Leisure parks: components and creators of the new urban landscapes?

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Abstract : The article analyses the relationship between leisure parks and the urban world and starts form the hypothesis that the leisure park may serve as a model for metropolitan reconstruction at the same time that it is a major component of it. This signifies that the leisure park, as an image and as an object, "permeates" the modern city, both as a microcosm through specific design features, and as a macrocosm through the design of the entire metropolis. The authors propose to verify this assumption in the case of two french leisure parks. They present, after a general review of literature, the results of a survey held in 2012 in Futuroscope and Disneyland Paris, which articulates a historical and statistical evaluation of the impact of these leisure parks in the suburban area with a interpretation of urban symbols and urban images inside both parks. The comparison of the place of urbanity in the two leisure parks and the place of parks in the dynamics of the two urban areas, in these two contrasting places, shows the importance of genuine models of urbanity in leisure space, but also its diversity.

Keywords: leisure park, leisure space, urbanity, metropolization, Disneyland, Futuroscope.

Résumé : L'article analyse la relation existant entre les parcs de loisir et la ville, il part de l'hypothèse que le parc de loisir est devenu un modèle de référence pour la conception des métropoles en même temps qu'il en constitue presque toujours une composante spatiale spécifique. Cela implique que le parc de loisir, en tant qu'image et en tant qu'objet, "infuse" la ville moderne, et ceci aussi bien à l'échelle micro, puisque l'on retrouve dans certaines zones urbaines des éléments spécifiques empruntés aux parcs de loisir, qu'à l'échelle macro, dans la démarche de planification métropolitaine. Les auteurs proposent de vérifier cette hypothèse en se penchant sur deux parcs de loisir français. Ils présentent, après une revue générale de la littérature, les résultats d'une enquête menée en 2012 au Futuroscope et à Disneyland Paris. Leur démarche articule une approche historique et une évaluation statistique de l'impact de ces parcs dans les zones périurbaines avec une interprétation des symboles urbains et des images urbaines utilisées à l'intérieur de ces deux parcs. La comparaison de la place de l'urbanité dans les deux parcs de loisirs et de la place des deux parcs dans les dynamiques des deux métropoles, dans ces deux cas contrastés, montre certes l'importance des modèles urbains originaux dans l'espace de loisir, mais aussi leur diversité.

Mots clés : parc de loisir, espace de loisir, urbanité, métropolisation, Disneyland, Futuroscope

Introduction

Leisure parks have been the subject of a considerable amount of scientific literature in the last thirty years or so (Lanquar R., 1991, Anton Clave S., 2007). This growing attention is explained by the fact that leisure, and the types of space that it creates, the temporal experiences it provides and the imaginary worlds it nourishes has an exceptional potential for allowing us to analyze the transformations that are occurring in the modern urban world and dealing with various key concepts in the human sciences, such as the concept of urban image, the idea of imposing themes on space or the impact of the ideas of capital on urban sites through consumption... (Sorkin M., 1992, Soja E., 2000, Begout B., 2002, Davis M., 2007, Berdet M., 2012). Combining the ideas of urbanity and leisure parks leads us, following in the footsteps of David Harvey (Harvey D., 2011), to raise the issue of the possible status of the city as a place for entertainment or profit-seeking, in short as a product and, hence, to examine the relationship between the evolution of cities and the evolution of the capitalist system.

France is a specific case for the analysis of leisure parks in two respects. Both geographically and culturally it is positioned between two major entertainment models, that which dominates in the north of Europe and that which is more present in Mediterranean countries. In the north-west of Europe, leisure parks have long been a feature of popular culture and there is a high density of such parks in periurban areas (for example the Europa-Park in Germany). The parks in the South of Europe are on the contrary comparatively recent, have no link with popular cultural heritage and tend to be located in mature tourist areas. This shows that unlike the parks of the north-west of Europe which are mainly visited by the local population at weekends, the parks of southern Europe target tourists who are holidaying in the vicinity. Examples such as the Portaventura park on the Catalan coast and Terra Mitica near Benidorm spring to mind (Anton S., 2012). France embodies a sort of transition between the north and south of Europe (Dewailly J.-M., 1990). It has both a few older parks, which tend to be near the

most urbanized and populated areas in the north (such as the Walibi amusement and water parks) and recent parks that are in the catchments of international tourist areas such as Paris. French leisure parks are also interesting in that they exhibit a hybrid case in the way they position themselves with respect to their clientele. They seek to attract both the metropolitan public and a national and international clientele. The best known park is Disneyland Paris, with more than 12 million visitors in 2012, and the next largest is the Futuroscope, which attracts over 5 million visitors per year.

The second reason for considering the case of France in connection with leisure parks has to do with how they have been received and perceived in the country. In France, the topic of the interaction between leisure, cities and leisure parks has generated a considerable amount of controversy (Boucherat J.C., 2002). In view of the very generous terms awarded by the French government to the Disney company for it to build its eponymous theme park[1], research that related to theme parks, and above all the Disney park, was initially marked by suspicion, and sometimes carried a strong polemical and ideological message, as leisure parks were seen as a symptom of cultural "Americanization" (Smadja G., 1988, Davis S., 1998, Brunel S., 2012). The out of hand rejection of the best-known of France's parks by a section of the research community has never been completely silenced (the debate started up again with the official signing of additional clauses that extended the terms of the agreement between the State, local government and the Disney Company (Deville Chabrolle V., 1999). However, as leisure parks have developed and become integrated within urban areas, the views reflected in research have become more varied and pluralistic, and passions have subsided. The time for objective scientific thought appears to have arrived.

But how can the issue of the relationship between French leisure parks and the urban world be tackled? Research into the interaction between cities and leisure

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[1] The agreement of 24 March 1987 that was signed between the Walt Disney Company and the French government. (The Interdepartmental delegation for the Eurodisney France project).

parks has followed two separate paths. First, some work attempts to measure the territorial and economic impacts of the leisure parks and how they have affected urban development (impacts on various sectors, jobs, investments ...). This requires researchers to take account of the highly changeable dynamic of these parks, many of which close only a few years after opening (Cazes G., 1988, Violier P., 2008), and use a variety of methodologies to create indicators to describe the economic effects of the parks on areas of varying sizes (Desvignes C., 1998). Second, some research considers cross-fertilization between cities and parks from the point of view of representations and the use of signs, symbols and images. From this culturalist standpoint, the leisure park is place that helps one consider one or more models of urbanity in the making. A considerable body of research has been conducted in this area, which examines the first historical models of parks, which are linked to the history of World Fairs, the history of places of popular amusement, and the history of shopping centres and public space... (Bajac Q., Ottinger D., 2010). The aim is to identify the links that may exist between several types of place (urban squares, public gardens, follies and amusement park attractions) and events of several types (religious and secular festivals, markets and street fairs) before and after the industrial revolution (Langlois G.-A., 1991, Eyssartel, A.M. & Rochette B., 1992). When such research does not have a historical dimension, it examines more contemporary phenomena and discusses the growing similarity between items in the urban environment that are associated with trade, leisure and living in a post-industrial urban society, often comparing Europe with the urban models of North America (Zukin S., 1995).

