



“What if we go by bicycle?” Moving ethnography in ecomotricity studies¹

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Abstract: This paper presents the theoretical and methodological foundations for moving ethnography focused on cycling through urban contexts and in/with Nature. Anchored in the phenomenological method and situated within the theoretical-methodological framework of ecomotricity, the presented research perspective highlights the playful (pleasurable-joyful-*illusio*) dimensions of moving-with Nature as potential catalysts for ecological praxis (ecosomaesthetic-environmentally ethical-ecopolitical). Empirical insights are drawn from research conducted in Valencia, Spain, focusing on the cycling experiences of two participants through the city and in/with Nature. The analysis is structured around the participants’ narratives and their trajectories through geocultural and temporal contexts characteristic of the Global North. Methodologically, the study employed moving ethnography, semi-structured interviews, and the use of field diaries and notebooks. The paths chosen by the cyclists reveal embodied, affective, and symbolic dimensions of their experiences, shedding light on the relational entanglements between human and non-human entities. This study highlights the potential of the bicycle not only as an object of investigation but also as an epistemological tool for generating knowledge in research on body-environment relations. It concludes that the research broadens perspectives on ecomotricity, especially those related to lived and situated experience, contributing to the strengthening of reflections and practices in environmental education.

Keywords: Ecophenomenology. Ethnographical Studies. Qualitative Research. Phenomenology of the Body. Urban Nature.

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“E se formos de bicicleta?” Etnografia em movimento nos estudos de ecomotricidade

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta os fundamentos teóricos e metodológicos para a etnografia em movimento focada no ciclismo em contextos urbanos e na/com a Natureza. Ancorada no método fenomenológico e situada dentro do arcabouço teórico-metodológico da ecomotricidade, a perspectiva de pesquisa apresentada destaca as dimensões lúdicas (prazerosas-alegres-*illusio*) do movimento-com a Natureza como potenciais catalisadores para a práxis ecológica (ecosomaestética-ambientalmente ética-ecopolítica). Insights empíricos são extraídos de pesquisa conduzida em Valência, Espanha, com foco nas experiências ciclistas de dois participantes pela cidade e na/com a Natureza. A análise é estruturada em torno das narrativas dos participantes e suas trajetórias por contextos geoculturais e temporais característicos do Norte Global. Metodologicamente, o estudo empregou etnografia em movimento, entrevistas semiestruturadas e o uso de diários de campo e cadernos de anotações. Os caminhos escolhidos pelos ciclistas revelam dimensões corporificadas, afetivas e simbólicas de suas experiências, lançando luz sobre os entrelaçamentos relacionais entre entidades humanas e não humanas. Este estudo destaca o potencial da bicicleta não apenas como objeto de investigação, mas também como ferramenta epistemológica para a geração de conhecimento em pesquisas sobre relações corpo-meio ambiente. Conclui-se que a pesquisa amplia as perspectivas sobre ecomotricidade, especialmente as relacionadas à experiência vivida e situada, contribuindo para o fortalecimento das reflexões e práticas em educação ambiental.

Palavras-chave: Ecofenomenologia. Estudos Etnográficos. Pesquisa Qualitativa. Fenomenologia do Corpo; Natureza Urbana.

“¿Y si vamos en bicicleta?” La etnografía en movimiento en los estudios de ecomotricidad

Resumen: Este artículo presenta los fundamentos teóricos y metodológicos de la etnografía en movimiento, centrada en el ciclismo a través de contextos urbanos y en/con la Naturaleza. Basada en el método fenomenológico y situada en el marco teórico-metodológico de la ecomotricidad, la perspectiva de investigación presentada destaca las dimensiones lúdicas (placenteras-alegres-*illusio*) del movimiento con la Naturaleza como potenciales catalizadores de la praxis ecológica (ecosomestética-ambientalmente ética-ecopolítica). Las perspectivas empíricas se extraen de una investigación realizada en Valencia, España, centrada en las experiencias ciclistas de dos participantes a través de la ciudad y en/con la Naturaleza. El análisis se estructura en torno a las narrativas de los participantes y sus trayectorias a través de contextos geoculturales y temporales característicos del Norte Global. Metodológicamente, el estudio empleó la etnografía en movimiento, entrevistas semiestructuradas y el uso de diarios y cuadernos de campo. Los recorridos elegidos por los ciclistas revelan dimensiones corpóreas, afectivas y simbólicas de sus experiencias, arrojando luz sobre los entrelazamientos relacionales entre entidades humanas y no humanas. Este estudio destaca el potencial de la bicicleta no solo como objeto de investigación, sino también como herramienta epistemológica para la generación de conocimiento en investigaciones sobre las relaciones cuerpo-medio ambiente. Se concluye que la investigación amplía las perspectivas sobre la ecomotricidad, especialmente aquellas relacionadas con la experiencia vivida y situada, contribuyendo al fortalecimiento de las reflexiones y prácticas en educación ambiental.

