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## Chapter 5

### Technological Fun

#### The Politics and Geographies of Amusement Parks

Jaume Sastre-Juan and Jaume Valentines-Álvarez<sup>1</sup>

On 23 January 1926 the readers of the conservative newspaper *La Vanguardia* could read an imagined description of the experiences of a peasant travelling to Barcelona. In an article entitled ‘Mechanical Wonders’, journalist José Escofet contrasted the quiet and slow-paced rural life to the overwhelming mechanical dynamism of ‘modern’ cities:

The city starts dancing a marvelous dance around the foreigner. Twisted forms and fugitive colours everywhere, like in an urban landscape painted by a cubist painter. Tramways, cars, trucks, buses, they all rapidly run in opposite directions. [ ... ] The peasant feels dizzy: he has seen the mechanical birds loudly flying near the roof terraces; he has witnessed the crash between a car and a tramway; he has gone for a sidecar ride; *he has visited an American amusement park.*<sup>2</sup>

The literary *topos* of the peasant visiting the city, scared and seduced at the same time, but in any case full of wonder, was hardly new, of course. This is but one of the countless examples in which it was used to build discourses on how ‘modern’ technology was changing the city.<sup>3</sup> What should be highlighted in José Escofet’s description is the fact that amusement parks are included, alongside transport networks, as elements of the perceived experience of urban technification and transformation of public spaces. Addressed to different publics, the many

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Arwen Mohun, Carroll Pursell and the editors and contributors of this volume for their insightful and helpful comments of draft versions of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> José Escofet, ‘Las maravillas mecánicas’, *La Vanguardia*, 23 January 1926, 7. Emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> For a historiographical review of these discourses, see: Mikael Hård and Markus Stippak, ‘Discourses on the Modern City and Urban Technology, 1850–2000: A Review of Recent Literature’, in Mikael Hård and Thomas J. Misa (eds), *The Urban Machine: Recent Literature on European Cities in the 20th Century*, ‘Tensions of Europe’, electronic publication ([www.tc.umn.edu/~misa/toe20/urban-machine](http://www.tc.umn.edu/~misa/toe20/urban-machine)), 35–56.

amusement parks that flourished in Barcelona during the first decades of the twentieth century were part and parcel of its technological cityscape.<sup>4</sup>

The most relevant feature of these amusement parks – the American origin of which is stressed by Escofet – were the roller coasters, water chutes, bumper cars or witching waves that made Coney Island famous.<sup>5</sup> Amusement parks like Steeplechase, Dreamland or Luna Park became the model for an increasingly standardized cultural form which was exported and locally appropriated all over the globe, especially during the first three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> Connected to the city centres by the new urban transport systems, these ‘fun factories’ – in Carroll Pursell’s terms – offered new technology-intensive forms of mass leisure and new ways of obtaining pleasures through the commodification of risk, as historian Arwen Mohun pointed out.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, we argue that the emergence of this new kind of technological fun in Barcelona went hand in hand, in politically significant ways, with the dramatic urban transformations that the city experienced in the period 1888–1929. The chapter has two interrelated goals: on the one hand, to explore the politics of this standardized and mechanized fun; on the other hand, to explore the spatial patterns of the spread of amusement parks in Barcelona and how they reshaped the broader social geographies of fun.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The publication of some popular books on amusement parks in Barcelona has unveiled a forgotten part of the city’s past. Among them, the book by Ròmul Brotons has proven an invaluable starting point for our research, even though the historiographical approach differs very significantly from ours. Ròmul Brotons, *Parcs d’atraccions de Barcelona: de 1853 fins a l’actualitat* (Barcelona: Albertí, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> On Coney Island and American amusement parks, see: John Kasson, *Amusing the Millions: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978); Judith Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry: A History of Technology and Thrills* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> On the appropriation of amusement parks in Great Britain, see: Josephine Kane, *The Architecture of Pleasure: British Amusement Parks, 1900–1939* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Amusement parks are only recently beginning to receive attention from the point of view of the history of technology. The scholars that are exploring their relevance beyond the case-study of Coney Island have focused on key issues such as the commodification of risk, the gendered nature of the rides, the dynamics of technology transfer, the standardization and exportation of American amusement parks, or the invention and mass-production of the rides. Arwen Mohun, ‘Designed for thrills and safety: Amusement parks and the commodification of risk, 1880–1929’, *Journal of Design History*, 14 (4) (2001): 291–306; Arwen Mohun, ‘Amusement parks for the world: The export of American technology and know-how, 1900–1939’, *ICON*, 19 (2013): 100–12; Carroll Pursell, ‘Fun factories: Inventing American amusement parks’, *ICON*, 19 (2013): 75–99. Stefan Poser and Carroll Pursell are currently exploring the wider field of the intersections between technology and play. Stefan Poser, ‘Playing with technology’, *ICOHTEC Newsletter*, 49 (2009): 2–10.

<sup>8</sup> For a first approach to leisure in Barcelona around 1900, see: Teresa-M. Sala (ed.), *Pensar i interpretar l’oci*:

But isn't fun *just* fun? Can we trust the 'Just for Fun' slogan that greeted many amusement parks' visitors from America to Australia? Does technological fun have politics? If so, in what sense? Mechanical devices have generally been considered either as producers of purely kinesthetic fun, or as liberating ways of subverting both gravity and social norms.<sup>9</sup> This chapter will try to show how this new technologically-mediated fun was neither politically neutral nor subversive by nature. On the contrary, we will argue that social control was also part of the story.

A useful theoretical framework for analysing the intersections between pleasure, technology and politics in amusement parks is the work of Tony Bennett, who has been a strong advocate for studies of popular culture from a Gramscian perspective since the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> In particular, in dealing with the politics of technological fun in Barcelona, we will explore what he calls 'regimes of pleasure'.<sup>11</sup> According to Bennett, the regimes of pleasure embedded in popular culture are 'not merely the forms of pleasure on offer but the system of signs and associated ideologies under which they are constructed and offered as pleasures'.<sup>12</sup>

In line with this perspective, by 'technological fun' we mean not only the pleasure obtained through mechanized thrill rides in amusement parks, but also its cultural articulation within specific discourses on technology and modernity. More specifically, we will explore amusement parks in Barcelona in parallel to hygienist thought, scientific management, regional planning and technocratic ideologies. In this sense, we argue that the changes in

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*passatemps, entreteniments, aficions i addiccions a la Barcelona del 1900* (Barcelona: Publicacions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> John Kasson's book, for example, is a typical example of this approach, which considers that thrill rides 'plunged visitors into a powerful kinesthetic experience that [ ... ] overturned conventional restraints, washed away everyday concerns, buoyed and buffeted participants as they submitted to its sway' and 'institutionalised the carnival spirit for a culture that lacked a carnival tradition' (cited in Pursell, 'Fun Factories', p. 76).

