

**“Beyond ‘the room’ of the Sahara Marathon:  
Event purpose and host culture as extensions of  
adventure sport gendered space”**

Master Thesis

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## **Abstract**

It has been argued adventure tourism spaces are strongly dominated by white male middle-class explorers and adventurers (Hall, 2018; Fullagar & Pavlidis, 2018) and that thus women adventurers have to negotiate gender inequalities and the diversity of embodied knowledges that operate in these spaces. The little we know about these spaces of difference and how they are experienced and negotiated by women comes from research done in the field of adventure sports (Hall, 2018; Fullagar & Pavlidis, 2018), which mostly focus on the most immediate social space where the sport is practiced.

However, these practices are performed embedded within a larger social space, which in international travel can also play a relevant role in the way women experience and negotiate gender inequalities. Moreover, there are occasions, where the adventure sport is practiced with multiple purposes in mind: sport with a cause! Therefore, whether and to what extent these extended cultural space of the host community, and an extended purpose of the adventure sport, affect the way women experience gender inequalities and negotiate embodied knowledges in adventure sports settings, is not known. Moreover, the 'room may be (re)designed' (the narrowed practice), but the 'neighborhood' or the 'city' may not (the extended cultural a purposive milieu).

The paper explores the role of these extensions in the particular case of the Sahara Marathon, an international event, held in the remote refugee camps of the displaced Sahrawi community, close to the Algerian – Western Sahara border. This adventure sport event is thus performed within the cultural context of a long-term displaced Muslim community in search of self-determination, which welcomes the participants in that they may become ambassadors of the injustice they are living and let the world know about their silenced cause. By means of participant observation and phenomenological interviews to a group of participant women in the event, the paper outlines the role that these extensions of the adventure space may play in the way women experience gender inequalities in adventure sports settings.

# 1 Introduction

This research was initially inspired by the official call for papers for the Troubling Geographies of Adventure Tourism session, sponsored by, Geographies of Leisure and Tourism Research Group (GLTRG), and hosted at the Royal Geographical Society – Institute of British Geographers (RGS-IBG) Annual International Conference, held in London, UK, between the 28th – 30th of August 2019.

The text of the call with the name Redesigning the room: Troubling geographies of adventure tourism, was crafted by the session conveners Dr. Jenny Hall (York St John University) and Dr. Maggie Miller (Swansea University) and it is here below verbatim reproduced, including the references:

“Mountains like deserts, oceans, caves and jungles are increasingly sought after as adventure tourism spaces to experience sensations of risk, self-sufficiency and wellbeing (Fletcher, 2014) Adventurers that participate in what Pomfret (2006) describes as ‘hard’ touristic activities (p.115), where an individual seeks to pioneer or independently experience the most remote and extreme environments, reify the heroic trope of the intrepid adventurer conquering the unknown. Since the early nineteenth-century white male middle-class explorers and adventurers have dominated adventure spaces, reproducing histories through prolific mainstream literature and film. Thus, stories of difference have been obscured by the dominant norm, rendering race, class and gender virtually absent from the discourse.

The space of adventure tourism remains an effective model of masculinity that continues to silence differences through competitive affective forces prevalent in the industry, governing bodies and national training organisations. Achieving legitimacy in adventure-based tourism and recreation requires adventurers of difference to take extraordinary risks to generate social capital (Hall 2018; Miller, 2017). In doing so, they recast, resist, subvert and reconstruct identities that map new routes of experience and difference in adventure sports (Fullagar and Pavlidis 2018). However, little is known about these spaces of difference and how they are experienced emotionally, sentimentally or otherwise (Hall 2018; Miller 2017). In the context of mountaineering, Sharp (2001) suggests that the underrepresentation of professional female mountaineers is a problem related to the ‘design of the room’ rather than ‘the way the door is opened’ (p. 82).

In this session we call for papers that examine how inequalities are experienced and how different embodied knowledges are realised in spaces of hard and extreme adventure, inviting scholars to suggest how the room could be or should be redesigned (Sharp, 2001)?

References:

Fletcher, R. (2014) *Enhancing the wild: Cultural dimension of ecotourism*. Durham, NC, Duke University Press.

Fullagar, S., Pavlidis, A. (2018) Feminist theories of emotion and affect in sport. In: *The Palgrave Handbook of Feminism, Sport, Leisure and Physical Education*. Mansfield, L., Caudwell, J., Wheaton, B., and Watson, B. eds. London, Palgrave Macmillian, pp. 447 – 463.

Hall, J. (2018) *Women mountaineers: A study of affect, sensoria and emotion*. York, UK, York St John University.

Miller, M., C. (2017) *An exploration of Sherpas' narratives of living and dying in mountaineering*. Ontario, Canada, University of Waterloo.

Pomfret, G. (2006) Mountaineering adventure tourists: A conceptual framework for research. *Tourism Management*, 27, pp. 113 – 123.

Sharp, B. (2001) Take me to your (male) leader. *Gender and Education*, 13 (1) pp. 75 – 86.”

In addition to the inspiration provided by this conference call, my past personal experience as woman and active mountaineer in my home country, Iran, my recent experience as researcher in a project, led by my supervisor Dr. Jaume Guia, in the Refugee Camps of the Sahrawi people of Western Sahara, and my collaboration with the organizers of the Sahara Marathon in 2017 and 2018, all resonated with the spirit of the conference call. Furthermore, together with my supervisor decided to prepare a paper proposal and write the master thesis on a topic fitting the call. The proposal was accepted, and the results just been presented at the conference in London on August 30th, 2019.

Regarding the academic rationale of this master thesis, strongly inspired by the conference call for papers, we take as a reference the literature on adventure tourism which argues that adventure tourism spaces are strongly dominated by white male middle-class explorers and adventurers (Hall 2018; Fullagar and Pavlidies, 2018) and stresses that as consequence women adventurers have to negotiate gender inequalities and a diversity of embodied pieces of knowledge that operate in them.

Hall (2018) and Miller (2018) further underlie that little is still known about these spaces of difference and how they are experienced and negotiated by women. They refer explicitly to Sharp's (2001) suggestion that the underrepresentation of professional female mountaineers is a problem related to the 'design of the room' rather than 'the way the door is opened' (p.82). Here the word 'room' is used metaphorically to refer to how the 'world' and practice of mountaineering is designed in reference to gender, and therefore refers to the material, discursive and organizational aspects of the practice. Therefore, the paper takes as a reference to this gap in the literature and tries to contribute with new perspectives about how 'the room' could be or should be redesigned.

Whatever the little already known about these spaces of gender comes from research which mostly focuses and pays attention to the diverse stakeholders operating in adventure sports, their discursive and organizational practices, as well as to material aspects of the practice (Warren 2016; Warren & Loeffler, 2006; Hall, 2018; Dingle & Kiewa, 2006). Using the 'room' metaphor as a reference, they are trying to redesign the room with the already existing elements and materials, either by redistributing them in the space or transforming them, e.g., the participation of women in organization and decision making, and so on (Hall, 2018). At the most, some of these researches focus at the broader culture within which the sport is practiced and how this culture strongly affects the gendered spaces of adventure sport (Stebbins, 1992, Fink, 2013, Hartmann-Tews & Pfister, 2003; Goodsell & Harris, 2017; Musto, Cooky, & Messner, 2017; Wegner, Ridinger, Jordan, & Funk, 2018); or using the metaphor, it takes into consideration the 'town' or 'city' where the 'room is located and assess how much that affects the way the 'room' is experienced.

What has not been explored so far is what the effect on the 'design of the room' would be if new 'alien' materials, people and discourses were brought into the 'room', or into proximity of it as new 'neighbors'. In other words, what if adventure sports practice and events introduce or invite in additional practices beyond those of the sport as such? Moreover, as we mentioned above, something is known about how much or to what extent the broader surrounding of 'the room', that is the social norms of these women's own society's culture, affect the way the room is experienced. But what has not been explored yet is how 'moving to another town', or in other words how practicing the adventure sport in close contact with a culturally different gendered space, affects the way the practice is experienced. In different terms, what is the effect of practicing adventure sport in close contact with alien cultures, which are themselves spaces of gender differences?

One way to explore this is by analyzing adventure sports practices or events where the practice has multiple purposes beyond sport, e.g., the sport with a cause! And which are performed within and in close contact with a larger and differently gendered social space, e.g., international sports events. This is precisely the case of the Sahara Marathon, which has been chosen as a case for the empirical study of the thesis. In it, in addition to the participation of the marathon as a long-distance race in an adventure geographical space, athletes are exposed to both the problems of social justice that the local refugee community is facing and the social activism that it involves, and to the distinct broader culture of the host community, which as a Muslim society involves a different gendered space for the participant athletes.

From all the above the following research question is proposed:

In what way and to what extent an extended social purpose of an adventure sports event, and the practice of the sport in and in close contact with a host community's differentially-gendered cultural space, affect the way women athletes experience gender inequalities and negotiate embodied knowledge in the practice of the sport?

Or using the 'room' metaphor: To what extent inviting or attracting new 'neighbors' to the room, e.g. a social purpose beyond sport, and moving to a different 'city', e.g. practicing the sport in a place with a differentially-gendered culture, can change the experience of living 'the room', e.g. reducing the yet 'too masculine' experience of performing the sport?

Therefore, in what follows, we first outline a literature review of the main topics of the research question, i.e., gender inequalities in adventure sports, gender in social movements and activism, and gender in transcultural encounters. Consequently, in the following chapter, the Sahara Marathon is described, and the research methodology outlined. Results are then presented and discussed, and conclusions provided in the last chapter.



## **2 Literature Review**

In this chapter the literature relevant for the thesis is reviewed. First the literature on gender inequalities in adventure sports, then, the literature on gender in social movements and activism, and finally, the literature on gender in transcultural encounters.

### **2.1 Gender inequalities in adventure tourism**

Literature review reveals that gender can be a restriction for the participation in adventure tourism, or so-called adventure sport, serious leisure or extreme sport, outdoor activities (Stebbins, 1992; Wegner, Ridinger, Jordan, & Funk, 2018). According to Stebbins, gender “acts as a sort of sieve, filtering out males and females from activities culturally defined as appropriate for one sex only” (p. 73).

