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PROJECTS OF TOURIST-AMUSEMENT PARKS: “BELGRADE’S DISNEYLAND”

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Abstract. Throughout history, the development of entertainment spaces has been intertwined with, and at times even ahead of, changes in the domain of industrial development and modern technologies as well as in the domain of society, urban culture and leisure behavior patterns, driven by both their organizational and aesthetic characteristics. This paper explores key examples of amusement parks that serve as links in the chain of influence and innovation, resulting in the Disney theme parks during the second half of the previous century as a global phenomenon. The focus of the paper is on the presentation and analysis of the amusement park projects in Belgrade designed by architects Aleksandar Đokić and Slobodan Ilić. Those park projects were developed and built during the 1970s and were persistently referred to as “Belgrade’s Disneyland” throughout the planning and construction stages. The aim of the paper is to contextualize the Belgrade project within the broader framework of the cultural and historical development of similar projects worldwide. The results of the paper indicate that Disney’s theme parks played an active role in promoting consumer culture throughout the last century. In Belgrade, however, the construction following a similar model faced social resistance and a series of difficulties during its implementation, which could be interpreted as an example of spontaneous (and short-term) defense of national cultural identity.

Introduction

Amusement parks offer multiple of perspectives for analysis.² Apart from serving as an escape from modern life, they also relied on the centralization of economic (Zukin, 1991, p. 224), as well as political power. The Latin phrase *panem et circenses* (i.e. *bread and circuses*) was coined in the time of ancient Rome in order to criticize those who would allow their attention to be diverted from serious social issues. Regarding the thesis that the aforementioned formula has been a form of social control since antiquity, as well as the viewpoints that consider spectacle an integral part of revolution and vice versa, Harvey (1989) believed that “the spectacle had always been a powerful political weapon” (p. 88). According to that perspective, the development of entertainment spaces has historically served as a means for national authorities to emancipate and modernize the population. However, in the contemporary conditions of technological advancements and altered flows of the global economy, their focus primarily shifts toward attracting as many tourists as possible and adapting to global trends.

A “sense of loss” emerged as a consequence of globalization and it could refer to a sense of losing one’s home, security, integrity, and the like. Nonetheless, it could also act as a driving force for individuals to devise romantic endeavors, artistic expressions, or to “deliver some future utopia” (Featherstone, 1993, p. 177). According to Featherstone (1993), one of the ways in which a sense of home is manifested is through the “countless little rituals, rites and ceremonies” (p. 178) that occur among individuals. Featherstone (1993) argued that during the second phase of (nostalgia and) globalization,³ theme parks flourished alongside “the whole heritage industry” because they provided a space for “commemorative rituals” that helped alleviate a sense of loss (p. 180).

² Russel Nye (1981) proposed eight approaches to observe and analyze amusement parks, primarily focusing on their fantasy and escapist qualities that set them apart from the experiences of ordinary everyday life.

³ The time period between 1880 and 1920 is considered to be a “phase of intense globalisation” that resulted in “wilful nostalgia”, while the second phase of globalization is associated with the period after the 1960s and was also accompanied by a “phase of nostalgia” (Featherstone, 1993, pp. 178–179).

From the perspective of architectural design, outdoor entertainment projects provided their authors with a perfect platform where they could truly express their imagination. A prominent Serbian architect Aleksandar Đokić (1936–2002) achieved significant results in the field of architectural design and urban planning throughout his career (Јевтовић, 2018). Đokić was the author of numerous tourist facilities which carried national and international style characteristics (Јевтовић, 2018). Moreover, over the course of his professional career, he had been periodically engaged in amusement and theme park projects for almost two decades (Јевтовић, 2018, p. 35).⁴ From the perspective of Đokić's architectural oeuvre, the utopian tendencies, the connection with *New Babylon* by Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920–2005), as well as the influences from the Japanese metabolists and futuristic projects of the Archigram group were recognized in his endeavors as the ones that created "amusement spaces" (Јевтовић, 2018, pp. 93–97, 216, 433–438). The aim of this research is to contextualize the amusement park projects designed for the Belgrade environment during the latter half of the 20th century within the wider context of the cultural and historical development in related projects worldwide.

Establishment and Development of Entertainment Spaces

The need for amusement and leisure in outdoor setting is as ancient as history of human society and dates back to the public festivities of ancient Greece and Rome, where there were gardens built for leisure time throughout the Mediterranean.⁵ During the Middle Ages, the main forms of outdoor entertainment were carnivals,⁶ while the 17th and 18th century introduced parks known as *pleasure gardens* throughout Europe.⁷ These spaces were a private property and were located in suburban areas, offering walking areas combined with often temporary structures designed for various forms of entertainment.⁸ Their exhilaration was heightened by the sheer mass of visitors, as ticket prices were affordable both for the aristocracy

⁴ Đokić explored the realm of amusement spaces through architectural design, theoretical work and through the organization of exhibitions (Јевтовић, 2018, p. 216). In addition to the amusement park projects presented in this paper, he also built the project of children's city called *Gradić Rodić* within the Belgrade Fair (1991), and during 1992 he also worked on the project of a large amusement park on Makiš (Јевтовић, 2018, pp. 423–424, 429–438).

⁵ These gardens were known as *Ancient Mediterranean Pleasure Gardens*.

⁶ From a social standpoint, carnivals were seen as a way for the marginalized to temporarily "ridicule the high and the mighty" (Wallace, 1985, p. 40).

⁷ Among the most famous examples of such parks were the *Vauxhall Gardens* (1661) in London and the *Tivoli Gardens* (1795) in Paris (Weinstein, 1992, p. 133; Conlin, 2008, p. 25).

⁸ The example of France showed that, despite being privately owned, these spaces actually served as "political institution" through which the court managed public leisure (Conlin, 2008, pp. 38–39).

as well as for the bourgeoisie (Conlin, 2008, p. 25). Therefore, pleasure gardens were regarded as a mechanism for social reform aimed at diminishing class distinctions.⁹ During the second half of the 18th century, pleasure gardens were used for urban development in previously neglected suburbs of Paris (Conlin, 2008, p. 26). Their architectural design thus acquired a distinct sort of typology and architects were encouraged to engage with it (Conlin, 2008, p. 32). The pleasure gardens reached their peak in the second half of the 18th century (1764–1784), thereafter an interest in them gradually declined.¹⁰

The concept of entertainment underwent its first radical change at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries and it was triggered by the discovery of the steam engine and the advent of the industrial revolution. The 19th century was marked by the first world fairs' exhibitions, which assumed the prior role of carnivals and festivities and which were organized with the aim of "celebrating industrial civilization itself" (Traktenberg, 1997, p. 127).¹¹ International exhibitions and fairs had a significant impact on the subsequent development of outdoor entertainment (Weinstein, 1992, p. 133). In Vienna, the *Prater* amusement park was established in 1766, transforming a former hunting reserve into a public attraction and initially providing amusement in the form of simple mechanical swings, carousels, and merry-go-rounds that were hand-driven (O'Brien, 1981). From a local culture perspective, *Prater* served as a mediator, facilitating the integration of newcomers into the sophisticated Viennese way of life (O'Brien, 1981, p. 76). *Prater* was cited as an example which supported the thesis that the latter half of the 19th century in Europe was marked by "more fast-paced and boisterous" amusement parks, which offered a wide array of mechanical rides.¹² During the same period, the United States witnessed the occurrence of the "cultivation and commercialization" of the circuses and traveling carnivals (Weinstein, 1992, p. 133).

In the mid-19th century in Europe, influenced directly by the most famous pleasure gardens,¹³ the *Tivoli Gardens* amusement park was opened in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1843 (Zerlang, 1997; West, 2022). Similar to the

⁹ That is is they were seen as "factories for making individuals of different ranks into 'citoyens'" (Conlin, 2008, pp. 32–33).

¹⁰ A small amount of pleasure gardens managed to survive until the second half of the 19th century when they too were closed down (Conlin, 2008, p. 44).

¹¹ Among the most prominent examples of that typology of buildings were the *Crystal Palace* by Joseph Paxton (1803–1865), which was built for the World Exhibition in London (1851), as well as the *Eiffel Tower* by Gustave Eiffel (1832–1923) and the *Galerie des machines* (*Palais des machines*) by Ferdinand Dutert (1845–1906), which were built for the World Exhibition in Paris (1889) (Traktenberg, 1997, pp. 127, 129).