This paper does not set out to focus particularly on any of these areas, but rather to investigate the links between them. It therefore studies how the spatial organization of leisure parks has borrowed from the urban world and also analyzes the development of leisure parks (with reference to their interaction with the spatial planning of metropolises). Working both on the organization and urban development of parks allows us to draw on a recent and fairly large body of research which postulates that there is a degree of convergence between the landscape of leisure parks and new planning trends in major cities. Manifestly, leisure parks are used as a convenient reference in urbanistic thought as they

summon up a set of images, and provide an opportunity to stress, with a touch of irony and in many cases detachment, the functional and artificial nature of new urban sites (Brunel S., 2012). They are thus frequently associated with the idea of the expansion of the commercial forms of urbanization. More rarely, the designer (architect or urban planner) or the public relations officer asserts the association between the concept of a leisure park and a new way of living, representing civilized and peaceful urban life.

On this basis, we have made the hypothesis that images, references, and spatial models circulate on a large scale between the sphere of urban thought and the leisure park. This circulation leads to the transposition of certain forms of spatial planning from the park to the urban setting, and vice-versa. Moreover, this back and forth movement of images and techniques takes place at many levels, from the largest to the smallest scale. On the very large scale, we can readily interpret leisure parks on the basis of the spatial model of a protected area whose nature is intensified by the concentration of activities and events. A considerable number of urban geographers draw attention to the fact that this type of planning is becoming more and more common in other urban areas, for example public spaces and tourist or cultural sites (Gravari Barbas M., 2006, Ghorra Gobin C., 2000). Models circulate too on a small scale, and researchers consider that planners conceive of the metropolis – at least partly – as a system that connects flows and functions, in particular entertainment, residential and commercial functions while using a set of tools (a vocabulary, images, ways of producing space) that have been borrowed from the design techniques applied in the large leisure parks. This means that we are moving, from both ends of the scale of urban metrics, towards a possible merger between urbanity and leisure. As a working hypothesis, the leisure park may serve as a model for metropolitan reconstruction at the same time that it is a major component of it. Thus, the leisure park, as an image and as an object, "permeates" the modern city, both as a microcosm through specific design features, and as a macrocosm through the design of the entire metropolis.

The goal of our demonstration is to clarify conceptually and discuss this observation by means of a rational interpretation framework which both separates

and connects two very distinct levels of understanding, the territorial sphere and the sphere of spatial representations.

With regard to territorial analysis we shall observe and classify the descriptors which can be used to detail the organization and make up of a park with regard to its projection in space, both on an internal level within the park, and externally within urban and metropolitan space. In this context we will discuss the different ways leisure parks are integrated within French metropolitan space using two contrasting examples Disneyland Paris and the Futuroscope. We shall observe the interference that takes place between the spatial dynamics of the leisure parks and the metropolis. The use of tools and vocabulary drawn from geography will enable us to describe the interactions that take place at the interface between the park and the urban space. In addition, with regard to symbols, we will stress how productive cross-fertilization between the concepts of leisure park and metropolitan planning is for geographical thought. We shall also demonstrate that this cross-fertilization is illuminating in two respects. In one way, the leisure park can, of course, be used to conceive and construct a modern metropolitan image that is in harmony with the social, economic and financial transformations of our time. In another way, we shall attempt to show that the supply of leisure changes and takes on new forms, and that the imaginary world of leisure also draws on genuine spatial models of urbanity. In this case too, the field study will provide examples of this system of reciprocal symbolic borrowings between the leisure park and urban space, through images, objects, elements of landscape etc.

The research has been conducted in three stages. Part one sets out the theoretical propositions which provide the foundations and working hypotheses, link our research to the literature and explain the construction of an interpretation framework. The second part is methodological and describes the field study and the double case study that was conducted in and around the Disneyland Paris and Futuroscope de Poitiers parks. Part three qualifies and discusses the results of the study and proposes, for the French case, a more generic and more systematic interpretation of the formal and symbolic reconstructions of urbanity and metropolitan space.

1. The value of a spatial approach for the analysis of the relationship between cities and leisure parks

11. *The diversity and complexity of the links between cities, parks and leisure*

It is widely accepted that entertainment profoundly affects new trends in the use of free time, the forms taken by mass consumption and the management of space in general (Yonnet P., 2000). Therefore, the first way of observing the links between the urban world and that of leisure is to observe the forms of spatialization at leisure sites. This involves observing how the sites are organized, from the symbolic point of view, in order to reveal meaningful images and highlight the imaginary worlds of the city and urbanity.

This task relates to the geography of the representations of tourist space, which is an area of research that has been developed in the wake of the work of Claude Raffestin (Raffestin C., 1986) and Hervé Gumuchian (Gumuchian H., 1991) amongst others. This approach, which consists of investigating the mental constructions that are made by individuals or groups (in which case one can talk of social representations), provides an understanding of the way certain characteristics (for example their picturesque, amusing, exotic, restful, magical nature) are associated with locations. This scientific approach is based on the identification of images and a rigorous analysis of the symbols used in discourse, in practise, and when and organizing the site. It has already been applied successfully to leisure parks as these are particularly rich semiotically (Wilson A., 1991, Urry J., 1995). Alexander Wilson thus visited Tomorrowland in Florida and showed how the space in the park in no way represents a real city but a succession of pure images, a *cityscape (*this concept is also centrally important in the work of Findlay J-M., 1992).

