

# Unmapping Trans Counter-Geographies

Trans People's Experiences  
in Outdoor and Adventure Activities

Doctoral Thesis

**Bart Bloem Herráiz**

Supervised by:

**Dr. Gerard Coll-Planas**

Departament de Ciències de la Comunicació

Universitat de Vic – Universitat Central de Catalunya

Inter-University Doctorate Programme in Gender Studies:

Cultures, Societies and Policies

Inter-University Women and Gender Studies Institute



UNIVERSITAT DE VIC  
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**2024**

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*A mis abuelas,  
Isabel y Margarete.*





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Han sido más de tres años de un viaje emocionante y lleno de aprendizajes; aparentemente solitario, pero que sin la presencia, ayuda, conversaciones, y aportaciones de muchas personas no hubiese sido posible.

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<sup>1</sup> The acknowledgments will be the only section written in Spanish and that I have decided not to translate. I invite you to use any translation application if desired.

Jerez, allá por el 2010, me acogieron cuando aún era una pequeña queer en el cascarón, y me han acompañado, abierto mundos, e inundado con sus sabidurías.

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## ABSTRACT

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The life narratives of trans individuals are still largely bound to urban spaces. In addition, there is limited research on the experiences of trans people in sports and physical activities, and it often focuses on the barriers, discrimination, and difficulties of accessing these cultural spaces. Finally, research on trans experiences tends to focus on the harm and pain that these communities have to endure in the current cisheteronormative society rather than on what brings them joy. In this panorama, this thesis aims to cover a dearth of research. By doing this, it challenges the metronormativity of trans studies, looking into spaces other than the urban/rural dichotomy. Furthermore, it will focus on trans experiences within outdoor and adventure recreation, distancing from cisnormative ideas of where trans bodies belong. Lastly, it will look at this from a *desire-based research* perspective.

The thesis aims to examine the experiences of trans individuals in outdoor and adventure activities in natural environments, through the lens of embodied queer methodological assemblages. In this regard, the research has focused on three different aspects of the experience: the bodily, the spatial, and the emotional part. To explore these, I have developed a methodological approach that I have called “on-the-move methodology”. This approach departs from an assemblage of feminist, queering, and outdoor methodologies, and understands knowledge production as situated and embodied. The research is based on a multisited ethnography, including on-the-move interviews with trans individuals residing in Europe (thirteen interviewees), on-the-move diaries (sixteen participants from Europe, North America, UK, and Australia), online ethnographic research of the social media network Instagram (fifty-five accounts), and auto-ethnography. Effectively, this methodology translated into on-the-move interviews and diaries gathered during outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, and climbing, as well as autoethnographic research through an on-the-move diary and during the same on-the-move interviews. Audio material from moments of the on-the-move interviews have been included in the analysis and discussion, and route and track information were provided. Lastly, there is a proposal to go out and listen to a podcast-chapter and an analysis from a transecological perspective of this methodological approach.

As qualitative research focusing on personal experiences, the lived realities gathered here do not intend to establish objective and universal conclusions. However, the variety of trans experiences – in regard to identities, age, nationality, race, migration background, bodily ability, or class – do reflect some common ground. Based on theoretical approaches such as counter-topographies and counter-geographies, unmapping, transecologies, somateca, trans necropolitics, and safe spaces, I claim that the project of

queering geographies also implies rethinking trans and queer bodies as tied to the city and I explore trans experiences in outdoor spaces.

The research shows that trans people find spaces to thrive in the outdoors but that accessing these spaces does not come without challenges. Participants highlighted a sense of freedom in regard to gender performativity and gender policing when engaging in outdoor activities, which resulted in a sense of transecological belonging in these spaces. These nurtured participants' sense of embodiment, empowerment, and resilience. Further, participants' relations with outdoor spaces distanced themselves from colonial and patriarchal understandings and legacies of adventure narratives. Through active engagement, both physical and online, participants noted the importance of representation for creating imaginaries of what is possible and where trans people belong and to tackle discrimination and hurdles. Queer and trans affinity spaces in adventure recreation were regarded as beneficial and safer than their nonspecific counterparts. Through the dynamic presentation, analysis, and discussion of the research, I have sought to reveal alternative transnational circuits that are being created in outdoor spaces.

Finally, the outcomes suggest that outdoor spaces may offer possibilities to escape gender constraints and that doing outdoor and adventure activities positively influences the well-being of trans people. Engaging in outdoor activities offered non-normative time-spaces to approach processes of self-determination and gender transitioning. However, it is crucial that outdoor and adventure educators, professionals, providers, and communities actively work to dismantle cis, white, male discourses and hegemony in these spaces, making real and effective efforts to create outdoor spaces that are inclusive for queer and trans individuals.

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## RESUMEN

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Las narrativas de vida de las personas trans siguen estando mayoritariamente ligadas a los espacios urbanos. Además, la investigación sobre las experiencias de las personas trans en la actividad física y el deporte es aún limitada, y a menudo se centra en las barreras, discriminación y dificultades para acceder a estos espacios culturales. Finalmente, las investigaciones sobre las experiencias trans tienden a enfocarse en el perjuicio y dolor que estas comunidades tienen que soportar en la actual sociedad cis-heteronormativa, en lugar de centrarse en aquello que les brinda bienestar. En este panorama, esta tesis busca cubrir una laguna en la investigación. De este modo, se cuestiona la metronormatividad de los estudios trans, explorando aquellos espacios más allá de la dualidad urbano/rural. Además, se centra en las experiencias trans en las actividades recreativas al aire libre y de aventura, distanciándose de ideas cisnormativas sobre el lugar al que pertenecen los cuerpos trans. Por último, se abordarán estas temáticas desde una perspectiva de investigación basada en el deseo.

La tesis tiene como objetivo examinar las experiencias de personas trans en actividades al aire libre y de aventura en espacios naturales, a través de una aproximación metodológica basada en ensamblajes queer corporeizados. En este sentido, la investigación se ha centrado en tres aspectos de la experiencia: el corporal, el espacial y el emocional. Para explorar estos aspectos, he desarrollado un enfoque metodológico que he llamado “metodología on-the-move” (en movimiento). Este enfoque parte de un ensamblaje de metodologías feministas, queer y al aire libre, y entiende la producción de conocimiento como situada y corporeizada. La investigación se basa en una etnografía multisituada, que incluye entrevistas on-the-move con personas trans residentes en Europa (trece participantes), diarios on-the-move (dieciséis participantes residentes en Europa, América del Norte, Reino Unido y Australia), investigación etnográfica online de la red social Instagram (cincuenta y cinco perfiles) y autoetnografía. En la práctica, esta metodología se tradujo en entrevistas y diarios recopilados durante actividades al aire libre como senderismo, bicicleta y escalada, así como investigación autoetnográfica a través de un diario on-the-move y durante las mismas entrevistas on-the-move. Asimismo, se incluyeron audios de momentos de las entrevistas on-the-move en el análisis y la discusión, y se proporcionó información sobre las rutas y trayectos realizados. Por último, se elabora una propuesta para escuchar un “capítulo-podcast” y se realizó un análisis desde una perspectiva transecológica de este enfoque metodológico.

Como investigación cualitativa centrada en experiencias personales, las historias de vida aquí recopiladas no pretenden establecer conclusiones objetivas y universales. Sin embargo, la variedad de experiencias trans – en cuanto a identidades, edad, nacionalidad,

raza, experiencia migratoria, capacidades corporales o clase – reflejan algunos puntos en común. Basándome en enfoques teóricos como las contra-topografías y contra-geografías, desmapear, las transecologías, la somateca, las necropolíticas trans y los espacios seguros, planteo que el proyecto de queerizar las geografías implica también repensar los cuerpos trans y queer como ligados a los espacios urbanos y exploro las experiencias trans en espacios naturales.

La investigación muestra que las personas trans encuentran espacios para prosperar en la naturaleza, pero que el acceso a estos espacios no está exento de dificultades. Los participantes destacaron una sensación de libertad con respecto a la performatividad de género y a la vigilancia de género al participar en actividades al aire libre, lo que dio lugar a un sentido de pertenencia transecológica en estos espacios. Esto fomentó el acuerpamiento, empoderamiento y resiliencia de las personas participantes. Además, las relaciones de éstas con los espacios al aire libre se distanciaron de las concepciones y legados coloniales y patriarcales de las narrativas de aventura. A través de la participación activa, tanto física como online, les participantes señalaron la importancia de la representación para crear imaginarios de lo que es posible y de dónde las personas trans pueden encontrar sentido de pertenencia, así como para abordar la discriminación y las barreras. Los espacios de afinidad queer y trans en las actividades de aventura se percibieron como beneficiosos y más seguros. A través de la presentación, análisis y discusión dinámica de la investigación, he buscado mostrar los circuitos transnacionales alternativos que se están creando en los espacios naturales.

Por último, los resultados sugieren que los espacios naturales pueden ofrecer posibilidades para escapar de las imposiciones de género y que participar en actividades al aire libre y de aventura influye positivamente en el bienestar de las personas trans. La participación en actividades en la naturaleza proporcionó espacios-tiempos no normativos para abordar procesos de autodeterminación y transición de género. Sin embargo, es crucial que educadores, profesionales y comunidades de actividades en la naturaleza y de aventura trabajen activamente para desarticular los discursos y la hegemonía cis, blanca y masculina en estos espacios, desplegando reales y efectivos esfuerzos para crear espacios en la naturaleza que sean inclusivos para las personas queer y trans.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

---

Queer communities have traditionally grown and found refuge in urban spaces, where many of us go seeking belonging as queer people. Many researchers have paid attention to the experiences of queer people migrating to, and inhabiting, cities (Abelson, 2016; Gutiérrez García, 2008; Guzmán, 1997; La Fountain-Stokes, 2004; Martínez-San Miguel, 2011; Moreno Acosta, 2013; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016, 2017; Saz, 2020; Zúñiga Rodríguez, 2020). This phenomenon occurs both within and between international borders. Originally conceptualized by Manuel Guzmán (1997) as *sexile*<sup>2</sup>, he defined it as “the exile of those who have had to leave their nations of origin on account of their sexual orientation” (p. 227). Other authors (Gutiérrez García, 2008; Moreno Acosta, 2013) have expanded the concept to include all people who do not adapt to cisheteronormative standards, including those of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Moreover, for these authors, *sexile* can happen at different levels, such as from the neighborhood, community, region, or country. *Sexile* has also frequently been conceptualized as queer people going from rural to urban spaces. In general, *sexile* can be understood as a way to renegotiate space, where queer people find spaces where they can be themselves and not face judgement (Zúñiga Rodríguez, 2020).

Further, as trans and queer persons, we often learn that our bodies feel “out of place” (Ahmed, 2004; Hogan, 2020) in many spaces. In this regard, barriers to accessing physical activity by LGBTQI+ individuals have also been noted by researchers (Gorzynski & Brittain, 2016; Pattinson et al., 2022). I claim that many trans people find comfort and safety in nature, although they often also struggle to access these spaces. Hence, this inquiry focuses on exploring trans people’s experiences in outdoor and adventure activities and delves into the dynamics that unfold in outdoor settings concerning trans experiences and bodies.

My personal experiences have also led to my interest in the present topic<sup>3</sup>. I grew up in the nineties, in a working-class household in Málaga, in the south of Spain. My parents didn’t own a car (and still don’t), so anywhere we went, we went by bike. I learned to cycle by the time I was three years old. They also took me hiking since before I could walk – on the backpack with my father. They didn’t force any gendered

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that *sexile* has another connotation used in slang, especially by young people in the USA, where it is used to describe the act of “expelling” someone from a room in order to allow their partner to have sexual relations there (Martínez-San Miguel, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Often I will include myself in the phrasing of the text with the use of the plural “we” as I relate to the experiences of other participants. Further, as it will be thoughtfully explained later on, the use of autoethnography is also part of the thesis.

restrictions upon me as a child; I could choose how I wanted my hair and which clothes I wanted to wear (or I would just inherit them), and I was allowed to move and play as I wanted. However, these freedoms weren't seen as 'normal' by the rest of those around me, and soon I sensed that I was different. My gender expression wasn't seen as 'appropriate' for a girl, yet neither was using the bike as a mode of transportation. Interestingly, I received more bullying for the latter during my high school years. In my teenage years, I joined a "mountain club"<sup>4</sup>; I went on hiking trips, built bivouacs, learned about clouds and knots, and from where it is safe to drink water. Further, while I had always loved playing sports, the mountain club was the only environment where we were never segregated by gender, even for sleeping arrangements. I also competed in other sports and activities while growing up, such as competitive judo. Later in life, when I was in university and had started transitioning, I thought I would have to give up sports altogether. After a few years where I stopped playing sports at the beginning of my transition, I returned to outdoor sports as a place where I could still participate while exploring my gender identity. While I felt free to be myself in this environment, finding people with whom I could feel safe wasn't easy. This didn't stop me. I went with strangers quite often, hiding the fact that I am trans. Meanwhile, I kept studying to become professionalized; I earned a master's degree in outdoor recreation management, became a certified Union of International Mountain Leader Associations (UIMLA) mountain guide, and went by bike alone for six months through Europe. For me, being outdoors meant that I could relax from all the gendered expectations that I perceived upon myself in the cities. I felt joy and I felt proud of my body.

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<sup>4</sup> It was a group of individuals aged between 11 and 25 that met weekly for recreational and educational activities. Additionally, we went on monthly hikes and at least one weekend hiking trip every three months. The group had similarities to the Scouts, but with fewer formalities.

When I did my master's in gender studies – between 2017 and 2019 – I started to reflect on the type of trans experiences that academia was interested in, asking myself: What kinds of experiences are portrayed in the field of queer and trans studies research? I read Gayatri Spivak's text where she asks: "Can the subaltern speak?" (Spivak, 1988), and other scholars' reflections on how "social science often works to collect stories of pain and humiliation in the lives of those being researched for commodification" (Holloway, 2023; Shuster & Westbrook, 2022; Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 2). Tuck and Yang contend that the "subaltern can speak", but only about their pain, thus often leaving communities "with a narrative that tells them that they are broken" (hooks, 1990; Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 6). Shuster and Westbrook (2022) have addressed this as "*joy deficit* in sociology" (p. 1) and Holloway (2023) as 'deficit-based lens' and "*tragic trans trope*" (p. 612). Further, they (Holloway, 2023; Shuster & Westbrook, 2022) add that this has an effect and it does not only stay within academia, but also shapes general understanding of what being a part of that group is like: "If the main story told about a group is that their lives are filled with trauma, discrimination, and violence, then that is likely what most people believe about the group, including members of the group itself" (Shuster & Westbrook, 2022, p. 5). This situation prompts what Tuck and Yang (2014) have theorized as 'desire-based research', which is to be understood as the antidote for damage-focused research –rather than the antonym. Further, "desire-centered research does not deny the experience of tragedy, trauma, and pain, but positions the knowing derived from such experiences as wise" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 10), nor does it deny the oppression that transgender people experience (Shuster & Westbrook, 2022). This research aims to investigate, explore, and discuss the spaces of joy and pleasure that the participants find in outdoor spaces while also analyzing the barriers and discrimination that we – trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and gender dissidents – experience in outdoor and adventure recreation. In doing this, I hope that bringing these "stories about joy may help reduce stigma and violence against trans people" (Shuster & Westbrook, 2022, p. 5).

Spaces are central to this thesis. Special attention has been given to all spaces where my fieldwork has taken place. The places where I have lived over the past three and a half years, while I have been researching and writing, have been some of the most beautiful and *wild* places I have lived in so far. In this sense, that setting has shaped and influenced my writing, views, and experiences on the present subject. Still, the ideas and knowledge presented here have also been developed throughout my experiences in the outdoors, both before and during these years. During the first two years (2020-2022), I was working toward my mountain guide certification on the side through the 'Instituto Andaluz del Deporte' in Andalusia, south of Spain. My experiences in this two-year course with other future mountain guides and the teaching staff have also informed a book chapter: "Outdoor and adventure activities as a space of refuge for LGBTQ+ people" (Bloem Herraiz & Velo Camacho, 2024, in press). Moreover, the course gave

me even more insight into this research, as I could see how far outdoor and adventure professionals still are from welcoming trans people.

Lastly, even though the present thesis is – almost entirely – written in English and has a transnational approach, I decided to theoretically situate the thesis in Spain for diverse reasons. My upbringing as an activist in Sevilla and Barcelona has influenced the way that I engage with research and approach academia. Hence, my understanding of concepts such as *queer*, or even my understanding of *outdoor* and *adventure*, is rooted in this geographical context. Further, these experiences effect and influence not only my positionality, but also the research, from design to analysis. Nevertheless, my academic background has also been informed by my studies in a master's degree in gender studies in Gothenburg, Sweden, and my participation in varied international conferences during the course of these doctoral years in the fields of gender studies and outdoor/adventure research.

## 1.1. LANGUAGE, FORMAT, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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Language is an important communication tool; how we speak and write invites or excludes people and communities. How do we conduct research not about, but from and for the people themselves? Throughout the writing of this thesis, I have tried to make it accessible to a wide audience; to write something that could be read and understood by the same participants of the research, for example. However, as a Ph.D. thesis, it is important to maintain a high level of analysis and technical language. This personal conflict is visible throughout this work, gaining importance in the more theoretical parts. I have aimed to tackle this conflict in several ways. Firstly, I needed to acknowledge that a thesis doesn't have to be for everyone, and that a specific type of language and use of abstract concepts are required for a fruitful and meaningful theoretical contribution. Still, I attempt to present the theoretical framework and analysis in a way that would be 'easier' to read – which I will further explain in the section *Introduction to the analysis, findings, and discussion*. Secondly, in the last chapter of this thesis, *Closing Remarks*, I have included a chart with “strategies that outdoor providers can implement to make their activities inclusive for the trans community”. This is aimed at any type of outdoor and adventure providers, as well as any NGO or educational program working in the outdoors, to have an accessible recommendation chart to begin working toward increasing the diversity and inclusiveness for gender diverse people of these spaces. Finally, a list of resources has also been added – Appendix E or online under <http://petricoraventuras.org/resources/>. This list includes blogs, podcasts, movies, or other types of resources created by activist-based groups or individuals about trans people's participation in outdoor and adventure activities.

Another important aspect regarding language is participants' pronouns and gendered language. The thesis is written in English, a language in which adjectives are not gendered. However, my first language is Spanish, and I find it relevant to clarify that any text in Spanish in this thesis is written using neutral language – with the -e ending. I have chosen not to use the masculine plural or the o/a formulations because they follow a binary and sexist pattern in which not all people may feel included. Instead, I have used the neutral -e because it is possible to read and because everyone can feel included in it, from those who identify with -a to those who identify with -o, and to those who identify with both or neither. Moreover, the use of the neutral -e seeks to dismantle the hegemonic masculine construction of the universal subject.

All interview and diary participants were asked about their pronouns, and those will be the ones used throughout the thesis. Fieldwork data was also gathered through online ethnography of Instagram. Instagram accounts also allow a space in the biography for stating the pronouns, which was always noted. In the case of the few Instagram accounts

that didn't have the pronouns stated in the bio and that couldn't be found in the posts, I have decided to use they/them to avoid misgendering. When pronouns for cited authors, academics, or scholars were used, I also researched about which pronouns they use in their respective biographies and personal information published on the Internet or publications.

Further, I also want to reflect on the decision to write this thesis in English, which felt both as a hindrance and an ease. While I feel comfortable writing academic texts in English, I do not aim for my texts to be entirely perfectly written, nor do I possess the wide range of vocabulary that a scholar whose first language is English would have. There were a few reasons for this. First of all, most participants spoke English, either as their first language or confidently enough to participate in writing or speaking. Writing the thesis in English would make this work accessible to most of the people who helped shape it, which was very important for me. Moreover, I had completed my master's degree in gender studies in English. Therefore, my approximation to this field and its vocabulary was in English. Additionally, not having to translate a vast portion of theoretical text and fieldwork data also felt very convenient within the time limitations. However, English is not my first language – not even second – and while writing academically felt sometimes easier, other times I missed having more vocabulary or just being sure about how to write grammatically correct. Sometimes, I really wanted to write some parts entirely in Spanish, and I fantasized about that possibility, though I always went back to my first reason to write in English. Moreover, I felt that I also lacked vocabulary in Spanish, as I had never written academic texts in this field in my first language. I was again in this transitional space as a result of life decisions that enriched my life experiences but that now hindered this project; I have learned to embrace the fact that my language is not going to be as delicate and rich as it is supposed to be expected – or as I would have liked sometimes. Yet, maybe this fact also makes this thesis available to a broader public. Thankfully, Microsoft Word's grammar checker, dictionaries, spelling apps, and proofreading have helped me overcome this challenge.

I would also like to mention here the identity standpoint that arises in some parts of the research. Most of the participants noted the importance of our shared trans – and outdoorsy – identity in their decision to get involved, further noting that research about trans people can or should only be done by fellow trans people. What is my position in this regard? The trans dimension, while relevant, would I give it the centrality that some participants give to it? Is our shared trans identity more important than our class, race, or ethnicity? Do I think that there are cis people who have contributed or can contribute to this regard? Do I know trans people who may not have felt comfortable with me or with them? While I believe that not all trans people share the same experiences and views, I do believe that there is a lack of research about trans people done by trans people. Traditionally, most of our experiences have been studied and described by cis people,

with a cisnormative perspective (Henrickson et al., 2020; Jourian & Nicolazzo, 2017; Z. Marshall et al., 2022; S. Rosenberg & Tilley, 2021). There will be trans scholars with whom I agree with their analysis and others with whom I might not agree. However, I do want to read more research carried out by and for trans people. And I also want to read research that doesn't follow cisheteronormative standards. Further, I would also love to find, for example, research about cis people's experiences in outdoor and adventure activities carried out by trans people, through a *transing*<sup>5</sup> lens. In this regard, if you are a cis person whose research interests include the lives of trans people, I highly recommend reading diverse authors' suggestions on how to ethically research queer and trans communities, such as Jacob Hale's (2009) 'Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing about Transsexuals, Transsexuality, Transsexualism, or Trans \_\_\_\_', Marshall et al.'s (2022) 'Trans Research Ethics Challenges and Recommendations', Henrickson et al.'s (2020) 'Principles for Ethical Research with Gender and Sexually Diverse Persons and Communities', or Galupo's (2017) reflections on 'Researching while cisgender: Identity considerations for transgender research'.

As you will discover moving forward in this text, you will not only *read* a text – but also *listen*. However, with the purpose of making this thesis more accessible to a broader audience, some aspects have been considered. For those of you who are listening to the whole text, image descriptions have been added to all photos and images that appear throughout the thesis. For those of you who are not able to hear the audio sections, audio descriptions have also been added to the files. I hope this helps you all to have a better and more fruitful experience.

Lastly, italicized text in quotations has been retained as in the original text, and quotations from texts written in Spanish have been translated by me.

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<sup>5</sup> I use here 'transing' as a verb, in a similar way to 'queering'. This has been proposed by other authors such as Camille Nurka (2015), Stryker, Currah and Moore (2008), and Koch-Rein, Yekani and Verlinden (2020). However, in its use as a verb I relate more with Silverman and Baril's conceptualization, "aiming to disrupt normative conceptualizations [...], valuing fluidity and changeability, instead of on a cisnormative\* injunction to sameness" (2021, p. 2).

## 1.2. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

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The core aim of this research is *to examine trans people's experiences within the processes that occur in outdoor and adventure activities in natural environments, through the lens of embodied queer methodological assemblages*. This aim responds to broad questions about trans people's experiences in outdoor activities, such as: To which kind of outdoor spaces do we go? With whom do we choose to go outdoors? Why? What are we looking for in these experiences? What benefits do we get from outdoor activities? What barriers do we find to participate in outdoor recreation? How does our trans identity affect our experiences, and how do the experiences affect our identities? To develop this main objective, I have devised four research objectives.

Firstly, *to analyze how trans people's gender identity and expression are constructed in outdoor activities, and how adventure activities impact the embodiment of trans people*. This aim responds to the questions of what kind of gender expressions are allowed in outdoor activities for trans people, how do we perform our gender identities in these spaces, and what impact does outdoor and adventure activities have in our own embodiment and empowerment processes, along with discussing the possibilities of outdoor activities as meanings of archives and epistemologies.

Secondly, *to examine the counter-geographies traced in the outdoors and how they affect the inclusion and participation of trans people in adventure activities*. This aim encompasses and reveals the creation of safe spaces for and by trans people in outdoor and adventure activities. Additionally, I will question metronormative narratives of trans people's lives and develop ideas of transecological belonging.

Thirdly, *to analyze the emotional and affective dimensions of the experiences of trans people in outdoor activities, examining the communities that form in these spaces and how visibility affects their experiences*. Here, I will delve into questions of how outdoor resilience processes might influence participants' personal development, how they might queer time-space compression, and how participants contest patriarchal and colonial outdoor language and concepts.

Lastly, the methodological challenges of including space throughout all phases of this thesis and engaging with the more-than-human of these experiences – both during the fieldwork but also with the readers, evoking their senses, prompted the last aim: *to explore queer methodological assemblages to 'produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently', through sensed and embodied on-the-move methodologies*.



### 1.3. SHORT COMMENT ON THE APPROACH

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*Una cicatriz es un lugar visible donde no habita precisamente el silencio, una huella alternativa que nos permite un recorrido y una búsqueda hacia la sanación, poniendo en cuestión aquello que la produjo o aquello que intentábamos alcanzar en nuestro caminar. – Mar Gallego (2020, p. 88)<sup>6</sup>*

As trans and queer persons, we soon learn that our bodies are not welcomed in most spaces. Thus, I want to inquire about the body's perception and physical embodiment of trans people in outdoor spaces: Is it possible for us to be in these spaces? Which processes occur in outdoor spaces compared to urban spaces regarding our bodies and gender surveillance means? Furthermore, I want to highlight what Tuck and Yang (2014) call *desire-based research*. Traditionally, research about trans people's experiences has tended to center on our pain narratives. However, I want to pay attention to the positive stories that we build, narrate, walk, and live. Thus, this thesis aims to contribute to knowledge of how to improve trans people's lives by looking deeper into aspects such as safe spaces, empowerment in our bodies, and resilience. In other words, it works toward making our lives more livable. In these matters, cisheteronormativity also plays an important role, as Sara Ahmed (2004) points out:

It is important to consider how compulsory heterosexuality – defined as the accumulative effect of the repetition of the narrative of heterosexuality as an ideal coupling – shapes what it is possible for bodies to do, even if it does not contain what it is possible to be. (p. 145)

Is it possible for trans bodies to go outdoors? How are the experiences of trans people in the adventure recreation community? What does adventure mean for trans people? How is adventure recreation related to the perception of our bodies? With this thesis, I want to bring our experiences together and start talking about the processes that occur in the outdoors in relation to trans experiences and bodies.

Overall, this research project has a *philosophical orientation*, understood as a “worldview that underlies and informs methodology and methods” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1); it is built on the understanding of *methodologies* “as the processes by which

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<sup>6</sup> “A scar is a visible place where silence does not dwell, an alternative trace that allows us a journey and a search towards healing, questioning what produced it or what we were trying to achieve in our journey” (Gallego, 2020, p. 88).

research is undertaken given a project's epistemological and ontological stance" (Nash, 2016, p. 133); and defines *methods* as "techniques and procedures for gathering and analyzing data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1). In this thesis, the research questions are philosophical in nature; the methodology is inspired by feminist, queer, and outdoor studies standpoints; and the empirical research consists of a multisited ethnographical approach. Feminist, queering, and outdoor stances inform the philosophical orientation, and epistemological position of this research – which will be further defined and analyzed in chapter 4. *Methodology and Methods*. Further, ontologically, the thesis draws from relativist stances that argue that there is no objective or absolute truth, but rather multiple interpretations and constructions of reality.

According to Lather (2006), research methods are political – and so are methodologies, I would add. Regarding queer methodology, queer thought is characterized by fluidity and dynamism, "motivating queer researchers to work against disciplinary legitimation and rigid categorization" (Holman Jones & Adams, 2016, p. 204). For Browne and Nash (2016), queer scholarship should be anti-normative and should seek to subvert and challenge the stabilities of social research and social life. So, what does it mean *to queer* the methodology and methods of a research? Nash (2016) explains that "the project of queering methodologies struggles to critically examine the way we as researchers 'do business' in terms of our potential complicity in normalizing knowledge production" (p. 133). Can we speak of queer methods? "Is research 'queer' if it is undertaken by queer researchers? Is such research about queer subjects and/or research that employs a queer conceptual framework? And what does it mean when we speak of a queer methodology or a queering of methodologies?" (K. Browne & Nash, 2016, p. 12). My topic is queer; I am queer; is that *enough* for queering my methodology?

Meanwhile, feminist methodologies are concerned with what feminist objectivity means. Here, I follow Haraway (1988), who defines feminist methodology as situated and embodied knowledges. Feminists and queer research do not aim for universal objectivity – or a universal truth –; instead, we "need the power of modern critical theories of how meaning and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life" (Haraway, 1988, p. 580). Thus, a feminist and queer research argues for a view "from the body" versus a "view from above" (Haraway, 1988).

Finally, outdoor studies researchers have not generally paid attention to their methodological practices until very recently (Pleasants & Stewart, 2020). What are the specificities of outdoor research? How can I *assemble* these three dimensions – queer, feminist, and outdoor? How could queer assemblages contribute to outdoor studies and this multi-sited ethnographical approach? Pleasants and Stewart (2020) ask how outdoor studies might "attend to the entangled philosophical and methodological dimensions of research" (p. 10). Here, I will follow the proposal of St Pierre, Jackson and Mazzei (St

Pierre et al., 2016) of *theorypractice*, who draw on the work of Deleuze and Foucault to argue that theory and practice are inseparable. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) depict how qualitative researchers can “use theory to think *with* their data (or use data to think *with* theory) in order to accomplish a reading of data that is both *within and against interpretivism*” (p. vii). Further, Pleasants and Stewart (2020) use the concept of *assemblage* developed by Deleuze and Guattari to frame their *theorypractice* research. As they explain it:

We employ assemblage to highlight the enmeshed dynamics of ontology, epistemology, ethics, matter and agency as they relate to outdoor studies in an effort to prompt researchers to engage with philosophical and methodological shifts underway in related disciplines, and in doing so encourage creativity in reconceptualizing research, pedagogy and curricula within the field. (Pleasants & Stewart, 2020, p. 11)

Jasbir Puar also elaborates on this concept in her book “Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times” (Puar, 2007). She further develops the notion of (queer) assemblages in her article “‘I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’. Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory” (Puar, 2012), in which she describes what assemblages *do*:

Assemblages are interesting because they de-privilege the human body as a discrete organic thing. As Haraway notes, the body does not end at the skin. We leave traces of our DNA everywhere we go, we live with other bodies within us, microbes and bacteria, we are enmeshed in forces, affects, energies, we are composites of information. (p. 57)

Hence, I am interested in exploring the inter-relations and intra-connections of these queer assemblages within outdoor methodologies. Further, Pleasants and Stewart (2020) urge outdoor education researchers to look upon international sociological and cultural knowledges and thinking across ecofeminism and material discursive analysis. As they put it: “Feminist orientations in outdoor studies might seek to critique and reframe universalist assumptions underpinning normative thinking that are premised on an unacknowledged white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied subject who exists apart from non-human nature” (Pleasants & Stewart, 2020, p. 17).

Upon starting my fieldwork, still in the middle of a global pandemic, I was overwhelmed by uncertainty. Would I be able to carry out my research as planned? Was my proposed methodological approach possible in this ‘new normal’? How could I address this research in a ‘safe’ way? I didn’t want to compromise on the quality of the study; thus, I saw the option for a mixed-method approach even more suitable. I chose a qualitative interpretive paradigm for the research approach, as it would allow me to comprehend the interviewees’ subjective experience better, employing in-depth, semi-

structured interviews diaries, autoethnography, and online ethnography (in particular, Instagram social media network) to collect participants' stories. Interviews were carried out 'on-the-move'. However, through this approach, I was not going to be able to reach as many participants as I desired. Hence, to enlarge the sample size, other participants' experiences were gathered through guided on-the-move diaries. This same guided diary was used for the autoethnographic data, a method that is also traditionally employed in queer research (Holman Jones & Adams, 2016) and outdoor research (Humberstone & Nicol, 2020). Autoethnography is a way to explain how a personal experience can describe a wider cultural experience:

My experience—our experience—could be and could reframe your experience. My experience—our experience— could politicize your experience and could motivate and mobilize you, and us, to action. My experience—our experience— could inspire you to return to your own stories, asking again and again what they tell and what they leave out. (Adams & Holman Jones, 2011, p. 110)

Additionally, the decision to incorporate an autoethnographic perspective implies abandoning a paradigm of invisibility and impartiality, allowing the research process to take me through it, reflecting on my own theoretical-activist, social, and geopolitical position, and making my personal involvement in the research process explicit.

Finally, the “opportunities the Internet provides for political organizing, making personal experiences more public, and creating spaces for a variety of voices makes it particularly relevant to feminist geographers and researchers” (Morrow et al., 2015, p. 526). The analysis of online material intends to add insights into the research questions and how these experiences figure in contemporary mobile lives (Fay, 2007).

By using these methodological approaches, I aim to broaden representation and visibility of trans people, showing that we are *Out-there* and that we also belong in these spaces. Further analysis and theoretical development into these questions regarding the thesis' methodology and methods will follow in *Part II: Methodological Approach*.

## 1.4. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

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I have divided the text into three parts. The first part explores the conceptual approach and state of the art. The conceptual approach delves into the understanding of concepts like queer, trans, cis, outdoor, and adventure that are employed throughout the thesis, and closes with a brief explanation of some theoretical concepts. This is followed by an overview of research on the intersection between gender studies and outdoor studies.

The second part will explore the methodological approach, which is a crucial component in the present research with a specific research objective. The description of feminist, queering, and outdoor methodologies will serve to assemble an embodied methodological approach, which I have called ‘on-the-move methodology’. This approach was developed in all stages of this project, including fieldwork, analysis, and, hopefully, your reading experience.

Finally, the third section encompasses the theoretical foundation, analysis, and discussion of the findings. It comprises four chapters, each corresponding to one of the research objectives. The thesis wraps up with the conclusion, which summarizes the central questions and main findings and contributions. I will then propose a guide for outdoor recreation providers to make their educational programs, internships, and travel experiences more inclusive for LGBTIQ+ people – putting the focus on the T – and suggest future lines of research.



**Part I.**

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**Conceptual Approach  
and State of the Art**





## 2. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

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Concepts carry a heritage of definitions that change over time, a background in their meanings, struggles, and resistances. These meanings vary depending on who uses them. Decisions on whether to use one or another concept are political, acquiring particular importance when they directly affect the personal identities of the subjects themselves (Currah, 2006; Halberstam, 2005; Serano, 2015; Stryker et al., 2008; D. Valentine, 2007). Terms regarding trans identities hold a legacy of pathologizing medical language, which has been challenged by feminist, queer, and trans activist discourses. Moreover, the meaning of these concepts is contextual, and they change through time and space (Halberstam, 2005).

Talking about trans, transgender, transexual, non-binary, genderqueer, etc., has political connotations and situates both – the speaker and the subject – in a particular position. Therefore, in what follows, I will briefly overview some of the concepts that will be used throughout the thesis, and the meanings and definitions that will be attributed to them in this text. This meaning is not stable and fixed, but it changes according to the social, political, and cultural context, as well as depending on the moment they are used and the conceptual framework. Moreover, I highly agree with Serano’s (2015) statement:

Because trans people are highly stigmatized and face undue scrutiny in our culture, all of the language associated with us will face similar stigma and scrutiny. At some point, every single trans-related term will be called out as “problematic” for some reason or another—e.g., its origin, history, aesthetic quality (or lack thereof), literal meaning, alternate definitions, potential misinterpretations or connotations, or occasional exclusionary or defamatory usage. And supposedly more liberatory or inclusive alternative terms will gain favor. But over time, these new terms will eventually be challenged too. (para. 1)

My aim here is not to reflect on the history and evolution of these concepts, nor their genealogy, as this would overreach far outside the aims of this thesis. Instead, I will reflect on the meaning that I attribute to them as a trans and queer person, as an activist, as a person for whom Spanish is their first language, and as a white person in Europe.

## 2.1. SITUATING TRANS AND CIS

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Following other trans scholars and activists (e.g., Enke, 2012; Straube, 2020; Stryker, 2017; Stryker et al., 2008), I understand being trans as not identifying with the gender assigned at birth, regardless of whether or not one does bodily modifications or social changes. I use trans as an umbrella term for different identities that fall outside of the norm in relation to gender identity and gender expression.

I decide to distance myself from the term transsexual<sup>7</sup> – described by Benjamin (2006) as “the intense and often obsessive desire to change the entire sexual status including the anatomical structure” (p. 46) –, which is attached to a history of medical pathologization. In English-speaking contexts, the term transgender has been widely used as an umbrella term. The publication of “Transgender Liberation” (Feinberg, 1992) is regarded as the starting point for its current use, in which she describes it as a term used by transgender people to auto-define themselves – rather than by others, as it has been (and it is) common (Stryker, 2006, 2017). For Susan Stryker (2017), transgender is an umbrella term, which she uses as follows:

I use it in this book to refer to people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth, people who cross over (trans-) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender. Some people move away from their birth-assigned gender because they feel strongly that they properly belong to another gender through which it would be better for them to live; others want to strike out toward some new location, some space not yet clearly described or concretely occupied; still others simply feel the need to challenge the conventional expectations bound up with the gender that was initially put upon them. In any case, it is the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place, rather than any particular destination or mode of transition, that best characterizes the concept of transgender that I develop here. I use transgender in its broadest possible sense. (p. 11)

However, this concept is in constant transition, and its use as a central and unifying term has also been questioned (Currah, 2006; D. Valentine, 2007). David Valentine (2007) expresses their concerns insofar that, even though ‘transgender’ is being used by institutions to refer to all gender non-conforming people, not everyone identifies with

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<sup>7</sup> Popularized by Harry Benjamin in the 1950s, the term transsexualism can be traced back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld wrote *seelischer transsexualismus* (translated as ‘spiritual transsexualism’).

this term. Paisley Currah (2006) questions what the political and personal consequences of the use of transgender as an umbrella term could be. In Spanish-speaking contexts, ‘trans’ and ‘trans\*’<sup>8</sup> are the terms that are currently being used as an umbrella term for gender non-conforming identities (Platero, 2017; Suess, 2015).

There are critiques of whether non-binary identities are or should be included under this trans (transgender, trans\*) umbrella term. Some non-binary people do identify with the term ‘trans’, while others don’t (Aultman, 2019; Bornstein, 1994; Platero, 2017), seeing ‘non-binary’ as another umbrella term<sup>9</sup> for gender identities that do not conform to binary notions of the alignment of sex, gender, gender identity, gender role, gender expression, or gender presentation (Stryker, 2017). Trans authors Kate Bornstein (1994) and Stephen Whittle (1996) have argued that trans activism has consistently questioned the gender binary from its inception, asserting that individuals within the movement have not confined their own gender experiences strictly to binary perspectives.

For the purpose of easing language, I have decided to use trans as an umbrella term, including non-binary identities within it, since “the crux of the problem is not the words themselves, but rather the negative or narrow views of trans people that ultimately influence how these words are viewed and used by others” (Serano, 2015, para. 1). In this sense, trans indicates a movement away from sex assigned at birth (Enke, 2012; Stryker, 2017) and it constitutes a “practice that takes place within, as well as across or between, gendered spaces” (Stryker et al., 2008, p. 13). Therefore, I agree here with Straube’s (2020) use of ‘trans’ as a concept that “includes gender as well as opening up toward further transformatory practices in humans and their intimate Others” (p. 56).

Alongside the discussion about the use of umbrella terms such as trans and transgender, there are critiques of these terms being by and for Western cultures and not taking into account contextual and cultural diversity, where other gender expressions and gender identities outside of the binary already existed (D. Valentine, 2007; Vincent & Manzano, 2017). The position of Western researchers has been assumed as inherently true, universal, and ahistorical, imposing a Western normativity of gender binarism into the terminology used in – and for – trans- and queer-related issues (Suess, 2015; Vincent & Manzano, 2017). In contexts such as Abya Yala<sup>10</sup>, terms like ‘travesti’ are used as an

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<sup>8</sup> The use of trans with an asterisk has both advocates and opponents. International organizations such as GATE ([Global Action for Trans\\* Equality: https://gate.ngo](https://gate.ngo)) and scholars such as Platero (2017) and Tompkins (2014) express how this wording could be a solution to include all gender non-conforming identities. However, it also has its detractors, as explained by Platero (2017) and here: <https://transstudent.org/issues/asterisk/>.

<sup>9</sup> Non-binary identities under the umbrella definition include, but are not limited to genderqueer, genderfluid, gender nonconforming, agender, bigender, demigender, and gender\*ck.

<sup>10</sup> Abya Yala is the name used before the colonization of Columbus for what is known as America in Western culture. Arias et al. (2012) argue that recognizing and “placing foreign names on our villages,

umbrella term, showing their own empowerment processes (Berkins, 2006, cited in Platero, 2017, p. 411).

Cis or cisgender, on the other side, refers to people who identify with the gender which they were assigned at birth. This term, first proposed by the biologist Dana Leland Defosse in 1994, is a Latin prefix that means ‘on the same side’ –while the Latin prefix ‘trans’ means ‘across’ or ‘over’. She described it as “the condition of staying with birth-assigned sex, or congruence between birth-assigned sex and gender identity. Nowadays, cisgender commonly implies staying *within* certain gender parameters (however they may be defined) rather than *crossing* (or trans-ing) those parameters” (Enke, 2013, p. 235). Moreover, cisgender has the purpose of replacing concepts such as ‘bio man’ or ‘bio woman’, dissociating from the practice of only labeling what is considered to be ‘different’ – from the norm –, a practice which reinforces the ‘normality’ of some identities – cisheteronormativity – and Othering processes (Aultman, 2014; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). Enke (2013) reflects on how it is cisgender people themselves the ones who object to this term, arguing that they “feel insulted by the word ‘cisgender’ because transgender (i.e., stigmatized minority) people dare to name and to *other* them” (p. 235).

It is interesting to note concepts such as ‘cisexism’ and ‘cisnormativity’ that arise from the prefix cis. Along the same lines as sexism is to hierarchical difference between men and women –, and heterosexism is to hierarchical difference between those who are straight and those who are not straight –, cisexism “problematizes the linear correspondence between sex and gender identity” (Martínez-Guzmán, 2017, p. 83). Similarly, cisnormativity can be defined as an established mechanism for surveillance and punishment of people who have gender variations that deviate from the dominant, cisgender identities. Thus, cisnormativity emphasizes the systemic and regulatory character – for all gender identities – of institutional, political, and symbolic practices that generate discrimination against trans people (Martínez-Guzmán, 2017). Critiques of this concept argue that it reinforces binary gender logics and risks the reduction and simplification of the complex and diverse reality of gender (Enke, 2013; Martínez-Guzmán, 2017).

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our cities, and our continents is equivalent to subjecting our identities to the will of our invaders and their heirs” (p. 7). Hence, the processes of naming territories with their pre-colonization names would be a step toward epistemic decolonization, and the self-determination of indigenous people and communities. This term was used by the Kuna people, an indigenous group residing in Colombia and Panama, to designate the territory encompassing the American continent. Currently, social movements and communities use it to refer to the entire American continent.

In the present thesis, the term *trans* refers to people with a gender expression or identity different from the one they were assigned at birth, including and among others: transsexual, transgender, transvestite, crossdresser, non-gender, multigender, gender fluid, genderqueer, agender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming. I choose to use this concept as an umbrella term for two reasons: First, not all people with a gender identity and/or expression different from the one assigned at birth identify with the term *trans*. Secondly, its Western character and the wide diversity of concepts existing in different cultural contexts to describe processes of transition moving away from the gender assigned at birth.

## 2.2. SITUATING QUEER

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Queer was originally a pejorative term used to insult those who are weird and/or different; gay, lesbian and trans people among them. Over 30 years ago, in the late 1980s, queer emerged in English-speaking countries as a term to challenge normalizing sexualities and gender identities and expressions. What started as a pejorative term, was reappropriated by those who considered themselves activists, faggots, dykes, trans, poor, HIV-positive, migrants, PoC<sup>11</sup>, etc., as a way to take distance themselves from the term gay, which only represented white middle-class gay male people (Sáez, 2017). Even though it is quite often used as an identity category, queer is precisely about problematizing those identity categories that pretend to normalize sexual diversities. In that sense, queer is at the same time identity and post-identity.

Thereafter, in the early 1990s, and emanating from the knowledge and discourses of activists' groups, queer was introduced as a concept in academia by Teresa de Lauretis (1991), who coined the term *queer theory* – though she distances herself from it three years later arguing that it had been appropriated by the same institutions and normativities that it was supposed to resist. Queer theory was meant to:

Open a theoretical reflection about questions that were already being raised in society by activist groups that incorporated racial, class, disability or decolonial issues (among others) as key factors to understand sex, gender and sexual diversity, beyond a naturalization or essentialization that conceived sex as something biological and that was based on a heterocentric and binary model. (Sáez, 2017, p. 382)

Thereafter, it was developed by other authors, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler being two of the most important. Butler's book "Gender Trouble" (1990), in which they question what it means to be a 'woman' or 'gay', sets the ground for queer theory henceforth. Later, in "Bodies that Matter" (1993a), Butler goes further into the concept of *performativity* and seeks to establish both the normative conditions under which the matter of the body is framed and formed, as well as the borders and limits of sex. I delve further in, and apply my research to this concept in chapter 5. *(Trans)Genders and (Trans)Bodies*.

Many scholars have problematized the term queer, starting with Butler, one of the people who has dedicated most time to thinking and developing queer theory. Butler points out the importance of including a self-critical dimension about the uses of the term

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<sup>11</sup> People of color.

and the risk of establishing new exclusions, with the aim of maintaining its character of collective opposition:

If the term ‘queer’ is to be a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings, it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes. (Butler, 1993a, p. 228)

Moreover, as they contend in their essay “Critically Queer” (Butler, 1993b), the assertion of queer must never purport to fully describe those it seeks to represent; the reinvention of the term is contingent on its potential obsolescence.

Other critiques point out how queer theory originated in Western academia: “Insofar as queer frameworks have originated in the West and the queer is articulated in a Western language, one might ask whether this would mean for him that any queer politics would be destined to enact the same particularist and orientalist stance” (Sabsay, 2012, p. 614). Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz (2005) also add to this discussion and assert that the future of queer studies “depends absolutely on moving away from white gay male identity politics and learning from the radical critiques offered by a younger generation of queer scholars who draw their intellectual inspiration from feminism and ethnic studies rather than white queer studies” (p. 12). Is *queer* creating a new Western standard of how not to be straight? Which are “the ways in which queerness should be performed for queers to be read as such” (Sabsay, 2012, p. 608)?

It is challenging to translate the word queer into Spanish. In English, the term carries a burden of offense and strong insult, covers many different sexualities, and does not have a specific gender. Furthermore, when translating queer into Spanish, it not only loses the element of reappropriation, but it also gets a positive signifier, an element of distinction. Moreover, some activists and researchers (Falconí, 2014; Falconí et al., 2013; Farfán, 2017; Godoy Vega & Rojas Miranda, 2017; Marugán Ricart, 2018; Ramallo & Gómez, 2019; Valencia et al., 2017) have argued that the use of the term in English is a form of linguistic colonialism and that it loses value in its subversive capital since the homophobic insult par excellence that it is in English, it is not such in Spanish. The term queer doesn’t reflect the same linguistic weight in Spanish. Therefore, an epistemic and visual reconfiguration has been proposed by Latinx scholars and activists, who have helped translate and rethink *queer* knowledge to locate it in Abya Yala, giving it its own record as an identity: *marica*, *tortillera*, *jota*, etc., as well as thought: *cuir/kuir/cuy(r)* (Ramallo & Gómez, 2019; Farfán, 2017; Valencia et al., 2017; Falconí, 2014). In the context of Spain, Sáez (2017) explains how these translations have been *trans-marika-bollo* when talking about identity and *transfeminism* when referring to queer theory. In the context of the Spanish State, transfeminism has been claimed by many organizations

and activists “as a word that feels more embodied and more meaningfully contextualized for them than queer” (Egaña & Solá, 2016, p. 75).

In the present thesis, I will employ the term *queer*, when concerning a person’s identity, as identifying outside the cisheteronormativity with regard to sexual orientation and/or gender identity. In relation to theoretical approaches, I have decided to also use the wording ‘queer’ to refer to *queer theory*, *queer studies*, *queer methodology*, and its other ramifications to highlight the multiple, diverse and changing character of the theoretical-activist discursive reflections.



### 2.3. ONE IS NOT BORN, BUT RATHER BECOMES, TRANS<sup>12</sup> – POSITIONING TRANS WITHIN GENDER STUDIES

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*Transgender studies underlines the body of flesh as the fundamental, but nevertheless contingent, starting point for any persons being in the world. – Signe Bremer (2013, p. 331)*

In this section, I outline the theoretical approach – which is partially grounded in activism, specifically transfeminist activism in Spain. It will be further developed in *Part III: Analysis, Findings, and Discussion*.

Over the last three decades, feminist scholars have argued that the deconstructionist approach of poststructuralism provided a challenge to the dominant discourses of social and political theory prevalent in the social sciences. This research draws upon queer theory that has developed within feminist poststructural and postcolonial theory in sociology, social and cultural geographies, and cultural studies. Poststructuralism “seeks to reveal the power relations upon which the construction, legitimation and reproduction of modernist society depends” (Aitchison, 2003, p. 31). Hence, we can understand poststructuralism as a way of thinking and theorizing subjectivity by disrupting and deconstructing modernist narratives that depict universal truths across culture, history, and time.

Concerning how gender, gender identities, and gendered bodies are experienced in outdoor contexts, we necessarily have to think of normativities, dualisms, and oppression. Therefore, poststructuralist thought together with queer theoretical critiques constitutes an adequate theoretical base for the present research. It foregrounds the needs to doubt the pre-discursive subject, to denaturalize categories (not only gender, but also sex), to question binary normativities, to show the violence inherent in all identity formation processes, and to focus on performativity rather than on a supposed underlying essence of gender. Further, it is convenient to decenter the monolithic feminist subject –

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<sup>12</sup> I first used this analogy with Beauvoir’s “One is not born, but rather becomes, woman” in an article published in 2016 in the blog of the collective Bloque Andaluz de Revolución Sexual: <https://bloqueandaluzrevsex.wordpress.com/2016/03/30/no-se-nace-trans-se-llega-a-serlo/>. It ended up being one of our most shared articles in social media, though it also got some heavy criticism from more normative trans activists, which compared it to the ‘Santísima Iglesia Católica’ (Holy Catholic Church). An English revised translation was published in 2020 in the feminist magazine Astra (Issue 3/2020 Tema: Trans): <https://www.astra.fi/blog/tidskriften/digi-kop/astra-3-2020-tema-trans-las-digital/>.

embodied by the cis, white, middle-class, able-bodied, Western woman – because it generates new hierarchies and forms of exclusion: “Any feminist theory that restricts the meaning of gender in the presuppositions of its own practice sets up exclusionary gender norms within feminism, often with homophobic consequences” (Butler, 1990, pp. vii–viii).

For poststructuralist feminism, close to queer theories, the transgender identity constitutes a transgressive figure necessary to question the dominant categories: “The transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science. It is a technological construction. It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born” (Stryker, 1994, p. 237). In this line, other authors (Cohen, 2020; Santos, 2023; Springgay & Truman, 2019; Straube, 2020; Stryker, 1994; Weaver, 2013; Weinstock, 2020) have also noted how trans and queer bodies have been regarded as ‘unnatural’, ‘less than human’ and “excluded from the category of the human in its transgression of gender norms and normative sexuality” (Straube, 2020, p. 57). However, as Springgay and Truman (2019) argue, “the figure of trans/queer body does not merely unsettle the human as norm; it generates other possibilities – multiple, cyborgian, spectral, transcorporeal, transmaterial – for living” (p. 8).

Transgender studies emerged in the USA during the 1990s. It developed from trans movements and activisms that were closely related to women’s, LGB, and queer activisms. Two texts, “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto”<sup>13</sup> from Sandy Stone (2006) and Susan Stryker’s “My Words to Victor Frankenstein” (1994), which are themselves heavily influenced by the thinking of poststructuralist feminist scholars such as Donna Haraway and Judith Butler, are considered to be the seed of transgender studies as a research field. Sandy Stone (2006) argues that:

To attempt to occupy a place as speaking subject within the traditional gender frame is to become complicit in the discourse which one wishes to deconstruct. Rather, we can seize upon the textual violence inscribed in the transsexual body and turn it into a reconstructive force. (p. 230)

To present the ideas and work of the most important trans scholars would exceed the limits of the present research. Some of the main current referents, among many others, are Julia Serano, Jack Halberstam, Paul Preciado, Sandy Stone, Kate Bornstein, Susan

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<sup>13</sup> Although I cite the version I used, published in 2006 in the Transgender Studies Reader, the text has a much longer trajectory. This is its publication history: Version 1.0 written late 1987. First presented at “Other Voices, Other Worlds: Questioning Gender and Ethnicity,” Santa Cruz, CA, 1988. First published in Kristina Straub and Julia Epstein, eds.: “Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity” (Routledge 1991). Second version, revised and updated, published in “Camera Obscura”, Spring 1994. This version was included in 2006 in Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, eds.: “The Transgender Studies Reader” (Routledge).

Stryker, Lucas Platero, Stephen Whittle, Dean Space, Z Nicolazzo, and Siobhan Guerrero.

Queer theories and politics contend that identities are historical and social products – rather than natural phenomena – and strive to combat existing dichotomies – male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual – as source of oppressions. Thus, queer theory implies an ample critique of normalization processes, destabilizing existing categories socially developed from above. Therefore, I argue here that trans as well as queer and gender research, if underpinned by a poststructural feminist approach, could have the potential to stimulate the kinds of debates necessary to throw light into the matters discussed in this thesis. To elucidate this further, I recall the concept of Othering, which first entered feminist discourse with Simone de Beauvoir (2011) in 1949 and is foundational to poststructural, postcolonial, and post-modern theorizing as a central term in trans and queer studies. Trans studies scholars such as Judith Butler (1990) and Finn Enke (2012) have drawn from Beauvoir’s prominent statement, “one is not born, but rather becomes, woman”, stating that transgender studies “extends this foundation, emphasizing that there is no natural process by which anyone becomes woman, and also that everyone’s gender is made: Gender, and also sex, are made through complex social and technical manipulations that naturalize some while abjecting others” (Enke, 2012, p. 1). Throughout this research, engagement with poststructural theory aims to enable an analysis of structural and symbolic power present within social-cultural nexus of (trans)gender and adventure recreation.

As discussed above, the term *queer* has a difficult translation into non-English speaking contexts. In some Western European countries (for example, in Spain and France), *transfeminism* has been a concept used for a political movement that takes insights from poststructuralist feminism and queer studies: “Through the concept of “transfeminism,” which closely approximates the notion of a “queer feminism,” some feminist organizations have claimed a word that feels more embodied and more meaningfully contextualized for them than queer” (Egaña & Solá, 2016, p. 75). In the Spanish context, the concept transfeminism appears for the first time in 2000 during the Jornadas Feministas Estatales (a state feminist conference), held in Cordoba (Solá, 2013), but it is in the 2009 conference held in Granada when it consolidates. The main ideas exposed there were: the need for trans-depathologization, to act on the silence of feminism regarding trans issues and the acknowledgment of the feminist roots of trans activism, the reaffirmation of transfeminism as a movement addressing issues that break binarisms (Araneta & Fernández Garrido, 2016). Moreover, in Spain, transfeminism seeks to avoid the “theoretical disembodiment of the political subject by consistently referencing the body and its ongoing transformations as the main means of resisting biopower through creative biopolitical production and counterproduction” (Espineira & Bourcier, 2016, p. 88). Transfeminism has opened a space for building up a feminism

based on a coalition between different minority groups, identities, and discourses; those of feminists, *okupas*, dykes, anticapitalists, faggots, sex workers, crips, and trans people (Araneta & Fernández Garrido, 2016; Egaña & Solá, 2016; Espineira & Bourcier, 2016; Solá, 2013). *Transfeminist perspectives* can also be found in English contexts (Enke, 2012; Koyama, 2001), referring to the integration of feminist- and trans studies and theories.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In the last years, the TERF – Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism – wave has also arrived in Spain. To read more about this, see Platero (2023).

## 2.4. SITUATING OUTDOOR AND ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

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This interdisciplinary research builds upon diverse theories and research from different areas of study, trans studies and outdoor studies being the two main ones. After having set the ground of the first field – trans studies – the goal of this section is to situate this research within outdoor studies. Later on, in chapter 3. *State of the Art*, I will show how the existing literature has brought together both research areas.

What is adventure? What is considered to be outdoors? What are outdoor activities? Research carried out in this field of study uses different concepts to refer to a similar kind of action, activity, and space. However, the definitions of these concepts have some distinctions, and the meaning that different subjectivities give to them also varies. In this section, I aim to provide an overview of the different definitions of these concepts that exist in current literature, situate this research within them, and argue in favor of the ones I have decided to use. Thereafter, I will envision the potential that has been revealed by looking at the geographical dimensions of space in the outdoors and the cultural dimensions of nature. Throughout these discussions and reflections, I hope to settle the concepts of ‘outdoor’ and ‘adventure’ for this thesis, as well as display what these spaces offer in terms of gender, bodies and resistance to cisheteronormative norms.

### 2.4.1. DEFINING OUTDOOR AND ADVENTURE. *CROSS PATHS INTO THE WILD?*

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What does it mean ‘to go outdoors’ in an ‘indoor society’? What is outdoor and what is indoor? When are we ‘in nature’? What is adventure? When confronted with these questions, it was clear to me that I did not want to focus only on going outside the comfort zone of our house – in fact, the house/home is a space that can be much riskier and more dangerous for trans and queer people than a forest or the mountains, as I will discuss more thoroughly in later in the thesis. Still, I wanted to address a specific kind of activities that take place outside, or as Pedersen (2003) calls it, “the outlying areas”, and a way to move through the space that is active. These ideas naturally drove me into concepts such as outdoor activities and adventure recreation. However, there is an ongoing debate around the definitions of these concepts – as well as others such as leisure, tourism, nature, or wilderness. In the following section, I will present the differences between these concepts and argue in favor of the ones I have decided to use for the thesis.

‘Leisure’ and ‘tourism’ are two concepts that often come tied to ‘outdoor’ and ‘adventure’. Yet, not all outdoor activities may imply leisure – for example, when discussing outdoor leadership experiences or other situations where it is part of the person’s work life. Tourism, on the other side, implies a commercial purpose (Doran et

al., 2018), which can be the case of some adventure recreation and outdoor activities, but it is only a part of these experiences. In addition, another significant difference is the need for tourism to be undertaken away from the participant's home region, whereas adventure recreation activities can be undertaken – although they don't have to – close to the participant's home (Doran, 2019; Overholt & Ewert, 2015). For the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), adventure tourism can be defined as “a trip that includes at least two of the following three elements: physical activity, natural environment and cultural immersion” (Rantala et al., 2018, p. 540).

Similarly, Humberstone (2000) argues in favor of the concept ‘outdoor industry’, which “provides or makes available outdoor experiences for leisure and recreational purposes, for educational, youth and management training and therapeutic reasons. Many outdoor and adventurous activities are associated with and have some of the characteristics of nature-based sports” (p. 21). However, the use of ‘industry’ reminds me of a more commercial aspect of these kinds of activities, whereas I aim to approach any type of activity, whether it has commercial purposes or not. Hence, I see the use of recreation and/or activities as larger-reaching concepts, which may include leisure, tourism, education, or work purposes.

On the other side, it is also possible to spot differences between adventure, outdoor, nature, and wilderness. Adventure recreation has been defined as “a variety of self-initiated activities utilizing an interaction with the natural environment, that contain elements of real or apparent danger, in which the outcome, while uncertain, can be influenced by the participant and circumstance” (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989, p. 125). Adventure can also be seen as “an experience where the outcome is uncertain because key information may be missing, vague, or unknown” (Haddock, 1993, p. 9, cited in Little & Wilson, 2005, p. 187). As Mortlock (2000) has indicated, adventure may be present as long as participants perceive the situation as potentially hazardous and anticipate that their actions could lead to some discomfort. Other characteristics of adventure activities are: The inherent risks that they include, it is a physical activity, it is challenging, and it is self-motivating (Díaz Carrión, 2012c; Little, 2002a). Feminist research has widened the concept of adventure, shifting from a product-oriented definition to more philosophical and people-oriented definitions (Rantala et al., 2018). Thus, adventure can also be seen as a state of mind (Little, 2002a; Little & Wilson, 2005) or linked to ideas such as “dreams, learning, personal growth, and discovery” (Little & Wilson, 2005, p. 190). However, although Ewert and Hollenhorst's (1989) definition includes an interaction with the natural environment, it is also possible to find adventure activities within a broader range of locations, such as indoor environments – e.g., a climbing gym. The main emphasis of adventure activities for most authors appears to be on the risk incorporated by the activity (Little & Wilson, 2005).

The concept of outdoor activities is used for adventure activities that happen in the natural environment. Although it quite often implies an element of risk, it does not always have to include this. For Carter and Colyer (1999), this factor is the one that differentiates adventure activities from outdoor activities: “The term ‘adventure recreation’, as opposed to ‘outdoor recreation’, implies an element of risk, either real or perceived, in the outdoor (and indoor) adventure activities undertaken” (p. 74). For Dashper and King (2022), outdoor recreation encompasses diverse activities through which individuals interact with the outdoors for leisure purposes. It involves a wide range of experiences that provide adventure, challenge, fun, and relaxation. These subtle differences keep open an ongoing debate within outdoor and adventure studies about the definition of the concepts (Carter & Colyer, 1999; Doran, 2019; Humberstone, 2000; Little & Wilson, 2005; Pedersen, 2003; Rantala et al., 2018). Similarly, nature sports “comprise a group of sporting activities that are developed and experienced in natural or rural areas, ranging from formal to informal practices, and which may contribute to sustainable local development” (Melo et al., 2020, p. 2).

Lastly, wilderness is another widespread concept in research about this topic. It appears that in some cases, it is used interchangeably with ‘outdoor’, although the use of wilderness may suggest that the adventure activities should be more remote. It is also more commonly used in the context of the USA, where it comes tied to the ‘Wilderness Act’<sup>15</sup>. In addition, wilderness is linked to colonial concepts: “Colonial conceptions of wilderness, however, in American (and Australian) contexts saw wilderness (or vast tracks of land) as ‘empty’ and ‘virginal’; these conceptions effectively erased the presence and agency of both indigenous peoples and nature” (Meyer, 2010, p. 15; Plumwood, 1998). This idea of wilderness as ‘emptiness’ has been criticized as Eurocentric and androcentric (Meyer, 2010). There is also the idea of wilderness being an opposite concept to civilization. However, the concept of wilderness itself is a human creation, so wilderness must also be a human construct (Cronon, 1995; Meyer, 2010; Plumwood, 1998). Hence, “wilderness hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural” (Cronon, 1995, p.7). Lewis (2007, p. 6, cited in Weatherby & Vidon, 2018) states this conflict in its definition: “Wilderness is a concept devised by humans to define a particular type of wild environment...Wild nature can be found everywhere; wilderness cannot” (p. 335).

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<sup>15</sup> The 1964 Wilderness Act established the National Wilderness Preservation System in the United States. The Act states: “A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain; and that wilderness should have outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation and may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value” (1964, Public Law 88-577).

In this manner, I would like to clarify the concepts I will use throughout the thesis and the meanings given to them. Outdoor recreation, outdoor activities, adventure recreation and adventure activities will be used synonymously and interchangeably. With this, I aim to comprehend the extensive range of sport activities that take place in the outdoors, understood as ‘outlying areas’ in nature, for different kinds of reasons such as leisure, recreation, relaxation, tourism, education, or work, and which involve an element of risk (whether physical or emotional) whose outcome is perceived by the participants as unknown or uncertain. Examples of these types of activities would be hiking, mountaineering, rock climbing, bike touring, mountain biking, bike touring, camping, kayaking, and skiing.

Finally, it is important to outline that all these definitions have been made from a cis male white Western perspective (Little & Wilson, 2005; Meyer, 2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013). As Little and Wilson (2005) remark, feminist research has now contributed to recognizing that the leisure experience may differ depending on the person’s gender identity – only taking into consideration cis experiences. However, the analyses that have been done until now are predominantly cisheteronormative, not taking into account queer, trans and non-binary experiences. Aspects such as race, class, and education have also been largely overlooked by ‘mainstream’ and feminist analyses of adventure recreation. This thesis aims to break that gap, arguing that trans people’s experiences in outdoor activities may also differ.

## 2.4.2. THE OUTDOORS AS A (CULTURAL) SPACE

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Feminist studies have ignored the complexity of nature as a cultural concept, while feminist theories “must be criticised for not taking seriously the complexity of women’s (and men’s) connection with the ‘natural’ environment [...] where different kinds of outdoor recreation and adventure have become the most important way of getting in touch with nature” (Pedersen, 2003, p. 124). This study aims to challenge the apparent neutrality of nature as set by the androcentricity of the outdoor studies field (Humberstone, 2000; Meyer, 2010). For doing so, it is crucial to acknowledge the outdoors as a cultural space where socio-cultural variations concerning the experiences of trans and non-binary people with nature exist. Therefore, I intend to provide a brief overview of the discussion within feminist outdoor research regarding the cultural dimension of adventure activities, arguing in favor of an analysis of the space from the point of departure of feminist geography. This thesis seeks to put trans experiences – situated and embodied – on the agenda of outdoor and adventure recreation.

Cultural studies have defined culture as “the ways in which ideologies and practices are constructed through systems of meanings, by webs of power and through the



organisations and institutions that produce and legitimate them. Culture therefore is frequently concerned with struggle” (Humberstone, 2000, pp. 27-28). Outdoor and adventure recreation culture is also a site of struggle, which comprises the processes, practices, knowledges, and categories that constitute them (Humberstone, 2000, p. 28). The cultural contexts and dimensions within which outdoor and adventure activities take place play a decisive role on the type of space that it is created. Thereupon, it is interesting to look into the concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ and how they are intertwined with the people who participate in outdoor activities. Even though prevailing sport cultures have had a crucial role in appraising idealized forms of hegemonic masculinity, and some studies have shown that outdoor traditions might have promoted similar kinds of masculinities, other studies have demonstrated that some forms of adventure and outdoor recreation may also provide counter-cultures (Dashper & King, 2022; Humberstone, 2000). The potential that can be found in the outdoors, as well as resistance and counter-geographies processes built and created by trans people through participation in outdoor and adventure activities, is a significant topic of this thesis, which will be discussed and explored in *part III. Analysis, Findings, and Discussion*.

The concept of ‘outdoor’ is embedded with dualisms – outdoor/indoor, culture/nature, rationality/animality, civilized/primitive, male/female, straight/queer –. This binarism perpetuates the power relations between those who fall inside the norm and the *benders*, who are subjected to Otherness. Humberstone (2000) argues that:

This dualism, with its associated privileging and exclusion, is deeply embedded in forms of Western knowledge and may be implicated in the ‘popular’ perception of the ‘outdoors’, (as well with sport), as in some way a ‘masculine’ cultural activity to which women are frequently denied access. (p. 24)

Val Plumwood (1998) claims that as a result of rejecting these polarities, the definitions of wilderness based on purity (virginal, empty versus full, conquered) and the absence of humans fail to recognize the agency of nature and the continuum between culture and nature. When Plumwood (Ibid.) refers to rejecting polarities, she is not implying discarding differences, as the existence of differences does not imply value judgments. Furthermore, defining the outdoors and nature as what is not cultural can be considered anthropocentric. Hence, for a re-conceptualization of the outdoors, we need to define it based on the presence of nature rather than on the absence of humans (Ibid.). As Plumwood (1998) points out, “there is a big difference between perceiving the Other as an absence or emptiness versus perceiving the Other as another center, as fullness or presence” (p. 680). For this re-conceptualization of what outdoor means, as I have argued above, it is crucial to look critically at the processes of Othering in adventure recreation, to understand the outdoors as a dynamic space that has social, cultural, and ecological dimensions, and to include perspectives of Other subjectivities in outdoor and adventure research (race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, functional diversity, etc.). This

“process of representing Others inevitably defines norms and deviants, centres and margins, cores and peripheries, the powerful and the powerless” (Aitchison, 2003, p. 81).

To examine the cultural and social aspects of adventure recreation, we need to study its geographical dimensions and to look at the outdoors as a space. For Lefebvre (1991), a social space is characterized by a set of relationships and forms between people. There are meanings attributed to this space, which are dependent on social constructions and relationships of power (Aitchison, 1999, 2003), which differ depending on the identities of the people that move through it, as well as the ways they do. However, they are also flexible, and “people can also shape and transform the meanings and uses of space through embodied performances” (Meyer, 2010, p. 26). In this matter, it is also especially significant Díaz Carrión’s approach (2012a), in which she takes gender geography as a basis to examine how adventure recreation is interlinked with gender. Gender geography analyzes the impact of power relations and social norms in the creation of spaces; space is thus constructed by power relations and limited at the same time by social norms that determine who belongs to a place and who is excluded, as well as the situation or location of a given experience (Díaz Carrión, 2012a). She explains that feminist geography considers the body as an essential concept in describing people’s relationships with physical and social environments, as well as the different ways of living and experiencing space. Gender geography is interested in how bodies of Other subjectivities (or *rebel bodies*, as Díaz Carrión names them) construct the space and how it becomes “a map, a surface susceptible to social inscription” (Díaz Carrión, 2012b, p. 4). Thus, what are the possibilities of outdoor activities as meanings of body archives and epistemologies? When *rebel bodies* occupy the outdoors, the spaces are appropriated and lived in consequence to them, appraising the creation of safe spaces for and by trans people in adventure activities. These concepts will be further developed and analyzed in chapter 6. *Unmapping Trans Counter-geographies*.

Finally, looking at the outdoors as a space, specifically as a social, cultural, and ecological space, allows us to understand its multiple meanings over time and the consequences they might have had or currently have. Who has access to it? How is this inclusion created? Which exclusion processes exist? This will be analyzed in the next chapter, *State of the Art*, where I will show how the outdoors is not exclusively a masculine space anymore, as the participation of women (cis, middle/upper class, white, able-bodied) in outdoor and adventure recreation has been increasing throughout the last two decades. By looking at power, performance, and resistance (Aitchison, 2003) scholars in geography, tourism, outdoor, adventure, and leisure studies have drawn attention to the role that space plays in shaping identities.

## 2.5. POST- AND TRANS\* – COMING TO BE *WITH* THE THESIS

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*If we also understand research to be an embodied practice, what possibilities exist for researchers to be moved to think, feel and know ‘matter’ differently through encounters with others (humans, non-humans, objects, texts and images)? – Simone Fullagar (2017, p. 248)*

In this section, I will shortly present how relevant theoretical concepts that I use throughout the thesis have been defined. These concepts inform the aims and objectives, contribution claims, philosophical stance, and methodology of the thesis. This is not meant to be a deep analysis of these theoretical concepts, but rather it is meant to give some overall ideas of what they mean to situate them within the thesis. While some of these concepts are highly theorized and can comprise a whole thesis by themselves, my aim here is to present them briefly and in the most practical way possible for this thesis in order to position myself and the knowledge I am producing. An attempt to summarize these concepts would be “an impossible task,” as St. Pierre et al. (2016) argue, adding then, “because they are in process and they are not one thing. Needless to say, there is much to read” (p. 1). I reckon that these definitions might fall short for some of you; however, I don’t feel that a deeper analysis is needed here for the purpose of this thesis. Moreover, these concepts will also appear and be used throughout the thesis, extending and adding to these definitions, as well as engaging and discussing them within the thesis.

### POSTHUMANISM

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Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova (2018) argue that posthumanism “focuses on the critique of the humanist ideal of ‘Man’ as the universal representative of the human” (p. 1). For Karen Barad (2007), posthumanism “marks a refusal to take the distinction between “human” and “non-human” for granted, and to found analysis on this presumably fixed and inherent set of categories” (p. 32). However, not every human is recognized as such; many of us who are part of marginalized or stigmatized communities have been considered less than human or inhuman. In that sense, Francesca Ferrando (2018) argues that:

The intersectional critical lenses of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability and age, among others, have successfully demonstrated that the human is not

one but many, and it shall thus be accounted in plural ways, based on the experience of embodied human beings. (p. 439)

Moreover, posthumanism highlights that the notion of “human” has been separated from the non-human world: “Posthumanism, instead, does not grant the human any onto-epistemological primacy, addressing the human in interconnected and symbiotic relations to the non-human” (Ferrando, 2018, p. 439). Similarly, for Wibke Straube (2020), “posthumanism refuses to take the difference between human and non human corporeality as given and challenges these categories as fixed or inherently separate” (p. 69).

Feminist posthumanities further this analysis, seeing humans as “entangled in co-constitutive relationships with nature and the environment, with science and technology, with vulnerable embodiment, and with other animals by which we live and die” (Åsberg, 2018, p. 157). For feminist posthumanities, the figure of the Man is not the centerpiece. Instead, these critical and creative forms of posthumanities or more-than-human humanities “take reciprocal and conditional relationships by which we become human with ‘Earth others’ (Plumwood, 1993) as its starting point” (Åsberg, 2018, p. 157). Posthumanities and feminist materialism “affirm corporeality, matter, and its complex relationship to nature without the negative tendencies of over-romanticizing nature or female embodiment as in some ecofeminist traditions and without biological essentialization” (Straube, 2020, p. 69).

Braidotti also distinguishes posthuman critical theory as the intersection between posthumanism and post-anthropocentrism: “The former proposes the philosophical critique of the Western Humanist ideal of ‘Man’ as the allegedly universal measure of all things, whereas the latter rests on the rejection of species hierarchy and human exceptionalism” (Braidotti, 2018, p. 339). Drawing from feminist theory and Deleuze and Guattari’s neo-materialist philosophy, feminist critical theory rejects dualisms and can be described as “vital-materialist, embodied and embedded, and immanent” (Braidotti, 2018, p. 340), thus renouncing the nature-culture divide and replacing it “with a philosophy of relationality and multiple interconnections” (Ibid.).

All these approaches have a theoretical, methodological, and ethical impact on this thesis. Åsberg (2018) argues that posthumanist researchers distance themselves from established norms and methods of disciplinary knowledge. The task of being critical and creative creates new ways of learning to think differently and inspires new concepts, thus emphasizing “the importance of learning to think differently about what we are in the process of becoming” (Braidotti, 2018, p. 341).

## NEW MATERIALISM

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New materialism, also called neo-materialism, is a concept forged by authors such as Rosi Braidotti (2000) and Manuel DeLanda (1996), both heavily influenced by Deleuze's and Guattari's French philosophy. Iris van der Tuin (2018) defines new materialism as:

A research methodology for the non-dualistic study of the world within, beside and among us, the world that precedes, includes and exceeds us. The effects of putting one's scholarly trust in dualisms such as matter– meaning, body–mind and nature–culture are reductivizing as the environment (of a scholar) is never neatly organized or classifiable. Neo-materialist researchers want to know how dualisms emerge, in natural environments (from wilderness to city parks), in society at large (politics, the economy), in art and in media, and in activism. (p. 277)

Feminist theories are also interested in new materialities: “In fleshy, material bodies, in the material effects of immaterial processes, in ‘nature’ that too often served as a foil to ‘culture’” (Neimanis, 2018, p. 242), giving increasing attention to the more-than-human. “Material feminisms don't think merely ‘about’ matter. They attempt to think *with* it, in ways that articulate specific ontological, epistemological and ethical commitments. *Material feminism is thinking with matter*. Matter here is lively” (Ibid.). Hereby, they critique total knowledge, echoing what Haraway has called “situated knowledges” (Haraway 1988) and Braidotti (2005) has conceptualized as an epistemological position of “embeddedness and embodiedness”.

## POST-QUALITATIVE

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Elizabeth St. Pierre, an education scholar, coined the term post-qualitative inquiry in 2011 to assert the “impossibility of an intersection between conventional humanist qualitative methodology and ‘the posts’” (St Pierre, 2014, p. 3). Her intention was to move away from the ethico-onto-epistemological normativities present in traditional humanist qualitative research (St Pierre, 2011).

Post-qualitative research moves beyond a theory/method divide, drawing inspiration from critical posthumanist debates “concerned with how ‘matter’ is thought and constituted through entanglements of human and non-human bodies, affects, objects and practices” (Fullagar, 2017, p. 247) and “with the limitations of how humanness has been thought in dualistic ways that privilege certain identities over others (e.g., whiteness over blackness, masculinity over femininity and culture over nature)” (Fullagar, 2017, p. 248). This shift implies rethinking what bodies can *do* and how matter *acts* (Fullagar, 2017; St Pierre, 2011, 2014). Research around the methodological-theoretical implications of

post-qualitative inquiry (St Pierre, 2011), together with the concerns of new materialisms (Braidotti, 2000; Coole & Frost, 2010; van der Tuin, 2018), offer new possibilities for re-thinking ways of doing qualitative research practices.

Post-qualitative inquiries question any theory and/or method that reduces qualitative methodology to an instrument or technique. Post-qualitative researchers are driven by critical posthumanist and new materialist theories (Fullagar, 2017; Kuby et al., 2016; St Pierre, 2011, 2014) and question the limits or normative understanding of research methods, “transgressing what has been normed in qualitative research” (Kuby et al., 2016, p. 141). Linear research processes are a recurrent trait of humanist qualitative research (Fullagar, 2017), characterized by “finding a research question, designing the elements of the study and deploying human-centred methods to extract data from people that can then be coded into aggregated themes and written up” (Fullagar, 2017, p. 251). On the contrary, a post-qualitative methodology means “moving beyond linearity, expert-centred knowledge and closed forms of analysis” (Ibid.).

## **NON-HUMAN//HUMAN**

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The concept of more-than-human challenges human exceptionalism and the distinctions between humans and nonhumans, nature and culture. Further, it criticizes the hierarchy of animacy, in which cis, masculine, heteronormative bodies occupy the top and marginalized groups like BIPOC<sup>16</sup>, dis/abled bodies, and queer and trans individuals, among many others, are at the bottom.

In addition to this, Braidotti and Hlavajova (2018) remark the importance of non-human and inhuman in posthumanism. They refer to the non-human as “the status of depreciated naturalized ‘others’ whose existence has been cast outside the realm of anthropocentric thought and confined within non-human life” (p. 2). On another side, they argue that the concept of inhuman poses both analytical and normative questions:

Analytically, the term refers to the de-humanizing effects of structural injustice and exclusions upon entire sections of the human population who have not enjoyed the privileges of being considered fully human. Gender and sexual difference, race and ethnicity, class and education, health and able-bodiedness are crucial markers and gatekeepers of acceptable ‘humanity’ [...] Those who are excluded from a dominant notion of the human based on masculinist, classist, racist and Eurocentric parameters. [...] Normatively, however, the inhuman also denounces the inhumane, unjust practices of our times. More specifically it stresses the violent and even murderous structure of

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<sup>16</sup> Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

contemporary geo-political and social relations, also known as ‘necropolitics’.  
(Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018, pp. 2–3)

However, the distinctions between the concepts non-human and inhuman are dynamic, and numerous scholars are using these terms interchangeably to describe other-than-human or less/more-than-human life (Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018).

## TRANS\*

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The prefix *trans-* or *trans\** refers to a movement across and beyond, usually referring to gender and sex, but not limited to these. For Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah (2015), *trans\** represents “mattering’s vital capacity to become more and other than it already is through movements, connections, intensifications, and refigurations that traverse existing material arrangements” (p. 190). Goda Klumbytė argues that the prefix *trans\** can be seen as a process of “becoming with” (Haraway, 2008) that “allows for transgender studies to move beyond transgender only as an identity category and towards transgender as a mode of analysis” (Klumbytė, 2018, p. 433).

Queer and trans studies and theories have debated about who gets to count as human and who counts as less-than-human (Ferrando, 2018; Klumbytė, 2018; Stryker, 1994; Stryker & Currah, 2015): “To be human has meant taking a position in relation to sexual difference and becoming gendered [...] while to be forcibly ungendered or to become transgendered renders one’s humanness precarious” (Stryker & Currah, 2015, p. 189). *Trans\**gender then questions the standards of legibility and intelligibility of humanism, allowing for exploration and expansion of the norms of humanness.

Later on, the impossibility of separating the body from technology was conceptualized in 2003 by Stryker’s – and a group of academics at Macquarie University – theoretical concept of somatechnics, “in an attempt to highlight what they saw as the inextricability of soma and techné, of the body (as a culturally intelligible construct) and the techniques (dispositifs and hard technologies) in and through which corporealities are formed and transformed” (Sullivan, 2014, p. 187). This concept, shaped by trans issues, has been deeply developed by Nikki Sullivan, among other scholars. The term somatechnics, comes from the Greek *soma* (body) and *techné* (craftsmanship), in which “*technés* are the dynamic means in and through which corporealities are crafted: that is, continuously engendered in relation to others and to a world” (Sullivan, 2014, p. 188). In a similar vein, in the intersections of capitalism, bio-politics, and *trans\** is Preciado’s concept of pharmacopornographic regime, by which he analyses the process of a “biomolecular (pharmaco) and semiotic-technical (pornographic) government of sexual subjectivity” (Preciado, 2008, p. 32).

Another concept that brings together new materialism and trans scholarship would be ‘tranimalities’ (Kelley, 2014) or ‘tranimacies’ (Chen, 2012), “which demonstrates that trans exists in non-human species, and proposes that trans phenomena, if explored in a way that is not restricted to cultural explanations, challenge the nature/culture distinction itself” (Klumbyte, 2018, p. 435). Moreover, ‘tranimalities’ emphasizes the exclusion of trans people and more-than-human animals from humanism and enmeshes “trans\* and animals in a generative (if also corrosive) tension leading to alternate ways of envisioning futures of embodiment, aesthetics, biopolitics, climates, and ethics” (Hayward & Weinstein, 2015, p. 201). This concept points out that the category of human depends on the binary opposition with animal, within the binary distinctions of human/man/culture and animal/woman/nature. Similarly, transgender is often rejected for being ‘unnatural’. These crossovers between the human and the animal, the natural and the cultural, have been explored through new materialism, highlighting the call for “transing the posthuman” (Nurka, 2015).

## TRANS-CORPOREALITIES

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Trans-corporeality is a concept developed by Stacy Alaimo in “Bodily Natures” (2010), drawing on feminist theory, environmental studies, and new materialist theories of non-human agency. For Alaimo (2018), trans-corporeality is:

A posthumanist mode of new materialism and material feminism. Trans-corporeality means that all creatures, as embodied beings, are intermeshed with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them. [...] Trans-corporeality contests the master subject of Western humanist individualism, who imagines himself as transcendent, disembodied and removed from the world he surveys. The trans-corporeal subject is generated through and entangled with biological, technological, economic, social, political and other systems, processes and events, at vastly different scales. (p. 435)

Alaimo further argues that the prefix ‘trans-’ on trans-corporealities refers to “multiple horizontal crossings, transits and transformations” (Alaimo, 2018, p. 436). As a posthumanist ontology, trans-corporeality argues that there can be no nature outside the human (Alaimo, 2018). In addition, Marchand (2018) contends that Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality furthers Haraway’s argument that “to be one is always to *become with* many” (Haraway, 2008): “Trans-corporeal becoming could possibly enfold a plurality of non-human forces and agents into an expanded natureculture collective and give voice to the multiplicity of ‘things’ that can and do, in fact, act on their own and within their own terms” (Marchand, 2018, p. 293).



Other authors have also developed the concept of trans-corporeality. For Seymour (2017), the term trans-corporeality is “conceptually aligned with transgender studies” (p. 255); while for Parker (2020), trans-corporeality refers to the idea that “our bodies are porous and perennially intermeshed with the nonhuman, meaning that we are never ‘separate’ from the environment in which we live and are always more-than-human. It firmly underlines interconnectedness” (p. 18); and Kuznetski (2020) describes trans-corporeality as “the movement across bodies, that is, the constant change, transit and interchange between various bodies—human and nonhuman, or with the nature within nature” (p. 81).

Finally, in the same way that trans-corporeality brings together the human and nonhuman, blurring the borders of nature/culture, Parker (2020) argues that there is a “naturally closer relationship between trans-individuals and the nonhuman world” (p. 18). However, Alaimo has avoided making the link between trans-corporeality and trans embodiment. “To consider this extension, trans as a trans-corporeal embodiment could even further trouble boundary politics, trouble the differentiations between humans and animals, different organic matter, and its co-relation with inorganic materialities” (Straube, 2020, p. 67).

## TRANSECOLOGIES/TRANS-ECOLOGIES/TRANS ECOLOGIES

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Transecologies, which is a quite new concept, “encompass the conditions of life both actual and potential, conditions that are both needed and desired, and which may yet come to be” (Stryker, 2020, p. xviii). For Gaard, transecology’s genealogy is ecocritical, queer, feminist, critically reconstructive, and trans\*disciplinary (Gaard, 2020, p. xx). Transecologies emerge in the connections between trans and environment, being Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality one of the central terms in the non-human turn (Parker, 2020, p. 18). For Thorsteinson and Joo (2020), gender is not a binary nor a spectrum, but a rich ecology, by which transecology is “a gender politics that does not assume it already knows what gender is (and isn’t)” (p. 38). As a conceptual frame, transecology

allows the entanglement of ecology, nature, trans embodiment, and transing bodies [...]. Transecology allows one to see the intimate intertwinement of queer and trans body politics with ecological questions and helps conceive a mutual relationship between the violent degradation of nature, its unacknowledged agency with the different forms of violence to which trans people are daily exposed. (Straube, 2020, p. 58)

Lastly, as a critical tool, transecology “enables us to see beyond two binarisms hindering our understanding of the living world as well as the possibility for gender fluidity: nature versus technology; stability versus mutation” (Fournier, 2020, p. 110).

### 3. STATE OF THE ART

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For compiling the state of the art I searched for articles, books, and other types of texts using the following keywords: women / gender / gay / lesbian / LGTB / LGBT / queer / transgender / trans / transexual / cuir / outdoor / mountain / hiking / cycle tourism / climbing / mountaineering / wilderness / adventure recreation / leisure / adventure tourism / active tourism / adventure / sport in nature / outdoor sports / adventure sports / outdoor activities, all possible combinations between the above mentioned, and their Spanish translations. I searched in Google Scholar, through indexed academic journals available through the university library search functions at the University of Vic and the University of Gothenburg, and came up with a total of 65 results. Throughout the years of the project, I always had an eye open for interesting articles, chapters, or theses in this area that I would stumble upon in Ph.D. groups, platforms like ResearchGate and Academia, and this last year, using an AI tool called Research Rabbit App<sup>17</sup>. In the end, I had a total of 78 results that I decided to incorporate. I acknowledge that there is a more extensive field of research I didn't have access to from, for example, other libraries, and that I cannot aim to cover all research in this thesis.

This State of the Art does not intend to make a systematic review but rather an exploration to situate the state of the research. Besides, I decided to expand the search to a broader spectrum than only trans experiences in the outdoors, bringing in the experiences of queer people and cis women, as well as the gender expectations that may exist in adventure recreation. This decision was motivated by the literature itself, as many of the articles mentioned the lack of studies regarding the role of gender in outdoor activities and adventure recreation (Boniface, 2006; Doran et al., 2018; Humberstone, 2000; Little, 2000, 2002b, 2002a; Little & Wilson, 2005; Meyer, 2010; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; Warren, 2016; Weatherby & Vidon, 2018); as Pomfret and Doran (2015) express: “there is a dearth of research about the role that gender plays in motivating mountaineers” (p. 146). This dearth of research became considerably greater when focusing on sexual and gender dissident identities, people of color, or non-normative masculinities, as acknowledged by Warren (2016): “gaps in the outdoor literature concerning gender, including the reluctance to explore masculinity in outdoor adventure, the invisibility of the experience of women/girls of color, its heteronormative nature and nascent attention to transgendered issues, will be examined” (p. 360). Some years earlier, Meyer (2010) mentioned that “there is virtually no research that looks at transgendered or transsexual perspectives of wilderness or outdoor education” (p. 186), which was also still the situation on their later research (Meyer & Borrie, 2013).

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<sup>17</sup> <https://researchrabbitapp.com/>

A breath of fresh air was thirteen articles that covered the topics of trans and/or queer people in the outdoors (Argus, 2018; Barnfield & Humberstone, 2008; Bren & Prince, 2022; L. P. Browne et al., 2019; Dignan, 2002; Garland, 2023; Grossman et al., 2005; Heath & Duffy, 2023; Meyer, 2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013; Mitten, 2012; P. Stanley, 2020; Wilson & Lewis, 2012). Four of them (L. P. Browne et al., 2019; Grossman et al., 2005; Mitten, 2012; Wilson & Lewis, 2012) focus on young trans people's experiences, six other (Argus, 2018; Barnfield & Humberstone, 2008; Dignan, 2002; Meyer, 2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013; P. Stanley, 2020) focus on queer identities in outdoor programs, while the last three (Bren & Prince, 2022; Garland, 2023; Heath & Duffy, 2023) cover other diverse topics regarding queer and trans experiences in outdoor recreation. However, the present thesis constitutes a unique approach to this topic by focusing on adult trans experiences, from a transnational background, using a desire-based research methodological approach that centers participants' embodied experiences in a multisited ethnographic research.

The authors used many concepts in the articles, such as nature, outdoor recreation, adventure tourism, or wilderness, to refer to the spaces and geographies in which the referenced activities, actions, or events occur. For the purpose of this section, I have decided not to focus on the concepts they use but rather on the nature/type of activities that it suggests. However, as it will be insightfully described below in section 3.1. *The wild macho. Gender stereotypes and hegemonic masculinities in outdoor activities*, it is necessary to note that these definitions have been made from a cis, male, white, and Western perspective. A review and discussion of these concepts was done in the preceding chapter. I also find it necessary to remark that in most studies, the sample consisted of cis, white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied women (e.g., Boniface, 2006; Chisholm, 2008; Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Holland-Smith, 2016; Laurendeau & Sharara, 2008; Little, 2000, 2002b, 2002a; Little & Wilson, 2005; Pedersen, 2003; Stringer, 1997; Warren, 2016).

In the following sections, recurrent topics that were identified in the literature review will be discussed separately.

