

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

FROM THE ORIGINS OF URBANISM FOR LEISURE TO THE SUMMER INVENTION: APPROACH TO AN ANALYSIS OF THE LEISURE TIMES DURING THE PROCESS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION IN ELCHE, 1884-1906

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The perspective of this article is local. The proposed object of study is the origin of leisure at the time of the first phase of the industrialization of Elche, a city in southeastern Spain, south of the then Kingdom of Valencia, which has a population of approximately 20,000 inhabitants, between the arrival of the railway, in 1884 and the inauguration of the first permanent cinema, the Kursaal Theater, in 1906. The primary sources predominate, all of them obtained from the Municipal Historical Archive, among which the press and the Municipal Record Books stand.

Secondary sources are scarce because the philosophy of this work does not respond to the elaboration of a research model, but rather to the analysis of documents from a paradigm that is more expository than interpretive. The article is simply an approximation to the complex theme, leisure, key to understanding contemporaneity and does not stop at the relationships of leisure, recreation or rest with the workers' demands, already present in Elche since the formation of the Workers' Center, in 1886, and the celebration of May 1st, since 1890. This etiological analysis would be very necessary.

The vocation of this small investigation is to present the results so that they can be useful to other researchers from other places, without proposing models of interpretation from the epistemological field.

The origin of leisure, as an inverse face of work, of leisure time as a right against working hours, and the concept of social pleasure, that is, the moment in which a collective activity is enjoyed, constitutes an element - category- fundamental of contemporary society.

In the case of Elche, during the final years of the 19th century, in the midst of industrialization taking off, we can observe the first steps in the construction of a culture of leisure, in which all social classes participate, although not equally. Culture that translates into new urban spaces, new forms of group fun, such as cinema - and other forms of rupture with daily work, such as staying at near by beaches. It is a new way of life, linked in

part to an incipient middle class, which is emerging as a function of the development of industrial and commercial activities in the city.

Leisure soon becomes one more product of the supply / demand system, that is, an entire economy is developing with intensity around the different leisure businesses: cinemas, dances, theaters, shows or vacations are capable of generating a new productive sector that it will increase its volume as the expansion phases of capitalism are overcome, from the end of the 19th century. On the other hand, as a consequence of these social changes, leisure will awaken the normalizing and collection interest of different public administrations, especially the City Council, which will obtain income thanks to the subletting of the right of "Public Shows", which in turn will set rates in the interior of the population that will be lyrical functions, dances in general, masked dances, gymnastic and prestidigitation functions, circus, cinematographs, wax figures exhibition, or bulls to death, among others.

In addition, the seasonal nature of the incipient espadrille and textile industry generates spaces of non-productive time, so that, taking advantage of the days after the patron saint festivities, during the second half of August, the population leaves the city for a few days to settle in makeshift wooden barracks on the beaches of the neighboring town of Santa Pola. This is how the summer invention process is instituted, which will have so much importance in the second half of the 20th century. A new way of organizing the rhythm of life of workers and manufacturers is being created, which in turn will transform the society and economy of Santa Pola.

The aforementioned patron saint festivities, in honor of the Virgen de la Asunción, known as the Festa, and within them the Misteri, are substantially transformed and acquire a new dimension, much more open to a less religious, more playful and tourist interpretation, capable of arousing the interest of journalists and intellectuals from Spain or the rest of Europe, as occurs above all after the inauguration of the railway. It should be remembered that the French archaeologist Pierre Paris is in Elche, invited by the local archivist and historian, Pedro Ibarra, with the intention of attending the representation of the Misteri, when the Iberian bust, later known as the lady of Elche, is discovered, in 1897.

One of the characteristics of the new concept that dominates the layout of the contemporary city will be the opening of open spaces that favor strolling or holding events, such as music and other shows, and communication between neighbors.

The arrival of the railway, and the location of the station in the north of the city, somewhat far from the urban area, and especially separated by a belt of palm orchards belonging to an ecclesiastical link, makes the notary José Gómez Aznar propose the opening of the city to the station through a large promenade that connects the town with the railway. The construction of the Paseo de la Estación will modify the orientation of the plan of much of Elche and will be the new nerve center, until the construction of the Glorieta.

During the 1890s, perhaps also due to the ease of communication in the city, Elche will enjoy innumerable shows, such as the wax figure exhibition in the Plaza Mayor, those of the trapeze artist Leona Daré, and others also from circus nature as stunts, conjuring, among which we find some lacking benefit.

We must also mention the bulls, which since 1878 have been held in the improvised plaza of the Santa Clara convent until a stable plaza is composed in the Old Barracks. The piñatas or dances, whether for costumes, carnival and masks, in the different cafes of the

city such as the one with the star or the casino, the fireworks, of which José Albarranch was the main architect, as well as the opening parties, among which we must highlight the railway, on the occasion of its arrival, on May 11, 1884, the electric lighting or the ornamental fountain of Plaza de la Merced, to which we should add the first indications recreational sports activities, such as the bicycle race starring in 1896, Lagier and Aznar or the allusion to the visit that the sportman, Pedro Revenga Pascual, made to the city in 1903. There is no news of the celebration of soccer until 1914, when matches are held that pit local squads against others from nearby municipalities, events that will be able to gather several thousand spectators.

As we have already said, the patron saint festivities, and especially the Festa, undergoes an important change in their functions, which while remaining religious and popular, are re-functionalized within the local culture and become a reason for the visit of many intellectuals and tourists to the city.

On the other hand, the bourgeoisie and the people reactivate traditional festivals, such as the custom of exhibiting “les belles de serra” on the balconies of the most prominent houses in the city, large rag dolls that are usually made by young single women, a fact in which gender and class culture overlap.

Regarding the Virgin festivities, whose financing will be borne mainly by the donations of the guilds and the classes with the highest purchasing power in the city, since the end of the eighties, the advertising poster and the festival program have been specially taken care of, as well as ornamentation and lighting.

There will be two factors that determine the arrival in the city of new forms of leisure: the first, new technologies, the second, the timing of work in the foot wear industry.

The electrification of some streets of the city and the consolidation of the “light factories” as new local industries active in the city since 1891 opens a new panorama of leisure in society, as the hours lengthen - the night loses its meaning traditional- and enables the arrival of new leisure technologies, such as the cinematograph.

On the other hand, the seasonality of the incipient espadrille industry and the proximity of the coast will explain the re-functionalization of summer as a space for leisure time in which the sea and the beach exert a great attraction for the population in a new society, society. Contemporary, product of industrialization.