Let us begin by considering the production of space in the parks, and first of all the general syntax, i.e. the reasoning that underlies the organization of scenes in the closed and multi-coloured world of leisure parks. Much work has been conducted in order to interpret the specific way signs are organized within leisure parks, with reference to the theory of modernity and post-modernity, with reference to critical analysis of the concept of landscape or , lastly, with reference to the "culturalization" of society. "Culturization can also be seen in the increasing significance of signs to the design and marketing of tourism sites". (Rojek C., Urry J. 1997., page 4). Rules exist for assembling sites as do spatial techniques which help to transform these highly structured enclosed areas into worlds that are dedicated to pleasure, leisure and amusement (Fjellman S., 1992, Findlay J. M., 1992). These rules for organizing forms and functions in space bring in the concept of the spatial narrative projected by parks. The raw material of this narrative is the park space which is subjected to highly sophisticated formal organization. Marc Berdet is one of the most recent researchers to have highlighted, in "Fantasmagories du capital" (2012), the extent to which the Disney park is topographically compartmentalized around four major areas, each of which represents a thematic world (Discoveryland, Fantasyland, Adventureland, and, obviously Main Street in the centre). When visitors move from one attraction to another, they are bound up within a story which moves forwards seamlessly without ever taking them "back to reality" (Behar Bannelier L., 2008). Space is completely stage-managed. The internal layout of the objects and attractions complies with a spatial syntax in which the order of the elements, the interaction of different scales, the distance regimes and the systems of heights are very accurately determined in order to support a narrative through forms, volumes and displays... (Clavé A., 2007, Benckendorff, 2006). The park is a symbolic microcosm which is constructed like a narrative scenario which gives physical expression to the imaginary (Tuan Y.F., Hoelscher S.D., 1997).

So how do visitors view and experience these parks? A field of research has developed that studies the interpretation of the images and imaginary worlds that are presented in leisure parks. The first requirement is for the public to know that the worlds in question have been produced and invented, to provide derive

pleasure and happiness. John Urry (Urry J., 1995) has analyzed the development of the capacity to engage in the visual consumption of places in western culture and stressed the social and historical conditions that fostered the development of this "tourist gaze", which makes the enjoyment of the landscape of images possible and which stimulates the appetite for these phantasmagoria. He explains that attaching so much value to the visual experience of places is a feature of advanced urban societies who have a new relationship with images and the magical worlds that are offered to them. Still in connection with leisure parks, other scholars see parks as paradigmatic of post-modernity (Venturi et al., 1972, Tuan and Hoelscher, 1997 and have thought about the re-use in parks of signs, forms, objects or monuments that relate to the urban and day-to-day worlds(Eco, 1989). These scholars highlight that an image (for example a photograph or a painting of a certain public space (Paris, or perhaps Venice) was used to produce an element of the park, which is therefore equivalent to a reproduction. The tourists "recognize" the spaces, and hurry to capture them on their smartphone or pose for family portraits in front of them, which brings to mind the interactions between systems of images, culture and tourist practices that many scholars have studied (Crawshaw C., Urry J., 1997). Ultimately, all that is needed is the appearance or the ghost of the object to satisfy the client, no longer the real object. Here we are very close to the definition of a simulacrum given by Jean Baudrillard in the paper "Simulacre et simulation" Baudrillard J., 1981). Baudrillard introduces the idea of the "precession of simulacra" referring to postmodern worlds (parks and other cultural and leisure sites) in which real objects and landscapes can disappear, their mere appearance being enough to create satisfaction. As they wander along the paths in the park, visitors recognize features of appreciated and desired models of public space (playgrounds, village squares, ...), which are reflections of an urban society that is calm and symbiotic, creating an environment which is conducive to the consumption of leisure.

To bring to a close this initial discussion of the spatial order of parks and the types of images and symbols they project, we shall take a series of spatial markers from the literature which we shall use as a basis for our work in the field. We shall give attention to the formal systems used to organize sites, and in particular the explicit

rules of entry and movement, and the general layout of the park. We shall see how, more or less consciously, visitors identify a kind of order immediately, how they are easily able to capture and interpret information, how they feel pleasure by virtue of the forms and colours, sound stimuli and signs which convey meaning to them. The different parts of the park (the entrance, the main street) will be observed in order to understand how their construction helps to diminish the traditional distinction between the real and the imaginary, the true and the false, and provide a narrative. Finally, we shall attempt to recognize certain sites whose attraction depends on the recognition of their existence as simulacra, and whose function is "over-signified".

12. The role of the leisure park in the urban metabolism and metropolitan construction

The second direction of theoretical research relates to the interactions between the urban "organism" (as regards its social, spatial and economic dynamic) and the leisure park. This research, which belongs to the discipline of urban geography (Cazes G., and Potier F., 1998, Dubois G., 2001) analyzes the factors and processes that govern the location of parks in metropolitan space, as well as the growth and expansion factors that affect them insofar as they interact with the metroplitan dynamic. This body of literature highlights two things. First, the spatial positioning of the parks in urban space is the outcome of a dialectic between separation and dependency – which in spite of what one might think does not involve a paradox. The literature above all documents the concept of insularity (Didier S. 2002) and shows that the major parks, which take up very large amounts of space, are very frequently located in the outskirts of large conurbations and apply a principle of very marked separation from the rest of the urban fabric. This isolation can be linked to how parks developed historically and the general manner in which metropolises grew in the United States (Begout B., 2002): on the one hand it is a response to the development of urban zoning, but it is also the outcome of speculation on the medium- and long-term increase in land prices, and a strategic vision of metropolitan development. We should also bear in mind another symbolic dimension of the city / park separation. Parks are of course isolated for economic and spatial reasons, but also symbolically to show they are a space

"outside everything", where visitors can engage in "non day-to-day" activities which are "extra-ordinary", but safely, and within a clearly marked perimeter.

However, the features of the park that express its closure and separation from the rest of the city should not lead one to believe there are no links and interactions between the urban space and the park. On the contrary, the siting of parks in the outskirts of cities is hard-fought and it is even possible to show that the park, although it is created at the instigation of a private company, is partly the result of **political** compromise. This is particularly true in Europe, especially in France, where government (municipal, metropolitan and regional authorities, and also central government) has a strong tradition of involvement in territorial planning. It is therefore necessary to consider how the park is integrated in a territory, the power struggles that exist and the coalitions between players from the public and private sectors that influence its dynamic. It is also the case that the parks have been part of the urban landscape for three decades. This means that the links between the park and the territory have had the time to develop and become more complex. The integration of a park within a geographical space follows a multi-stage process that runs from the creation of the park to its development (during which functional and spatial diversification can be identified), and finally, to its maturity (at which stage functional diversification is at a maximum, interactions with the metropolis more powerful and interactions with institutional actors more complex). Therefore, the field study described below needs to consider how the studied parks fit into this dynamic vision and see whether they are sufficiently diversified functionally, whether they meet certain expectations of metropolitan actors and whether the territories in which they are located modify their growth, and if so in what way.

