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14. Contribution of leisure to creativity and innovation of a region

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Abstract

This paper deals with the contribution of leisure and culture to the creativity of a region. The study proposes four main ideas: the transformer strength of leisure; the value of people (people who innovate and learn by enjoying are people who enjoy learning); the role of leisure and innovation in the organisations; and the promotion of innovation and creativity by means of good practices of leisure. The research also provides an approach to measure the creativity of a region under the leisure and culture point of view. The framework of the study is the Basque Country where innovation and creativity is one of the main stays of the Basque government developed by means of the Basque Innovation Agency Innobasque.

Introduction

We would like to thank the European Commission for this opportunity to outline some of the main ideas relating to the project: *Ideas, People and Leisure Organisations Serving Innovation* study (Cuenca, M. San Salvador del Valle, R., Aguilar, E. and Ortega, C., 2008), commissioned by Innobasque , the Basque Innovation Agency, which was completed last autumn. This paper does not seek to set out the study's approaches and conclusions, which would require more space, but it provides some ideas that suggest new approaches in areas the area of leisure and creativity. The study reflects on the contribution of leisure and culture to creativity and inno-

vation of a region. The study was carried out by the Institute of Leisure Studies of the University of Deusto, located in the Basque Autonomous Community, Spain, a region that has made innovation a sign of its identity, with the goal of confronting its Second Great Economic and Social Transformation, in which leisure and culture play a fundamental role.

The study is a first inquiry into the specific aspects in which leisure can contribute to increase creativity and innovation, and more concretely into the social innovation of a region. We define social innovation as the collective change in values that changes the referents and forces us to reformulate the meaning of actions. Leisure is a value highlighted by sociological studies in recent years.

It is very difficult to understand present-day society without the contribution of leisure as an important pillar of development in the 21st century. It is enough to stop and think about what is the meaning today, economically and culturally, of tourism, the world of spectacle, television, sports, modern music, theme parks, games of chance or museums. The human experience of leisure is everywhere and in everyone. It is present in games, sport's practice, travel, vacations and weekends full (or empty) of music, celebration, etc. Its absence can be seen in boredom, lack of creativity, initiative, integration … and, consequently, in sadness and 'meaninglessness'.

Leisure has become a source of economic and social development at global level. Nevertheless, the transforming force of leisure resides in the way of conceptualising it, understanding it and making it a reality. With the purpose of shedding light into the idea of leisure as a *Transforming Force*.

Starting framework

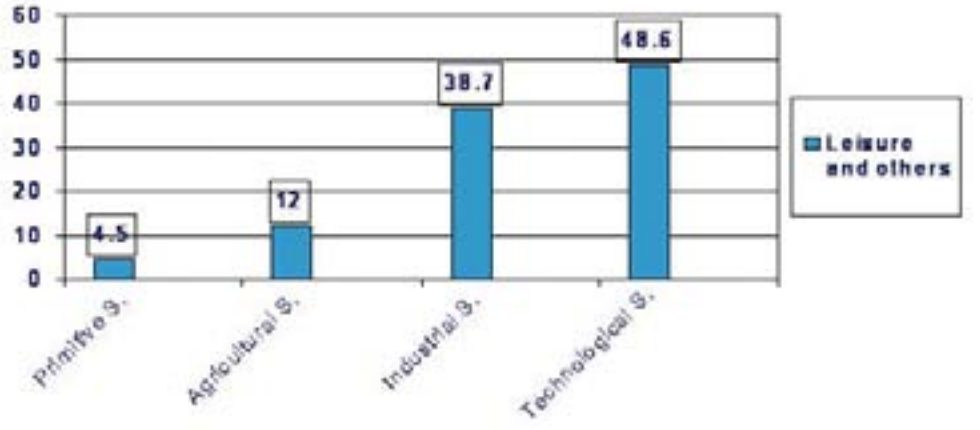
The departure framework constitutes the social changes. First, we emphasise the new concept of time; with the high speed of change, time is increasing in value. The second variable subject to profound change is referring to socio-demographic characteristics. The life cycle is modified in a significant way: childhood ends earlier, young people are halted in a prolonged adultescence (a term coined by Gil Calvo), adulthood is confined to two decades of intense productive and reproductive work, old age arrives before 60 and extends through a prolonged active ageing, first, and dependent ageing, later. The third variable affects the socioeconomic sphere, in which the consolidation of the market economy based on products and services implies the germ of the economy of experience (Pine, J. B. and Gilmore, J. H. 2000) The fictional Capitalism (Verdú, V., 2006) is imposing the intangible on the tangi-

