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The way we roll: the use of longboards and cameras by girls to roll through the urban outdoors

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ABSTRACT

We use a nonrepresentational (NRT) lens to explore the affect generated in the use of an action sport for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds in a short-term Sport for Development (SfD) project. Longboards and GoPro cameras were used to enable adolescent girls from disadvantaged communities to participate in urban outdoor action sport and to be digitally engaged by making vlogs of their participation. We used an NRT framework to explore the ways affects were produced during longboard instruction practices. The data consisted of 36 longboard instruction observations, 22 focus groups and 230 min of selected video fragments with the girls. We show how 'U on Board' became a counter pedagogic space and discuss how such SfD projects can create knowledges and pleasure in ways that can open up new possibilities for shaping sport practices.

KEYWORDS

Disadvantaged girls; sport for development; nonrepresentational theory; action sports

Introduction

In this paper, we use a nonrepresentational lens to explore the affect generated in the use of an action sport for girls from a disadvantaged¹ background in a Sport for Development (SfD) project. Sport is often seen as an important vehicle for enabling social inclusion and for its possible positive contribution to the development of youth in disadvantaged communities (Nols 2018). Adolescent girls with an immigrant background, lower socio-economic status (SES) and/or those who participate in the lowest level of schooling are however, unlikely to be involved in sport and are often positioned as being uninterested in sport participation (Elling and Selten 2016; Schailée, Theeboom, and Skille 2017; Schailée, Theeboom, and Van Cauwenberg 2015; Vandermeerschen, Vos, and Scheerder 2015). Efforts to involve them reveal that a multitude of complex factors and issues, more so than a lack of interest, play a role. Special initiatives that invite girls to participate in sports/physical activities often have long term goals, specifically to attract them to and become involved in mainstream sport clubs. Research suggests the success percentage of such invitations is low (Super, Verkooijen, and Koelen 2018). Sport clubs tend to be structured for those with financial resources, parental support, competition and emphasize boys/men's sport and regular participation.

In contrast, SfD projects, especially those focusing on those who are framed as being disadvantaged, often specifically focus on girls (e.g. Chawansky 2011; Oxford and Spaaij 2019; Zipp 2017). The intent of such projects is to provide the girls with structured activities, to encourage healthy practices and long-term sport involvement, to learn life skills and to empower these girls. The chosen sports are often team sports in which participation is assumed to challenge gender stereotypes such as football, martial arts or cricket. Such projects tend to be plagued however, by instrumental perspectives that require measurable results and progress in the use of sport and life skills. The enjoyment and pleasure that these activities may evoke tend to be ignored and/or seen as not measurable and therefore unimportant (Chawansky and Carney 2017). Thorpe, Hayhurst, and Chawansky (2018) also contend that the actual experiences of these girls during these projects tend to be ignored and subordinated to the goal of long-term participation.

As we indicated above, often girls from disadvantaged background living in the West may not feel at home in sport clubs and in structured competitive sport activities. Relatively little attention has been paid to possibly offering action sports to these girls. Action sports tend to be individual activities, unorganized, unstructured, often practiced outside the context of a sport club without coaches/instructors and emphasize a desirable masculinity for mostly middle-class young males (Gilchrist and Wheaton 2017; Smits 2019). A great deal of the research on action sports focuses on the highly skilled, on boys/men who comprise the largest number of participants, on how some girls/women challenge this male domination, on those having financial resources to obtain the necessary equipment and places to practice, on those who practice it for a long time to develop their skills, on professional athletes and on how participants develop a community of action participants (e.g. Borden 2016; Smits 2019; Thorpe and Olive 2016)

Exceptions to this emphasis in action sport research are found in a SfD programs in non-western countries (see for example, Thorpe, Ahmad, and Williams 2018; Thorpe and Chawansky 2016). Initiators of such programmes contend that outdoor action sports can provide a valuable opportunity for participation of groups who are traditionally marginalized within mainstream sport settings. Thorpe and Chawansky for example, used the sport of skateboarding in a project for SfD girls in Afghanistan. Projects such as Skateistan aim to develop physically active, empowered and healthy girls in the long term by developing their skills in this activity and by contributing to their education and to their health and wellbeing. The research on such projects has often focused on the images of participants and on how leaders negotiate the tensions in various local meanings given to gender (e.g. Forde and Frisby 2015; Hayhurst 2011; Thorpe 2014). The actual experiences of the girls has received less scholarly attention while scholars have also argued that more attention needs to be paid to every day experiences and affect including pleasure that such participation in SfD evokes in girls (Chawansky and Carney 2017; Thorpe and Chawansky 2016; Thorpe and Rinehart 2010).