### 3.1. THE *WILD MACHO*. GENDER STEREOTYPES AND HEGEMONIC MASCULINITIES IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

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Adventure has been described as male-defined and male-dominated (Knapp, 1985, p. 17). Many of the articles highlight this historically gendered- and male-dominated aspect of adventure recreation (Argus, 2018; Baker et al., 2022; Carter & Colyer, 1999; Díaz Carrión, 2012c, 2012b; Doran, 2019; Doran et al., 2018; Frohlick, 1999; Humberstone, 2000; Kling et al., 2020; Little & Wilson, 2005; Low et al., 2022; Martín Talavera & Mediavilla Saldaña, 2020; Meyer, 2010; Morin et al., 2001; Pedersen, 2003; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; P. Stanley, 2020; Warren, 2016; Weatherby & Vidon, 2018; Whittington, 2006). Pedersen (2003) describes outdoor life as “male-dominated in practical, structural, and symbolic dimensions” (p. 125) and points out how, in the same way as with other research fields, outdoor research “typically views the ‘human’ subject as male” (p. 125), creating a universal subjectivity that is cis, white, male, and fit. Weatherby and Vidon (2018) go further and describe wilderness not only as a male domain but also as “a threat to femininity” (p. 332). Himalayan mountaineering – which is considered by many as the ultimate expression of mountaineering – has also traditionally been about masculinity and manhood (Frohlick, 1999). Additionally, these masculinities represented in the outdoors are *hegemonic masculinities*, which are defined as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Humberstone, 2000, p. 30) and operate “within a strict heteronormative gender binary” (Argus, 2018, p. 530). Characteristics such as remoteness (Little & Wilson, 2005), camaraderie (Díaz Carrión, 2012c), individualism (Kling et al., 2020), and physicality of the outdoors (Humberstone, 2000) have perpetrated the idea of the outdoors as a place for cis men to penetrate, compete and conquer (Baker et al., 2022; Knapp, 1985; Little & Wilson, 2005). Thus, these spaces reinforce traditional views and feature the heroic white cis male adventurer (Doran et al., 2018). As it has been shown, there are powerful gendered normativities that operate within intangible systems of power and mobilities that affect what we expect a hiker should look like (Stanley, 2020, p. 243).

Weatherby and Vidon (2018) note that the “perpetuation of wilderness as masculine is often linked to the ‘Geography of Women’s Fear’ by Valentine (1989), which addresses spaces as being socially constructed and, in this case, gendered to the point where exclusion and vulnerability are present” (p. 341). Hence, as a result of women being routinely excluded from adventure recreation (Carter & Colyer, 1999, p. 77) and the idea of the outdoors as a place ‘free of women’, it has been masculinized in such a harsh way that gendered bodies even disappear (Frohlick, 1999; Pedersen, 2003).

Reinhold Messner, one of the best-renown high-altitude mountaineers, argues – as if only men climbed mountains – that they do so because they “cannot bear the children”. As he writes in one of his books (1979):

Why do we climb these mountains? Who can say? Indeed, I don't think I would really want to know the reason, but I often indulge the theory that perhaps it has something to do after all with the fact that we men cannot bear the children. (p. 57)

The number of women participating in travel and nature tourism is constantly growing (Wheaterby & Vidon, 2018). This change arises from a place where, historically, women’s participation in adventure activities has been hindered by the idea of women being less physically capable and socialization processes that see these activities as inappropriate for women (Bialeschki, 1990; Carter & Colyer, 1999; Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010). However, even though women are taking up more space in the outdoors, Pomfret and Doran (2015) argue that it appears that they are only accepted if they hide all signs of masculinity and display traditional ideas of femininity. These ideas also come with the belief that they won’t be as capable as their male counterparts, or as Freda Du Faur, a pioneering Australian mountaineer, writes, “the average person's idea of a woman capable of mountaineering is a masculine looking woman with short hair, a large voice and large feet” (cited in Carter & Colyer, 1999, p. 77). Yet, it is imperative to question to where it is that these women are gaining access. Laurendeau and Sharara (2008) observe that women are taking up white, middle-class, and liberal-feminist discourses of participation. They are using the new opportunities that are being offered, but neither questioning and challenging the heteronormative reproduction of spaces itself, nor the structures that privilege cis men over other identities. Thereby, they are “creating a set of standards of femininity that marginalize other potential embodiments of femininity” (Ibid, p. 28).

A different but linked phenomenon is the case of women climbers, to which six articles pay attention, analyzing gender relationships in climbing (Chisholm, 2008; Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Holland-Smith, 2016; Kiewa, 2001; Plate, 2007; Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010). For some authors, climbing is a unique outdoor experience, in which gender relations might work differently than in other outdoor activities. Some authors see climbing as a space where gender roles and gender expectations may be more flexible and dynamic, where women can find a sense of belonging more easily (Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Plate, 2007). On the other hand, other scholars point out that climbing is still a male domain where differentiated gendered expectations shape and influence climbers’ behaviors (Kiewa, 2001; Holland-Smith, 2016).

Some articles offer a feminist research approach to this issue (Baker et al., 2022; Carter & Colyer, 1999; Collins et al., 2018; Humberstone, 2000; Kilgour, 2007;

Laurendeau & Sharara, 2008; Little & Wilson, 2005; Pedersen, 2003; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; Warren, 2016). Pedersen (2003) recognizes that “there exist both new possibilities and strong social and cultural limitations in the ways women and men, girls and boys, can use nature” (p. 134) and Warren (2016) identifies some aspects of feminist outdoors such as “validation of personal experience, democratic or consensus decision-making processes, attention to power dynamics in group processes, shared leadership, collective problem solving and communication, and honoring participant choice” (p. 362). Carter and Colyer (1999) illustrate how adventure providers are adopting a “more feminist philosophy that ‘seeks to empower and enhance integrity for all participants’, an approach to adventure recreation leadership that is more people-centred and outcome-centred and less activity focused” (p. 78). It is these elements of counter-cultures and alternative masculinities and femininities that appear in some forms of outdoor education/recreation (Humberstone, 2000; Weatherby & Vidon, 2018), where a window opens for new possibilities and ways of being outdoors. This shift is also happening through the active engagement and increased presence of women in adventure recreation, which challenges both the social expectations and the normative and masculine perceptions of outdoor activities (Weatherby & Vidon, 2018; Yang et al., 2018). While these expressions of alternative masculinities might still be marginalized, they open a door for new ways of understanding the outdoors (Warren, 2016).

Some authors talk about a mountaineering identity (Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Moscoso-Sánchez, 2008; Pomfret & Doran, 2015), which is seen “as a subculture which unites all mountaineers by a common lifestyle based on values which reflect contact with nature, personal development, challenging experiences, expeditions and human relations” (Pomfret & Doran, 2015, p. 148). For Pomfret and Doran (2015) and Humberstone (2010), this identity is used by women to escape, stretch, and challenge stereotypical gender roles and socially imposed limits on the use of their bodies, giving them a feeling of belonging and empowerment. In the same direction, Weatherby and Vidon (2018) argue that “women’s assertions and performances of power in wilderness directly combat stereotypes of their place in these landscapes” (p. 332).

Finally, promoting “gender-sensitive outdoor activities” (Warren, 2016) is essential in order to address linguistic and territorial sexism and to avoid discriminatory techniques. Jarvis (2007, cited in Weatherby & Vidon, 2018, p. 341) writes that when women go to the mountains, they are “recognizing that wilderness belonged to them too”. However, the approach taken by these studies and the insights they provide into gendered expectations is still very binary (Doran, 2019). By approaching this research from a post-structuralist perspective, I aim to question the inherent nature of dualisms such as male-female, public-private, urban-rural, and outside-inside. This way, the present thesis contributes to knowledge with its unique philosophical stance and post-qualitative and post-humanist methodological approach.

### 3.2. REPRESENTATION MATTERS. OUTDOOR MEDIA, LITERATURE, AND ADVERTISING

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Media, literature, and advertising play a significant role in portraying and creating an imaginary of the people who can participate in adventure activities, establishing spaces in which people might feel included or excluded. “Just as the outdoors itself is not ‘natural’, there is nothing ‘natural’ about the ways in which outdoor magazines, advertising, and other media portray legitimate outdoors people in very specific ways: White, male, straight, muscular, and able bodied” (P. Stanley, 2020, p. 244). Many authors analyze the implications and ways of how representation works in outdoor media (Doran, 2019; Frazer & Anderson, 2018; Frohlick, 1999; Humberstone, 2000; Kling et al., 2020; Little & Wilson, 2005; Pedersen, 2003; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; P. Stanley, 2020; Stringer, 1997; Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010; Warren, 2016; Weatherby & Vidon, 2018). Current narratives of mountaineering in outdoor advertising and guidebooks do not dispute gender roles, but rather emphasize the idea of male heroism, white colonialism, and manliness (Doran, 2019; Humberstone, 2000; Kling et al., 2020; Pedersen, 2003; P. Stanley, 2020; Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010; Warren, 2016; Weatherby & Vidon, 2018), further portraying “hegemonic masculine features, such as bravery, risk-taking, competitiveness, physical strength, rationality, leadership, self-sacrifice, ruggedness and resourcefulness, and they describe the male body as dominating the natural environment” (Pomfret & Doran, 2015, p.142).

On the other side, when women are portrayed, it is done in a passive way, in which they are not actively interacting, but instead, they are modeling gear, they are less visible, and their roles reflect what is considered traditionally feminine activities (Frazer & Anderson, 2018; Little & Wilson, 2005; P. Stanley, 2020). Women are represented based on an idea of femininity as white, middle-class, able-bodied, cis, and heterosexual (Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010; Warren, 2016) rather than non-white, queer, fat, disabled, or other deviant bodies (P. Stanley, 2020). They are – again – put in the private domain, centering “on women’s heterosexuality, accentuating their involvement in romantic relationships, domesticity within their home lives and their roles as mothers” (Pomfret & Doran, 2015, p. 146). Furthermore, “valorizing female athletes more for their maintenance of hegemonic femininity than for their athletic talents also serves to perpetuate an ideal of heterosexuality. Identifying the female athlete as heterosexual becomes extremely important in her marketability in society” (Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010, p. 140).

Women are challenging and changing their representation in adventure recreation – thus increasing their empowerment – using, for example, social media platforms (Low et al., 2022; P. Stanley, 2020; Weatherby & Vidon, 2018): “Social media plays an integral role in women’s assertions and performances of power in wilderness which directly



combat stereotypes of their place in these landscapes” (Weatherby & Vidon, 2018, p. 341). These authors have researched how social media is being used by women to redefine the ideas of wilderness and increase their empowerment in outdoor spaces. Further, “social media helps to reshape the nature of female participation in outdoor adventure activities as well as giving everyday women greater visibility in outdoor landscapes” (Doran et al., 2018, p. 396). Thus, they are embracing their place in the outdoors, pushing for societal recognition, and changing the way others see them by putting themselves in powerful and dynamic poses in the outdoors (Low et al., 2022; Weatherby & Vidon, 2018).

The hypermasculinization and cisheteronormativity in the portrayal of adventure recreation also shows in the language used to describe it, referring to mountains in “a phallic way, using terms such as ‘virgin peak’ and ‘virginal purity’. Their domination is eroticized, and mountaineering is played out as a ritualized competition for masculine supremacy” (Pomfret & Doran, 2015, p. 141). Moreover, “the spirit of rugged individualism can be found in all pictures of male visitors taken in challenging environments” (Kling et al., 2020, p. 244). Frohlick (1999, 2005) examines how these normative notions of masculinity appear in mountaineering narratives and how the perceived superiority of the cis, white, able-bodied male perpetuates, both in written narratives and in movies. In her analysis emerges the idea of the universal man, putting men’s bodies in a position of ‘alleged neutrality’: “Male authors rarely refer to their bodies or to their identities in gendered terms. They remain unmarked and are assumed to be male, or worse, to be neutral as though gender meant nothing to the world of high-altitude mountaineering” (Frohlick, 1999, p. 87). This displaces women and non-white men to the periphery of the adventure imaginary (Frohlick, 2005, p. 175).

Low et al. (2022) explore user-generated content on Instagram and reveal how social media content may “contribute to new understandings and ways of being outdoors for everyday women” (p. 396). While there is still a lack of traditional representation for subjectivities that fall outside the white, straight, cis, fit, able-bodied, Western masculinity, social media appears as a ground where to tackle and resist these hegemonic representations and find other types of discourses through self-presentation, “thereby re-framing access and participation both within and beyond physical outdoor and adventure spaces” (Low et al., 2022, p. 400).

### 3.3. FACING CHALLENGES. MOTIVATIONS, CONSTRAINTS, NEGOTIATIONS, AND BENEFITS

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Although Pomfret and Doran (2015) noted that in some studies from the 1980s, it was suggested that men and women wanted the same out of adventure recreation, in the articles reviewed, many of the authors argue that they have different motivations for going to the outdoors and that there are differences in the kinds of adventure activities they are interested in (Boniface, 2006; Bower, 2016; Díaz Carrión, 2012b; Kiewa, 2001; Kling et al., 2020; Little, 2002a; Little & Wilson, 2005; Martín Talavera & Mediavilla Saldaña, 2020; Moscoso-Sánchez, 2008; Overholt & Ewert, 2015; Warren, 2016).

Some of the differences pointed out in the articles are that women are interested in activities based on trust and focus more on the relationships, while men are adrenaline-seeking adventurers that are looking for power and challenge, focusing more on the activity in itself. Another difference mentioned by the authors can be found in women's perception of adventure, which for women included traditional qualities such as challenge, uncertainty, and danger but also entailed the opportunity to learn, newness, and surprise oneself (Little, 2002a; Little & Wilson, 2005). Little and Wilson (2005) explore these different perceptions of adventure and express them as it follows:

There is an ongoing gendered gap between the possible (access and opportunity for all) and the practical (restricted by mores and culture) within the broad adventure field. This gap is evident in the meanings and stories of adventure that exist within Western society, and it has implications for unrestricted access and ownership of adventure by women. (p. 196)

Concerning fear, Kilgour (2007) argues that “fear is actualised through many different guises and in most cases women conceptualised fear through two dominant discourses: spatiality discourses and temporality discourses, and social and cultural environment discourses” (p. 221), while Boniface's research (2006) found out that women are more disposed (than men) to admit their fears.

Regarding women's participation in outdoor activities, McNiel et al. (2012, cited in Kling et al. 2020) found that it is shown as “short in duration and lacking physical performance, whereas men's participation is portrayed as a source of challenge, demanding strength and endurance” (p. 237). Green et al. (1990, p. 37, cited in Humberstone, 2000) analyzed the different experiences of women and men in leisure, which is an area “where social divisions structure access and experience but is also an area where inequalities are negotiated reproduced or challenged” (p. 24). Given these differences, Moscoso-Sánchez (2008) observes that “gender identity determines the opportunities people have to partake in mountaineering” (p. 183). His research analyzes the motivations, behaviors, and habits of Spanish mountaineers, and shows that men

believed themselves to have better physical aptitudes and higher pain tolerance. At the same time, they see outdoor women as masculine, less physically capable, with no ability to self-sacrifice, and prioritize family. On the other side, women saw themselves as having higher self-esteem, greater capacity for learning, stronger self-organization, and better mental performance, while they saw men as physically stronger and with a protagonist attitude. In addition, Díaz Carrión (2012b) notes that care related activities that happen during adventure activities were predominantly done by women.

Further, as Johnson et al. (2001) stress: “It is important to consider recreation constraints for marginalized groups because of the dearth of recreation equity studies focusing on these populations” (p. 112). Additionally, “research conducted by socialist feminists from the field of leisure studies in the 1980s revealed how women faced more constraints to accessing leisure time and leisure facilities than men” (Kilgour, 2007, p. 216). Women’s constraints to participation in adventure recreation have been categorized as intra-personal, inter-personal, and structural (Doran et al., 2018; Little, 2002b; Warren, 2016). Examples of intra-personal constraints, which are categorized as less important, are fear, anxiety, and self-doubt. Family commitments and gendered expectations are examples of inter-personal constraints, which are the most significant ones. Lastly, examples of structural constraints are lack of time, socioeconomic standing, limited access to transport, and lack of female role models. This categorization of constraints has been created and analyzed for cis, white, middle-class, Western women. The outdoors as a space, however, is not as ‘freely available’ as one might think – or as it should be? –, “rather class, race, ability/disability and gender inequalities, for example, are reinforced through leisure space and organization” (Little, 2002b, p. 158).

These constraints are being negotiated, as Doran (2016) underlines: “Despite these challenges, women are using adventure tourism as a space where they can resist, rather than submit to constraints” (p. 65). Prioritizing adventure activities or restructuring the outdoor experience (Little, 2000; Little, 2002b) are some of the ways in which women are negotiating these constraints. Furthermore, by negotiating these constraints, women are challenging traditional gender expectations, which has been found to be a form of resistance, and it leads to feelings of empowerment (Bower, 2016; Doran, 2016; Overholt & Ewert, 2015). Doran (2016, 2019) presents a model that shows interrelationships between women’s participation constraints, negotiations and benefits, which can also be experienced simultaneously and altogether contribute to women’s empowerment through their participation in mountaineering activities. One of the outcomes of this interrelationship is the resilience building process, shown in Overholt and Ewert’s (2015) research, where women’s resilience increased after participating in an outdoor program. Interestingly, they also found out that ‘androgynous people’ – whom they describe as people with high feminine and masculine traits – seem to be more resilient, as they “have

a larger repertoire of behaviors to draw from and thus are more able to select effective behaviors” (Ibid., p. 51).

Spending time in nature has been found to have physical, psychological, spiritual, and emotional benefits, such as enhanced physical fitness and vitality; increased self-confidence and self-esteem; expanded curiosity and imagination; greater calm and peace of mind; a general sense of well-being; and reduction of immediate and long-term stress (Boniface, 2006; Bower, 2016; Kling et al., 2020; Meyer, 2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013; Mitten & D’Amore, 2017; Stringer, 1997). Mitten and D’Amore (2017) point out that “some of the benefits women receive from being in nature may be due to effects of the natural environment and some benefits may be due to being active” (p. 109). Warren’s (2016) study finds that there are specific benefits from being in nature for women, such as the gain of resilience, more positive identity formation, and an increased ability to speak out (p. 363), while Stringer (1997), Bower (2016), and Evans et al. (2020) also add belonging, empowerment, self-efficacy, self-knowledge, enhanced confidence, and improved body image. As Warren (2016) puts it: “Women participants in outdoor programs face an untenable dilemma of trying to resist oppressive stereotypes of femininity while at the same time having to conform to these traditional notions to gain acceptance” (p. 361).

There are some studies that pay attention to women-only activities (Carter & Colyer, 1999; Adele Doran, 2016; K. Evans et al., 2020; Mitten & D’Amore, 2017; Mitten & Woodruff, 2010; Plate, 2007; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; Warren, 2016; Whittington, 2006). In these articles, it was shown that women gained more benefits from these kinds of programs, such as “connections to nature and wilderness, relational bonding, physical confidence and strength, competence, disengagement from traditional gender roles, overcoming fear and gaining autonomy” (Warren, 2016, p. 363). Evans et al. (2020) note that these all-female programs might allow a space where girls can experience their own success without comparing themselves to other boys, who are perceived to be more skilled and experienced (p. 4). In addition, the studies showed that women participating in only-women adventure activities preferred them to mixed-gendered activities, as they “provide women with the freedom to be themselves, to be able to express their feelings in a supportive and non-competitive environment where they can work on their fears and safety issues and focus on developing their skills” (Doran, 2016, p. 71). Moreover, Whittington (2006) notes that all-female adventure programs challenged conventional notions of femininity and gender stereotypes. In the same way, “single-gender program allows transgender and gender-variant individuals to express themselves without constantly needing to react to the presence of the dominant gender binary” (Wilson & Lewis, 2012). What, then, are trans people’s motivations, constraints, negotiations, and benefits for and from going to the outdoors? Feminist philosophers and researchers in outdoor studies are demanding a re-conceptualization of what ‘outdoor’ and ‘adventure’

mean in terms of gender, sexuality, race, and class in contemporary society (Meyer, 2010, p. 18). As the research objectives state, this thesis aims to shed light on the experiences of trans and non-binary people in particular. Still, I recognize that issues such as class, race, and functional diversity, as well as the colonization processes that occurred and occurs in outdoor settings, are also vital to understanding the production of Otherness that takes place in them.

### 3.4. BOOSTING EMBODIMENT

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How does the bodily perception and physical embodiment of trans people change when engaging in adventure activities? This matter, addressed in the first research objective, was not discussed in any of the articles that cover LGBTQ+ experiences, yet it is addressed regarding cis women by some authors (Boniface, 2006; Breault-Hood, 2018; Doran, 2016; K. Evans et al., 2020; Mitten, 2010; Mitten & D'Amore, 2017; Mitten & Woodruff, 2010; Warren, 2016). Their research findings show that outdoor activities benefit girls' development, how being physically active through adventure activities is a source of "positive body image", and that it provides opportunities to rebuff patriarchal beliefs, feel liberated, and gain control over their own bodies (Doran, 2016; Mitten & D'Amore, 2017).

Body image is defined as "the way people perceive their own body, their perceptions about how other people view their body, and the complex relationship between these internal and external perceptions" (Mitten & D'Amore, 2017, p. 97), while positive body image is defined by Wood-Barcalow et al. (2010) as an overall love and respect for one's own body. Breault-Hood (2018) uses the concept of body scrimmage, which also considers our feelings and thoughts about our own bodies. There are positive effects of being in contact with nature, classified by Mitten and D'Amore (2017) as physical, cognitive, psychological, and emotional benefits (p. 101). When being in nature, the body's strength and capabilities – what one can do with their body rather than the way it looks – gets recognized and valued, improving the overall positive perception of one's own body appearance and confidence (Breault-Hood, 2018; Mitten & Woodruff, 2010). Furthermore, there is an increase in the perceptions of attractiveness and acceptance of the body, and in the "outdoors women are able to reject cultural and stereotypical definitions of beauty and, as a result, maintain a more positive body image" (Breault-Hood, 2018, p. 561). Finally, many cis women reported a sense of feeling at home when being in outdoor environments, as well as a feeling of acceptance from the natural world (Mitten, 2010; Mitten & D'Amore, 2017). This sense of belonging was also reported by Meyer (2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013) concerning queer women and by myself (2019) regarding trans people.

### 3.5. INCLUSIVITY IN OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP

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In outdoor and adventure recreation, leadership refers to the person or team leading a trip or activity. In other contexts, such as in Spain, concepts like guiding, mountain guide, or outdoor guide are more frequent. Researchers have noted that outdoor leadership is also still predominantly white, male, cis, and heterosexual (Allen-Craig et al., 2020; N. Anderson et al., 2021; Aylward & Mitten, 2022; Duffy, 2021; Heath, 2022; Heath et al., 2023; D. J. Jordan, 2018; Loynes, 2021; Lundin & Bombaci, 2022; Merrett, 2021; Rogers & Rose, 2019; Warren et al., 2018), while also noting that “outdoor leadership that values the experiences of women and nonbinary gendered leaders, and the contributions of feminist outdoor leadership to the outdoor adventure field need to be considered” (Warren, 2016; Warren et al., 2018, p. 253). Rogers and Rose (2019) studied the experience of cis women as outdoor leaders, finding that “participants experienced sexism, gender bias, and lack of confidence in technical skills as outdoor leaders” (p. 37). Two of the research participants, who identify as queer and lesbian, argue that “sexual orientation has had a positive impact on their experiences as outdoor leaders” (Ibid., p. 45). Finally, they argue for the necessity to explore “people’s experiences through intersectionality, queer theory, and (toxic) masculinity frameworks [to] help broaden perspectives of how outdoor education is conceived and practiced” (Ibid. pp. 47-48).

Language practices actively impact inclusivity in the field of outdoor leadership (Jordan, 2018; Lundin & Bombaci, 2022; Merrett, 2021; Warren et al., 2018). Jordan (2018) suggests strategies for combating sexism in language, whereas Warren et al. (2018) propose practices to foster greater inclusivity in outdoor leadership environments. Merrett’s (2021) dissertation “explores how outdoor instructors and transgender participants use and understand language surrounding gender [and looks] at how ideologies and hegemonies are upheld through the language” (p. 2). They conclude that there is a lack of education and knowledge of outdoor instructors and leaders, which results in the invisibility of trans participants. This invisibility is also highlighted by Anderson et al. (2021), Duffy (2021), and Loynes (2021). Allen-Craig et al. (2020) argue that a “collective action for gender equity must therefore be promoted and framed as a common cause, positioning all people, including those who identify outside the binary, as agents of change” (p. 123). Therefore, it is crucial to amplify the perspectives of a diverse range of outdoor leadership professionals (Allen-Craig et al., 2020).

Here, it is important to include Sandra Heath’s doctoral thesis (2022), which explores the experiences of outdoor professionals who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two Spirited, Pansexual, Intersex, Asexual, Plus (LGBTQ2SIA+ or LGBTQ+). While the importance of including this research is clearly

notable, I would like to note that it falls short in research quality<sup>18</sup>. On the other side, it is highly valuable that from the 6 participants in the study, there were cis, trans, and non-binary/2 spirit participants who were black, indigenous, and white, with also diverse sexual orientations. Heath's research looks at the role of participants' identity from their childhood to coming out, how identity and community impact their professional experiences, and the facilitators and constraints as outdoor professionals with an LGBTQ+ identity. From the findings of the study, I would like to highlight that participants noted "feeling exhausted or using significant amounts of energy to interpret their social environment; trying to gauge if they were safe or welcomed" (Heath, 2022, p. 155) while also referring to the "power in affinity spaces or trips taken in the outdoors with other LGBTQ+ people" (Ibid.).

Finally, the need for inclusivity is already present in the outdoor industry, as the conference – INclusivity in the OUTdoors – held in Cumbria, UK, in 2021 upholds. Outdoor leaders have indicated that "they would like more training in working with gender diverse people, but that such training has not been available" (Aylward & Mitten, 2022, p. 7). Lundin and Bombaci (2022) indicate that despite ongoing efforts to make outdoor leadership programs more inclusive, "cultural and procedural changes are still needed to support the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ+) community when participating in outdoor field experiences" (Lundin & Bombaci, 2022, p. 1). Their research highlights key actions that outdoor leaders can adopt to increase LGBTQ+ awareness in their practices.

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<sup>18</sup> References are highly obviated in the reference list, while other references from the list do not appear on the actual text. It misses some of the appendixes, definition of important concepts for the thesis are resolved with just a line and one author's reference, completely obviating the discussion behind them, many statements are made without a reference, or methods of analysis mentioned in the methodology are then not seen in the findings/discussion – i.e. she mentions that she reviews magazine articles that discuss queer experiences in the outdoors and queer outdoor social media influencers, but her analysis only references and bases on the interviews carried out to outdoor professionals –, to mention some of the deficits.



### 3.6. POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND COLONIALISM IN OUTDOOR CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

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Historically, nature is frequently personified as an untouched woman. This is linked to the idea of manliness as a conqueror, for example, when Abya Yala is described as a “Paradise with all her Virgin Beauties” (Kolodny, 1975, cited in Pedersen, 2003). This colonial and patriarchal language prevails in the world of outdoor and adventure recreation in Western cultures with expressions such as “To Conquer a Virgin” (Kværne et al., 1995, cited in Pedersen, 2003) when referring to a first ascend to a mountain in the Himalayas. Furthermore, Mitten (2010) writes that this “dominant culture’s attitude towards nature as something to be used or conquered is destructive and belittling to both women and the land” (p. 34). Rak (2007) adds that the way to study the cultural meaning of high-altitude mountaineering “has been to examine the links between early high-altitude mountaineering and discourses of European masculinity and to connect the discourse of mountain conquest and exploration to imperialism and colonialism” (p. 114). This history has created an idea of adventure as a man’s business; *He* who has the free time, energy, and money to go exploring the ‘untouched’ land. Little and Wilson (2005) point out how this also shows in the language: “To be an adventurer is a heroic business of travel and swashbuckler; to be an adventuress is to advance through society by dubious means, usually sexual” (p. 188).

It has also been common to describe the Earth as feminine throughout History, both in the physiological aspects – linking procreation or menstrual cycles as a natural connection of cis women with the environment – and psychological – with aspects such as caring and nurturant as feminine and both characteristic of cis women and the Earth (Mitten & D’Amore, 2017). While women were displaced to the private sphere and aligned with nature, men were associated with public life, perpetuating the construction of binary opposites: men, rational, objectivity, culture and women, emotional, subjectivity, nature (Humberstone, 2000). These discourses about dualisms – sex/gender, nature/culture, etc. – are present and touch the very core of feminists debates. Moreover, feminist movements have a long history of rejecting these naturalizations of gender and sexual hierarchy. This skepticism is present in poststructuralist feminist theories, as demonstrated by Judith Butler and Susan Bordo, who have been highly critical of these ideas:

[They] have been highly critical of any conception of the body as ‘natural’ or ‘real’. Instead, they have strongly emphasised the significance of language and discourse for the construction of reality and as forces that create social change, and argued that the body should be theorised as an entirely culturally constructed set of signifying surfaces. (Pedersen, 2003, p. 123)

Wilderness, as with many other Western concepts, is socially constructed: “There is nothing natural about the concept of wilderness” (Cronon, 1995, p. 16). In this direction, Rak (2007) analyzes the politics of gender in narratives of high-altitude mountaineering, specifically in the Annapurna. She notices that in these texts, it seems that it is not possible to discuss political matters and even less gender related topics, “even though the uses and representations of the body in wilderness environments are always politicalized and always involve issues about power, knowledge, and pleasure (or pain)” (Ibid., p. 111). It appears that this politics makes its meaning gendered by what it does *not* say about manliness. She compares it to Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick’s characterization of ‘closetedness,’ “a condition that says through silence what “cannot” be said out loud, bodily politics in mountaineering constitutes a set of gendered assumptions about what good mountaineers are supposed to do, and it informs whatever is said about anything else” (Rak, 2007, p. 116).

Finally, Baker et al. (2022) note that we are witnessing a recent surge in research focusing on indigenous leisure in outdoor settings, that are marking “a profound and transformational shift away from discourses of outdoor recreation focused on mastery, quest, conquering and possession” (p. 305) present in Western outdoor research.

### 3.7. NON-NORMATIVE IDENTITIES AND GENDER EXPECTATIONS IN THE OUTDOORS

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Despite the historical traditions of hegemonic masculinities in the outdoors, some authors also point out that it is also possible to find resistance to stereotypical gender norms within outdoor activities, as “the boundaries which have been conventionally associated with masculinity and femininity within mountaineering are becoming more blurred” (Pomfret & Doran, 2015, p. 147). Other authors also reclaim the potential of ‘wilderness experiences’ to allow space for different ways of being and escape from gendered social constrictions and conventional gender roles (Humberstone, 2018; Meyer, 2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013). Furthermore, this idea of escaping a fixed stability and blurring the borders of male and female categories has also been perceived in other sports, according to Martín (2015).

Many studies have reported that for people who do not identify as cis men, sometimes being outside in nature allows them to find a place to be and express themselves (Argus, 2018; Boniface, 2006; Meyer, 2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013; Overholt & Ewert, 2015). As a participant in Argus’ (2018) research says: “No one judged me. The outdoors is for everybody. Everyone could have the same exact experience. I felt at home there. There was safeness in experience” (p. 536). However, being queer and being outdoors doing adventure activities hasn’t been in the imagination of the typical ‘outdoor person’ nor what a ‘queer person’ would do, something Graham (1993) already noted in a newspaper article: “Few people expect to find gay men and lesbians hiking or camping in the woods. [...] They can’t possibly be gay, here they are hiking in the mountains. Gay people don’t do that” (p. 2). Sadly, 30 years later, this is still quite often a reality in adventure recreation contexts, in which the presence of queer and trans people is still not taken as a possibility.

Outdoor programs quite often prevail being cisheteronormative spaces, where queer outdoor participants are usually erased or remain invisible (N. Anderson et al., 2021; Argus, 2018; Bren & Prince, 2022; Dignan, 2002; Merrett, 2021; Meyer, 2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013; P. Stanley, 2020; Warren, 2016). Hence, on the one side, outdoor culture relies quite often on dominant ideologies, as Moscoso-Sánchez (2008) says: “The unequal social construction of a gender identity in the field of mountain sports contributes to the reproduction of the structure of patriarchal dominance” (p. 188) and thus, to spaces that support and encourage heteronormativity. However, on the other side, they can also be seen as “significant cultural forms which not only reflects the dominant values and ideologies but importantly may also be sites of struggles over meaning, practices and gender subjectivities” (Humberstone, 2000, p. 27), and as opportunities of new ways of building our bodies (Díaz Carrión, 2012b).

Focusing now on the articles that pay attention to trans youth experiences (L. P. Browne et al., 2019; Grossman et al., 2005; Mitten, 2012; Wilson & Lewis, 2012), which engage with adventure-based youth camps. Wilson and Lewis (2012) and Mitten (2012) discuss whether it is better to create specialized camps for young trans people or if they should attend mainstream camps. Wilson and Lewis (2012) argue for specialized camps just for trans youth, where it would be possible for them to focus on the activities themselves and not on the potential hurdles and situations of discrimination that could emerge because of other people not being respectful of their non-normative gender identities. Furthermore, these particular programs might provide a space for self-expression and foster confidence among trans and gender-variant youths.

Mitten (2012), on the other side, argues that mainstream camps are already inclusive, and, in addition, she states that other participants and the staff may also benefit from the presence of trans campers. Additionally, mixed camps resemble a more realistic societal situation – versus an ‘oasis of utopia’ – in which cis and trans people have to share spaces. For her, mainstream camps are safe spaces for trans people, and they won’t find any hurdles or discrimination<sup>19</sup>. Browne et al. (2019) explore how some youth camps in North America are ensuring the inclusion of transgender youth in their programs through specific programs or integrating trans youth into a general program. They argue that the former one allows the creation of spaces where LGBTQ+ youth are building confidence, resilience, and being empowered.

Lastly, Grossman et al.’s (2005) article went in a different direction. Even though they claim that their aim is “to link leisure inquiry with gender expression” (p. 8) and that they want to research the aspects that affect the participation of young trans people in leisure environments, it seemed that they were more interested in the ‘gossips’ around being trans. These came from a very binary and traditional perspective of gender roles: Trans boys like ‘masculine things’ and trans girls like ‘girly activities’ and they all identify as transgender from an early age. Besides, they put a lot of emphasis on the victimization processes that trans people supposedly suffer: “[Trans people] experience relatively more health and psychosocial problems than other social groups (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse, low self-esteem, HIV infection), and live outside of mainstream society” (Grossman et al., 2005, p. 6).

All these articles highlight the biggest hurdle for trans youth attending adventure-based camps as the logistics involved – for instance, sleeping facilities and bathrooms, which are traditionally sex-segregated. Nonetheless, there are no signs stating if a bush is for men or women (Wilson & Lewis, 2012). Lastly, I would like to mention that the

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<sup>19</sup> This idea seems a cis-narrowed point of view, and I strongly disagree with it, as having such a safe space comes with a lot of work and effort, otherwise, gender dissident youths won’t be taken into consideration.

conception of gender brought by these authors is grounded on binary conceptions. For Mitten (2012), transgender only means transitioning from one gender to ‘the other’, which is seen as the ‘opposite’ by normative values and conceptions of gender; Wilson and Lewis (2012) defend that sex-segregation rules exist to “protect women from males who may get them pregnant” (p. 231); and Grossman et al. (2005) pathologize trans identities, using concepts such as ‘gender identity disorder’, referring to trans people as ‘patients’ and employing ‘male transsexuals’ for trans women. It appears to be that the ideas of gender identity and gender expression in these articles are still based on the Minnesota test<sup>20</sup>: “Do they like dolls or cars?” “Do they play soccer or dance?”

Following now are the five articles that focus on queer identities in the outdoors. Argus’ (2018) conducts interviews with LGBTQ Girl Scouts, focusing on how their gender identities or sexual orientations influence their outdoor experiences. Dignan (2002) discusses the impact of heteronormativity in outdoor recreation, while Barnfield and Humberstone (2008) explore the experiences of lesbian and gay participants and educators of outdoor education. Lastly, Meyer (2010) and Meyer and Borrie (2013) use a post-structural feminist framework to understand how people with non-heteronormative gender identities and sexualities experience their bodies and genders in the wilderness. In their findings, LGBTQ+ people describe wilderness experiences in terms of connection, integration, belonging, and refuge. Meyer (2010) claims that spaces in the wilderness might be places “where judgment of body is minimal, where gender expectations are neutral, where movement can be meditative, and where the mind can be calmed” (p. 189). Hence, participants in wilderness activities are allowed to experience their bodies without the social constraints of gender, without societal surveillance, and judgment; they are able to feel their bodies moving and interacting with nature “away from prescribed and idealized ways we use and present our bodies; and away from the predatory eyes of oppression” (Meyer & Borrie, 2013, p. 314). Finally, they also found that wilderness was seen as a refuge from normative gender, especially for trans people, but that there needs to be more research done in this direction (Meyer, 2010, p. 186).

Finally, there are some recent articles (Bren & Prince, 2022; Garland, 2023; Heath & Duffy, 2023) and Merrett’s thesis (2021) – the latter of which I have already reviewed in section 3.5. *Inclusivity in Outdoor Leadership*. Bren and Prince (2022) explore “current practice with regard to trans, non-binary, and gender variant participants in residential and non-residential outdoor programmes in the UK” (p. 28). They highlight

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<sup>20</sup> Together with the Real-Life Test (created in 1979 by the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, nowadays called World Professional Association of Transgender Health), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI, created in 1943) is aimed to dismiss other pathologies and it has a masculinity/femininity scale based on stereotyped gender conceptions (Pons Rabasa, 2013).

the binary structure of the programs that further perpetuates heteronormative policies, and conclude that education and training are crucial for establishing best practices and enhancing the overall experience of trans and non-binary participants. Garland's (2023) and Heath and Duffy's (2023) articles are part of a special issue of the "Parks Stewardship Forum" focusing on LGBTQIA+ experiences in the outdoors. Garland (2023) offers a narrative autoethnographic approach to their queer relationship with 'wilderness', while Heath and Duffy (2023) analyze, in a case study, the career of a transmasculine person as an outdoor recreation professional. They conclude that outdoor experiences "have been commandeered and appropriated by the white colonial narrative—a narrative that is also inherently anti-LGBTQIA+. Many LGBTQIA+ stories that have been erased by the colonial narrative may describe the values of the outdoors in a different context" (Heath & Duffy, 2023, p. 220).

All these articles indicate the absence of research regarding sexuality and gender identity in the outdoors, which the present thesis is covering. As we have seen, the spaces in which outdoor activities take place can be a heteronormative and heterosexist environment, but it can also be a counter-culture place for alternative femininities and masculinities (Humberstone, 2000). Lastly, I would also like to note that most authors – except Merrett (2021) – identified as cis<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> In the same way as heteronormativity works, by which the society assumes that everyone is straight until they prove otherwise, and if one is straight this is not relevant to point out, cisnormativity is the assumption that all individuals are cisgender, and acknowledging one's identity is not seen as necessary, not even when researching about trans issues. Therefore, the authors identity was rarely addressed by themselves in the articles, but rather assumed through the lack of proving otherwise.

### 3.8. FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE STATE OF THE ART

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The majority of the articles reviewed focus on how experiences in adventure activities change in relation to the participant's gender – always examining it from a cis-perspective and focusing on a population of white, able-bodied, class-privileged, heterosexual, cis women. The literature reviewed about queer experiences in outdoor activities is relatively recent and only covers limited aspects. In addition, all the articles were based on people's experiences from Western countries (USA, UK, Spain, Australia, and New Zealand), except for two articles (Díaz Carrión, 2012b, 2012c) that was situated in Jalcomulco (Mexico). In this sense, the present thesis covers a gap present in the literature, where experiences of trans people in outdoor and adventure activities are brought together, with a diverse sample regarding age, gender identity, race, ethnicity, indigenous background, place of origin, bodily abilities, and body diversity.

Everyone deserves to be able to participate in adventure activities and access outdoor spaces, although it seems that not everyone has this right, but that it is rather a privileged space for white, straight, fit, cis, able-bodied, and middle-class people. Quinn (2018) defines privilege as “the ability to decide what you do and do not pay attention to/give energy to/acknowledge as being real because you're not impacted by it directly” (para. 1). When engaging in outdoor activities and being part of a marginalized minority, ignoring larger issues and just going into the ‘wilderness’ is not an option because we are affected by systems of oppression everywhere we go. These powers and privileges are maintained through cultural hegemony. However, these dominant cultural forms are also challenged, and for Humberstone (2000), leisure, sport, and the outdoors are significant sites in struggles against hegemony.

Emanating from this literature and taking into account the dearth that exists in current research, I aim to examine trans people's experiences within the processes that occur in outdoor and adventure activities in natural environments, through the lens of embodied queer methodological assemblages. By doing this, I expect to throw light upon how adventure recreation might help, influence, and shape our identities. How is gender performed and constructed in the outdoors? How do we (trans people) create spaces of resistance in them? Furthermore, how does the different time-space compression between city/nature may originate in different gender expectations? Is the outdoors a welcoming place for trans people? Could the outdoors be perceived as a less gendered space? These are some of the questions that guide my objectives and research.





**Part II.**

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# **Methodological Approach**



## 4. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

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In this chapter, I will present the philosophical orientation and methodological approach of the thesis, explain the methods used, and close with a reflection on the limitations and ethical concerns faced during the fieldwork process.

In discussion of the methodological ground, I will first analyze and explain feminist, queering, and outdoor methodological stances that inspire and guide this research. These inform the philosophical orientation, epistemological- and ontological stance of this thesis (Crawley et al., 2021; Pryce et al., 2014). Hereby, I will build upon an assemblage methodological approach that I have called ‘on-the-move methodology’ – which will be explained in detail in section 4.4. *Methodological Assemblages*. Coming up to this thesis, I knew that I wanted to pay special attention to the methodologies and methods I would use, giving them the space and time that I felt they needed. Throughout the first year, getting more immersed in this field ultimately led to an emerging methodological objective for the thesis, in my attempt “to produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently” (Lather, 2013, p. 635). The methodological choices, as well as the choice of methods, are political (Lather, 2006). Hence, approaching a new research field prompted the need to use diverse types of methodologies and methods, which would allow more diverse data and a more fruitful analysis. Some questions which were prompted into my mind then: How can I compose a methodology that *means* to this specific research project? How can I develop a sensed and embodied methodological approach? How can I create a text that is not flat but rather ‘sensual’, that can be felt, heard, and touched? This research is not about comparability but about working on developing methodologies and ideas transnationally, since the present thesis aims to cover transnational experiences of trans people in outdoor activities. Transnational feminist queer research aims to answer “the same question in different places, using methods that are created in context and may not be ‘comparable’” (K. Browne et al., 2017, p. 1376). Furthermore, paying close attention to these aspects is also a way to respect and consider the integrity of all parts implicated in the research process. In this ‘post-qualitative’ (St Pierre, 2011) panorama, the opportunity of an assemblage of methodologies arose as an open possibility to disrupt the normative linearity of research.

As stated in the introduction section 1.3., this thesis has a *philosophical orientation*, understood as a “worldview that underlies and informs methodology and methods” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1), where methodologies shape the research’s theoretical orientation (Nash, 2016), and the methods involve techniques for data gathering and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Furthermore, the methodology is inspired by feminists, queer, decolonial, and outdoor methodological theories, and lastly, the methods are based on a multisited ethnography. Consequently, the research follows an

interpretive ethnographic approach. Ethnographic research is intrinsically “partial, committed and incomplete” (Rooke, 2016, p. 27). However, as it has been claimed by feminist and queer researchers, this partiality is now a flaw but rather a strength, as it is a way of acknowledging our situatedness as researchers, questioning our social and political position in the context of the study (Haraway, 1988; Rooke, 2016). Therefore, ethnographic research offers a comprehensive framework for delving into the nuanced personal experiences of participants in outdoor and adventure activities, providing rich insights into their lived realities.

In outdoor studies, the use of ethnographical approaches is under-employed (Buckley, 2014; Doran, 2019), even though it lends itself as a fitted slant to research into the lived experiences of participants in outdoor activities. Therefore, I argue that using a phenomenological and autoethnographic approach, which allows for an embodied knowledge production, will offer a methodological contribution to the field of outdoor research. Building upon an assemblage of methodologies, I aim to investigate new ways of interconnection between outdoor-, queer-, online-, and walking methodologies. I will build the methodological foundation starting from a feminist standpoint, moving forward to queering methodologies and, hereafter, outdoor methodologies. These will set the ground for a methodological assemblage that has resulted in an ‘on-the-move methodology’. Subsequently, I will dive into the methods for gathering and analyzing the data – on-the-move interviews, on-the-move diaries, analysis of social media network Instagram, and autoethnography – and finally, into the ethical considerations and limitations of the research’s methodological approach.

## 4.1. FEMINIST METHODOLOGIES

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*Feminists don't need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence, a story that loses track of its mediations just where someone might be held responsible for something, and unlimited instrumental power. [...] We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meaning and bodies that have a chance for life. – Donna Haraway (1988, p. 579)*

Feminist research has a long history in qualitative inquiry and discussing what objectivity means in qualitative research. “Feminist epistemologies across disciplinary boundaries have long understood that there is a politics of location in research” (K. Browne et al., 2017, p. 1377), arguing for a view “from the body” versus a “view from nowhere” or a “view from above” (Haraway, 1988). Through the work of feminist scholars like Haraway (1988) we have come to understand feminist methodologies as situated, located, embodied, and interconnected knowledges. Hence, feminist methodologies do not aim to uncover a universal truth but rather partial sights and limited voices (Haraway, 1988). As Haraway (1988) puts it: “We need the power of modern critical theories of how meaning and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life” (Haraway, 1988, p. 580).

Moreover, feminist research delineates an epistemological position that attempts to break away from dichotomous oppositions. In addition, as Martín Palomo and Muñoz Terrón (2014) add, in feminist research methodologies it is important to “pay more systematic attention to silence: much can be learned about people’s experiences of subordination by looking not only at what they say but also at what they do not say” (p. 38). Scholars have paid attention to these queer silences as resistance practices against oppression (Wagner, 2012), to refuse a subordinating discourse (Jaworksi, 1993), and to protect the lives of those who live on the margins (Smilges, 2020). Feminist methodologies have acknowledged that silence does not always indicate a dearth of agency and that one needs to learn to *hear* it (Rich, 1986; Smilges, 2019).

In this endeavor of challenging the neutrality and presumed objectivity of the research process, as well as addressing the power relations that may arise within it, feminist researchers have pursued questions of the relationships between researcher and researched (K. Browne et al., 2017; Nash, 2016). In ethnographic research, one seeks to understand the lived experiences of others, though the distance between the researcher

and the participant entails that it is not possible to understand their lived experiences (Nash, 2016) wholly. However, “it is this space of ‘betweenness’ (the difference between us and them) that constitutes a possible site for partial and situated knowledges to be mutually constituted and produced” (Nash, 2016, p. 134). When conducting qualitative ethnographic work, it is necessary to acknowledge “that gender and sexual identities, and the meanings that circulate around them, are more than merely discursive formulations. They are daily realities and practices that have real consequences” (Rooke, 2016, p. 28). By this means, not only does the relationship between researcher and researched need to be given attention, but these reflexivity processes also need to address the researcher’s own position. Reflexivity can be defined as “the endeavour of making transparent the complex relationship between researcher and research process and understanding the implications of such a relationship for the research outcome” (Pousti et al., 2020, p. 8). In that sense, feminist research methodologies demand that the researcher holds a reflexive position (Adams & Holman Jones, 2011; K. Browne et al., 2017; Haraway, 1991; Martín Palomo & Muñoz Terrón, 2014; Nash, 2016; Olive, 2020; Rooke, 2016), instead of holding an ontologically stable position from which to enter (and leave) a fixed fieldwork. This reflexive approach to methodology requires an understanding of the field as fluid and with flexible boundaries (K. Browne & Nash, 2016; Rooke, 2016). As described by Nash (2016), “self-reflexivity entails, in part, a ‘self-critical, sympathetic introspection and self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher’ —a process designed to consider the distance between participants and to recognise the fallacy of the supposed ‘objectivity’ in the research project” (p. 135).

Reflexivity can be understood as more than a methodological tool “used during data collection or a theoretical concept that is applied during analysis, but as an essential part of doing research across all stages” (Olive, 2020, p. 123). Reflexive approaches see the people they research as subjects positioned within the system, being part of it and accounting for the changes that their observations produce. Further, they address experiences as specific to individual subjectivities as well as they help us remain engaged with our own subjective assumptions and lived experiences: our sex, gender, sexuality, race, dis/ability, age, class, skill level, etc. When “we think the social through ourselves, we allow for ways of knowing that are explicitly mediated through our researching subjectivity” (Olive, 2020, p. 123). Reflexivity enables us to negotiate how the experiences, conversations, theories, and more that we have gathered throughout our research process have all folded into and through us (St Pierre, 1997). As Olive (2020) explains: “Intersections of our subjective self with others and with space may produce understandings of experiences that are shared or unique, and which may reproduce, resist and disrupt normative understandings of cultures” (p. 123). Hence, reflexivity is about developing the ‘situated knowledges’ (Haraway, 1988) that feminist methodologies are grounded on. Furthermore, we need to constantly ask ourselves and our research about our aims, the methods we choose, the theories that guide us, how we write, and the ways

in which we publish. This allows us to ask new questions, write differently, and try new methods and methodological assemblages. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that throughout this reflexive process, the researcher needs to think through their subjective position without privileging it; “the research is through me, not about me” (Olive, 2020, p. 124).

As we have seen, reflexivity can be comprehended as a methodological orientation in research but also as a writing practice (Adams & Holman Jones, 2011; Richardson & St Pierre, 2005; St Pierre, 1997, 2011). Writing has been suggested by Richardson and St Pierre (2005) as a way of thinking through ourselves and the experiences, ideas, and contexts we research as a means of maintaining a reflexive process. Thinking through the researching self-implicates embodied and messy interactions between people, spaces, places, bodies, experiences, discourses, and cultures and the impacts they may have throughout the research process. Moreover, reflexivity also entails opening up about and discussing the choices made during a research process, making the research practice more transparent. Reflexivity will be integrated consistently across all stages and chapters of the thesis, ensuring thorough introspection and critical self-awareness.

Finally, phenomenological approaches to research are also prominent in feminist methodologies (Martín Palomo & Muñoz Terrón, 2014). Phenomenology is considered a research philosophy that departs from interpretivist paradigms (Jackman, 2016; Rooke, 2016). As a philosophy, phenomenology “gives primacy to subjective consciousness as a means of understanding experience and existence” (Telford, 2020, p. 48), while phenomenological approaches to research seek to “explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experience” (C. Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 19). Hence, it is about putting individuals’ lived experiences at the center of inquiry, and its purpose is to explain the subjective meanings that people give to their experience about a particular phenomenon (Doran, 2019). While ethnography is focused in studying and describing a cultural or social group, phenomenological approaches aim to understand the lived experience of a certain phenomenon through the individual experiences of people who take part in it (Creswell, 2014; Fetterman, 2010). This phenomenological approach is also particularly interesting in outdoor research studies. When looking into issues regarding people’s identities, their particular subjective experiences, and the meaning they give to them before, during, and/or after they engage with them, phenomenology has the potential to offer us fruitful insights.

Bodies move and interact; they are not detached from the context in which they do so. “Feminists have long argued that bodies’ capacities to think and act are affected by the environment in which they move, or are prevented from moving” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 63). Queer, dis/abled, racialized, fat, and non-normative bodies are marked ‘out of place’ in nature (Bloem Herraiz, 2019; Kafer, 2013; P. Stanley, 2020).

By going to outdoor spaces, we trouble the narratives of who is “expected or allowed ‘to go there’” (Kafer, 2013, p. 130). But in addition to being out of place, Puar (2009) contends that biocapital also insists that bodies are never *enough* and thus are “always in a debilitated state in relation to what one’s bodily capacity is imagined to be” (p. 167). Similarly, *who* produces knowledge is part of the process that it is being researched (Ibáñez, 1991). As Gorman-Murray et al. (2016) claim, we should be “alert to how research narratives are always spatial, temporal and to a particular audience” (p. 109).



## 4.2. QUEERING METHODOLOGIES

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*We needed for there to be sites where the meanings didn't line up tidily with each other, and we learned to invest those sites with fascination and love. – Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1994, p. 3)*

“Is research ‘queer’ if it is undertaken by queer researchers? Is such research about queer subjects and/or research that employs a queer conceptual framework? And what does it mean when we speak of a queer methodology or a queering of methodologies?” (K. Browne & Nash, 2016, p. 12). I will not argue here for a queer methodology but rather for a *queering* of methodologies. Queer is inherently feminist. Accordingly, I do not conceive a queer methodology that is not also a feminist methodology. Thus, this distinction does not exist as a binary opposition.

Every element of a research study is connected to the others – theory, researcher, data, participants, method, and so forth, are related and inter-connected. They cannot be read and seen in isolation from each other – in what is called the “data-theory-method triangle”:

What counts as ‘data’ depends upon the methods used to gather it and the theories used to explicate it; what counts as ‘theory’ depends on the data used to substantiate it and the methods used to support it; what counts as ‘method’ depends on the data it is to obtain and the theories it is to inform. (Boellstorff, 2016, p. 216)

Hence, “questions of how queer studies should construct its object of study must be posed not only in terms of theory, but also as part of a larger concern with methodology and the politics of representation” (Jackman, 2016, p. 113). If I am to build on queer knowledges, my methodologies also have to *queer*. How has queer theory contributed to methodologies? What are the main contributions to the field of qualitative research methodologies? K. Browne and Nash (2016) explain that queer theory:

Works specifically to unwrap the commonly taken-for-granted and normalized connections between sexuality and gender in order to render visible their contingent connections. [...] Queer theory challenges the normative social ordering of identities and subjectivities along the heterosexual/homosexual binary as well as the privileging of heterosexuality as ‘natural’ and homosexuality as its deviant and abhorrent ‘other’. (p. 5)

Queering methodologies nourish from the influence of feminist methodologies, thus embracing the situatedness, embodiment, and reflexivity of them. K. Browne and Nash

(2016) argue that queerness should intersect with “those sets of logical organizing principles that link our ontological and epistemological perspectives with the actual methods we use to gather data” (p. 2). In this manner, queer is used to designate practices and theories that unsettle norms, it invokes complication, and it aims to trouble the production of knowledge (Dadas, 2016). Queering methodologies undermine traditional research considerations. They highlight the instability of taken-for-granted meanings, refusing the reification of normative structures, challenging what is normal and what breaks out of research boundaries, thus interrogating methodological normativities (K. Browne et al., 2017; K. Browne & Nash, 2016). Would this mean that any method can be ‘made’ queer? Or coming back to my question from the introduction, is it *enough* if my topic is queer and I am queer? I will argue that a queering of methodologies does not only require attention to methods, but it rather needs to queer the positions of researcher and researched, acknowledging their permanent instability and reflecting on power relations of ethnographic research; its temporalities, and situatedness.

To be accountable is about “making commitments and connections” (Barad, 2007, p. 392, cited in Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 7). This accountability should be taken into consideration in the enterprise for queering methodologies by using queer theory to rupture the normalizing inheritances of ethnographic research. In ethnography, there is a constant border crossing between a ‘here’ and a ‘there’, a crossing that separates differentiated places and moments and creates a normative temporality in ethnographic time research; between fieldwork to a future ‘writing up’, in which to account for the ethnographic past, “presenting a self who is now detached and distant from the fieldwork situation in both emotional, spatial and temporal terms” (Rooke, 2016, p. 29). Acknowledging this temporality is part of queering the normative ethnographic time (Rooke, 2016), though there is a conflicting force between pursuing a non-normative queer position in research, one that is unstable and fluid, and the academic requirements of scientific rigor and clarity (K. Browne & Nash, 2016). With this queering of temporality also comes the matter of the insider/outsider position. “How do we critically analyze the practice, culture or community we are part of, that we love, that impacts our identity?” (Olive, 2020, p. 122).

As I have shown, for a feminist and queer methodology, epistemological reflexivity is essential, acknowledging the researcher’s own subjectivity, positionality, and embodiment. In queer and outdoor research, the researcher is frequently part of the community they are studying, often breaking that dualism between being in the field studying ‘others’ and theorizing in the ‘writing up’, assumed to be detached from the field site (Boellstorff, 2016, p. 218). Furthermore, my interest in this topic comes from my own personal experiences; I do not aim to be a neutral observer, but rather, the knowledges I intend to produce will be informed by my particular location and experiences. Being unapologetically queer and trans, I want to run away from cis-

normative perspectives into our lives' stories. As an 'insider', sharing a similar identity with the research's participants, it will be possible to create a closer and more direct connection with them as there are common shared experiences (Doran, 2019; Gorman-Murray et al., 2016; Nash, 2016). Moreover, because of the history in research on trans subjectivities, I find myself, as well as many other trans and gender-non-conforming people, having difficulty trusting cis researchers<sup>22</sup> studying our realities. Often, cis-normative knowledge on trans people has been held as 'better', 'more accurate', or 'more valid'. However, currently, there are many trans scholars, activists, and researchers changing this story; as Robyn Dowling (2005, p. 26, cited in Gorman-Murray et al., 2016) suggests, "insiders might have an advantage because people are more likely to talk to you freely, and you are more likely to understand what they are saying because you share their outlook on the world" (p. 104). The experiences, ideas, and explanations shared by the participants are moderated and influenced by their understanding of the identity and situated subjectivity of the researcher. Therefore, I claim that my embodied situatedness will allow participants to disclose their experiences more freely, being able to create a better relationship with them.

Is it possible to queer communication in these research relationships? How does queering communication work through and across dichotomous subjective binaries to subvert these insider/outsider relationships? When prevailing assumptions in ethnographic studies are "that researchers are fundamentally different from the people whom they study, ethnographies of queer assemblages could offer a way to study sexualities without presupposing the shape or integrity of desire" (Jackman, 2016, p. 128). How could queer assemblages contribute to this mixed methodological approach<sup>23</sup>? As Jackman (2016) notes, we should consider "whether ethnographies of queer publics and assemblages might hold the promise of expanding our existing understanding of sexualities cross-culturally" (p. 114). How could assemblages queer outdoor methodologies? Consequently, I will keep building upon the methodological approach to arrive here.

I want to distance myself from our stories of trauma and start to talk about how we build and create trans livable lives. Possibly 'hike' them away, climb high up where we have passed these stories of pain. As Rooke (2016) notes, "queer is connected as much to a body of theory as to emotions" (p. 26). Very often, research about trans topics focuses

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<sup>22</sup> I'm referring here to researchers, of any identity, that work from a cis-normative point of view. I decided to use a general of cis-identified people because this is the case for the vast majority of these cases. However, trans and non-binary researchers can also use a cis-normative lens in their research, and *not all* cis researchers will do so.

<sup>23</sup> I use here the concept 'mixed methodological' approach to refer to different methodological stances. However, in regard to methods, this research takes a multisited ethnographical approach.

on narratives of our pain; the academy's fetishization of reproducing stories of oppression doesn't fall out unnoticeable. Hereby, I want to highlight "a concern with the fixation social science research has exhibited in eliciting pain stories from communities that are not White, not wealthy, and not straight" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 6). This does not imply that I will ignore or disregard them if they arise during the fieldwork and data collection. Processes of pain and experiences of damage are part of ourselves and our experiences. However, I will aim to focus on the stories of pleasure, empowerment, resilience, and pride that we build through outdoor and adventure activities. Tuck (2009) and Tuck and Yang (2014) talk about "damage-centered researchers", who work within a theory of change, by which: there must be harm documented in order to persuade an outsider that there is a need for reparations. This "theory of change" needs subjugated communities to locate themselves as powerless. Even more, they have observed how these communities are often left with these broken narratives and the supposedly won reparations rarely became a reality. They also argue that the researcher's voice is established and legitimated by the voices of those in the diasporas, as they put it: "The researcher-self is made anew by telling back the story of the marginalized/subaltern subject" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 7). In this regard, they contend that "in settler colonial logic, pain is more compelling than privilege, scars more enthralling than the body unmarked by experience. In settler colonial ideology, pain is evidence of authenticity, of the verifiability of a lived life" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 9); or as Jaffe says: "Scars make your body more interesting" (1996, p. 58).

*"You are in pain, therefore you are"* (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 7).

Otherness is created by the delimitation of what falls into the normative, thus producing a subaltern<sup>24</sup> and diasporic subject – likewise, Whiteness is constituted by the production of Blackness (Fanon, 1967), "the work of research and the researcher are constituted by the productions and representation of the subaltern subject" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 6). These logics of pain require a linear temporality and a rigid structure; "Desire-based frameworks, by contrast, look to the past and the future to situate analyses. [...] In this way, desire is time-warping. The logics of desire is asynchronous just as it is distemporal" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 11). Moreover, these logics of desire resonate with the claim for 'gender euphoria'<sup>25</sup> present in trans activism. Could, then, desire-based

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<sup>24</sup> The subaltern subject is a concept developed by Gayatri Spivak (1988), which aims to bring forward those who are oppressed. For more about it, I recommend reading her text "Can the subaltern speak?"

<sup>25</sup> Trans activists have used the slogan 'gender euphoria' in contrast to 'gender dysphoria' which is how trans identities are pathologized since 2013 in the DSM-5 manual. Gender euphoria can be

research be seen as a way to *queer* trans research? Ahmed (2004) contends that “pain can shape worlds as bodies, through the ways in which stories of pain circulate in the public domain” (p. 15). I claim so that desire-based research is a means to *queer* trans research. In the same direction, Gingrich-Philbrook (2005, cited in Holman Jones & Adams, 2016) suggest “that telling stories of subjugated knowledges —stories of pleasure, gratification and intimacy— offers one possibility for writing against and out of the bind of sacrificing a multitudinous *artistry* for clear, unequivocal *knowledge*” (p. 196). With this thesis, I want to start talking about the stories of pleasure of queer and trans bodies. How are outdoor activities influencing our lived experiences? How do they affect and shape our identities?

Finally, in the same way as becoming queer is always in process (Heckert, 2016, p. 43), so is queer research, ontology, and methodology. By acknowledging this failure (Dadas, 2016; Halberstam, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2014), we can see nonlinearity in research, where research does not necessarily progress through a linear sequence of stages (from private through reading, data collection, and analysis to a public presentation of the findings). Queerness embraces messiness and complication. Becoming queer is also “learning to be comfortable with uncertainty” (Heckert, 2016, p. 43). Queer ethnography, as I have shown, implies questioning the logics of normativity, twisting and inquiring ethnographic methods and principles, also in writing. In this sense, it is imperative to attend to *queer silences* as moments of disclosure (Gorman-Murray et al., 2016). This queering approach to adventure research offers novel contribution to this field and is fundamental to ensure the thesis’ research objectives.

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described as a feeling of comfort, joy and pleasure in regard to their own gender identity (Benestad, 2010).

### 4.3. OUTDOOR METHODOLOGIES

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*I really want to sleep in the safety and intimacy of my tent. To find refuge in my tent: my house. – Bart Bloem Herraiz, TransBike Diaries (2017)*

Differently from feminist and queer methodological approaches, outdoor methodologies are an imminent field that hasn't been given much attention yet (Humberstone & Nicol, 2020; Pleasants & Stewart, 2020). Moreover, they dwell in a masculinized field, in which discussions that were held many years ago in feminist and queer studies are now starting to arise. In this section, I want to bring some of the tendencies in qualitative outdoor methodologies – such as posthumanism, reflexivity, autoethnography, and situated knowledge – that connect with the issues I discussed in the previous sections.

Recently, scholars in outdoor studies have started to incorporate posthumanist theories into their studies (Doran, 2019; Hill et al., 2020; Humberstone & Nicol, 2020; lisahunter, 2020; Lynch, 2020; Mcphie & Clarke, 2020; Olive, 2020; Pleasants & Stewart, 2020; Rea, 2008; Springgay & Truman, 2019). “In outdoor studies, knowledge lays, primarily, in and through sensed experience” (Pleasants & Stewart, 2020, p. 9), thus, ethnographic phenomenological approaches serve this purpose a great platform. In addition, research in outdoor studies often relates to experiences that might be hard to describe for participants, as they are in some way deeply meaningful (Telford, 2020, pp. 47–48). Frequently, it is also about experiences that the researcher has had themselves and that are difficult to put into words. Therefore, methodologies such as “ethnography and autoethnography, which are underpinned by phenomenological perspectives, provide unique methodologies for exploring human and non-human interactions in the outdoors” (Humberstone & Nicol, 2020, p. 112). Reflexivity, which I already discussed in the feminist methodology section above, is also very present in outdoor research, where researchers are often part of the community they are studying:

As participatory researchers, we are thinking of the work of the self, as we do it; analyzing as we swim, surf, skate, climb, dive, ski, paddle, play. [...] We are also listening, feeling, tasting, smelling, and touching, as well as responding, reacting, accommodating, negotiating, fearing, enjoying, and using all of our bodies and emotions to get a sense of a space, place, culture, community, network, knowledge and set of experiences. (Olive, 2020, p. 124)

The researcher's own participation in adventure activities is key to how they access participants and how they analyze the interviews (Doran, 2019; Olive, 2020; Telford, 2020). When going hiking, cycling, climbing, surfing, or engaging in any other outdoor

activity, we situate ourselves in the physical and cultural space that the research focuses upon. So, instead of getting to know other people's experiences from a supposedly objective outside, we share the experiences and place ourselves amongst them. In this case, I shared multiple identities and lived experiences with the participants – identifying as trans and/or gender nonconforming, queer, and into adventure and outdoor activities. This way, research can be contemplated as a collaborative process, in which exchange is mutual and neither part aims to hold 'the knowledge'. This attempts to "keep the context, the research and the theory explicitly connected, and the analysis relevant to and reflective of participants' lives" (Olive, 2020, p. 122).

Alongside these are personal interviews, which allow researchers to "develop embodied understandings of how participants experience cultural practices, spaces, and relationships" (Olive, 2020, p. 121), as well as they intend to shorten the distance in time and space (Hill et al., 2020). Interviews are not a stable environment, fixed and immune to interactions with the human and more-than-human surroundings, but they are rather situated and embodied. How does this translate in outdoor and adventure contexts? How does the space of the interview interact with the experiences and ideas that can be shared in outdoor research? Do we think about experience differently when being in movement, whether it is walking, cycling, climbing, or skiing? How does sharing an 'outdoor experience'<sup>26</sup> with the researcher influence the trust that is built for the interview to happen? When researching about outdoor experiences, the environment and the more-than-human acquire utmost importance, which I argue cannot be grasped through an online interview or inside a building.

Both participant and researcher are entangled subjects (St Pierre, 2011), which implies that when using interviews, we need to acknowledge that individuals are shaped by their social worlds and they are entangled with others and everything, also compassing the more-than-human world (Hill et al., 2020). As Jonathan Lynch (2020) notes, the concept more-than-human "signifies a way of understanding 'nature' that does not reduce it to something less important than the human. Secondly, the term denotes all that we encounter in 'nature' but rejects a priori meaning" (p. 216). Springgay and Truman (2019) also develop on the concept of more-than-human as a concept that emerges in scholarly discussions to "challenge and de-centre human exceptionalism, taxonomies of intelligence and animacy, and the distinctions made between humans and nonhumans, nature and culture" (p. 8). At the top of the animacy taxonomy would be cis, masculine, heteronormative, slim, and able bodies, while moving down the pyramid the subjects get dehumanized and become less agentic, positioning particular subjects – such as black, indigenous, and trans – at the lower bottom and creating a particular human body and

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<sup>26</sup> I use the term 'outdoor experience' to refer to the connection that develops between participants in an adventure activity as a result of the shared risk and the need to trust each other in order to 'survive'.

human sexuality as a norm. Springgay and Truman (2019) argue that “the more-than-human must not merely blur the boundaries between human and nonhuman, but operate as a *strategy* that asks how those categories rub on, and against, each other, generating friction and leakage” (p. 9).

Researchers such as Pleasants and Stewart (2020) and Gough and Whitehouse (2018) have called attention to how outdoor research has overlooked feminist approaches to research, which can contribute to outdoor studies in their critique of universalist and normative understandings of knowledge, which is presumed to be a subject that is white, male, straight, cis, middle class, able-bodied, and who exists apart from non-human nature (Fullagar, 2017). In a posthuman sense, “relationships between the researcher, participants, *and* the more-than-human world are also crucial to consider” (Hill et al., 2020, p. 58). Posthumanist theories and their profound analysis of concepts such as place offer a vast range of possibilities for interviews in outdoor studies. Even more, “given the central role of ‘place’ in outdoor studies, it is critical to understand the ways in which place might be positioned within interviews” (Hill et al., 2020, p. 62).

I would love inquiries that take us for a walk, that spark our curiosity into rock climbing, and that make us dream about sleeping in a tent after a day riding our bikes. I would love inquiries that give us goosebumps, like the first time I hiked up a snowed mountain or the first time guiding a group into a cave. How do I imagine outdoor inquiries? Same as when going on an adventure trip, I would love inquiries that we can’t have full control of, that take us on a ride. Just as this Ph.D. thesis is an adventure trip, a journey that adapts and lives in the present time, I would love located inquiries that flow with the current of the processes. How can I make them *happen*?

A posthuman approach aims to break binaries such as theory/practice, human/nature, mind/body, and emotion/reason, producing messy and entangled knowledge pathways (Hill et al., 2020, p. 63; Mcphie & Clarke, 2020). Furthermore, it shifts the focus from an interpersonal interaction between researcher and researched to a “more mangled orientation between bodies, things and sensations” (Springgay, 2014, p. 79). Outdoor studies is an academic field that promotes “the epistemological values of ‘being-on-the-move’ to kindle direct embodied experiences, in-depth knowledge and awareness of the environmental surroundings” (Gurholt, 2020, p. 164). I assert that outdoor studies require and *desire* methodologies that are susceptible to the more-than-human features of the research setting’s place and that understand outdoor places as a field of messy, entangled, and assembled relations. I felt inspired by mobile methods, such as walking interviews (Lynch, 2020; Springgay & Truman, 2019), that have been used in ethnographic research before by other scholars such as Kusenbach through the



‘go-alongs’<sup>27</sup> (2003, 2018) and activists through ‘las derivas’<sup>28</sup> (Colectiva XXX, 2020; Precarias a la Deriva, 2004; Somolinos Molina, 2019). How can these walking interviews expand into other adventure sports? How would a cycling interview look like? And a climbing interview? Or a skiing interview? Moreover, this methodological approach understands place as a field of entangled material and discursive relations, which recognizes “the ways in which lived experiences, perception, and meaning-making are constructed through place and spatial practices of sociality and positionality” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 3). In the next section, 4.4. *Methodological Assemblages*, I will expand into this methodological assemblage – that I call ‘on-the-move methodology’ – in which queer, feminist, and outdoor methodologies “inter-act” and “intra-act” (Barad, 2007).

Finally, researchers in outdoor studies have felt inspired by digital and multimedia methodologies to capture the experiences and entangled relations with the human and more-than-human world (Gurholt, 2020; lisahunter, 2020; Springgay & Truman, 2019). As many outdoor scholars have noted, it is vital to link corporeality, embodiment, and emplacement, *sensing* and paying attention to what our senses capture (Gurholt, 2020; Humberstone & Nicol, 2020; lisahunter, 2020; Lynch, 2020; Olive, 2020; Pleasants & Stewart, 2020; Telford, 2020). “Yet much of the research is recorded, analysed or at least re-presented as research texts that are linear, unimodal, sensorially flattened and text based” (lisahunter, 2020, p. 219). When doing outdoor activities, observations and sensations of the landscape, wind, skies, temperature, and topography carry information that is essential for our own safety as well as for the possibility of pursuing the activity itself. By contrast, desktop computers and texts are physically passive, isolated, and distant us from interactions with the rest, one could even say that they may be “disembodied” (Gurholt, 2020). How could I portray the feelings, reflections, and our senses’ perceptions during the interviews with the participants and the outdoor activity? How could recorded soundtracks, visual images, maps, and other tools embody the research experiences? Even though no technology can capture the feeling of ice-cold

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<sup>27</sup> ‘Go-alongs’, firstly developed by Kusenbach are “techniques of data collection during which researchers participate in patterns of movements with their human subjects” (2018, p. 2). As a methodology, go-alongs have the following characteristics: they are place-based, person-centered, interactive, systematic, and symbolic (Kusenbach, 2018, p. 5).

<sup>28</sup> ‘Las derivas’, which could be translated as ‘drifts’, are a feminist methodology developed by the collective ‘Precarias a la Deriva’ (La Eskalera Karakola, Madrid, Spain) that consists in a situated walk that goes through the daily spaces of each participant, maintaining a multisensorial and open character of the event. ‘Drifting’ thus becomes an interview in movement traversed by the collective perception of the environment (Precarias a la Deriva, 2004, p. 26). It is conceived as a feminist methodology to study work precariousness and how spaces construct specific subjectivities and it is thought to be done through urban spaces (Colectiva XXX, 2020; Precarias a la Deriva, 2004; Somolinos Molina, 2019). ‘Las derivas’ are a collective methodology, both in their execution and their writing processes.

wind freezing your toes, or the hot sun of a sunny summer day in southern Europe, “digital devices can document visual and aural appearances of the present manifestations more completely than merely written notes” (Gurholt, 2020, p. 168). How could technologies capture the experiences and the more-than-human in outdoor research? lisahunter (2020) has experimented with multimedia methodologies in outdoor studies “to facilitate communication that is ‘multi’, that is, engaging with multiple senses, multiple modes of communication and employing multiperspectival multimedia to engage in/beyond human experiences and multiple timespaces” (p. 222). Hence, I will approach digital and multimedia methodologies to bring the more-than-human into the thesis.

#### 4.4. METHODOLOGICAL ASSEMBLAGES

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*We lose ourselves in what we read, only to return to ourselves, transformed and part of a more expansive world.* – Judith Butler (2013)

While getting through my methodological readings, I found that the concept of assemblage, as a theoretical and methodological concept, could entangle and *assemble* the multiple dimensions of my research, both methodologically – feminist, queering, and outdoor methodologies – and regarding methods – multisited ethnography. Assemblage is a concept used originally by Deleuze and Guattari that comes from the French word *agencement*. This concept focuses on relations rather than content: “In *agencement*, specific *connections with* other concepts is precisely what gives them their meaning. Concepts do not prescribe relations, nor do they exist prior to them; rather, relations of force, connection, resonance, and patterning give rise to concepts” (Puar, 2012, p. 57). Hence, as Puar (2012) notes, we should ask what assemblages *do* rather than what assemblages *are*. Puar (2012) explains it as it follows:

They [assemblages] de-privilege the human body as a discrete organic thing. [...] Assemblages do not privilege bodies as human, nor as residing within a human animal/nonhuman animal binary. Along with a de-exceptionalizing of human bodies, multiple forms of matter can be bodies—bodies of water, cities, institutions, and so on. Matter is an actor. (p. 57)

In doing so, assemblages bring the more-than-human in as an actor. Authors such as Puar (2005, 2007, 2012) and Jackman (2016) have proposed the study of queer assemblages, that reach more than an identity: “The aim of queer research must neither be a simplistic queering of identity categories nor a documentation of the lives of queer people, but an intent focus on affective corporal queernesses” (Jackman, 2016, p. 127). Therefore, I argue that assemblages, which “encompass not only ongoing attempts to destabilize identities and grids, but also the forces that continue to mandate and enforce them” (Puar, 2012, p. 63), could adequately lead the queer methodological approach of this thesis. This reflects in this research in the ongoing questioning of normativities present in research and in how the methodology, findings, and the *text* are presented in the thesis.

Researchers in outdoor studies have also recently started to pay attention to what assemblages can *do* (Mcphie & Clarke, 2020; Pleasants & Stewart, 2020), highlighting the dynamic dimensions of ontology, epistemology, methodologies, and matter and encouraging researchers to reconceptualize research engaging with philosophical and

methodological shifts in a creative way (Pleasants & Stewart, 2020, p. 11). For instance, Mcphie and Clarke (2020) recommend outdoor scholars to immerse in post-qualitative research, which “doesn’t attempt to operate from a perspective of critical objectivity but rather acknowledges the situated, partial, ethical, relational, posthuman and responsive ways of knowing that have been developed in feminist studies” (p. 191). They argue for a posthumanist and postqualitative inquiry that challenges the binaries of research, in which theory and practice are two separate entities. In this postqualitative inquiry, each researcher will create their own “*remix, mash-up, assemblage, a becoming* of inquiry that is not *a priori*, inevitable, necessary, stable, or repeatable but is, rather, created spontaneously in the middle of the task at hand” (St Pierre, 2011, p. 620). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) expose how qualitative researchers can “use theory to think *with* their data (or use data to think *with* theory) in order to accomplish a reading of data that is both *within and against interpretivism*” (p. vii). In that sense, they argue that theory and practice are intertwined, in which “research itself becomes another theory to deconstruct and think *with*, hopefully to create new epistemological pathways to further social and environmental equity” (Mcphie & Clarke, 2020, p. 187). In thinking *with, in, and through* new materialisms, we allow the space for opportunities to emerge in these in-between spaces and assemblages. How could an *assemblage* of these three dimensions – queer, feminist, and outdoor – look like? How could queer assemblages contribute to this interdisciplinary thesis? Which entwined methodologies and methods could I assemble in order to pursue this? In what follows, I will delve deeper into this approach to demonstrate how queer assemblages address the aforementioned questions.

Like most outdoor studies scholars and adventure lovers, I am fascinated by outdoor places and what makes them so unique for many people. Although outdoor activities share commonalities with other sports – in the sense of carrying out physical activity –, in outdoor and adventure activities the space exists by itself and has its own meaning, purpose, and life, and it acquires great importance in the performance and experience of the activity. Here, the situatedness of the interview gained importance, as I wanted to grasp the more-than-human that exists in these activities. I was thus inspired by posthumanist views, which directed their attention to these ideas. Rather than questioning the validity of interviews for posthumanist research, we need to pay attention to the epistemological and ontological assemblages and entanglements:

Perhaps more attention needs to be given to the *where* of the interview, and the *when* of the interview, and the *if* of the interview. If we are to make sense of these material and discursive material constructions and joining of forces, perhaps we must think practices that disavow an over-reliance on words as the primary source of meaning. (Mazzei, 2013, p. 739)

Walking methodologies, which “privilege an embodied way of knowing where movement connects mind, body, and environment” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 4),

address the questions raised by Mazzei's quote from above. Understanding embodiment through phenomenology, "researchers and participants examine the lived experiences of what it means to move in a particular place" (Ibid., pp. 4–5). Ethnographic research requires movement, whether it is from the researcher's original position into the data, between different texts, or between the online and offline world (Jackman, 2016). One way of describing how texts are moving is the emotionality of these texts, in terms of which emotions they generate (Ahmed, 2004, p. 13). For Ahmed (2004), emotions are not something that we have. "Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 10). Using the senses could be a way to evoke emotionality in the text, as lisahunter and emerald elke (2016) propose:

*Using the senses to create a text and creating a text that can be engaged sensorially: can it be touched, smelt, tasted, can a research text evoke pleasure or pain, where/when is it in place/space/time, how can a text capture me (turn me)?* (p. 39)

Both through multimedia technologies such as recorded audio and invitations to walk outdoors while listening to a recorded chapter, this thesis aims to evoke this emotionality in the reader, bringing the more-than-human into the text and inviting the reader into the outdoors. Moreover, this *podcast-chapter* offers the possibility to *read it on-the-move*, broadening the methodology to the readers' experience.

When engaging in outdoor activities, water, soil, climate, plants, rocks, and animals shape our participation and experience. However, some authors claim that it hasn't been adequately included in outdoor research (Gurholt, 2020; Hill et al., 2020; lisahunter, 2020; Olive, 2020). Olive (2020) exposes how, more recently, researchers have been using multimedia and moving methods as a way to put themselves, their perspectives, and their experiences into the research picture, as well as to include more-than-human aspects of outdoor activities. In addition, scholars have drawn attention not only to the places in the outdoors but also to the knowledge-building processes that take place in/with/through the movement along places. Ingold (2011) considers place as less important than the movement through places: "The path, and not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming" (p. 12). Movement can be defined as the act of consciously moving the body, changing one's physical location between fixed points (Springgay & Truman, 2019). There are many challenges in representing *movement*. At this point, lisahunter's (2020) questions about how to explore these possibilities were *moving* around in my thoughts: "How do we 'gather' or 'record' movement? How to gather what these evoke in participants? What are the languages of taste, touch, smell, sound and so on?" (p. 223).

#### 4.4.1. ON-THE-MOVE METHODOLOGY

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*Los feminismos territoriales deben entender el territorio como un ente vivo en continuo tránsito. Como un cuerpo que habla, que se expresa y que no permanece quieto y pasivo ante los acontecimientos. Ponerle el micrófono al territorio implica asumir que éstos son el cuerpo de nuestras historias y experiencias colectivas. Un lugar de pasados que son presentes, de cruces, presentimientos y formas propias que son producto de muchas. – Mar Gallego (2020, p. 174)<sup>29</sup>*

Thus, I have shown two differentiated challenges. The first one being how to include place and movement in the interview; the second one finding ways to engage the senses and the more-than-human, as well as evoking emotionality in the texts. These also interact and intra-act (Barad, 2007), thereby involving movement and place in the methods and texts and engaging the more-than-human in the interview process. To tackle these challenges, I will engage with ‘on-the-move methodology’, which builds upon an *assemblage* of feminist, queer, and outdoor methodological approaches. This ‘on-the-move methodology’ departs from walking methodologies, which are conceived as a mobile method where place and space are put in the center:

Place is understood as a specific location and as a process or an event. Walking scholars discuss the ways that walking is attuned to place, how place-making is produced by walking, and the ways that walking connects bodies, environment, and the sensory surrounds of place. Walking becomes a way of inhabiting place through the lived experience of movement. (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 4)

Walking interviews are situated, embodied, and emplaced (Bates & Rhys-Taylor, 2017; Haraway, 1988; Lynch, 2020; O’Neill & Roberts, 2020; Springgay & Truman, 2019). Moreover, walking-with encourages walkers to make an ontological shift, “to think about experience differently, to experience differently, and to experience difference in experiencing” (Clough & Calderaro, 2019, p. xiii). I find walking research interesting for on-the-move methodologies, as it has contributed to building an understanding of

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<sup>29</sup> “Territorial feminisms must understand the territory “as a living entity in continuous transition. As a body that speaks, that expresses itself and that does not remain still and passive in the face of events. Putting the microphone to the territory implies assuming that these are the body of our collective histories and experiences. A place of pasts that are present, of encounters, sensations and forms of our own that are the product of many” (Gallego, 2020, ‘p. 174).

place as an event, in movement and transition, collaboratively produced and socially constructed, instead of conceptualizing place as something fixed and immutable (Massey, 2005). For the feminist geographer Doreen Massey (2005), space is contingent, “always under construction” and constructed by movement (p. 9). Walking as a methodology has not been largely used in social research yet (Bates & Rhys-Taylor, 2017; J. Evans & Jones, 2011; P. Jones et al., 2008; O’Neill & Roberts, 2020), though some scholars have analyzed and examined these as a way to obtain richer understandings of the meanings that participants give to place. Walking methodologies can expose both researcher and researched to a more “multi-sensory stimulation of the surrounding environment” (J. Evans & Jones, 2011, p. 850) and give access to people’s knowledges and attitudes towards the surroundings places. They intimately engage with landscape, encouraging and facilitating connection with the environment, lived experiences, journeys, memories, communities, and identities, and build mobile, spatial, and sensory knowledges (J. Anderson, 2004; Bates & Rhys-Taylor, 2017; Colectiva XXX, 2020; J. Evans & Jones, 2011; P. Jones et al., 2008; O’Neill & Roberts, 2020; Precarias a la Deriva, 2004; Somolinos Molina, 2019; Springgay & Truman, 2019). However, these methods have been more broadly used in urban spaces than in nature (Bates & Rhys-Taylor, 2017; Colectiva XXX, 2020; Precarias a la Deriva, 2004; Somolinos Molina, 2019; Springgay & Truman, 2019), though “their findings inform how walking is conceptualized as both a practice of care of the environment, and a form of self-care” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 22). Originally, the walker was firstly seen by Henry David Thoreau as a crusader and errant knight, conquering the wild, “presumed to be uninflected by gender and thus male, reinforcing the position of the autonomous male worker who leaves behind everything in order to tap into the wilderness of place” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 56). Walking scholars have been working to change this notion, developing walking-with through posthumanism, queer, and trans theories:

Walking-with is explicit about political positions and situated knowledges, which reveal our entanglements with settler colonization and neoliberalism. Walking-with is accountable. Walking-with is a form of solidarity, unlearning, and critical engagement with situated knowledges. Walking-with demands that we forgo universal claims about how humans and nonhumans experience walking, and consider more-than-human ethics and politics of the material intra-actions of walking research. (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 11)

In doing so, walking researchers have been insisting on walking as a methodology that is embodied, tangible, sensed, and that “foregrounds the bodily experience of moving. As we walk we are ‘in’ the world, integrating body and space co-extensively” (Pink, 2015; Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 50). However, I also wanted to include other ways of movement that happen in the outdoors, such as cycling, climbing, skiing, or snow hiking. I wanted to imagine outdoor inquiries that took both researcher and researched

on an adventure activity, where the interview script could depend on what was happening in the moment, negotiated by the embodied experiences and the knowledge that could be produced when being on-the-move. Moreover, the focus would shift from an interpersonal interaction between participant and researcher to an entangled between bodies, emotions, and the more-than-human. This movement and the more-than-human would also be included in the outcome, incorporating digital and multimedia methodologies to capture and *sense* these, through audio recordings taken throughout the interviews, as well as through proposed outdoor activities/hikes connected with the knowledges that are treated in specific thesis chapters.

A queer approach to ethnographic research acknowledges that, even though bodies are fixed by texts, these bodies change over time, and it recognizes them as doing beings on their own. Therefore, the representation of bodies in texts will always be incomplete and partial (Holman Jones & Adams, 2016). Queer theory reveals this failure in language, illustrating how words can hardly describe or explain a phenomenon that is not stable, that mutates (Holman Jones & Adams, 2016). As a multisited ethnographic project, I wanted to incorporate the online space into the research process, which is considered by some authors a natural expansion of a multisited ethnographic project (Caliandro, 2018; Morrow et al., 2015; Postill & Pink, 2012). In a multisited ethnography, the researcher follows participants throughout different spaces, which in the current ‘network society’ (Castells, 1996) also includes the online space. Moreover, Hine (2000) also demonstrates how online spaces are not apart from offline spaces but rather intertwined with everyday life. In this sense, researchers have been interested in placemaking processes (Massey, 1994, 2005; Postill & Pink, 2012), understanding ethnographic place as “constituted through the emergent relations between things and processes. They are not bounded territories or groups/communities. Rather, they are clusters or intensities of things of which both localities and socialities are elements” (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 124). Thus, it is possible to say that the internet is a “messy fieldwork” that surpasses the online-offline spaces, connected and navigated through the researcher’s narrative (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 126).

Social media has been defined by many authors (Caliandro, 2018; Harness, 2018; McKenna et al., 2017; Shirky, 2011; Tuten & Solomon, 2014). Some of the common characteristics are the use of digital technology, the communication and interactivity between users, the participation in a community, and the fact that the content is generated by the user. For the purpose of this thesis, I want to highlight two of these definitions. Harness (2018) defines social media as “electronic communication technologies that enable users to create and share content and to participate in social networking. [...] Social media most often functions as a way to increase feelings of connectedness, interactivity, and the need for self-reflexivity” (p. 627). Tuten and Solomon (2014) expand this definition, referring to social media as “online means of communication,



conveyance, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organizations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility” (p. 4).

Feminist research has looked at online spaces and social media as spaces that can politicize everyday life, making the private public and giving voice to those who are silenced and invisibilized (Harness, 2018; Jha, 2018; Morrow et al., 2015). However, it has also argued and examined how online spaces might still provide more space to certain types of bodies, subjectivities, and identities than others (Harness, 2018; Jha, 2018; Morrow et al., 2015): “It is important to ask which lives, and which choices, even have the opportunity to become public and/or politicized on the Internet. [...] Which voices are missing from the online dialogue” (Morrow et al., 2015, p. 529). Research has also been carried out in regard to social media and queer-identified people, in which it was argued that social media provides a safe space in which they are able to express themselves, interact and get in touch with others and find community (Harness, 2018). Harness (2018) explains how this works: “By allowing for various forms of social engagement, GLBT people experience a sense of pride about their identity, recognize that their own experiences of oppression are not isolated, and acknowledge their connectedness to a larger public beyond themselves” (p. 629). Feminist and queer online research has pointed out how “Internet users are not dislocated, disembodied subjects, but people embedded in a variety of material relationships in particular places” (Morrow et al., 2015, p. 536). Therefore, reflexivity in the research process is fundamental, as well as taking a position as a researcher in the social media space: “What is the researcher’s connection or relationship to the social media site or community, to the phenomenon or participants being investigated?” (Salmons, 2018, p. 180). I have already reflected on this in previous sections; however, how is this reflexive space useful and important in the context of social media research? For Pousti et al. (2020), it helps “to explore how methodological difficulties and dilemmas caused by the characteristics of social media shape the way a qualitative study is practiced” (p. 11).

Finally, this doctoral research would lack its seed if I didn’t include my own subjective position. As a trans person who has practiced adventure activities for most of their life, my own insights and experiences are very present in the study’s chosen topic and research interests. I found that autoethnography, as a methodological approach, would perfectly serve this purpose. Moreover, autoethnography is a way in which the reader can connect with the author emotionally, bringing emotions into the research process as Sparkes (1996) expresses: “In presenting moments from my narrative of self, I draw upon my body’s memory in an attempt to take you as the reader into the intimacies of my world” (p. 467). Furthermore, writing autoethnographic research aims to break research norms and practices of representation, along with longing to create accessible texts that will be reachable for a wider audience (Holman Jones et al., 2013). This thesis

has its roots in my experience and the shared experiences with other trans people. Nowadays, when going outdoors, theory comes with me, blurring the line between what is the activity and what is research.

As stated by many authors, autoethnography is a queer method (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008, 2011; K. Browne & Nash, 2016; Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; Holman Jones et al., 2013; Holman Jones & Adams, 2016), as well as a method commonly used in outdoor studies (Gurholt, 2020; Humberstone & Nicol, 2020; Olive, 2020; Pleasants & Stewart, 2020; Telford, 2020). Autoethnographies use personal experiences to analyze social and cultural experiences, accounting for the role of the researcher's personal experience in research itself, and "to more fully articulate the complex research and decision-making processes researchers engage in the conduct of their work" (Holman Jones et al., 2013, p. 33). Writing stories is a powerful way to theorize social and cultural phenomena, extracting meaning from experience while at the same time promoting social change (Holman Jones et al., 2013; Holman Jones & Adams, 2016; Nash, 2016). These writing stories "are not about people and cultures 'out there'— ethnographic subjects (or objects). Rather, they are about ourselves – our workspaces, disciplines, friends, and family" (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 966). Further, "writing trans stories means playing with form, with how text is laid out, and with what constitutes writing, in order to make space for multiply voiced experiences, subjectivities, histories, and psychogeographies" (Eades et al., 2019, p. 134).