Palabras clave: Ecofenomenología. Estudios Etnográficos. Investigación Cualitativa. Fenomenología del Cuerpo. Naturaleza Urbana.

INTRODUCTION

“What if we go by bike?” This question was posed to participants as part of the recruitment process, after explaining the objectives of the research⁵⁶ and explaining that an interview would be conducted. The initial reaction, often marked by surprise or hesitation, reflects the novelty and relative unfamiliarity of this type of empirical approach: a qualitative investigation with ethnographic characteristics in which the researcher and participant ride together through the field of inquiry, following a route previously chosen by the participant, during which the interview unfolds in movement. The title-question thus serves as an invitation to the (de)construction and (re)configuration of the theoretical-methodological frameworks that sustain qualitative research on cycling-movement, in its various contexts and intentions.

During field work in which we have already used this methodology, one participant reported finding it intriguing to be interviewed while cycling. In this format, she was able to highlight aspects that would only be perceptible-expressible through immersion in the experience, something that, according to her, would not be possible in a closed, controlled environment or in an online research format. This is where phenomenologically based ethnography stands out, involving participation in the daily life of the research field (Pfadenhauer and Grenz, 2015), marked by lived experience, which differs “[...] from experience understood as empirical or informative. For this conception, it is not pragma that matters, such as the experience of the things with which the subject deals, but praxis, the way of acting and doing, creatively and critically” (Bicudo, 1994, p. 21, translated by us). In other words, returning “to the things themselves” expresses, phenomenologically, the intersubjective nature of the relationship with the world, among others (human and non-human elements), in this process mediated by experience and bodily expression (Merleau-Ponty, 1996).

The choice of using the bicycle as a methodological and epistemological tool in ethnographic research is not arbitrary. According to Torres (2024), the use of bicycles in

⁵ The research presented here is part of the project entitled “Experiences of People from Minoritized Social Groups Using Bicycles in Urban and Natural Leisure Contexts”, was carried out during the sandwich PhD period (PDSE/CAPES – 2024/2025) at the Facultat de Ciències de l'Activitat Física i l'Esport of the Universitat de València (UV), Spain. The activities at UV were linked to the “Activitat Física, Educació i Societat” (AFES) Research Group and supervised by Dr. José Devís-Devís. The project aligns directly with the overall objectives of the thesis entitled “Ecomotoricity of Cycling in Nature as an Experience of Ecofeminism”, developed within the Graduate Program in Development and Environment (PRODEMA) at the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS), under the supervision of Dr. Cae Rodrigues.

⁶ From now on, this project will be referred to as the “UV Project”.

qualitative research has a long-standing presence in the social and anthropological sciences and, when experienced bodily, can reveal multiple layers of meaning. With the emergence of new research fields and practices, the bicycle expands its investigative potential, especially by enabling a sensitive engagement with research participants and the environments they inhabit. This approach not only offers methodological advantages but also brings forth important epistemological and ethical considerations, particularly within the scope of ecomotricity, which looks at bodily experiences with Nature.

From a conceptual point of view, ecomotricity embraces moving bodies inter-acting as Nature, where affective and sensory meaning to the lived experience warrants for revitalized and animated ecological praxis (Rodrigues, 2018). In turn, ‘ecological’ is here understood as the indissoluble triad of that which is ecosomaesthetic-environmentally ethical-ecopolitical (Payne, 2015), where the aesthetics is the affect for Nature incorporated through sensory experience, which intertwines with how we perceive the world (ethics), and how we act upon these perceptions (politics).

Also important to the conceptualization of ecomotricity is how the affective and sensory dimensions of the lived experiences with Nature are directly associated to the playful essence of these experiences. This playfulness involves how the experience is greatly defined by a sense of pleasure and joy which is part of the *illusio*⁷ of being-with-Nature. When *illusio* is in play, the experience materializes within imaginaries of Nature as something worthwhile, even in the face of fatigue, physical exertion, or other discomforts related to the practice. Understanding the *illusio* within experiences with Nature is key to understanding how meanings are created and embodied in these experiences.

In its methodological scopes, ecomotricity offers a framework with a diversity of instruments and approaches, among which the presence of ethnographic research with a phenomenological bias stands out, articulated with movement with Nature (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2017; Rodrigues, 2018; 2019). Similar approaches have been used in research on walking (Iared, 2017; Iared and Oliveira, 2018; Blades, 2021; 2024), sensory ethnography in the multisensory immersions of aesthetic experiences (Ferreira and Iared, 2025), and mobile experiences of students in coastal/beach locations in Australia

⁷ “The *illusio* is the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing the game is ‘worth the candle,’ or, more simply, that playing is worth the effort. It is to be taken in by the game, to believe that the stakes are real and valuable” (Bourdieu, 1990, p.67).

(Nakagawa and Payne, 2017). It is worth highlighting that studies that link ethnography in movement to the practice of cycling as ecomotricity are rare, which underscores the significance and originality of this study.