<sup>10</sup> Tony Bennett, 'Introduction: Popular Culture and 'the Turn to Gramsci'', in Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott (eds), *Popular Culture and Social Relations* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986), pp. xi–xix. For a defence of the usefulness of Gramsci's thought for the history of science, see: Agustí Nieto-Galan, 'Antonio Gramsci revisited: Historians of science, intellectuals, and the struggle for hegemony', *History of Science*, 49 (4) (2011): 453–78.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, Bennett uses the term in his analysis of the introduction of mechanical rides in Blackpool. Tony Bennett, 'Hegemony, Ideology, Pleasure: Blackpool', in Bennett, Mercer and Woollacott, *Popular Culture and Social Relations* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986), 135–54.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

regimes of pleasure were related to the contemporary emergence of what Dominique Pestre calls new ‘regimes of knowledge’.<sup>13</sup>

And, moving to the geographies of technological fun, what about the spaces in which it took place? Were they neutral containers or historical agents? How did the city shape the amusement parks and how did they shape the city? The majority of amusement parks in Barcelona were placed at the outskirts of the city. The design of their rides required large open spaces, which were not very common in Mediterranean city centres. But there were also symbolic and economic reasons for their peripheral location having to do with hygienist urbanization projects, tourism and land speculation.

In order to explore the urban geographies of technological fun, we will adopt a spatial narrative and focus on three key spaces of the city, which constituted what we call a ‘technological fun belt’: the Parc de la Ciutadella in the eastern part of the old city centre, the Collserola mountain in the northern part of the new expanded city, and finally the Montjuïc hill in the western part (see Figure 5.1). As we will see, this ‘technological fun belt’ was socially and politically entangled with the major urban transformations that Barcelona experienced during this period. In fact, we suggest that it should be read in parallel to the formation of the ‘red-and-black belt’, named after the colours of the main anarchist trade-union’s flag. This is what urban historian José Luis Oyón called the new poor and segregated peripheries of Barcelona, where anarchist ideas were very prominent among the immigrants from other regions of Spain who mainly lived there.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Dominique Pestre defines ‘regimes of knowledge’ as specific sets of institutions, instruments, spaces, theories, practices, values and so on, that coalesce at a specific time and the articulation of which defines the ways in which knowledge is socially produced. According to him, the regime of knowledge that crystallized in the period 1870–1930 involved the co-construction of a new industrial technoscience and a new technoscientific nation-state. Dominique Pestre, ‘Regimes of knowledge production in society: Towards a more political and social reading’, *Minerva*, 41 (3) (2003): 245–61; Dominique Pestre, *Science, argent et politique. Un essai d’interprétation* (Paris: Inra, 2003). On the rise of the engineering profession and its role in the emergence of a new regime of knowledge during the first decades of the twentieth century in Catalonia, see: Jaume Valentines-Álvarez, *Tecnocràcia i catalanisme tècnic a Catalunya als anys 1930* (PhD thesis, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> José Luis Oyón, ‘The split of a working class city: Urban space, immigration and anarchism in inter-war Barcelona’, *Urban History*, 36 (1) (2009): 86–112.

Figure 5.1      Touristic map of Barcelona, 1907. The ellipses represent the spaces of the ‘technological fun belt’, with numbers indicating amusement parks or sites in which mechanical rides were installed: 0. Plaça de Catalunya; 1. 1888 Universal Exhibition; 2. Saturno Park; 3. American Park; 4. Rabassada; 5. Tibidabo Park; 6. Lake Valley; 7. Turó Park; 8. Amusement Park at the 1929 International Exhibition; 9. Maricel Park. The shaded circles indicate the neighbourhoods forming the ‘red-and-black belt’. The rectangle marks the old city centre and the two lines signal the Haussmannian Via Laietana (connecting the sea with the Eixample neighbourhood) and the Passeig de Gràcia (reaching towards the mountain).

We will deal with the following amusement parks that flourished in the spaces of the ‘technological fun belt’: Tibidabo Park (1901), American Park (1907), Lake Valley (1908), Saturno Park (1911), Rabassada (1911), Turó Park (1912) and Maricel Park (1930). Three main aspects will be considered: first, the publics and their experience of technological fun; second, the mechanical rides themselves – both as technical artefacts and signs; and third, the promoters and their ideologies. While all aspects will be present in the three sections, each one will emphasize one of them. The first section will highlight the different publics that enjoyed the amusement park in the Parc de la Ciutadella. The second section will emphasize the rides and their role in the urbanization of the Collserola mountain. And the third section on the Montjuïc hill will focus on the promoters and their ideology. The conclusions will bring together all these threads of the politics and geographies of technological fun in Barcelona.

### **Parc de la Ciutadella: Mechanical Rides, Civilizing Spaces and Interclass Publics**

Mechanical rides were brought to Barcelona – as in many other cities – by the big nineteenth-century celebrations of industrial capitalism: world fairs.<sup>15</sup> The first mechanical roller coaster

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<sup>15</sup> On the continuities between world fairs, amusement parks and other fairgrounds, see: Deborah Philips, *Fairground Attractions: A Genealogy of the Pleasure Ground* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012).

to be installed in the city was the one in the amusement zone of the 1888 Universal Exhibition. However, when the exhibition closed, it was moved from the Parc de la Ciutadella to Plaça de Catalunya, by then a free-access open space where popular fair entertainments proliferated: cafés, circuses, panoramas, puppet shows, anatomical museums, animal shows, cinemas, freak shows and so on.<sup>16</sup> Many of these entertainments ended up some years later in the Paral·lel Avenue, which became the new centre of popular entertainment. The new technological fun would have to wait for its return to the Parc de la Ciutadella until much later, when the Saturno Park opened its doors in 1911.

Right after the 1888 Exhibition, the plans for the Parc de la Ciutadella included quieter kinds of entertainment. The creation of the Parc de la Ciutadella in the late nineteenth century needs to be placed within the rational recreation movement. In order to morally uplift the population and foster social control, this movement opposed the wide spaces of public parks to the opacity of the narrow urban streets of the old city centre and the ‘underworld’. It opposed the rational entertainment and disciplined behaviour of what Tony Bennett calls ‘exhibitionary complex’ institutions, such as museums and world fairs, to a more popular fun that could be found in the pubs, cabarets, music-halls and boxing arenas located in popular neighbourhoods.<sup>17</sup>

As Oliver Hochadel and Laura Valls analyze in Chapter 2 of this book, after the 1888 Exhibition the Parc de la Ciutadella became a site for science popularization, with the creation of the Museu Martorell, the zoological garden, the Umbracle, the Hivernacle, the mammoth sculpture and so on. The park’s popularization programme was managed by the Junta de Ciències Naturals, which from 1907 on actively deployed a nationalist, Catholic and

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<sup>16</sup> Enric H. March, ‘Ex-plaça de Catalunya’, *Bereshit: reconstrucció de Barcelona i altres móns*, <http://enarchenhologos.blogspot.com.es/2014/01/ex-placa-de-catalunya.html> (last accessed 18 October 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1995).

conservative agenda that conceived entertainment around natural sciences as a tool for moral uplift and religious apologetics, and as a way to enhance national identity.<sup>18</sup>

