

## Leisure, adventure and risk: thoughts on activities performed in nature

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**Abstract:** The objective of this article is to contemplate concepts of adventure and risk manifested in activities performed in nature. The discourses contained herein are part of a broader study where the approach works with a universe of motives, aspirations, values, beliefs and attitudes, corresponding to a more in-depth space of processes, relationships and phenomena. It was possible to perceive that adventure activities in nature bear countless meanings, relating to new discoveries, new challenges, the search for the unknown, re-finding oneself, uncertainty, spontaneity, cooperation, friendship, among others. These activities encompass diverse forms of experimentation, pointing beyond the physical risk and including the symbolic and imaginary risk.

**Key Words:** Leisure activities. Adventure. Risk. Nature.

### 1 Introduction

At a time when technological development and living conditions (work, housing, etc.) in the urban environment seem to increasingly push people away from life with nature, while economic development continues to destroy the environment on a planetary scale, it is symptomatic that a growing number of people should seek to spend pleasant and exciting moments in nature. Although the idea of seeking adventure in expeditions is not new, there are clearly some peculiar motivations, meanings and consequences during these times in which we live, especially when we think of adventure activities in nature.

These activities are being understood as the diverse practices performed, mainly during moments of leisure, with innovative and differentiated characteristics from traditional sports, because the conditions for these practices, the motivation itself and the means used to carry them out are different. Furthermore, there is also the presence of innovative technological equipment that permits greater fluidity between the practitioner and where it is practiced - land, water or air. They are activities restricted by calculated, whenever possible, risks and dangers, without any prior intensive training (as in the case of traditional sports and corporal practices such as gymnastics and bodybuilding). They are practiced in a more direct manner, without any planned output. Other characteristics and specific contextualizing discussions can be viewed in other writings (MARINHO, 2001; MARINHO; BRUHNS, 2005, 2003, 2001).

In this sense, leisure seems to be an interesting starting point to sharpen the understanding of the most varied relations that are established everyday between human beings, so long as it is not considered in an isolated manner, but rather in a profound relation with other spheres of human life: political, economic, religious, etc.

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The emergence of new technologies, creators of new possibilities for experiencing leisure, leads to a rethinking of the meanings of proximity, distance, individuality, sociability, mobility, environment and adventure.

Believing that “[...] the sensitivities of one period become part of this period’s culture” (GEERTZ, 2001, p.31), the intention of this article is to think about adventure activities in nature as fertile possibilities for understanding the relationships that are established in our contemporariness between human beings and nature from less committed and more ephemeral, although truer and more intense involvements.

Countless factors indicate the expressive growth in visitations of natural areas in Brazil and the world, and according to a study conducted by the Ministry of the Environment, adventure activities in nature are among the most promising segments of the tourism market, with world growth estimated at between 10% and 30% per year (BRAZIL, 2006).

Other initiatives are also emblematic and contribute towards situating this phenomenon. They include: growing scientific production; greater visibility and recognition in scientific events in various areas of knowledge on a regional, national and international scope; the offer of elective and obligatory classes, extension, undergraduate and graduate study courses, especially (but not limited to) in the areas of Physical Education and Tourism at several colleges and universities in Brazil; development of countless projects with different populations: the elderly (DIAS, 2006); children (INÁCIO *et al.*, 2005); those with special needs (CARVALHO, 2005; MUNSTER, 2004); dependents on drugs (GIMENO *et al.*, 2000); among other initiatives.

Complement, mitigate, reward, go beyond or become re-enchanted by being in this world were goals of modern western societies, and nowadays, they still prevail, at different levels and from new configurations. The various forms of religious fanaticism; ethic resurgence; manifestations of new “tribes” (MAFFESOLI, 1995); musical and sport effervescence; exacerbated consumption (FEATHERSTONE, 1997); diverse instabilities at work and on the job (SENNET, 2000); the exaltation/exploration of nature and landscapes (LUCHIARI, 2000) are some examples of the context in which the referred to desire for becoming re-enchanted with the world is found.

By enabling the establishment of new relationships among those involved, in leisure and in other spheres of human life, creating new ties of friendship, providing new sensations and emotions, adventure in nature reveals itself as a fertile opportunity for us to think of contemporary social life based on the illustrated context.

