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## Body, environment and adventure: experience and spatiality

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to investigate human spatiality and perception in general, with the experience of adventure sports as its background. These activities highlight especially our strong relationship with the world when we consider the specific way in which the environment participates in the development of human potential. We first analyse the notions of risk and instability as important elements in adventure sports. Then we explore the notion of experience and spatiality, considering the way in which we establish our relationship with the world. The theoretical background is found in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard's phenomenology of imagination to investigate perspectives of space among adventurers. We hold that more than a different range of corporeal techniques, adventure sports can teach us a way of interrogating and looking at the world. They require a peculiar sensibility that allows our body to experience the environment in favour of a corporeal wisdom. Alternative sports indicate the possibility that we have to build up different ways of inhabiting the world and comprehending it.

### KEYWORDS

Adventure; human movement; experience; spatiality; phenomenology

### Introduction

Outdoor activities such as trekking, mountain biking, climbing, and sailing allow our body to experience the environment, limits and challenges in a very different way than we can in our everyday life, especially in urban societies. For example, in these activities, we choose the path according to our actual physical fitness and ability of overcoming natural obstacles or the challenges we wish to face. Moreover, the speed of the journey can vary according to a rhythm elaborated in communion with the environment. The interference of the weather, the vegetation, the presence and the marks of animals, the smell and sounds all around are usually different from urban regions where we live. All these elements require our attention and suggest a different stance from us. In natural tracks, through mountains, valleys, rivers or on the sea we strive to adjust our moves to the environment. Means and ends are both important, and the adventurer is always looking for new challenges. The purpose of this article is to investigate human spatiality, with adventure sports<sup>1</sup> as its background. For these activities, we conceive the environment in terms of Dougherty's view (2007), of the 'wilder place' as a location that is relatively free from human influence (94). So, in these cases, 'practice

would be guided by the principle of adapting the activity to the environment, rather than the environment to the activity' (Dougherty 2007, 96). Because of their unique features, adventure sports represent a kind of counterculture in relation to highly standardized competitive sports (Loland 2007).

Elements of risk and instability are very often related to adventure. However, risk-taking does not seem to be the main element that justifies this kind of sport. Although the presence of risk is constant, adventurous risk-takers generally consider possibilities and hazards carefully, and they take into account the amount of risk that is possible for them to take on (McNamee 2007). This attitude also shows respect for and acknowledgement of the power of the environment. As it changes every moment and these shifts orient our behaviour, we can perceive instability as a way of relating with the environment. When sailing, for instance, the challenge is to cope successfully with the instability of the wind and the water. Such peculiarities offer much to think about and may enrich practice as well, or even the way we understand ourselves in practice. Experiments on the sense of place from a holistic perspective, for instance, make a significant contribution to improve educational programmes of outdoor adventure (Leather and Nicholls 2016).

Arguably, the relationship we establish with space, with its unique contributions to us as humans, plays a crucial role in adventure sports. It is difficult to be indifferent to the river, the mountain, the rocks and so on because of the aesthetic experiences they may offer (Howe 2012) but also, and particularly, because of the challenges they pose. These provoke reflection on the notions of experience and spatiality. Even though experience is unique to each person, most fieldwork highlights how different adventure sports offer a particular kind of seduction, by invitation from the activity itself. To capture this, we cite from adventure fieldwork narratives. To this end, adventurers were invited to describe their experience, focusing especially on the relationship with the environment and their perception of space during the activity. These reports do not intend to focus on personal point of views but rather present the opportunity to discuss in depth some important elements such as risk and instability. Merleau-Ponty (2002) states that phenomenology is the study of the essences, but also puts essences back into existence. We try to focus on the experience, not as a kind of subjectivism but looking for the conditions of every human to experience something (Martinkova and Parry 2011). 'In phenomenology, one strives to pass precisely from the singular, self-evident view to a more generally valid meaning, independent of our particular situation' (Halák, Jirásek, Nesti 2014, 119). So, the case of adventure sports here is not taken as an exclusive condition for such study, but as an opportunity to address some challenging issues. Accordingly, we will explore some possibilities about how we experience space. Mainly, we consider the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (2002) on corporeality, and Bachelard (1971, 1994) on the role of the imagination.