Action sport participation is often based on and elicits feelings of pleasure and freedom. Action sport athletes and those who wish to emphasize (and exploit) the image of freedom associated with these sports have claimed this freedom as an essential element of action sports (Smits 2019). The aforementioned research however, has also paid relatively little attention to exploring the pleasure and enjoyment and/or affect that may be generated in those sports (Chawansky and Carney 2017; Pringle, Rinehart,

and Caudwell 2015). Thorpe and Rinehart (2010) suggest exploring the affect evoked in action sports through the lens of nonrepresentational theory (NRT).

Theoretical framework

Our project is situated within a nonrepresentational framework (NRT) based on work by Thrift (2008). We draw on application of his work to sport in general (Andrews 2017), to action sports (Thorpe and Rinehart 2010) and to methodology (Vannini 2015).

A considerable body of literature has attempted to understand action sports, often using a post structural approach (Smits 2019; Spowart, Burrows and Shaw 2010; Thorpe 2008; 2014). Scholars (e.g. Andrews 2017; Thorpe and Rinehart 2010) have argued however, that such discursive approaches although insightful, are based on the cognitive and tend to place movement experiences in the margins and fail to capture the immediacy of the moment and the affect and sensuality that connect the material and nonmaterial during performance. They contend an approach like NRT that places embodied movement at the centre of its analysis is needed to explore dynamics of affect in sport, including action sports. NRT goes beyond the individual and focuses on the practices, performances, affect (senses and sensations) involved and the interactions of participants with material objects (Andrews 2017; Thorpe and Rinehart 2010; Thrift 2008). Specifically, this perspective views physical activities and sport as shared 'material, embodied, expressed and sensed physical act(s) happening in space and time' (Andrews 2017, 769; Thorpe and Rinehart 2010).

According to Thrift (2008), NRT is based on seven overlapping tenets or principles: on flow, is anti-biographical, focuses on practices, assumes interactions between bodies and objects, is experimental, assumes affect is produced and transmitted and may produce kinetic empathy. We briefly explain these principles here and expand on them in the results section. Although they overlap and are conflated, we present them as separate principles here. The first principle asks researchers to pay attention to the 'on flow'. Vannini (2015) suggests 'on flow' means researchers explore how embodied movement becomes an 'instrument of sensation, play, and imagination, and a life force fuelling the excesses and the rituals of everyday living' (4). The second principle of NRT is that it is anti-biographical. It rejects methodologies that focus on the individual and their (auto)biographies. Instead NRT focuses on the lived 'now' and assumes complexity and relationality not only between human beings but also in their relationship with material objects, and background. Thorpe and Rinehart (2010) assert that in NRT 'the relevance of past lives is relatively inconsequential, and only meant for elucidating the now' (1227). Thirdly, NRT places practice, action and performance at the centre of its description of embodied movement. In action sports such as longboarding, these movements are continually changing and in a state of flux.

The fourth principle of NRT, interactions between bodies and objects, is based on the assumption that the body, the material and the social cannot be separated from each other. Longboarders must continually be connected to their boards in some ways, while they navigate different surfaces, move through neighbourhoods and interact with other bodies who may or may not be boarding. Principle 5, experimental, asserts that NRT methods and reporting of data are experimental instead of being based on representation. This means for example, that researchers focus on descriptions of embodied

experiences and do not try to uncover or assign deeper symbolic meanings to the descriptions given by participants to those experiences. NRT does not attempt to 'uncover symbolic meaning where other, more practical forms of meaning or even no meaning at all exist.' (Vannini 2015, 4). Principle 6, affect, reflects the importance placed on the affective capacities of bodies. Thrift (2008) has argued that affect cannot be neatly defined or circumscribed. It includes but transcends moods, emotions, sensations anger, fear, happiness, joy, disgust, embarrassment, shame and grief. Andrews (2017) argues that affect is contagious as either a toxin or as a positive infection that acts on bodies and materiality's and vice versa. Affect therefore has no bounds or limits but is ongoing as it is produced by and acts on bodies (Thorpe and Rinehart 2010)

The novelty of experience as well as ethics and morals define the seventh NRT principle (Thrift 2008). Specifically, participation in action sports 'may enable some individuals to resonate better with the world and to realize better a sense of an existential now' (Thorpe and Rinehart 2010, 1276). Thorpe and Rinehart also describe how participation in action sports may create kinetic empathy. They argue that this may develop as a result of 'kinaesthetic awareness' that is 'both the means by which the body experiences itself kinaesthetically and also the means by which it apprehends other bodies' (1277).

Thrift (2008) has argued researchers/scholars should make greater use of NRT because it emphasizes the immediate experience of movement in space. In this paper we take up Thorpe and Rinehart's (2010) and Chawansky and Carney's (2017) challenge for researchers to explore affect in action sports and SfD projects using NRT. The research question of this study was: how can a nonrepresentational lens be used to describe the generated affects in an action SfD project that aimed to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of participating girls from disadvantaged neighbourhoods? The focus in the current paper is primarily on the affect that was produced during this activity however, and not on assessing mental and physical wellbeing although research (Andrews, Chen, and Myers 2014) suggests positive affect can contribute to subjective sense of well-being.