Many are the commonalities and shared conceptual and purposeful affinities between autoethnographic methodological approaches and queering methodologies. Firstly, they both refuse orthodox notions of methodologies, focusing instead on fluidity without feeling restricted by the limits of categories and embracing contingency. Thus, they seek to contest and challenge hegemonic ways of producing knowledge (Adams & Holman Jones, 2011; Browne & Nash, 2016; Holman Jones et al., 2013; Holman Jones & Adams, 2016). Secondly, both are also "often criticized for being too much and too little – too much personal mess, too much theoretical jargon, too elitist, too sentimental, too removed, too difficult, too easy, too white, too western, too colonialist, too indigenous" (Holman Jones & Adams, 2016, p. 197). Finally, both are highly political and committed to creating social change, thus what depicts these "is not only its underlying theoretical, epistemological and ontological starting points but its political commitment to promote radical, social and political change that undermines oppression and marginalization" (Nash, 2016, p. 131).

As stated before, one of the ways in which autoethnography aims to break the norm of how qualitative research should be done and embraces the fluidity of queer lives is putting affects and desires in the research process (Sparkes, 1996). "Writing stories" (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005) reveals the emotional, physical, social, and political aspects present in the research processes, bringing feelings and emotionality into them.

Authors such as Sara Ahmed have explained how emotions *matter* in feminist and queer research: “Emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well as worlds” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 12). Moreover, emotionality enhances the flexibility of texts and describes how they are moving (Ibid.).

The decision to use autoethnography is also based on the research’s phenomenological approach. Phenomenology-based ethnography is about “doing it yourself” and taking part in the activities and experiences of the people you are studying (Pfadenhauer & Grenz, 2015, p. 599). Rather than being simply an outsider and observer, I become part of the experience that is being studied, and as part of that process, I have written myself into the research findings. This is highly useful in outdoor research studies, as adventure activities are experiences that engage the whole body, require special technical knowledge, and bring in a certain type of sensations and feelings. Finally, the use of autoethnography also reciprocates the importance of situatedness in feminist and queer research, recognizing the ways in which our own subjectivities as researchers influences what and how we study, along with what we are able to see and how we interpret these results (Holman Jones et al., 2013), as well as the emphasis on reflexivity in qualitative research (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Berry & Clair, 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Holman Jones et al., 2013). What impact does being trans have on my research? What impact have my previous outdoor experiences? How do we break the cis-normative discourse in trans studies? Autoethnography speaks out to the absences and silences (Lorde, 1984). It is about who gets invited to speak, what is a valuable subject to produce knowledge, and who gets acknowledged. At last, it involves which subjects are recognized as visible, worthy, right, and, ultimately, human (Butler, 2004b).

In this sense, on-the-move methodologies *move*, walk, climb, cycle, or paddle between different spaces, which include online and offline spaces, tracing ethnographic places along processes, as “ethnographic places are not bounded localities (although physical localities might be part of or associated with them), but collections of things that become intertwined” (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 127). As a space-based research study, I found an assemblage of methodologies and methods – on-the-move interviews, on-the-move diaries, online ethnographic research of the social media Instagram, and autoethnography – as a way to better understand the processes and experiences that were going to be analyzed. This on-the-move methodological approach will enable me to get exposed to the feelings and experiences that the participants are having. On-the-move interviews will allow me to experience the same kinesthetic experiences as the participants. Feelings of challenge, uncertainty, physical hardship, danger, surprise, newness, and learning which are common to adventure and outdoor activities will be present for all parts involved in the research process. Their body and mine will be immersed simultaneously in the experience, allowing a richer understanding of the

subjective meanings and recording an embodied and sensed account of these types of activities for trans and gender non-conforming people.

## 4.5. METHODS

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As discussed in the above section, a multisited qualitative ethnographical approach was deemed as best appropriate to explore the present topic and to capture the diversity and fluidity of the experiences. The methods that were used are the following: an online ethnography of the social media network Instagram, on-the-move semi-structured in-depth interviews, on-the-move guided diaries, and autoethnography.

The analysis of the social media network Instagram was first thought to be used as a contextualization of the experiences of trans people in outdoor and adventure activities. However, the amount, depth, and diversity of the data gathered allowed for this material to be used at the same level as the data from the other fieldwork sites. Moreover, through this social media, a network of safe spaces for trans people was being generated, and our presence in the outdoors was being given visibility.

The core method for analyzing individuals' experiences were on-the-move, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Because of the nature of these interviews, which have to be in-person and demand at least a full day of availability, a guided diary was proposed as an alternative method for gathering more diverse experiences. By doing this, I was also able to include perspectives of people living in other countries and outside the EU, such as the USA, Canada, and Australia, while not having to compromise the 'on-the-move' element of the process. At the same time, the diaries connected 'on-the-move' experiences to the data gathered through Instagram, as some people who participated also used this social media network to write about their outdoor experiences.

Finally, using autoethnography was seen as a way of embracing my subjective position as a trans person who practices outdoor and adventure activities. I first used the guided diary myself to write about a three-day cycling trip. Nevertheless, autoethnography also beautifully arose through the same on-the-move interviews, where the insider/outsider, researched/researcher binaries were blurred, breaking the normative positions of qualitative research and putting affects and desires in the fieldwork. These methods are thought to fit together like the pieces of a puzzle, or in other words, as a queer assemblage to "produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently" (Lather, 2013, p. 635), through sensed and embodied on-the-move methodologies.

Interviews – and the diary that was sent as an audio file – were transcribed by me without the use of any transcription software. They were all transcribed in 2022, as soon as possible after the interview took place. The data collected from Instagram was organized into an Excel spreadsheet. All these documents, along with the participants' diaries, were then imported into an Atlas.ti project. Four main category groups were created, one for each research objective – or chapter of analysis: (Trans)Genders and

(Trans)Bodies, Unmapping Trans Counter-Geographies, Affective Politics of Outdoor Spaces, and On-the-move Interviews as a Trasecological Methodology. Each of these had between twelve and sixteen subcategories, that were created during the first reading. Additionally, I made a separate code for auto-ethnographical material – these quotes would be coded twice, as autoethnography and with the respective code for the thematic topic. I read through all the materials and assigned codes to specific categories based on relevance. In total, considering that most quotes were assigned more than one code, there were 2410 codes assigned. To ensure a more accurate analysis, I went back and did a second round of coding since additional codes were created during the first read. Certain subcodes were also moved to a different category while writing Part III. Lastly, I created a code to mark the quotes that had already been used for the thesis. The data was analyzed using an inductive approach.

In the following sections, I will describe the processes and decisions taken throughout the fieldwork. For each method, I will explain and analyze the sampling method. However, before doing so, it is relevant to explain how I recognized intersectionality in my data collection.

### Some aspects regarding the intersectionality of data collection

The experiences gathered belong to trans and non-binary people who currently live in the Global North, although some of them are originally from different countries of South America or Indigenous people. However, when the call for participants was done, this was not a requirement or something that I was specifically looking for. I aimed to gather experiences as broad and unique as possible, and the call was spread through a wide and diverse range of international networks, from email lists to international Facebook groups, LGBTQ+ hiking groups in diverse countries, or Instagram pages. In the same vein, all participants in the interviews and diaries except one – who uses a wheelchair – consider themselves able-bodied. Details regarding body type were not directly asked, neither in the interviews nor the diaries, though the participants of the interviews had diverse body types, meaning that not everyone was what is considered thin and fit. Issues concerning class also arose in some of the interviews and diaries, in relation to diverse topics and because of different reasons. However, when reaching out to participants, I did not look for any of these aspects – race, ethnicity, religion, class, dis/ability. The main reason I did not specifically try to look for more intersectional diversity within race, ethnicity, body type, class, dis/ability, etc., is because I thought that it was already going to be hard to find eligible participants due to the high commitment level required, both for the diaries and the interviews. However, this does not mean that these aspects will

not be regarded and analyzed; I aim to bring forward the tensions displayed by these intersections.

It is relevant to note that the scope of the participants has affected the results. Reflecting on the limits regarding the constraints of the sample size is crucial in understanding the implications for the analysis. The experiences gathered primarily represent trans and non-binary individuals residing in the Global North, with a potential bias towards those with certain abilities and body types. Actively including issues of intersectionality within the study would have added a layer of complexity and nuance to the analysis. Acknowledging these limitations is vital for a comprehensive interpretation of the findings, as it opens the door to exploring the tensions arising from the intersections of various social identities within the studied group. Acknowledging the absence of intentional consideration for intersectionality reveals potential gaps in understanding how various social dimensions intersect with the experiences of trans and non-binary individuals. An intersectional analysis would involve examining how different social identities intersect with and shape the experiences of the participants. For instance, how does being a trans or non-binary person from a specific racial or ethnic background influence their experiences in outdoor activities? How might issues related to class intersect with their gender identity, and what disparities might emerge?

### 4.5.1. ONLINE ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH – INSTAGRAM

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As transnational research whose location does not focus on nation-state borders but rather on natural spaces, such as mountains, beaches, forests, lakes, or the sea, research on social media and using online methods emerged as a possibility to cover a broader range of spaces and experiences. However, I do not ignore the cultural and political differences between state countries. Feminist methodologies understand that there is a politics of location in research and argue that a “view from nowhere” does not exist (Longino, 1993). Transnational queer feminist methodologies introduce the possibilities “to conceptualise a series of transnational flows that have the potential to develop and enhance feminist (and) queer research methodologies” (Browne et al., 2017, p. 1378). Through mapping, borders are decided, created, and shaped, producing spaces. ‘Geo-borders’ of postcolonial states were shaped by colonial cis-straight-normative mapping (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). However, borders are found in many places and circumstances, being much more than those of nation-states, as Anzaldúa’s “Borderlands/La Frontera: The new mestiza” (1987) brings to the fore. By unmapping (Razack, 2002) the counter-geographies (Sassen, 2003) of trans people in outdoor spaces, I will also be aiming to queer borders and reveal necropolitical tools. Moreover, I aim to investigate the network of online and offline spaces within trans experiences in outdoor activities. How is Instagram being used to counter-map our experiences in the outdoors? How are they creating safe spaces, both online and offline, in outdoor places through this social media?

Feminist scholarship has already used Instagram as a tool to research a given phenomenon or certain experiences (Low et al., 2022; Marques & Camargo, 2020; P. Stanley, 2020), hashtag movements (Noel, 2019; Sebastian, 2019), or Instagram as a platform of social reality (Rassi, 2016; Utter et al., 2020), among other topics. When analyzing, some have focused on the images posted (Noel, 2019; Rassi, 2016; Utter et al., 2020), on the text description (Sebastian, 2019; P. Stanley, 2020), or both (Marques & Camargo, 2020). In addition, when deciding how to research Instagram as a social media space for trans and gender non-conforming outdoor visibility and advocacy, it was relevant to set up the ground of what can be understood as ‘community’ in the online world. In that sense, social media has the ability to unite individuals who have a common purpose and identity, but are geographically dispersed. Hence, community can be understood as “a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds” (Caliandro, 2018, p. 561). However, online communities are not solely virtual; in many cases, members might also meet face to face (Postill & Pink, 2012). This was the case in some of the accounts analyzed, as many of them also organized in-person hikes and outdoor trips for trans, queer, and/or non-binary people. However, my analysis will be focused on the personal experiences described in the Instagram posts. Sometimes, the



posts refer to group activities set up by some of these community leaders and organizers, others don't. The reason for focusing on individual experiences is that the rest of the fieldwork – interviews, diaries, and autoethnography – also analyze personal experiences. While I have not included these broader group experiences here, they are highly relevant and should be included and studied in future research, as well as the organizations and projects that are being created and that are working around trans and queer people in adventure and outdoor activities.

This online ethnographic research approach (Kozinets, 2009) aims to analyze the text in the caption of Instagram posts, in which the owners feature their experiences in outdoor and adventure activities, relating these to their trans identities and/or experiences. Instagram is a very visual platform where you cannot publish without uploading a photo. However, I realized that adding a further layer by analyzing the images wouldn't add to the depth of my analysis, as it was in the descriptions where the thoughts and experiences were being expressed. Moreover, engaging in analysis of images would bring a whole new dimension to the research, which I am not able to cover within this time and space. However, with an enlightening and illustrative aim, I decided to include the photos from some of the Instagram posts which are quoted in the analysis. Further, they were only added when no recognizable person was in the photo. Similarly, I was not interested in analyzing hashtags, as my purpose is not to index or catalog a phenomenon, nor to analyze a certain movement, but rather to examine the personal experiences of trans people in outdoor activities. Posts that included hashtags were quoted with the hashtags.

To decide which accounts I would analyze, I followed Stanley's criteria, by which some accounts were run by "individuals while others [were] organisational accounts showcasing individuals who are diversifying the outdoors across one or more axis of identity. There are also those that organise group hikes, and some accounts blend one or more purposes" (P. Stanley, 2020, p. 248). The aim was to get a representation of a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. To find eligible accounts for the study, I started by identifying organizational accounts that showcased individuals, which were mainly two: @unlikelyhikers and @\_wild.wanderer\_. This way, I came to individual accounts and other organizational accounts. Once I started following these accounts, Instagram would suggest me to follow similar accounts, in a similar way as a snowball technique. I realized that many of these people were using hashtags; some of these referred to their experience as queer and/or trans people in the outdoors, such as #transhikers, #queerhikers, #transcyclist, #unlikelyhikers, #diversifyoutdoors, #queeroutdoors, #hikingwhiletrans, #queercamping, #nonbinaryhiker, #transclimbers, #queerclimbers, and #prideoutside. Through these, I found more accounts of trans people who participated in adventure activities and were giving visibility to their experiences through their Instagram accounts (Rassi, 2016; Sebastian, 2019). I tried translating these

hashtags into Spanish and looking for their use on Instagram, with almost no success in any of them. Therefore, the accounts I analyzed are mostly run in English (although this might not be the first language for all their owners) and based in the USA, with some people based in Canada, the UK, Australia, or Europe.

With all of these criteria, I ended up with 72 accounts<sup>30</sup> run by single people, 2 ‘public figures’ accounts, 5 private accounts – those whose content is not visible unless they accept your following request –, and 54 accounts of community projects and/or collectives that work with trans and queer people and adventure activities. From the 72 single accounts that I analyzed, 21 were discarded because even though they were run by trans people who do outdoor activities, they did not directly address the gendered experience of the outdoors, leaving me with 51 accounts (12 people who identify in the feminine spectrum, 22 who identify as non-binary or genderqueer, 13 who identify in the masculine spectrum, and 4 ‘organizational’ accounts which showcase other individual accounts). Regarding the kind of outdoor and adventure activity represented on the accounts, there is a wide range of types, climbing and hiking being the most common ones, but also cycling, skiing, camping, trail running, rollerblading, or general outdoor adventures included.

The 21 accounts I decided not to include did not share their experiences regarding their gender identity and their outdoor adventures. Many of them would write about where they were, what they had done, or other outdoor-related specific details only. I decided that for my Instagram analysis, I would only focus on accounts where the user clearly reflects on their experiences as a trans and/or non-binary person in outdoor activities. Therefore, experiences and posts that would be related to other facets of their life were not analyzed.

A ‘public figure’ account is a person who has a great public interest and has set their profile to a ‘professional account’. Two ‘public figures’ accounts were not analyzed, as they involved a type of publication that, while it is still personal, it is made for a broad audience and quite often sponsored. I would not include this type of figure in other parts of my multisited ethnographic fieldwork. In a similar way, I decided not to analyze the projects’ accounts; even though they did not imply such a big amount of data, the kind of information shared in these accounts differs from the experiences of single users. Moreover, I did not intend to interview people about these kinds of projects. Therefore, I concluded that these two types of accounts were not going to be included in the analysis.

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<sup>30</sup> By November 2021, when I started gathering all the data from Instagram accounts. However, I kept finding new accounts that would suit these criteria throughout the following months and years. It was a hard decision deciding not to include them, but a necessary one; otherwise, I would still be scrolling through Instagram accounts and collecting new data.

The five private accounts were not analyzed for ethical reasons; the content they create and publish is not thought to be public, so consent would need to be given in these cases.

Stevens et al. (2015) write on ethics of social media research, concluding that distinctions between public and private spaces and accounts need to be made and that when necessary to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, data protection is required. Therefore, the data for this thesis was exclusively drawn from public-domain accounts. Moreover, usernames were checked to preserve anonymity. In the case where the person could be identifiable by the username (username same as real name), it would be anonymized. This was the case for three of the accounts analyzed, which can be recognized by the suffix ‘\_anom’. Further, I followed Stanley’s (2020) criteria: “Where identifiable names are given in the text, these are the names of people who have, themselves, published about their experiences, linking their publications to their Instagram accounts” (p. 248). In this sense, when external publications were linked, their real names are shown, and informed consent is assumed. This was the case for two of the accounts analyzed. I have decided to follow these criteria because it also credits the people behind them, doing online activist work. I agree here with P. Stanley (2020) and consider that this is just as valid ethical reason. Below is a table of the analyzed accounts<sup>31</sup>:

*Table 1: List of Instagram accounts analyzed for this thesis.*

<b>Account name</b>	<b>Type of account</b>	<b>Outdoor activity</b>	<b>Gender identity</b>
transclimberscoalition	Community account	Climbing	–
trans_cc	Community account	Cycling	–
unlikelyhikers	Community account	Outdoor	–
_wild.wanderer_	Community account	Outdoor	–
astronomack	Personal account	Trailrunning	Transmasculine
beauback_mountain	Personal account	Outdoor	Non-binary
brieoutside	Personal account	Climbing	Transfeminine
bruno_anom	Personal account	Hiking	Transmasculine

<sup>31</sup> This list was put together in December 2021. Accounts may have been deleted, usernames may have been changed, or public/private status of the accounts may have been changed since then. This is something that happens regularly on social media and it is part of its fluidity. Interestingly, some of the accounts analyzed at the end of 2021 had become ‘public figure’ accounts by the end of 2023.

cal_hikes	Personal account	Hiking	Trans and non-binary
carlin.trustme	Personal account	Climbing and Cycling	Non-binary
catlikeacat	Personal account	Climbing	Transmasculine
claire_anom	Personal account	Outdoor	Transfemenine
coachmalcommel	Personal account	Climbing	Transmasculine
ecclesiastesthebike	Personal account	Skiing and Cycling	Non-binary
erininthemorning	Personal account	Hiking	Transfemenine
erinsends7	Personal account	Outdoor	Transfemenine
esmiavida	Personal account	Outdoor	Transfemenine
foolscard	Personal account	Outdoor	Genderqueer
gaylyfwd	Personal account	Hiking	Transmasculine
genderqueerclimber	Personal account	Climbing	Trans and Genderqueer
genderqueer_hiker	Personal account	Outdoor	Genderqueer
harms315	Personal account	Outdoor	Genderqueer
hikingwhiletrans	Personal account	Outdoor	Non-binary
innesmck	Personal account	Hiking	Transmasculine
jaimie_outside	Personal account	Outdoor	Trans and non-binary
j_onthewing	Personal account	Outdoor	Transfemenine
lor_sabourin	Personal account	Climbing	Non-binary
lucakahninen	Personal account	Hiking	Transmasculine
mannon_taylor	Personal account	Climbing	Transman
mateo_anom	Personal account	Climbing	Transmasculine
mika_lou_selber	Personal account	Outdoor	Transwoman
moothril	Personal account	Outdoor	Non-binary
morninhays	Personal account	Outdoor	Non-binary
nikkik_smith	Personal account	Climbing	Transfemenine
nonbinarynomads	Personal account	Outdoor	Non-binary
outdoorqueeries	Personal account	Outdoor	Non-binary
parkslucifer	Personal account	Hiking	Transmasculine
peak_neak	Personal account	Trailrunning	Non-binary
queergravel	Personal account	Cycling	Trans and non-binary

ranger.plattypus	Personal account	Outdoor	Trans and non-binary
roaming_forests	Personal account	Hiking	Transfeminine
seltzerskelter	Personal account	Hiking	Transwoman
that.ftm.outdoorsy.nerd	Personal account	Outdoor	Transmasculine
transicleta	Personal account	Cycling	Transfeminine
transplanter_	Personal account	Outdoor	Transmasculine
transending7	Personal account	Hiking	Transwoman
trans.boulder.babe	Personal account	Climbing	Non-binary
vadose.aidan	Personal account	Climbing	Non-binary
vincent_inthislife	Personal account	Outdoor	Transmasculine and non-binary
westcoastjes_	Personal account	Outdoor	Non-binary
wild.inquiries	Personal account	Hiking	Non-binary

For each of the 51 accounts, I analyzed every post that was published between January 2019 and December 2021. Some posts from before or after this period have been included occasionally, and only if they contributed to the research with new and relevant experiences. However, the time frame of two years was decided when both sample saturation was identified and the type of comments didn't add new layers of analysis. In order to find significant experience descriptions, I looked for keywords such as 'trans', 'transgender', 'gender', 'non-binary', 'queer', 'LGBTQ+', and 'identity' within the written descriptions. The aim was to identify the posts that were not only about their outdoor experiences but rather about how their identity influences their outdoor experiences. Once any of these were present, I checked the content of the post in order to see if it related to outdoor or adventure activities. Posts in which these keywords appeared but did not include the outdoor aspect were also obviated. After having done this, I had a total of 319 post descriptions.

There is one type of publication that I regret not being able to analyze because of my decision to not analyze the description's associated images: posts made during specific celebration days, such as international coming out day (11<sup>th</sup> of October), trans day of visibility (31<sup>st</sup> of March), transgender day of remembrance (20<sup>th</sup> of November), or around Pride in June. On these days, many of the people from the analyzed accounts would not specifically talk about their experiences as trans/non-binary people in the outdoors but only mention reflections about that specific day, always with a photo of them practicing some outdoor activity. These actions imply the visibility of non-normative bodies and identities in the outdoors, creating diverse representation and

encouraging others to go out. Therefore, they are important for activism and advocacy. However, I decided that including the analysis of images only for these types of posts would bias the research outcomes.

One detail that I would like to point out is that it was very noticeable that the number of publications decreased during the first months of the pandemic (March to summer of 2020), with a clear increase in 2021 when many places started opening again. However, specific experiences around being trans in the pandemic and their access to the outdoors were not frequently mentioned in the posts. Rather, posts that mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic were mostly related to how it was affecting their mental health. Therefore, I decided I would not use these types of posts in the online ethnographic analysis.

Finally, I use the following structure to render the text description: First will be the account name starting with a @sign, as it is how Instagram usernames are configured. Emojis are in square brackets and described using emojiipedia.org descriptors. Example:

*@trans.boulder.babe: Summer dysphoria is here, but so are summer hikes. Can't wait to hike with queer and trans people again. [Round Pushpin] Abenaki Land*

#### 4.5.2. SEMI-STRUCTURED ON-THE-MOVE INTERVIEWS

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This is intended to be the most in-depth method to obtain information about participants' experiences in outdoor activities, as well as the core of the proposed on-the-move methodology. As a queer methodological assemblage, the data, stories, maps, route information, and reflections gathered through them are conceived to “produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently” (Lather, 2013, p. 635) through sensed and embodied knowledge production. Bodies have different ways of living and experiencing space; counter-geographies put the bodies as a central concept, explaining the relationships of people with physical and social environments. Thus, how do “rebel bodies” (Díaz Carrión, 2012c) construct outdoor spaces? When occupying these spaces, our bodies become “a map, a surface susceptible to social inscription” (Díaz Carrión, 2012b, p. 4) and by unmapping our counter-geographies, we are revealing an archive – or somateca, as I will argue in chapter 5. *(Trans)Genders and (Trans)Bodies – of rebel bodies*. Moreover, what are the possibilities of outdoor activities as epistemologies? As I will argue, when trans bodies move outdoors, the spaces are re-appropriated, and counter-geographies processes may occur. By (un)mapping our hiking, cycling, and climbing routes, I am aiming to bring forward these processes.

Initially, I aimed to interview ten people (3-4 trans masculine people, 3-4 transfeminine people, and 3-4 nonbinary people) from at least two European countries. Eventually, thirteen people participated in the research through an on-the-move interview. The only prerequisite in the recruitment process was that they were over 18 years old, they identify under the trans, nonbinary, and/or gender nonconforming umbrella, and that they would practice any kind of outdoor and/or adventure activity, at any level. I did not specifically look to cover other aspects such as class, race, age, and/or migrant background. However, I acknowledge that these factors may influence people's experiences within outdoor activities. Indeed, if any of these came up during the fieldwork, they would not be left out. I believe that specifically looking for these aspects would surpass the length and depth of what this thesis can do, and future research should be done in this direction.

For both the interviews and the diaries – which will be described in the next section – I created a flyer in Spanish and in English [figure 1]. I used a purposive sampling technique to reach out to possible participants. I posted it on my personal Facebook account, in different Facebook groups, such as trans and queer Ph.D. network groups and groups for trans people interested in outdoor and adventure activities based in Sweden

and Germany, or other general trans activist Facebook groups based in and outside of Europe<sup>32</sup>.



Figure 1: Poster in Spanish and in English

I also distributed it through mailing lists such as the Transgender Europe mailing list and a transfeminist email list based in Catalonia, Spain. I did a search of LGBTQ+ outdoor groups based in Germany and Switzerland, gathering a total of 10 collectives, to which I also sent the flyer through email. The poster was also published on my personal Instagram account, as well as in a public Instagram account that I co-manage that

<sup>32</sup> [Image description]: I will describe here the poster in English. Both look the same, and have the same text, just in different languages. The poster has four sections, differentiated by colors. The first section, in pink, says: “Participants needed. Research about trans people's experiences in outdoor and adventure activities (hiking, climbing, cycling, skiing, etc.).” It is accompanied by a delineated mountain. The second section, in yellow accompanied by a trans symbol, says: “You:

- You are a trans and/or non-binary/gender non-conforming person who loves going outdoors.
- You practice any kind of outdoor and/or adventure sport, at any level.
- You are +18 years old.”

The third section, in green, says: “Me: I'm Bart (they/them), a trans and genderqueer person, an outdoor lover, a mountain guide, and a Ph.D. student. How: 1.- In person: an interview during a day outdoors doing the adventure activity of your preference (this can only happen in the EU). 2.- Through a 'guided diary' (spoken or written diary, as you prefer), no matter where you live.” Finally, the last section, in purple, has a photo of me bouldering, the logo of the University of Vic, and states: “I can't offer any compensation as it is not a funded project, but I will carry the costs of the activity and food (in the case of the interview). Please, contact me here for more information: bart.bloem@uvic.cat”.



promotes a project for queering adventure education (@petricor\_aventuras). Other Instagram accounts reposted the publication, and I also know of it being distributed through diverse email lists in countries such as Germany, Switzerland, and Spain. A few friends distributed it through queer and trans Telegram and WhatsApp groups they are part of in Germany, Italy, and Spain. The aim of this cross-posting was to reach people outside my personal network circle, in order to get a diverse group of trans experiences. If not enough people would contact me, I had intended to personally reach out to people I know who fit this profile and ask for their participation, specifically looking to address characteristics that hadn't been represented yet in relation to gender, class, race, bodily ability and/or migration background. In the end, this was not necessary due to the high success of recruitment. Finally, I want to acknowledge the bias of this participant search, as most of it went through activist networks, making it difficult to reach people outside of these. However, this decision aligns with my intention to highlight experiences from an empowered place. Moreover, not everyone who contacted me was out as trans or non-binary to their close network, although most of them were out as queer. This was also possible because of the anonymity of online spaces such as Instagram, where people can have anonymous accounts, and Facebook, where people can become members of groups without it being public in their profiles.

The initial search happened during the first week of 2022, getting a total of 65 people interested in participating, living<sup>33</sup> in North America, Europe, and Australia. Depending on where they were based, I proposed them to participate through an interview, a diary, or both of them. Once I started receiving people's interest, I saw from which countries I could gather a group of at least three people whom I could interview. Based on that I had to pay for everything – travelling costs and outdoor activity costs for both researcher and participants – with my own money, this was set as the minimum number of people I would need to gather in order to be able to travel to that city/country. The financial aspect was also one of the main reasons I didn't do more interviews and that a diary-based format was also chosen as a method to gather people's experiences.

The first set of interviews was done in Catalonia, Spain. I had ten people interested in participating living in different regions of Catalonia. I had been offered by my supervisor the opportunity to give a class in the LGBTIQ+ studies course from the Gender Studies Master's program at the University of Barcelona, so I set to organize the interviews during that same week. Therefore, I approached 8 of these participants, who brought a diverse range of experiences and outdoor activities, to check in with their availabilities. In the end, five people confirmed, one of whom canceled the day before

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<sup>33</sup> Some people are originally from the Global South, but currently living in the Global North.

due to their mother’s illness, for a total of four interviews. These were all done during the third week of February 2022.

The next set of interviews was done in Helsinki, Finland, on the week after Easter in April 2022. Here, I had the opportunity to stay at a friend’s place, whom I was also going to interview. I arranged the trip once I knew the participants’ availability and found a week when all were available. I had only been contacted by three people here, so I had to hope for the best and that no one would have to cancel last minute, which didn’t happen ultimately.

The third set of interviews was done in Germany during the spring of 2022 in two different cities: Berlin and Freiburg im Breisgau. I have some close contacts in Germany, so I found a few people interested in participating here. However, a couple of respondents expressed their preference for the diary format. In the end, one person living in Berlin and two living in Freiburg participated through an on-the-move interview, while two others participated through the diary format.

The final set of three interviews was done in northern Italy, with one person living in Bologna and two others in Torino. I first wanted to combine these interviews with my participation in the 11<sup>th</sup> European Feminist Research Conference taking place in Milano in mid-June. However, this was not possible in the end because of the availability of the participants, so I went to Italy again during the first week of July to carry out the interviews.

Below is the list of the thirteen interview participants. On the list there is the place of residency<sup>34</sup> when the interview was done, age, most relevant outdoor activity, and their pronouns. Their gender identity – or even ‘transition phase’, as it is regarded in some research about trans people’s experiences carried out by cis researchers (Elling-Machartzki, 2017) – was not deemed as necessary – neither in my opinion nor theirs.

*Table 2: List of on-the-move interview participants*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>City of residency</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Outdoor activity</b>	<b>Pronouns</b>
Alcornoque	Barcelona	33	Cycling	He/him
Ginesta	Lleida	41	Cycling, hiking	They/them/no pronouns
Pi Cargolat	Barcelona	33	Hiking	She/her
Pit Roig	Barcelona	23	Hiking	They/she/he
Deer	Helsinki	28	Climbing, hiking	They/he

<sup>34</sup> Closest biggest city to where they lived. Not all of them lived in the city itself.

Hirvi	Helsinki	36	Climbing	They/she/he/no pronouns
Lobo	Helsinki	45	Hiking	He/him
Castor	Freiburg	27	Outdoor	They/she
Libélula	Berlin	37	Cycling	She/her
Woodruff	Freiburg	29	Climbing, hiking	They/them
Cicala	Bologna	40	Climbing	He/him
Dormouse	Torino	61	Hiking	He/him
Lionhead Monkey	Torino	66	Climbing, mountaineering	She/her

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. All participants were sent or given a document with the information about the research before the interview took place and signed a consent form (see appendix A), validated by the ethics research committee of the University of Vic, with the internal code 190/2022 (see appendix E). Following this, all participants' names were anonymized; they were all given names of trees or animals. I proposed to the participants whom I went with to do an on-the-move interview to choose a plant or animal they wanted to be. For those who didn't choose one, I picked an animal or plant that resonated with the route that we had done together. They could also choose the pseudonym's language, so they are in Spanish, Catalan, English, Finnish, and Italian. Because of the nature of these pseudonyms, no gender identity is recognizable from them. This is intended to be so, as I don't believe that there is a need to put us in a box in order to understand our experiences. However, this does not mean that all of the experiences presented here are equal, and when reading part III, specific situations, analysis, and quotes will take into account the participant's specific experience.

Participants were sent the transcriptions of our on-the-move interview and given the opportunity to change anything they wanted to. This was done to ensure their consent and validation of the material gathered. None changed significant statements, apart from some misheard dates – which happened during the transcription process – or typos. Some of them very much enjoyed reading the transcript and noted it to me. I greatly appreciated this, as I sometimes had quite a difficult time transcribing the interviews<sup>35</sup>.

Each on-the-move interview consisted of a one-day outdoor activity, just the other person and I. The activity depended on their most predominant outdoor activity and the weather forecast. Some of them expressed their interest in having done a longer activity, meaning one night of camping. I regret that I could not offer all the participants that opportunity due to constraints on my time and finances, which would have required me

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<sup>35</sup> All transcriptions were done before AI and tools like Whisper.

to spend additional time in other cities. All interview participants were compensated by covering the expenses of their transportation from home to the outdoor venue for the day, as well as providing them with food for the day, when requested. Moreover, as a certified mountain guide, I quite often organized the route as though I were doing so professionally. In some way, I was offering them my services as a mountain guide whenever this was possible. The reality was that after most of the activities, I was invited to a coffee, beer, or a meal at their home. We had spent a day outdoors and we had created some kind of connection, both with the people I knew from before and with the ones I had just met for the first time.

In the following sections, I will briefly describe each outdoor activity that was part of the on-the-move methodological research process. In them, I will share practical information about the routes, such as type of route, length, altitude, details of its difficulty, specific details from the geography, fauna, and/or vegetation of the area, and a link to the route hosted in a personal webpage, where you will find photos and a .gpx track of the route to download. Moreover, I will describe each encounter with the participants, what we experienced during the day – from my personal and subjective point of view of that route and day outdoors – and details of the personal connection and/or relationship with that person from before, during, and after the route.

In outdoor studies, knowledge is based on sensed experiences; the terrain we cross or the type of flora and fauna we see are an essential part of the experience. On-the-move interviews are situated and embodied; they do not happen in a stable environment, and interactions with the human and more-than-human surroundings are a significant part of the experiences. This on-the-move methodology should not only stay on our side – the participants and myself – but you, the reader, should also feel and sense these more-than-human aspects. In section 4.3. *Outdoor Methodologies*, I asked: “How does the space of the interview interact with the experiences and ideas that can be shared in outdoor research? And how does sharing an ‘outdoor experience’ with the researcher influence the trust that is built for the interview to happen?” These aspects will be covered in the following sections, where I intend to reflect on them. Moreover, by including this information about the routes, I am aiming to bring the more-than-human aspects of the research into the text.

If you are reading this, and you live close to one of the routes or have the possibility to go there, I sincerely encourage you to take a break from this thesis and adventure yourself to try one of these routes. My intent is to inspire you to sense and embody these inquiries by giving you some tools and material to go out. If you live elsewhere, feel free to choose any other route that suits your possibilities. If you don’t have the necessary knowledge and/or experience, I advise you to look for a certified mountain or climbing guide to accompany you to the outdoors.

The use of a topographic map is intentional<sup>36</sup>. It gives us information about the terrain; you can see when we went up through the dell, when we crossed a mountain pass, and how steep or flat the area was. As a mountain guide and adventure lover, I must admit that I can spend hours looking at topographic maps, especially before and during routes, deciding on where is best to go, what might be more appropriate depending on the situation and kind of adventure planned, and what I will see around. Topographic maps give us a lot of information about what we will find when being outdoors, and they are a necessary tool to know when spending time outdoors in order to enjoy a safe adventure.

However, I also quite often ask myself about who has mapped these terrains and who has access to these maps. As I will argue, mapping has been, and is, a colonial (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Razack, 2002) and patriarchal tool. Razack (2002) argues that “the subject who maps his space and thereby knows and controls it, is also the imperial man claiming the territories of others for his own. [...] Maps sought to measure, standardize, and bind space, keeping the environment on the outside” (p. 12). Hence, when cis white men map, they are leaving out Other bodies and subjectivities. Cartography, which is the science of mapping, creates subjectivities and decides who can exist in that space. Queer and trans bodies, bodies with dis/abilities, migrant bodies, or bodies of color are left out, and their existence in these spaces is invisibilized. Through mapping these one-the-move interviews, I am aiming to give visibility to these hikes, bike tours, and climbs, bringing forward our experiences and presence in the outdoors and acknowledging the space resistance in claiming the outdoors as our space.

Duedahl and Stilling Blichfeldt (2020) argue that “it is imperative to identify alternative methodologies, methods, tools and techniques that challenge notions of developing, innovating and researching upon others and nature” (p. 1). The routes walked, cycled, and climbed *being-with* (Duedahl & Stilling Blichfeldt, 2020) the participants are placed on the maps as a way to (un)map counter-geographies (Sassen, 2003) produced by our trans bodies in the outdoors. Sassen has developed the concept of counter-geographies, which can be understood as alternative transnational circuits; as Sassen (2003) explains: “These counter-geographies are deeply imbricated with some of the main constitutive dynamics of globalization: the formation of global markets, the intensification of transnational and translocal networks, and the development of communication technologies that easily elude conventional control practices” (p. 49). By placing the maps here, I am visibilizing the territories that we have walked, cycled, and climbed. Furthermore, Anderson (2004) indicates that “understandings of the knowledge

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<sup>36</sup> After giving it much thought, I decided not to include the topographic maps with scale in this thesis document. If wanted, they can be checked in the link provided for each route. I decided to give more importance to what the map shows, than the scale itself.

and lives of individuals can be gained through making geographical context more explicit within qualitative research methods” (p. 254). Thus, together with the maps, I am giving information about the length and elevation gain of the route, along with a short reflection of the *walking-with* the participant, which can be understood as “a collaborative and participatory process of inquiry” (Duedahl & Stilling Blichfeldt, 2020, p. 2). Moreover, these data are considered vital information when going outdoors, in order to evaluate if the route is appropriate for the knowledge and physical shape that one has, as well as to plan any emergency evacuation in case of an incident. For a safe and pleasant experience outdoors, previous knowledge of the area is desirable. If you do not have this, I advise going together with an experienced person.

#### 4.5.3.1. On-the-move Interview with Pit Roig

The day before the interview, I arrived in Barcelona. I decided to stay at a hostel in the mountains of Collserola, behind the city. I had rented a car at the airport, and in getting to the hostel, the phone’s GPS had already sent me through a closed and unpaved road, so I carefully checked the way to the meeting point with Pit Roig. It seemed that it went through mountain roads again, but I still decided to give it a go. I still don’t know how I went up some of those very steep and very narrow roads; I just hoped that a car wouldn’t come in the opposite direction.

Pit Roig and I didn’t know each other from before, and it was my first interview for the thesis, so I was a bit nervous, which I also told her. They are a certified mountain guide and know the area very well, so I asked them to choose the route. We went to Montserrat, where we did a 9.5km circular route going up the mountain of Montgròs (1133m), with 800m of accumulated positive height. Montgròs is located in the heart of the massif of Montserrat. It is a great rock mass with stunning 360-degree views, from where you can see almost all groups of rock needles of Montserrat. The geological origins of the massif are sedimentary, formed by conglomerate; its dominant clast lithologies are limestone and calcite. These high amounts of carbonate present in the rock led to the formation of typical karst landforms, leading it to be a world-renowned site for climbing. Typical Mediterranean vegetation, such as evergreen oak, holm oak, and pine woods, are the predominant vegetation of Montserrat.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route, photos, and a link to download the GPX track: [Track hiking route Montgròs](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: [<sup>37</sup>http://petricoraventuras.org/pit-roig](http://petricoraventuras.org/pit-roig). In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/cim-montgros-68331ff?u=m>

*On-the-move interview*



*Pit Roig - AllTrails*

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<sup>37</sup> The webpage that hosts the material of the on-the-move interviews and autoethnographic diary belongs to another personal project, Petricor Aventuras, which is independent from this doctoral thesis.

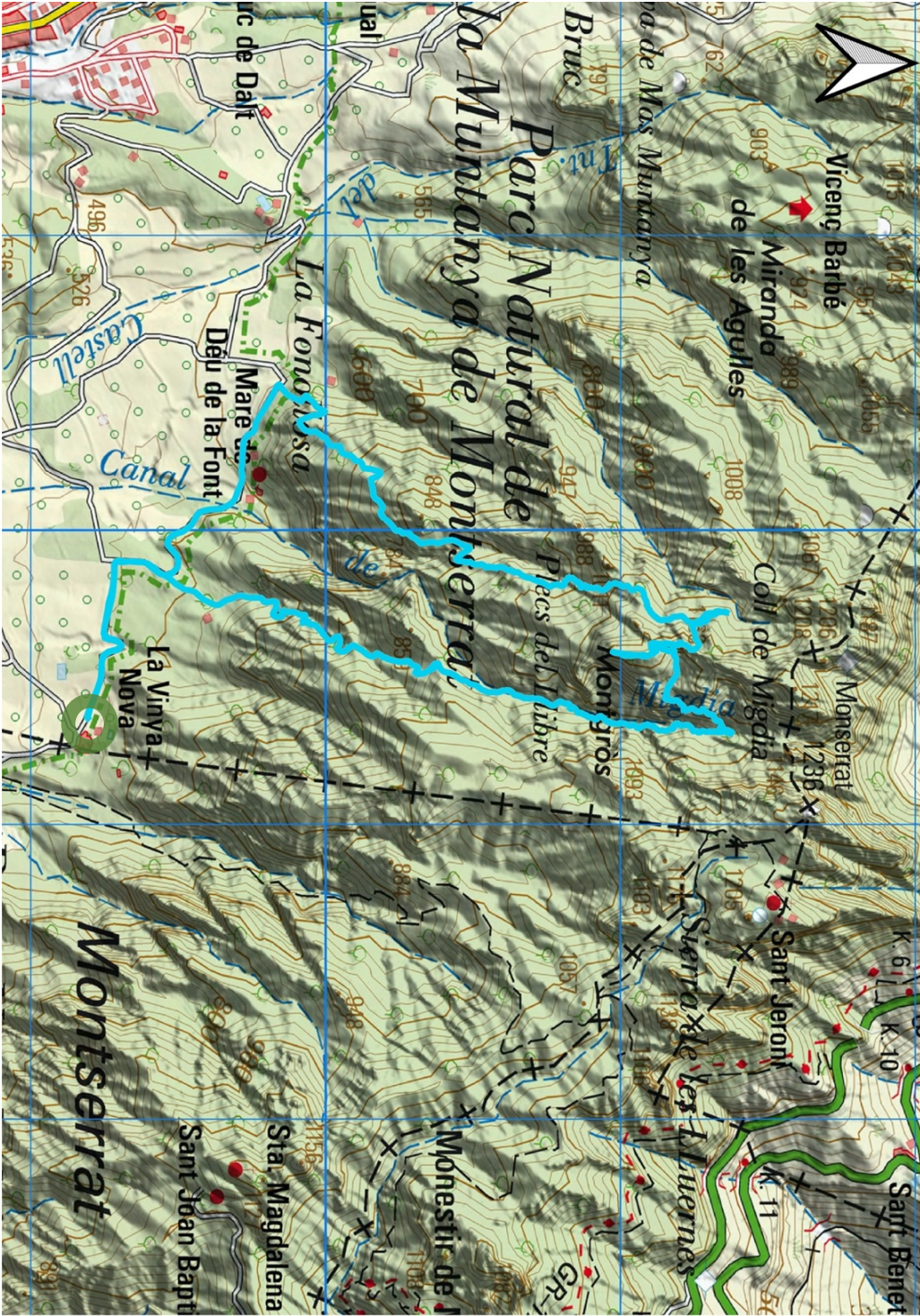


Figure 2: Map of the route with Pit Roig



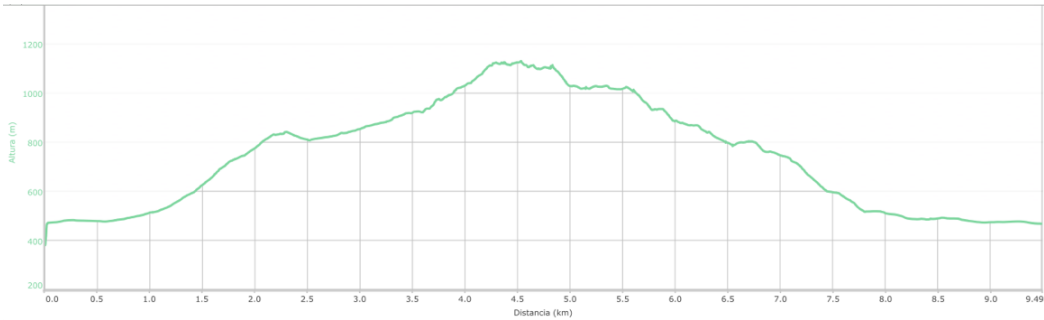


Figure 3: Profile of the route with Pit Roig

I started recording once we got into the trail, about 10 minutes after leaving the cars. It is a stunning route, but that requires experience in hiking. The path goes up and down quite steeply in some parts where you need to use your hands. Some sections of the route can be vertigo-inducing. In addition, it was very useful that I had my GPS with the track of the route, as the trail gets lost very often and we ended up using the GPS on many occasions. The route has many mountain passes with incredible views of the surroundings, but it is also frequently very windy. This meteorological condition complicated the recording sometimes, such as when I had to put the recorder in my mouth in order to be able to keep recording while using my hands to progress in the terrain; or moments where I slightly changed the subject of the interview because it was very windy, but I didn't want to lose the flow of the conversation.

This route had two very special encounters; the first one was with a robin, called *pit roig* in Catalan. This is a tiny bird with red feathers around the breast area. It stood on a tree branch just one meter away from us for about one minute while we stayed still and silent, contemplating it. The other encounter was with a group of wild goats on our way down. Pit Roig had already told me that it is pretty common to see them on this route, as it is not a very crowded or well-known route, but we kind of had lost hope as we were getting quite low already. And then she saw them, a group of them not far away, eating from the bushes. We contemplated them for five to ten minutes; they did not run away and we stayed silent, enjoying the moment they were offering us.

We met at 9 am and finished around 4 to 5 pm. This experience was not only an interview but much more. I didn't know of the existence of another certified mountain guide in Spain who was not cis (just my best friend and myself, who had done it together), nor did they. What I thought started as an interview ended up being a conversation, where the participant asked me some of my own questions back; a conversation where we exchanged our experiences as trans people in the outdoor and adventure community. The dichotomy of the interview had disappeared, the researcher-researched positions were not clear anymore, and the experience of the route, its landscape, the wind, and wildlife were embedded as part of the research. Moreover, possible future collaborations may

emerge from here, in which we talked about the necessity of organizing outdoor hikes for queer and trans people in Catalonia.

#### 4.5.3.2. On-the-move Interview with Pi Cargolat

The day after the interview with Pit Roig, I meet with Pi Cargolat close to the hostel I was staying at. We drove to the natural park of Montnegre i Corredor, situated east of Barcelona city. While I drove, she put on Brazilian music on the car's radio, while I smiled at her excitement about going out of the city. This is a route that I proposed and which I had also never done before. I carefully prepared it, choosing a route with some interesting and cultural highlights. It is a circular 10,9km route, with 400m of accumulated height. It is an easy route, both technically and physically, which is also quite well marked (if you know the directions, as there are many marked routes in this area). Geologically, the area is composed of granitic and slate masses. It is close to the Mediterranean Sea, being its maximum altitude of 773 masl<sup>38</sup>. Its vegetation is constituted by Mediterranean forests; the main species are cork and holm oak, alongside stone pine forests, characteristic of the Mediterranean climate.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route track: [Track hiking route Montnegre i Corredor](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/pi-cargolat/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/montnegre-dolmen-ca-l-arenes-4217403?u=m>

*On-the-move interview*



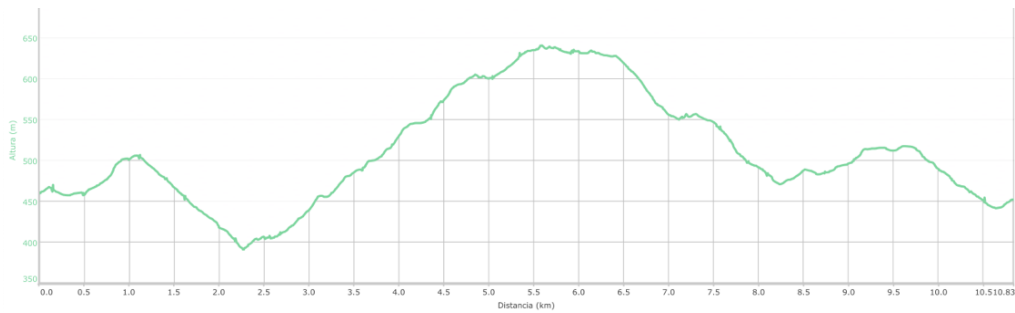
*Pi Cargolat - AllTrails*

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<sup>38</sup> Masl: Meters above sea level



Figure 4: Map of the route with Pi Cargolat



*Figure 5: Profile of the route with Pi Cargolat*

The route starts at a free car parking lot at Can Bosc, the first part being the hardest, with a relatively long uphill part. The trail is narrow and full of vegetation throughout the whole day, and the landscape views impressed us with dense forests. There are two highlights in this route. The first one comes after the first 2.5 km and is the Dolmen Ca l'Arenes, a megalithic tomb from approximately 5000 years ago. The second one is the Pi Cargolat, a stone pine with a peculiar trunk shape. These were followed by the Sanctuary of El Corredor, which has its origin in a chapel built here in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. After 6.5 km, we encountered the Mirador del Corredor, a viewpoint from which we can see the sea. We profited from being alone and the lovely sunshine to sit there, eat a bit, and talk.

I enjoyed so much this route and her company; I was happy seeing her so happy. She hadn't been outdoors since arriving in Barcelona and starting her transition, over a year ago. Her laughter made me laugh. I felt an immense joy of being able to offer her such a guided route, of being able to explain to her how the cork is taken from the trees we were seeing. I felt like all the difficulties I had to overcome to get the mountain guide certification during a world pandemic and a Ph.D. thesis were nothing compared to what I was experiencing through her now. I wish I could have offered this to so many more trans people.

#### 4.5.3.3. On-the-move Interview with Ginesta

Third day and third interview. This time, I met a good old friend who now lives in a little village in the province of Lleida. We hadn't seen each other since before the COVID-19 pandemic, and this was a great opportunity to spend the day together while being outdoors.

We decided to go by bike on a comfortable 27.7 km ride with 130 m of accumulated elevation gain. The route follows a small road through a couple of villages, La Fuliola and Ivars d'Urgell, until it reaches the Estany d'Ivars, a protected natural space which consists of a small lake and natural area around it. We went around it through wide trails, taking a few breaks at some wooden piers placed around the lake. The Ivars and Vila-Sana Lake was recovered in 2005 after the old pond had dried up in the middle of the last century. Now, the lake is once again home to more than 250 bird species and more than 400 plant species, which highlights its incalculable value for the biodiversity of the region.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route track: [Track bike route Estany d'Ivars](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/ginesta/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/la-guardia-llac-8859a81?u=m>



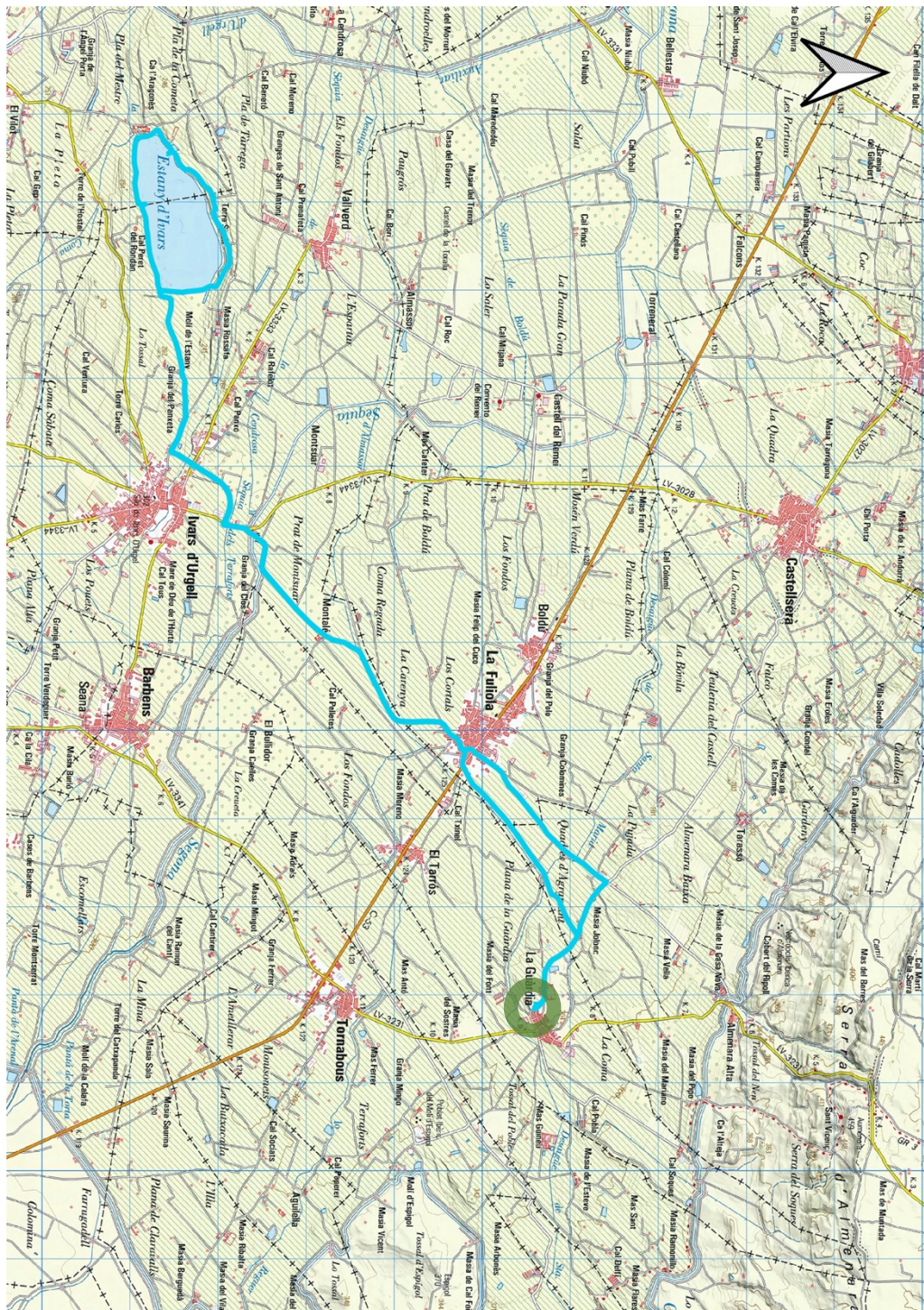


Figure 6: Map of the route with Ginesta

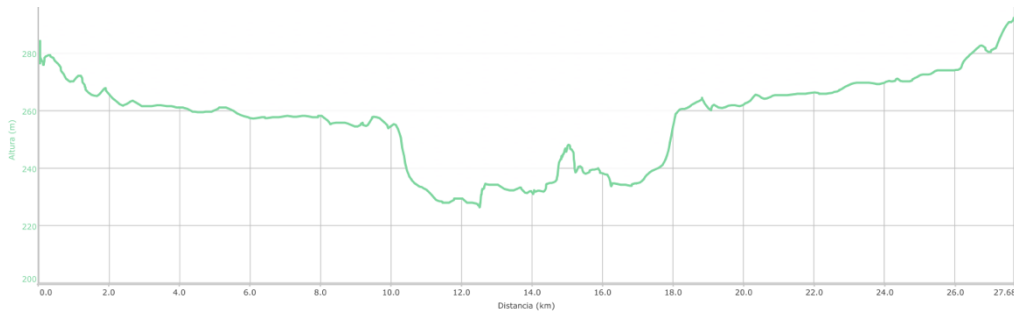


Figure 7: Profile of the route with Ginesta

They were going to lend me a bike, but they told me that it wasn't in the best condition and that I should maybe take a look at it first. After a first tryout up and down the street, I decided that it definitely needed a new chain, as Ginesta had proposed. They had already bought a new one long ago but didn't know how to change it. So, the first thing when I arrived was a quick mechanic lesson on how to change a bike chain. We pumped air into the wheels of both bikes and got ready for the bike ride. They had done this bike ride once long ago but wasn't sure about the way, so I also put the Google GPS on just in case.

The road is small, and we could ride next to each other during most parts – which is also legal and recommended in Spain. It was the first on-the-move interview on a bike, which sets up new challenges: Can I record while riding a bike? How can I hold the recorder while riding? Will I be able to hear the interview afterward, with all the surrounding noises? I decided to take a chance and record while riding the bikes, while also looking for longer breaks to be able to talk. After having done half of the round to the lake, we sat at some stone tables at a rest area, which was a bit higher up, giving us a stunning view of the lake. Next to us were many *ginestas*, a plant with yellow flowers that grows widely in the Mediterranean area. Here we ate some fresh and dried fruit while talking about our experiences. Even though we know each other, we haven't seen each other in many years, and much has happened in our lives since then. We talk about our personal life situations, about the mutual friend that introduced us but neither of us is in contact anymore, or about having stopped taking testosterone – which we both did coincidentally in January 2021. At one point, we were both getting hungry, so we took a break from the interview – I stopped recording – and we rode the bikes back to their place, where we will prepare lunch. We eat on the terrace, soaking up in the peninsular winter sunshine. We were going to finish with the last couple of questions when their partner, who I also know, arrived home from work. I asked Ginesta if it is okay to record while she is here, which they are totally fine with. They lay down on the mattress and talk with their eyes closed quite often, like looking inside themselves.

I stayed with them until late evening, planning the rescue of an abandoned dog, which I would help them to pursue. The dog lives now a very happy life with a new family that loves him.

#### **4.5.3.4. On-the-move Interview with Alcornoque**

The fourth interviewee canceled the night before due to personal reasons. I tried to contact two other people who had reached out to me recently, interested in participating, but neither of them could meet that day. This meant that I had a day off before this last interview with Alcornoque, which my body appreciated; I still had some sore muscles from those steep downhill parts on the first route in Montserrat.

I had met Alcornoque once long ago when he was planning a long bike trip, and I had just returned from my 6-month bike trip around Europe. He wanted to buy a bike for traveling and some general advice about traveling by bike in Europe. Since then, we had exchanged some recommendations about bike travel destinations through Facebook; I could say that we were acquaintances.

I proposed several routes to him, between 30 and 90 km long, from 300 to 2000 m elevation gain. I realized that the longest and hardest route was too much for the purpose of an on-the-move interview; we needed time to take breaks. In the end, we chose a linear 41.2 km route with 630 m of accumulated height through the massif of Montseny. The natural park and biosphere reserve by UNESCO in 1978 is a mountain range situated north-west of Barcelona. Its three most significant peaks are around 1700m high, and its geological formation consists of granite and metamorphic rocks, such as slate. The park's most remarkable species is the Montseny brook newt, which was recently discovered and is the massif's only native vertebrate. Due to the wide range of altitude differences, one can find vegetation characteristic of the Mediterranean (holm oak, cork oak, and pine forests), mid-mountain (oak groves), Central European (beech and fir trees), and even subalpine environments (scrubland).



Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route track: [Track bike route in Montseny](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/alcornoque/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/montseny-by-bike-8ce8b10?u=m>

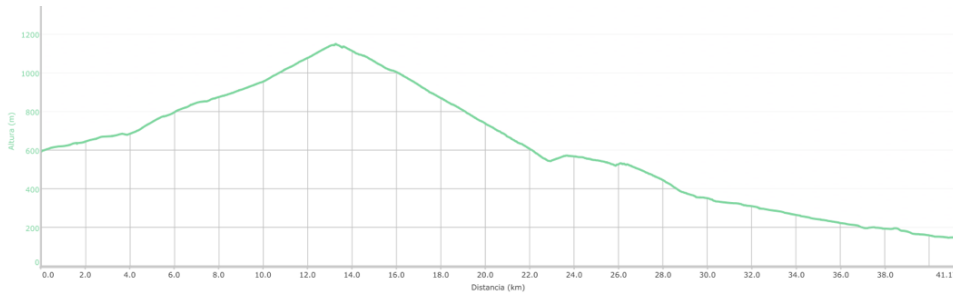
*On-the-move interview*



*Alcornoque - AllTrails*



Figure 8: Map of the route with Alcornoque



*Figure 9: Profile of the route with Alcornoque*

We met at his place, where I picked up his older road bike, which he lent me for the route. He had checked it before, so this time it was in optimal condition to start riding it. We took a 1.5-hour ride to Sant Miguel de Balenyà on the regional train. When arriving in this village, we went to a bar because he hadn't had breakfast yet. We just googled a bar and went to the closest one to the train station, which happened to be the cyclist bar of the village. We could take our bikes inside and there was a signed maillot from La Once, an iconic Spanish cycling team. From here, we rode on the small regional road to Seva, El Brull, and up to Collformic, the mountain pass at 1145 masl. Here, we decided to take a longer break to talk while enjoying the views of the natural park. When we set to continue the second part of the route, which was now downhill until Sant Celoni, we found a lost dog walking in the middle of the road. Coincidentally, when I asked Alcornoque what adventure means to him, he said, 'finding a lost dog in the middle of a bike route' as an example of what an adventure can be. This, which had never happened to him before, was just happening to us now. The dog had a collar with a couple of phone numbers, which he called. On the second one, the owner of the dog picked up the phone. He apparently lived quite far away from where we were, so we arranged to leave the dog at a restaurant in Collformic for him to pick it up.

We continued our ride with awe and wonder, down into Montseny, the little village which gives name to this massif. We took a break from the recording while enjoying a beer at a bar. I stopped the recording because we were at a bar's terrace with other people sitting around, and we decided that it wasn't appropriate to continue here with the more personal questions. However, the topic of the conversation did not change much, as it was still about our experiences traveling by bike in different European countries and different related bike topics.

While going fast downhill with the bike, I did not even attempt to try to record our talks, as with the wind it was not possible to listen to it afterward, and it was too dangerous to carry the recorder in one hand while needing to brake precisely with both hands. Therefore, we took a last break at a grass field, by the sun, some kilometers before arriving in Sant Celoni, to finish the on-the-move interview. I really enjoyed

being able to get to know each other better, about what we do, how we experience traveling by bike, and how we do it. The possibility of future bike trips together emerged, thus mapping new trans cycling routes.

#### 4.5.3.5. On-the-move Interview with Woodruff

I had been living in Freiburg, Germany, for one month when Woodruff contacted me. March had been a really warm and sunny month, with very little rain and temperatures above 20°C. But a low-pressure front was coming, so we set out to do the interview the last spring day – a couple of days later, it was snowing and everything became white, even in the outskirts of Freiburg city. Arriving in a completely new city isn't always easy, and I hadn't met many people yet, even fewer queer people, so I was really looking forward to meeting them and socializing with a queer person outdoors.

They proposed a couple of routes, and I suggested a couple others. We decided to do one that I had looked up, as neither of us had done it: The “Genießerpfad - Hochschwarzwälder Hirtenpfad”. It is an 8.5 km circular route with 300 m accumulated height. We met in the city, where I picked them up with the car and drove close to the Titisee, a lake in the Black Forest 30 km away. The Hochschwarzwälder Hirtenpfad follows the paths of the shepherd people of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century along the high pastures. The stories of former shepherd people leave their mark along the way. Other traces in the terrain come from glaciers that pushed rocks and formed valleys and lakes and from the people who worked the soil: they cleared, plowed, planted, harvested, and cultivated it. The flora of this area are birch-pine forests and alder-ash forests close to water's edges.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route track: [Track hiking route Genießerpfad](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/woodruff/>. In addition, here is the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service:

*On-the-move interview*



*Woodruff - AllTrails*

<https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/geniesserpfad-black-forest-0f34132?u=m>

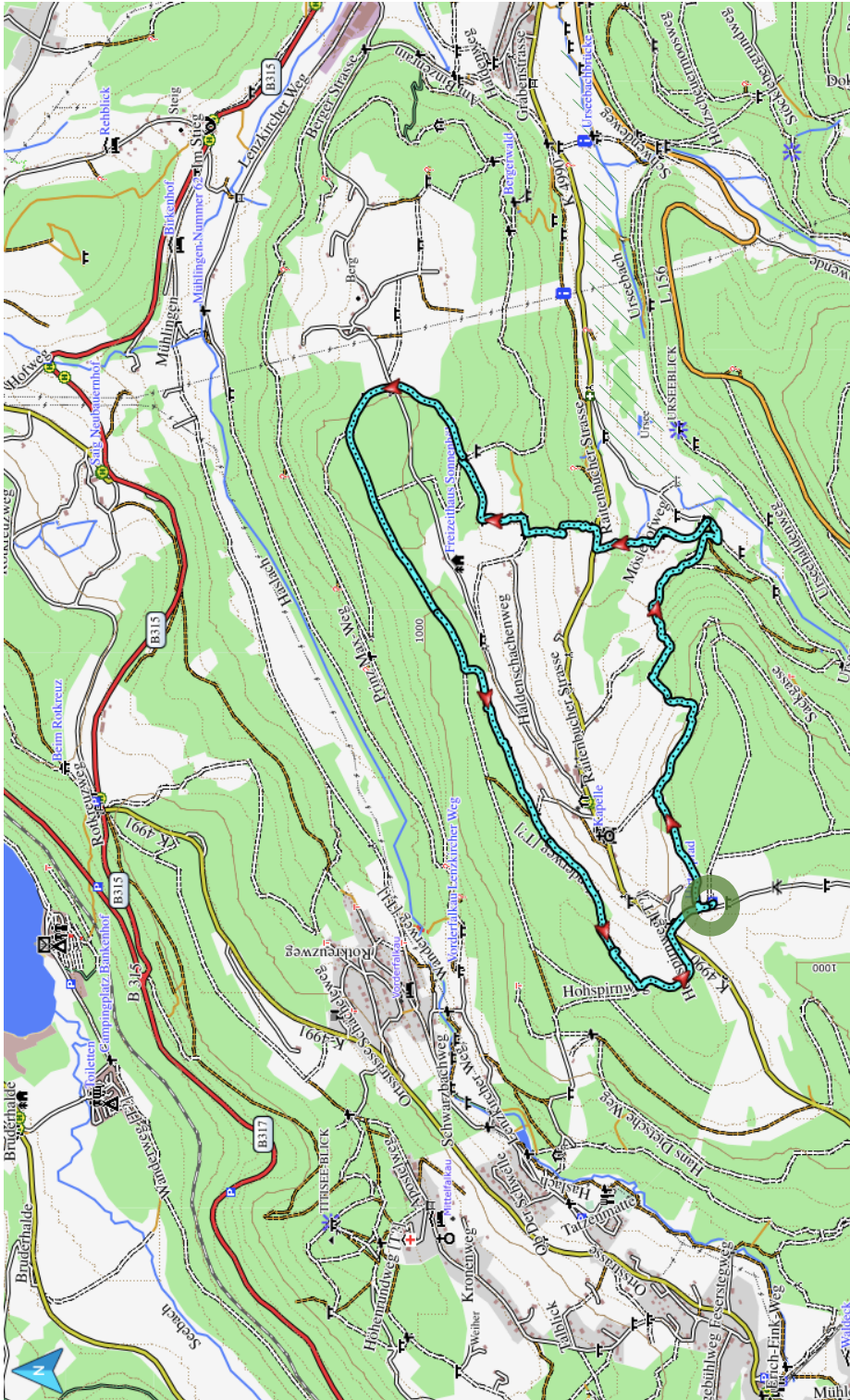


Figure 10: Map of the route with Woodruff

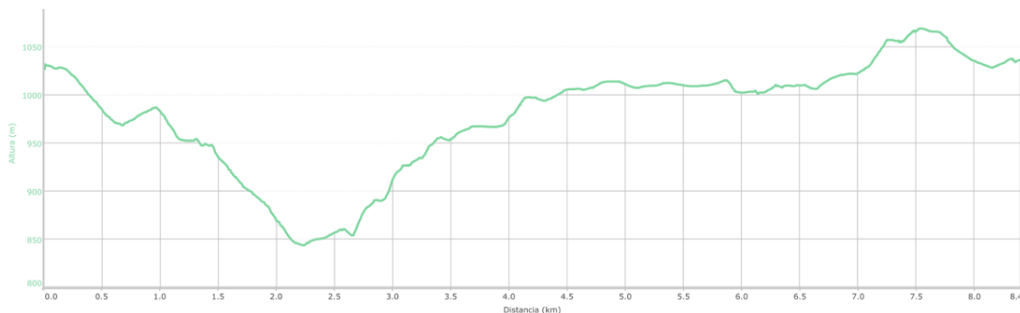


Figure 11: Profile of the route with Woodruff

While driving and talking, Woodruff quickly changed the conversation when we passed a gorge with a white deer statue on one side. They told me the story of this deer, which is a tradition to tell everyone the first time they drive through this point. The so-called Deer-jump (*Hirschsprung*) owes its name to a legend: a knight of Falkenstein Castle went deer hunting one day. After some time, he sighted a magnificent white deer, but the deer made it difficult for the knight because it was fast and agile. Driven by mortal fear, the deer jumped with a mighty leap over the ravine and thus escaped from its pursuer. Today, such a leap is hardly imaginable when driving through the gorge, but at that time it was not completely impossible. The gorge was only 9 meters wide, but a deer can make jumps of up to 10 meters.

At the beginning of the route, we saw a bit of snow, which quickly disappeared a few hundred meters into the trail. It is an easy trail with some viewpoints where, on clear days, it is possible to see the Alps. Sadly, we didn't get that lucky. It was very windy, so finding a spot to finally sit sheltered from the wind was hard. I took out the thermos with tea I had been carrying and offered them a cup. It was really lovely to have something warm. However, my cup was not very stable, and trying to get some nuts from my backpack, I threw it all over me, getting my pants quite wet. Luckily, I didn't get burned, and with the wind, my pants dried quickly. A bit later, we got to the best viewpoint of the route, where there was a small wooden box fixed to a tree. When I opened the door, it had some spirits glasses and two different bottles of fruit liquors from the Black Forest, for free! Attached to the door was a note with the coordinates, stating that this is the 'only place in the world with these coordinates' and advising hikers to enjoy the view and drinks.

Woodruff is also not from Freiburg; they moved here four years ago. On our way back, we talked about the difficulties of getting to know new people and how, quite often, people already have their friendships settled and don't have more space and time for new people. When we were saying goodbye by the parking lot, they told me that they "still

have place for new friends” while smiling. I’m now looking forward to new outdoor hikes and climbs with Woodruff outside of the thesis framework.

#### 4.5.3.6. On-the-move Interview with Castor

Castor is a very good friend of mine, so I was hesitant to include them as a participant in the thesis. However, even though we know each other very well, there were many topics in my interview script that I had never talked about with them, so I believed that the interview could be genuine and that it proposed new topics to speak and discuss about. We tried doing the interview a couple of times before this trip. Once we went snowshoeing close to Freiburg in March 2022, and it was during that hike that the possibility of them participating in the thesis came up. However, the snow melted and we couldn’t do another snowshoe hike. During Easter weekend, we had the possibility to do a two-day hike in the Black Forest. We decided to do two-day of the ZweiTälerSteig, a circular 106 km route divided in 5 stages, which a hiking magazine described as “Germany’s most beautiful hiking route 2019”.

On the first day, we rode the bikes 10 km to go to Waldkirch, where we parked them and started by trekking up the Kandel mountain, passing by the Zweribach Waterfalls and wild camping by the old Brunnenhof after 20 km. On the second day, we continued through a beautiful, dense, and green forest path by a river, followed by an easy portion through the valley until Simonswald, where we went up the mountain Hörnleberg and finished hiking down until Bleibach after 28 km, where we took the train back to Waldkirch and then cycled back to Freiburg. A special kind of forest in this area are *Bannwald*, a German designation for protected forests. The word *Bannwald* dates back to the Middle Ages when it referred to a forest area where a nobleman had the exclusive right to use the forest and the animals living in it. This was meant to prevent people from hunting, fishing, collecting firewood, or collecting nuts and berries. Nowadays, due to their protected designation, they are a refuge for many endangered species of animals, plants, and mushrooms. Any removal of plants, flowers, seeds, or fruits is forbidden, as well as altering the natural flow of water. Fallen trees must also remain in the reserve, except if they pose a danger to nearby roads. Other forbidden acts are the construction of roads (only footpaths may be maintained in the area), disturbance of wildlife through photography, and the use of chemicals.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route track: [Track hiking route ZweiTälerSteig](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/castor/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/zweitaler-route-117ffc1?u=m>

*On-the-move interview*



*Castor - AllTrails*



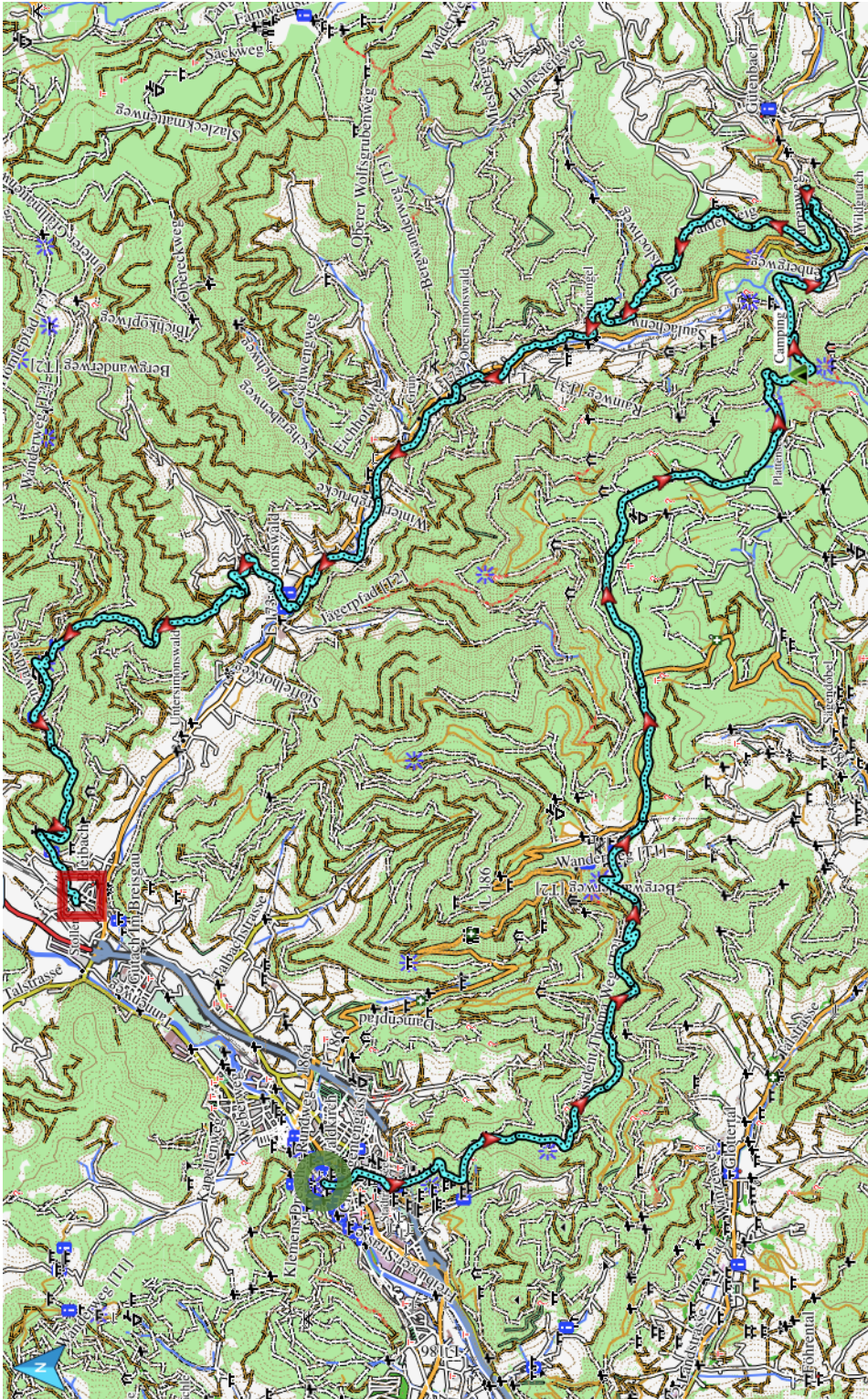


Figure 12: Map of the route with Castor

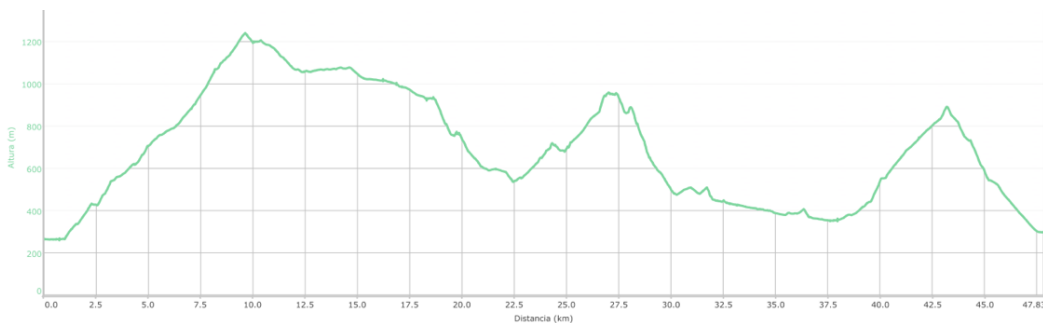


Figure 13: Profile of the route with Castor

The first day, the route was quite crowded, as it is possible to drive with the car up to the Kandel mountain, so many people were enjoying Easter Sunday at the top. However, just a couple hundred meters down we found a sunny prairie, protected from the wind, where we set to have lunch and slept a short siesta. The second part of the day went through fields and an area where they have been generating renewable energy for dozens of years through hydroelectric, wind, and solar energy. However, the highlight of this day was the Zweribach waterfalls, in the middle of the *Bannwald*. Shortly after, on the old placement of the Brunnenhof, there is a shelter, a fountain where the water comes out of the ground, a nice spot of grass where to pitch our tent tonight and, surprisingly, a wooden shelf full of different drinks, which one could take and put the money in a metal box. We decided to take a beer to share that we drink while eating some chips and enjoying the views and location. The nights are still quite cold, with temperatures around 0°C, so at 8:30 pm we were already inside the tent and sleeping bags, and one hour later, we fell asleep.

We had a very windy night. Castor woke up hearing wolves in the middle of the night, but the tent was protecting us, or so they told me in the morning. We were expecting a day without many highlights, but the path surprised us quite positively. After a couple of kilometers through some farms, we entered a *Bannwald* again. The path next to the river, flowing down through small waterfalls, big rocks, and green and mossy surroundings, brought us the joy of the day. We cooked lunch next to the river before entering the more ‘civilized’ part of the two days route: 7 km through the valley, walking across some small villages and by the road at times. It was pretty warm, so we decided to have an ice cream before the last steep part, taking advantage of the populated area. We were tired, so we didn’t speak much these last 10 km of the trip. We concentrated on our bodies, trying not to focus too much on the spots that were hurting. The path follows a pilgrimage route, and every hundreds of meters there is a Catholic crucifix. At the top of the Hörnleberg there is a church with an outdoor altar with views over the valley and

mountains. We had to admit that it is a pretty place to perform a Mass, even though neither of us is religious.

#### 4.5.3.7. On-the-move Interview with Hirvi

I had just arrived the night before in Helsinki, after a long trip with many delayed trains (up to 100 minutes delay), which put me under quite a lot of stress. However, I was happy to be there, and there was still some snow laying around in some places! It was the third week of April, and I would also have four days with sun and temperatures up to 12°C, which was a lot more than I had expected. I was staying at my friend's place who, some weeks before, I had discovered that they were sharing the flat with Hirvi. I met Hirvi the same day I arrived in Helsinki. We then discussed in person what we wanted to do the next day during the interview. It was also nice to meet and chat a bit before the actual day of the interview, as it created a more relaxed mood for the next day.

The interview with Hirvi was also the first one – and in the end the only one – done while climbing. We had the option of going sport climbing or bouldering, and I proposed the second one. The main reason for doing so was that I believed that a bouldering setting could be easier for the interview, as boulder problems<sup>39</sup> are shorter, so there is more time in between to talk. We took two crash pads and went 3 km walking to the place they suggested, Myllypuro. Even though it was very close to the city, we could not hear the cars; instead, we listened to the birds.

Below are the *topos* of the boulders we did, and through this link you can also find more information about the boulders: [Boulder topos Myllypuro](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/hirvi/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the boulder topo's information hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/es/explore/recording/myllypuro-7417744>




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<sup>39</sup> A boulder problem is a suggested route to climb up the rock.



Figure 14: Topo "Kids Wall"

KIDS WALL 2 / 2 Edit

- 1 Rouva Vilijonkka, 4** ...  
 2m
- 2 Tuutikki, 4+** ...  
 Start low from the good crack.  
 2m
- 3 Niiskuneiti, 5** ...  
 Traverse the slopers to get to the good holds on Tuutikki.  
 2m
- 4 Lämpää, 4+** ...  
 2m
- 5 Mymmei, 5+** ...  
 Stand start from crimpers.  
 3m

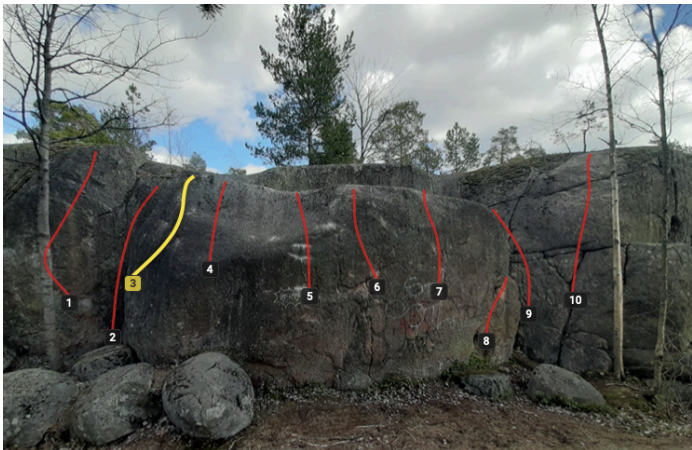


Figure 15: Topo Mörkö on the "Main Wall"

MAIN WALL 4 / 7 Edi

- 1 Nuuskamuikkusen heitto, 6B+** ...  
 Sit or stand start. Sit start adds a couple of nice moves.  
 4m, Valterri Pulkkinen, 2011
- 2 Hattivatti, 3+** ...  
 Climb the off-width crack between walls.  
 3m
- 3 Mörkö, 6A** ...  
 Start left hand on the arete. Continue bit right and up the feature with compression like moves.  
 3m, Valterri Pulkkinen, 2011
- 4 Muumimaman päiväkävely, 5+** ...  
 Start standing on the stone. Step up and balance your way on top of the boulder.  
 3m



Figure 16: Topo Slab "Main Wall"

MAIN WALL 3 / 7

- 1 Nipsun kotikolo, 5** ...  
 Sit start with right hand on the left most crack. Stand start is nicer and easier.  
 3m
- 2 Hosuli, 4+** ...  
 Use the cracks and climb up the slab.  
 4m
- 3 Näkymätön lapsi, 4+** ...  
 Climb up to the highest point starting from arrow like holds.  
 4m

We decided to start on the ‘Kids wall’; because of the easier routes and less height, it was ideal to warm up. Moreover, it was my first time bouldering outside with an actual crash pad – even though I have been bouldering in climbing halls for five years and I have tried some easy boulders outdoors, I do not own a crash pad nor had I been able to join other people with crash pads outdoors. Therefore, this was also nice for me to start feeling the safety of the crash pad when falling. We started with the problems Rouva Vilijonkka (4), Tuutikki (4+), and Lämppä (4+), which we solved flash. I especially enjoyed the traverse Niiskuneiti (5). The last problem of this wall was Mymmeli (5+) on a slab wall, which Hirvi solved on the first try, but I only managed to do half after several tries.

We then went to the ‘Main wall’, where we started with Mörkö, a 6A, which Hirvi hadn’t done yet, so doing something new for both of us was nice. It had a pretty bad fall, so we put the crash pads in the part that went higher. After a few tries in which they tried different foot positions, they managed to top it. I knew this was a bit over my level, but it had a quite nice start, and I had seen Hirvi climbing it, so I mentally decided which point I wanted to reach; it was fun and challenging.

We still had time for some last boulder problems; we decided to go to a slab area with a couple of 4+ and a 5 boulder. These were all a lot of fun and we left happy with what we had done. On the way back, we talked about queer archives and the importance of archiving in some way the material of these on-the-move interviews. I had already been thinking about adding the transcripts as appendices to the thesis, but this would mean increasing, at least 25%, the length of the thesis. Moreover, almost all the participants argued that they wouldn’t have done this interview if I had been a cis person, so I don’t want these interviews available for anyone to use and analyze. However, this conversation reinforced this idea and how necessary it is that we don’t keep deleting all the material that is being created.

#### 4.5.3.8. On-the-move Interview with Deer

I had known Deer for four years. However, we have always lived in quite faraway places and we haven’t been able to meet that often over the years. Moreover, it was the first time that I would visit him in Helsinki and to spend time one-on-one. He suggested that we should go camping for one night, something we had already done with a mutual friend in Spain and Sweden.

Deer proposed going to the Uutela peninsula, just a few underground stops from their place. I was a bit hesitant to go to a place that was so close to the city, but we needed to leave in the early evening, so it was also quite convenient to go to an easily accessible

place. It ended up not being as crowded as expected and with a feeling of being out in nature. The peninsula has a protected nature reserve called Särkkäniemi, with more than 100 hectares of old forests in their natural states, high cliffs, coastal meadows, and distinctive lagoon bays, which split off from the sea due to post-glacial rebound. The area is home to a variety of water birds, moor frogs, common toads, smooth newts, and a wide range of dragonflies.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route, photos, and a link to download the GPX track: [Track hiking route Uutela peninsula](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/deer/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service:

*On-the-move interview*



*Deer - AllTrails*

<https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/route-uutela-deer-e0b60d9?u=m>

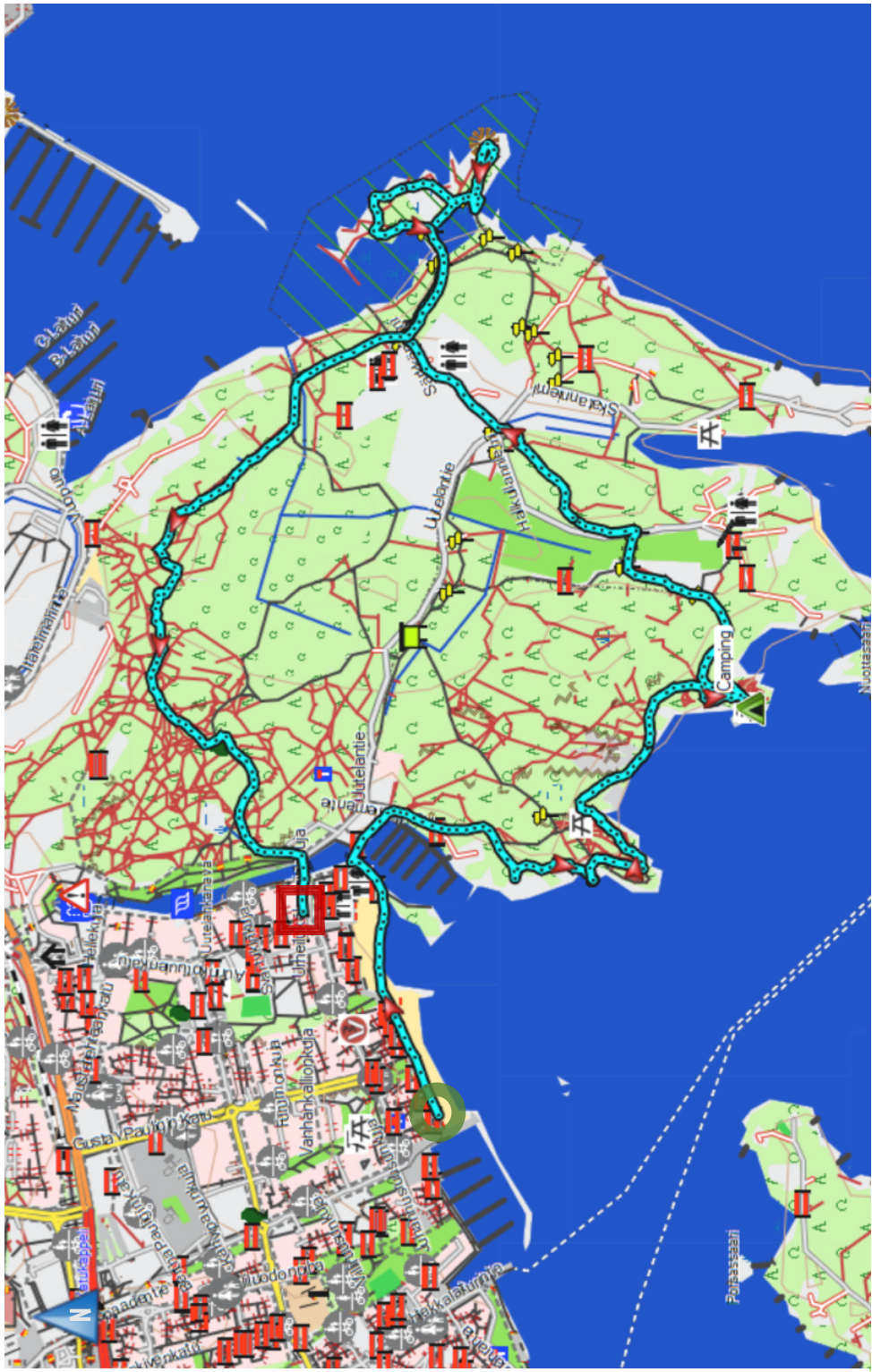
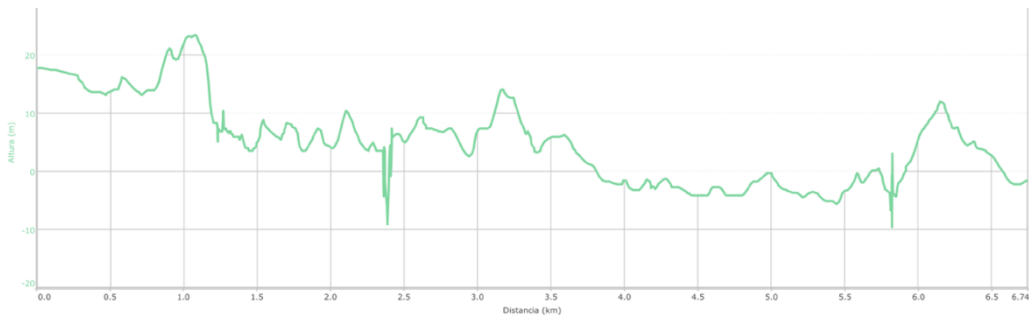


Figure 17: Map of the route with Deer



*Figure 18: Profile of the route with Deer*

We started the interview while cooking dinner on the camping stove, sitting on a rocky terrain next to the sea while watching the sunset. It was a very relaxing view just after a 20-minute walk from the underground stop. However, when we were going to start eating, I asked him about his fork or spoon, and he had forgotten to take one! Thus, we decided to share my fork, passing it every couple of bites. We then headed to the camping spot, which also had a grilling spot. After we had put up the tent, Deer made a fire, and we grilled a couple of vegan sausages to round out dinner. It is still early spring, so when the sun sets it gets cold quite quickly; around 10:30 pm, we decided it was too cold to stay outside, went inside the tent, and fell asleep.