ble. The fourth variable concentrates on the socio-political scope. An important economic globalisation takes place without a similar and comparable evolution in what could be termed a political globalisation. The fifth variable has to do with identity. We live in multiple spaces in accelerated time, in the meeting of diverse realities, with different people, in a fluid society (Bauman, Z., 2006) that affects our affective, personal, social and labour relations. The result is the miscegenation, with multiplicity of identities and senses of belonging.

Intellectuals worldwide agree that we have entered a new era in which we will need to redefine habits and customs, time and space, work and leisure. We are facing a transcendental change that has its epicentre in the construction of a new civilisation. The political, social, economic and cultural transformations that we experience at present have their origin in technological revolution, but the change is much greater. The crisis of interests, values and models is generating new social, institutional and cultural forms. In a context of this nature what role will leisure take? What are the factors that explain new ways to experience it and to understand it? In order to answer these questions, we will discuss the importance of leisure in today's society, the innovative function of leisure, the value of the concept and the importance of valid leisure experiences for its innovative function. We will end by providing a series of good practices based on valid experiences in different spheres in order to exemplify what has been previously discussed.

Importance of leisure in today's society

The value of leisure time has increased exponentially, not only as an economic and social value, one can also appreciate its rapid increase in the average life of the new societies, in the average life of a person, in the importance that leisure times acquire in a year and in daily practices. The following graph provides an overview of what non-working time currently means, a good part of which would consist of free time.



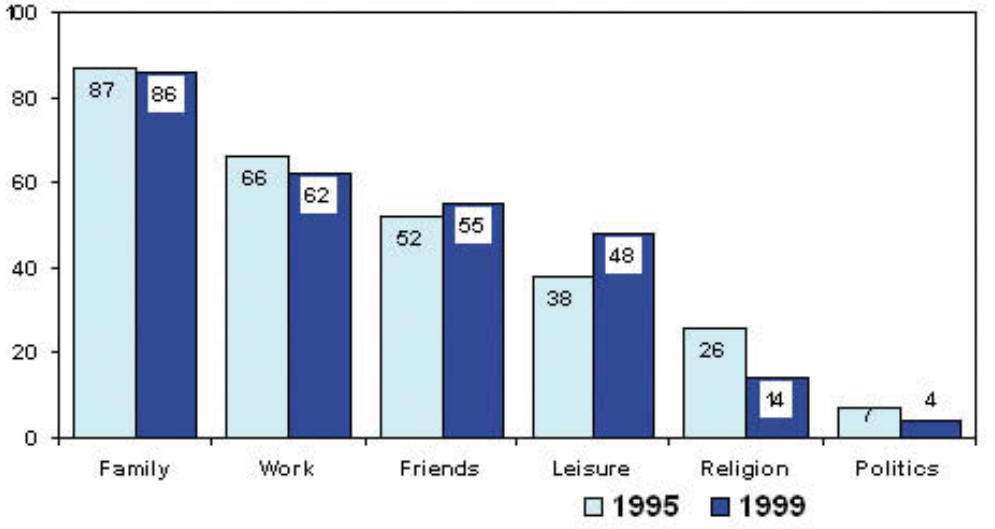
Graph 1: Leisure as part of life as a whole, according to societies
Source: Prepared using EU data (Report, 1994)

Graph 1 shows the percentage of time that the vital non-working time represents in different social periods in history. The criteria used to determine the time spent in leisure is constructed using the overall view of life, disseminated by the New York Metropolitan Life Insurance Company: eight hours dedicated to sleep, work and non-working time. In line with this proposals, an individual in technological societies would spend around 48.6 years on education, eating, games, leisure and other activities, while it would be 38.7 years by an individual in the second half of the 20th century — which is depicted as an industrial society in the graphic. The percentages highlight the importance that non-working time has acquired in recent history.