Context 'U on board'

The purpose of professional youth work in the Netherlands is to guide and support young people between the ages of 10 and 23 years and living in disadvantaged circumstances, on their way to adulthood (Metz 2011). Activities consisting of a combination of urban culture and sport, take place during their leisure time (Metz 2011). Youth work offers young people the opportunity to learn skills and to obtain information and advice, practical help and individual guidance (Metz 2013). Youth workers use a gender-specific method of working with girls, that aims to support girls in their identity development on their way to adulthood so that they are able to shape their own lives as much as is possible (De Boer and Metz 2014). Groups usually consist of a fairly stable number of girls who meet each other for a certain amount of time, meeting anywhere from once a month to a few times a week. Although the size of the groups varies, they usually consist of 8–12 girls. Girls' group work offers a great variety of activities such as cooking, make-up, crafts, or just hanging around and discussions about topics such as sexuality, nutrition, healthy habits and self-image. Very little attention is paid to sport activities. Girls have a say in the kind of activities they want to participate in and the topics they would like to discuss (Boomkens et al. 2019).

SfD scholars have called for those organizing projects for girls from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to focus on short term projects, collaboration, and every day experiences and to use visual methods (Hayhurst 2017; Thorpe, Hayhurst, and Chawansky 2018). Pyyry (2015) has argued that the use of visual tools with such girls can ‘open up meaningful ways of “dwelling with” the world and bring with it embodied thinking and reflection ...’ (150). GoPro cameras were therefore, embedded in this project to give the girls a visual tool to engage in their activity. The project U on Board was developed to contribute to the wellbeing of disadvantaged adolescent girls in Utrecht (the Netherlands) by enabling their participation in an urban outdoor action sport. U on Board provided longboard instruction for these girls alongside the use of GoPro action cameras, long boards, selfie sticks, protective gear, helmets and tablets with GoPro apps to enable them to capture their experiences, to create and to share their own longboard videos. The girls participating in the study were 10–12 years old, came from low income and/or non-western immigrant backgrounds in different neighbourhoods and attended elementary school or the lowest levels of secondary school. Parents of the girls were informed by the youth workers about the project via a letter. All parents gave permission for their daughters to participate in the project and research. Although the idea to offer U on Board was presented top down, the project gave space for agency and the voices of the participants. They and the embedded researcher conferred and collaborated with each other to decide where to skate, the speed, which risks were acceptable, etc.

Methods

The project was part of a community ‘living lab’ in Utrecht in which researchers, professionals and citizens work together on social issues. The first author initiated this living lab and had the role of embedded researcher. She invited six youth workers to attend longboard workshops with their group of girls. The embedded researcher visited the youth workers and girls in their community centres before the first workshop to get to know the girls, the youth workers and neighbourhood a little bit better and to engage in informal chats with three to four girls at a time. These chats also functioned as semi-structured focus groups to explore the girls’ interest in urban outdoor sports and their opinions about the group and their neighbourhood. The first workshop began with an hour and a half longboard instruction including a lesson on safety and how to push, stop and steer, followed by riding around together on the longboards in their own neighbourhoods. In other workshops we introduced challenging practices such as giving each other a high-five while longboarding. The girls also could film and record their adventures for their vlogs. Since focus groups did not seem to facilitate these girls to talk about their longboard experiences and the affect this produced, the first author began to vlog while longboarding to record her observations. The workshops finished with a ‘Recap your Ride’ programme part, where the girls could edit videos with their own captured film shots, taken during the longboard sessions. We introduced themes like ‘fall and rise’, ‘choose your own path’ and ‘pushing forward’, that could be used as topics by the girls while vlogging and recording their videos. The themes also served as topics in the semi-structured focus groups with the girls, that took place after every workshop. The focus groups were part of the programme overall as well as part of the data collection. These chats were open ended, consisting of reflections about their

experiences and to talk about what they wanted to learn the next time. These chats were our way of giving the girls a voice. One chat for example, revealed they enjoyed the speed of longboarding and giving each other a high-five, but were less interested in learning to slalom between traffic cones. This means that the content of the longboard sessions were a co-creation of the participants and the embedded researcher. The themes of the chat or discussion sessions emerged from the longboard workshops. In this sense, the embedded researcher tried to expand the enjoyment of the girls and continually monitored their affect by being actively involved. A total of 49 disadvantaged girls participated in 36 U on Board longboard workshops. Our data consists of 230 min of selected video fragments of the vlogs, 36 longboard instructions observations and 22 focus groups with the girls that took place in the community centres.

