

AN UNDERSTANDING OF LEISURE VIA THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION¹

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Abstract

This study seeks to contribute to the understanding of leisure. For this analysis, we will interpret leisure via The Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) of Jürgen Habermas (1987a and 1987b). First, we aim to understand the most important categories of the TCA, especially the concepts of Life World (LW), Money Systems (MS) and Power Systems (PS), and then, we interpret leisure via TCA. In a second step, we seek to strengthen this referential by bringing other interpretations of the object leisure, such as: leisure and work, leisure and postmodern, leisure and pleasure; showing how the Habermasian referential can contribute to the interpretation of contemporary leisure. To conclude, we bring a definition of leisure, based on all the theoretical construction presented in this study. This study is theoretical exploratory, based on understanding of the theories of leisure, the Habermasian reference (TCA) and the understanding of leisure via this reference.

Key-words: Leisure; Leisure Theory; Theory of Communicative Action.

Uma compreensão do lazer pela Teoria da Ação Comunicativa

Resumo

Este estudo visa contribuir para a compreensão do lazer. Para isso, nós interpretamos o lazer pela Teoria da Ação Comunicativa (TAC) de Jürgen Habermas (1987a;1987b). Primeiro, objetivamos compreender as categorias mais importantes da TAC, especialmente os conceitos de Mundo da Vida (MV), Sistema Dinheiro (SD) e Sistema Poder (SP) e, posteriormente, interpretamos o lazer pela TAC. Numa segunda etapa, buscamos reforçar esse referencial ao trazer outras interpretações para o objeto lazer, como: lazer e trabalho, lazer e pós-moderno, lazer e prazer; demonstrando como o referencial habermasiano pode contribuir para a interpretação do lazer contemporâneo. Para concluir, trazemos a definição de lazer, baseada em toda a construção teórica apresentada no estudo. Esse estudo é teórico exploratório, baseado na compreensão de teorias do lazer, na referência habermasiana (TAC) e na compreensão do lazer por essa referência.

Palavras-chave: Lazer; Teoria do Lazer; Teoria da Ação Comunicativa.

Una comprensión del ocio desde la Teoría de la Acción Comunicativa

Resumen

Ese estudio busca contribuir para la comprensión del ocio. Para este análisis, nosotros interpretamos el

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ocio por la Teoría de la Acción Comunicativa (TAC) de Jürgen Habermas (1987a; 1987b). Primero, procuramos comprender las categorías más importantes de la TAC, especialmente los conceptos de Mundo de la Vida (MV), Sistema Dinero (SD) y Sistema Poder (SP) y, posteriormente, interpretamos el ocio por la TAC. En una segunda etapa, intentamos fortalecer ese referencial al traer otras interpretaciones para el objeto ocio como: ocio y trabajo, ocio y pos-modernismo, ocio y placer; demostrando como el referencial habermasiano puede contribuir para la interpretación del ocio contemporáneo. Para concluir, formulamos una definición de ocio, basada en toda la construcción teórica presentada en el estudio. Este estudio es teórico exploratorio, basado en la comprensión de teorías del ocio, en la referencia habermasiana (TAC) y en la comprensión del ocio por esa referencia.

Palabras-clave: Ocio; Teoría del Ocio; Teoría de la Acción Comunicativa.

Categories of The Theory of Communicative Action

The original The Theory of Communicative Action (TCA), by Habermas, was published in 1981. This means that the TCA is the best positioned referential in the academia when occurs the collapse of real socialism and the so-called crisis of the paradigm work is settled. Its author enjoys broad legitimacy. He has extensive production, is known for taking progressives political positions, has historical connections with the Frankfurt School and can be seen as the heir of the traditional seriousness of German philosophical thought. The TCA overflows scholarship. It passes an updated picture as it anticipates the break with the centrality of the working paradigm, moving away from traditional proposals that, at that moment, seemed to become outdated. Presents an exhibition sophisticated and complex and, besides all that, it leaves the doors open to a utopian, or emancipator, interpretation of the social reality.

The TCA (Habermas, 1987a, 1987b) performs at least two very interesting conceptual spins. Starting from the classical thought in the social sciences it rearranges categories of different authors in an original way. The first question that must be highlighted is the exile of the Weberian concept of rational action with respect to the goals of the space of economics, politics and administration, redefined as subsystems driven by money and power systems. The Habermasian concept of strategic action is close to the Weberian definition that originates it. The strength of the category strategic action is precisely the fact that now it is used in a more circumscribed way, limited to the interior of the subsystems.