Deer had a cold night, so he made another fire in the morning to warm up and make breakfast. In the morning, the place got a bit more crowded, with some people coming to the area to run or walk. After we picked up everything, we went for a 6 km walk around the peninsula and the reserve area, which is very pretty. At some point, I decided to stop recording, though we kept talking about this last question I often do – when it hasn't come up yet – about the meaning of me being also a trans person and how it influences their participation. But not only that, being someone who is into outdoor activities, he said, is also equally important; there are many experiences and feelings climbing or hiking that are quite difficult to describe if one has not experienced them. I would like to add here a quote from Deer he said in this conversation: “My body becomes the place where it is. In the mountains everything is bigger, and every small detail that might stress you in the city becomes insignificant”.

#### 4.5.3.9. On-the-move Interview with Lobo

Lobo is a friend of a friend of mine. While Lobo was born and raised in Sweden, he has now lived in Finland for 25 years. He has done long hiking trips in Lapland and cycling trips through different parts of Europe, and he also goes outdoors regularly for day hikes or trail runs. He knows the area very well, so I asked if he wanted to propose a route,



which he was thrilled to do. He suggested going to the National Park of Nuuksio, which is only 30 km from the city center away.

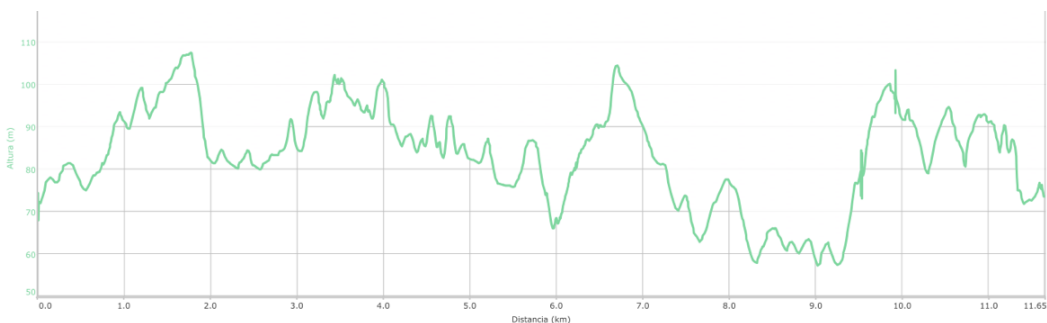
We met directly on the bus, as I had to jump in a few stops earlier than him. He also came with his dog, who is well-trained in walking long hikes and for hours in the woods and snow. Nuuksio National Park is the closest National Park to Helsinki. It has a marshy and rocky terrain marked by small lakes (over 80 lakes and ponds). It is located on the border of the oak forest zone and the southern boreal forest zone. Valleys and gorges formed during the Ice Age predominate the landscape, and in some places, the hills reach a height of 110 masl. The rocky lake upland is home to many species that thrive in old-growth forests and several dozens of threatened species of animals, plants, and fungi. The park's emblematic animal is the Siberian flying squirrel (*pteromys volans*). The park is also inhabited by some endangered bird species, such as the European Nightjar and the Wood Lark. Like most forests in the south of Finland, we can find a big diversity of coniferous or evergreen trees – it surprised us that many were broken and laying down on the ground because of the weight of the snowfall this winter.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route, photos, and a link to download the GPX track: [Track hiking route National Park of Nuuksio](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/lobo/> In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/route-with-lobo-1192265?u=m>

*On-the-move interview*



*Lobo - AllTrails*



*Figure 19: Profile of the route with Lobo*

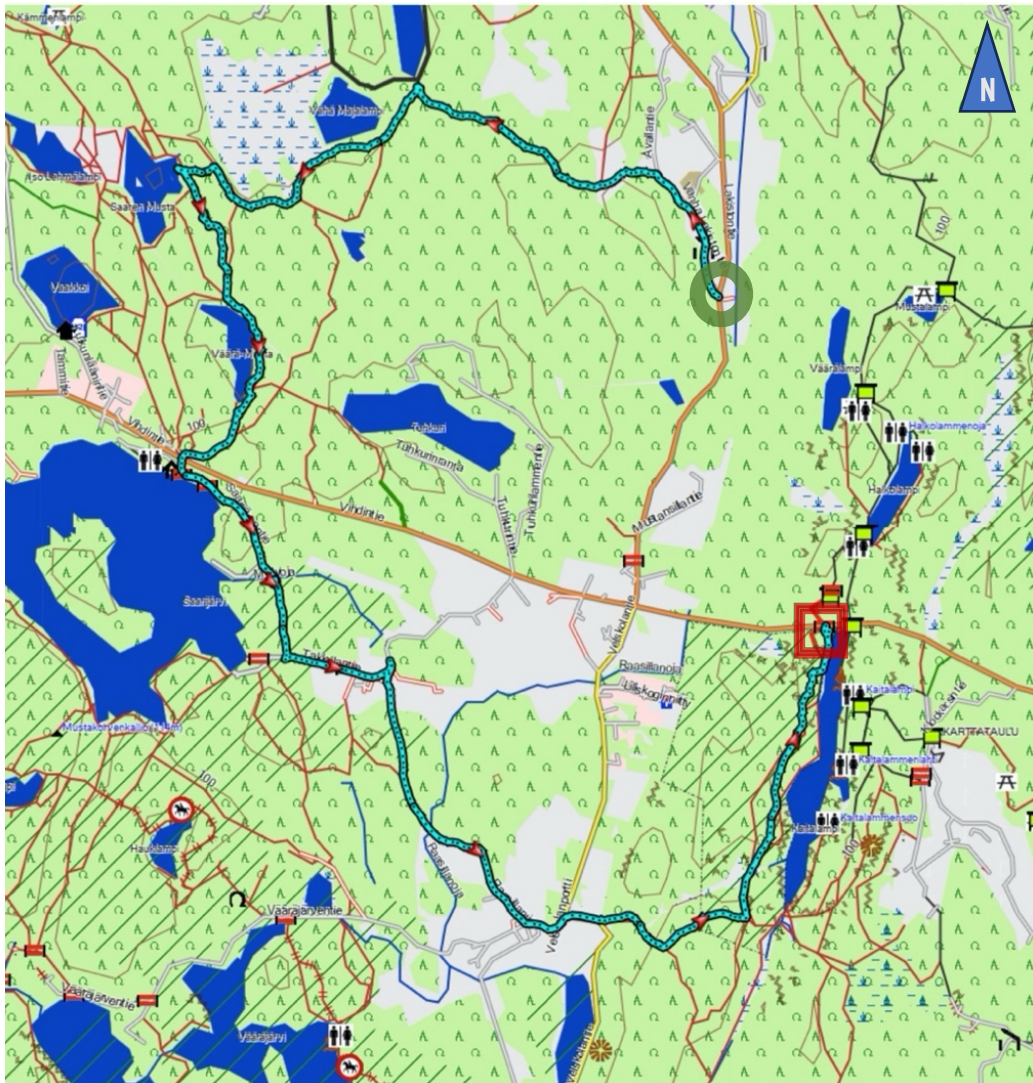


Figure 20: Map of the route with Lobo

When we were on the bus on our way to the National Park, Lobo took out his map of the area and proposed several routes. It was nice that he had the topographical map of the place with him, where he also had marked some places that he likes for making a fire or camping overnight. We decided to go for a circular route, which we then changed a few more times during the hike because of the snow conditions. I really enjoyed this aspect of just stopping and deciding together, on the spur of the moment, on a new path to take because the one we had planned before was still covered with too much snow.

During the first 200 meters, Lobo put his feet in a spot that went directly into a knee-high hole in the snow, with mushy water under it. His feet were now wet, but he had been hiking in Lapland with wet feet for days before, so he was used to it and just squeezed

the water from his socks and put them back on. A bit later, the trail was already better. One of the most memorable moments of the route was having lunch next to a fire he made, on top of the snow with just some wood we found around. Then, he had brought a small teapot that he hung over the fire to boil water and make tea for both of us. It felt so nice to drink something warm! The lakes were still frozen, although not hard enough to walk on top of the ice, and we saw the first butterflies of the Finnish spring. He also told me that because it was a yellow one (there are yellow and black ones at this time of the year in the area), we will have a good spring – if we would have seen the black one, it means bad luck for the spring, or so say the people from Finland. We had to catch a bus in 20 minutes and had 3km left; he proposed to run a bit; thus, we did the last part of the on-the-move interview doing some trail running – that was fun!

#### 4.5.3.10. On-the-move Interview with Libélula

The first time I saw Libélula was in a newspaper article around the time I started my Ph.D., in November 2020. There, she talked about her bike trip from Spain to Denmark. She was also promoting her Instagram account, so I decided to follow her. I was excited to see another trans person cycling around Europe, as I had done this back in 2017, and I didn't know of anyone else who had done a similar trip. Since then, we had exchanged a few messages, and she had offered to have me join her during some part of her future trip after Copenhagen. However, after some months in Copenhagen she continued her trip but got 'stuck' in Berlin, where she lives now. When I sent the flyer looking for participants, she contacted me, and I was so happy about finally having an excuse to do a short bike trip together. Moreover, she is the only person whose Instagram account I analyzed that would also be able to participate through an on-the-move interview.

I proposed a couple of routes around Berlin, and we decided to go to an area where neither of us had been before, located east of the city. We took a regional train to Fürstenwalde, where we then cycled to Bad Saarow and south and west along two lakes – Scharmützelsee and Großer Storkower See – until Storkow, where after 32.5 km, we took the regional train back to Berlin city. Bad Saarow lies in and on the edges of a 25,000 to 15,000-year-old meltwater stream of the Weichselian glaciation period; while Scharmützelsee is one of the largest lakes in Brandenburg, together with more than 200 other lakes in the area of the Spree and Dahme rivers southeast of Berlin, and it was also formed in a subglacial gully during the Weichselian glaciation period.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route, photos, and a link to download the GPX track: [Trak bike route Fürstenwalde to Storkow](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/libelula/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/2022-05-28-libelula-5637f32?u=m>

*On-the-move interview*



*Libelula -AllTrails*

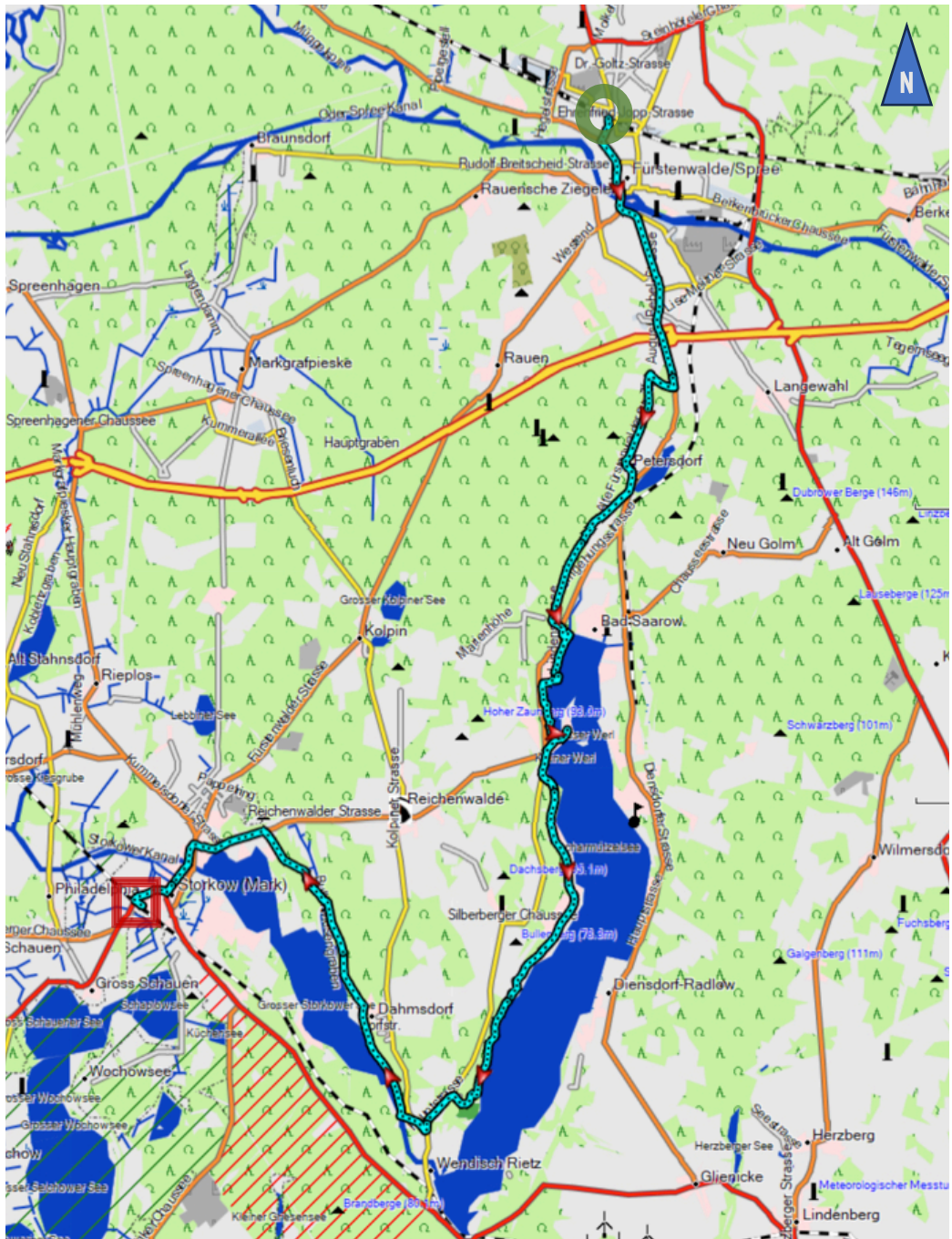
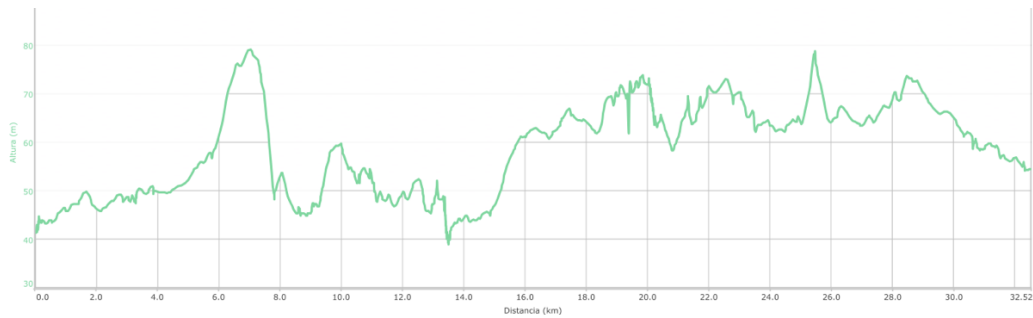


Figure 21: Map of the route with Libélula



*Figure 22: Profile of the route with Libélula*

Our initial plan was to go around Scharmützelsee. However, due to the wind forecast, we decided to change it that same day and do a linear route in order to avoid headwinds. We also decided to be quite spontaneous about the route and would pick the way once we were at crossings, just by seeing how the different options looked like. We wanted to avoid roads with traffic, and this is not always possible to know just by looking at a map. This led us to some pretty paths inside forests, but also sometimes very sandy or with fallen trees.

It was the end of May, and I had initially hoped for a warm and sunny day where we could maybe even bathe in the lake. However, we got a cold front and a quite erratic weather day, with clouds, sun, wind, and even rain; a bit of everything. It looked like every time we decided to take our jackets off, it would get colder again, or it would start to rain. However, we also enjoyed some sun and warmth, and pretty views over the Scharmützelsee.

Libélula asked if her partner, a non-binary person, could join for the bike route – not for the interview. I checked that this was a trusted person for Libélula and that her answers would not be affected by the presence of her partner. I didn't see a problem with it, although I was a bit nervous about how it would work out. However, it was a quite good experience, in which a one-day bike trip with three people was also an on-the-move interview. I recorded most of the interview while we took the breaks, so we talked about other things while riding; it was also 'easier' not to continue talking about the interview topics while riding our bikes because of how technical some of the paths we were riding were. Libélula's partner prepared a delicious vegan pasta salad for the three of us! – It was a pleasant surprise when we stopped by the lake for lunch.

#### 4.5.3.11. On-the-move Interview with Cicala

This was the first of the last set of interviews, which happened during the first week of July 2022 in northern Italy. I had been interchanging emails with Cicala since March and

until we found a date that worked for both of us. He had an examination at the end of June to become a teacher in Italy, so this made it a bit trickier to find a date. Luckily enough, he said that could meet at the beginning of July, and that week also worked well for Dormouse and Lionhead Monkey, the other two Italian participants. However, many people in Cicala's family and friends circle got COVID-19 the last week of June, so we weren't sure if he would escape the virus. I wrote to him some days before the trip to confirm the interview and what we would do, but he hadn't replied yet when I set out to Bologna. Once I got there, I wrote to him again and, while I was visiting the city, I got a message from him; we could meet the next day, although just a couple of hours and not for climbing.

By then, this was more than I had expected, so we decided to go to a park close to the city and take a short walk. Cicala suggested going to Parco Talon, also known as Parco della Chiusa. From there, we could take a small hiking path up to the Santuario della Madonna di San Luca, and then another path to return to Parco Talon. The route was 4.7 km long, with an accumulated height of 200m.

Since 2014, Parco della Chiusa has been part of the protected natural and semi-natural landscape "Colline di San Luca". The area has an extension of 5000 hectares. Despite being close to densely populated areas, it includes a wide range of still quite preserved natural environments, typical of the low Bolognese hills that host numerous rare and endangered animal and plant species. The importance of the area lies in the conformation and location of the site: it is an ecological corridor for both birds and land-based species. The park consists of five ecological areas: The historical garden, where among the autochthonous species we can find field maple, Bagolaro, Tree of Judas, and Orniello; the floodplain forest, which consists mainly of white poplar (some specimens reach 30 m in height), black poplar, and black alder; the agricultural area, occupied by herbaceous arable land (planted) and vineyards; the area of gullies and chalky outcrops, where the morphology becomes more rugged and assumes the typical forms of erosion of the clayey badlands – in this area the vegetation is scarce and mainly shrubby, with a prevalence of *Rosa canina*, Broom, Hawthorn, Bramble, Perastro, Blackthorn; and the mesothermophilic mixed wood forest, with a multilayered structure and one of the most interesting areas from a forest point of view.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route, photos, and a link to download the GPX track: [Hiking in Parco Talon](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/cicala/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/bologna-ccb1d57?u=m>

*On-the-move interview*



*Cicala - AllTrails*



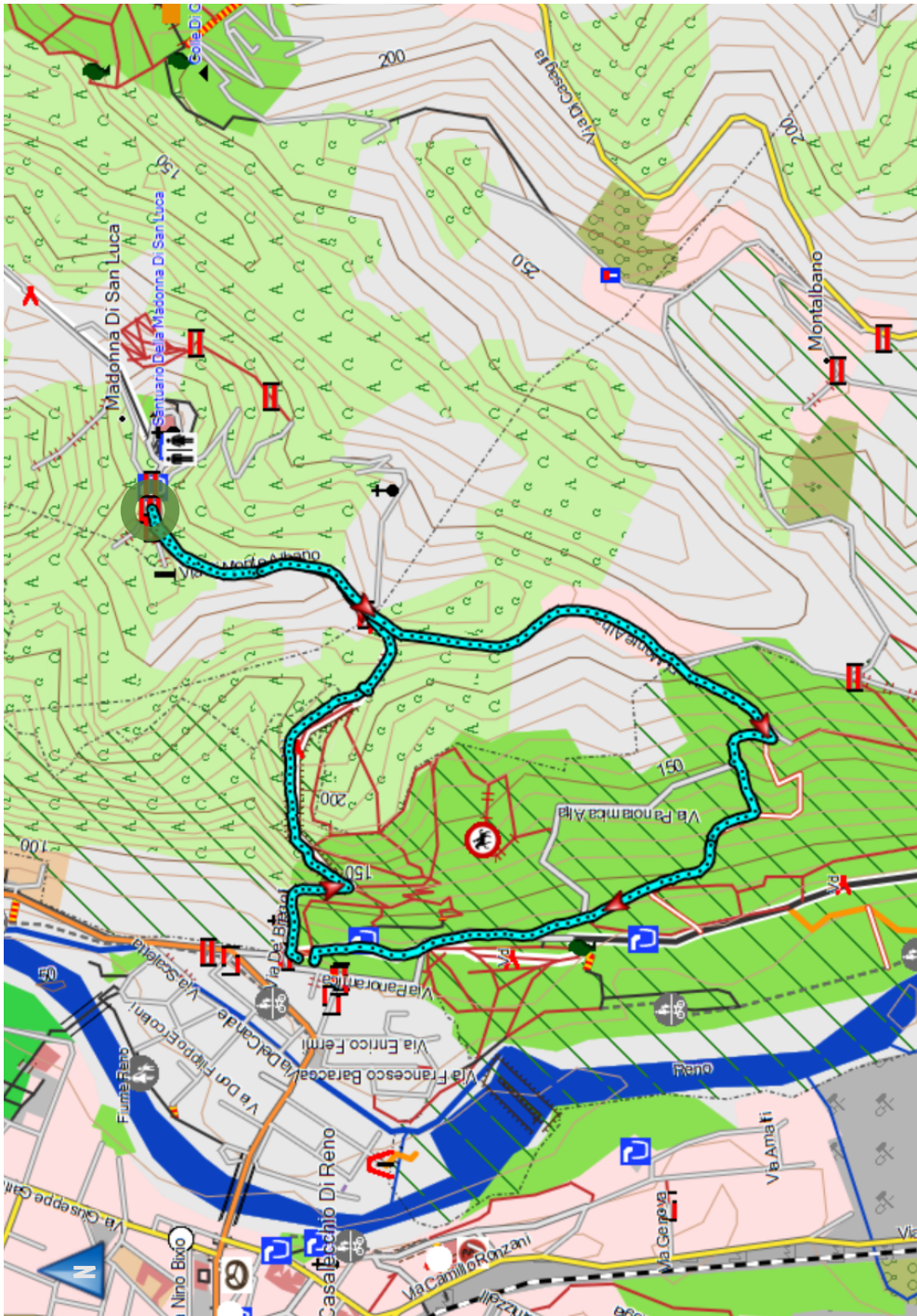


Figure 23: Map of the route with Cicala

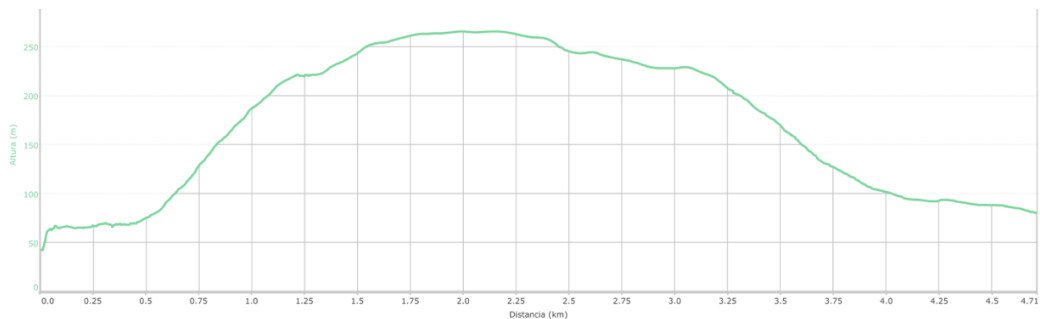


Figure 24: Profile of the route with Cicala

Something one cannot miss when going to Bologna in summer is the constant buzzing of cicadas (called “cicala” in Italian) during the day and crickets when the sun sets. The buzzing is so loud that it is not pleasant anymore; as a stranger to the city, it can end up feeling noisy. The city is never silent, and in many places, when paying close attention to the trees, you can find the skin corpses of hundreds of cicadas. When I got to the park, I realized that here it was even louder, so I used the free time I had before meeting Cicala to record some audios and test if I could do the interview with the presence of the cicadas. It definitely wasn’t like a strong wind, so I hoped for the best and tried to be always a little bit closer than usual with the microphone.

It was over 30°C, so the initial plan of going rock climbing was changed not only by the personal situation of Cicala, but also because of the weather; it is simply not nice to be climbing on a sunny wall in this hot weather. However, quite often, we don’t need to go too far away from home to find nature and the feeling of being outdoors, and this on-the-move interview also ended up being about that. Even when living in big cities, quite often we can have access to a park which hides more natural treasures than we think of. One of the things I enjoy most is finding fruit to eat while hiking. Here, I got lots of different kinds of plums, which tasted delicious and were the perfect snack for the route. I could also see the green figs hanging from the trees, but it was still too early for these. Sadly, because they’re one of my favorite fruits.

Finally, our route also passed by or crossed some longer hiking routes, such as *Via degli Dei*, the well-known hiking route that connects Bologna to Florence through the Apennines; *Via della Lana and della Seta*, a trekking itinerary that connects Bologna to Prato, which crosses the Apennines; *Via Cavera*, built in 1262 and that connects Casalecchio and Sasso Marconi; and the one we followed, the *Sentiero dei Bregoli*, which is 1.7 km long and its final point is the Santuario della Madonna di San Luca, one of the symbols par excellence of Bologna, which stands on the top of Colle della Guardia.

#### 4.5.3.12. On-the-move Interview with Dormouse

I have known Dormouse and Lionhead Monkey since 2017, when they hosted me during my TransEurope Bike trip. When I was searching for participants, I also sent the poster to the Transgender Europe mailing list, which they are part of. I got really surprised and happy when I saw their email and interest in participating, and it was also an excellent opportunity to see them again, in a new setting, five years later.

I got to their place in Turin at night (they hosted me during my stay in Turin), and we talked over a plate of pasta about my research and the routes they wanted to do for the on-the-move interviews. Dormouse proposed to do a hiking route around two lakes close to Avigliana, west of Torino, situated in the natural park Laghi di Avigliana. The route was 7.9km long with 100m of accumulated height. The Avigliana Lakes Natural Park was established in 1980 and is located in the Susa Valley, just over 20 kilometers from Turin. The characterizing element are the Avigliana Lakes, which are a testimony of the last two glacial periods. The fauna is mainly characterized by different types of fish: chub, carp, rudd, catfish, and eel, among others. The territory welcomes the presence of hundreds of birds of various species, such as pochards, tufted ducks, teals, wigeons, moorhens, and shovelers, especially in autumn and winter.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route, photos, and a link to download the GPX track: [Tack hiking route in Parco Naturale dei Laghi di Avigliana](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/dormouse/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/dormouse-5fbb4eb?u=m>

*On-the-move interview*



*Dormouse - AllTrails*

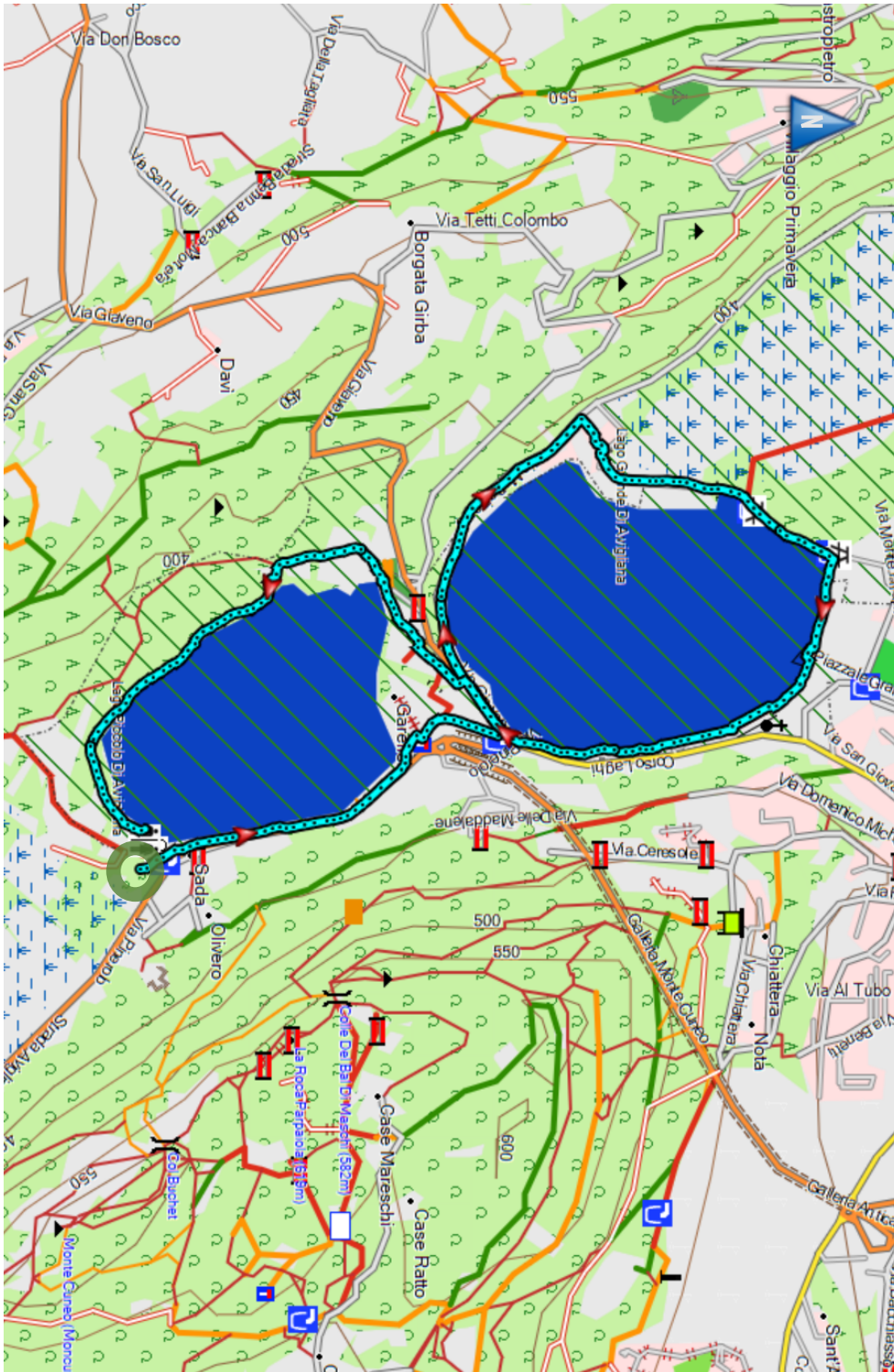


Figure 25: Map of the route with Dormouse

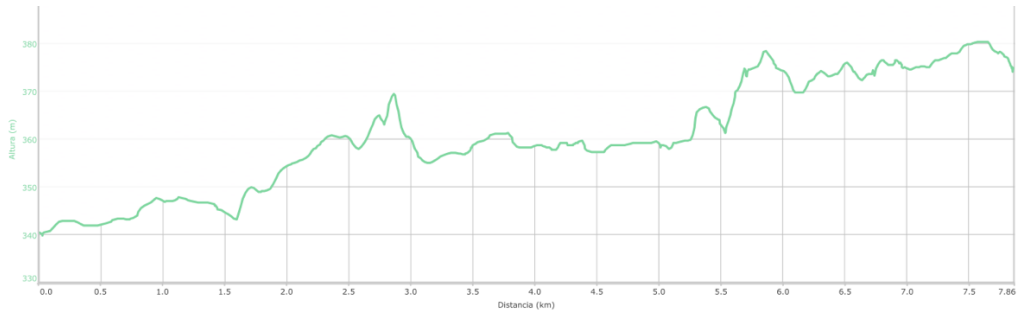


Figure 26: Profile of the route with Dormouse

After a short drive, we arrived at the parking next to the smaller lake. From here, we walked around both lakes, drawing an figure-eight around them. The east side of the lakes has a road, while the natural park area and small hiking trails cover the west side. We went quite early in the morning to avoid the hot sun hours. Because it was a weekday, the area was not full of people yet. On the south side of the big lake, we stopped to see the fish and even some turtles sunbathing.

When we finished the hike and on-the-move interview and got back to the car, Dormouse suggested going to the village of Avigliana, which has an old center and castle, as well as some places to eat. This ended up being a great decision, as it was a wonderful visit and we got to eat some very tasty focaccias in the village's old square.

#### 4.5.3.13. On-the-move Interview with Lionhead Monkey

This was the last on-the-move interview; I was sad and excited about it. I couldn't have asked for a better last on-the-move hiking interview. After having suggested or led many of the routes until now, Lionhead Monkey was taking me to a first-time experience: hiking to a glacier in the Alps. Just a few days before our hike the Marmolada glacier disaster<sup>40</sup> had happened. However, although the glacier to which we wanted to hike goes quite low, its characteristics are quite different from the Marmolada glacier.

The Miage Glacier is a debris-covered glacier in the upper Aosta Valley, in the northwest part of Italy. It is situated on the southwest side of the Mont Blanc massif, flowing from the Col de Bionnassay to the south towards Val Veny. It is around 10 km long, being Italy's longest glacier and the largest debris-covered glacier in Europe; approximately 5 km<sup>2</sup> of its total area is covered in debris. At the southern end of the glacier is the Miage Lake, an ice-contact lake. On one side, it has an enormous ice cliff

<sup>40</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022\\_Marmolada\\_serac\\_collapse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_Marmolada_serac_collapse)

rising up, with a two-colored appearance. Lionhead Monkey and I did a 12.4km linear route to the glacier, with an accumulated height of 590m.

Below is the map and profile of the route, and through this link you can also find more information about the route, photos, and a link to download the GPX track: [Hiking to Miage Glacier](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/lionhead-monkey/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/explore/recording/glaciar-de-miage-4ddb5b8?u=m>

*On-the-move interview*



*Lionhead Monkey - AllTrails*

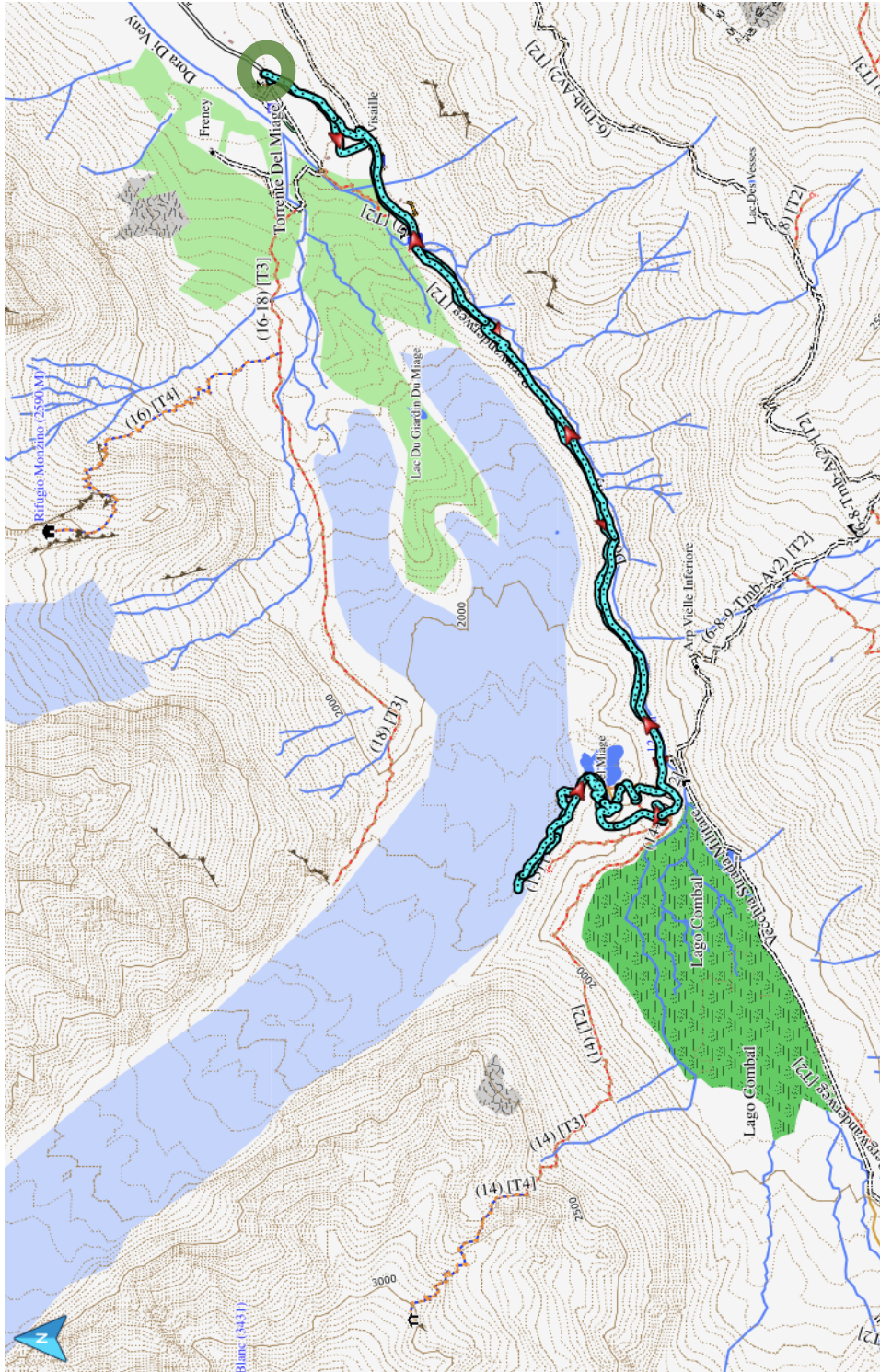
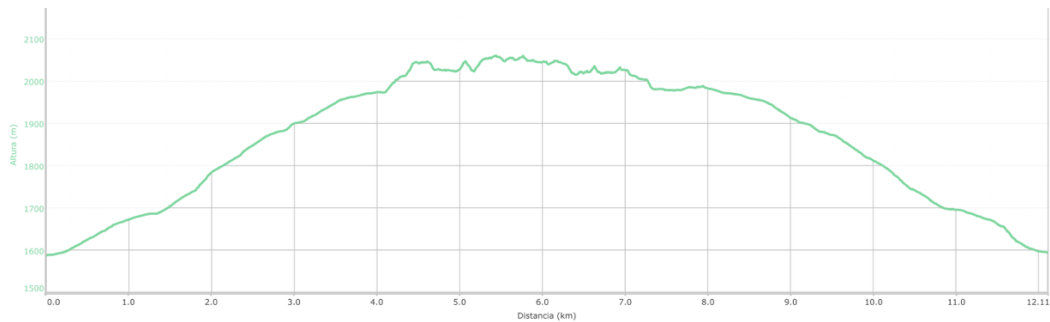


Figure 27: Map of the route with Lionhead Monkey



*Figure 28: Profile of the route with Lionhead Monkey*

Lionhead Monkey needed to check this area for an upcoming hiking trip with youngsters in late August. She hadn't been here in over ten years, so the area might have changed since then. Her initial idea was to do a circular hike traversing the glacier to show the kids the glacier and explain the natural formations of the area. However, as we weren't sure if crossing the glacier would be possible to do (safely), we decided to start the hike going up the road until the Miage Lake, from where we would try to cross the glacier. The Miage Lake was now divided in two because of the low water level. The ice cliff stood on the larger lake, which had a brownish color, while the smaller lake had gotten a blue color because it didn't have any new water flowing in. Here, we took a rest and talked while contemplating the lake and the views to the mountains.

We then continued along the glacier and started stepping on it, trying to find a good path to cross it. Sometimes, the ice is uncovered, revealing massive walls of glacier ice. The debris covering the glacier was quite wet and muddy, and the rocks had a lot of movement when stepping on them, with the danger of big rocks rolling down. After about 50 meters of walking towards the other side – which took us at least 15 minutes –, we decided to try a bit further up the glacier to see if the debris was less wet and if the glacier got flatter. We started following some signs that led us up through a better path on top of the glacier, although we didn't find a good and safe path to cross to the other side. We saw a hiker coming down in our direction, so we asked him about the conditions of the glacier; he confirmed that crossing to the other side seemed not possible. Thus, we decided not to risk it, as it was sure that she wouldn't be able to hike it with the teenagers. We then turned around, following our steps back to the lake and the mountain cottage close to it, where we had a beer, put our sandals on, and returned to the car. It had been a fantastic day in the mountain together.



### 4.5.3. ON-THE-MOVE DIARIES

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*I spend the day looking at the sky; it's supposed to start raining at 2 pm. At 3 pm, I look at the sky and decide that there is still more than an hour until it starts to rain, so I have a quick lunch; I also feel that my legs need energy. Little by little, the energy is coming back to me. I'm still cycling with fear of getting wet, looking at the sky, the clouds, the wind... – Bart Bloem Herraiz, TransBike diaries (3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2017)*

This quote is from the diaries of a six-month solo bike trip around Europe that I did back in 2017, and which I later used in 2019 during my master's thesis as autoethnographic material. Back then, when I wrote these diaries, I didn't think that they would become part of my academic life, or even shape it. I was spending a lot of time alone, on the bike during daylight and either next to my tent or inside in the evening, when it was colder or there were a lot of mosquitoes. I had a small tent where only one person fit, and I couldn't sit up straight inside of it. Hence, reading and writing were my main hobbies during those six months. I had never done such a long trip before; it was a completely new experience for me, and I was being *affected* throughout the journey. I wanted to write about these experiences and reflect on the adventures I had had that day. These personal and experiential insights encouraged me to include a diary element in my research.

Because of the nature of 'on-the-move' interviews – they need to be in person – I knew that I would not be able to reach and interview as many participants as desired for the present thesis through this method. There are many reasons for this: Firstly, in 2021 and 2022 we were still in the middle of exiting a global pandemic, in which travel restrictions had been very strict. When I started this project, I did not know if I would even be able to travel between European countries to interview diverse sets of people easily, so planning to travel outside Europe was deemed impossible. Secondly, the presence of COVID-19 meant that the uncertainty of being able to meet each participant was always present; I could get sick, they could get sick, any of us may have to quarantine the day/s before the interview, a new restriction could appear, or people might not want to meet with me because they were minimizing physical contacts with other people. These risks were constantly present in my mind when planning the field trip interviews to different countries. In addition, I had to personally assume the costs of all these on-the-move interviews, which included traveling to different countries and cities. Finally, each interview also required an entire day dedicated to it and an audio recording between 3 and 7 hours long, that had to be transcribed. Thus, I decided to add another method that would allow more people to participate without compromising the time frame that I had, and that would allow people living in other countries to contribute with their experiences to the thesis.

My initial aim was to recruit ten people for the diaries, trying to find diversity within the scope regarding gender identity and place of residence. The only prerequisite in the recruitment process was that they were over 18 years old, they identified under the trans, nonbinary, and/or gender non-conforming umbrella, and that they practiced any kind of outdoor or adventure activity at any level. This search of participants was the same as for the interviews; depending on the participants' place of residency and their desire on how to participate, two different lists were made. As the call had a greater reception than expected, I decided to raise the aim of participants that I had initially set. I have accepted all diaries received between January 2022, when I first did the call, and September 2022, when I decided to finish the data collection, in order to have enough time to analyze the material obtained. Many of the people who initially reached out to me stopped answering my emails. I sent them all an email approximately one month after their last response. If I did not get an answer back, I decided not to insist further. Even though I was contacted by many people who identify in the transfeminine spectrum, in the end, not so many participated through the diary method. However, half of the people who completed the diaries identify as non-binary, being some of them AMAB while others AFAB<sup>41</sup>. In the end, I gathered a total of sixteen on-the-move diaries, and none of these participants are the same as the ones for the interviews.

Unlike on the interview participants' list, I have included a column with the category 'identity'. Most of the diary participants clearly stated their identity, so it was deemed appropriate to include it. However, quite often the explanation of their identity was more elaborated than what fits in this space, and a short version of it was listed. Below is the list of the diary participants:

*Table 3: List of on-the-move diary participants*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Country of residency</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Outdoor activity</b>	<b>Pronouns</b>	<b>Identity</b>
Encina	Spain	25	Hiking	He/him	It is not important
Acacia	Germany	18	Hiking	He/him	Transmasculine
Redwood	UK	24	Cycling	He/him	Binary transgender man
Linden	Belgium	52	Hiking, skiing	He/him	He is not boxed as male only

<sup>41</sup> AMAB: Assigned male at birth. AFAB: Assigned female at birth.

Savin	USA	39	Trail running	They/she	Queer and Genderfluid/genderqueer
Hawthorn	Germany	18	Cycling, hiking, climbing	He/him	Non-binary transman, sometimes quite fluid
Maple	Canada	26	Cycling	They/them	Non-binary
Eucalypt	Australia	33	Climbing	They/them	Queer, biracial and agender human
Pinetree	USA	47	Running, hiking	They/them	Trans-femme/non-binary
Limestone	USA	29	Hiking, climbing	He/him	Queer trans man
Sandstone	Australia	29	Climbing	They/them	Trans and non-binary
Juniper	Spain	45	Mountaneering	They/he/she	Non-binary
Palm	USA	35	Cycling	They/them	Non-binary white person
Lingon	Sweden	28	Climbing	He/him	Transmasculine, non-binary and lesbian
Granite	Spain	33	Climbing	They/he	Trans and non-binary
Chestnut	Sweden	26	Hiking	He/him	Transmasculine

I was particularly keen on recruiting participants who also share their experiences on Instagram, thus connecting the online ethnographic material with the diaries and the interviews and ensuring validity of the data collection. I aimed to reach 40% of the diary participants that also use Instagram to portray their experiences. This was achieved, with six participants of the diaries who also reflected on their experiences using Instagram to talk about their experiences as a trans person in outdoor activities.

Diary participants were sent a diary guide (Appendix C) with a set of questions, ideas, and topics to reflect on, which touched on: general feelings about their primary activity, feelings regarding their perception of their gender and body before, throughout,

and after the activity takes place, things they might have learned outdoors, the environment, discrimination, or their Instagram experience, among others. Some of these questions were similar to the interview questions, while others were specific questions for the diary. One set of questions was for before going on an outdoor activity, another for while being outdoors, and a third set for afterward. They could either write it or record it, however they felt more comfortable, as short or long as they felt like. Just one participant opted for the recorded option, which I offered as I saw it as an appropriate method for those who lack time – writing a diary involves some time investment – and for those who might not feel comfortable with their written language.

Part of the method was that they did the diary only once, meaning as part of just one activity. If it was an activity that took a whole weekend, then they could follow up on the diary during that whole weekend. If it was a one-day activity, then I would expect just a one-day entry. The aim was that it shouldn't imply a commitment for an extended period of time and would keep participant burden low. Some questions also opened up space for more general experiences that might have happened in the past and that they wanted to share. If there was a question that they did not feel related to their experience at all, they could also skip it or communicate that. It was explained to all participants that the questions were there to guide them but that they did not need to stick to them 100 percent if they did not want to – they didn't need to fill up the diary in a question-answer style. However, they were also given the option to write the diary in any format they felt comfortable with. So, if they wanted to follow a question-answer style, they could. The diaries I received were between three and nine pages long and most of them followed the question-answer style, while two followed a free style.

The depth of this material varied between participants. Still, even in the more superficial diaries, I could read and feel the person's experience during the activity they were being part of. Moreover, even though I was not present, these diaries were written while being outdoors. The goal behind this was to include the more-than-human aspects of their experience into the diaries, in a similar way to the on-the-move interviews. However, I could not ask the participants to record the route tracks to include them here, as that would require knowledge and technology they did not need to know or have.

#### 4.5.4. AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

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So far, I saw on-the-move methodologies as holding the potential to include space and movement in the interview, as well as the possibility to engage the sensorial and the more-than-human of the environment in which they would take place, thus evoking emotionality in the texts that I would write. On-the-move methodologies, which build upon an *assemblage* (Puar, 2005, 2012) of feminist, queer, and outdoor methodological approaches, hold the potential to build mobile, spatial, and sensory knowledges. Further, as I reflected in section 4.2. *Queering methodologies*, autoethnographic approaches challenge conventional qualitative research paradigms by foregrounding emotions within the fieldwork, aligning thus with the last research objective of the thesis.

This assembled approach was feeling like a sunny hike on a spring day. However, I also felt an urge to use autoethnographic methods. But how could this be done? A few years ago, while I was completing my master's in gender studies, I went to the International Adventure Research Conference. There, I was told by a professor that I should look for a Ph.D. that takes me to nature, to the mountains. That sentence got stuck in my head. Was that possible in the gender studies field? And how? Every time I was doubting whether to pursue an academic career and start a Ph.D., I would go back to that: I need to find a project that takes me to the mountains. Autoethnography could be a way to do so, but how could I include it? Going on a six-month bike trip wasn't an option in the middle of my Ph.D., but I definitely felt the need to go out, to *sense* the space. Moreover, as a trans person myself, who has quite a lot of experience in outdoor activities, my experiences were also guiding and shaping my research interests. Through autoethnography, I could include them as part of the thesis itself, not just as a reflection in the introduction or conclusion. Further, as already explained before, autoethnography is also claimed to be a queer method (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008, 2011; K. Browne & Nash, 2016; Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; Holman Jones et al., 2013; Holman Jones & Adams, 2016), and an outdoor method (Gurholt, 2020; Humberstone & Nicol, 2020; Olive, 2020; Pleasants & Stewart, 2020; Telford, 2020).

Autoethnography uses personal experiences to analyze wider social and cultural experiences. My experiences were the root of this project; when going outdoors, the theory was coming with me, blurring the borders of the research. The use of autoethnography also responds to the emphasis on situatedness (Haraway, 1988) in feminist and queer research and on reflexivity in qualitative research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Berry & Clair, 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Holman Jones et al., 2013). How do my previous outdoor experiences impact this research? What do I consider adventure? How could I break the cis(normative) discourse in trans studies?

Gorman-Murray et al. (2010) highlight the importance of thinking queerly about the communication between all the parts. On-the-move interviews were changing the researcher-researched positions. Participants were throwing back my questions; I was being asked about my experiences. The experience of spending one day outdoors with the participants, sometimes our first time together, sometimes with acquaintances or friends, felt at times like a ‘date’ on which we would get to know each other while hiking, cycling, or climbing. These same on-the-move interviews were unexpectedly becoming autoethnographic material.

Initially, I had only planned to use the same diary guide as the one handed to the participants for the autoethnographic research to document my experience as a trans person in outdoor activities. These experiences were already embedded in the thesis, as they are the ignition spark and the ‘eyes and ears’ from where the research departs. By doing this, I was also aiming to break the researcher/researched–insider/outsider dichotomy, positioning myself during an outdoor trip in the same role as the rest of the participants. I kept this diary during a 3-day tandem bike trip in November 2021 in southern Spain. These kinds of trips have been present throughout the whole timeframe of the thesis, whether it was cycling, climbing, hiking, skiing, mountaineering, or snowshoeing. My experiences during these outdoor trips were embedded in the theoretical processes, blurring the line between my personal life and my academic life. By using an autoethnographic approach, I am able to emphasize all of these aspects.

The trip started in El Palo, the neighborhood in Malaga, Spain, where I grew up. My partner and I were going to borrow my parents’ tandem for the winter, and we decided to take it to Mazagón the easiest way possible: riding it. However, because of their work schedule and my doctorate duties, we only had three days for the trip, so we checked the map for the best routes. We needed to cross through four Andalusian provinces: Malaga, Cadiz, Sevilla, and Huelva. I had some ideas for the first two provinces, as I have been cycling through them throughout my life. They knew best Huelva, where they had grown up. In Sevilla, we adventured by checking the roads and how they looked on the map.

On the first day, we decided to take the train from Malaga to Pizarra, a village outside the city, in order to avoid the ugly outskirts of the city of Malaga. It was going to be a hard day; Malaga is one of the hilliest provinces of Spain – some argue that it is even the hilliest one, but this is another big debate. We went through some pretty villages, we took a couple of avocados from a tree – that came with us until Mazagón because they were still quite green – and we climbed up ‘el Puerto del Viento’, a mountain pass called ‘the windy mountain pass’, which honored its name, with lots of chilly wind. A total of 95 km and 1900 m of accumulated height, without being able to stand up on the bike and getting used to riding a tandem. Spoiler alert: Our butts hurt so much after the trip. We put up our tent close to the village of Olvera, by the ‘Via Verde’, the path we would take the next day.

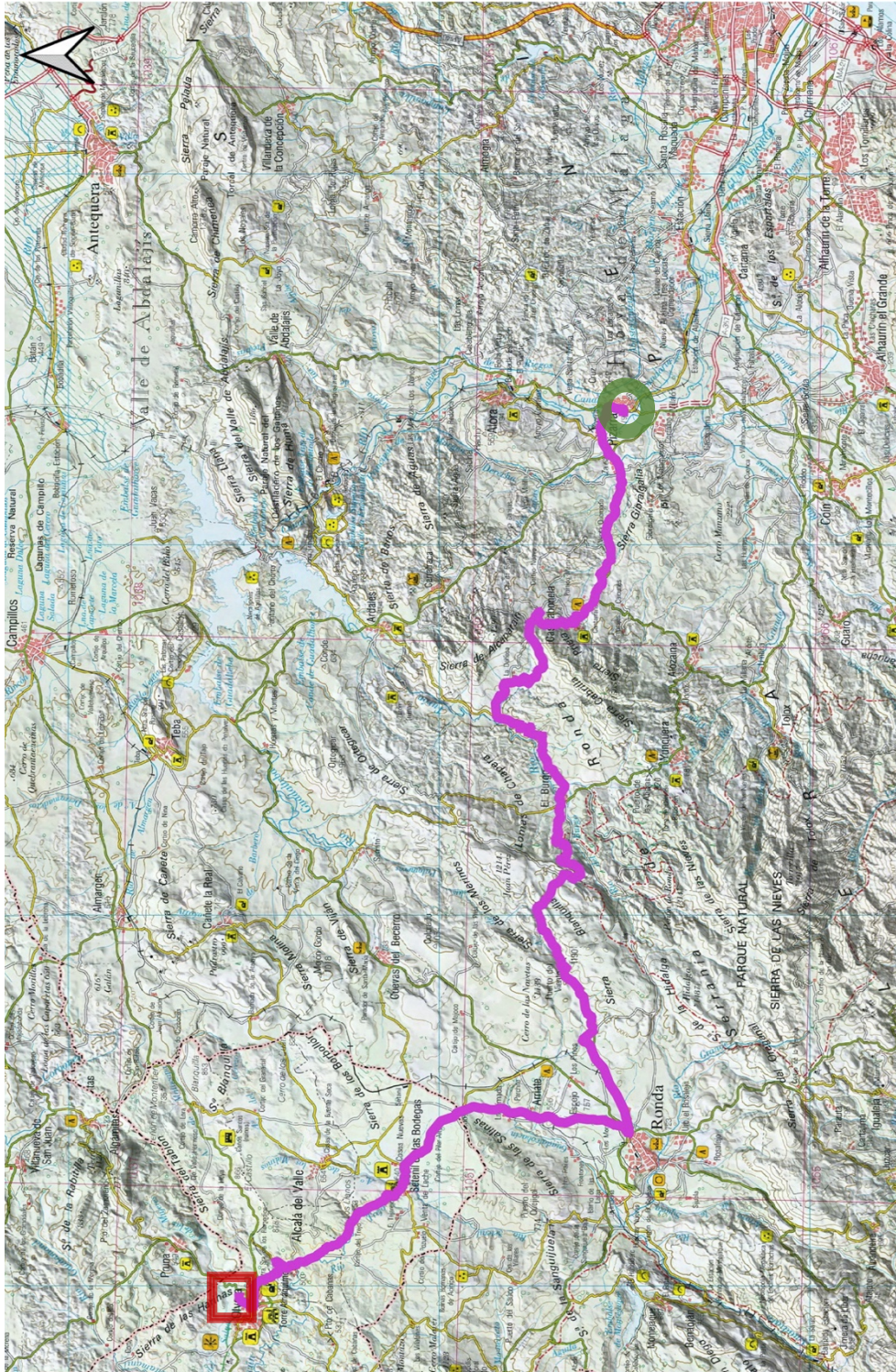
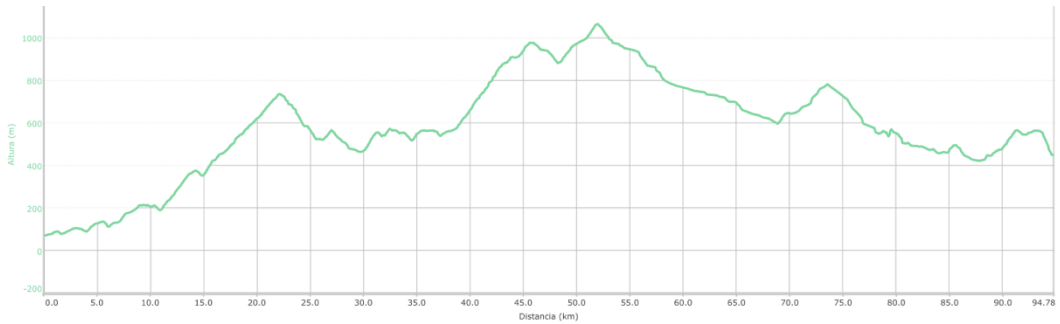


Figure 29: Map of the route. Day 1 Pizarra - Olvera



*Figure 30: Route profile day 1: Pizarra - Olvera*

The second day started with a beautiful, and also very cold, ride on the ‘Vía Verde’. ‘Vías Verdes’ are old train routes that have been conditioned as hiking/cycling/horse riding routes. Cars are not allowed in them, and they often have many tunnels. Sometimes, we had to stop where it was sunny just to stay still and take in the warmth of the sun. We were always going slightly downhill in this first part of the route, and even though we were wearing two pairs of gloves, we couldn’t feel our fingers. We left the Vía Verde in Coripe, a little village where we had a second breakfast at the bar of a pensioners’ home; they always have good breakfast at a low price. The old people who were there had a whole argument about what was the best road for us to take, though we decided to continue with our plan – sometimes people think about the best roads for cars, but riding a bike is completely different; we love small roads with lots of curves. We did a total of 102 km and 500 m of accumulated height, and had quite a strong headwind during a big part of the day. In the evening, we found a cute place to put up our tent, far away from the roads. While we were cooking our last dinner – of the trip – we ran out of gas, so we ate some part-boiled couscous with semi-dried vegetables. At least it was edible.



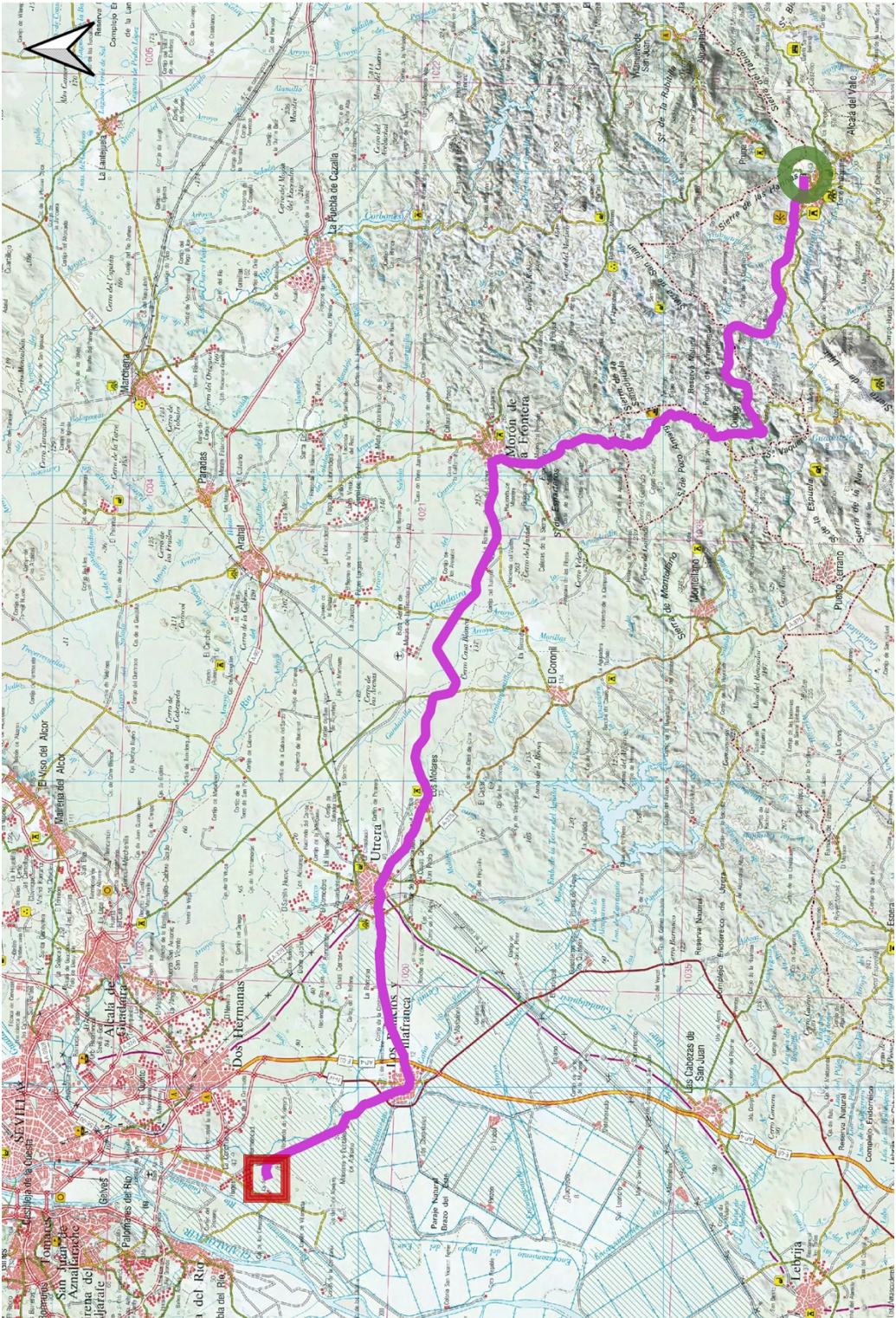
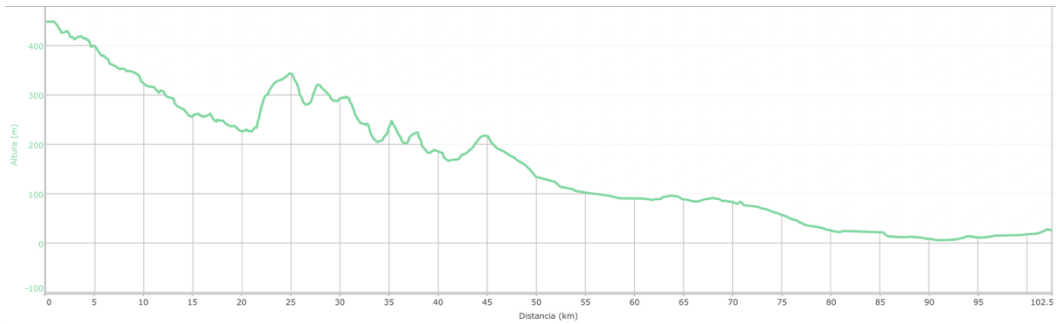


Figure 31: Map of the route. Day 2 Olvera - La Atalaya



*Figure 32: Route profile day 2: Olvera - La Atalaya*

On the third and last day, we did 91 km and 540 m accumulated height. The day started with a ferry – one which we were not sure existed, all we knew was that Google Maps showed it – to cross the Guadalquivir River, one of the longest rivers in Spain. When we got to the end of the road, the ferry was there and it took less than three minutes to cross the river; we did not even had time to take a photo. The next kilometers until Aznalcázar went through an old road in the middle of the Natural Park of Doñana. Doñana has some areas designated as National Park since 1967, and the surrounding areas as Natural Park since 1989. It is a unique natural area that is being devastated by human beings through (illegal and legal) overexploitation of its resources and human-caused forest fires. 8 km before Bonares, my partner's village, there is the village of Niebla, which has a pretty famous castle. I had never been there, so we decided to visit it and take one last break before arriving in Bonares. We didn't want the trip to end so soon. While having a coffee, we saw in the sky that heavy rain could be coming our way. A small rain cloud had already discharged, so we waited for it to finish and took the bike. Just 4 km before Bonares, it started raining again; it was very strong. It didn't matter our shoes were waterproof, the water came in from above, feeling like our feet were swimming inside a boat. We arrived completely soaked but happy to have our first shower in three days.

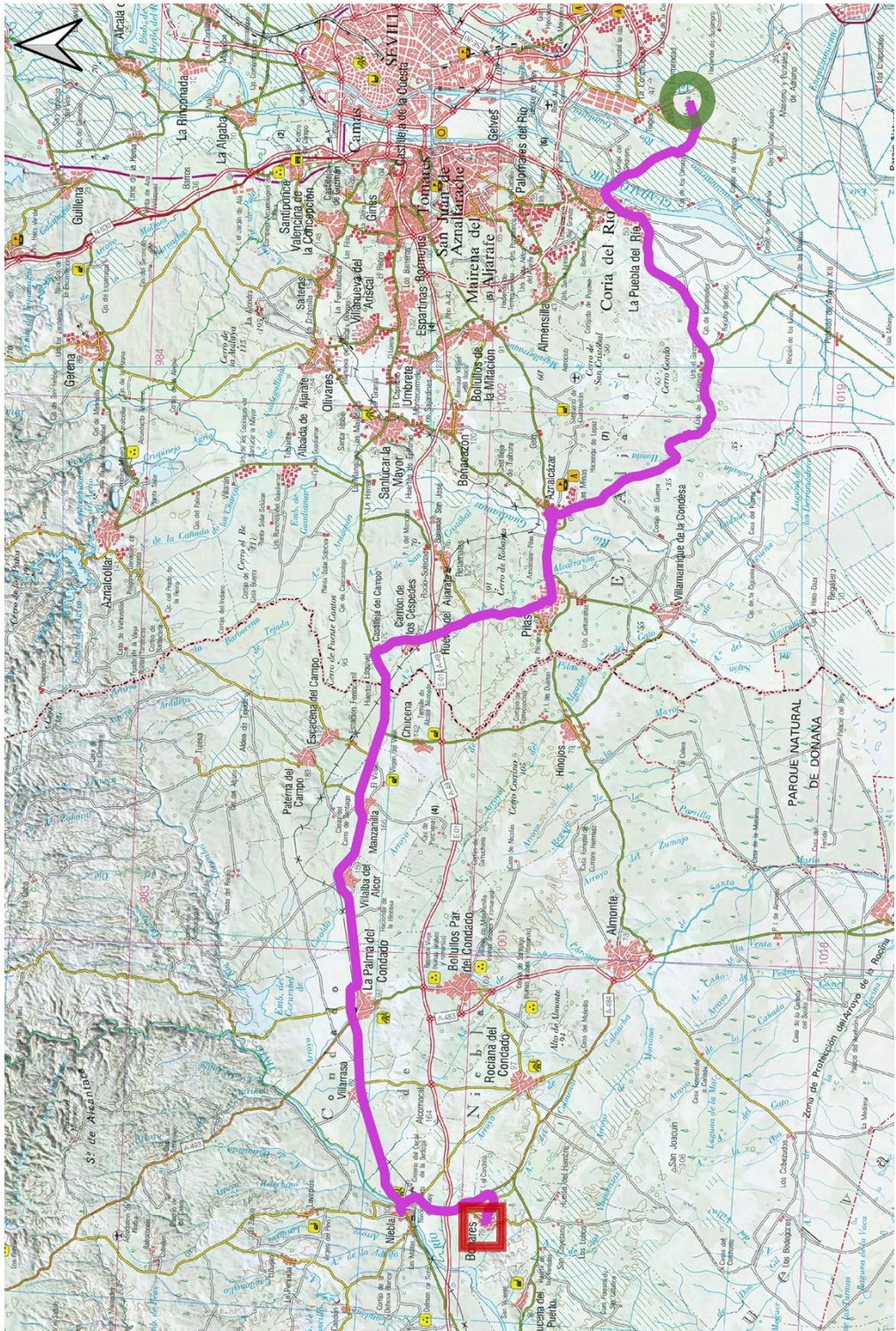


Figure 33: Map of the route. Day 3 La Atalaya - Bonares

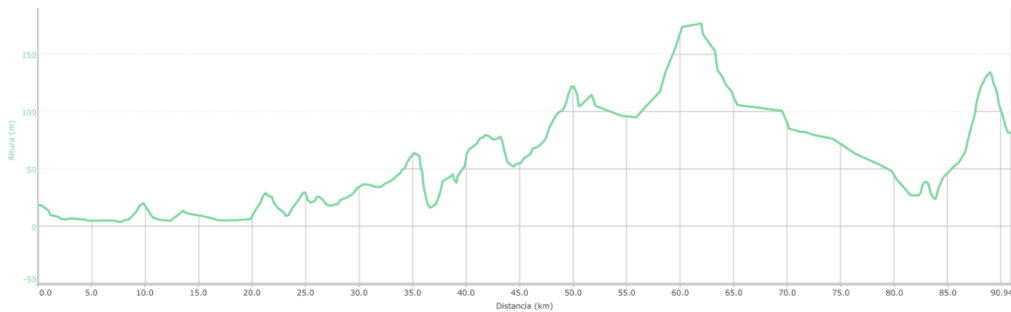


Figure 34: Route profile day 3: La Atalaya - Bonares

Through this link, you can find more information about the route, photos, and the GPX track: [Track bike tour from Pizarra to Bonares](#). If the link doesn't work, you can also type this URL in your browser. Please note that this page is not searchable within the webpage menu, you can only access it with this link: <http://petricoraventuras.org/diary-bart/>. In addition, here is also the link and QR code to the route's track hosted in the AllTrails web service: <https://www.alltrails.com/es/explore/map/map-1fa6269--49>



Tandem trip in AllTrails

The material presented in this section is thought of as a window to take you to the experiences of the on-the-move interviews. When I envisioned an on-the-move methodology, I wanted it to involve not only the research process but also the future readers of the thesis. By explaining each of the routes and how I lived them, I would like to bring you a little bit closer to our feelings and experiences. Moreover, giving you all of the practical information about the routes aims to provide you with the necessary tools to get yourself *on-the-move*, by doing any of these routes. Alternatively, I hope that, if living in another region, it gives you the motivation to go out in your area for a hike, a bike tour, or even climbing. The routes' information is gathered on the thesis and online, on two different websites: one is an international website for uploading a wide range of diverse outdoor activities, AllTrails, while another is a website from a personal project – Petricor Aventuras. The Internet is not stable, and thus I can't guarantee now where these data will be in 5-10-20 years from now. That is also why I decided to publish the routes on a well-established site, as it will likely perdure longer. Alternatively, I will always be happy to give you more information if you contact me personally.

## 4.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

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*No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk. – bell hooks (1990, p. 343)*

As a transmasculine and genderqueer person who is also professionally trained in outdoor and adventure activities, I aimed to approach the field of study as a confidant rather than an outsider researcher (Gorman-Murray et al., 2016). However, one must note that this does not eradicate issues related to power relations that may arise during the fieldwork. As a feminist and queer researcher, I also need to reflect critically on my own subject position and my positionality in relation to each participant's subject position. These changed with each field. In the previous sections, I've reflected on my relationship with each participant with whom I did an on-the-move interview. Relationships with diary participants also vary; while three of them were friends or acquaintances, the rest I did not know previously. I also feel that these are the participants that I feel most distant from; I just know what they have decided to share with me in the first demographic question of the diary. With some of them, I exchanged more emails than with others, which dealt about research information or requirements. However, they were all informed about my positionality – as it can be seen in the posters, Figure 1 in chapter section 4.5.2. *Semi-structured on-the-move interviews*. They were all also sent the following abstract of the project:

The present research project aims to target a groundbreaking research area, working transdisciplinary within the areas of social studies, outdoor studies (within sports studies), and queer and trans studies (within gender studies). Currently, there is a dearth of research regarding the role of gender in outdoor activities and/or adventure recreation. Most of the existent literature around this topic focuses on cis women's experiences, and if we narrow this search to trans people's experiences the gap becomes even bigger. Queer communities have traditionally grown and found refuge in urban spaces, where many of us go seeking to find belonging as a queer person. Many researchers have paid attention to these experiences of queer people inhabiting the cities. However, I

claim that many LGBTQ+ people find comfort in nature, although there is also a struggle to access it. As trans and queer persons, we soon learn that our bodies are not welcomed in most spaces, thus I want to look into how the outdoor and adventure activities can help trans people to empower themselves in their minds and bodies. Consequently, I aim to bring our experiences together and discuss the processes that occur in the outdoors in relation to trans experiences and bodies.

About the **methodology**: the methodology is inspired by feminists, queer, and outdoor studies standpoints. I want to highlight what Tuck & Yang (2014) call desire-based research. Traditionally, research about trans people's experiences has tended to center on our pain narratives. However, I want to pay attention to the positive stories that we build, narrate, walk and live. Thus, this dissertation aims to gain knowledge of how to improve trans people's lives, by looking further deeper into aspects such as safe spaces, empowerment in our bodies, and resilience. I will be using in-depth semi-structured in-person interviews (done while being outdoors), diaries (for participants that I'm not able to interview in person), and auto-ethnography. An analysis of the social media Instagram has also been previously done.

Thus, all interview and diary participants were made aware of my positionality and the research's approach: queer and feminist. They were all sent an informed consent to participate, which was signed by all of them. Trans people's names do not always correspond to their legal names, for a number of reasons. Therefore, participants weren't asked to put their legal names on the informed consent. I personally decided that this was not relevant information for the consent form.

Regarding the data collected on the social media network Instagram, even though I did not personally know most of them, I had been following some people from before, or I started following others throughout the data collection. With some, I've exchanged messages – not related to the thesis. Some might follow me too, though I don't know to what extent. It is this virtual reality relationship in which you feel that you somehow know a person, whilst you only know the side that they decide to share online. However, all of them are creating, shaping, and helping to flourish a more inclusive outdoor community. When I thought there weren't many other trans people crashing it outdoors, I found an online community that made me feel represented. There were more of us 'feeling at home in nature'. Concerning the anonymity and consent to participate of Instagram users, the most difficult part was deciding on what to do with users who change the status of their account from public to private. However, I concluded that this could happen even after the publication of the thesis, thus I decided to "close" the field of study in December 2021. All data used from Instagram for the present thesis was publicly published in December 2021.

As the quote that beautifully introduces this section illustrates, marginalized communities often feel with no voice in academia. On the other side,

[p]eople who are underrepresented in the academy by social location – race or ethnicity, indigeneity, class, gender, sexuality, or ability – frequently experience a pressure to become the n/Native informant, and might begin to suspect that some members of the academy perceive them as a route of easy access to communities that have so far largely eluded researchers. (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 14)

Another question that might prompt here is: Should we only do research in those fields where we are an insider to? How does that limit those of us who are part of marginalized communities? – I have already reflected on this aspect in section 4.2. *Queering Methodologies* and I will expand this reflection in section 8.2. *My positionality affects the methodology*. Nevertheless, I argue that an on-the-move approach is “an important methodology and method for thinking ethically and politically about bodies, movement, and place” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 142). Further, with this thesis I am not aiming to ‘discover’ something, but rather to write and talk about the experiences that we, trans people, have in outdoor and adventure activities. However, as I have contended before (Bloem Herraiz, 2019), “there is no conclusion to an experience” (p. 25). This approach is also a *refusal* to traditional research consideration, understood by Tuck and Yang (2014) as “not just a ‘no,’ but a redirection to ideas otherwise unacknowledged or unquestioned” (p. 20). Jack Halberstam (2011) has also resignified *failure*, as “there is something powerful in being wrong, in losing, in failing, and that all our failure combined might just be enough if we practice them well, to bring down the winner” (p. 120). Thus, *refusing* would prompt recognizing the potential of failure in undoing cisheteronormativity in research practices.

Regarding limitations to the present research, the one that I have had to adjust most was the lack of financial support. Having had financial support to carry out the fieldwork would have allowed me to carry out interviews in a wider range of places – instead of only in four European countries. This would have left the diaries only for those people who might have felt more comfortable participating through this option, and thus increased the scope.

Concerning financial support, another possible limitation might have been the limited compensation that I have been able to offer to participants. For participants with whom I did an on-the-move interview, I offered to pay the traveling expenses if we needed to take a train/bus somewhere, or in the interviews that I did in Barcelona, I rented a car and I would drive with the participants to the different mountain regions where we did the route. This way, they wouldn’t have extra costs for the activity. Moreover, as a certified mountain guide, I proposed diverse routes to the participants to choose from,

and I prepared the one we agreed was more convenient in each case. Depending on the participant, this compensation was more or less valuable. Still, I can now see how it improved the quality of the interviews, as well as the feeling of safety for all parts involved during the course of the activity. Finally, if desired, I offered to bring food for the day. This happened at the end more as a casual exchange of snacks, and some participants even insisted on inviting me to a drink at the end of the activity. However, I cannot precisely know to which extent this lack of financial compensation affected the participants who reached out to me. Despite this, I do was confronted by one person living in Germany who contacted me through Facebook and who demanded financial compensation. I was completely honest and open with him about the money I get through my scholarship to pursue this Ph.D., and what I was able to offer thereto. His only answer was that I should “do it with white people”. When this exchange happened, it left me doubting my fieldwork, how I was conducting the research, and whether the lack of financial compensation was biasing my research. I spoke about it with different people I trust, and we discussed how both options – offering and not offering monetary compensation – would bias the participants that approached me. When this happened, I had already done on-the-move interviews with people from the Global South who currently live in Europe, and I knew that some of the diary participants were people of color, indigenous people, and/or had a migrant background. Moreover, before starting to recruit participants, I knew that my positionality as a white trans person could influence the interest in participating of the people that I reached out to, in the same way as we don’t always trust cis researchers and/or researchers with a cisnormative approach. However, except for this one person, I do not know of other people who approached me and decided not to participate because of this reason. Regarding the diaries, I did not offer any financial compensation. They were meant to be carried out throughout a regular or planned activity, and therefore, they should not imply extra costs for the participant.

Another limitation of the research refers to the references I had access to and was able to read. Firstly, there is a language barrier; I can read academic articles or texts written in Spanish and English. Secondly, I had access to different databases. During the first two years, I had access to the University of Gothenburg (Sweden) library, through the access I got during my first-year research stay at this university. When these two years finished, I took a course at the University of Linköping (Sweden), which gave me access to its library for the rest of my Ph.D. studies. The access to academic journals from the University of Vic, which I got as my home university, wasn’t of any worth. Moreover, I also searched through Google Academic and other non-conventional channels. However, I acknowledge that these resources are all based in the global north and thus bias the kind of articles and journals I had access to. Additionally, “research is just one form of knowing, but in the Western academy, it eclipses all others” (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 17). Hence, there is a lot of knowledge production coming from activist-based groups or individuals about trans people’s participation in outdoor and adventure



activities, in the form of blogs, podcasts, or other types of resources. Thus, I decided to include a list of these resources as an appendix – Appendix E – for those interested in deepening their engagement into the topic, which is also uploaded and will be updated online under <http://petricoraventuras.org/resources/>.

Finally, my position as a white, southern European, and physically abled person positioned me as an outsider when analyzing intersectionally issues of race, coloniality, and dis/ability. Moreover, because of time limits, I decided not to specifically analyze how these axes influence the experiences of trans people in outdoor activities. However, this doesn't mean that I didn't take them into account or that they wouldn't be analyzed at all, but rather that I wasn't able to include as much theory and analysis into these as I would have liked to. As Gorman-Murray et al. (2016) say: "It is impossible to understand gender, sex and sexuality without also considering issues of biculturalism, multiculturalism, racism, colonization and postcolonialism. Subjectivities such as race, ethnicity and culture cannot be disentangled from the spaces in which we research sexualities" (p. 108). Therefore, more work should be done in this direction in the future.

An ethics research committee has been passed for this thesis at the University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia, with the internal code 190/2022 – Appendix D. All information regarding the fieldwork is saved in my computer under a password-accessible folder in order to secure the anonymity and data of the participants. Diary and interview participants' names were anonymized, giving them all names of plants, animals, or rocks. The pseudonyms are in Spanish, English, Italian, Finnish, and Catalan.



**Part III.**

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# **Analysis, Findings, and Discussion**



## INTERLUDE, OR HOW TO GO OUT OF A THEORETICAL BLOCKAGE

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*Because I am there, and because I am trans, this is a transecology. It is an environment capable of accommodating naturally techno-cultural me and my kind and our tools and fuel, even as it accommodates so little else of life.* – Susan Stryker (2020, p. xvi).

I have been creating and dreaming of new methodological approaches, of feminist, queer, and outdoor methods nurturing together. I have been doing on-the-move interviews, and I have been gathering data of Instagram accounts and looking for and talking with people to participate through diaries. I have been traveling by bike and going for hikes in Sweden, Spain, and Germany. I have been running in the mountains behind the houses where I have lived at different points these years. I have read authors that would inform my theoretical approach, and I have done diagrams and connection maps with concepts, authors, and ideas around each theoretical chapter. And still, the months go by, and I don't know where to start. Maybe if I just start to write about the struggles to write the theoretical approach, could that be a beginning? Is this even part of the thesis, or am I just doing it to feel like I have started? And concepts come to my mind almost every day, like a heavy rain with no shelter. Metronormativity! Counter-geographies! Trans necropolitics! Somateca! More-than-human! Post-qualitative! Embodiment! Safe spaces! Transecologies! Borders!

This is also a border; a border in the thesis. Like the kind of borders that are difficult to cross, but once you're on the other side, everything starts to flow. I need to embrace the feeling of never knowing everything about a certain topic or concept, of not being able to read everything, of things missing out, in the perfect imperfection. A failure that flourishes, like queer and trans people. Like this spring, where it was plus 20°C, then it snowed for a couple of weeks, and now the spring is here again. But is the winter a less flourishing time?

What is different between what I have written until now and the theoretical frame? There is a pressure for this to be the core of the thesis, or so I feel it. As if everything I have done until now is for nothing if my theoretical frame is not good enough. How do you create a theoretical frame that is interesting while at the same time understandable for more people than just gender studies academics? While complex reading texts can also be fun and exciting, I sometimes like to imagine my text as 'easy', in the sense that it is easy to follow. I remember reading this meme that said: "Gender theory paper with so many big words only four people understand it", and I can relate so much to this. A

friend, Mar Gallego, in her book, “Como vaya yo y lo encuentre. Feminismo andaluz y otras prendas que tú no veías”, wrote:

A pesar de que esta era la historia que había tras el ensayo [de las mujeres de mi familia], ni mi madre ni mi abuela aparecían en él. Y no solo eso. Inmediatamente después de tener el libro entre mis manos, supe que mi madre –la causante primera de que ‘yo me hubiera hecho feminista’– no iba a entender absolutamente nada de aquel entramado teórico complejo y lleno de vocablos extensos e interminables. Sentí vergüenza, una vergüenza que se asentó con fuerza cuando le pregunté a mi madre: ‘¿Te está gustando el libro?’. Y ella, con esa alegría de ver a su hija contenta, me contestó: ‘Es muy bonito. Juntas muy bien las palabras unas con otras...’ (2020, p. 24)<sup>42</sup>

I can closely relate to this feeling when I saw my mom printing my master’s thesis; so proud of me, while I also knew that she would not be able to read it because it was in English. And I can think of other close friends, without whom I would not be here today, who won’t be able to read this; conversations that made me the person, activist, and scholar I am today. Maybe I will finish writing the last part of the thesis in Spanish? Sometimes I wish I had the time – and energy – to translate this whole thesis into Spanish to make it accessible to more people.

I am slowly becoming excited about what will come and how I could put things together. This is a process of becoming with- my research, my writing, my thesis. But somehow, I don’t want it to be mine, while on the other side, I think that a Ph.D. thesis might probably be the most egocentric research. I was *whatsapping* with Ginesta the other day because I had just finished their transcription and sent it to them, when they said: “That is part of your thesis work....to motivate [to go outdoors]”. I hope not only to motivate all the people I adventured with during the on-the-move interviews, but also the readers, especially those of you who are trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming, or queer, to enjoy moving in nature and to do it more and more often. Because, as Susan Stryker says: “We do live here, we transfolk who are home/not home in nature” (2020, p. xvi).

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<sup>42</sup> “Although this was the story behind the essay [of the women of my family], neither my mother nor my grandmother appeared in it. And not only that. Immediately after holding the book in my hands, I knew that my mother –the first reason why ‘I had become a feminist’– was not going to understand absolutely anything of that complex theoretical framework full of long and endless words. I felt ashamed, an embarrassment that settled firmly when I asked my mother: ‘Are you enjoying the book?’ And she, with that joy of seeing her daughter happy, replied, ‘It’s very nice. You put the words together so well...’” (Gallego, 2020, p. 24).

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION

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What follows now is the analysis and discussion of the data gathered in fieldwork, entangled and assembled with the theoretical approach. As Hill et al. (2020) say: “A posthumanist approach to research methods also demands alternative approaches to analysis” (p. 65). Instead of employing a conventional coding approach, an attempt was made to map the intricate and entangled nature of encounters, acknowledging their messy and complex nature. Thus, I follow Mazzei’s idea that instead of analyzing data solely to find meaning or attaching data such as interview transcripts to specific individuals who are expected to represent the essence of experience, a posthumanist methodological approach acknowledges and values the data itself as having agency. In other words, the data is seen as more than just a means to an end or a representation of someone’s voice; it is recognized as having its own inherent value and potential to contribute meaningfully to the research (Mazzei, 2013).

Each chapter will have a short introduction to present and situate the main theoretical points that will be used. Other parts of the theoretical contribution and the discussion will be entangled with the participants’ statements, creating an interconnected relationship between them. I have decided to follow this structure, which I have already used before in a master’s thesis (2019), because it adds fluidity to the reading. More importantly, it also situates the experiences of the participants at a leveled position with the theoretical contributions; the data collected is not just data or evidence, but it interacts with the theoretical frame and my texts/contributions at the same level. In that sense, the data gathered through the on-the-move interviews, on-the-move diaries, autoethnography, and online ethnographic research has its own agency (Mazzei, 2013), allowing for an embodied knowledge production where participants’ experiences are put at the center of the analysis. This, further, contributes to building a desire-based research (Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2014) that focuses on building livable lives for trans people. Therefore, the quotes will not always be introduced in a more traditional way, but they often should be read as another paragraph that adds to the preceding or subsequent ideas and theories. By doing this, I aim to break the dichotomy between researcher/researched and higher/lesser importance knowledge. In addition, I consider that presenting the results this way makes the text a little bit more accessible to a broader public. While I reckon that some theoretical concepts that have been used might complicate this aim, I aim for this presentation of the results to enhance the flow and fluency of the reading experience.

The analysis is divided into four chapters; the first one, ‘(Trans)Genders and (Trans)Bodies’, will cover the experiences of the participants regarding the following objective: To analyze how trans people’s gender identity and expression are constructed in outdoor activities, and how adventure activities impact the embodiment of trans people. Here, I will explore participants’ bodily experiences in relation to processes of

empowerment, embodiment, and gender surveillance and expectation in outdoor activities: How do outdoor and adventure activities influence our transitions? Then, I will engage with the understanding of adventure for the participants, followed by an approach to the concept of somateca and the significance of creating trans bodily archives in the outdoors. Finally, I will engage with how outdoor and adventure activities are used or seen as a way to cope with and/or improve the mental health of the participants.

The second chapter, ‘Unmapping Trans Counter-geographies’, will delve into the outdoors as a space, deepening into the subsequent objective: To examine the counter-geographies traced in the outdoors and how they affect the inclusion and participation of trans people in adventure activities. I will begin by examining concepts such as metronormativity and trans representation in urban and outdoor environments. Building on the notion of counter-geographies, this section aims to unravel the ways in which trans individuals carve out spaces in the outdoors that resist or subvert traditional gender norms and societal expectations. Consequently, I will engage with the search for safe spaces for trans people in adventure activities, unmapping the counter-geographies we create and unfold while moving in these spaces. In addition, I will analyze feelings of transecological belonging and the sense of being in/out of place, aiming to shed light on the lived experiences of trans individuals in relation to their surroundings. This chapter aspires to contribute to the growing body of knowledge surrounding trans experiences within spatial contexts.

The third chapter, ‘Affective Politics of Outdoor Spaces’, will engage with the affective and emotional aspects of engaging in outdoor activities, delving into the following objective: To analyze the emotional and affective dimensions of the experiences of trans people in outdoor activities, examining the communities that form in these spaces, and how visibility affects their experiences. By exploring these experiences, I seek to illuminate the intricate interplay between emotional landscapes, community dynamics, and the impact of visibility within outdoor spaces. The chapter starts by considering how the historical legacies of colonization and the personification of Mother Nature shape trans individuals’ experiences. I continue with an exploration of how outdoor activities queer time-space processes, to then inquire into what representation means and participants’ abilities to create trans visibility that positively influences our community. Sections 7.4 and 7.5 respectively, confront the dual realities of discrimination and the formation of supportive communities within these spaces. Lastly, I explore how outdoor activities serve as unique platforms for learning and personal development in the lives of trans people. As I traverse these matters, I highlight processes of trans necropolitics and how condemning trans people to the cities is *killing us softly* (Shakhsari, 2014).

Lastly, the fourth chapter, ‘On-the-move Methods as a Transecological Methodology’, will expand the discussion of the last research objective, which has



already been partially developed in *Part II. Methodological Approach*: To explore queer methodological assemblages to ‘produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently’, through sensed and embodied on-the-move methodologies. To do so, I will first delve into how the more-than-human interactions *affected* the methodology, analyzing them from a transecological perspective. Hence, I will present various moments from the on-the-move interviews where we closely engage with our surroundings and shift the focus away from centered human interactions. Throughout this exploration, the central question guiding the analysis will be: How did the physical spaces where these interviews occurred become an integral part of the interviews themselves? Secondly, I will reflect on how my own subjectivity as a trans and outdoor person influenced the methodological approach and the research itself, also bringing forward participants' reflection on this matter. To sum up, I will conclude this chapter with some general reflections about how this aim was met and what it meant for the present project.

Although I have divided the analysis into four chapters, the topics and experiences overlap the stated categories. These categories are themselves constructions; they are interrelated between them, being part of one another. The bodily experiences depend on the processes of belonging and the affective processes that occur while participating in outdoor activities. For Straube (2020), “trans performs a trans-corporeal movement across bodies” (p. 68). This movement is intimately connected with challenging and resisting the traditional boundary politics that reinforce and maintain rigid distinctions such as male/female and animal/human (Straube, 2020). Our transecological belongings are “contact zones” (Straube, 2020) and “borderlands” (Anzaldúa, 1987), they are “places of perceived danger, and impurity, but they must also offer liberation and have the potential to be reclaimed as sites of belonging for those cast as “impure” within the social body” (Bredford, 2020, p. 2). Thus, a trans-corporeal movement is a “rebellion against boundary politics [and a] significant [...] ‘contact zone’ between human and more-than-human nature” (Straube, 2020, p. 67).