Constraints to general leisure related to gender are cultural and structural and manifest in the form of social norms that both suggest a sacrificing leisure in favor of family commitments (Maume, 2008; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Warren, 2016; Hall, 2018) and prescribe particular forms of leisure for women (Shaw, 1994). Modern gender briefly put, refers to social expectations of men and women which emerged during the transition to an industrial capitalist society wherein work and home became distinct places. Men dominated the public sphere of work and politics, while women were in the private sphere of home and family. Masculinity became associated with power, competitiveness, rationality, and independence; femininity with passivity, nurturance, emotional expressiveness, and dependency. There is continued socialization of modern gender in the media, schools, and family today, even as a counter-trends challenge it. While parents, teachers and those in the media may consciously alter their socialization practices, other practices are not directly within their control, like hiring and promotion practices in the name of competitiveness and profitability that exclude workers based on sex. Gender factors refer to these two intertwined practices of sex segregation of work and gender socialization (Serravallo, 2000).

Moreover, these social norms are diverse in different cultures (Hartmann-Tews & Pfister, 2003). According to Lorber Lorber (1991), gender is constructed culturally through six components: gender statuses which are socially recognized genders in a society connected to norms and expectations which lead to gender hierarchies; the gender division of labour, which assigns different tasks to different genders; gendered personalities, which are imagined traits and behaviour patterns of both sexes according to existing stereotypes; gendered sexual scripts, which are norms governing sexual behaviour; gender ideology,

which legitimizes gender statuses and prevents resistance by normalizing the gender role; and gendered imaginary, which is the symbolic presentation of gender in culture, language and media.

Constraint negotiation (Loucks-Atkinson & Mannell, 2007; Ridinger, Funk, Jordan, & Kaplanidou, 2012, Little, 2002, Goodsell & Harris, 2011) has been proposed as a relevant mechanism to overcome the disadvantages related to family commitments, which seem to have helped to increase the number of women participating in sports in recent years (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015).

As for the social norms that prescribe particular forms of leisure for women, the way female sport is covered in media has been identified as an essential deterrent to the increase of participation of women in sports leisure. According to (Fink, 2015), the coverage of female sport is notably less than male sport. When it comes to broadcasting women sport, it is generally nightly sportscast which receives much fewer viewers. The producers of sports media claim and justify this underreporting by arguing that they respond to the market forces. Furthermore, Cooky (2015) argues why young women “can’t be what they can’t see.” She also argues that the minutes which athlete women are broadcasted is not the only important issue. The way that media portrays the athlete females also plays an important role. Kissling, (1999:80) illustrates this with the words: trivialization in which the limited coverage of women athletes portrays them as inferior athletes or minimizes their significance; objectivation, in which women athletes are portrayed in a manner that emphasizes their sexual appeal, especially to heterosexual men; and unnaturalness, in which successful women athletes are portrayed as failing at femininity.

Until women do not appear in sports films and magazine coverage, there will be an impact regarding gender issues, and thus implicitly recognizes media as a tool to overcome cultural restrictions to women participation in sport. Masculine imaginings, performances and discourses generate semiotic processes that create effective autoimmunity atmospheres in women, wherein the case of mountaineering, for instance, masculinity is what shapes the identity of mountaineering and femininity is not. (Hall, 2018).

The focus so far is mostly put on barriers to participation in the first place. However, beyond this first type of barrier to participation, there are also other types of barriers for the meaningful and non-gendered engagement of women in adventure leisure or sports activities: technical skills and gear, and social barriers.

Technical outdoor skills are an integral part of a successful outdoor education program experience. However, outdoor leaders often note that women struggle to develop technical skills (Dingle & Kiewa, 2006). Moreover, if women have successfully acquired these skills, they frequently fail to recognize their technical expertise, or they lack confidence in their skills despite being one of the most capable participants or leaders on a course (Loeffler, 1997). This discrepancy in technical skill development (TSD) for women demands an analysis called for by (Humberstone, 2000) to vigorously pursue a critical examination of gender in the outdoor field. (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Moreover, regarding social barriers, women in their attempts to belong to the ‘masculine’ world of mountaineering end up in a position of difference as outsiders, as ‘to belong’ does not mean they do belong (Derrida & Ferraris, 2001).

In the case of mountaineering, it is undeniable that women have innovated feminine ways to practice the activity, both technically and socially. Their lower center of gravity and their firm reliance on the feet are examples of technical differences. As for social behavior, “Crying in the context of mountaineering is regarded as a display of weakness, loss of control or feebleness, beliefs which can be traced back to Victorian androcentric values that favor displays of strength and bravery. Thus, crying in front of companions and clients, as some of the research participants had done, feminized the experience of mountaineering, shifting the masculinized norm and expanding perceptions of acceptable emotional behaviors in mountaineering and epistemological understandings of what a feminized experience of mountaineering can be” (Hall, 2018).

The Cordee Feminine is a critical turning point in mountaineering when women took control of their own mountaineering spaces, thus openly politicizing their rights and desires to experience independence. However, taking a break from the herd to create female-only spaces is seemingly more laborious than the mountaineering endeavors women undertake and attempts to redesign the room have faltered and are only just beginning to re-emerge (Hall, 2018).

Thus, changing the room requires a rebalancing of the rules that govern the activity, rules that affect all. Challenging the dominant discourse requires the active participation of women and their male peers to tackle androcentrism that impacts on all who engage in mountaineering (Hall, 2018); but also the collaboration of media as, like Abbas, (2004) showcases in her study about the development of long-distance running, the promotion of leisure activities that are viewed as unproblematically ‘healthy’ like running it is found

that it promotes an embodiment of middle-classness that naturalizes gender and age perpetuates inequalities.

By going through all the above obstacles and becoming adventure sports adepts, women are doing activities that are empowering. Doran, (2016) reinforces this through a conceptual model that illustrates the opportunities adventure tourism offer for women's empowerment, in which constraints, negotiations, and benefits can be experienced simultaneously at different points in a woman's adventure tourism journey and used as a vehicle for empowerment.

In general, women who take part in sports activities experience little role conflict and report positive changes including increased self-esteem, personal development, physical power and well-being (Kay & Jeanes, 2008; Boniface, 2006). Moreover, sport becomes a site for women to challenge and contest dominant stereotypes rather than solely being a site where these are reproduced (Scruton, et al., 1999; Whitson, 2002). Colwell, (1999) argues that simply participating in sport challenges patriarchal definitions of submissiveness, passivity, and dependence (Whitson, 2002). Furthermore, the sport has been demonstrated to help some women achieve empowerment and use their bodies to challenge sexual stereotypes and patriarchal control of women's bodies (Birrell & Theberge, 1994). Therefore, participating in sport can be a liberating experience for female athletes. Therefore, for women sports participants, empowerment is redefined as the pleasure that is derived from the sense of accomplishment. Women feel empowered by the confidence they gain from learning how to execute complex sport skills, rather than the physical enjoyment of dominating others in a competitive sport situation.

This increasing female participation in male-dominated sports indicates a change in the power relations between men and women (Colwell, 1999). Although traditional male sports continue to be male-dominated, the increasing number of female participants alone constitute a change in power and the raising of a somehow transgressive subculture that challenges traditional expectations that women should only take responsibility for female tasks.

Therefore, the desire for empowerment is a vehicle for emancipation and therefore, to redesign the room from within. Wearing, Small, & Foley (2018) explore, within the context of leisure and tourism, poststructuralist ideas of multiple, gendered subjectivities to produce alternative gender discourses which allow for the re-writing of masculine and feminine scripts. They explore sites of leisure and tourism as culturally gendered enclaves which can offer an opportunity for struggle and resistance to hegemonic masculinity and

identify the possibilities for change that arise from theorizing bodies as “becoming” rather than as “static.”

## **2.2 Gender and social activism**

The study of social movements and social activism as gendered spaces has received some attention in the literature (Kuumba, 2001; Bhattacharjya, Birchall, Caro, Kelleher, & Sahasranaman, 2013; Shitrit, 2015; Stephen, 2010). Misrecognition and limited participation have both been identified as the main signs of gender inequality. According to Kuumba (2001), the invisibility of women in social movements is the result of the many ways in which major social movements are gender-biased. Men and women have unequal levels of structural availability linked to their assigned gender roles, contributing to a gendered division of labor in social movements, and social movements reflect gender structures and hierarchies that exist in society at large.

The dominant masculine social norms of the societies in which the activism operates permeate into the social movements in many ways. While gender justice and women’s rights may be ‘on the agenda’ in civil society platforms and policies, practitioners and activists trying to achieve practical change on the ground still experience strong resistance within the ‘deep structure’ (Rao & Kelleher, 2005) of movements and affiliated organizations. ‘Deep structure’ is the taken-for-granted assumptions about the place of women in organizations and societies. These assumptions are below awareness level and are therefore not talked about or challenged, but they determine how people think and act, and therefore ultimately frame the priorities and actions of social movements (Bhattacharjya et al., 2013) .

Nonetheless, women do get involved in social activism with different intensities and can be empowered through individual achievement and ‘soft transgressions’, in search of emancipation.

This is illustrated by Stephen, (2010) in her book called, *Women and social movements in Latin America*, who focus on the limits placed on Latin American women’s political activity by both the dominant cultural ideologies which specify that their proper place is at home and within the family; and by conflicts experienced by women in their homes, communities, and in larger mixed organizations as they become more active. Development projects for these women remain focused on small-scale economic activity that generates minimal amounts of income and does little or nothing to empower women economically. Positive outcomes from such projects are more likely to come from the unintended political and cultural consequences of women attempting to change the

gendered division of labor in their homes and organizations in order to carry out their small economic development projects.