This movement opens up space for another one, equally or more original. Excluding the subsystems (economics and politics), what remains is not accessory, but essential. In simple terms, what remains is the space of culture, sociability and subjectivity. It is the space of creativity and rationality.

The TCA, as the name implies, is a theory, i.e., a comprehensive explanation of the human beings relationships, seeking its understanding from the use of a specific explanatory model. It is a

theory that is based on the concept of action, understood as the ability that social actors have to interact within and between groups, rationally pursuing goals that can be known by observing the action's agent. Habermas will prioritize, to understand the human being in society, the actions of communicative nature. That is, the actions related to the intervention in the dialogue between various subjects. It is therefore a theory of communicative action. The habermasian fundamental categories are:

- The Life World (LW), where occurs the communicative search of consensus through the communicative action.
- The subsystems addressed by media power (a concept close to the sphere of politics or the state - Power System (PS)) and through media money (idem market - Money System (MS)) where strategic actions occur while the speaker searches for a useful behavior in the listener.
- The specificity of the relationship between LW and the subsystems driven by the media, where we will find the colonization and exploitation of the first by the second.

With this definition, Habermas abandons the common division in critical theory between rational act with respect to purpose and the substantive reason. For him, the fundamental difference is not in the sense that guides action, but on the principle of social integration: between (a) mechanisms that represent a linguistic communication driven by claims of truth in the LW and (b) the means of control by which differentiate the subsystems of action oriented to success in systems.

Habermas, at times, very clearly defines the two subsystems (economic and state) and sets the money maximization and the power maximization as the means by which the social action's agent acts, inside, even against the impoverishment of communication. We understand capitalism and the modern state institution as subsystems that, through the media money and power, differ from the institutional system, i.e., from the social component of LW. In bourgeois society, the spheres of action socially integrated acquire, front of Economy and the State, the shape of the sphere of private life and the sphere of public opinion, which have among themselves a complementary relationship. From the perspective of Systems, the interactions with the life world spheres, which are confined, in each case, are carried out in the form of relationships of exchange connected in parallel: the economic system exchanges wage for work, and goods and services for consumer demand. The public administration exchanges organizational accomplishments for taxes and exchanges policy decisions for the loyalty of the population. From the perspective of the LW, around these exchange ratios crystallize the roles of social worker and consumer on the one hand, and customer of public bureaucracies and citizens on the other hand.

The categories of TCA, alone, seem clear and encourage its use in different research areas such as education, leisure and work organization. However, their articulation, consistently within the theory

as a whole, is complex. It is necessary, first of all, to have in mind that, for Habermas, the relationship between subsystems driven by money and power media and LW are difficult to visualize. The evaluation of the relative weight between social integration and systemic integration is a difficult problem that can only be resolved empirically. However, the fact that media of controlling such as money and power need an anchor institution in LW seems to speak in favor, at least in principle, of a primacy of socially integrated areas compared to systemically reified contexts. That is, the LW is broader and more important than systems, since its media power and money need to be anchored to it.

Even with advances in politics, economy, society, urbanization, labor, Habermas argues that there is only one prime reality, the LW, essentially communicative, that must be experienced, because that is where people live, think, and connect.

Thus, we see that society is composed not only by the unilateral principles of success or focused on the execution of rules, as also by economic aspects, but it should be viewed through the complexity of all these systems. By understanding human activities as coordinated socially, where its members have their actions for community living, the subjects have to establish communication tending to an agreement as paramount. These conditions become accessible in modernity, with the disenchantment of the world, the differentiation of the way of life and the consolidation of personality (Almeida; Gutierrez, 2013).

Definition of Leisure via TCA

Leisure as interpreted via "Theory of Communicative Action" is essentially a social relationship that is expressed in LW (Almeida; Gutierrez, 2011a). The essence of leisure is to be another interlocutor of LW, serving for the evolution of language, institutions and formation of personality, therefore leisure would express the three worlds: social (relationships between people); goal (transformation of nature) and personal (construction of subjectivity). It can be argued that leisure arises in LW through integration between people, pursuit of fun and desire to experience pleasure. The complexity of leisure occurs in modern societies: a) systematization of time (separation from the world of obligations and fun), and b) disenchantment of the world (rationalization of life forms).

Leisure expresses the three spheres of Life World (culture, society and personality). These spheres are in symbiosis that can be exemplified by: free will of the person doing the activity; pleasure that is being sought; social space that activity occurs; exchanges with other subjects, and action being considered by the group as leisure, according to the behaviors of the place. It will be considered leisure if the individual is relating with their peers (culture), seeking pleasure (personality) and that activity is considered leisure by the group (society). In complex societies, leisure moves from LW, being appropriated by the System, expressing themselves through the political actions of the State, such as

public policies of leisure; market activities as cultural industry, and logically, spontaneous relationships in the world of life, as folklore (Almeida; Gutierrez, 2013).

