

MODE OF RECREATION

Julia Gerlero, Universidad Nacional del Comahue

Introduction

This paper addressed the need to consider recreational activities in the wider context of the particular society, community or social group in which they take place in order to make sense of their multiple orientations and complex relationships.

Here I make some preliminary suggestions in order to study recreation on the basis of the concept “Mode of Recreation” (MR). This concept will make possible the study of recreational practices in view of their historical reality, taking into account the factors that determine their development at a certain time.

I begin by explaining the point of developing the concepts that integrate the totality of recreational activities of a society. In the process, and within the context of the theories of social conflict, I will point out the need for linking social practices, and among them the recreational ones, with the mode of production prevalent in a certain society in order to introduce the concept “Mode of Recreation” and to describe its functioning. Finally, I will highlight the practical possibilities arising from this approach.

Mode of Recreation

The study of recreational activities in isolation has led to the search on the particular motivations generating them, making it difficult thereby to perceive that each form of organized recreation involves a *collective* conception of behavior, goals and social values (Smith 1996:31). To move forward with a non-atomistic conception of recreational activities, which identifying the social meaning of recreation implicit in the set of recreational practices offered in a given society requires that they be studied “globally” or as an ensemble, taking into account in a coordinated way their psychological, sociological and related aspects (Elías 1986:27).

From the perspective of materialist dialectics (Munné 1986) it is evident that the mode of production of a society has an influence over all forms of activities in everyday life. An analysis of the “socioeconomic structure” (Sereni 1973) shows the crucial influence that the material base has over the interaction of all social relationships and phenomena, stamping its characteristics on culture, public order, services and, among other things, on leisure time and recreational activities.

From this perspective, the concept “mode of recreation” –MR- refers to the complex of factors that in a given socioeconomic structure allow for and, at the same time, limit the possibility of particular recreational activities. These activities reflect the combination of certain recreational practices and the particular condition of a given society. They also reflect the way that the subjective and the objective elements are related insofar as the factors that allow and constrain recreational activities are closely connected to the living conditions of the society and, at the same time, have an important influence on it.

Functioning of the Mode of Recreation.

As can be seen in the attached schema, there are a number of factors, which I will call “mode supports,” which need to be taken into account when we speak of Mode of Recreation. To begin with, for the definition of the support for intellectual and motor

skills I refer myself to Bourdieu's ideas about habitus and cultural capital. Habitus is understood by the author as a set of predispositions to act, think, and feel which are constituted as a product of the physical and emotional environment of the subject. In other words, they are acquired socially.

The skills linked to the scope of culture make up the incorporated cultural capital of the subject. This condition of the cultural capital is "something one owns and which has turned into an integrating part of the person, placed in a habitus" (Bourdieu, 2000:142). This cultural capital allows subjects to obtain benefits in terms of "pleasure" during free time. For a real possession of some recreational practices, the subject must have an incorporated cultural capital, as for example, to enjoy a visit to a museum or a painting exhibition. Moreover, motor skills linked to outdoor and sport recreational practices in their different levels account for not only the individual capacity of the subject but also for the social trajectory of the activity itself.

The technological support takes into account the complexity of the structure in which this practice stands. Here I include: skates, skis, electronic games, amusement parks, among others. The analysis of the technological support used in recreational practices is a key indicator for the evaluation of the different alternatives and complexity levels at which a given recreational activity can be performed.

The temporal support refers to the frequency in performance of a recreational practice and divides it – as way of example- in "systematic" and "non-systematic". The temporal support must also be understood in its relationship with the habitus since the predisposition towards certain systematic recreational practices can be related to the possibility of performing other practices in another temporality for which the subject is accumulating capital. The motor skills necessary for the practice of skiing during wintertime are acquired through the training of physical qualities (resistance, strength, etc.) in systematic activities performed all year long, such as attending a gym, running, etc.

The integral analysis of recreation that I propose incorporates, by means of the spatial support, matters of environmental and aesthetic quality and spatial distribution of the recreational offer. Using the technique of recreational surveying, we can visualize the relationship between the availability of recreational spaces and the population characteristics, regarding the hierarchies of communities and neighborhoods, these being residential, institutional, or closed neighborhoods. The spatial analysis explains aspects of the power relationships within a society since "all political and religious institutions together with the productive system and work places have created a reticle that prescribes, selects, distributes, organizes and distinguishes individuals by means of their recreational or labor activities in different specialized spaces, public and private" (De la Peza Casares 1997:151).

Finally, the ideological support is being shaped by the interrelationship of the supports mentioned since these -as a whole- account for the social values and representations that favor or constrain the presence or absence of practices, or even stain them with special characteristics. The most contrasting aspects in leisure ideology can be observed, for instance, between a free individual recreational practice regulated by the laws of the market and the free access and equal opportunities for enjoying them. I take the notion of variability of the ideological support from Doistua (2000:248), who presents

a classification of various leisure ideologies identifying seven tendencies, from conservatism through liberalism and marxist socialism among others, and nationalism.

Practical Application

The information gathered while preparing a description of the Mode of Recreation of a particular society is useful for taking decisions in public environments devoted to recreation as well as for formulating policies of that sector.

The notion of Mode of Recreation allows us to elaborate and systematize the information about recreation favoring, first of all, the knowledge and comprehension of the current recreational situation. The interrelated analysis of the different variables that intervene allows us to identify problems and tendencies linked with, for instance, the spatial distribution of the recreational activities, the offer of activities in the private sector or, among others, the relative importance a type of activity has according to the community participation in it. The identification of the different aspects of the principles allows us to determine priorities and strategies of intervention in order to, as the case may be, diversify the recreational opportunities, or reduce the spatial fragmentation in order to get recreational services available to all and to promote recreational practices in accordance with the characteristics of the population.

In the same way, and as indicated above, the Mode of Recreation allows us define the recreational profile of a society making the comparison of forms of recreation among different groups and communities available and offering the possibility of identifying the peculiarities that provide identity to the recreational fact. From this point of view, the decision for the intervention of professionals in the recreation environment could be oriented towards preserving and promoting the validity of recreational practices linked to the historical and artistic heritage, such as traditional festivities, exhibition of specific skills, etc., and evaluating the possibilities of their tourist exploitation.

Mode of Recreation "X"

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