However, not all were mammoths and museums: other forms of leisure coexisted in the Parc de la Ciutadella. The Saturno Park, a big amusement park named after the famous Luna Park in Coney Island, was located in the heart of the Parc de la Ciutadella from 1911 until 1926. The businessman Ramon Barga  s bought the main mechanical rides from the 1909 Valencia Regional Exposition and secured from the City Council the right to fence a big portion of the park and the licence to sell tickets at 10 cents to enter the perimeter.<sup>19</sup>

Now the Parc de la Ciutadella not only offered to its visitors the grass, the trees, the open spaces and the rational recreation, but also mass entertainment and the kinesthetic emotions from what the promoters called ‘modern sports’. Among many other entertainments, the visitor could glide in the skating ring Patines Siglo XX, go round and round on an electric carousel, shoot in the shooting grounds, or dare to board the main thrill rides: the toboggan, the water chute and the roller coaster Los Urales. In the toboggan, the visitor could feel the acceleration of gravity in his or her own body while descending the spiral-shaped ramp. After ascending with the help of an elevator, he or she could experience the speed of the big roller coaster, which had an artificial lake at its centre. This was the lake in which the vehicles of the water chute were launched through a ramp, causing incessant screams. On windy days, the splashes must have bothered or refreshed the customers seated at the tables of the huge caf  , which was actually one of the most visited parts of the amusement park.

Figure 5.2 Postcards depicting mechanical rides at the Saturno Park, around 1913. *Left*: toboggan. *Right (top to bottom)*: witching waves, water chute and the roller coaster Los Urales

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<sup>18</sup> For an analysis of these Catalanist and Catholic scientists, see Chapter 3 of this book.

<sup>19</sup> Brotons, *Parcs d'atraccions de Barcelona*, p. 67.



Indeed, mechanical pleasures were not the only ingredients of Saturno Park's technological fun. Listening to music, eating, drinking, strolling around, and watching other people on the attractions, were also crucial components of the experience. All of them, however, took place in the context of a constant display of new technologies. Whether one was drinking lemonade with his fiancée or eating sweets with one's parents, there was a background noise, a mix between the roller coaster's mechanical clink-clonk and the technology-induced screams and laughs.<sup>20</sup>

But who visited the amusement park? Although in the beginning it was rhetorically aimed at the bourgeoisie and, indeed, it hosted on many occasions aristocratic soirées, it also quickly attracted the artisans and workers of the nearby popular neighbourhoods, and thus ended up being an interclass space.<sup>21</sup> There is visual evidence that the publics of the Saturno Park not only wore bourgeois hats but also worker's caps (see Figure 5.2), and contemporary descriptions tell us about people picnicking on the grass and lovers immorally sheltered in the shadows at night.<sup>22</sup> The satirical weekly *Papitu* described the park as an interclass space two weeks after its inauguration:

Now life comes from the Park [ ... ]. There you can find men and women from the bourgeoisie, *cocottes*, troublemakers and children. If one rides the Urales, one might hear a woman complaining: 'I cannot stand so many slopes'. If one rides that exhilarating boat, one might hear a man equally complaining: 'I get too excited with such fast descents'. [ ... ] There is only one problem: the Toboggan. Since everyone can see the soles of your shoes when you descend, you must make sure to wear the ones without holes, otherwise everyone will notice.<sup>23</sup>

The Saturno Park was a political battleground from the very beginning. The first years of the amusement park were a success in terms of audience, and new rides, like the Witching Waves

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<sup>20</sup> This description is based on several articles published in weekly and daily newspapers such as *Papitu*, *Mirador*, *La Il·lustració Catalana* and *La Vanguardia*.

<sup>21</sup> Brotons, *Parcs d'atraccions de Barcelona*, p. 73.

<sup>22</sup> 'Some families bring their "dinner" with them and lie on the ground as if they were at the mountain. What a picture for foreigners!'. Juan Taixidó, 'Cultura y sport', *La Vanguardia*, 7 August 1911, 6.

<sup>23</sup> 'La saturnal del Parc', *Papitu*, 7 June 1911, 400.

or the Labyrinth, were incorporated every season. However, the privatization and commodification of the Parc de la Ciutadella led to protests from the political opposition in the City Council. Republicans and conservative nationalists accused the populist and anticlerical party in power to have perverted the public and moral nature of the park in order to benefit their own friends.<sup>24</sup>

In 1916, critiques grew significantly. Some of them included what they perceived as the aesthetic dissonance of the amusement park in the list of degradations and misbehaving that were sullyng the Parc de la Ciutadella as a space for rational recreations. In the autumn of 1916, the pages of *La Vanguardia* described on more than one occasion a park ‘turned into a centre of American attractions and particularly frequented by soldiers and maids’.<sup>25</sup> And, most interestingly, some explicitly contrasted the ugliness and immoral qualities of mechanical rides to the respectability of the exhibitionary institutions fostered by the Junta de Ciències Naturals. By that time, Francesc Darder, the director of the adjacent zoo, kept complaining to the mayor about the consequences of the noise both of the rides and visitors of the Saturno Park ‘for the life of the poor animals’, and asked for the removal of the amusement park.<sup>26</sup> And Carles Buigas, the engineer responsible for the Magic Fountain of the 1929 International Exhibition, wanted to ‘take out from the floor in front of the museum [Museum of Fine Arts] [ ... ] the banal and desecrating stalls that were part of the Saturno Park’. After all this criticism, when the concession expired in 1916, the Saturno Park was finally moved to another – less central – area of the park (near the Cascada), and the site it formerly occupied was converted into a rational garden by architect Nicolau Rubió.

So did the mechanical rides clash against with rational recreations of the Parc de la Ciutadella and the civilizing project they embedded? The amusement park was clearly not

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<sup>24</sup> Brotons, *Parcs d'atraccions de Barcelona*, p. 69.

<sup>25</sup> José Escofet, ‘La ciudad y los parques’, *La Vanguardia*, 28 October 1916, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Rosend Casanova Mandrí, ‘Francesc d’Assís Darder i l’origen del Parc Zoològic de Barcelona’, *Revista de Catalunya Barcelona: Fundació Revista de Catalunya*, 142 (1999): 36–44, p. 38.

part of the Catholic and nationalist popularization agenda of the members of the Junta de Ciències Naturals, who thought that the most morally uplifting kind of popular science was one that did not include the thrills and big iron structures of the mechanical rides. However, this should not lead us to think that we are dealing with the regimes of pleasure that the exhibitionary institutions opposed and tried to counterbalance. As we will see in the next sections, amusement parks shared spaces, ideals and promoters with exhibitionary institutions.

In the present case, and despite the criticisms from the conservative ranks, the tensions with the Parc de la Ciutadella's authorities and the actual practices of its customers, the regime of pleasure on offer at the Saturno Park was clearly different from the one operating in the 1880s in Plaça de Catalunya (the space which had hosted the first mechanical roller coaster in the city, alongside other privately-owned little spectacles) or the one operating in the Paralelo Avenue (with its music halls and cabarets). The Saturno Park was a big-scale, regulated, gated and commodified space, with a unified decoration inspired in the style of the international exhibitions' amusement zones, and aimed at appealing with its technological fun to a broad audience ranging from bourgeois and middle classes to the 'respectable' part of the working class.