Similarly, Shitrit, (2015), analyzes women activism in the context of contemporary religious-political movements around the World, which advocate conservative gender politics and promote patriarchal religious interpretations and structures of religious practice in which women hold subordinate positions. In the public sphere, some of them advocate men and women's role-complementarity, stipulating a sexual division of labor where women's essential, primary roles are motherhood and caregiving to the community while the political public sphere is mostly the domain of men. Women in these cultures attain different levels of visibility, voice, and leadership and perform different tasks depending on the case. In some movements, they work strictly on piety promotion and social services provision and operate mainly within segregated women's spheres; their activism seamlessly adheres to the articulated gender norms of their movements. In others, women are involved in mixed-sex explicitly political public action such as unruly protest, physical confrontations, and even militant action. They take part in activities that seem to contradict and transgress their professed commitment to role-complementarity, sex-segregation, and notions of female modesty. Moreover, in yet other movements, women serve in the highest leadership bodies and even run for elected office.

Therefore, how do activists in patriarchal religious-political movements, with clear notions about male and female different private and public roles, manage to expand spaces for political activism in ways that seem to transgress their movements' gender ideology? Also, why does this happen in some movements but not in others?

Transgression generally refers to discursive actions which cross boundaries or violate limits which separate the normal and abnormal, the healthy and unhealthy and the domestic and foreign (Foust, 2010). Transgressions which are permitted, or escape the notice and discipline of boundary-policing authorities, push the boundaries further. Therefore, transgression redefines lines of distinction, giving new meaning to identities and social practices. However, there is a broad spectrum of transgression, ranging from that which blends, with a supports hegemonic action, to that which virulently opposes or evades the common sense of social change. Our interpretative practice must be re-trained to see outside of hegemony, in order to more fully grasp the potential of transgressive resistance.

Transgression thus shares a deep conceptual relationship to immanence, as the volatile force which ceaselessly attempts to consume, break down divisions, hybridize, or couple

those elements which had been divided transcendently. Welzel, (2013) exclaims that despite the ongoing discussion and critic concerning postmaterialism theory remain[s] convinced that the basic logic holds: fading existential pressures open people's minds, making them prioritize freedom over security, autonomy over authority, diversity over uniformity, and creativity over discipline.

Getting involved in social activism and maintaining this identity requires is itself transgressive in that activist may have to face some stigma in the external World, facing a lack of 'success', long hours of voluntary dedication, or not meeting the obligations of one's family (Lofland, 2017), together with emotions which may come together like disappointment, frustration or embarrassment. Therefore, transgressive activism requires the embodiment of beliefs, which entail emotions like joy, hope, enthusiasm, pride, and affective attachment to the group. It is because of emotions such as these that participation carries many pleasures, which may be significant enough to motivate participation without relying on the cognitive belief that success is possible or likely (Bell, 1992).

Nonetheless, beyond the cultural restrictions to gender equality in social activism seen so far, it seems that contrary to the case of sport where women may not be as naturally attracted to the competitive nature of the activity, women do seem to be more attracted to activism for social and environmental justice than men. For instance, Tindall, Davies, & Mauboulès, (2003), after comparing women's and men's environmental activism and environmentally friendly behavior found that women may be more concerned about environmental issues and committed to environmentalism, but their personal and familial constraints which present barriers to participation constrains their activism. Similarly, Schwabenland, Lange, Onyx & Nakagawa (2017), describes how, through the organization of civil society, ordinary women have done extraordinary things to challenge oppression locally, nationally, and across the globe. They have achieved many successes and have developed outstanding entrepreneurial activities. Women are at the heart of civil society organizations; they come together to run activities, provide services, establish local networks and raise funds; also, studies suggest that women are more philanthropic than men and make up the majority of volunteers (Themudo, 2009).

Moreover, emotions have been identified as a critical ingredient of social movements and activism (Jasper, 1998; Goodwin & Jasper, 2006; Flam & King, 2007; Jasper, 2011). As emotions are often defined as 'women's work', therefore, social activism would be a more natural ground for women involvement. Shame, pride, anger, and solidarity have been identified as the dominant emotions in social activism, even if many other also play a

role: loyalty, joy, hope, fear, contempt, sadness, distrust, empathy, compassion, altruism, outrage, gratitude, and happiness (emotions and social movements).

For instance, moral shocks, are often the first step towards recruitment into social movements when an unexpected event raises a sense of outrage in a person making her inclined toward political action, whether or not she has acquaintances in the movement (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995). Blame is another emotional ground of activism and differs according to the perceived ultimate causes and the direct embodiments of each outrage (Gordon & Jasper, 1996). Moreover, social activism requires ‘frame alignment’, which means the conviction that a problem needs to be addressed, that there are appropriate strategies in place, and that action is needed. Frames are better accepted if they fit with the beliefs of potential recruits, involve credible claims, and are compatible with the life experiences of the audience (Snow & Benford, 1988). Injustice frames are situations that express indignation over a perceived injustice, as well as some human agency to blame for the transgression (Gamson, 1992), and are particular grounds for emotional involvement. In an injustice frame, the passion for justice is triggered by anger over existing injustice. Abstract norms of justice gain some power from the positive emotions associated with them – hope, joy, compassion- but probably not enough to motivate action in the absence of contrast with an unjust situation and the negative emotions associated with it – outrage, anger, fear, and so on.

Therefore, like the case of sport, the field of social activism is a field with emancipatory potential for women (Welzel, 2013). Here, emancipation is different from empowerment, though both are sometimes used interchangeably and both can have positive implications for women, as seen in the examples further above. Empowerment is about women taking power or authority, individually or collectively, while emancipation to free from the restraint of any kind, especially the inhibitions of tradition and to terminate paternal control (Inglis, 1997).

Finally, collective identity or sense of community has also been identified as a crucial aspect of social movements. A sense of community is the feeling of membership or belonging and sharing a sense of personal relatedness; a sense of mattering, or making a difference for the group; a sense of fulfillment from what members get from the group; and shared emotional connection, which stems from the commitment and belief that members will share and time together, common places and other join experiences (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). It refers to a sense of solidarity among members of a social movement itself, and sometimes to an underlying social categorization in whose name a



movement claims to speak (Jasper, 1998). Therefore, a collective identity is not simply the drawing of a cognitive boundary; most of all, it is an emotion, a positive effect towards other group members on the grounds of that common membership. Partly because of this affection, participation in social activism can be pleasurable in itself, independently of the ultimate goals and outcomes.

### **2.3 Gender and cross-cultural encounters**

After having reviewed the literature on gender and sport and gender and social activism, the stream of literature relevant for our research is gender in transcultural contexts or sites. The understanding and negotiation of transcultural contexts have been mostly analyzed in the realms of tourism (Reisinger & Turner, 2012) and of migration (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995; Faist, 2006; Schiller & Faist, 2009). They involve and are characterized by encounters between different cultures, and when the different cultures that meet in these encounters have different conceptions and conventions about gender roles and behavior, both conflicts about proper behavior and opportunities for emancipation exists.

In the domain of tourism studies, Reisinger & Turner (2012) introduce the notion of cultural differences and intercultural interaction and explore the concept of social interaction with specific emphasis on cultural factors and the impact of cultural differences on tourist-host interaction, including the concept of culture shock. These cultural differences are grounded in both differences in values (Triandis, 1972) and the rules of social interaction (Kim and Gudykunst, 1988). Therefore, similarities in attitudes, images, stereotyping, and ethnocentrism will develop positive perceptions and encourage social interaction, while dissimilarities will create misperceptions and discourage interaction.

In the sphere of immigration studies, recent attention has been paid to how international migration and migrant transnationalism affect changes in contemporary societies (Schiller & Faist 2009). Nawicka (2012) suggests several perspectives think about diversity, and to conceptualize what it means for people to encounter diversity in society. She uses the term ‘transculturality’ or ‘transcultural’ (Robins 2006) to stress that cultures undergo constant negotiations and that they are permeable, contested, and open to change. Besides, migrants’ experience is never straightforwardly and unproblematically about being more or less involved in one or the other cultural practice. She first identifies some issues which need to be considered: demographic constellations, material aspects of immigration and the changing patterns of social inequality; and then analyses the aesthetic

experiences of diversity, the affective aspects of encountering diversity, and how migrants involve and reproduce diversity through transcultural practices.

Several scholars have shown that the presence and everyday interaction of people from all over the world provides opportunities for the development of multiple cultural competences (Vertovec and Rogers 1995) and practices of cultural 'crossing' or code-switching. New migrants, as well as their hosts, display competence to operate across cultural frontiers. It means neither that this practice encompasses all areas of life to the same degree nor that it is a straightforward process. However, in their daily lives, migrants do undermine the national cultural categories, often in a non-reflexive way. Therefore, migrants may bring into existence new cultural dynamics, which can exceed the capacities of the nation-state and ethnic belonging.

The transcultural theory presents a dialectical approach to identity, in which the interaction with another culture is a critical move towards a synthesis that produces greater cultural understanding (Stephan, 2012). As such, 'one's identity is not strictly one dimensional but is now defined and more importantly recognized in rapport with the other' (Cuccioletta 2001). It is not just an interaction with the other that is important, but how that interaction takes place and in what way it affects the subjectivity of the individual, which sheds light on the concept of subjectivity itself.

Transculturalism has been presented as part of 'the quest to define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders' (Slimbach 2005), and in essence as a means of moving towards a new understanding of humanity as a whole. 'In many ways transculturalism, by proposing a new humanism of the recognition of the other, based on a culture of *métissage*, is in opposition to the singular traditional cultures that have evolved from the nation-state' (Cuccioletta 2001: 8).

The focus is on local interactions, in the realm of the individual and interpersonal connections in which the boundaries of cultures can be explored, recognizing that individuals are not merely the product of a high national or cultural identity. Furthermore, these local interactions are the sites in which transcultural negotiation takes place, and thus can be most clearly understood.

Pratt (1991) introduced the concept of the contact zone to the academic debate of postcolonialism, where much of the current thought on transculturation stems from. The contact zone refers to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today. The

transcultural site, represents a displacement of the individuals, as they stand in and for their respective cultures, from their reinforcing cultural contexts. The outcome of such an encounter, is by no means uniform, but through entry into a transcultural site, the power relations inherent in each cultural context are removed leaving the individuals more vulnerable and open to each other's culture.

