appearance was not merely aesthetic choice but a calculated diplomatic strategy. Ancient Greek temples had historically functioned as symbols of both religious and political power, serving civic and ceremonial functions that extended far beyond worship (Pierattini, 2022: 1-2). By adopting this architectural vocabulary, the Greek pavilion communicated permanence, stability, and cultural continuity—essential messages for a nation seeking to establish its modern European credentials while emphasizing its unique historical patrimony. The Greek pavilion of 1954 was widely praised for its architectural quality. The use of traditional motifs and modern design elements was seen as a successful synthesis of Greece's cultural heritage and its aspirations for economic modernization (Tsimikalis, 1954). The pavilion also served as a focal point for Greek-German commercial relations, hosting meetings, negotiations, and promotional events throughout the exhibition period, including official visits from prominent German figures such as Minister of Economy Ludwig Erhard, television coverage and interviews with Greek officials that became standard practice after 1958, and strategic promotional dinners showcasing exclusively Greek products as part of broader efforts to cultivate commercial relationships with German importers and industrial buyers (Tsimikalis, 1958).

Fig. 3: The permanent Greek pavilion in Frankfurt, combining simplified classical motifs with modernist architectural principles. Dimitris and Alexandra Moretis Personal Archive.

Despite the success of the permanent pavilion, the archival material reveals that by 1957, there was a growing sense that the interior of the Greek pavilion needed to be renewed. The main issue was that the internal arrangement and decoration had remained largely unchanged since the pavilion's construction in 1954, leading to a certain stagnation in the presentation of Greek products (Tsimikalis, 1957). The trade official of the Greek Embassy in Bonn noted that the static nature of the interior design was becoming a liability, as it failed to reflect the evolving priorities and capabilities of the Greek export sector. There was also a sense that the pavilion's interior no longer met the expectations of international visitors, who were increasingly accustomed to dynamic and innovative exhibition designs. The renewal of the interior was motivated by both practical and symbolic considerations. On a practical level, the organizers wanted to create a more flexible and adaptable space. On a symbolic level, the renewal was seen as an opportunity to reaffirm Greece's commitment to innovation and modernization, and to project a more confident and forward-looking image to the international community.

In summary, the evolution of the Greek pavilion at the Frankfurt Exhibition in the 1950s reflects both the challenges and the opportunities of Greece's post-war economic and public diplomacy. The transition from rented to permanent structures, and the subsequent need for interior renewal, underscore the importance of adaptability, innovation, and professionalism in the context of international trade fairs.

Marketing the Nation: Greek Products and the Quest for Market Penetration

The positioning and presentation of Greek tobacco at the Frankfurt Exhibition represented far more than mere commercial promotion—it constituted a carefully orchestrated diplomatic and economic strategy designed to rebuild Greece's prewar dominance in the German tobacco market (Carmona-Zabala, 2020). This exhibition strategy was part of a broader multi-pronged approach by the Greek government to address the urgent post-war

problem of disposing surplus tobacco production, which included bilateral trade negotiations, strategic use of Greek shipping as a bargaining chip (Tsakas, 2022: 40-41), and targeted participation in international trade fairs. The strategic positioning of tobacco displays at Frankfurt, and later in the 50s at the ANUGA exhibition in Koln, complemented the Greek government's earlier diplomatic efforts, including the Erhard-Papandreou agreement in October 1950 (Pelt, 2002: 118-124), where the absorption of Greek tobacco by the German market was identified as a central issue for Greece's ruined post-war economy Dimitris and Alexandra Moretis (1952; 1954), who designed the internal arrangement of the Greek pavilion, strategically positioned the tobacco displays immediately after the tourism section at the entrance and exit hall of the building. This placement ensured that visitors encountered one of Greece's most competitive export products before viewing any other exhibits—a deliberate choice that reflected tobacco's critical importance to the bilateral economic relationship. Archival blueprints from the Greek pavilion confirm that this strategic positioning remained consistent until at least 1957 (Tsimikalis, 1957), demonstrating the sustained priority given to tobacco promotion. The presentation itself went beyond simple product display, incorporating maps, cigarette samples, and detailed statistical presentations to create what contemporary reports described as a "lively" and comprehensive exhibition of Greek tobacco capabilities (Tsimikalis, 1953). This approach reflected both Greece's urgent need to regain the German market by targeting German consumers as directly as possible, and its confidence that Greek tobacco could serve as one of its main exhibits at the fair.