¹² The introduction of amusement machines in the *Prater* was attributed to the direct influence of the World's Fair hosted in the same area in 1873 (O'Brien, 1981, p. 79; Đokić, 1984, p. 170).

¹³ *Vauxhall Gardens* (1661) in London and *Tivoli Gardens* (1795) in Paris are referenced as models upon which *Tivoli* was founded in Copenhagen (West, 2022, p. 6).

Prater, *Tivoli* also distinguished itself from the earlier pleasure gardens by incorporating the mechanical rides (West, 2022, p. 8). However, from the perspective of national history, it also symbolized the “transition into Modernity” and the introduction of “freedom of trade” (Zerlang, 1997, pp. 81, 88).¹⁴ *Tivoli* had a multifaceted connection to the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen.¹⁵ Apart from its attractions,¹⁶ *Tivoli* particularly captivated visitors with its architecture, which was designed in an exotic, oriental spirit featuring motifs inspired by Turkish, Arab, Chinese, and Persian cultures.¹⁷ During the 19th century in Europe, the Orient, based on the *Tivoli* example, represented the “metaphor of three things: fantasy, freedom and foreign” (Zerlang, 1997, p. 104).

The 1890s witnessed the discovery of electricity, the breakthrough of technological inventions that contributed to entertainment, and the rapid development of amusement parks in America (Đokić, 1984; Zukin, 1991, pp. 225–226; Weinstein, 1992). The *Electric Theater* was presented at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893),¹⁸ while the fair’s “single most impressive and popular structure” was undoubtedly the *Ferris Wheel* (Nelson, 1986, pp. 118–119; Zukin, 1991, p. 225).¹⁹ The World’s Fair in Chicago is recognized as the event that paved the way for the creation of modern amusement parks (Nye, 1981, p. 65).²⁰

¹⁴ The establishment of *Tivoli* was also regarded as a “manoeuvre to divert attention from politics” of the absolutist king, but it was also perceived as a form of “social and political experiment” (Zerlang, 1997, pp. 81, 87).

¹⁵ *Tivoli* was firstly serving as a source of inspiration for the writer and later becoming a venue for theater and ballet performances based on his works (West, 2022).

¹⁶ At the end of the 19th century, *Tivoli* offered a grand bazaar, a theater, a concert hall, fountains, statues, gondolas, swings, an early version of a roller coaster, merry-go-rounds, pavilions for various activities, and it also hosted traveling caravans from exotic destinations (Zerlang, 1997; West, 2022, p. 8).

¹⁷ The architects involved in the design of *Tivoli* were Harald Conrad Stilling (1815–1891) and Vilhelm Dahlerup (1836–1907) (Zerlang, 1997, pp. 91–94; West, 2022, p. 6).

¹⁸ The *Electric Theater* provided a “diorama-like presentation” that incorporated scenography, lighting, sounds and electricity, immersing visitors in an experience reminiscent of a “Day in the Alps” (Nelson, 1986, p. 118).

¹⁹ The first example of the *Ferris Wheel* was 80.5 meters (264 feet) in height, had a diameter of 76.2 meters (250 feet), rotated on a 13.7-meter (45 foot) shaft, and could accommodate approximately 2,160 people (Nelson, 1986, p. 119; Weinstein, 1992, p. 134). Four years later, the *Ferris Wheel* was erected in Vienna’s *Prater* (1897), thus immediately becoming its landmark (O’Brien, 1981, p. 76).

²⁰ The development of amusement parks in America was undeniably stimulated by the Chicago Exposition, but their forerunners can also be traced back to 19th century agricultural fairs, which, in addition to exhibits (agricultural machinery and products), also offered various entertainment activities. Examples of such activities include acrobatic performances, animal shows, horse races, and similar forms of entertainment (Nye, 1981, p. 65).

Commodification of Leisure Time

It is believed that the practice of “selling leisure as a commodity” began at Coney Island in New York City, with the construction of the first modern amusement park in 1895.²¹ They were followed by the establishment of the first theme park in 1903, which also featured captivating live performances (Weinstein, 1992). The example of Coney Island showcased noticeable changes in the structure of leisure. Those changes emerged under the influence of technological advancements, the expansion of free time, and the increasing purchasing power of the working class, with the amusement park themselves being recognized as “laboratories of the new popular culture” (Weinstein, 1992, pp. 136, 144).

The first theme park in history, named *Luna Park*, offered attractions that were categorized based on cultural, historical or geographical themes.²² Its author was Frederic A. Thompson (1873–1919), an architecture student and former festival worker (Weinstein, 1992, p. 138).²³ According to Thompson’s insights, the goal was to offer visitors “innocent fun” and “elaborated child’s play” (Nye, 1981, p. 65). He believed that objects, lights, decorations and performances were a means of initiating emotional excitement as well as a “spirit of gaiety”.²⁴ The construction materials used for the park included a plaster of Paris and slender wood (Weinstein, 1992). During the architectural design of *Luna Park*, Thompson incorporated motifs inspired by the oriental East (Nye, 1981) as well as pictorial aesthetics, with the aim of enhancing the impact of spectacle and playfulness. According to the available photographs, *Luna Park* featured an eclectic combination of domes, minarets and towers adorned with lavish relief ornamentation and a variety of flags.²⁵ From a business perspective,

²¹ Although the transformation of Coney Island into a seaside tourist destination started in 1824 with the establishment of the first hotel and a levee across the river, the inception of the first modern park, known as *Sea Lion Park*, can be directly attributed to the influence of the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893) and the acquisition of its performers and attractions (Weinstein, 1992, p. 135). After its closure in 1903, *Luna Park* was constructed in its stead (Weinstein, 1992, p. 138).

²² The park was also known as the *Electric City by the Sea* and featured a wide range of attractions, including a Japanese garden, Chinese theater, canals of Venice, Eskimo camp, German village, Dutch windmills, electric tower, illusion rides, water slide, and more (Nye, 1981, p. 66; Weinstein, 1992, p. 138).

²³ The main attraction of the park, from which it derived its name, was *A Trip to the Moon*, which was conceived by Thompson in collaboration with Elmer Dundy (1962–1907) (Weinstein, 1992).

²⁴ Moreover, he emphasized the importance of inspiring people to actively engage in the proposed festivities (Weinstein, 1992, p. 138).

²⁵ All the structures were ornately framed with lanterns that contributed to a festive impression.

the success of Luna Park was guaranteed by Thompson's focus on attracting a more decent audience and families by offering them a well-maintained, comfortable and safe place for entertainment (Nye, 1981, p. 70).

"The amusement parks were also at the forefront of the great change occurring in turn-of-the-century America, the shift from an economy based on labor and production to one dominated by patterns of consumption and leisure." (Weinstein, 1992, p. 143)

Throughout the first two decades of the 20th century, Coney Island's significant impact on the outdoor entertainment industry was reflected in the rapid proliferation of amusement parks throughout America and in the surge of tourist arrivals. Ironically, after 1910, Coney Island's attendance rate started to decline.²⁶ The Great Depression (1929–1939) led to the closure of over two-thirds of amusement parks in America. Low purchasing power of visitors contributed to the deteriorating reputation of Coney Island, which was still regarded as the capital of entertainment, although that entertainment took on a more somber tone (Weinstein, 1992, p. 146).

A glimmer of hope for a brighter future was provided by the 1939 New York World's Fair, which was hailed as a site of an "encouragement for collective amnesia" (Стаменковић, 2017, p. 316).²⁷ The Fair exhibition blurred formerly clear distinctions between displays of technology and culture and there was also a demand for an increase of audience participation (Zukin, 1991, p. 226). Moreover, the entertainment level rose to that of "sophistication and opulence" with an abundant use of "fanciful mechanization" (Nelson, 1986, p. 123).²⁸ The exhibit of the Small American Homes was indicative and where two "typical American families" resided in buildings constructed at the fair (Nelson, 1986). The aforementioned statement might imply the upcoming trend of popularizing a certain "way of life" as a fashionable commodity, which escalated in the 21st century. However, it might also suggest the tendency to highlight the "American way of life" as a desirable cultural pattern.²⁹ Critics have also observed that the presentations of companies involved in consumer goods production were

²⁶ Throughout the summer months spanning from 1904 to 1910, three major amusement parks operated on Coney Island (*Luna Park*, *Dreamland* and *Steeplechase*), which collectively attracted approximately 20 million visitors annually (Weinstein, 1992, pp. 143–145).