## Risk and instability

In many articles, adventure sports athletes are described as being focused on the pursuit of risk. Although adventurers talk about the risk involved in their activities, safety is also a priority. In fact, Breivik (2007) reminds us that humans are 'often supposed to be "risk avoiding" and "safety seeking"' (11). Indeed, technology has vastly improved in this area concerning safety. Lyng (1990) points out a paradox in the agreement on the value of safety and the seeking for risky activities in modern society. He introduces the concept of edgework as a

classifying category for voluntary risk taking, considering a sociological perspective. According to him, high-risk sports place the question on the boundaries between order and disorder. The expression 'edgework' has been widely used by researchers and this notion provides a wider understanding of the presence of risk and instability in human life.

Even if risk is inseparable from many adventure sports, risking death or serious injury are not the main elements that characterize these activities. Rather, for adventurers it is very important to be able to explore new possibilities anew. In this case, the risk will always allow surprising elements into the sport, which will usually be addressed by spontaneous movements. Then, risk and instability are acceptable and sometimes desirable to perform an activity. After all, 'Risk is one of the critical components that makes adventure programming popular and successful ... balancing risk and safety is a central paradox for outdoor leaders' (Priest and Gass 1997, 122). The interaction with the environment that adventure sports may require justifies the presence of a certain amount of risk. Thus, we take into consideration that taking risks is already an indication that adventurers take a different stance from athletes of regular sports. It means they are more likely to focus their attention on the environment and be open to surprises.

Risk is a significant element, especially because of the possibilities of challenge and success that it offers. Moreover, it is relevant that the adventurer perceives the risk as a real one and not as a simulated situation. As Ilundáin-Agurruza, Graça and Jáuregui-Olaiz (2012, 115) write about sailing, 'sailors' lives are enhanced precisely because they are willing to face risks in their quest to refine skills that expand the richness of their experiences, be they fun, beautiful, sublime, or scary'. Participants seem to realize that their practice is not about enacting some previous knowledge in an established practice, but mainly about exploring corporeal possibilities in the ongoing experience. The element of risk requires attention and openness to unexpected provocations and possibilities from the environment. In interviews with adventure sport participants we found that this understanding is presented in many reports about this kind of practice:

First of all, because I have this feeling that this activity depends more on my ability of judgment... For me, this is the point of high-risk sports... I can explore my possibilities and the possibilities that come from the environment. (Paragliding report)

In this case, achievements depend on perceiving and engaging the environment: on one's judgement of risks, possibilities and skills. 'When we move swiftly through nature we inject our own energy into the activity and in so doing develop a sense of ownership for the experience that we can achieve in no other way' (Atherton 2007, 47). The adventurers have the feeling of being protagonists of their activity.

Most conventional sports activities usually take place in standardized and controlled environments. Although the sense of place is very important for any performance, in standardized environments the athlete does not play with the place but on or in it. We can recognize different relationships with the environment when we compare, on the one hand athletes in swimming pools specially built to prevent waves and, on the other hand, the adventurers who are looking for instability and obstacles in their sports environment such as open water swimmers. In surfing, for instance, the environment changes from moment to moment, and to follow the behaviour of the ocean and the wind is considered part of the sport's demands. How can we extend our corporeality to the surrounding world in a way that indicates a kind of intuitive dialogue between the environment and our own body? Regarding the play with risk and instability, it is not always that the adventurer has time and

condition to think carefully about the best possibility before taking an action. How can adventurers immediately realize possible paths? It is a kind of understanding that happens previous to concepts; it must be lived. It is more about a corporeal wisdom that needs to be elaborated every moment anew, considering the changes that the body faces. Athletes accept challenges: 'there is always some challenge, things you think you already know how to do but suddenly the wind changes, or a different wave appears ... and you need to learn everything again.... You need to start again' (Windsurfing report). This new learning needs a complex background to work smoothly on the waves.