With the TCA we assume that the object is endowed with leisure proper meaning and not mock other objects like job, economy or time. Leisure should be studied searching for its social-historical significance, worrying about the forms of association of historical, social, and cultural facts and their influence on the expression of leisure in society. The conceptualization adopted starts with the reference author's vision, and aims a comprehensive analysis of the social fact. This study intends to seek the understanding not in exclusion of concepts, but in expanding through understanding, instead.

Structuring Leisure via TCA: dialogue with other references

Dumazedier discusses leisure through free time, this being opposed to working time. The free time would be used for different social responsibilities (family, school, religion and leisure). Thus, leisure is possible only at a time off from work, in conjunction with the time dedicated to social obligations. To the author:

Leisure is a set of occupations to which the individual can surrender voluntarily, either to rest, either for fun, recreate and entertain themselves, or even to develop its information or disinterested training, voluntary social participation or free creative capacity after getting rid of or discharging from professional obligations. (Dumazedier, 1979: 34).

According to Morin (1997), modern leisure is not only the democratic access to free time that was the privilege of the ruling classes.

It (leisure) comes from the very organization of paperwork and industrial. Working time framed on a fixed schedule, permanent, unattached to the seasons, flinched under the impulse of the union movement and, according to the logic of an economy that, slowly covering workers in its market, is obliged to provide them not only time to rest and recovery, but also consumption. Leisure is a time gain on the job. (Morin, 1997: 67).

Antunes (2001) incorporates the discussions regarding work modification, noting that the sense in which the agent of social action relates to the job is crucial to the relationship outside of work, included leisure. Leisure endowed with sense is only possible with a work endowed with meaning. Some parameters serve as a basis for this assertion, for example, the conquest of workers on reducing working hours. In this case, leisure would be opposed to the work. Thus, the crisis of labor affects leisure: structural unemployment, the reduction of positions, the services sector. Increasingly, the rights

that were won are usurped from the working class, with a setback of their achievements. We live in alienation inside our work and outside of it, such as leisure consumption.

It should be clear that every researcher has a different perspective of leisure, despite entering into the leisure-work. Without minuteness, certain authors address the importance of leisure for social transformation and its educational aspect (Marcellino, 1987; Mascarenhas, 2000), others value the popular culture (Magnani, 1998; Dumazedier, 1994) or playful. Many researches point to his fetishistic character and player of the consumer society (Morin, 1997; Antunes, 2001). The critics to these studies refer primarily to put in the same conceptual frame current leisure and work on the era of Keynesian regulation. Second, it limits leisure over work.

A different approach from previous comprises leisure through the pursuit of pleasure and the spectrum of free time (Elias; Dunning, 1992). Their discussions point to a strong presence of the individual, insertion in a hedonistic historical perspective and disinterest in work as a fundamental category.

For Elias and Dunning (1992: 145), leisure is understood as a type of activity that is inserted into the free time. They think about leisure as a decisional character. The authors place the individual as primary articulator, that can give meaning to their activity and bring it closer to the pursuit of pleasure or excitement. Thus, leisure is seen as a search for a calculated decontrol, within the rules that make up society. Or, as the authors develop, a controlled decontrol. Therefore, leisure occupations offer a wider field of action for an individual fun, short-term intense and spontaneous, than any other type of public activity. According to Elias and Dunning (1992: 170): "Leisure works in the form of social stimulation, stimulation as key source of leisure activity and therefore pleasure. This enjoyable stimulation, the stimulation that is get to be meeting with others, either in fact or by your own imagination, is one of the most common elements of leisure satisfaction."

Another recent trend in theories of leisure is having no concern with macro theories. These are the postmodern theories. Despite the fact that postmodern theories approach a hedonistic subject, they do not discuss the macro social leisure. The idea of the postmodern is not having a single conceptual framework.

Postmodernism understands the changes in the world through "a positive intervention in view of change of attitude by the possibility of exposing individuals to raise awareness of the inconsistency of their beliefs and current values, encouraging reflection" (Schwartz, 2000: 95).

The postmodern leisure is discussed in different spheres, such as narcissism, adventure sports, enchantment with nature, giving to each other, the concept of tribe, the body as a filter and interaction channel. In discussions between the contemporary body and leisure, postmodern approach the narcissistic body, pointing to the "syndrome of myself". The human being lives dualism to see and be

seen. The beauty and eroticism of the body are the hallmarks of our civilization; the relationship hangs a subjective relationship with technology (internet, video games, virtual chats, virtual tours). "The emphasis on body appearance is shown as an exacerbated process in our society, reinforced by visual images as one of the drivers of consumer society." (Bruhns, 1999: 89).