NRT analysis of data is not characterized by a particular method or a unique mode or medium of communication, but the key lies in the orientation of the data (Vannini 2015). According to Vannini (2015), NRT researchers are 'much less interested in representing an empirical reality that has been taken place *before* the act or event of representation than they are in enacting multiple and diverse potentials of what knowledge can become *afterwards*' (12). In the analysis we therefore looked for examples that illustrate affect, how that shaped experience and showed how these examples are congruent, if at all, with principles of NRT. This way of collecting and analysing data increased the performativity of our research (Vannini 2015). Performative NRT research can enact embodied practices in expressive ways, finding creative ways to reconfigure thinking, sensing and presenting. We used the verbal part of the vlogs and videos and noted what the girls had said as data. The vlogs and videos were therefore part of the programme and of the data. This analytical process contributed to a collaborative embodied reflection, that is congruent with the purpose of NRT, to open up new spaces for reflection and thinking by attending to the non-cognitive and affectual (Pyry 2015).

Longboarders must be continually connected to their boards in some ways, while they navigate different surfaces, move through neighbourhoods and interact with other bodies who may or may not be boarding. We assumed that the girls' descriptions of their experiences on the longboards, navigating through neighbourhoods, their use of cameras/GoPro, and creating the vlogs provided data that were important to their understanding of the activity. Instead of trying to categorize the experiences of the girls, we tried to understand the role of affect produced during the longboard workshops for disadvantaged girls.

As others (e.g. Andrews, Chen, and Myers 2014; Pyry 2015) have shown, the use of NRT as an analytical framework assumes fluidity and complexity in verbal presentation of the data. The data could not be neatly assigned to one of Thrift's (2008) tenets but often reflected more than one. The two authors therefore engaged in dialogue with each other looking for examples of a tenet and combined tenets where necessary. We continually explored and discussed the best fit for specific data until we were in complete agreement.

Positioning of the embedded researcher

I enjoy outdoor sports and participate in kitesurfing and snowboarding. I developed U on Board when I realized these girls had little access to informal organized action outdoor

sports, including the use of action cameras. Because the girls live in urban neighbourhoods, I chose an urban action outdoor sport that was relatively easy to learn and suitable as a group activity. Although the girls and I had never longboarded, the activity enabled us to explore together how it could contribute to joy and well-being. To set a good example, I consistently wore a helmet and protection gear, which meant I had to ignore my own discomfort about wearing a helmet and protection gear in public. I tried to learn more about the experiences of the girls by also vlogging and sometimes took the lead by longboarding and interviewing at the same time. This practice was contagious; the girls often participated in the vlogs and filmed and initiated new vlogs. In short, the content of this innovative programme was developed in co-creation by the embedded researcher and the girls.

Results and discussion

NRT places practice, action and performance at the centre of its description of embodied movement (Thrift 2008; Vannini 2015). In our presentation of the results, we focused on embodied play that these girls experienced and created during longboarding and how this was reflected in their vlogs. In applying Thrift's (2008) principles to the data analysis, we discovered that the results could not be neatly assigned to a specific tenet but that descriptions of experiences often illustrated several of them simultaneously. We therefore organized the data to give a picture of the ways these girls experienced the project and the affects it elicited. In the girls' longboarding experiences, these movements continually changed as the girls practiced and encountered new challenges. We describe these performances in a non-biographical way, that is, we did not assign pseudonyms to data and/or data to specific people; instead our focus was on what is said that reveals affect. We also do not attempt to uncover or assign deeper meanings to the affective experiences of these girls.

Experiencing 'on flow' and freedom

Thrift (2008) defines 'on flow' in ways that resonate with much of the action sport literature. This principle pertains to expressions of sensations, feeling and emotions including a total embodied feeling of pleasure. Action sports are often described as sites where participants can experience freedom: freedom from regulations, from coaches and from pre-conceived forms and techniques (Smits 2019). For these girls, longboarding was an outdoor sport where they could playfully and freely experiment: *'You are totally free and can do whatever you want to do.'* Another girl describes this in similar ways: *'I felt as free as a bird [when longboarding]. I loved not having to think about anything.'* They acknowledged that the absence of coaches gave them the feeling that they could make their own choices about what to do and try. The embedded researcher was always present so the girls could ask questions about the development of their skills. *'I felt free to choose and develop my own movements and skills. I could do what I wanted and when I wanted to do it.'* These playful practices contributed to their 'on flow' and experiences of freedom.

Their comments revealed how the girls fully enjoyed the activity and being outside. A girl exclaims: *'The weather is super great; the wind blows through my hair and it is fun to do*

this together with the other girls. Another exclaimed: *'I love it that I do not have to think about anything while boarding!!'* As they gained more experience, the girls wanted to go faster and faster: *'I am really improving and want to go faster!'*, *'You can sort of let everything go when you are on a longboard'*, *'you can be wild!'* and *'you can go wickedly fast!!'* A girl describes how making a vlog added to her enjoyment of being on a longboard: *'I loved it when we went really fast over a parkours and I could film myself. I showed that you only have to try and not give up.'* Another: *'It was fun [filming while boarding]; I could show how at first I could not do it and then that in the end I could.'* Their ability to use GoPro added value to their sensations of flow: *'The whole experience using GoPro was really chill and professional. I've always wanted to have something like that on my head.'*