Lastly, the following chapter, 5. *(Trans)Genders and (Trans)Bodies*, is a ‘walking podcast-chapter’. Here, I further on Springgay and Truman’s (2019) proposition of “walking-writing practices”. For them,

walking activates the creation of concepts. To walk is to move-with thought. In addition, we understand writing as something more-than what exists on a page or in a book. Walking-writing is experimental and speculative. Walking writing surfaces. It is vicious and intense. Walking-writing is collaborative. (p. 131)

In their book “Walking Methodologies in a More-than-Human World: WalkingLab” (Springgay & Truman, 2019), they invite readers to engage with certain book sections through diverse walk proposals. Following this idea and in line with the proposed on-

the-move methodology, I invite you now to take a break from reading and start listening. Go outside. It can be a park next to where you live (or where you are now) that you like to go to, or you can choose to go on a hike somewhere you have never been. The length doesn't matter; the rhythm doesn't matter. Just take a moment to be outside in movement, surrounded by nature, whether it is a forest, lakes, mountains, or the sea. You can listen while walking or find some nice place to sit and enjoy the moment, *queer* and *trans* the trail, and listen to the following chapter. Don't forget to bring a device and earplugs to listen. If you have any hearing impediments and this is not possible for you, please print or bring the following section – in the digital device of your preference – with you to read while being outdoors.



Please, follow or copy-paste the following link. Alternatively, use the QR code to enter the site:

<http://petricoraventuras.org/podcast-chapter/>

The chapter is available at original speed (1x) and at a higher speed (1.15x). Here are also the direct links to the platform where they are available:

- Original speed version: [soundcloud.com/petricor-aventuras/podcast-chapter-original](https://soundcloud.com/petricor-aventuras/podcast-chapter-original)
- Speed-up version: [soundcloud.com/petricoraventuras/podcast-chapter-fast](https://soundcloud.com/petricoraventuras/podcast-chapter-fast)

## 5. (TRANS)GENDERS AND (TRANS)BODIES

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Trans studies emerged in the 1990s out of trans activist movements, which were closely connected to feminist and queer movements (e.g., Holm, 2017; Stryker, 2006, 2017). They were based on the queer critique of the gender binary system and the dismantling of the sex-gender-sexuality normative order (namely, if you were assigned female at birth, you had to be a woman, feminine, and straight). Transgender has been defined as anyone who rejects or transgresses the social expectations about the gender-sex binary embodiment and behavior (Butler, 1990; Stryker, 2006, 2017, 2020). Scholars such as Judith Butler, Sandy Stone, Susan Stryker, Kate Bornstein, and Leslie Feinberg are at the beginnings of trans studies. Beauvoir's famous quote, "one is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (de Beauvoir, 1949/2011), has been extended in trans studies by scholars such as Finn Enke, for whom transgender studies broadens this foundation, "emphasizing that there is no natural process by which anyone becomes woman, and also that everyone's gender is made: Gender, and also sex, are made through complex social and technical manipulations that naturalize some while abjecting others" (Enke, 2012, p. 1).

The focus of this chapter will be to deepen on the following aim: 'To analyze how trans people's gender identity and expression are constructed in outdoor activities, and how adventure activities impact the embodiment of trans people'. I have discussed in chapter 2. *Conceptual Approach*, about how scholars have defined adventure, and in chapter 3. *State of the Art*, what it means for cis women. Most of us have an image of what an adventurous person should look like, which quite often is defined by categories such as cis, male, white, fit, and able-bodied. However, how did participants define adventure? And adventure activities? How do gender diverse bodies navigate adventure spaces?

Moreover, I was intrigued about how trans people's experiences in outdoor activities influenced trans-life related decisions<sup>43</sup> and how they affected our self-perception as bodily beings. Gender performativity is a concept developed by Judith Butler in their books "Gender Trouble" (1990) and "Bodies that Matter" (1993a). It refers to the constant repetition and reiteration of gender norms that have been established by society. Here, Butler brings forward that there is a conscious decision in how we present our gender, which is regulated through discourse and power. How is gender performed and

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<sup>43</sup> By 'trans-life related decisions' I am referring to a broad variety of steps toward transitioning, from recognizing themselves as a trans, non-binary, or gender non-conforming person, to coming out, making choices toward social or medical transitioning, or how to navigate or handle these aspects when doing outdoor activities.

constructed in the outdoors? Could the outdoors be perceived as a less gendered space (Meyer & Borrie, 2013)? The mountains are not free of societal norms; it would be naïve to think so. However, I claim that different gendered processes occur in the outdoors that lead to the empowerment of trans people in their minds and bodies. Nevertheless, is it possible for trans bodies to go outdoors? Scholar Sara Ahmed (2004) states that:

It is important to consider how compulsory heterosexuality – defined as the accumulative effect of the repetition of the narrative of heterosexuality as an ideal coupling – shapes what it is possible for bodies to do, even if it does not contain what it is possible to be. (p. 145)

As trans and queer persons, we soon learn that our bodies are not welcomed in most spaces. Hence, how are we approaching adventure activities? Which places of comfort and discomfort do we find and/or create in them? The following section will discuss how adventure recreation may help, influence, and shape participants' identities.

Before I continue, I would like to provide a brief profile of the participants. These are just some of their introductions, but they represent the diversity of the people who have participated in this project. Participants defined their identities in diverse ways when asked about how they identify. These show how identity is understood as something that is not binary or stable, not even the same in all spaces. Moreover, these descriptions illustrate how trans, transgender, and non-binary are just umbrella concepts used in this thesis, and identity categories are much more complex than that – hence, they were simplified in the above methods section in order to get an overall idea of the diversity of the participants.

- Woodruff: *Sometimes I go by Woodruff, which is the name that I am trying out for myself, but then also often, especially at work and stuff, I go by my given name. And I'm 29...what else? Oh, my pronouns, this is also difficult, because I think in English, I would use they/them pronouns, but in German, I use Sie/Ihr [which are the feminine pronouns]. But it's just that I haven't found any pronouns yet that feel like me. So, like, giving any pronouns is always a little bit like, 'aaahhh, I guess...you know, this, I suppose'. I haven't found anything that works for me yet, but maybe I will.*

- Castor: *I identify as a non-binary person, a sportsperson, and always willing to learn.*

- Lionhead Monkey: *I'm a trans woman, she/her. Probably, I'm not sure. I'm happy with who I am now, but I'm not sure if I had started the transition now, I would identify myself in a non-conventional manner, probably...non-binary with, probably, a predominant part on the female side. But, in any way, I'm happy to be a trans woman. I like she/her. I'm quite crossing genders for a lot of reasons...but, in the end, after the completion of the transition, I think that I started to transition to become more gender fluid. But I do not regret it at all.*

- Lobo: *People tell me I'm a man. On some occasions, I'm a trans man or transmasculine person. I use he/him, but sometimes, when they ask, I put something else, not a he or a she.*

- Encina: *I am a natural being, for a long time, I thought I was a woman and for a long time, I have denied it, claiming to be a man throughout my life. Now I do not know; now I do not care.*

- Eucalypt: *I identify as a queer, biracial, and agender human being who loves adventure.*

- Hawthorn: *My pronouns are he/him, and I am a non-binary trans man and sometimes quite fluid. In my daily life, I live as a stealth boy most of the time, but all my friends at least know that I am trans, the good ones also that my gender isn't binary. I am white and abled-bodied and my family (that supports me in most things) is in the upper middle class.*

Here, the participants from both the diaries and interviews provided a diverse range of answers. While some people referred only to their gender identity, other answers were broader, mentioning other parts of their lives, their intersectional identities, or how their identity might change depending on the context. For some, there is also a fluidity in their identity, referring to concepts such as 'natural being' or 'human being' rather than to the binary man/woman; or to how it continues to evolve, seeing it as something dynamic. Juniper stressed out how it also spanned to other areas of their life.

- Juniper: *I think this kind of lack of definition and "not fitting in" in relation to gender, also happens to me in other areas of my life such as work, my identity regarding my origin, relationships, etc...*

Instagram users quite often describe a bit of themselves in their bios, which I have decided not to analyze. However, some also introduced themselves through a post, often expressing how their identities intersect and inter-act.

@nikkik\_smith: *Hello, my name is Nikki, my pronouns are she, her, hers, and I happen to be transgender. I happen to be a lot of things: a woman, a wife, a photographer, an artist, a climber, a hiker, a great cook, a friend and so much more. But now, many people just see me as transgender. Like most of you, I know I'm so much more than what people see. I'm not going to allow others to define who or what I am, or what I can or can't do. I love the outdoors. It's one of the few places where I can be myself without reservation. The mountains or desert or coastal areas are beyond judgement. They have always accepted me for who I am, and I have always felt at home there...or at least, I did.*

@claire\_anom: *What does it mean to be a Transgender Climber? This is something I've been asked a lot, and more frequently. The truth is, I don't fucking know. I only know what it is to be me. And while yes, I am Transgender, and I am a climber, I am*

*so much more, and I am so much different and individual from all the other Transgender climbers; Who intern are also their own whole and complex individual selves. So what does it mean to be me then? That's an ever-changing answer. But right now, it means to acknowledge and just exist in the complexity and beauty of all my parts.*

Many of the Instagram users also described themselves with identities such as climbers, hikers, cyclists, or outdoor persons. This was also the case for the majority of the interview participants when asked about if they felt that outdoor and/or adventure activities are part of their identity.

- Pit Roig: *Yes, of course, a ton. I even think that I have been influenced to such an extent by nature and the connection I have with the mountain, that it is part of my energy, of my being, and even of my vital needs.*

- Woodruff: *Yeah, I think so. I think they're definitely part of who I want to be and that I feel most like me when I'm doing them, as opposed to in different kinds of settings, like in an office setting or so I don't feel like me. [...] When I'm sweaty and exhausted and somewhere on a mountain, that feels like me.*

Woodruff expresses how this is something they are looking for, to be identified as an outdoor person. Performativity “consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer’s ‘will’ or ‘choice’” (Butler, 1993a, p. 234). In this sense, Lobo explains that he likes to be seen as an outdoor person in order not to perform a specific gender identity.

- Lobo: *And it's comfortable that people think I'm an outdoor person because I don't have to make up a specific identity.*

In a way, Lobo is escaping gender performativity through an outdoor performativity, which he doesn't feel the need to be gendered. Doan (2010) argues that “the tyranny of gender oppresses those whose behavior, presentation and expression fundamentally challenge socially accepted gender categories” (p. 639). Through an outdoor identity, Lobo is creating a space of refuge through which he can escape gender normativities. This sense of safe space is a recurrent feeling that comes up in the interviews, diaries, and Instagram posts, and will be further analyzed in the following sections and chapters.

After this first introduction to the participants, I now invite you to follow us on our journey of self-exploration through the sections of this chapter.

## 5.1. WHAT IS ADVENTURE?

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In chapter 2. *Conceptual Approach*, I already defined adventure based on academic literature. However, as I showed, there isn't one clear definition of adventure activities or recreation, and the ones that do exist come from cis, male, white, Western perspectives (Little & Wilson, 2005; Meyer, 2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013). Nevertheless, it is also remarkable that feminist researchers have paid attention to this, expanding the definition of adventure to facets more philosophical and humanist with ideas such as learning, personal growth, and personal discovery (Beames et al., 2017; Humberstone, 2000; Warren, 2016). During the on-the-move interviews, I asked participants about their definition of adventure. Castor threw back the question at me – something many others also did and that I came to love during the on-the-move interviews. At first, I was answering with the theoretical knowledge I had about what adventure activities are and what they imply. However, in that moment, I realized that it wasn't my personal definition, but the one I conveyed for the thesis.

- BB: *For me, adventure activities also have to be outdoors, in nature in some way, involving physical activity, at any level.*
- Castor: *That's what I meant by movement.*
- BB: *It has to have some kind of risk as well.*
- Castor: *That's true. Many times, the risk is subjective, and it becomes the challenge.*
- BB: *Risk is also very relative. Who tells you that this two-day hike we are doing has more risk than going to work in the city? In the city, there are going to be more people who may attack me, there are going to be more people who might do something to me. In the city, there are more cars, it's easier to have an accident. So, saying this, I'm realizing that I may have been giving you the definition of adventure that I've read. But for me, when I do adventure activities, I think I usually feel safer than in my day-to-day life. I feel that there is less danger to my life in the type of adventure activity I do. It's true that I don't jump out of a plane or go paragliding or anything like that. Okay, maybe the most risk that I feel like I'm always going to die is when I'm climbing; that's when I feel like I'm going to die, but I don't know how much of a real danger that is. But when I go on a bike trip, when I go hiking, even when I do snowshoeing or crampons, mountaineering things, I have not felt that fear, and I have gone with people doing crampons in Carros de Foc in the Pyrenees, and the person I was with thought they were going to die all the time and I did not have that fear, I felt safe, I trusted myself, I trusted in my skills. And of course, there is a risk, because, for example, when you go in snow there is already the risk of avalanche, right? There may be things, but I feel that the risk is less than in my day-to-day life in the city of taking the bike in the*

*middle of the city and going somewhere, climbing a staircase, facing transphobia, or whatever.*

While adventure activities are commonly described by their implicit risk, this concept didn't come up for any of the participants in their own answers. Instead, the most common ideas were uncertainty, outdoors, out of the ordinary, and challenge. With fewer people outdoors, the risk of violence or discrimination targeting our identities may be reduced. This sense of risk was not present for the participants while doing adventure activities, or it was more of a kind of controlled risk.

*- Ginesta: When I hear adventure sport, I see it as something risky and that I don't do. Not even if I've been through mountains and storms, I can't imagine myself...I don't see that as an adventure sport. [...] But adventure...if I hear adventure, for me it's different than adventure sport. When I hear adventure, it relaxes me...but adventure sport is all this that comes to my head, stereotyped, of things with a lot of risks, a lot of emotion, a lot of marketing... fast, full of adrenaline, of money...and when I hear adventure, I detach myself from this and adventure can be many things. It can be 'adventuring to', to know something new, to open something...it can be in any situation, it can be right now...it depends on my reading, I transform it, I don't get the stereotype of something. [...] In fact, I'm going to be more adventurous. It will give me more pleasure if it's less normative, it will allow me to open up and be better.*

For Ginesta, adventure is non-normative; they clearly differentiate between adventure and adventure sports or even adventure tourism. Similarly, Hirvi distinguishes between adventure and sport. For them, climbing is not a sport but an adventure activity.

*- Hirvi: Maybe the adventure part comes from, for me personally, that there are no clear set goals of like...I mean, I guess by goals I mean that the day doesn't get made or failed by reaching the goals or not. I think it's just...I feel that anything that is very goal-oriented is not an adventure. Maybe it's not a definition you would find in an encyclopedia...I haven't really thought about this, but this is something that just came to me: that if you have clear, set goals and if your success depends on reaching those goals or not, then it is not an adventure, then it's just a sport, or a competition, or goals, or whatever. But I feel that adventure comes from taking into consideration everything else that actually makes the day.*

Furthermore, some participants noted that an adventure needed to be satisfactory, not only a physical struggle or challenge, but that you would get something beautiful out of it.

*- Deer: Yeah, but if it's not beautiful, then it's just a struggle. Then it's not an adventure. Adventure, always, there has to be a carrot or something.*

*- BB: A carrot?*



- Deer: *Oh, this is just Finnish [we laugh]. There needs to be a treat after the struggle. Otherwise, there's just struggle. Of course, the treat for me is probably the view on top of the climb, or topping something. Or, not even topping, but big muscles, or good company, or this moment that we drink wine now after a heavy hike we did from the metro station. I think this sensation that we did it alone, like this nice feeling that I managed to do something...two weeks hiking trip and we came back home safe and alive.*

Lastly, other aspects mentioned by some of the participants, to a lesser extent, were emotion, connection, learning, and movement. While freedom was brought up only by one person when I was specifically asking about what adventure meant for them, it was, however, mentioned by most participants as something they related with outdoor activities.

- BB: *What sorts of feelings come to your mind when you think about this trip to Patagonia or the one to Scotland?*

- Dormouse: *Freedom, I'd say, is the first thing. You know, everything is so wild and free. So, I suppose that would be it. I also very much like this wild environment. You know, the weather is very changeable.*

Freedom was one of the most recurrent feelings they sought when engaging in outdoor activities, or a feeling they would get from being outdoors – freedom of gender expression, freedom of what they could do, freedom to be themselves.



## 5.2. TRANS EMBODIMENT AND AGENCY IN THE OUTDOORS

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The concept of embodiment, which is central in the current study of the body, intends to overcome the idea that the social is inscribed in the body. Embodiment is often linked to the concepts of corporality or corporeality (Luz Esteban, 2004; Torras Francés, 2017). However, Torras Francés (2017) and Luz Esteban (2004) argue that what differentiates the two concepts – embodiment and corpor(e)ality – is social agency: while corporeality comprehends the actions and reactions of the body without intention and/or agency, embodiment pursues the acquisition of this agency, emphasizing its potential, intentional, intersubjective, active and relational dimensions, which means that the concept is politically charged. Hence, the concept of embodiment includes all the actions performed by and with the body with the aim of articulating themselves in the social sphere (Gilleard & Higgs, 2014; Torras Francés, 2017).

In this sense, participants relate to how outdoor activities have influenced their embodiment. This feeling extends amongst participants after an outdoor activity, without differing much between activities, gender identities, or bodily abilities. For example, Granite explains how they feel in connection with their body when climbing outdoors.

*- Granite: I feel that my body is unified, that I am not divided into parts, and that I am with myself because it is with me that I go up. I also feel confidence in the person who is going to take care of me; I don't feel that I am climbing alone, I climb accompanied from below. This feeling is liberating because it helps me to believe in myself and to trust someone else, things that I sometimes find difficult in my daily life.*

In post-structuralist feminism, the notion of the body as a biological or natural entity has been replaced “with an understanding of bodies as the material effects of historically and culturally specific discourses, discursive practices, and regulatory regimes” (Sullivan, 2005, p. 363). Post-structuralist scholars view bodies as sites of embodied subjectivity that are lived in heterogeneous ways; in words of Sullivan (2005), “all bodies are always already marked in so far as they are significant cultural entities; in so far as they come to matter” (p. 363). Maple shared their sense of embodiment after a day riding bikes.

*- Maple: Along with the affirming choices for clothing, the other major aspect of why I enjoy cycling as a nonbinary person is the meditative experience of riding both connects me and dissociates me from my body. What I mean by this is that I feel in tune with my muscles and body, but not in connection with how I exist in physical space. Overall, being able to participate in an activity without feeling the gendered perception I experience in other activities is a liberating experience for me.*

Cycling connects Maple with themselves while simultaneously disconnecting from how others perceive them. Gender performance is regulated “by the observers as well as the spaces in which we interact” (Doan, 2010, p. 648). Through cycling, the observers and the space ‘disappear’ from Maple’s experience. In a similar vein, Encina reflects on his embodiment in connection with nature after a hiking day.

- Encina: *At the beginning, I don't feel anything, but as time goes by, breathing, disconnecting from the urban world and connecting with nature, with me, I feel lighter, more present, more aware of my breathing and my body, of her<sup>44</sup> body. I feel more energetic, more aware of who we are, of the support she gives me. When we start going back, I think of my home, my house, my family, and I think of them in a more peaceful and loving way than when I am with them and there are arguments. Those feelings stay with me for a while. I would like to lock them inside me forever, but like the trip, they come to an end; like us in the place we have gone to, they come and go; and that's okay.*

The border between the ‘urban world and nature’ that existed for Encina before the hiking trip blurs, and so does time with it. An archive of somatic feelings is created while hiking, transcending the border urban/outdoor. Consequently, embodiment is regarded by Torras Francés (2017) as:

A political negotiation involving the body in the process of subjectification, a transition that takes place through identity narratives, through distinctive bodily practices, through discourses of power constitutive of what a body should and can be, and against all of these at once. (p. 164)

Trans embodiment is also trans joy; and joy is “an aspect of trans and nonbinary lives that is often missing from much of the research on trans communities” (Holloway, 2023, p. 1). For Steinbock (2021), embodiment is “to become a self through knowledge of a bodily being encountering other embodied beings” (p. 229). Instagram user @hay\_is\_for\_hayden finds embodiment through sharing in the outdoors with others.

@hay\_is\_for\_hayden (@unlikelyhikers<sup>45</sup>): *Growing up in the Twin Cities, I have countless memories of hiking the Mississippi River bluffs. My soul is forever tied to the river, and the limestone cliffs of Minnesota. When I moved away to Seattle 3- 1/2 years ago, I was running away from myself and all of the people who had known me as a boy my whole life. Inhabiting that role and my own skin had not felt right for a long time. In the mountains of Washington, I found a place where I could be in my body the way I could before puberty. Sometimes hiking-while-trans can be scary for*

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<sup>44</sup> Here, Encina is referring to nature. He is using the feminine because this diary was written in Spanish and the word nature in Spanish is feminine: “La naturaleza”.

<sup>45</sup> When an Instagram post was published in a community account, that account will be written in brackets.

*my partner (also trans, and an avid hiker) and I, but never do I feel more at peace with my body, than when I am goofing off on the trail with them and our friends. So I guess I would say that to me, being an unlikely hiker means connection. Connecting with people, nature, my body, and my past.*

Finding joy as a trans person is not always ‘easy’; it frequently also means that we have to overcome hurdles and constraints. Our corpor(e)alities do not seem to matter (Butler, 1993a) in a world where, in most Western countries, our rights are constantly under threat.

@lor\_sabourin: *The US Department of Health and Human Services released a document on Friday that took away important protections for transgender people, including their rights to basic medical care. While policy makers are debating the impact that this document will have on the lives of trans people, I’m watching my community reel from another experience of dehumanization. I went climbing yesterday. Climbing is a strange thing to do when you are living in a world where people with a lot of power have just decided that your*



*body isn’t allowed to exist in the world. I wanted it to feel liberating and rebellious—going out to do something that brought me joy when an entire group of people wanted me to disappear. But honestly, I felt prickly and distracted. I’m not sure what my next move is. I’ve been finding comfort in the reminder that I didn’t decide to transition because I thought it would be easy or safe. I decided to transition because I didn’t want to live for another day with the absolutely devastating experience of hating myself. So, no wise words yet. Just a reminder that transgender people exist, that we feel all the things just as deeply as any other human, and that we will not stop fighting until every member of our community feels safe and supported.<sup>46</sup>*

The concept of embodiment puts forward a perspective that seeks to break the dualities of Western thought, such as mind/body, nature/culture, subject/object, objective/subjective, rational/emotional; “or, more importantly, it puts them up for

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<sup>46</sup> [Image description]: The photo is taken from the ground looking up, between two narrow and straight brown-red color rock walls. The sky is blue, with some light clouds. On one of the walls there is a person climbing, almost at the top. The climbing rope and quickdraws are visible.

discussion” (Luz Esteban, 2004, p. 4). Moreover, when being in nature, how others perceive us becomes less important.

- Bart (diary): *I feel relaxed, happy, and complete. I feel more comfortable regarding how others might see me. I'm even excited quite often when meeting strangers and talking to them.*

- Sandstone: *I feel more myself in my body when I'm feeling sore and stiff from exercise. It feels both like the appearance of my body is less important but also that I'm moving towards the kind of body I feel myself in.*

“Queer is born embodied, it is thought and spoken and done in and from the body” (Torrás Francés, 2017, p. 164). Steinbock (2021) brings embodiment and trans studies together and argues that “employing a trans optic on questions of embodiment allows the researcher to consider how to extrapolate from common experiences to comment on a generalized condition and even overturn previously held assumptions” (p. 229). We have learned to understand embodiment as a collective achievement. While the dominant narrative – medical, cultural – tells us that trans people have to hate their bodies, these experiences are telling us that trans bodily joy is found, among other, through outdoor activities.

@brieoutside: *I love climbing mountains. I feel so comfortable wandering up above the trees and far away from the world of men and women. The rocks and lakes and marmots don't see my round soul stuck in my square body. All my awkwardness is left in the valley. My arms and legs are freed to move through the world without edit. My being gets to just be. #pride #transclimbers #unlikelyhikers #womxnwhoclimb #thisiswhattranslookslike #titlenine #yosemite #backcountrycamping #mountains #transgender*

Binary normativities – men/women – are left outside her perception of the outdoors. For @brieoutside, binaries and uncomfot are left “in the valley” – the places inhabited by human beings. In being in/with nature, she just gets to be. Moreover, “the embodiment of trans time then might be fractured, discontinuous, and layered: At any rate, it goes against the presumption of a linear, enduring sense of self-sameness associated with a cis identity” (Steinbock, 2021, p. 230). Time outdoors is also not linear; the path has many crossroads, and the decisions depend on the changing environment. Queering time in the outdoors will be further analyzed and elaborated in chapter section 7.2. *Queering time-space in outdoor activities.*

- Castor: *Also, sometimes things happen that you don't expect, right? Like when you go on a bike trip, you get a flat tire and you have to stop and you have no other choice but to stop and fix it because it's your only way to keep going. And when you're walking in the mountains, I've had a storm, hail, and you have to stop and get under a hut or find shelter until the storm stops. You can't go on; the outdoors is so uncertain that...it*

*gives us freedom. And somehow there are no fixed rules, right? The only rules are to respect nature, respect what's surrounding you and little else. And a basketball game lasts so many minutes, there are rules to respect, lines to follow, it's really very rigid. Yeah, and in nature, there's nothing structured, I think, there are no lines to... Well, sometimes the paths, the fences of the fields.*

The uncertainty of outdoor activities is here regarded as an opportunity to escape the borders of sports. This freedom offers opportunities for trans embodiment. However, as Steinbock (2021) notes, representation is essential to fight isolation and create community, as it allows “possibility models for being trans” (p. 231). Instagram communities may foster spaces where marginalized communities can create representation.

*@richhomiequinoa (@unlikelyhikers): As a queer, trans, person of color, I was intimidated by the idea of being an outdoorsperson. From what I've seen (whether it's television, online advertising, or even my friends), being 'outdoorsy' is a cis, white male dominated niche. I decided to be the change that I needed to see. I eventually found Unlikely Hikers, @TheGreatOutchea, and a few other social media presences that also pushed for the inclusion and representation that is much needed. Being an unlikely hiker has also done wonders for me as someone who also has depression, anxiety and PTSD. I now feel more at peace and have a newfound closeness with nature that makes me feel connected and instills a sense of belonging.*

Intersectional marginalized positions overlap in outdoor spaces, which have traditionally been dominated by cis, white, straight, able-bodied, thin men. However, @richhomiequinoa also noted that being in nature can provide a sense of perspective and help them feel more grounded and connected to themselves and their body.

At the beginning of this section, I noted that embodiment requires and implies the agency of the subjects to which it refers. The concept of agency challenges the hegemony of the normative, homogeneous and fixed order, creating diverse and heterogeneous ways to relate to each other and to the outside. Thus, the “power of agency translates into a transformative practice to develop other non-hegemonic forms of enunciation of subjectivity from the perspective of collectivity. [...] Queer cultural agency, sexuality and subjectivity act as part of the process of subversion of normativity” (Villaplana Ruiz, 2017, p. 19). Authors such as Butler (1990), Sedgwick (1990), and Valencia (2016) conceive performativity as a queer cultural agency to subvert experiences of symbolic and physical violence or trauma. In this sense, “we can consider queer agency as a performative cultural process in which words, actions and discourses articulate non-normative subjectivities” (Villaplana Ruiz, 2017, p. 19). In the diaries, when asked about what comes to their mind when they think about their gender after being outdoors, gender was seen as not relevant in that space.

- Juniper: *That it operates "in relation to". Although I'm sure it's part of my self-perception and my relationship with myself, I enjoy the fiction that gender disappears when I'm alone in the natural environment. I believe that my fears and desires are not "feminine" at all (according to social gender stereotypes), and I think that is what has made my life non-normative in various ways.*

For Butler, agency is the subject's capacity for action to subvert the norms in the performative process:

If I have any agency, it is opened up by the fact that I am constituted by a social world I never chose. [...] the "I" that I am finds itself at once constituted by norms and dependent on them but also endeavors to live in ways that maintain a critical and transformative relation to them. (Butler, 2004b, p. 3)

In that sense, outdoor activities were often seen as a tool to subvert gender normativities.

- Encina: *It appears to me as one more tool that I can use or not, that can be useful sometimes and sometimes not, that is multipurpose and sometimes I need it for some things, sometimes for others and sometimes not.*

Further, it was frequently noted how participants gained control over their bodies, feelings, and gender through adventure activities.

- Acacia: *It gave me more control over my body and also a new view on (my) gender.*

Butler's theory of agency builds on their conception of performativity, where performativity challenges the norms. As Saba Mahmood (2005) argues: "what makes the structure of norms stable the reiterative character of bodily and speech performatives—is also that which makes the structure susceptible to change and resignification" (p. 162). This is so because the "reiteration may fail, be resignified, or be reappropriated for purposes other than the consolidation of norms" (Ibid., p. 162). The norm is created by the view of others.

- Castor: *Also, when you're on a bike trip, you don't think about anything but surviving, getting to the place, eating, and looking where you're going to go the next day; you read, you write, but you don't think about having a deadline or anything, because you're not going to be able to do it because you're in the middle of nowhere, almost without battery and looking for water. This is when you start to think that things don't really have the importance they have; it's given by us and by people. We decide the importance of everything, don't we? And having the freedom to show your body as it is, you give the importance you want to that.*

What is outside the norm, what fails the norm, is considered to be monstrous (Courtine, 2006; Santos, 2023). For Courtine (2006), a monster "is a genetically unfinished human" (p. 224), while for Santos (2023), "monsters have been represented



as those who do not fit, whose bodies, practices or experiences constitute powerful reminders of inadequacy, unsuitability or wrongness” (p. 77). In that sense, cis-heteronormativity regulates who remains human and who gets disposed of humanity and enters the monstrous realm (Santos, 2023). Trans bodies are often only seen as correct bodies once they reach integration in society, once they’ve gone through “all surgeries” and look more similar to cis bodies – or have cis-passing. Hence, if trans bodies are wrong, are they unfinished humans? Or not correctly finished? For Halberstam (1998),

this rhetoric assumes, moreover, that the correct solution for that wrong and painful body is to move towards the right body, where ‘the right thing’ can easily depend on being white or on class privileges. We could ask ourselves who can afford to dream with a correct body. Who believes that such a body exists? (p. 197)

After all, does “the correct body” really exist?

- Ginesta: *I claim a lot the idea of monstrosity, yes, because monsters don't have to be...yes, everything more oniric, more psychedelic, more...that we could be surprised, but not in a sense of fear or despise, but to be surprised in the sense of 'Wow!', that it confronts us with something different.*

- BB: *Yes, in the end a monster is what is out of the norm, isn't it?*

- Ginesta: *That which can scandalize as well. And if not, we go back again to being normalized, to having everything under control...and whenever something enters the norm, something else will be left out again. For sure. Now, in our context, trans binary people seem to be more normalized. Non-binary people, people who do not want to be neither men nor women, this is more difficult now.*

Moreover, by creating the norm, it is our gaze which creates the monster. Courtine (2006) contends that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this norm was created and consolidated through the exhibition of its contrary, the Otherness. As Foucault (1977b) would say, the monster “is against nature and outside the law” (cited in Courtine, 2006, p. 228).

- Pi Cargolat: *I think me being myself, not accepting the bullshit that is imposed on me, and sharing this information with other people, and showing that other people don't need to follow these made-up rules either, I think this is the fight. I remembered this quote that says: “I'm a transsexual, therefore, I'm a monster”.*

Meanwhile, in the last days, weeks, and months, I keep reading news about new laws and bills against trans and queer people, crafted by right wing politicians who are

advocating to “eradicate transgenderism from public life”<sup>47</sup>. In Spain, a new trans law has passed<sup>48</sup>, which recognizes and depathologizes trans identities, and the backlash from the right and TERF movement is high. In this social and political landscape, trans existence is resistance.

- Pi Cargolat: *I think that the moment I am trans, to exist is a resistance. So, everything I do is a resistance. Maybe I don't know if for the world, for life, I'm always resisting, but in my head, I feel like I'm constantly having to think about this and how to work to stay here. It's a force that you have to always be doing. And honestly, I like it.*

As Sara Ahmed (2017) has claimed: “The monsters will lead the way” (p. 227).

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<sup>47</sup> This quote was said by Michael Knowles at the CPAC (Conservative Political Action Conference) on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March of 2023: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/bvjgnq/cpac-transgenderism-speaker-called-for-eradication>

<sup>48</sup> Ley 4/2023, de 28 de febrero, para la igualdad real y efectiva de las personas trans y para la garantía de los derechos de las personas LGTBI (Law 4/2023, of February the 28th, for a real and effective equality of trans people and for the guarantee of the rights of LGTBI people).

### 5.3. BUILDING SELF-EMPOWERMENT THROUGH OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

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Empowerment is a concept widely used in contemporary feminist thought and activism. It is linked to the development of self-awareness, a process in which power is gained over personal experience. For López Rodríguez (2017), empowerment

is related to the beginning of a process of change aimed at gaining self-awareness of the problems that differentially affect oppressed political subjects, but also of their capacities and skills to participate in individual and collective change. [...]. Processes of subjection are made explicit, possible alternatives are imagined and new strategies are shared to confront daily life from a position in which agency and autonomy are gained. (2017, p. 169)

Here, I will use the concept of empowerment from its personal dimension, related to gaining agency and awareness over our own skills and competences, as well as the structural dimension of the problems that affect us (López Rodríguez, 2017). Through outdoor and adventure activities, participants gain agency over their bodies and decisions and, thus, feel empowered.

- BB: *And what comes to mind when you think of your body in the outdoors or on a trip?*

- Libélula: *What a question full of infinite answers. Well, when I'm traveling, I feel strong and capable and empowered. And it's cool, with my own decision I can get anywhere. It's cool.*

For Díaz Carrión (2012c), “empowerment describes a process that allows shifting from a context of subordination to a context of autonomy” (p. 533). When asked about how adventure activities influenced their gender identity and bodily perception, many experiences were clustered around being in control over their own bodies and being more secure in their gender identities.

- Acacia: *Still confused [about their gender] but I'm happy that I have sport as a way to control certain things. I'm happy that I took my time to reflect and now I'm at a somewhat content point. [...] I still don't like it [their body] but it got better [the outdoor activity]. I have sport to at least try to change what I don't like about it, so that's a good thing.*

Additionally, Díaz Carrión (2012c) argues that “studying adventure tourism from a gender perspective implies an analysis of empowerment processes in order to evaluate progress or setbacks in access to opportunities” (p. 533). Outdoor and adventure activities can provide a sense of self-empowerment, agency, and connection to the natural world that helps face the many challenges of living in a transphobic society.

*@nonbinarynomads: I don't cry often, either in real life or in trail life. Being on testosterone makes it significantly harder for me to make tears so I usually have to schedule a sad movie to get it out of my system. Today was much different. This waterfall made me feel all the feelings. It was so beautiful. So powerful. So perfect. The falls made it easy to hike far- we expected a new waterfall around every corner. The rushing of the water made me feel powerful so I let my feet guide me along the trail, no questions asked. Around 19:00 we made it to the trailhead as the sun was setting. We quickly found the site for hikers at the campground in Cascade Locks and settled into our tent- feet throbbing but hearts full. What a fulfilling day.<sup>49</sup>*



This feeling of power is also enabled through the creation of safe spaces outside. Therefore, people need to have access to safe and welcoming spaces where they can be themselves and feel empowered to live their lives to the fullest. One Instagram participant points this out, while also acknowledging that while being out in nature allows them to build self-empowerment, courage is also necessary for going outdoors as a trans or gender non-conforming person.

*@ritesof.ramble (@unlikelyhikers): My relationship with nature is deeply rooted in my recovery and acceptance. It has always felt queer, powerful, and cracks me wide open every time. My first backpacking trip was a 10-mile trail work endeavor on the PCT. I had no experience or knowledge and cried the whole way until I just couldn't stop singing! It was the first time I'd been completely safe from any abuse or trauma in my life. The first time I was completely, fully myself. It granted me the courage to be honest, to feel my power. The trail has always told me more about myself than I think I'm capable of and I'm forever indebted to it. As I grow in my identity, I realize nature is truly one of the only spaces we can meet each other where we are and move forward in that. That's something really special to me and I'm thankful there are spaces such as Unlikely Hikers, that affirm us to the truth that we \*do\* belong and it's brave as fuck to keep going.*

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<sup>49</sup> [Image description]: A high and narrow waterfall in the center of the photo is surrounded by green plants and moss. At the back there is a forest. On the right side, there is a path that goes behind the waterfall. A fit, white person with a 40-50l backpack is hiking on the path.

The necessity of these safe spaces in the outdoors, and how different people wander through them will be further analyzed in the next chapter, 6. *Unmapping Trans Counter-geographies*. However, as we have seen, personal empowerment through outdoor activities comes through bodily empowerment and empowerment in our identities. This was expressed in almost every participant's diary.

- Hawthorn: *Nearly all the positive things I could say about my body are somehow related to the outdoor activities I do/did. Being outdoors shows me what my body is capable of and that I can be grateful to live in it. Also being outdoors taught me a lot about the insanity of the gender binary and that my gender is definitely not binary.*

Empowerment has also been described as “generated by an interminable resistance and transgression of oppressive sexual and gender normativities” (García Rodríguez, 2019, p. 372). In a normative society where trans people are expected to hate and be at war with their bodies, these experiences show resilience and *euphoria* in our bodies.

- Linden: *Being outdoors was a decisive element of coming into my body and becoming male, overcoming a lot of physical problems (I am also multiply disabled, but by now, most is controlled through my tantric body work). I would say that the mountain walking, less the skiing, has been a decisive part of me finding myself in my body as a trans man. And being out there with others, particularly other men, was very important.*

Gender *euphoria* emerges in trans activism as a play on an inversion of gender dysphoria, a medical diagnosis specified in the DSM-5-TR<sup>50</sup> as “a clinically significant distress or impairment related to gender incongruence, which may include desire to change primary and/or secondary sex characteristics” (American Psychiatric Association, 2022, para. 21). Whereas gender dysphoria, “exists as a medical term, a symptom to be cured to achieve normalcy, gender euphoria indicates something more utopic and possibly more accurate” (Jones, 2023, p. 2). For many participants, feelings of self-empowerment emerged together with feelings of gender euphoria.

- Eucalypt: *I am very comfortable in my body and I am growing more and more confident in my body all the time. I like my body, I think I love my body, and I am treating it very well and looking after it. I feel grateful to have my body and that it is capable and allows me to do the things that bring joy to my life, like this big trip that I've been on. I am grateful to have a body that can sense and experience this incredible world that I live in.*

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<sup>50</sup> The DSM is the “The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders” published by the American Psychiatric Association and it is considered one of the main guides for mental health providers. The DSM-5-TR is its latest version from 2022.

Thus, gender euphoria is being used to describe powerful positive experiences that come from one's own gender (Austin et al., 2022; Beischel et al., 2022; Crewe-Kluge, 2021; Jones, 2023). Unlike gender dysphoria, gender euphoria has been given relatively little attention in research (Austin et al., 2022; Beischel et al., 2022; Jones, 2023), which also relates with Tuck and Yang's (2014) argument of the focus that's given to the study of pain of marginalized communities. Liking our bodies, feeling grateful for our bodies, and feeling comfortable in our bodies is also gender *euphoria*.

- Sandstone: *I feel more focused on what my body can do rather than how it looks or is perceived. It feels tired but strong. I feel much more in my body when I'm exerting it.*

However, there is one participant who, while he feels "thankful for his body" after being outdoors, he also perceives some bodily discomfort when hiking.

- Limestone: *The one thing that gets me while hiking is how my backpack pushes my boobs together and makes it very much so noticeable that I have them. So in that way, I guess you could say adventure activities kinda irk my gender identity (if that even makes sense); at least when I consciously notice it.*

Participants reported different types of feelings around their participation in outdoor and adventure activities, though almost all of them could be linked to self-embodiment and empowerment. Alcornoque compares the satisfaction of doing outdoor physical activity to the one he gets from testosterone.

- Alcornoque: *If there's one thing that physical activity gives me, it's a lot of satisfaction, and it's like a testosterone injection for me, it's incredible. I mean, everything it manages to do in my body...because I was already very strong and very active before, but now I'm even above the average guy.*

In addition, for Woodruff, outdoor activities give them confidence and the ability to work together with their body.

- Woodruff: *I felt very in sync with my body for like, I don't know, I don't usually feel that. But on that hike, I felt I was just part of the whole landscape and part of myself, and my body and mind working together doing this thing, I felt confident, and I don't usually feel confident with my body.*

For Pit Roig, being outdoors means feeling alive, and it is through that feeling that they find empowerment.

- Pit Roig: *I really like the feeling of being alive. I would define myself as a very experiential person, like I really like to appreciate this moment, for example. Oh, I am so lucky to be here and to be sharing this moment with you. Like bringing awareness to these moments, right? Not to do it for the sake of doing it, but rather to give value to it. To say how lucky I am to be able to be here and to be able to do it, to have this*

*freedom. I am a person who needs and likes to feel free, obviously within the limitations that this implies on a day-to-day level.*

This feeling of freedom, meaning freedom from social expectations and constraints, is one of the most recurrent throughout all the diaries, interviews, and Instagram posts. Through on-the-move interviews, I also impacted participants' lives, empowering them and creating livable spaces outdoors for us. Moreover, as I will analyze in the next section, these feelings also permeate our experiential bodily archives, creating joyful memories that we long for.

- BB: *What feelings do you get when you get back home after a trip or hike?*
- Ginesta: *Great anticipation, general excitement. The memory gives me excitement and the desire to repeat the experience.*

Finally, some outdoor trips may also fundamentally change the way we perceive and understand ourselves, as we have already seen above. We experience, adapt, learn, and face new challenges, and we also learn to stop hiding.

- Lionhead Monkey: *Before the trip, I was worried, more by other people looking at me and my body. During the trip, I was worried about the environment, the response of my body to that environment. And after the trip, and also on top of the summit, something changed: I have very different pictures of myself along the trekking: apart from the clothes, at the beginning it was a period in which I was trying not to hide, but to melt among the other members of the group. In the end, I was with this other girl who was the group leader...[she gets a phone call]. So, as I was saying, there's this picture in which my way of behaving is much more assertive; I was not hiding anymore in the group.*

We live in a society – whether we are *in*(doors) or *out*(doors) – in which we constantly confront the views of others, the way they look at us, very often judging the way we are. People are continually categorizing others' gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, physical ability, body type, etc. When referring to gender, this is called gender policing or gender surveillance. “Gendered bodies are subjected to a regulatory regime that enforces the boundaries of properly gendered behaviors” (Doan, 2010, p. 639). How does gender surveillance affect participants when engaging in outdoor activities?





## 5.4. FROM GENDER POLICING/SURVEILLANCE TO GENDER FREEDOM

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Gender policing can be understood as a process by which someone – not necessarily an individual, but also social institutions and governments – attempt to control, force, regulate, criminalize, and punish individuals who express their gender in socially non-conforming ways, meaning that their “behavior and expression fail to conform ahistorical, essentialist definitions of sex and gender” (Domínguez Jr. & Budge, 2021; Dwyer & Valcore, 2021, p. 627). Examples of these are, among others, telling gender-non-conforming people to wear clothes stereotypical for their assigned sex, or to act according to the gender binary rules in order to reduce the discomfort their behavior might create in others. Gender policing happens constantly to trans people, as many of the participants pointed out.

*@nonbinarynomads: I'm having a hard time existing in public places. I feel like people are constantly staring. Noise seems to be a constant. No one respects personal space. "Are you a boy or a girl?" seems to be the only question on everyone else's mind. [...] I find my inner calm in campfires. In nature. In flowers. In birds. Where do you find yours?*

*- Pi Cargolat: Because since I started to transition, one thing I had to get used to is that people look at me and make comments... So, not always bad, but there is always some comment. So, when I see that a person looks at me in a certain way... I already feel a little bit annoyed...*

Gender policing comes directed to us from other people, but not from other-than-human beings. Here, I would like to share a piece of the conversation I had with Pi Cargolat regarding our feelings towards other living human beings.

*- BB: My favorite place to camp, when I go on a bike trip, are the cemeteries. Because they are very quiet at night and they have water, and then I can wash clothes, take a shower, cook...and sometimes I would camp inside, or next to it, or just outside. And always in very small towns, never in a big city, here in Europe there are a lot of small towns. They're very calm, I love it. It gives me peace. Then, it has happened to me that when I sleep in other places, in a forest or similar, I have nightmares, and I dream of being attacked by an animal, or having my bike stolen...but then in the cemeteries, I never have nightmares.*

*- Pi Cargolat: Yes, I think I also like people better when they are dead [laughs].*

*- BB: Yes, they don't give problems... [laughs].*

*- Pi Cargolat: Yes, they don't give problems and they are such a peaceful company.*

*- BB: Dead people don't judge you, they don't have any problems with you....*

When I first started sleeping in cemeteries, I had usually had a rough day both on the bicycle and with human encounters. However, slowly, I began appreciating other aspects of these spaces, such as the fact that they usually had a very nice grass to pitch the tent and that they (almost) always had water. Water is life, and during a bike trip, this accentuates even more. Knowing that I could wash myself, my clothes, the dishes, that I could drink as much water as I needed that night, it gave me safety over my overall well-being. This place of death became life.

- Woodruff: *Mmmm, I think in the city I'm always more aware of how I'm perceived from the outside, and I look at myself in that same way, like, 'What am I wearing? Do my arms look flappy? Does my hair look weird?' And I always look at myself as the one outside of my body looking at me. Then, when I'm outdoors, I forget that I'm gendered, and I forget to look at my body from the outside, I just kind of feel inside of my body. And I feel the movement that my body is doing.*

Michel Foucault's (1977b) concept of surveillance – self-surveillance, gender surveillance, social surveillance, etc.<sup>51</sup> – works similarly to that of gender policing. He argues that surveillance is a disciplinary technology, which instead of punishing the physical body, its aim is “to ensure that individuals assumed control of their own bodies and maintained them in accordance with socially and culturally ascribed schema” (F. Jordan & Aitchison, 2008, p. 332). These processes of gender surveillance also come from within ourselves, for example, when participants feel forced to perform their identities in normative gendered ways.

- Castor: *That there are no people. And nature doesn't look at you in any way, nature doesn't tell you: 'You're sitting wrong, you have to sit with your legs crossed. Or you're not wearing a sports bra, your boobs are showing'. In a climbing wall I do feel more like I have to wear a sports bra. At work I also feel it a little bit, even though I wear wide T-shirts. Not here.*

While “regimes of surveillance are particularly important in shaping the embodied gendered dynamics of urban life” (Magnet, 2016, p. viii), it appears that in the outdoors, there could be spaces where gender surveillance processes are, in fact, relaxed. Spaces in which to escape the constant gender policing that trans people face in their daily lives.

- Eucalypt: *I feel comfortable in my gender or lack of gender identity [in the outdoors]. Gender feels like a concept that is more enforced upon me by the people around me in how they perceive and treat me. I just feel like me, a person, not a gender.*

Could outdoor spaces be, in fact, a less binary gendered space in which to thrive as gender non-conforming people? Or as Doan (2010) asks: “Are there social and spatial

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<sup>51</sup> A detailed analysis of gender surveillance from a Foucauldian perspective was done by Smith et al. in their article “‘Creamy and seductive’: Gender surveillance in flight attendant work” (2023).

contexts that empower the performance of non-binary genders and how do they operate?” (p. 649). Would that be a queer utopia?

Queerness is an ideality. [...] Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing. [...] Queerness is also a performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world. (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1)

Many participants also noted that they prefer to go to outdoor spaces that are remote or at least not crowded. For example, Lobo’s favorite area is the Lapland region, where he does not have to face so many encounters.

- Lobo: *But then, in the outdoors I usually don't have to think about gender because I don't meet any other people, so I almost don't interact with people. And when I was a girl, in the outdoors I could be anyone because it was only the birds, so that was a relief. Nowadays I think it's nice to...I like how I feel, it's close to my body, and when I see pictures of myself outdoors, I like them more than the pictures that are in the city or indoors. Because I feel most comfortable.*

According to Foucault (1977b, cited in Reddy-Best & Olson, 2020), surveillance “contributes to docile bodies and self-surveillance where individuals then control their own bodily and social behaviors” (p. 3). However, “individuals are not mere ‘docile bodies’ shaped by power but social agents that can resist disciplinary power and confront constant surveillance” (Smith et al., 2023, p. 9). Bodies of Otherness – or *rebel bodies*, as Díaz Carrión calls them – construct the space and how it becomes “a map, a surface susceptible to social inscription” (Díaz Carrión, 2012b, p. 4). When *rebel bodies* occupy the outdoors, spaces are appropriated and lived in consequence to them and to the activities carried out in them and, as I will argue in the following chapter, counter-geographies processes may occur. What does it mean for trans people when there are ‘less eyes’? How does it impact our well-being? And our possibilities to relax from discrimination?

- Ginesta: *I think it could be, or I feel that perhaps in natural environments, my body can release more, with more ease. I mean, it happens to me without moving, without doing sports, in the natural environment...because there are less gazes, there are less people...and maybe I can also transform myself a little bit, because if, for example, I am surrounded more by trees and non-human animals, that transforms me too. I mean, like less layers, less performance, maybe...something more simple. And you?*

- BB: *Me too...like...I have to perform less one type of gender or another, depending on who is looking at me, because there are less gazes. And then sometimes it also*

*happens to me, that the people I pass by, we greet each other or, sometimes, when you're on trails in the mountains, you ask about the way, or how much is left, but it's more like helping. It's another kind of interaction than in the city or in the day-to-day life where you live.*

Ginesta connects with being in/with nature, in a way that they are transformed by the more-than-human parts of the space, finding a safe space through their transecological belonging. Moreover, a moment of self-reflection of my own experiences is created when they throw the question back at me. Further, the search for spaces which allow us to be freer comes up again, as the lack of gazes also allows for this.

- BB: *Why do you feel more freedom?*

- Alcornoque: *In the end, there are fewer eyes, there are fewer eyes and here in the mountains there is no etiquette. In the mountains it doesn't matter if you eat with your hands or with a fork...in the mountains there is no etiquette, there are no rules (well, the basic ones), but you have to think less. Outside of a big city you have to think less, yes, everything is more relaxed.*

Participants noted that, when being outdoors, gender became less important. For some, it even disappears, at least until they don't encounter other people. Doan (2010) states that "genders are mutually constituted by the performer and by the viewer in a particular space" (p. 645). In that sense, the scrutiny from each person we encounter contributes to the broader gender policing practices, challenging our gender and destabilizing the fragility of the category (Doan, 2010). When asked about their gender identities when doing outdoor activities, the participants' responses varied, but they all went back to the lack of necessity of the gender category while being outdoors. I want to bring up here a few of the responses, because I genuinely feel that they are all beautiful, and it moves me every time I read one of these. I hope we can all dream of a queer utopia for a moment.

- Palm: *Being on my bike just pushing and going forward, I am able to just be a human and outside of the gender norms pushed on me by society. I am not expected to ride in a gendered way, I am just expected to ride.*

- Juniper: *Gender has not been present at any time. 'Herenow' I only am. I am, and that being is not in relation to any other person who reads me, classifies me, relates to me according to what they extrapolate from their reading. I also do not measure myself, compare myself, place myself in relation to any person 'herenow'. I am aware that my self-perception, of which gender is also a part, conditions me at this moment as it does at all times; but in this context, in the middle of a mountain, I believe that this conditioning is minimal.*

- Eucalypt: *I think my gender is not important, it doesn't matter out here. The only thing that feels relevant about my gender is how my "gender" is perceived by the other*

*people in the campground and their assumptions about me. But otherwise, it hasn't been something I have thought too much about today at all. I believe my gender identity (agender) has stayed the same throughout the day. Only when there have been other people around, and I know they are perceiving me as a woman on a motorbike.*

- Hawthorn: *As most of the time, I am less concerned about my gender while being outdoors. Because trees don't even think about gender. Existing in a world without gender is possible!*

- Lobo: *Somehow, I have, I don't know how to say, but a kind of different connection to the outdoors, maybe it's the trans thing, or that I want to escape to the nature, and that makes my experience outdoors a little bit different. That it's kind of a way to survive in life, to have the option to go to nature and have a relief from having to be a man or a woman, I can be anything. If I compare to some friends who just do outdoors or go to a cafe and it doesn't make a big difference. For me, I need the outdoors to survive...*

These experiences show how relevant access to outdoor spaces can be for the livelihood of trans individuals – further analysis into trans necropolitics will be done in chapter 7. *Affective Politics of Outdoor Spaces*. Moreover, while doing outdoor activities, many participants noted that gender identity is not at the center of every interaction with our surroundings, as Castor also explains.

- BB: *What comes to your mind when you think of your gender in the outdoors/natural environment (like, for instance, right now)?*

- Castor: *I don't think about it much in the natural environment, actually.*

- BB: *Why do you think that you don't think about your gender?*

- Castor: *Because I don't need to identify myself. I don't need to identify myself to be doing an activity in the natural environment. I'm not in a class where I have to say something...or I'm not in the middle of a library, and I have to go to the bathroom, and I have to go to the women's bathroom or the men's bathroom, I don't have that need to identify with a gender. That's the advantage, isn't it? That you can be whatever you want to be.*

As most of the participants regarded, it may be noted that one of the reasons trans people go to nature is to escape gender normativities and expectations. Nature is viewed as a place of refuge and gender freedom for many of us, a place where to be ourselves.

@hollybartlettinh (@unlikelyhikers): *'Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked, in which you can walk with love and reverence.'* - Henry David Thoreau. *Since about the age of 4, I knew I was different than 'the boys.'* I hid. I hid away in a place that was raw and extremely exciting. I fell quickly in love with the beauty of nature. I sought it out as often as possible and wherever possible. As harsh and tasking

*as some find it, I found it peaceful and non-judgmental. I didn't have to look a certain way and there were no mirrors for me to see the stranger looking back at me. I could be myself! I nurtured my wants and needs along paths filled with smells and textures that wrapped my desires up for safe keeping. It didn't matter what I was doing as long as I was doing it in the wilderness. There was so much that I could find to do there! I didn't have to fight anyone to do it. When we think of transgender folk it's often unlikely that an outdoors enthusiast comes to mind! But here I am!*

This feeling of less gender policing also translates for many participants in a process, through which participating in outdoor and adventure activities, a somateca – or bodily archive – is built; a safe memory to return when needed.

## 5.5. BODILY ARCHIVES – SOMATECAS

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In a general sense, archives are collections of materials that are maintained for the purpose of preservation and access. In relation to queer and trans studies, historical material can be found in a wide range of archival contexts, such as newsletters, personal and organizational records, letters, diaries, clothing, academic work, and brochures, among many other formats. The diversity of materials and sources brings a wide range of type of records, such as first-person experiences of queer and trans people, material of organizations, or material that document queer and trans people’s confrontation with the state or police. This also creates tension between materials that are by trans people and materials that are about trans people (Rawson, 2021, p. 44). Rawson (2021) invites us to deepen into critical questions beyond who is represented in archives:

What can (and should) the archival record capture of trans experiences? After all, what is collected in archives are only fragments of lives [...] Particularly with respect to trans history, the challenge of accounting for bodies and embodied experiences in archival contexts presents a formidable obstacle when attempting to document trans lives. (p. 44)

Archives are an important source of trans lives’ accounts, and they contribute to “personal identity development, community formation, political activism, the enrichment of the historical record, and scholarly work that touches upon all of these areas” (Rawson, 2021, p. 45). However, I argue that we also have a bodily archive, which I refer to as somateca. The concept of somateca has been developed by Paul Preciado (2013), who argues that:

The modern subject doesn't have a body. It is a somateca: a dense, stratified somatic apparatus, saturated with organs managed by different biopolitical regimes that determine spaces of action hierarchized in terms of class, race, gender or sexual difference. Somatic practices are ‘general forms of domination’ (Bordieu), ‘techniques of the body’ (Mauss) that function as ‘devices of subjectivation’ (Foucault), as ‘processes of incorporation of the norm’ (Butler). (para. 1)

Building somateca, or bodily archives, through outdoor activities can be a powerful way to deepen the connection with our bodies and the ecological world.

- Limestone: *In my Junior year of high school, my film photography teacher gave us an assignment; create a six-word memoir and mine was: “Silence; my beating heart’s screaming echo”. Most people saw it as sad and lonely, but years later, I’d come to find out that the noises of nature is the silence I’ve been searching my whole life for. I don’t think I could ever really fully write out or explain what mother nature means to me. I’m forever fascinated, terrified, encouraged by, and left speechless by everything*

*she does. Mother Nature literally gives us everything we could possibly need and we continue to take her for granted and treat her like shit. I take no day in the woods for granted. I cherish every step and stop continuously to just stare in wonder.*

With the concept of somateca, Preciado “has taken up the Foucaultian idea that to each model of power corresponds a certain body management in order to invite us to think of them in a different way” (Torras Francés, 2017, p. 163). Saying that the body is a *somateca* means that it is a living political, cultural and historical archive. By doing this, Preciado moves away from the classical idea of the body – a finished, unitary, integral, organic, and functional product – emphasizing its capacity for political action and, thus, as a political agency.

The relationship with outdoor activities throughout their lives was very diverse among participants. While some hadn’t done outdoor activities until after transitioning, for others, it was in their lives since their childhood.

- Juniper: *In my case, I believe that the fact that I grew up immersed in nature has meant that I am not a very normative person in terms of gender, sexual orientation, identity... Like all other areas of our society, machismo is rampant in mountaineering. However, doing activities alone has given me the opportunity to experience (the feeling of) freedom with respect to gender.*

Many participants returned to these archives of feelings and memories outdoors after a specific breakout point in their transitions. It is through their somateca that they create a feeling of home outdoors.

@lady\_nhytefall (@unlikelyhikers): *As a kid, I played in the woods a lot. The trees, hollers, hills, streams, valleys, mesas, and canyons were all places a kid on a bicycle could go and disappear for a day. I grew up and the Wild became a Story of Safety I told myself on the hard nights. This was especially true when I transitioned, because safety, for a transwoman, is as much about invisibility as it is authenticity.*

During the on-the-move interviews I opened the space for an embodied storytelling, in which I encouraged participants to share stories about a special experience in the outdoors, focusing on how this experience felt in their bodies and how they relate with the more-than-human aspect of the space. Through this, I aimed to stimulate and widen their somateca.

- Woodruff: *And I think it was the best hike I've ever had. It was really long, it took me the whole day. It led to a tower, a kind of medieval tower. There were many in the area, and they had this messaging thing when enemies would be spotted on the sea, they would light a fire, and then other towers would also light a fire and it was like...and I hiked to one of the towers and it took so long, but it was so beautiful, like, it was a really hot day and I remember that parts of the path led to shadowing trees, and I sat there and ate an orange and it was beautiful. And then there were all these*



*honey suckles, I think, and their petals were strewed all over the trail, it could have been a wedding...It was just like the sections of the trail were beautiful and rocky, with gigantic trees and roots over the trail, you had to climb over the routes. And I had to go over all these places, and then, when I got through it, there was this vast prairie. It didn't seem real, but it was. And I went up the tower, and I was able to see the sea the entire time because I was on the side of the mountain that was facing the sea, but from there, you could really see it. But then, on the other side, you could see the Pyrenees. And it was beautiful, this was the best hike ever. I had a really great time with myself too, I really enjoyed it.*

These bodily archives of memories that we build when we go outdoors are our archives of joyful moments<sup>52</sup> and, if needed, we might go back to those moments.

- Lobo: *I get relaxed when I think about the view because I can remember the view and I can remember the real images I get from my head. Mostly, I remember a view, with the normal weather, not high mountains but mountains.*

- BB: *What is normal weather?*

- Lobo: *Not perfect sunshine and not rain, but maybe cloudy...and it's like calm. Calm weather. Sometimes, I just take this image from my pocket, and when I want to go to Lapland, I just think about that.*

Moreover, feminist, transfeminist, queer, trans, decolonial, and crip movements “could be reread as struggles of somatic rebellion, becoming part of a process of uprising of bodies” (Preciado, 2013, para. 2) of those who have been excluded and criminalized. The theoretical concept of somateca also allows to deepen into spaces as places of somatic production, establishing critical links with the history of technologies, architecture, cities, or outdoor spaces. It is through our somateca that transecological belonging may also be created.

- Cicala: *I love the rocks! The physical sensation of the rock. Yeah.*

- BB: *What do you like about it?*

- Cicala: *I don't know...touching...everything [laughs].*

- BB: *And is it different with different types of rock?*

- Cicala: *Yeah, maybe, yes. I have a better feeling with rocks that come from my childhood memories. So, 'calcareas' rocks.*

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<sup>52</sup> While not all experiences in outdoor activities can be regarded as joyful, participants highlighted and focused on these joyful experiences. Further analysis on the hurdles and discrimination that participants experienced or feared in outdoor activities will be analyzed in chapter 7. *Affective Politics of Outdoor Spaces*.

Transecological belonging – a concept which will be further analyzed in the following chapter, *Unmapping Trans Counter-Geographies* – through somateca refers to the sense of connection and belonging that trans individuals may experience with nature and their own bodies. This connection can be a source of comfort, strength, and resilience. One approach could be to explore this process of reconnecting with one's body through movement and physical awareness.

*@genderqueer\_hiker: Eight years ago today, I stood on Mt. Everett in Massachusetts, near the MA/CT border, and looked back ~75 trail miles to Mt Greylock in the far distance. I was only a year into medical transition, and I was desperately seeking that same sense of calm and connection I'd felt in the woods as a young child. And as I stood there, I felt a whole-body tingling as I stared in awe at the distance my own two feet had taken me, needing nothing that I didn't carry with me on my back. In that moment, I fell in love with long-distance backpacking and challenging myself to do really hard things really fast. I had walked across the state of Massachusetts on my own for 4 days, solo, backpacking for the first time in my life. And I wanted to do it again and again and again. And so I have. [Round Pushpin] Mohican land*

For a long time, trans bodies, among many other non-normative bodies, have been, and still are, invisible in adventure recreation settings – though this is slowly changing, as many of the Instagram posts will show us throughout the present thesis. Additionally, the outdoors can serve as a powerful tool for indigenous people to connect with their cultural heritage and gain a strong sense of identity and belonging. In this sense, for many of the participants with indigenous backgrounds, the outdoors was also regarded as a way to connect with their ancestors.

*@themaineari (@unlikelyhikers): For me, the outdoors and nature mean connecting with my ancestral guides and finding wisdom in the teachings of other beings. As a member of the Mi'kmaq people, and the LGBTQIA+ and neurodivergent communities, being in nature is where I feel grounded and accepted on all levels. Being an Unlikely Hiker means taking the path less traveled and helping to expand access to these wild spaces. The wild places of my life have shaped who I am today and continue to be vessels of healing, comfort, and learning. My time with nature is always sacred and I honor the beings and wild spaces that nourish my mind, body, and spirit every day.*

For marginalized communities, access to nature and the ability to enjoy it without fear or discrimination is often limited. The experiences with intersecting identities may impact the way one experiences and relates to nature, which may have both emotional and political implications. Emotionally, connection to nature may be a way of grounding oneself and finding peace in a world that can be hostile to your existence. Politically, connection to nature may also be a way of reclaiming space and asserting your right to exist.

@parkerthurley (@unlikelyhikers): *As a queer, black, non-binary trans man, my connection to nature is political, as well as spiritual. Being outdoors means connecting to my ancestors, reclaiming skills and ways of surviving, while taking up space in a body that is often better to me than I have been to him. Connecting to nature and living a joy-filled life in the face of oppression is my deepest act of resistance. My earliest memories were of walking across town, since we didn't have a car until I was 12; my first overnight hike was at a camp in the Catskills - on scholarship. Although I don't often see myself reflected in the white/straight/cisgender outdoor adventure spaces - QTPOC are reflected in the resiliency, beauty and power of nature. Getting outside is a coming home to myself.*

This somateca that we assemble while doing outdoor and adventure activities also creates and builds a space and community for others to come to these spaces. Further, it creates archives of transecological belonging in outdoor spaces.

In relation with Preciado's concept of somateca, I would like to bring in the concept of 'somatechnics', which was coined in 2005 by a group of academics involved with the topic of body modification (Sullivan, 2005, 2009, 2014; Sullivan & Murray, 2011), with the aim to highlight the inseparable character of the body – soma – and the techniques – techne – through which “corporealities are formed and transformed” (Sullivan & Murray, 2011, p. vi). Hence, the concept of somatechnics reflects the poststructuralist understandings of embodiment as practices and discourses that are “inter-corporeal, (trans)formative and ethico-political” (Sullivan & Murray, 2011, p. vi). In this sense, many trans people have a history of medical interventions inscribed in their bodies, which they also carry with them outdoors.

- Linden: *I have myself been through a lot of shit in my years and darn many operations, it is a book-filling story. But I would say by now, I have fully embodied who I am and my body is a beautiful expression of abilities for flow. This is how I have been taking it outdoors. I have always been very outdoorsy, hiking in the summer and skiing in the winter, since childhood.*

Western thought has studied the body as a biological and natural entity, a house of flesh for the superior mind; hence, studies of the materialization of embodied being are valuable (Sullivan, 2009; Sullivan & Murray, 2011). Sullivan (2009) explains that a somatechnics approach doesn't pursue making 'truth-claims' about certain practices of embodiment. Instead, to “ask repeatedly, how [...] particular categorizations work, what

enactments they are performing and what relations they are creating, rather than what they essentially mean” (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 27, cited in Sullivan, 2009, p. 282).

*@nonbinarynomads: I've been spoiled for the last three weeks with the silence of the outdoors and I can feel it both physically and mentally. I've been going to sleep with the sunset and awaking with the sunrise. I've felt well rested, barely anxious, and happy existing in nature with my best friend.<sup>53</sup>*



“So perhaps we can say that queer life writing/trans bodywriting is also somatechnic writing, where lived and embodied experiences and relationalities are central to the concerns of writer and reader both” (Eades et al., 2019, p. 136). Through their presence in outdoor activities, @nonbinarynomads’ embodied experiences outdoors are *writing* their somateca. Consequently, walking outdoors is also somatechnics writing.

- Pit Roig: *Besides, this cloudy day also provides a touch of enchanted forest [we walk a little bit without talking much]. And... I throw the question back to you. Do you think the mountain has influenced or influences the way you are, your personality...?*

- BB: *For me, the mountain is freedom, a place where certain pressures that I feel...that I put on myself or that society puts on me, where all that relaxes, and my body is more relaxed and calmer. Like all those pressures of society, everything is soothed, and for me it creates that bubble space that gives me a little more freedom to be.*

In that enchanted moment in the mountains with Pit Roig, my own somateca was being expanded, stretched and enlarged. A moment in which I could relax from daily societal pressures and normativities. Thus, “queer life bodywriting” (Eades et al., 2019) of our lived experiences happens when sharing moments outdoors. Here, the mountain – and by mountain I could also say adventure – was again regarded as freedom; freedom to be ourselves.

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<sup>53</sup> [Image description]: A white, fit person is at the center of the photo, looking to the left side. There is a sunset light with a big blue sky covering 2/3 of the photo. The person is standing on top of a grey rocky ground.

## 5.6. TRANS/ITIONING OUT THERE

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*Transitioning is a long road, you can't carry a light backpack, but you can get rid of everything that is not going to help you along the way. We will throw away all those expectations that mom tucked in your left pocket, and we will add your compass, not the one dad lent you, but yours. We'll burn the fears at the bottom in the next bonfire to make dinner after the first day of the route. We will wash in the river all those dirty clothes you were told you couldn't wear. We will change the shelter of the closet for a good tent, so that when you wake up, you can see the landscape you have always dreamed of. On this route, you are going to hurt yourself, because no matter how easy the path is, there are bears out there, so put together a good bag of band-aids, tweezers for splinters and bandages, lots of bandages. When you get that customized backpack, remember that the summit is far away, you might as well forget your watch at home. Enjoy the lights that creep along the paths, the fog that will make you focus on short steps, the falling leaves and the new ones you will see growing. Enjoy the path, maybe you will only pass by that place once. Take a thousand pictures because you will love to see how much you grow as you traverse the paths of this route. Maybe someone is emptying their backpack now and will follow the tracks you leave, maybe you will see tracks to follow. The route is yours mate, walk carrying what is yours. Enjoy the journey [Sparkles] – @bruno\_anom*

How do our transitions look like *Out There*? Which spatialities and geographies are being created while transitioning? How does the flexibility regarding gender identity expressed by the participants relate to the flexibility of the outdoor environment? In the same vein as gender, nature is not stable, it continuously changes, adapts, and transitions.

Being and spending time outdoors quite often becomes a reflection activity – it is for a reason that it is one of the sports/physical activities with more books and novels written about it. For some people, a certain hike, trail, or trip meant a turning point in their lives and decisions regarding their transitions.

*@ranger.plattypus: Coming back from my first thruhike made me realize how uncomfortable I was in my identity in "real life" and sent me spinning. It still took a year and a half of reckoning to finally see the pieces click together. And I feel so much better. And I feel so free. And I have so much space to be. It's been a long journey to get here, and many miles lie ahead. I'm grateful for the mountains and the forests and the sunrises and sunsets, for my body that carries me forward and the people I meet along the way. Peace, freedom, and serenity. I am grateful to be trans, to finally*

*understand that I don't have to feel that way the rest of my life. I'm grateful for a new chapter that I get to write myself.*

For many of them, these outdoor activities were carried out alone or in small company, which often translates in more time to think. This may lead to reflections about past and future decisions, also in regard to gender transitioning. Additionally, for Hawthorn, it was also a safe space to go after coming out to someone, as they could more easily disconnect from their devices.

- Hawthorn: *I think outdoor activities were necessary for me to be able to transition. Going on hikes for me always is time to think a lot about everything. It gives my brain time and space to see all the things that are suppressed in daily life because I have to function. When being outdoors, there usually are no people around that I would have to function for, so I calm down and my thoughts are becoming more present. Every time I wrote an outing message to someone important, I went into the forest immediately to not check my phone every second and be in an environment that I feel safe in when I read their reaction.*

Similarly, others marked a certain hike by going back to it as their 'true selves'. Thus, it becomes a place where individuals find ample room to reflect on their lives and make personal commitments or promises to themselves.

@erininthemorning: *This morning I woke up and out on a very particular shirt for a very particular hike. 28 months ago, I did this hike for the last time presenting as "male." I did it in the first shirt I had ever bought from the women's section. I made a promise to myself among the trees that when I got back home, I would become the girl I've always wanted to be. Today, 28 months later, I put on that shirt again. I hiked to the same spot. I fulfilled a promise to that person I made more than 2 years ago.*

As analyzed above, outdoor spaces become, for many of the participants, joyful spaces and archives of memories to return: a somateca – or an archive of bodily feelings and experiences. In being in/with nature, there is space for reflection and self-discovery. These feelings were more recurrent on more-than-one-day hiking activities, in which time and space expands. It is through our exploration in/with nature that we get to reflect on ourselves without fear of judgment from nature.

@roaming\_forests (@unlikelyhikers): *I hiked the Pacific Northwest Trail in 2017 and fell head over heels with thru-hiking. It was grueling and wonderful and helped me tremendously with confidence and self-love. I don't think I would have ever had the confidence to come out as trans, or even bisexual had I not decided to hike those 1200 miles. It's 2 years later now. As of this post, I'm around 6 months into my transition while also hiking the Continental Divide. I was worried, of course, being a trans girl hiking in such remote places and small towns, but for the most part, no one seems to care. I'm just another smelly thru-hiker. [Purple Heart]*

Through the embodiment and empowerment gained and built while doing outdoor activities, @roaming\_forests gained the confidence to come out. While finding a like-minded community is important, adventure activities may also give the space to build the confidence needed to do so. Another recurrent feeling is the comparison of climbing a mountain, a route, or hiking a long-distance trail with transitioning.

*@mannon\_taylor: Swipe left to see the picture of me hiking Mt. Whitney pre-transition after my current picture of hiking this trail. This trail really opened my eyes to what I wanted to do with my life. I don't want to be stuck in life living for my career, I want to be living to see the most beautiful parts of the planet. Hiking up this beautiful trail was also the most difficult physical task I've ever accomplished. Nearly 23 miles of hiking in one day led me to see the most beautiful view of Sequoia National Park. Sometimes, the roughest parts of life really help you get to the most beautiful parts. That's what it felt like to transition. You have to work every day and get hurt by words people say until one day you just find that happiness. Some day, I'll hike the whole trail again and see those mountains, but for now, I have more parts of the beautiful world to see.*

Hikes – similarly to transitions – are not linear. There are ups and downs, we sometimes might have to turn around to find the right path for us. Some days will feel better than others, some days the weather – or society – will make our day easier, other days there will be storms and hazel. For some of the participants, outdoor activities became another branch of their transition processes.

*@trans\_cc: Other than allowing me to access places that I otherwise wouldn't have been able to get to by myself, I've always felt a sort of gratitude towards cycling for how it makes me feel within my body. As a young queer, I was intensely critical – and almost fearful – of my body, and I lacked the confidence to move it or use it for any physical purpose. Maybe it's too saccharine to say so, but discovering cycling almost felt like an extension of my transition: if transitioning allowed me to feel more comfortable in my body, cycling allowed my body to actually feel like something alive in the natural world.*

Doan (2010) explains how “gender strongly influences the ways that spaces are perceived and the kinds of activities that are possible, acceptable, or even safe within them” (p. 649). Here, @trans\_cc recalls cycling as a way to broaden access to spaces that weren't allowed to her as a trans person. In this sense, there is a common shared feeling among participants around being able to be ourselves in nature, no matter what point in the transition they are.

*- Pit Roig: I think that for me, mountains have always been a space of not having barriers or inhibition, so I don't feel that there is a before and after in how I see mountains, in how I feel, since I reaffirm myself as non-binary. That brings me the reflection that, on the one hand, it's cool because it tells me that the mountains are a*

*space where you can be yourself. And on the other hand, it brings me the reflection that maybe my experience is this because I have been socialized as a man, that I already have that privilege, and that surely it's also part of this.*

Outdoor and adventure activities have historically been defined as male-dominated, and our experiences don't escape this HIStory. This perception is also shared by transmasculine participants who felt that transitioning gave them privileges that were not always desired.

- Alcornoque: *Because of my male passing, I don't feel limited in society. In fact, I even feel that many times I have advantages, and I really feel a lot of gender difference with things that I have an advantage in now. So, I don't feel like I'm limited in society. It sucks, it sucks because I gain privileges that I shouldn't have to have, that shouldn't be a privilege.*

However, outdoor spaces are not always safe and comfortable for trans people. Trans individuals may experience verbal or physical harassment, threats, or violence when they are perceived as different or not conforming to societal norms of gender and sexuality. As in any other public space, trans and non-binary people can also face discrimination and violence in the outdoors; this was more frequently mentioned by trans feminine people, who often fear or avoid going outdoors until a certain point in their transition.

@erininthemorning: *I'm finally comfortable enough to go outside hiking as myself. A long time ago when I was first coming out, I avoided physical outdoor activities because the only way I could present was with a wig and makeup. Now my natural hair has grown, and I need far less makeup to get gendered correctly. A year after starting hormones, I'm comfortable just going out with a sun blocking BB cream and mascara. Hiking was my favorite activity pre transition and I am overjoyed to be able to enjoy it again and share it with my son. This summer we are learning plants and identifying them in the wild and it has been healing for my soul after so long in quarantine lockdown. We can still socially distanced because I go to trails that are literally empty. Life is great y'all.*

Which trans necropolitics processes happen here? If we do not conform to binary gender expectations, the outdoors was regarded by some participants as a less safe space. While very often cis men's experiences in outdoor activities are centered around fear of exposure to the elements, for the participants nature was related to safety, while fear came from possible human encounters instead. Some trans feminine participants noted being afraid of encountering hostile strangers in a space where one might feel more vulnerable. This fear, however, reduced when there was a certain kind of passing; always only if there is normativity in their gender expression.



- Pi Cargolat: *Because since I started the transition, one thing I had to get used to is that people look and make comments... Not always bad, but there is always a comment. So, when I see that the person looks already in a certain way... I get a little bit nervous....*

- BB: *And is that something you think about, for example, when you think about going to the mountains, that it could happen to you in the mountains?*

- Pi Cargolat: *Yes, I'm afraid... one of the reasons is because I still don't know how people will react. More due to the lack of knowledge.*

[...]

- BB: *And do you think there will come a point in your transition where you'll feel comfortable or safe going outdoors or camping again?*

- Pi Cargolat: *I don't think so...the way I felt before, I don't think so. I don't feel insecure enough to stop, I'm still eager to keep doing. I'm not doing more now because of lack of opportunity, but I would also look for more opportunities if I were more comfortable. Like today, I loved coming here because I had company. I can't imagine myself doing this alone.*

Pi Cargolat hadn't dared to go hiking since she had started transitioning for various reasons; while she feared strangers' reactions if they identified her as a trans woman, she also lacked a community to go outdoors safely. These trans necropolitics processes will be further explored in chapter 7. *Affective Politics of Outdoor Spaces*, together with strategies to create safe outdoor spaces to support trans and queer people in adventure activities.

Many of the Instagram users documented and reflected on their transition processes and the way they intersected with their outdoor experiences.

*@gaylyfwd: Today I went for a trail run to see how much my fitness has changed post-GDT<sup>54</sup> and woah you guys I'm #feelingmyself. Ran & speed/hiked the 30-something Km Haines Valley Loop and it felt so good I got a little posey [Rainbow. Rainbow. Person Tipping Hand]. A lot of people have asked me what it was like to do such a grueling thru-hike at the same time as starting testosterone. When I started the hike, I thought it would give me an edge and help me build muscle and endurance, but the reality is that it was incredibly hard on my body. Physiologically, I'm a 14 year old boy, I should be eating and sleeping a lot. Instead, I was exercising 12 hrs/day and although I was easily eating double the amount of others on the trail, I was hungry and exhausted all the time, had trouble recovering, and lost a lot of weight. Despite all this, I'm still feeling really good in my body. I'm only on a small dose, and the*

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<sup>54</sup> Great Divide Trail, which is 1123km long.

*outward changes are quite small. Internally though, I feel like my body is my home (broken and worn as it is), for the first time. Now, I'm gonna go back to eating everything in sight.*

From starting HRT<sup>55</sup> during a long outdoor trip to documenting how to safely proceed with hormone administration while being in the outdoors.

@nonbinarynomads: *Trail Shot Day: Trigger Warning-Needles!*

*PCT<sup>56</sup> Day 10 also happened to be Shot Day! Here's a sped-up clip of what those days look like for me. Everything is pretty much the same as if I were to do my shot at home, except I have a mini version of my sharp shuttles box, and I let my Tramily know what's going down so I get some time/space alone. Any questions on the process or what gear I use? I love spreading this kind of knowledge!<sup>57</sup>*



These trans-related routines that may seem ‘simple’ when being in a city get complicated when being outdoors. Sometimes, they may even become a barrier to access adventure activities, especially when we do not know how to deal safely with them when being in uncertain conditions. Questions such as if it is going to be possible to bring all the utensils needed or if there is going to be a clean and safe space to do the procedure arise.

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<sup>55</sup> HRT: Hormone Replacement Therapy.

<sup>56</sup> Pacific Crest Trail, which is 4265km long.

<sup>57</sup> [Image description]: A white, fit person, with a beard, wearing a green t-shirt, and sitting inside a tent is holding a dose of injectable testosterone in front of the camera.

*@brieoutside: My backcountry post surgery dilation kit. I'm not going to lie, this is a royal pain in the well... groin area. I'm 4 months post vaginoplasty. The journey so far has been amazing but not without frustrations too. One of them is the fact that I need to dilate twice a day. No exceptions. So when I was invited to spend 8 days in the backcountry with 5 other women, I gave quite a bit of thought to how I was going to accomplish this task and came up with this kit. It contains the dilator with a breathable cloth cover, lots of wipes, bacteriostatic lubricant, and a small mirror. I also have a bag to carry out all the used wipes and a small towel (not shown) to sit on in my tent. Everything resides in a breathable mesh bag. (The catheters are in case my urethra closes up so I can self catheterize.*

*This is a whole separate saga and unrelated to dilation). I have to dilate for 15 minutes twice a day. This keeps the pelvic floor muscles pliable and the new skin in my vagina healthy. Every evening when we make camp I set up my tent and lay everything out. I do the dilation and clean everything well with my baby wipes. This takes about 25 minutes. After, I'm out of the tent enjoying the sisterhood of the amazing women surrounded by views to die for. First thing in the morning, I repeat the ritual, then*



*out of the tent for a day of hiking. Keeping everything clean is my biggest concern. I'm still processing how it worked and I'll be sure to update y'all with lessons learned. This is something all post vaginoplasty women (and many others) must do. I'd love to hear how other women are managing dilation in the backcountry.<sup>58</sup>*

Being visible and open about these procedures creates representation and gives other trans people tools about how to cope with these medical aspects of the transition outdoors. Some trans-related procedures – such as surgeries – may cause a break in the practice of outdoor activities. When is it possible to go hiking, climbing, or cycling after a gender-affirming surgery? How will our body feel going back to these activities? This knowledge is passed from trans people to trans people, nowadays also through those

<sup>58</sup> [Image description]: The kit described in the post is laid out on top of a rock, at the bottom of the photo. The background is a green and rocky landscape with some steep, rugged, and imposing mountains at the back.

documenting these processes publicly in diverse online spaces, which also happens through Instagram.

*@brieoutside: Last Monday, my surgeon cleared me to climb again!! As I left the hospital, I was already looking at every vertical surface. So, of course, I was hanging from the monkey bars the next day much to the amazement of my kid and worry of my wife. I am excited and a little scared to get back on the rock. I love climbing and teaching climbing even more, but I doubt myself. My body and my abilities post-surgery are entirely unexplored territory. I'm still healing, and there are simple things that still cause many discomforts—bending down to tie my shoes, for example. So what will that mean for me as a climber and guide? I don't know, and part of me is afraid to find out. But mostly, I'm excited because I want to show up in climbing. For women, queer folks, and everyone else who just wants to be safe, feel safe, and have fun. I'm never going to let any arbitrary measure of worth or success keep me out. I'm taking my space because I want everyone to feel welcome in climbing. It doesn't matter where you show up. Yosemite Valley, or the local park: Both are valid and meaningful. Each day I show up, I'm getting a little stronger and a little more confident. On each run, each toe touch, each lift of my kid into my arms revives my soul and reminds me how much I love to move. This new body is so right. I'm in the moment but my heart and my soul are looking forward to that day that we all climb together. #transclimber #thisiswhattranslookslike #singlepitchinstructor #climber #womanclimber #climbing #showup #unlikelyhiker*

Here @brieoutside reflected on her doubts and fears of doing outdoor activities after a gender affirmation surgery. Nevertheless, she declares how going back is also part of making climbing a safer space for others to come, to be visible and ‘show up’. In another vein, some people slowed down or avoided taking certain steps into their gender transition because it would hinder their participation in outdoor activities.

- Woodruff: *I think yeah, because sometimes I would like to wear a binder...would you like to stop here? [there is a bench with views]*

- BB: *It's a bit too windy here, maybe somewhere more covered in a bit.*

- Woodruff: *Yes, and you're not supposed to wear it too long, and also not while doing sports, and I know that there's sports binder, but I also always wear sports bras, and I feel that is kind of similar, because sports bras are already kind of tight. So then, actually, I ended up really not wearing my binder because I like to move so much, and be outside, and do sports so much, that there are very few occasions where I can put it on, where it makes sense and wouldn't be dangerous. And that's actually funny because, actually, outdoor sports are hindering my gender expression.*

Sometimes, transition-related decisions were put on hold because of the difficulty to continue participating in outdoor activities, becoming these for some people more important at certain points in their lives. However, further in the conversation, Woodruff

also realized that maybe, taking some steps would make them feel better with themselves, which would positively impact other parts of their lives, such as in outdoor activities.

- Woodruff: *So, yeah, I think that there are some things that are holding me back from transitioning, but I also think that if I had top surgery, I would feel better about myself. I would feel more like myself, and it would also help me in the areas that I'm most passionate about, like climbing and hiking, I would look more like myself and have my body look more how it feels like when I'm not thinking about it.*

For Woodruff, it is a matter of choosing between putting outdoor activities on hold to take specific transition steps or delaying these to continue going outdoors without having to take a break from adventure activities. On another hand, many participants related to outdoor activities as a means to help them towards transitioning. For them, participation in these kinds of activities, and the changes in their embodiment that come with it, stimulated the conception of spaces for them to be comfortable in their transition processes.

- Lington: *And I think that [going outdoors and feeling myself kind in connection to nature and experiencing acceptance from a group that I didn't know, because we are doing together this activity outdoors] helped me to feel more safe to keep making steps forward into my transition process. And, yeah, definitely there's some significance there, with outdoor activities and feeling good with yourself and your body and your identity and being more open-minded.*

Outdoor activities and nature also influence other more social aspects of transitioning. For Castor, outdoor activities relate to freedom, and it is also that freedom they're longing for regarding their non-binary identity.

- Castor: *I don't know, they [outdoor activities] might have influenced a little bit on that feeling of freedom that I want and need, which is really that feeling of freedom that I've always needed regarding my identity.*

- BB: *Yeah, so maybe that feeling of freedom that you felt in nature is the one that you need with respect to your gender, can it be?*

- Castor: *Yeah, yeah, I just thought about it, not that I was thinking about it at that time. It could be that the freedom that nature has given me has also given me that freedom that I need with respect to my gender identity. That's nice, isn't it?*

Similarly, self-reflection during outdoor activities was crucial for some participants to get to know themselves better and how they feel about their gender identity.

- Redwood: *I definitely believe that cycling has been greatly significant in relation to my transition. Sometimes I reflect, and I think that I likely would not have realized I was trans until later in life if it was not for cycling helping me realize where my body image issues were stemming from and helping me learn to differentiate between that*

*and my dysphoria. Cycling is perhaps the one thing in my life so far that has been a constant, so it has helped me in that way too. Participating in sports as well as being passionate about sports on a personal competitive level, and being a fan of the professional level really helped me discover who I am, and although the path is difficult, I would not change it. One thing that I think shows the way my dysphoria was so entwined with this sport as a trans man, is that I would look up to the professionals, who would shave their legs for “aerodynamics” but mostly to prevent infection if they crashed, and this was the only reason I would do it as a young afab 14 year old, it was the only reason I felt comfortable doing it, and therefore I wasn’t able to easily recognize the now clear dysphoria I had around typically feminine things.*

For Redwood, cycling was a constant activity throughout his life, which had also helped him overall in his transition. Moreover, his relationship with gender dysphoria was sometimes put in relation to his relationship with cycling: When did he do something because of dysphoria and when was it because of cycling? Here, he reflects on the act of shaving legs, which is common in professional cyclists, no matter their gender. While he felt it uncomfortable when related to notions of femininity, it felt comfortable when related to cycling. Similarly, for Lobo, going outdoors was also a space where to feel comfortable. His thoughts about his distinct feelings when being hiking or in the city also encouraged him to take steps towards transitioning.

*- Lobo: Well, when I was not sure about transitioning, if I wanted to do it, I noticed that when I was outdoors, I didn't have to have any identity because I didn't face any other people. So, I was thinking about why I feel more comfortable when I'm in the woods and I want to go there, or I have to go there every summer. And I didn't want to come back from there, so then I understood that in the city I have to be with other people, new people, they have to...they're checking who I am. So that helped me to transition, to make the decision.*

Furthermore, Lobo used outdoor activities and nature as a social space to share with his mother when he started transitioning. This space, uncertain and unknown for both of them, allowed for connection to happen without other people being in the center of the conversation. Instead, the focus was on the environment.

*- Lobo: So, yeah, I also did that with my mother when I started transitioning; we met in the forest, and then it was more relaxed, as you said.*

*- BB: Why do you think it's more relaxed?*

*- Lobo: It gives something to think about...and you get another perspective, I think.*

However, not all participants did outdoor activities before transitioning, because of different reasons. Sometimes, these had to do in some way with them being trans – such as focusing on keeping the job while transitioning or not wanting to be constantly explaining themselves [regarding their gender identity] – while others, it was because of

other life situations – they just didn't have the opportunity before. In other cases, there was a break of some years where they didn't go outdoors, until at some point they felt again comfortable with themselves, and it was possible to put their focus on things that made them happy.

- Bart (on-the-move interview with Lionhead Monkey): *Like once I started transitioning, I went back to nature. Like, I was then comfortable again with myself, and then I was looking again for things that made me happy that I had before, that I had somehow lost.*

Outdoor and adventure activities are very diverse, and so are the experiences in them and the communities they gather. Within the data, there were three umbrella outdoor activities: climbing, cycling – including gravel competitions, recreational road cycling and cycle touring, – and hiking. In hiking, I include all types of summer and winter hiking, camping, thruhiking (long-distance trekking), and similar activities. Even within each of these umbrella activities, we can find considerable differences in the experiences related to the kind of participation – competitive or non-competitive – how society reads us – male, female, queer, trans passing – race, migration background, or the country we live in. As a closure for this section, I would like to highlight Sandstone's following reflection.

- Sandstone: *I've rockclimbed and hiked throughout my transition. It feels relevant given how irrelevant my gender feels when I'm in nature.*

This is one of the most recurrent feelings that comes up in all parts of the fieldwork. Why is it that gender becomes less important when being in nature? What kind of spatial structures are leading to this? How does it affect our mental health? Let's continue digging deeper into these aspects.





## 5.7. WILDING PERFORMATIVITY

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Clothes are a fundamental element in gender performativity, as it is one of the ways people communicate their gender identities. Further, Reddy-Best and Olson (2020) argue that “dress and appearance-related practices while traveling play an integral part of negotiating gender identities in ways that feel authentic to the self for trans individuals” (p. 1). Hence, their relationship with clothes was also brought up in diverse ways by the participants: From something that allows embodiment, comfort, and empowerment to an element that may hinder participation for them because of the discomfort and dysphoria that it may cause.

- Ginesta: *For me, clothes have to do with the body...I mean, I don't separate it, it's not only the nudity of the body. I mean, I think my image is the body. Yes, it's like more things are allowed...I can't say that everything is allowed, but I think that the margin of relaxation, of permissiveness, is wider, it's not as restricted as in the city. In the city I feel that everything suddenly starts 'ffffffiu' and everything is more constricted, and here it's like something widens.*

In outdoor activities, quite often the purpose of clothes is not to look a certain way, but rather to be able to move in a certain way, thus shifting the focus away from it. In relation to this comes again that feeling of freedom frequently mentioned by most of the participants. Not having to think about their gender expression through their clothes is regarded as a liberating feeling. Further, there is a certain gender neutrality in some outdoor clothing, which is generally positively perceived by transmasculine participants.

@west\_coast\_rain: *Favorite thing about skiing so far, I don't look like a girl. [Skier] #serious #sogay #enby*

While this was the general feeling towards clothes regarding outdoor clothing for mountain activities, there were two types of situations that had opposite effects on clothing: Moments of swimming and cycling activities. Moments of swimming were generally perceived as especially vulnerable and often avoided as a whole, whether they were in nature or in a pool with other people.

- Granite: *Yes, the swimming pool is very difficult for me. Both because of the swimsuit and the changing rooms, it's a horrifying experience.*

Swimming is definitely one of those moments where we expose our bodies entirely. While swimming per se isn't necessarily regarded as an outdoor activity – with the exception of open-water swimming or cold dipping –, it is frequently part of an outdoor trip or adventure experience, and it is almost always present when going outdoors during the summer.