In this perspective, the specific objective of this article is to contemplate concepts of adventure and risk manifested in activities performed in nature, bringing discussions found in a broader study<sup>1</sup>, whose methodology is shown below.

## 2 Introducing the study

The study through which the data presented in this article were collected refers to an investigation in the leisure studies area.

As qualitative research, the approach works with a universe of motives, aspirations, values, beliefs and attitudes, corresponding to a more in-depth space of processes, relationships and phenomena, which cannot be reduced to the operationalization of variables, as explained by Minayo (1993).

The conceptual bases on the addressed theme were mainly sought in Sociology, Physical Education and Anthropology, areas that together contribute towards and sustain the established discussions. In the sense of overcoming the diverse academic compartments, these areas are being viewed as an integral part of a whole, interrelating in the sense of their specificities and complexities.

The study was carried out simultaneously through two complementary research projects. One was a bibliographic study that involved bibliographic findings related to adventure activities in nature, such as trekking, climbing, among others. This bibliographic study aimed at elaborating a philosophical and theoretical basis for the problem, enabling an in-depth conceptual and terminological analysis.

The other referred to a field study based on two instruments (semi-structured interview and participant observation), permitting the investigation of the reasons that make people travel to find adventure activities in nature; as well as what these people like, their behaviors, values, etc.; the forms of practitioner involvement in these activities and how the groups of practitioners interact; how adventure activities in nature establish relations in everyday urban life, at work, in the family, etc.; in short, how these experiences relate to the practitioners' every day lives. All of these investigations were tied to the main interest: how the practitioners perceive adventure and nature.

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<sup>1</sup> MARINHO, Alcyane. **As diferentes interfaces da aventura na natureza**: reflexões sobre a sociabilidade na vida contemporânea. 2006. (The different interfaces of adventure in nature: reflections on the sociability of contemporary life. Thesis (PhD in Physical Education) – College of Physical Education. State University of Campinas, Campinas (SP), 2006. Advisor: Dr. Heloisa Turini Bruhns.

The subjects/players of this study had prior experience in activities in contact with nature, making them, in part, different from the new adepts who emerge every day, who are often driven merely by the desire to do something different, by the fad or simple consumption.

There was no intention to limit the profile of the interviewees, which is why it is so diversified. However, for purposes of improving the return and obtaining more in-depth answers, we opted for people who had already had prior contact with nature in diverse activities.

The traveling and the choice of those people were carried out randomly, according to the interests of both: researched and researcher.

The interaction with each investigated person occurred at multiple moments and in different manners, revealing a variety of personal relationships with the activity.

In this paper, the subjects/players receive the denomination of interviewee 1, 2, 3 and so on, with the intent of preserving their identities.

As a technique, the participant observation (BRANDÃO, 1988) permitted situations of relative proximity to the researched individuals.

The observation focused mainly on the behavior of the research subjects that would indicate the motives that led them to seek contact with nature; the attitudes that demonstrated their values and principles tied to the environment, and the behavior that would evidence forms of involvement in the activities and with the participants in those situations in nature.

In turn, with the structured interviews (SEVERINO, 1992), it was possible for the interviewees to jointly participate in the research elaboration process following the line of their own thoughts and experiences.

The observations and interviews mainly occurred on some trips I made with groups to nature sites, such as: Alto Ribeira State Tourism Park (PETAR); Itatiaia National Park (MG; SP); Visconde de Mauá (RJ); Brotas (SP); Analândia (SP), Chapada dos Veadeiros (GO) and Serra da Canastra (MG). These sites are much recognized for their beauty and natural attractions, receiving many visitors all year long. Trips to these sites mainly occur on weekends and long holidays.

The information obtained from participant observation was compared to the data collected from the semi-structured interview.

The interviews were scheduled according to the availability of those involved and most of them were recorded, some of which filmed for subsequent transcription and analysis. The most important and relevant data for the objectives of this study were saved after using content analysis. The observations were also registered using field diaries. This instrument

was of utmost importance, because without it, it would have been impossible to register what was not recorded.

From this methodology, the research intended to understand how the practitioners perceived adventure and nature. Besides that, according to codes and conventions that represent the social relations close to the group and its rationality, the study tried to capture the implicit meanings that comprise the current phenomenon of adventure.

