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Bodies out/in Place? Unmapping Trans People's Experience in Outdoor Activities

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ABSTRACT

Scrutiny over trans people's bodies in urban contexts is continuous. This thesis develops the idea that the outdoors offers a less-gendered space for trans people, enabling and empowering them to escape self-surveillance processes and to feel freer in their gender expression/identity. I believe that spaces of resistance can be built in the wilderness, and that specific experiences are happening in it for trans people. Moreover, outdoor experiences help trans people build resilience to overcome the gender-related issues that may happen in the cities. In addition, doing outdoor activities empowers us, trans people, in our bodies. However, these experiences have not been given much attention in scholarly literature. Taking into account the fluidity and dynamism of our life experiences, I combined the use of autoethnography with semi-structured-in-depth interviews conducted with five trans people, then put these experiences in conversation with the theories. Nature was described as a less judgmental space, and a place where it is possible to be ourselves. It was also portrayed as a place to escape the urban contexts' gender normativities, which, I argue, are damaging us. The outdoors is also a safe space for trans people and unmapping these counter-geographies is aiming to claim our space in it.

Keywords: Trans, Outdoor, Body Experience, Counter-geographies, Queering Methodology

RESUMEN

La vigilancia sobre los cuerpos de las personas trans en contextos urbanos es continua. La presente tesis desarrolla la idea de que la naturaleza ofrece un espacio menos generizado para las personas trans, pudiendo escapar de procesos de auto-vigilancia y sentirnos más libres en nuestra expresión/identidad de género. Considero que se pueden construir espacios de resistencia en el medio natural, y que experiencias específicas se están produciendo en él para las personas trans. Además, las experiencias al aire libre ayudan a crear resiliencia para superar los problemas relacionados con el ser trans que puedan ocurrir en las ciudades. Asimismo, realizar actividades al aire libre nos empodera a las personas trans en nuestro cuerpo. Sin embargo, estas experiencias no han merecido mucha atención en la literatura académica. Teniendo en cuenta la fluidez y el dinamismo de nuestras experiencias de vida, combiné el uso de la autoetnografía con entrevistas en profundidad semi-estructuradas realizadas con cinco personas trans, poniendo estas experiencias en conversación con las teorías. La naturaleza fue descrita como un espacio donde se juzga menos, y un lugar donde

es posible ser nosotres mismos. También se presentó como un lugar para escapar de las normatividades de género del contexto urbano que, como argumento, nos está dañando. El aire libre también es un espacio seguro para las personas trans, y desmapear (*unmapping*) estas contrageografías apunta a reclamar nuestro espacio en él.

Palabras clave: Trans, Outdoor, Experiencia del cuerpo, Contrageografías, Metodologías Queer

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1.- Introduction: Background and Aim of the Study

My personal life experiences, as a trans person doing outdoor activities, have been fundamental for my interest in this research topic. I was finding myself alone as a trans person in the outdoors, but at the same time I knew of the beneficial effects I was gaining from my outdoor experiences. Right before I moved to Sweden for studying the Gendering Practices Master, I had done a 6 months bike trip around Europe (geographically) by myself. During those 6 months I kept a diary, where I wrote about what I did every day, what I saw, but also about my feelings, experiences or thoughts that came to my mind. Last year, at the methodology course, we talked about autoethnography as a research method, and those diaries that had been laying on my shelf, came back to my mind. At the same time, there were some projects based in Turtle Island (also known as the US) around the issues of queer and trans people in the outdoors, and reading their blogs, social media posts and comments made my interest in this topic grow. Moreover, using 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). It is also a form of telling other trans and cis people that we are there in the outdoors, and that it is also our space. In addition to that, I also conducted semi-structured-in-depth interviews with 5 trans people, living in different European countries, who do outdoor activities, and a trusted person carried out that same interview on me.

I understand being trans as not identifying with the gender assigned at birth. I use trans as an umbrella term for different identities that fall out of the norm, in relation to our gender identities and gender expressions. Along the same lines, I use the term queer, when used in relation to an identity, as identifying outside the cisheteronormativity, in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. As trans and queer persons, we soon learn that our bodies are not welcomed in any space, so I wanted to look into whether and how the outdoors can help trans people to empower themselves in their minds and bodies. “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” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 145). Is it possible for our bodies to go into the wilderness? Are we doing it? How are our experiences with that?

Very often queer communities grow and find refuge in urban areas/spaces. For many of us, to find belonging as a queer person, we moved to cities and met other humans who were queer. Many researchers have paid attention to these experiences of queer people inhabiting the cities (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016a; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016c). However, I have always found comfort in nature, and speaking with other trans people and exploring and reading about groups that work around this idea, I believe that many other LGBTQ+ people find comfort in nature, although there is also a struggle to access it. Based on this idea, I would like to think about how the dichotomy natural environment/city work for trans people. Moreover, I wanted to bring our experiences together and start talking about the processes that occur in the wilderness in relation to trans experiences and bodies. As I will discuss later, literature about this topic is still very limited, if not almost completely bare. Therefore, this thesis will bring up new questions and lines of thoughts, that will hopefully spark further studies in both the gender studies and the adventure research fields, and the inter-connections between them.

My aim is to start a conversation about what outdoor experience means for trans people, and how it is related to the perception of our bodies. Thus, I will consider our experiences doing outdoor activities, and how the outdoors can be spaces of resistance for trans individuals. I have these two topics: trans individuals' experiences, and doing physical activity in the natural environment. I would like to focus not only on the fact of being outside, but also on moving yourself in it, using your body to get to new/different places, to look what happens with the borders that we may encounter, as well as to which counter-geographies (Sassen, 2003) we might be creating. I would also like to focus on more than one-day activities. By that I mean sleeping overnight outdoors, and other ways of moving that slow down the life rhythms imposed in today's urbanized societies. Quite often, trans people might experience a fear of being ‘discovered’, of not passing. How can that change when being outdoors? Is nature a place where we find less judgment? At least, there are no toilets there, no segregation between genders for our basic needs, but there is also a possibility of being seen when squatting for peeing. Depending on one’s identity, the sense of personal safety and security in the outdoors can also greatly vary. Is nature a place to fear for trans people? Or, on the other hand, a place to find refuge?

Finally, whose bodies do you see if you think of outdoor sports/activities? Probably thin, straight, cis, typically white men. In an interview conducted for an online magazine by Zak (2018), two trans individuals mentioned some aspects that I find very intriguing. Cohen said: “There weren't any mirrors. There weren't any bathrooms. It was just me. [Hiking] was a way of finding appreciation for a body that in a lot of ways I didn't like.” Ribot added: “Nature doesn't judge you. You can go outside and be whoever you are, It's where I feel most at home and where I feel most at peace.” It is something I can closely relate to through my experiences in the outdoors. Cohen also added that after a particularly hard climb he could, for the very first time, trust his body. How does our perception of our bodies change when using it in the natural environment? Moreover, how is gender performed and constructed in the outdoors/natural environment?

For looking into these topics, these were the main questions that guided me:

1. How is gender performed and constructed in the outdoors? How does our perception of the body change when using it in the natural environment? Which subjectivation processes are gender variant people subjected to in the outdoors?
2. How does the border natural environment/city work for trans people? Which counter-geographies are we (trans and queer people) creating when going/walking in the outdoors?
3. Is condemning trans people (among other identities like migrants, people of color, people with dis/abilities and/or queer people) to the urban context a way of *killing us softly*? (paraphrasing Shakhsari)

Having these questions in mind, my theoretical approach is based on queer and feminist knowledge production, as well as feminist geography. 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 & Nash (2016), queer scholarship should be anti-normative and should seek to subvert and challenge the stabilities of social research and social life. I will also pay special attention to my methodology, as “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” (Nash, 2016, p. 133). Hence, the way I presented my analysis intends to give dynamism to the text, as well as highlighting the importance of trans peoples' voices.

Ideas around queer feeling and fear arose during the interviews and in the diaries. In addition, I will follow Ahmed's (2004) ideas about the 'affective politics of emotions' to guide me through the conceptualization of fear and queer feelings.

On the other side, I draw upon feminist geography, looking into concepts such as the *time-space compression* (Massey, 1994), which is also different if you are in the outdoors or in a city. How do the differences in time-space compression can affect our identities? As Mezzadra & Neilson (2013) say, we live in a "world which national borders are no longer the only or necessarily the most relevant ones for dividing and restricting labor mobilities" (p. 2). For them, "borders are not merely geographical margins or territorial edges. They are complex social institutions, which are marked by tension between practices of border reinforcement and border crossing" (p. 3). The reason why I rely on Sassen's concept of counter-geographies is because it takes a critical distance from geographical borders, in a process that I would call as queering the borders. *Counter-geographies* talk about the time-space where the subjectivities of the Other¹ are visible, in a process of *unmapping* (Razack, 2000) them. Those subjectivities that are invisible in nation-states geographies, that are "included through exclusion" (Mountz, p. 386) create transnational maps of communication and intersections, called counter-geographies. Looking at it from a transnational perspective, I will focus on the border natural environment/city, the different time-space compression of both of them, and the counter-geographies that trans people create when walking in the outdoors. Condemning trans people (among other identities like migrants, people of color, people with dis/abilities and/or queer people) to the urban context as a way of creating disempowered subjectivities, and also affecting negatively our health, is, paraphrasing Shakhsari, a way of *killing us softly*. How are the necropolitics of the border natural environment/city working and affecting trans people?

As a final note, Ahmed (2004) says that "for queers, to display pleasure through what we do with our bodies is to make the comforts of heterosexuality less comfortable" (p. 165). I hope that this master thesis can help to create some comfort for other trans fellows, meanwhile provoking cis and straight individuals, because that would mean that their privileges start to tear down.

¹ With the concept of Other, with a capital O, I aim to draw attention to how majority and minority identities are constructed. Moreover, it highlights how societies create a sense of belonging and identity by constructing social categories as binary opposites.

2.- Literature Review

When looking for literature regarding the topic, I focused on search words such as ‘gender/women and outdoor’, ‘gender/women and adventure recreation’, ‘women in leisure’, ‘adventure tourism and women’, ‘queer adventure’, ‘transgender outdoor activities’, ‘queer adventure mountaineering’, ‘women mountaineering’, all possible combinations between the before mentioned, and their Spanish translations. I searched on Google, Google Scholar and the journals available at the University of Gothenburg online library. I acknowledge that there is a big research field and publications I didn't have access to. In addition to this search, I had some articles that I had gotten one year ago from a scholar specialized in the topic around gender and adventure tourism, coming to a total of 28 articles. I knew that my biggest hurdle was going to be to find articles regarding outdoor activities and transgender people, or even queer identities, as the topic hasn't even been well researched in relation to cis women. This became even more evident when I started to read the articles I had, as in much of the literature it was mentioned the lack of studies regarding the role of gender in the outdoors activities and/or adventure recreation (Warren, 2016; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; Doran et al., 2018; Boniface, 2006; Little, 2002a; Little, 2002b; Little, 2000), whether it is about women's experiences (Pomfret & Doran, 2015), the constraints faced by women (Doran et al., 2018) or the women's meanings of adventure (Little, 2002a). As Pomfret & Doran (2015) put it: “there is a dearth of research about the role that gender plays in motivating mountaineers” (p. 146) or in Doran et al. (2018): “Carr (1997) identified a number of constraints faced by women in mountaineering tourism, but no other studies in the last twenty years have assessed the extent to which these constraints may or may not manifest themselves in female mountaineering tourists” (p. 397).