Greece's intensive focus on tobacco at Frankfurt must be understood within the broader context of bilateral economic recovery efforts. Tobacco had been Germany's primary Greek import before the war, representing approximately 50% of total Greek exports to Germany (Pelt, 2003: 101). The destruction of these commercial ties after the war, with the turn of German market to Virginia variety over the Oriental of Greece (Stergiopoulos, 2023: 378-379) created an urgent need to reestablish its market position in what had been its most important export destination (Elliot, 2012).

The success of this exhibition strategy is documented in contemporary archival sources. In 1953, the front office of the Frankfurt Exhibition sent a letter to the representative of the Autonomous Organization of Greek Tobacco, specifically commending the success of the Greek tobacco display at the fair. The letter praised "the great detailed presentation of statistics" and the overall quality of the tobacco exhibition, indicating that Greek efforts to combine product samples with comprehensive market data had achieved their intended impact (Messe und Ausstellungs-Gesellschaft mbH, 1953). This success was further validated by German trade press coverage. The specialized newspaper Tabak-Zeitung published an article highlighting the achievements of the Autonomous Organization of Greek Tobacco's exhibition within the Greek pavilion, emphasizing both the importance of tobacco to the Greek economy and the quality of the Frankfurt presentation. Such coverage in industry-specific publications was particularly valuable, as it reached precisely the German tobacco importers and industrial users whom Greece sought to re-engage (Newspaper Tabak-Zeitung, 1953).

Perhaps most significantly, the archival record reveals that the Greek ambassador used the pavilion as a platform for high-level diplomatic advocacy. Reports from the 1953 exhibition document a speech by the Greek ambassador at the pavilion in which he "stressed the necessity for further improvement of exports of Greek tobacco to Germany and the bilateral economic relations" (Newspaper Tabak-Zeitung, 1953). This direct linkage between tobacco trade and broader diplomatic relations underscores how

exhibition participation served multiple strategic objectives simultaneously—commercial, diplomatic, and symbolic.

Beyond tobacco, the rest of the agricultural products suffered from inconsistent representation at the Frankfurt Exhibition, with the notable exception of wines. From 1952 onward, Greek wines emerged as the most successful category of exhibits at Frankfurt (Tsimikalis, 1953). This success reflected both the inherent quality of Greek wine production and the growing German appreciation for Greek wines during the post-war period. The wine sector's consistent performance provided a model for how other Greek products might have been successfully marketed, combining traditional quality with effective presentation (Tsimikalis, 1959). Many other agricultural products remained absent from the exhibition displays, despite possessing significant commercial potential for the German market. This pattern of selective exclusion indicated either insufficient coordination mechanisms between Greek exhibition organizers and domestic producers, or a systematic failure to comprehend the specific demands and preferences of German importers (Tsimikalis, 1952a; 1953; Moretis, 1956).