To summarize this initial survey of the research that may provide some insight into the spatial aspects of the relationships between the city and leisure, we are able construct a kind of theoretical matrix that combines two axes. The first relates to scales and shows that spatial factors are indispensable for an understanding of the structure and operation of a leisure park. Space plays a role continuously from the smallest scale, i.e. a few metres to a few tens of metres (which enables us to analyze

distinct elements which are assembled according to a specific rule and create the conditions for amusement) to a standpoint that permits analysis at local level, which involves the scale of a few hundreds of metres (that at which we can observe the integration of the park in the urban fabric), and, lastly, at the metropolitan level at a scale of at least ten kilometres, in which the expansion of the leisure park influences the form and operation of the metropolis. These different scales can be crossed with another axis, that which distinguishes between the different stages in the maturity of the park, from creation to consolidation through to maturity. Throughout these phases, the park makes symbolic use of real or fictional elements of urban space (simulacra, scenes, narrative), it also interacts, in a negotiation framework, with urban actors to diversify what it offers and remain competitive. Also, in some cases, the leisure park exerts an influence over part of metropolitan space and affects development within it.

2. Two case studies illustrate the spatial and symbolic interactions between cities and leisure parks: Disneyland Paris and the Futuroscope

21. Construction of a methodological framework for the study areas

The hypotheses presented above must be compared to observation data in order to check their explanatory power, then qualify, criticize and add to them. This methodological section begins by selecting the most appropriate leisure parks, continues with the construction of a study and data collection framework, and ends with a discussion of the first findings.

The criteria on which a leisure park was selected for study were factual in nature and can be divided into three types. We need to study large parks, which should if possible be theme parks rather than aquatic or entertainment leisure or games parks as theme parks, by the very virtue of their thematization, offer a more sophisticated spatial narrative than leisure parks. We need to consider the number of visitors, because this is an indirect descriptor of the number of attractions in the park, hence its level of formal sophistication and semiotic wealth. A third criterion is linked to the metropolitan integration of the park. The selected cities must have a population that is sufficiently large and socially and economically diverse for

their elected officials to be able to interact with the park, and for the metropolitan space to be able to accept and develop, based on the project for the park, policies that set out to bring about functional diversification. A final selection criterion was how long ago the park was created: a park that is still at the planning stage or that has been created only recently will not have had the time to put down roots and produce the spatial effects that interest us.

In the context of France, these selection criteria lead us to choose, without any hesitation, Disneyland Paris and the Futuroscope, a pair of sites that are frequently used together for research purposes (Jacquin, J. 1993). Both are theme parks and not just leisure parks. Their spatial organization provides experiences and concretizes imaginary worlds. In addition, they are associated with a city, of which they are a sort of satellite – Disneyland is 30 kilometres to the east of Paris and the Futuroscope is 20 kilometres to the north of Poitiers. They both attract large numbers of visitors (the first has more than 12 million visitors a year and the second more than five million). The fact that they have existed for some time (they were created twenty and twenty-five years ago) means that they have had the time to become integrated within their conurbation and become a part of new planning programmes.

The data was collected on-site in the autumn of 2012. In Marne-la-Vallée, the fact that a scientific conference that was held to mark the twentieth anniversary of the opening of Disneyland Paris provided us with a rich body of material. Apart from written documents and contemporary films, the metropolitan stakeholders and the management teams of the two parks were interviewed on the dual themes of metropolitization and leisure[2].

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[2] The public planning body EPAMARNE, accepted our request for a work-related interview and supplied us with a large bibliography of reports drafted by specialized consultancies. In Poitiers, the regional and metropolitan authorities (the conurbation committee) also agreed to our requests for meetings, maps and economic data. In addition, we visited the park and interviewed the director.

22. The findings of the field studies

We began by using plans and maps to physically explore the interior of the theme parks in order to identify forms of spatial organization and symbolic objects that might refer to urban forms. We succeeded in doing this, but the symbolic meanings and narrative projects present in the two parks differed very greatly.

Disneyland Paris imitates a form of urbanity and successfully merges European and American cultural influences. The visitor who walks through it is immersed in the bustling centre of a European metropolis during the Belle Epoque. Like the Grands Boulevards of Paris in the nineteenth century, *Main Street* offers multifunctional spaces (restaurants, leisure, information ...), cosmopolitan locations, bursting with life and activities (Bryman A., 1995, Behar - Bannelier L., 2008). The creators of the park set out to evoke memories among visitors of daily life in urban spaces (daily life as experienced, imagined or seen in films). The space is therefore filled with copies: squares and boulevards that resemble "real" public spaces with which visitors identify and feel empathy. Stephen Fjellman (Fjellman S., 1992), in his analysis of Disneyworld, describes processes like that set off by Proust's madeleine: an insignificant detail takes form and unfurls itself to reveal a whole world of the senses. We encountered the same kind of device with urban objects such as streetlamps and footpaths, whose design evokes a nineteenth century European city (London, Paris...) which has been pacified and civilized. Disneyland offers places for which its customers can develop an attachment that is based on emotional bonds, memories, similarities with other familiar and appreciated spaces, in front of which they would like to be photographed with their family. We are faced with a set of references and quotations, applying a process which is widely used in cities such as Las Vegas (Venturi R., Scott Brown, D., Izenour S., 1972). There is also the physical manipulation of a "sense of place", the organization of a "magical atmosphere" that is intended to generate, particularly among children, immediate attachment (we have used this term in line with the work of Low S. M., Altman I. (1992). The copy of the city, the image of a concentrated form of urbanity, devoid of menace above all appeals to people's senses and individual and social affects. While a large number of city-dwellers in advanced societies are rejecting cities, in the park they find a counter-model which

triggers an emotional link with the site (Martouzet D., 2002). Both in the case of access areas (entrances, transitions from one "land" to another) or zones where streams of visitors mingle or intersect (esplanades, forecourts, streets), the space in the park imitates perfect urbanity and determines social behaviours because it provides an environment which allows visitors to interact collectively: festivals, parades, celebrations, ... (Beckendorff P., 2006)