These descriptions also show how the 'now' of these girls was constantly changing as they explored what they could do while boarding and using GoPro. These girls showed a sensual awareness of their moments on the board and then again on seeing those moments another time. NRT assumes that skills/movements mutate even when repetitive. The affect the girls experienced changed depending on whether they were actually on the board, when they saw themselves on the board through videos, and again when they made the vlogs. This seeing or reviewing elicited similar and other forms of affect than the actual boarding experience. They enjoyed using the videos to show and explain their experiences on the boards to each other: *'Here I show a few tricks I learned [on the boards] and explain how to do them.'* Their awareness reflects Thrift's (2008) contention that "the contours and content of what happens constantly change: for example, there is no stable 'human' experience because the human sensorium is constantly being re-invented as the body continually adds parts in to itself; therefore how and what is experienced as experience is itself variable" (2).

Embodied relational social practices: continual mutations of fear and pride

NRT assumes bodies have affective capacities and are affected in ways that have no bounds or limits. Multiple affects were experienced at the same time. The presence of or seeing a longboard evoked both pleasure/ happiness and fear of falling simultaneously. For example: *'I love going fast but going down a little hill is a challenge.'* Similarly, another girl talked about her initial fears:

I liked doing it but it was also scary. Before we did it, I thought I would not like it because I do not like skateboarding but in the end, it was lots of fun. At times it was difficult to stay upright on the board.'

Some were surprised they were able to stay upright on the board and to move: *'I am usually quite clumsy but this went well!!'* Another: *'I do not always do very well but I am learning to do this!!'* Another admitted she had to learn to use her body in different ways: *'When I go fast and then slow down, I do not know how to use my foot properly to push and go faster.'*

When they reflected on their first experiences on the longboards; the girls admitted they were afraid to try it. They were afraid of falling. Falling and fear of falling played a large role in their affective accounts of their experiences. They assumed actual falling was due to lack of concentration. A girl proudly says: *'I did not fall at all although I did go very fast! To do this, I really concentrated on what I was doing.'* Another: *'I fell once, perhaps because I failed to really concentrate on what I was doing because I liked doing*

this so much.' This affection for the activity was enhanced by its social nature: *'I really liked it; no, I'd never do this on my own because I found it to be quite scary. But all of us went together into the neighbourhood and that was a lot of fun and very jolly.'* The social nature of the activity and fun factors pushed the girls to overcome their fears, to try the activity and to develop more skills. They were proud of what they were able to do: *'In the beginning I did not dare to take sharp corners but after a while I could do it. I developed more self-confidence and dared to try more skills.'*

As they became more self-confident, they dared to do more: *'I really liked it; today went really well. I am going to see if I can challenge myself more.'* And: *'I've become much better, I can now take on those slopes and corners.'* This self-confidence meant the girls dared to go into neighbourhood on their boards and felt they could cope with obstacles such as speed bumps, bridges over canals and bicycle tunnels:

We went over a bridge and that was super fun! I had not expected that I would dare to do this because you go super-fast and I did not know how to slow down but I quickly learned how to do that.

Another girl described how her persistence and courage enabled her to learn a new skill: *'I liked it when we had to go under a rope and that rope was lower each time. At first I lost my balance when I squatted. With more practice I could do it.'*

As they improved and their self-confidence increased, they looked for new challenges in the neighbourhood. Thus, they were continually interacting with objects in addition to the longboard itself. The result of the engagement of these girls with their surroundings not only reflects the continual mutations of their longboard experiences but also reflects the NRT principle that things, space and nature together create hybrid assemblages that continually change. Their neighbourhood, the people they met, their boards, longboarding and their GoPro cameras were all part of the total experiences of the participants.

Although the intended purpose of using GoPro was to enable the girls to film themselves and use the vlogs to focus on their skills, they mutated this objective by also filming their surroundings, their neighbourhood and whom they met. A girl describes: *'I liked passing and filming other people while I was on the board and then they'd give me a high five or something and that I have that on film.'* The filming aspect of the project was a resource for pleasure and provided visibility for these disadvantaged girls. Such girls are often invisible in youth work, youth sport and in public spaces in their neighbourhoods (Wijntuin 2019). During this project they were not only visible in outdoor spaces but also created digital records/archives of this visibility. Their encounters with objects in the urban outdoors revealed how their material world had the capacity to inspire them (Pyry 2015). These cameras as well as the resulting videos were not passive objects but were performative since they had the capacity to affect these girls.