Even more notable is the absence of research regarding sexual and/or gender variant identities, women of color, or non-normative masculinities. Furthermore, only one article mentioned this ‘hole’ in the studies: “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” (Warren, 2018, p. 360), and dedicated a couple of paragraphs to the topic. On another page, there are various activist projects (Queer Nature, Out There Adventures, Unlikely Hikers, Venture Out Project, and Shifting Gears², among

² If you want more information about these groups check [Queer Nature](http://www.queernature.org): www.queernature.org, [Out There](#)

others) working on this topic in the USA, with many small texts published in the internet and social media about their work and experiences.

Some light in the darkness were six articles that covered the topics of trans and queer people in the outdoors (Wilson & Lewis, 2012; Mitten, 2012; Grossman et al., 2005; Barnfield & Humberstone, 2008; Argus, 2008; Dignan, 2002). Three of them (Wilson & Lewis, 2012; Mitten, 2012; Grossman et al., 2005) focus on young trans people experiences, and the other three (Barnfield & Humberstone, 2008; Argus, 2008; Dignan, 2002) – on queer identities in the wilderness.

Finally, some authors (Doran et al., 2018; Doran, 2016; Pomfret & Doran, 2015) noted the necessity of further research on women's experiences, constraints, “their empowerment and expressions of femininity in a range of mountaineering activities” (Pomfret & Doran, 2015, p. 143), and on experiences of LGTBQ people in the outdoors (Grossman et al., 2005; Barnfield & Humberstone, 2008).

Many of the articles distinguish between adventure recreation and adventure tourism. Other use concepts such as outdoor activities, wilderness or mountaineering. For adventure recreation, one of the most accepted definitions is “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 and Hollenhorst, 1989, p. 125, cited in Little, 2002a, p. 55). Adventure can also be seen as a state of mind (Little, 2002a; Little & Wilson, 2005). Moreover, “as Mortlock (2000) has indicated, as long as participants believe the situation they are experiencing is dangerous, and that their actions may result in some unpleasantness, then adventure may exist” (p. 188, Little & Wilson, 2005). Other characteristics of adventure activities are the inherent risks, that it is challenging and that it is self-motivating (Little, 2002a, p. 56). Lately, ideas such as “dreams, learning, personal growth, and discovery” have also been incorporated into the concept of adventure (Little & Wilson, 2005, p. 190). On the other hand, mountaineering includes ‘soft’ (such as hill walking and moderate trekking) and ‘hard’ (such as rock climbing and high-altitude mountaineering) adventure activities (Doran et al., 2018, p. 396). Little & Wilson (2005) note that there are differences between adventure activities and outdoor recreation, but they didn't specify which ones, although they clarify that

[Adventures](http://www.outthereadventures.org): www.outthereadventures.org, [Unlikely Hikers](http://www.jennybruso.com): www.jennybruso.com, [Venture Out Project](http://www.ventureoutproject.com): www.ventureoutproject.com, and [Shifting Gears](http://www.letsshiftgears.com): www.letsshiftgears.com

for both of them the outcome is uncertain. The difference between adventure recreation and adventure tourism is that the later one has commercial purposes (Doran et al., 2018, p. 397).

Regarding the concept of outdoor, it is used for adventure activities that happen in the natural environment. Wilderness is used interchangeable with outdoor in the articles, although it may suggest that the adventure activities should be more remote.

Finally, it is important to note that all these definitions have been made from a cis male white Western perspective. We will later see how some of these definitions vary for cis women, according to some studies. I also find it interesting to remark that in almost all studies the sample consisted of white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied women and that the oldest article is from the year 2000, which means that they are all from the 21st century.

For the literature review, I found some topics that were recurrent among the articles, and I will go through them separately:

- The lack of role models. Outdoor media, literature and advertising;
- The *wild macho*. Hegemonic masculinities in the outdoors;
- Do men and women want different things in/from the outdoors?;
- Facing challenges. Women's constraints, negotiations and benefits;
- Feminist outdoor research, and climbing as a space of resistance;
- Boosting body positivity through adventure activities;
- Non-normative identities and gender expectations in the outdoors.

The lack of role models. Outdoor media, literature and advertising

How the media, literature and advertising portray the people who participate in adventure activities has a big influence in how the society in general sees it, and in which people can feel included and/or welcomed in the outdoors. This idea is analyzed by four of the articles (Warren, 2016; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; Frohlick, 2000; Humberstone, 2000), and it has one of the biggest influences in creating role models, in order to be able to imagine yourself in the outdoors. The general sense is that “in studies of outdoor advertising, popular press and outdoor guidebooks, researchers have found that oppressive gender roles have been reified rather than disputed” (Warren, 2016, p. 361).

There is a hypermasculinization of the outdoor activities, where mountains are even referred to 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). The narratives of mountaineering, such as guides, narrative books or in mountain film festivals, emphasize the idea of the heroism (Humberstone, 2000), white colonialism and manliness, 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). Frohlick (2000) examines how these normative notions of masculinity appear in mountaineering narratives, specifically the ones written by western men. In her analysis emerges the idea of the universal man, as “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, 2000, p. 87).

When women are represented, it is based on the idea of femininity as white, middle-class, cis and heterosexual (Warren, 2016). They are again put in the ‘private’ scene, as they focus “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). As Warren (2016) puts it: “women participants in outdoor programmes 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). Moreover, women are “less visible and their roles reflect more leisurely and feminine activities.” (Little & Wilson, 2005, p. 189).

The *wild macho*. Hegemonic masculinities in the outdoors

Many of the articles highlight the male-dominated aspect of the outdoors (Warren, 2016; Doran et al., 2018; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; Little & Wilson, 2005; Humberstone, 2000; Frohlick, 2000; Argus, 2008; Díaz Carrión, 2012; Whittington, 2006). Himalayan mountaineering (which is often defined as the ultimate expression of mountaineering) until the 1970s had been “about masculinity and manhood” (Frohlick, 2000), and these spaces still reinforce traditional views and feature the heroic white cis male adventurer (Doran et al.,

2018). The masculinities represented are, moreover, hegemonic masculinities, which can be 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 which operate “within a strict heteronormative gender binary” (Argus, 2018, p. 530). Characteristics such as the remoteness (Little & Wilson, 2005), the camaraderie (Díaz Carrión, 2012), and the physicality of the outdoors (Humberstone, 2000) is what has perpetrated, until nowadays, the idea of the outdoors as a place to penetrate and conquer (Little & Wilson, 2005).

Furthermore, there is an idea of the outdoors as a place ‘free of women’ (other identities don't even come up in question), masculinized in such a harsh way that gendered bodies even disappear (Frohlick, 2000, p. 91). Reinhold Messner, one of the best known mountaineers, says in one of his books: “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” (cited in Frohlick, 2000, p. 89).

On the other hand, it is also noted that “there have always been elements of counter-cultures and alternative masculinities prevalent in some forms of outdoor education” (Humberstone, 2000, p. 31), and while these expressions of alternative masculinities might still be marginalized, they open a door for new ways of understanding the outdoors (Warren, 2016).

Do men and women want different things in/from the outdoors?

Some of the articles suggest that women and men look for different things in the outdoors, or that they are interested in different kinds of adventure activities (Warren, 2016; Overholt & Ewert, 2015; Boniface, 2006; Humberstone, 2000; Little, 2002a; Kiewa, 2001; Díaz Carrión, 2012; Moscoso-Sánchez, 2008), with the exception of Pomfret & Doran (2015), who noted that studies from the 80' suggested that men and women wanted the same.

Some of the differences pointed out in the articles are that women focus more on the relationships and look for activities based on trust, while men look for power, challenge and focus on the activity in itself. In relation to fear, it appears that women are just more disposed

to admit their fears (Boniface, 2006), and the study done by Overholt & Ewert (2015) showed that “the males with a higher initial resilience score and decreasing over time, while the females increased, ultimately surpassing the initial score of the males” (p. 48). Another difference can be found in what they perceive as adventure, which for women is not “only the traditional masculine qualities of challenge, uncertainty and danger, but also entails learning, newness and the exploration of risk in its social and esteem based elements” (Little, 2002a, p. 66).

Given these differences, Moscoso-Sánchez (2008) observes that “gender identity determines the opportunities people have to partake in mountaineering” (p. 183). In his research, where he analyzed the motivations, behaviors and habits of Spanish mountaineers, it shows that men believed themselves to have better physical aptitudes, more pain tolerance and more involvement, while they see women as masculine, less physical capable, with no ability to self-sacrifice and prioritizing family. On the other hand, women saw themselves as with higher self-esteem, greater capacity for learning, self-organization and better mental performance, while they see men as with more physical strength, weak personality and an attitude towards protagonism. Díaz Carrión (2012) also noted that care related activities were done by women.

Facing challenges. Women's constraints, negotiations and benefits

Even though the number of women participants is increasing, it is still a minority, so some of the articles focused on the constraints that women face. Constraints have been categorized in intra-personal, inter-personal and structural (Warren, 2016; Doran et al., 2018; Little, 2002b). Intra-personal constraints examples are fear, anxiety and self-doubt, and they are found to be the less important. The most prominent ones are the inter-personal constraints, such as family commitments and gendered expectations. Finally, examples of structural constraints are lack of time, limited access to transport, costs, and lack of female role models. It is important to note that these constraints have been analyzed for cis, white, middle-class, Western women, although the outdoors are not as ‘freely available’ as one might think, “rather class, race, ability/disability and gender inequalities for example, are reinforced through leisure space and organization” (Little, 2002b, p. 158).

However, as Doran (2016) stresses: “Despite these challenges, women are using adventure tourism as a space where they can resist, rather than submit to constraints” (p. 65). Some of the ways women negotiate these constraints are prioritizing adventure activities or restructuring the outdoor experience (Little, 2000; Little, 2002b). Negotiating these constraints has been found as a form of resistance, challenging traditional gender expectations, and leading to feelings of empowerment (Doran, 2016).

Doran (2016) presents a model that shows that “constraints, negotiations and benefits can be experienced simultaneously, at different points in a woman’s adventure tourism journey and used as a vehicle for empowerment” (p. 57). Thus, resilience is one of the benefits, as it also shows in Overholt's and Ewert's (2015) research, where women's resilience increased after taking part in an outdoor program. It is interesting that they also found out that androgynous people (which 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” (p. 51).

General benefits from outdoor experiences that have been found out are enhanced physical fitness and vitality; increased self-confidence and self-esteem; expanded curiosity and imagination; greater calm and peace of mind; emotional well-being; and reduction of immediate and long-term stress (Boniface, 2006, p. 10). Specifically benefits for women have been gain of resilience, positive identity formation, and an increased ability to speak out (Warren, 2016, p. 363). Moreover, Boniface (2006) points out how the pleasure and excitement that can be experienced through mountaineering activities are also a way to escape overall routinization and materialism of everyday life in western society.

