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## A Fascist Coney Island? Salazar's Dictatorship, Popular Culture and Technological Fun (1933-1943)

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[...] Ó fábricas, ó laboratórios, ó *music-halls*, ó Luna-Parks,  
Ó couraçados, ó pontes, ó docas flutuantes –  
Na minha mente turbulenta e encandescida  
Possuo-vos como a uma mulher bela [...]

(Álvaro de Campos, *Ode Triunfal*, 1915)

### Introduction

*Ode Triunfal* was the first poem of engineer Álvaro de Campos, the futurist heteronym of Fernando Pessoa. Published in 1915, it is a vanguardist hymn to the objects, rhythms and perceptions brought about by the machine age, in which the poet abandons himself in a sensual and patriarchal fusion with “all things modern”.<sup>1</sup> Just as his predecessor Cesário Verde, who sang the romantic “technological nocturne” of Lisbon’s avenues illuminated by gas in 1880, Álvaro de Campos embraced the infrastructures and forms of life of the industrial city as the materialization of a new aesthetics and subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> Among the icons of urban mass culture described in the poem, Álvaro de Campos includes “Luna-Parks”. However, while factories, bridges, music-halls, battleships and floating docks could all be found in Lisbon in 1915, the first big-scale amusement park in the city would only be inaugurated two decades later.

In June 1933, the press announced that Lisbon would “finally have an amusement park” with “the greatest international rides”.<sup>3</sup> Two hundred trucks had been rented and were ready to carry the mechanical rides that were about to arrive in two ships from the port of Antwerp.<sup>4</sup> The newspaper *Lisbon Daily* (*Diário de Lisboa*) welcomed the amusement park as a sign of modernity that would “transform the peaceful and insipid

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<sup>1</sup> Álvaro de Campos. *Obra completa* (Lisboa: Tinta da China, 2014 [1915]), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Tiago Saraiva and Ana Cardoso de Matos. “Technological Nocturne: The Lisbon Industrial Institute and Romantic Engineering (1849-1888),” *Technology and Culture* 58, no.2 (2017): 422-458.

<sup>3</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, June 10, 1933, 3 [advertisement].

<sup>4</sup> “Lisboa vai ter...,” *Notícias Ilustrado*, June 11, 1933, 15; “O Luna Parque...,” *Notícias Ilustrado*, June 18, 1933, 8.

physiognomy” of the city and bring “happiness, modern life, [and] civilized movement” to Lisbon.<sup>5</sup> “All the great capitals of the world”, claimed the weekly newspaper *Illustrated News* (*Notícias Ilustrado*), “have a Luna Park. Berlin, Paris, London, New York all possess since a long time ago wide enclosures where the so-called ‘attractions’ rise in the midst of a fairy illumination, attracting every night, and many afternoons, the city crowd, eager of the air, movement, youthfulness and joy of a few hours that take them away from the nightmare of the job, the school, the daily work. Lisbon has just imitated these other capitals”.<sup>6</sup> The amusement park was called “Luna Parque” after its original homonym in Coney Island.

Amusement parks were indeed a global phenomenon of urban mass culture. They took a standard shape in the United States at the turn of the century and spread quickly all around the world.<sup>7</sup> In the first decades of the twentieth century, the engineered fun of roller coasters, water-chutes, bumper cars, and other mechanical thrill rides was globalized and circulated in heterogeneous spaces that ranged from big enclosed amusement parks to small traveling fairs. Cultural and social historians have analyzed amusement parks as “industrial saturnalia” in which social and gender codes were negotiated.<sup>8</sup> However, as already analyzed by John Kasson and Tony Bennett, the fact that bodies were turned upside down did not necessarily mean that social relations were also temporarily inverted as in carnivals.<sup>9</sup> Historians of technology such as Arwen Mohun have paid attention to the design, production, and international circulation of the rides, to their links to electrification and transport systems, and to the commodification of risk.<sup>10</sup> Drawing on these approaches, and engaging with urban history, in a previous work we analyzed amusement parks in early twentieth-century Barcelona as spaces in which new regimes of pleasure were entangled with new regimes of knowledge and technocratic

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<sup>5</sup> “Lisboa vai ter...,” *Diário de Lisboa*, June 13, 1933, 5.

<sup>6</sup> “O Luna Parque...,” *Notícias Ilustrado*, June 18, 1933, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Arwen Mohun. “Amusement Parks for the World: The Export of American Technology and Know-How, 1900-1939,” *ICON* 19 (2013b): 100-112; Carroll Pursell. *From Playgrounds to Playstation: The Interaction of Technology and Play* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Gary Cross and John Walton. *The Playful Crowd: Pleasure Places in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). In his 1937 novel *Capitães da Areia*, Jorge Amado beautifully depicts the socially heterogeneous publics of a traveling carousel in Salvador da Bahia.

<sup>9</sup> John Kasson. *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1978); Tony Bennett. “Hegemony, Ideology, Pleasure: Blackpool,” in *Popular Culture and Social Relations*, eds. Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott, 135-154 (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986). In a previous work (see note 11), we inaccurately attributed to John Kasson a different point of view in this regard.

<sup>10</sup> Arwen Mohun. *Risk: Negotiating Safety in American Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013a).

ideologies.<sup>11</sup> In this chapter, we study the urban inscription of new regimes of pleasure in relation to a specific political regime: Salazar's dictatorship.

In Lisbon, the remarkably late arrival of amusement parks coincided with the proclamation of the Estado Novo (New State) in April 1933. Led by António de Oliveira Salazar, the Estado Novo institutionalized the military dictatorship in power since 1926 and advanced towards a fascist corporatist organization of the state. Fun and popular culture were crucial for fascism, which tried to manage social life in all its aspects, from work to private life and leisure.<sup>12</sup> Salazarism was no exception, and the Portuguese capital, which had grown from 228.000 inhabitants in 1878 to 600.000 in 1930, became a key battleground in this regard.<sup>13</sup> Daniel Melo and Vera Marques Alves have studied in detail how the official cultural policies of the regime attempted to frame popular culture from above at several levels and for different audiences, through the creation of institutions such as the National Propaganda Board (*Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional*), the National Federation for Joy at Work (*Federação Nacional para a Alegria no Trabalho*), or the Houses of the People (*Casas do Povo*), as well as through the organization of festivities and exhibitions.<sup>14</sup> However, as argued by Rahul Kumar in his path-breaking study on the place of football in the Estado Novo, less historiographic attention has been paid to the intersection between fascism and the different expressions of global urban mass culture, which he analyzes in Bourdieusian terms as “relatively autonomous fields” that the state tried to shape with varying success.<sup>15</sup> The spread of Hollywood cinema, boxing, jazz, or –we add– amusement parks, was part of what historian Victoria de Grazia called an “irresistible empire” to which the European fascist

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<sup>11</sup> Jaume Sastre-Juan and Jaume Valentines-Álvarez. “Technological Fun: The Politics and Geographies of Amusement Parks.” In *Barcelona (188-1929): An Urban History of Science and Modernity*, eds. Oliver Hochadel and Agustí Nieto-Galan (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 92-112.

<sup>12</sup> Victoria de Grazia. *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi. *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 1997). On the debate about the totalitarian and fascist nature of Salazarism, see: Fernando Rosas. “O salazarismo e o homem novo: ensaio sobre o Estado Novo e a questão do totalitarismo,” *Análise Social* xxxv, no.157 (2001): 1031-1054; Irene Flunser Pimentel. *História das organizações femininas no Estado Novo* (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2000), 14-22; Tiago Saraiva. *Fascist Pigs: Technoscientific Organisms and the History of Fascism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 3-6.

<sup>13</sup> Fernando Rosas. *Lisboa revolucionária, 1908-1975* (Lisboa: Tinta da China, 2007), 18.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Melo. *Salazarismo e cultura popular (1933-1958)* (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2001); Vera Marques Alves. *Arte popular e nação no Estado Novo: A política folclorista do Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional* (Lisboa: ICS, 2013). See also: Margarida Acciaiuoli. *Exposições do Estado Novo, 1934-1940* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1998); Ramos do Ó, Jorge. *Os anos de Ferro: O dispositivo cultural durante a 'Política do Espírito', 1933-1949* (Lisboa: Estampa, 1999);

<sup>15</sup> Kumar, Rahul. *A pureza perdida do desporto: Futebol no Estado Novo* (Lisboa: Paquiderme, 2017).

countries were not impermeable regardless of their attempts at controlling the sources of popular culture.<sup>16</sup>

At a time in which the Estado Novo was trying to regulate leisure and pleasure, what was the place for the bodily shakes and strong emotions of the international, urban and technological fun of amusement parks? Salazarism mobilized a rhetoric of an idyllic rurality based on the minifundist communities of the North of Portugal as the pillar of the national regeneration.<sup>17</sup> In his discourses, Salazar criticized on many occasions technological modernity and praised what he considered the traditional virtues of God, Nationhood and Family over urban life, which he condemned as morally dubious and inclined to class struggle. However, as shown by Tiago Saraiva, among others, this discourse was articulated with a program for developing an alternative modernity that implemented innovative techno-scientific practices and transformed both the rural landscape and the urban fabric.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the “politics of spirit” (*política do espírito*) promoted by the National Propaganda Board used a wide range of modernist aesthetics and techniques of mass communication in order to create new national traditions and cultural forms. Behind the rhetoric of a return to a “genuinely Portuguese” spirit there was a modern process of re-codification of selected elements from rural folklore for urban audiences.<sup>19</sup>

In this context, what form did amusement parks adopt? How did they relate to the aesthetics of fascist modernity? What was their place in Lisbon’s geographies of leisure? In order to answer these questions, we study the three amusement parks created in Lisbon in the decade following the institutionalization of the Estado Novo. We analyze their different urban inscription and their different regimes of pleasure, which we understand, with Tony Bennett, as “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>20</sup> The first section of the chapter deals with the Luna Parque, an amusement park associated with an international and modernist rhetoric. It was created by private initiative in 1933

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<sup>16</sup> Victoria de Grazia. *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005). See also: Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes. *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Fernando Rosas. *O Estado Novo nos anos 30, 1928-1938* (Lisboa: Estampa, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Saraiva, *Fascist Pigs*; Tiago Saraiva and Marta Macedo, eds. *Capital científica: Práticas da ciência em Lisboa e a história contemporânea de Portugal* (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Alves, *Arte popular*.