The Futuroscope also has a narrative project, but the visual environment presented to visitors does not attempt to connect them to specific cities. The principal reference is a utopia or a futuristic mythology in which the urban component is less apparent. As its name indicates, the park is dedicated to the future: its architecture is extremely daring, particularly, when one considers the rural landscape which is still its backdrop. The geometrical forms of the buildings accentuate the idea of being elsewhere. The architecture is deliberately redundant in relation to what the park offers, i.e. multifarious visual and sensory experiences, but above all speed, technology, science ... and above all science fiction. The extraordinary nature of the narrative is highlighted by the physical nature of the buildings (materials, forms, assemblies of volumes) and by the park's technical and technological systems, particularly the way lighting is managed both during the day and at night. The spatio-temporal break with the territorial context of a medium-sized city in the Département of Vienne is pushed to its maximum symbolic intensity. In the Futuroscope, space is filled and organized in a way that is intended to block spatial reflexes (the entries and exits of the attractions, the winding paths) and avoid any reference to a local architectural tradition. It refers to no specific city, either past or future, but provides a sensory world and a feeling of the unusual by effects of scale, overhanging buildings, the depth of the views .... The use of space and the futurist architecture are part of the attraction in themselves, and an integral part of the visitor's experience in the park: 3D images, games in which bodies and images are accelerated and in which perception is at the boundaries of the virtual and the real... The concept of thematization is present, but here the created setting aims to express the future: the technical future of objects, the future of lifestyles; the future of social relationships, etc. And

the very nature of this park project leads to a virtual approach to the urban (Bajac, Q., Ottinger, D., (directors), Beckendorff P., 2006). *see Photo 1*

We need to distance ourselves somewhat from the vision of the future provided by this park. To begin with, the future is quite a common theme in leisure parks (Bajac, Q., Ottinger D. 2010) and the style of the Futuroscope reflects how the future was perceived at the time the park was designed and built, i.e. the early 1980s. This is, incidentally, typical of many technology parks, one obvious example being Epcot, and, more generally, other locations that attract a great deal of scholarly attention because of their links with the parks model, namely the World Fairs. For the purposes of comparison, we can mention the 1939 New York World Fair which presented a "vision" of the future entitled "The World of Tomorrow". However, the interest of the architectural narrative that has been constructed around the idea of the future lies elsewhere. The designer has not so much attempted to detach the park from its rural context (the Département of Vienne, in the south-west of France) as to transform the "backward" image of the département by creating a series of visual shocks in the park. To fully understand the meaning of this environment which was seen at the time as representing a break, even a sort of revolution, we have to see the history of the project in the context of the history of French representations in which Paris is seen as attractive and progressive, in opposition to "the provinces" (everywhere apart from Paris), that are frequently considered to be untouched by progress and behind the times. The Futuroscope had a genuine meaning in the context of French political decentralisation. It can also be interpreted as both taking up an economic challenge (creating a park) and a political challenge (proving that somewhere a long way from Paris can embody the future, and therefore going against the old-fashioned and lethargic image frequently associated with the south-west of France.

Second, we wished to understand how the parks matured as leisure spaces that are part of the metropolitan dynamics and the planning projects of the two urban areas. Here too, the two parks have very different histories, yet some parallels can be drawn. The Futuroscope is the result of a public initiative on the part of the

General Council of the Département of Vienne. Its Chair, René Monory (1923 - 2009), wished to diversify the image and economic orientation of an area which was very much dominated by agriculture and, originally, envisaged the park as part of a comprehensive project for the area. The original idea was also for it to be joined by facilities that were focused on other activities, either public or private. "The Futuroscope will be part of a larger complex, formed by an entertainment zone, a training zone and a business zone" (Maigret J. 2005). This quotation from René Monory dates from 1987 and highlights the fact that the park was just one part of a comprehensive planning operation for the area and that it was considered to be a means to bring about a larger economic project. Consequently, the park gradually became integrated within a 200 hectare site known as the technopole that focused on three activities: leisure (with accommodation and support services), training, and production (Jacquin 1993, Robillard, 1993). In two decades, the site has been filled by firms, particularly in the telecommunications, telephony, distance marketing sectors and the cinematic and communications industries, i.e. activities with a large technological component (Lemaignan C. 2003).

The phasing of the plan thus becomes clear. The park encouraged a number of hi-tech firms to move to the site which, to apply Georges Benko's definition, we can describe as a science and technology park (Benko G., 1991). After the time required for the site to mature, i.e. for its functions to become diversified and combine leisure, knowledge and production the site became a technopole, i.e. a diversified, centralizing, local system. The Futuroscope theme park, which was gradually caught up in the wave of development that affected the Poiters conurbation, expanded within an industrial zone that today functions like a second urban centre (Verot P., 1989) with hi-tech firms, research centres, offices and a university campus. In 2012, the Futuroscope technopole counted 283 firms that were specialized in services and the internet providing 7073 jobs in all[3], and its

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[3] Including ZTE, the largest Chinese manufacturer and installer of mobile telephones and MTA Plateforme d'Essais (the test platform of the Mov'éo competitiveness cluster.

business incubator had assisted 23 start-ups[4]. The technopole is also host to 2000 students with a specialization in e-education who are grouped around the Cité des Savoirs[5]. More than 400 researchers from 13 research laboratories[6] are also present at the site. The activities of the leisure park, and the attraction exerted by the firms and the educational establishments in the technopole have led to an increased need for accommodation. In all, 1500 events, attended by almost 2 million persons, were held at the Futuroscope between 1996 and 2008. As highlighted by Robillard (Robillard Y., 1993), this confirms the high level of economic interaction between the science and technology park and the leisure park.

All analysts stress the almost unique status of the Futuroscope in France: it is one of the most economically robust theme parks (its balance sheet is in equilibrium) in a sector with many bankruptcies (Violier P., 2008, SNELAC, 2012). It was created by a public stakeholder, but not central government, in a country where centraI government plays a very important role. After have been sold several times within the private sector (for example to the Amaury group, best known for organizing the Tour de France, in 2000), it is currently owned by the Compagnie des Alpes Group. It is hailed as an indisputable example of successful local development, as it has generated positive knock-on effects for the economy of an area with little industry (Dubois G., Ceron J.-P., 2001). It played a positive role at a key moment for the development of a medium-sized French city, helping local jobs to become more diversified and more highly qualified (Le Bot E., 2000). Obviously, its detractors draw attention to the scale of the financial commitment that weighs

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[4] source: Futuroscope.

[5] This is a Public Interest Grouping (GIP) that brings together the CNED (National Distance Learning Centre), the CNDP (National Centre for Teaching Materials, the CNAM (COnservatoire National des Arts et Métiers – an engineering school), the University of Poitiers, the Fondation Prospective-Innovation and the association for life-long and in-service training.