- Ginesta: *When I take a swim I think about my body shape, also about how I was operated [mastectomy]. I think they are going to look at me, that's why it's good for me to go with other people who also have different bodies or to swim when there are no people around. Otherwise, I'll be annoyed.*

Many participants mentioned that they avoided swimming altogether, while others shared their strategies to feel comfortable and safe in swimming situations.

@brieoutside: *It seems like a good time to talk about wearing swimsuits. I love this one by Prana. Still, for me, it's only worn at these secret swimming holes where I'm unlikely to encounter others. I really struggled with posting this one. The suit I love. The body in it I'm still learning to like. But I guess I wanted to show that I can be out in the world as who I am right now. There's not a lot of people talking about tucking while getting outside and being active. Climbing, marathons, long hikes, and of course the bane of many trans adventurers, the swimming hole... for the trans women out there like me who want to get out but are shy as hell: swim skirts of course and neoprene! So warm and the thick material allows for a lot of modesty. #transgender #unlikelyhikers #swimminghole #getoutside #sierra #dysphoria #swimsuit #onepiece #queeroutside*

While not everyone avoided swimming, those who didn't were the exception. During the conversation with Lionhead Monkey, we shared a moment of finding joy through swimming, while putting the discomfort on the view of the other.

- BB: *Yeah, one thing that has come up for some of the people that I've interviewed is that when going outdoors, everything is fine, and they like it, and they enjoy it, until there's this moment where everyone goes into a lake or swimming somewhere in a river or so. Even if it's not naked, that's the moment where they're like, 'no...'*

- Lionhead Monkey: *I don't care. Normally, I'm the first to go naked. So the other women are like, okay, if she does that, I can do it.*

- BB: *Yeah, I'm the same. I'm like, if there's an opportunity to jump somewhere and swim, I will do it. With people that I don't know, I'm like, I don't care. I want to do it. And if they're uncomfortable, it's not my problem. It's their problem.*

Similarly, cycling specific clothes are also subject to discomfort, and participants regarded the necessity of creating strategies to deal with them.

- Alcornoque: *For example, I don't wear cycling culottes. And even less for traveling. Well, because you can tell there's nothing there. And it's what we say, surely people don't go around looking, but since I don't feel comfortable, I'm not going to act comfortably...and then it's more noticeable that something is going on or I don't know.*

In road cycling, clothes become even more significant, as it is very rare – I would say almost impossible in Western countries – to see people training on road bikes without

the “proper clothes”. Redwood, who went on a ride with their cycling club, reflects on their experience with the upper part of the kit, the maillot.

- Redwood: *This is something that actually determines whether or not I will decide to go with the club that day or not: I'll wake up, try on various cycling kits and a hoodie on top (because I don't want to wear the top) and then decide if I can push myself enough to go out still, or if I think I will be too uncomfortable. This morning was okay, and at least I don't have panic attacks if I wear a hoodie – that used to happen, because I would become almost hyper aware of my chest, and it would make me want to be physically ill, which kind of sounds weird I guess, but that was my experience. I do hate not being able to wear the full top half of the kit, and that's something that's on my mind when I first arrive to ride with the club, because people can definitely be snobby/judgmental since they don't know the reason I do this. It also sometimes makes me feel really silly, because I have a nice bike, and decent/good kit, so it almost makes no sense to others that the other parts of my gear are really good, but then I'm wearing something that a “casual” would wear.*

In that moment, he feels out of place, and the clothes become the strongest hindrance for his participation in the activity. However, experiences also varied in this regard, and Maple reflected very differently on their experience with cycling clothing.

- Maple: *In general, I feel extremely at home on my bike as it's a sport that doesn't have a strong gender connotation in my country and has somewhat of an equal choice of sport-specific apparel for the “men” and “women” categories, which helps me feel less dysphoric while wearing this type of clothing.*

Performativity “consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's ‘will’ or ‘choice’” (Butler, 1993a, p. 234). Clothes are a tool to perform gender and to create our gender. They may make us feel encaged and limited, but other times they can feel liberating.

@laylafelgenreher (@trans\_cc): *Through cycling I've learned that my womanhood is not taken away by wearing clothes that aren't perceived as feminine or not wearing makeup all the time and I feel so liberated by that.*

On the other side, for most of the participants, outdoor activities provide opportunities for gender expression that may not be possible in other contexts, allowing individuals to dress and present themselves in ways that feel more authentic and aligned with their gender identity. Thus, the experiences with clothing in hiking activities all related to a sense of relaxation and aesthetical freedom, where function is more important than the gender aesthetics of the clothes themselves.

- Castor: *I wear more comfortable clothes, so I don't worry so much about how I act, how I dress, how I talk; it doesn't affect me. I don't think I would be walking in the*

*countryside wearing my mountain pants, which are too big and make me look like I have a bulge, and people would say, 'you look like a guy'. Not because there are no people, but because the people that are in the mountains, in nature, are not going to tell you that your clothes are too big, that you look like a guy...*

- BB: *Somehow the clothes become less important, the style of the clothes.*

- Castor: *And the things you do, if you sit one way or another.*

Castor notes how, when being in the mountains, not only does the importance of clothing change, but many other aspects of gender performativity do, too. Butler (1990, 1993) deconstructs the sex/gender binary – which overlaps with that of the natural/cultural. They delve into the proposal of a performative conception of gender, which develops the idea that gender is constituted normatively through interaction, which naturalizes it and thus invites us to understand bodily materiality as a product of the embodiment of discourses. This does not imply denying an ontological, carnal reality of the body. Instead, it emphasizes that the constitution and understanding of the body is carried out discursively. As Butler (1993a) explains:

If the materiality of sex is demarcated in discourse, then this demarcation will produce a domain of excluded and delegitimated “sex”. Hence, it will be as important to think about how and to what end bodies are constructed as it will be to think about how and to what end bodies are *not* constructed and, further, to ask after how bodies which fail to materialize provide the necessary “outside”, if not the necessary support, for the bodies which, in materializing the norm, qualify as bodies that matter. (p. 16)

Butler’s quote allows us to deepen in the unequal recognition of the value of people’s lives, in which certain corpor(e)alities embody existences that do not seem to matter (or not so much), beings whose human condition is lowered and who are condemned to precariousness and vulnerability. Hence, the importance of depathologization, empowerment, embodiment, and the demand for one’s own diverse and unique body. In this sense, embodiment is a personal and political tool of empowerment, an agentive negotiating practice in the existential becoming of people and communities.

*@elhazzard (@unlikelyhikers): As a non-binary transmasculine person, the outdoors is freeing—I don't have to think about society or its binaries and restrictions. I don't have to think about my clothes or my body. I am allowed to just be el. It is one of the only places in which I see myself reflected. My relationship with hiking, camping, and photography in nature has become one of self-preservation, healing, and anxiety-management. [Fallen Leaf]*

## 5.8. OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AS AN ACT OF SELF-CARE AND THERAPY

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Many researchers have found that spending time in nature and doing physical activities in the outdoors have many physical, psychological, spiritual, and emotional benefits (Boniface, 2006; Kling et al., 2020; Meyer, 2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013; Mitten & D'Amore, 2017; Stringer, 1997). This was also reported by many participants, who not only got embodied and empowered through outdoor activities, but they also used these to take care of their emotional well-being and mental health.

- Deer: *I have a trauma background, and when I deal with great amount of fear in my daily life, climbing has taught me how to push it aside and focus on what is actually happening. That I just have to practice, I just have to focus. And when I go in my life and I have these like things that bring me completely somewhere else, it's like the same amount of adrenaline.*

In that sense, outdoor activities were also regarded as a way to meditate or even understood as therapeutical by many participants.

- Savin: *It calms me and gets me out of my head. When I feel anxious, running outside is like a meditation. I focus on my breath, on the trail under my feet, the river beside me, the trees above me. I try to see how many different birds I hear. If I start to spin out mentally about feeling unsafe, I focus on the natural world around me and it calms me.*

@ranger.plattypus: *This is my therapy. This is my safe space.*<sup>59</sup>



<sup>59</sup> [Image description]: A mainly grey mountain landscape occupies the view of the photo. There are some green bushes in the low areas too. The sky is blue and a person with a big backpack and a trekking pole is hiking downhill towards the valley.

Furthermore, outdoor activities may not only be used as therapy or meditation, but some participants also perceived them as what saved their lives.

*- Limestone: At the beginning of starting T, I was really hesitant about doing anything outdoors or going anywhere in general by myself for fear of what could happen to me for being trans. I kinda got lucky with the pandemic and the mask mandate because it meant I had a reason to not really draw attention to myself, and I'm not one to want to be the center of attention. But eventually, I got really depressed and tried to kill myself and the only thing, the one solid thing that helped me get better and continues to help me feel better is wandering in the woods and seeing all Mother Nature has to offer.*

The Instagram community was found to be especially avid to share their experiences with mental health and how outdoor activities had helped them. Some of these mental health issues may be related with the fact of being trans in a transphobic society, while others don't. Either way, the trans population, and especially trans and gender-diverse youth, has a higher risk of suicide, psychological distress, and mental ill-health, as demonstrated by research internationally (Austin, Craig, et al., 2022; Calderon-Cifuentes, 2021; Herman & O'Neill, 2021; James et al., 2016; Strauss et al., 2017; Virupaksha et al., 2016; Warner, 2007).

*@beauback\_mountain: Some of you may know, but most of you probably don't. I've struggled with killing myself and suicide since the age of 12. It dominated my life. I didn't know anything else outside of my own fascination with death, nor could I even try to be outside myself. Every year I didn't think I was going to make it to the next. More than 3 times I went so far as to write dozens of letters to friends and family stating why I was doing it, and how sorry I was for the pain it would cause. But something changed this year...somehow I reached 35. Hiking, backpacking, and connecting with the earth helped me get there. That's why it's so important to me to just GO. When I stay stagnant, the thoughts start to creep in...but not like they used to. I'm not saying I don't fear the past coming back to haunt me 100 fold, but I've come to terms with my body, my identity, and looking forward to each day as it comes. Anyways, I just wanted to let y'all know this is the first year of my life. [Rose]*

One of the largest surveys on trans population worldwide, the U.S. Transgender Survey, found that 81.7 percent of respondents reported ever seriously thinking about suicide in their lifetimes, while 40.4 percent reported attempting suicide at some point in their lifetimes (James et al., 2016). Similarly, a survey of Australian trans and non-binary youth showed that 82.4 percent of respondents experienced suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives, 79.7 percent have ever self-harmed, and 48 percent have attempted suicide (Strauss et al., 2017). Research has demonstrated that feeling isolated, lack of support, lack of positive representation, society's LGBTQ+phobia, and a social environment that stigmatizes, marginalizes and discriminates against trans and queer

people are factors that result in an increased ill-mental health amongst trans population (Austin, Craig, et al., 2022; Calderon-Cifuentes, 2021; Herman & O’neill, 2021; James et al., 2016; Strauss et al., 2017; Virupaksha et al., 2016; Warner, 2007).

*@breezy\_\_does\_\_it (@unlikelyhikers): I spend my time in the outdoors to seek refuge from a world that doesn’t always align with my needs or temperament. I am a non-binary queer person who lives with chronic anxiety. Persistent anxiety means I’m usually at war between achieving my desires and giving into fears, and it is difficult for me to be at peace. Most often nature is my remedy, and hiking in particular, has been my most generous teacher. Climbing up a rocky ridge, or winding through a forest of gigantic Sitka spruce draped in mist can be the magic portal to my inner-strength, and damn, I do have a lot of it when I need it. Even so, inhabiting nature is not always a safe space for many of us simply because of the way our bodies appear, our race, our socio-economic standing or our perceived abilities. I believe the outdoors is a deeply political place and I passionately work with #unlikelyhikers to foster a community that supports vulnerable folks, encourages diversity and radically embraces an inclusive outdoors community. Everyone deserves to feel at home in the outdoors.*

While doing outdoor activities was used by many participants to take care of their mental health, it was also noted that it is not always a safe space. Affinity groups are one of the strategies participants use to create safe spaces for everyone outdoors. Engaging in outdoor activities through affinity groups can provide opportunities for trans individuals to connect with like-minded individuals and form supportive communities – I will further elaborate on this matter in chapter section 7.5. *Finding community in outdoor recreation*. These communities can help to foster a sense of belonging and provide a space for individuals to share experiences, offer support, and build relationships.

*@claire\_anom: Climbing has been pretty all consuming for me recently, it’s a way to connect to nature and disconnect from society (it’s very privileged), it allows me to momentarily shut off my - also all consuming - anxiety and just be. Climbing, and even just daydreaming of climbing, has gotten me through some pretty shitty and low moments, and has been a vehicle to expand my community and family.*

The necessity of creating outdoor recreation spaces that are safe and inclusive for trans and gender non-conforming people is, therefore, a matter of building livable lives for trans communities.

*@west\_coast\_rain: I love that my body lets me do hard things. Like trail running. And climbing mountains. Growing up queer and non-binary in a conservative America was not a fun time. As an adult, I’m safe enough. But years later I’m still healing from trauma and dealing with a lot of anxiety. Training myself to do increasingly harder and scarier things outside is one of the best ways I’ve found to heal myself. To feel*

*calm, safe and in control more of the time. It's one of the reasons I feel so driven to make spaces for queer folks in climbing and mountaineering. Maybe we can all heal a little bit....together. [Red Heart] #natureheals #sendwithpride #queerhiker #nonbinary*

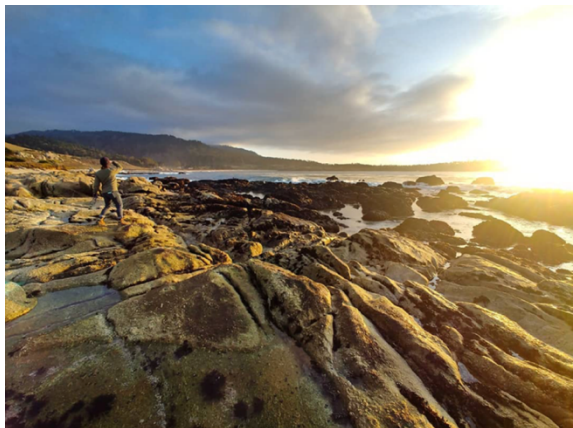
Moreover, going outdoors is not only meditation, therapy or a way to take care of ourselves, but also a way to find transecological belonging. For many trans individuals, finding a safe and accepting space can be challenging. The outdoors may offer a more fluid and open space where individuals can express themselves and connect with nature in a way that feels authentic and empowering.

- Bart (diary): *When being outdoors, I like listening to the mountains, forests, or lakes. I enjoy listening to the kind of silence they create, I bring them into myself, and my mind and body feel relaxed from the everyday stress.*

Transecological belonging emphasizes the importance of recognizing the interdependence between humans and nature and working towards building more equitable and sustainable relationships – this will also be further elaborated in the following chapter 6.

Lastly, @nonbinarynomads shared an Instagram reflection that perfectly summarizes this first chapter, which I would like to use as a closing quote.

*@nonbinarynomads: Nature is such a healing space for us. It's a place without judgment. It's a place that lets us do what we want. It's a place for us to exist without questions and worry. It's a place for us to come and go. It's our safe haven. And for that, we will always be thankful. #nonbinary #gay #queer #diversity #trans #transgender #ftx #fin #theythem #hiking #adventure #optoutside #queersinnature #staywild #optoutside #outsidewithpride #unitedbynature #safespace<sup>60</sup>*



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<sup>60</sup> [Image description]: The photo shows a sunset at a rocky beach. There are some grey clouds in the center. A person is facing backwards, and it appears to be moving – almost like throwing a stick. Some of the rocks look like a sliced bread.



## INTERLUDE – I JUST WANT THE ATTACKS TO STOP FOR A MOMENT

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*We are entitled to our anger in response to this oppression: our anger is a message to ourselves that we need to get active and change something in order to survive. So we resist the oppression, the violence – we resist the tendency of the culture to see us as a joke. – Kate Bornstein (1994, p. 81)*

Yesterday, 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, I ran my first marathon. I ran for the first time in the non-binary category<sup>61</sup>. I ran for all the trans people that are being excluded from sports.

Earlier this week, the World Athletics announced a new policy<sup>62</sup> by which all transgender athletes who have gone through “male puberty” are not allowed to compete in the women’s category, while at the same time stating that “there are currently no transgender athletes competing internationally in athletics and consequently no athletics-specific evidence of the impact these athletes would have on the fairness of female competition in athletics” (para. 37). A year ago, the FINA<sup>63</sup> passed a similar policy<sup>64</sup>. There is, however, a scientific review of literature on the participation of transgender athletes in competitive sports between 2011 and 2021 that states that “available evidence indicates trans women who have undergone testosterone suppression have no clear biological advantages over cis women in elite sport” (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2023, p. 5). The World Athletics policy will become effective in four days, the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, on Transgender Day of Visibility.

In the past, I’ve competed in the female category during my childhood and adolescence. Later, in my twenties, when I started testosterone, I competed in the male category. Now, after two years without taking testosterone – and low dosing again since one month ago – I don’t even know where I should compete. When I saw that the marathon in my city offered a non-binary category for the first time, I decided to sign up. My longest run before training for the marathon had been 13km, and 10km in a

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<sup>61</sup> While I see the necessity of including non-binary categories in popular sports, I also don’t see them as a ‘solution’ for professional sport.

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.worldathletics.org/news/press-releases/council-meeting-march-2023-russia-belarus-female-eligibility>

<sup>63</sup> International Swimming Federation, known since 2023 as World Aquatics.

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/19/sports/fina-transgender-women-elite-swimming.html>

competition. It was an outrageous and passionate decision, but I knew that if I would ever race a marathon, it had to be for a good reason: trans inclusion and visibility in sports.

Meanwhile, in the United States, hundreds of laws against trans rights are being passed, many of them this same week. Many of them target trans girls' participation in sports – and by girls, I mean minors. Many other criminalize access to gender-affirming care for minors – and adults. These bans would make it impossible for any trans girl to ever compete in sports, as access to puberty blockers is becoming more difficult and they are forcing trans girls to go through male puberty. It is incoherency at its highest level. On the other side, Spain approved its new 'trans law'<sup>65</sup> just one month ago, by which trans people do not need any medical or psychological diagnosis to get their gender mark and name legally changed. However, not even this seems like a win in the current state of attacks. With the new law, a lot of hate is coming towards us, even more than before<sup>66</sup>, also from so-called feminists, a.k.a. TERF<sup>67</sup> (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist).

Feminism, that movement where I grew as a person and activist, where I learnt that I don't need to follow gender norms, where I got empowered. Without feminism, I wouldn't have been able to transition, and yet, some feminists claim that trans people don't deserve rights.

I will not dwell here into details of why these policies are unjustified and transphobic – that is a matter for another whole thesis. However, these policies are creating sports spaces that are unsafe for trans and non-binary people. While the activities discussed in this thesis are mainly non-competitive – with some exceptions, because many of these sports also have competitive options and spaces – these policies do create an atmosphere of exclusion of trans participation in all physical activities and at all levels. For many of the participants, sports and physical activities have been and are fundamental for their well-being, even crucial to take certain trans-related decisions. Thus, I would contend that excluding trans people from sports is another form of trans necropolitics.

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<sup>65</sup> Ley 4/2023, de 28 de febrero, para la igualdad real y efectiva de las personas trans y para la garantía de los derechos de las personas LGTBI (Law 4/2023, of February the 28th, for a real and effective equality of trans people and for the guarantee of the rights of LGTBI people).

<sup>66</sup> There is this idea that is currently being discussed within some trans activist groups of "the safety of being ignored", which relates to the safety that existed in the past – especially for trans women in sports, for example – by simply not being on the radar of cisgender people, politicians, and media.

<sup>67</sup> Also called FART: Feminism-Appropriating Reactionary Transphobe.

## 6. UNMAPPING TRANS COUNTER-GEOGRAPHIES

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Feminist and queer studies have long been interested in the study of spaces (K. Browne, 2006; K. Browne et al., 2010; Doan, 2007, 2010; Gorman-Murray et al., 2008; Halberstam, 2005; Johnston, 2016; Kilgour, 2007; March, 2021; Misgav & Hartal, 2019; Nash, 2010; Nash & Gorman-Murray, 2017; Razack, 2002; R. Rosenberg & Gilliam, 2021). Different strands of geographies have come out of these studies – such as feminist geographies, geographies of sexualities, queer geographies, and trans geographies –, which have been defined by diverse scholars (e.g., K. Browne et al., 2010; March, 2021; Nash, 2010). However, these strands need to be understood not as separated boxes without connection, but rather as imbricated and interconnected.

Feminist geographers have explored the dichotomies between how men and women experience space (K. Browne et al., 2010; Doan, 2010) arguing that space is gendered and that this gendering has profound consequences on the ways that it is constructed and lived. Geographies of sexualities have illuminated the social and political development of gay and lesbian communities in urban spaces, though keeping a binary view on identities and positions (K. Browne et al., 2010; Nash, 2010). “Queer geographies focus on how non-normative sexual practices operate to both queer space and constitute various formulations of queer subjectivities” (Nash, 2010, p. 581). Thus, queer geographies have focused on the interactions between subjectivity/performativity, experience/embodiment, sexual desire and spatial organization. They have paid special attention to queer urban spaces, criticizing that the categorization of human subjectivities is more complicated than the binary categories of man/woman and heterosexual/homosexual (Nash, 2010).

Meanwhile, trans geographies have critiqued and complicated the work of both geographies of sexualities and queer geographies (March, 2021). Geographical inquiry has yet not fully engaged with the experiences of those who transgress binary normativities – with some exceptions (e.g., Abelson, 2016; K. Browne, 2004; K. Browne et al., 2010; Doan, 2007, 2010; Johnston, 2016; March, 2021; Nash, 2010; R. Rosenberg & Gilliam, 2021). However, Rosenberg and Gilliam (2021) have claimed that there are some specificities about trans geographies, which “center the lived experiences of trans people across space and time by focusing on the relationships between trans people and the spaces and places of their everyday lives” (p. 341). One of the most relevant contributions of trans geographies is their understanding of the feminist geographical concept of gendered spaces, debunking its dichotomic vision, complicating “how gender functions in, and creates, sociospatial processes with unique challenges for, and experiences by, trans people” (Ibid., p. 342). “Far too often, we are viewed as subjects to be counted and mapped without consultation” (Ibid., p. 342). Hence, trans geographies

also question depictions of and discourses about trans people situated in a traditional cis-centric research environment, challenging institutional power structure by using methodologies such as autoethnography.

Nevertheless, trans geographies have focused on how trans people experience urban spaces (Abelson, 2016; Doan, 2007; C. R. Johnson et al., 2016; Misgav & Hartal, 2019; Nash, 2010; Nash & Gorman-Murray, 2017; Weston, 1995, 2001) – in, for example, different ways than cisgender queer people. Some of the sites that have been most researched in trans geographies have been bathrooms, followed by prisons and queer urban spaces, specifically gay villages, bars and clubs, and bathhouses (Rosenberg & Gilliam, 2021, p. 343). Hence, trans geographies have analyzed the experiences of trans people in urban spaces, with a vast majority of them situated in the Global North. Rosenberg and Gilliam (2021) point out the huge gap in the experiences of trans people in the Global South and, I would add, outside the metropolis and in outdoor spaces.

Trans geographical scholarly work has also focused on trans mobilities – referring to the mobility and migration of trans subjectivities across geographical borders – and identifying mechanisms of state surveillance. One last issue that has concerned trans geographies is the particularities of trans people inhabiting rural spaces, though research centers on the experiences of queer and trans people in “rural America” (Abelson, 2016; Gray et al., 2016; C. R. Johnson et al., 2016). In addition, Rosenberg and Gilliam (2021) note that only the experiences of white trans men in rural spaces have been examined. However, as some authors point out, this work “has not yet engaged closely with trans experiences of rural space” (Abelson, 2016, p. 1538). Moreover, there is still a common belief that rural spaces are hostile and violent places for queer and gender non-conforming people (Gorman-Murray et al., 2008; Misgav & Hartal, 2019). Therefore, more attention needs to focus on trans experiences outside urban spaces in the Global South and outside of North America.

Doan’s work on the tyranny of gendered spaces (2010) is central in trans geographies. For her, “those who transgress gender norms experience a tyranny of gender that shapes nearly every aspect of their public and private lives” (Doan, 2010, p. 635). This tyranny refers to a form of oppression and an exercise of power. Gender policing instructs meanings over those who dare to challenge the hegemonic gendered expectations, affecting all aspects of trans people’s experiences and spaces in which we live and move. Moreover, trans geographical work pays attention to and analyzes how spaces and bodies are mutually constructed (Doan, 2010; R. Rosenberg & Gilliam, 2021), how spaces are performed through gendered interactions, and how the presence of trans people is mediated through spaces. Yet, there is still “little consideration of how variations in gender identity and performance can change the subjective nature of gendered spaces” (Doan, 2010, p. 638). Finally, some authors also note that trans geographies center the work and voices of trans scholars as the producers of knowledge

(K. Browne et al., 2010; R. Rosenberg & Gilliam, 2021; Stryker, 2006). As Browne et al. (2010) contend, trans geographies care about “the challenges and resistances trans people experience in the spaces and places they use, create and reject” (p. 573), but as I will show here, they also cherish the spaces in which where we thrive and flourish.

Lastly, there is a tendency in queer and trans geographies to create an imaginary of two distinct options: One about freedom in the cities and another about intolerance and violence in rural spaces. Nonetheless, “the gay imaginary is not just a dream of a freedom to be gay that requires an urban location, but a symbolic space that configures gayness itself by elaborating an opposition between urban and rural life” (Weston, 2001, p. 274). This urban versus rural dichotomy “is written throughout the history of queer studies as well as through the popular and activist queer imagination” (C. R. Johnson et al., 2016, p. 12). This thesis aims to take a closer look at spaces that are neither urban nor rural but instead, those outdoor and natural – as in nature – spaces where we also live and thrive as trans persons. Thereby, it challenges the metronormative (Halberstam, 2005) discourse by which queer and trans people can only be and express their true selves in the cities.



## 6.1. CHALLENGING METRONORMATIVITY

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*Some queers need to leave home in order to become queer.* – Jack Halberstam (2005, p. 27)

Historically, queer communities have thrived and sought refuge in urban areas. For many of those who identify as queer, discovering a sense of acceptance and community involved relocating to a city and connecting with fellow queer individuals (Bredford, 2020; Crawford, 2017; Halberstam, 2005; Hogan, 2020; C. R. Johnson et al., 2016; Misgav & Hartal, 2019; Rubin, 1998). Most work has been focused on the experiences of queer people migrating to- and inhabiting the cities (Gutiérrez García, 2008; Guzmán, 1997; Halberstam, 2005; Hogan, 2020; La Fountain-Stokes, 2004; Martínez-San Miguel, 2011; Moreno Acosta, 2013; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016, 2017; Saz, 2020; Zúñiga Rodríguez, 2020). As such, “spatial metronormativity is skillfully harnessed in both popular and academic understandings of queer lives outside the city” (C. R. Johnson et al., 2016, p. 13). As I discussed in the introduction to the thesis, this phenomenon has also been conceptualized by Manuel Guzmán (1997) as *sexile*, which serves as a means to redefine and reimagine the concept of space. *Sexile* is characterized by the migration of queer individuals from rural areas to cities in search of secure environments where they can be themselves without fear of discrimination or prejudice (Guzmán, 1997; Zúñiga Rodríguez, 2020). In contrast, some scholars have already noted that LGBTQ+ people are “prone to experience homophobia and un-belonging there [in urban spaces]” (Gorman-Murray et al., 2008; McGlynn, 2018; Misgav & Hartal, 2019, p. 7). Hence, I assert that many LGBTQ+ individuals discover a sense of security and comfort in natural surroundings, despite encountering obstacles when attempting to access these areas.

*@gaylyfwd: I grew up in an outdoorsy family, with a river guide dad and a mountaineer mom but spent my formative years immersed in urban queer scenes searching for some kind of idealized belonging. After a decade of disowning outdoor adventure though, boy howdy, I came back with a vengeance! On my first thru-hike, I stayed in the closet as trans. I was hiking solo, far from my familiar urban queer community. I didn't want to answer prying questions about my body, or deal with transphobia out there on my own. It ended up being a really lonely hike. So, last summer on the #greatdividetrail, I decided to screw it and bring my whole trans self to the trail, and you know what? It wasn't that bad. I answered a lot of questions, but it brought me closer to people, and I finally got to experience belonging without sacrificing either part of who I am.*

Halberstam (2005) states that “the rural/urban binary reverberates in really productive ways with other defining binaries like traditional/modern, Western/non-

Western, natural/cultural, and modern/postmodern” (p. 36). Some authors have recently started working to break this binary and linkage between queers in rural spaces and violence:

For so long, the only narrative we hear about concerning queers living in rural areas is one of violence—and while I think that’s an important story to tell, it’s not the only one. I’m interested in stories that break open that simple binary—that cities are safe and rural spaces are unsafe for LGBTQ folks—and explore the many ways one can be queer and exist in rural or natural spaces. (Carter Sickels, email message to author, June 21, 2016, cited in Hogan, 2020, pp. 129–130)

However, I would argue that in the urban/rural dichotomy, the outdoors can be both and neither; thus, it could be perceived as a liminal space. For Sherene Razack (2002), a liminal space “is the border between civilized and primitive space, the space inhabited by savages whom civilized men vanquish on every turn” (p. 13). Loren March (2021), who has widely studied liminality through the lens of trans and queer geographies, has described liminality as:

A complex border-space or a mediator between points, constituted by an exteriority [...]; a kind of in-between where life as usual is suspended, or a socio-spatial rift where new kinds of collective politics and forms of citizenship are produced; new hybridities, meanings and ways of being emerge; and gaps in existing frameworks allow for both subversions and abuses of power. (pp. 456–457)

Sometimes, outdoor and adventure activities can happen in spaces that reverberate urban spaces, such as ski resorts. In contrast, others happen close to rural areas, where we must interact with what sometimes is perceived as “hostile population” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 22).

*@nikkik\_smith: [...] While these beautiful spaces remain the same, the people in and around them are not always as accepting of me or others who don't fit the typical outdoor narrative. In order to travel to climb, hike or take photos, I have to stop in places to get gas or food that are not used to seeing a transgender person. I've been harassed on hiking trails, openly made fun of in stores and restaurants and felt completely alone and afraid while trying to use the restroom at a truck stop bathroom on the way to and from outdoor trips.*

Liminality “often translates into space that is subversive or alternative, presenting opportunity for transgressive behaviour” (March, 2021, p. 457). Nevertheless, the outdoors might be something different than urban or rural spaces, and in that way, it could break away from this dichotomy, thus, challenging queer and trans metronormativity that “construct the city as where queers *do* queerness, and the country



is where things *are done* to queers” (Crawford, 2017, p. 917). However, are cities always a safe haven for queer and trans people? Are they “primarily, exclusively, or unambiguously liberating for non-normative people” (Crawford, 2016, p. 131). On that account, while outdoor and natural places are public spaces, many participants find refuge from constant stares and gender surveillance processes in these spaces.

*@nonbinarynomads: I remember thinking, "I'm really excited for the noisy crackle of the flames and the smell of the burning wood" while I was making a fire on our last trip.*

*We've been back in society for almost a week now, and I'll admit, it's been a rough week. Since we're saving our time off for this summer's adventure, we haven't been backpacking as much as we normally do. It's taking its toll.*

*I'm having a hard time existing in public places. I feel like people are constantly staring. Noise seems to be a constant. No one respects personal space. "Are you a boy or a girl?" seems to be the only question on everyone else's mind.*

*Coincidentally, the theme for this week's episode of @outtherepodcast is #innercalm . I find my inner calm in campfires. In nature. In flowers. In birds. Where do you find yours?*

In the introduction to “De-centering Sexualities: Politics and Representations beyond the Metropolis” (Phillips & Watt, 2000), the editors argue that research on geographies of sexualities has been centered around urban spaces. In this context, rural queer studies emerged to reject the notion that rural areas are inherently and inevitably violent, and it has persistently questioned the belief that the rural environment is an inhospitable place for queer individuals to reside (Hogan, 2020). Additionally, these debates have developed the concept of metronormativity, conceptualized by Halberstam (2005):

This term reveals the conflation of 'urban' and 'visible' in many normalizing narratives of gay/lesbian subjectivities. Such narratives tell of closeted subjects who 'come out' into an urban setting, which in turn, supposedly allows for the full expression of the sexual self in relation to a community of other gays/lesbians/queers. The metronormative narrative maps a story of migration onto the coming-out narrative. (p. 36)

*@parkslucifer: When I was growing up, my family went hiking every Sunday morning instead of going to church, and I loved it, but as I got older, life got a lot more complicated and I started spending less time in the woods. When I was 17, I did what all rural queers are supposed to do and moved to NYC. For nearly seven years, I rarely went hiking. But last year I returned to the woods and mountains that I love so dearly by thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail, which had always been one of my dreams. However, my reception as a queer and transgender nonbinary person wasn't what I*

*wanted it to be. Other hikers were uncomfortable when I mentioned my identity, and many of those that I asked to use the correct pronouns didn't even try. I completed my hike successfully and had an amazing journey, but I know that it would have been a lot better if trail culture was more accepting.*

Many participants related to this metronormative narrative that suggests that “there must be something wrong with the gay person who does not migrate to the city” (Hain, 2016, p. 165) or even blames those queers who do not leave for the city for their own death (Soderling, 2016, p. 129). However, I contend that engaging in outdoor activities challenges the notion that queer and trans individuals exclusively belong in urban settings. As Puwar (2004) notes, “by occupying spaces they are not expected to be in are constantly challenged by a look which abnormalises their presence and locates them, through the workings of racialized framings, as belonging elsewhere” (p. 41-42). Hence, our presence in the outdoors defies expectations of the spaces trans people inhabit.

*- Juniper: I felt the need to read, think, and experience gender during a pivotal moment in my life when I became closer to the city. All interpersonal relationships are influenced by gender, and to believe that mountaineering or climbing are not, seems too naïve to me. However, it is true that living alone in the mountains for a long time has allowed me to live outside of gender constraints. When I get closer to the city, the issue of gender becomes important again in my life. When I spend more time in the mountains, its importance fades away and I stop paying so much attention to it. It's automatic, and I've noticed it happening to me again and again.*

Halberstam (2005) explains that the metronormative account of migration from a rural area to a city is a spatial narrative that portrays the individual moving from a place of suspicion, persecution, and secrecy to a more tolerant environment (p. 36-37). Further, Hogan (2020) adds to this that:

Metronormativity consistently elevates the urban over the rural by way of a rigid binary separation that misrepresents, and often actively belittles, rural cultures. It casts the countryside as a pathetic, inhospitable closet—stuffed with suffering rural queer and trans people—and tells rural queers that they have no choice. (p. 130).

This metronormative narrative is still present for many of the participants, with many of them separating their queer spaces in the city from their outdoor connections, as if they were two different worlds that cannot be combined.

*- Cicala: I got interested in your research because all my life, these two parts of me, queerness and queer activism and outdoor activities, never went together, you know? In the outdoors, I'm all the time with cis people, and when doing activism, I'm with people that don't give a shit about mountains.*

In addition, some participants noted that queer encounters had not happened yet while engaging in their adventure activities. This was remarked by two of the participants, though many others indicated that they only meet and encounter cis people when being outdoors.

- Dormouse: *I've never met another trans person in an outdoor setting.*

- Woodruff: *I don't think I have met a lot of queer people in outdoor sports.*

This delves into the collective imaginary of outdoor and adventure settings, which is constituted by fit, cis, straight, white guys doing very difficult and dangerous activities (Warren, 2016; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; Frohlick, 2000; Humberstone, 2000; Argus, 2008; Díaz Carrión, 2012), versus “the urban, especially metropolitan space as historically linked to sexual, racial, and political diversity as well as normative transgression and deviancy” (Straube, 2020, p. 56). This narrative is emphasized by media, literature, and advertising that depict a traditional and masculinized idea of the outdoors, a narrative reinforced by participants, who noted that “they have never seen their gender and bodies represented in outdoor and adventure media” (Encina).

@lor\_sabourin: *I would give anything for this headline to say, “Lor is the 1,000th out non-binary climber to send 5.14 on gear.”*

*Because the truth is, I've been the first out non-binary person to send most of the routes that I climb. And for a long time, I thought that it meant that I had to choose between doing something that I love and being who I am.*

*I've done a lot of work to find places and communities where I feel safe. And I want all the enby kids who read that post yesterday to know that they are so much stronger than anyone who feels threatened by another person's identity.*

*The reality is, we have a lot more work to do, my friends. Thank you for being the type of people that opt in [Blue Heart; Blue Heart]*

With a lack of role models and representation, trans people have to create their own spaces and narratives in outdoor activities. However, which kind of safe spaces do we want in adventure recreation? What type of relationship with our surroundings do we want to produce? How do we distance queer outdoor representation from traditional outdoor representation (i.e., colonial and patriarchal narratives)?

- Juniper: *I have never been interested in mainstream publications about mountains, adventure... I am not interested in stories that portray mountaineering as adventure, overcoming challenges, conquering difficulties, risks, extreme experiences... Even though all these elements may be a part of many subjective experiences, I am not at all interested in placing the bulk of the narrative on them. I am interested in other, much more subjective nuances. I have not felt interpellated by these types of publications, and I do not share the idea that the liberation of women (and/or*

*racialized people) comes from incorporating these identities into these stories. No!!! I believe it is essential for other subjectivities to generate alternative narratives about mountaineering (in the same way as with all other aspects of life). Capitalism, colonialism, machismo... shape the mainstream narrative of mountain experiences, which is why I believe it is necessary to create other stories based on different values, purposes, and perspectives. I specifically avoid spaces where experiences align with these narratives, I look for cracks in solo activities and for climbing/hiking/skiing/cycling... partners 'where other songs shine'.*

Participants frequently noted that they wished to distance their interaction in outdoor activities from colonial and capitalist narratives of adventure recreation, a desire for a different kind of representation from outdoor and adventure providers.

*- Woodruff: What I think, maybe, is that if queer people and trans people were more visible and more part of this [outdoor] community, maybe, it could stir more conversations about the reasons people get into this kind of super adventurous scenarios, because also then cis women do it because cis men do it and they have to prove they're just as tough. And if we talk about gender more, and about the expectations that come with performing gender in our patriarchal society, then maybe, we could move away a little bit from just equating massive danger and risk and dying with being successful and move towards more just a sense of enjoyment. And so, maybe, if we could have that conversation more, through more visibility of queer people and also in general people questioning those gender norms in outdoor sports, and especially norms about cis men, about what they have to be like in an outdoor setting, yeah, maybe that would benefit the whole outdoor community.*

This connects with a different vision of what adventure is, which was also discussed in the previous chapter. With Lobo, I talked about how he felt that, when being outdoors, he usually didn't see commercials trying to sell him something. Similarly, Deer feels anxious from the capitalism present in the cities.

*- BB: And what do you feel when you go back to the city after being outdoors?*

*- Deer: Well, I get anxious, right away.*

*- BB: What is it in the city that makes you anxious?*

*- Deer: Capitalism. All the roles that I have started to perform in my life and I have to pull through.*

For Deer, going outdoors means escaping gendered and capitalist expectations which, for him, are interconnected. Though, as stated above by Juniper, the outdoors are not always inherently free of power structures. Still, for some of the participants, going outdoors was regarded as a way to escape from capitalism, something they also desired.

- Woodruff: *Well, I think, for one thing, going to the outdoors kind of already feels, in a way, countercultural to me, not only in a gendered - oh, look at that bird! I think it's a red kite, from the tail feathers. I just know this one bird, so every time I see it, I say it like I know a lot about birds [we laugh] - not just a gendered perspective but also kind of capitalist perspective, as a way of escaping this very narrow way of living that I feel most of us experience within capitalism. We're supposed to do a very small set of things, and we're supposed to do them in a certain way, and we're supposed to care about certain things. And for me, escaping into nature has always felt like escaping from capitalism as well. But then, of course, there's also a massive industry and stuff around the outdoors, so it's not that binary.*

Halberstam argues that “since each narrative bears the same structure, it is easy to equate the physical journey from small town to big city with the psychological journey from closet case to out and proud” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 36-37). However, for most of the participants, urban spaces and going back to the city after an outdoor trip often came with feelings of discomfort.

@nonbinarynomads: *Every day we fill the space with some type of activity in an attempt to feel a similar euphoria to that on the trail. Some days we get close. Other days we fall short. There's something about backpacking that makes everything in our bodies and minds feel okay. It's a fix we'll never stop reaching for.* [Fallen leaf]<sup>68</sup>



Similarly, returning to the city is also going back to a space where there are more eyes and where feelings of gender surveillance may come back. As Mary Douglas states, dirt “exists only in the eye of the beholder” (Douglas, 1966, p. 2). How we look and how we are perceived by others are thoughts that come back when returning to the city: ‘Am I clean enough?’

- Ginesta: *Well, I think that, like an onion, I have the feeling that I'm removing layers [in the outdoors]. In the city, for example, I notice it. Right now, for example, I can be more... what would be called dirty, in the sense that I've got mud on me, whatever. What people often call dirtiness, I don't consider it dirt, but...you understand. What in*

<sup>68</sup> [Image description]: A white, fit person with a big and full backpack is facing backward. They are wearing a t-shirt, shorts, and a baseball cap. The ground is grey rock. They are looking at the landscape, a big range of steep, grey mountains is visible. The sky is blue with some clouds.

*a city would be called dirty. Or more laid-back...all of that I think is more allowed outdoors. Because, of course, with this same appearance, if I were to go into the middle of the city, I would feel...conditioned. I would say, oh, well, I have to shower, I have to change my clothes. Or if I had been on a bike for several days, that could happen...and so in that sense, I think I'm removing layers, relaxing and saying, bfff, well, I care less about things.*

Dirt “is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements” (Douglas, 1966, p. 36). Furthermore, Douglas (1966) implies that to reflect on dirt also means to reflect on the nexus between order and disorder, being and non-being, form and formlessness, life and death. In a cisheteronormative society in which, as Douglas states in the quote above, ‘ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements’, trans people also exemplify *dirt* in the binary sex-gender system.

The everyday urban oppressions dictate who is able to inhabit and find comfort in those spaces. Here, the reference to a feeling of freedom in nature comes again, a public space in which our bodies are not so public, thanks to ‘the lack of eyes’. Gender surveillance processes considerably shrink, allowing to feel freedom from gender constraints.

- Lobo [this sentence was lost in the audio transcription and then asked through email]:  
*I would say that in the city, my body is kind of public, and in the nature, it becomes just part of nature. That gives me a feeling of freedom.*

Rosenberg and Gillian (2021) have argued that “while trans geographical scholarship illuminates how profoundly space is used to prohibit trans embodiment, it simultaneously gives voice to the ways in which trans people insist on living and surviving within such precarious sociospatial conditions” (p. 344). However, this relationship with nature as a space for trans embodiment and joy was not always there for all participants. For some, they have had to work on it and give space for it to happen.

- Granite: *A couple of years ago, however, I really started to connect and enjoy nature from a different perspective. It's like I opened a door within myself and nature, in turn, allowed me to enter. I still feel very disconnected from this experience because of my urban lifestyle, but I consider it highly healing, and I value it very much. I think that nature provides me with the sounds that matter, that heal, that help me reach deep places. It's a really special kind of vibe. And for that, I try to be as humble and careful as possible, as we already cause enough damage with the damn globalization and exploitation of all resources.*

For many participants, outdoor activities allow them to escape from societal constraints and expectations around gender, providing a haven space where trans people

can find joy and freedom in their bodies. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the outdoors, there may be more room for self-expression and exploration and less pressure to conform to binary gender roles or traditional notions of what one should look or act like. This search for joy in outdoor activities can be a transformative and empowering experience for trans individuals, helping them to cultivate a sense of embodiment and connection to their bodies that may not always be available to them in other spaces.

- Maple: *I love being surrounded by trees and the sound of life outside the city, and once we had left the city limits and were out in a relatively unpopulated area, I felt so much joy.*

“But whether it be in the ‘wilderness’ or in urban surroundings, the motivation to travel to these spaces of practice is expressed, as I will argue, in terms of beauty, of uniqueness, of atmosphere, of myths, and so on” (Geffroy, 2016, p. 4). For some of the participants, they found joy and life in both spaces, in contrast to suburbs or small towns, which were perceived as a middle ground that was both and neither.

@parkslucifer: *People are often surprised when they find out that I love both city life and being in the woods. To me, the city and the woods actually don't feel that different. Both are full of life and energy and activity that you can immerse yourself in. The difference is just that in the city all the energy comes from humans, and in the woods it comes from the flora and fauna. Both environments make me feel very alive. What I can't deal with is the lack of energy found in the suburbs and small towns, which feel dead because there isn't enough human activity but there isn't enough nature either.<sup>69</sup>*



Similarly, Alcornoque refers to himself as an urbanite, explaining that he needs and enjoys both, the city and the outdoors. However, while he refers to not feeling limited in the city, the feeling of freedom is again more present when being in nature.

- Alcornoque: *Well, I don't feel limited in the city, although I do feel more freedom in nature...*

Though outdoor activities happen outside of urban spaces, most participants did not identify them either as occurring in rural areas, albeit sometimes they imply passing

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<sup>69</sup> [Image description]: Close photo from the inside of a dense forest. The sunlight comes through and lights the green moss.

through these. These “in-between spaces on the margins of sexual geography are simultaneously spaces of sexual power and danger” (Phillips & Watt, 2000, p. 1). Most research has regarded urban areas as ‘more livable’ than rural areas for trans and queer subjects (Aizura, 2018; Annes & Redlin, 2012; Weston, 1995). According to Aizura, (2018):

The metronormative migration plot dictates that migrating from rural to urban spaces or migrating transnationally can offer the possibility of self-fulfillment and the ‘freedom to be who you are’: by moving, trans people can find bearable and worthwhile lives in which gender identity and sexuality are accepted and celebrated. (p. 96)

However, outdoor activities challenge this rural/urban dichotomy by providing spaces where trans people may feel more freedom to be themselves.

@ecclesiastesthebike: *The mountain knows you're queer. Come out anyway.*



## 6.2. UNMAPPING TRANS COUNTER-GEOGRAPHIES

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Mapping is, and has been, a tool for colonial domination (Katz, 2001; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Razack, 2002; Springgay & Truman, 2019). According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.), topography is “the art or practice of graphic delineation in detail usually on maps or charts of natural and man-made features of a place or region especially in a way to show their relative positions and elevations” (n.d.-b), while cartography is “the science or art of making maps” (n.d.-a), thus, of mapping. As such, the “history of mapping is entrenched in imperial and colonial powers who use and create maps to exploit natural resources, claim land, and to legitimize borders” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 99). As Razack (2002) argues, “the subject who maps his space and thereby knows and controls it, is also the imperial man claiming the territories of others for his own” (p. 12); hence, mapping creates spaces and decides who is able to inhabit and exist in them. Similarly, when cis men map, they are leaving out other bodies and subjectivities, mapping spaces where queer and trans people, people with dis/abilities, or people of color – among many others – cannot exist.

The production of space, constituted by the symbolic and the material work between spaces and bodies, determines social life in specific ways, “permitting certain actions and prohibiting others” (Razack, 2002, p. 9). The production of space done by mapping territories is also the production of excluded and included bodies (Razack, 2002), which happens, among others, through border delimitations: “Borders are equally devices of inclusion that select and filter people and different forms of circulation in ways no less violent than those deployed in exclusionary measures” (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013, p. 7). This inclusion develops in continuity with exclusion processes (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). ‘Geo-borders’ were shaped and mapped by colonial and cisnormative subjectivities, creating complex social institutions that are fundamental in the production of time and space.

How does the mapping of outdoor spaces look like? Who is included and who is being left out? By claiming the outdoors as our space, trans and queer people are building space resistance.

- Pit Roig: *It is a very easy space [the outdoors] to convey values such as nature conservation, environmental education, and doing so through play and adventure, and not erasing that part of childhood from your essence [referring to the sense of adventure]. Ultimately, being in the mountains is playing, jumping obstacles, running, grabbing onto things, like what we are doing now... running downhill and feeling this sense of "wow", such a freedom.*

Embodiment, which refers to the way in which the physical body experiences and interacts with the space, emerges because engaging in outdoor activities involves bodily

movement and interaction with the physical environment. Through this bodily engagement, the subject develops a relationship with the space that is both physical and emotional. Outdoor activities are also a ‘play with space’ (Geffroy, 2016, p. 10), a relationship that builds from and through play. This embodied experience of outdoor activities is what makes it a unique and meaningful form of play: “But sport is also always moving – and playing – *with* space and matter. Thus, active sport tourism is also the search for an intense and pleasurable *contact* with elements” (Geffroy, 2016, p. 11).

- Juniper: *Here, my body is a place for enjoyment. It dances through space, it breathes and sweats, it senses the matter that sustains me and the air that surrounds me. I like to feel the strength and the resistance. I like to be surprised by the fact that my little steps can take me to places that seemed far away. Movement hypnotizes me, I enter a state of meditation through breathing and rhythmic movement. Tiredness stretches my limits.*

Juniper’s reflection emphasizes the transformative power of outdoor activities on their experience as a trans person. This *play with space* is not only about engaging in physical activities but also encompasses a more profound relationship that emerges through playful exploration. By *playing with space*, outdoor activities become an embodied experience through which Juniper perceives their body as a source of enjoyment and liberation. Thus, analyzing these reflections, we see that for many trans individuals, participating in outdoor activities might transcend mere physical exercise, becoming a means to reclaim agency over their bodies and experience a sense of freedom and joy.

Borders are much more than those of nation-states (Anzaldúa, 1987) or geographical margins; “they are complex social institutions, which are marked by tension between practices of border reinforcement and border crossing” (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013, p. 3). Moreover, gendered borders, in the same way as geographical borders, are spaces of violence. What happens when we inhabit those borders? How do we *queer* those borders? Heckert (2016) says that it is possible to queer any presumed border: “Between theory and data, researcher and researched, hetero and homo, right and wrong” (p. 43). To *queer* borders and spaces, we need to unmap. Unmapping consists of denaturalizing geography “by asking how spaces come to be but also to undermine world views that rest upon it” (Razack, 2002, p. 5). Mapping lands enabled colonizers to claim and win the lands, while unmapping is described as a decolonial tool intended “to uncover the ideologies and practices of conquest and domination” (Razack, 2002, p. 5). Unmapping is done by those who are left out, excluded from the ‘visible maps’. These excluded bodies belong to other spaces, feeling ‘out of place’ by “the inclusion/exclusion operate through the designation of the somatic norm” (Puwar, 2004, p. 33). Hence, Razack (2002) claims that there is an important relationship between identity and space in unmapping.

- Ginesta: *What I also like is that it is something [the outdoors] that is like...blurred, dissipated, because perhaps you also go unnoticed...it depends on how. Because there is more visual or sensory space, you know? You don't feel as suffocated. And also, it's like...not here? Well, I'll go somewhere else and escape. I don't feel obligated to stay. And the fact that I can move around also creates a cool vibe. I mean, I don't have to stay in a place I don't want to, or... I can decide when I leave, where I'm going...*

Topographical data is collected and analyzed routinely as a way of dominance and surveillance that serves imperial practices (Katz, 2001). Therefore, “if topographical knowledge is so integrally important to capitalists and other agents of domination and to the maintenance of uneven development, its appropriation should be important to countering them” (Katz, 2001, p. 1215). Feminist geographer Cindi Katz was “looking for resistance” (Ibid., p. 1220) when she developed topography – and counter-topographies – as a research method. As a method, to do topography is “to carry out a detailed examination of some part of the material world, defined at any scale from the body to the global, in order to understand its salient features and their mutual and broader relationships” (Ibid., p. 1228). She aimed to develop a critical topography to underline layers involved in the production of places, which she then called counter-topographies. Counter-topographies intend to link “different places analytically and thereby enhance struggles in the name of common interests. In many ways, this builds an oppositional politics on the basis of situated knowledges” (Ibid., p. 1230). Alison Mountz (2011) further theorizes this concept, explaining that counter-topographies “map and challenge colonial, imperial power relations with which global capitalism is entangled, revealing material disparities operating across uneven terrain” (p. 383). One significant aspect of topography are contour lines, which connect distant places at the same altitude, revealing a terrain’s three-dimensional shape. Similarly, counter-topographies connect distinct places transnationally through contour lines that represent particular relations to a process, instead of elevation. “This offers a multifaceted way of theorizing the connectedness of vastly different places” (Katz, 2001, p. 1229). By linking places transnationally, counter-topographies aim to mobilize and connect political struggles happening in them, in a process of unmapping topographies of struggle, exclusion, and resistance.

- Libélula: *Well, I always say that wherever I pass through, people become more queer. I feel responsible for that, and it makes me feel better.*

Libélula’s statement exemplifies how individual actions and experiences can act as contour lines, connecting distant places through shared identities and fostering a sense of queer connectedness transnationally. Moreover, Libélula’s activism connects with the notion of counter-topographies as actively working towards challenging existing power relations and promoting inclusivity. In that sense,

walking can re-map archives and disrupt linear conceptualizations of time. Walking as an ‘anarchiving’ attends to the undocumented, affective, and fragmented compositions that tell stories about ‘a past that is not past but is the present and an imagined future.’ As counter-cartographies and anarchiving practices, the walking projects disrupt dominant narratives of place and futurity. (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 100)

Further, as Springgay and Truman (2019) note: “Many artists and social science researchers deploy counter-cartographical approaches to map against dominant power structures, question the assumptions that conventional maps produce, and recognize different spacial knowledge systems” (p. 99). In that direction, Saskia Sassen, a feminist economic scholar, has developed a similar concept, counter-geographies, which she understands as alternative transnational circuits, as she explains:

These counter-geographies are deeply imbricated with some of the main constitutive dynamics of globalization: the formation of global markets, the intensification of transnational and translocal networks and the development of communication technologies that easily elude conventional control practices. (Sassen, 2003, p. 49).

By doing this, they take a critical distance from geographical borders. Counter-geographies critique the androcentric approaches that have led knowledge production in globalization studies. Thus, counter-geographies can be understood as “those places where the functioning of the cis-hetero-norm converges with economic, social and political exclusion dynamics to generate, within the collective, territories more inaccessible for the development and exercise of rights” (Fernández-Garrido, 2017, pp. 15–16).

- Pit Roig: *Based on the premise that everything that is different bothers society... I believe that just as there are many diverse spaces in the city, in the mountains, I don't know of any other gender dissident people who work professionally in the mountaineering field; and therefore, I think there is still a lot of work to be done here. It could be pure ignorance on my part for not knowing more people...but I've always strongly advocated for small acts, and I think that, for example, what we're doing right now is already super transformative and revolutionary. Or at least that's how I feel, and it makes me feel really good.*

Pit Roig embodies a counter-geographical presence that challenges traditional norms in outdoor activities. They suggest that what we are doing – being two trans people connecting through movement outdoors – is already a small act of resistance and transformative action, which aligns with the notion of counter-geographies as spaces of resistance.

Sassen puts gender into the equation of analysis of globalization – which she claims hasn't contemplated power dynamics behind the flows of globalization (2003) – analyzing cross-border alternative circuits (counter-geographies) in which being a woman and migrant is decisive. These subjectivities remain invisible in nation-states' geographies and colonial mapping processes. However, they can be traced through counter-geographies, by unmapping transnational maps of communication and intersections. By doing this, counter-geographies decolonize time-space processes and give visibility to subaltern subjectivities. One important element to consider is that counter-geographies also apply to broader spaces such as the health system or our houses, and not only to geographical aspects. Finally, Sassen explains how these *counter-geographies* leave marks that can be seen and traced: topographies. However, these could also be conceptualized as *counter-topographies*, those topographies of exclusion – the bodies and places that remain invisible, *out of place* (Puwar, 2004) – that appear when we *unmap*.

@brieoutside: *Today I start to celebrate International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia. It's celebrated on May 17 around the world. Today I want to issue a call to action to all the climbing and outdoors community to post your support from around the globe to help make access to the outdoors equitable. In climbing we literally lift ourselves and each other up and while we can't do that at the cliffs, we can still offer the catch. So put those belay hands to use and get posting! Thanks!*

Here, @brieoutside is calling the climbing and outdoor community to work together into building these counter-geographies. By (un)mapping our spaces of resistance and joy, we are tracing our counter-geographies – and delineating counter-topographies. For Razack (2002), to “unmap spaces, we begin by exploring space as a social product, uncovering how bodies are produced in spaces and how spaces produce bodies” (p. 17). Throughout the thesis, I aim to unmap and trace the counter-geographies that trans people create when engaging in outdoor activities. How are trans bodies produced in those spaces, and which kind of spaces are produced by trans bodies? Are outdoor spaces shaped differently when trans people immerse in them? Cisnormativity and colonialism have brought colonial and patriarchal language to adventure recreation: They conquer mountains and go to virgin territories, being these spaces predominantly mapped by cis white men. However, what happens when *rebel bodies* (Díaz Carrión, 2012b) enter those spaces? What kind of language and epistemologies are produced? What kind of invisible maps exist in the mountains, forests, and natural environments when we – trans people – move in them? Which kind of outdoor spaces do trans bodies (un)map? What happens with the gendered borders?

*@ranger.plattypus: I have carried this flag for more than two thousand miles. It weighs very little but it also weighs a lot. It came to me in a small town on the AT [Appalachian Trail], at the end of pride month in 2019.*

*Sometimes I put it away. Roadwalking in Montana and Idaho always had my stomach in knots as cars drove up behind me. I would unconsciously hold my breath as they rolled past, feel relief as they drive out of sight. The forests and the mountains feel like home but being visibly queer feels unsafe in a lot of the rural parts of this country. But if I can make one person feel more comfortable being out here, it's worth it. I carry it proudly, because representation matters, and visibility matters, and we are out here. #queerthruhiker #queerhiker #pacificnorthwesttrail<sup>70</sup>*



Many of the Instagram accounts analyzed emphasized the use of the LGBTIQ+ flag as a way to create a safer space. Moreover, by moving through the outdoors with it, they are also delineating counter-geographies in these spaces and allowing other queer and trans to see it and feel welcomed.

As I have contended above, spaces, when mapped by cisheteronormative views, result in the creation of cis borders and exclusion processes. The processes of inclusion/exclusion produced by those borders are extremely violent, determining which lives are worth living – and which are not. Therefore, borders have been described as

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<sup>70</sup> [Image description]: A hiking black backpack – aprox. 40-50L – occupies the center of the image. On the top there is a folded sleeping mat, the sides have plastic water bottles, and there is small classical pride flag hanging on it. The backpack is standing on a beach with small rocks and a very small island with green trees is close to the coast.

necropolitical tools (Haritaworn et al., 2014; Mbembe, 2003). When occupying and crossing those borders, counter-geographies and counter-topographies are produced. By unmapping trans people's experiences in outdoor activities, I am also revealing and making these processes visible.

The present 'conversation' between trans people's experiences in outdoor activities and the theories aims to bring forward the counter-geographies that trans people create when participating in outdoor activities, tracing the experiences that were mentioned in the interviews, diaries, and Instagram accounts. By unmapping the counter-geographies of these spaces, the invisible is made visible. Furthermore, it gives visibility to the de-gendering processes and alternative time-spaces that are being created outdoors.

The decision to put this section in the middle of the analysis is intended. Throughout the analysis, I've been unmapping trans people's experiences outdoors by looking at our spaces of joy and exclusion, our bodily experiences, and how we navigate these spaces, thus revealing our counter-geographies.

[Sound of wind at Montgròs with Pit Roig:  
https://on.soundcloud.com/uobvH](https://on.soundcloud.com/uobvH)



At this point, the thesis is like the wind we had on the first on-the-move interview when we reached the peak. When doing outdoor activities, sometimes you get headwind and it doesn't let you keep moving, while others it comes from the back, and it propels you through the path. As Pit Roig and I reached the Montgròs peak, the wind forced us to stop for a moment and think carefully about how to move, to be steady and confident in our steps. Oftentimes, when reaching a peak, one might think about the path they have walked so far and what is still ahead. Thus, I invite you to think now about the counter-geographies that have been traced until now:

- ... Tracing, remembering, and reclaiming trans lives and our transitions outdoors.
- ... (Un)doing performativities in outdoor activities.
- ... Celebrating trans embodiment and agency in adventure recreation.
- ... Finding comfort and self-empowerment in/with/through outdoor activities.
- ... Outlining gender policing and de-gendering processes outdoors.
- ... Caring and nurturing trans lives through outdoor activities.
- ... Trans lives thriving outdoors and defying metronormative standards.
- ... Outdoor and adventure activities challenging the rural/urban binarism.

... Depicting the emotional geographies of spatial dis/comfort.



*@wild.inqueries: Finding pride at the top of my hike yesterday [Raising Hands] Let's celebrate June by remembering that Pride started as a rebellion led by queer and trans POC against police raids targeting the LGBTQIA2+ community. Let's celebrate the road they've paved for us, while acknowledging that recent anti-trans legislation means that the fight is not over. #pride #pridemonth #queer #stonewall #trans #transrights #marshajohnson #sylviaivera #activism<sup>71</sup>*

As it has been discussed in section 5.4. *From gender policing/surveillance to gender freedom*, participants seemed to be looking for spaces to evade gender policing practices; and outdoor spaces were providing opportunities for this. By bringing forward these experiences, I aim to outline the counter-geographies (Sassen, 2003), which pay attention to the alternative transnational circuits that are happening in these spaces.

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<sup>71</sup> [Image description]: A small classical pride flag is standing and waving on top of a metallic surface. The background is a very green landscape with a mountain on the right side and an inhabited valley on the left. The sky is blue with very few clouds.



### 6.3. FINDING SAFE SPACES

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There is widespread recognition in social sciences and geography that space is socially constructed and that the social is likewise constructed by the surrounding space (Massey, 2020). Moreover, geographies of sexualities have widely accepted since the 1990s that space is created and maintained as heterosexual and heteronormative (Binnie, 1997; Hartal, 2018; Oswin, 2008; G. Valentine, 2000), suppressing non-normative sexualities and controlling queer desires and embodiments in space. However, feminist geographers such as Massey (1994) have challenged this view and shown that space is negotiable and can involve conflicts, which construct meanings and create opportunities for (re)construction and being in space (Hartal, 2018; G. Valentine, 1996).

- Castor: *I think it could be that; being surrounded only by trees doesn't scare me, unless it's at night. At night, it does make me a little more scared, but during the day, not so much. Also, inside a cave, I have felt confident, but maybe it's because I go in as a guide, you know? Those are some of the times I have felt more welcomed.*

Queer spaces are often imagined to be safe and accepting for queer individuals (McCartan & Nash, 2023; Nash, 2016) and as spaces that contribute to the overall well-being of LGBTQ+ people (Vo, 2021). But some researchers such as Sara Ahmed (2004) and Natalie Oswin (2008) suggest that they can still reproduce hierarchies and exclusion based on heteronormative construction of identities, creating feelings of discomfort and 'being out of place' (Ahmed, 2004). While they may be free of some forms of sexism and LGBTphobia, power relations may still be present and queer spaces may not always be as inclusive as they appear.

- Hirvi: *I also don't necessarily feel that queer people would make me feel the safest, because there's a lot of queer normativity and there's a lot of expectations on how to appear or what are you supposed to want out of your life, let's say transition. Then there's gonna be a lot of propping around those topics, that I myself wouldn't feel comfortable with.*

There is often the assumption that a condition for a space to be safe is that it is restricted to people with the same identities – e.g., women-only spaces, trans-only spaces, FLINTA<sup>72</sup> spaces, etc. – which Hirvi's statement questions. The concept of a safe space is typically understood as a secure and welcoming environment where individuals can freely and comfortably express their identities. It is intended to be a protected environment that fosters a sense of security and promotes discourses of inclusivity and

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<sup>72</sup> In German speaking countries FLINTA is used as an acronym for Frauen (women), Lesben (lesbians), Intersexuelle (intersex), Nicht-binäre (non-binary), Trans, Agender. Sometimes it is also used as TINFLA, to highlight the inclusivity of trans people, or TINLA, to include only queer people.

diversity (Hartal, 2018; McCartan & Nash, 2023; The Roestone Collective, 2014; Vo, 2021). Further, it represents the ability to share one's opinions, take risks, and disclose one's sexual identity without fear of judgment or harm. Safety in this context encompasses not only physical safety but also psychological, social, and emotional safety (Hartal, 2018). These spaces not only provide refuge from potential violence, but also enable individuals to collaborate and develop new strategies for resistance (Hartal, 2018; McCartan & Nash, 2023; McPhail et al., 2022). Safe spaces are also relational and rely on interpersonal connections and interactions that are established and controlled (The Roestone Collective, 2014). Thus, they are not static and require ongoing attention and effort to maintain. Moreover, safe spaces are "reactively and proactively responding to and interacting with an insecure world" (The Roestone Collective, 2014, p. 1362).

- Lionhead Monkey: *Normally, I transfer quite the sense of safety.*

- BB: *Because I think that's something important, more than maybe your identity.*

- Lionhead Monkey: *Absolutely. This is one of the reasons why high mountains are a better place for us. Because it's risky for cis persons to deny the possibility to have an additional team member, that the member is a person that knows how to do, how to behave, how to be safe...saying no because you are trans could become risky.*

As Lionhead Monkey shows, when doing adventure activities, safe spaces are also about feeling safe with and during the actual activity that is being carried out. For her, this also means that it is a space where no one will risk discriminating her.

Safe spaces are often created through intentional efforts to establish a culture of inclusivity, respect, and understanding, and by challenging oppressive attitudes and behaviors. This can be achieved by establishing clear guidelines for behavior and communication, providing support for participants in case of mistreatment, and actively advocating for the needs and rights of queer and trans people. For many of the participants, in order to feel safe, they choose to go outdoors with people whom they trust.

- Lingon: *I'm going with this person that I'm dating, like, yeah, lover, partner. I don't know. I chose to do this with them because it feels very safe. They also are a queer person. And, yeah, it's also something that somehow connects people, and this can make the relationship grow and make it a deeper connection.*

Safe spaces, in the context of queer and trans geographies, are physical or virtual environments where individuals who identify as queer or trans can feel accepted, supported, and free to express themselves without fear of judgment, discrimination, or violence. In other words, "queer safe space is commonly understood simply as space that is safe for queer people" (McCartan & Nash, 2023, p. 770). These spaces are created in response to the marginalization and exclusion that queer and trans individuals may

experience, and they are related with a sense of comfort and belonging (Hartal, 2018; Quinan, 2016; The Roestone Collective, 2014). This relation with comfort resonates with Ahmed's (2006), who suggests that power categorizes certain bodies as belonging and others as being 'out of place'. For Muñoz (2009), queer spaces are thought of as reimagining a utopian of the social, "one that is not quite here but always in process, always becoming, emerging in difference" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 112). Safe spaces are essential in the construction of queer spaces, and the term itself often serves as a prerequisite for establishing queer spaces.

It is important to note, however, that the concept of safe spaces is not without controversy. Some argue that safe spaces can be exclusionary and reinforce the same kinds of identity-based categorizations and hierarchies that they seek to challenge, while others also note that they can imply letting your guard down. The term is frequently used without being fully explained or questioned (Quinan, 2016), leaving its meaning to ambiguity. As such, it is important to approach the concept of safe spaces critically and with an awareness of its potential limitations and drawbacks. In this sense, Anzaldúa (2002) takes this a step further and argues that there are no safe spaces:

To step across the threshold is to be stripped of the illusion of safety because it moves us into unfamiliar territory and does not grant safe passage. To bridge is to attempt community, and for that we must risk being open to personal, political, and spiritual intimacy, to risk being wounded. (p. 3)

Safe spaces are very diverse; they can range from community centers, home spaces, and leisure spaces to bars and clubs, pride parades, and entire neighborhoods (Vo, 2021). In addition, they can also be virtual. However, "activist safe spaces such as the ones originally created by the women's movement essentially rely more on *who* is meeting than *where* they are located" (Mazet, 2019, p. 7). Outdoor spaces, on the other side, are often perceived as a safe space for many of the participants, even without specific work towards creating the safe space itself.

- Encina: *With her [nature], I always feel welcomed, at peace, and safe; I don't know what it is, I don't know what she has, but it feels like home.*

Although, as it has been shown, what and when a space is safe can be hard to delimitate, having safe spaces is important because queer and trans people often face discrimination, exclusion, and violence in cisheteronormative society. Therefore, they provide a space where individuals can express themselves freely and feel a sense of belonging and community. By unmapping these counter-geographies that trans people are shaping outdoors, we may open the possibility for new and welcoming spaces for trans and gender-non-conforming people in adventure recreation.

- Chestnut: *Another fellow hiker, whom I suspect was LBTQ, arrived, and I pondered the security of not being alone. And just knowing that more people are okay with that.*

This reappropriation of public space through the body, and in this case, through adventure recreation, transforms its traditional meaning, outlining counter-geographies in these spaces. On another side, the outdoors was felt safer the lesser other people were present. Thus, it was not the space or the activity that felt unsafe, but rather the possibility of encountering other humans.

- Lingon: *If there are any outdoor activities or spaces that I would avoid because of my identity, it would be like a place where there's not a lot of people around and I don't feel safe enough.*

Traditionally, in nature, fear is often linked to the presence of dangerous animals or adverse weather conditions. However, many participants perceived human presence in nature as sites of violence towards trans individuals.

@outdoorqueeries: *As we sat around our campsite exchanging stories, we also discussed the tricky nature of loving nature while queer. The most dangerous animals in the park are most likely other people and that truth is amplified as visibly queer people, especially as a Black queer woman. Despite this troubling reality, the beauty of mountain lakes, wildflowers, and rushing streams still outweighs the risk - and makes us feel restored. [Round Pushpin] Pit River Land (<http://pitrivertribe.org>) #queerbackpacking #queeradventures #lassenvolcanicnationalpark #optoutside #outinnature #lgbtqadventure #lgbtq*

Fear, which is a response to a threat of violence, works to “align bodily and social space: it works to enable some bodies to inhabit and move in public space through restricting the mobility of other bodies to spaces that are enclosed or contained. Spaces extend the mobility of some bodies” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 70). As many participants noted, when being in nature, possible dangers are not directed towards us because of our diverse identities, but because of simply being humans in nature.

@lucakahminen: *I found some comfort in the fact that the trail itself is an ally, it doesn't discriminate, miles are miles, uphill is uphill, the rocks of Pennsylvania are tough for everyone, trail food is trail food. The bears that steal your food don't care about your colour, your beliefs, your gender or your sexuality.*

Fear, as a response to the threat of violence, restricts the mobility of certain bodies, confining them to certain spaces. For @lucakahminen, the dangers and challenges presented by nature are not discriminatory, and he feels free from the specific threats they may face in society due to their diverse identities. However, the trail – and especially the people whom you might encounter in them – is not entirely free of social normativities; different bodily abilities would, for example, significantly affect the experience of that same trail.

The experience of fear is embodied and can manifest through physical effects on our bodies (Ahmed, 2004). Being outdoors was seen by many participants as a matter of survival, where gender takes a backseat and is no longer as prominent. In addition, fears experienced in outdoor settings may also be viewed as challenges. When asked about the importance of non-human elements in the activity, Ginesta reflected on how these weren't perceived as a threat or violent.

- Ginesta: *I don't perceive non-human animals as violent. Many times, I feel that human beings are the violent ones. Let's say... if a lion were to appear here right now... [laughs]. But even so, my interpretation is different. They would attack me for another reason, to defend themselves... but not because I'm trans, or because I have a certain body... they are not concerned with that. They don't understand gender. Maybe that's it. Plants, trees, non-human animals are not concerned with gender... and we human beings are always doing everything, or almost everything, in relation to gender. Money, social class, gender, race... and gender is heavily present, it permeates everything, I believe. But non-human animals, I think they don't. Oh, look, I had never thought about this before, maybe that's why I like them so much... They sing... but they go about their own business, right? And I don't feel alone because I perceive that there are other beings. I perceive a tree as a being, and little plants and such...*

In this sense, Geffroy (2016) has contended that outdoor activities are a “search for an intense and pleasurable *contact* with elements [and] a privileged way to connect with ‘nature’” (p. 11). Many participants’ experiences related to/with a feeling of transecological belonging and a sense of ‘feeling at home’.

- Juniper: *It's like being at home. The ruggedness, the empty air, the bare rock... I feel that things here are truly what they are.*

Let's continue exploring this aspect in the following section.



## 6.4.- TRANSECOLOGICAL BELONGING – FEELING AT HOME

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At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed and pointed out the metronormativity present in queer and trans discourses of belonging, questioning the ways non-urban spaces and communities “have been depicted as *hostile* environments to queer and trans people in both popular narratives and LGBTQIA literature” (Bredford, 2020, p. 9; Hogan, 2020). While many authors (Aizura, 2018; Annes & Redlin, 2012; Halberstam, 2005; Weston, 1995) have argued that trans and queer people must ‘get thee to a city’ (Weston, 1995) and have conveyed to the “entrenched idea that rural space has nothing to offer queer and trans people except isolation, violence, and death” (Hogan, 2020, p. 129), there is also a current ‘rural turn’ in queer geographical studies, which puts the focus on the geographical dimension in the analysis of gender and sexualities. The purpose of this scholarship extends beyond simply rectifying urban bias. Rather, it seeks to broaden our comprehension of a queer sense of place and confronts the concept of “temporal superiority” within queer urban settings (Crawford, 2017, p. 909). This field of study questions the assumption that the city is the exclusive origin of creativity and safety for queer and transgender individuals (Hogan, 2020).

*@brieoutside: I absolutely love being in the mountains in the winter. This is from a few years ago when I was teaching my wife how to self arrest. We had a blast. The fog made the atmosphere airy and the valley feel bottomless. It's so easy in moments like this to step outside of time and life and just be.*

Bredford (2020) argues that there is a “vital discussion of place and belonging for transgender citizens and their narratives” (p. 10). However, little has been done “on the potential interconnections between the environment and specifically *trans*-experiences” (Parker, 2020, p. 18). This thesis aims to bring one perspective into this gap in the literature. In this sense, when being asked about their gender while being outdoors, some participants connected it to their surroundings.

*- Encina: That it [gender] doesn't exist, it's not static, it flows with the wind, it's in the wind, and sometimes it passes through me, and I can breathe it in and let it go, it's within me but I am not it. At first, thinking about this gave me a severe headache, as if I were getting dizzy, but by sitting down (or not) and closing my eyes (or not), listening to the birds, the wind, feeling the earth (sometimes we took off our shoes), there was no more chaos, only peace, understanding that no matter how dizzy I may feel, I won't fall, that fear of falling, I must also confront it face to face.*

In chapter 2. *Conceptual Approach*, I outlined the concept of transecology. Transecology, as summarized by Seymour (2020), serves several ongoing functions. It facilitates the examination of intersections between “ecological and trans(gender) issues”, and it encourages the exploration of “connections between embodied

experiences of nature and environment and the idea of coming-into-one's body" (Seymour, 2020, p. 201). Moreover, transecology aids in assessing how transphobia, cisnormativity, and cissexism shape representations and experiences of the more-than-human world, and lastly, it plays a crucial role in recognizing and critiquing how discourses on environmental degradation pathologize bodies that deviate from normative gender identities, including "trans(gender), queer, and other non-normative bodies" (Ibid.).

Meyer (2010) and Meyer and Borrie (2013) point out that, because of the particularities of outdoor settings, which offer opportunities to escape from gendered social normativities, these spaces facilitate feelings of belonging and ecological connectedness. This, I would contend, is a transecological belonging (Bredford, 2020; Gaard, 2020; Straube, 2020; Stryker, 2020; Thorsteinson & Joo, 2020).

- Juniper: *I feel genderless. My gender doesn't matter to me. I am a body that breathes among animals and plants, among rocks, in a space filled with air and light. I am just another part of this place, and as such, I have no name. I don't belong to any specific species, and I am part of this space as another element.*

Straube (2020) proposes the concept of "intimacy with Others", which they understand as a posthuman ecological intimacy. This notion of intimacy moves away from a human-centered conception of it, looking for an intimacy of "encounters, affinities, proximities, and ethical relations" (Straube, 2020, p. 68). This understanding of intimacy as "the interrelatedness and connection of and with other life forms" (Morton, 2010; Straube, 2020, p. 68) expands its definition beyond its anthropocentric form and "allows a reformulation of intimacy as posthuman and ecological in the engagement between the human bodies" (Straube, 2020, p. 57). This reckons Alaimo's notion of trans-corporeality (Alaimo, 2018), which blurs the borders between the human and more-than-human (Alaimo, 2018; Kuznetski, 2020; Parker, 2020).

- Pi Cargolat: *I also belong to this, I feel part of this. I believe that we are always constantly seeking connection, not only with people but also with nature.*

This more-than-human intimacy was also present in the purpose of doing outdoor activities. For Ginesta, it was meeting the 'Cow Teresa'. On May 18, 2011, a cow destined for meat consumption in the Italian province of Messina escaped from the vehicle that was transporting her to the slaughterhouse and traveled a long distance until the town of Santa Teresa di Riva, where she took a swim in the sea. While in the middle of the sea, she was spotted by the coast guard, who captured her and returned her to the Sicilian coast. The cow was pardoned and adopted.

- Ginesta: *I wasn't just doing it to go cycling, to see landscapes, to challenge myself in different situations while being alone, or to experience the pleasure of eating something... I was also doing it because I wanted to get to know Teresa, the Cow.*



Alaimo describes her concept of trans-corporeality as a “contact zone” between human and more-than-human nature (Alaimo, 2008, 2018), or as she says: “The literal contact between human corporeality and more-than-human nature” (Alaimo, 2010, p. 2). Thus, trans-corporeality refers to the conceptualization of the human body as intricately intertwined with the surrounding environment, both with the material world and more-than-human (Alaimo, 2010, 2018; Kuznetski, 2020; Straube, 2020). “Trans-corporeality emphasizes the movement across bodies, that is, the constant change, transit and interchange between various bodies—human and nonhuman, or with the nature within nature” (Kuznetski, 2020, p. 81).

- Ginesta: *But I believe that the place, the environment, there's something that maybe I can't articulate, but that is interrelating with me. It could be that there's a sensitivity in my body, which I may not pass through consciousness, but there's a communication with other beings, perhaps. Maybe all those bird sounds [heard in the background right now], or the air itself, or scents, or the presence of trees... I experience it, and it could be that, well, I believe and feel that I am communicating with that, there's a communication with that... which is not the same as being surrounded by four walls of cement. Because I consider that cement is not alive, in that sense.*

Participants experienced this *intimacy* (Straube, 2020) and *trans-corporeality* (Alaimo, 2008, 2010, 2018), emphasizing this inseparable relationship between the human body, the natural world, the environment, and any entities that surpass human boundaries, in a relationship that is sensorial, sensual, and affective. However, as Straube notes, Alaimo has refrained “from embedding the link between trans-corporeality and trans embodiment” (Straube, 2020, p. 67).

@qtpoc\_adventures (@unlikelyhikers): *Nature is more than just an aesthetic. One of the biggest misconceptions we humans have created is that we are separate from nature. Truth is, we are nature and nature has been an intimate part of our ancestors lives for thousands of years. Hiking and recreating as the way we see it now is only a contemporary way society has formed its relationship with it. Nature has no race or gender roles. That's my favorite part of being in the outdoors as a Queer and Transgender Person of Color (QTPoC). I think about how much privilege I have with an able body and enough resources to be able to explore nature. The fact that I can access clean air, water and nature as far as the horizon goes is not something I take for granted. When I hike, I acknowledge the beautiful struggle it is to be alive. Every breath of oxygen is my own and I feel the most affirmed by the way nature greets me. Towering ancestral trees remind me to persist, regardless of where I am rooted. Rivers remind me of the thirst for constant change and movement as a part of life. The mountains whisper, "everything happens with time." As they themselves did now grow in a day. The ocean reminds me of the deep and endless ways to be. When I hike in*

*nature, I am home. Existing in nature as my holistic self is what makes me an #UnlikelyHiker.*

This, following Straube (2020), is a “posthuman ecological intimacy”. Posthumanism challenges the notion of an inherent and fixed distinction between human and non-human corporeality, refusing to accept this difference as a given and questioning the boundaries between these categories (Alaimo, 2010; Straube, 2020). Moreover, “posthumanities and feminist materialism affirm corporeality, matter, and its complex relationship to nature without the negative tendencies of overromanticizing nature or female embodiment as in some ecofeminist traditions and without biological essentialization” (Straube, 2020, p. 69). Further, ecology is described as a “*mesh ...* between species, between the living and the nonliving, between organism and environment” (Morton, 2010, pp. 275–276). Following these definitions of posthuman and ecology, Straube (2020) defines “posthuman ecological intimacy”

as one that engages with a body that is becoming with many, as entangled with multiple others. Understanding the human body’s proximity with other human bodies, animals, plants, organic and inorganic matter as intimate, based on affectivity, new affinities, is anchored in the knowledge that nature is our place, our only home. (p. 74)

Many participants experienced a sense of transecological belonging in being in/with nature, as these outdoor spaces offer opportunities to escape gender normativities and find both physical and emotional connection with the environment and their identities. Within these settings, they experience a harmonious and interconnected state, both internally and externally, fostering a sense of wholeness rather than fragmented selfhood. Furthermore, for most participants, these outdoor spaces provide a refuge from surveillance and judgment that marginalized subjectivities face, offering safeguard against the pressures of conforming to gender norms. These experiences also facilitate a profound sense of connectedness with oneself, others, and the vast interconnectedness of all things.

- Woodruff: *Like, when I'm by myself, I'm really inside of the landscape, like I'm part of it, and like I feel that I have my best thoughts and time with myself when I'm outside by myself.*

Bendorf (2014) argues that “nature matters for transgender studies because of how we map (and are mapped) along boundaries of inside and out, natural and unnatural” (p. 136). In this sense, “the performance of gender in space not only shifts with each performance, but in a very real way each performance also changes the space in which it is performed” (Doan, 2010, p. 638). This would mean that when trans people are moving outside, they are also (un)mapping these spaces and shaping counter-geographies of how to approach them.

- Lingon: *I also make sure to kind of ask for permission when I get into the forest, like, I'm going to be here. Kind of thank you for letting me be walking through this path that belongs to this forest and this place. So, I feel welcomed, I belong here. This is my place, and this is me. I am this. I am also this. Like, we all come from here. We will all go back to this so it can actually be super spiritual and existential. Well, I like to think it from there.*

Accordingly, respecting nature was often recalled as an important aspect of the adventure activity. This could be done in very diverse ways, from acknowledging the land they were moving in – many of the Instagram users do this by acknowledging the Indigenous lands in their posts – to learning about the space.

- Lionhead Monkey: *I think just going to the mountain to climb without knowing anything about the nature, about the place, is kind of very disrespectful.*

Historically, queer and trans subjectivities have often been portrayed and targeted as “unnatural” (Bredford, 2020; Gaard, 2020). Hence, (re)claiming nature and belonging in nature can be both seen as dangerous and a radical act (Bredford, 2020). Further, “it’s also a turn from the metropolises of society to a theoretical place where cisheteropatriarchy might not reign supreme” (Bredford, 2020, p. 1). In this sense, @lasondranicole makes an analogy of feeling like weed or a wildflower, that depending on where they grow, they can be seen as unwanted or beautiful. Being outdoors becomes thus a way to escape from the confines of a society that has historically deemed our existence as ‘unnatural’.

@lasondranicole (@unlikelyhikers): *I've always known I was different ever since I learned there is a way we are 'suppose to be'. I remember going on a hike as a kid and going off trail, deep somewhere I found some flowers that looked like ones my Dad had me 'weed out' of our yard and there in the woods they looked so beautiful. I remember thinking maybe I'm just in the wrong place. I continued going outside as often as I could and really looked to nature to teach me how to be comfortable existing. I'm a mixed race, queer person. Despite the history of people trying to keep the outdoors segregated, I've found a home there and all my deepest friendships usually start outside. I tell myself I'm a wildflower and while some just pass by, others will see and appreciate my existence.*

Within the nature-culture dichotomy, nature has been rendered as inferior, and “if one ceases to elevate the human over nature, then it means giving up privilege” (Bredford, 2020, p. 1; Stryker, 2020). Queer and trans activisms and studies aim to deconstruct these hierarchies and binaries. Claiming a transecological belonging intends to disrupt the metronormative narrative that links queer and trans people to the cities, helping to unmap new possibilities to thrive.

@erinsends7: *You can take the girl out of the outdoors, but you can't take the outdoors out of the girl. Clearly, I'd have taken wild spaces over wild lashes, if given the choice.*

Butler (1990) asserts that subjects who fail “proper” gendering – or, I would add, escape gender binarism – consequently fail to fit into the category of “human”, and thus being “dehumanized” or regarded as “less than human”, “unnatural”, “against nature”, or “monsters” (Hogan, 2020; Santos, 2023), – as I discussed in chapter section 5.2. *Trans embodiment and agency in the outdoors*. This opens up possibilities for “interrelatedness and connection with other life forms” (Kuznetski, 2020, p. 92) and “posthuman intimacy” (Straube, 2020). These happen within climbing activities especially with rocks.

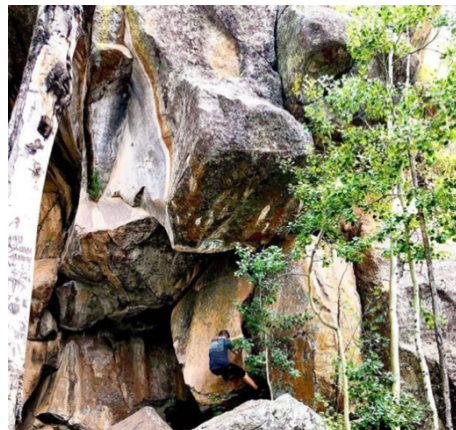
- Hirvi: *And I'm also really curious to just look at the rock, not that I know shit about geology, but like rocks are something that are considered to be so stable. I mean, these are the same rocks that were here when the humans first came to Finland, like step into anything that would now be considered Finland, not that we had national states at the time. Is more like stepping on this piece of land and seeing these rocks; these were already here, no one brought them here. But they're still changing all the time, and you can recognize the change, you can see where something has gotten rounded or, or even climbing is rounding these rocks, just the fact that there are places that are climbed so much that only the hands touching the rocks is already changing it. And this is granite! Just witnessing the change has its appeal.*

Rocks, which are often perceived as dead, are indeed full of life. Participants who climbed appraised and yearned this *intimacy* with the rocks they were climbing.

- Deer: *With climbing, I'm also super touchy with the rock...it's a big thing for me...the smells or, it's also nostalgic because I spent my youth in the forest. I feel like I grew up in this really natural place.*

Further, this approach to the *rocks* – similarly to other more-than-human aspects that participants mentioned in different adventure activities –, yearns for a respect to *them*. In climbing *with* the rocks in a *posthuman intimate* way, a decolonial (un)mapping of adventure activities can be envisioned.

@that.ftm.outdoorsy.nerd: *Anyone else see random rocks on hikes and just HAVE to touch them [Face with tears of joy, Person climbing, Herb, Sun]. I think that one of my favorite parts of climbing is that I'm not trying to conquer the rock, I'm trying to conquer my own body and will. When a*



*summit is reached or I get a send, the rock's not any different, I am.*<sup>73</sup>

Finally, this transecological belonging also fosters an awareness of feeling at home in nature. Fortier (2001) argues that, for queer people, “evocations of home are embedded in the struggles to create and maintain spaces of belonging and comfort in the face of adversity without (or within) the ‘lesbian and gay community’” (p. 412).

@mika\_lou\_selber: *Feeling home in the mountains and in myself.*

Hence, “the home is often considered a space of safety in which individuals escape the constant surveillance of identity” (Doan, 2010, p. 647). For many participants, it is also a space of refuge where to escape the constant attacks on our rights.

@brieoutside: *Climbing has always been a place of refuge for me. Being high on a ledge, looking down at the world, feels safe. When I read news articles about violent protests over the rights of transgender people to even exist, my first thought is to run for the hills.*

“To question how spaces come to be, and to trace what they produce as well as what produces them, is to unsettle familiar everyday notions” (Razack, 2002, p. 7). This ‘feeling at home’ or ‘feeling in place’, which relates to feelings of comfort and belonging, will be further investigated in the following section.

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<sup>73</sup> [Image description]: A white person wearing a dark blue t-shirt and shorts is bouldering in what appears to be a granite rock wall. The rock bricks are very big and overhanging. On the right side there are five thin and small trees with green leaves.



## 6.5. FEELING IN/OUT OF PLACE

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Outdoor activities and the natural environment, as it has been shown, are not exempted from power relations, and spaces of discomfort also arise in them when trans people engage in these. Discomfort can be expressed in many ways; for Ahmed (2004), discomfort is “a feeling of disorientation: one’s body feels out of place, awkward, unsettled. I know that feeling too well, the sense of out-of-place-ness and estrangement” (p. 148), while comfort is “the effect of bodies being able to ‘sink’ into spaces that have already taken their shape (p. 152).

*@claire\_anom: You are enough. You are a ‘real’ climber if you want to be. You can know something to be true, to be factual in your head, but to know it in your heart is something entirely different. I know I’m enough, but it is so fucking hard to believe I am enough. Every time I rope up, and every time I walk into the gym, I hear these words play over and over in my head - you don’t meet my standards and expectations as a climber, and I am too intimidated to climb with you. These words, and others like them, have been said to me multiple times in the last year. Before coming out and transitioning, I never would’ve dreamt I would be told that. Add on top that I can count on less than one hand the number of ice/alpine climbers that I know/know of who share my identity; and my two most reliable and supportive climbing partners live multiple states away - one nearly halfway across the country.*

*Least we mention imposter syndrome. It’s so fucking hard to believe I am enough. I’m starting to ramble, and I don’t know what my point is, but I’m gonna keep climbing because I love it, even when it’s a really lonely place, because I climb for myself.  
#transgender #transwoman #transclimber #lgbtqia2s #diversifyoutdoors  
#representationmatters #queer #iceclimbing #alpineclimbing #rockclimbing*

While not feeling like a ‘real climber’ might be a common thought among a large portion of the climbing community, the sense of being the ‘only one’ can increase this feeling. Further analysis on the importance of trans representation in adventure recreation will be done in the following chapter 7. *Affective Politics of Outdoor Spaces*.

Emotional geographies describe the spaces of comfort and discomfort (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016). Queer subjectivities “have to negotiate the contradiction of simultaneously belonging and not belonging— being ‘out of place’—in both urban and rural contexts” (Hogan, 2020, p. 131). Outdoor and adventure activities break this rigid urban/nature dichotomy, as it had been explored throughout the analysis. Trans bodies may experience a sense of comfort and belonging when being outdoors, as they become at ease with the environment. As argued in the above sections, in spite of the anonymity of urban spaces that has been argued advantageous for queer lives, I have claimed that there may also be

a constant fear of discrimination and discomfort for trans bodies<sup>74</sup>. Gender policing is constant, the ‘surfaces of our bodies’ don’t disappear from the view of the Other (Ahmed, 2004).