The transcultural threshold (McLeod, 2011) can productively be thought of as one of conversation and silence, engagement and displacement, where cosmopolitan and postcolonial approaches productively inform each other rather than short-circuit an attempt to build ethical, hopeful mondialisation. The transcultural site, which allows for a more open and positive cultural encounter, can produce different results based on the characteristics and dynamics of the encounter. Therefore, both the shorter-term visits of tourist or the longer-term presence of migrants may create opportunities for social change in the host societies but also can produce limiting reactions of host societies to the behavior of the visitors and bounds visitor's transgression within acceptable levels for the host community.

Codes of conduct have been produced for tourists to educate them about societies they visit, and how to behave without causing offense (Cole, 2007). As an instance, visiting villages in less developed countries serves many western tourists' desire to experience the 'exotic other' first hand. This type of tourism involves encounters between different value systems. The values, attitudes, and behavior of tourists are determined by their social environment, cultural identity and way of life, and maybe in conflict with local customs. The differences in cultural values can result in miscommunications, suspicions, shortcomings, misunderstandings, and conflict (Reisinger, 1994). Misunderstandings frequently occur due to ignorance and arrogance (Pearce, 1995) or a combination of the two. Tourists often lack information and awareness about their impact in different cultures and environments. While some tourists may be open to learning, they are often unaware of appropriate behavior and have little guidance on how to behave. As Shackley (1996) suggests concerning wildlife tourism, many adverse impacts of tourists are entirely accidental. Few tourists wish to cause harm, but many are quite ignorant of the effects of their actions. Similarly, the WTO (1997) also suggest tourists and hosts both need knowledge about the tastes, tendencies, and pre-occupations of each other.

Now, both the opportunities for social change in the host societies produce by the presence of the visitors and the potential limits to visitor's behavior that host communities may have to set up, have implication for gender. Therefore, on the one hand, women

visiting specific societies may have to face inequalities for her fellow male visitors and gendered experiences on the site; while on the other, women in the host communities may benefit from the encounters and presence of the visitors by opening potential paths towards more gender equality.

Regarding the former, we have evidence from the study by Brown & Osman (2017) about the female tourist experience in Egypt as an Islamic destination. They found how, in Islamic destinations, female tourists face the added challenge of negotiating their way through male constructed local norms. They explored women's coping strategies with the male sexualized gaze that they encountered during their holiday in Egypt, and shed light on measures taken towards safeguarding themselves. Their experiences were profoundly influenced and often involuntarily altered by unwanted male attention and sexual harassment, as the women felt the need to fit into local female norms of behavior in order to safeguard themselves.

On the other, as for women in the host communities benefiting from the encounters and presence of the visitors and opening potential paths towards more gender equality.

Ferguson (2011), argues that while tourism development may, in theory, contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, a substantive reframing of policies is required in order to be able to maximize this potential. Moreover, Duffy, Kline, Mowatt, & Chancellor (2015) explored how the employment of women in the tourism industry has challenged or reinforced the traditional machismo–marianismo gender ideology in the Dominican Republic. They found that tourism employment is a source of opportunity, with women gaining economic and social independence, but also conflict as women and men negotiate new gender roles and identities, emphasizing issues such as the double workload, negotiating domestic tasks with partners, and tension resulting from employment. Similarly, Kabeer (2005) contends that women's access to paid work through tourism may give them a greater sense of self-reliance and higher purchasing power, but if it is undertaken in conditions that erode their health and exploit their labor, its costs may outweigh its benefits. Women's presence in the governance structures of society carries the potential to change unjust practices.

Therefore, transcultural encounters with visitors are potential triggers for women's empowerment in the host communities, but something else is needed. In the book, *Transcultural Negotiations of Gender: Studies in (Be)longing*, Bhaduri, and Mukherjee (2016), refer to a different type of transcultural negotiations. Instead of the transcultural negotiation between separated cultures, the book deals with temporal transculturality

within the same geographical space, that is between tradition and novelty in what is presumed to be the same culture. In other words, the emphasis is on how gender is negotiated along the two axes of 'belonging' and 'longing'– the twin desires of being located within a cultural milieu, while yearning for either what has passed by or what is yet to come.

### 3 The Sahara Marathon

In this section, we describe the Sahara Marathon and the context within which it operates for empirical analysis. The Sahara Marathon is an international event, held in the remote refugee camps of the displaced Sahrawi community during February each year, close to the Algerian – Western Sahara border

#### 3.1 Sahara marathon sport event

Running a marathon is an activity that can be completed without urban interference in the vast areas and wilderness of the Sahrawi desert. The only possible downside can be the heat but February is still a milder month in terms of temperatures which enables the organizers to carry out an event of such nature.



Figure 1- Sahara Marathon poster 2019 © Sahara Marathon.org

The marathon is the main event; however, there are several other races on the same day in order to let all the interested participants be a part of this event. Sahara marathon is considered a popular race and not an extreme race. For this reason, there are 10 and 5 km

races along with 21 and 42 km. The route is marked with piles of stones, flags, and other temporary labels. The ground is mostly compressed earth, sand, and rocks with some areas of soft sand. The marathon follows a path that is mainly flat apart from a series of low rises between 20-30km.

In Sahara marathon, there are four age classifications such as absolute, Master 30, Master 40, and veterans for both male and female. (“Information on the races,” 2019)

The organizers of the Sahara marathon, together with the collaboration of Sahrawis, provide water stations every 3km. Four-Wheel drive vehicles follow the course to assist if required. (“Information on the races,” 2019)

### **3.2 Sahara marathon and social activism**

Since 2001, the Secretary of State for Sport of the Saharawi Republic and Sahara Marathon NGO organization, helped by a generous array of volunteers from all over the world, organizes one of the most unique and impressive sports events with the goal of raising awareness about the Saharawi cause and to collect funding for humanitarian aid. At the same time, it promotes a relevant message about the importance of practicing sport and its advantages amongst the young Sahrawi. (“Sahara Marathon, About us,” 2019)

Running the Marathon is a good way to increase international awareness about the Sahrawi cause. Since the event attracts many outsiders, higher exposure is generated. However, in the end, what also matters during the competition is the sport and social interaction, while enjoying the stay with the Sahrawis.

“Sahara marathon is much more than a race”. The main objective of this project is to raise international awareness for the exiled people by sharing their way of living and suffering in their unjust exodus and then transmit what they experienced in the respective countries of the participants. For that reason, there are shorter alternatives to the 42 kilometers race, of 21 kilometers, 10 kilometers and 5 kilometers. Therefore, everyone who wants to participate is welcome.

### **3.3 Western Sahara community**

Western Sahara is a non-self-governing territory<sup>1</sup> located in Northwest Africa. Its neighboring countries are Morocco to the North, Mauritania to the South and East, and Algeria to the Northeast. To the west lies the Atlantic Ocean.

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<sup>1</sup> Non-self-governing territories are territories that are governed by another country and are rarely allowed representations in the governing country’s legislature



Figure 2- Map of Western Sahara © By Kmusser - Own work based primarily on the Digital Chart of the World, with this UN map and commercial atlases

When Spain left its colony of Western Sahara, both Morocco and Mauritania attempted to claim rights to the Western Sahara territory in 1976 for what lasted as a sixteen-year-long war with the Polisario<sup>2</sup> liberation movement. Polisario represents the rights of the Western Sahara indigenous people, named ‘Sahrawi’. Right before the start of the Western Sahara War, Polisario proclaimed the Sahrawi Republic and is the UN-recognized representative of the people of Western Sahara. (News, 2018)

Today, a 2.400 km long militarized berm, built by Morocco over the course of the Western Sahara war and hosting the largest minefield worldwide, divides the territory into two zones. The largest, western zone, bordering the Atlantic Ocean is governed by the Moroccan state, called the Moroccan Southern Provinces, but considered by the Sahrawi Republic State as the Occupied Territory. The eastern smaller strip of land,

<sup>2</sup> Popular Liberation Front for Western Sahara



bordering with Algeria and Mauritania, is governed and named by the Sahrawi Republic as the Liberated Territory or the Free zone.

Western Sahara is regarded by the United Nations as one of the last non-self-governing territories in the world. It is considered as non-self-governing since Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara has not been recognized by any other nation-state, and as Western Sahara finds itself still on the UN list of non-decolonized territories. It is also considered by the African Union as Africa's last colony. This implies that the Moroccan state is implicitly considered as an occupying force and the Spanish state as the official colonial administrator.



Figure 3- - Indication of the refugee camps in Algeria © [http://www.saharamarathon.org/en/aboutus\\_en/](http://www.saharamarathon.org/en/aboutus_en/)

Today, the Sahrawi Republic government lives in exile in Southern Algeria where it organizes the life of 173.600 refugees in five refugee camps. Since its establishment, more than forty years ago, the camps have grown into temporary cities in the Sahara Desert where a second or even third generation of Sahrawi are born and raised.

. Therefore, Sahara Marathon is performed within the cultural context of a long-term displaced Muslim community in search of self-determination.

The participants of Sahara Marathon will be hosted by Sahrawi families in groups of five people, meaning that the homestay will be the available type of accommodation. Therefore, it presents a unique opportunity to learn and be part of the Sahrawi culture.

## **4 Methodology**

This chapter introduces the methodological choices made in order to analyze the outcomes of this research.

This thesis is conducted from the point of view of the interpretivist paradigm, which will be explained further. The methods, which used to lead this research, will be presented subsequently.

In consideration of a reasonable and widespread response to the provided research question, diverse ranges of procedures and resources have been considered while observing and investigating the understudied case study. Documentation process brings transparency about the used method (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, & Dillon, 2003); therefore, in this chapter, the methodological choices are introduced.