²⁷ The Kingdom of Yugoslavia also participated in that fair with its pavilion (Стаменковић, 2017, pp. 317–331).

²⁸ Visitors were riding through one of the pavilions "in moving chairs" (Zukin, 1991, p. 225).

²⁹ One perspective of the globalization process emphasizes the "American way of life" as a "corrosive homogenizing force" that penetrates all corners of the world and poses a threat to the distinct local characteristics of other nations (Featherstone, 1993, p. 170).

noticeably superior to those engaged in industrial goods production (Zukin, 1991, p. 226). This observation corroborated the shift in economic priorities as well as considerable social changes.

In the mid-20th century, the advancement of mass media made a significant impact on further development of entertainment spaces.³⁰ The advances in technology, combined with the need to satisfy the increasing expectations of the public, paved the way for the development of “suitable fantastic architecture” (Nelson, 1986, p. 127). Thompson’s *Luna Park* on Coney Island was destroyed in flames in 1944. There are even some indications that Walter Elias Disney (1901–1966) visited it in the final years, prior to the fire (Weinstein, 1992, p. 146).

Global Cultural Phenomenon: Disney’s Theme Parks

The project of the future *Disneyland* initially faced misunderstanding from professionals and distrust from financiers,³¹ which merely indicated its unconventionality in terms of the former business practice. Walt Disney had been developing the vision of that venture since the end of the 1930s,³² while its main foundations were Disney’s fantasy characters and “nostalgia for a fabricated past” (Wallace, 1985, pp. 34, 36). *Disneyland* was built in 1955 in Anaheim, Orange County, California. In spite of the pessimistic predictions, it has been a thriving business since its opening (Zukin, 1991, p. 223).³³ The final design of the park was created by illustrators and artists from Disney’s studio. They had

³⁰ The development of mass media, television and movies enabled the public to keep up with the technological discoveries. On the one hand, this change diminished the allure of current outdoor entertainment forms while, on the other hand, heightened people’s expectations of such spaces (Nelson, 1986; Weinstein, 1992).

³¹ During the year 1953, the project was presented at a convention of amusement park owners where it was criticized as unprofitable and unrealistic in business terms (Zukin, 1991, pp. 222–223). Disney studio executives opposed the construction and banks refused to support the project, which forced Disney to use his life insurance policies and to enter into a contract with a television company to provide initial funding (Wallace, 1985, pp. 34, 55; Weinstein, 1992, pp. 147–149).

³² It was noted that Disney visited and studied various outdoor attractions (carnivals, circuses, national parks, fairs) for many years, and that he was fueled with animosity towards the amusement parks he had taken his children to when they were young. In one of the preserved early documents, Disney expressed his desire to avoid a carnival atmosphere, alcohol or subpar merchandise, and he envisioned attractions to be “interesting, educational and scientifically correct” (Weinstein, 1992, pp. 131–132, 147–148, 150). *Tivoli Gardens* in Copenhagen was cited as a park that positively influenced Disney (Mittermeier, 2021, p. 3; West, 2022, p. 9).

³³ During its first year of operation, *Disneyland* welcomed nearly 4 million visitors (Weinstein, 1992, p. 152).

no prior experience in designing amusement parks although Disney himself was actively participating during the planning process (Goodstein, 1999, p. 313, Mittermeier, 2021, pp. 2–4). The implemented project comprised five themed areas dedicated to historically tinged entertainment and visions of the future.³⁴ However, according to the original concept, one of the areas should have been devoted to “present realities” (Weinstein, 1992, p. 151). The omission of an area dedicated to the present contributed to the distortion of historical continuity, which was in accordance with the principles of postmodernism.³⁵

Contrary to viewpoints that recognized Disney’s personal prejudices against the main cultural features of America in *Disneyland* (Weinstein, 1992), others pointed out that *Disneyland* was the embodiment of America in the 1950s and that it was imbued with patriotism (Mittermeier, 2021). According to Wallace (1985, pp. 35–36), Disney’s approach to the past was “not to reproduce it, but to improve it” which corresponded to the broader cultural trend of “selective amnesia” that prevailed in America during the 1950s. Zukin (1991) observed that Disney’s fantasy “both restored and invented collective memory” (p. 222).³⁶ Stupar (2009) considered *Disneyland* to be “one of the genuine examples of globalization”, a sort of reserve where the “remnants of the city of the past” were being nurtured (p. 158).

Jean Baudrillard (1985) considered *Disneyland* the “perfect model” of all sorts of interlinked simulacrum (pp. 15–18). With its mere existence, *Disneyland* diverted attention from the fact that the real world belonged to a kind of simulation fueled by childish infantilism. By transforming (fictional) history into a modern product and advertising it, *Disneyland* created a sort of longing for history, despite being a scenario where the desired outcome is beyond reach.³⁷

The second Disney’s amusement park was planned to be ten times larger than the previous one and aimed to attract foreign tourists, as a result of which the planners placed special emphasis on roads and traffic connections (Foglesong, 1999, p. 90).³⁸ The construction of the park in Florida near Orlando took eighteen months, and *Walt Disney World (Magic Kingdom)* was unveiled

³⁴ These themed areas included *Fantasyland, Tomorrowland, Adventureland, Frontierland* and *Main Street, U.S.A.*

³⁵ The postmodern state is characterized by subversions directed toward established hierarchical relationships, a loss of sense for history, a mistrust of metanarratives and so on (Butler, 2002).

³⁶ Thereby contributing to the transformation of traditional amusement parks into “landscapes of power” (Zukin, 1991, pp. 221–232).

³⁷ As Butler (2002, pp. 113–115) notes, we can only get what we pay for, and even that is not in the service of some truth but “maintaining one’s economic or other power”.

³⁸ In addition to infrastructure, Disney was drawn to privatization and deregulation, perceiving in them the potential to fulfill his vision of self-governance (Foglesong, 1999).

on October 1, 1971. In the same year, the number of tourists who visited Florida nearly tripled.³⁹

The park project consisted of six themed areas,⁴⁰ accompanied by numerous technological innovations.⁴¹ Compared to *Disneyland*, both parks used motifs from the American history and children's literature, and their spatial layouts were organized around the central castle. They served as a focal point for orientation,⁴² with thematic areas arranged radially around it. In both examples, the introduction of the *Main Street* as an entertainment component meant integrating enjoyment with the experience of everyday life (Weinstein, 1992, p. 158). Judd (1999, p. 52) argued that the *Disney World* was built “with no reference to the surrounding context at all”, which was recognized as a strategy for cities lacking the inherent tourism advantages. The buildings were constructed from durable materials and were designed for practical use, while their architecture embodied its own irony, presenting a false facade and mere scenography.⁴³ The various thematic areas were complemented by appropriate architecture of the associated buildings.⁴⁴ The architectural design was based on a creative reinterpretation of historical references, as well as on contemporary visions influenced by comic art. By playing with proportions and scale, along with applying pastel colors, the intention was to amplify a “sense of fantasy” (Goldberger, 1972; King, 1981).⁴⁵

³⁹ It was recorded that in 1969, the number of tourists was 3.5 million, whereas in 1971, that number soared to 10.7 million (Goldberger, 1972; Foglesong, 1999, p. 96).

⁴⁰ The park replicated five thematic units from *Disneyland* and included the addition of *Liberty Square*, which housed the *Hall of Presidents*. The project for the *Hall* was developed in the late 1950s (1957–1958), during a time when technical limitations prevented its actualization (Wallace, 1985, pp. 37–38).

⁴¹ Below the entire park, there was a service basement that provided convenient access to all necessary installations, including electricity, water and sewage lines. That service basement served as a large backstage area and facilitated the movement of employees and vehicles for goods delivery. Furthermore, enhancements were made to the existing monorail system from *Disneyland*, and there was a specialized waste disposal system which used vacuum tubes and was developed in Sweden that was implemented as well (Goldberger, 1972; Mittermeier, 2021, p. 67).

⁴² In *Disneyland* it was *Sleeping Beauty Castle*, and in *Magic Kingdom* it was *Cinderella Castle*.

⁴³ The architects Robert Venturi, Charles Moore and Peter Blake were highly appreciative of the architectural design of the Disney's parks (Goldberger, 1972). Those architects were influential proponents of postmodernism in architecture (Јевтовић, 2018, p. 69). Postmodern architecture was also referred to as populist and according to Frampton (1992, p. 293), it offers scenographic solutions that are essentially “motivated by cynicism”.