[6] *Including the Institut Pprime (Pôle Poitevin de Recherche pour l'Ingénieur en Mécanique, Matériaux et Energétique), a CNRS Research Unit focusing on robotics.*

on local taxpayers (the General Council invested of the order of €400 million in the park and its adjacent business zone in the first ten years) and the need for very costly periodic recapitalisation of the firm to make up for the constant fall in visitor numbers.

Disneyland Paris also acted as a catalyst for an exceptional metropolitan planning operation (Pellerin J.-C., 1995) which, over a period of some twenty years, has completely metamorphosed the site, the landscape, the settlement and the infrastructure of the eastern periphery of the Greater Paris Region. This metamorphosis was not unrelated to the complex love-hate relationship that exists between French public opinion and the Disney Company (Altman Y., 1999). In this case too, it was a public actor (central government this time) which encouraged the creation of the park in order to assist the development of a new town to the east of Paris that had been created several decades before (in the very early 1960s) but which lacked demographic and economic dynamism due to its location in a sector of the conurbation with few services and limited industrial potential (Boucherat M., 2002). In 1987, Disneyland signed a contract with the French Prime Minister by which it promised to play an important role in the construction of the fourth sector of the new town (Val d'Europe) (which involved planning a highly ambitious property development programme near the park that covered an area of 2000 hectares and over which the company had option rights) in exchange for the French government's undertaking to provide major infrastructure, such as a high speed railway station, a metro line (the regional express network) taking travellers to the centre of Paris in twenty minutes, and business, education and health services for residents (Lainsbury A., 1999).

Disneyland Paris has had a very marked impact on its area (D'Hauteserre A.M., 1997). Twenty years after it was opened, the park is surrounded by a district that offers a large number of business, cultural, educational, further educational and sporting services as well as dwellings and offices (Beyard M., 2008). This is linked to the determination of the public authorities and the investments they have made (in particular in order to provide high quality public transport that links the satellite town to the centre of Paris) and to the Walt Disney Company's strategy

with regard to land (Puydebat J.-M., 2007). The park has also imposed its own planning standards which have given this part of the metropolis a very different character from the other parts of the outer suburbs with single family detached homes: visitors cannot help but describe this part of the eastern Paris suburbs as an "ideal town", with its excellent road provision, very controlled public space but occasionally kitsch architecture (Beyard M. *et al.,* 1998). The influence of the Disney model in the creation of the architectural and urban forms and in the treatment of public space refers to an ideal urbanity, but is based on the total destruction of all previous activities and all the elements that gave their identity to the villages which existed beforehand (Berdet M., 2012).

If, carrying on from Taylor and Stevens, we attempt to characterize the economic impact of Disneyland Paris (Taylor R., Stevens T., 1995), we can see that that the five municipalities which form sector IV of the new town of Marne-La-Vallée (Chessy, Magny-le-Hongre, Serris, Coupvray, Bailly-Romainvilliers) benefited from 20,000 new dwellings (A. M. D'Hauteserre, 1997). The park has disseminated growth and generated obvious benefits in terms of business start-ups and job creation: the official figures are 15,000 direct and 60,000 indirect jobs (Handschuh E., 1998, Epamarne, 2008). The effects are not limited to its immediate area, but are also apparent throughout the Paris metropolis: the Park's excellent links with Paris and other capital cities as a result of High Speed Rail have affected urban leisure practices and the metropolitization of the capital as a whole (Lanquar R., 1991, Grover, 1997, Potier F. and Cazes G., 2006). There is an extremely large amount of accommodation available in the area around the park: according to EpaMarne, in 2010, the zone had 11304 hotel rooms. This means it is not only able to cope with the visitors to the park, but can also attract professional visitors, business tourists and people who come to Paris for a congress, etc. The site is also home to a number of training bodies (the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Université de Paris-Est, the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers).

Our research into the two parks thus identifies distinct regimes of growth and development, different ways of becoming integrated in the metropolitan space, but confirms that both parks are genuinely integrated within their area, as had been

foreseen so clearly by the geographer Georges Cazes (Cazes G. 1988). The Futuroscope brought a technological dimension that was lacking to an "under-metropolitanized" (to use a term coined by Emmanuelle Hellier) medium-sized city which lacked any other endogenous resources but which wanted to attract investment projects and benefit from the delocalization of production (Robillard Y., 1993, Hellier E., 2001). Disneyland Paris provides a contrasting example: the park is one of the elements of a project to spatially rebalance the growth of the Paris metropolis (Puydebat J.-M., 2007). In both cases their influence on the urban space and their positive impact on attractiveness to tourists is undeniable (Cazes G., Potier F., 1998).

Our work in the field has therefore allowed us to verify some of our starting hypotheses and qualify others. The idea that leisure parks interact with the contemporary urban world has been broadly confirmed, by providing thematized environments that are filled with references which either help to create a pacified, friendly, happy urban ambience (Disneyland Paris), or transport the visitor to a utopian, uchronic parallel world, which prepares the visitor for new sensations and experiences (Futuroscope). In both cases, all the objects and images that were there for viewing and which we can characterize as the "landscape" of the leisure parks (in the sense used by Dietvorst A., 1998) are made from the same materials that are used in existing or imagined urban models. However, what needs to be specifically qualified, is the actual nature of the transfer. Even if the smallest details in the park express the urban, we must not look for a direct transfer, i.e. the straightforward movement of an object or the spatial environment from the city to another location, that of the leisure parks. The typical environment of American cities or Paris has not been transferred from their original location to a new one. No "urban material" has been removed. The environment has been totally reinvented, i.e. both spatially and temporally, which encourages fun because the environment itself resembles nothing other than a game that plays with form.

There are considerable parallels with regard to territorial factors too. Both parks, even though they are managed by private companies, exist in spaces that have been planned by public entities for whom it was clear the park should be the seed of an

urban area. The parks experienced a first decade of uncertain growth and then, at around the turn of the millennium, entered the mature phase and succeeded in putting down roots (admittedly to different degrees) in their area, the first (the Futuroscope) by linking its development to the attractiveness of a hi-tech business zone, the second (Disneyland Paris) by switching to the satellite town model.

3.   Some ideas about the contribution of the leisure parks to the creation of metropolitan urbanity

This last section of the paper provides a discussion and analysis of the results we obtained following a visit to the two French parks. It seems clear that both Disneyland and the Futuroscope interacted very strongly with their surrounding areas in previous decades. They have also diversified their activities to include businesses, services and residential developments..., to the extent that they can be considered in a way as creators of the contemporary urban dynamic. However, our research leads us to qualify a number of received ideas at the risk of seeming to go against the general celebratory tone of the official reactions (Handschuh E., 1998).