Modern leisure, the result of the industrial era, has been a continuous developing concept. Not only has it increased in quantity and new uses, but also in terms of generalised and democratic access. Leisure practices are an essential part of the new lifestyles, which have steadily and imperceptibly been replacing customs that were previously considered to be unchangeable. The average citizen dedicates more and more time to leisure every day. Furthermore, people have increasingly more opportunities for free time throughout their lifetime, as they start work later and frequently take early retirement. We will consider these aspects in brief over the coming pages.

Amando de Miguel (2000:253), in his analysis of the data of the survey conducted among young Spaniards in 1988, pointed out that the general increase value of leisure was noteworthy and, more specifically, among young people of both sexes aged between 21 and 29. They reported that leisure was in first place on their scale of value, above work and family. The data are in line with other studies at that time. Thus, in

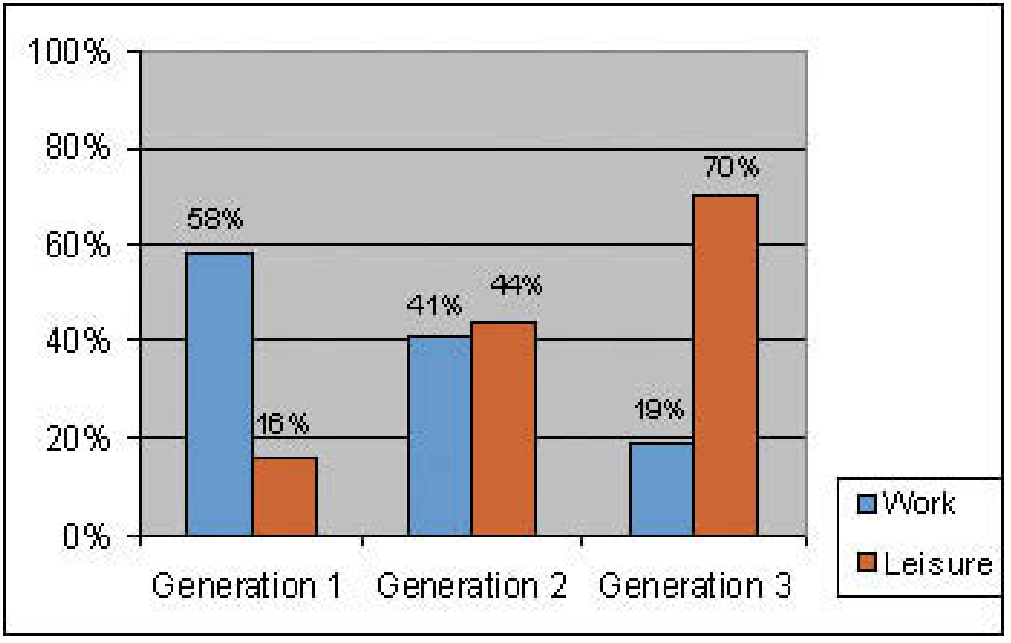
the *Encuesta Europea de Valores de España 2000* (*European Values Study for Spain 2000*), Maria S. Cabrera (2000:25–47) stated that free time and leisure was in fourth place of the hierarchy of priorities for Spaniards at that time. Some 80.4 % indicated that it was something very important or quite important, which puts it closely behind the top places occupied by family, work and friends/acquaintances, and some away ahead of the value given to religion (41.7 %) and politics (19.1 %). Graph 2 shows the situation in the Basque Autonomous Community and Navarra:



Graph 2: CAPV and Navarra, 1995–99 (%)
Source: European Values Study, 1995 and 1999

The increase in the value of leisure is not only of interest in Spain, but is common to developed countries. Other research, such as that carried out by Antonella delle Fave and Fausto Massimini (1998:191–209) in the north of Italy found similar results. The following graph exemplified the change in leisure values according to the new generations and their different approaches to life. It shows how leisure is viewed by a three-generation family group, who live in a small town of Valle de Gressoney. The researchers found that the oldest generation, the grandparents', achieved their greatest satisfaction through work (58 %) and barely any from leisure (16 %). With regard to the parents' generation, it can be said that there was a balance between work (41 %) and leisure (44 %) and, finally, in the grandchildren's generation, the importance of leisure, 70 %, compared to 19 % attributed to work,

was noteworthy. The importance of leisure as a life experience exceeded, in this case, the place occupied by work in the generation of their grandparents.



Graph 3: Value changes according to the generational change
Source: Based on A. delle Faye and F. Massimini, 1988: 199

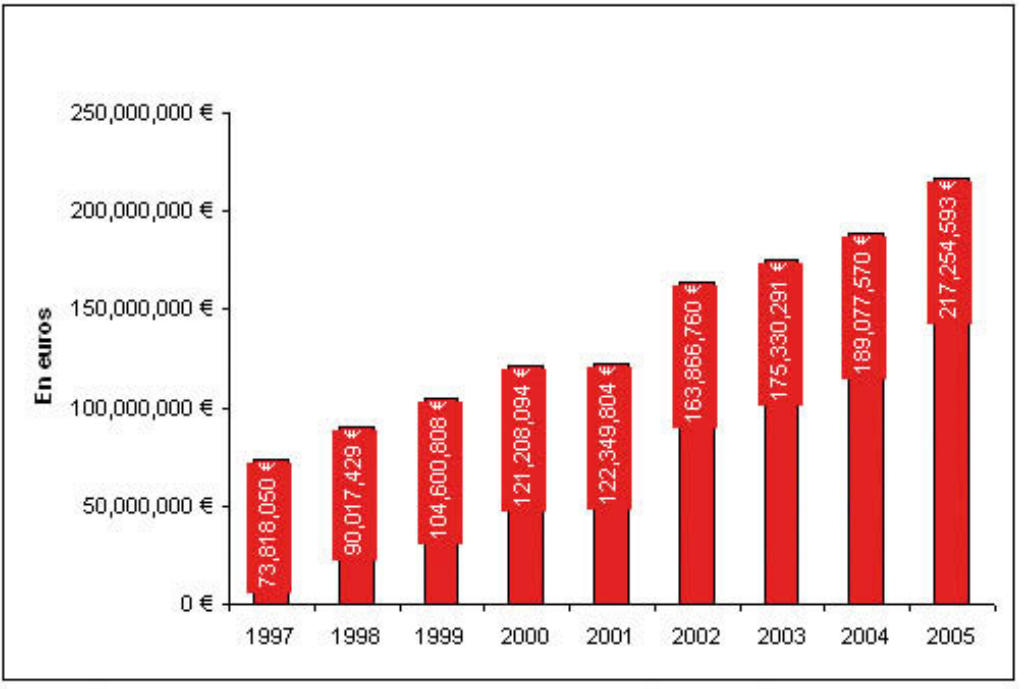
The aforementioned research exemplifies that the rise in the value of leisure in the scale of social values was already a consolidated reality at the turnover of the century. We should now ask ourselves if that importance is truly reflected in the present environment and in what way.