<sup>20</sup> Bennett, “Hegemony”, 136.

and stayed for three summers at the Eduardo VII Park, at the end of the Liberdade avenue. The second section analyzes the amusement parks directly or indirectly organized by the fascist state. It takes us first to the neighbourhood of Belém, where technological fun coexisted with the exhibitionary climax of Salazarism at the 1940 Exhibition of the Portuguese World. Then it finally moves to the Palhavã area, close to the expansion district of the Avenidas Novas (New Avenues), where the Feira Popular (Popular Fair) was created in 1943. Rhetorically presented as a restoration of the old traditional fairs, it served in its early years as a showcase for government corporatist institutions, and its mechanical rides marked several generations of Lisboners.

### **Luna Parque (Eduardo VII Park, 1933-1935)**

The first amusement park in Lisbon was placed at the Eduardo VII Park, at the top of the Liberdade avenue. Built in the 1880s as part of the symbolic and material construction of the capitalist city, this Haussmanian boulevard quickly became a space of bourgeois leisure.<sup>21</sup> In the 1930s, it was a central artery in the axis connecting the Terreiro de Paço (next to the Tagus river) to the Avenidas Novas neighbourhood (at that time still under construction). This axis hosted the dwellings of the middle and upper classes and most of the political and economic institutions. The upper segment of the axis, the Chiado-Restauradores-Liberdade avenue, was where the elegant cinemas, theaters and opera halls were located, but it was also the space of Bohemian night leisure.<sup>22</sup> This urban axis was surrounded by popular neighbourhoods, while the factories and the industrial working class neighbourhoods stretched along the riverside.<sup>23</sup>

During its first half century of existence, the Eduardo VII Park was a wide non-urbanized space near the dense city center. It played, however, a key role not only as a strategic place in the military uprisings of the period but also as a space for temporary events such as official parades, fairs and exhibitions.<sup>24</sup> In 1898, the top of the Liberdade avenue hosted a big fair commemorating the “Portuguese discovery” of the sea route to

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<sup>21</sup> Marta Macedo. “Engenheiros e capital: Crédito e ciência na Escola Politécnica e na Escola do Exército,” in *Capital científica: Práticas da ciência em Lisboa e a história contemporânea de Portugal*, eds. Tiago Saraiva and Marta Macedo (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2019), 45-80.

<sup>22</sup> Margarida Acciaiuoli. *Os cinemas de Lisboa: Um fenómeno urbano do século XX* (Lisboa: Bizâncio, 2013b).

<sup>23</sup> For a more nuanced account of this schematic tripartite socio-geography of the city, see: Rosas, *Lisboa revolucionária*, 18-37.

<sup>24</sup> Rosas, *Lisboa revolucionária*.

India. The Feira Franca, as it was called, featured human zoos, regional music, light shows and even freak performances with trained fleas.<sup>25</sup> Some years later, technological fun made its presence felt in the Eduardo VII Park. In the summers between 1908 and 1915, in the August Fair, Lisboners could attend animatograph sessions, eat typical oily *farturas*, and also experience the kinesthetic joy of an electric carousel, a big toboggan or a scenic railway.<sup>26</sup> In 1926 the Eduardo VII Park was also the chosen location for the largest roller coaster that had been installed in the city until then.<sup>27</sup>

In 1932 and 1933 the Eduardo VII Park hosted the Portuguese Industrial Exhibition. It was organized by the Portuguese Industrial Association (*Associação Industrial Portuguesa*), the main industrialists' association of the country. Led by engineer José Maria Alvares, it represented an influential economic sector that was waging a battle for political hegemony with the large agricultural landowners.<sup>28</sup> As many other industrial exhibitions, the goal was to promote national industry, colonial products and a techno-nationalist identity.<sup>29</sup> The Exhibition took place at the Palace of Exhibitions as well as at temporary industrial and commercial stands. The visitors were to be reminded of the “modernity” of the metropolis through the contrast between the machines on display and the crafts of the inhabitants of a tribal village from Guinea, which were exhibited as a human zoo.<sup>30</sup>

This was the spatial and ideological context in which the Luna Parque opened its doors as part of the second season of the Exhibition. The City Council leased 15.000 square meters of the Eduardo VII Park to the company Sociedade de Diversões, which had been created for the purpose. In turn, the company had to urbanize the area, pay a percentage of the revenue, and instal mechanical rides “of a modern and artistic aspect”.<sup>31</sup> Two of the three stockholders were engineers: António Branco Cabral, who held high

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<sup>25</sup> José Augusto França. *Lisboa 1898. Estudo de factos socioculturais* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1997), 43-99.

<sup>26</sup> Mário Costa. *Feiras e outros divertimentos populares de Lisboa: histórias, figuras, usos e costumes*. (Lisboa: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1950), 191-200.

<sup>27</sup> “Montanha Russa, Parque Eduardo VII, 1926”, PT/AMLSB/CB/14/02/534, Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa.

<sup>28</sup> Rosas, *O Estado Novo*.

<sup>29</sup> “Uma grande parada...,” 1932; “A grande Exposição...,” 1932.

<sup>30</sup> Luiz Castellão. *Grande Exposição Industrial Portuguesa: Roteiro 1932-1933 (2º ciclo)* (Lisboa: Grande Exposição Industrial Portuguesa, 1933). On human zoos, see: Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, Eric Deroo, and Sandrine Lemaire, eds. *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> “Condições a que deve obedecer a concessão...,” *Boletim da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, 336, June 15, 1933, 13-16.

responsibilities at the Portuguese Railway Company, and José Belard da Fonseca, who specialized in construction with reinforced concrete. The third stockholder was the building contractor Amadeu Gaudêncio.<sup>32</sup> The economic success of the 1933 season made the Sociedade de Diversões to ask for a renewal of the concession.<sup>33</sup> In 1934, the direction of the company partnered with show business entrepreneur Ricardo Covões. He was the owner of the famous and eclectic Coliseu dos Recreios, which programmed cinema, opera, boxing, mesmerizing spectacles, and even automobile shows.<sup>34</sup>

The promoters held influent economic and civic positions. Politically, they ranged from the more conservative liberal sector of the regime to democratic republican positions. Branco Cabral, for example, did not hide his pro-Allied leanings during an investigation by the political police in 1940 under the accusation of defaming the Army. But at the same time, he invoked in his defense his commitment to the Estado Novo and his familiar connections with key figures of the government.<sup>35</sup> Ricardo Covões was a prominent republican who had been private secretary to former president of the Republic Bernardino Machado, who went into exile after having been overthrown by the military coup of 1926. The ongoing political relationship with Machado and his little sympathy for the Portuguese dictatorship (and for Italian fascism) also caused him troubles with the police in the 1930s.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Sociedade de Diversões, Limitada,” *Diário do Governo*, III Série, 132, June 9, 1933, 1082. Belard da Fonseca was a representative for the construction companies at the Corporative Chamber (1935-1942), director of the Superior Technical Institute (1942-1958) and president of the Portuguese Engineering Association (1947-1950). Gaudêncio, who is remembered as a republican, an atheist and a mason, became a major player in the (literal) construction of the regime after founding his own company in 1935.

<sup>33</sup> “Concedendo licença à Sociedade de Diversões Ltda,” *Boletim da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, 363, December 22, 1933, 22-25.

<sup>34</sup> Ricardo Covões. *O cinquentenário do Coliseu dos Recreios* (Lisboa: Tip. Freitas Brito, 1940).

<sup>35</sup> “Processo do engenheiro António Branco Cabral,” 13 July 1940, Arquivo Histórico Militar, PT/AHM/FO/033/1/478/2957.

<sup>36</sup> Ricardo Covões to Bernardino Machado, October 4, 1932, Documentos Bernardino Machado, folder 07016.030, Arquivo da Fundação Mário Soares; Ricardo Covões to Bernardino Machado, October 31, 1932, Documentos Bernardino Machado, folder 07016.037, Arquivo da Fundação Mário Soares); Covões, *O cinquentenário*, 81.