Ilundaín-Agurruza (2014) argues that skilful striving requires spontaneous and intuitive responses, which do not rely on representational cognitive processes at the moment of action, neither solely it is the result of 'black box' automatized and unconscious processes. He develops a comprehensive understanding of skilful striving as an ethos of personal growth based on a holistic enactive *bodymind* thesis: 'we know how to act suitably and adapt to the situation with the engagement of our *bodymind*' (Ilundaín-Agurruza 2014, 506). This proposal emphasizes the value of the 'before and after' period involving performance considering the notion of reflective intuition: 'one where understanding and judgment are instantaneous, surely, but informed by previous deliberations and training and subsequent reflection on the performance.' (Ilundaín-Agurruza 2014, 519). Such a view offers a remarkable contribution in terms of exploring the conditions of skilful performance with an acknowledgement of spontaneity and intuition.

Even if the adventurer already had some experience or knowledge about the movement or the geography, the current experience is always different. In the present, a new challenge may need digging in the past in order to deal with an anticipated future. However, despite previous experience it is always necessary to reconstruct the movement anew, considering all the lived relationships it upholds: 'as actually experienced, the movement is a different movement because it creates a different qualitative dynamic' (Sheets-Johnstone 2009, 366). It is necessary to be creative. Atherton (2007) points out that the demands from outdoor kinesthetic experience require an expansion of our 'knowledge repertoire with special attention to knowledge that comes to us through the body, so-called body wisdom' (48).

The acknowledgement of such body wisdom is supported by a phenomenological view of the lived-body, which rejects a dualistic body–mind notion. Merleau-Ponty (2002) highlights that it is with the body that we live in the world. To know a particular object is to consider what we see from many angles and in relation to any environment. Perception does not belong to the perceiving subject or the object; it is a spontaneous development in relation to the world (Merleau-Ponty 1974). Hence, perception is not an innate ability but instead an acquired one.

The gaze gets more or less from things according to the way in which it questions them, ranges over or dwells on them. To learn to see colours it is to acquire a certain style of seeing, a new use of one's own body: it is to enrich and recast the body image. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 177)

Therefore, we learn a way of inhabiting space by living in the world. How does the surfer know how to choose the best wave or the right moment to stand up or to perform some special movement? It is a very complex situation: the speed and shape of the wave, the surfboard, the weight of the surfer, and the distance from the beach, the obstacles and so on. However, we do not face challenges as a sum of elements. We inhabit space and time as an occasion for action and we learn how to interact with the environment and nurture the body's potential.

These practices provide the occasion for an interaction with the environment when we are more open to facing possible challenges in a different way. Instability emphasizes, in this way, the possibility of a kind of dialogue with the environment, carried out in an interactive game. The athlete has an idea about how to interact with the environment, but also, nature presents possible and unpredictable paths to build up new interactions.

This emphasis on a dialogical posture agrees with the idea of harmony, which is often echoed in contemporary reports from nature sports. Harmonizing with the environment requires us to properly respond to it. Importantly, there is not just *one* right reaction to the changes presented in practice. The good answers can be elaborated by finding harmony between athletes' movements and their challenges from the particular environments of their sports. Krein (2007) claims that one of main sources of attraction lies in the opportunity to play with remarkable environmental partners such as mountains, waves and forests. In this sense, adventurers recognize the power of nature as a real other. The other is not a thing or someone else; it is neither the in-itself nor the for-itself (Merleau-Ponty 1974). The other is the difference, which is not necessarily another athlete or the elements of nature but perhaps a question or a provocation which requires our expressive condition. Hence, the environment is not an opponent as usually understood in conventional sports – as someone or something to overthrow. The environment is not playing games, but nature's elements make playing possible. The challenges we face guide us to new possibilities of being ourselves. This possibility announces our unfinished condition, our ability for learning and changing when faced with a dialogical condition (Zimmermann and Morgan 2011).

Even so, it is important to mention that risk and instability, more than objective facts of adventure sports, play a role in an intimate dimension (Bachelard 1971). According to Atherton (2007) it is a paradox that 'we may come to learn more about the self' (53) when absorbed by the demands from the environment. By doing so, the adventurer acquires not only more abilities but also different perspectives. 'The familiar can grow tyrannical when we cease to challenge our ways of thinking, grow complacent with the status quo, and fear change as a threat' (Atherton 2007, 44). Risk and instability challenge us to look at the world in many different ways and that can thus be a contribution to the way we act, as one situation opens a horizon of possibilities. In this respect, Russell (2005) argues that dangerous sports also represent an opportunity for self-affirmation. According to him facing an immediate risk offers the challenge of meeting and extending the boundaries of our existence.