⁴⁴ Moreover, all the accompanying details, from employee uniforms to trash cans, were carefully designed (Goldberger, 1972).

⁴⁵ Weinstein (1992, p. 152) argued that Disney's expertise in the film industry was directly applied to the physical layout of the park, creating an illusion for visitors by making them feel as if they were on an actual movie set.

After the establishment of the *Disney World*, Disney received numerous accolades.⁴⁶ Disney's third project, *EPCOT Center*,⁴⁷ was envisioned as a "laboratory city" with an initial population of 20,000.⁴⁸ The planning and construction of *Epcot* was accompanied by positive reviews in the business press.⁴⁹ The center was unveiled on October 1, 1982, as part of *Disney World* in Florida, representing an extension of the collaboration between the Disney Company and the General Electric (Foglesong, 1999, p. 98).⁵⁰ Instead of the initial idea of a utopian community,⁵¹ the implemented amusement park project became a kind of "permanent World's Fair" (Mittermeier, 2021, p. 79), and it once again achieved commercial success.⁵²

Nelson (1986, p. 127) emphasized that *Epcot*, due to its (physical) scale, was entirely different from a typical amusement park. The temporal scale of the entire project was equally ambitious, encompassing a period from prehistory to space travel. At the same time, the method of historical analysis subtly legitimized capitalist development as "natural and inevitable" (Wallace, 1985, p. 47).⁵³ The implemented project was divided into two major themes: *Future World*, featuring pavilions of the most advanced companies, and *World Showcase*, which consisted of national pavilions. The *Future World* pavilions were designed in the

⁴⁶ Disney was acknowledged for his role in single-handedly rescuing the American amusement park industry in the 1950s (Weinstein, 1992). He was praised by architects and architectural critics (Goldberger, 1972), and gained influence as an urban planner as well (Judd, 1999, p. 49).

⁴⁷ *EPCOT – The Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow*.

⁴⁸ It aimed to provide a controlled environment for testing ideas in urban planning, and development of the American industry and research (Wallace, 1985).

⁴⁹ The project was supported by numerous participating companies, who viewed it as a possibility to showcase their own products, but also as an opportunity to highlight the advancements of technological progress (Wallace, 1985, pp. 42–43; Zukin, 1991, p. 230).

⁵⁰ The collaboration between the Disney Company and the General Electric commenced in 1964, when they participated in the World Fair with the *Carousel of Progress*. Their *Carousel* glorified the availability of consumer goods (Wallace, 1985, p. 39), and on that occasion, they also recognized the exhibition format's potential (Nelson, 1986, p. 127).

⁵¹ The alterations to the original concept were driven by the excessive legal obligations associated with constructing a residential community, as well as the inadequate technological advancements necessary to support the initial vision (Zukin, 1991, pp. 224–225).

⁵² Most visitors purchased a combined *Disney World* and *Epcot* pass so there were no separate attendance figures. However, it was recorded that in 1983, a total of 22.7 million guests visited both parks, with a record attendance of 125,000 in one day (Nelson, 1986, p. 128). In the same year (1983), *Disneyland* and *Disney World* collectively welcomed 33 million tourists, while some experts attributed this success to Disney's adept popularization of historical themes (Wallace, 1985, p. 33).

⁵³ During the 1980s, at the *Spaceship Earth Pavilion* was broadcasted the recorded narration to visitors which was saying: "From the very beginning of the human experience we have sought to follow the distant stars of our ancestors to a brighter tomorrow" (Nelson, 1986, p. 133).

spirit of retro-futurism, incorporating spatial grids, glass surfaces or alucobond facades.⁵⁴ In terms of content, the pavilions offered multimedia presentations,⁵⁵ which were made by companies and were used to illustrate the historical progress within their business sector. The section of the park devoted to featuring the national diversity was completely developed by the Disney Company.⁵⁶ Visually, the national pavilions resembled three-dimensional stereotypical postcards, showcasing the main attractions and features of each respective country.⁵⁷ They were catering the visitor's tastes, and, in functional terms, they were predominantly restaurants or shops. The only pavilion that offered more than mere food and souvenirs was a centrally positioned and "the most technically impressive" pavilion called *The American Adventure* (Nelson, 1986, p. 144). Inside of the pavilion, the presentations were conducted by humanoid robots portraying famous figures from the American history (Wallace, 1985). *Epcot*, disguising itself as "sanitized entertainment",⁵⁸ sold visitors a "uni-directional" interpretation of historical progress (Wallace, 1985, p. 48), a simplified understanding of cultural diversity. The aim of the *Center* was to promote nationalism and to establish an easy digestible image of the American superiority.⁵⁹

Disney's theme parks have contributed to the development of both Orange County and the tourism industry (Zukin, 1991), transforming Orlando into one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world (Foglesong, 1999, p. 91).⁶⁰

⁵⁴ In the central area of the *Future World*, there was a geodesic dome-shaped pavilion known as *Spaceship Earth* (sponsored by Bell), which was followed by a two-part attraction called *Communicore*. The surrounding pavilions were arranged in a radial pattern and included: *Universe of Energy* (sponsored by Exxon), *Horizons* (sponsored by General Electric), *The World of Motion* (sponsored by General Motors), *Imagination* (sponsored by Kodak), *The Land* (sponsored by Kraft) and *The Living Seas* (sponsored by United Technologies) (Wallace, 1985; Nelson, 1986).

⁵⁵ Presentations were made with the use of visitor vehicles, dioramas, acting robots, hologram projections and even different scents (Nelson, 1986).

⁵⁶ In that particular area of the park, international companies were permitted to participate solely as suppliers of souvenirs or food (Nelson, 1986, p. 137).

⁵⁷ The *World Showcase* consisted of pavilions designated for countries and national enterprises that were arranged around a central artificial lake. National pavilions represented Mexico, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, France, United Kingdom, Canada, while the central position in that section of the park was occupied by *The American Adventure* pavilion (Wallace, 1985; Nelson, 1986).

⁵⁸ In descriptions of Disney's parks, cleanliness of the surroundings and employees is often emphasized, particularly when comparing them to their historical predecessors at Coney Island (Nelson, 1986, pp. 139, 141; Weinstein, 1992, p. 154).

⁵⁹ Nelson (1986, p. 142) observed that the goal of the *World Showcase* was not cross-cultural exchange, but "to bolster and champion American attitudes and ethics".

⁶⁰ Orlando also became one of the "nations's ten fastest-growing cities". The second leading industry in the region, after tourism, was construction, and the number of hotel rooms grew from 8,000 in 1965 to 85,000 in 1996 (Foglesong, 1999, pp. 98–99).

The commercial success of the Disney parks has led to the emergence of new theme parks throughout America, as well as to the renovations of existing ones by adding themed zones (Weinstein, 1992, p. 153). In addition to the establishment of theme parks, the Disney concept also influenced the design of hotels, shopping malls, other private and public facilities, and the entire urban streetscape (Neuman, 1999).⁶¹ From the mid-1980s, the Disney Company hired and sponsored numerous renowned architects,⁶² and expanded its business and influence to other continents.⁶³ In the context of cultural globalization, and in accordance with theories about the “McDonaldization” of the world (Jevtović, 2019), the global influences of the Disney theme parks are referred to as *Disneyfy* (Weinstein, 1992, p. 159), *Disneyize* (Reisinger, 2009, p. 28), or *Disneyfication* (Mittermeier, 2021, p. 157) in literature. However, in-depth studies of the Disney parks located in Europe and Asia indicate that it is a manifestation of glocalization (Mittermeier, 2021), which refers to the mutual process of adapting a global product to the local market and vice versa.

Local Phenomenon: “Belgrade’s Disneyland”

The death of Walt Disney (1966) was accompanied by articles in daily newspapers in the Republic of Serbia,⁶⁴ which was part of the SFRY during that period. Socialist Yugoslavia emerged after the Second World War as a union of six states, and since its formation, it has sought means to legitimize itself.⁶⁵ The capital of the newly formed state, Belgrade, was a significant platform for the establishment

⁶¹ Analyzing the cities of globalization, Stupar (2009, p. 157) considered that elements of spectacle and glamor were attributed to spaces of consumption, starting from the 1990s, transforming mundane activities into extraordinary events. From that perspective, it can be concluded that the Disney’s concept played a significant role during the process of the mentioned transformation. As Ghirardo (1996, pp. 45–62) observed, in the context of public spaces of the late 20th century, “Disney took command”.