### **4.1 Research paradigm**

Once researchers exchange different approaches to research, they are sharing their **paradigm**. It is a “worldview built on implicit assumptions, accepted definitions, comfortable habits, values defended as truths, and beliefs projected as reality”(Patton, 2008). Furthermore, Rossman, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (2003) define paradigm as “shared understandings of reality” a worldview or series of expectations about how things work. Therefore, in this research, the author has the intention of offering a balanced approach to sharing her understandings having studied several different available options in order to find out the best possible way to share her idea with the readers. The aim of this study is to understand and comprehend the meaning of the human behavior in the area which in this regard, referring to Neuman (2002), the most appropriate approach is “interpretivism”. As discussed by (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988) comprehending the motivations, reasons and particular experiences are crucial for the interpretivist researcher. Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug (2001), advocate the view that the achieved awareness via this discipline is socially created and not empirically perceived. The researcher has flexible outlines for the research and is trying to be open toward human interaction and the reality of the area. Like the way that Hudson & Ozanne (1988) additionally explain that in this approach the researcher is open to new facts through all the study and this is the way researcher acts.

The researcher studied the area and formed some prior vision before entering the field. Hudson & Ozanne (1988) further point out that the interpretivist researcher uses emergent and cooperative approach and actually this is the whole beliefs of the researcher that the

human being adapts to the situation and almost no one can achieve enough knowledge of the context bound social realities; this is the reason that she is open to new realities.

Consequently, the main aim of this type of research is to understand and interpret the reality and not generalizing and predicting the causes and the effects. In the following study, it is crucial for the researcher to apprehend motives and reasons and any subjective experiences, which are time and context bounded. (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Neuman, 2002)

## **4.2 Data collection**

Investigating people's insight is the provided information for **Qualitative data**. Narrative description of personal understanding of the people is scientific knowledge. This gathered knowledge is subjective as each individual has different thought based on the background and social norms and different environments which they live in (Guthrie, 2010).

The procedure of data collection depended on variable planning and replanning, looking ahead was always necessary for diversions. In the researcher's experience in the fieldwork, connection with different marathon runners was easily achieved, as in refugee camps of Western Sahara there is a very close connection, and especially Sahara marathon participants form a kind of so-called community. The researcher was feeling privileged as she already knew Sahara marathon organizers due to her several trips to the camps. During the first day of inscription for the marathon, she was located in the same place that all the runners were passing by. This gave her the opportunity to reach the athletes and explain about her research. During this day, the researcher could manage to arrange a meeting with several of the marathon runner during the following days after they experience the marathon in the camps. In several cases, the meeting for the interview happened in the house of the runner's host family, which is a Saharawi family. Being in the house of Sahrawis gave an added value to the whole research as everyone was feeling relaxed and in ease. Besides, after interviewing the runner, there was a chance that the researcher could have a conversation with the host family. The support of the locals and participants was achieved by the use of various patterns as such; usage of soft skills in socializing, being respectful and appreciating.

### **4.2.1 phenomenological interviews**

The interviews are one of the most common types of qualitative methods. They are discussions, usually one-on-one between an interviewer and an individual (interviewee)

that gather more in-depth information on a specific set of topics (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016).

In-depth Interviews allow a better understanding of the interviewees' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions, being a source of factual information too. Interviews also gather background information, such as past or present behavior, experience, or even expert knowledge of the individual (Guthrie, 2010).

In this thesis, the process of data collection started with the elaboration of an unstructured questionnaire (APPENDIX 2). Issues as such as women experience concerning gender in a sporting event, women experience on gender regarding her participation in a social activist context, and gender experience of female athletes of their participation in a cultural space is exposed face to face and with the less structure and conversational style. (Ellis & Berger, 2003). The main reason for choosing this type of interviews was to allow the candidates to feel free. The interviewee had a minimum control over how the respondent should answer. The participants could open up regarding the issue and take the lead, but an overall topic in mind. (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2012)

Before each interview, the interviewer introduced herself, her research, and the purpose of the interviews. She also agreed with them to record the interviews. All the interviews were face to face, and the duration of each sector was mainly between 45 minutes to one hour, in some cases, it could arrive till 3 hours depending on the engagement of the local host and participants.

English Spanish and Catalan were the main used languages in this study to undertake these interviews. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and the ones, which were not in English, were directly translated into English. Regarding Attride-Stirling, (2001), there is a need to concentrate on the content while transcribing. The researcher followed this rule in order to keep the translation accurately as much as possible.

#### **4.2.2 Interviewees purposive sampling**

In qualitative studies, committed and trustful sampling is hugely recommended by Bryman (2015) and Maxwell (2008). Maxwell (2008) further explains that this is a strategy in regards to purposefully nominating particular persons for the information they can provide. He added that this information could not be collected from other resources. Firstly, the primary method of interview sampling was defined as theoretical sampling. The main reason for choosing this method was to guarantee to get the most out of the full relevant information existed among the participants and in the camps.

By being in the camps more than a week before the start of the Sahara marathon and getting in touch with the organizers of the Sahara marathon beforehand, the researcher had the highest possibility of reaching her interviewees. It is essential to highlight the privilege of being familiar with camps for several years of visits.

Interviewer conducted unstructured interviews categorized for two groups the female athletes and the host community. The female runners who have experience in extreme sports, explicitly running and having varied participants from several destinations. The host community, in this case, are the organizers of the Sahara marathon, these people are from Spain, Italy, and Western Sahara. The reason for this added section is that the host community has a good understanding of the situation. As a result, 12 out of 20 women who ran the whole Marathon and four core-members of the marathon organizers from Italy, Spain, and western Sahara were interviewed.

### **4.3 Methods of analysis**

#### **Qualitative analysis**

In the beginning, the qualitative analysis was chosen as a technique for analysis of the collected data. The chosen methodology does not attempt to insert a style mainly but simply suggesting possible ways for the prosperity of the case (Thomas, 2006). In addition, this methodology tries to introduce a smooth-edge approach in order to use the current resources but in a more effective and attendant way possible, having considered the best practices of the same concept in mind and applied the best actions for the current area.

Considering qualitative research, the primary purpose is to raise the information and knowledge of people or the situation, which were not usually covered, and offering information that possibly can be used for social change. (Rallis & Rossman, 2011)

The qualitative research design is used in the following study in an endeavor to describe the reality of discrimination in the sport between genders and the relation between the ways women experience gender practicing extreme sports in a social activist context and cultural difference spaces. The qualitative methodology allows gaining in-depth and profound insight into the interactions of the different sectors and therefore comprehending better the complexity of the situation. Contribution to the development of the experimental knowledge is facilitated with the use of qualitative research design and the subjective and interpretation of the researcher (Thomas, 2006).

This methodology has a number of advantages, such as giving the researcher enough freedom to explore and get the information she is seeking. However, it is essential to point

out that the *qualitative analysis* itself is too broad and therefore the researcher for the prosperity of the study is presenting a vivid demonstration of a qualitative analytical method called Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). (Anderson, 2007a)

### **Thematic content analysis (TCA)**

Following the explanation made by Anderson (2007), several steps and procedures were distinguished in order to present an acceptable TCA. He further explains that this method is the most indispensable of the qualitative analytic method. Before starting this analysis, based on Anderson (2007), the transcripts of the interviews were provided. Furthermore, the post-interview notes and all the useful information were gathered through collecting data.

Afterward, the emphasis was kept on all the relevant descriptions of the topic under analysis. This was defined by highlighting the most relevant related areas. From this area distinctive unit of meaning is provided, therefore; as a result, there are several units, and from them, the researcher puts the similar units together in a pile and makes a code for each one.

The next step is going through the whole transcript of interviews and classifying different units and grouping and reorganizing these units and relabeling categories. After some days, the researcher reread the original interviews without looking at the categories. In this stage, she purifies common themes from the commonality of the participants' expressions. The researcher tries to conclude names for each theme, which is the direct reflection of participants' authentic words, and afterward, group themes in a way that reflects the whole text. In this process, the researcher tries to keep the interpretation to a minimum level possible and do not engage personal feelings and thoughts. The interpretation of the themes is happening in the Discussion part. (Anderson, 2007b)

Reducing the categories is the next step that the researcher follows. As Spencer et al. (2003) explain the researcher after going through all these steps, reviews all the categories separately and redo all the instructions until she is satisfied that the categories reflect the whole interviews.

(needs development). If embodied knowledge is going to be a central part of the paper, then, in addition to use the interviews, we will need to also use results derived from photos, videos, or simply through observation (visual ethnography).

By means of participant observation and phenomenological interviews to a group of participant women in the event, the paper outlines the role that these extensions of the

adventure space may play in the way women experience gender inequalities in adventure sports settings.

## 5 Results and discussion

In this chapter, we present the results of the empirical analysis as described in the previous chapter. They are below organized in three separate sections, each of them corresponding to the one of the three layers of conceptualization: gendered running practices in adventure marathon spaces ('the room'), gendered adventure running practices in spaces of social justice and activism ('the new neighbors'), and gendered adventure running practices in spaces of cultural difference ('the new city'). Figure 4 below sums up the themes and subthemes that resulted from the analysis.