### **Collserola Mountain: Urbanism, Hygiene and Upper-Class Leisure**

While the Saturno Park, at the boundary of the overcrowded city centre, became an interclass space where working classes were 'getting some fun out of life' – as Billie Holliday sang – other spaces for a more exclusive leisure were opened far away from the Parc de la Ciutadella: a new segment of the 'technological fun belt' emerged in the Collserola mountain, where several amusement parks appeared during the first decades of the twentieth century: the Tibidabo Park (1901–present), the American Park (1907–1908), the Lake Valley (1908–1916), the Rabassada (1911–1934) and the Turó Park (1912–1927). This boom of amusement

parks in Barcelona took place while major urban transformations and social struggles were changing the city. Both processes were entangled with land speculation, the promotion of tourism and hygienist and civilizing ideals.

Two great urban plans were at stake at the time: the construction of the Via Laietana Avenue and the ‘making’ of the Collserola mountain. On the one hand, the construction of the Haussmannian Via Laietana (1908–1913) split the maze-like urban structure of the old city centre with the aim of smashing the popular ‘vices’ – in hygienist terms – and better controlling the social upheavals which threatened the bourgeois hegemony.<sup>27</sup> The avenue stood for an icon of modernization as well as a self-affirmation of the ruling classes in a time of strikes and violent riots in a city known as the ‘Rose of Fire’ since the Tragic Week of 1909 (also known as the Glorious Week for some).<sup>28</sup>

The Via Laietana connected the sea and the rational grid-like Eixample district through the city centre. From the beginning of the century, the Passeig de Gràcia – the richest street of this district, with houses by Gaudí and other prominent Art Nouveau architects – reached towards the mountain. The elite gradually looked for new, quiet, green and fresh spaces of residence and entertainment in the upper part of town. In this process, new kinds of commodified and technified risky pleasures were built there, far away from (and in opposition to) the perceived risks of the city centre in terms of safety and health.<sup>29</sup> The ‘technological fun belt’, in which the metal-coloured iron structures of the mechanical rides mixed with the green of trees, turned its back on the so-called ‘red-and-black belt’ (see Figure 5.3).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Antoni Nicolau and Daniel Venteo (eds), *La construcció de la gran Barcelona: l'obertura de la Via Laietana, 1908–1958* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> José Álvarez Junco et al., *Tragic, Red and Glorious: One Week in 1909* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> For a spatial analysis of the ‘territorialization’ of health risks in Barcelona (in Yankel Fijalkow’s terms), see: Celia Miralles, *La tuberculose dans l’espace social barcelonais, 1929–1936* (PhD Thesis, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> The 1907–1916 period has been highlighted as the starting point in the making of the ‘red-and-black belt’, despite the fact that the major building boom took place after World War I (1917–1926). Glòria Andrés and José Luis Oyón, ‘Las segundas periferias de Barcelona: vivienda y formas urbanas, 1917–1936’, in José Luis Oyón and Juan José Gallardo (eds), *El cinturón rojinegro: radicalismo cenetista y obrerismo en la periferia de Barcelona, 1918–1939* (Barcelona:

Figure 5.3 Postcards from the Rabassada (up) and the Tibidabo Park (bottom), around 1915. The views of the healthy, planned and civilizing ‘green and metal-coloured belt’ are shown through the roller coaster at the Rabassada (top), the Tibidabo Funicular (bottom) and the Aerial Railway (bottom to the right)

The promoters of urban changes, land speculation, transport networks and amusement parks around the Collserolla area were the same people, all of them members of the upper bourgeoisie in Barcelona. In 1899, the S.A. Tibidabo Company was founded, among others, by one of the main property developers of the Eixample (Salvador Andreu) and the founder of the railway company Ferrocarriles de Montaña a Grandes Pendientes (Romà Macaya). Similarly, the company Rabassada Sociedad Anónima Inmobiliaria de Sports y Atracciones (1910) was directed by the businessman Josep Sabadell, the prominent leader of the main Spanish employers’ organization, created to counteract the rising working-class empowerment.<sup>31</sup> The land of the Turó Park was owned by the Girona family, one of the most influential family of bankers in Barcelona.

All these projects, which included mechanical rides, were fiercely supported by the Sociedad de Atracción de Forasteros (Society for the Attraction of Foreigners; from now on, SAF), which was created in 1908. Its main goal was to develop private enterprises for promoting tourism.<sup>32</sup> The members of the SAF belonged to the financial, political and cultural elites of Barcelona, and some of them actively promoted the projects of amusement parks in Collserola. Engineer Marian Rubió (1862–1938), who will be a key character in this chapter, was at the same time the main manager of the Tibidabo Park (1904–1936) and the President of the SAF (1911–1936).

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Carena, 2004), 17–43.

<sup>31</sup> Soledad Bengoechea, ‘Los hombres de la patronal a principios del siglo XX: Luis Ferrer-Vidal, José Sabadell y Félix Graupera’, *Historia Social*, 48 (2004): 69–85.

<sup>32</sup> Albert Blasco Peris, *Barcelona Atracción (1910–1936). Una revista de la Sociedad de Atracción de Forasteros* (PhD Thesis, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2005).

All amusement parks in Collserola were conceived by these social actors as a way to make money by selling healthy, moral and entertaining spaces to the visitors, who could delight in the panoramic views, rest in magnificent hotels and restaurants, and enjoy French cuisine and Tzigane, Catalan, Russian or American orchestras.<sup>33</sup> Or they could also go for a walk, ride a horse below the trees or drink the ‘miraculous’ waters of the Collserola wells. Turó Park was qualified by the press as ‘a privileged site in the city, dominated by the fresh airs from the mountain’, and the Rabassada simply as the ‘Eden’ (see Figure 5.3).<sup>34</sup> Tibidabo Park's main commercial hook was quite similar. And the Lake Valley, very influenced by the project in the Tibidabo, was also designed as a ‘moral and hygienic’ space.<sup>35</sup> Ironically, pure air was a commodity sold by the same bourgeoisie that owned the factories which were polluting the city. In July 1923, Salvador Andreu wrote to Marian Rubió, who was also a prominent figure in the popularization of hygienist practices:<sup>36</sup>

My friend Mr. Rubió, I have had an idea. To publish on the front pages of the main newspapers in Barcelona a big-lettered advertisement: ‘Let’s go breath in Tibidabo!’.

Only this sentence, three or four consecutive days, in almost all newspapers. [ ... ]

You will see how each *peseta* coin will become five.<sup>37</sup>

However, besides enjoying the calm, amusement park visitors could also get their thrills by seeing a bullfight in the Turó Park, playing tennis or football in the Lake Valley, practising clay (or real) pigeon shooting in the American Park or betting in the Rabassada casino. And also by boarding the speedy and risky mechanical rides. Commodification of hygiene and commodification of risk were entangled issues in the Collserola mountain.

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<sup>33</sup> Before the first mechanical rides were in operation, the S.A. Tibidabo Company promoted the glamorous and arabesque Gran Café Restaurant (1902). The Rabassada tourist resort was built around the luxurious Restaurant Hotel (1899).