A recurring theme throughout the decade was the disconnect between the pavilion's architectural excellence and the poor quality or presentation of its contents, raising fundamental questions about the effectiveness of Greece's exhibition strategy. Government reports repeatedly noted the paradox of substantial public investment in beautiful, well-organized pavilions that housed inadequate or poorly presented products. This mismatch between architectural investment and commercial content suggested deeper structural problems in Greece's approach to international trade promotion (Pappas, 1952; Moretis, 1956). The 1954 report noted that while the new permanent pavilion was larger and more aesthetically pleasing than the rented structures, it appeared empty due to insufficient exhibits (Tsimikalis, 1954). This visual inadequacy undermined the pavilion's architectural impact and created an impression of Greek commercial weakness. In addition, it highlighted significant shortcomings in the packaging and presentation of several products. In particular, poorly packaged goods and inadequately labeled samples further detracted from the overall impression on visitors (Tsimikalis, 1954; Koumpos, 1954). These persistent issues—such as the use of substandard containers for foodstuffs and the lack of clear pricing or product information—demonstrated insufficient attention to international commercial standards and revealed a failure to recognize that packaging and display were essential components of export marketing, especially in a competitive environment like the Frankfurt Exhibition.

The most striking characteristic of Greek participation throughout the 1950s was the complete absence of industrial products from the pavilion display. This conspicuous gap reflected both Greece's limited industrial capacity and the organizers' lack of confidence in competing with Germany's advanced manufacturing sector. The contrast with Greece's successful exhibition of industrial products at other venues, such as the Smyrna fair, highlighted the specific challenges of penetrating the sophisticated German market. In 1952, Dimitris Moretis was particularly critical, informing the Ministry of Trade via telegram that the products exhibited in Frankfurt were wholly inadequate for display at subsequent exhibitions. He recommended either sourcing new products from Greek producers or canceling participation altogether. (Moretis, 1952b). This candid evaluation highlighted the fundamental disconnect between Greece's exhibition ambitions and its industrial capacity during the early post-war reconstruction period. This was further corroborated in 1959, when the ambassador, in his report, recommended refraining from

exhibiting industrial products, as there was no basis for expecting an increase in exports in this sector to Germany (Tsimikalis, 1959).

Greece's mineral wealth represented another area of persistent underperformance at Frankfurt. Despite possessing significant deposits of ores, the Greek pavilion consistently failed to capitalize on these resources. The 1953 exhibition exemplified these shortcomings, with mineral products including barite, bauxite, and chromic potash poorly positioned due to logistical delays that caused late arrivals and inadequate presentation (Tsimikalis, 1953). The irony was particularly acute given that the 1953 devaluation of the drachma created highly favorable economic conditions for the increase of mineral production and mineral exports (Eliades, 1954: 64; Gerakis, A., & Wald, H., 1964: 133), yet Greece failed to capitalize on these opportunities in its exhibition presentations to potential German buyers during this critical period of economic transformation (Tsakas, 2022: 126-128). This systematic failure to adequately showcase mineral products persisted throughout most of the 1950s and suggested not merely logistical incompetence but a deeper failure to understand the commercial possibilities of German market.

The performance of Greece's traditional industries at Frankfurt revealed a mixed pattern of achievement and missed opportunity. Pottery and ceramics emerged as consistent success stories for many years, generating numerous orders and demonstrating genuine commercial appeal in the German market (Keramourgia Ikaros, 1953). However, after some years Greek handicrafts stopped to have the variation of the first period, and the limited variation in handicrafts offerings throughout the period reflected a broader failure to adapt products to changing market demands. While traditional Greek crafts had inherent appeal, the lack of innovation or adaptation to contemporary German tastes limited their commercial potential.

Other traditional sectors faced significant challenges. On the one hand, there was a complete absence of leather goods throughout much of the decade, while on the other hand, textiles failed to gain ground in the German market through the International Exhibition despite the trade counselor of the Greek embassy attempting to arrange trade deals (The failure to showcase textile industry progress was equally problematic, as Greek textile manufacturers had made substantial post-war advances (Geronimakis, 1965: 275) that went unrepresented at Frankfurt, primarily because their prices were considered too high by German companies. The irony that 1957 marked a peak year for visitor interest and commercial success for traditional Greek products at Frankfurt made the textile industry's inability to capitalize on favorable market conditions all the more notable (Tsimikalis, 1957). This dual failure highlighted the broader structural challenges facing Greece's traditional export industries in penetrating the West German market during the crucial post-war reconstruction period.

