123 - ADVENTURE SPORTS: AN OPTION OF LEISURE AND DEVELOPMENT FOR THE CITY OF AREIA - PB

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Theoretical Framework

We can assure that the search for development has been constant in human history. The human being has always looked for improvements for his habitat, so that he could reach his achievements, no matter whether they are individual or group ones. The truth is that in this search for improvements, human beings not always were able to make these improvements.

According to Cardoso (2002, p.29) economic growth, just like it happens nowadays, affects negatively the environment and, due to this fact, it is necessary to rethink the development purposes and how things are done to achieve them. Beyond the environment, we believe that the current development model has been causing negative consequences on the society quality of life. As a result of this, it is necessary to understand better what development really is.

The term 'developing', according to the dictionary, means 'to take off the sheath, find what was there; to get better, to enhance, to advance', which means that it can be understood as a reality discovering process, raising information about what is real, potentialities and difficulties, and then take further actions which will result in progress and improvements to what it is intended to develop.

Boisier (1996) gives his contribution to this topic when he says that to build a region socially means to empower its ability of self-organization, transforming a lifeless society, targeted by industries interests, with little perception of its territorial identity and, finally, passive, into another one, organized, cohesive, aware of its society-region identity, able to become subject of its own development.

In order to do so, it is necessary to make a big cultural change, and intense and effective educational process, prioritizing society advantages instead of individual ones, not avoiding the minor groups, saving the local and regional (MÜLLER, 2002).

In this context of a major development, sustainable, which is positioned beyond the economic growth, and we take into account the relation between leisure and regional development, so, according to Müller (2002) there is no way to have a development if the human dimension of resting, having fun and personal and social development, which are leisure responsibilities, does not achieve each one of the social actors.

We want to make it clear that we think of leisure, agreeing with Marcellino (2002), as culture, understood in its broadest sense, experienced in the available time, with its peculiarities, while public policies, which cannot be treated separately from other social issues. According to Müller (2002), mentioning Dumazedier (1980) and Camargo (1986), leisure can be classified into six cultural subjects; they are: social, touristic, artistic, physical-sporty, intellectual and manual.

It can be said that one of the leisure activities which has been increasing the most lately is the adventure sport. The word adventure comes from the Latin 'adventura', which means 'what is coming', with the meaning of unknown, unpredictable. So, it can be reported that the adventure sports are getting close to the feeling of looking for something which cannot be touched at first, what is really common among people who practice these physical activities in nature (PEREIRA and ARMBRUST, 2010).

According to Pereira et al (2004), physical activities in nature have had an increase in number of participants of all age groups practicing them due to many reasons. The same author mentions that adults have joined these activities to run away from regular basis and fight against the stress; young people have the intention to practice activities because it enables them to release adrenaline; and children want to avoid the monotonous world and experiment bigger spaces. Besides these groups, we could mention the elderly whose main purpose is the search for better life quality and longer lives.

Bruhns (2003) says that this search for emotions can represent a possibility of a reapproach to the states of surprise, fear and loathing incorporated in a natural environment (due to the contact with the flora, fauna, range, height, water and others) whose access was limited. Besides, it is also mentioned the reapproach with the culture and history of a specific city or small region when combined with historical landmarks and monuments, followed by a great orientation.

This increase of adventure sports resulted in an increase of tourists, mainly in natural environments. This breakthrough in tourism allows economists to raise the development taxes in different regions. In this context, tourism is seen as an activity which can contribute to the economy as well. The more the number of participants, more necessities come up: hotels, restaurants, etc., creating an spiral of goods and services, requiring more manpower (SOUZA, 2000).

1.2. Problem and reason

Based on what has been exposed, we should pay close attention to the city of Areia – PB, located 130 km from the capital of Paraiba, which has been mentioned, constantly, as a city with great potential to host the practice of adventure sports. This is a consequence of the large amount of Mata Atlantica around it, its terrain and the typical weather of the micro-regions in Paraiba's Marsh, occurrence of waterfalls, dams, etc.