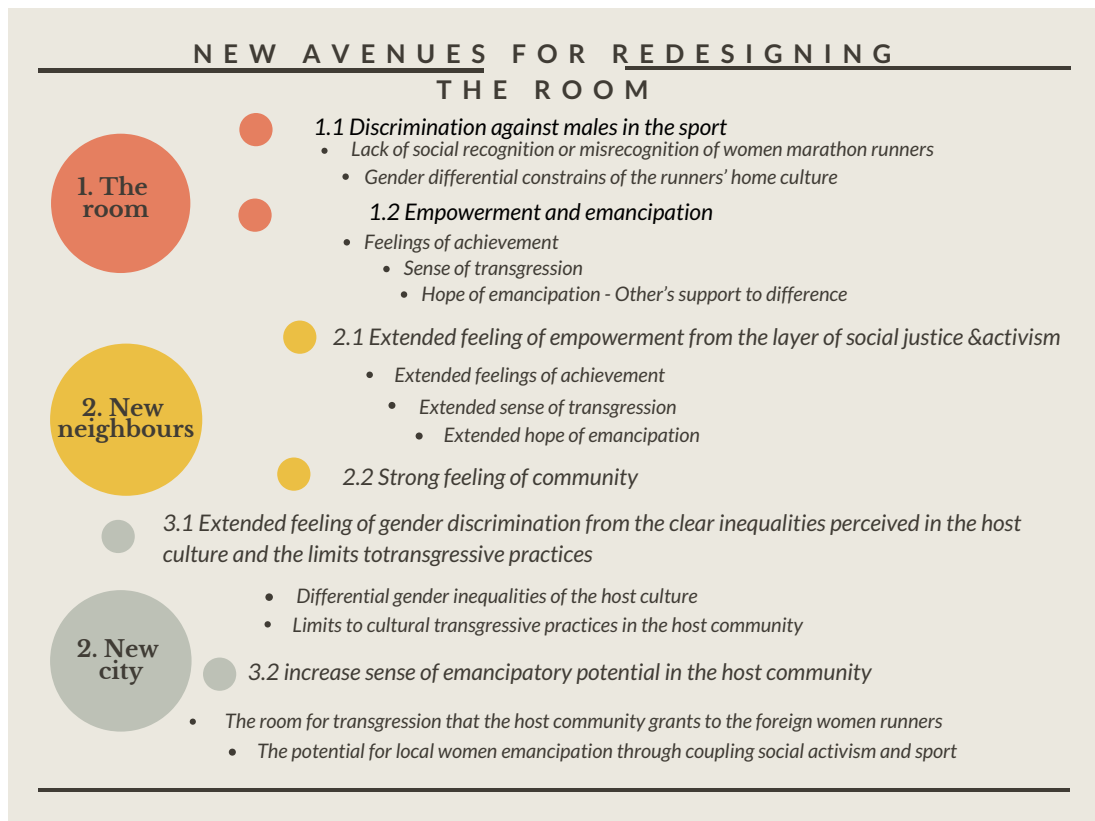


Figure 4- Visual division of the themes, New avenues to redesign 'the room' of adventure sport: summary of findings

### 5.1 Gendered running practices in adventure marathon spaces – 'the room'

This section describes the findings on how the female runners of the Sahara marathon experience gender in the adventure sports space of the marathon and the way it affects female participants. Two main themes emerged in this regard: gender inequalities and discriminations, and feelings of empowerment.

#### 5.1.1 Discrimination against males in the marathon space

Results show that these discriminations are of two types, those related to the lack of social recognition of women marathon runners, and those dealing with the differential gender constraints of the runners' home culture.



### Lack of social recognition or misrecognition of women marathon runners

Different instances of social misrecognition we found from the analysis. Ranging encompassing financial constraints from sponsors', less valuable prizes and awards, sports gear, and lack of consideration of the lower physical power of women, together with the lack of attention of media to women and the reification of men in the sport. Several participants were affirming that there is much less attention to watching female sports. This issue was underlined by interviewee12th, who was a sports journalist struggling to find equal attention to both genders. Regarding the lower physical power of women, the 9th interviewee stated:

*"I am convinced that physical differences between genders make female participation in sport less valuable. In general, female participation in sports events is treated as a simple sub category of male sport."*

The interviewees, some of which were also mountaineers and adepts to other extreme sports in addition to marathon running, also stressed how much more difficult it is for them to have sponsors or to earn a living out of sport than their male peers.

### Gender differential constrains of the runners' home culture

Along with discriminations due to social misrecognition, results were also found about the differential cultural constraints of the women runner's own home culture concerning their peer male athletes. For instance, we found how the perception of relatives and friends back at home that running a Marathon in a place like the Sahrawi refugee camps would be dangerous for a woman. For instance, the 1st interviewee mentioned that in her own words:

*"My family and friends were worried about me as they think that running a marathon in an unknown Muslim culture is a very hazardous activity for me because I am a woman."*

#### **5.1.2 Feelings of empowerment**

The analysis of the data shows that these feelings of empowerment of the women marathon runners when experiencing the marathon sports space can take three different forms: feelings of achievement, sense of transgression, and hope of emancipation.

#### Feelings of achievement

Feelings of empowerment in the form of achievements were found in most of the interviewees and revealed the pleasure of getting more proficient at being competitive and the feeling of self-realization for meeting the challenges of the race. For instance, the

2nd interviewee, who all her life she was into sports, she ran ultra-marathons, marathons, trail runs, and mountain runs, emphasized these points in the following terms:

*“Female athletes have much more tolerance for pain, so we can do any sport for a long time, which is a great achievement from my point of view. As an example, I can refer to one of my experiences of 100 miles running in the mountains. Only 11 persons finished this competition out of 30 and half of them were women. I believe women take their responsibility more seriously, and they have a higher tolerance.”*

Several of the interviewees also expressed that they feel empowered and realized each time they finish a marathon. The 5th interviewee was a mom of two kids; she highlighted that going through pregnancy and giving birth took her to a massive drop in her physical situation which her male peers do not experience. She added that:

*“each time I got myself back to the gym and tried hard in order to get back on track. It’s an achievement for me, and I feel realized”.*

The 11th interviewee also asserted that:

*“At the beginning of my way, it was tough; it took a long time to prove myself and gain respect in the world of running, which is very competitive and primarily male-driven. Now everyone considers my experience, and people know me and my abilities. In contrast with my male partners, they do not have to earn respect. They do not have to prove themselves”.*

#### Sense of transgression

Empowerment through transgression occurs through the experiencing difference that goes against convention and the feeling of relative tolerance by the dominant others. Transgressors are pioneers of emancipatory processes. Results show how some of the interviewees feel empowered by standing out of the crowd in their host cultures and breaking deep-seated conventions and assumptions related to gender differences. They expressed that among their society, their friends, or family members, they are considered different. An excellent example of this case was described by the 8th interviewee, who is a Sahrawi woman living abroad and a runner, which makes her a particular case. She is an example of a woman who goes against ‘the rules’ and is accepted as a pioneer. She said:

*“I lived in Spain for several years, and since last year I am living in Belgium. I always loved sport and always wanted to look for the possibility of doing more of it. This year is the first year I am running*

*the whole Sahara marathon here in the camps. My community expects something else from a Sahrawi woman. Housework and taking care of the family and kids should be my job. But instead, I am here running with the running outfit and not my traditional clothes. My people are shocked, and only because I am a Sahrawi woman. All the other foreigners are treated with normality, but this makes me feel proud. I feel powerful and will continue running each year here and also back in Brussels”.*

### Hope of emancipation

Instances of empowerment derived from the feeling of emancipation were also found in the analysis. Feelings of emancipation emanate from perceiving other’s acceptance of support for unconventional practices that erase inequalities. For instance, the 4th interviewee explained that she does not feel discrimination participating in this sporting event. She stressed how much support she was receiving from her male partners. The 11th interviewee explicitly expressed:

*“We all are human being, and we manage to share the same facilities during the race.”*

Several other interviewees also mentioned that over the years, the participation of women in marathons is increasing and therefore, they are receiving more interest and attention.

## **5.2 Gendered adventure running practices in spaces of social justice and activism – ‘new neighbors’**

In this second section, we describe the findings regarding the effect produced on the women runners’ experience of the marathon space by their experiencing of the strong social activism space of the local community. Two main themes were found: a widespread feeling of empowerment, and a strong sense of community.

### **5.2.1 Extended feeling of empowerment from the layer of social justice and activism**

These extended feelings of empowerment take the same three different forms that those experienced with regards to the strict sports space: feelings of achievement, sense of transgression, and hope of emancipation. It was interesting to see faces of the interviewees and their passion once the conversation came to this direction.

#### Extended feelings of achievement from the layer of social justice and activism

There was a general agreement on the increased feeling of achievement provided by their introduction to the social injustices of the Sahrawi people in the refugee camps and the

opportunity to contribute to the existing corresponding social movement. It was acknowledged the feeling of empowerment emanated from being in close proximity of such a strong case of social injustice, or from having contributed to the visibility of the case through their participation, and in some cases from a commitment to further involvement in the Sahrawi social movement. For instance, the 9th interviewee expressed the following:

*“I know about the Saharawi cause; however, I did not have any idea how the real situation would be like. Since I arrived in the camps, I feel that this aspect is on top of all my objectives. Especially because I am a woman.”*

All the interviewees mentioned how after becoming aware of the social injustice aspect of the event, getting to know more about it, feeling they were contributing to the social movement, produced a feeling of achievement equal if not superior to that provided by performing in the race. The 3rd interviewee had participated in several editions of the Sahara marathon, and she is planning to come back as much as she can in order to support the social movement. She mentioned:

*“This event is a unique case, in which in addition to running, I can also contribute to a good cause. I am now acting as a goodwill ambassador for the Sahrawi people. I went to Washington and gave a talk about the Sahrawi social movement. I bring new people to the Sahara marathon each year. I have also started different projects in order to help the Sahrawi community in the refugee camps. Opening a running club for Sahrawi kids is one of the main activities that we sponsor in the camps. Moreover, we sponsor a Sahrawi coach and several of our international ambassadors who are visiting the camps each year to work in the club. I truly feel empowered as a woman.”*

#### Extended sense of transgression from the added layer of social justice and activism

Social activism in a society with individualistic values and wellbeing is still a transgressive act in some cultural milieus. Supporting social movements involves walking away from some passive positions in neoliberal societies and therefore offer an opportunity to become and feel ‘minoritarian’ and therefore somewhat transgressive in particular social spheres of the home culture. Therefore, becoming a social activist, in addition to being a women athlete, can reinforce the feelings of empowerment through transgression. Some interviewees were well aware of their pioneering role in social

activism among their friends and family back home. For instance, the 5th interviewee stated:

*“My friend and I run the Sahara marathon for a solidarity project we started a while ago back home. Our project supports and pursues women emancipation through sport. We feel very proud of being representatives of Sahrawi women in our home country. It is sad how some people in our own societies are becoming more insensitive to social justice issues and feeling that social activism is still something uncommon.”*