Greek tourism promotion at Frankfurt represented perhaps the most glaring failure of the entire exhibition strategy. The inadequacy was starkly illustrated by an incident where a Greek embassy employee requested a tourist map, only to be told that merely thirty copies were available (Tsimikalis, 1953). This shortage of basic promotional materials reflected a broader inability to capitalize on the post-war development of Greek tourism (Dritsas, 1998: 193-197) and the growing interest in Mediterranean travel destinations during the 1950s (Alifragkis & Athanassiou, 2018: 596-597). The failure to promote Greek tourism effectively was particularly short-sighted given Germany's emerging prosperity. The lack of coordinated tourism marketing at the Frankfurt exhibition represented a missed opportunity that could have long-term implications for Greece's tourism development in the German market.

Conclusion

The 1959 report from the Greek trade counselor provides a revealing epilogue to Greece's decade-long participation in the Frankfurt Exhibition, highlighting both the evolution of Greek exhibition strategy and the persistent challenges that characterized this period. For the first time in the exhibition's history, Greek officials explicitly acknowledged the need to increase "the individual element of the exhibitors over the state as exhibitor" to reduce the impression of state propaganda and enhance commercial credibility. This recognition represented a fundamental shift from the state-centered approach that had dominated Greek participation throughout the 1950s, suggesting a mature understanding that successful trade promotion required authentic commercial relationships rather than government-orchestrated displays (Tsimikalis, 1959).

Equally significant was the systematic acknowledgment of Greece's consistent inability to achieve its sales objectives, with the pavilion failing to reach its commercial goals year after year throughout the decade (Tsimikalis, 1958). This persistent underperformance, despite substantial public investment in architectural design and strategic positioning, exposed the fundamental disconnect between Greece's exhibition ambitions and its commercial capacity during the crucial post-war reconstruction period.

The Greek experience at Frankfurt reveals the complex intersection of public diplomacy, economic strategy, and national identity projection in the context of Cold War Europe. The evolution from improvised rented structures to the permanent pavilion reflected not merely growing financial commitment, but Greece's recognition of international exhibitions as essential platforms for Western integration. The architectural synthesis achieved by Dimitris and Alexandra Moretis successfully projected Greece as both culturally rooted and progressively modern, demonstrating sophisticated understanding of nation branding before such concepts were formally theorized.

However, the consistent gap between architectural achievement and commercial performance highlighted deeper structural challenges facing Greece's post-war economy. The systematic absence of industrial products, inadequate mineral resource promotion, and inconsistent agricultural representation revealed a nation struggling to translate cultural authority into economic competitiveness. Greek producers either failed to send representatives, didn't provide their best quality products, or showed insufficient interest in exhibition participation, emphasizing the fundamental disconnect between state exhibition policy and private sector engagement (Tsimikalis, 1956). The tobacco sector's strategic positioning and diplomatic success provided a notable exception, demonstrating how effective coordination between cultural presentation and commercial strategy could rebuild prewar market dominance. Yet this success remained largely isolated, failing to create broader momentum for Greek export diversification.

Greece's Frankfurt participation ultimately illustrates the limitations of public diplomacy as a substitute for comprehensive economic modernization. While the pavilions successfully projected Greek identity and attracted international attention, they could not overcome fundamental weaknesses in industrial capacity, product standards and quality, and commercial organization. The persistent packaging problems, pricing disadvantages, and missed tourism promotion opportunities revealed institutional failures that architectural excellence could not mask.

The transition from state propaganda to private commercial initiative, belatedly recognized in 1959, suggests that Greece's exhibition strategy required fundamental reorientation from diplomatic symbolism toward genuine market engagement. The

Frankfurt experience thus provides important insights into how smaller nations navigate the tension between cultural representation and commercial effectiveness in trade fairs, demonstrating both the potential and the limitations of exhibition diplomacy as an instrument of economic development and European integration.

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