This study presents the theoretical-methodological foundations for the application of moving ethnography in research focused on the practice of cycling in urban contexts and with Nature. It is grounded in a phenomenological approach with an ethnographic character (Merleau-Ponty, 1996; Katz and Csordas, 2003; Pfadenhauer and Grenz, 2015), where human experience is understood as involving an intimate relationship between the subject and the world, based on a logic of co-constitution. In this perspective, the ‘self’ is formed in relation to the world, and the world gains meaning through the subject's experience (Toro-Arévalo, 2017). Ethnographically, the study adopts a focus ‘in movement’ (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2017), using cycling as both a methodological tool and a field of experience.

The questions guiding this descriptive article are: What is (and what is not) phenomenological ethnography in movement? Can it be used alongside other research instruments? And does the shared act of cycling as ecomotricity between researcher and participant during empirical data collection affect the validity of the method or study?

In the subsequent section, we will present conceptual notes on ethnography, specifically focusing on moving ethnography. We then detail how the research was conducted (how to do it?), the context, the participants, and, most importantly, the methodological approach of this study. It is important to emphasize that this work does not propose an analysis of the presented empirical data but rather relates how the data intertwine with the perspective of moving ethnography.

MOVING ETHNOGRAPHY: CONCEPTUAL NOTES

In this section, we delve deeper into the theoretical and conceptual aspects of moving ethnography and its limitations. The Priberam Dictionary of the Portuguese Language defines ethnography (from the Greek *ethnós*, meaning “race” or “people”, and -grafia, meaning “description”) as the science that describes peoples in relation to their customs, nature, race, language, and religion among other sociocultural dimension of people's lives. Magnani (2002, p. 17, translated by us) points out that “the ethnographic method is not to be confused with or reduced to a single technique; it can

use or employ several, depending on the circumstances of each study; it is more a way of approaching and understanding than a set of procedures.”

From the perspective of Peirano (2014), points out that ethnography is more than a technical method of data collection: It constitutes the vital foundation of anthropology, anchored in empirical research and concrete experience with the social world. Empirics are not treated as a set of objective facts to be cataloged, but as a living field of events, interactions, and affects that instigate questions and renew anthropological thought. In the view of Ingold (2017, p. 223), the goal of ethnography “[...] is to produce a description —written, filmed, or using other graphic medium—of life as it is actually lived and experienced by people in a given place and at a given time.”

Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that anthropology encompasses a plurality of approaches and subfields, shaped by the diversity of human life (Peirano, 1992), which allows us to understand that there are different forms of ethnography, constructed from multiple authors, distinct ontologies and epistemologies, and, above all, situated in specific temporal and spatial contexts, as well as the different social actors involved. For Peirano (2014, p. 381, translated by us), “(Ethnographic) methods can and always will be new, but their nature, derived from who and what we want to examine, is ancient. We are all inventors, innovators. Anthropology is the result of a permanent intellectual recombination.”

It is crucial to understand that, given the conceptual plurality of ethnographies, different approaches articulate themselves in distinct ways. In the field of Physical Education, for example, ethnography has been incorporated as an important methodological approach for participant observation and prolonged immersion in the study environment, essential resources for grasping the subtleties of social and cultural interactions that permeate bodily practices (Molina Neto, 2010).

When addressing phenomenologically based ethnography, Pfadenhauer and Grenz (2015, p. 599) point out that participation “[...] is about involvement and 'doing it yourself,' which generates data derived from immediate experience that can contribute to the reconstruction of the internal viewpoint by uncovering the essence of a phenomenon.” Katz and Csordas (2003) remind us that phenomenological ethnography can go beyond abstract concepts and demonstrate, in practice, how people incorporate identities and social structures into their everyday experiences, revealing ways of being and acting that manifest in the body, emotions, and interactions. Phenomenology, in this

sense, offers tools for understanding these bodily-sensory experiences, revealing how people orient themselves in the world based on embodied perceptions and responses, often unspoken but fundamental to the way social life unfolds.

But what constitutes a moving ethnography? Such approach has been explored in investigations that use bodily practices such as walking (Iared, 2018; Blades, 2021; 2024) and cycling (Bermúdez, 2017) as methodological tools to access experiences of body-environment relationships. These practices enable a deeper understanding of experiences in their multiple contexts, revealing both the meanings surrounding these experiences and the limiting factors that emerge from the interactions with the environment. Furthermore, these factors are often intertwined with broader social structures, including power dynamics (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2017). For Müller and Sousa (2023, p.4) “there is nothing better than capturing movement through movement, thinking about it as we move.”

In this context, the bicycle is a research tool. As Torres (2024, p. 4, translated by us) points out: “[...] we cannot ignore that, in addition to its material dimension, the bicycle also carries with it a symbolic, social, political, and historical meaning that varies from place to place.” For the author, the bicycle as a tool in qualitative research highlights studies in which the ethnographer uses it to observe realities, insert themselves in certain contexts, and, above all, as an auxiliary resource in fieldwork. In the study by Rodrigues *et al.* (2017), the proposal of an ethnography in movement invites researchers and research participants to move together.