#### Extended hope of emancipation from the added layer of social justice and activism

Feelings of empowerment through hope for further emancipation was also found in some of the interviewees. The overall experience of the Sahara marathon was described as being much less gendered than traditional marathons where the race is the only ingredient of the event. Therefore, participating in a new space where gender differences are much more blurred than in the adventure sports space is seen as an opportunity for further emancipation. Moreover, sport can also be considered as a mechanism for social justice and therefore help to emancipate women through practicing sport. The 12th interviewee and the winner of the Sahara marathon 2019 emphasized:

*“I believe more female athletes must show themselves for these types of solidarity activities.”*

#### **5.2.2 Strong feeling of community**

The participants of the Sahara marathon that we interviewed highlights the communitarian and friendly atmosphere of the event, which exceeds by far that experienced in other only sports events they have participated in. They explain how this feeling of belonging to a community provides an additional layer of satisfaction and reinforces the feeling of equality. For instance, the 3rd interviewee said:

*“In this special event, I feel that a big family comes together; I feel loads of positive energy. This encountering feels like a communal experience for me. I believe that these types of activities should be emphasized in sports events. In the particular case of the Sahara Marathon, I feel that this objective is perfectly accomplished.”*

She continued;

*“You come to this event and experience the people and this place, and you want to return time and time and remain part of this community, there is*

*something about strengthening the social movement and trying to think of ways to help these people more, and that is why I come back year after year.”*

The organizers of the Sahara marathon also highlight this aspect of the event and acknowledge it is a very relevant aspect of their commitment with the event year after year:

*“It is like a family meeting every year with old and new people coming together for the challenge and for supporting the social movement.”*

### **5.3 Gendered adventure running practices in spaces of cultural difference – ‘a new city’**

In this final section of the chapter, we describe the findings regarding the effect produced on the women runners’ experience of the marathon space by their experiencing the strongly different gendered culture of the host society. Two main themes emerged from the data: an extended feeling of gender inequalities and discrimination, and an increased sense of emancipatory potential.

#### **5.3.1 Extended feeling of gender discrimination from the clear inequalities perceived in the host culture and the limits to transgressive practices**

This extended feeling of gender discrimination manifest in two different ways: in the differential gender inequalities of the host culture, and in the experiencing of the limits to cultural transgressiveness of the visiting women runners’ presence.

##### *Differential gender inequalities of the host culture*

Results show how women runners of the Sahara marathon perceive strong host community gender inequalities which constraints both local women involvement in the race and some of the runner women’s practices. Therefore, they perceive additional and new forms of gender discrimination to those they already have in their home societies.

Some interviewees were explicitly expressing their perceptions and feelings of discrimination among local women of the host culture. The 9th interviewee expressed that:

*“I do not understand this culture entirely, but some differences are eye-catching and surprising for me. For example, we generally only eat with men in our host family. Women of the house do not eat with us. There is no problem for me as a woman to eat with men, but apparently, it is not acceptable that local women eat with guests once the man of the family is at home. The*

*difference among genders in the local community was so eye-catching and clear.”*

The interviewee 10th expressed that she was surprised that there was practically no local woman competing in the marathon. She found this situation deplorable. She was questioning if the local women were not allowed to compete or if running is proscribed to women in their society. She was concerned about why they value female runners from abroad but do not consider themselves running.

Another instance of this is provided by the Sahrawi runner who lives in Belgium, 8th interviewee:

*“I was born and raised in the refugee camps; I grew with this culture and rituals. I can express my words easily in order to explain what I am going through. In my society, the participation of female foreign runners is acceptable for the locals, and people respect and value their act. It is because foreigners do not share the same religion with us and simply because they have different cultures. However, society does not accept me running because we share the same culture.”*

This issue was reinforced by the organizers of the Sahara Marathon, which confirmed that so far only women participants in the marathon or half marathon from the Sahrawi society have been Sahrawi women who live abroad.

#### Limits to cultural transgressive practices in the host community

Results also reveal how some of the constraints of the local culture do also apply to international women runners. Accordingly, it seems that for the women runners there is some room for transgressing the local culture as seen in one interview excerpt above, but in the end, it has some limitations, like in the case of dress code, or having to be in the public space with friends and not on their own. The interviewee 11th, who said illustrate this:

*“Here in the camps as a part of the Sahara Marathon community, I feel great and happy. However, I might not have felt the same if I had been here by myself. It has been a few years since I wished to come to the camps and participate in the Sahara marathon, but I needed to convince a friend of mine to accompany me. I felt the need of coming to the camps with the company as a single woman in such a different cultural space is somehow breaking the rule.”*

Also, interviewee 11, a professional mountain guide, and marathon runner, mentioned that:

*“In some cultural destination, not only I need to be careful about the way I dress but also, I need to be careful the way I act, laugh or smile as it can convey sexual misunderstanding. This situation is not what my male colleagues are experiencing. They can be free of misjudgments regardless of what they say.”*

### ***5.3.2 Increased sense of emancipatory potential in the host community***

This increased sense of emancipatory potential emerges from the combination of two different circumstances: the room for transgression that the host community grants to the foreign women runners, and the existence of spaces for meaningful encounters of local and foreign women, which is only granted by the combination of sport and social activism in the Sahara marathon.

#### ***The room for transgression that the host community grants to the foreign women runners***

The room for the transgression that the local community leaves to foreign women runners is clearly acknowledged by the interviewees, as we have already seen in some of the chosen excerpts further above. Therefore, by this means, local women can be exposed to alternative gendered practices, which may become potential models for future emancipatory change in the host community.

The organizers of the Sahara marathon affirmed that during the first years of the Sahara Marathon, female runner participation was very unusual. They expressed that this has changed and now Sahrawi people respect and give value to female participants. The first woman who had participated in several marathons in different cultural spaces mentioned:

*“It seems that foreigners do not have to follow the rules that local women have to follow. The rules are bent, and there are fewer obligations from foreign runners.”*

#### ***The potential for local women emancipation through coupling social activism and sport***

However, the results also show that this room for the transgression that is open to the foreign women participants could not be effective as an emancipatory example for local women, if the event was a pure athletic or adventure event, in which case the local women might not even be able to become part of the audience. However, due to the social justice activism of the Sahara Marathon, the importance of social activism for the local community, and due to the fact that Sahrawi women, after a process of emancipation that



started at the time of the war for liberation, are active and productive participants and even leaders in some of the existing social movements. They can thus be an active part of the audience of the Sahara Marathon or even of the organization. Therefore, by this mean are closely exposed to the transgressive sportive practice of the foreign women runners. This way, the potential for further emancipation of the Sahrawi women within their society is kept alive and can be felt as empowering. One of the members of the host community explained:

“In the world of solidarity, women play an important role, and in the Saharawi world, women play a vital role. Because, on the one hand, Sahrawi people were involved in a long-term war with Morocco, and the women were bearing the weight of the camps. On the other hand, after the war, it was the women who had the main responsibilities for the house and children’s education, while men were working in the other cities in the camps or even in other countries away from the family.”

## **6 Conclusions**

In this paper, we addressed the call made by previous researchers to study further how the gendered spaces of adventure sports and the differences and inequalities they produce could be neutralized. Using the metaphor of ‘the room’ (Sharp, 2001), the question to address is how ‘the room’ could be redesigned.

Instead of only following the mainstream of research which consist of further analyzing the way adventure sport women experience this gendered space and the role their home culture plays in perpetuating difference, the paper focuses on novel avenues by looking beyond the strict realm of adventure sport activity and home culture, and explores how these women experience adventure sports practices where the practice has multiple purposes beyond sport, and when they are performed within and in close contact with a larger and differently gendered social space.

The empirical analysis has involved adventure marathon women runners, participants in the 2019 Sahara Marathon in the Refugee Camps of the Sahrawi people of Western Sahara, near the Algerian - Western Sahara border. In addition to the activities of an adventure marathon in the desert, this event provides the exposure of athletes to additional experiential layers. The social justice issues the local host community has been facing for 40+ years and the social movements and activism that they have created, and the close

contact with a cultural space which is gendered in a different way than the home cultural spaces of the participating women runners.

Therefore, after the analysis we are in condition to ask the proposed research question, i.e. In what way and to what extent an extended social purpose of an adventure sport event, and the practice of the sport in and in close contact with a host community's differentially-gendered cultural space, affect the way women athletes experience gender inequalities and negotiate embodied knowledge in the practice of the sport?

Regarding the way participants in the Sahara Marathon experience their participation in marathon running spaces in general and in the Sahara Marathon in particular, we found most of the gender inequalities and discriminations already identified in the literature.

The particular instances of gender discriminations identified by the interviewed participants cover a broad range of misrecognition including, financial constraints from sponsors' gender discrimination, less valuable prizes and awards, material discriminations regarding gendered sport gear, and social recognition constraints related to the lack of social consideration of the lower physical power of women, together with the lack of attention of media to women and the reification of men in sport. In addition to this recognition discrimination, participants of the Sahara Marathon also found differential cultural constraints in relation to their peer male athletes, e.g. the perception of relatives and friends back at home that running a Marathon in a place like this would be dangerous for a woman.

In addition to these examples of lived discrimination, women, participants emphasize several constructive aspects of their experience as marathon runners in general and in the Sahara Marathon in particular, which involve feelings of empowerment. Instances of empowerment are found in the form of achievements, e.g. getting more proficient at being competitive, and feeling of self-realization for meeting the challenges of the race; in the form of transgression, e.g. noticing they are socially standing out of the crowd in their host cultures by breaking deep-seated conventions and assumptions which perpetuate gender inequalities; or in the form of emancipation, e.g. the feeling of support and attention received from the fellow male participants and the broader audience for her being 'transgressive'.

Results regarding the effect produced on the women participants' experience of the marathon space by their experiencing the social injustice activism of the local community are interestingly constructive.

On the one hand, they value the additional layer of empowerment this brings to their athletic experience. This added feeling of empowerment took the same three forms already found for the purely sportive experience: achievement, e.g. getting to know and be in close proximity of such a strong case of social injustice, feeling of having contributed to the visibility of the injustice through their participation, and getting mobilized and willing to somehow further support or join the Sahrawi social movement; transgression, e.g. feeling of pride by experiencing social activism as an activity, which because of its minoritarian character in the athletes home societies, can be seen as somewhat transgressive in particular social spheres of the home culture; and emancipation, e.g. participating in a new space where gender differences are much more blurred than in the adventure sport space. On the other hand, in addition to the extended feeling of empowerment, the women runners underline the strong sense of community that the social activism layer brings to the marathon community, e.g., willingness of some participants to repeat year after year, intense feeling of involvement, and social proximity of the local audience with the community of athletes.