Therefore, we came up with the following guiding questions for this study: what are the potentialities and difficulties for the practice of adventure sports in the city of Areia – PB? Has this kind of sport been presented as a leisure option for those who live in this area and/or contributed to local development?

We believe that this study we will enable us to give a contribution to the academic debate about the relation between adventure sports and local development and leisure. In addition, it will provide the city of Areia with more knowledge about its potentialities, possibilities and difficulties in providing leisure, which could be used as basis to improve the access to such activities.

1.3. Goals

In broad terms, we intend to analyze the potentialities and difficulties of adventure sports in the city of Areia – PB as a chance for local development and leisure. In specific terms, we aim at:

- Getting to know and analyzing the attractive and suitable environments for the practice of adventure sports in the city of Areia;
- Analyzing the local managers' perceptions of the relation between leisure, adventure sports and development;
- Verifying the local guides perceptions of this profession;
- Verifying the difficulties in implementing adventure sports in this city.

2. METHODS

2.1. Characterization, population and sample

In order to achieve the goals established, we chose to use in this qualitative research an investigation method. We believe that, in agreement with Silva (1996), from the analysis of people's speech, observing their records and behavior, it is possible to get to know human beings better and understand how the evolution of their world definition occurs.

This study was developed in the city of Areia – PB, as part of the extension activities of the project: Caminhos de Areia – uma proposta de desenvolvimento sócio-ambiental e promoção da atividade física por meio de esportes de aventura e lazer (PROBEX/UFPB – 2010). The sample was selected by uniqueness, convenience and availability; and composed of municipal secretaries and local tourism guides.

To take part in the municipal secretaries group, it was necessary to be the Secretary or Deputy Secretary (selected by availability) of Areia's municipal government in the current administration, totaling 08 managers. When it comes to the local tourism guides, it was required that they were working and/or had finished the training course in the field this year (2010), totaling 12 people.

2.2. Procedures

The first step taken was to raise the potentialities for the practice of adventure sports in Areia. To do so it was looked for information about people and references that could somehow give a contribution to this among the local guides and the prefecture.

Then, guiding questions were formulated to guide the interviews. Before asking the questions, it was presented a Statement of Informed Consent and the questioning would only begin after the acceptance of it by the interviewee.

The questions aimed at measuring, among the managers, their knowledge about what leisure and adventure sports are; their comprehension of the relation between local development and leisure; how much they know about this city; difficulties faced in the implementation of this kind of sport as an option of leisure. Among the guides, the main goal was to verify the main difficulties encountered in the office held.

Before processing and analyzing the data, the interviews were registered in the format of notes to highlight the most relevant parts, establishing the units of meaning. The similarities and differences found were organized into structural categories, to make the analyses possible. Based on this, it was possible to establish the results, revealing subjects individual and concordant propositions and making the phenomenon questioned clear.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first contacts made in this research were with the tourism guides and with the tourism municipal secretary. The dialogues with these people were intended to start listing the city potentialities for the practice of adventure sports. After the first moment, the following orientations were given to us:

- Consult Areia's tour (2008/2009);
- Consult the action plans for the historic (2010 – 2013);
- Consult the monograph entitled “Meio ambiente e esportes de aventura: uma perspectiva profissionalizante para o ecoturismo em Areia - PB”;
- Go through the tracks;

When following these orientations together with other data, we could verify that Areia is located in the micro-region of Paraiba's marsh with surface area of 269 km2 according to IBGE (2004). Starting at the base where it is found the Piemonte do Planalto da Borborema, the area includes the foothills and another area over the top of the Planalto. Inserted in the Humid Eastern Sector and in the State Sub-humid, it shows a really diversified geomorphology in its different positions, situated in a very rough terrain with intense curves, whose modeled is found in a geological group with crystalline structural base.