Figure 14.1. The Eduardo VII Park in 1934: Aerial view. Photograph by José Pedro Pinheiro Corrêa (above); Close-up of the roller coaster Vertigo. Photograph by Judah Benoliel (below).

When the Luna Parque was inaugurated in July 1933, it featured many imported rides installed by local workers under the direction of German and Portuguese engineers.<sup>37</sup> In an atmosphere marked by the light of 20.000 electric bulbs, the smell of a 15-meter-high perfumed light fountain, and the “noise of the powerful machinery of the rides and the constant twittering of the crowd”, the thousands of visitors at the Luna Parque immersed themselves in a multi-sensory experience: they could loudly scream in a bumper car, nervously laugh in a water-chute, experience the thrilling emotion of turning around in a carousel, or feel the suspense of seeing an acrobatic motorbike in the Wall of Death.<sup>38</sup> In the 1934 season, the most remarkable novelties were the 650-meter roller coaster Zig-Zag Vertigo. That year, the public could also enjoy the Whip, a famous thrill ride consisting in a string of wagons following a track, patented by the “amusement inventor” William F. Mangels and first installed in Coney Island. One could also get dizzy at the flying stairs, travel in the haunted train, or slide in the toboggan.<sup>39</sup>

In 1935 new rides such as gasoline-powered boats and a carousel with simulated planes, which was pompously described as a “colossal work of engineering”, joined old favourites as the bumper cars or the Wall of Death.<sup>40</sup> Still another novelty was the Automobile Tour of Portugal, a 200-meter racetrack for gasoline-powered miniature cars. According to the *Daily News* “Everyone can be a ‘chauffeur’, with no need of special licenses [...] and without worrying about danger”.<sup>41</sup> These simulation rides not only offered the thrill of speed, but represented a ludic way of negotiating risk and familiarizing the population with large socio-technical systems that were in expansion at that time.<sup>42</sup>

All these attractions co-existed with a varied offer of non-mechanical fun: fortune-tellers, illusionists, music orchestras, shooting galleries, live animals carousels or natural “monsters” such as a 700-kilograms turtle captured at Costa de Caparica, near Lisbon.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> “É preciso ministrar...,” *Indústria Portuguesa* 65 (1933): 26. The German connection went perhaps through architect Moritz Ernst Lesser, who had a share of the company’s initial capital by delegation of Branco Cabral (“Sociedade de Diversões, Limitada,” *Diário do Governo*, III Série, 132, June 9, 1933, 1082). Lesser, who was a Jew, was forced to exile and moved to Lisbon in 1934.

<sup>38</sup> “O Luna Parque será...,” *Diário de Lisboa*, July 3, 1933, 5; “Inaugurou-se...,” *Notícias Ilustrado*, July 9, 1933, 12-13.

<sup>39</sup> “Luna-Parque...,” *Diário de Lisboa*, 20 June 1934, 2; “O Luna Parque foi...,” *Diário de Notícias*, June 8, 1934, 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, June 5, 1935, 5.

<sup>41</sup> “O automobilismo ao alcance de todos...,” *Diário de Notícias*, June 19, 1935, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Mohun, 2013a; Luísa Sousa. *A mobilidade automóvel em Portugal, 1920-1950* (Lisboa: Chiado Editora, 2016).

<sup>43</sup> *Diário de Lisboa*, September 7, 1934, 2 [advertisement].

Actually, the main attraction of the summer nights at the Luna Parque were perhaps its many open-air restaurants, cafés and bars. People could eat an ice cream at the Inuit Stall, have dinner at the House of Seafood or hear fado stars at the fancy *Retiro da Severa*, which recreated a picturesque nineteenth-century tavern.<sup>44</sup>

The Luna Parque presented itself and was portrayed in the press under a “modernizing” rhetoric.<sup>45</sup> The name itself, after the original in Coney Island, emphasized the foreign origin of the attractions and was described as “as a magic evocation” reminiscent of “movement, modern vibration, true cosmopolitanism”.<sup>46</sup> A chronicle in the *Daily News* praised the opportunity that Lisboners now could have fun “in contact with civilization and modern progress” as it should be the case for “a European city like ours”.<sup>47</sup> Along the same lines, an advertisement in the *Lisbon Daily* claimed, that it was “a duty of civilized people to go to the Luna Parque”.<sup>48</sup>

But who actually went to the Luna Parque? What was its place in the urban geographies of leisure? When the Luna Parque was already closed after its first season, an article in the *Lisbon Daily* made an informal survey of the leisure on a Sunday in the city. On 5 November, more than 80.000 Lisboners had paid for entertainment: basically football (35.000), cinema (22.000), theater (15.000), bullfighting (7.500) and circus (3.000). Many others enjoyed free entertainments or meals in sport and neighbourhood associations. The article also mentioned the amusement park as part of the commodified leisure in Lisbon: “[people strolling in the avenues] contented themselves to look at the others, the passing cars, the Eduardo VII Park, (...) the palisade of the Luna Parque, that fantastic and fairy world of illusion, where there is always an implacable door or an implacable doorman that interdicts the entrance to those who do not present the magic ticket”.<sup>49</sup>

While the “magic ticket” excluded the poorest and the lower working classes, we should assume a certain degree of social heterogeneity. The standard entrance fee was 2,5 *escudos*), and when the season was already advanced there were “Popular Nights” in

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<sup>44</sup> “Os recantos do Luna Park,” *Notícias Ilustrado*, August 12, 1934..

<sup>45</sup> See, among many other examples, the advertisements published in: *Diário de Notícias*, June 15, 1933, 3; June 30, 1933, 3; June 9, 1934, 11.

<sup>46</sup> “Lisboa vai ter...,” *Diário de Lisboa*, June 13, 1933, 5; “Lisboa cosmopolita...,” *Diário de Notícias*, June 5, 1935, 5.

<sup>47</sup> “Abriu hoje o Luna...,” *Diário de Notícias*, June 1, 1935, 5.

<sup>48</sup> “Ir ao Luna Parque,” *Diário de Lisboa*, August 26, 1935, 2.

<sup>49</sup> “Domingo de sol!” *Diário de Lisboa*, November 6, 1933, 4.

which the public could get in for just 1,5 *escudos*. It was not extremely expensive: during the 1930s, a litre of wine and the cheapest tramway ticket costed about 0,5 *escudos*, a coffee was 0,80 *escudos* and a film at a *chic* cinema 3,5 *escudos*.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the company Sociedade de Diversões had to give 1.000 tickets to the City Council each week to be distributed among schools, charity institutions, and district councils.<sup>51</sup> However, the prices of the attractions (the price of the water-chute, for example, was 2 *escudos*),<sup>52</sup> and the fact that the Luna Parque was advertised as being free of “that danger of mixtures from which our best public instinctively runs away”, show that it was mainly addressed to the middle and upper classes.<sup>53</sup> The High-Life section of the *Lisbon Daily* listed the names of the distinguished ladies and gentlemen of the urban elite that attended “the most chic and civilized entertainment venue of the capital” during the “Fashion Nights”.<sup>54</sup>

This can be illustrated with an article published by the *Lisbon Daily* on 9 July 1933, which reproduced the reactions of playwright João Bastos to a visit to the newly inaugurated Luna Parque. Bastos was expecting a “Lona Parque”, that is “just another of those bric-a-brac fairs to which we are used” (“lona” means a cheap and perhaps shabby canvas in Portuguese). But he was surprised to find an atmosphere that led him to believe that Lisbon would soon have “the aspect of the great European capitals”. The article described an enthusiastic public made, among others, of young kids from sports clubs and high schools, well-to-do foreign citizens living in the coastal town of Cascais, and “the names of our best aristocracy, high finance, politics, industry and arts”. The article also makes a special emphasis on the fact that the Luna Parque was “a place where half of Lisbon was introduced to the other half”, highlighting the massive attendance of women.<sup>55</sup>

The Luna Parque’s promotional rhetoric and iconography, as well as the press coverage, reflect ongoing redefinitions of urban middle and upper class femininity. In line with Bastos’ opinion, another (male) journalist argued that the Luna Parque showed how “our women, so defamed by foreigners and nationals, do not acquiesce to remain

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<sup>50</sup> José Augusto França. *O Ano X, Lisboa 1936. Estudo de factos socioculturais* (Lisboa: Presença, 2010), 282 and 291; João Nêu. *Em volta da Torre de Belém. Vol III* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2006), 302.

<sup>51</sup> “Condições a que deve obedecer a concessão...,” *Boletim da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa* 336, June 15, 1933, 15.