Using the bicycle as a research tool enables us to reveal subjective dimensions that would be difficult to reach through traditional methods. The rigidity of static observation is broken, inviting the researcher to experience the practice, that is, to move-with-others, and to be actively involved in the practices and experiences of the research field. As stated by Müller and Sousa (2023):

Moving ethnography and floating observation not only help us follow our research subject wherever it goes, but also capture the very essence of this movement. These methods must be mobile in capturing the object, but also in analyzing it, reflecting beyond the production of the subject in movement, that is, the act of moving itself (Müller and Sousa, 2023, p. 4, translated by us).

By taking the moving body and the reflective act of movement as a point of departure, it is possible to highlight that “[...] returning to things themselves means returning to the experienced, to the real and the vivid, to what is proper to the human”

(Mondini, Paulo, and Macrosky, 2018, p. 4). It is during movement that the body relates to the environment in a bidirectional way, as Ingold (2000, p. 199) points out: “the world itself assumes the character of an organism, and the movements of animals [...]. This means that when inhabiting the world, we do not act upon it, or do things to it, but rather move along with it.” This does not mean denying human action, but rather situating it in a relational logic with the world that surrounds it, in which corporeality is in constant correspondence with the flows of the lived, felt, and perceived world.

Conducting a moving ethnography is not a simple task. The entire methodological design must be well-structured based on the line of thought in which the research is grounded (a way of interpreting reality; e.g, in the case of this study, phenomenologically), and especially due to the complexity of body-environment relations. To conduct an effective ethnography, it is necessary to meet three fundamental criteria during the research (Peirano, 2014, p. 386, translated by us): “consider communication, [...] transform [...] into written language, what was intensely lived and experienced in the field, converting the experience into text; critically analyze the social effectiveness of the observed actions.”

Ingold (2017) points out that a good ethnography must be sensitive, nuanced, and detailed, and it requires researchers to be attentive and sensitive to capture the nuances of the phenomenon under investigation. The ethnographic process also demands a movement of methodological decolonization, by destabilizing the hierarchies of knowledge and power that sustain many Western methods. This implies the recognition that many of our methods have a historically colonial character, based on logics of control and objectification of the ‘other’ (dos Santos, 2022). According to Peirano (2014, p.389, translated by us):

[...] if those who preceded us privileged the exploration – in the double sense of the term – of the exotic, today we reevaluate and expand the universe researched with the purpose of expanding the theoretical/ethnographic enterprise, contributing to unveiling new paths that help us understand the world in which we live.

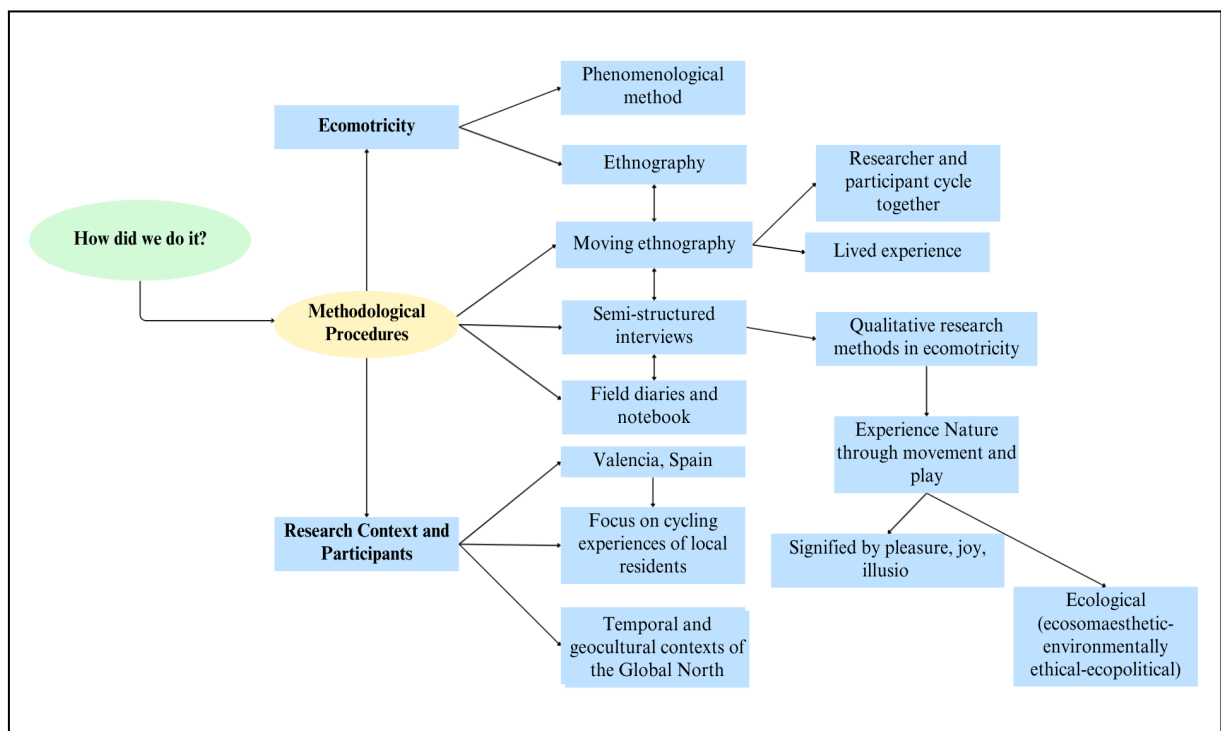
Thus, we acknowledge the diversity of ethnographic approaches from different methods and perspectives. A conceptual understanding of ethnography (more broadly) and (phenomenological) ethnography in movement (more specifically) allows us to: a) Identify fundamental elements that characterize (and those that do not) ethnographic research; b) understand what defines ethnography in movement; c) the need for an