Finally, the results regarding the effect produced on the women participants' experience of the marathon space by their experiencing the strongly different gendered culture of the host society, are also remarkably impressive.

On the one hand, they stress the way they perceive and experience additional and new forms of gender discrimination to those they already have in their home societies. Some of these constraints are noticed in the behavior of their local hosts but do not apply for the women visitors, while others do apply for them as well. For instance, the women marathon runners are sensitive to the very clear distance and difference among genders in the local community, which does not apply to the way local men and women engage with the women runners. It produces a conflicting feeling of gender difference, as they as foreign women are privileged, but as universal women, they feel even more discriminated through their empathy with the fellow local women, none of which runs the race. However, some of the constraints of the local culture do also apply to international women runners. Therefore, it seems that for the women runners there is some room for the transgression of the local culture, but in the end, it is bounded, like in the case of dress code, or having to be in the public space with friends and not on their own.

However, on the other hand, the women runners also have valuable experiences related to the different cultural host space. For instance, the room for a transgression that the local community leaves to foreign women runners introduces and makes visible

alternative gendered practices, which become potential models for future social change in the host community. Moreover, this room for transgression could not be effective as an emancipatory example for local women, if the event was simply an athletic and adventure event, in which case the local women may not even become part of the audience. However, due to the social justice activism of the event and its importance for the local community, and to the fact that Sahrawi women, after a process of emancipation at the time of the war, are active and productive participants and even leaders in some of the existing social movements, they are also active part of the audience of the Sahara Marathon and the organization of the event, and therefore are closely exposed to the transgressive sportive participation of the women runners, which increases the potential for further emancipation of the Sahrawi women within their own society.

Now, from all the results above we can deduce the following relevant conclusions, which are contributions not only to the literature on gender and adventure sport, but also that of gender in social movements, and that of gender and tourism:

The research confirms the existence of gender discriminations in the practice of adventure marathon running, which broadly coincides with those already acknowledged by the literature (Shaw, 1994, Fink, 2015, Cooky et al., 2015). Emphasis is put on social recognition discrimination of different sorts, and in cultural constraints in both their home society and the community hosting the event, and not so much in material or technical discriminations, which in the case of mountaineering are prominent (Dingle & Kiewa, 2006; Hall, 2018)

However, in these spaces of difference, different opportunities for gender empowerment arise in the form of challenging achievements, transgressive practices, and feelings of emancipation. Even if the literature on adventures sports have paid some attention to these issues (Kay & Jeanes, 2008; Boniface, 2006; Scraton, Fasting, Pfister, & Bunuel, 1999; Whitson, 2002; Wearing, Small, & Foley, 2018), the results of this research reflect the type of women who have the capacity to contribute to the redesign of 'the room' from within.

Regarding the effect produced on the women participants' experience of the marathon space by their experiencing the social injustice activism of the local community results show the intrinsic value women give to the participation in social justice activities. How it somewhat compensates the intrinsic misrecognition of the adventures sport space, how it produces additional layers of empowerment potential in the form of supplementary challenging accomplishments, new transgressive roles, additional opportunities for

emancipation, and the additional value of the sense of community brought in by the communitarian atmosphere of the social movement. Some of these findings support existing knowledge of the literature on social movements and social activism (Stephen, 2010; Shitrit, 2015; Lofland, 1996; Welzel, 2013) but those referred to the impact on social activism experiences on the lived experience of adventure sport gendered spaces are entirely novel.

Finally, as for effect produced on the women participants' experience of the marathon space by their experiencing the sharply different gendered culture of the host society, the findings reveal the way women runners perceive and experience additional and new forms of gender discrimination to those they already have in their home societies (Reisinger & Turner, 2012), and how some of which only apply to the women of the hosts society, but others also apply to them. This type of findings resonates with existing knowledge in the field of tourism which has mostly focused on the limitations that the host culture imposes on the women visitors (Cole, 2007; Brown & Osman, 2017);

however, the conflicting feeling of gender difference in cultural spaces like this, whereas foreign women are differentially privileged, but as universal women they feel the discrimination suffered by the fellow local women, and how this conflict indirectly affects the women runners' experience of the adventure sport space of difference is a novel finding. The close contact and encounters between women runners and host community women offer room for the latter been exposed to the former's tolerated transgressions and therefore to alternative gendered practices and potential empowerment and emancipation. Nonetheless, the results also show the potential difficulties the realizing of these meaningful encounters may have unless the practice of the adventure sport is tied up to some other action field, in which the active participation of women is culturally sanctioned by the local society. In our case, this was realized by means of tying up the marathon to the social activism around the long-term social injustices of the Sahrawi people. This is also a novel finding and therefore, a contribution to the works of literature of gender and sport and gender and tourism.

Summing up, we have explored in this research two novel alternative ways of 'redesigning the room', that is of making adventure sport and adventure tourism spaces more welcoming to women. To refer to them, we propose the two new concepts of selective hybridization and meaningful encounters of difference. The former refers to strategies where the adventure sport is combined with other types of pursuits, which bring to the adventure sport experience practices and discourses that are less gendered; and the

latter to strategies which involve the practice of the adventure sport in foreign spaces of difference in which close encounters with the local community are actualized and made meaningful for further emancipation.

Finally, we would like to point at some future research, which would further information about potential avenues to designing adventure sports spaces of equality and more generally to women empowerment and emancipation.

This research has only focused on how women experience the practice of adventure sport in a context of selective hybridization and of meaningful encounters of difference. As a consequence, the results are limited to the perceptions and experiences of the women runners when the full effectiveness of these strategies also depends on how other relevant actors like the male runners, social activists, and members of the local community, perceive and experience the event.

Therefore, in our research, nothing is known about how the male athletes experience these two new layers of operation, and thus, further research about male's experiences will contribute to elucidate whether these strategies add value or detracts value from the nude experience of the adventure sport in itself for the male runners.

Moreover, the case analyzed in this research combines both strategies, and therefore it may be difficult to discern whether some of the experiences of the women runners are produced by one of both or the combination of the two. Therefore, reproducing similar studies in cases where only selective hybridization or only meaning encounters of difference holds will help to further clarify the effects of each of the two strategies, and of the two together.

Furthermore, most of the women runners of the Sahara Marathon were athletes who met the social justice movement as a novel experience. However, there are also women participants, and particularly those running the shortest distances of the race, who are a social activist who met the practice of adventure sport as the novel experience. Focus on the experience of these women will illuminate the effects of selective hybridization and meaningful encounters of difference in the space of social activism.

Also, attention to the way local women from the host community experience the meaningful encounters of difference with the visiting adventure sports space will also contribute to discerning how much this strategy is useful in the path towards gender emancipation.

Finally, these strategies can be exported to other gendered fields and assess their impact on the selected, gendered field itself, on the field chosen for hybridization, and on the corresponding host space of cultural difference.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Over view of interviewees

<b>Interviewee/ Female runners</b>	<b>Country of birth/ residence</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> interviewee	From the USA living in France, Paris
2 <sup>nd</sup> interviewee	From USA, Los Angeles California
3 <sup>rd</sup> interviewee	From, USA
4 <sup>th</sup> interviewee	From, Spain
5 <sup>th</sup> interviewee	From Spain
6 <sup>th</sup> interviewee	From Belgium, lives in Switzerland
7 <sup>th</sup> interviewee	Form Singapore
8 <sup>th</sup> interviewee	From Refugee camps of western Sahara, lives between Spain and Belgium
9 <sup>th</sup> interviewee	From Spain
10 <sup>th</sup> interviewee	From USA
11 <sup>th</sup> interviewee	From Sweden
12 <sup>th</sup> interviewee	From Sweden

<b>Interviewee/ The organizers</b>	<b>Country of birth/ residence</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> interviewee	From the Italy
2 <sup>nd</sup> interviewee	From Spain
3 <sup>rd</sup> interviewee	From, Western Sahara
4 <sup>th</sup> interviewee	From, Italy

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Conversation-Style Interview Question Guide:**

**Introduction:** Hello, my name is Shima Ahmadi, I am a master student at the University of Girona, faculty of tourism. Thank you so much for your time and agreeing to participate in my investigation, I really appreciate it. I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences as a marathon runner, extreme sports athlete. I am excited about hearing your story and how you understand and feel and experience gender in the sport that you are practicing. Furthermore, if your experience can vary depending on the cultural space you run or for the cause you run.

Please if you feel uncomfortable with the questions, do not answer to them. I will audio record our interview today. Is this okay with you?

This interview is intended to be conversational. I have several questions that I would like to ask you; however, I am more interested in investigating new ideas and topics as they appear. With this interview, I would like to begin by asking you the following questions:

#### **A) Questions for the female participants of Sahara marathon**

1. How participating women experience 'gender' in what concerns their participation in the sporting event (focusing only on the 'functional' aspects of the sports activity as a whole)
2. How participating women experience 'gender' in what concerns participating in a sports event, which takes place in a 'cultural space' that frames 'gender' in a singular way (in this case, a Muslim community with its idiosyncrasy)
3. How participating women experience 'gender' in what concerns participating in a solidarity event, which takes the form of a sports event in this particular case (to what extent this additional dimension of the event - solidarity- modify (if at all) the way participants experience gender during the event.

#### **B) Questions for the host community**

1. I am interested in learning more about how the host community, that is you and your people, experience hosting and watching the Sahara Marathon?
2. in particular, how you experience the participation of those women who run the race? Please explain to me more about your experiences? (depending on the answer, let me know also know about whether you would ever have considered participating, and why

or why not?). In case if the interviewee is a woman. For the case of men, then the question must be adapted accordingly.

4. Why do you think there is such a small number of Sahrawi women participating in the race?