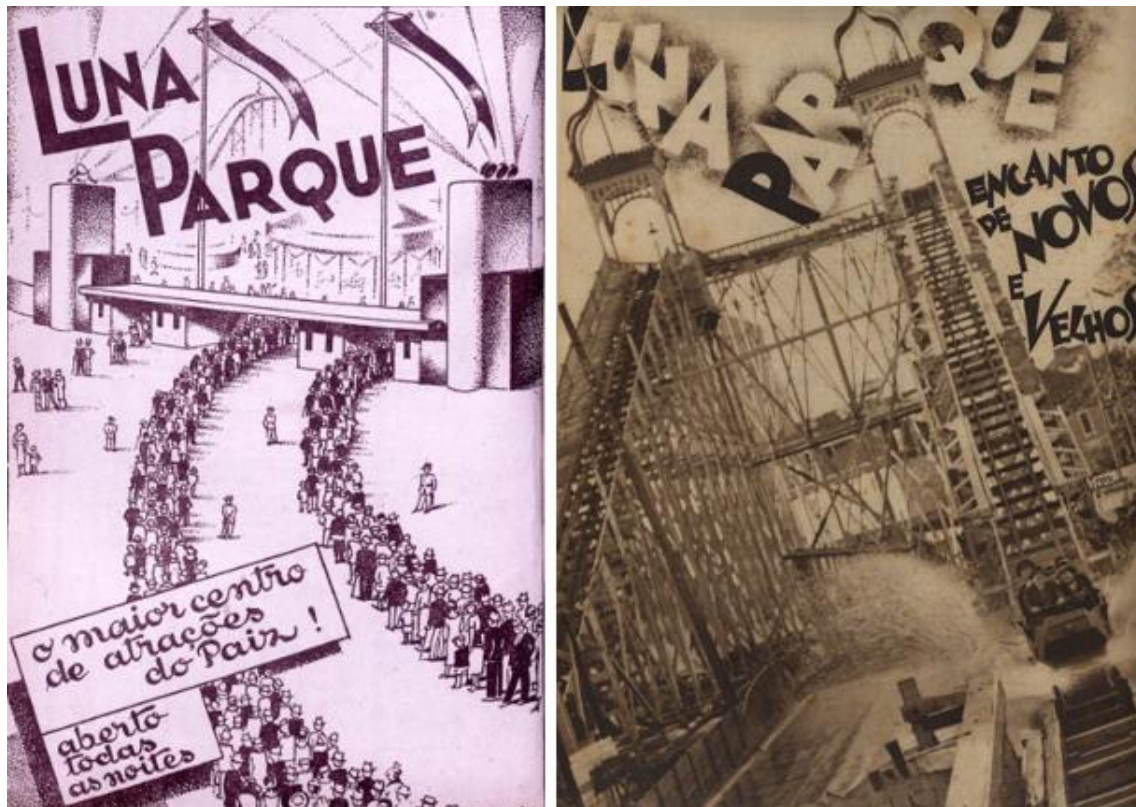
<sup>52</sup> “As Aventuras do Quim e do Manecas,” *Diário de Lisboa*, August 22, 1933, 3.

<sup>53</sup> “Lisboa vai ter...,” *Diário de Lisboa*, June 13, 1933, 5.

<sup>54</sup> “A verbena de amanhã...,” *Diário de Lisboa*, September 17, 1935, 3; *Diário de Lisboa*, June 21, 1935, 2 [advertisement].

<sup>55</sup> “O Luna Parque...,” *Diário de Lisboa*, July 9, 1933, 4.

perpetually doing tricot at home and demand their share of air, light and movement”.<sup>56</sup> A 1933 promotional film about the Portuguese Industrial Exhibition ended with a close-up of six young actresses with stylish haircuts shouting and laughing while they descended the water-chute.<sup>57</sup> The big promotional poster depicted in Figure 2 went even further in selling the amusement park as a space in which sensuality could be explored through technology. The thighs under the flying skirt of the girl in the first row, the kinesthetic exhilaration of her body, abandoned to the sensation of freedom enhanced by the mechanical power of the water-chute, as well as the flirting in the second row, do not seem to be in line with the hegemonic ideals of femininity promoted by the regime. The Salazarist gender ideals encouraged Catholic virtues and domestic roles for the “New Woman” at the service of the “New State”, but also feminine sport, movement and authoritarian *joie de vivre*.<sup>58</sup>



<sup>56</sup> “Lisboa vai ter...,” *Diário de Lisboa*, June 13, 1933, 5.

<sup>57</sup> “O Adivinhão Topa-Tudo” (1933), Promotional Documentary, 35mm, 22 min, directed by Aníbal Conreiras, Filmes Castello Lopes, Arquivo da Cinemateca Portuguesa, ID: CP-MC: 7000182.

<sup>58</sup> These ideals crystallized in the creation of the Feminine Portuguese Youth in 1937: Pimentel, *História das organizações*; Irene Flunser Pimentel. *Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina* (Lisboa: A Esfera dos Livros, 2007).

Figure 14.2. Different advertisements at the Luna Parque: Thrill and gendered emotions (left) along with order and mass entertainment (right; drawing by Emmerico Nunes, illustrator and later team member of the National Propaganda Board).

An effort was made, however, to highlight the respectability of the Luna Park. The emphasis on its cosmopolitan character was always coupled with a rhetoric welcoming “healthy modernism” and amusement parks as salutary social balsams for urban populations.<sup>59</sup> Free Sunday matinées, for example, were regularly organized for children and families. The *Lisbon Daily* highlighted the importance of bringing young people to the “open air” to enjoy the “naïve fun” of the Luna Parque.<sup>60</sup> Actually, the open spaces, the familiar public and the relatively expensive mechanical rides served to demarcate the Luna Parque from other geographically close but more morally suspect nocturnal spaces of leisure, such as the Parque Mayer.

Located close to the Liberdade avenue, the Parque Mayer was a space of mass entertainment that brought together bohemians, intellectuals, journalists, the underworld and the middle class. It was mainly known as the mecca of vaudeville shows (*revista*), but it also featured carousels, skating rings, illegal gambling, box, or jazz music.<sup>61</sup> The thigh of a girl riding the water-chute of the Luna Parque seemed to be more respectable than the thigh of the vedettes of the Parque Mayer, who were sometimes the target of Catholic fundamentalists. The author of a 1937 pamphlet condemned it as a space of depravation and concealed prostitution, and argued that it should be “set on fire for humanity’s sake”.<sup>62</sup> The fire would have also burned many mechanical rides, as they were very common in the Parque Mayer. In November 1934, for example, some of the attractions of the amusement park at the Porto Colonial Exhibition were transferred to the Parque Mayer.<sup>63</sup> They stayed there, at much lower prices, until they were transferred to the Luna Parque in April 1935.<sup>64</sup> The very same bumper cars, gasoline-powered boats,

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<sup>59</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, June 11, 1935, 2.

<sup>60</sup> “A alegria nocturna...,” *Diário de Lisboa*, June 15, 1933, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Daniel Melo. “As marchas populares: A encenação da cidade de Lisboa,” in *Vozes do Povo: A Folclorização em Portugal*, eds. Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco and Jorge Freitas Branco (Oeiras: Celta Editora, 2003a), 307-321. On the night clubs spiced up by jazz, gambling and cocaine consumption, in the Chiado-Restauradores-Avenida axis, see: Cecília Vaz. *Clubes nocturnos modernos em Lisboa: Sociabilidade, diversão e transgressão, 1917-1927* (MA diss.) (Lisboa: ICSTE, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> Z. Lerbak. *Parque Mayer, em chamas* (Lisboa: Edição do autor, 1937), 16.

<sup>63</sup> The Porto Colonial Exhibition included a roller coaster, a haunted train, bumper cars and automobile-boats. “Atrás do Reposteiro,” *Diário de Lisboa*, November 29, 1934, 2; “Do sucesso da exposição,” *Ultramamar*, October 15, 1934, 8.

<sup>64</sup> “Últimos dias das diversões mecánicas no Parque Mayer,” *Diário de Lisboa*, April 14, 1935, 8.

and motorbike round racetracks were enjoyed in all three spaces, with their different regimes of pleasure, institutional settings, urban inscription, aesthetic features, prices and publics.

The mechanized amusement of the Luna Parque also coexisted spatially with state-regulated fun linked to the process of (re)invention of an folkloric tradition for Lisbon. In June 1934 and 1935, the City Council organized a cultural program for the Festivities of the City which included historicist and nationalist parades, as well as the *Marchas Populares*, a dancing contest among different neighbourhoods of the city. The first edition of the *Marchas Populares* was organized in 1932 at the Parque Mayer by journalist, playwright, and filmmaker José Leitão de Barros. He was the director of the *Illustrated News*, and eventually became, as we describe in the next section, a key actor in the creation of the Feira Popular. In 1934 the *Marchas Populares* were appropriated by the City Council, which codified and supervised in a strict way the dresses, the lyrics and all the details of the contest.<sup>65</sup> In the sentimental landscapes of many Lisboners, the memories of the Luna Parque must have been seamlessly tied to the *Marchas Populares*. On 9 June 1935, for example, the parade started in the Terreiro do Paço near the river, went up the Liberdade avenue and arrived near midnight at the lower part of the Eduardo VII Park. The crowd spent the night around (and inside) the Luna Parque.<sup>66</sup> Three days later, the day of Saint Anthony [the patron saint of the city], a crowd gathered to see the fireworks over the Tagus river from the Luna Parque.<sup>67</sup> According to the press, the Luna Parque was one of the most frequented spots during these celebrations.<sup>68</sup>

The next year, however, after three summers of being part of the trendiest Lisbon nights, the Luna Parque did not open its doors. In March 1936, the company Sociedade de Diversões asked for a renewal of the contract, expired in September 1935, but it was never granted by the City Council.<sup>69</sup> There is an eloquent silence in the press. The only mentions to the Luna Parque seem to be depreciative. The *Lisbon Daily* praised instead the Algés Fair, located that year in the western outskirts of the city. It was described as a revival of the old August Fair, even though it featured a racetrack which was perhaps the one that had been at the Luna Parque the previous year. The journal added that the Algés

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<sup>65</sup> Melo, “As marchas populares”.