In this perspective, this article privileges the discussions that especially refer to the adventure and its interfaces with risk, the unknown and exploration.

### **3 Adventure, risk, unknown and exploration**

“But son, what is the sense in a trip like this?” asked Amyr Klink’s uncles, the first person to sail alone on board his sailboat *Paratii*, for five months, with the intent of circumnavigating Antarctica (never done before). Klink (2000, p.205) answers:

[...] precisely for nothing, and there truly is nothing useful about traveling for months on end to simply return to where you started. But the useless circumnavigation I had just completed had been my most wonderful achievement. Hard to explain. The history of humanity is filled with useless acts and works that became important simply because someone did them, how they did them, and the symbol they represent. Completing the trip was the most important task I had before me.

Experiences of this type have aroused the interest of different scholars in the sense of unveiling the search for adventure. According to some authors (EWERT, 1989; DONNELLY; WILLIAMS, 1985), adventure activities performed during moments of leisure, and even tourism (since many take place on trips), somehow seem to be related to the element of risk<sup>2</sup>.

It is pertinent to evoke Le Breton (2006, p.107-108), an author who has specifically investigated risk activities in nature, focusing on practices that can be fatal. The author develops the idea of “ordeal” (“extreme probation”) incorporated in risk activities as a form of “free gambling with death”. The base jump (jump from a minimum necessary height for opening the parachute), solo climb (practiced alone without any equipment), extreme ski

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<sup>2</sup> Remembering that the main differentiation between the words risk and danger must be considered. While the first is unpredictable, the second is predictable and its probability can be calculate, according to the levels of exposure involved. However, it is worth pointing out that risk has been used indiscriminately for both real and imaginary risk.

(performed outside of conventional and ensured trails), among other modalities, are emblematic of this.

According to Ewert (1989), what truly defines an adventure activity is the deliberate search for risk and result uncertainty. Risk takes on a significantly important role regarding satisfaction with the experience, where the desire to participate can be diminished if these risks do not exist. Likewise, excess risk in an adventure can result in diminished satisfaction, and even loss of the desire to participate.

In this sense, the element of risk is a multi-dimensional construction where recognition and the study of psychological, physical and social dimensions can have relevant implications in administering the adventure experience.

It is worth remembering that although people often consider the work risk negatively, it can also be associated with the search for positive results. According to Swarbrooke (2003), the perceptions of risk are directly tied to the capacity, experience and knowledge of the person in relation to the adventure activity.

This author, supported by lots of research on the subject, believes people with high levels of experience in mountain climbing, for example, tend to view risk as a challenge and not a danger. Rather than feeling threatened by the level of risk in mountains, these people feel that risk contributes positively towards achieving satisfaction. Thus, a person who never practiced mountain climbing can experience a level of uncomfortable and uncontrollable risk. However, as soon as this same person becomes familiar with the practice, the risk component is perceived in a more positive light.

Risk represents something that cannot be dissociated from adventure. It expresses a probability that something unexpected will happen, only momentarily, and can equally result in positive and pleasure-filled situations. This was detected in interviewee 1, a professor and trail leader:

When I competed in an Ironman contest, for example, and other difficult events like the mountain bike, when I was suffering, at risk, I thought: “wow, I’ll never do this again”, “enough”, “that’s it”, but a week later, I began to remember and was already wishing for something even worse. When suffering, when at risk, you swear you’ll never do it again, but when you arrive, take a deep breath and see no part of you is missing, you survived, you get this enormous desire to do it again!

When researching authors' studies, like those addressed here, in theories by sociologists, like Simmel (1988), and even in dictionaries of the Portuguese Language<sup>3</sup>, it is possible to see that the concepts of adventure are most often somehow related to ideas of risk, the unforeseen, uncertainty.

However, the basis for adventure activities in nature is as much a search for situations of risk as it is a search for new and challenging situations that transmit new knowledge.

Thus, the initiative here is to question whether the existing definitions and concepts are sufficient for a more in-depth understanding of the term adventure. Other elements must be inserted in this discussion, such as: the subjective experience of the individuals and their perception of what adventure really is. The consideration of these elements can lead to a broader and more in-depth understanding of the issue.