The economic Importance of leisure industries

The current importance of leisure industries is a well-known aspect. We shall only recall some figures, statistics and graphs, disseminated in recent years, which reveal some complementary aspects relating to the leisure economy. Enjoying music or the dramatic arts is an example that we find in the cultural sphere. Music is the most popular of cultural activities and the most difficult to determine, as it can be considered as a recreational or a cultural practice. It has become the most commonplace cultural activity in Spain. The latest data used in our Institute reveals that 86.2 % of

the Spanish population acknowledge that they listen to music, compared to 13.8 % who do not do so.

The dramatic arts sector has also grown, as it has been able to retain the capacity to attract audience and generate income (see Graph 4). In the same way, it is likely that this slow but steady growth is going to continue over the coming years.



Graph 4: Total income from theatre performances in Spain (EUR)
Source: SGAE (Spanish General Society of Authors and Editors)

Radio and television are the most popular home leisure activities. Television continues to be the most widespread leisure pastime. A TV consumer profile would show that the elderly are, by a long way, the age group that spends most minutes watching television. In terms of 'gender/sex', women are seen to spend much more time watching TV than men (around 40 minutes more) and, at the same time, households consisting of one or two people tend to watch more television, while that figure decreases as the number of members of the family unit increases in Spain.

The number of minutes that the population spends watching television depends, among things, on the day of the week. Sundays are the days with the highest audience figures, a fact that has been noted over the last three years. During the working week,

the number of minutes spent watching television has remained steady between 210 and 220 minutes a day. However, the time spent on taking part in televised leisure in 2005 decreased compared to 2004.

Incidence of leisure in quality of life

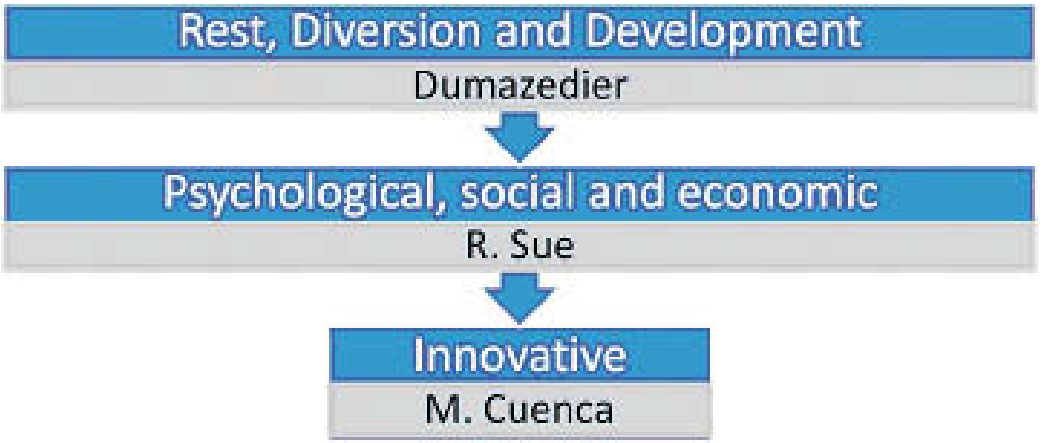
The relation between leisure and quality of life of can be observed through two important indicators: health and community intervention. The WHO considers leisure as essential for the correct development of the human being, and basic for his or her psychic and social balance. It has been shown that the correct enjoyment of leisure prevents disease, increases creativity and provides a better quality of life. Leisure that is a satisfactory experience has a beneficial effect that goes far beyond its own existence, affects our whole being and has an impact on other aspects of our life and our relations with our surroundings. The English bibliography and, in particular, North American research, contains abundant specific research that highlights the important function that leisure activities play in our lives. In psychology, this work area is known under the generic name of 'leisure benefits'.

Another social quality of life indicator that we would like to highlight is the one that refers to community intervention in leisure spheres. Community intervention has two preferential channels. One pays special attention to the negative, claims rights and duties not fulfilled, and tries to seek solutions to problems and conflicts that appear in the society. The other fosters satisfactory experiences by generating positive community citizen involvement. Both are complementary approaches and, in no case, excluding; but negative leisure behaviour, such as young people drinking in the street, frequently gets greater social attention than others.