<sup>66</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, June 10, 1935, 6.

<sup>67</sup> *Diário de Lisboa*, June 13, 1935, 2 [advertisement].

<sup>68</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, June 13, 1935, 5.

<sup>69</sup> “Sociedade de Diversões Lda. dispensada do pagamento...,” *Boletim da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa*, 483, March 19, 1936, 20.

Fair would become “the shelter of all the population of Lisbon during the coming midsummer heat, since nothing entertaining exists in the city after the fatiguing and useless attempt of the Luna Parque”.<sup>70</sup>

The silence of the sources forbids a detailed reconstruction of the reasons behind the end of the Luna Parque, but several relevant factors can be identified. The drums of war in Europe, as well as the victory in February of the Popular Front in Spain, led to the ideological and repressive hardening of the regime. In April 1936, the Fascist youth organization *Mocidade Portuguesa* and the Tarrafal concentration camp in Cabo Verde were created.<sup>71</sup> In this context, the new plans for the Eduardo VII Park did not include technological fun. On May 28th a commemorative official exhibition was inaugurated there on the occasion of the ten years of the establishment of the dictatorship. The contiguity of the exhibition with the Luna Parque was most likely seen as not adequate, in a context in which even the Festivities of the City had been cancelled in order to avoid large concentrations of people and to focus on the cultural and political program around the anniversary.<sup>72</sup>

Also, in June 1936, the press announced as imminent the project of enlarging the Liberdade avenue and monumentalizing the Eduardo VII Park. The debate on whether the Eduardo VII Park should be the green closing of the Liberdade avenue or the beginning of its future expansion had been going on for decades. Architect Luís Cristino da Silva, who had advocated for the second option since the early 1930s, advanced with a project to turn the Eduardo VII park into a monumental glorification of the regime, including a huge Triumphal Arch, gardens, canals and buildings that were to host several museums.<sup>73</sup> This grand project never took place, and it took several years until the final project by architect Francisco Keil do Amaral was approved and implemented. Yet the Luna Parque disappeared in the meantime.

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<sup>70</sup> “A Feira Franca de Algés inaugura-se amanhã,” *Diário de Lisboa*, July 28, 1936, 4.

<sup>71</sup> The fascination with the summer of 1936 as a crucial moment in Portuguese history can be seen in three well-known novels in which the city of Lisbon is one of the main characters: Jorge de Sena. *Sinais de fogo* (Lisboa: Edições 70, 1979); José Saramago. *O ano da morte de Ricardo Reis* (Lisboa: Caminho, 1984); Antonio Tabucchi. *Sostiene Pereira* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1994).

<sup>72</sup> On Lisbon in 1936 and the exhibition, see: França, *O Ano X*, (esp. pp. 479-488).

<sup>73</sup> “O prolongamento da Avenida,” *Diário de Notícias*, June 3, 1936, 1; “Lisboa, Capital do Imperio,” *Diário de Notícias*, June 4, 1936, 1. Curiously enough, Cristino da Silva had designed an impressive art deco entrance and a path-breaking modernist Capitólio Theatre for the Parque Mayer in 1931.



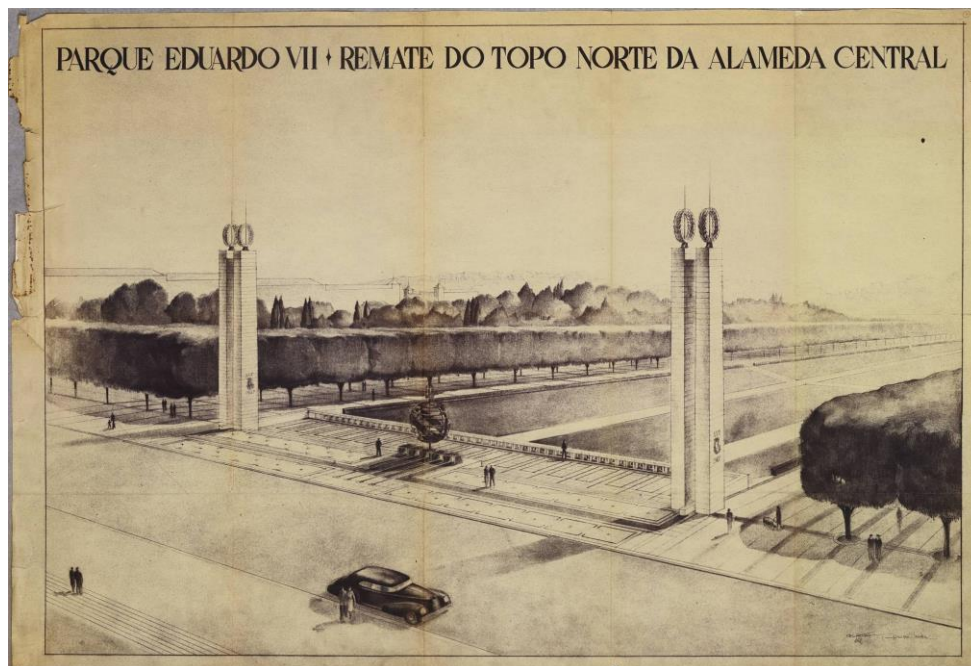
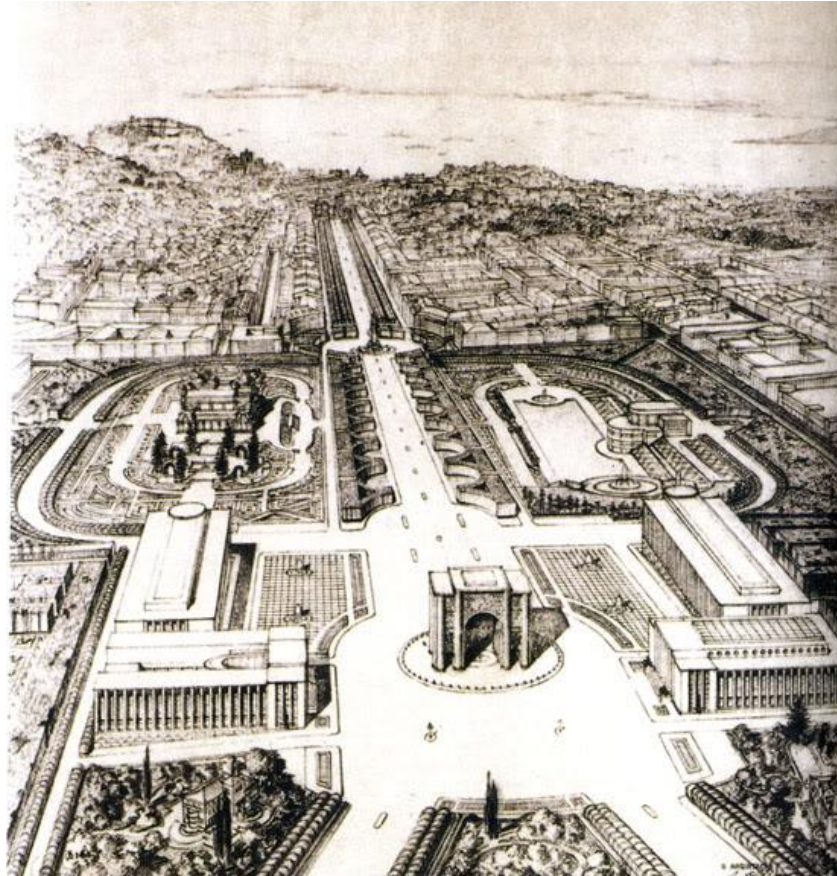


Figure 14.3. Fascist echoes and national grandeur in the urbanization of the Eduardo VII Park: Project by L. Cristino da Silva, 1936 (above) and project by F. Keil do Amaral, [c.1948] (below).

It is difficult to settle to what extent the end of the Luna Parque was fundamentally related to financial, political or urban planning reasons. While the Luna Parque had not been promoted by the state, nor was it aligned with the officialist discourses, nothing indicates that the regime explicitly wanted to wipe it off from the face of Lisbon. It is worth to mention, for example, that the inauguration of the 1934 season was attended by the Minister of the Navy, the Navy General Commander, the Civil Governor, the Police Commander, the Censorship Inspector, and representatives of the City Council.<sup>74</sup> Yet, the transformation of the Eduardo VII Park into a solemn space of exaltation of the fascist “national revolution” did not seem to match with the “international attractions” promoted by liberal and republican engineers and entrepreneurs. As the next section makes clear, however, it would be wrong to conclude that mechanical rides as such were incompatible with the cultural policies of Portuguese fascism, since the two amusement parks that were created in Lisbon after the Luna Parque were either officially organized or had full official support.