First of all, it is necessary to stress that the concept of adventure is dynamic and has significant differences when certain facts and times are compared.

At present, Schwartz (2002) underscores that adventure is beginning to be used to promote positive life messages, proposing the generation of positive self-esteem, a certain status, and even a possible notion of preservation.

Transmission of these positive messages can be seen in the most varied communication media, from the use of the expression adventure for selling goods and services, such as travel, cars, life insurance, clothes, food, etc. Along those lines, adventure even begins to establish a standard of happiness. Besides that, it is important to consider the empty ecological appeal of these initiatives, which often have nothing to do with ecology.

Weber (2001) says the individuals' subjective experience of adventure and their perceptions may not be in keeping with certain classifications and definitions by researchers and scholars of the area. This fact, in turn, has several implications on the experience, research, administration and marketing of adventure activities in nature. It is also necessary to highlight factors like: personality characteristics and prior experiences with activities that directly interfere in the participants' perception of adventure.

Therefore, this discussion cannot fail to take into consideration the subjectivity associated with the greater or lesser predisposition for exposure to risky activities. Interviewee 2, a photographer and trail leader, shows his perception and interest in adventure are quite different from those pointed out by interviewee 1, presented above:

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<sup>3</sup> Among some meanings of the word adventure in the Novo Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa (FERREIRA, 1975), the following stand out: "[...] risky, dangerous, uncommon experience with uncertain endings or results [...]; unforeseen, surprising event [...]".

I don't know if I'm a great practitioner or even encourager of adventure. Perhaps I'm more of a good encourager and practitioner of contemplation. I end up calling more attention to the plants, vegetation, possibility of finding animals on the trail. I think adventure is more esthetics than physical. It's more a search from image, for the visual and that has a lot to do with my background (I'm currently a photographer) and I think it's another way to do tourism and adventure into the woods. It's a different perspective, I'd say.

Other aspects linked to this (subjectivity) should also be considered and have to do with respect for decision making and the environment. With regard to the latter aspect, Walle (1997) argues that adventurous behavior is generally recognized not merely because it involves exciting places, because not every activity in the open air or in nature constitutes an adventure. Interviewee 3, an architect, indicates she agrees with this, affirming:

[...] not every activity in nature is an adventure. I think what characterizes an adventure is the novelty, the challenge of going someplace new where you don't know what will happen, what the route will be like, you don't know what or who you may run into along the way. There's a beginning, but you don't know what the end will be. Sometimes it's to overcome physical difficulties. But, on the other hand, that doesn't always happen when you go to the same place several times, taking the same path, the same route; then it becomes commonplace. So, I don't know if I could call it an adventure, because I already know what will happen. There may be some surprises, but I don't know if they can be called adventures [...]. I think adventure is the challenge to do something new, confront the new or discover something I didn't even imagine could be there, really make a discovery.

According to Ewert and Hollenhorst (1989), even though in certain situations the participants try to increase the levels of difficulty and opportunities for challenges, they do not necessarily seek higher levels of risk.

It is possible that there may simply be the manifestation of elements that aim at exceeding limits, which may not necessarily be tied to risks, but rather to new discoveries and new challenges. Interviewee 4, a speleologist and professor, points out some indications of this situation:

[...] adventure to me is when you try to exceed your limits. The moment you know of a place, of an activity, and you want to exceed those limits, you are putting yourself in a moment of adventure, and that happens all the time in a cavern. Even if you go to do scientific research, you are practicing an adventure; you are going beyond your knowledge. I think everyone who goes into a cavern ends up thinking of a moment of adventure. It's different, for example, when someone goes somewhere already known, a beach. He is

enjoying leisure, but what else is he looking for besides what he already knows? The beach?

More than exceed limits, the above discourse seems to underscore the idea that the adventure is much more related to a search for the unknown that can add knowledge. For this interviewee, the experience in a cavern is the perfect stage for this:

[...] in the cavern, you are living an adventure at every moment. You are always seeing new things. For example, if you enter a tourism cavern, like the Caverna do Diabo, it is illuminated; it has handrails; it has stairs, but it still seems like you are entering a spirit of adventure. And if you get to the end and the lights go out? What are you going to do, to feel? So you always have this image of something dark, of something that could happen. It's different from going to the beach because you don't imagine something other than the traditional could happen. When you are in a cavern, underground, you are always expecting something different to happen and you always discover something new [...] but, to get to this something "new", it must be possible to overcome the obstacles!