A few studies that paid attention to women-only activities (Warren, 2016; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; Doran, 2016; Plate, 2007; Whittington, 2006) showed that women gained more benefits from this kind 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” (p. 363, Warren, 2016). Doran (2016) points out that the women participating in such all-female adventure activities also reported their preference for them, 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” (p. 71). Moreover, Whittington

(2006) notes that girls participating in all-female wilderness programs challenged conventional notions of femininity and gender stereotypes. In a similar 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, p. 233).

Feminist outdoor research, and climbing as a space of resistance

Even though most of the articles didn't take into account feminist research that has been done in the leisure and sport field, some of them did include this knowledge (Warren, 2016; Little & Wilson, 2005; Laurendeau & Sharara, 2008; Pomfret & Doran, 2015). 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). Other aspects for having ‘gender-sensitive’ outdoor activities would be to address linguistic and territorial sexism and avoiding discriminatory techniques.

Women are taking up more space in the outdoors slowly, but it appears that they are only accepted if they hide all signs of masculinity and they display traditional ideas of femininity (Pomfret & Doran, 2015). Yet, the question could be to what are they gaining access to. Laurendeau & Sharara (2008) remark how women are picking up white, middle-class and liberal-feminist discourses of participation, using the opportunities that are offered, but not questioning and challenging the reproduction of spaces itself and the structures that privilege men over other identities. Thereby, they are “creating a set of standards of femininity that marginalize other potential embodiments of femininity” (p. 28).

Especially interesting is the case of women climbers, with four articles focusing on gender relationships in climbing (Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Kiewa, 2001; Plate, 2007; Holland-Smith, 2016). Although most of the articles focused on outdoor and adventure recreation in general or in a few activities specifically, it is interesting to note that climbing is seen as a differentiate outdoor experience for some authors. For Dilley & Scraton (2010), climbing is a space where women can feel accepted in their differences and find a sense of belonging. In this same direction, Plate (2007) points out how climbing is not organized in the traditional

sports way (separating between women and men), and how this might endorse more dynamic gender relations as well as more flexibility of traditional gender roles. For Plate, there is no clear dichotomy in climbers expectations. Meanwhile, Kiewa (2001) indicates that there are differentiate gendered expectations that shape the behaviors of climbers, and Holland-Smith (2016) remarks that climbing is still male dominated and that climbers' "gender identities still remain limited and determined largely through and by male validation" (p. 1190).

As a final interest, some authors talk about a climbing/mountaineering identity (Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; Moscoso-Sánchez, 2008), 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 & Doran, this identity is used by women to escape and challenge stereotypical gender roles, giving them a feeling of belonging and empowerment.

Boosting body positivity through adventure activities

How can the outdoors affect our own body perception? This is one of the questions that I pose for this research, and it is also addressed by some authors (Warren, 2016; Boniface, 2006; Doran, 2016; Breault-Hood 2018). They mention how outdoor activities might benefit girls' development and how "bodily movements through physical adventure activities provide opportunities for women to feel liberated and gain control over their bodies" (Doran, 2016, p. 70).

Breault-Hood (2018) uses the concept of body scrimmage (Savigny, 2006, cited in Breault-Hood, 2018), instead of body image, as it does not only include how we look like or our body parts, but also our feelings and thoughts about our own bodies. She alludes to how, when being in the outdoors, is when she feels most attractive and strong, in moments of body scrimmaging: "My confidence soars. I recognize that my body is much greater than 'image'—rather, it is connected to my self-worth. None of these moments are about how I look—they are how I feel about and what I can do with my body." (Breault-Hood, 2018, p. 560).

Furthermore, she indicates that there has been research done that illustrates how the outdoors has positive outcomes in the body image, noticing increases in the perceptions of

attractiveness and acceptance of the body, and how “outdoors women are able to reject cultural and stereotypical definitions of beauty and, as a result, maintain a more positive body image” (p. 561). Thus, when finding ourselves in “an outdoor setting where we need to focus on what our bodies’ capabilities are, we can develop a sense of pride in what our bodies can do, rather than focusing on how they look” (Breault-Hood, 2018, p. 563).

Non-normative identities and gender expectations in the outdoors

In spite of the hegemonic masculinities and male-dominated aspect of the outdoors, resistance to stereotypical gender characteristics is starting to appear within mountaineering, and “the boundaries which have been conventionally associated with masculinity and femininity within mountaineering are becoming more blurred” (Pomfret & Doran, 2015, p. 147). Martin (2015) also argues how sport (not only outdoor sports), instead of reproducing the idea of fix stability of the categories male and female, blurs the borders and hierarchies between them. In addition, Overholt & Ewert (2015) point out how the wilderness is a place where women can escape conventional gender roles, being able to express themselves more freely. As a participant in Boniface's research (2006) concludes, for her, being out in the mountains, means that “you can just be yourself” (p. 17), as well as another one in Argus (2018): “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). Meyer (2010, cited in Wilson & Lewis, 2012, p. 231) has also written about the positive value that outdoor programs offer to LGBTQ participants (unpublished thesis).

Even though outdoor and adventure activities are still heterosexist and homophobic spaces, where queer outdoor participants are erased or remained invisible (Warren, 2016; Argus, 2018; Dignan, 2002), it is also seen as “sites of struggles over meanings, practices and gender subjectivities” (Humberstone, 2000, p. 29), and as opportunities of new ways of building our bodies (Díaz Carrión, 2012). On the other side, for Moscoso-Sánchez (2008), “the social construction of a gender identity (unequal) 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 (Dignan, 2002).

Focusing now on the articles that pay attention to trans youth experiences, Wilson & Lewis,

(2012) and Mitten (2012) engage in a conversation about adventure-based youth camps, and whether if it is better for trans young people to go to specialized camps or mainstream camps. For Wilson and Lewis the best option for trans youths are specialized camps, where they can focus on the activities at the camp itself and not on the possible hurdles or oppressive situations that may arise from their non-normative gender identities. These specific programs may allow transgender and gender variant youths to find a space for self-expression and confidence. On the other hand, for Mitten, mainstream camps are inclusive, and she believes that campers and staff will benefit from the presence of trans youths. Moreover, trans youths will be in a more real societal situation (and not in an ‘oasis of utopia’), where they have to share spaces with cis people. Mitten believes that mainstream camps are safe spaces for trans people, and that they will not need to fight for their rights. I would like to add that I strongly disagree with this last idea, as it seems a very cis-narrowed point of view.

Grossman et al. (2005) article was a disappointment. Even though they say that their aim is “to link leisure inquiry with gender expression” (p. 8) and the factors that affect trans young people in leisure environments, it seems like they were more interested in remarking how trans people had interests based in their gender identities (and not in their gender assigned at birth) since little age, that they identify as transgender from an early age, and the victimization processes they suffer: they “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 a., 2005, p. 6).

The three articles note that the biggest issue with trans youth attending adventure-based camps are the logistics (sleeping facilities, bathrooms, etc) that are traditionally sex-segregated. However, as Wilson & Lewis (2012) note, in the wilderness there are no signs stating if a bush is for men or women. All of them also remark the stigmatization and victimization processes of trans people.

Lastly, I would also like to note that all the authors were cis identified people. This can be perceived in that Mitten (2012) argues that the word transgender is based on binary concepts of gender, because it means transitioning from one to another (even though transgender is an umbrella term under many other identities fall into); while Wilson & Lewis (2012) argue that sex-segregation rules are to “protect women from males who may get them pregnant” (p. 231); and Grossman et al. (2005) pathologize trans identities when talking about gender

identity disorder, use ‘male transsexuals’ for trans women, use the word ‘patients’ for trans people, mix gender expression with gender identity when talking about gay men having feminine behaviors, and it seems as though they base their ideas of trans people in questions from the Minnesota test³: do they like dolls, do they like sports, do they play soccer, etc.

Finally, here are some aspects of the three articles that focus on queer identities in the outdoors. Argus (2018) conducts interviews with LGBTQ Girl Scouts, asking them about their outdoor experiences, and how their gender identities or sexual orientations influence them. Dignan (2002) discusses the impact that heteronormativity has on participants of outdoor recreation; and Barnfield & Humberstone (2008) explore the ways in which the participants and educators of outdoor education conceal their lesbian and gay identities, and the effects resulting of it. The latter two state that the outdoors can still be a heteronormative and heterosexist environment, and the lack of research regarding sexuality in the outdoors. Hopefully, outdoor adventure as a counter-culture place for alternative femininities and masculinities slowly starts to extends (Humberstone, 2000).

Final thoughts on the literature review

Most of the articles I reviewed focus on how the outdoor activities and experiences of the participants change in relation to their gender (always looking at it from a cis-perspective, and focusing on a population of white, able-bodied, class-privileged, heterosexual, cis women). The literature about queer experiences in outdoor activities also covers limited aspects (adventure-based youth camps for trans teenagers and the stigmatization and victimization processes of trans people). Departing from this literature, I am, nevertheless, more interested in looking into how outdoor activities can help, influence and shape our identities, and the spaces of resistance we (trans people) create in them. Moreover, I am interested in how adventure activities may influence our own body perception, and how the different time-space compression between the city/nature also creates diverse feelings and gender expectations in us. Are the outdoors a welcoming place for trans people? The outdoors as a less gendered space, and our bodies as spaces that defy gender normativities, in a project which, in a similar

³ 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) aims to dismiss other pathologies, and has a masculinity/femininity scale based on stereotyped gender conceptions (Pons Rabasa, 2013).

way to Katz's (2001), "is driven by the notion that producing a critical topography makes it possible to excavate the layers of process that produce particular places and to see their intersections with material social practices at other scales of analysis" (p. 1228). I argue that the project of queering geography also implies rethinking trans (and queer) bodies as tied to the city. As it will be shown, doing outdoor activities brings comfort to our bodies and minds, and changes our own processes of self-surveillance over our bodies and gender performativities⁴.

With the exception of one article (Díaz Carrión, 2012), that was situated in Jalcomulco (Mexico), all the articles were placed on experiences of people from Western white countries (USA, UK, Spain, Australia and New Zealand). Díaz Carrión was also the only author looking at the topic from a gender geography point of view. As she explains, geography considers the body as an essential concept, which further explains the relationships of people with physical and social environments, and the different ways of living and experiencing space. Gender geography is interested in how bodies of Otherness (or *rebel bodies*) construct the space and how it becomes "a map, a surface susceptible to social inscription" (Díaz Carrión, 2012, p. 4, my translation). When *rebel bodies* occupy the outdoors, the spaces are appropriated and lived in consequence to them and to the activities carried out in them, and counter-geographies processes may occur.

4 With gender performativity I am referring to Butler's concept, which she develops in "Gender Trouble" (1990) and "Bodies that Matter" (1993). Gender performativity is about the constant repetition and reiteration of gender norms that have been established by the society. Butler argues that there is a conscious decision in how we present our gender, hence how we perform our gender is regulated through discourse and power.

3.- Queering Methodologies

Feminist and Queer Methodologies

This research is built on the understanding of methodologies “as the processes by which research is undertaken given a project’s epistemological and ontological stance” (Nash, 2016, p. 133). Regarding the methodology, it is very important for me to have a feminist and queer standpoint. The question is, how can I queer my methodology?