### **Amusement Park of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World (Belém, 1940) and Feira Popular (Palhavã, 1943)**

In 1940 Salazar's dictatorship commemorated the centenaries of the “foundation” and “restoration” of Portugal through the Exhibition of the Portuguese World, which became the most ambitious showcase of Portuguese fascism and its imperial project.<sup>75</sup> The exhibition was located in the Western outskirts of the city, next to the impressive Jerónimos Monastery and the Belém Tower. These monuments of the sixteenth century marked the place from which the caravels set sail to India and America. In the early twentieth century, however, the Belém area was a Lisbon's industrial neighbourhood with a landscape made of workshops, storehouses, and working-class housing.<sup>76</sup> The 1940 Exhibition was the turning point for transforming Belém into what Elsa Peralta has analyzed as a “memory complex”, an urban space that materializes to this day a nation-

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<sup>74</sup> “O Luna Parque foi ontem visitado...,” *Diário de Notícias*, June 7, 1934, 1.

<sup>75</sup> Acciaiuoli, *Exposições*; David Corkill and Carlos Almeida. “Commemoration and Propaganda in Salazar's Portugal: The Mundo Português Exposition of 1940,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 44, no. 3 (2009): 381-399. On international exhibitions around World War II, see: Robert Kargon, Karen Fiss, Morris Low, and Arthur Molella. *World's Fairs on the Eve of War: Science, Technology and Modernity, 1937-1942* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2015).

<sup>76</sup> Ana Martins Barata. “A ordenação do espaço litoral de Lisboa, 1860-1940,” *Scripta Nova* XIII, 296, no.4 (2009) (<http://www.ub.edu/geocrit/sn/sn-296/sn-296-4.htm>; last accessed: 15 May 2019).

building mythology around the imperialist echoes of the so-called Portuguese Discoveries.<sup>77</sup> The head of the National Propaganda Board António Ferro, architect Cottinelli Telmo and the other members of the Commission for the Commemoration of the Centenaries sought to materialize the “politics of spirit” through a monumental architecture combining historicism and a remarkable modernist interior design. The folklorist displays about arts and crafts in Portugal and the reconstruction of villages from all over the country presented a sanitized notion of popular culture. The Exhibition also featured medievalist parades with knights, heralds and trumpets as well as the “Nau Portugal”, a replica of a ship from the “golden ages” of the sea route to India. The Colonial Garden included embalmed wild animals, Fula women, drummers from Quinungo, native huts, handlooms and other craft technologies from the Portuguese colonies.<sup>78</sup>

In parallel, modern technology also played a role. Aerial railways, electric trains, and light fountains were part of the technological entertainment at the Exhibition, which according to the organizers was “an assertion of national technique”.<sup>79</sup> The company Electro-Reclamo displayed the “secrets of modern luminotechnics”, while Phillips Portuguesa managed a network of one hundred megaphones reproducing music and information.<sup>80</sup> Within the medieval-style houses of the Industrial and Commercial Neighborhood, there were not just old fishermen repairing fishing nets and women cross-stitching, but also engineering companies. The Pavilion of Telecommunications displayed “the lyricism of the technique and the poetry of progress,” the main electrical companies popularized those technologies that “dissipate darkness,” and the oil company SACOR introduced the visitor to the future oil refinery in Cabo Ruivo, in the eastern outskirts of Lisbon.<sup>81</sup>

Technological fun was also part of the huge fascist spectacle of the Exhibition of

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<sup>77</sup> Elsa Peralta. “A composição de um complexo de memória: O caso de Belém, Lisboa,” in *Cidade e império: Dinâmicas coloniais e reconfigurações pós-coloniais*, eds. Elsa Peralta and Nuno Domingos, 361-407 (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2013)-

<sup>78</sup> See the chapter by Cláudia Castelo in this volume.

<sup>79</sup> “A Exposição do Mundo Português será uma afirmação de técnica nacional,” *Revista dos Centenários* 6 (1939): 11-17; Manel Melo. “A Exposição do Mundo Português,” *Boletim da Ordem dos Engenheiros* 48 (1940): 441-473. See: Nuno Madureira. *A economia dos interesses. Portugal entre guerras* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2002), 99-116 (esp. 112-113).

<sup>80</sup> António Manuel de Bivar. “A instalação de som da Exposição do Mundo Português,” *Boletim da Ordem dos Engenheiros* 48 (1940): 473-485; Barroso Ramos. “O som na Exposição Histórica do Mundo Português,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 73 (1941): 1-20 (offprint).

<sup>81</sup> “O Pavilhão das Telecomunicações...,” *Diário de Notícias*, July 20, 1940, 4; *Participação das principais empresas produtoras e distribuidoras de energia eléctrica* (Lisboa: Editorial Império, 1940), 6; “Exposição do Mundo...,” *Boletim Oficial das Juntas de Freguesia de Lisboa* 11-16 (1940): 22.

the Portuguese World, even if the amusement park occupied a peripheral position. Located in one of the corners of the Exhibition, it was relatively independent from the rest of the Exhibition. Visitors could access the amusement park either from inside the Exhibition (the general ticket including the right to access the park costed 3,5 *escudos* instead of 2,5) or directly from the outside (paying 1,5 *escudos*).<sup>82</sup> Actually, official guides usually referred to the amusement park in the last place when listing or describing the spaces and pavilions. In many short guides, souvenir pamphlets and films it was not even mentioned.



Figure 14.4. The Exhibition of the Portuguese World. Maquette (above) and map of the final project (including the amusement park in the upper left area). Drawing by Fred Kradolfer, Swiss artist and team member of the National Propaganda Board.

The architectural design of the amusement park was commissioned to Francisco Keil do Amaral, a young modernist architect who had already been behind the planning

<sup>82</sup> *Guia oficial. Exposição do Mundo Português* ([s.l., s.n.], 1940)..

of the Portuguese Pavilion in the Paris World's Fair in 1937. He was working under civil engineer Duarte Pacheco, the Mayor of Lisbon and Minister of Public Works, and was involved in the design of some of the largest green spaces in the city: the Monsanto Hill (for which forced labour of prisoners was used), the Campo Grande Park, and the Eduardo VII Park. The Eduardo VII Park was finally shaped by classical geometric lines in the central part and two tall obelisks of fascist and imperial connotations in the upper part.

In his project for the Exhibition's amusement park, Keil do Amaral combined modernist forms with circus aesthetics. He conceived a high rectangular entrance giving access to a round square with eight monoliths and a 50-meter-high captive balloon in the center.<sup>83</sup> The decoration of the monument included a mural depicting a weightlifter, a woman with a gun (ready to use it in the shooting gallery), and the winding rail of a roller coaster. Keil do Amaral also designed two one-floor modernist pavilions as a restaurant and a bar. However, this ambitious project was finally put aside by the organizing commission. The high captive balloon with its circus motifs could distort, as seen from the Empire Square, the majestic view of the symbol of the magnificence of the old Crown and of Portugal's Christian crusade: the Jerónimos Monastery.<sup>84</sup> Finally, a less spectacular proposal for the amusement park was put forward in collaboration with architect António Lino, who was already planning other leisure spaces in the Exhibition, such as the colourful Children's Playground and the neoclassical Garden of the Poets.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> “[Parque de atrações da Exposição do Mundo Português, Lisboa],” 1940, Collection “F. Keil do Amaral”, Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa.

<sup>84</sup> Joana Brites. “Arquitetura e cenografia política: o Mosteiro dos Jerónimos na Exposição do Mundo Português de 1940,” *Murphy: Revista de História e Teoria da Arquitectura e do Urbanismo* 2 (2007): 120-145, esp. 128-129. See: “Fotografias da ‘maquette’,” *Revista Oficial do Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos* 10 (1939): 280-281.

<sup>85</sup> Maps, technical drawings, and artistic drawings of the Exhibition are preserved at the Arquivo Histórico de Obras Públicas (1939-1940, Comissariado da Exposição do Mundo Português, PT/AHMOP/CEMP).