Besides the exaltation of the unknown, for this practitioner, adventure also must be overcome, that is, it must be possible to experience it, despite the inherent difficulties to the practice, in this case, visiting caverns. Otherwise, the activity could become demotivating.

When questioned about her interests and expectations with adventure activities in nature, interviewee 3 corroborates and complements his affirmations:

[...] day-to-day life in the city is crushing, a rat race. I leave my house in the morning, go to the office, stay there about 9 hours and go back home. I have activities to do at home besides studying. So I think to look for activities outside the urban environment, in a rural area, is like a refuge. It's to look for different things, seek novelties, meet new people, appreciate the landscape. Whether the mountains or the coast, Brazil has wonderful places!

Implementing the discussion, the concept of adventure for the professor, interviewee 5, also demonstrates important issues:

Adventure to me is not adrenalin. I hate it!!!! Don't like it at all! Adventure to me is to do something without much planning. I know where I want to get; I know what I want to do; I just don't know how it will happen. It will happen naturally. To me, in our day-to-day life, in science, consulting, in projects, everything has to be millimetrically planned and I hate that [...]. So, how do you make up for it? How do you have compensatory attitudes in this rigid day-to-day life when everything has to so planned? By not planning! I got sick because I was no longer having the opportunity to travel and just turn all this off. When I travel, I try to get lost, because I think that by getting lost you get to know places, people you meet. We get lost and then

find ourselves. And when we find ourselves, we don't do it geographically, but psychologically too, and it gives us a feeling that we can find ourselves two different ways.

The discourses presented truly emphasize that adepts of adventure activities in nature insist on the lack of stimulation and freedom in their lives, pointing out existences overprotected by social rules and the technical comfort of societies. "Routine, or better, the security that involves existence, at times arouses boredom. It feeds the regular search for an intensity that habitually does not exist" (LE BRETON, 2006, p.101).

So perhaps we can effectively affirm that adventure encompasses the freedom of choice for the type and level of activity (more or less risky, stressing, tiring), the uncertainty component, directly linked to the unknown, the new, and also rewards inherent to the practice (satisfaction, well-being, overcoming, happiness, etc.).

In this perspective, spontaneity is another characteristic that also appears in the discourse of some practitioners and it is very pertinent to the discussion of adventure activities in nature. The diverse types of repression (political, religious, etc.) human beings have undergone over history have in a way hindered the adventurous part of life. Along these lines, adventure activities in nature seem to arouse less controlled aspects, such as attitudes of hedonism, cooperation, sensitivity, displacement, experimentation, among other possibilities.

However, it is necessary to recall that the opposite can also be true when we think, for example, of those closed ecotourism packages where everything is structured in details (breakfast, outings, lunch, dinner, relaxation, etc.) impeding behavior and freer and more flexible attitudes, truly limiting taking full advantage of the trip, because everything must be done according to pre-determined standards, and you cannot be late or you will disturb the group. Therefore, adventure activities in nature can arouse spontaneity in people as well as hinder and inhibit the same behavior depending on how the group is led by the guide, for example.

Interviewee 5 adds other elements for us to think about:

I don't like anything with heights. I don't like going up; I prefer coming down. So I dive. I like real green places, true forests. I think being in nature is a moment to contemplate, to re-find myself. It is where I find new equilibrium, listening to the sounds of nature. It is as if I cleaned my mind. It's very calm, and I enjoy that feeling. I am even able to evaluate my life; analyze what you want, what you dream.

Interviewee 3's comments are also illustrative in this context, emphasizing, like the professor above, that being in nature can be rewarding, which does not make the experience less important:

These refuges in nature are essential to my life! It's where I rest, where I'm able to re-gain my energy and gather momentum to continue my activities in the city, which is where I live. [...] when I come back, it's very gratifying! I work a lot with creativity and I think this renewal, this contact with nature is important! I think it greatly increases my creativity, makes me looser, less tied to day-to-day things, which becomes boring over time.