attentive and sensitive ethnographic perspective. Therefore, consolidating this conceptual framework leads us to the question that guides the next step: How to do it?

MOVING ETHNOGRAPHY WITH THE BICYCLE: HOW IS IT DONE?

To provide a comprehensive overview of the methodological framework applied in this study, the conceptual map presented as Figure 1 summarizes the entire research process involved in the moving ethnography with the bicycle. This map describes the theoretical aspects, instruments, and research context that guided the development and execution of the study. It serves as a roadmap for understanding how the different elements interconnect and contribute to the validation and rigor of the research approach. Subsequent sections will explore each component in greater detail and its importance within the overall methodology.

Figure 1 - Conceptual map of the methodological framework adopted in the moving ethnography



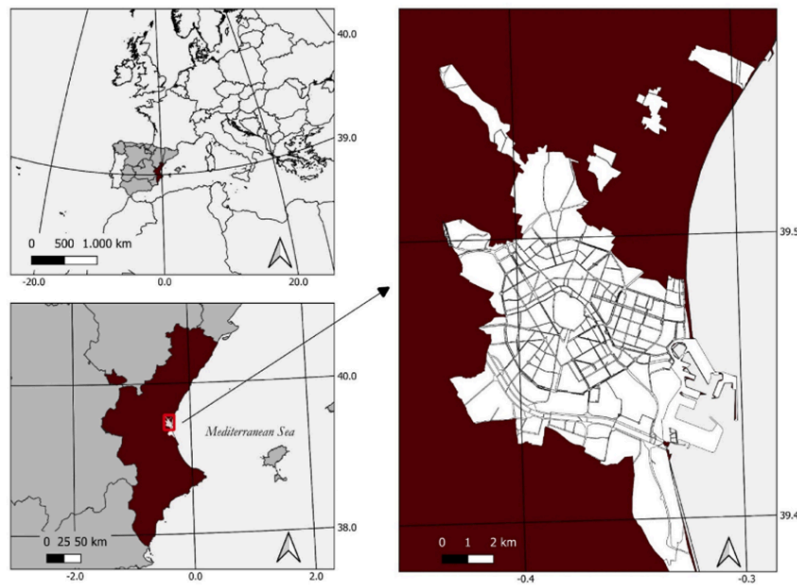
Source: Research project UV

Location

The study was conducted in the city of Valencia, located in Eastern Spain (Figure 2), with approximately 800,000 inhabitants and a total population of 1.5 million

in its metropolitan area. It is the third-largest city in the country, after Madrid and Barcelona. Tourism is one of the main economic activities, in part due to its mild Mediterranean climate and infrastructure focused on cultural tourism and entertainment. Its economy is sustained by small businesses and small and medium-sized industries (INE, 2024).

Figure 2 - Location of the city of Valencia, Spain



Source: Pellicer-Chenoll *et al.* (2025)

The selection of Valencia for the empirical research is based on its unique urban, social, and environmental characteristics, which make it a suitable space for the proposed research. Recently, the sustainable mobility policies and strategies implemented in the city have received attention (Pellicer-Chenoll *et al.*, 2025). Valencia is a setting where the coexistence of urban and natural environments permeates the daily lives of its inhabitants, providing a rich context for studies on cycling. The city and its surroundings features two million square meters of gardens and offers nearly 20 kilometers of Blue Flag beaches. Nearby, Albufera Natural Park and the Huerta Valenciana provide scenic rural escapes with country lanes, rice fields, and traditional farmland (Valencia, 2025).

Participants and procedure

Participant selection was conducted using non-probability sampling, particularly a convenience sampling strategy. The recruitment was done through the

contact of different academic and leisure sport institutions of the city (e.g. Valencia University and the Samarucs Sporting Club). Invitations to participate in the research were sent via WhatsApp, containing information about the research objectives and the need to own a bicycle to participate. 15 participants were selected, according to several inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1). As this is a methodological study, we do not intend to conduct an in-depth analysis of the data; we only present some elements extracted from the interviews to illustrate the methodological proposal, which is the focus of this paper.