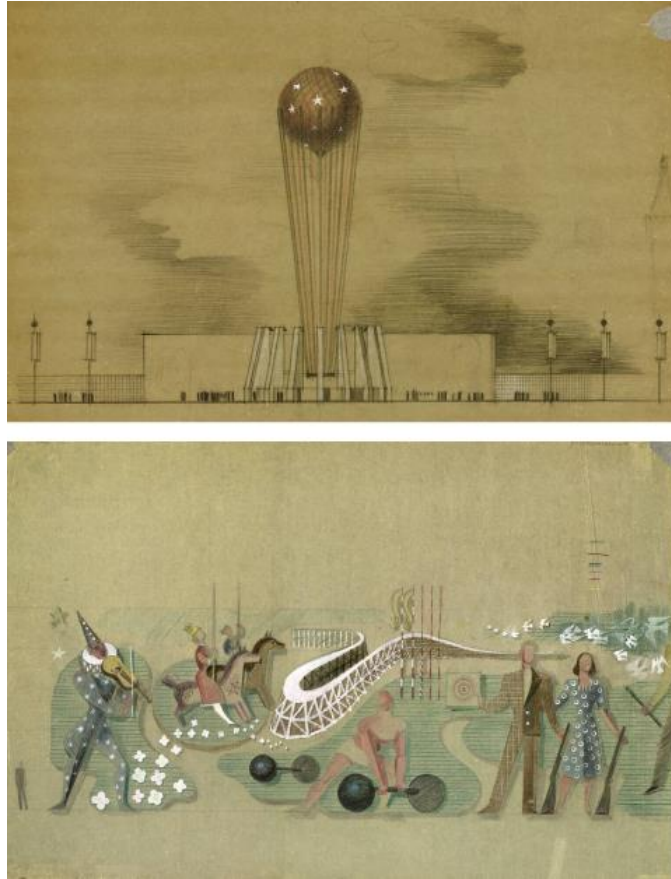


Figure 14.5. Sketches of the 1940 Exhibition of the Portuguese World: The projected captive balloon (above) and the mural decorations at the amusement park (below). Drawings by Francisco Keil do Amaral.

The expert in charge of the technical systems of the amusement park was engineer José Mendes Leal. Mendes Leal was a well-known professor at the Superior Technical Institute (*Instituto Superior Técnico*), who had campaigned for a higher political role for engineers and for practical education in engineering through well-equipped specialized workshops and the collaboration with the private sector, taking inspiration from the the United States.<sup>86</sup> The organizing commission opened a tender for the concession of the services at the amusement park, and the mechanical rides were finally rented in Milan.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> José Mendes Leal. “A moderna função social do engenheiro,” *Revista da Associação dos Engenheiros Civis Portugueses*, 639 (1927): 15-22; José Mendes Leal. “A função das oficinas do Instituto Superior Técnico,” *Técnica*, 12, no.88 (1937): 345-347. See also: Maria Fernanda Rollo and Ana Paula Pires. *Ordem dos Engenheiros. 75 anos de História: Inovação e desenvolvimento em Portugal* (Lisboa: Ingenium, 2012).

<sup>87</sup> “Informação relativa aos concursos de adjudicação...,” September 30, 1939, Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, 1932/1974 (PT/TT/SGPCM-GPC/0007-C/00005), Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo; Costa, *Feiras*, 420.

Yet just before the ship that transported the gears, rails and engines could weigh anchor in Genoa and head to Lisbon, Mussolini's government forbade Italian boats to sail in international waters: Italy had entered the war on 10 June 1940.<sup>88</sup> As a result, on 23 June the Exhibition of the Portuguese World was inaugurated without its amusement park.

Despite this initial failure, the organizers rushed to build a made-in-Portugal amusement park, and ordered against the clock new rides to Portuguese workshops.<sup>89</sup> When the amusement park was finally inaugurated on 7 August 1940, the press coverage was limited to a few lines in the advertisement section: "At 9 p.m. - Amusement Park of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World - the best rides and amusements from foreign Luna-Parks - the *Rivière Mystérieuse* stands out among them - absolutely unknown in Portugal".<sup>90</sup> In the following months, among pages with horrific war news and pictures of Hitler and Franco, advertisements of the "sensational novelties" and "world-class rides" of the "Grand Luna-Park" were regularly published. These ads were one of the few mentions to the amusement park that we have found in the press. Unlike the case of the Luna Parque at the Eduardo VII Park, the amusement park at the Exhibition of the Portuguese World seems to have been rhetorically hidden.

The silence of the press, however, did not prevent many of the three million visitors of the Exhibition from enjoying the amusement park. The visitors could access the "modern rides" that were inaugurated week after week.<sup>91</sup> At the end of August, the amusement park possessed some of the well-known standardized rides of the Luna parks around the world, such as the abovementioned Whip, the Haunted Train, a Scenic Railway, and the Devil's Wheel, electric cars, carousels... Besides, there were a number of stalls featuring lethal tropical snakes or the medium Ferdoli, not to mention fireworks, car rallies, and the open-air terrace of the Casanova Dancing Bar.<sup>92</sup>

The amusement park closed with the Exhibition on 2 December 1940, at a time of

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<sup>88</sup> Carlos Fontes. *Feira Popular de Lisboa: diversão e poder* (MA diss.) (Lisboa: ISCTE, 1999), 52; Costa, *Feiras*, 420-421.

<sup>89</sup> Costa, *Feiras*, 420. The scarcity of sources about mechanical rides in Lisbon makes the reconstruction of the making and circulation of artefacts very difficult. It might be the case that rides like the Whip and the Haunted Train at the 1940 Exhibition of the Portuguese World were the same that were featured in the Luna Parque in 1934 and 1935. Carlos Fontes suggests that there might be a connection between the rides of the amusement park at the Exhibition of the Portuguese World and the ones at the Feira Popular through the company *Sociedade Lusitana de Atracções* (Fontes, *Feira Popular*, 115).

<sup>90</sup> *Diário de Lisboa*, August 7, 1940, 2 [advertisement].

<sup>91</sup> *Guia da exposição do mundo português* ([s.l.: s.n.], 1940).

<sup>92</sup> See the advertisements published in *Diário de Notícias* (p. 3), *Diário de Lisboa* (p. 2) and *O Século* (p. 3), in August, September, and October.

the year in which open-air leisure was not very popular because of the weather. The plan was to re-open the amusement park the next summer season, but the cyclone on 15 February 1941 seems to have destroyed many of the rides and facilities.<sup>93</sup> The presence of technological fun in Belém was thus quite ephemeral, disappearing from a space that continued to represent one of the main symbolic urban inscriptions of Salazarism. But it would not take long until the mechanical rides went back to the city.

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On 10 June 1943 the Feira Popular was inaugurated in a private park in Palhavã, between the Eduardo VII Park and the bullring in Campo Pequeno. This park had hosted the Zoo between 1894 and 1905, and had afterwards been closed to the public. It is interesting to note that, after a brief presence in Belém, mechanical rides came back to the city at a location that was close to the one of the first Luna Parque. It seems as if technological fun accompanied again the urban expansion of Lisbon, moving north along the Chiado-Restauradores-Avenida axis towards the new urban centrality of the bourgeois area called Avenidas Novas (New Avenues). Avenidas Novas, had been planned following a geometrical grid in the early twentieth century and slowly implemented during the following decades.

The Feira Popular was born at the initiative of the newspaper *The Century* (*O Século*) as a way to raise funds for their Sea Summer Camp for Children. The main characters behind the idea were João Pereira da Rosa and José Leitão de Barros. Pereira da Rosa was the director of *The Century*, and had political and personal ties with Salazar. Leitão de Barros was artistic director of *The Century Illustrated* (*O Século Ilustrado*), and a key actor in creating a new folkloric tradition for Lisbon and the nation.<sup>94</sup> Besides his early Fado films and the already-mentioned involvement in the *Marchas Populares* parade at Lisbon's City Festivities, he was behind the organization of many other events, from knight tournaments at the Jerónimos Monastery in the 1930s to the Exhibition of the Portuguese World Novo in 1940 as a member of the general commissariat.<sup>95</sup> The Feira Popular was promoted as a "resurrection of the Lisbon Fairs" of the past, such as the

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<sup>93</sup> Costa, *Feiras*, 420.

<sup>94</sup> Michael Colvin. "Images of Defeat: Early Fado Films and the Estado Novo's Notion of Progress," *Portuguese Studies* 26, no.2 (2010): 149-167.

<sup>95</sup> Another member of the Executive Board of the Feira Popular, Gustavo de Matos Sequeira, had been organizer of the *Lisboa Antiga* historicist theme park in São Bento area and part of the general commissariat of the 1940 Exhibition.



Alcântara Fair or the August Fair, and must be seen as a continuation of these efforts.<sup>96</sup>

The Feira Popular had full support of the regime.<sup>97</sup> The first season in 1943 was inaugurated by the Ministers of Economy, Public Works, and the Colonies, and the 1944 season was inaugurated by the president of the Republic.<sup>98</sup> The Organisms for Economic Coordination (*Organismos de Coordenação Económica*), the General Colonial Administration (*Agência Geral das Colónias*), or the Houses of the People set up propaganda stands to praise the achievements of the autarkic and colonial policies of the corporativist regime.<sup>99</sup> The Feira Popular even became a public stage for diplomacy between the Portuguese government and its new preferred allies after 1943, when the fascist discourse was accommodated to the shifting geopolitical situation. This entailed the installation of an official pavilion of the United States and the United Kingdom, the presence of the ambassadors of both countries in the inauguration of the 1945 season, the organization of events such as homages to the Brazilian Expeditionary Corps, and the inclusion of candy bars and popcorn in the gastronomic offer of the Feira Popular through the Stall of American Specialties.<sup>100</sup>

At the Feira Popular in Palhavã, technological fun was framed within a regime of pleasure that was aligned with the ideological and aesthetic tenets of the Estado Novo. The central rhetoric of international urban modernity surrounding the Luna Parque at the Eduardo VII Park swung towards a nationalist reinvigoration of the old Lisbon fairs. The entertainment offer included the police brass band, popular orchestras, folklore performances by farmers from Alentejo region and fado (even though vaudeville and jazz were also present). One could also attend religious ceremonies, sport events, cinema, puppets, and tombolas, as well as participate in allegedly “genuine” regional festivities, with traditional food and wine stands.<sup>101</sup> There was also space for the fair shows of the “electric saw” and the “electric woman”, the display of “extravagant and curious”

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<sup>96</sup> “A Feira é reconstituição exacta das de há 50 anos e afirmação da arte moderna,” *O Século*, June 11, 1943, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Fontes, *Feira Popular*, 38.