However, when it involves risks and fear predominates, the adventure reveals other components. Interviewee 5 does not hesitate to comment the experience of her first dive, which was not very satisfactory, at least not at first.

I don't like to feel fear, I feel bad! In the middle of a panic situation, during my first dive, at a depth of more than 15 meters, my mask would not stop filling up with water and I cannot remember feeling so much despair in all my life.

When commenting on how the above situation finished, the practitioner calls attention to the relationship of trust and friendship manifested in adventure activities in nature:

[...] a friend noticed my despair, came over and transmitted trust, grabbing my hand and patting me. I think that was what I needed to get over the panic and feel good in that different situation.

Nature ceases to be an object to be explored, and becomes a partner; which can be noticed in the ways one dresses, eats and other examples that relate to quality of life, including ideologies, philosophies of life and new means of production (MAFFESOLI, 2005).

Factors such as instruction, information, opportunity and motivation are determining in this context, because not everyone has the same access to them. Regardless, a popular creativity, of common sense, is still manifested, even if it is an instinctive creativity that serves as a substrate for the diversity of social creativity.

Maffesoli (2005, p.22) recalls that the social body shifts from a "logic of identity" (essentially individualistic) to a "logic of identification" (much more collective). Thus, the culture of feeling is a consequence of attraction. Groups form according to circumstances or desires. These characteristics are peculiar to the people and groups involved in adventure activities in nature.

Believing in this affinity is a characteristic aroused in these practices and interviewee 5 exemplifies it by citing a trip she made with very different people, where despite the differences, several affinities were found.

I think the greatest link between all of them was the desire to be in nature, the search for this encounter with themselves, the pleasure of being in nature. Unfortunately, I had to drop out of the group, because, besides other problems with the ecotourism agency, I also had problems with my knee, which is funny because even during such times of difficulty, people suggested medicines, doctors, etc. So affinities appeared in many situations. People who worked in companies, but developed some environmental project, and various other cases where you get to know a little about each one of them and you learn what drove them there. Why choose to spend New Year's climbing up and down a mountain and not be someplace else?

Interviewee 6, a climber, also notices this common thread that permeates these outings in nature. He says this type of activity has an unbeatable quality:

[...] it's intense; the entire group unites! Since the emotional is very involved, it unites people, the group gets stronger and that is one of the most enjoyable things for me to observe. Seeing the group participate, uniting, becoming friends, it's really cool. You establish a relationship of trust at great speed and depth. People who allow themselves to get involved reach a level of relationship with regard to trust that would normally take a long time.

The experiences of the biologist, interviewee 7, also lead to this direction. When he arrived from a crossing and thought about it, he realized it had been the most beautiful trip he had ever taken in his life, a great learning experience, and he explains why.

[...] it was very different! I learned that for you to take a trip like that, for a long time, in a team, the team has to be sharp, in several senses. Will there be problems, conflict? Yes, but the final objective is greater. You cannot have complaining all the time; it just won't work. One has to show the other he's okay even through foolish things (switch backpacks, switch food preparation, etc.), but things that will add equilibrium to the trip. I began to understand all that. I began to enjoy it and want to come back all the time.

Besides the emphasis on issues of unity, partnership and identification that exist in the group, it is also necessary to highlight a contradiction observed in adventure activities in nature: on one hand, there is a great feeling of cooperation and union; however, on the other hand, there are demands for behaviors (you cannot complain about annoyances and boredom, you have to keep up with the pace imposed on the walk, etc.).

Waiting for the other on a walk, for example, is an inherent part of more contemplative aspect, where there can even be a certain adjustment or negotiation by both parties, as seen in the discourses presented herein; however, the same situation can also cause tension or frustration. The learning experience the biologist mentions had a positive sound as a whole, but before the group truly got going, he says that of the ten people who began the crossing with him, four dropped out precisely because they could not adjust to the rhythm, posture and interest of the majority. In other words, in adventure activities in nature there are also some demands regarding attitudes that even when not explicitly imposed, can cause conflict and dissension.

However, in this contradictory dynamic of adventure activities in nature, the spirit of cooperation and desire for being together prevail, permeating the activity and making it so that the distinction between the best and least able is not, most often, a factor for exclusion. For the practitioners of adventure activities in nature, cooperation is a stimulus as well as an issue that involves each others' safety.