Embodied practices: mutating and reliving the experience

Following the longboard workshops and the filming, the groups began to create their vlogs in the neighbourhood youth centre. They worked on the editing in groups. They wanted to use the vlogs to show their longboard skills and how this activity enabled them to blur traditional gender boundaries. A girl said she wanted her film to: *'show that girls are good in longboarding and that it is an activity for girls.'* They were very aware that they were an all-girl group and preferred the activity to be single sex. The

presence of boys might have created another experience that could have change the 'on flow.' A girl asserted that the presence of boys affects her self-confidence: *'I am very unsure of myself when boys are around; they are quick to mock you and then I behave in a different matter.'* Another: *'I am much happier doing this without boys; they always act so tough.'* Another: *'Boys can be quite irritating ... they can get in your way while girls do not do that.'* The absence of boys therefore, seemed to enable them to focus on the activity itself and to enjoy it with all their senses. This absence also enabled them to create and experience kinaesthetic shapes that were new to them. Although they concentrated on not falling while on the boards, they used the videos not only to show their best efforts but also incorporated bloopers: *'I used a blooper in which I had a hard fall; it was hilarious to see that again.'* Falls with serious consequences did not occur so were not part of the resulting films.

They used the films to create videos and vlogs that they then shared with each other, with families and/or friends via social media via WhatsApp and displayed them on Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat or their own YouTube channel. They asked their parents and those visible in the vlog for permission to do this. Although all of the girls used GoPro, a few girls did not want to be recognizable in the videos: *'People from my culture do not like it if I take photos of myself. I do not mind but my brothers would be angry. They are trying to protect me.'* Although these girls did not want to be visible in videos and vlogs, they liked to use the GoPro cameras to vlog, record videos and helped others to work on their videos. In this manner, these girls also relived their experiences and the affect they produced.

Corporeal routines and specialized devices: challenges and concentration

The girls described their involvement in longboarding as *'being creative and being athletic.'* They experienced their involvement as different from participating in other sports since in longboarding *'you have to move your body a lot to keep control.'* Keeping control required interaction between their bodies, the surface on which they practiced, the board and the GoPro device. It also required a special focus because they wanted to avoid falling as much as was possible. This focus on not falling, as well as using the GoPro camera, provided an embodied challenge: *'It was challenging to do all this because I was scared, I might break the GoPro. If you fall or hit something with at top speed then it could easily break and I did not want that to happen.'* As we show throughout this paper however although the use of the GoPro may have created some tension, it also added to the girls' 'full engagement and enabled them to celebrate the ecstasy of their enjoyment' (Thorpe and Rinehart 2010, 1271). After a while the girls became fully involved in boarding as a skilled activity and began to create their own ideas for tricks they wanted to learn and practice. *'I want to learn to do a trick where you jump over something and your longboard goes underneath it and you land on the board and continue on!'* Pyry (2015) who used NRT to understand how disadvantaged girls negotiated their neighbourhoods, has suggested that public tactical experiments that such girls undertake in their surroundings, can be seen as examples of their agency.

Human and nonhuman interactions: mutual influences and relationships

Thrift's (2008) tenet about the experience of affect and sensation requires the researcher to examine various interactions including how actors and objects influence each other

and how these are relational. These girls were aware that longboarding was not just about them but about their relationship with the board and the surroundings. A girl points to her board and says in her vlog *'This is my board; we are going to longboard for a while'*. Her use of 'we' reflects her relationship with this object. Another girl points to the affect generated by being outside: *'It is great that we can do this outside'* and the difficulties of doing this in the context of a neighbourhood with all its objects: *'Taking corners wasn't easy at first but you improve if you take them often enough.'* And: *'Initially I crashed against a lot of objects.'* Here too the relationship between a material world and human assumes agency for both.

In addition to encounters with objects including bridges and hills, these girls also had to cope with specific challenges from other actors in the neighbourhood. Some of the girls literally had to overcome the fear of being seen on a longboard in the neighbourhood: *'When I used to see others longboard, I used to think it was a crazy thing to do. Now I know how much fun it is.'* And: *'People have to try it themselves. When I tried it myself I understood how much fun it is.'* Another object, beside the board that is part of longboarding, is the helmet. The wearing of a helmet at first elicited resistance from the girls: *"I saw that helmet and said: 'Oh no, ha ha ha; I'm not wearing that thing outside.'" Another explained how the resistance to the helmet came from the fear of what others would think or do: 'I am afraid people will mock me when they see me wearing this helmet.'* They were aware that being outside meant they were in a public space. A few girls were so afraid of being seen wearing a helmet that they decided not to participate. Others thought it was a good thing for them to be seen in the neighbourhood while longboarding: *'It is cool for people to see us girls longboarding through the neighbourhood!'* These positive as well as negative experiences reflect how affect is shaped through power, experience and moral approval for who is implicitly allowed to be seen in public and the kinds of activities in which they may be engaged.

Developing kinaesthetic awareness and kinetic empathy

Thorpe and Rinehart (2010) have argued that the use of NRT to analyse or describe data can reveal the embodied development and use of kinaesthetic awareness that gives participants 'other ways of being, other ways of knowing' (1277). The girls showed how they developed this corporeal awareness through their interactions with their boards and their surroundings.