Innovative function of leisure

Before questioning directly the relationship that exists between the practices of leisure and creativity and innovation it seems advisable to reflect on the consequences of leisure experiences in the people as in the community. Besides the three functions of leisure, known as Dumazedier's three Ds: Rest, Diversion and Personal Development; and the psychological, social and economic functions mentioned by Roger Sue, we maintain that leisure also serves to harness creativity in the individual and, therefore, to favour innovation. With respect to psychological functions, the practice of leisure can be something with special incidence in social innovation, to the extent that it can become personally something beneficial, a cause for satisfaction, identification, crea-

tivity, recovery or catharsis, reflection or spirituality. Some proposals of social, innovative and possible functions, which could make specific some of the ideas previously enunciated are: socialisation, solidarity, natural surroundings and consumption.



Graph 5: Leisure Functions
Source: Own elaboration

The innovative function of leisure acquires special importance in the Leisure Studies Team of Deusto, where we consider it to have special relevance. Considering the work of E. Cohen, as well as the reflection on the psychological and social functions of leisure, M. Cuenca (2008) draws attention to the incidence that leisure practices have on social innovation and cultural creativity. Both concepts are directly related to the intrinsic meaning of experiences and the search for quality of life of the citizen.

The innovative function of leisure is related to the fact that it is a propitious area for development and the promotion of new lifestyles but it also arises as a result of the appearance of new social situations, which harness innovating motivations of leisure and, consequently, new markets. The change over recent years, particularly in developed countries, has highlighted the importance of the new lifestyles that raise unknown questions. Leisure is a significant element of this change and an increasingly more important aspect of our society. The new lifestyles of young people and pensioners is therefore very significant. In both cases, leisure is an essential aspect to understand the meaning of their lives and motivations. In the knowledge era, we are learning to live in a different context that is unprecedented in the history of humanity, even though it is not yet a day-to-day reality. In this new context, we will redefine habits, uses of time and space, but the way of seeing work and leisure in particular.

There is no doubt that the lifestyles of today's society are directly related to the appearance of new forms of leisure and its development in specific population groups. All have a social incidence far beyond what we thought; but normally we only pay attention to those which pose immediate problems.

Value of the concept and relevance of valuable experiences of leisure for their innovative function

What is leisure? What do we understand by the experience of leisure? Can any experience of leisure acquire this innovative function? Is some type of experience more appropriate than another to perform this function and to create more creative people with a capacity to innovate? In order to try to answer these questions, we shall first look further into the value of the leisure concept and, then, into leisure as a valid experience.

The value of the concept

The concept of leisure has had and continues to have many meanings (free time, idleness, activity, liking, entertainment, pastime, disconnecting, escapism). How should we understand this reality at the moment? The concept developed by the Institute of Leisure Studies of the University of Deusto maintains that leisure is an integral experience of the person and a fundamental human right. An integral, that is to say, total, complex human experience (directional and multidimensional), focused on beloved activities (free, satisfactory), autotelic (being an end in themselves) and personal (with individual and social implications). Also it is a basic human right that favours development, just as much as does education, work or health, and of which nobody should be deprived for reasons of gender, sexual orientation, age, race, religion, belief, health, incapacity or economic status. A right legally recognised by different legislatures.

Leisure is an experience of great value at present and, mainly, it is explained because it is a type of human experience that the subject perceives in a satisfactory way, not obligatory and non-utilitarian. Affirmatively stated it can be said that leisure is a free, satisfactory human experience which is an end in itself; that is to say, voluntary and separated from need, understood as a primary need. A leisure experience is characterised as being a subjective perception influenced both by one's own personal experience as by the social surroundings in which it is experienced.