According to Assis (2008), out of the regions studied in the field research, the ones which seem to be more appropriate for practicing adventure sports are located in rural environments in Areia. Rich natural beauties, such as the fauna and flora, waterfalls, stone walls, natural pools, trails, native forests (mainly represented by the Parque Estadual Mata do Pau Ferro), sugarcanes, dams and mills and a gastronomic and architectural heritage are some of the attractions which can be seen and visited there. Besides, it was found a mill which was almost totally emerged by the creation of a dam, where only the top of the chimney could be seen from outside.

We could notice that people have been practicing trekking, Mountain Bike, Downhill, horseback riding, 4x4 vehicles rides, Motocross, and we should call attention to the fact that trekking is becoming more and more popular, as guides and local guides mentioned. Besides these activities, other ones could be equally stimulated, such as climbing, rappelling, going to waterfalls, contemplative diving, canoeing, tree climbing and zip line.



Picture – Overview of Areia (left); Serra Grande Waterfall (middle); Barragem Vaca Brava e Mata do Pau Ferro (right). Source: Prefeitura Municipal de Areia (left and right); Assis (2008) (middle).

In addition to the nature beauties and going back to the adventure tourism, we can add to the potentialities of this city the tipping of the combination of the local history, urban and landscapes by IPHAN (Institute of the National Artistic and Historic Heritage), as well as the fact of being close to João Pessoa - PB (130 km), Campina Grande - PB (40 km), Recife – PE (198 km) e Natal (199 km); all cities with airports. These attractions make adventure people feel like going to Areia, which increases local tourism.

After listing the local potentialities for the practice of adventure sports, our purpose was to verify if this sport was seen as an option of leisure for this city and the reasons why it was not. To do so, we analyzed what the municipal secretaries and local guides said. Out of 08 secretaries, we could not reach two of them, totaling 06 people; out of the 12 guides, 02 are part of this study and 01 decided not to answer, totaling 09 participants in the sample.

The first difficulty we noticed came up when we asked the guides what sports and sectors they worked with. We verified that 55,56% (n=5) of the guides have never been a guide; 22,22% (n=2) of them have guided but only in urban trails, and they have never worked with adventure activities; and only 22,22% (n=2) have worked with adventure activities. The 02 who are working now only lead and guide the trekking practice, and one of them only uses the trails in the Reserva florestal da Mata do Pau Ferro. We found out that some trails, such as “Serra Grande”, which is 18 km long, that goes to the top of the hill, going past waterfalls, mills, rivers streams (by the way, this is where the name of the city came from), has got no local guide.

When we asked those who have never worked in the field the reason why they had never done so, some of them said it was due to the lack of opportunities and motivation (60%); some mentioned they did not feel ready to work (40%), but all of them pointed out that they would like to. Among those who are working only in urban trails, when asked about why they do not do nature trails, one did not say anything and the other mentioned he does not feel ready to. In other kind of sports practices in Areia, there were not found any instructors.

The subject exposed above shows that there is a lack of human resource to work with instructing and guiding people in adventure activities in the city of Areia. This becomes worrying because even though there are people interested in practicing adventure sports, both tourists and people who live in the city, there won't be anyone to guide them or there will be someone but not as well prepared as he/she should be. It seems that people have not looked for it or do not know their possibilities, what would be a requirement, as shown in the quote from Boisier (1996) above in the introduction.

By analyzing what the municipal secretaries said, we noticed that the majority of them agree that the leisure in Areia need to get better; none of them mentioned adventure sports as one of the main leisure activities, but 83,33% believe that Areia – PB has the potential to develop this kind of sport. Besides, all of them know at least one kind of adventure sport which is practiced in the city, and they believe that this practice would contribute to the development.

Agreeing with the previous analyzes, it is seen that adventure sports have not been well valued in this community, which means that the growth of these sports, mentioned by Pereira et al (2004) and Souza (2000), does not seem to be real in Areia – PB. On the other hand, when municipal managers say that adventure sports can be an option not only for leisure but also for development, we start to believe that what these authors said will also become true in the city of Areia – PB.

However, besides the lack of adventure sports guides and instructors, from the secretaries' perspective, there are several difficulties to be faced in order to the above mentioned become true. The first one is the infrastructure problems, such as the lack of accommodation, restaurants and public policies which do not care about the leisure demands.