'I love it that you can steer with your feet by hanging on one side with your toes or heel; it makes me feel like I am surfing.'

'You can use the power in your legs to determine how fast you go.'

'Sometimes it is difficult to keep your foot on the board because the board is not always so steady.'

'It was quite warm today, which is why my feet felt very tired.'

Thrift (2008) as well as Thorpe and Rinehart (2010) emphasize that a focus on affect that emerges from corporeal activities can contribute to change, whether it be at the local or global level as these activities may create 'kinetic empathy' in participants. In our study this happened in various ways. The girls took the social nature of the activity seriously and

were sensitive to how the others experienced longboarding and the affect it produced. They recognized their own fears in others. The following conversations reveals their kinetic sensitivity as they adjusted their speeds to others who were afraid to go faster:

'[I went slower than the rest]. I appreciated it that my girlfriend went slower for me. That gave me a good feeling.'

'We all went slower on purpose so we could stick together. This gave me the ability to try stuff. At first I did not dare to go down a slope but I did do so because we encouraged each other.'

Another girl described, using her GoPro film, what actually happened when she was afraid to go downhill by a bridge and how she valued the sensitivity and support of the embedded researcher who went with her over the bridge. The girl says (via GoPro):

Girl: I really do not dare to do this; it is really scary to go downhill by this bridge
 Embedded researcher: Shall we try it together? I will ride with you, come on (they go together).
 Girl: It really is not that scary after all. If I started [going over the bridge] with a lot of speed then I would find it scary again but this was great, it was cool.

The experiences of the participants in the U on Board project illustrate how this actor-object interaction that produces kinaesthetic awareness and kinetic empathy is not confined to highly skilled participants as some of the action sports literature may suggest, but includes beginners as well.

Encounters with pedagogical moments

The wellbeing of these girls who come from disadvantaged neighbourhoods plays an important role in all youth work activities. The affect and experiences described by the participants not only reflect the pleasure that a SfD project can elicit but can also be seen as contributing to their well-being. Previously, the youth workers had used cooking and personal grooming as tools to contribute to the well-being and support of these girls but had not used sport and physical activities as a resource that could contribute to the girls' well-being and facilitate them being outdoors. The embedded researcher therefore introduced themes like 'falling and getting up' and 'making your own choices' into conversations to explicitly integrate the longboarding into the youth work programme/activities. These conversations often developed during the time the girls were editing and vlogging:

I: Our theme today was push forward, that is, pushing with your feet on your board to go forward. Do you have any examples from your own lives where you had to give a 'push forward'?

Girls responded:

'Yes, the first day that I wore a head scarf to school and I was afraid of reactions.'

'Yes, I learned that I need to go on when nasty or difficult things happen. You have to keep on going and stand up for yourself.'

'Yes, when my father died, I did not feel like going to school anymore but then my friends helped me and I went to school again.'

The girls also showed how they understood the instruction 'follow your own course' as pushing and extending their own boundaries 'Yes, I really realized that today. Since everyone went very fast, I tried to do that too but I was afraid.'

These examples also reflect Thrift's (2008) contention how affect in one domain can carry over or transfer to other domains.

Living in the now

The lived now these girls described was not only filled with positive affect but also with negative affect due to interpersonal interactions and neighbourhood related dynamics that occurred prior to or during the activity. The freedom these girls experienced occurred in contested spaces. These spaces were also sites associated with verbal and physical violence. The embedded researcher asked a girl to describe this:

I: 'I heard you say that at times you quarrel with each other. What happens?'

S: 'yes, some girls quarrel every day.'

I: 'Are you involved and/or do you try to solve it?'

S: 'No, I stay out of it.'

Other girls described these occurrences in a focus group:

'The quarrels are about unimportant things. I don't want to be involved.'

'No, the interactions often end in a quarrel or a verbally violent discussion among them because they are jealous of each other. Therefore, they quarrel and scream at each other. ... or bully each other.'

'You are better off ignoring it all.'

The youth worker who was responsible for the group often processed these interactions with the girls before they began boarding.

Unpleasant interactions took place not only among the girls themselves prior to the longboarding sessions, but also in the neighbourhoods. Various girls described these interactions during a group interview:

'There are often fights in the neighbourhood.'

'Yes, we all see that and watch the fights.'

'These fights [in the neighbourhood] often mean the police show up, also at school.'

'Yes, the police come often. There is a lot of junk on the street and people hanging around. They act like they are drunk or so.'

These interactions reveal that the experiences of the girls while boarding were informed by contextual factors as well. They reflect the 'messiness of social life' (Thrift 2008) that also shaped the urban outdoor experiences of these girls. SfD initiatives can be seen as pedagogical counter-spaces when pedagogical youth work gives youth a voice and creates a welcome and safe environment. Such a counter-space can foster a sense of community and increase involvement in the initiative and the wider community (Nols 2018). U on Board can be seen as an SfD initiative that is a collaborative effort with community youth work. This effort goes beyond the traditional way of organizing sport and instead serves as a pedagogical 'counter-space' within a mainstream sport landscape and an urban context where many spaces are exclusive (Nols 2018).