One of the main questions of feminist methodologies is what feminist objectivity means. Here I follow Haraway (1988), who defines feminist methodology as situated and embodied knowledges. Feminist research is not looking for a universal truth, but rather partial sights and limited voices (Haraway, 1988). As such, ethnographic research is intrinsically “partial, committed and incomplete” (Clifford and Marcus, 1986, p. 7, cited in Rooke, 2016, p. 27), although for Rooke (2016) “this partiality is a strength, not a flaw; it is a way of acknowledging and interrogating our social and political situatedness as researchers” (p. 31). Feminists and queer people do not need a universal objectivity, or to theorize the world, but rather “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).

There are many definitions and/or ways to understand queer theory, but I would like to highlight this one from Browne & Nash (2016): “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). Every part of a research is connected to the others – theory, data and method are related and cannot be understood 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). In other words, the “relationship between theory and data is a methodological

problem” (Boellstorff, 2016, p. 210). This means that for our knowledges to be queer, our methodologies also have to be queer.

Queering my methodology

Queer research constitutes and undermines traditional research considerations. Does this mean that any method can be contemplated as ‘queer’? Is there a queer methodology/method? “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?” (Browne & Nash, 2016, p. 12). My topic is queer, I am queer, is that enough? Furthermore, a queer methodology does not only need to pay attention to the methods, but it also needs to queer the positions of researcher and researched, acknowledging their permanent instability.

Through my readings about queering methodology I started to feel trapped in the structure of my thesis. Why do I have to have a conclusion? Why are the phases of the thesis so isolated? Fieldwork, analysis and ‘writing up’...I felt as if a linear approach was somehow imposed, but if something is sure about queer thinking, is that it is not linear. At least not for me. Rooke (2016) argues that research practices have their own temporal normativities, describing them as one of the most defining characteristics of ethnographic research, and defines how “the ‘writing up’ period classically follows a scholastic convention of presenting a self who is now detached and distant from the fieldwork situation in both emotional, spatial and temporal terms” (p. 29). How can I queer this temporality? There is an opposing force between maintaining a non-normative queer position, which is unstable and fluid, and the requirements of an academy for rigour and clarity (Browne & Nash, 2016).

Quite often, research about trans topics focuses on pain narratives, as Tuck & Yang (2014) express: “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. [...] We observe that much of the work of the academy is to reproduce stories of oppression” (p. 6). There is a way to create Otherness by the delimitation of the normativity, thus producing a subaltern subject⁵. These logics of pain, of the oppressed, require time to also be organized in a linear

⁵ 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 to read her text “Can the subaltern speak?”

and 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. 10-11). Could desire-based research be seen as a way to queer trans research? Ahmed (2004) argues that “pain can shape worlds as bodies, through the ways in which stories of pain circulate in the public domain” (p. 15). In the same direction, Gingrich-Philbrook (cited in Holman Jones & Adams, 2016) “suggests 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). What if we start talking about the (*our*) stories of pleasure of queer and trans bodies? For my thesis, I will be paying attention to those stories of pleasure that the outdoor activities bring to trans people, and how they positively influence our identities.

Another important aspect is what is called the insider/outsider position. For a feminist and queer methodology, it is essential to be epistemologically open to my own subjectivity, positionality and embodiment. There is a need for a reflexive process of feminist scholars (Nash, 2016), to be able to acknowledge our own instability. I am currently part of the culture and the community I am writing about, and my position inside this community had an impact in the relationship I have been able to establish with the participants, and what kind of participant's profile I was able to reach. As a way to break this duality, I also positioned myself as a ‘research subject’, not only with the use of autoethnography, but also having another person to interview me. The decision of having a trusted person to conduct the interview with me, instead of answering the questions by myself was a conscious one, as I wanted to position myself in the participant's place. My answers, although useful for this research, weren't the aim. The intent was rather to break the insider/outsider positionality.

Queer theory is not only limited to reflect about gendered and sexual subjectivities, but it also implies questioning the logics of normativity. Critiques regarding ethnography have focused on the textual normativities of ethnographic writing (Rooke, 2016). Hence, queer ethnography is about twisting its method and principles, while queering methodology involves breaking with the normative logics of ethnographic research and writing.

Queering my writing

A fundamental part of queering my writing is making it matter. Holman Jones et al. (2013) argue that “writing stories offers us a powerful form for theorizing the daily workings of culture” (p. 19) and 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, 2000, p. 966). This led me to autoethnography as a queer method. Autoethnographies use personal experiences to examine or critique cultural experiences. Both, autoethnography and queer theory, share conceptual and purposeful affinities, such as refusing notions of orthodox methodologies, focusing instead on fluidity, while also being highly political (Adams & Holman Jones, 2011; Holman Jones & Adams, 2016; Holman Jones et al., 2013). Additionally, 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). Hence, what renders feminist and queer research singularity “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).

The use of autoethnography responds to the emphasis that there has been on reflexivity in qualitative research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Berry & Clair, 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Holman Jones et al., 2013), as well as the recognition of “the ways in which social identities such as race, class, age, gender, sexuality, religion, and health, among others impact what and how we study as well as what we see and how we interpret what we study” (Holman Jones et al, 2013, p. 30). What does it mean to be trans in academia? What impact does it have in my research? Do cis people ‘conquer’ trans culture? Autoethnography speaks out to the absences and silences (Lorde, 1984), it is about who gets invited to speak, what counts as knowledge, as scholarship, and who gets acknowledge. Furthermore, it involves who is “recognized – as visible, worthy, right, and, ultimately, human” (Butler, 2004, cited in Holman Jones & Adams, 2016, p. 200).

Autoethnography also aims to break the norm of how social scientific research should be done, putting affects and desires in the research process (Sparkes, 1996). Likewise, ‘writing stories’ are stories that reveal the emotional, physical, social, and political in the research,

bringing the feelings and the emotionality in the research processes. For Ahmed (2004), “feminist and queer scholars have shown us that emotions ‘matter’ for politics; emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well as worlds” (p. 12). As Ahmed explains (2004), emotionality in texts is a way to describe how they are moving, destabilizing the fixity that words may give them. Moreover, “if, as queer thinking argues, subjects and subjectivities are fluid, unstable and perpetually becoming, how can we gather ‘data’ from those tenuous and fleeting subjects using the standard methods of data collection such as interviews or questionnaires?” (Browne & Nash, 2016, p. 1). Therefore, qualitative research is appropriate for my topic, as it embraces the fluidity of queer lives, and embodies the idea of not being ever full or knowable (Holman Jones et al., 2013).

Queer theory also reveals the failure in language, as words can hardly describe or explain phenomena that is not stable, that mutates (Holman Jones & Adams, 2016). Even though words fix bodies in a text, in a space and/or in an experience, it is important to acknowledge that bodies change over time, and their experiences in this research are not transferable to other spaces or texts. The representation of bodies in texts will be always incomplete and partial (Holman Jones & Adams, 2016).

Queering the method

As Browne & Nash (2016) assert: “Research ‘methods’ can be conceptualized as what is ‘done’, that is, the techniques of collecting data (interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, photographs, videos, observation, *inter alia*). [...] Methodology can be understood as the logic that links the project’s ontological and epistemological approaches to the selection and deployment of these methods” (p. 10-11). While I was doing the interviews, I was also reading my diaries –the ‘auto-ethnographic material’–, and the academic articles about queering methodology. I started to feel emotionally affected by all of that, it was like ‘the mountains were calling me’. Sometimes I felt like leaving this research on hold and go out to the wilderness for a couple of weeks. I was writing about something while I couldn't experience it. Rooke (2016) talks about an affective approach to research, which goes both ways, between the researcher and the research. My research was emotionally affecting me, urging me to go outdoors.

For this research, I used a combination of two methods: in depth-semi-structured interviews and autoethnography, which I am going to analyze further in the next section. The decision of combining different methods responds to the need of addressing the fluidity and diversity of the research, acknowledging its queerness. Gorman-Murray et al. (2016) say that “it is not just how we do research that matters but also where we do research” (p. 111), as research narratives are spatial. How can the spaces where the interviews were conducted bias the research itself? In the same way as the social practices make the space (Bell et al. 1994; Bell & Valentine 1995), the space also influences the practices happening in it. Regarding this, two of the interviews were done walking in forests nearby the city of Gothenburg, while other two were done through Skype, and the fifth one through written messages. There was a significance difference in the way we connected with the topic depending on the space where it happened. With the participants that I went for a walk in the forest, after some time we could feel and experience in the moment the ideas, feelings and emotions we were talking about. There was a deeper connection with the meanings, and I wish I would have been able to do them all interviews out in nature. The interviews in the forest were creating a transformative space (Heckert, 2016), in which I know I have been transformed, and I hope that by listening, I also gave something to the participants. I also encouraged them to talk about topics that came up, of which although I knew they weren't of interest for my research, I could feel that it was important to them.

Ethical considerations and limitations

When using ethnography as a methodology there are matters related to power relations, the textual construction of subjectivities and the limits of knowledge production that have to be taken into account (Rooke, 2016). Being critically reflexive about my own subject position, my positionality in relation to each participant's subject position, and the interactions that may happen; all of them affect the outcomes of the research. Bell Hooks (1990, p. 343, cited in Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 7) illustrates very well how we, the people in the margins, feel about the academy:

“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.”

My subjectivity, as a transmasculine and genderqueer person, who does outdoor activities, feminist, and who is also politically close to all the participants contributed to position me as confident rather than as researcher (Gorman-Murray et al., 2016). However, it also posed some limits to my study, being one of the most important one the inequity between the diverse gender identities of the participants, as I wasn't able to get any participant in the trans feminine spectrum. Besides, what would I research if I weren't queer? My interest in this topic rises from the fact of me being an insider and affected by it. One of the participants asked me if I had ever thought of how my life would be if I weren't queer. Which things I have stopped doing, or not even tried to do, because of the fact that I am queer. Or what I have done because of it. That question has been haunting me ever since then. Most likely, I came to the conclusion that I wouldn't be sitting here right now. This experience acknowledges the idea of Gorman-Murray et al. (2016) of 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), and learn and experience from the interaction. On the other side, what happens “if I bump into a participant when I am out shopping in the local high street and have a chat is that a moment of fieldwork?” (Rooke, 2016, p. 30). Actually, I went on a ski trip with a participant just one week after conducting the interview, and I also visited another one in Berlin 1.5 months after, while I was still immersed in the writing process. The borders of ‘the field’ were being blurred, and so were the power relations that may arise in them.

Moreover, both Rooke (2016) and Gorman-Murray et al. (2016), argue that being an insider helped them to create a more open environment to share and talk, and that sharing situatedness with the participants influences the self-explanations offered to the researcher. Participants are more willing to share certain life experiences with people they feel they share subject positions with. This was also mention to me by some of the participants, who remarked that the fact that I am trans was an important aspect for them to take part in it, I was not a ‘cis straight person looking for something exotic’, in the words of one of them. In a similar line of thought, some researchers feel/have felt that, even though they are an insider,

they are also “an outsider looking in” (Rooke, 2016, p. 35). For me it was very important to not fall into that position as a researcher. The fact that I knew all the participants except one (that was a friend of a participant) helped with that. Even though we would meet for ‘the interview’, we wouldn't go directly into it and we didn't finish directly after it.