⁶² The Disney Company collaborated with several architects, including: Michael Graves (1934–2015), Frank Gehry (1929), Arata Izosaki (1931–2022), Robert Stern (1939), Robert Venturi (1925–2018) & Denise Scot Brown (1931), Arquitectonica, Helmut Jahn (1940–2021), Aldo Rossi (1931–1997), Philip Johnson (1906–2005), Antoine Grumbach (1942), and Antoine Predock (1936) (Goodstein, 1999; Neuman, 1999; Mittermeier, 2021).

⁶³ The projects initiated in America were subsequently followed by the establishment of parks in Asia (Tokyo, 1983) and Europe (Paris, 1992). In the 21st century, two more parks were built in Asia (Hong Kong, 2005 and Shanghai, 2016) (Mittermeier, 2021).

⁶⁴ The articles were predominantly focused on his biographical information and emphasized his contributions to the world of animated film, while *Disneyland* was merely mentioned casually, or as “one of the wonders of this time” (Д. А., 1966; Вукотић, 1966; Радојчић, 1966).

⁶⁵ After a brief period of alignment with the USSR, Yugoslavia worked on presenting itself as a unique avant-garde, not leaning towards either the East or the West, but boldly following its own “third way”.

of a new ideology, and architecture played a pivotal and active role throughout the entire process (Ignjatović, 2012). During the early 1960s, there was an improvement in economic conditions, while the early 1970s were characterised by exceptional construction intensity and the erection of large projects for various purposes. From the perspective of construction technology, these projects mainly followed world standards (Јевтовић, 2018).⁶⁶ Starting from the mid-1960s, Yugoslavia followed the trends in the domain of contemporary tourism, which was then assuming a mass character and was internationally recognized as an important driver of urbanization and economic development (Антешевић, 2021, p. 410).⁶⁷ Tourist development represented one of the significant topics from the perspective of architectural activities in the 1970s.⁶⁸ The construction was particularly intensive in the area of the Adriatic coast in Croatia, where two amusement parks were built in the period between 1968 and 1976.⁶⁹ These parks constituted an integral part of large tourist complexes and were predominantly designed for nightlife and hospitality. In terms of their functional concept, they were entirely distinct from the example in Belgrade. Ignjatović (2012, p. 693) identified the teleological position within the architecture of socialist Yugoslavia, manifested in Josip Broz's address to the architects with the grandiose aspiration "for Belgrade to become like Paris". Certain architectural solutions were accompanied by the slogan "Belgrade as New York", while competitions were announced with the objective of "surpassing the era" (Ignjatović, 2012, p. 695).

The competition for designing a "Disneyland-like amusement park" was announced in 1973 by the company Inex and the Belgrade Assembly (Јевтић, 1974). The intention was to establish a prominent entertainment center for children and young people in Belgrade, as well as to include Belgrade among the cities

⁶⁶ World standards were also followed in terms of stylistic features, with the Serbian architects primarily embracing structuralism and brutalism during the 1960s and 1970s (Јевтовић, 2018, p. 93).

⁶⁷ During the 1970s, tourism in Yugoslavia acted as a catalyst for modernization and was actively promoted by the state as part of the narrative of social equality (Јевтовић, 2020).

⁶⁸ In addition to their practical contributions to the construction of tourist infrastructure, architects analyzed the issues through theoretical considerations and contributed to the broader professional discourse (Антешевић, 2021, pp. 415–419).

⁶⁹ The entertainment center *International Club* (1968) was built as a part of the tourist complex *Plava Laguna (The Blue Lagoon)* in Poreč, according to the design by an architect Božidar Lazar and an academic painter Bruno Mascarelli (1926). Primarily intended for nightlife, it also offered space for exhibitions (*Art club*) and a Japanese meditation garden. The applied materials ranged from rustic stone to plastic, and its design incorporated brutalist and futuristic elements (Lazar & Mascarelli, 1969; Lazar, 1972). The entertainment center (1976) within the tourist settlement Katoro in Umag, designed by an architect Moslavac Zdravko (1929–2012), primarily served for nightlife and games of chance, while during the day, it provided hospitality services. It was conceptually aligned with Istrian urbanism and shaped using concrete beams, panels, and walls covered with rustic stone cladding (Moslavac, 1972; 1977).

whose tourist offerings encompass theme parks. Upon the recommendation of the Urban Planning Institute, a location was planned within Topčider Park, which was a significant recreational area for the residents of Belgrade. Topčider Park also represented a rich natural and cultural-historical environment with old vegetation and numerous nearby cultural monuments (Rakočević, 1975).⁷⁰

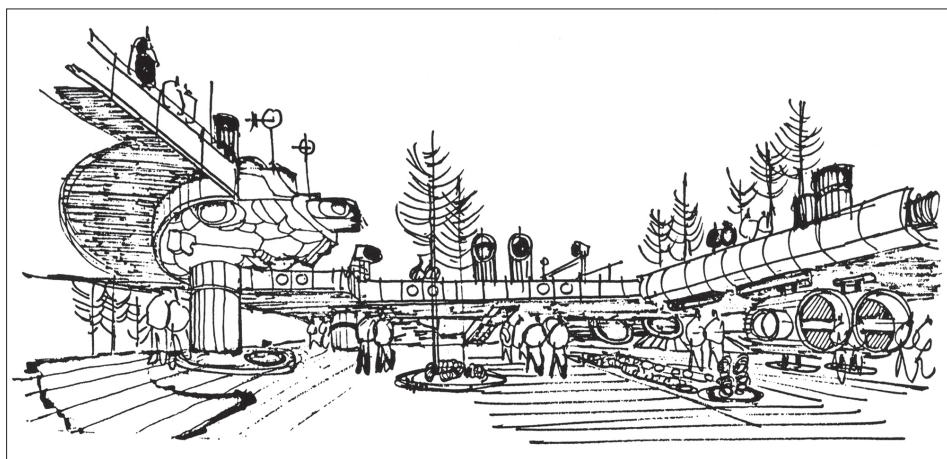


Fig. 1. Sketch of the tourist and entertainment center in Topčider, A. Đokić & S. Ilić, 1973 (Published in: Jevtić, 1974, p. 44)

At the invitational competition, two author teams participated, and the solution proposed by architects Aleksandar Đokić and Slobodan Ilić (1931–2000) won the first prize.⁷¹ After the cornerstone is set in 1975, the citizens submitted a petition to the City Assembly, advocating for the preservation of Topčider Park and the relocation of "Disneyland" to a different setting (Влајић, 1976). It was noted that during the discussions regarding the location, the criticism shifted towards the spatial and functional characteristics of the proposed project (Маневић, 1995, p. 72). The new location was determined to be the western part of Ada Ciganlija, a river peninsula that was transformed into a

⁷⁰ During the 2000s, there were a total of six declared cultural monuments in the area, including: Prince Miloš's Residence (1831–1834), Topčider Church (1832–1834), Church Manor (1830–1832), *Harvestine* sculpture (1852), *Obelisk* (1859) and the Archibald Reiss Monument (1931) (Ђурић, 2008, p. 8).

⁷¹ The second author team consisted of architects Uglješa Bogunović (1922–1994) and Slobodan Janjić (1928–2003). Their project was criticized by the jury for neglecting commercial and business aspects and for the excessive use of folklore elements in architecture (Jevtić, 1974, p. 45). In the mid-1970s, the Museum of African Art (1973–1976) was constructed according to the design of Slobodan Ilić. The Museum architecture exhibits elements of futurism aesthetics and certain features that Đokić and Ilić applied in their work for the amusement park (Ilić, 1977).

sports-recreational and excursion center in the period between 1959 and 1967.⁷² The amusement park project was adopted by the Urban Planning Commission in 1977, and the construction commenced in 1978 (Павловић, 1978).