31. The siting of the leisure parks in their local areas: from ideas to reality

The first idea that was given much importance by the political stakeholders of the metropolis is the vision of the park as a creative force: this idea is central to the review of the French press that we conducted at three key periods in the life of the parks: on their creation in 1992, on their tenth anniversary and on their twentieth anniversary. This journalistic view systematically employs the idea of a *tabula rasa* (before the park, the area was completely rural without any possibility of developing on its own) on which a UFO landed (the park is an object that has arrived from outside and which one day "came to earth"). The value of this approach is that it highlights the political battles which, over the years, have ensured the "graft took" and created all the bonds and entities (businesses and infrastructure) which have spread wealth and jobs. Then at the end of a long process that involved extensions of the park and the opening of various pieces of infrastructure (high speed rail stations, large hotels, secondary parks, etc.), the dominant discourse explains that the park has grown, quietened down and embedded itself. This summons up an image of a gradual dynamic of "taming". The

park was initially seen by the public authorities as something external to the local world. Little by little, its managers became involved in a process of integration, which involved planning, the opening of new infrastructure, and a whole series of conflicts with local actors, in particular its neighbouring municipalities. Ultimately, the managers of the leisure parks were ready to create a metropolitan project.

Our work shows that the reality was quite different. There has been constant interaction between the city and the leisure park: the parks are not external elements but parts of the metropolis's urbanism and urbanity. The maturing of parks is therefore the outcome of a twofold process of ageing. First, each of the parks has undergone a process of extension which has increased the number of sites open to the public and diversified what it offers, and this ongoing process of renewal is more the result of the need to adapt the park to changing demand than a sudden "quietening down" in response to conditions laid down by local government. The maturing of the leisure park is therefore both the outcome of marketing adaptation and a desire to guarantee its medium-term growth. On the other hand, the area has quite simply changed, undergoing a commonplace process of urban sprawl as experienced by metropolitan peripheries in general. The park has therefore been caught up in a wave of suburban development, partly made up of residential areas and partly of productive spaces.

32. The drivers of the cross-fertilization between urban planning and the leisure park

The second received idea relates to how time affects the functional diversification of the parks. A simplistic view is that the longer a park has existed, the better it will be integrated within metropolitan competitiveness strategies, and the better it will fit and respond to the needs of the metropolis. However, our research indicates, on the contrary, that the diversification of parks does not automatically meet the expectations of the area. It is based on entrepreneurial strategies which follow the tendencies of urban society: giving a greater role to activities, nature, technology and heritage…

This increase in functional diversity is not universal, and may take varied forms.

The corporate strategy of the Futuroscope is to update continuously the image-based and communication-based entertainment it provides, with a view to being a "knowledge park as much as an amusement park" (Monory R., 1998). Even today it produces most of its attractions itself (3-D films, robotic activity presenters ...). It provides work for subcontractors and develops the functional fabric of the metropolis, which has oriented its institutional instruments by creating the technopole. Ultimately, the entire tourist destination will be remodelled (Dehoorne O., 1998). With regard to the links between Disneyland and the metropolis, convergence has been achieved through diversified partnerships. In the 1990s, it was the growth of the leisure function and the combination of leisure, commerce and a new urban image for the new town that supported the understandings between the metropolitan stakeholders (Ghorra-Gobin C., 2000, Chesneaux V., 2001). The large Val d'Europe shopping centre provided the park with a flow of clients from the periurban zone which provided traffic, activity and volume. The suburban area found an answer to its needs for accommodation and gained a centre as well as improving its urban image. The construction of a large number of hotels for tourists who visit the park, but also tourists visiting the capital and business tourists increased the interdependency between the growth strategies pursued by the park and the development possibilities of the metropolis (see Rebuffel C., 2000) (see Photo 2)

PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 2

Our work on these two examples raises one final issue, and attempts to remove an ambiguity that is connected with the presence of a large number of hotels. What is the role of the park and the area near it in the metropolitan space – is it a place where people live or one they simply pass through? On this issue, business tourism and the presence of business hotels, which was central to the strategic ideas of both the managers of the park and the metropolitan planners, in spite of their minor economic importance, provides us with some directions for investigation.

In the case of Poitiers, the sequence of events seems to have been as follows: the Futuroscope served as a major tourist attraction. It provided a foothold for hotels

in the technopole (the first hotels survived thanks to the park's clientele and passing holiday-makers from the Paris-Bordeaux motorway). We have already noted that the park is located very near the Paris-Bordeaux motorway and a TGV station. Then, little by little, the Département General Council and the urban area of Poitiers fostered the presence of hotel chains and encouraged the firms in the technopole to hold seminars and congresses. Ultimately, the fundamental goal of this business park is to maximize the positive knock-on effects of travel. The Futuroscope helped the medium-sized city of Poitiers enter a new era of urban planning, that of movement. The advent in the near future of a high speed railway line linking Paris to Spain will boost a new metropolitan dynamic: the park is assisting the birth of a city that is a stopping point on a European corridor (Manceau E., 2013).

The metropolitan paradigm is not the same in the case of Disneyland Paris: the project is not so much based on the idea of permanent and ubiquitous travel as creating the impression of a prosperous residential area. The aura of the Disney park pervades the eastern part of the Greater Paris conurbation and (potentially in discourse but also in reality) attracts middle class residents who wish to avoid the working class areas of the Département of Seine-Saint-Denis. This brings us to the very well-known body of research on gated communities (Le Goix R., Webster, 2008) and secure residential zones in general (Madoré F., 2009), but what we want to emphasize here is the urban – or more precisely the mixed rural/urban environment and the introduction of "natural" or environmental frames of reference. This explains the appearance, after the Val d'Europe shopping centre programme we have mentioned above, of a Nature Village, which sets out to be at one and the same time the green lungs of the metropolis, a holiday location and the means of importing into France the model of residential condominiums that combine residential functions, entertainment and a highly aesthetic environment with excellent landscapes (Alphandéry P. 1996, Baron-Yellès N. 2004 and 2006). The greening of the site (the planting of trees and the creation of lakes) and its naturalization are yet another way of advancing the urbanization of this area. On the fringes of the tourist zone proper, which, with its hotel facilities, is intended for stays of between several days and several weeks, the goal is to develop an

environment where people can live on a permanent basis. In the twenty years during which it has exerted an influence on its area, the theme park has completely reinvented its purpose: it aims to produce a town, in an environment which has been designed and in a manner of speaking imbued with the theme of nature in order to elicit specific sensations (an impression of calm, security, privacy) (Alphandery P. 1996). The leisure archipelago continues to grow, taking on the form of a residential town.