Conclusion

The longboard workshops combined human and non-human entities that created assemblages of physical activity with new entanglements between the girls, objects like the longboards, protection gear, GoPro cameras and obstacles in the neighbourhood and affects such as pleasure, fear, excitement and fun. In this way, the U on Board project created a field of potential for disadvantaged girls in action sports in the urban outdoors to engage in non-normative experiences. Their involvement in the project, enabled us to better understand the entanglement of physical activity, objects and affects and to draw attention to how their participation in the longboard instructions could contribute to their wellbeing.

According to Thrift (2008), the novelty of experience also evokes affect. This novelty is especially pertinent to our project since most of the other activities offered to these girls took place indoors. None of the girls had used longboards previously. They tended not to participate in sport activities outside of gym class (if at all), had never worn helmets nor had used GoPro to create their own vlogs about these experiences. In other words, their experiences or 'doings' in the U on Board project consisted of dynamic assemblages of performance, action, practices, affects and background.

The dialogues between the embedded researcher and the girls in which possible transfer of themes from longboarding instruction were explored in their daily lives, suggest that the project may have had a socializing effect congruent with the conventional purposes of SfD projects for disadvantaged girls. Pleasure is often not a main objective in SfD projects for girls however, although an underlying assumption of such programmes is that sport participation is fun and enjoyable (Chawansky and Carney 2017). Consequently, relatively little attention has been paid by policy makers and scholars to how and why girls may experience positive affect during SfD projects. Our results support Thorpe, Hayhurst, and Chawansky's (2018) contention that short term projects in SfD can be worthwhile for participants. Much of SfD and sport development tends to be based on models that focus on sustained impact and sustained participation. This short-term project provided a valuable counter narrative that highlights the value of activities that are not based on the idea of transfer to participation in other contexts such as sport clubs or development of elite athletes. The purpose of the programme U on Board was not to develop highly skilled longboarders, but to enable these girls to engage in affective positive (body) experiences. These experiences consisted of showing agency, making vlogs, being proud, being visible and claiming a 'counter-space' in the urban outdoors where they were often excluded: U on Board provided a SfD program that went beyond the traditional way of organizing sport. The project involved collaboration between the embedded researcher and young people who together created a 'counter-pedagogy' within mainstream sport landscape and in an urban context where many spaces and practices exclude these girls (Nols 2018).

Our findings therefore also support Thorpe and Rinehart's (2010) contention that the positive affect produced during action sport involvement can play a role in social change. More specifically, Wheaton, Roy, and Olive (2017) argue that the experience of freedom during involvement in an action sport that serves as a SfD project, may work to produce an embodied personal transformation or awakening. This is corroborated by Andrews, Chen, and Myers (2014) who used NRT to explore the relationship between

physical activity and affect and wellbeing. They found that ‘positive affection’ (described as “joy affect”) acts as a nutrition that energizes an individual, carries them forward and increases their capacity to operate’ (217). This suggests the ‘freeing experience’ that participants described in the project U on Board also may have served as a critical alternative to conventional desired results of SfD and as such may be a ‘form of social change’. Wheaton, Roy and Olive contend that highlighting the experience of freedom in an SfD project involves ‘a shift away from positioning the individual as a subject in need of development, and of sport as the provider of this development’ (page number missing). Since the U on Board project involved disadvantaged girls who may be invisible in school, sport and public spaces, we assumed that the filming and the creation of vlogs enabled this enactment and allowed these girls ‘to speak their “own language” without the presumption of a “correct answer”’ (Pyyry 2015, 157). In this way, the project served as a counter pedagogical practice to common pedagogical practices that are often used to produce specific outcomes in SfD projects.

We acknowledge that our data are limited by words/the vocabulary available to the girls and how we presented them. The use of GoPro and the making of vlogs provided additional affective insights that helped the girls in describing their experiences. We recognize that what the girls say and how we heard them are not the feelings themselves but representations. The assemblages of which they were part ‘are never closed or their relations complete. Instead assemblages are subject to a never-ending influx of bodies and objects (mediated by practices and ideas) from the very local to the global.’ (Andrews, Chen, and Myers 2014, 217).

Note

1. We could describe the girls using words such as socially ‘vulnerable’, ‘disadvantaged’, ‘underserved’, ‘marginalized’ or ‘deprived’. We chose to use the word ‘disadvantaged’. Schailleé, Theeboom, and Van Cauwenberg (2015) defined disadvantaged communities as ‘communities that suffer acute social problems such as increasing population densities, low SES, high levels of migration and young people at risk of exclusion of society’. These characteristics typify the neighborhoods where these girls live.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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