All of these let me thinking if, at the end, we can only do research about our own struggles. Or maybe not even those. “People 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). Sometimes it might feel like there is no way to escape this juncture, except maybe refusal? I don't want to find out something, I want to talk about an experience, about many experiences. There is no conclusion to an experience. Would this be considered a failure? “Refusal is not just a ‘no,’ but a redirection to ideas otherwise unacknowledged or unquestioned. Unlike a settler colonial configuration of knowledge that is petulantly exasperated and resentful of limits, a methodology of refusal regards limits on knowledge as productive, as indeed a good thing” (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 20). Refusing research, would urge us to discover the powerful potential of failure as a tool for undoing cisheteronormativity and success, 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” (Halberstam, 2011, 120). At the same time, I am afraid, I am not even a scholar yet, and I feel that queering too much could have the potential to make me too vulnerable. As Heckert (2016) asks: “How queer can one be in a university?” (p. 42); and I would add, how much can I go outside the box?

One of my biggest limitations, due to time and space limits, is that I haven't been able to analyze intersectionally: “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” (Gorman-Murray et al., 2016, p. 108). In this research, I am focusing on trans identities, not taking into account issues of race, class, coloniality, dis/ability, etc. Moreover, the fact that I am a white, south European and physically abled person also positioned me in a place where I am seen as an outsider in

relation to those subjectivities.

Another limitation in my research is related to my references. Doing research in a Swedish University, having access to the university library, limited the kind of material I had available. Tuck & Yang's (2014) quote: "research is just one form of knowing, but in the Western academy, it eclipses all others" (p. 17), portrays very well this limitation. Most of my readings were in English, with the exception of some articles and theory written in Spanish and Catalan. However, although I am using APA reference style, which doesn't include full names, I decided to write the first names. Hiding the first names makes that people assume that the authors are cis men, not acknowledging the work of women in the academy.

Finally, a further limitation is *where* the stories were told, and how that positioned me differently in relation to the participants and in relation to the spaces of the project. It also affected my 'insider/outsider' status. When we were walking in the forest, talking, I was not seen as a researcher in the same way as when conducting the Skype interviews, which positioned me in a hierarchy over the participant. When I was positioned closer to an 'insider', it helped to create a more direct and closer connection with the person (Nash, 2016).

4.- Unmapping Trans Counter-geographies

Mapping has been, and is, a tool for colonial domination (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Razack, 2000), as well as a patriarchal tool. As Razack (2000, p. 12) 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. [...] Maps sought to measure, standardize, and bind space, keeping the environment on the outside”. Cartography (the science of mapping) creates subjectivities and decides who is able to exist in that space. When cis white men map, they are leaving out other bodies, such as queer and trans bodies, bodies with dis/abilities, migrant bodies and bodies of color. There is a space resistance in claiming the outdoors as our space. The production of space, done through mapping, is also the production of excluded and included bodies (Razack, 2000), which happens when borders are decided, created and shaped. ‘Geo-borders’ of postcolonial states were shaped by colonial cis-straight-normative mapping (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). Borders are complex social institutions, along with being fundamental in the production of time and space. They are devices of exclusion, as well as inclusion, as Mezzadra & Neilson (2013) claim: “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” (p. 7), inclusion that develops in continuity with exclusion, not in opposition to it. Who is included in the outdoors? Are the ‘geo-borders’ leaving us, trans people, out by the inclusion of cis white straight people? What happens when we inhabit those borders? Geographical borders are spaces of violence, as well as sex and gender borders.

Borders are found in many places and circumstances. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* is an example of how borders are much more than those of nation-states. Thus, it was also important to pay attention to the project of queering the methodological borders, which implies to assume their fluidity, breaking the dichotomy between the insider/outsider position, in a process of unmapping (Razack, 2000) these geographies. 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). What happens when the field is also my life? My ‘field work’ was bringing me closer to ‘the field’ again. And my life could be seen as ‘field work’. For Rooke (2016), borders are flexible and fluid, and a reflexive ethnographic approach requires that the ethnographer inter/connects emotionally. Ultimately, qualitative social research is full of interpersonal connections and engagement, and takes emotions thoughtfully (Rooke, 2016).

To queer borders we need to start unmapping. Unmapping consists in denaturalizing geography “by asking how spaces come to be but also to undermine world views that rest upon it” (Razack, 2000, p. 5). Mapping territories was used by colonizers to claim that they had discovered lands, and therefore also owned it. Unmapping, on the other side, is a decolonial tool, “intended to undermine the idea of white settler innocence (the notion that European settlers merely settled and developed the land) and to uncover the ideologies and practices of conquest and domination” (Razack, 2000, p. 5). Thus, there is an important relationship between identity and space in unmapping. Unmapping is done by subaltern subjectivities, those who are not in the ‘visible maps’. “These different bodies belonging to ‘other’ places are in one sense out of place, [...] as the inclusion/exclusion operate through the designation of the somatic norm.” (Puwar, 2004, p. 33). To unmap we need to look at the topographies of exclusion and to the bodies and spaces that remain invisible, and therefore out of place. By doing so, we are creating counter-geographies, we are (un)mapping our spaces of resistance. I am interested in the invisible maps that exist in the mountains, in the forests, in the wilderness where trans bodies walk through, but that are invisible in the geographies. How are trans bodies produced in those spaces? For Razack (2000), “to denaturalize or 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). Digging deeper into it, it is also interesting to ask which kind of spaces are produced by bodies. Cis people have brought colonial language and epistemology to the outdoors, they conquer mountains. Furthermore, they are also cis men bringing patriarchal language, when they go to ‘virgin’ territories. Virgin for whom? It appears as only cis men can be there. What happens when Other bodies walk those spaces? Which kind of spaces do those bodies produce? What occurs with the geo-borders and the gendered borders?

Mapping produces spaces and times, and creates cis and colonial borders. Those borders produce inclusion/exclusion processes, which are extremely violent, and one of its outcomes is deciding which lives are worth living, and which not. Hence, borders are necropolitical tools. Counter-geographies and counter-topographies are produced, appear and/or happen when inhabiting and crossing borders, as well as when we unmap those spaces. How do trans people unmap the outdoors and, by doing so, create counter-geographies?

Counter-geographies and counter-topographies, although referring to similar processes, work

in different ways. Hereby, I will explain both of them and why I chose to work with the concept of counter-geographies.

Feminist geographer Katz (2001) developed the concept of counter-topographies, which intent is 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” (Katz, 2001, p. 1230). Mountz (2011) explains that Katz's counter-topographies “map and challenge colonial, imperial power relations with which global capitalism is entangled, revealing material disparities operating across uneven terrain” (p. 383). Thus, counter-topographies are temporal zones maps, which are strongly linked to national and geographical borders. Doing topography is tracing contour lines along places with the same altitude. Counter-topographies connect places transnationally through contour lines that don't represent elevation, but rather particular relations to a process. “This offers a multifaceted way of theorizing the connectedness of vastly different places” (Katz, 2001, p. 1229). In this sense, by linking different sites transnationally, counter-topographies are precisely putting them on the map and mobilizing the political struggles that happen in them. In other words, they are an unmapping process that connects particularities as a way to political mobilization.

While counter-topographies come from the feminist geography studies, counter-geographies come from feminist economic studies. As Mezzadra & Neilson (2013) say, “borders are not merely geographical margins or territorial edges. They are complex social institutions, which are marked by tension between practices of border reinforcement and border crossing” (p. 3). Sassen's counter-geographies (2003) take this critical distance from geographical borders, in a process of unmapping and queering the borders. She develops and understands the concept of counter-geographies (2003) 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” (p. 49, my translation). Its starting point is a critique of the androcentric approaches that have guided the knowledge approaches in the globalization. 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).

Analysis in the field of globalization have treated gender as if it were neutral. Sassen considers if these analysis are actually worth, as they have not contemplated which power dynamics are behind the flows of globalization. For doing this, Sassen analyzes the cross-border alternative circuits (counter-geographies) in which it is crucial to be a woman and migrant, and conceptualizes them as a proletariat that originates outside the countries of origin. These are subaltern subjectivities that are “included through exclusion” (Mountz, p. 386). Those subjectivities that are invisible in nation-states geographies and the colonial mapping processes create transnational maps of communication and intersections, called counter-geographies. Counter-geographies also decolonize time-space processes, giving visibility to Other subjectivities. One of the most important aspects of counter-geographies, compared to counter-topographies, is that they do not only focus on the geographical aspects, but they apply to broader spaces, such as the health system or our houses. Moreover, Sassen explains that counter-geographies create topographies, that is, what can be seen and traced. In my analysis below, the ‘conversation’ between the experiences of trans people in the outdoors and the theories, I will be tracing the circuits of trans people in the wilderness, putting together points of exclusion that were mentioned in the interviews or in my diaries. These are the counter-geographies that we create in the outdoors. By tracing the abstract in the geographies of where we live, how we navigate those spaces, and materializing it, the invisible is made visible. Furthermore, these counter-geographies give visibility to the de-gendering processes which exist in the outdoors, which are also channeling the creation of alternative time-spaces that forge safe spaces for trans people. To unmap and to pay attention to these counter-geographies processes means turning the gaze into hegemonic aspects of the own LGBTQ+ collective (Fernández-Garrido, 2017). Researchers have paid attention to the way queer people inhabit the cities and the queer ‘migration’ to big cities. However, there is a dearth of attention to the outdoors as a socialization space where gender normativities are more relaxed.

Revealing trans necropolitics through counter-geographies

The circuits made visible by the counter-geographies also reveal the necropolitics of the geoborders. As Shakhsari (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). The subaltern subjectivities that inhabit these counter-geographies are the ones that need to die in order for the privileged ones to live.

“To kill or to allow to live constitute the limits of sovereignty” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 11). Mbembe's concept of necropolitics intends to supplement the notions of biopower and biopolitics (Foucault), which disclose “a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death” (Foucault, 1981, p. 138). However, instead of focusing on life, necropolitics are interested in how sovereign power is concerned with death-making. As Shakhsari (2014) asks: “When does the sovereign kill in the name of rights and when does it let die, forgetting those rights?” (p. 95). Mbembe argues that “vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*” (Mbembe, 2003, p.40, author’s emphasis).

The concept of queer necropolitics “connects a range of spectacular and mundane forms of killing and of ‘letting die’” (Haritaworn et al., 2014, p. 4). Not all queer bodies matter the same, as Butler (1993) argues, the bodies “that fail to materialize constitute the ‘necessary outside’ of the heterosexual hegemony” (p. 16). These are the abjected bodies, those who are not worth protecting, saving, or grieving (Shakhsari, 2014), and are left to die. The rise of transnormative identities, those who stay in the normative time-structures of Western societies, those who do not inhabit the gender borders, are producing hegemonic processes which leave out other trans bodies to die. Moreover, gendered-spaces and processes that occur in the cities, which makes us feel constantly observed, are ‘killing us softly’. Thereby, finding refugee in the cities may not be the only option for trans individuals. Cities are full of police, gendered interactions and spaces, and structural violences which are damaging us mentally and physically.