When Mauss (1974) talks about 'body techniques', he points out the relationship between biology and society – that is, the culture inscribed in our corporeality. However, despite the intertwining of culture and human nature, there is something more that allows the human body a new configuration that cannot be sustained by only biological facts and past experience. Our movement indicates a special way of being communicative, and our gesture both unifies possibilities and defines our position as a being in relation to the world. In this sense, Dougherty (2007) argues in favour of authenticity in engagement with wilder places, with its relative lack of a mind/environment dualism.

Moreover, in the case of activities in nature, although there is one goal – to perform certain manoeuvres, for example – most of the time, ends and means are blended. This proposition aligns with Ilundáin-Agurruza's proposal on skilful striving regarding a non-instrumental interest in the activity: 'we set goals and embrace them because they give us a reason to do what we enjoy' (2014, 529).

Still drawing on the example of surfing, we have seen that surfers use more than manoeuvres; surfers also develop and perform personal gestures or signature moves; which give an aesthetic sense to the way in which they perform their actions. It is not enough to do an action properly, with timing and so on. Surfers play their role in exploring the possibilities of their performance – whether that is different, innovative, beautiful or amazing. Such an aesthetical dimension of human movement plays a very important role in adventure sports, considering the focus on the engagement with the environment. Risk and instability offers a chance for the adventurers to explore their relationship with the surroundings, equipment and partners. All of these factors count in carrying out the movement which, although repeated, are never the same. This leads us to explore the notion of experience.

## Experience

The word experience is related to our relationship with the world and with ourselves. However, the understanding of how it happens and its relationship with learning and knowledge changes over different traditions in science and philosophy. The different meanings of this word are present also in our daily life expressions, but in general 'experience' may be understood in two ways: 'First, it may be taken to mean some event that affects or involves a person. The second is some knowledge, skill, wisdom gained through practice in some activity' (Jirásek 2007, 140).

Put into a phenomenological context, experience is not a concept or a specific behaviour but rather a way of interacting with world. An experience does not necessarily correspond to some knowledge, but it can arouse or bear it. 'To be a consciousness or rather *to be an experience* is to hold inner communication with the world, the body and other people, to be with them instead of being beside them' (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 111). In Merleau-Ponty's view, experience is what initiates us to what we are not; it is an 'exercise that has not yet been submitted to the subject object separation, it is promiscuity of things, bodies, words, indiscernible active passive, inhaling and exhaling or breathing of Being' (Chauí 2002, 138, authors' translation). This view highlights the strong connection that a lived body establishes with the world.

Experience, in this case, is embodied and indicates the initiation of a being on the possibility of knowing. So, the wisdom provided by our body in movement is not limited to its representation. Indeed, adventurers seem to have difficulty in describing their experience. Reports always start with suspension: 'Now you got me.... It is difficult to speak about it because it is something so ... interactive.... To describe it to you is kind of hard, I think; I cannot tell you' (Trekking report). Or they start with an assumption of a lack of words: 'there is nothing to say because it is too different. I don't know. You need to be there to understand' (Surf report).

Initial hesitation is common in many descriptions, and it does not mean that the question is incomprehensible; nor does it indicate that adventurers do not know what the activity is about. This difficulty in finding words probably indicates that there are not enough good words to describe the experience of being in it.

We easily notice that before language we exercise a kind of primitive apprehension of the world that demonstrates our pre-existence to language. According to Merleau-Ponty (2002) 'The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have

no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible' (XVIII). So, our experience is not submissive to the discourse we can elaborate about it.