Friendship, trust, cooperation and affinity frequently occur in these practices, giving them a unique meaning. Many examples could be cited, such as rafting, where in the boat, each member can row in a different direction (sometimes it is necessary for some to row forward and others backward); however, this occurs in perfect harmony so the desired direction can be achieved and the common objective reached. In other words, in adventure activities in nature, whether rowing, climbing or hiking, the points of view, the differences, are respected and the goals are only achieved from that.

The discourses by the practitioners are very illustrative, showing that a certain type of chance prevails; however, the value, admiration, hobby and shared taste become the basis, the vectors for the ethics. You can also see a sort of collective narcissism, emphasizing esthetics, because it promotes private styles, a way of life, an ideology, among other examples that are part of sharing (MAFFESOLI, 2005).

Adventure activities in nature, due to the collective experience of emotions and feelings, represent one of the most recent founding practices of social life, where the component of fun is both the cause and consequence of the experienced sociability.

To be or not to be an adventure is relative and varies from person to person. Since the groups are always so heterogeneous, simultaneously there are always conflicts and joys at the most varied levels. This is not categorizing adventure, but a way to show the tension dynamic of the relations that exist in it.

Besides this issue of group heterogeneity and diversity of perceptions, it is also interesting to consider when an activity in nature effectively ceases to be an adventure for that same person. Referring to personal experiences, interviewee 1 adds another important contribution.

I think the activity in nature is an adventure when it has to do with the unknown or the little known. A place that has been less explored by me is my thermometer for adventure; the less I know about the place, permitting visual, vegetation and terrain surprises, the more of an adventure it is. The more I know about the place, the less adventuresome it is for me.

Interviewee 3 also enriches the discussion with her impressions, which have elements in common (the unknown) and also in opposition to those of interviewee 1 (fear of great challenges).

The outing ceases to be an adventure when it truly becomes exceedingly common, and to me, all of these outings in the mountains are still very adventuresome, but over time, they may cease to be.  
I don't know if I'm a person who has had many adventures. I've been through some situations where I faced much cold at night; fear of some animal appearing out of the brush and entering my tent. I'm sort of a fraidy cat. But that's all! I don't think I have ever gone through moments of facing many challenges where I got tense and nervous because of something new.

An adventure in nature experience tests one's skills and capacities, where risk and danger can be evaluated and measured. In this context, the risk level admitted by the participants, as illustrated by the practitioners' discourses, is quite varied. Hiking known trails, for example, can be an adventure activity for some people where they experience moments of pleasure, learning something about the place, culture, about other people and themselves; however, without experiencing moments of risk.

Risk can indeed expose the practitioner to the possibility of injury or even death. Personal skills, correct and prudent decisions and help from technological devices contribute towards increasing the feeling of safety in the activity. However, for some people, risk does not seem to be the primordial component in an adventure activity in nature.

Therefore, adventure can have a close tie to obstacles, not only physical, but also symbolic and imaginary ones, to be overcome, which are not necessarily the most risky and difficult, but somehow add the new, the unknown, the exploration.

Perhaps we go back to ancient times when travelers acted according to destiny. For example, Ortiz (2000), reflecting on the stories of the Odyssey, points out that the heroes

roamed about unknown territories without any choice. They traveled and adventured over seas, deserts, mountains, with the intent of actually satisfying the gods. The route was experienced as a proving ground and the adventure a moment of suffering.

However, in the contemporary world, adventure seems to rid itself of the weight of suffering and has become something that provides pleasure, excitement, joy and new vigor. The current adventure has a different connotation. It has taken on reasons that are more related to the personal desires of individuals who form groups according to common interests. In this perspective, it was possible to observe that spontaneity, affinity, solidarity, freedom of choice, trust, cooperation and collectivity were directly and indirectly focused on by the practitioners of adventure activities in nature.

#### **4 Final Considerations**

Individuals become and develop in new and different social, economic, political and cultural conditions. In this process of building identities and socialization, leisure plays a fundamental role.