We are in a moment where the sovereign power wants to protect trans people, but only as long as they stay in the transnormative processes and spaces, such as the cities. “It is as though to kill slowly (through sanctions or poverty), 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” (Shakhsari, 2014, p. 93). Moreover, there is a conception of transgender people as victimized. Snorton & Haritaworn

(2013) argue that “it is necessary to interrogate how the uneven institutionalization of women's, gay, and trans politics produces a transnormative subject, whose universalized trajectory of coming out/transition, visibility, recognition, protection, and self-actualization largely remains uninterrogated in its complicities and convergences with biomedical, neoliberal, racist, and imperialist projects” (p. 67). A transnormative subject is also doomed to the urban context, resulting in processes of exclusion from the wilderness and outdoor activities, which are a form of ‘slow death’. As Haritaworn et al. (2014) explain: “The production of alterity as social death is therefore dependent on processes of expulsion or exclusion, and the redrawing of boundaries of belonging and unbelonging” (p. 6). These processes of exclusion, within a transnormative frame, also sustain our bodies out of place, preserving our lives reduced to the city.

Trans people, by reclaiming their space in the outdoors are telling you that we do belong in those spaces too. White cis men have colonized and mapped the mountains and wilderness, but we are unmapping them, creating and shaping counter-geographies by walking, cycling and climbing in them. Unmapping is also a decolonial and feminist project. Our wilderness spaces are not seen in the same ways and those mapped before, we see them with other eyes and live other experiences in them. Moreover, we go there with our bodies, not against them. We belong in the space and we empower ourselves in it, and in our bodies. Furthermore, tracing 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). When we go to the natural environment, when we do outdoor activities, we are fighting the imperial notion of having to be in the cities. For trans people, doing outdoor activities is not (only) about leisure, but also about self-caring and a political act.

5.- The Experiences talk with the Theories

As mentioned above, I used a combination of autoethnography with semi-structured-in-depth interviews. As my autoethnographic material I am using six months diaries that I wrote between February 13th and August 13th 2017, during a solo bike trip around Europe (geographically). During this trip I was wild camping (which means staying overnight in remote areas where there is no need to pay for a campsite), I slept almost every night in a different place (with some exceptions in big cities), I tried to contact other trans and queer activists in the countries I was cycling through, I carried out a couple of visibility projects, and I managed a social media account in Facebook⁶. At the end, I cycled through 26 countries and did over 14.000km. I also want to note that it wasn't a high budget trip, but rather the opposite: during those 6 months I spent 14.000 Swedish Krona (1400€) for everything I needed (food, ferries, bike spare parts, accommodation, etc). However, I have a Spanish passport that opens the nation-states borders easier, though it has a gender neutral name (Bart), with a female sex mark and I usually have a male passing. I am also European and white, although I was read as 'not white enough' in countries such as Poland and the Baltic countries. All these identities influenced my experiences during the 6 months of the journey. Before this research, I had not read again the diaries, so it was the first time that I actually read them. While I was reading the diaries, I took notes and highlighted quotes that I thought were significant for this thesis. It is important to note that those diaries weren't written specifically for this purpose, although that also gives me the chance to find reflexions around the present topic before I actually reflected on it.

In addition to the autoethnography I conducted semi-structured-in-depth interviews with 4 trans people. All of them were white and European (Spain, Austria, Estonia and Sweden) between the age of 30 and 35, and had different education levels. A 5th person participated reflecting on some thoughts they had after I sent them a part of the thesis synopsis, by written message. All of them were friends, except one, who was a friend of one of them. All of them identified as trans (understood as not identifying with the gender assigned at birth), although they had different gender identities. The interviews were carried out in English, except one (we mixed Spanish and English). All of the participants had experiences with outdoor activities and were still going into the wilderness. The interviews were recorded and the significant parts transcribed. Moreover, I anonymized the names of the participants (they all

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got names of typical Swedish trees), they were told about the publication of the thesis and were good with it, and they all agreed to read and confirm the quotes that I would use in the paper. Finally, I also added the interview that was done to me, with the same questions as a basis. A friend of mine, who has a bachelor in Anthropology and a Master Degree in Gender Studies carried out the interview through Skype, which was also recorded, and transcribed. I didn't anonymized this interview.

5.1.- The outdoors as a space – How is it understood and imagined?

Feeling in/out of place

The emotional geographies describe the spaces of comfort and discomfort, for example in relation to gender identity and sexuality (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016a). As Ahmed (2004) describes, 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).

- Alder: *I like (from nature) that there's more space, less noise...there are other sounds, but they're sounds and not noise. In cities there's a lot of noise, is overwhelming, and the sounds are very unpleasant. In nature I don't find many unpleasant sounds and it's also less and they're more distinct so your attention can go and relax.*

The outdoors bring comfort to our bodies, as our bodies become at ease with our environment. In the cities, in spite of the anonymity that has been argued that it is ‘useful’ for queer lives, I claim that there is actually a constant fear of discrimination and discomfort for trans bodies in them. We feel observed, the ‘surfaces of our bodies’ don't disappear from the view (Ahmed, 2004).

- Elm: *I feel like I can breathe, I feel like...I think for me it's like I've been observed my whole life because of my different gender expressions, I've been really observed and, even though I'm not observed all the time anymore, it's still in me. So I really have to go somewhere where I feel like there's really no eyes. Only, of course, the animals, but it's non judging eyes.*

In this sense, comfort is not seeing as passing (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016c), but rather as “the

emotional ‘fit’ between the embodied self and place” (Gorman Murray, 2009). The power of the cis-hetero-normative gaze (Doan, 2010) creates spaces where gendering practices are policed in our everyday lives. Similar to Elm, Doan (2010) expresses that the gaze of each person she passed “was part of the overall ‘policing practices’ that questioned my gender and undermined the tenuousness of the category” (p. 645).

- Oak: *In the cities you need to be gendered, but in the nature is just you and the nature. It makes me relax, happy, there's no social pressure...nature is always nice and beautiful.*

These normative gazes create a feeling of being out of place. “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” (Puwar, 2004, p. 32). In that sense, these experiences correlate with the idea of bodies belonging to other places, and being ‘space invaders’ (Puwar, 2004).

- Oak: *At that point, I used to walk alone around a lot, because every time when I was in the city or trying to be with other people they were always asking: “Are you a boy or a girl?”. So it was really relaxing just walk around and spent the most of the time alone. I'd see animals, sometimes you see people, but you don't see so many people. So if somebody sees you, they're just happy to see another person.*

That necessity of knowing ‘what we are’, boy or girl, man or woman, is pointing out the fear of the other person, while at the same time producing fear in our bodies. “Each living body is space and *has* its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space” (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 170).

- Alder: *In the outdoors I do think less about gender, because there's less to think about gender. But also because I've been doing it with my partner, or with good friends. Also there's less people, and there's less gendered interactions, but because there are also less actions. It's more simplified.*

Outdoor activities are also less gendered because you are not asked about your gender when you go there to participate, as with other sports. In nature, gender can be more fluid, because it doesn't make much sense in that space either. It is more a set of actions to be and to survive and not how to be one thing or the other.

- Bart (interview): *When I started to transition, it was more about other kinds of sports, that I had some issues, like if I want to participate in a popular course like a running course or something, then I need to be like male or female to register. When going to the outdoors I didn't have that problem, I didn't have to register as male or female to go on a hiking trip, it didn't matter. I just go there and hike with a group of people, there are no categories.*

Going and being outdoors is also challenging the idea of where queer and trans bodies belong, the cities. “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” (Puwar, 2004, p. 41-42). Our presence in the outdoors defies expectations.

- Birch: *I don't think a lot of men go outdoors and think that something sexist or violent will happen to them. I don't think men have that fear as much as women and trans people, not in the city but especially not in the outdoors.*

Moreover, the images that we get from the outdoors, its landscape, is that of fit cis white guys doing very difficult and dangerous activities, as it was portrayed in the literature reviewed before (Warren, 2016; Pomfret & Doran, 2015; Frohlick, 2000; Humberstone, 2000; Argus, 2008; Díaz Carrión, 2012). These authors emphasize how media, literature and advertising depict a traditional and masculinized idea of the outdoors. This makes it more difficult to find role models in the wilderness as trans persons, and we have to create our space in it.

- Bart (interview): *As a Trans person I haven't really found a place in outdoor recreation. I've felt welcomed because I've created and made my space, but I haven't felt welcome as a trans person and I had to fight for it, more than if I were cis.*

The visibility that comes from not being the norm, it is noticed that comes from being bodies out of place or unexpected bodies (Puwar, 2004). As a trans person, there is a transgression in doing outdoor activities, which comes from being bodies out of place, though this transgression is not our choice, but the “effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 153). These acts of occupying public space are individual and everyday actions, but they also contribute to the production of the space (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016a).

- Bart (TransBike Diaries): *And in spite of everything, it doesn't matter, the days are perfect*

as they are.

Unmapping (Razack, 2000) is pointing out this production of the space, by looking at the topographies of exclusion that exist, and that try to maintain our bodies invisible in those spaces. Paying attention to these processes is part of making visible the counter-geographies (Sassen, 2003) that we are creating while being in the wilderness. In doing so, bodies are 'becoming in place', as the disorientation and terror that being out of place produces in other societal spaces is not as recurrent in the natural environment, as nature doesn't judge you.

- Elm: *I think it's this feeling of safety and feeling of non-judgmental, which gives me a feeling of freedom. Like being able to breathe.*

Urban vs. Outdoor – Gaining Resilience and overcoming fears

When talking about the border city/nature, aspects related to fear and challenges appeared, as well as the relationship between them. "Fear 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), Thus, as feminist critique has noticed, fear is a response to a threat of violence.

- Elm: *I just feel like no, no, no (when going back to the city after being outdoors). I get really stressed in the city. I don't think I'm hypersensitive, but I do take in a lot, which I also think it actually is related to gender identity and having a thread of violence over you.*

The cities are seen as a place of violence related to transphobia, while in nature fear was related to the (un)existence of dangerous animals or the weather conditions. These daily urban violences also determine who is able to live in those spaces, and to find comfort in them.

- Oak: *If you go hiking in like Sweden or Norway, those are the most safest countries ever, because there's no snakes, there's like nothing. And in Lapland you can drink water from everywhere. I have more chances to die here in Tallinn if I don't get food, or money (especially money), but there you can walk forever, you meet only nice people, you can drink water and you can fish. Is like paradise.*

Oak has experience with doing outdoor activities in Lapland, where there are few people and

no dangerous animals. It is in the interactions with other humans in the cities that the feeling of being targeted appears, and when gendered expectations take place. Thus, fear is an embodied experience, which has effects in the surface of our bodies. As Ahmed (2004) asks: “Which bodies fear which bodies?” (p. 68).

- Elm: *The things in the forest are not dangerous, or unpleasant. They're not dangerous because they're not targeted at me, so if I accidentally die in a tsunami it's not like because someone was evil. Maybe it's control...I know that no one wants anything from me here, outside.*

Elm is reflecting here that the fears in the outdoors may also be perceived as challenges. This also reflects in Alder's and Oak's understanding of fears in the wilderness. When the actions are simplified, fears also become simplified. It turns into a survival aspect, where gender goes to the background, and is not anymore as present.