<sup>34</sup> ‘La Rabassada: El centro mundial de atracciones’, *ABC*, 11 August 1911, 7; ‘Inauguració del Turó Parch’, *Il·lustració Catalana*, 9 June 1912, 288.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Una excursión al Tibidabo’, *Tibidabo: revista mínima*, 2 (21) (1905), 3–5; ‘Permiso para obras a D. Heriberto D. Alemany y Escardó’, Folder 113–31 (1908), Arxiu Municipal del Districte de Sarrià-Sant Gervasi (AMDSG).

<sup>36</sup> Rubió lobbied for hygienist policies in articles in *La Vanguardia*.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in: Antoni Lázaro, ‘Marian Rubió i Bellvé i el Parc del Tibidabo’, in *Els Rubió: una nissaga d’intel·lectuals* (Barcelona: Angle, 2003), pp. 51–6.

The ‘conquest of the mountain’ was a planned project conceived as a civilizing colonization of the area through the development of transport networks.<sup>38</sup> Despite the fact that Collserola was formerly a space for forest resources and hunting, popular picnics and family celebrations around wells, religious festivities, workers choir singing or even clandestine trade-union meetings, these sites were symbolically dressed with a virginal aureole.<sup>39</sup> In 1911, a newspaper described the Rabassada in the following terms: ‘Man found it shining and fertile [ ... ] . Its woods offered him rest and its shadow offered him health. Man arrived, and took possession of the place’.<sup>40</sup>

Technology was a key element in this conquest of nature for developing tourism, making money, urbanizing and keeping diseases at bay. In amusement parks, the role played by technology in these processes can be seen on three levels: first, the transport network surrounding the amusement parks; second, the display of technological innovations within them; and third, their very core: the mechanical rides. We will deal with them in turn.

As in the case of the ‘trolley parks’ in the United States, many amusement parks in Barcelona were intimately related to the spread of the transport and power networks.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, in many cases, the transport facilities were not only the mandatory means to arrive to the entertainment sites, but also true mechanical rides in themselves. The funicular railway in the Tibidabo (the first one in Spain and one of the first in the world) was inaugurated in 1901, and became the earliest technological thrill in the Collserola mountain (see Figure 5.3).<sup>42</sup> During the eight-minute funicular ride that ended at the Tibidabo Park, located at the

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<sup>38</sup> The idea of ‘the conquest of the mountain’ has been used to analyse the urbanization of the mountain by: Sergi Garriga Bosch, *El Tibidabo i la concepció metropolitana de Barcelona* (Master thesis, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2012), p. 83.

<sup>39</sup> However, these activities kept taking place in Collserola after amusement parks appeared. See: Ferran Armengol Ferrer et al., *Un segle pujant al Tibidabo: història del Tramvia Blau i del Funicular del Tibidabo* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> *Heraldo de Madrid*, 26 August 1911. Quoted in: Sergi Yanes and Turiscòpia, *La Rabassada: la utopia de l’oci burgès* (Sevilla: Punto Rojo, 2011), p. 82.

<sup>41</sup> The S.A. Tibidabo Company was not only a property developer company and an amusement park company, it was also created as a transport company and an electric company.

<sup>42</sup> In 1901, a tramway climbing up the newly urbanized Tibidabo Avenue was also inaugurated. Both the tramway and the funicular were designed and built by the S. A. Tibidabo Company.

top of the Collserola mountain, the passenger could admire the panoramic sights.<sup>43</sup> Before reaching the top, the funicular passed by the Fabra astronomical observatory (1904) and the Mentora Alsina experimental physics museum (1905). At the top, one could see the impressive Sagrat Cor Church, and, some years later, the antennas of Radio Barcelona.<sup>44</sup> Thus, before entering the amusement park, the visitor was not only amazed by the views but also greeted by some of the icons of science and religion that shaped the Barcelona skyline.

Likewise, the Lake Valley Park featured Mina Grott, the first electric passenger railway in Spain. The excitement of the journey through a 1300-metre-long ancient water tunnel connecting the two sides of the mountain with plenty of electric light bulbs and dioramas was the main technological ride of this park.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, even the access by car to the Rabassada through a dusty and winding road already meant a technological thrill for the richest elite.<sup>46</sup>

Amusement parks themselves were also spaces for displaying technology. In 1913, the first Automobile Fair in Barcelona was celebrated in the Turó Park, as a part of a wider Exhibition of Import and Export Products.<sup>47</sup> Sponsored by the Real Automóvil Club de Catalunya (Royal Automobile Club of Catalonia), the most famous international and national brands (for example, Ford and Hispano-Suiza) were shown to the public alongside the newest airplanes. During the fair, a French Borel monoplane flew over the Turó Park. Shows of acrobatic flights high above the amusement parks were usual tourist attractions in the early years of aviation.<sup>48</sup> Alongside bourgeois anti-TB charity galas, pet exhibitions, nationalist events, banquets, high-society meetings and elite sports championships, exhibitions of technology were very common. During World War I, the War Gallery (1916) in the Turó

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<sup>43</sup> A 'virtual' visit to the park through images can be found in: Junceda, *Auca del Tibidabo* (Barcelona: David, 1930).

<sup>44</sup> See Chapters 9 and 10 of this book.

<sup>45</sup> Actually, it became the first and only ride of the park, since the initial project (with a big carousel, roller coasters and balloons) was never implemented due to conflicts over railway licences with other transport companies. Ricard Fernández Valentí, *El Mina-Grott: història d'un petit tren de Vallvidrera* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2004).

<sup>46</sup> From 1914 on, the Tibidabo Coup, a pioneer car rally, was organized there.

<sup>47</sup> 'Exposición de productos de importación y exportación', *Industria e invenciones*, 31 August 1912, 88.

<sup>48</sup> On the Tibidabo, see: 'Lo vol sobre'l Tibidabo', *Il·lustració Catalana*, 19 March 1911, 150.



Park and the War Museum in the Tibidabo Park (1916–1940) – promoted and designed by Marian Rubió – displayed materials and habitat-like scenes of the daily life in the trenches and the war technologies, including a reproduction of the famous Big Bertha howitzer.