The reason why we use the TCA in the analysis of leisure: final thoughts

To understand leisure it was necessary to use as a parameter that was the most significant historical period that enabled the development of leisure. Authors such as Corbin (1995) and Csergo (1995) suggest the development of leisure as something that accompanies the process of expansion of capitalism. Urbanization, labor sectioning, class struggle, the systematization of times oblivious to nature were crucial to the growth of leisure. For Corbin (1995: 9-18) the change of time usage in industrialization is a major feature of the emergence of modern leisure. Synthesizing the author's ideas, there were some free time on the bourgeoisie – leisure was social status of a single class -, later with the labor achievements, leisure has become a sociable time for the entire working class. The author Csergo (1995: 125-140) associates the birth of modern leisure to an urban culture of fun, pleasure, beauty and novelty. A first feature raised by the authors on the evolution of modern leisure, refers to the appropriation of elements linked to urbanization, industrialization, expansion of spaces and public policy as means of development. Linked to this, there is a second feature, the incorporation of social practices that were not considered leisure and that, after the complexification of society, they acquire other meanings and can express also leisure activities. With the society development, human actions such as physical activities, walks and gastronomy, began to be understood as leisure, if practiced according to the principles that the group considers leisure. Therefore the society re-means everyday activities, giving these elements a way to interpret them socially. Leisure provides another perspective for interpretation of human actions.

This phenomenon can be exemplified with physical activities, such as the practice of running, cycling or fishing, which could be considered work activities, or livelihood, and later became leisure activities. On the other hand, in the transport usage such as car rides, trips to other cities, motorcycling, trains and horses rides, which can now be naturally considered leisure activities. The appropriation of the arts, such as painting or looking without compromise, watching a good play, reading a good book, going to the movies or reciting poetry; ways of using tools, like cleaning the house, building wooden artifacts, making toys for their children and grandchildren, taking care of the garden; it is worth remembering the incorporation of popular festivals like leisure activities, Catholic festivals, folklore and social. That is, with the development of contemporary society people started doing these activities in

their free time and considering the participation in these moments as leisure, expanding even further the range of activities that the group understands as leisure.

Rauch (1995: 85-90) states that the love of nature was also suitable for leisure, example of this are the tours, camps, trips to the beach, the pool and mountaineering.

Roy Porter (1995: 21-54) associates the development of leisure to the complexification of the capitalist society. Leisure, according to the author, went from a rare consumption of goods and luxuries of a ruling class to something broader associated with the consumption of material goods and cultural arts. This association would be evident in the relationship between urbanization, road building, creation of vacation places and new technologies that leisure incorporated in the list of activities.

Modernization is significant in the transformations of contemporary leisure, as the commercialization of leisure in tourism, sport and popular activities, inserting them in urbanization (Farcy, 1995: 228-30).

This complexification, according to Habermas (1987b), takes place after constituting up new mechanisms of social integration. It is necessary first to institutionalize a new form of social integration so that there is increased systemic complexity. This development creates practical conditions that enable transformation on the material level. Leisure, in this sense, follows the modern state development, in the creation of more complex mechanisms of social integration.

The incipient urban centers were meeting places of culture. The clash of typical leisure activities with the industrial development leads to a transformation of the first. This cultural renewal is difficult to be analyzed because it refers to multiple alternatives and possibilities. The change of the typical activities in the urban world allows us to analyze their own leisure or urbanization. According to Tinhorão (2001: 42) there is a passage of activities in regional leisure for urban leisure, "in which the first is incorporated by the second through the commercial interests and producers of industrial goods."

To finalize this study, we defined leisure as: Leisure is the result of relationships between subjects, which was developed from urbanization, having a close cultural-artistic connection. Leisure reinforces the idea of social development, class and economic power. Its palpable expressions in society are: social activities in groups; popular leisure practices (street, folklore and festivals); theaters; cinemas; arts; physical activities; sports; mass communication; the activities of the leisure industry and its other expressions. Leisure expresses the spheres of LW and can be understood by the will, pleasure, space, interaction, customs. It is defined as leisure if the individual is in a relationship with the other (culture), seeking personal satisfaction (character) and the action performed is considered leisure by the peers (society). In urban industrial societies, leisure becomes complex being colonized by the Systems, expressing itself through: the actions of Government as leisure policies - Power System; the Market

actions as the entertainment industry - Money System; and logically, the spontaneous relations in the LW as the popular events.

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