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## **The contemporary festive experience: Time, Body, and Technology**

(Abstract)

When thinking about the notion of *party* –fête, fiesta, fest or festivals– in globalized societies, Duvignaud brings social and cultural problems to light. Do they represent a “decadence or renewal? What has become of all these festivals in McLuhan’s global village?” (1989). Fully answering this question is difficult. The festive experience might be one of the most paradoxical and enigmatic of the cultural phenomena. It is also one of the most ambiguous. Why? Anthropologically, *parties* or *to be partying* represent the social and symbolical ordering of disturbance, commotion and effervescency. As Duvignaud says, the party “remains beyond what it provokes” (1997, 216). That is to say, its subsequent effects have moral, aesthetic, and political repercussions that are extremely important for the community in which it takes place. In other words, parties suppose a ritualized modification of behavior patterns that anticipates and gives meaning to the *virtually* anomic, inherent to all cultures.

Following a general reading of widely varying perspectives by different authors (J. Pieper, 1974); H.G. Gadamer, 1977; M. Bajtin 1999; J. Duvignaud, 1997; B. Echeverría, 2010; É. Durkheim, R. Caillois, 1996, G. Balandier, 1994, Cruz de Amenábar, Gil Calvo (1991), it can be established that the concept of the *party* supposes: a) an intrusion of a public dimension and partial blurring of collective identities; b) a substantial paralyzation of the organization of labor and alienation; c) a framework of collective expression in which affective outbreaks are integrated by virtue of their enrollment in a symbolic articulation of the community; d) a putting into play of an aesthetic conception of the community’s own; and e) the triggering of an anomalous experience of time. Thus, they locate the party in a traditional society, conceiving it as a therapeutic ritual.

However, the observation of different cultural dynamics shows us that contemporary individuals can have festive experiences not only in traditional parties. In fact, entertainment industry attracts crowds to shows that skillfully exploit aspects or elements of the festive experience or “festive spirit”. Sometimes, this kind of shows has been termed as genres of “secular ritual” or “cultural performances”. Nevertheless, its aesthetic and political consequences in complex societies remind unknown, and this demands a “socio-processual thought” (Turner, 1987). Are contemporary parties a decadence or renewal? Are they an alienation or liberation? It depends on the perspective adopted

by the ethnologist. My research seeks to contribute to this understanding and situates itself in the context of Ibiza and Palma de Mallorca, Spanish Balearics.

Both places are international tourist destinations for nightlife and festive dynamics of British and German youth population during the summer. When this happens, a question comes quickly: What community is celebrating? Who, so to speak, owns those parties? These questions inquire about, according to available research, a growing conflict in terms of cultural contact and exchange during the last two decades. Creating a new phenomenon, these parties take place against the grain of the local tradition. In relation to this, the data emphasize several dimensions of the conflict: a) the socioeconomic dimension, which entails an ample entertainment infrastructure, adapted to the contextual geographical conditions and reporting high profitability (Blackman, 1995); b) dimension of public health, examined in studies commanded by different levels of government, which point out the health problems the phenomenon gives rise to (Calafat *et. Al.*, 2010); c) socio-historical dimension, that is to say, a recurring pattern in terms of cultural exchange is identifiable along Balearic Islands history (Ramón and Cerra, 2014); d) certain aspects of the subjective dimension of the youth who participate in these events, a point on which opinions are divided (Briggs, 2013).

My research situates itself in this context and aims to shed light on an as-yet-unmentioned aspect that forms part of the contemporary festive experience: the meaning-processes of time (see Elias, 1984). Taking the conceptualizations constructed by Zerubavel (1979) and Gell (1996) as examples, it is possible and viable to detach the temporal structure of a phenomenon and guide field observation according to it. I would like to recall that the "lived experience of time" cannot be approached in an isolated manner, but only as the expression of a specific social formation. The preceding, despite being an extremely general assertion, represents a theoretical premise with which my research works. In other words, "time" refers here to the social institution of time that organizes, among others, said festive phenomenon.

But what is the specific relation between the social institution of time and the festive experience? We should observe that the social institution of time is structured in general, particular and singular levels (Elias, 1984). In less differentiated and complex societies than the ones in the late modern times, the parties as social activities were organized as part of the institution of time in its general level (Durkheim and Mauss, 1971). As shown, most of the research about the party refers to this structuration level. This relation between the social institution of time and the party is troublesome. If the fiesta cancels the normative strength of the social order, it cancels at also the social coercion of time. According to Duvignaud it is like this and it is very important. The festive trance, from where the imaginary experience is detached, is contrary to the coming of anything and "seems to give during a few hours and in a limited frame, a delirious possibility: the one of not having "oneself", (...) not being more a personality (Duvignaud *op. Cit.* 24). According to this, the normalized sequences of reference or time units are typically established in these societies between two points: one of extreme rigidity of the social time coercion and another one, as it is in the party's case, it is practically canceled. The social institution of time in this kind of societies fulfills its function of orientation taking as reference moments of cancelation of its own social coercion guidelines. It is about, sort of speak, going through a "not-meaning" moment.

However, the relation between time and the fiesta becomes even more troublesome to study when the societies, as said, present greater development and differentiation degrees. The phenomenon in question is a perfect example. Its festive activities demands the coordination of a countless number of activities, and consequently, a supposed subject that, for the sake of orient himself in such activities, it possesses a great sensitivity of time, that Elias would designate as "compulsive" (Elias *op. Cit.* 46). This means that the social institution of time has been internalized in his conscience with great strength and deepness; that is to say, in particular and singular levels of structuration. Summarizing, it has been

individualized as patterns of social "self-regulation".

Of the theoretical and empirical considerations and the questions that arise, the main goal can be understood and put into words. The general objective of the research is to understand the meaning of time in the festive experience of youth that travels to said context during the summer holidays. As said, that meaning is structured in several levels, hence the research is oriented in accordance with two specific objectives. The first one is to know, according to a particular level, the meaning-processes of time typical of the young people groups that go to Mallorca and Ibiza annually. The second objective, according to a singular or individual structuration level, is to know the typical patterns of social self-regulation of time that take part in the festive experience of the individual that integrates those groups. I lay out the following questions as research guide: a) in its group and individual levels: How it is structured the meaning of time in the festive experience? b) What is the role of the body in the meaning of time? c) What is the role of the audiovisual and technological experience in the meaning-processes of time of this experience? d) In the conformation of the festive experience: What is the role of the technological experience in the meaning of the body (corporal behavior and exchange)? As one can appreciate, the categories of "body" and "technology" are not located on the same level, but are dependent on the category of "time". They are categories that seek to enlighten elements that participate in the meaning-process of time.