*@forest\_\_butch (@unlikelyhikers): My desire for connection to nature reflects my desire to connect to myself and to my own power. I am a fat queer who grew up being told that outside is not for me, primarily because of my weight. I remember being the slowest hiker and being left on the sides of mountains because I wasn't moving as fast as others wanted. I came to hate hiking. However, there was something deep that called me back. As a queer person, when I am outside of society, I am the most comfortable inside of myself. I started camping and then walking and now I call myself a hiker. I'm still not the fastest person on the trails, but it has never been about that for me. It's about noticing the tiniest moss and lichen, the rushing of rivers, and the chorus of the leaves; it's about feeling small and sublimated and connected and strong.*

According to Doan (2010), the cis-hetero-normative gaze has a strong influence and creates environments where gender norms are enforced in our daily routines. These ‘policing practices’ question our gender, creating spaces of discomfort through the gazes of the people we pass. On the other side, comfort is seen as “the emotional ‘fit’ between the embodied self and place” (Gorman-Murray, 2009, p. 448). This connection between identity, comfort, and belonging-in-place that happens in nature allows for trans lives to thrive.

*- Castor: Being in nature and engaging in outdoor activities gives you a kind of freedom that you may not experience in society. I don't take my shirt off so easily in the middle of the city, but maybe I would do it here. Nature gives you many things... or you feel more judged in the city... When you are in nature, people don't pay as much attention to what you do, how you act, how you speak, or how you dress... it's that freedom I mentioned.*

Puwar (2004) notes that “it is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived and produced. Bodies do not simply move through spaces but constitute and are constituted by them” (p. 32). For Castor, this lack of normative gazes creates a feeling of being *in place*. Further, these experiences also correlate with the idea of ‘feelings of bodily comfort’ (Gorman-Murray, 2009). As argued by Puwar (2004), bodies constitute spaces. In that sense, the experiences of the participants in these outdoor spaces are also dependent on the other bodies they encounter in the trail.

*- Savin: Nothing comes to mind unless passing people on the trail. When people look at me or stare, when they don't smile or wave back, I wonder what they are thinking*

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<sup>74</sup> Other aspects such a social class, bodily ability, or racialization may also be source of discrimination. However, participants from the diaries and interviews put the focus on their trans identities, and thus, I have decided to highlight this aspect in the analysis.



*of us. I worry they are bigoted; I worry about violence. When people smile or wave back, I feel safe and relaxed. When we are alone, I feel great! When passing people who don't seem friendly back, I worry for my partner, who is usually the target of verbal abuse or threats, who is more visibly queer.*

The need to define our gender identity within the binary framework of male or female highlights both our fear of others and the fear it generates within our own bodies. “Each living body *is* space and *has* its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 170). Puwar (2004) defines bodies belonging to other places as being “space invaders”. This insistence to fit into the binary creates fear within individuals to conform to these norms and fear in others who may perceive bodies that do not fit these norms as ‘space invaders’.

*@nikkik\_smith: I'm not going to allow others to define who or what I am, or what I can or can't do. I love the outdoors. It's one of the few places where I can be myself without reservation. The mountains or desert or coastal areas are beyond judgment. They have always accepted me for who I am, and I have always felt at home there...or at least, I did. As a white, cisgender, and heterosexual dominant society, we regularly hear that “the outdoors are for everyone.” I used to think the same. Now, since I came out as trans, I find these amazing places a little more difficult.*

The act of being visibly different from the norm draws attention to those who are seen as “bodies out of place or unexpected bodies” (Puwar, 2004, p. 49). For trans individuals, engaging in outdoor activities can feel like a transgression because they are often perceived as ‘out of place’. This transgression comes from the “effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 153).

*- Redwood: I felt welcome in the activity I participated in; I know or have spoken to most of the people who I ride with before. That said, I noticed people definitely treat or view me differently, and sometimes, I do find myself feeling like the outsider who can't relate to anyone. Whilst I know a lot of the people here, I don't have many friends. The guys will talk to other cis guys and the girls will talk to other cis girls, and I am the only trans person here, so I find the social aspect of the club much more difficult than I used to before I transitioned.*

These acts of occupying public space, which are individual and everyday actions, contribute to the production of the space (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016). Lionhead Monkey noted that, while this feeling of ‘out of place’ has appeared in other spaces related to sports, when being in the mountains, and especially high-altitude mountains, this ‘feeling out of place’ was not because of her identity, but rather because of her human being.

*- Lionhead Monkey: This “feeling out of place” is a bad feeling. And, I don't know if this is the reason, but it could be a reason why I didn't get involved in competitions of any sort. I compete with myself and that's more than enough.*

- BB: *And when you go to the mountains, you don't feel out of place?*

- Lionhead Monkey: *No. I feel out of place exactly as anyone should feel it. Because of the environment... I felt this especially in Nepal, when you are close to the dead zone, you cannot live permanently there, so I felt out of place absolutely. But it was really not discriminating in that case.*

Being in the natural environment might allow our bodies to feel a sense of belonging – or, transecological belonging – as the disorienting feeling of being ‘out of place’ that occurs in other social settings is less common there. Furthermore, for most participants, nature is regarded as a less judgmental space and a place where individuals are freer to be themselves.

Throughout this chapter, by looking at the topographies of exclusion that exist, as well as the spaces of refuge that trans people create outdoors, I aimed to unmap (Razack, 2002) adventure spaces. Pointing out this production of the space brings forward the bodies that are invisible in those spaces. Being mindful of these processes is a way of highlighting the counter-geographies (Sassen, 2003) that emerge when trans people move in the outdoors.

## INTERLUDE – ADVENTURING TO CONFERENCES

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I love going on adventures before or after conferences, it is something I started doing even before my Ph.D. studies. Last year, in 2022, I attended two in-person conferences: the 11<sup>th</sup> European Feminist Research Conference in Milano, Italy, and the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Transnational Working Group for the Study of Gender and Sport in Bødo, Norway. To the first one, I went with my partner – with whom I do research about the intersections between queer pedagogies and outdoor pedagogies – and our cat by bike, from Luzern, in Switzerland, through the Alps until Milano. Another conference in Bødo took place in late November. The city is located in the upper north part of Norway and it was already very cold, so we decided that going by bike was not an option this time. Instead, we went hiking and camping in the surroundings for a few days after the conference. It was a beautiful and scary experience, where we even had to cross frozen rivers – which we only did after seeing a couple of Norwegians doing it very casually.

Next week, beginning of June 2023, the International Adventure Research Conference in Treuchtlingen, Germany, will take place. I have decided to go primarily by bike, as I always try to look for alternative and environmentally friendly ways to arrive to places and events whenever it is possible. Therefore, I will be taking the train to Donaueschingen, where the Danube River originates, and I will be following one of the most famous bike-trip routes along the Danube. For three days and almost 300 km, I will follow the Danube River until Donauwörth, where I will cycle north for 40 km to reach Treuchtlingen. During these ‘conference adventures’, I like to think about what I have written so far and about the following steps in my thesis. However, what is more significant is that I get to live and experience my fieldwork; I am able to go back to my body and listen to it. I always remember why I love this research topic and why I find it so important. Richardson asks: “How do the specific circumstances in which we write affect what we write?” (Richardson, 2000, p. 153). These short trips to/around academic conferences are an “invaluable part of doing embodied, ethical, and political ethnographic research” (Olive & Thorpe, 2011, p. 424).

Richardson has extensively written about the use of ‘writing stories’ in academic research (see, for example, Richardson, 2000; Richardson & St Pierre, 2005), which reflect on the context in which the research has been written. Following her proposal of ‘writing stories’, I would like to invite you to join me on this bike trip. In all my adventures, I like to keep a diary where I write about how my days have been, how I have felt, what I have done, or what I have seen. This is also how it all started and the reason why I am here enmeshed in this thesis: The diaries of my 6-months bike trip through Europe were the spark of my master’s thesis and became the autoethnographic material for that research. Moreover, this approach helps to “communicate an experience in a way

that is complex, affective and embodied” (Olive & Thorpe, 2011, pp. 435–436). I hope that sharing these experiences may lead to readers “seeing themselves, knowing themselves through another’s life story, re-visioning their own...” (Richardson, 2000, p. 158).

### *Day 1.*

I take the train to Donaueschingen, with the bad luck of getting into the wrong car. Part of the train splits halfway and goes in another direction, and I didn’t see that until I was in the wrong place. So, in Titisee, I have to switch to the front car. It’s a small mistake that adds some nerves to the beginning of the journey.

I begin cycling along the Danube Cycle Route, which coincides with the EuroVelo 6 route. I think I’ve never seen so many cycling tourists in a single day, at least 300 or 400, maybe even more. It’s a continuous crossing of people cycling in the opposite direction or passing by groups of families, older people, younger people, and all other kinds of groups. The first 40 km are quite monotonous, but from Tuttlingen onwards, the landscape starts to thrill me more. A small canyon begins, and the route goes through the forest, going up and down gravel paths, passing castles, palaces, and many small villages. I don’t feel like visiting the villages alone today, so I admire their views from the outside and keep pedaling. I stop sometimes where there is shade, and if there’s water, even better (many of the fountains I pass by are dry). I take a break at a village’s fountain to get water, and shortly after, an older couple also stops. They, too, have luggage and non-electric bicycles. I realize they are speaking in English, so I joke about the dust we have on us. It turns out they are from the United States and are also surprised by the number of e-bikes and people here. We chatted for a while, but as I continue, I feel a bit of regret about the fact that I didn’t ask them more questions. I always enjoy engaging in conversations with strangers during my long cycling trips.

I feel like doing fewer kilometers than planned, and besides, I don’t trust any of the places I’ve considered for camping so far. The most important thing today is being able to “shower” because I have layers of sunscreen, dust, sunscreen, dust... Suddenly, I see a very abundant fountain right on the path in the forest. Moreover, it seems like I can hide behind some trees to camp. I’ve also started to see fewer cyclists; it’s already six in the evening, so I decide to stay here. The evening feels strange; it’s been a while since I traveled alone, and I feel like I have a lot of free time. I leisurely prepare dinner, post on Instagram about today’s route, send an audio message to my partner and listen to the birds. Before the sun completely sets, I set up the tent to avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes.

*Day 2.*

I wake up, pick everything up, and place the tent in the sun, as it is soaked from last night's morning dew. Whenever I camp near a river, the tent ends up being very wet in the morning due to the proximity to water. I started the day knowing it would be long, but I didn't expect the headwind. Fortunately, the handlebar of my gravel bike is good for this; I can hunch down, make myself small, and offer less resistance to the wind. Today, it seems like there are slightly fewer people cycling, although there is still quite a crowd. Until Ulm, the big city I will pass through today, I keep seeing a German couple who are also riding without e-bikes. During one of the times they pass by me, we exchange a few words. It seems that nowadays, those of us with bikes without motor, are like a minority group within the Danube route. Ulm is a beautiful city, but I decide to only visit the fishing district and the cathedral. I don't feel like doing too much sightseeing in large cities right now, though I cross many charming little villages throughout the day.

Once again; dust, sunscreen, dust, sunscreen, dust... Finally, a shower at a cemetery. When I finish "showering", a woman arrives and we talk for a while about how beautiful the villages in this area are. I find it hard to understand her accent. I'm craving ice cream, but I've decided that I only want it if it's regional. Hopefully, I'll have more luck tomorrow. Tonight, I'm sleeping next to a football field surrounded by a forest on the outskirts of a small village. I'm exhausted and don't feel like searching for a more picturesque spot. Shortly after setting up the tent, an unexpected summer storm arrives. What luck I've had!

*Day 3.*

It's been a good place to sleep; the sun is out now, and I can dry the tent. At the beginning of the day, I make several wrong turns, even though the route is quite well-marked. Finally, in Dillingen, at a café-bakery-ice cream shop, I get a regional ice cream; I went with pistachio and chocolate. I take the opportunity to use a restroom for the first time during the trip; the bread here looks delicious too! The following 10 kilometers until Donauwörth are tough with strong headwinds. It's a challenging stretch. When I arrive in Donauwörth, I have lunch in a little square. I have low energy right now, but I only have 40 kilometers left, and I can stop whenever I want and as much as I need. I'm in no rush. I leave the Danube behind, and the cycling tourists become scarce. More forests and mountains, peaceful cycling scenery. Honestly, this last part is the one I'm enjoying the most. It's gorgeous, and I needed to relax from the crowded tourist areas along the Danube. As I continue enjoying the journey, I reach Treuchtlingen, not without one last uphill climb to arrive at the Adventure Campus. Finally, a good shower and a chance to do some laundry!

*Reflections on the bike trip.*

This bike trip has been like my thesis journey. The first day went really smooth; it was sunny, I could easily follow the route, and there wasn't much headwind. The first 40 km were a bit monotonous, but then I got into the forest, with small ups and downs. During my first Ph.D. year, I wrote the state of the art and laid out the foundation for the methodological approach. It was exciting and amusing starting both journeys.

The second day of the trip was challenging, with 129 km of almost non-stop headwind. I was craving an ice cream that I didn't manage to find. I talked to a few cycle tourists also riding without motor; it seems like we're the outsiders on this route where the majority of people are riding e-bikes. There were some nice spots and a lot of stocks. My second Ph.D. year was fun, long, and tough. While I enjoyed the process of looking for participants, doing the interviews, and collecting data, the process of transcribing was very hard and tedious. It felt like it would never end, just like my last 30 km, that stretched and stretched. At the cemetery where I had a shower and took water for the night, I forgot to fill up my water bag, which supplies me with water for cooking. Just like my transcripts, which I still need to re-read to correct spelling mistakes.

Lastly, on the third day, I got lost a few times during the first 50 km, though I enjoyed the paths and the fact that it was not windy, yet. Similarly, sorting out and coding all my data was a process of learning and going back sometimes, but always progressing. 10 km of very strong headwind followed. I could only think about pedaling, getting small, and just keep going forward slowly. This felt like starting to write the analysis; it was a hard beginning, slow, and laborious. I didn't know how to start. After my lunch break, I felt like I had no energy for the last 40 km, imagining them as hard and windy as the previous 10 km. However, the landscape changed, some hills, more forests, and less people. I started really enjoying this last part of the trip. Moreover, I knew that the destination was not far away anymore. Just like my analysis, which is starting to flow and I'm seeing things that I like in it. Every night, when I was inside the tent, I could listen to a concert of birds. I enjoyed listening to the birds – and the feedback that I am getting at conferences –. Inside the tent, all sounds become amplified, and I get immersed in the space. Birds, ducks, bumblebees, and mosquitoes. A little bird decides to take a break on top of my tent. I whisper: “Hey you, welcome”. I don't move. This has never happened to me before. They fly away. “Thank you for your visit, little bird”.

## 7. AFFECTIVE POLITICS OF OUTDOOR SPACES

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The counter-geographies discussed in the preceding chapter also exhibit necropolitical processes, which I aim to unveil in this chapter. Spaces mapped through cisheteronormative perspectives contribute to the establishment of cisnormative exclusionary mechanisms. These processes of inclusion and exclusion are highly violent and determine which lives are worth living – and which are not. These processes have been conceptualized as necropolitics. Achille Mbembe introduces the concept of necropolitics as an extension of Foucault’s biopower and biopolitics, which examine the control over life to the extent of determining life and death (Foucault, 1977a). He argues that “to kill or to allow to live constitute the limits of sovereignty” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 11). Thus, necropolitics shifts its focus to the exercise of sovereign power in matters of death, exploring the mechanisms of death-making rather than the preservation of life. In this regard, Mbembe argues that “vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*” (Mbembe, 2003, p.40), while Shakhari (2014) asks: “When does the sovereign kill in the name of rights and when does it let die, forgetting those rights?” (p. 95).

In the dynamics of biopolitics, the lives and well-being of the privileged ones are prioritized, often at the expense of the subaltern subjectivities. As Shakhari (2014) explains:

Although it is the individual who is subjected to the management of life and death through biopower, as Foucault has argued, it is the *population* that is the target of the art of governmentality through biopolitics, where the management of life of one is inevitably connected to death of another. (p. 95)

In other words, the subaltern subjectivities are the ones who end up suffering or sacrificing their lives for the sake of the privileged ones to live in a society structured by unequal power relations.

Queer studies scholars have also shown interest in this concept, further developing it by coining the concept of queer necropolitics, which encompasses various forms of killing and “letting die”, both “spectacular and mundane”, as mentioned by Haritaworn et al. (2014). Within queer communities, not all bodies are equally valued (Butler, 1993; Haritaworn et al., 2013; March, 2021). Certain bodies are relegated to the ‘necessary outside’ of heterosexual hegemony, and queer necropolitics aims to “capture how some privileged (usually white and western) queer groups flourish at the expense of marginalized groups” (March, 2021, p. 459). These bodies, considered abject, are not deemed worthy of protection, preservation, or mourning (Shakhari, 2014), and thus, they are left to die.

Transnormative identities, which conform to the normative temporal structures of Western societies and do not challenge traditional gender power structures, reinforce hegemonic processes that marginalize and leave out other trans bodies: racialized, migrant, precarious, non-normative, dis/abled, etc. Additionally, as I have analyzed in the previous two chapters, gendered interactions and processes that exist in urban spaces can produce a constant feeling of gender surveillance, which may lead to a process of ‘killing us softly’. As a result, seeking refuge in cities may not be the only viable option for trans individuals. With pervasive policing and enforcement of gendered spaces and the prevalence of structural violence, cities may have damaging effects on the mental and physical well-being of transgender individuals. Further, these necropolitical processes increase when individuals live under more than one marginalized identity; it is not the same to be a white, trans man with higher education than a black, trans woman with low income.

Currently, in many Western countries, sovereign power appears to be willing to protect transgender individuals, but only if they adhere to transnormative norms and occupy certain spaces – i.e., not sports. Haritaworn et al. (2014) argue that:

Thinking through necropolitics on the terrain of queer critique brings into view everyday death worlds, from the perhaps more expected sites of death making (such as war, torture or imperial invasion) to the ordinary and completely normalized violence of the market. (p. 2)

Nevertheless, Shakhsari (2014) explains that these ‘queer necropolitics’ often take the form of slow, indirect harm, such as through sanctions or poverty, without taking direct responsibility for implementing lethal laws and policies: “‘Queer necropolitics’ emerges as the concept-metaphor that illuminates and connects a range of spectacular and mundane forms of killing and of ‘letting die’” (Haritaworn et al., 2014, p. 4).

This situation arises because the value of protecting lives is conditional on how they conform to societal norms and do not pose a perceived threat to the population: “While some abjected bodies are transformed into intelligible valued ones, not all queer bodies ‘matter’ the same way” (Shakhsari, 2014, p. 102). Therefore, not all trans lives experience these in the same way, as we all have other identities and life situations that intersect with our trans identities. Additionally, this idea of a transnormative subject – those who knew that they identify within a binary gender category since they were little their gender expression matches that identity, are straight, white, and living in a big city, among other things – also confines trans individuals to urban contexts, leading to exclusion from outdoor and adventure activities. As discussed and shown in the above chapters, outdoor spaces can positively affect trans people’s lives and experiences. Thus, I argue that both active and passive exclusion from outdoor spaces may lead to a form of “slow death” (Berlant, 2007; Shakhsari, 2014), as it hinders a source of well-being for



many trans people. Haritaworn et al. (2014) explain that the production of alterity, or otherness, as social death is linked to processes of expulsion and exclusion, which redefine the boundaries of belonging and non-belonging (p. 6). Within a transnormative framework, these exclusionary processes perpetuate the feeling of being out of place and confine transgender lives to urban spaces.

Trans individuals, through their efforts to reclaim outdoor spaces, send a powerful message showing that trans people also belong in those spaces. As I have been discussing, traditionally, these spaces have been dominated and defined by white cis men, who have colonized and mapped mountains and outdoor spaces. However, by engaging in activities like hiking, cycling, or climbing, trans people are unmapping these spaces, creating alternative counter-geographies. This process of unmapping is both a decolonial and (trans)feminist endeavor.

Moreover, as I have analyzed in the preceding chapters, trans individuals experience spaces – all kinds of spaces – in unique ways, often seeing them through different perspectives and living distinct experiences. Most participants claimed that they embrace their bodies and identities when venturing into outdoor spaces, finding empowerment and a sense of transecological belonging. In other words, we go outdoors with our bodies, not against them. Further, our presence in outdoor environments challenges conventional views of those who have previously mapped them.

Tracing these counter-geographies “might encourage and enable the formation of new political-economic alliances that transcend both place and identity and foster a more effective cultural politics to counter the imperial, patriarchal, and racist integument of globalization” (Katz, 2001, p. 1216). Engaging in outdoor activities can be perceived by some trans people as a form of resistance against the notion that we must conform to city life. For many of the participants, these activities are not solely for leisure; they hold deeper significance as acts of self-care and political expression. By participating in outdoor activities, we challenge societal expectations and norms, advocating for our right to exist and thrive beyond the constraints of urban spaces. In that way, tracing our counter-geographies is a way of unmapping our spaces of joy and pleasure. Thus, while I will analyze the processes of exclusion and discrimination that trans people face in adventure recreation, I will also highlight the spaces of resistance and joy that we create in them – hence, arguing for a *desire-based research* (Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2014).



## 7.1. LANGUAGE AND COLONIALISM IN OUTDOOR CULTURE

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In chapter section 3.6., *Poststructuralism and colonialism in outdoor culture and language*, I reviewed some of the research that has been done on the colonial and patriarchal language that prevails in the world of outdoor and adventure recreation in Western cultures. Nature has been historically connected to the idea of an untouched woman to be conquered by men (Gaard, 2020; Humberstone, 2000; Mitten, 2010; Parker, 2020; Pedersen, 2003). Feminist and postcolonial scholars have analyzed the natural-cultural divide, which has tended to

feminize and primitivize it [nature] within the escalating logics of confine-and-conquer, or expropriate-and-dispossess systems fundamental to ideologies of expansionism, [and questioned] the concepts of woman, otherness, and nature in relation to the globalizing projects of domination via (economic and cultural) modernization. (Minh-ha, 2011, p. 61)

In this sense, I was interested in how participants related to these notions of nature, how they subjectivized and constructed nature, and what language they used to refer to their experiences. Many called out the history of colonialism attached to outdoor activities – and especially mountaineering, where white men went to unknown territories to conquer mountains.

*@wild.inqueeries: Let me introduce myself! I'm a white, Jewish queer from Colorado. I hike because it's where I find my power. It's when I feel the most connected to my body and my surroundings. I use they/them and she/her pronouns because the combination makes me feel expansive. Just like being on top of a mountain, drinking in the forever-views. My mission is to work to increase equitable accessibility in the outdoor industry. This requires, of course, an immense amount of unlearning and reframing of the intent and impact of the outdoor industry. Let's remember: this is an industry that has violently excluded the native owners of this land and perpetually silenced voices of folks that don't fit the white, cis, hetero male qualifiers.*

Generally, participants acknowledged the racist, sexist, classist, and ableist dimensions of outdoor activities and, when applicable, noted the privileges they had from being white, middle-class, or able-bodied. Some also recalled experiences in which these racist, discriminatory aspects were remarked.

*- Hirvi: I think that there's also a lot of racism within the climbing community, and all outdoor and adventure sports. I remember when I was climbing in Colorado, and my climbing friend was a black guy, and I just suddenly heard, like he had already moved half of our stuff to another place where we were a bunch of climbers, and I was still gathering stuff from the previous place, and then I heard someone giving advice to another person like 'oh, you turn left from the black guy', just because it was possible,*

*because there was just one black guy at the crag, and I was like, this is making it so obviously racist.*

Another particular aspect of outdoor climbing where these sexist, racist, and patriarchal structures can be traced is the naming of climbing routes. Traditionally, the person who does the first ascent of a route has the right to name it (Dobner, 2019; Fuchslueger, 2023; Wigglesworth, 2022). This has resulted in misogynistic, racist, colonial, queerphobic, etc. naming of routes, a high portion of them named by white, cis, straight men (Dobner, 2019; Wigglesworth, 2022). Further, these practices remain still very much uncontested in the climbing community, as some of the Instagram participants noted<sup>75</sup>.

*@brieoutside: We should not continue to worship misogynistic and racist practices by even “legendary” climbers. Times have changed and names can too. The idea that the First Assentionists have a dynastic right to own a climb is just simply colonial. The worst thing that would happen if we changed the name of iconic climbs would be that less people would give a shit just because you say you climbed it.*<sup>76</sup>

<b>Drop the Tranny</b> Boulder Nevada • Calic...uldres • Fin du Monde Drainage • Tickle Pickle	V4 ★★★
<b>Tranny Swazy</b> Sport Wyoming • Ten Sleep Canyon • Lake Point • His and Hers Wall	5.11a ★★
<b>Paying the Tranny</b> Sport - 1 Pitch Arkansas • Horseshoe Canyon Ranch • Prophecy Wall	5.13b ★★
<b>Tranny Channel</b> Trad - 1 Pitch Zimbabwe • Matobo Hills National Park • Maleme Crag	5.9 ★★
<b>Tranny Pack</b> Boulder Maryland • Cunningham Falls State Park • Cliff Trail Boulders	V0 ★
<b>Drop the Tranny</b> TR - 1 Pitch Alaska • Juneau • Downtown Juneau - Mount Maria • Second Wall	5.8

Bredford (2020) argues that hegemonic masculinities are threatened by women in non-traditional roles, by non-heterosexual relationships, and by trans people:

Women and land are something white men can imagine owning and profiting from. [...] Men’s desire to build, to remove cheap energy, to erode not only natural spaces but also any legal protections for them are all part of an idealized unfettered capitalism and an individualistic masculinity upon which nothing encroaches. This capitalistic, individualistic, cisheteropatriarchal worldview

<sup>75</sup> It is worth noting that some climbing organizations are starting to create a change in this regard. For example, the American Alpine Club has drafted a guide of “Principles for Publishing Climbing Route Names”: <https://americanalpineclub.org/route-name-principles> This guide also includes a list of “unacceptable words” to use when naming a new route: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1\\_xEa0iWXY3rHV4sdRfC-OBRruF3uycaGAvwbrQZ9hyk/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_xEa0iWXY3rHV4sdRfC-OBRruF3uycaGAvwbrQZ9hyk/edit#gid=0)

<sup>76</sup> [Image description]: A list of six different climbing routes with their grade shows. The names of the routes are: Drop the Tranny (Boulder) – V4, Tranny Swazy (Sport) – 5.11a, Paying the Tranny (Sport) – 5.13b, Tranny Channel (Trad) – 5.9, Tranny Pack (Boulder) – V0, and Drop the Tranny (TR) – 5.8.

doesn't conceive trans people as property to be profited from, but it does imagine them as a threat to masculinity. (p. 4)

While the presence of trans people might contest patriarchal and sexist aspects of outdoor activities, how does this translate into participants' experiences? For Cicala, a higher presence and representation of queer people could – though it does not have to – affect how we view and relate with these spaces.

- Cicala: *In general, I would like to find more representation of queer people. And also, maybe, something that has nothing to do with desire or sexuality. It's more like, outdoor is not about boys/men and the nature, and conquering...*

- BB: *And do you think that queer people would bring different kinds of representation? That's not just kind of conquering the mountain.*

- Cicala: *Not necessarily, but also women climbers have brought something different, some of them, so I guess it would be the same with queer people.*

This possibility of other types of relationship to/towards/with outdoor activities was materialized in the experiences shared on Instagram, where many of the participants actively created and visibilized diverse ways to relate to these spaces and activities, divergent from those hegemonic and colonial masculinities.

@nikkik\_smith: *I don't like the idea of conquering or winning something in the outdoors. It's more about creating something and being focused and engaged in some of the most beautiful places in the world.*<sup>77</sup>



This was also manifested by the fact that most Instagram users, when posting about a particular hike, included an acknowledgment of the native land<sup>78</sup> where it took place. Land acknowledgments are used to recognize and honor the traditional territory of

<sup>77</sup> [Image description]: A white, fit person with long and slightly red hair is climbing a boulder. The person is wearing a purple tank top and is facing the boulder, which has a negative inclination. In the back, on the right side, there are high trees with green leaves, and the sun light passes through the leaves.

<sup>78</sup> If you want to check the name of Native Land, it is possible to look it up in this worldwide interactive map: <https://native-land.ca>

Indigenous people who called the land home – and in many cases still do – before the arrival of settler colonialism. Respecting the land also comes with changing the way we ‘see and talk’ about it.

*@vadose.aidan: We need to figure out how to foster a mindset of respect and reciprocity in everyone that visits these places, not just wish people would leave. We need to welcome people into a community of stewards and caretakers. WE NEED TO STOP USING THE WORD “PLAYGROUND” TO DESCRIBE THE LAND. If people at the core of the outdoor community act as though wild places are something from which we extract fun, if that’s what we broadcast on social media, then who the hell do we think we are, belittling those newcomers that do the same thing, that leave trash and party, when we were the ones that said, “this place is for fun”. They’re just having fun the way they know how. We need to start by fixing ourselves. We NEED to grow past the treatment of land as a place from which to extract fun and cool images to boost our social capital. These places are HOME. We need to change our culture to one that welcomes all, teaches respect for the land, and has some goddamn accountability. [...] The problem is that WE, as core members of the outdoor community, have been broadcasting a shallow, extractive narrative for decades, and the world heard us.*

While outdoor and adventure activities have been traditionally related with hegemonic masculinities and as a masculine domain, nature is often linked to womanhood: “Women’s bodies, menstruation, and ‘life-giving- forces’ were thought to align them more closely with Nature” (Bredford, 2020; Gaard, 2020; Parker, 2020; Thorsteinson & Joo, 2020, p. 35). This biological and pathologizing essentialism rhetoric that assumes certain dichotomies – nature/culture, feminine/masculine, health/disease – has been essential in the control of ‘true womanhood’ and “to exclude individuals and behavior that deviates from binary constructions of masculinity and femininity or male and female” (Bredford, 2020, p. 5; Thorsteinson & Joo, 2020). Further, some feminisms – some strands of eco-feminism or back-to-the-land feminisms – have aligned “the city with maleness and masculinity, while Nature corresponds with femaleness and femininity” (Thorsteinson & Joo, 2020, p. 35). This Nature discourse has been deemed especially problematic for trans women, who have been regarded either “as not really women, [...] or they are assumed to be too committed to their identities as real women” (Thorsteinson & Joo, 2020, p. 36).

Moreover, Bredford (2020) has argued that “the exploitation of Others through the maintenance of hierarchies means that trans and ecological Others are intertwined in their subjugation within the cisheteropatriarchy” (p. 2). Further, the attitude of colonization towards women and land frames them as entities to which white men believe they are entitled. This has also led to a heightened intensity in political and social attacks targeting trans rights simultaneously with assaults on the environment (Bredford, 2020). This

discourse was generally absent in most of the participants' experiences, with some exceptions. Here, Limestone, in a quote already used previously, referred to this concept of 'Mother Nature'.

- Limestone: *Mother Nature literally gives us everything we could possibly need and we continue to take her for granted and treat her like shit.*

In that sense, nature is constructed as a maternal entity that "takes care of us", and the urban is then dichotomized as an aggressive other. Similarly, Encina often refers to nature as a feminine entity, though it is unclear if this is only related to the diary being written in Spanish (where nature is a feminine noun) or if he understands nature to be feminine. On the same lines, Lingon referred to the forest as an entity, and walking through the forest was regarded as a "spiritual and existential" experience. However, his reflection also linked to the concept of being trans as something 'natural'. This discourse of being trans as something 'natural' – as opposed to 'unnatural' – does come up in much of the experiences analyzed, which tries to distance itself from the idea that "queer/trans people have been deemed 'unnatural' and 'against nature' for centuries" (Hogan, 2020, p. 133).

@charli.adventures (@unlikelyhikers): *Nature made the mountains and nature made me. I will never stop openly being who I am until the day I die. Proud to fly rainbow colors on top of Mt. Adams yesterday! These are the ancestral lands of the Yakama tribe. As we celebrate and protest for Pride, never forget the ways that we have and continue to marginalize the first ones. This land is theirs.*

Susan Stryker, in her renowned text "My words to Viktor Frankenstein above the village of Chamounix" (1994), writes about the view of being trans as "monstrous," "outside of nature," "less than fully human," and a "mistake" (1994, pp. 244–245). In chapter 5.2. *Trans Embodiment and Agency in the Outdoors*, I further analyzed the concept of the 'transsexual monster' (Courtine, 2006; Halberstam, 1998; Santos, 2023; Stryker, 1994), which symbolizes what is 'outside the norm', those whose "identities and experiences have been devalued, described in derogatory terms and constructed as (queer) monsters because they remain misfits under the dominant cis-heteronormative system" (Santos, 2023, p. 83).

On the other side, some works have tried to link trans- to the natural world. However, this association does not aim to 'normalize' trans and gender-non-conforming identities under the cis-heteronormative regime, but they rather claim that 'monsters' are also 'natural'. In this sense, Parker analyzed how Ebershoff – in his movie *The Danish Girl* – "draws upon numerous images of nonhuman Nature to emphasize the fact that Lili, perhaps more than anyone around her, is decidedly *natural* in order to undermine these prejudices" (Parker, 2020, p. 24). This idea of queer connection to the natural world, particularly in relation with those gender identities and expressions falling outside the

traditional cis-heteronormative framework, also appeared in many of the narratives of the Instagram data. These narratives challenge the notion that queer and trans people are somehow unnatural, following other trans scholars (Nordmarken, 2014; Shuster & Westbrook, 2022; Stryker, 1994) who have claimed their *monstrosity* as a place of intimacy, reconnection, and joy.

*@jaimie\_outside: Pride month has me feeling all kinds of feelings lately, one of which happens to be pride! It's been a long process of learning to love my queer heart and body, and I'm not even close to done. Hiking has mostly been a super affirming experience and as I learn more about the natural world, being outside has felt like a vacation into a queer utopia. So many plants and insects and animals thriving outside of a constructed binary and a hetero compulsive system. It seems wild to me now that people try to invalidate who I am by claiming that queerness isn't natural. Have they seen a bumblebee make sweet love to a wildflower?! Happy pride month to everyone except the old lady on the trail today who didn't like my Stonewall shirt [Rainbow Flag; Round Pushpin] The lands of the Santa Ysabel preserve belong to the Digueño tribe of the Kumeyaay people.*

However, opposition to this nature/culture dichotomy is crucial in queer and trans studies (Seymour, 2020). Julia Serano (2013) argues that theories of gender have narrowed the false dichotomy between nature and culture – or between the biological and the social – which leads to the perception of trans people as being inherently unnatural. The ambivalence emerges because the counter-nature discourse, whether it's rooted in feminist, queer, or trans perspectives, consistently depends on the contrast between inclusion and exclusion (Thorsteinson & Joo, 2020). Nevertheless, Thorsteinson and Joo (2020) argue that “a transecological framework asks instead that we rethink the false dichotomies structuring these reversals, aiming for a politics of intimacy over one of inclusion” (p. 36). This disruption of the dichotomy nature/culture was also regarded by some of the participants.

*@parq\_ranger (@unlikelyhikers): Queer people know better than anyone that binaries are usually false - or at least incomplete. The distinctions that we draw between the urban world and the wilderness, or between the human world and the natural world, are just as incomplete.<sup>79</sup>*

This idea of intimacy also connects with Straube's (2020) posthuman ecological intimacy – which I analyzed in chapter section 6.4.- *Transecological belonging – Feeling at home* – and the concept of trans-corporeality, as outlined by Alaimo (2008, 2010,

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<sup>79</sup> It is to be noted that @parq\_ranger's quote could be perceived as some kind of queer idealization, particularly if we think of queer just as an umbrella term for LGTB identities. However, queer could also be read as in people who do not conform with cis-hetero-normativities in regard to gender expression, identity, and/or sexual and romantic orientation.



2018). On these lines, Seymour (2013, 2020) argues for a counter-discourse which she has coined as “organic transgenderism”: “A vision of gender transitioning as spontaneous, immanent, self-driven, and generally ‘natural’—akin to the life-cycle changes of plants and animals—in opposition to its dominant framing in popular and medical discourse as an ‘unnatural,’ technoscientific intervention” (Seymour, 2020, p. 191). Seymour further argues that this counter-discourse aims to shift the focus away from the pathologization of trans experiences (Seymour, 2013). These experiences underscore the inextricable connection between the human body, the natural world, the environment, and entities that extend beyond human boundaries. Further, these connections are marked by a sensorial, sensual, and affective relationship, aligning with the concept of transecological belonging.



## 7.2. QUEERING TIME-SPACE IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

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*for thinking about the time of queerness and for thinking through queerness in relation to the temporality of lived experience.* – Whitney Monaghan (2019, p. 99)

Change is often thought of as linear, unfolding solely as time moves forward. In this view, space is typically regarded as a fixed aspect of the present moment. However, Doreen Massey urges us to adopt a perspective where space and time are inseparable, as she asserts: “Space is not static, nor time spaceless” (Massey, 1992, p. 80). Consequently, time not only propels changes in space, but space also serves as a source of time. This insight leads us to consider the concept of *space-time*, highlighting the inherent interconnectedness of these concepts. Both space and time shape the social landscape and are concurrently shaped by it, in Massey’s (1992) words: “It is not that the interrelations between objects occur *in* space and time; it is these relationships themselves which *create/define* space and time” (p. 79). Following this, Massey (1994) inquires the concept “time-space compression”:

Much of what is written about space, place and postmodern times emphasizes a new phase in what Marx once called ‘the annihilation of space by time’. The process is argued, or - more usually - asserted, to have gained a new momentum, to have reached a new stage. It is a phenomenon which has been called ‘time-space compression’. (p. 146)

How are time and space perceived and experienced by the participants while they engage in outdoor activities? How does it affect their experience? How does it affect our gender identities? How does it affect gendered expectations? Counter-geographies play a role both in decolonizing time-space dynamics and in bringing visibility to Other subjectivities. Moreover, they shed light on the processes of de-gendering that take place in outdoor spaces. These processes contribute to the development of alternative time-space constructs that forge safer spaces for trans people. In this regard, some participants pointed out the change of rhythm.

- Deer: *I would say that when I stare at the ocean, or the waves, or the mountains, I follow the rhythm of these things because they have a different rhythm. This fire has a rhythm that forces my body to do something. Or the waves, or the sunset, I adapt to this rhythm, and it forces me to adapt to this rhythm. You know, the city forces me to adapt to something that makes me act like [gesture of fast]. So, that's why I think it's partly difficult for me and that's why I do it, because it's hard for me to slow down. So, I think this is one of the...it slows me down or it gives me the same rhythm.*

Jack Halberstam argues that space and time are social constructions (2005); therefore, “a ‘queer’ adjustment in the way in which we think about time, in fact, requires and produces new conceptions of space” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 6). This process has been addressed as ‘queer temporality’ (Conde Arroyo, 2022; Crawford, 2017; Podmore & Bain, 2020; Soderling, 2016; Solana, 2016). Queer temporality has been “used to refer to a whole series of narratives, metaphors, and figures about gender-sexual practices, experiences, and sensations that come into tension with socially legitimized temporal norms” (Solana, 2016, p. 39). Further, Mariela Solana argues that this concept is used in two ways: Firstly, it describes the non-normative temporal experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals who don’t fit into traditional narratives of marriage and heterosexual reproduction. Secondly, it highlights the radical difference between queer people who experience time in non-normative ways and those who adopt and promote normative life stages. Hence, this term can be seen as both exclusive to LGBTQ+ experiences and applicable to a broader view of human time. Additionally, Solana, drawing from Sedgwick (1990), argues that there are two ways to understand this notion: “A minoritizing one (*queer* subjects live *queer* times) and a universalizing one (time itself can become *queer*)” (Solana, 2016, p. 56). In this sense, I argue that queering temporality in the outdoors follows both a minoritizing and universalizing view: Queer subjectivities allow spaces to produce alternative temporalities which fall outside cisheteronormativity, but outdoor and adventure activities<sup>80</sup> may also *queer* time.

- Bart (diary): *When being in nature, I have time. Time expands, even in winter, like now. I have time to be in the moment, not rushing between places and things to do. I have the time to just sit in the sun and catch its warmth, contemplate my surroundings, or just spend the day cycling, something that would feel like losing my time when being in the city. I can cycle the whole day, day after day, and I don’t feel bad with myself. I’m not wasting time, because I’m here. It helps my mental health and teaches me that even things that I sometimes see as ‘losing my time’, they are not. They’re beneficial and help me grow.*

In this sense, it is even possible to assert that time outdoors differs from a capitalist view of time, consequently also queering time. José Esteban Muñoz argues that “we know time through the field of the affective, and affect is tightly bound to temporality” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 445). Similarly, Deer reflects on how clock-time almost disappears when being outdoors. “Clock-time, which was developed in Europe during the 14th century, no longer tracks and synthesizes time of the natural and social environment but

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<sup>80</sup> Some outdoor activities require a strict plan in order to succeed. However, this is not the case for most of the activities that the participants brought up. Nevertheless, even in these activities that require of some kind of plan or structure, there often is ‘lost time’. Think, for example, of a big expedition to the Himalayas. While there needs to be a plan on when to leave camp to achieve the summit, there are often many days who are just spent waiting for the perfect weather window.

produces instead a time that is independent from those processes: clock-time is applicable anywhere, any time” (Adam, 2006, p. 123). When being outdoors, the rhythm doesn’t follow anymore *straight* clock-time.

- Deer: *But I think it's the capitalism there, when you don't have the phone, you don't have the things reminding you all the time that you should be a better version of yourself or doing something better and improving, or being productive or...it plays differently. Like the capital that we get here in nature is so different than in the city. Time is really different, it goes really differently. Like one hour in a city is very different than one hour than here. Like, we already spent 2 hours, and if I would have been eating breakfast in Helsinki, like home, for 2 hours, I would be a fucking mess, like I should be get going already, and I don't know where the fuck I should go, but I gotta go.*

For Deer, outdoor physical activity is not related to the idea of sports as a means to become “a better version of yourself”. Here comes also into play that sport and physical activity are two different concepts: Physical activity is any bodily movement that we do, while sport, based on the European Sports Charter, “means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels” (2021, p. 3).

“Straight time tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 84). For Muñoz, the answer to this comes from stimulating political imagination about the future based on the ideas of hope and queer utopia. Thus, if the outdoors can be a space where it is possible to *queer* temporalities in a universalizing sense, how does the construction of time unfold during outdoor activities? And how does it affect the production of space? With the queering of time, it was noted that the space also opens up in a way that creates *space*.

- Ginesta [discussing space being more open]: *But I believe this affects me in that maybe, when I can look further, I can also distance myself from myself... you know, not so much 'ego' in the sense of being within myself. When something sticks to me, it's like in the end, I stagnate and stay more in the same place. But if I see it from a broader perspective, there's a part of transcending, you know? Like not being so caught up in worries or things like that... it's like, for example, there are people in Barcelona who live with... who have a window and there's a wall in front of it. I think it's not the same as looking out a window and seeing the horizon. I definitely don't think it's the same...*

- BB: *Yes, it's like it limits you... there's no room for things to come out...*

- Ginesta: *Yes, exactly... and if you're not feeling well, it can bounce right back at you, right?*

Massey (1994) explains that time-space compression refers “to movement and communication across space, to the geographical stretching-out of social relations, and to our experience of all this. [...] It is capitalism and its developments which are argued to determine our understanding and our experience of space” (p. 147). The difference in time-space compression plays a crucial role in defining the border between the city and nature. This aspect was observed in various manners by the participants and had a notable impact on their overall sense of well-being. One example is the lack of noises mentioned, among others, by Lobo.

- Lobo: *I like to be free of all the noises, I don't like high volume...so yeah, I don't like noises, I like it when it's quiet. But all the lights from cars, the streets, and the commercials, they can be very aggressive. So outdoors I get relaxed because there are not so many noises, and you can feel more.*

- BB: *I see that for me, in the city, there are a lot of inputs, very fast. And here there are also a lot of things happening, but it's somehow slower... Also, I'm thinking there are some outdoor experiences nowadays that they try to sell you. When you're doing them in the outdoors, then not anymore. I'm thinking like canyoning, going down the river, then it's like the companies selling you the trips. Yeah... they're trying to sell you something, but once you're there, then...yeah, the selling happens in the city before, not while you're outdoors.*

In these quotes, we can also regard the construction of a dichotomy mentioned in the preceding section: Urban spaces as aggressive vs. nature as caring. The abundance of noises in the city reflects the fast-paced, high-stimulus character of urban spaces, which can be perceived as aggressive, while the calm related to nature can be seen as something that relaxes and cares for our overall well-being. However, the commercialization of outdoor experiences acknowledged in the above quote also suggests that the line between caring nature and aggressive urbanization might become blurred by marketing and commodification, while at the same time highlighting the complex interplay between that commercialization and the desire for ‘an authentic connection’ with nature.

Some authors, such as Crawford (2017) and Soderling (2016), have aimed to contest metronormativity by exploring queer experiences in queer ruralities. However, Podmore and Bain (2020) argue that these works that challenge metronormativity through the urban-rural binary cluster all non-metropolitan spaces under the same ‘umbrella’: “This counter-hegemonic framework unifies the rural, the small town, the provincial, and the colonized against the powerful norms emanating from the queer metropolitan” (Podmore & Bain, 2020, p. 3). Thus, Podmore and Bain (2020) and Straube (2020) aim to disrupt this dichotomy by looking into the queer temporality of the suburbs. In these narratives, the ‘urban’ is related to fast and new, while the ‘rural’ is related to slow and old. Crawford (2017) contends that to disrupt the linear narratives of time and speed, it becomes essential to question the seemingly harmless assumption of consistently imagining the

queer subject as perpetually moving forward. Thus, Crawford<sup>81</sup> contends that “to queer time, it is crucial to ruralize – even ‘slow’ down – queer theory” (Crawford, 2017, p. 905). Crawford continues: “A model for queer rural temporality (of the body and of space) that can indeed operate beyond the ‘closed time of capitalism’ into the ‘excessive time of revolution’” (Ibid. p. 906).

- Sandstone: *It feels like everything is simplified and that things I was stressed about aren't so important. It's nice not having my gender constantly assumed by people because I'm not interacting with people. I like the feeling of sitting on the ground and swimming in the water holes. Everything is about eating, moving, and sleeping.*

Sandstone's quote aligns with Crawford's statements from above. Crawford suggests that queering time involves slowing down, allowing for a model of queer temporality that exists beyond the confines of capitalism's closed time. Sandstone's observations of simplification – focusing on basic needs like eating, moving, and sleeping – reflect a departure from the capitalist rhythm of production, further contributing to queering temporality. In this way, outdoor activities may contribute to disrupt the conventional notions of time dictated by capitalism, leading to a queering of temporality that transcends the constraints of societal norms and structures. Additionally, the slower rhythm that has been mentioned can be interpreted as an opportunity to slow down. That would mean there's no rush to hastily reach a destination, whether it's a geographical location or transitioning.

- Juniper: *My approach to mountaineering and climbing is not based on competitiveness, but it has a lot to do with the pleasure at the surface with a macro view of the smallest, the most purely subjective. I have not wanted to be a parent. I have prioritized living a series of experiences rather than building a stable life endowed with everything that is believed to be essential to live well. I have opted for uncertainty and precariousness. And I believe that everything, all of that, has to do with my relationship with the mountain and what I have learned from inhabiting it.*

Trans pathologization has established a linear chrononormative (Freeman, 2010) time, arguing for a universal “presupposed chronological progression from a ‘terrible-present-in-the-wrong-body’ to a ‘better-future-in-the-right-body’” (Fisher et al., 2017, p. 2). Freeman's (2010) concept of chrononormativity “describes the process by which subjects are interpellated into temporalities of development and production naturalized through heterosexual discourses of genealogy and progress” (Fisher et al., 2017, p. 5). Time in the outdoors, as I have been discussing, may disrupt these chrononormative

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<sup>81</sup> Here, I was going to use pronouns, but after my initial decision to use they because I didn't know the author's pronouns, I went to google it. All of Lucas Crawford's descriptions were done avoiding pronouns altogether, and this is also the formula that I will follow.

assumptions, in the same way as the complexity and nuances of trans lives go beyond what the above chronological sequence suggests.

- Castor: *For me, being in nature is freedom. I don't feel... no one is judging me, there's no one judging me, it's freedom. And I like it even more when I don't have to go at a specific pace, walking or cycling, but at the pace my body and I can, or at the pace I feel like. And if I want to stop, I stop, and if I want to look at the windmill, I look at it, and if I want to write, I write. That's what I like about nature, that many times you don't have to go at a specific pace, you can go at the pace you want. There's no one, it's just you and the field, the rabbit that passes by, or the sheep in the farm...*

In this vein, transitions are not linear; there is no clear beginning or end. Taking breaks to feel ourselves, deciding to go faster or slower depending on how we feel, or external factors may affect transition-related decisions. In that sense, both transitioning and outdoor activities subvert linear chrononormativities.

Stina Soderling, who focuses on rural queer experiences, argues that “in urban-centered queer theorizations of time, the rural is the end, the space-time of death. The rural is approached with fear and presented as an Other at constant risk of demise” (2016, p. 343). She further states that the rhythms of the non-human world are more present in rural areas compared to urban spaces, affecting the pace of human bodies. Therefore, she contends that:

Focusing on the rural makes for a closer attention to the material aspects of time. Not because the rural is somehow more material than the urban, or ‘closer to nature’—the whole earth is material—but because the materiality of human life is harder to ignore in an environment that includes more interactions with the more-than-human. (Ibid. p. 347)

Soderling’s approach still focuses on the dichotomy rural/urban. However, participants’ experiences connected with her idea of rhythm closer to the more-than-human world. In the same vein as the space researched by Soderling (2016) was described as ‘magical’, some participants also used this word when describing outdoor spaces to connote “a time-space beyond the normative” (Ibid., p. 333).

- BB: *It is very magical. There [the Pyrenees], when I'm in silence, you don't hear anything, no birds, but you feel like the sound of the mountains...they are such huge mountains, so many, that it's a silence but at the same time the sound of the mountains, of their presence...*

- Pi Cargolat: *Yes, and the howling of the wind, which can come to sound like a wolf, I love that...*

This silence was also mentioned in different ways by other participants. The silence often present when engaging in outdoor activities also disrupts normative capitalist time



notions. Moreover, @nonbinarynomads also related this silence to a sense of welcoming and safeness.

@nonbinarynomads: *When your first waking thought is about work, part of a system you genuinely despise, you hit the trails extra quick. I entered the forest as the sunbeams crept around the trees. My footsteps crunched on the gravel and my water sloshed in my pack. As I ingested spider webs and listened to the trees groan, I noticed there weren't any bird chirps. It was too cold and too early for anyone to make noise. The silence felt safe. It was welcomed. It felt right. As I appreciated the stillness of the nature around me, I felt the urge to invite others to feel the power of nature, to feel this safe space, to be quiet. Afterall, even our President could use some silence*<sup>82</sup>.  
[Fallen Leaf] #nonbinary #NonbinaryNomads #queer #ftx #optoutside #unitedbynature #trailrun #run #nature.<sup>83</sup>



The events at the capitol building in the United States on January 6th was present in many of the Instagram accounts of people living there, where many also posted about their need to go outdoors during turbulent political times.

@parkslucifer: *On days like today*<sup>84</sup> *I like to go to the woods. The forest reminds me of our impermanence, that things have existed long before us and (hopefully) will exist long after us. No matter what happens, it is our duty to mourn the dead and fight like hell for the living.*

Queering temporality beyond the rural and urban binary through outdoor activities also requires fighting institutional trans necropolitics, as it involves fighting policies and structures that lead to the marginalization and harm of trans people. These trans

<sup>82</sup> This post was written on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January of 2021, after the capitol attack that happened on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January in the USA.

<sup>83</sup> [Image description]: The scene depicts a landscape set against a mountain range. At the center of the image, a white person with short dark hair, a black tank top and black shorts stands atop a grassy hill, positioned toward the right side, and facing backwards. There is a solitary tree, bare of leaves, to their upper-left side. A mix of brown grass, weeds, and small rocks coats the ground beneath the person's feet. The sky is blue with some upper clouds.

<sup>84</sup> The post was written on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2020. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2020 was the United States presidential election where Joe Biden defeated Donald Trump.

necropolitics are a form of “slow death” (Berlant, 2007; Shakhsari, 2014), which consists in the everyday “physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of people in that population” (Berlant, 2007, p. 755). Engaging in outdoor activities can be regarded as a form of resistance and reconfiguration of conventional notions of time and space, challenging established norms and offering a different perspective on time, not limited to the rural-urban divide.

### 7.3. QUEER OUTDOORS – REPRESENTATION

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*How can we be seen without being known and how can we be known without being hunted? – Eric Stanley (2017, p. 618)*

Historically, queer and trans communities have actively pursued visibility as a political objective, aiming to resist the erasure of trans lived experiences from public imaginary (Álvarez Broz, 2017; Ciszek et al., 2023; Gossett et al., 2017; Holtby et al., 2015; Koch-Rein et al., 2020; Lee, 2020; Missé, 2018; Riggs & McIntyre, 2022; Stanley, 2017; Van Haelter et al., 2022). However, while “we are living in a time of trans visibility, [...] we are also living in a time of anti-trans violence” (Gossett et al., 2017, p. xv). Many scholars have pointed out the imbrication that exists between trans visibility and surveillance practices (Beauchamp, 2019; Ciszek et al., 2023; Gossett et al., 2017; Lee, 2020): “Efforts towards more recognition of transgender identities and bodies within surveillance systems may reduce harm for certain individuals, yet they also facilitate the workings of surveillance, bringing those identities and bodies more efficiently under biopolitical management” (Beauchamp, 2019, pp. 19–20). This oxymoron has been analyzed in diverse ways.

Gossett et al. (2017) acknowledged that, when framed within the context of capitalism, the concept of ‘positive representation’ falls short in offering safeguarding to a significant portion of trans and gender non-conforming individuals. This disparity is especially pronounced among those who belong to low-income or people of color. They have called it “the trap of the visual”, which “offers—or, more accurately, it is frequently offered to us as—the primary path through which trans people might have access to livable lives” (Gossett et al., 2017, p. xv).

Similarly, while there has been increased interest in the representation of transgender characters in films and media, representation itself has not equally translated into improved living conditions for transgender individuals, noting an incongruence between media visibility and lived reality (Berberick, 2018; Keegan et al., 2018; Koch-Rein et al., 2020; Riggs & McIntyre, 2022; Stanley, 2017). This has been addressed as the “paradox of trans visibility”, “a condition that highlights (and at times exaggerates) particular narratives while silencing others” (Berberick, 2018, p. 124).

Additionally, Haritaworn et al. (2013) refer to “murderous inclusions”, which shift the focus from promises to violence. These ‘murderous inclusions’ shape diverse forms of ‘queer citizenship’, “conceptualized as a deadly mechanism of differentiated inclusion, which divides its subjects into grievable and ungrievable, worthy and

unworthy of state protection, folded into life, or socially dead” (Haritaworn et al., 2013, p. 446). Lastly, they pose the question of “inclusion into what?” (Ibid.), referring that inclusion into a cisheteronormative society is a way of queer and trans necropolitics, as our bodies will always be the “necessary outside” (Butler, 1993), the “abjected realm of bodies do not matter, are not worth protecting, saving, or grieving” (Shakhsari, 2014, p. 102).

On the other side, some authors have also pointed out the benefits of trans visibility (Holtby et al., 2015; Koch-Rein et al., 2020; Missé, 2018; Missé & Parra, 2022). Missé and Parra argue that “the wave of trans role models that has emerged in the media, online social networks, educational institutions, and peer groups has positioned the trans experience as a possible and fulfilling journey for many adolescents who defy gender norms” (2022, p. 80). However, according to Missé, we have to differentiate between trans visibility and trans role models (Missé, 2018, p. 95), and he continues: “Our invisibility in the social imaginary is not a trade-off for any television representation, simply because the trans issue is not widely known we are not obliged to accept any narrative as a positive role model” (Missé, 2018, p. 96). Thus, representation constructs notions of what is possible, broadening the scope of what can be comprehended, but we do not have to accept all trans representation as inherently ‘good’. In this regard, we need trans representation that is intersectional, which questions not only the binary gender system but also issues of racism, classism, sexism, ableism, etc.

While this is the current state of research on trans visibility and representation, when it comes to outdoor and adventure activities, most participants reflected on a lack of representation and visibility.

- Hawthorn: *I don't really see myself in media surrounding the outdoors, partly because of my gender, but a huge part is also that typically advertisements for adventure things include couples which is something that I don't really see in my future as an aroace<sup>85</sup> person. The film They/Them by Patagonia made me feel happy and hopeful that there is a place for me in the outdoor industry.*

For people with multiple marginalized identities – in this case, a white, trans, aroace person – this lack of representation is more noticeable. Moreover, “trans representation shapes public discourse and affects politics” (Koch-Rein et al., 2020, p. 3). To counter ‘the trap of the visual’ and ‘the paradox of trans visibility’ it is important to be “mindful of how representation can be and is used to restrict the possibilities of trans people flourishing in hostile worlds” (Gossett et al., 2017, p. xviii). These constraints to thrive can be regarded as a necropolitical tool and a form of ‘slow death’ (Berlant, 2007;

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<sup>85</sup> Aroace is a term that refers to an individual that identifies both in the aromantic and in the asexual spectrum.

Shakhsari, 2014). However, representation by itself does not represent an existing reality, though it creates imaginaries for what is possible, expanding the realm of the intelligible.

- Eucalypt: *YouTube and Instagram have helped me imagine myself and inspire me to be participating in more adventure/outdoor activities. Although, I am looking within myself to find ways on how I want to be in the outdoors and HOW I want to be participating in these activities that aligns more with who I am, not what's "normal" or "approved" of.*

Debates surrounding trans representation also include discourses about who can speak for trans people and how trans lives are represented. For a long time, trans representation has been quite problematic, as trans people were shown “as either dangerous psychopaths and sexual predators [...] or as victims with little agency” (Koch-Rein et al., 2020, p. 2; Missé, 2018), and said representation followed the widely criticized storyline of the ‘wrong body’. However, as Ginesta regards, trans people are not imagined having joy and pleasure outdoors.

- Ginesta: *Ah, I do see it as resistance [going outdoors as a trans person], definitely. Because, essentially, it is to occupy a space, an environment, that basically we have not... for example, in the imaginary, trans people do not exist in the public imaginary. And this is extrapolated to nature, I think... many people think that we don't exist. But sometimes, it seems that pleasure is forbidden to us, right? Enjoyment, pleasure, these are things that people don't think we do...*

Koch-Rein et al. (2020) contend that “the politics of trans representation are not limited to the notion of ‘authentic’ or ‘good’ trans representations but ideally intervene and *trans* our ways of looking at the world” (2020, p. 7, emphasis added). The lack of possibility for something to exist is also a form of trans necropolitics:

It is necessary to interrogate how the uneven institutionalization of women’s, gay, and trans politics produces a transnormative subject, whose universal trajectory of coming out/transition, visibility, recognition, protection, and self-actualization largely remain uninterrogated in its complicities and convergences with biomedical, neoliberal, racist, and imperialist projects. (Snorton & Haritaworn, 2013, p. 67)

In this regard, participants linked more trans and queer representation and visibility only with positive possible outcomes, and as something to strive for that would help improve trans lives.

- Woodruff: *I think with more representation comes also more of a feeling of community and connection. But also, we're badass and our stories deserve to be heard and made into movies and like, 'look at this amazing person climbing this mountain'. You know, I watched all these documentaries about cis guys and I'm so impressed, but I want that with trans people. And I want other people to say, 'man, trans people are*

*badass!', you know? 'Look at them climbing rocks!' And also, I think more representation in general, for queer people but also for everyone else, just seeing that we're here and we're doing things, I think it always opens up people's minds a little bit. If outdoor people can connect with queer people over an outdoor thing, that maybe also furthers the like... Yes, we are actually all people, and we love the same thing and it's great.*

Representation was deemed by participants for its “formative and transformative power” (Gossett et al., 2017, p. xviii). In this sense, self-representation was regarded as a tool to counter current feelings of misrepresentation (Van Haelter et al., 2022). Many of the participants used social media for these purposes, both to find and to create representation. This was also perceptible in the Instagram posts analyzed.

*@genderqueer\_hiker: Four years ago today, I finished my 4-year long-ass section hike (LASH) of the Appalachian Trail, after averaging 550 miles/year. I started as a complete backpacking noob, having never backpacked before in my life. I started by solo hiking across 92-mile Massachusetts in 4 days, a harbinger of ultramarathons in my future.*

*I also started backpacking only a year into medical transition and only 1.5 years after realizing I was transgender. I knew of no other queer or trans hikers, backpackers, or thruhikers. I had no one to ask for advice, no one to help me troubleshoot. I had to learn everything on my own, because it was made abundantly clear that I was NOT welcome in the white straight cis men-dominated hiker spaces.*

*It's strange thinking back, because this feels both like last week and an eternity ago. I've evolved as a person and backpacker, so far from where I started. I know at least a dozen other queer, trans, and/or nonbinary thruhikers and ultrarunners.*

*[...] [Round Pushpin] Land of the Abenaki, Wabanaki, and Penobscot peoples*

Additionally, some researchers also note that:

For cisgender people, watching media portrayals of transgender persons is associated with more supportive attitudes toward transgender people and policies. For transgender individuals, in turn, being able to see meaningful role models represented on screen can co-construct their own gender identities. (Gillig et al., 2018; Van Haelter et al., 2022, p. 77).

However, as many Instagram participants claim, there is a lack of representation in the outdoor industry, and they are actively asking for a change in this scenario.

*@littleclimbingstories (@\_wild.wanderer\_) asks: How often do you see an LGBTQ+ person on the cover of an outdoor magazine? How frequently do QTBIPOC couples get featured on sports websites or in guidebooks?*

@torifyfishes (@\_wild.wanderer\_) demands: *Show our faces year round in advertisements. Hire us in your companies. Recruit us to be ambassadors for your labels. Host classes/workshops geared towards diversity year round.*

@morninhays (@\_wild.wanderer\_) says: *I don't just want queer representation in the industry, I want a thriving queer-dominant sector. No more waiting for the white cis het hegemony to open doors for us - it's time to pick the locks.*

While visibility can be double-sided, as analyzed above, this does not show in any of the Instagram data analyzed – nor in the diaries or interviews. Moreover, much of the current trans representation in media is transnormative and stereotypical (Riggs & McIntyre, 2022; Van Haelter et al., 2022), as it is also regarded in the above quotes. Through Instagram, trans people are creating the representation they are longing for and need, from their own perspective and on their own terms.

@halcyhoo (@unlikelyhikers): *I grew up loving the outdoors but almost gave up my dreams of being a climber because I didn't see anyone else out there who was also transgender. I definitely had concerns about my safety and if I would be accepted by the community. But my decision to not be deterred has resulted in some of the best experiences of my life. I found a community of people like me (turns out I'm not the only one!), friends that love me, and an opportunity to help increase representation. Best of all I am able to enjoy nature as my authentic self.*

Many authors highlight that the current increase in trans visibility may have negative effects (Beauchamp, 2019; Berberick, 2018; Gillig et al., 2018; Gossett et al., 2017; Haritaworn et al., 2013; Keegan et al., 2018). However, due to the current state of lack of trans representation in outdoor recreation, this negative effect has not yet been perceived here by the participants. Additionally, while some experiences of trans people in the outdoor industry are starting to appear in selected online outdoor media<sup>86</sup>, much of the representation is currently happening at an individual level through diverse social media.

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<sup>86</sup> See, for example:

[www.trailrunnermag.com/dirt-digital-editions/to-be-seen/](http://www.trailrunnermag.com/dirt-digital-editions/to-be-seen/)

[thetrek.co/author/lyla-h/](http://thetrek.co/author/lyla-h/)

[thetrek.co/pacific-crest-trail/trans-continental-adventurers-lyla-and-cals-birthday-bash-interview/](http://thetrek.co/pacific-crest-trail/trans-continental-adventurers-lyla-and-cals-birthday-bash-interview/)

[thetre.co/life-as-a-nonbinary-hiker/](http://thetre.co/life-as-a-nonbinary-hiker/)

[www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/hiking-and-backpacking/thru-hike-appalachian-trail-transgender-woman/](http://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/hiking-and-backpacking/thru-hike-appalachian-trail-transgender-woman/)

[www.outsideonline.com/culture/opinion/lgbtq-transgender-thru-hike/](http://www.outsideonline.com/culture/opinion/lgbtq-transgender-thru-hike/)

[www.climbing.com/people/power-of-affinity-spaces-in-the-climbing-community/](http://www.climbing.com/people/power-of-affinity-spaces-in-the-climbing-community/)

*@codimus\_ (@unlikelyhikers): I am on a journey to create visibility for folks like me. The outdoor recreation community seems inaccessible to us and it's hard to feel like we have a space here. No matter our physical ability, our socio-economic standing, our gender identity, no matter those we choose to love, or the color of our skin, we all belong. We can discover a love for the natural beauty of our world and create a more sustainable, equitable, diverse, and accessible future for generations to come. I am a queer person, the unconventional lover here to inspire passion. Stomish Chan, I am a warrior, an indigenous person from the Noxws'a7aq tribe in the Pacific Northwest working hard to keep traditional values alive. I am a person of color, the ink of the letters on a white-saturated page, here to expand the narrative.*

Further, representation on Instagram often highlighted the intersectional identities of the practitioners and how they related to the outdoor experience, criticizing not only the cisnormativity of adventure recreation but also the whiteness, ableist, and colonial aspects of its current media representation. In this regard, @codimus\_'s quote seeks to challenge the current lack of representation in outdoor recreation, emphasizing inclusivity, diversity, and the importance of recognizing intersectional identities within the outdoor community. Lastly, the majority of participants believed in the need for increased representation with the aim of making outdoor recreation a more inclusive and welcoming space for everyone.

While lack of representation is something that has and still hinders trans participation in outdoor activities, among other issues analyzed in previous chapters, what other fears and discriminations do we face when engaging in adventure recreation? How are they being tackled by the participants? And by the outdoor community?



## 7.4. FACING DISCRIMINATION IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

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Discrimination against trans people is an everyday and constant issue in most – if not all – of society’s areas. Being part of diverse and marginalized communities increases your chances of encountering discrimination or violence. While nature may offer a way of escaping some of these oppressive environments, bias or discrimination is still frequently encountered in natural environments, making the interaction with nature a process of negotiating these difficulties.

I have already started to explore fears in sections 6.3. *Finding safe spaces* and 6.5. *Feeling in/out of place*. Sara Ahmed, in “The Cultural Politics of Emotion” (2004), writes about how fear has the power to shape and control the ways in which people move and occupy physical and social spaces. It achieves this by granting certain bodies the freedom to navigate and exist in public spaces, while simultaneously limiting the mobility of other bodies, forcing them into confined or restricted areas. In essence, fear is used as a tool to determine who can move freely and expansively within a given environment and who is constrained by limitations and boundaries.

Fear is a response to a threat of violence. Hence, fears of being in certain spaces can often be linked to discrimination and who is expected to be there. Gender surveillance – the feeling of being targeted and gendered expectation – appears in the interaction with other humans. Though, “which bodies fear which bodies?” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 68).

- Sandstone: *I do feel welcome [in adventure activities]. But I also feel that in any space with cisgender people, that I’m not understood. I still get frequently misgendered, and experience other microaggressions. Despite the group being well meaning, and would consider themselves allies, it never quite feels like a safe place for me.*

For some participants, once there are other people in the outdoors, the power dynamics don’t change when compared to other spaces. This was experienced differently by people with a certain amount of cis passing – even when this passing didn’t correlate with their gender identity – which was used as a way to stay safe as it granted less fear of discrimination.

- Palm: *I have generally felt welcome, but I think that is because almost all people just read me as a white man in the USA. I have felt less welcome at times when I share my non-binary identity but fuck those assholes.*

However, misgendering was regarded as one of the most common forms of discrimination suffered by participants. For participants who pass – or have passed – as a woman, sexist and misogynist comments are also a common concern.

- Juniper: *I have felt the discrimination of being read as a woman on many, many occasions. For example, I have experienced the following situation a thousand times: I am alone in the mountains, far away. Suddenly, I meet a guy who is also alone. And he tells me, "Aren't you afraid to go alone?". I'm probably much more experienced in the mountains than he is. Surely, I'm stronger and have more endurance than him. And yet, just by reading me as a woman, he thinks I should be afraid to be alone on the mountain. "And you, aren't you afraid of going alone?"*

*Or climbing or hiking with a friend, we've been asked, "are you going alone?" It's obvious that we are not alone, because we are going together. But the company of a person read as a woman doesn't count, of course.*

In the State of the Art, I analyzed how outdoor and adventure activities, and especially mountaineering, have been historically regarded as a white, cis, masculine space, where gender stereotypes and hegemonic masculinities were, and still are, very much present. Many of the participants' experiences also noted this aspect of adventure activities.

- Lionhead Monkey: *I decided that I wanted more knowledge, and I started a course in the mountaineering school in Torino. [...] And, years later, I discovered that the steering club of the Torino Alpine Club was complaining that the school had accepted me. It was very transgressive. The Alpine Club, in general, was and is still, very conservative. Some mountaineering schools didn't accept women until the nineties, so there's still this very conservative approach, especially in the high-altitude mountaineering. Anyway, I wasn't aware, or I wasn't caring about that. I know that one day an instructor refused to be my leader, and the school director forced him to be my leader for the rest of the course, as a punishment for him [laughs].*

However, when compared to other sports, outdoor activities were often regarded by participants as a more welcoming space for trans people. One of the most common reasons for this was the lack of gendered categories to participate. Although some outdoor activities also exist in a competitive form, most practitioners do not participate in competitive events. On the other side, even when played as an amateur, most sports have teams or groups separated by gender, or even the way of playing may change.<sup>87</sup>

- Bart (diary): *Since I started transitioning, it has been a place to feel at home in my body, to minimize dysphoria when I had it (which luckily it hasn't/isn't often). Outdoor activities have been a place where I could keep practicing sport without having to choose between a female and male category, being able to take on challenges with no need of choosing a category.*

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<sup>87</sup> This happens for example in badminton, where same gender doubles are played differently than mixed gender doubles.

Outdoor activities may be perceived as a less gendered space because you are not asked about your gender when you participate, as it is the case with many – if not most – other sports. Additionally, for most of the participants, gender was seen as less important when being in nature. It was regarded as if it doesn't make much sense in that space, but rather, being outdoors is more about a set of actions to be in the space and survive than how to be one gender or another.

Many participants had also quit other sports that they played before transitioning – such as soccer, swimming, rugby, or going to the gym – and most frequently, being trans was one of the most significant reasons to do so. For many participants, outdoor sports have become a place to thrive amid discrimination.

*@mateo\_anom: Too many names.*

*I dream of a day when trans day of remembrance is about celebrating and remembering the community members that have given us so much life and care, and have parted from us due to natural causes, and not for being snatched away from our communities because of racist transphobic violence.*

*There are so many things I want to say and express right now, but I'm exhausted of repeating year after year "this year has been the deadliest year for trans communities."*

*And so this post is to dream of the day in our lifetime when we can eradicate racist, transphobic violence from the state and from our streets and that our people can be free.*

*Today on TDOR, my post is not about a trans flag or photos of the people I love that have passed away, but this post is to celebrate what centers me, what grounds me, and what brings joy as a trans person who needs to recharge from living this fight.*

*Bouldering is my haven.*

*Bouldering gives me a taste of what freedom feels like.*

*#tdor #tdor2020 #trans #transman #transclimbers #transbouldering*

Even though there are valuable aspects of outdoor activities for most of the participants, some of them also indicated that they had to deal with discrimination and fears, too. While it was frequently noted that 'nature doesn't judge', or that 'gender wasn't relevant', the presence of other humans was almost always seen as a risk. Therefore, when possible, many participants chose activities where it was less probable to encounter other people.

*@genderqueer\_hiker: Outer peace for me as a trans, nonbinary, and queer person is complicated. While the mountains don't know about gender, the people visiting the mountains do and bring their assumptions and biases with them. When I first started*

*backpacking by solo hiking across Massachusetts on the Appalachian Trail in 4 days, I created my own peace in the outdoors by avoiding other people. The forest was my refuge as I went through gender transition and I avoided people's gendered assumptions by avoiding them altogether. I section hiked the AT [Appalachian Trail] over 4 years and hiked predominantly in the off season, when I would be alone on the trail. It was often lonely, but my loneliness hurt less than the tense moments when I had to navigate people's judgment and bigotry.*

While this strategy may work for some people, not everyone feels safe or has enough knowledge to adventure outdoors alone. In section 5.6. *Trans/itioning OUT there*, I briefly analyzed how the fear of encountering other humans hindered some participants from engaging more, and more safely, in outdoor activities. In addition, our overall feeling of safety in the world also affects the risks and/or challenges we may undertake.

*@lor\_sabourin: On the hike up to the Hulk this weekend, we had a conversation about how a person's ability to unequivocally say "YES!" to amazing adventures can depend on their baseline feeling of safety in the world. How adventures can be exciting when you're launching from a secure base, but completely destabilizing if you're being sent out from a place of hyper vigilance.*

While a high portion of the participants noted that they often go alone to the outdoors, when going with a group, most of them chose to go with friends, partners, or people that they trust. Frequently, a friend of a friend may sometimes join an adventure. This would often create a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty.

*- Granite: The fact that a cis guy is coming makes me feel conflicted when it comes to confronting everyday life. Sometimes I don't feel very comfortable with the external heteronormative gaze. I'm still going to give it a chance because sometimes I'm surprised.*

Many of the participants didn't dare to go to an organized outdoor activity with a group of strangers because of the uncertainty it implies going with a group of people that most probably aren't aware of trans topics. However, for those who do it, having passing plays a relevant role in the decision and experience. When they were not read as the gender they identify with, some people decided not to come out at all, while others tried to encounter a safe moment to come out or a queer accomplice within the group.

*- Chestnut: Regarding the LBTQ aspect, it has been with me from day one. Misgendered, no one understands that I'm a guy. I didn't dare to say anything. I'm stuck with these people for 10 days, in an intimate living situation. One day, a guy in a wheelchair mentioned that he was gay. Then, it loosened up a bit for me. I had had some hope as he had a rainbow-colored ribbon on his whistle. I then dared to come out, and he asked for my pronouns.*

Chestnut found another queer person in the group, who made him feel comfortable and safe enough to also come out to the rest of the group later in the trip. He noted that the other participant in the activity asked for his pronouns. Themes regarding pronouns come up frequently in the data, whether it is regarding misgendering or the necessity to ask for people's pronouns. As Doan (2010) remarks: "Many people do not understand the power of these little words and how painful the persistence use of inappropriate pronouns can be" (p. 647). Therefore, as I will suggest later in chapter section 9.2. *Strategies that outdoor providers can implement to make their activities inclusive for the trans community*, it is crucial to create spaces where participants can share their pronouns.

Other participants observed that while having a certain passing ability can be a privilege in some situations, it doesn't remove the fear of being discovered, feelings of being out of place or, as Nirmal Puwar (2004) says, being 'space invaders'. Societal normative gazes can make queer and trans individuals feel like they don't belong, creating a sense of being 'out of place' – as I explored in section 6.5. *Feeling in/out of place*. Puwar emphasizes the significance of the body in perceiving, experiencing, and shaping space, suggesting that our bodies aren't just passive entities moving through space; rather, they actively contribute to the formation and understanding of the spaces they inhabit. This understanding is crucial in the context of queer and trans experiences, where societal norms often dictate where individuals can or can't belong. The idea of being 'space invaders' aligns with the notion that queer and trans individuals can feel out of place because their presence challenges established norms and expectations.

*@lucakahminen: Thru hiking has undoubtedly been one of the most empowering experiences of my life, but my time on the trail has also been the moment I have felt the most discriminated against as a queer hiker. I cannot begin to imagine the experience of people of colour on the trail. On many occasions, I decided not to come out and to let people misgender me in order to be safe, I realise POC don't have this privilege. As I walked, I often thought about the trail community and how it made this trail less safe for some of us. Sometimes arriving at a shelter exhausted after a long day but deciding to push on because of that uneasy feeling of not being safe, or trying to ignore sexist and homophobic jokes around the campfire while eating undercooked Knorr Pasta Sides. Thru hiking was tiring but having to constantly negotiate who to come out to and who to trust was exhausting.*

(Cis-hetero-normative) society often expects trans people to be in specific spaces, such as cities – a process called metronormativity – where gender non-conforming identities are thought to be more tolerated. When trans people venture into outdoor spaces, they are deviating from this spatial expectation and, thus, challenging the norm. Ultimately, the act of going outdoors for queer and trans individuals challenges the conventional notion of where they are supposed to be: within urban settings. Our

presence in outdoor spaces disrupts these expectations and forces a confrontation with the gaze of societal norms. This defiance is significant as it calls into question and challenges the often restrictive boundaries and expectations placed on individuals based on their gender and sexual identities. It is a way of asserting their right to exist and enjoy outdoor spaces.

Moreover, engaging in outdoor and adventure activities offers many positive outcomes, as has been shown in the previous chapters. Therefore, I argue that not letting trans people into the outdoors – through direct or indirect discrimination, invisibilizing trans identities, impeding trans participation, or any other way to hinder trans participation in outdoor activities – is a way to “kill softly” (Shakhsari, 2014), and hence, a process of trans necropolitics.

## 7.5. AND FINDING COMMUNITY IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

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In a scenario where violence and discrimination from other humans can hinder the participation of trans people in outdoor activities, what strategies do participants use to feel safer? What are the characteristics of outdoor communities that foster spaces that are inclusive toward queer and trans individuals? Participants follow different strategies to feel safer, from choosing the places to go to, to deciding the people they go with.

- Savin: *When running trails alone, I am careful which I choose, and I have many steps to help with safety but there are places I would just never run for fear of violence. There are races I wouldn't sign up for due to how they are run or who tends to run them. I try to find more diverse spaces, to feel safer.*

When making the choice to engage in outdoor activities in the company of others, a majority of the participants expressed a heightened sense of security when the accompanying individuals were already familiar to them, such as family members, friends, or partners. Conversely, doing outdoor activities with a group of strangers was perceived by most participants as a potential risk – related to overall safeness or with feeling uncomfortable – particularly when the composition of the group included cis men. The reasons for opting to participate in activities alongside strangers often centered on the participants' desire to continue engaging in outdoor activities, even if this meant venturing with strangers, as this was their only possibility to go outdoors.

- Linden: *I chose to go with the people, I chose to take the risk that they did not know who I was in advance. It went well. And I love being with my son outdoors anyway.*

Consequently, these circumstances result in diminished opportunities for outdoor participation for trans people, as not everyone has the required skills and knowledge to embark alone in these activities, nor do they know people to go with. Furthermore, this underscores the persisting lack of inclusivity within the broader outdoor community for queer and trans individuals. This practice-hindering further normalizes metronormativity within trans communities, and it inhibits trans people to benefit from the participation in these activities and from being in these spaces.

Within climbing communities, it is widespread practice that strangers meet each other to go climbing, a practice that some of the participants have done in the past, and they've had varied experiences with it. Some of the participants mentioned that there were some attitudes that they wouldn't tolerate at all, such as the other person being sexist or fascist. Nonetheless, when describing positive encounters, participants often attributed this to them transmitting a sense of safety to their climbing companions.

- Cicala: *And then, you know, when you're nonbinary and you're not doing surgery, also people don't take you seriously. It's easy for them to escape this, you know? Maybe*

*the guy I'm climbing with now, we're very close, bonded to each other. And I think he is, because I was the first person who took him to the mountains. He was dreaming of doing it, but he was just doing sport climbing. And I gave him trust. For me, I think because it's the first person I have been climbing with who met me after transitioning and always called me with my name, and the right pronouns and everything, since we met, because he didn't know me before. I think it's because of that, because sometimes I wonder why I am so close with this person...*

Notwithstanding, outdoor activities were often related as one of the preferred ways to socialize, get to know people, and find community.

- Palm: *They [outdoor activities] have provided me with a bigger gender expansive community for me to be a part of.*

What traits define outdoor communities that foster environments that welcome queer and transgender people? How do participants themselves imagine and create these spaces? Instagram is one of the spaces where trans people are creating an inclusive outdoor community.

- Savin: *I like to use it [Instagram] to keep a running journal and to connect with other queer runners. I like to increase visibility because I feel safer around other LGBTQ folx and I hope to make my community feel safer and more supported in sports too. I use it usually after running but sometimes I will do a short video during, while on longer runs. I like to share especially beautiful runs or share when I have had an encounter where I feel unsafe.*

Building community outdoors was also a highly discussed topic throughout all of the Instagram participants' data. They reflected on their need for queer and trans communities in outdoor recreation, they praised the community they had found, and they actively created spaces with the aim of increasing diversity in the outdoors. Moreover, many of these people and groups have connected and created a network to give visibility and support to each other.

@jqt2\_3 (@unlikelyhikers): *It was during a battle with depression, anxiety and loneliness that I began hiking. I moved slowly, head facing the ground, trying to find enough traction in my running shoes to not slide and fall. I thought the outdoors was for healthy-eating know-it-alls strutting around in workout gear with lattes in hand. I was afraid to be too slow and didn't like the pressure of overly trafficked trails where people were at my heels. The more I challenged my body and mentality, I grew more confident. It wasn't about going 'slow,' I was taking my time and becoming at home with the outdoors and in my own body. I hike to find adventure and create the community I've always longed for. As a queer, non-binary person, finding friends in outdoor communities like @wilddiversity, @queernature and @unlikelyhikers has unlocked this beautiful universe where people like me not only exist, but desperately want to connect. Their work inspired me to begin creating @qtpzine in Southern*



*California. When I hike, I am reclaiming the land of my ancestors and actively seeking healing.*

In this sense, most of the Instagram participants referred to activities directed to a specific group – whether that would be activities for women, queer, trans, QBIPOC<sup>88</sup>, etc. – as a way to create a space that felt safer to them. In chapter section 6.3. *Finding safe spaces*, I analyzed how safe spaces are described and produced, and how queer-only spaces might not be inherently safe per se. Here, it's important to return to the ideas of comfort and discomfort, also analyzed in the chapters above, understanding comfort as “the effect of bodies being able to ‘sink’ into spaces that have already taken their shape” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 152), and discomfort as the “effect of bodies inhabiting spaces that do not take or ‘extend’ their shape” (Ibid.). However, none of the Instagram data analyzed showed reluctance toward non-mixed or affinity spaces. Instead, queer and trans-only spaces were always regarded by most participants as necessary and as safe spaces in the outdoors, compared to other outdoor community spaces.

*- Maple: I have felt welcomed in a way with cycling, as it's primarily an individual activity at heart. There are queer-centered cycling groups that I've found community in, but there are also areas of the community that are still very much patriarchal, racist, and overall discriminatory. I have the privileges of being white and with some financial security, which has made my experiences with cycling much easier to navigate.*

Safe spaces are designed to provide a secure and inclusive environment where individuals can express their identities without fear of judgment or harm (Hartal, 2018; McCartan & Nash, 2023; The Roestone Collective, 2014). They also contribute to the well-being and empowerment of trans and queer individuals (Hartal, 2018; McCartan & Nash, 2023; McPhail et al., 2022). Furthermore, queer spaces outdoors were seen as a way to bring more queer and trans folks to participate in outdoor activities and gain from their benefits. Many of the Instagram users participated in or led these types of affinity groups and activities, creating overall visibility in the outdoor scene but also online through social media.

*@claire\_anom: Regardless of the technical skills I got to work on and refine, this space confirmed in me how special affinity groups are, and that we not only deserve to exist at the bare minimal level, but we get to thrive in every part of our intersectionality. I've heard these affinity spaces at the AMGA [American Mountain Guides Association] criticized as “separate but equal,” - going to save the topic of how this criticism erases the lived trauma of Black Americans for another time. While I and everyone else should feel safe and welcome in every space we choose to exist in, these*

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<sup>88</sup> Queer, Black, Indigenous, People of Color.

*affinity clinics celebrate our autonomy, our humanity. I got to CHOOSE to learn with people I didn't know, but whom I can see parts of myself in, I got to choose to celebrate, support, and be supported by people that share a common story, even if it's only a small part of our collective narratives. I don't know how far climbing or this course will take me, but it's taking me somewhere, and everyone that had a part in the SPI [Single Pitch Instructor] course is forever a part my journey. Thank you [Two Hearts]*

@claire\_anom touches on the importance of affinity spaces and how they can be transformative for the people participating in them. These affinity spaces are a type of safe space where people with shared experiences and identities come together to learn and support one another. These experiences correlate with the studies on women-only outdoor activities (Doran, 2016; Evans et al., 2020; Warren, 2016) analyzed in chapter 3. *State of the Art*, which stated that participants in affinity group activities preferred these over mixed group activities and gained overall more benefits.

In most of these affinity group activities that Instagram participants shared, not only participants would be queer and/or trans, but also the organizers and group leaders. If there is a lack of representation of trans practitioners, this absence is even more noticeable among people who work in outdoor recreation.

@lor\_sabourin: *“What the students didn't realize, though, was how badly their instructor needed an affinity space too. I had grown up believing that the only way that I would be able to succeed in the outdoor industry would be to downplay my queer identity. At the time, I had not met any LGBTQ+ people who worked in the industry and definitely had not seen anyone talk openly about their identity. Without representation, I assumed that it was safest to hide that part of myself. If I could assimilate, I would be accepted and loved. That day, however, I realized how much more fulfilling it was to teach something that I was passionate about when I was not dedicating half of my energy to masking a part of who I am.” I wrote an article<sup>89</sup> for @gymclimber about a special teaching experience that I had this spring [Yellow Heart] Thank you @bennett\_anom @elby.j and all of the other climbers that made this experience so special for me [Orange Heart; Orange Heart].*

@lor\_sabourin's personal experience discusses the importance of representation and its role in fostering a sense of belonging. Further, this can positively affect individuals' self-acceptance and their ability to bring their authentic selves into their professional roles. This narrative underscores the need to create inclusive environments not only for participants but also for instructors, teachers, and leaders within these spaces.

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<sup>89</sup> Title of the article: “Queer fear: The power of affinity spaces in the climbing community”: <https://www.climbing.com/people/power-of-affinity-spaces-in-the-climbing-community/>

Furthermore, while participants have regarded these queer-affirming spaces as a positive way to tackle discrimination and create safe spaces outdoors, they should not be the exclusive means through which trans individuals can participate in outdoor activities. The broader outdoor community needs to change and make efforts to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to construct inclusive environments. Collaboration with LGBTQ+ organizations is essential to expand the accessibility of these activities to individuals from all backgrounds.

*@brieoutside: I am so lucky that I've had the opportunity to make the outdoors part of my life. Being outside was always the thing that kept me going and it played no small part in giving me the strength to make myself whole. That would not have been if others had not taken me outside and now, I have the opportunity to pay that forward. I want to introduce others in my community to the joy of getting outside, but I need help. I'm calling on the outdoor community to help me build a more equitable outdoors by supporting my initiative to bring more outdoor activities to my local LGTBQ center.*

In chapter 9, *Closing Remarks*, I will propose some guidelines and strategies that outdoor providers can implement to make their internships, education programs, and trips inclusive for the LGBTQ+ community.



## 7.6. LEARNING OUTDOORS – LEARNING THROUGH THE OUTDOORS

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*There's a lot to be learned in the mountains, in the dark, about hating yourself and letting it go, and how little any of it matters to things like the stars bedding down for the day. – @ecclesiastesthebike*

Many studies have shown that spending time outdoors – in nature – has physical, psychological, and emotional benefits. These benefits encompass improved physical fitness and vitality, heightened self-assurance and self-worth, an expanded sense of curiosity and creativity, increased inner tranquility and mental serenity, an overall feeling of wellness, and the alleviation of both short-term and enduring stress (Boniface, 2006; Kling et al., 2020; Meyer, 2010; Meyer & Borrie, 2013; Mitten & D'Amore, 2017; Stringer, 1997). Further, in chapter 3. *State of the Art*, I analyzed studies that focused on the benefits that women gain from outdoor activities, which showed the development of resilience, sense of belonging, empowerment, self-efficacy, self-awareness, and increased confidence (Evans et al., 2020; Stringer, 1997; Warren, 2016). These benefits have also been shown – and analyzed throughout the chapters – to be hold true for the participants of the present study.

Many of the participants also reflected on things they learn from participating in outdoor and adventure activities and how these improve their daily lives. In what manner can these challenges yield insights applicable to our everyday life? How might these challenges prompt distinct approaches to gendered spaces? Which lessons do participants mention that help them face the many challenges of being a trans person in current Western society?

*@esmiavida: Not everyone is given the same set of resources to work with, no matter how much we want to believe that here in this country [USA]. Yes, we are all given the same opportunities, just like everyone is given the same views of mountains that we can climb. But some people have to put in a lot more energy in order to get there. Some folks have to jump through a lot more hoops just to get to the base of the climb. Some of us have to go outside of our cultural norm, while others simply need to step into it. Some of us have to transgress expectations of our body, of our looks, of how we choose to spend our time. Maybe it's why I personally live my adventures so passionately. Maybe I'm getting way more out of seemingly trivial things and activities because I know how much work and energy it has taken me to get to where I am.*

I asked diary and interview participants what they had learned from that outdoor activity in particular – where the on-the-move diary or interview took place – or from

outdoor and adventure activities in general. Their answers were very diverse, but many shared the following lessons: To trust themselves and their bodies, to listen to their bodies, to be more self-confident, that their body is capable of more than they are aware of, to appreciate their body, the importance of hiking for their well-being, to be resourceful and not give up, to calm down/relax when facing problems/challenges, to feel more connected *with* and *in* their body, self-reliance, to learn valuable things about themselves, to be resilient, to take up bigger challenges in life, to stop and take time, feelings of independence/autonomy, to be more patient, to judge less, to put things into perspective, to be more respectful and more forgiving towards themselves, and to learn how to deal under pressure and with challenges.

- Juniper: *Climbing, for example, has always been a very useful space for me to understand, experiment and practice my relationship with fear. Exposing myself to fear in a controlled risk situation and playing with it has helped me to find self-control strategies that have later been useful in other circumstances, and to understand how I function under challenging situations.*

Further, positive feelings regarding our bodies when doing outdoor activities come from paying attention to all parts of our bodies, instead of just focusing on those that may cause discomfort, as Alcornoque describes.

- Alcornoque: *I learn to see that my body is more than what is related to my sex assigned at birth and the way my body is designed... it is more than what is related to the genitalia and the chest. I mean, in the end, I don't know how much of that is the body, a tenth of it or less, and these things make me appreciate the other 90%. What I was telling you, as simple as going through those pine trees that we were passing now and that intense smell, and it's like...this is the vehicle that I have to experience this life and it is designed in a different way, but it is a vehicle that works very well [...] Many times we want to change things that already work perfectly. I'm already experiencing things and experiences that I love with this vehicle [his body]. It's beautiful, and it's just the way it is. And I think that when I'm more in the city, I kind of close myself a little bit more to think about that one tenth of my body, or what I don't have, or what I can't do, what I don't, what I don't...and the activities in nature make me see what I CAN [emphasizing] do.*

While there are many challenges that we may face in outdoor and adventure activities, these are not directed towards us because of our gender. Instead, the challenges come from doing outdoor activities, where moving in nature becomes the challenge. This allows space to see and value all aspects of our bodies. Additionally, these feelings towards their bodies and the benefits participants get from being outdoors improved after the activity took place. This can be interpreted as an overall improvement in resilience, which encompasses the capacity to adapt, bounce back, and improve in the face of challenges, adversity, or disruptions.