- Alder: *I think the outdoors is less simplified than climbing, but it's more simplified than the city life. And I find that challenging and calming, and it just brings me back.*

- Oak: *I didn't see any challenge in office work...just like the printer doesn't work, the coffee machine doesn't work...So if you go out you need to check what clothing you have, what kind of weather you will have and plan a little bit about the real life. I know what decisions I do, and it's not fighting about stupid things...but I'm actually outside and I need to survive and know what to do to feel safe.*

The challenges came from doing outdoors activities. We are moving and nature becomes our challenge. Things that we do not notice in our daily lives in the city are part of our struggles outdoors, but they are different struggles, as is not our gender what is questioned.

- Bart (TransBike Diaries): *I feel like I'm always fighting the wind. It's as if my motivation is carried away by the wind.*

How could this challenges help us back in the cities? How can this challenges face the gendered-spaces in a different way?

- Oak: *Outdoor sports teaches you to keep really cold nerves, that you're not gonna get pissed off really fast, and you have to make decisions within seconds. Then when you're in the city and somebody is being annoying, then you can tolerate it more easily, because they're not*

that big problems anymore.

In addition to that, the outdoors were mentioned by many of the participants as a place where people wouldn't focus so much on the gender expression of the others. It is almost an agender space, in contrast to urban spaces, where gender is produced in a binary and imposed way. Urban spaces were described as gender-determining, so what are the configurations of gender in the outdoors? They exist, we cannot escape gender in our current society, but it pass by another side, it works differently.

- Bart (interview): *With the gender expression that I had as a teenager, I felt more free than when I was in the city, where it was more evident that my gender expression was different, people looked more at me because of that, and in the outdoors I was not so targeted, and that also felt good.*

Safe spaces – Feeling at home in nature

A big difference between the experiences of trans people showed here, and the ones reviewed in the literature section (that referred mainly to cis women experiences), is that the latter one is mostly only concerned with the representation of them in the wilderness, while for trans persons this is (still) not in mind. Trans people, rather, are interested in how to create and make our lives more livable. Gender has a strong influence in how we perceive spaces, in which kind of bodies are accepted within them and in what kinds of activities are possible. Could the outdoors be a safe space for trans people?

- Blackthorn: *Being alone in nature, using nature for movement, with no wardrobes, no gendered gazes, etc. Yes, it is definitely less stressful than going to, for example, a gym or climbing hall.*

These urban spaces mentioned above (gym, climbing hall) are mapped by cis, straight views, creating cis borders, and resulting in exclusion processes. How are the unmapping processes that occur when trans people were moving themselves in the outdoors? It appeared that we were looking for places to escape the gender policing practices that occur in everyday places in the cities. In doing so, we were outlining counter-geographies (Sassen, 2003), which pay attention to the alternative transnational circuits that were happening. However, are the

outdoors free of the cis-hetero-normative gaze?

- Bart (interview): *There are no expectations in the same way as there are in the city. In the city you are expected to act in a certain way, dress in a certain way, be in a certain way, while in the outdoors, those expectations are not there anymore, you're not so much immersed in the society, but you're immersed in nature and nature doesn't have those expectations from you.*

The wilderness, although it is often perceived as a space that could be asocial (just you and nature), it is at the same time deeply social, as there are also social interactions with other people. There is a break of rules in the outdoors, and transgressions that occur precisely because of that, which might not be perceived as such for cis people but that exist for trans people, allow safe spaces for us. By doing so, it escapes the normativity and binary logic, being dichotomous thinking deconstructed, and thus queering the space. However, it might not always be like that.

- Blackthorn: *Social spaces related to nature can be very hetero-cis-normative. I think it's partly because people expect queer people to belong to the city. People don't expect to meet a queer person in the mountains. I prefer being in nature with a tent, or on friends cottages, compared to places where I will have to run into many unknown people. This is definitely because I am trans/queer.*

Historically, activism and social spaces for queer people have been in the cities, in bars, parties or assemblies. However, when you fall outside the cis-binary-gender-normativity they can become places of discomfort. Heterosexism can be a grounding reason for not being able to have access to a space (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016a). Thus, I was interested in which ways the participants made the wilderness a safe space to them, in regards to the social interactions that could occur.

- Elm: *I go with people I know, people that are close to me. The whole thing about going out in the nature, for me, it's about feeling safe and connected. So for me is really important who I bring.*

- Bart (TransBike Diaries): *I'm cycling with my friend, we go next to each other talking. It's strange to talk so much to someone, but I feel it nice too. Company, company that I know and with whom I feel safe.*

This was a general feeling for all of the participants, who choose to go alone or with people close to them in order to make the space safer. In this way, even though the outdoors were felt as a place where gender was not as important as it is in the cities, there was still a need to make the space safe. This can be seen as a different constraint than those mentioned by cis women in the literature (Warren, 2016; Doran et al., 2018; Little, 2002b), along with limiting the access to adventure activities, as most of them said, since it wasn't always easy to find people to go with among your friends, and going with a group of strangers wasn't a possibility for them in most cases. The possible constraints such as fears or finding people to go with and make the space safe wasn't, however, a main focus for the participants.

- Bart (TransBike Diaries): *I slept in a forest, and last night I had a nightmare. Wild animals, wolves, boars, elks, deers, bears and even a lion began to come. Everyone is in this forest. After surviving somehow to all of them, a herd of cows comes. 2-3 of them start to touch my tent, they end up rolling over it and breaking it. My tent is broken. I was very scared. In the end it looks like the cemeteries are the best place, also against my fears.*

Many times, when I slept close to populations, I had nightmares. I started sleeping in small graveyards very early in the trip, and they started to become a safe space. The graveyards, spaces of the dead, but which became necessary to travel through this world, in this type of life. Dead bodies giving space to living bodies. Moreover, there were no living humans there, the main source of my fears. I also created a home, that I carried with me:

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

This idea of finding home in nature and/or away of populations was also recurrent for other participants. The feeling of 'being home' was perceived



as being in a place of comfort (Ahmed, 2004) and safeness. Thus, the natural environment was perceived as a safer space than the cities for some of the participants. How does fear work? Fear “shrinks bodily space and this shrinkage involves the restriction of bodily mobility in social space” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 64).

- Bart (interview): *But also it has been relevant (my gender), because every time I go to a hiking trip with people that I don't know, I think about it. About the strategy that I will have to do to be safe during that trip. I don't know what kind of people I'm going to meet, I don't know if they're going to be open or not, if they are going to be transphobic, or homophobic or whatever. [...] Because if I go with friends, I know that if something happens I'm going to have support, that I'm not gonna be alone, they are going to be there for me. But if I'm going alone, by myself, I know that I'm gonna have to pretend to be cis to be safe, during most of the trip, if not the entire trip to feel safe.*

Many of the participants expressed how going with people they knew was a way to make the space safer. As Ahmed (2004) explains, “fear, like pain, is felt as an unpleasant form of intensity. But while the lived experience of fear may be unpleasant in the present, the unpleasantness of fear also relates to the future. Fear involves an anticipation of hurt or injury. Fear projects us from the present into a future. But the feeling of fear presses us into that future as an intense bodily experience in the present” (p. 65). Bringing people close to them was used as a way to fight against that fear and the anticipation of hurt. In the same way, knowing that there is no fear to project, relaxes our minds and bodies.

- Birch: *People seem sometimes more relaxed outdoors, and it makes me feel freer. Everything seems far away, the problems that I have in the city with people staring at me, like “who is that”.*

There's a similarity between this gendered gaze and “the look” that Fanon (1986) talks about; and although it refers to different bodies (black vs. trans), the sense of incomprehension coming from the normative body (white vs. cis) and the fear created in the bodies and spaces are there. Who gets afraid of whom? Should we be afraid of being in the wilderness? Finally, the overall sense of the participants was a positive relationship with safety in nature, and a right to occupy those spaces, to be there and exist.

- Alder: *It's cool to be outdoors when you're not a cis guy and it's cool that other people can see you.*

- Birch: *It feels cool to take space in the mountains, like I'm here and I have the right to be here.*

5.2.- Bodily experiences and affect of trans people in the wilderness

Trans/itions in the outdoors

“Caminante no hay camino, se hace camino al andar”

(Antonio Machado, Proverbios y cantares, 1912)⁷

Many researchers have been interested in the experiences of queer people in the cities (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016a; Rodó-de-Zárate, 2016c; Nash, 2016), and how its anonymity may help to create a space where it is possible to be freer. Places close to nature have often been seen as not safe, because of queerphobic and transphobic violences that have occurred in those spaces, specifically in the rural areas. However, I argue that it is not always like that, especially for trans people, who might find in the wilderness and outdoor activities a way to escape gender norms. There are many definitions about what being trans is, but what does it mean to be trans for the people who participated in this research? There is definitely not one answer to that, rather as many as trans people exist, but all participants in this thesis express their gender identity as something that is not stable:

- Oak: *I'm a transgender guy, for now.*

- Birch: *I use the pronouns he/him. I'm genderfluid and transmasculine but at the end, I find that I'm a human being that's into climbing and lots of different things. The gender label can't really summarize it all. What I notice about my gender and sexuality is that it's very fluid, it's evolving it's not stopping at one point, and I don't think it ever will. Transgender works, because then people know that I'm not a woman anymore, and that's correct.*

Both gender identity and gender expression are not fix and stable, they change and transition during our lives, as it was stressed by all the participants. In this sense, these fluid identities create counter-geographies within the own trans community, escaping trans-normativities and constituting our own sense of space.

- Bart (TransBike diaries): *For me, transitioning is a journey, maybe it has a beginning, but it's a journey without an end, a journey to enjoy throughout my whole life.*

Which spatialities are we creating while transitioning? How does the flexibility of gender relates with the flexibility of gender musts in the outdoors? Gender is not stable, and nature is

⁷ Extract of “Proverbios y Cantares (XXIX)”, which is included in the book “Campos de Castilla” (1912). It translates: Walker there is no path, you make your path as you walk.

not stable, so why are the cities so stable? The flexibility of the outdoor environment was also reflected in how the space changes. In the same way as we do not expect the environment to stay stable and look the same, we do not do so with our identities and gender expressions.

- Bart (interview): *There's no stability because in the outdoors everything changes the whole time, that's also nice, everything changes, you're not expecting something. In the city, there's a moment when you know the streets or where the things are, but in the outdoors it's a different scenario, and even though you go to a place many times there are things that change, a tree can fall, it's a different season, etc. So it's not as stable as the city.*

Another important aspect I would like to expose is the relationship between these outdoor activities experiences and our bodies, identities, gender expressions, and gender expectations. Can the benefits of the outdoors also help us in our transitions (socially, bodily, psychologically)? What can the outdoors activities teach us? One recurrent feeling for trans individuals is the urge of changes when, for example, starting to take hormones.

- Bart (TransBike Diaries): *It's as if I already wanted to finish, as if I didn't feel like cycling for 5 more months to get there.*

But when doing outdoor activities the rush is no good companion. It is about the path, the journey, the climbing movement. It is in the moment where the body is.