This technological display was highlighted and enhanced by the display of ‘non-technological’ colonized societies. In 1913, the Tibidabo exhibited the ‘primitive’ forms of work and leisure of dozens of men, women and children of a ‘Senegalese tribe’, while the Turó Park exhibited an orientalist ‘Far East Village’ where the public could ‘examine the rough customs of their inhabitants’.<sup>49</sup> These displays can be interpreted as having a dialectical relationship with the mechanical rides in amusement parks, as being a distorted mirror, an intended living proof of the superiority of industrial cultures over ‘pre-scientific’ peoples.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, the most significant display of technology in amusement parks was that of their amusement devices. Some of them, like the electric or steam engine miniature locomotives, seemed to be part of the transport network that had brought the visitor to the park. In the Tibidabo, some of the first amusements were ‘optical trips’, like seeing through a telescope (1904) that worked with a one cent coin, or using a mobile searchlight (1905). Even its three major mechanical rides can be regarded as technologies developed in order to enjoy more intensively the views of the mountain and the sea. In 1915, the Aerial Railway – a monorail inspired by the German Wuppertal Suspension Railway (1901) – allowed a burgeoning scenic view of the city over the trees and passed by several exotic dioramas representing the Alhambra palace in Granada and the Dragon Cave in Majorca (see Figure 5.3). In 1921, a huge 50-metres lever illuminated at night, the Talaia, allowed the users to observe Barcelona from an overall altitude of 550 metres. Finally, in 1928, a real-scale and self-propelled replica of the first commercial plane that flew from Barcelona to Madrid in

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<sup>49</sup> *La Vanguardia*, 1 June 1913, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> For an analysis of the role of discourses on technology in the ideological construction of racism and imperialism, see: Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). The literature on anthropological spectacles is huge. See, for example: Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

1927 put the city under the visitor's feet in the only 'flight experience' many people in Barcelona had in their lives. These mechanical rides in the Tibidabo Park were designed by Marian Rubió himself and built by local-based enterprises under his supervision.<sup>51</sup>

The other amusement parks in Collserola, however, preferred to import rides, mainly from the United States.<sup>52</sup> In some cases, the importation was direct and complete. Roller coasters in the Rabassada (1911) and Turó Park (1914), for example, were authentic Scenic Railways.<sup>53</sup> These rides were patented by the most famous 'father of gravity', LaMarcus Thomson, and built by his own company, L.A. Scenic Railway Thompson Company, which exported its products all across the US and Europe.<sup>54</sup> As in many other parts of the world, many trendy rides for the 'factories of fun' in Collserola – electric carousels, witching waves, water chutes, electric cars, cakewalks, haunted houses – were an important part of the early globalization of products and technological know-how from the US.<sup>55</sup> But the circulation of technologies of fun from North America (sometimes indirectly, through other European countries like France) was not only a matter of production, but also a matter of commercial hook through the promotion of the so-called 'American way of life'.<sup>56</sup> Amusement parks were often referred to as 'American parks' or announced their ever new 'American rides'.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the business of technological fun continuously produced innovations for attracting visitors, that is, for seducing consumers. From its inauguration, Turó Park promoted itself in

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<sup>51</sup> The enterprise in charge of the Talaia was Suministro de Construcciones Metálicas Hijo de Miguel Mateu, and the one that built the Plane was Talleres Estrada (from Sarrià, a town next to Collserola). The Aerial Railway was also locally manufactured.

<sup>52</sup> The Electric Carousel in the Turó Park, however, was implemented by the Barcelona-based Torra Company.

<sup>53</sup> In fact, the design of the Rabassada amusement park was assigned to John Calvin Brown, promoter of the White City Amusement Park in Manchester (1907). Yanes and Turiscòpia, *La Rabassada*, p. 93.

<sup>54</sup> From the 1910s, several international patents of mechanical rides systems were filed in Spain, as the journal *Industrias e Invenciones* pointed out.

<sup>55</sup> Mohun, 'Amusement Parks for the World'.

<sup>56</sup> On the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century roots of the globalization of American mass culture through amusement parks, among other popular entertainments, see: Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869–1922* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> This influence is evident from their names. The amusement park called American Park was created in 1907. The following year, another amusement park with an English name was born next to the tiny Vallvidrera Dam: the Lake Valley Park. Moreover, most of the amusement parks were not called 'parc' or 'parque' (the words for 'park' in Catalan or Spanish), but 'park', with the English 'k'. On the other hand, the mechanical rides and entertainments often had English names.

the press as ‘the best amusement centre in the world’ and ‘the trendiest park’ with ‘40 modern rides’.

Furthermore, the mechanical rides helped spreading values and behaviours such as faith and confidence in technology. The physical integrity of the user boarding the risky rides completely depended on engineers and technicians, who worked hard to maximize both the safety measures and the illusion of risk through speed, acceleration or altitude.<sup>58</sup> Marian Rubió was fully aware of this key feature of amusement parks, and this awareness determined his technological choices. In a paper published in the journal *La Energía Eléctrica* in 1915, he assured that a major accident was ‘absolutely impossible’ in the Aerial Railway and that ‘all the parts of the metallic construction have been designed to be totally safe’.<sup>59</sup> According to Rubió, everything was designed to ‘feel the emotion of an aerial journey’ and ‘the beauties of that incomparable panorama’. However, the risk was real. During a stormy night in 1930, the Plane fell down.<sup>60</sup> No casualties were to be lamented, because the park was closed. However, other accidents (like the one that happened in the Rabassada just some days after its inauguration)<sup>61</sup> were a reminder that, even if commodified and controlled by engineers, risk was still risk.

### **Montjuïc Hill: Engineers, Ideologies and Entertainment**

While engineer Marian Rubió was actively participating in the ‘conquest’ of Collserola and the design of the Tibidabo amusement park, he had another huge project in mind: the 1929 Barcelona International Exhibition and the urbanization of the Montjuïc hill.<sup>62</sup> This project was initially conceived as an international exhibition of electric industries in 1914 – the year

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<sup>58</sup> Mohun, ‘Designed for Thrills and Safety’.

<sup>59</sup> Marian Rubió, ‘Ferrocarril aéreo de la cumbre del Tibidabo (Barcelona)’, *La Energía Eléctrica*, XVII:12 (1915): 177–80.

<sup>60</sup> Lázaro Díaz, *El Tibidabo desde dentro: historia de un parque de atracciones* (Barcelona: Actual, 2004).

<sup>61</sup> Juan Baguñó, ‘Sr. Director de ...’, *La Vanguardia*, 5 August 1911, 4–5.

<sup>62</sup> On the fact that the International Exhibition was conceived as a way to reorganize the city in capitalist terms, see: Ignasi Solà-Morales, ‘L’exposició internacional de Barcelona (1914–1929) com a instrument de política urbana’, *Recerques: història, economia, cultura*, 6 (1976): 137–45.

in which Rubió himself designed the first mechanical ride in the Tibidabo Park – but it was finally postponed because of the outbreak of the Great War.

After Collserola, Montjuïc was the next space to be urbanized and ‘engineered for fun’ in the city. The Montjuïc hill was close to the city centre and flanking the very popular Poble Sec neighbourhood. Throughout the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, this hill became a preferred site for expressions of self-managed fun by the working class, such as picnics by the many wells (known as *fontades*) or popular dancing (see Figure 5.4). However, from 1914 on, the hill was transformed by engineers and architects in order to host new ways of entertainment that overlapped with the former ones. During the 1920s, the public works to transform the hill attracted a great mass of migrants from other regions of Spain. They mainly settled in the areas forming the ‘red-and-black belt’, while at the same time they were building what would become the last part of the ‘technological fun belt’.