In fact, Sheets-Johnstone (2009) points out that everyday language is inadequate to deal with dynamic happenings and experience: 'the idea that language names things and that its function is to name things gives precedence to stable items in the world, not to dynamic events experienced in a directly felt sense by sentient living bodies' (363). She pays attention to the challenge of 'linguaging' experience and the possible failure of describing human movement, as it was an object. Ilundáin-Agurruza (2014) also emphasizes the challenge of developing a descriptive vocabulary that is qualitatively true: 'Poetry and narrative – metaphorical coinage and its analysis – can help articulate matters in ways agreeable to open minded phenomenologists and scientists' (555).

The difficulty of developing a satisfying narrative about adventure sports indicates the struggle to nominate the complexity and the dynamism of human experience. This difficulty may rest on trying to use words as a possible translation for experience. However, experience requires expressivity, so it requires an expressive use of language as well. According to Merleau-Ponty's conception of language (1964, 2002) it is important to consider the word in the texture of the linguistic gesture. In this view, language is not only an envelope of thought or an instrument for naming things. Instead, it is a gesture and may retain tracks of its origin in an expressive experience. Talking about climbing is not the same as effectively moving towards rocks and mountains. But 'to talk about doing something' resembles 'doing something' because they are both an action and may be both expressive. So, we cannot simply translate a meaningful experience of human movement without considering its life and movement. We need to recreate an expressive condition by the creative use of language.

Even a sophisticated description will not be sufficient, but it will try to introduce the interlocutor in such experience. So that is why many reports resort to an artistic or emotional style. In other words, expressive narratives are the best ones in order to approximate the interlocutor to the experience that adventure sports may evoke:

If the surfer inhabits the sea as a poet, it is because the world of wave is so close and so far away for him. Always looking for the exceptional wave, magic, or mythical, his practice is not anchored in any recipe or package leaflet. He surfs in a world that makes him unique in a multiplicity that nourishes his experiment. (Lins 2008, 74, authors' translation)

That same hesitation for expressing the experience appears when we ask, 'How does it feel?' 'It is impossible to describe, you need to go there and see.... I would say that it is even a crime trying to describe this experience because it is very peculiar, very different' (Windsurf report).

Interviewees want to convince the speaker to undergo the same experience in order to understand what they are talking about. If, on the one hand, it means a lack of words, on the other hand it also performs a kind of seduction. Experiencing is to accept an invitation – to something great that you can only know by doing. Images or expressive narratives may awaken desire, but the activity has its own seduction that happens only in practice: the moment when it drags you into the novelty, the challenge and the pleasure. Some interviewees make reference to 'another world', about feeling like an 'alien' or a 'visitor'. To discover the world is to incorporate it, integrate it into the body. According to Jirásek (2007, 146), 'we can see the entrance into other possible worlds by experience, moreover, when we consider other fields of intense experience'.



Adventure sports may help us to recognize the intersubjective character and the versatility of being in relation to the world. One can be immersed in the activity, 'more integrated', with total focus on the activity. Inversely, it can also be a moment to be elsewhere: 'taking time to think about life', 'daydreaming'. Here, the idea of integrating with the world appears again as a kind of dialogical relationship. Experience, in this sense, demands some kind of permission to let it go. The athlete assumes a dialogical condition: he allows that the present challenge requires his past for a new configuration instead. So, the subject of experience is the one who exposes itself in order for something to happen or not:

the subject of experience defines itself not by its activity, but by its passiveness, by its receptiveness, by its availability, its openness. It is, however, a passiveness which precedes the opposition between active and passive, of a passiveness made of passion, of surrender, of patience, of attention, as a primal receptivity, as a fundamental availability, as an essential openness. (Bondía 2002, 24, authors' translation)

Experiencing is about taking risks but also about encounters and learning. In order to have an experience, it is necessary to venture into the unknown and the uncertain. In order to become an expert, it is necessary to risk and face the challenges of the new (Bondía 2002; Tuan 2001). These elements remind us of the notion of adventure. The word adventure derives from the Latin *adventurus*, which means 'about to happen', and from *advenire*, which means 'to arrive' (Hornby 2005). In order to be an adventurer, what is necessary is more than being in a proper place and having proper equipment. It is necessary that the adventurer be someone who expects the unexpected, to be someone who 'plays the game' and is open to new possibilities. Regarding the extreme, Ilundáin-Agurruza (2007) refers to Dewey's view of 'an experience' which relates to the idea that some experiences mark a before and an after because they are adventure-like and change how we see life. This notion seems to help to understand the position of risk and surprise in adventurer's life and the difficulties adventures have in describing such experience.