Instagram participants shared similar lessons of self-reliance, confidence, trust in their body, connection to the land, and pride in themselves and their bodies, among others. Further, I identified two different approaches in how they perceived these lessons: First, nature as the source of/for learning; and second, facing challenges in outdoor activities as a way to learn. Both approaches share the common theme of using nature and outdoor activities as vehicles for personal development and growth. However, the first approach emphasizes the holistic and transformative aspects of nature itself as a teacher, while the second approach focuses on the challenges and learning opportunities provided by outdoor activities.

*@beauback\_mountain: I go to nature as the teacher that helps me find comfort, on being present, how to navigate all of my traumas, my failures, and how to keep growing. I can't stop. All the different landscapes that it has to offer. All of the geological, ecological, and cultural connections of the land and indigenous people's histories. The animals, bird songs, sunrises, and sunsets. The moon in all of its moods and how the light of each phase looks against the backdrop of the forest or mountain ridge. [...] I want NOTHING more than for everyone to be able to have these experiences...<sup>90</sup>*



Beauback\_mountain's quote relates to the first approach, where the individual sees nature as a teacher and a source of personal growth and healing. For them, nature is not just a space for learning but a profound and holistic teacher that enhances their life. They also highlight the transformative power of nature. On the other side, carlin.trustme relates

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<sup>90</sup> [Image description]: The photo is captured from a high angle, showcasing the vastness of a red rocky landscape with tower-like formations. The sky is blue, and the photo has probably been taken soon after sunrise or short before sunset. The viewer is drawn to a tall, slender red rock formation at the left side, where the sun's rays break through a circular hole in the rock.

with the second approach, in which the individual sees outdoor activities – the challenges and achievements – as a means for personal development and learning. For them, outdoor activities involve a continuous process of acquiring new knowledges and skills and integrating them with their already existing expertise.

*@carlin.trustme: Roughly one year after my first trad lead, I am a certified Single Pitch Instructor. [...] To me, trad climbing and its systems involve continuously fusing new learnings with previous knowledge. So here is what I know:*

- *I value teaching, especially in non-traditional settings.*
- *In my college years I felt disconnected from the LGBTQIA community around me.*
- *Climbing helped me find my strengths and my voice. Through guiding, my goal is to be a positive role model for nonbinary people in the climbing world. I hope to grow into the leader I never got to see myself as. I'm here to support others and change the narrative - and have a rad time doing it.*

While the approaches are distinct, the main outcomes are similar: Learning and personal growth. Moreover, both of these participants also express their wish that more queer and trans people get the chance to have these experiences.

Straube (2020) argues that “space and becoming through space interacts with every aspect of being a human being and particularly with community, belonging, and identity” (2020, p. 73). However, our ‘trans-life’ is:

*Perpetually precarious life, a life always at risk of death and subjugation, a fugitive life that needs an elsewhere to sustain itself. Our concepts of life, and of life’s spread through time and space, should help move us toward a better ethics—a better life. (Stryker, 2020, p. xvii)*

In this context, outdoor activities may foster conditions to build better trans-lives. On the contrary, not having the resources, spaces, and opportunities to go outdoors could be considered a channel of trans necropolitics.

*- Linden: I learn in this ski week again just how much the mountains are my lifeline. How easy it is to be with people, and that the trans topic remains, being there to stay and I can remember the anxieties with it but can no longer actually feel them in the now.*

Linden’s concept of the mountains as his lifeline relates with Fournier’s idea of mountain environments as a place of new beginnings: “As much as they are a border, they are also a heart—a center from which the rediscovered trans body can find its way toward the world surrounding them” (Fournier, 2020, p. 112). Yet, the *effects* of not following the norms are many, such as “the psychic as well as social costs of loving a body that is supposed to be unloveable for the subject I am, or loving a body that I was



‘supposed to’ repudiate, which may include shame and melancholia” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 146); ‘Still, we climb’, as @erinsends7 says.

@erinsends7: *In the next month, I'm Denali-bound to attempt my 5th of the Seven summits. [...] I know the world is resilient, and ready to heal. It's been a giant task staying positive, focused, and patient through all of the challenges the world has been through for more than a year<sup>91</sup>. And, as a trans person trying to find joy through outdoor sports, these last few months have been some of the most stressful I can remember. Still, we climb. I dream of coming back to a fully healed and more understanding world. Realistically, I know that resilience is a long-term act of committing to taking small steps on the way to climbing giant mountains, and to falling forward when things don't go your way.*

Climbing mountains is used by @erinsends7 as a metaphor for persevering in the face of adversity, emphasizing the personal and emotional challenges that individuals may encounter when choosing to be true to themselves and follow their own path.

Stryker (2020) contends that “spaces become places through our interactions and affective connections with them” (p. xvii). In this vein, outdoor activities can hold special significance for many trans individuals, as they provide safe and affirming environments for trans people to thrive. Moreover, Ahmed (2004) argues that comfort is related to the seamless integration of one’s body with the environment: “One fits, and by fitting, the surfaces of bodies disappear from view. The disappearance of the surface is instructive: in feelings of comfort, bodies extend into spaces, and spaces extend into bodies” (p. 148). As shown, many of the participants related outdoor spaces with these feelings of comfort.

On the other side, Shakhsari (2014) argues that violence can occur slowly through various means, “without bearing the responsibility for murderous laws and policies, is not only contingent on the possible threat that the killable subject poses to the population whose life is worth protecting” (p. 93). Discrimination and the lack of possibilities to engage in these activities and spaces could be considered as a way to ‘kill slowly’. In the face of it, the creation of safe and welcoming spaces for trans people in outdoor activities may be a way to resist this slow violence by offering an affirming experience exempt of oppressive norms and policies.

Lastly, trans lives, then, are “much more than a right, [they] became the stake of political struggles, even if these struggles were formulated through affirmations of rights. The ‘right’ to life, to the body, to health and to happiness” (Foucault, 1977a, p. 175). These outdoor spaces are not just recreational spaces for trans individuals, but they can

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<sup>91</sup> This publication is from the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2021, and thus the challenges that she means might be related to COVID-19 pandemic.

also be considered political spaces, as they provide a means for asserting the right to life, happiness, and acceptance.

## INTERLUDE – TWO LITTLE OUTDOOR STORIES

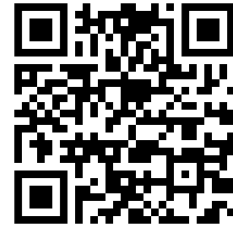
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Please, follow or copy-paste one of the following links:

<https://soundcloud.com/petricoraventuras/interlude>

<http://petricoraventuras.org/audio-interlude/>

Alternatively, use the QR code to enter the site.



[Audio Transcript]

For this interlude, I would like to invite you to come with me to two different outdoor activities. The first one is a trail running route close to my home.

[Running steps on a gravel ground. Breathing]

So, today is the 15<sup>th</sup> of September and I want to invite you to join me in one of the most common trail running routes that I have done the past year and a half. It's a round route that starts from my house and it's about 8.5 km. The first half goes uphill the whole time, and the second half goes downhill. Now, I'm by the walnut tree because...now, in one or two weeks, the walnuts will fall and I will be able to pick them. Now I'm finishing the walnuts that I picked up from this tree last autumn. So, I'm looking forward to picking new ones because they were really good. Yeah, let's continue a little bit.

[Running steps on a gravel ground]

[Silence]

There is something that I really like about this route. Well, there are many things that I like about this route. First of all, it goes almost the whole time through the forest, so there is shadow. Today it's about 25 degrees and sunny, so it's pretty hot. And then...[silence] I like the silence of nature in this forest. [Silence]

[Running steps on a gravel ground]

[Sound of water running, it is not heavy water. You can hear Bart drinking and breathing heavily]

This little water fountain is surrounded by rocks, and it always has water; throughout the whole summer, it had water. And it's kind of almost halfway. It's only about 300 or 400 more meters up. So almost half of the route and it's perfect for these hotter, warmer days in the summer.

[Running steps on a gravel ground]

I'm already going downhill, and now I arrived to a spot that I really like. In German, it's called Wildtalereck, and it's a point between two valleys. On one side is the valley where I live, and on the other side is a valley called Glottertal. And in this point, there is a bench and a very, very big and old chestnut tree. And the chestnuts that this tree gives, they are also possible to eat. But they will be ready in about...also one month more or less. One of the other reasons that I really like this route is because in days when I'm really lucky, I don't meet anybody at all. Some days you might meet some people that are either hiking or mountain biking [Sound of a bird in the background]. But you never see many people.

I actually started to trail run, so to run in the forest, in the mountains, in nature...actually, more or less, when I started to write the Ph.D. thesis. Before, I had tried to run many times in the city, always with headphones. But I never really liked it or enjoyed it. And then, when I started to run in the mountains or in nature, I never ran with headphones. I always like to listen to the animals and the sounds around me. And I also really like that there is a lot less people. And that the people that there are or that I meet, they are always doing some kind of activity. They are not just sitting, but they are actually doing one activity. Let's keep running a little bit more.

[Running steps on a gravel ground]

So now I'm almost done. It's more or less 7.5 km now. So, in this part, the path becomes very narrow. And there are a lot of plants on the sides, so the plants hit my arms. And then, on the left side, there is a wine yard. Now it's full of black, red grapes. And on the right side is the black forest. But also, at the beginning of the summer, in May-June, there are a lot of wild strawberries on this path. And then, a little bit later, in July-August, there are many blackberries, when it's wet. So, last year, it was very, very, dry and there weren't any blackberries. But this year, in July, it has rained a lot, and there has been a lot of blackberries. And also, I can see the valley. I can see the farm and the cows where I started to run. And then, up in the mountains, there are four windmills for wind energy. So now it's just a little bit more and we are home.

[Running steps on a gravel ground]

[Sound of water]

This is the little creek that surrounds the garden by my house. This means that I'm done with the run today. But I wanted to tell you one last thing. And the reason why I chose to bring you with me in this run is because during the past months, when I've written the last chapters that you have just read or listened to, many of the things that are there were thought while running this route. So many of the ideas and many of the knowledges that I have aimed to put together in these last three chapters were thought in the same forest, in the same path. I hope you enjoyed this little run.

[Silence and there a feeling of change of setting]

For the second outdoor activity, we're going to travel a little bit in time and space. I'm going to read you a diary entry from back in 2017. Then, I did a six-month bike trip through Europe, alone. And this entry diary is from a day in Greece. For listening to it, I would like to invite you to think that you're crawling inside the tent and lying facing up.

[Bart's voice changes in quality, sounding more like a narrator. It sounds a little more intimate, as they are speaking closer to the microphone. There are some very faint background sounds throughout]

It was my fifth day in Greece and it was the Easter week. I could feel that the mood in the air was special: a big holiday feeling. After having some rough days, emotionally and physically exhausting, I was starting to feel expectant and happy about it.

[Spinning wheels and chain of a bike, which blends into a sound reminiscent of the seaside sound as Bart continues]

This day, I was cycling along the beach the whole day on a road directly next to the sea.

It was a sunny and warm day. I took a few breaks to lay in the sun.

[Wooden or bamboo wind chimes]

At lunch, I stopped at Platanos Beach. I had some potato chips with me. It was something special - I didn't buy this often. On the other side of the sea, I could see big mountains with snow. The contrast between me, laying on a beach, and the mountains with snow was really beautiful.

After a few days camping, I decided to arrange a couch surfing place. Because of the holiday, my contact is with her family in the village she grew up, Xylokaastro. When I get there in the afternoon, I realized that there is a big family and friends reunion.

[Faint background chatter fades in]

I ate some of the food that is still left over from lunch: salad, potatoes, chickpeas. They also have a local mastika [mastiha] liqueur, which is made out of mastic, a resin gathered from the mastic tree, a small evergreen tree native to the Mediterranean region. And that they tell me that it is very traditional. It is really nice.

The mood is very relaxed and happy. It has been a long time since I laughed so much. The mother puts on music. There's also a friend of hers, who used to be a teacher of Joana. She's so much fun. The three of them start dancing. We are all laughing. They even somehow convince me to dance - I really suck at dancing, but I am so happy here and now. I also talk with the mum quite a lot about traveling by bike. She's interested in doing a bike trip around the Peloponnesus Islands.

In this house, I will have a small independent room, with its own bathroom. I take a nice, warm shower. It feels so fresh. After the shower, I change my clothes from my cycling t-shirt to a clean one for the evening.

[Very faint background breeze]

For the sunset in the early evening, I am going with Joana and some friends to her grandfather's field. It is a bit outside, so we go there by car. The field has a small house with no electricity, a couple of big trees and grass. Joana and I are talking around a tree. The sun is slowly setting, the atmosphere is very special. We gather around, sitting on some tree logs. After talking for a while, some of them have brought instruments and start playing and singing some traditional Greek songs.

[Guitar, hand drum, and a number of people singing. We hear a couple of verses, and the music fades down under Bart's voiceover]

Now, we're in the darkness. Just with the stars and some music.

[Quiet, atmospheric sounds - faint birdcall and insects]

It feels so magical. I am there, we are there, in the moment. It has been a long time since I have been enjoying time with a group of people, being so present.

Around 11 pm, we go back. The tradition is that on this day, they have dinner at midnight. We are going to the grandparents' house. They have prepared the traditional food for this holiday. I feel so humbled to be able to join them on this special moment. There is a kind of Greek spinach pie, lots of feta cheese, and a soup. The soup has some green vegetables and meat pieces. We are eating and talking. Even though the grandparents don't speak English, they are asking me many things and Joana is translating.

While I'm eating the food, I realize that the meat has a different texture. Meanwhile I am actually biting on a piece, they tell me it is made of the inner parts of the animal. I try not to make any weird facial expression and just keep eating it. I don't eat meat in my day to day life, but during this trip I have decided not to reject any food that people offer me, whatever it is! I am happy that there is a lot of spinach pie and feta cheese. The feta cheese tastes SO good in Greece. When they ask me if I want more soup, I say that it was really nice, but that I am full. It was my first time eating bowels.

After dinner, I go to the terrace with Joana.

[Faint sound of fireworks echoing in the mid-distance]

We are sitting on a swing bench and there are fireworks happening. She has made Greek coffee for us, which we take in cups. We both feel very comfortable, and we are talking about our views around life, about our own experiences. We were opening ourselves. We talk about traveling alone when you are perceived or read as a woman, and how it differs

now for me that people read me as a man, though I still fear being discovered in situations where I might not feel safe.

[Birdcall]

I didn't see the village of Xylokastro at all, but I feel like I know this place so well, and that it is one of the most beautiful places I have been during the whole six months traveling. Tomorrow, I will continue cycling. It is a bit sad, because I like it here so much. But Athens is also waiting for me.

[Change in atmosphere, as Bart begins some concluding comments recorded at a different time]

So, this was one of my days, a day that I hold in a special place in my memory - but there were a lot of amazing days. After this day, I kept cycling and I arrived one day later to Athens, where I met some queer activists and I had some relaxing days - with not so much cycling!

There were many reasons for doing this trip, but one of them was that Athens - and Greece - has a lot of history regarding sports and the Olympic Games. And for me, as a trans person, cycling for three months from the south of Spain until Athens, it was my way of telling them it doesn't matter that they don't want us in sport, it doesn't matter that they don't let us, we will keep doing sports, we will keep going out and we're doing it really good.

I hope you enjoyed today these two little pieces of outdoor adventures and... see you outdoors!





## 8. ON-THE-MOVE INTERVIEWS AS A TRANSECOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

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In chapter 6, *Unmapping Trans Counter-Geographies*, I explored the feeling of transecological belonging of being in/with nature that many participants shared. Following that, in this chapter, I want to analyze how on-the-move interviews developed themselves throughout the research process as a transecological methodology, hence embracing my last aim: To explore queer methodological assemblages to ‘produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently’, through sensed and embodied on-the-move methodologies.

To do so, I will first analyze some of the interactions that happened during the on-the-move interviews and how they relate to transecologies, aiming to address the following questions: How did the space where the interviews took place become part of the interview itself? How did more-than-human interactions *affect* the methodology? Could on-the-move interviews be regarded as a transecological methodology? Hence, I will present different moments of the on-the-move interviews that engaged *intimately* with our surroundings and de-centered human interactions from the interview.

Secondly, I will reflect, together with participants’ reflections from the on-the-move interviews, on how my own subjectivity as a trans and outdoor person influenced the methodological approach. Although this has already been partially explored in the methodological chapter, where I described my positionality as an insider in the research, the specificity of this methodological approach allowed some of the participants to comment on how my positionality affected our interaction on their own – while I asked others directly about it if it had not come up at the end of the day. In this regard, these interviews could be regarded as a kind of t4t<sup>92</sup> exchange, walking away from cisnormative ideals and expectations of research on trans lives.

Finally, I will reflect on how this aim has been implemented throughout the thesis by approaching and presenting knowledges differently. This was done by using multimedia resources – such as audio recordings –, with the use of “writing stories” (Richardson, 2000; Richardson & St Pierre, 2005), by inviting the readers to *venture out* (Springgay & Truman, 2019) while listening to a chapter, and by including all the necessary route’s information of all the on-the-move interviews.

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<sup>92</sup> t4t is a concept that originated in Craigslist personals to refer to trans people seeking other trans people. However, it currently also refers to practices of trans solidarity, “trans separatist social forms, trans x trans erotics, trans practices of mutual aid and emotional support” (Awkward-Rich & Malatino, 2022, p. 2).



## 8.1. MORE-THAN-HUMAN INTERACTIONS AFFECT THE METHODOLOGY

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### Little Robin Redbreast, with Pit Roig

- Pit Roig: *I am a very earthy person. I like to feel connected with small things like touching the earth, smelling the wet earth...*

- BB: *You touched the rosemary before...*

- Pit Roig: *[...] Typically, when you are doing a trek, you are usually at a higher altitude and the views are more panoramic; I love that, I love it, I love it... and being able to hear when a bird flies over you, an eagle... I really like the feeling of arriving to a pass, to a high point, when the wind blows strong, it's like 'oooohhh', and you come from a hard climb, that feeling that you start to get cold...or looking back and seeing the landscape we were going up, "buah, look, now the perspective has changed, a little higher"... Like those little things that maybe in the frenetic rhythm of the city we were talking before, we don't pay attention to, right? Watching your body, your breathing... [they touch my arm and there is silence; there is a little robin redbreast very close to us sitting on a tree. We keep looking at it for fifteen seconds] How beautiful! I don't think it had ever come so close to me...*

- BB: *So beautiful...*

Transecologies draw from ecocritical, queer, feminist, critically reconstructive, and trans\*disciplinary perspectives (Gaard, 2020) and encompass the present and potential conditions of life that are both necessary and desired, and what may yet unfold (Stryker, 2020). The emergence of transecologies lies in the intersections between trans experiences and the environment, with Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality playing a central role in the shift towards non-human perspectives (Parker, 2020). According to Thorsteinson and Joo (2020), gender should not be seen as a binary or a spectrum, but rather as a rich ecology, understanding thus transecology as "a gender politics that does not assume it already knows what gender is (and isn't)" (Thorsteinson & Joo, 2020, p. 38).

Transecology, as a conceptual framework, "allows the entanglement of ecology, nature, trans embodiment, and transing bodies" (Straube, 2020, p. 58). It enables the recognition of the intimate connection between queer and trans body politics and ecological concerns, highlighting the mutually reinforcing relationship between the violent degradation of nature and the various forms of violence experienced by trans individuals on a daily basis (Straube, 2020).

On-the-move interviews, as a transecological methodology, decenter the human interaction and experiences from the interview process. The answer materializes through our surroundings; it is not the participant who answers, but rather the experience we are in, the trans-corporeal mesh that we are with the more-than-human that surrounds us. These interactions with the more-than-human of the space create unique moments of observation and stillness. A stillness not present in the city for Pit Roig, where the frenetic rhythm doesn't allow space for 'these little things'. We interact with the space – touching and smelling the rosemary – and the space interacts with us – a little robin redbreast becomes a participant for a moment. We acknowledge them, and we create space for them.

### Listening to the ants, with Woodruff

- Woodruff: *Oh, I like ants.*
- BB: *Wow, that's a big one [in reference to an anthill].*
- Woodruff: *And then, sometimes, if you're quiet, you can hear them [they put their hands behind the ears to direct them towards the anthill. I copy them and we can hear the ants moving]. This is what I learned, I used to do 'Stone Age gatherings', where we went to an open area and we dressed like Stone Age, and we kind of lived it. And I got into this because of my best friend who studied English and archaeology, and he got invited to those and he invited me and I was like, 'yes!'. And then one day we did with a person, because there's also usually different workshops, and this one person took us on a little Stone Age forest walk, like try to walk very quietly and softly, make no noise, and also this what I just showed you, that he called "deer ears", because deer, when they listen, they put the ears in the direction of the sound, and this way you can hear better.*
- BB: *I didn't know that about the ants. It's amazing!*
- Woodruff: *Yeah, right? It's so crazy...*

Trans-corporeality is a concept that was developed by Stacy Alaimo drawing upon feminist theory, environmental studies, and new materialist theories that acknowledge the agency of non-human entities. Alaimo defines trans-corporeality as a posthumanist perspective within new materialism and material feminism. It asserts that “all creatures, as embodied beings, are intermeshed with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them” (Alaimo, 2018, p. 435). In contrast to the Western humanist notion of a transcendent, disembodied individual separate from the world, trans-corporeality challenges the idea of a singular, autonomous subject. Thus, the trans-corporeal subject is understood as arising from and entangled

with biological, technological, economic, social, political, and other systems, processes, and events, occurring at various scales (Alaimo, 2018). Further, Seymour argues that trans-corporeality is conceptually aligned with transgender studies (Seymour, 2016, 2017, 2020). In that sense, just as trans-corporeality blurs or erases boundaries between the human and non-human, there are arguments proposing a closer natural relationship between trans people and the non-human world (Parker, 2020).

A moment of intimacy and sharing arises when passing an anthill. Woodruff shares their knowledge with me, a knowledge that I will pass over in other on-the-move interviews. In a trans-corporeal space and time, we ‘get’ deer ears – with our hands, we move our ears so they are looking forward – and listen to the ants walking and moving through the space. It feels attentive; we are acknowledging their presence. I wondered in that moment how many humans have walked this path only for the sake of the exercise, not even seeing this beautiful anthill. In this shared moment of attentive presence with the anthill, in which we engage with the trans-corporeal experience of tuning into the ants’ world, I ponder: How might incorporating such mindful interactions enhance the broader adventure activity experience for trans individuals? How can we deepen our connection with the non-human aspects of our surroundings in the realm of adventure activities?

Woodruff kept being attentive to the ants the whole hike, always pointing out when there were ants on the path in order not to step on them.

### The decorated tree, with Pi Cargolat

- Pi Cargolat: *Clearing the mind is the main thing. But this air, fresh, on the skin, seems to be treating my skin with affection... treating my lungs with affection [laughs].*

- BB: *So, it's also a way of taking care of yourself, isn't it?*

- Pi Cargolat: *Yes, yes, look at these trees, they are perfect! I want to be perfect like these trees!*

- BB: *This one is even decorated.*

- Pi Cargolat: *There are two types of decoration, the mosses and the plant that climbs on it... This is wonderful, all in harmony. I think this is it, this is why. These stones also, because suddenly it was a dead thing, and now with the moss, they are not dead anymore... [...] Yes, to observe, to see the harmony, how everything connects. I am also part of this, I feel part of this.*

*I think we are always constantly wanting to connect, not necessarily only with people but with nature as well.*

Another concept that combines new materialism and transgender scholarship is the notion of “tranimalities” (Kelley, 2014) or “tranimacies” (Chen, 2012). These concepts emphasize that trans experiences are not limited to humans but can also be observed in non-human species. By exploring trans phenomena beyond cultural explanations, they challenge the conventional distinction between nature and culture (Klumbyté, 2018). They highlight how the human category is dependent on the binary opposition with animals, perpetuated by the binary distinctions of human/man/culture and animal/woman/nature. In a similar way, transgender identities are often stigmatized as being “unnatural” or “monstrous” (Stryker, 1994).

These intersections between the human and the animal, the natural and the cultural, have been examined through the lens of new materialism, which calls for the act of “transing the posthuman” (Nurka, 2015). This approach challenges the rigid boundaries present in society and encourages an exploration of the diverse entanglements and fluidities that exist between species, genders, and the realms of nature and culture.

Pi Cargolat sees this tree that catches her attention while hiking. We stop to admire it. The tree-moss-climbing-plant assemblage is in harmony, in her words. For her, everything connects in this moment, we are all connected in a tranimacy of human and non-humanness. She sees herself in this decorated tree, which she wants to resemble.<sup>93</sup>



“Trans-corporeality refers to the idea that our bodies are porous and perennially intermeshed with the non-human, meaning that we are never “separate” from the environment in which we live and are always more than-human. It firmly underlines interconnectedness” (Parker, 2020, p. 18). Pi Cargolat and I are not separated from the environment we are going to spend the day in, our trans-corporeal bodies are enmeshed with our surroundings. In this sense, Pi Cargolat refers to the fresh air as an entity that is ‘touching her with affection’. Instead of recalling threats or violence, she is

<sup>93</sup> [Image description]: A tree trunk occupies the center of the photo. The bottom part is covered by green moss, while the upper part is covered by a climbing plant. The tree is in a dense forest surrounded by smaller trees, and the ground is covered in leaves.

nurtured and cared for by nature. It is these kinds of experiences that also draw her into outdoor activities.

### The sound of fire, with Deer

In exploring the outdoors and the more-than-human, how might a text effectively incorporate the sensory dimensions of on-the-move interviews? How can this thesis transcend conventional boundaries to evoke the sensorial richness of transecological experiences? Can the reader truly sense the wind described by Pit Roig or feel the immersive sounds of nature? How can a text include the more-than-human of the outdoors? With an on-the-move methodology, I aimed not only to impact the research process but also all the other parts of the thesis, such as the text itself and the readers. I want to invite you to our transecological experiences.

This is a short travel to a moment with Deer, in which we went to the peninsula of Uutela, close to the city of Helsinki, Finland. After a short hike, we arrived at our camping spot for the night. It had a grill area with a table and two benches under a wooden roof, and it was surrounded by trees and the sea. It is the end of April, which in northern Europe means that the days are starting to get quite long, with almost endless sunsets. Luckily, it wasn't as cold as expected for this time of the year. One thing that I have learned to admire while living in Sweden<sup>94</sup> is the easiness with which



they make fire in these northern countries. Deer is no exception to this; he loves making fires while spending time outdoors. For me, coming from southern Europe, there is nothing more dangerous than making a fire in the woods, which had led to my inability to start fires. Deer makes a fire where we grill some vegan sausages for dinner. Afterwards, we talk, laugh, and stay silent around the fire. We move around avoiding the smoke in what looks almost like a dance. We listen to the sound of the 'cracks' of the wood, how the wetness comes out through the smoke, how the logs slowly burn down.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>94</sup> I lived in Sweden between 2017 and 2021.

<sup>95</sup> [Image description]: A fire is lit in a big round grill area. On top of the grill there is an aluminum tray with two vegan sausages. The sun is gone but there is still some light in the sky. There are no clouds at the horizon has orange light. At the back there is a line of trees and then the sea. Further back some city lights are recognizable.

I invite you to close your eyes and feel the warmth of the fire while listening to it:

Sound of fire: <https://on.soundcloud.com/mc7ki>



I would like to bring back a quote from my conversation with Deer: “My body becomes the place where it is”. Deer’s statement relates to the idea of trans-corporeality described by Parker (2020), who suggests that our bodies are perpetually intertwined with the non-human, emphasizing interconnectedness and blurring the boundaries between the human and non-human, a relationship that she contends is closer between trans individuals and the non-human world. In the above described moment of the interview, we became enmeshed with the fire, its smoke, and the surrounding space.

### A transecological adventure, with Alcornoque

- Alcornoque: *Of course, that's an adventure [referring to everything you can experience when you have a bike mechanical breakdown in a foreign country]. You go and the unexpected happens, like finding a puppy on the road and having to do something about it. It's something very rare to happen to you.*<sup>96</sup>



Alcornoque and I were having this conversation while cycling up Coll Formic. Curiously, precisely what he said happened to us an hour later, and it was a first-time experience for both of us – having to rescue a lost dog on the road. While we were resting at the pass, we saw a dog wandering on the road – a road with quite a lot of roaring cars and motorcycles zipping quickly away. When we decided to continue, the dog was walking clearly lost in the middle of the road. We took him aside; he was quite friendly and cuddly. He was wearing some kind of GPS and had a collar with a phone number,

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<sup>96</sup> [Image description]: A light brown middle-sized dog is laying on their side, showing their belly. My hand is rubbing their belly. They are wearing a yellow reflexive collar with a GPS antenna. Their eyes are closed.



so we decided to contact the person responsible for the dog and tell them about the situation. The man on the phone didn't seem very worried, though he lived pretty far away (20 to 30km from where we were). We agreed to leave the dog at the restaurant located at the pass, where he would come up to pick him up. Alcornoque's definition of adventure just became real for both of us. And it really felt like an adventure!

Through the on-the-move interview we got to experience the uncertainty of adventure activities. While the example that Alcornoque mentioned when I asked him about what adventure means for him was not referring to an experience that any of us had lived before, it happened to become true just one hour later. Furthermore, this 'adventure' meant taking care of a lost dog, thus relating to our surroundings and creating a safe space for this other-than-human animal. "Nature is an adventurous space, dangerous as much as liberating" (Straube, 2020, p. 62). Nature is not seen here as something "pure" or "cleaner", but as imbricated with culture. Transecologies "capture the corporeal as well as discursive entanglement of nature with trans and queer bodies" (Straube, 2020, p. 58). This entanglement also allows for the arising of adventures, as "in nature, nothing is static, nothing is normative, and nothing is impossible" (Kuznetski, 2020, p. 82).



## 8.2. MY POSITIONALITY *AFFECTS* THE METHODOLOGY

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*Trans theories emphasize viral, tentacular, and transversal conceptualizations of difference.* – Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman (2019, p. 6)

In chapter section 4.2. *Queering Methodologies*, I wrote about my positionality as a trans person in the research. That section was written before the fieldwork, based on my own experiences in previous research and on the related literature. I reflected on my position as an insider in the research topic, as well as on the need for trans people to go from being mere subjects of study to becoming producers of knowledge. However, how did my positionality actually *affect* the on-the-move interviews? Was it decisive for the participants in order to take part in the research? How did it *affect* their experience?

Trans activism has taught us to fight the binary system. The insider/outsider binary regarding the researchers' positionality is another one to blur. When I decided to pursue a Ph.D. thesis, which is, without doubt, a long commitment, I knew it had to be about something that motivates me so much that I wouldn't get tired of it after one or two years of reading about the same topics. Therefore, I deliberately chose a research topic in which I consider myself as an insider and by which I feel *affected*. Through the on-the-move interviews, I also aimed to tackle this deed. Gorman-Murray et al. (2016) argue that "while researchers often speak of 'research subjects', both researchers and research participants are, in fact, subjects, in that both researchers and participants enter the research relationship from the perspective of their own subjectivities" (p. 98). This is to be appreciated in that these same on-the-move interviews became part of the autoethnographic field. Instead of a classical interview in which one asks and the other answers, on-the-move interviews developed as a dialogue between two persons with a shared interest and activity. Thus, they follow Johnson's (2015) proposal of a transfeminist methodology, which upholds for the inclusion of trans people in research in "ways that do not reproduce social inequalities" (p. 37).

As some authors have pointed out, being an insider also brings positive outcomes to the research (Gorman-Murray et al., 2016; Jourian & Nicolazzo, 2017; Rooke, 2016; S. Rosenberg & Tilley, 2021). Rosenberg and Tilley (2021) highlight that "meaningful trans involvement in research provides more in-depth data, builds more constructive rapport with community members, and produces more effective research than the norm of purely outsider research in the field" (p. 1). Ultimately, it benefits both trans and research communities. Moreover, participants might also be more willing to share certain life experiences, or they might feel it "easier". Participants in this study also agreed with

these claims. Once I had stopped recording the conversation with Ginesta, they asked me to turn on the recorder again.

- Ginesta: *I also want to say that I have been very comfortable and that I think that all these topics can only be done by trans people too, that's what I think. And that I liked doing it while we were riding our bikes.*

I was surprisingly shocked and happy to hear this. I had also participated in several research projects about trans people's experiences in a number of fields. At first, I didn't pay all that much attention to the researcher's positionality when participating in research about trans topics. However, as requests for participation in studies became more frequent and I had more experience, positionality became decisive for my participation – at least, the researcher needed to identify under the LGBTIQ+ umbrella. In that sense, I related with Hale's statement: "Ask yourself if you can travel in our trans worlds. If not, you probably don't get what we're talking about. Remember that we live most of our lives in non-transsexual worlds, so we probably do get what you're talking about" (Hale, 2009, para. 12). When it hadn't come up by the end of the interviews, I would ask participants about their stance:

- Deer: *For sure! I wouldn't like to participate in a research made by a cis person about trans people. I wouldn't have my interest.*

A while after I had stopped recording, Deer also added another point crucial for him. Not only was I a trans person, but I was also an 'outdoor person'. I am experienced in a variety of outdoor activities, and I am a person who loves going outdoors. For him, this was equally decisive. Woodruff also felt similarly.

- Woodruff: *I think that was a large part of why I replied to you, because I was like, 'yes, ok, and then also outdoors stuff, that takes both of my passions'. Yeah, but I also think that it helps with trust like I feel comfortable with this. I also think, because you always focus on a thing for a reason, right? And I think, for a cis person studying trans things, the incentive would probably be different. It would maybe be to understand, or I don't know. But for a trans person is like, ok, I want to bring into light and into visibility these things, and these things, and this vibrant community that I'm part of, you know? And that's maybe something that cis people don't really get to see. And so, I think it makes a difference, this is also your lived experience.*

This aligns with the idea that shared identities between researcher and participant may result in higher abilities to engage in open conversations between them and for a better comprehension by the researcher of the shared perspectives, given their similar outlook on the world (Gorman-Murray et al., 2016; Nash, 2016; S. Rosenberg & Tilley, 2021). Often, participants felt like they didn't need to explain to me certain aspects of what it means or feels to be trans, but rather focus on just our experience in the moment

and our experience in outdoor activities. I would say that this has significantly, and positively, impacted the research's outcomes.

- Lionhead Monkey: *I think so, yes. I am much more relaxed because I think it's easier, even if we are crossing the opposite side, I think that you are more aware, it's easier to explain you something. You felt it or you know how it feels [being trans]. Yes, absolutely, much more comfortable.*

Finally, some participants felt like they didn't need to prove anything with me, as they would sometimes feel with cis people – especially cis men. They didn't need to perform a certain type of masculinity or femininity in order to be considered valid, and I was not there testing their outdoor skills. Moreover, it was also perceived as a way to help another fellow trans person and to give something to the community.

- Lobo: *Yes, it's much easier, I don't have to be with this masculine, big guy who's coming to test my skills, like, 'are you an outdoor person or not'. Yes, and it's also nice to help other trans people.*

In chapter section 4.2. *Queering Methodologies*, I asked: “Is it possible to queer communication in these research relationships?” On-the-move interviews worked through and across dichotomous subjective binaries to subvert these insider/outsider relationships and queer communication in the research fieldwork. And I continued: “How could queer assemblages contribute to this mixed methodological approach?” Through this methodological approach, I have aimed for ethnographies of queer assemblages that provide an alternative approach to studying sexualities, challenging the prevailing assumptions in ethnographic studies that researchers are fundamentally different from the individuals they study (Jackman, 2016). Ultimately, this has endorsed the possibility of creating a narrative of trans lives that is nuanced, genuine, reliable, diverse, complex, and ultimately beneficial to trans and queer communities.



### 8.3. FINAL REFLECTIONS ON THE METHODOLOGY

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“A posthumanist approach to research methods also demands alternative approaches to analysis” (Mcphie & Clarke, 2020, p. 65). When confronted with fieldwork, I faced two methodological challenges: To include place and movement in the research process, both during the fieldwork and in the outcome, and to engage the senses and the more-than-human in the research process, as well as evoking emotionality in the texts. Outdoor activities – in contrast to other sports where the field space is regulated and always the same – have the particularity to center the activity around the uncertainty of the space and all the more-than-human aspects of it. To tackle this, I aimed to explore queer methodological assemblages to “produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently” (Lather, 2013, p. 635) through sensed and embodied on-the-move methodologies. Richardson (2000) asks: “How does the way we are supposed to write-up our findings become an unexamined trope in our claims to authoritative knowledge, and what might we learn about our “data” if we stage it in different writing formats?” (p. 157). In that sense, I was interested in exploring how to include sounds of the more-than-human aspects of the interviews as part of the text.

- Sounds of birds: <https://on.soundcloud.com/TtqSS>
- Pi Cargolat: [*whistles, as if communicating with the birds*]



Lynch (2020) argues that a mobilities inspired method requires to adopt an analytical approach that avoids returning to a dualistic understanding of the world. Methodologically, this can be tackled by opting for an analysis approach inspired by post-qualitative methods. A post-qualitative approach resists “the representation of knowledge through language” (Lynch, 2020, p. 212). During the on-the-move interviews, we interacted with the more-than-human of our surroundings, such as plants, animals, rocks, wind, or fire. Therefore, I have included some sounds from the interviews at different points in the analysis. By doing this, I aimed to bring you closer to the space where we were, engaging your senses. This way, “I try to background what the paper is *saying*, and instead focus on what a paper *does*: what subjectivities does it create? What worlds are implied? What is still research ↔ learning for me, and the reader?” (Mcphie & Clarke, 2020, p. 192).

Moreover, I contend that conducting interviews outdoors while doing adventure activities has been decisive for the research process and outcomes. I could sense how the participants felt closer to what we were talking about, or how they could stop and think

about what they were feeling in that moment, not having to invoke and rely only on memories. lisahunter (2020) also notes that “feminist calls last century for lived body and sensory/sensuous scholarship had anthropologists and ethnographers becoming more attuned to using their own bodies and senses for analyses and writing about their experiences” (p. 222). At the end of my day with Ginesta, this topic came up, and they reflected on their feelings about it.

- Ginesta: *So not only have I focused, but I have also been able to be there. I was perhaps more open, contemplating the lake, we were able to share that. I mean, not to focus so much. And, at the end, we moved our bodies, and that must have given us some different information.*

Before I would stop recording, I always gave the space to share something more, perhaps something that hadn't come up yet or that they had thought about when first reading the call for participants.

- Pi Cargolat: *I was very happy to find this because I felt that it was for me. I never imagined I would have this, and it came at a good time.*

Although I wasn't able to financially compensate the participants, I always offered to prepare and organize the route and pay for the travel costs. However, I felt that Pi Cargolat was probably the participant who needed this safe space outdoors in that moment the most. I felt delighted seeing her enjoying the hike so much throughout the whole day. And, maybe even only for that, all this was worth the effort.

Being outdoors increases your curiosity to learn about what surrounds you, as it has been widely studied in the outdoor pedagogy field (e.g., Beames et al., 2017; Caballero Blanco et al., 2020; Cosgriff et al., 2012; Humberstone, 2018; Prince, 2018). When going hiking, cycling, climbing, or camping with the participants, my curiosity was also increased. Moreover, the data collected during the on-the-move interviews included voice recordings and photographs from the spaces where we walked, climbed, or cycled. As Lynch (2020) noted: “This choice of method was vital to my research because it allowed me (the researcher) to be in the unified relational field” (p. 211). Often, I could relate to their feelings or learn new things about my experience and the space that surrounded us.

- Dormouse: *I always have a sense of marvel, like when you notice the little things. Like the fact that this is made of tiny, tiny other bits [takes a plant nearby while he says this]. And I think it's fascinating. And if you stop and look, you can make a fascinating discovery about anything that you find in nature. Any plant, any animal... Sometimes I look at insects, how they work, and what they do. And sometimes I just sit there, looking. Until it goes away [laughs].*

I found myself engaging in a simultaneous process of *thinking with*: reading and analyzing data while I was also constantly influenced by my new experiences outdoors



or statements from Instagram users that I couldn't simply overlook. "I was on a ride that I was not in control of – and I like it that way. The inquiry took me for a walk" (Mcphie & Clarke, 2020, p. 190). Researching is very similar to what Dormouse described above: Looking at tiny bits and making fascinating discoveries. In this sense, I also wanted readers to experience this, the 'marvel' of going outdoors, enjoying, being curious, and learning. I have tackled this in two ways. Firstly, in chapter section 4.5. *Methods*, I have included all the information of the routes that we have done during the on-the-move interviews and during the autoethnographic route: Information about the place, map, the GPS-track and the link to the route on the AllTrails web platform, where it is also possible to find some photos (in situations where individuals cannot be readily identified) of the route. By doing this, I aimed to – almost literally – (un)map trans counter-geographies in outdoor spaces.

Secondly, chapter 5. *(Trans)Genders and (Trans)Bodies* has been recorded to listen as if it were a podcast. This will allow the reader to stop at this point of the thesis, go outside, and listen – or read, in case they have some hearing impediment – to the chapter while walking or being in nature. I hope some of the readers may feel more connected or be able to relate to us while they do this. By reading *differently*, they may even 'discover' something they didn't know about the place where they go. Do you remember the first butterfly you saw this spring?

- Lobo: *Oh! A butterfly! Is it the first one you see in Finland?*

- BB: *Yeah.*

- Lobo: *That's good. Because if it's yellow first instead of black, then you get a super summer.*

In many Nordic countries, seeing the first butterfly is very significant, as it relates to the end of the dark and cold season. When I went to Helsinki at the end of April 2022, I saw my first butterfly of the year with Lobo, a yellow butterfly. When he told me about what it signifies, my first thought was: 'Oh, then I'm going to have a great thesis!'. That summer, I enjoyed and nurtured the whole data collection process, though I also struggled to finish the transcription of the interviews. However, every time I saw a butterfly, I remembered what Lobo had told me, and it motivated me to keep working on achieving a 'super thesis'.

Another important methodological decision was to keep all participants' names (from the diaries and interviews) without gender markers. Having names related to plants, animals, or rocks blurs the gender identification of names. I thought of adding the pronouns of the person between brackets when a quote of them was used. However, in the cases where the gender identity is relevant for the analysis, it is mentioned before or after the quote. In other cases, it is possible to know the person's gender identity through

their words. In most cases, it is not visible. Similarly, the person's race, ethnicity, bodily ability, or class, among others, does not show just by reading a name. When this identity is relevant for the analysis, it was also mentioned.

In terms of the limits of the methodology, there are practicalities related to it that are important to acknowledge. Firstly, doing outdoor activities implies uncertainty and risk – similarly as with many other activities in life. However, most of these can be tackled with knowledge of the terrain and how you prepare and organize beforehand. Therefore, I would contend that not any person can safely carry out on-the-move interviews, but that an official mountain leader certification (or similar) or high amount of knowledge in outdoor activities is needed to carry out these types of interviews. Nevertheless, on-the-move diaries may also be a good alternative for when the adventure activity or the terrain is not well known to the researcher. Secondly, because of the space in which the conversation takes place, parts of the audio recording might easily get lost. In future cases doing on-the-move interviews, I would recommend using a wind-shield microphone that can be easily attached to the t-shirt/jacket of the participant. However, this would also mean that what the researcher says will be harder to hear – maybe even consider having two recorders. Thirdly, there is an underrepresentation of water-based adventure activities; this might be because of different reasons: I am not personally involved in these kinds of activities, so I don't know many people to practice them; water-based activities, as it was shown in section 5.6. *Trans/itioning OUT there*, they are often an activity that many trans and non-binary people avoid; and carrying out interviews in the water is also technically and practically more complex – however, some scholars have dared to immerse in this field (e.g., Butler-Eldridge, 2022; Denton et al., 2021; Olive, 2022). Lastly, because they need to happen in person, I was only able to carry out on-the-move interviews with people living in Europe, and therefore, experiences of people living in the Global South were underrepresented in the research. However, this limitation was partially tackled – and could be further improved – through the on-the-move diaries and the analysis of social media Instagram.

To conclude, I wanted to reflect briefly on the ethical approach of the methodology. On one side, Springgay and Truman (2019) contend that walking methodologies and methods – or in this case, on-the-move methodologies and methods – are crucial for thinking ethically about bodies, movement, the more-than-human, and spaces (p. 142). On another side, trans scholar Tobias Raun (2014) argues that trans-specific research should adopt a dialogical process that allows the narrative to flourish, rather than striving to reach conclusive finalizations. We have come to understand and agree on that knowledge is situated and partial and, thus, no researcher has the whole story. The researcher “must not only leave room for alternative interpretations but also keep the experiences of the subject at the centre. To do ethical trans research and analysis is to give significant weight to the embodied experience of the speaking subject” (hartline,

2020, p. 64). Through my approach to present the analysis, I aimed to give high relevance to the experiences, leaving also space for others to interpret them. For further recommendations about how to ethically conduct research about trans individuals, experiences, and communities, I recommend Z. Marshall et al. (2022) article, “Trans Research Ethics: Challenges and Recommendations for Change”.

Finally, the space where these ethnographies took place may not only have biased the outcome giving more nuances to the experiences, but it might also have limited the research in some cases. As Doran (2019) notes: “The challenging natural environments in which the ethnographies took place (e.g., on water or in the mountains), the physical demands of the adventure activities and the participants being mobile may have also constrained opportunities and the ability to conduct interviews” (p. 76). Moreover, as I have been showing, our interactions with our surroundings were central over the course of the on-the-move interviews. Shortly after I had discussed with Ginesta some points of what the informed consent meant, we had a short conversation while admiring the Estany d’Ivars and a stork nest.

- BB: *I'm going to stop and take a picture of the storks; they are very idyllic there [we stop and hear them chirping very loudly]. What might they be communicating with that sound?*

- Ginesta: *Maybe they are telling us something...*

- BB: *Informed consent for the photo, please.*

- Ginesta: *I think they are watching us, aren't they?*

- BB: *At least they know we are here...*

- Ginesta: *Yes... [whistles]. It is very beautiful here, the views...*

- BB: *The lake is lovely.*<sup>97</sup>



<sup>97</sup> [Image description]: Photo of the lake “Estany d’Ivars”. On the bottom left there is a stork nest with one stork sitting on it. The landscape is brown, and the plants don’t have leaves, because it is winter. Both sides of the lake are visible, and the sky is completely blue.



# **Closing Remarks, Epilogue, References, and Appendices**



## 9. CLOSING REMARKS

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*Think about a place that you love and that feels safer than other places – It might be a piece of land that you long to protect, maybe it’s a place you go to regularly or that you used to visit, maybe you went there just one time and it stayed with you. Maybe it’s not a specific spot, but a type of environment. Feel free to write/draw/think something about that spot – Why do you love it? How does it make you feel? What does this particular spot mean to you? Feel free to inquire with as many details as you want – Who lives there? What type of living beings are they? Who/what doesn’t live there anymore? What are the textures that you can find like? How does it change through the year? Think about why it is important to you – If you are of a trans, queer or otherwise marginalized experience, what is it about this place that means you can feel safe here?<sup>98</sup>*

Throughout the thesis I have posed many questions, which I have aimed to inquire through the participants’ as well as my own experience. While I will discuss the main findings and contributions of my thesis below, one of my wishes with this project was to prompt reflection on the matters raised throughout the thesis. Rather than answers, I hope that you got moved and affected by our experiences in the outdoors.

Moreover, I hope you felt and sensed trans joy through the participants’ experiences. Many are the difficulties, constraints, and barriers that participants face in their willingness to engage in outdoor activities. However, while we need to tackle this, and strategies to do so will be suggested in the section below, my aim for this thesis was to focus on the benefits, joys, and enablers that adventure activities provide to the participants. Shuster and Westbrook (2022) argue that “the absence of joy in the academic literature has important consequences. It is not only what is known that shapes the trajectory of scholarship—what we do not know also matters greatly” (p. 4). Academic literature that delves into trans experiences has disproportionately focused on collecting our stories of pain (Holloway, 2023; hooks, 1990; Shuster & Westbrook, 2022; Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Nevertheless, my experiences within trans activism and in sharing experiences with other trans individuals tell me that our lives are also overflowed with joy and *gender euphoria*. With this research, I aim to contribute to the increasing field of knowledge conceptualized as *desire-based research*. This perspective

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<sup>98</sup> This is a modified version of an exercise proposed by Kes Otter Liefte at the *Trans Ecologies Symposium* that took place virtually on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2023: <https://sagebrice.com/2023/10/20/trans-ecologies-symposium/>

recognizes the oppression, trauma, and pain that marginalized communities endure, yet it perceives the knowledge and wisdom derived from these experiences as valuable and insightful (Tuck & Yang, 2014). My wish is that throughout the thesis, you have been able to connect with our experiences of joy, pleasure, and belonging that we encounter while engaging in outdoor activities. Further, participants' impressions of the call also positively embraced this perspective.

- Libélula: *I thought the idea was cool. I think it's always important to have this positive discourse about anything related to the LGBTQ or queer community. It's important to not always live in an attitude of struggle. It's fine, and I think it's great, and we should do it, but we also need to indulge ourselves and find happiness in this life.*

This last chapter will be structured in three parts. First, I will briefly review the aim and objectives of the thesis, how they were addressed, and the findings and contributions of the present thesis. Thereafter, I have put together a series of steps and implementations – based on what the participants have expressed that is needed, related literature (Allen-Craig et al., 2020; Bloem Herraiz & Velo Camacho, 2024, in press; D. J. Jordan, 2018; Lundin & Bombaci, 2022; Rogers & Rose, 2019), and my own experiences – to make the outdoor and adventure recreation industry, as well as outdoor education programs, more inclusive for trans and gender non-conforming individuals. Finally, I will propose future lines of work and research to keep delving into trans and queer experiences in outdoor and adventure activities and to create outdoor spaces where everyone can feel welcomed and safe.



## 9.1. FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

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Comprehensively, this thesis has addressed the overarching inquiries concerning the experiences of trans individuals in outdoor activities, as stated in the main aim: “To examine trans people’s experiences within the processes that occur in outdoor and adventure activities in natural environments, through the lens of embodied queer methodological assemblages”. Specifically, it has delved into aspects such as the types of outdoor spaces frequented, the choice of companions for outdoor ventures, the motivations behind such choices, the cherished aspects in these experiences, the derived benefits from outdoor activities, the barriers encountered to participation in outdoor recreation, and the reciprocal impact between trans identity and these outdoor experiences on identity formation. In this way, the thesis serves as a meaningful addition to the expanding body of knowledge concerning the multifaceted experiences of trans individuals in relation to outdoor spaces.

In chapter 4. *Methodology and Methods*, I discussed the transnational approach of the project, since the present research focuses on outdoor spaces rather than borders of nation-states. Nevertheless, the relevance of acknowledging cultural and political differences must not be obviated, drawing on feminist methodologies to argue against a “view from nowhere” (Longino, 1993). The research explores transnational flows through an assemblage of queering-feminist-outdoor methodologies, exploring the shaping of borders through unmapping the counter-geographies of trans people in outdoor spaces. In this regard, utilizing a multisited ethnography, in which experiences of trans people were analyzed through on-the-move interviews, on-the-move diaries, online ethnographic research, and autoethnography, I aimed to encompass a diverse range of experiences. Our diverse positionalities, backgrounds, and identities affect our experiences. While we all identify under the trans umbrella, our experiences are not equal, and they are thus not to be transferred to the whole trans community. The participants in this project do share a love and passion for outdoor activities, which I have aimed to bring forward. Further, the border between online and offline spaces has become blurred. Participants have used Instagram as a social space to counter-map trans people’s experiences in the outdoors, creating representation and safe spaces to *come out*. In this sense, I hope that the methodological approach that I have suggested in this project has also allowed you to *come out*, enabling you to put not only your mind in this text but also your body and senses in a holistic experience.

The first research objective, “to analyze how trans people’s gender identity and expression are constructed in outdoor activities, and how adventure activities impact the embodiment of trans people”, was discussed throughout chapter 5. *(Trans)Genders and (Trans)Bodies*. Firstly, we delved into participants’ perspectives on what adventure is

and means for them. Aspects such as a heightened perceived freedom were recurrent. Thereafter, we observed how trans individuals' gender identity and expression unfold in outdoor activities, particularly delving into the transformative effects of outdoor and adventure activities on personal embodiment and empowerment processes. Participants stated an increased connection with themselves and their bodies and a sense of pride that led to personal empowerment. Further, we explored the influence of these activities on participants' gender transitions, exploring "how gendered entanglements are shaped and how we can create a world of greater trans\*flourishing—a world in which all inhabitations of gender continue to be transformed" (Thorsteinson & Joo, 2020, p. 48). Throughout the chapter, we also explored how gender normativities are contested in outdoor spaces by trans people, challenging the cisheteronormativity that still persists in outdoor recreation. Additionally, this chapter intertwines discussions on how participants created meaningful somatecas through their participation in outdoor activities, which they would draw on when looking for feelings of comfort. Lastly, we explored how being and moving outdoors serve as coping mechanisms or avenues for improving participants' mental health.

I then continued in chapter 6. *Unmapping Trans Counter-geographies*, delving into the following research objective: "To examine the counter-geographies traced in the outdoors and how they affect the inclusion and participation of trans people in adventure activities". Here, the exploration was dedicated to the nuanced understanding of outdoor spaces, investigating and outlining the counter-geographies that emerge when trans people move in these spaces and their impact on the inclusion and engagement of trans individuals in adventure activities. We started questioning the assumed metronormative narrative of trans lives, contesting the urban/rural dichotomy. Participants noted that outdoor activities allow space to escape from societal constraints and expectations around gender, providing them a haven space to find joy. We then continued delving into the concept of counter-geographies, through which the research aims to inquire about how trans individuals actively shape spaces that resist or subvert traditional gender norms and societal expectations, thus *unmapping trans counter-geographies*. The examination extends to the search for safe spaces crafted for and by trans individuals within the realm of outdoor and adventure recreation. Nature was often referred to as a safe space, where possible risks weren't directed toward our trans identities, but instead toward the fact of our being humans. Furthermore, the analysis explores the nuances of transecological belonging, contributing valuable insights into the lived experiences of trans individuals within these spatial contexts. Through their feelings of connectedness with their surroundings, participants related to emotions of 'feeling at home'.

Thirdly, chapter 7. *Affective Politics of Outdoor Spaces*, focused on the third research objective: "To analyze the emotional and affective dimensions of the experiences of trans people in outdoor activities, examining the communities that form

in these spaces, and how visibility affects their experiences”. Here, we delved into the intricate interplay between emotional landscapes, community dynamics, and the influence of trans visibility and representation within outdoor spaces, with a spotlight on trans necropolitics processes and the adverse impact that participants noted of condemning trans people to only urban spaces. Outdoor activities carry a historical legacy of colonization, personification of Mother Nature, and patriarchal language; thus, we explored how these aspects shaped the participants’ experiences, how they reimagine these spaces, and how they envision other ways of relating with or to them. We continued looking into how participants’ experiences with time in outdoor spaces were. *Transing* time-space processes are unveiled, revealing how trans and queer subjectivities allow spaces to produce alternative temporalities which fall outside cisheteronormativity, and how outdoor and adventure activities may also *queer* time. After that, we inquired about the possibilities and limits of trans visibility within outdoor communities. In this regard, participants noted the necessity to continue increasing trans representation in adventure recreation. This led to examining the dual realities of discrimination – mostly present when encountering strangers on the trail – and the formation of supportive communities within these spaces, for example, by creating outdoor affinity groups. Lastly, participants shed light into how outdoor activities uniquely function as platforms for learning and personal development in their lives.

Finally, in chapter 8. *On-the-move Methodology as a Transecological Methodology*, I analyzed how the last research objective – “to explore queer methodological assemblages to ‘produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently’, through sensed and embodied on-the-move methodologies” – unfolded throughout the different processes of the research. Building on the groundwork laid in the methodological chapter, we expanded on how an on-the-move methodology contributed to the research. In that sense, we delved into the methodological challenges inherent in incorporating space across all phases of the thesis, coupled with the wish to engage with the more-than-human aspects of these experiences. Hence, we analyzed how the methodological approach aimed to involve readers and evoke their senses. The chapter presents instances from on-the-move interviews, highlighting moments where the focus shifts from centered human interactions to immersive engagement with the surroundings. Finally, the chapter reflects on how the researcher’s subjectivity as a trans and outdoor person influenced the methodological approach, incorporating participants’ reflections on this aspect.

Regarding the contributions that this thesis provides, I have introduced and discussed some of the aspects and gaps that I aimed to cover with this research throughout the thesis. The present thesis makes original contributions to knowledge within the fields of gender, queer, and trans studies and in outdoor and adventure research, as well as in

their intersections. Moreover, its methodological and philosophical approach also contributes to the increasing knowledge and research on trans experiences.

As discussed in the state of the art, there is little research written on trans experiences in outdoor and adventure activities, most of it focuses on young people and do not focus on transnational experiences. In this sense, the thesis provides a unique contribution focusing on adults' experiences, who live in diverse countries, who come originally from the Global North and Global South, and who participate in a wide range of outdoor and adventure activities. Furthermore, authors in the field mainly identify as cisgender, with the majority of published literature that looks into gendered dynamics in the outdoors centered on the experiences of heterosexual cisgender women. Research on queer experiences in outdoor activities remains scarce, predominantly examining constraints and narratives of suffering, primarily within Western contexts. While acknowledging limitations, this doctoral thesis expands the discourse by delving into the positive aspects, pleasures, and facilitators that adventure pursuits offer to trans participants. Consequently, it embraces a desire-centered research methodology, thus contributing to this emerging methodological field. This thesis seeks to contribute to knowledge to enhance the well-being of transgender individuals, exploring topics such as the creation of safe environments, empowerment in our bodies, and fostering resilience. In essence, it endeavors to aims to make our lives more livable, making them more conducive to flourishing.

Further, participants understanding of what adventure means also challenges existing definitions, reconceptualizing the concept of adventure and recognizing slower forms of adventure, being immersed in nature for the wellbeing, and acknowledging the non-human aspect of these activities, in tune with posthumanist views of space. Additionally, this thesis makes a unique contribution by exploring how trans individuals understand outdoor and adventure activities, distancing from cisheteronormative understandings of adventure.

Methodologically, the proposed embodied queer methodological assemblages and on-the-move methodology provide a novel methodological approach that recognizes non-human aspects of the experiences and delves into transecological understandings of adventure. Moreover, this transecological approach highlights the interconnections between the space and trans experiences.

Finally, the strategies for outdoor providers to implement in order to ensure inclusivity for the trans participants represent a valuable contribution to both academic discourse and adventure recreation practice.

## 9.2. STRATEGIES THAT OUTDOOR PROVIDERS CAN IMPLEMENT TO MAKE THEIR ACTIVITIES INCLUSIVE FOR THE TRANS COMMUNITY

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Throughout the thesis, I have outlined many benefits outdoor and adventure activities can offer to trans individuals. Some of them are the possibility to escape gendered normativities and expectations, finding a sense of transecological belonging, escaping gender policing, taking care of our mental and physical health, empowering ourselves in our bodies, finding safe spaces, and developing resilience. In this sense, the possibility of participating in outdoor and adventure activities could be considered a tool for building livable trans lives (Butler, 2004a, 2004b). However, discrimination and difficulties in accessing these spaces have also been uncovered. Many participants noted that they felt the safest when going alone or with groups of friends. Alternatively, when going with strangers, many of them also regarded queer groups as a strategy to create safer spaces outdoors. This situation translates into a reduced chance of possibilities to go outdoors, as they don't feel safe enough to join outdoor clubs, activities, or trips, which are extensively offered by outdoor and adventure providers. In this regard, how can adventure tourism professionals address this matter? What changes are needed in adventure recreation in order to create more inclusive and welcoming spaces for trans and queer individuals?

In chapter 6. *Unmapping Trans Counter-geographies*, I unmapped (Razack, 2002) the counter-geographies (Sassen, 2003) that trans people trace when engaging in outdoor activities. Further, in chapter section 7.3. *Queer OUTdoors – Representation*, participants noted the importance of representation for creating imaginaries of what it is possible to do, while many of the Instagram accounts analyzed were actively creating other imaginaries of what an adventure person looks like – other than cis, straight, white, able-bodied, muscular. However, outdoor and adventure recreation is still mapped by cisheteronormative gazes that result in exclusion processes. In a forthcoming chapter (2024, in press), Velo Camacho and I have begun to outline a proposal of actions to enhance LGTBQ+ inclusivity in the outdoor community. We argued that by addressing these matters, outdoor professionals will be working towards the creation of more welcoming spaces for all of us. I have further developed these suggestions with the knowledge and data from the participants of this project, expanding those suggestions as follows:

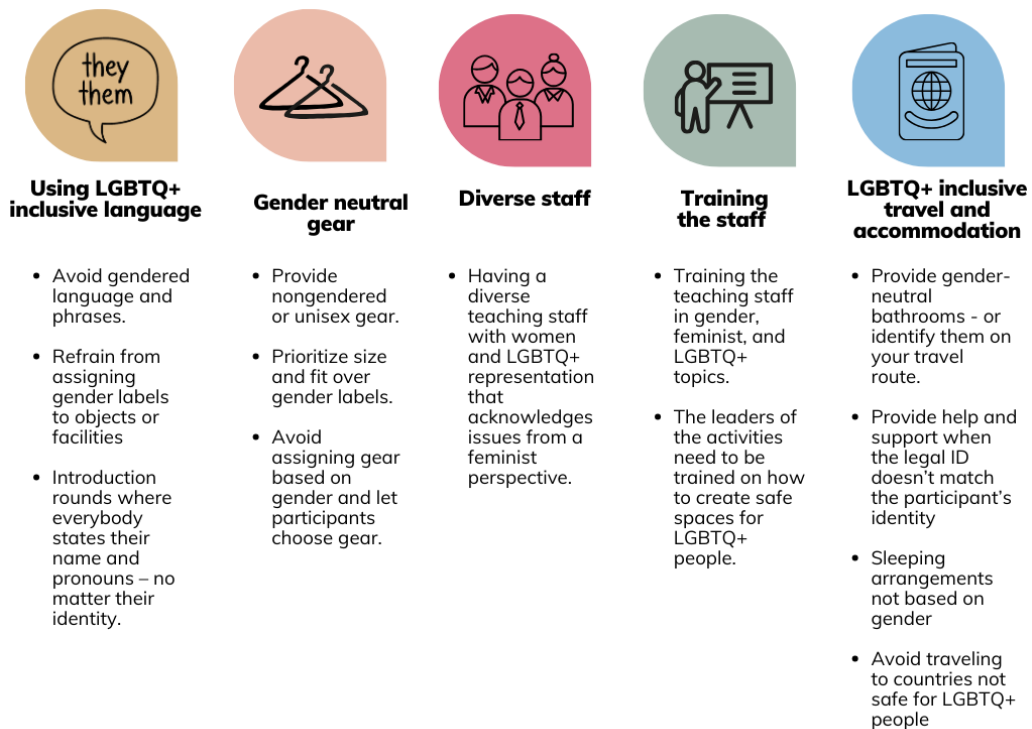


Figure 35: Strategies that outdoor providers can implement to make their activities inclusive for the trans community.

I would like to highlight some of the proposals that participants brought up to support the above suggestions. One of the most recurrent topics was the importance of not assuming people’s pronouns. For many of the participants, this small act made the difference between feeling welcomed or not in the space and/or group. As trans scholar Petra Doan (2010) says: “Many people do not understand the power of these little words and how painful the persistence use of inappropriate pronouns can be” (p. 647). Furthermore, while visible support and structural change are needed, the outdoor and adventure community needs to address the current issues with acts in order to see change.

*@seltzerskelter: We need institutional level change and commitments from outdoor organizations - not just performative, surface level actions. Let’s see organizations hire BIPOC/LGBTQ+ people as editors, executives, board members. Then let’s see them listen, learn and work collaboratively to create new approaches to equity.*

Some of the Instagram users who also work as outdoor professionals and/or are involved in organizing outdoor activities highlighted the conscious effort required to implement changes in the industry, and their wish to see this happening.

*@lor\_sabourin: My favorite cause in climbing advocacy right now is creating safer, more inclusive spaces for folks in the climbing community who might have felt*

*unwelcomed in the past. Climbing has the potential to be such an engaging positive force in people's lives. I want everyone who gets the "climbing bug" to get the chance to pursue their passion without feeling afraid of wondering if there is space for them in the community.*

In conclusion, addressing the current issues within the outdoor and adventure community requires not only visible support but also structural change and institutional-level commitment. The above recommendations are a starting point, but further research is needed to improve these suggestions.

### 9.3. FUTURE RESEARCH

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This thesis aims to start covering a gap in the research literature regarding trans and queer people's experiences in outdoor and adventure activities. Further, it has brought a different lens and methodology to analyze these experiences, which are transferable to other areas of research in outdoor and adventure studies. However, the time and scope of this project have also required to leave out many interesting topics and methods of analysis. In terms of methods, a mixed-method approach – qualitative and quantitative – would encompass a wider range of experiences and nuances, which would draw a broader picture of how trans people's experiences in outdoor activities are, and what is needed to make these spaces safer and more inclusive. Likewise, methodological tools for analyzing intersectionally – such as relief maps – would be of great value to understand the intricate realities of trans people in outdoor activities.

Further, I consider that it would be of great interest to do focus groups during queer-only or trans-only outdoor trips to further delve into the possibilities and hazards of these types of spaces: How are participants' experiences in these compared to other kinds of groups? Are they creating a 'safe space' outdoors? If so, how or how not? How are these spaces gendered? How are they relating to the more-than-human of the environment? In this regard, affinity group experiences have been noted by the participants as highly relevant and beneficial, and further research into these would be of great interest.

When deciding the scope of the Instagram accounts, I resolved to leave out organizational accounts. There are currently many small collectives and some bigger organizations working around trans and queer people in adventure and outdoor activities. Research – whether quantitative or qualitative: in-depth interviews, cases of study, on-the-move methodologies, etc. – into their organizational structure and the work they do, as well as participants' experiences in them, would help to increase knowledge into how to tackle current discrimination in the outdoor community. In this line, it would be relevant to delve into the training of outdoor professionals: How are the training programs structured? What is left out? How do the professors and trainers in this area approach these matters in their classes? What kind of role models do they bring forward? How are the experiences of queer and trans students in these trainings? What are the experiences of queer and trans outdoor professionals?

The current state of increasing transhate<sup>99</sup> violence, especially against young trans and gender non-conforming individuals and against trans inclusion in sports, is also

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<sup>99</sup> I use here the concept transhate instead of transphobic, in line with current activist discourses – mainly in Abya Yala – arguing that the use of the word hate (LGBThate) is more accurate to describe the sentiment that LGBTphobia.



impacting the outdoor community. How is transhate appearing in the general outdoor and adventure communities? How is this influencing the expansion of outdoor sports into a more mainstream and competitive sports culture? How are the spaces changing through this discourse?

In addition, participants in this research, while engaging in a diverse range of outdoor activities, there were three main types of activities: hiking, climbing, and cycling – with some exceptions such as skiing, trail running, or a camping-motorbike trip. These all pose different challenges. Further research focusing individually on each of them – hiking, climbing, and cycling – would expand our knowledge into how the different communities are shaped. Furthermore, research into other types of outdoor activities – such as high-altitude mountaineering, thru-hiking, outdoor winter activities, or water sports – would bring more nuances to the analysis and discussion.

Lastly, a more intersectional analysis, looking into how race, migration, age, bodily ability, and/or class interplay with our trans and queer identities in the outdoors is needed. This would also expand the knowledge into some aspects that I have started to discuss here, such as queering temporalities, decolonization of outdoor language and practices, transecological belonging, embodiment, resilience, and necropolitic processes.

*Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain. – José Esteban Muñoz (2009, p. 1)*

I hope that throughout the thesis we have learned together, prompted curiosity, listened to our experiences, and dreamt with hopeful and joyful *transing* futures.

## EPILOGUE

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I would not be here – researching, adventuring, thriving, imagining futures, and *gender euphoric* – without all the trans activists that have come before. They have fought like hell so that we can be here today, researching about trans joy. My emphasis is on joy, though remaining aware of recent criticisms regarding the commodification of happiness and its association with notions of the ideal citizen (Ahmed, 2010; Cabanas & Illouz, 2019). While anger and frustration are necessary to catalyze activist movements, joy and fun are crucial to sustain these mobilizations (Shuster & Westbrook, 2022). Shuster and Westbrook (2022) contend that, “if the main story told about a group is that their lives are filled with trauma, discrimination, and violence, then that is likely what most people believe about the group, including members of the group itself” (p. 5). I hope that throughout the thesis we have learned together, prompted curiosity, listened to our experiences, and dreamt with hopeful and joyful *transing futures*. We will keep fighting for our rights; they will not erase us, nor our glee.

Closing a project like this one is always hard. There will always be space to improve – though not time. Fortunately, that leaves space to keep working on these topics, in many exciting ways. Throughout these last three and a half years, I have learned about how I have come to where I am and how the mountains have shaped the person I am today. Nevertheless, one of the many things that this process has taught me is how essential it is for me to go outdoors and move. I’ve dreamt about outdoor trips so many times. I would look out the window and imagine lots of adventures; hiking and cycling, in the winter and in the summer, sleeping in the comfort of my tent in cemeteries and in refugees. This is to say, that I will always be open to invitations to go out.

I hope that other trans people who read this felt identified, less alone, and connected to all of us who have participated in this project. I hope that cis people who read this could also relate to our experiences, empathize, and that they start taking the lead into changing outdoor and adventure communities to build more LGBTQI+ inclusive spaces outdoors. Lastly, I hope you all got a bit curious, went outdoors, and spent some time reflecting on your own experiences.

Let’s continue *queering* and *transing* the mountains, forests, seas, lakes, deserts, and rocks.

## EPÍLOGO

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No estaría aquí – investigando, aventurándome, prosperando, imaginando futuros y con euforia de género – sin todes les activistas trans que me han precedido. Elles han luchado sin descanso para que hoy podamos estar aquí, investigando sobre la felicidad trans. Pongo el énfasis en el disfrute, siendo consciente de las recientes críticas sobre la mercantilización de la felicidad y su asociación con las nociones del ciudadano ideal (Ahmed, 2010; Cabanas & Illouz, 2019). Mientras que la ira y la frustración son necesarias para catalizar los movimientos activistas, el disfrute y la diversión son cruciales para sostener estas movilizaciones (Shuster y Westbrook, 2022). Shuster y Westbrook (2022) sostienen que, “si la historia principal que se cuenta sobre un grupo es que sus vidas están llenas de traumas, discriminación y violencia, entonces es probable que eso sea lo que la mayoría de la gente crea sobre el grupo, incluidos los propios miembros del grupo” (p. 5). Espero que a lo largo de la tesis hayamos aprendido juntas, despertado la curiosidad, prestado atención a nuestras experiencias y soñado con *futuros trans* esperanzadores y felices. Seguiremos luchando por nuestros derechos; no nos van a borrar, ni a nosotres, ni nuestra felicidad.

Cerrar un proyecto como éste siempre es difícil. Siempre queda espacio para mejorar, aunque no tiempo. Afortunadamente, eso deja espacio para seguir trabajando sobre estos temas, de muy diversas maneras. A lo largo de estos tres años y medio he aprendido sobre cómo he llegado hasta donde estoy y cómo las montañas han conformado la persona que soy hoy. Sin embargo, una de las muchas cosas que me ha enseñado este proceso es lo esencial que es para mí salir al campo y moverme. He soñado muchas veces con viajes a la naturaleza. Miraba por la ventana y me imaginaba un sinfín de aventuras; haciendo senderismo y montando en bicicleta, en invierno y en verano, durmiendo en la intimidad de mi tienda de campaña en cementerios y en refugios. Con esto quiero decir que siempre estaré feliz de recibir invitaciones para salir a la naturaleza.

Deseo que las personas trans que lean esto se sientan identificadas, en compañía y conectadas con todas las personas que hemos participado en este proyecto. También deseo que las personas cis que lean esto se hayan sentido identificadas con nuestras experiencias, empaticen con ellas y empiecen a tomar la iniciativa para cambiar las comunidades de aventura y de actividades al aire libre con el fin de generar espacios al aire libre más inclusivos para las personas LGBTQI+. Por último, deseo que todes hayáis sentido un poco de curiosidad, hayáis salido a la naturaleza y hayáis dedicado algún rato a reflexionar sobre vuestras propias experiencias.

Sigamos *queerizando* y *transitando* las montañas, los bosques, los mares, los lagos, los desiertos y las rocas.



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## APPENDICES

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### APPENDIX A. INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMED CONSENT

---

#### Information for participants

I, Bart Bloem Herraiz, am a Ph.D. student at the University of Vic. I am carrying out a research project entitled *Unmapping Trans Counter-Geographies: Safe Spaces, Body Archives and Empowerment of Trans People in Outdoor Activities*.

1. **Purpose of the study:** The project aims to analyze trans people's experiences in outdoor and adventure activities. Firstly, I will conduct an online ethnography of the trans outdoor community in Instagram. Secondly, I will conduct 'on-the-move interviews' while taking part in the outdoor activity of the participant's preference, while other participants will be asked to write/record a diary while doing the outdoor activity of their preference. This diary guide will also be used by myself for conducting autoethnography.
2. **Procedures:** In the context of this research, I would like to request your collaboration as you meet the following inclusion criteria: You are a trans/non-binary/gender nonconforming person, you are over 18 years old, and you currently participate in outdoor/adventure activities.
3. **Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday outdoor life. In the case of the interview, I will be responsible for the activity, and decisions of quitting the activity because of any perceived risks will have to be complied by the participant. As a certified mountain guide, I hold the legal responsibility of the activity. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort.
4. **Benefits:** Although there is no immediate benefit to you, possible benefits of your participation include increasing visibility of trans/non-binary persons in outdoor activities.
5. **Participation:** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The investigator may withdraw you at their professional discretion.
6. **Cost of Participating:** There will be no financial compensation for your participation. However, I will cover the travel and dietary costs of the activity in case of the interviews (as long as it stays within an affordable range, i.e. I won't cover a trip to a faraway and/or expensive destination). In the case of the diaries, these should

be ideally done while one of your regular outdoor activities, meaning no additional costs.

- 7. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Participants’ data will be dealt with anonymously at all times, so that they cannot be linked either directly or indirectly with the person to whom they correspond, as a guarantee of confidentiality. The data that are obtained during their participation will not be used for any purpose other than that explained in this research. All data will be stored safely under my direct responsibility. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your responses.

All data will be treated accordingly to the Spanish *Organic Law 3/2018 of 5 December, on Personal Data Protection and guarantee of digital rights*, and the *EU General Regulation 2016/679 of 27 April, on Data Protection and complementary regulations*.

- 8. **Right to Ask Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me at: [bart.bloem@uvic.cat](mailto:bart.bloem@uvic.cat) or to my Phone/WhatsApp: +34644258509

### Informed consent to participate

I, ....., a person of legal age, with identification number ....., acting in my own name and on my own behalf

#### STATE THAT:

I have received information about the Ph.D. project *Unmapping Trans Counter-Geographies: Safe Spaces, Body Archives and Empowerment of Trans People in Outdoor Activities* about which I have been given the information sheet attached to this consent form and in which my participation has been requested. I have understood its meaning, my doubts have been clarified, and the actions that are associated with this project have been explained to me. I have been informed of all aspects relating to confidentiality and protection of project participants’ data, and the assurances provided according to the Spanish *Organic Law 3/2018 of 5 December, on Personal Data Protection and guarantee of digital rights*, and the *EU General Regulation 2016/679 of 27 April, on Data Protection and complementary regulations*.

My collaboration in the project is totally voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from it at any time, which will revoke this consent. Withdrawal from the project will not have any negative impact on me in any case. If I do withdraw from the project, I will have the right to remove my data from the study files.

As a result of the above, I GIVE MY CONSENT:

1. To participate in the project *Unmapping Trans Counter-Geographies: Safe Spaces, Body Archives and Empowerment of Trans People in Outdoor Activities*
2. That the Ph.D. candidate Bart Bloem Herraiz as the principal researcher can process my data under the terms and scope required for the research. In no case will they disseminate these data in a way that could be associated with my identifying information, and the data will only be kept for as long as necessary to meet the aims of the project, according to the Spanish *Organic Law 3/2018 of 5 December, on Personal Data Protection and guarantee of digital rights*, and the *EU General Regulation 2016/679 of 27 April, on Data Protection and complementary regulations*

[CITY] on [DAY/MONTH/YEAR]

[SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT]

### **Consent Form for Audio Taping and Transcribing Interviews (just for participants who will be interviewed)**

This study involves the audio taping of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript. Only me, Bart Bloem Herraiz, will be able to listen to the tapes.

The tapes will be transcribed. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

You can have the tape erased at any time if you wish to withdraw your consent to taping or participation in this study.

You will be given the opportunity to read the transcripts, as well as the final quotes used in the Ph.D.

**By signing this form, you are consenting to:** having your interview taped; having the tape transcribed; use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

[CITY] on [DAY/MONTH/YEAR]

[SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT]

## APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW GUIDE

---

***Note to the interviewee: This first section is just for demographical purposes. If you want to elaborate on any, feel free. If you don't want to answer, that's okay too.***

- 1) Could you tell me a bit about yourself? Name, pronouns, age, how you identify, what you do for a living, etc. (*Ask for these beforehand*)
- 2) How is a 'normal' day in your life? (*So, you work in that area? And do you live with other people or alone?*)
- 3) Which sports have you practiced in the past? Do you still do them? In case not, why? How would you say that is your general relationship with sports?

***Note to the interviewee: This next section is meant to get an overall overview of your participation in outdoor and adventure activities.***

- 4) What outdoor activities do you practice? How often do you do them?
  - a. If you no longer participate in some adventure/outdoor activities, what factors influenced you to stop? Would you like to do them again?
  - b. Do you go alone or in groups? What kind of groups (same-sex/queer groups)? Why do you choose to do them with these people?
- 5) Why do you like doing adventure activities? How did it start? Why do you continue?
- 6) Can you tell me about your most recent outdoor trip or one that you hold in your memories as special or unique?
  - a. What sorts of feelings come to your mind when thinking about the experience?
  - b. How did your body feel – before, throughout, afterward –?
  - c. How significant were, for you, sensations from the natural environment, such as smells, sounds, sights, feelings of the weather conditions, or textures?
- 7) Do you take part in more-than-one-day outdoor activities? If so, how are your overall experiences with that?
  - a. What sorts of feelings arise when going back to the city/your home afterward?

***Note to the interviewee: The following section explores your relationship with nature and adventure activities.***

- 8) How would you define outdoor or adventure activities?
  - a. What does adventure mean to you?
  - b. If mentioned, explore connections to gender.
- 9) Do you feel like outdoor/adventure activities are part of your identity?

- a. If so, could you explain how and why these experiences are part of your identity?
  - b. If mentioned, explore connections to gender.
- 10) Do you find any barriers when pursuing specific outdoor activities or going into certain outdoor spaces?
- a. Have you felt any form of discrimination before or while participating in adventure activities?
  - b. Have any specific spaces/outdoor contexts been particularly positive or welcoming? Why?
  - c. Are there any outdoor activities/spaces that you avoid due to your trans and/or gender non-conforming identity?
  - d. Have you found representation in the adventure setting/landscape (movies, magazines, etc.)? If not, would you like to? Why do you think that it is important?

***Note to the interviewee: This final section goes into your bodily and gendered relationship with nature and outdoor activities.***

- 11) What comes to your mind when you think about your gender in an outdoor setting? (Like right now, for example)
- a. Do you feel like your body is gendered while being immersed in the outdoors?
  - b. Do you think about your gender differently when you are in outdoor places? Explore.
  - c. Do you think that outdoor activities influence your gender identity and expression? How?
  - d. What is it about outdoor places that allow these feelings?
- 12) What comes to your mind when you think about your body right now? Has it been different/changed throughout the time that the activity took place? How did your body feel – before, throughout, afterward –?
- 13) Would you like to describe what it's like for you to be immersed in nature? You can be as specific as you want regarding physical, psychical, and social aspects.
- 14) Do you feel that adventure activities teach you anything?
- a. How would you describe these learnings? How do they impact other aspects of your life?
  - b. Do you feel that they teach you anything about your body?
  - c. Do you think that outdoor activities help you to (re)connect with your body? How?

- 15) Do outdoor activities have had any influence or significance in relation to your transition processes? Explore.
- a. Did you do outdoor activities throughout your transition? (Having into account that this is a process that, for some people, doesn't have a beginning or end)
  - b. How have adventure activities influenced your own gender identity and body perception?
- 16) How has your gender identity been relevant to others when participating in adventure activities/when being in outdoor contexts?
- a. Do you think that our (trans people) presence in adventure activities has any kind of influence on the general adventure recreation community? Do you have any specific examples?
- 17) Do you feel that YOU (as a trans and/or gender non-conforming person) going to the outdoors is a way to resist something that society will not let you do? Or a way to explore something that society will not let you be?
- a. Is there a particular bodily and or gendered experience that you're fleeing from?
  - b. Is there a particular bodily or gendered experience that you're looking for?
- 18) As a general closure, have you felt welcomed/found a place in adventure recreation as a trans/non-binary/gender non-conforming person? Do you think your experiences would be different if your gender identity/sexual orientation/race/class would be more normative?

***Is there anything you would like to add, something that came to your mind during the day that you think might be important?***



## APPENDIX C. DIARY GUIDE

---

*Note: This first section is just for demographical purposes. If you want to elaborate on any, feel free.*

- 1) Could you tell me a bit about **yourself**? Name, pronouns, age, how you identify, what you do for a living, etc.

*Note: This next section is for before going outdoors, to explore your relationship with outdoor activities*

- 2) What **outdoor activities** will you be doing for participating in the present research? Are you going to go alone or with a group (in that case, please describe the group)? Why do you choose to do them with these people? How many days will it last?
- 3) What comes to your mind when you think about your **gender** right now?
- 4) What comes to your mind when you think about your **body** right now?

*Note: This next section is for while being outdoors, whenever you feel it's a good moment. These are just suggestions; you can write (or record) as you please:*

*E.g., in a diary format where you also address these questions, any kind of written format works; feel free to be creative if you wish. You can also directly answer the questions in any given order. If you don't want to answer a question, that's ok too.*

- 5) What sorts of **feelings** come to your mind when thinking about today?
- 6) What comes to your mind when you think about your **gender** right now? Has it been different/changed throughout the time that the activity took place?
- 7) What comes to your mind when you think about your **body** right now? Has it been different/changed throughout the time that the activity took place? How did your body feel – before, throughout, afterward –?
- 8) Would you like to describe what it's like for you to be **immersed** in nature? You can be as specific as you want regarding physical, psychical, and social aspects.
- 9) Have you **learned** something during this trip? How would you describe these learnings? Do you think that they will be helpful for other parts of your life? How?
- 10) Did you feel **welcome** in the outdoor activity you participated in now? Why or why not?

- a. Have you felt any form of **discrimination** while participating in adventure activities? (In general)

*Note: This next section is for after going outdoors.*

- 11) What comes to your mind when you think about your **gender** right now?
- 12) What comes to your mind when you think about your **body** right now?
- 13) Do outdoor activities have had any influence or significance in relation to your **transition** processes? Please also use the following questions to inspire you:
  - a. Did you do outdoor activities throughout your transition? (having into account that this is a process that, for some people, doesn't have a beginning or end)
  - b. How have adventure activities influenced your own gender identity and body perception?

*Note: This question is for those of you who engage with Instagram portraying your experiences as trans, gender nonconforming, and/or nonbinary person in adventure and outdoor activities*

- 14) Why do you find it significant to portray your experience on Instagram?
  - a. Do you use it while being outdoors, before and/or afterward?
  - b. What positive and negative outcomes do you get from sharing your experiences?

*Note: Final thoughts and/or anything you wish to write about.*

- 15) As a general closure, have you felt welcomed/found a place in adventure recreation as a trans person? Do you think your experiences would be different if you had a different gender/sexual orientation/race/class? Here are more ideas if you wish to elaborate further:
  - a. How has the adventure setting/landscape (movies, magazines, etc.) affected you when imagining your possibilities for participating in outdoor activities?
  - b. Are there any outdoor activities/spaces that you avoid due to your identity?

## APPENDIX D. RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

---



**Favourable report**  
Research project  
Internal code: 190/2022  
27 January 2022

Dr Ester Busquets Alibés  
Technical Secretary of the UVic-UCC Research Ethics Committee

### CERTIFIES

That at its meeting of 24 January 2022, the UVic-UCC Research Ethics Committee considered the research project:

Title: *Unmapping Trans Counter-Geographies: Safe Spaces, Body Archives and Empowerment of Trans People in Outdoor Activities.*

Internal code: 190/2022.

Lead researcher: Bart Bloem Herraiz.

Considers that:

- It meets suitability requirements in relation to objectives and design methodology.
- It meets ethical requirements for obtaining informed consent and aspects relating to confidentiality.
- The competence of the lead researcher and the resources available are appropriate to carry out the study.

Consequently, this Research Ethics Committee has issued a FAVOURABLE REPORT<sup>1</sup>.

Ester Busquets  
Alibés - DNI  
33946176Q (TCAT)

Firmado digitalmente por  
Ester Busquets Alibés - DNI  
33946176Q (TCAT)  
Fecha: 2022.01.27 09:55:29  
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27/01/2022

Signed by the Technical Secretary

---

<sup>1</sup>A favourable report places the following obligations on the lead researcher:

- a) If necessary, to submit the project to external competitive or non-competitive calls with the same key features that have been favourably considered by this Research Ethics Committee.
- b) If necessary, to carry out the project with the same key features that have been favourably considered by this Research Ethics Committee.

## APPENDIX E. LIST OF RESOURCES

---

Here is a short list of resources for those who would like to hear, watch, or read more about trans and queer people's experiences outdoors. I have focused on resources that specifically focus on trans and non-binary folks in outdoor and adventure activities. There are many other useful resources regarding trans participation in other sports, or focusing on BIPOC and bodily diversity experiences in outdoor recreation that I would have loved to include here. However, this would make this appendix too long for its purpose. Moreover, many of these resources do engage intersectionally and/or will lead you to other initiatives on a diverse range of topics.

I have decided not to include a list of trans and queer outdoor groups and collectives, as there are many groups in different countries and a list of all of them would be nearly impossible. If you are struggling to find a group, you are always welcome to write to me ([bartbloem@icloud.com](mailto:bartbloem@icloud.com)), and I will do my best to help you.

Most of the resources available here are in English. There are many groups organizing activities and trips for trans and queer people in non-English speaking countries, but I haven't been able to find any podcasts, movies, or magazines specifically targeting this intersection. This list is also published online (<http://petricoraventuras.org/resources/>), where it will be – more or less regularly – updated. If you have a resource that you would like to be included, don't hesitate to write to me.

This list was last checked in March 2024. It has been modified over the course of the thesis, as some of the resources initially listed have disappeared over the last years. Sadly, this means that some of these may disappear in the near future too.

### Podcasts:

- Queer out here: [www.queerouthere.com](http://www.queerouthere.com) Listen on Spotify: <https://spoti.fi/3uOK6AV>
- Out Outdoors: [www.instagram.com/out\\_outdoors](http://www.instagram.com/out_outdoors) Listen on Spotify: <https://spoti.fi/4bEY3C5>
- Outside Voices: [www.outsidevoicespodcast.com](http://www.outsidevoicespodcast.com) Listen on Spotify: <https://bit.ly/3SMayDb>
- Expanding the Outdoors: [www.thewildernessexpansive.org/expanding-the-outdoors-podcast](http://www.thewildernessexpansive.org/expanding-the-outdoors-podcast) Listen on Spotify: <https://spoti.fi/3I496HI>
- All Bodies Outside. Episode #16: Increasing sense of belonging and safety for trans populations. Listen on Spotify: <https://t.ly/mdDIK>

- All Bodies Outside. Episode #19 Queering the Outdoors with Dr. Sandy Heath. Listen on Spotify: <https://t.ly/AxdWl>

## **Blogs**

- We belong outside: [webelongoutside.com](http://webelongoutside.com)
- Articles from Lyla Harrod on The Trek: [thetrek.co/author/lyla-h](http://thetrek.co/author/lyla-h)
- Articles from Aubri Drake on The Trek: [thetrek.co/author/timex](http://thetrek.co/author/timex)
- Antecima. In Spanish: [antecimaanticima.home.blog](http://antecimaanticima.home.blog)

## **Magazines & Co.**

- Wild Wanderer. Queer Outdoor Adventure Media: [www.wild-wanderer.com](http://www.wild-wanderer.com)
- Gorp Magazine: [www.instagram.com/gorpzine](http://www.instagram.com/gorpzine)
- Butter Magazine: [www.buttermag.io](http://www.buttermag.io)
- Outrip Magazine [www.outripmagazine.com/blank-2](http://www.outripmagazine.com/blank-2)
- Cyclista Zine [www.cyclistazine.com](http://www.cyclistazine.com)
- Gears for Queers Book: [www.gearsforqueers.co.uk/shop/book](http://www.gearsforqueers.co.uk/shop/book)

## **Movies/short movies**

- They/them [youtu.be/ahuiQT4xMdw](https://youtu.be/ahuiQT4xMdw)
- Who's on top? [nosunrisewasted.com/whosontop](http://nosunrisewasted.com/whosontop)
- Climbing with Pride [youtu.be/21c5EVyCO6I](https://youtu.be/21c5EVyCO6I)
- All pronouns [youtu.be/hoEv14MVEf8?si=2oK7xovAlbb2-0EV](https://youtu.be/hoEv14MVEf8?si=2oK7xovAlbb2-0EV)

## **Other**

- Queer Trail Service. Increasing diversity within trail work: [www.instagram.com/queertrailservice](http://www.instagram.com/queertrailservice)
- Arise Fenyx: Consultant that provides a variety of services to help Outdoor Leaders, Programmers, and Organizations become more culturally adaptive and LGBTQ+ inclusive: [www.thewildernessexpansive.org/arise-fenyx](http://www.thewildernessexpansive.org/arise-fenyx)

- LGBTQ Outdoor Summit: [www.lgbtqoutdoorsummit.com](http://www.lgbtqoutdoorsummit.com)
- Trail Mix Fund. Fund for trail races for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ folks: [trailmixfund.org](http://trailmixfund.org)
- Radical Adventure Riders. A movement towards gender inclusivity and racial equity in cycling and the outdoors: [www.radicaladventureriders.com](http://www.radicaladventureriders.com)
- Out in the Wild Adventures. Queer Outdoor Festival: [www.outinthewild.org](http://www.outinthewild.org)