Moreover, all of them mentioned the lack of commitment and dialogue as an obstacle to be overcome. This includes all society components, as well as members of the government (municipal, state and federal); members of associations, NOGs, trade unions; entrepreneurs or just a member of the society in general. Another relevant problem mentioned was the lack of financial resources allocated to leisure (66,67%), as well as the low number of projects with this purpose (33,33%).

Observing the last data, it leads us to believe that the problem is not restricted to adventure sports, but also to the conception that society has about leisure and, consequently, development, as we could verify that leisure is not part of the local social groups' plans. The concern comes when we consider what Müller (2002) said when he assures that any regional development plan has to set goals for leisure development and finding ways of providing people with better life quality.

4. CONCLUSION

The issues related to leisure should be present in any development plan which aims at making improvements in society life quality. Therefore, we aimed at analyzing the possibilities of promoting the practice of adventure sports in Areia – Paraiba – Brazil, seen as one of the leisure options with highest growth in the whole world, as a local alternative.

Since it was possible to find many rich nature beauties in Areia, such as the fauna and flora, waterfalls, stone walls, natural pools, trails, native forests (mainly represented by the Parque Estadual Mata do Pau Ferro), sugarcanes, dams and mills, including one which was almost totally emerged by the creation of a dam, where only the top of the chimney could be seen from outside; we conclude that it is possible to practice trekking, Mountain Bike, Downhill, horseback riding, 4x4 vehicles rides, Motocross, climbing, rappelling, going to waterfalls, contemplative diving, canoeing, tree climbing and zip line in Areia. However, not all of this potential has been properly enjoyed due to many different reasons.

Considering all that was said in the interviews and then analyzed and discussed in this research, we assume that the key problem to be solved is related to the knowledge about leisure and its importance to the development policies. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to educate the whole society to and by leisure, since it is impossible to debate about something we do not know anything about. This is a call which should be answered by those who have knowledge about this subject, as well as by those who are not satisfied with the way leisure is being treated in current policies.

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ADVENTURE SPORTS: AN OPTION OF LEISURE AND DEVELOPMENT FOR THE CITY OF AREIA - PB

ABSTRACT

In broad terms, this study is aimed at analyzing the potentialities and difficulties of adventure sports in the city of Areia – PB as an opportunity for leisure and local development. In order to reach these goals, we chose to use in this quality research an investigation method. This work was developed in the city of Areia – PB, and its sample was selected by uniqueness, convenience and availability; and composed of municipal secretaries and local tourism guides. It was possible to find in Areia many rich natural beauties, such as the fauna and the flora, waterfalls, stone walls, natural pools, trails, native forests (mainly represented by the Parque Estadual Mata do Pau Ferro), sugarcanes, dams and mills. The area demonstrates that Areia is a place where people can practice trekking, Mountain Bike, Downhill, horseback riding, 4x4 vehicles rides, Motocross, climbing, rappelling, going to waterfalls, contemplative diving, canoeing, tree climbing and zip line. However, all this potential has not been enjoyed as it should have been for many different reasons. Considering all that was said in the interviews, and then analyzed and discussed, we assume that the key problem to be solved refers to the knowledge about leisure and its importance to the development polices.

DESCRIPTORS: Adventure sports, leisure, development.