Adventure sports may help us think about experience not because of the extraordinary and exotic we can find in it, but especially because they highlight a quest built up from our relationship to the world and how it may change the way we see it. From these reflections, we do not intend to draw a linear idea of cause and effect by linking adventure and experience. We experience by experiencing ourselves facing the world, and this destroys a supposed duality of being. We learn from a body open to a horizon of possibilities. It is a position that indicates an embodied intelligence.

This notion of experience may help to investigate spatiality, considering the peculiarities of adventure sports and the previous idea of risk and stability. Such activities bring to the foreground our relationship with the world when we consider the specific way in which the environment participates in the development of human potential.

## Spatiality

The idea of movement as the trajectory of a body between a starting point and an endpoint – which can be represented by a two-dimensional graph – is present in many references to human movement. Data about position, distance covered and time spent by athletes in different sports are available in many types of analyses. However, this information does not say everything about human movement, and it says even less about spatiality and the way in which we inhabit space. Human movement cannot be completely reduced to dots, because we are a lived body with a

horizon of past and future. Any given representation is just one possible representation of something that we may experience in a very different way. If we wish to consider human movement, we cannot base our analysis only on data from an anonymous observer regarding a displacement of an object in space. 'To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world, as we have seen; our body is not primarily in space: it is of it' (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 171).

This lived space is invested with our projects; we incorporate it and assign meanings to it. Schrag (1988) refers to a 'human space'; Buytendijk (1977) mentions a 'living space' and Merleau-Ponty (2002) addresses an 'oriented space'. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between spatiality of position and spatiality of situation. The first one refers to the abstract space, mathematics, and is symmetrically divided. The second one is the lived space, guided by the experience of the body: 'far from my body's being for me no more than a fragment of space, there would be no space at all for me if I had no body' (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 117). It is a spatiality that actively integrates human and space. This helps to understand, for example, how we interact and harmonize with nature in adventure sports. As we have seen in experience and perception, it is about a dialogue with nature and its elements, more than an act of domination or competition. It is about responding more than guiding. Moreover, it is an important idea to promote – adventure sports offer us, in this way, a possibility to be less omnipotent as humans.

Therefore, we understand space with our own body, and that is why wisdom is a better word than knowledge to describe the spontaneous way in which our movements are guided and elaborated. Bachelard (1994) points out that in intense contact with nature, or in an intimate contact, people feel good about themselves. The environment does not exist only as a space for displacement, but as part of the movement itself.

By considering the body in movement, we can see better how it inhabits space (and, moreover, time) because movement is not limited to submitting passively to space and time, it actively assumes them, it takes them up in their basic significance which is obscured in the commonplaceness of established situations. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 117)

We experience the world through the interaction and creation that it requires from us. In the everyday humdrum of urban spaces, we usually see repetitive geometric forms and facilitators that require little creation. Human places in general are built up with some utility, intentions and certain expectations of behaviour. Our cities' streets and sidewalks are just corridors, places of passage and not for coexistence, unlike many other places with a different purpose, such as the 'arcades' in Paris as described by Benjamin (2002) in his analysis about the project of modernity. Interestingly, adventure activities reinvent spaces in the cities through playful movement. Parkour, skate, free running tend to look at the sites in very different and innovative ways. Practitioners see a designed city as a universe of challenges and different possibilities for movement. Frequently they are considered as outsiders for their insistence in inhabiting spaces in a way that it is not the one planned.