The research was approved by the ethics committee, ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines for research involving human beings.

Table 1 - Study inclusion and exclusion criteria

Owns a bicycle	Does not own a bicycle
Is over 18 years old	Is under 18 years old
Has experience cycling on short, medium, or long routes	Has no experience in cycling
Uses the bicycle for leisure, whether in urban or natural environments	Does not use the bicycle in urban and natural contexts for leisure.
Has resided in the city where the research would be carried out for at least 3 months	Has not resided in the city where the research would be carried out for at least 3 months
Has signed the informed consent form	Has refused to sign the informed consent form

Source: Research project UV

Techniques of data gathering

Data collection took place between February and April 2025. After obtaining informed consent, participation required both the researcher and participant to be on a bicycle, making it impossible to conduct the interview if one of the parties was not cycling. Because this is a moving ethnography, immersion is essential, as it is an intrinsically subjective, private, and non-transferable process. Each participant selected the routes and stops along the route for the interview, and the details were discussed with them in advance. In situations where the routes or stops were unfeasible, the researcher was free to suggest adjustments, as long as such modifications did not compromise the participant's autonomy in making their choices. It is important to emphasize that the meeting points between the researcher and participant functioned

solely as geographic references and did not constitute the ultimate objectives of the research.

On the day of data collection, the informed consent form (ICF) was presented for signature before the start of the trip, ensuring that all participants understood the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, that the interviews would be audio recorded, and the route tracked via the *AllTrails* app (see Figure 3). The interviews were audio recorded, ensuring data accuracy and allowing for a precise translation into Portuguese and English, preserving the linguistic nuances of Castilian Spanish.

The interview considered the methodological aspects of ecomotricity proposed by Rodrigues *et al.* (2017), which highlight three central dimensions: a) The aesthetic dimension of the experience; b) the connection between the experience and daily life; c) the personal profiling of the research participant. Below, we present the structure of the ecomotricity script (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2017):

Initial question (profile): I will begin by asking you to briefly describe yourself. So my question is: Who is (interviewee's name)?

Questions:

1. Talk about cycling.
2. What is your relationship with cycling like?
3. Do you observe other people relating to cycling in different ways than how you describe your relationship? [If the answer is simply 'yes', ask: What are these different ways other people relate to cycling?]
4. Tell a story that happened to you in your experiences with cycling that impacted you in some specific way.
5. Describe a dream you have related to cycling?
6. What do you bring from your daily life to cycling?
7. What do you take from cycling into your daily life?
8. There are many possibilities for outdoor activities. Why did you choose to cycle?
9. Stop for a few seconds and think about how you feel while cycling and try to put that feeling into words.
10. What does 'cycling' mean to you?
11. Is there anything about your cycling experience that you would like to add that we haven't talked about yet?

Although a structured script served as a basis, it was adapted and expanded with new questions relevant to this research, such as the relationship with physical activity (What does physical activity mean to you? Which physical activity do you enjoy most? How do you choose the physical activities you practice? Do you follow any criteria for choosing your physical activities?), leisure activities (What is free time for you? What do you do in your free time?), Nature and the city (What is Nature for you? What is the city for you?), and aspects related to identity (What emotions or thoughts arise when you are riding a bike? How does this activity contribute to your perception of who you are, your identity?). Thus, despite the existence of an established framework, the interviews were conducted in a more fluid and open manner, characterized as unstructured interviews, allowing participants to freely express their experiences cycling with Nature or in the city, with room for spontaneous deepening and dialogical constructions.

The interviews lasted, on average, an hour and a half and were conducted in different areas of the city. With the participant's consent, the route was recorded in the *AllTrails* app (Bloem, 2024) to create maps and attach photographic records of each interview, contributing to the understanding of the affective, symbolic, and relational elements linked to each participant's chosen routes. Figure 3 presents examples of route representations.

Figure 3- Representations from *AllTrails* app of the paths of two interviewees from the research.



Source: Research project UV

Interviews were audio recorded during stops made along the rides. In line with the moving ethnography framework, the aim was not to observe fixed cultures in time and space, but rather to follow the movements of bodies, the production of meanings, and the relationships woven between body–bicycle–environment. Throughout the routes, informal conversations and spontaneous comments emerged that were not captured by the audio recordings.

To document these interactions and contextual details, such as the agreed-upon paths, the stops made, and sensory impressions, a field diary⁸ and a field notebook were used. Notes were written by the researcher immediately after each route, without the presence of the participants, based on memory and the lived experience of the journey. The field diary, adopted as a methodological tool, proved crucial for describing essential aspects of the research process. These included the highlights of the interviews, emotions evoked during the interactions, elements to be revisited in future interviews, changes along the way, and reflections on the feelings expressed by the participants. It therefore served both as a technique for recording contextual nuances and as a space for

⁸ “The field diary also serves as an intervention tool by provoking reflections on the research practice itself and decisions regarding planning, development, analysis method and scientific dissemination” (Kroef; Gavillon; Ramm, 2020, p.466, translated by us).

reflexivity throughout the research. This approach enabled sensitive listening to participants' narratives, contributing to the collection of data that would be difficult to obtain in formal contexts or contexts separate from everyday cycling.