There is a certain consensus regarding leisure as a cultural dimension, experienced by different groups, with a crossing over of intentions and diversified identities. Along these lines, it can be underscored that the culture globalization process (ORTIZ, 2000) does not produce cultural uniformity, like many suggest exists. Rather, it makes us aware of new levels of diversity and countless existing facets in culture.

In this perspective, the development of leisure and tourism should not be considered merely an issue of numbers, a fact that brings interesting data, especially for the economy, but mainly a qualitative change in the use of free time in a so-called globalized society. Likewise, trips are not merely displacements. Instead, they are expressions of change in the very conception of people's available time, as are the different forms to experience leisure, exemplified herein by adventure activities in nature.

Adventure seems to be a foreign body in human existence, but at the same time, and paradoxically, it is linked to its core. In a way, the adventure functions as a synthesis of some of our dreams and desires. Along these lines, Simmel (2000) contributes by elucidating that adventure is the pulsing heart of all of society.

Since "the single dimension of thought is unable to understand multi-dimensionality of experience" (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p.35), I believe that in this framework adventure reveals

itself as an important challenge for us to contemplate the reason and the senses, the certainties and uncertainties of the contemporary world, becoming sensitive forms of social life.

According to the discourse presented herein, adventure is tied to the idea of a search for the unknown and desire for exploration, redefining models and in a way arousing new behaviors in those involved.

In this sense, it is possible to affirm that contemporary adventurers engage in such practices with the objective of experiencing different things and emotions, which have significant relationships and echoes in every sphere of human life.

Adventure encompasses the search for playing with risk, most often as an end in itself, characterizing the behavior of people with an adventurous spirit. Due to its strong component of fun, adventure associated with nature can thus be understood as a metaphor for a new lifestyle: an adventurous lifestyle. This clearly does not mean understanding it in its strictest sense, but rather according to the general context in which it is found, that is, social life during a given moment in history. It is a unique way to produce subjectivity and construct the collective imagination.

The social construction of adventure presents core elements of our contemporary society, of its forms of production, segregation, fund, etc. In this perspective, it arouses the possibility to better understand the other, nature, and most of all, ourselves.

In conclusion, I reiterate that the phenomenon of adventure activities in nature cannot be unveiled within the limits of these discussions; however, with them and from the examples provided, some of the dimensions can be contemplated. In other words, the discussions held intended to contribute with new challenges that present themselves in the sphere of leisure, strengthening a rethinking of sociability in contemporary life, especially tied to nature.

### **Lazer, aventura e risco: reflexões sobre atividades realizadas na natureza**

**Resumo:** Este artigo tem como objetivo refletir sobre as concepções de aventura e de risco, manifestadas nas atividades realizadas na natureza. Os discursos aqui apresentados estão contidos em uma pesquisa mais ampla, cuja abordagem trabalha com um universo de motivos, aspirações, valores, crenças e atitudes, correspondendo a um espaço mais profundo dos processos, relações e fenômenos. Foi possível perceber que as atividades de aventura na natureza são portadoras de inúmeros significados, relacionando-se a novas descobertas, a novos desafios, à busca pelo desconhecido, ao reencontro consigo mesmo, à incerteza, à espontaneidade, à cooperação, à amizade, entre outros. Tais atividades compreendem diversas formas de experimentação, apontando para além do risco físico, o risco simbólico e imaginário.

**Palavras-chave:** Atividades de lazer. Aventura. Risco. Natureza.

### **Ocio, aventura y riesgo: reflexiones acerca de las actividades de aventura**

**Resumen:** Este texto presenta reflexiones acerca de los conceptos de la aventura y del riesgo, revelados en actividades en la naturaleza. Los discursos se encuentran en una investigación, que

trabaja con un universo de razones, de aspiraciones, valores, creencias y de actitudes, correspondiendo a un espacio más profundo de los procesos, de las relaciones y de los fenómenos. Es posible percibir que las actividades de la aventura en la naturaleza tienen muchos significados, relacionados con nuevos descubrimientos, nuevos desafíos, incertidumbre, cooperación y amistad, entre otras. Tales actividades presentan diversas formas de experimentación, señalando más que el riesgo físico: el riesgo simbólico e imaginario.

**Palabras-clave:** Actividades recreativas. Ocio. Aventura. Riesgo. Naturaleza.

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