More natural environments, as they are not built for any purpose, already provoke us with their obstacles and organic elements. Moreover, there are neither strict nor expected movements or behaviours in them. Breivik (2011) chooses three sports with different environmental characteristics to explore the role that environment plays in risk activities: climbing, skydiving and white water kayaking. Regarding aspects of spatiality, this author points out a contrast between extremes: on the one hand, there is the small 'world' with its details close to the body, as one deal with immediate challenges and possibilities. On the other hand, there is the vast landscape around, distant mountains, the sky and the horizon. Despite

peculiarities of each sport, Breivik's phenomenological analysis (2011) highlights the strong interaction with the environment in risk sports considering the specific interaction between the person, activity and arena. Adventure sports in natural environments better show us a space that is being elaborated by a dialogical relationship and not a space that needs to be only covered or surpassed. It brings together the space of waiting, expectation, listening, wavy and winding movements, daydreaming and poetic imagination. Bachelard, in his phenomenology of images, collaborating with Merleau-Ponty, reinforces that

Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination. Particularly, it nearly always exercises an attraction. (Bachelard 1994, XXXVI)

This attraction is also an invitation. Seduction comes along with contemplation; where, against the beauty and the immensity of nature, peace can be established in antithesis of a troubled world. The route and the path are dynamic objects, says Bachelard (1994). Distances, travel, journey and crossing are symbols of active and varied life 'breathing with muscles of effort'. The nearby, the far way, the flat and the abrupt are all indications of space in relation to corporeal potencies. Contributing to this reflection, philosophers of geography bring the idea of a distinction between the concepts of place and space. According to Tuan (2001) 'what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know better and endow with value' (6). The value is placed in space as we interact with it. Exploring something makes it more familiar. And, being familiar with something means knowing how to interact with. Adventurers refer to locations where they perform as places in which they feel 'at home': 'When I am out there, I feel at home', or something to that effect, is frequently repeated as they talk about their practice. 'If the surfer loves so much the risk it is because in the sea, calm or rough, he feels at home, deterritorialized, but at home' (Lins 2008, 73, authors' translation). Space, in adventure sports would refer to the immensity, the challenge or the unknowing. Mountains, rivers, caves, forests and the sea can become more familiar in the sense of acquiring some value when we experience them with our body. Adventure brings with it a movement between inside and outside. The close is the personal, the far is the horizon; it is how far one can or cannot go. The adventure exposes the dangers of crossing, of a trek to far distances and to unknown spaces. Adventures usually describe their relationship with space referring to poetic images and reinforcing an intimate dimension. Space in adventure sports seems to refer more to an aspiration, putting men in 'meditations before the more imposing spectacles of nature' (Bachelard 1994, xxxix). The activity enables the experience of 'nature's most amazing facets' (Ilundáin-Agurruza, Graça and Jáuregui-Olaiz 2012, 111). Space is usually described as vastness, the horizon as freedom, the view as a prize. The sky, the sea and the mountains, after hard work, bring silence, and with it, the sensation of the vast, the colossal, the deep, the unlimited. Ilundáin-Agurruza (2007, 156) argues in favour of the sublime to better understand the engagement in dangerous activities: 'We experience the sublime when fear takes over as an "intellectualized" response from the standpoint of our fragility'. This reflexion draws attention to the unpleasant feeling of our vulnerability facing the size of nature, and on the other hand, the pleasure of understanding our possibilities respecting the forces of nature.

It is curious that nature in general is full of noise, birds, insects, wind, and even in the deep ocean, one could describe it as a place full of sound, but silence is another common word used by adventures. Maybe it is a bit about the silence of knowledge (Zimmermann and Morgan 2016). Bachelard localizes spatial immensity in this intimate dimension, and that is

where silence is. Peace, then, has a body (Bachelard 1994). 'I forget all my problems,' says one adventurer; 'I came back to myself,' says another.

Talking about the immensity a horizon can hold is to talk about subjective experiences. 'When the dreamer really experiences the word immense, he sees himself liberated from his cares and thoughts, even from his dreams. He is no longer shut up in his weight, the prisoner of his own being' (Bachelard 1994, 195). Therefore, immensity in spatiality as lived in adventure sports 'is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests, but which starts again when we are alone' (Bachelard 1994, 184). When one faces immensity, one turns it into intimacy because the reverie is always particular. It is not possible to reach the immense unless it is for the intimate experiences of each one, as the immensity is in us. Immensity is not connected to any object, says Bachelard, so there is more to express beyond descriptions of landscapes. 'The exterior spectacle helps intimate grandeur unfold' (Bachelard 1994, 192). Bachelard invokes the poet Rainer Marie Rilke, one of the most significant poets in the German language who finds in the landscape a frequent source of inspiration: 'the plain is the feeling by which we grow...; everything in it is significant for us: the great circle of the horizon and the few things simply and importantly in front of the sky' (Rilke 1978). Space is explored by many poets because of its metaphysical character; in addition, many adventurers near poetic language when trying to express their experiences: '... it looks like I'm flying ... it is a completely different place, I feel frightened and respectful but astonished as well ...' (*Diving report*). It turns out that contemplation is a great human value (Bachelard 1994). It promotes an intense and intimate contact with nature, and the word here seems to be completeness. One adventurer says, 'I feel integrated with the environment and with myself... I feel complete' (*Canoeing report*).