SPORT AVENTURE: UNE OPTION POUR LES LOISIRS ET LE DÉVELOPPEMENT À AREIA - PB

RÉSUMÉ

Le but de notre étude est d' analyser les potentialités et les difficultés des sports d'aventure à Areia, ville située dans l'État du Paraíba - PB, comme une possibilité de loisirs et de développement de la Région. En essayant d' atteindre ces objectifs, nous avons adopté comme méthode d' investigation la recherche qualitative. Ce travail a été élaboré à Areia - PB et son échantillon a été sélectionné par son caractère unique, commodité et disponibilité, et elle est composée de secrétaires municipaux et de conducteurs de tourisme local. Dans cette région, nous avons trouvé la présence d'une beauté naturelle riche en flore et en faune, des cascades, des murs de pierre, des piscines naturelles, des sentiers, des forêts natives (représentée principalement par le Parc d'État Mata do Pau Ferro), la cannaie, les barrages et les usines. Cette région possède un potentiel pour le trekking, VTT, descente, équitation, tours en 4x4, motocross, escalade, rappel, chutes d'eau, plongée contemplative, canoë, accrobranche et tyrolienne. Mais tout ce potentiel n'est pas apprécié comme il faut par plusieurs raisons. En considérant tout ce qui a été prononcé dans les entretiens et ensuite analysé et discuté, nous supposons que le principal problème à résoudre est dû à la connaissance sur les loisirs et son importance dans les politiques de développement.

DESCRIPTEURS: Sport aventure, loisirs, développement

DEPORTES DE AVENTURA: UNA OPCIÓN PARA EL OCIO Y EL DESARROLLO DE LA CIUDAD DE AREIA - PB

RESUMEN

En general, nuestro objetivo, es através de este estudio para analizar las posibles dificultades de los deportes de aventura en la ciudad de Areia - PB como una posibilidad para la recreación y el desarrollo local. Buscando alcanzar estos objetivos, hemos adoptado como método de investigación la cualitativa. Este trabajo fue en Areia – PB (Paraiba – Brasil), su muestra fue seleccionada por su singularidad, conveniencia y disponibilidad, e integrado por los secretarios municipales y los conductores de turismo local. Se encuentran en el territorio areiense la presencia de la rica belleza natural de la flora y la fauna, cascadas, paredes de piedra, piscinas naturales, senderos, bosques nativos (Representado principalmente por el Parque Estatal Mata do Pau Ferro) campos de caña de azúcar, presas, molinos. El lugar tiene potencial para trekking, Moutain bike, dowhill, paseos a caballo, excursiones en vehículos 4x4, motocross, escalada en roca, rappel, saltos de cascadas, el buceo contemplativa, piraguismo, escalada a los árboles y tirolesa. Pero todo este potencial no ha sido debidamente disfrutado por una variedad de razones. Teniendo en cuenta todo lo que se pronunció en las entrevistas y, a continuación conjetura analizados y discutidos, que el problema clave que se resuelto se refiere al conocimiento sobre el ocio y su importancia en las políticas de desarrollo.

DESCRIPTORES: Deportes de aventura, ócio, desarrollo

ESPORTES DE AVENTURA: UMA OPÇÃO DE LAZER E DESENVOLVIMENTO PARA O MUNICÍPIO DE AREIA – PB

RESUMO

De uma forma geral, objetivamos, por meio deste estudo, analisar as potencialidades e dificuldades dos esportes de aventura no município de Areia - PB como possibilidade para o lazer e desenvolvimento local. Buscando alcançar tais objetivos, optamos por adotar como método de investigação a pesquisa qualitativa. O presente trabalho foi desenvolvido no município de Areia – PB sendo sua amostra selecionada por tipicidade, conveniência e disponibilidade; e composta por secretários municipais e condutores de turismo local. Foi possível encontrar no território areiense a presença de ricas belezas naturais de fauna e flora, cachoeiras, paredões de pedra, piscinas naturais, trilhas, matas nativas (representado, principalmente, pelo

Parque Estadual Mata do Pau Ferro), canaviais, barragens, engenhos. A localidade apresenta potencial para a prática de trekking, Mountain Bike, Downhill, cavalgada, passeios em veículos 4x4, MotoCross, escalada, rapel, cachoeirismo, mergulho contemplativo, canoagem, arvorismo e tirolesa. Porém, todo esse potencial não tem sido devidamente usufruído pelos mais variados motivos. Considerando tudo o que foi proferido nas entrevistas e, em seguida analisado e discutido, conjeturamos que o problema chave a ser solucionado refere-se ao conhecimento sobre o lazer e sua importância nas políticas de desenvolvimento.

DESCRITORES: Esportes de aventura, lazer, desenvolvimento