The Institute of Leisure Studies has been working for 20 years on the concept of Experiential Leisure which, from a business point of view, has become an innovative finding in the 21st century. From the scope of consumption, the same idea has a referent in the work of B. J. Pine and J. H. Gilmore, the *Economy of experience,* whose antecedent is *The Tourist* of D. MacCannell. Pine and Gilmore state that the economy of experience is the beginning of a new economic era and seek to explain it with examples like the following: why does a cup of coffee cost more when it is served in a fashionable cafeteria that in the bar on the corner? The economy of experience understands that the key is in the subjects who want to live memorable experiences.



Graph 6: The leisure experience
Source: Own elaboration

In the Institute we also start from leisure understood as a human experience, but we defend the values of the person and their dignity over other values, as it could be mere economic benefit. Our humanist thought has the originality to orient reflection based on the European and North American contribution centred on personal and humanist values. Here also is the nucleus of our way of understanding Experiential Leisure.

A experience of personal, satisfactory, significant and memorable leisure, is a key factor in the construction of an innovative social fabric. But are some experiences better than others with respect to their capacity to generate more creative and innovating people? Both personally and socially, activities can have diverse functions. To determine whether they are better than others, at certain times, it is fundamental to secure to any objective of transformation and innovation. Research indicates that it is not sufficient to live Experiential Leisure, but we need to make a valuable experience of it. Manuel Cuenca (2004) puts forward four options of verified importance in

the value of leisure experience and its innovative function: active, substantial, creative leisure and leisure with solidarity.

Leisure as a valuable experience

Different Researchers who have considered the phenomenon of leisure, among which we emphasise Csikszentmihalyi, induce us to think that it is not sufficient to live leisure as a human experience, but we should tend to make of it a *valuable* human experience. In this line of thought we indicate two options that, while well known, do not cease to be important in the value of leisure experience: active leisure and substantial leisure. Together with these we also address the less well-known positions, although ever more valued: creative leisure and leisure with solidarity.

We begin by speaking of active leisure because it is the easiest to understand, although not so easy to practice. Active leisure, from our point of view, is not only a physically active, 'moving', leisure that is translated into physical activity, but also one that implies mental activity. From a general approach it is possible to say that active leisure is one in which you involve yourself, with which you react and into which you put something of yourself. The practice of active leisure contributes to an increase in greater vital satisfaction, understood as physical, psychological and social well-being.

Substantial or serious leisure implies the practice of a reiterated leisure activity which systematically seeks an intense satisfaction(Stebbins, 2000). It manifests itself in amateur activity, voluntary service and in the practice of hobbies. The characteristics of substantial leisure are perseverance, effort, training, benefits, social scope and identification.

Creative leisure is a self-motivated, conscious, active, complex and playful leisure. This type of leisure finds its closest scope of accomplishment in culture, an area that is characterised as separate from the instinctive and the easy, introducing us to a vision and an enjoyment of the world that is more difficult and complex but, in the long term, enriching, satisfactory and much more human (Csizentmihalyi, 2001). Creative leisure is characterised by the experience of creative experiences, understood in its more global sense, as creation and recreation. It has two aspects: (a) expressive, characterised by producing something new; and (b) compressive, giving life or recreating something created.

Leisure in solidarity is that which finds its cause for satisfaction in helping others through actions in solidarity. For some authors it is a superior form of leisure (Jensen, 1995). Research indicates that leisure in solidarity provides experiences full of satisfaction and meaning, these aspects being key to understanding all of the others.



Graph 7: The leisure pyramid
Source: Based on K.A. Henderson and Maslow

In the pyramid of leisure, which is based on Maslow's pyramid of needs (1943), we see that the valuable experiences of leisure about which we are talking can be indicated in diverse forms and degrees, from the simplest, understood as pastime and escapism, to the most complex, such as the experiences of creative leisure and leisure in solidarity.

Good practices of valuable experiences in different scopes: Education, work and free time

Those set out so far are not just theoretical, but also have their practical side. We take good leisure practices to mean those initiatives capable of generating free, satisfying leisure experiences that have a purpose in themselves, whose innovative, proven and evaluated approach tends to be successful in other contexts. There are leisure initiatives that have facilitated the improvement of the present and which, therefore, can become a referent for the transformation of any region from the point of view of innovation.