Listening in movement

Interviewee 1

Interviewee 1 is 41 years old and is pursuing a doctorate at the University of Valencia. He has been a competitive cyclist since he was 16. He prefers to cycle to university because he finds it relaxing and enjoys the journey more, despite the longer journey time. The route chosen for the interview is one he takes every day. He finds the route pleasant, although there are sometimes many people walking on the bike path, which slows him down. Cycling is especially important to him because he feels his disability “disappears”⁹ when he's on his bike. He competes in cycling and trains regularly and has already achieved many dreams related to competitive cycling, including participation in the Paralympic Games. A future goal is to cycle the Camino de Santiago de Compostela.

Figure 4- Record of Interviewee 1's cycling route



Source: Research project UV

⁹ The term “disappears” appears in quotation marks because it reflects a phenomenological impression described by the participant during the interview. This perception demonstrates that bodily experience is contingent on context and practice. Variations in movement or sensation do not erase the body one inhabits but indicate how embodiment is modulated across situations.

Interviewee 2

Interviewee 2 is 26 years old, has lived in Valencia for about 7 years, and is in the third year of her doctorate at the University of Valencia. She enjoys living in Valencia, especially in the quiet neighborhood where she lives, which offers a good balance between urban life and access to green spaces. She appreciates the proximity to the beach, where she goes for a run approximately every two weeks. She chose the interview route because of the good bike path and the proximity to the beach. The interviewee describes her experience cycling in both natural and urban environments. In Nature, she feels calmer and more disconnected, enjoying the outdoor activity. In contrast, in the city of Valencia, she faces constant traffic noise that bothers her. She emphasizes the importance of a safe cycling environment, citing the presence of lighting and bike lanes in Valencia as factors that have increased her cycling. The interviewee states that she would not cycle as much if she had to ride on a road without bike lanes. Finally, she noted that she feels safer cycling than walking, due to the speed.

Figure 5 - Record of Interviewee 2's cycling route



Source: Research project UV

The participants' views

The interviews revealed significant elements about the participants' relationship with the bicycle in their daily lives, marked by both sporting experiences and leisure and transportation. Conducting the interviews more fluidly, with pauses along the way, contributed to creating a more welcoming listening environment, in which participants felt comfortable sharing deeper aspects of their experiences, whether as a man with a disability navigating issues of accessibility, or as a woman expressing concerns about cycling safety and environmental noise in urban spaces. Questions related to these themes emerged progressively as we cycled, talked, and observed the surroundings along the routes.

For instance, an important issue from interviewee 1 refers to how his disability 'disappears' while he cycles, the bicycle becoming his own body. From a phenomenological perspective, the bicycle-object is understood as an extension of the body itself. As Merleau-Ponty (1996) describes it, the object is incorporated, meaning it becomes part of the self. This discussion does not advocate for the erasure of disability, as such an erasure would reflect a fundamentally ableist perspective. What we are saying is that the body can have alternative subjective dimensions linked to perceptions of oneself in moments where it interacts with the world. The lived experiences of interviewee 1 in his daily routine journey points to a way of inhabiting the world that is actualized in movement, where the moving body produces meanings, reorganizes memories, and broadens perceptions. This refers to the self-actualization in movement that Arnold (1988) mentions as the knowledge of oneself in action. That is to say, self-understanding in a variety of contexts that allows one to learn about oneself and the world in which we live (Devís-Devís, 2018).

Another important issue, now from interviewee 2, refers to the interplay between gender, cycling, and education. The perception of safety, influenced by factors such as the presence of street lighting and secure bike lanes (separated, wide, with good pavement conditions) has a direct impact on the decision to cycle. This is especially so among women who have greater perception of insecurity than men and among university students who show a stronger sense of environment protection than their non-university counterparts (Antón-González et al., 2023; Pellicer-Chenoll et al., 2025). How do environmental conditions shape access to and permanence in these spaces? This debate spans the most diverse fields of knowledge that study bicycles, requiring

approaches that consider both the structures and the subjective experiences of those who commute.

The view of the main researcher-self

To speak of moving ethnography is, first and foremost, to discuss the first author's ethnographic perspective. The first step guiding this investigation was to observe how people use bicycles in Valencia. Who are the individuals who cycle? What profiles stand out in the city's different spaces? Initially, as an observer, the first author dedicated herself to following daily commutes to various parts of the city and surroundings. This allowed her to immerse herself in the field, becoming an active part of the research process. Indeed, shaped by previous experiences in the Brazilian context, she found in observation a way to challenge the habitual sense of strangeness, exchanging a sensitive immersion in ways of moving that previously seemed unfamiliar.