<sup>98</sup> “Os Senhores Ministros...,” *O Século*, June 11, 1943, 1; “A Feira Popular de Lisboa...,” *O Século*, May 25, 1944, 1.

<sup>99</sup> “Os Senhores Ministro de Economia e...,” *O Século*, June 8, 1944, 1.

<sup>100</sup> “Hoje, véspera de...,” *O Século*, June 18, 1945, 2; “Os bravos soldados brasileiros...,” *O Século*, September 1, 1945, 1; “Foi uma locura...,” *O Século*, September 4, 1945, 1.

<sup>101</sup> “A Feira Popular de Lisboa foi um êxito...,” *O Século*, June 11, 1943, 1-2, 5; “Os campinos das lezírias...,” *O Século*, September 12, 1943, 1.

Portuguese inventions, and a haunted house with “prodigious mechanisms”.<sup>102</sup> In its first year of existence, the Feira Popular had few mechanical rides.

From 1944 on, however, the more picturesque fair fun was combined with a stronger emphasis on technological display and technological fun. On the one hand, a permanent trade fair with two hundred stands was organized to promote national industry and international commerce. The Feira Popular slowly became a showcase for new electric appliances and technologies of communication in Lisbon (the Radio Marconi stand, for example, was very successful).<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, a large amount of mechanical rides offered thrills to the crowds that visited the Feira Popular: a million in 1943, a million and a half in 1944, and two millions in 1945 (according to official numbers). Like the 1940 Exhibition, technological fun was never as highlighted in the promotional rhetoric. Nevertheless, mechanical rides were a key part of the Feira Popular.



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<sup>102</sup> “A grande expectativa que apaixonou Lisboa...,” *O Século*, June 9, 1943, 2; “A Feira popular...,” *O Século*, June 11, 1943, 5; “O primeiro domingo...,” *O Século*, June 14, 1943, 2; “A Feira Popular,” *O Século*, July 4, 1943, 2.

<sup>103</sup> Fontes, *Feira Popular*, 126, 131 and 224..



Figure 14.6. Fun, technology and diplomacy at the Feira Popular. New Circus (and new mechanical rides) for the New State in 1943. Photograph by Judah Benoliel (above); Members of the Portuguese government and ambassadors of allied powers right before the end of WWII (the Ferris Wheel in the upper area) (below).

A 1945 promotional documentary film allows us to have a panoramic view of the the Feira Popular.<sup>104</sup> The documentary shows a multitude of men, women and children, mostly well dressed, enjoying the kinesthetic thrills of a number of mechanical rides. One of the most popular was a locally-built Ferris Wheel, which was bombastically compared to the famous one in Vienna (despite being much lower). *The Century* also highlighted that it provided “a baptism of air, but without danger”.<sup>105</sup> Visitors could also have fun by descending a Water-Chute, riding several swing rides and merry-go-rounds, or driving gasoline boats. Women appear driving bumper cars, having a drink in taverns, and smoking in high class gala dinners. In fact, “Nights devoted to madams” were regularly organized in Pavalhã and the wives of the president of the Republic and other prominent

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<sup>104</sup> “Grande Feira Popular de Lisboa,” Documentary, Sociedade Nacional de Tipografia, 35mm, 11 minutes, 1945, Arquivo da Cinemateca Portuguesa, ID: CP-MC: 7001355.

<sup>105</sup> “Cresce cada dia o interesse...,” *O Século*, June 23, 1944, 2.

dignitaries showed up.<sup>106</sup> The short film also shows how the public visited commercial stands, official stands, or a colonialist display of dioramas of tropical landscapes, and how they enjoyed bullfighting, circus performances, dancing and fado restaurants. The co-habitation of all these elements in the same space is what characterized the particular regime of pleasure of the Feira Popular, in which the technological fun of mechanical rides was integrated into the production of popular culture by the Estado Novo.

The connection with the regime would become clearer in 1949, when the state took charge of the organization of the Feira Popular through the Lisbon Civil Government (*Governo Civil*) (the newspaper *The Century* would be back in charge in 1951). In a similar way to what happened to the *Marchas Populares* folklore parade, which were born at the initiative of a newspaper and were later organized by the City Council, the Feira Popular was nationalized and replicated. At a time of internal political tensions, the regime took on its own hands the promotion at a national level of a regime of pleasure that had been stabilized in Lisbon, and new “Feiras Populares” were inaugurated in Porto and Coimbra in 1950. The story of the Feira Popular in Lisbon in the second half of the twentieth century is still to be written. But its first years of existence already show that it played an key political role during Salazarism.

## Conclusions

A fascist Coney Island? There is not a straightforward answer to the question posed by the title of this chapter. Actually, while the expression is useful to point to the tensions between global mass culture and the cultural program of fascism, it would be misleading to answer it with a clear-cut yes or no. Like fado, football, or cinema, amusement parks should be understood as cultural and political battlegrounds. In this chapter, we have seen how the technological fun of amusement parks arrived in Lisbon under a rhetoric of international urban modernity in the early years of the Estado Novo, and how the regime attempted to frame this expression of urban mass culture along the lines of its cultural policies. The historiography of popular culture under Salazarism has rarely taken amusement parks into account, most likely because of its emphasis on state institutions as object of study and the fact that technological fun does not match the expected folklorist approach. Yet, we have shown how they played a significant role in Lisbon’s

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<sup>106</sup> *O Século*, June 12, 1943, 2; *O Século*, August 18, 1943, 2.

geographies of leisure and how they were embraced by the Estado Novo, especially with the creation of the Feira Popular in the early 1940s.

The mechanical rides circulated in Lisbon during the 1930s and 1940s in several spaces such as enclosed amusement parks, exhibitions, small fairs, or the Parque Mayer. They were very similar, sometimes even the same. But the geographical locations, the symbolic settings and the regimes of pleasure in which they were inscribed were quite different. It is through the study of these differences that we can grasp the cultural appropriation of these technologies for fun in Salazarist Lisbon. The Luna Parque was a commercial amusement park that was not promoted nor sponsored by the state, and its creation in 1933 at the Eduardo VII Park should be understood as the expression of the urban mass culture that proliferated in the Chiado-Restauradores-Avenida axis. Targeted to the middle and upper classes, the Luna Parque promoted its mechanical rides as a factor of urban modernization that would push Lisbon up the ladder of cosmopolitanism. This rhetoric, and the aesthetics and iconography that went with it, were not in line with the incipient cultural program of the Estado Novo. The kind of urban modernity represented by the Luna Parque was not aligned with that of the “politics of spirit” of the National Propaganda Board nor with that of the (re)invented urban folklore of the *City Festivities*. While the aspiration of the promoters of the Luna Parque, who mostly belonged to the more liberal sectors of the regime, was to import a standardized form of globalized mass culture (and to make money), the goal of the Estado Novo in the 1930s was to resignify elements of local culture to produce a new national approach to fascist modernity. Nonetheless, the main dissonance between the Luna Parque and Salazarism were not the mechanical rides as such, but the way they were framed in a specific regime of pleasure, which shifted in the two amusement parks organized by the regime.

Technological fun was mobilized in the 1940 Exhibition of the Portuguese World, the most ambitious fascist modernist display of Salazarism. Despite being peripheral in spatial and rhetorical terms, a big enclosed area behind the Jerónimos Monastery in Belém was devoted to an amusement park. The kinesthetic experience of visitors was now shaped by the fact that the mechanical rides were surrounded by a broad nationalist and colonialist official narrative that permeated the “memory complex” of Belém area. The fact that amusement parks did not consolidate as a business in the 1930s, made their appropriation (and monopolization) by the Estado Novo in the 1940s much easier. The creation of the Feira Popular in Palhavã in 1943, close to the expanding neighbourhood

of the Avenidas Novas, represented the officially-sanctioned appropriation of amusement parks by the Estado Novo. The Feira Popular should be understood in relation to the process of (re)inventing traditions for Lisbon. Just like the *Marchas Populares* attempted to restore an alleged folkloric tradition of old neighbourhoods, the Feira Popular was promoted as a return to traditional Portuguese fairs. Both cases were closely connected through the participation of the same actors, like José Leitão de Barros, and we are in front of new cultural forms. The Feira Popular was a hybrid that mixed within the same space historicist aesthetics, folkloric shows, propaganda stands of corporativist and colonial state institutions, national and international novelties of an industrial fair, diplomatic events and geopolitical showcases, and, of course, the thrills of mechanical rides. Technological fun helped in making the Feira Popular extremely successful in terms of assistance and to become a privileged space for the regime to attempt to reproduce its changing conceptions of the popular culture and urban modernity.

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