Conclusion

Over a time-scale as long as twenty years, the destiny of a theme park and that of the area in which it is located should not be seen as the outcome of a straightforward one-dimensional relationship (the success or failure of a graft). On the contrary, the links between the two can be seen as a complex interlacing of feedback interactions, which are themselves caught up in the more general dynamic of changes in the system of tourism as a whole.

This paper set out to identify the links between the production of leisure spaces, the organization and planning of land use, and leisure parks. We have noted that there are many such links. By asking whether or not a leisure park is a landscape, whether or not it is an urban entity, and whether or not it is part of a land use planning programme, we have actually tackled a series of questions which are vital to contemporary debates on the production of cities.

The starting point of this study was a broadly-based consideration of the status of the urban as regards entertainment. The relationship it reveals is essentially one-directional: leisure parks select and reorganize certain symbolic elements and physical objects that belong to the city in order to recreate artificial and entertaining environments. On the other hand, it has shed less light on the reverse process, by which, in European and North American cities in particular, urban space attempts to integrate references obtained from parks. However, such borrowings are very obvious. Cities contain many types of spaces, chief among them shopping centres, that make use of entertainment (and/or art) and thematization to create an attractive and lively impression. On this issue, a

knowledge of parks is one way of gaining an understanding of the new global cultural economy of space because by integrating entertainment, the city provides a setting for, encourages and showcases new forms of spatial experience.

We have also established that the leisure park transforms urban space on a number of spatial scales. First, through what we can liken to contamination "through contact" insofar as the park exists in areas where it develops economic and social bonds that become greater and greater as it grows. But what is involved is not just commercial links or the classical links that exist between an area that provides jobs and one which provides labour. The examples given in the paper show that after a few decades the leisure parks put down roots in their area and project their form and norms over a geographical zone whose size may vary from one case to another (Asayyad, N. 2001). The case of the Futuroscope, which is very different from that of Disneyland Paris, shows that the managers of the leisure park make compromises with the local public actors. On one hand, for the public actors, the agreements in question make it possible to spread the economic benefits of the leisure parks over a wider area and at the same time, for the managers of the parks, they help "the graft to take" by diversification (new entertainments and business activities, new sectors such as congress tourism, new displays, sporting and cultural activities, etc.). In addition, the changes in the content of the parks and their near surroundings (businesses, technology, image of nature) are part of more general and more overarching changes in the metropolitan economy and society. Our next area of study will, in the framework of an integrated multidisciplinary programme sponsored by the "Urban Futures" Laboratory of Excellence, investigate in greater depth issues that relate to the accessibility of metropolitan leisure parks by transport infrastructure (high speed rail in particular).

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Figure 1.   The architectural style of the buildings that house the attractions reinforces the technological experience of the attractions (virtual images) (source: S. Anton)
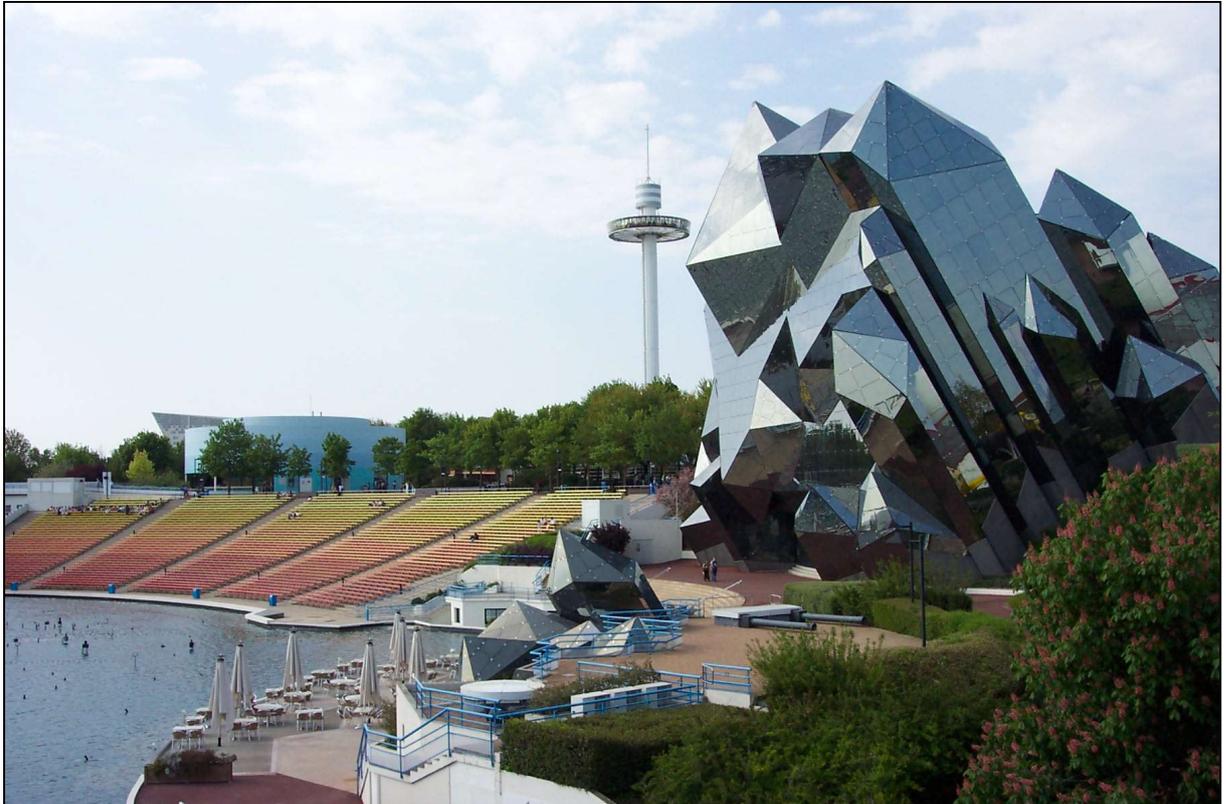

Figure 2 The Val d'Europe shopping centre, an urban development project that combines leisure and commerce in symbiosis with the Disneyland Paris theme park, whose architectural style refers to the urban forms of the local architecture of Paris. (Source: N. Baron)