This incursion demonstrated that the researcher-self, when entering the scene by suspending prior judgments and beliefs about reality, opens herself to experience as it manifests, provoking profound internal elaborations. As Geertz (1989, p. 20) points out, "doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of 'constructing a reading of') a strange, faded manuscript, full of ellipses, inconsistencies, suspicious amendments, and biased comments...". This metaphor reminds us that social reality is complex, ambiguous, and requires attentive and situated reading. In the context of interviews conducted while cycling with the participants, this movement of 'reading' the field takes on bodily and affective contours. It is through shared displacement and movement that the senses are revealed, as the participants feel more comfortable narrating their experiences and interactions with the world.

In general, immersion in experience mobilizes the sensitive and affective in different dimensions: Whether in relationships with non-human elements, such as water, trees, or birds; or in bonds with other people and in relationships built in work or study environments. This requires a phenomenological theoretical reflection, demonstrating that these aspects go beyond mere objective knowledge. It proposes that the affective and relational dimensions be understood as constitutive of experience, intertwined with one's encounters with the world and with others. It is important to emphasize that during the journeys, while the interviews are taking place, the researcher also reports on their

experiences. This is because it is an approach that values dialogue as immersion and lived experience.

One aspect that emerged most frequently in the field diary was the constant presence of self-care and care for others throughout the journeys. A collective concern was observed in signaling the way with gestures (such as pointing out directions), slowing down or stopping when someone fell behind, and especially in cycling together, fostering conversations that connected with the history and dynamics of the city of the 'Other'. These dialogues ranged from historical and cultural aspects to the importance of urban gardens for the population, to suggestions on the best place to drink *orxata* or *horchata* (local refreshing drink). This sensitive and practical mutual care was reported in all interviews, reinforcing the feeling of shared security and the relational dimension of the experience. It is a care that emerges from building bonds and paying attention to others.

CONCLUSION

We conclude this article by revisiting the conceptual map (Figure 1), which organizes and synthesizes the main learnings of this research, guiding us from the theoretical foundations to the methodological procedures, the context, and the participants investigated. The research, anchored in ecomotricity, encompasses ways of moving (cycling) through urban contexts and with Nature, opening space for a glimpse of the living body in interactive actions that are both playful and ecological. The phenomenological approach allowed a return to lived experience, within the realm in which existence manifests itself, especially by approaching the experience itself, with its sensations, affects, intentions, and meanings. In dialogue with moving ethnography, which is based on the participant's immersion in the experience, it enabled continuous reflections on the experience of cycling that occurs in life itself, in which humans and non-human elements coexist and affect each other in a relational, being-with-Nature mode. This process revealed meanings attributed to the lived experience, both during the immersion and prior to the research, reaffirming the power of this study in sensitive and situated listening.

Regarding the methodological procedures, we present a combination of moving ethnography and semi-structured interviews; and records kept by the researchers in diaries and field notebooks, aimed at describing interactions, perceptions,

and reflections throughout the immersion. This combination allowed us to capture multiple perspectives on the participants' cycling experience, fostering a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. It is important to remember that the questions used can be adapted or expanded according to the objectives and nature of other research, considering that, as this is a phenomenological study, the questions should be open-ended, without imposing rigid categories or closed answers.

Finally, regarding the research context and its participants, we highlight that the city of Valencia has a well-connected cycling infrastructure, which enabled safe and fluid travel in various parts of the city during data collection. However, it is important to consider that, when applying this method to other geocultural and historical contexts, with their local and regional particularities, it is essential to map the routes in advance to ensure the logistics and safety of all research participants. Regarding the participants, the choice of local residents, who have in-depth knowledge of the meanings of the territory, taught us that valuing these trajectories and memories contributes to a more situated, sensitive, and engaged perspective on the place and its experiences.

In summary, this study was developed within a specific geocultural and historical context. Therefore, we do not seek generalizations, but rather highlight the possibility of future research that deepens our knowledge on moving ethnography, with an emphasis on cycling or other ecomotricity activities, and explores different methods that can be applied to other settings or realities, whether in the Global North or the Global South. This expansion could enrich the dialogue and contribute to ecomotricity in its conceptual, methodological, and (eco)pedagogical *scapes*, offering insights for researchers interested in expanding the methodological repertoire of the humanities and environmental sciences through approaches that foreground lived and situated experience.

The present study also contributes to strengthening reflections and practices in the field of environmental education. It mainly underscores the relevance of research on ecomotricity in the contemporary context of local and global socioenvironmental crises, especially due to its power to articulate the moving body, experience (which can occur in natural, rural, or urban spaces), and the relational dynamics that emerge from interactions between human and non-human elements. Moreover, ecomotricity integrates educational dimensions associated with play, such as pleasure and joy, and the ecological dimensions of aesthetic, ethics, and politics. Consequently, lived and situated

experience may inform innovative theoretical and practical approaches of environmental education, fostering the development of critical, active, and participatory individuals within their local realities.

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