Figure 5.4     The urbanization of the Montjuïc hill, from the autonomous fun of the *fontades* and other popular activities (*top to the left*: people climbing up the hill, 1910s) to the civilizing promenades in well-planned gardens (*bottom to the left*: Laribal garden) and the technological fun of amusement parks (*right*: promotional image of the Maricel Park, around 1930)

The figure of Marian Rubió, who had a powerful influence in this process, embodies the links between the new regimes of pleasure and the new regimes of knowledge. Marian Rubió had already been involved in the 1888 Universal Exhibition, where he was appointed representative of the Military Engineering Corps (by then he was a young and promising military engineer in Minorca).<sup>63</sup> From then on his career took off, as we have seen in the preceding section. His leading role in the Tibidabo Park project, his presidency of the SAF,

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<sup>63</sup> *Els Rubió*, p. 42.

his ties with the right-wing and nationalist party La Lliga,<sup>64</sup> and his pro-Allied writings in *La Vanguardia* during World War I made him probably the best known engineer in Catalonia.

This trajectory led him to be appointed the chief engineer and director of the next Barcelona International Exhibition, a position he even maintained during General Primo de Rivera's Dictatorship (1923–1930) due to his high military rank, regardless of the change in political regime. But the patriarch of the family was not the only Rubió involved in the plans to urbanize Montjuïc: he was joined by two of his sons, the architect Nicolau Rubió and the industrial engineer Santiago Rubió, who some years earlier had already helped their father in the design of transport systems, architectural spaces and amusement devices in the Tibidabo Park.<sup>65</sup>

The 1929 Exhibition was celebrated as a professional triumph by the Asociación de Ingenieros Industriales de Barcelona (the Catalan association of industrial engineers) and it marked a turning point of their social and political rise, which was strengthened with the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1939) and especially with the administrative and economic reforms fostered by the Generalitat de Catalunya (the Catalan government) following its creation in 1932.<sup>66</sup> A visit to the exhibition will highlight the links of the Rubió family and the engineering professionals with the urbanization of the Montjuïc hill and the ideological features of the site in which the mechanical rides of the exhibition's amusement park and the Maricel Park were to be located.

After taking the tram line number 31 from Plaça Catalunya to Plaça Espanya, the exhibition's starting point, the passenger could ascend to the National Palace using a funicular railway designed by Santiago Rubió, who already was a distinguished expert in transport engineering (particularly for mountain sites devoted both to Catholic worship and

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<sup>64</sup> Blasco, *Barcelona Atracción (1910–1936)*, p. 49.

<sup>65</sup> At the same time, Marian Rubió's brother, the Gaudinian architect Joan Rubió, was the master mind behind some of the most beautiful houses in the Tibidabo Avenue: Casa Roviralta (1903), Casa Fornells (1903) and Casa Casacuberta (1907). Joan Rubió was also an influential member of La Lliga and became district councillor in the Barcelona local government in 1905.

<sup>66</sup> Valentines-Álvarez, *Tecnocràcia i catalanisme tècnic*.

tourism).<sup>67</sup> From the National Palace esplanade, the visitor could admire the monumental Maria Cristina Avenue with the eclectic architecture of its pavilions, the many illuminated glass obelisks and the light spectacles of the ‘Magic Fountains’ that Marian Rubió had dreamt of and Carles Buigas had finally made real.<sup>68</sup> Standing there, and looking ahead into the horizon, the observer could see the entire city with the Tibidabo's Talaia at the top. Using the new escalators, the visitor could explore the main pavilions of the fair, such as, for example, the Palace of Metallurgy and the Palace of Work. The first one displayed an authentic old Catalan forge as an icon of the ‘technological soul’ of Catalonia. The display was carried out by Santiago Rubió and Antoni Gallardo, pioneer industrial archaeologists that looked for this kind of ‘lost’ national technologies in the Pyrenees from the 1910s.<sup>69</sup> The Palace of Metallurgy (first called Palace of Pedagogy, Hygiene and Social Institutions) was aimed at popularizing and spreading the Taylorist principles,<sup>70</sup> just as Marian Rubió had done in *El trabajo humano* (1916), one of the first (and few) books in Spain dealing with the ‘human motor’, scientific management and psychotechnics.<sup>71</sup>

After visiting the pavilions, one could go for a walk at the Laribal and Font del Gat gardens, with their tidy Mediterranean vegetation, their evocations of classical and Arabic culture, and their shaded promenades and fountains (see Figure 5.4). All these gardens were designed by the main disciple of the French landscape architect Jean Claude Nicolas Forestier in Barcelona: the architect Nicolau Rubió.<sup>72</sup> He was the main responsible of the ‘ordering of nature’ in the Montjuïc hill, which implied replacing the self-constructed houses and shanty towns of gypsies and migrants that occupied the slopes of the hill with a rational urbanism of

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<sup>67</sup> Santiago Rubió had already designed the funicular of Sant Joan in the mystical Montserrat mountain (1916–1918) and the funicular of the Núria Sanctuary in the Pyrenees (1917, not implemented). He also designed the Gelida funicular (1922–1924) and had been the director of the construction of the first line of the Barcelona subway (1919–1922).

<sup>68</sup> Marian Rubió, *Ensayo de fuentes monumentales y juegos de agua en la exposición de Barcelona, Ibérica*, 249 (1918): 250–2. See also Chapter 11 of this book.

<sup>69</sup> Valentines-Álvarez, *Tecnocràcia i catalanisme tècnic*, pp. 125–9.

<sup>70</sup> The journal of the SAF pointed out the urgent need for the nation to popularize the Taylorist principles beyond technical journals. ‘Exposición de Barcelona de 1929’, *Barcelona Atracción*, 204, June (1928): 163–8, pp. 166–7.

<sup>71</sup> Marian Rubió, *El trabajo humano* (Barcelona: Publicaciones de la Cámara Oficial de Industria de Barcelona, 1916).

<sup>72</sup> Nicolau Rubió was director of the Barcelona Town Hall’s Parks and Gardens section and designed the spaces of the Parc de la Ciutadella and the Turó Park when their amusement parks closed in 1926 and 1927.

planned gardens and exhibition pavilions.<sup>73</sup> He was one of the main promoters of the ‘garden city’ idea in Catalonia and from the 1920s on he successfully lobbied the Catalan government to reorder the whole nation through regional planning.<sup>74</sup>

Finally, the visit would not be complete unless the visitor enjoyed himself or herself at the big amusement park that was installed in an ancient quarry. Once again, as in the case of the Parc de la Ciutadella, we find amusement parks going hand in hand with world fairs, and being part and parcel of exhibitionary complex spaces. The amusement park of the 1929 Exhibition had several mechanical rides, like a great roller coaster, the thrilling Devil Ball, laughter barrels and a miniature passenger steam-engine railway. At night, it was illuminated by hundreds of light bulbs, thus joining the many light spectacles of the exhibition. In line with the contents of the exhibition, a mechanized and civilized fun was colonizing the Montjuïc hill.

Initially, technology was to play a major role in the museum projects that had to consolidate the civic use of the hill after 1929. Once the exhibition closed, the head of the Rubió clan lobbied to devote the central space of the exhibition to build what he portrayed as the biggest technical museum in the world: the ‘Technotheque’.<sup>75</sup> However, the attempt was not successful, and the spaces around the National Palace were finally the site for other more traditional museum projects such as the Art Museum of Catalonia (1934) and the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia (1935).