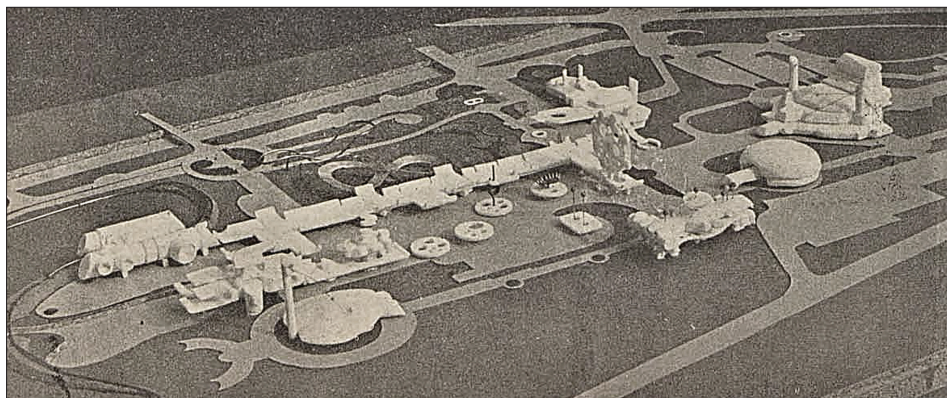


Fig. 2. Photograph of the model,
A. Đokić & S. Ilić, 1973 (Published in: Jevtić, 1974, p. 44)

From winning the competition to the start of construction (1973–1978), the tourist and amusement park project by Đokić and Ilić underwent numerous changes, and throughout that time, it was referred to as “Disneyland” in the daily press (Јевтовић, 2018, p. 221).⁷³ The initial competition solution incorporated the following three zones: (1) basic entertainment content concentrated around the central square, (2) a zone of imaginary “road around the world”⁷⁴ and (3) a park zone with an exhibition pavilion and a summer auditorium (Manević, 1973). With further development of the project, the amusement park complex consisted of the following: an administrative and service area,⁷⁵ an

⁷² The Directorate for the Construction of Ada Ciganlija was established in 1958. Between 1959 and 1967, three bathrooms, two camps, ten sports fields, fitness trails, mini golf courses, two children’s playgrounds, as well as numerous roads, footpaths, parking lots, and more were built there (Janković et al., 1977, p. 34). The amusement park was supposed to rely directly on the existing Small Lake. In the mid-1990s, the small lake was renamed to Ada Safari.

⁷³ Đokić and Ilić presented this project at the exhibition “5th May Salon – Experiment 5” at the Museum of Applied Art in Belgrade (1973), where they were awarded. They were also a part of the exhibition “Architecture ‘70” at the gallery of the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade (1974) (Јевтовић, 2018, pp. 224–225).

⁷⁴ According to the initial concept, the railway route was designed to pass through a scenic setting featuring popular literary and comics book heroes, as well as various geographical environments (Петровић, 1973; Jevtić, 1974).

⁷⁵ The administrative building was intended to accommodate offices, as well as the treasury, ambulance, police, and more. The service area was planned to include workshops for mechanics, electricians, carpenters, plumbers and other craftsmen.

exhibition pavilion, amusement and scientific-technical facilities for children,⁷⁶ a railway area,⁷⁷ a theater and fairy-tale world area, leisure and catering facilities,⁷⁸ a pedestrian area with toy shops, souvenir shops, fast food kiosks, and ticket sales for individual activities in the park (Јевтић, 1975; Rakočević, 1975).⁷⁹ At this stage of the project development, it was emphasized that the future park would be designed for both children and adults (Јевтић, 1975). With the exception of two pavilions which were classified as scientific-technical facilities, the park predominantly offered traditional sort of entertainment and closely resembled the model of Thompson's *Luna Park* at Coney Island. The potential influence of Disney's parks was solely reflected in a desire to incorporate a "fairytale world" as a theme. Two decades later, the architect Đokić noted that the literature on entertainment projects during the 1970s and 1980s in Serbia was evidently lacking (Kadijević, 1996, p. 95).⁸⁰

The originality and compatibility of the proposed solution with world models were reflected in the architectural design of facilities, in which the influences of the Archigram were recognized (Manević, 1973). However, the evaluation committee indicated that the overly futuristic architecture would appear incongruous in the assigned setting of Topčider Park (Jevtić, 1974). Jevtić (1974) believed that Đokić and Ilić, through their "futuristic vision" and the evasion of the traditional folklore-romantic approach, managed to avoid the model that *Disneyland* imposed on all projects of that type.⁸¹ The preliminary design of the park's facilities was expressed through a bold graphic language,

⁷⁶ The planned amusement facilities included a driving school for children, a Ferris Wheel, an ice rink, carousels and similar attractions. The scientific-technical facilities consisted of two pavilions: a History Pavilion where each floor would represent a different chapter of the national and world history, and a Space Pavilion where visitors would "travel to the moon and back" (Петровић, 1973).

⁷⁷ The scenographic effects of a railway area would evoke characteristic landscapes from specific countries around the world and include features such as an artificial lake with boats and small vessels, a pirate ship or a galley.

⁷⁸ Leisure facilities included bowling alleys, shooting ranges, vending machines and similar amenities designed for both young and older visitors. There was a dairy restaurant among the catering facilities that was specifically intended for children and situated on the shores of an artificial lake.

⁷⁹ Given the fact that the location included mature vegetation, special attention was given to the park areas and walking paths.

⁸⁰ The personal archive of the architect is filled with excerpts from magazines, brochures, maps and other materials related to amusement parks (Јевтовић, 2018, p. 437), which he collected and analyzed in the absence of more specialized literature.

⁸¹ The *Epcot Center* project in Florida, which included futuristic-shaped structures in the *Future World* area, opened nearly a decade later in 1982. However, it is important to note that by that time, Disney's parks in Anaheim (established in 1955) and in Florida (established in 1971) already existed and were including the *Tomorrowland* area, which could have served as an inspiration for the authors. According to photo documentation

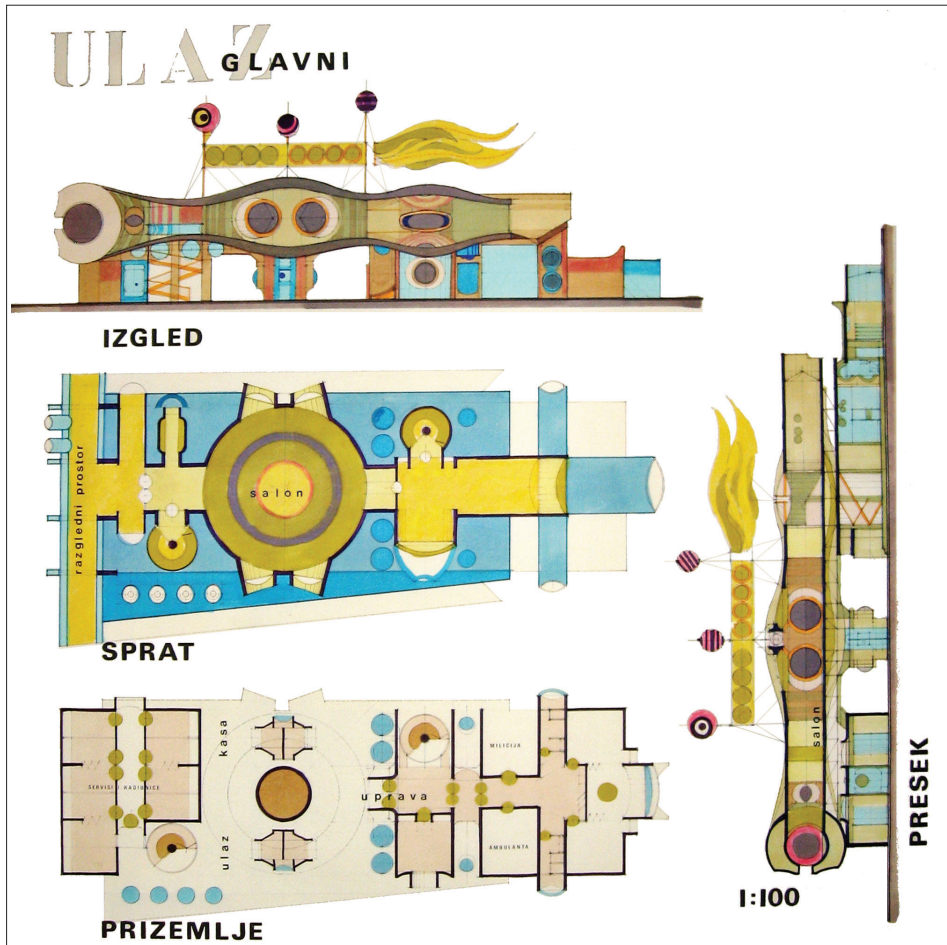


Fig. 3. Amusement Park in Belgrade – Main Entrance Facility, A. Đokić & S. Ilić, 1973 (Source: documentation from the bureau “Romantic architecture”)

with the use of vibrant colors and an abundance of details in the spirit of retro-futurism.⁸² The initial concept involved the construction of buildings with the predominant use of metal and plastic (Јевтовић, 2018, p. 221).⁸³

from the private legacy of the architect, Aleksandar Đokić visited *Disney World* in Florida only in 1978.