Spatiality, says Bachelard (1994), indicates a 'phenomenology of extension, of expansion, of ecstasy'. Ecstasy is another word often used by adventurers in the attempt to describe the practice: 'It is a sensation of ecstasy ...' (*Surf report*). It means rapture, a moment of intimacy, enchantment. An intimate moment is one where we become more vulnerable and exposed to the 'caress and stimulus from a new experience' (Tuan 2001, 152). The word ecstasy, from Greek *ekstasis*, means a displacement, a state of being beside one's self and it may refer to exaltation or rapture as well (Harper 2016). This notion reminds the discussion of spatiality and dialogue. However, the term ecstasy was also present in many religious movements to indicate the moment when an intellectual search for God is replaced by a feeling of communion with him. It is not a vision, but a way of seeing. It is an overwhelming feeling of great happiness or joyful excitement, but it is originally also a state that involves an experience of mystic self-transcendence (Abbagnano 2007). In this sense, spatiality in adventure sports shares this possibility of being as well an extension of the corporeality and an expansion of being.

### Concluding remarks

Considering the elements of risk and instability, we recognize that in adventure sports, our conceptual references are not enough to handle many situations. 'Hearing' and 'seeing' with all of our body is necessary. We constantly interact with organic elements from the environment, and we need to respect other rhythms, from which we learn a different posture; a posture that may be less omnipresent and more dialogical, more respectful, not only with the elements of nature but with life in general. The common feeling among adventurers

seems to emphasize a posture that exercises less desire of control, more acceptance of improbabilities in different situations, and the expertise to handle what was not previously planned for. We have seen that risk is not inherent to adventure sports but is instead acceptable to some extent, and it is rarely synonymous with playing with death. But its presence requires adventurers to take a different stance: to be open to the instability of the environment. We may enrich body potentiality by the willingness to engage in a dialogical situation with the elements of nature. This experience calls attention to the ways in which we perceive the world.

Adventurers summarize their experiences by using metaphors, interjections, one-world utterances: breath-taking, awesome, extreme, exciting, amazing, adrenaline. All of these indicate a corporeal engagement that is better experienced than explained. In this way, poetic inference is used to explain what happens to us, what is lived in the body, with the body: excitement, sensation seeking, interaction, surprises, engagement, challenge, seduction, pleasure and freedom. Adventurers use these expressions as invitations to practice.

We have seen that space is not only a place for displacement; it is also part of the existence and the movement. Spatiality actively integrates human and space, and space can become more familiar in the sense of acquiring some value when we experience it with our body. To adventure is to visit this place where the unknown is a possibility and knowledge is a becoming.

Risk, instability and experience in adventure sports lead one to this intimate, analytical and reflective dimension, which requires full concentration and precaution. Space cannot be only the outside or the exterior, as it is lived, imagined and remembered within. The contemplation that spatiality can promote integrates active and reflective life, diluting a supposed duality of being.

Dealing with special features of adventure sports announces our unfinished condition, our ability for learning by a dialogical conjuncture. More than showing only an alternative range of corporeal techniques, adventure sports better point out a way of interrogating and looking at the world: the way we live in space and time.

## Note

1. For the purposes of this article, our emphasis is on the outdoor and risky activities, and we may refer to them mainly as adventure sports. However, extensive literature is available on discussing adequate terminologies for a great variety of new sportive practices. These sports are in constant flux, and we do not intend to go deeper regarding categorization.

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