People who innovate and learn by enjoying are people who enjoy learning.

The link between leisure and training becomes a vitally important aspect for the development of the society of knowledge. Formative experiences of leisure as processes of individual improvement and social transformation acquire an essential value for the enormous value that leisure experiences have based in freedom and intrinsic motivation. Experiences of formative leisure, like those developed in OcioBide, based on self-directed learning and conjugation with personal tastes, offer us the keys that the true processes of learning must follow (http://www.ocio.deusto.es).

The role of leisure in the innovation of organisations

Through an analysis of Google working practices, we can see that the link between the workers of an organisation and their leisure is manifested as a space for the promotion of innovative culture. The provision by the company of spaces, services, and breaks in routine acts as an interesting method of facilitating creativity. To understand work as a constant challenge, looking for workers who perceive it as such and who are allowed to link their tastes and interests with the work that they do, are presented as key aspects for this increase of creativity. To find workers who are able to have 'optimal' experiences in their professional scope and to facilitate spatial and professional possibilities for this, is revealed as one of the keys to innovation in organisations.

For example, the case of LEGO demonstrates how at present users and clients are turning from consumers to prosumers, making the *importance of serious leisure in the innovating processes of products and organisations* ever greater. The experience realised by LEGO shows the innovative power that fans can have. The processes of open innovation are becoming an ever more evaluated and effective innovative process. Both the model denominated Open Innovation OUT (based on the development of a platform at the service of users and collaborators which allows to increase and take advantage of their creativity) and the model denominated Open Innovation IN (in which an external network of collaborators for the innovating process is used) proposed by Leadbeater (2007) can become a fundamental value for the development of societies.

Fomenting innovation in free time

The analysis of organisations like Wikipedia or the Gutenberg Project, shows us the *value of social life and cooperation in innovation in leisure*. The increasing amount of time dedicated in today's society to leisure, and the possibilities for social transformation through the use of ICT, provide possibilities to use leisure for solidarity. The possibilities of collaborative work promote processes of digital voluntary service that are becoming key elements of 21st-century society. The use of leisure time as a transforming social force goes beyond its temporary importance, and allows it to become, through its existential value, an element with a great power of social innovation.

Final reflection

A society that seeks to have innovation as a sign of its identity must harness the creativity of people. How we can construct an innovative society? What must we do from the point of view of leisure to make people more creative? How we can make people able to live valuable experiences of leisure?

What can this type of experience contribute to the promotion of innovation processes?

A society that innovates needs continuous learning and the ability to adapt to changes in technology, in markets and in our mode of thinking. Leisure education is not a minor subject, since leisure occupies one of the highest positions in our scale of values and is an essential part of the new lifestyles. Active, substantial, creative and solidarity experiential leisure provide development and quality of life, but they do not arise spontaneously. In order to promote them, it is necessary to have suitably oriented training and socioeconomic policies.

The innovative challenge of today's leisure can be specified in the following aspects:

- to reject mistaken ideas;
- to know its meaning and incidence;
- to promote active, substantial, healthful, creative and solidarity experiential leisure;
- to develop to new interests and habits that allow these forms of leisure to be experienced;
- to provide people with access to valuable experiences of leisure;
- in addition, at community level it is important: to promote accessible and inclusive leisure, to prevent the risks of damaging leisure, to promote forms of leisure that facilitate cohesion as well as intergenerational leisure.

Training is the only means for us to gradually achieve valuable leisure. Leisure, understood as an area of innovation and social development, needs a group of people who are positive, decided, solidarity, hopeful, able to enjoy the projects that they undertake. A healthy society should ensure that leisure is a vital area which meets the needs of human development that are difficult to satisfy in other areas. For all these reasons, leisure education should occupy a place no less important than education for work at the time of the industrial revolution.

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