⁸² From the perspective of Đokić’s creativity, that project belonged to the period of style consolidation (1969–1979), during which he experimented with geometric forms, futuristic expressionism and current global influences (Јевтовић, 2018).

⁸³ The 1977 solution also incorporated the use of colored concrete and glass (Janković et al., 1977, p. 37).

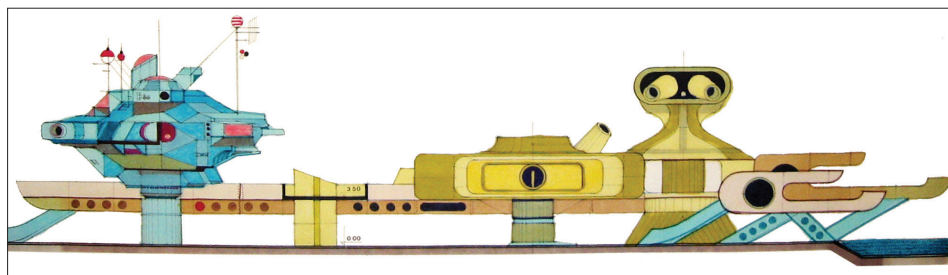


Fig. 4. Amusement Park in Belgrade – Space Pavilion and Dairy Restaurant, A. Đokić & S. Ilić, 1973 (Source: documentation from the bureau “Romantic architecture”)

After the relocation to Ada Ciganlija took place, the authors proceeded with the development of a new project documentation.⁸⁴ The preliminary solution of the amusement park from 1977 encompassed four categories of users of all ages, and the functions were divided according to their nature.⁸⁵ The spatial organization included commercial facilities and a Space Pavilion in the entrance area. The noisier parts of the complex, which extended towards the railway zone,⁸⁶ were positioned at the left side of the entrance. The quieter facilities, however, were planned to be located at the right side of the entrance along with a Drawing Pavilion which had not been a part of any former project so far.⁸⁷ The spatial dominant of the complex was supposed to be the History Pavilion, which would be built on a smaller island (Janković et al., 1977, p. 36). The entire park complex was conceived as a multitude of micro-ambients whose common thread intended to be the futuristic design of all the buildings,⁸⁸ which has not changed significantly since the initial idea in 1973.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ It is important to note that during the second half of the 1970s, there was a significant requirement for the construction of new buildings to preserve the existing silhouette of Ada, considering that the existing vegetation was not protected and that it required reconstruction (Janković et al., 1977, p. 34; Ђириловић, 1977).

⁸⁵ The covered categories were: children, youth, adults and older adults, while the functions were divided into: dynamic, visual, acoustic, participatory and various types of games (Janković et al., 1977, p. 34).

⁸⁶ The environments where the railway would pass included: Smederevo Tower, Mostar Bridge, the North Pole, a settlement in Texas and the African Savannah (Ђириловић, 1977).

⁸⁷ At the beginning of the 1980s, the *Prater* in Vienna, among its usual entertainment facilities, also featured sculpting studios (O’Brien, 1981, pp. 82–83), thus making the idea of a drawing pavilion in Belgrade modern.

⁸⁸ Unlike the concept applied to Disney’s parks, which involved incorporating architectural quotes from futurism, as well as from various historical styles and periods.

⁸⁹ The only architectural innovation was the introduction of canopies in the form of spatial grid structures (Јевтовић, 2018, p. 263).

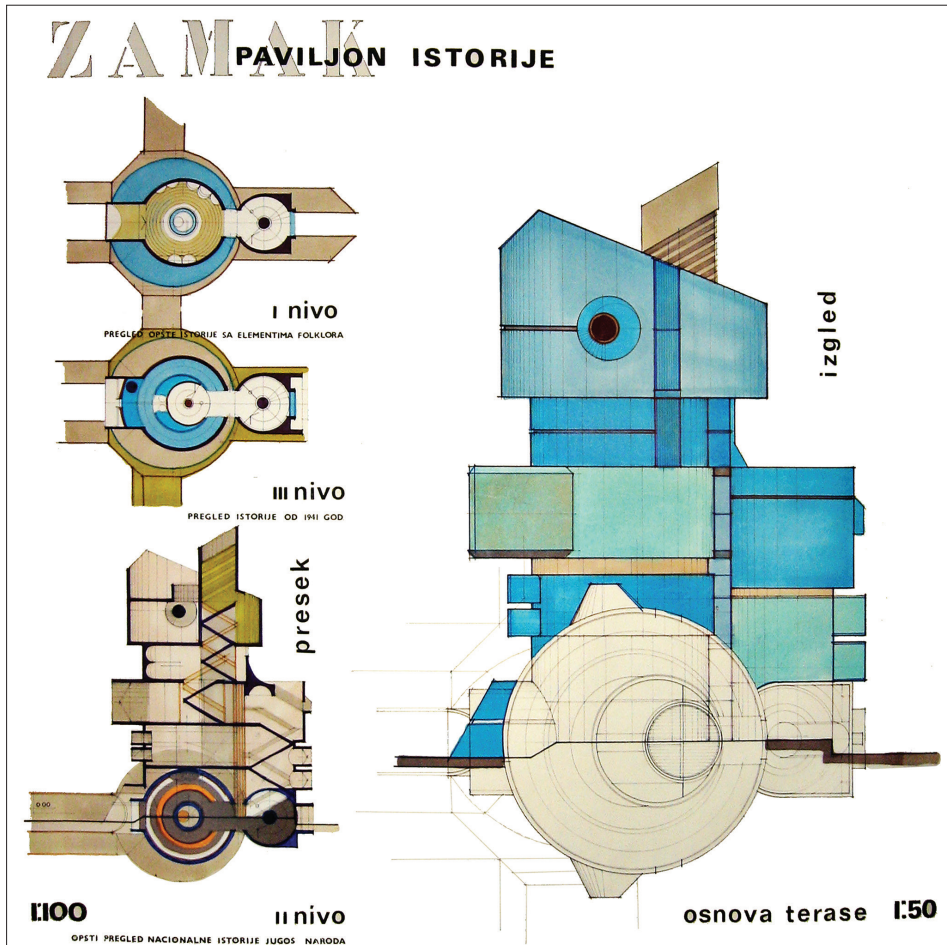


Fig. 5. Amusement Park in Belgrade – History Pavilion, A. Đokić & S. Ilić, 1973 (Source: documentation from the bureau “Romantic architecture”)

The Space Pavilion was supposed to consist of two screens, one on the floor and the other on the ceiling, which would simulate the experience of being inside a flying saucer, while the History Pavilion was intended to educate visitors about the national past. At the first level, the History Pavilion provided an overview of general history with elements of folklore. The second level was dedicated to a general overview of the national history of the Yugoslav peoples, while the highest level was reserved for the period of history after 1941 and the significance of the people’s liberation wars.⁹⁰ That phase of project development

⁹⁰ The people’s liberation wars were considered an ideological foundation in socialist Yugoslavia, and the cultivation of the revolutionary tradition was singled out as “the most important social task” (Vukotić Lazar & Marković Savić, 2020, p. 28).



Fig. 6. Amusement Park Pavilions on Ada Ciganlija, A. Đokić & S. Ilić, 1977
(Source: documentation from the bureau „Romantic architecture“, photographed in 1981)

indicated that there were clear connections to the model established as early as *Disneyland* (1955) and transferred to other Disney’s amusement parks.⁹¹ Furthermore, the way historical topics were structured merely demonstrated the aspiration to legitimize Yugoslavism (second level), as something that emerged from national folklore (first level) and to emphasize the importance of the contribution of the ideology of the ruling party (third level).