Nonetheless, technology remained a relevant feature in the Montjuïc hill. Several mechanical rides were moved from the initial site to a nearby location, where a new

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<sup>73</sup> Mercè Tatjer and Cristina Larrea (eds), *Barraques. La ciutat informal del segle XX* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2010).

<sup>74</sup> The Regional Planning of Catalonia was promoted by himself several years before, when he was Secretary of the Societat Cívica ‘La Ciutat Jardí’ (Garden City). The project was not developed until the creation of the Catalan government in 1932. Nicolau M. Rubió Tudurí and Santiago Rubió Tudurí, *El pla de distribució en zones del territori català. Regional Planning* (Barcelona: Impremta de la Casa de Caritat, 1932), p. 8.

<sup>75</sup> Jaume Sastre-Juan and Jaume Valentines-Álvarez, ‘Envisioning a Technotheque for Barcelona. Some thoughts on the technical museum as a cultural form (1914–1939)’, unpublished paper, presented at the 8th STEP Meeting, Corfu (Greece), 21–24 June 2012.

amusement park called Maricel Park opened its doors in 1930. In its promotional advertisements, the park claimed that ‘thrill and happiness’ were guaranteed and offered ‘the most modern’ and ‘the most thrilling rides in the most delightful and fresh place of the city’.<sup>76</sup> It also offered ‘the latest in American parks’, like bumper cars and the Tumble Bug, a very recent invention by the leading roller coaster designer and founder of the Traver Engineering Company, Harry Traver (1877–1961).<sup>77</sup> Chronicles written shortly after the inauguration remarked that ‘the roller coaster [ ... ] confers a great atmosphere of modernity to the side of the hill dominated by these impressive iron structures’ where ‘thousands of light bulbs draw the [amusement] park’s skyline’.<sup>78</sup> The sounds of American jazz, as well as the ‘unavoidable screams of women’, filled the air, and the central restaurant offered ‘American dinners’ under the lighting designed by Carles Buigas, the designer of the famous light-and-colour fountains of the exhibition (see Figure 5.4).

Everything seemed to be modern, middle class, clean, civic, streamlined, magic. Ticket office clerks were dressed in a red jacket and white trousers. Everybody, everything, was in red and white: saleswomen, the skating court, logos, shops, panels, mechanical rides and so on. While the red and the white of the last space of the ‘technological fun belt’ shined, the inhabitants of the shanties that previously occupied that same Montjuïc area were being relocated into a different belt, red and black, poor and radical, which emerged in other outskirts, for example just right on the other side of the hill, in the peripheral neighbourhoods of Can Tunis and Eduardo Aunós’ ‘Casas Baratas’.<sup>79</sup>

## **Conclusions: New Regimes of Pleasure and Knowledge**

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<sup>76</sup> As stated in several advertisements in the press (particularly in *La Vanguardia* and *Mirador*).

<sup>77</sup> David Pescovitz, ‘Roller coaster biographies. Harry Traver’, *Britannica online* (Project ‘Roller coasters. Inventing the scream machine’, *Encyclopædia Britannica*), 1998–1999, [http://kids.britannica.com/coasters/i\\_traver.html](http://kids.britannica.com/coasters/i_traver.html) (last accessed 3 May 2014).

<sup>78</sup> Manuel Sarret, ‘Unes hores a Maricel-Park’, *Mirador*, 24 July 1930; *La Vanguardia*, 14 July 1930.

<sup>79</sup> Teresa García Castro, ‘Barrios barceloneses de la dictadura de Primo de Rivera’, *Revista de geografía*, 8 (1–2) (1974): 77–97; Tatjer and Larrea, *Barraques*.



In 1913, the journal *Industria e invenciones* published an article written by the engineer Marcel Hegelbacher on the newest innovations in mechanical rides, which was entitled ‘Science in the service of pleasure’.<sup>80</sup> By asking which were the urban geographies and the politics of what we call ‘technological fun’ in Barcelona, we have explored the complex meanings behind Hegelbacher’s title and we have argued that amusement parks were spaces in which both ‘science’ and ‘pleasure’ were being redefined in relation to one another during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Amusement parks were businesses with both local and international dimensions, and their emergence has to be understood within the context of the growing leisure industry and the commodification of entertainment. At the same time, most amusement parks were part and parcel of broader urbanization projects linked to property speculation and the development of tourism industry. But money is not the whole story. These urban projects were politically inscribed within hygienist and paternalist programmes. We have seen how amusement parks were promoted not only by the most powerful elites in the city, but many times by the very same individuals that were fostering hygienist policies, scientific management, regional planning and technocratic ideologies, like the Rubió family. The regime of pleasure of the new mechanized and standardized technological fun was closely tied to the rise of new technical elites and in tune with the new regimes of knowledge.

The analysis of the geographies of technological fun in Barcelona also point in a similar direction. The urbanization processes in the Collserola mountain and Montjuïc hill went hand in hand with a change in their use for entertainment purposes. Amusement parks were important agents in the partial transformation of former peripheral spaces of autonomous and self-managed fun into urban spaces offering a new kind of entertainment that included amusement parks, but also other exhibitionary institutions, such as industrial

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<sup>80</sup> Marcel Hegelbacher, ‘La ciencia al servicio del placer’, *Industria e invenciones*, 60 (117) (1913): 117–8.

museums, lighting displays and world fairs. Parallel to the formation of a ‘red-and-black belt’ in Barcelona, a ‘technological fun belt’ was formed in green spaces that were being ‘conquered’ by the city’s bourgeoisie through their technical elites and urban planners.

How were the new rides experienced by its several publics? This is always the most difficult question. On the one hand, we suggest that the symbolic construction of technological fun mattered. But on the other hand, it would be misleading to think that these discourses on technology and the ideologies of the promoters completely determined the reading of the experience with mechanical rides, which was unpredictable and multi-sided.<sup>81</sup> In any case, amusement parks became an important part of the technological cityscapes, and were spaces where the population became acquainted with new technology beyond labour and experienced new pleasures that meant a subversion of everyday behaviour in terms of gravity and even of social norms – for example the gendered codes of proximity between bodies – but not of the dominant symbolic order. The loops, twists and crashes of the water chute at Saturno Park, the roller coaster at the Rabassada, or the bumper cars at the Maricel Park took place in a carefully engineered, commodified and civilizing environment that was insistently portrayed as ‘modern’ and ‘international’ by its promoters.

In conclusion, the ludic experience of visiting an amusement park in Barcelona in the beginning of the century was mediated by discourses on technology and society – hygienism, scientific management and ideologies of progress – that were embodied in the spaces around – and within – the amusement parks, their rides and their displays. In this sense, technological fun was not just fun, and amusement parks were not only entertainment sites, but also an arena in which certain ways of looking at technology and the social order tried to seduce hearts and minds.

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<sup>81</sup> Bennett, ‘Hegemony, Ideology, Pleasure: Blackpool’, pp. 135–54.