Although it was expected to be “one of the largest and most beautiful entertainment and recreation centers in Europe” (Ђириловић, 1977), the partially realized Amusement Park on Ada Ciganlija was closed after a few years, having proved to be unsustainable (Јевтовић, 2018, p. 265). Apart from having such a strong preliminary basis and effective and modern architectural design of the park, the reasons for its partial realization, commercial failure and short life span must be sought in a wider cultural and historical context and events that were beyond the influence of its creators. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Serbia and Yugoslavia underwent a series of significant social changes,⁹² and the ambitious construction projects from the 1970s had the aim to maintain an apparent image of well-being and prosperity.⁹³ Two years after the opening of

⁹¹ It reflected the aspiration to contribute to the construction of collective memory, as well as faith in the future and technological progress.

⁹² The adoption of the new Constitution in 1974 granted greater freedom to the constituent states within the federation, resulting in the decentralization of the Yugoslav market and to the economic and social crisis that occurred in the latter half of the decade (Ignjatović, 2012, p. 691; Јевтовић, 2018, p. 65).

⁹³ Well-being and prosperity were primarily reliant on foreign loans (Štraus, 1991, p. 94).



Fig. 7. Amusement Park Pavilions on Ada Ciganlija,
A. Đokić & S. Ilić, 1977 (Source: private collection of the author,
copyright Aleksandra Jevtović 2021)

the new amusement park, the death of Josip Broz (1980) marked the beginning of strengthening the nationalist opposition and the onset of the process of ideological transition (Ignjatović, 2010, p. 663; Јевтовић, 2018, pp. 70–71, 505).

Mittermeier (2021, p. 169) recognized that the success of any theme park greatly depends upon the establishment of a strong local fan base. Đokić and Ilić's amusement park project, however, faced public outcry from its beginning due to an urbanistic oversight regarding the selection of a location in Topčider.⁹⁴ The amusement park project was perceived as a threat to traditional values.⁹⁵ The entrance to the amusement park in Belgrade was free of charge, and visitors only had to pay for specific entertainment facilities (Ђириловић, 1977). Despite the fact that the amusement parks in America, adhering to the model of world fairs,⁹⁶ charged entrance fees to visitors and sold special tickets for individual attractions,

⁹⁴ It should be mentioned that it was most likely not an 'urbanistic oversight' but a deliberate tendency that was in line with the ruling ideology. Namely, the area housed significant historical monuments related to the period of Prince Miloš's reign, the liberation from the Ottoman Empire, and even the First World War, all of which belonged to the historical period before the establishment of the socialist republic. In that sense, it was attractive to the ruling structures as a platform that should be rebranded with new ideological premises.

⁹⁵ Topčider, as a cultural and historical entity, was designated as a monument of exceptional importance for the Republic of Serbia in 1987 (Ђирић, 2008).

⁹⁶ It was believed that the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago influenced the transfer of the ticketing admission model to Coney Island (Weinstein, 1992, pp. 134–135). *Disneyland*, alongside other motifs, shared with the New York World's Fair the practice of having high ticket prices for entry into theme parks (Zukin, 1991, p. 227).

such a principle was not acceptable in the context of socialist democracy and social ownership.⁹⁷ The amusement park project corresponded to the ideological narratives of the ruling party much more than to the actual needs of society.⁹⁸

Conclusion

The development of amusement parks indicates that through various historical periods and different cultural environments, certain innovations have modified former types of practice, behavioral patterns and habits for outdoor entertainment. Innovations have led to the formation of a new cultural product (Weinstein, 1992), while different cultural environments have not embraced the altered behavioral patterns and outlines of that new world with equal enthusiasm. In Europe, it was considered that medieval carnivals often served as a mockery towards the established social norms (Wallace, 1985). During the 18th century, pleasure gardens in France contributed to the reduction of class differences and the awakening of a sense of national unity (Conlin, 2008). However, during the 19th century, the *Prater* in Vienna and the *Tivoli* in Copenhagen played a mediator and emancipatory role (O'Brien, 1981; Zerlang, 1997). By the end of the 19th century, world's fairs introduced a series of innovations that directly influenced not only the intensification of global interactions but also the further development of entertainment. Amusement parks in America from the beginning of the 20th century represented the pioneering commodification of leisure time. *Disneyland*, however, is believed to have offered a "model of consumer society" that reached the widest market by recycling the cultural clichés (Goodstein, 1999, p. 315). It was also reported that *Disneyland* actually erased all "traces of rituals of revolt" through high level of organized entertainment (Wallace, 1985, p. 40). There is no doubt that the idea of synthesizing entertainment and new technology and their introduction as commercial products intended for mass consumption actually originated in America (Nelson, 1986, p. 106). The American formula, moreover, imposed a (paradoxical) idea of a highly controlled and meticulously regulated environment in which control was the key factor that enabled enjoyment (Zukin, 1991, p. 227; Ghirardo, 1996, pp. 42, 46).

In terms of the architectural design of the analysed amusement park projects, in the mid-20th century, there was a transition from oriental motifs (*Tivoli* and *Luna Park*) into futuristic motifs (Disney and Đokić). This transition can be interpreted as a direct, visual consequence of the globalizing trend. In an

⁹⁷ It is only at the begining of the 1990s that Serbia entered the process of transitioning from the socialist system into that of the capitalistic one (Јевтовић, 2018, p. 78).

⁹⁸ Based on other ambitious projects that emerged during the 1970s in Belgrade, a time of its intensive expansion, it has also been noted that they often exceeded the actual needs of the cultural environment (Јевтовић, 2018, pp. 66, 73).

interconnected world, the Orient was no longer sufficiently exotic and unknown, and the imagination was awakened by the still unexplored outer space.

From the perspective of the American cultural environment, during the latter half of the last century, amusement parks were considered to be “key symbols of American culture”, and they were regarded as “pilgrimage sites”, “meccas” of popular culture and “national shrines” (King, 1981, pp. 117, 119; Neuman, 1999, pp. 252–253). During the 1960s and 1970s and within the discourse of socialist Yugoslavia, memorial parks were built to this end and had the aim of strengthening the ruling ideology and consolidating collective identity, often through various manifestations that took place in those areas (Manojlović Pintar, 2014). The cohesive national force was the reverence for the fallen victims as well as assigning meaning to tragedies,⁹⁹ instead of commercialized entertainment and “amnesia”. From the perspective of domestic architectural practice, the “Belgrade’s Disneyland” project confirms the ambitions and modernity of its authors. Although the amusement park project represents a significant theme within the creative biography of Aleksandar Đokić, the fate of its realization and short lifespan might be interpreted in the light of the combination of other influences. These influences resulted in the spontaneous defense of the national cultural identity against the early onslaught of the “society of spectacle”.¹⁰⁰ The analyzed example also confirmed that Serbia was more successful in defending its traditional identity during the observed period than in the one following the 1990s, given that Belgrade back then did not become richer for one “Disneyland”, but it did for numerous shopping malls.

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⁹⁹ The ideology shift on the territory of Serbia was accompanied by a metamorphosis of meaning through which the monuments dedicated to historical events passed, but there was also an effort to establish a certain “continuity of suffering” (Manojlović Pintar, 2014, pp. 164, 387–390; Јевтовић, 2018, p. 254).

¹⁰⁰ As Milivojević asserts, the totalitarian consumer society of the spectacle tends to exist “in the domain of deception and false consciousness”, as well as to form an opposition between the lonely individual and the market-oriented world (Миливојевић, 2013, pp. 269–270).

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Резиме

Развој простора намењених забави је током историје кроз своје организационе и естетске карактеристике пратио, а повремено и предводио, одређене промене у домену развоја индустрије и савремених технологија, као и у домену развоја друштва, урбане културе и образаца понашања у слободно време. Рад разматра кључне примере забавних паркова, који су карике у ланцу утицаја и иновација, а који су резултирали тематским парковима компаније Дизни током друге половине прошлог века, као глобалним феноменом. Фокус рада је на представљању и анализи пројеката забавног парка у Београду архитеката Александра Ђокића и Слободана Илића, а који је развијан и грађен током седамдесетих година прошлог века и који је све време током планирања и изградње називан „београдским Дизнилендом“. Циљ рада је да се београдски пројекат позиционира унутар ширег контекста културно-историјског развоја сродних пројеката широм света. Резултати рада указују на то да су током прошлог века Дизнијеви тематски паркови играли активну улогу у промоцији потрошачке културе, док је у Београду изградња по сличном моделу наишла на друштвени отпор и низ потешкоћа током реализације, што се може тумачити као пример спонтане (и краткорочне) одбране националног културног идентитета.

Кључне речи: забавни парк; тематски парк; архитектура; туризам; национална култура; глобална култура; Александар Ђокић.



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