- Bart (TransBike Diaries): *Loneliness on a bicycle is a good companion. It allows me to listen to my body and observe my way. They're my traveling companion. Today I'm accompanied by the beauty and energy of this place. Can the energy of a place accompany me? Its silence? I feel this company.*

Moreover, our conceptions of space and time are social constructions (Halberstam, 2005). Thus, “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). Queer subjectivities produce alternative temporalities, which fall outside the cis-hetero-normativity. How is time constructed when doing outdoor activities and which influence does it have in the production of the space?

- Alder: *It's more space and more time, these things do extend, and they need the space to extend, if not it doesn't work so well.*

Another of the participants also commented on how time disappears. “Clock-time, which was developed in Europe during the 14th century, no longer tracks and synthesizes time of the natural and social environment but produces instead a time that is independent from those processes: clock-time is applicable anywhere, any time” (Adam, 2006, p. 123). However, when spending days in the wilderness the rhythm doesn't follow anymore the social clock-time.

- Oak: *Everything is so natural, I wake up or I sleep when is light or dark. If I walk, I get hydrated if I feel thirsty. I get hungry, I eat. If you wanna get warm you make fire...*

There is a moment when even the notion of the weeks and calendar disappears. This can be seen in that the dates in my diaries are changed. After the 17th of June comes the 18th of August. I didn't notice until the end of the month, when I start again with the 1st of July. A part of me just didn't pay attention if it was June or August, I just kept writing my daily experiences.

- Bart (TransBike Diaries): *It's curious how I always know on what numerical day I am thanks to this diary, but I have completely lost the notion of the day of the week. For me now, a Monday, Friday or Sunday are the same, they no longer have that normative burden of the routine of the cities, it is so relaxing.*

The control over time was lost, as it was not needed anymore. There is the idea that we own our time, and that things are supposed to be than at a specific time and space. However, “these formulaic responses to time and temporal logics produce emotional and even physical responses to different kinds of time: thus people feel guilty about leisure, frustrated by waiting, satisfied by punctuality, and so on. These emotional responses add to our sense of time as ‘natural’” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 7).

- Bart (TransBike Diaries): *As time passes I'm less attracted to the villages and cities, I barely stop in them and I don't take photos of them. I prefer afternoons in nature listening to the water breaking on the shore and the birds. I can spend time thinking without doing anything in particular, I don't feel it like like a waste of time as in the city.*

Furthermore, the difference in time-space compression (Massey, 1994) is a significant part of what constitutes the border city/nature. This was mentioned in different ways by the participants. It is also something that affected their well-being. Moreover, the fact that the

rhythm is slower could be seen as a way to slow down. There is no need to rush to get somewhere, not to a geographical space, not to transition.

- Bart (interview): *I feel that when I'm in the outdoors the things don't move as quickly around you. If you're walking the trees don't move, the mountains don't move. If there's something that moves it's an animal, but is something isolated. Everything moves slowly around you, and you get used to that, your view gets used to that everything is slow and doesn't move so fast, and the noise is different...*

Gender performativity – Let's get wild

We have to pay the 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” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 146), our bodies have feelings of those costs attached to them. Finding safe spaces allows us to empower in our gender identities and expressions.

- Elm: *I get really high in the forest, it's like all the smells...it just makes me feel really alive. [...] If I'm outside it's like my consciousness expands. Everything gets really big and I can feel so much...In periods where I've been really sad, going through crisis, as soon as I get in the forest, as soon as I smell the forest I get really calm and I just feel like really home. I feel safe and home.*

Being able to perform our gender without the surveillance from the city brings calm to our bodies and minds. Letting go the constraints of city life, the self-surveillance over our gender performativity relaxes, and opportunities of new ways of building our bodies appears, as Díaz Carrión (2012) brings up in her research. Rodó-de-Zárate (2016c) asks: “Is comfort acquired when one can express one’s identity or when one does not experience fear of discrimination?” (p. 310).

- Birch: *With my body, I think I have less dysphoria in the mountains, because I focus on other things. And in a hard route, when I have really hard moves I need to do, everything is completely gone, only the moment matters. You don't have the time to worry about all these things that are important in the city...like what can I do to pass or not in this moment, or how can I change my voice to look extra masculine. It doesn't exist in the outdoors. I'm just me,*

I'm a human being. I can just exist.

Another aspect that was brought up by many of the participants was the lack of gender impositions in the outdoors. In addition to open up the possibility to make the space safe, as it was analyzed before, it also affects the constant imposition of gender musts and how our gender expressions should and have to be.

- Oak: *In nature there's no gender. It doesn't matter at all. You pick your clothes by the weather and it has nothing to do with the gender.*

The outdoors can be a social place where there is a flexibility of the canons of the sex-gender system, where they can almost be erased. It is a social space where there is the possibility of breaking and dynamiting the categories of the sex-gender system, something that it is not possible in other contexts. It is not an asocial space, but rather a space where the social has other types of interactions. A few of the participants brought up the aspect of the lack of mirrors in the outdoors, which helps to explain how the social interactions and fear work in this space.

- Alder: *One big thing is also that, I don't normally have a mirror when I go outdoors. And I don't have clothes, you have what you have, that's it. Without mirrors I squeeze less pimples, or worry less about how I look, and I might worry more about how I feel.*

The lack of mirrors in the wilderness shuns the possibility of seeing yourself, but also works as a way of not having the society's eyes on you. With the dearth of the society's look, the bodies expand. While “fear involves shrinking the body; *it restricts the body's mobility precisely insofar as it seems to prepare the body for flight*” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 69, author's emphasis), the comfort of the outdoors opens up the space for the trans bodies to exist. As the social space opens, so does the bodily space.

- Oak: *In the outdoors you don't have any toilets, so you just go to pee in the forest. [...] There's no locker rooms, or people that use clothes to go swimming. You just jump in, jump out. You see a couple of fish and they don't care about what you have.*

The wilderness was described as a porous space in which the sex-gender system has cracks, where other kinds of interaction can be elaborated and are possible. A space of social interaction that allows transgressions to the system, through ‘other’ interactions.

- Bart (interview): *It has also been relevant regarding that it was not relevant (referring to*

their gender). The thing was, that quite often when being outdoors my gender identity wasn't that relevant, it wasn't about who I was, it was more about what we had to do and where we had to go and how to get there.

The way in which nature is lived is different than the city, as it is the way in which we move through them. “For the gender variant, the tyranny of gender intrudes on every aspect of the spaces in which we live and constrains the behaviors that we display” (Doan, 2010, p. 635). The pressure of ‘tyranny of gender’ goes down in the outdoors, which leads to mental relaxation associate to it.

- Alder: *I have issues overthinking, or thinking all the time, and climbing is kind of a meditation, meaning, when I'm climbing I cannot think of anything else. While I'm on the wall, if I'm not concentrated on my body and on the wall then I'm gonna fall. It helps me to be and not think. Cycling is a bit like that...I also think, but it's a very different train of thought, it cannot get so obsessive. It's not that you stop thinking but your thinking is different.*

Empowering ourselves in the outdoors

“Different forms of lived spatiality (the verticality of the city, as opposed to the horizontality of the landscape - at least in the ‘West’) affect the ways in which we live space, and thus our comportment and corporeal orientations and the subject's form of corporeal exertion” (Grosz, 1992, cited in McDowell, 1999, p. 65). This has effects in how we perceive our own bodies, and also in how gender is perceived, performed and arranged.

- Bart (interview): *When I'm outdoors I feel happy, but I also feel strong and it's a mix, I get so happy that I start feeling strong. And when I notice that I start feeling strong, I also get more happy and proud of my body. And I don't feel strong in a macho way, I feel strong in a way that I can survive in that place...*

Trans people are inhabiting the borders of binary gender normativity, and as Mezzadra & Neilson (2013) note, the borders are not a comfortable place to live. “Hatred, anger and exploitations are the prominent features of this landscape” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 19). This has effects in our wellbeing.

- Birch: *I think the outdoors it also helped with depression twice. Just going out, being in the nature, breathing and climb helped a lot for a lot of health issues I had. Overall it gives me a*

sense of peace to be in the mountains or in a forest.

Outdoor activities also empower trans people in their bodies. The fact of being able to believe in your body, to feel it, creates a sense of comfort and self-confidence.

- Bart (TransBike Diaries): *I'm in Aurich, the end of my trip. Tears come to my eyes, I look at my legs, how they move the cranks. This, my body, has brought me here. 14,246km. WOW. I have arrived. I'm here. This is it. Happiness. Joy. I've been able to do it.*

My body became my engine and fuel during the journey. I had to trust it, I had to believe in it. Being able to relax from the gendered cities and having to use our bodies creates a double benefit. Accessing the outdoors for trans people is about allowing our bodies and minds to live. It is also about building lives that are livable.

- Elm: *I feel a kick in the body, high. I get really energetic. I also get really alert, I get much more talkative, because I get energetic. My body becomes functional, and it becomes important for practical reasons. So I have to start taking care of my body in another way, because I need it. So it's a different relationship in that and it's also appreciating it. [...] And it's nice because I start to take care of it and things that I don't like become less important. Like I don't really see them.*

Feelings of dysphoria fade into the background and feelings of belonging in our bodies and the space are present. In the cities our bodies are a target for violence, discrimination and where feelings of erasure might arise. On the other side, when your body is taking you to the places, when you need it to get there, and you are getting positive feedback from that, you start appreciating it.

- Birch: *I feel strong, I feel good about my body because I know, it just did that, it can do that. I'm able to do something, I have muscles, I'm proud of them. I feel a sense of pride, strength and confidence. [...] The whole experience makes you more integrated in your body and I like that. I feel happy about my body when I do a route.*

Moreover, depending on the activity, the body may extend beyond the skin. It becomes an assemblage, in which the body is not only flesh.

- Bart (TransBike Diaries): *Sometimes I look at my legs, the cranks, the bottom bracket, that cyborg assemblage of my body that has brought me here. I look at my cyborg body with incredulity.*

Are we already cyborgs? My body was already a sex cyborg (Haraway, 1991), for which I choose which hormones I want in it. I modified, chose and created my chest, a new chest which feels more mine. Cyborg nipples: cut out, shrank, emptied and put again on the body. We modify our bodies, taking hormones, stopping them. We create cyborg bodies in which we belong. Moreover, my body was also starting to be a mechanical cyborg. I was moving with it without touching the ground, but at the same time being so present.

- Alder: *To be more present in my body, more connected with my body, more aware of what's happening and enjoying those things that are happening.*

- Oak: *I like that I feel a lot, that I feel alive. When I go outdoors I feel winter, rain, I get wet...in the city I never get wet. Plus in the outdoors, in the walking distances, I can feel that I have muscles, blood vessels...I feel more connected with my body because I'm using my body, and in the city I don't use my body, I just sit.*

Finally, I would like to end with a couple of quotes that express the overall idea of the outdoors as a safe space to be yourself as a trans person, without being judged, being able to express ourselves in an open way without being judge by nature.

- Elm: *In the outdoors, it's free there, it's me and my imagination, so I can be whatever I want to.*

- Birch: *For me, it helped a lot to accept myself. In all stages of my life and gender transition I've been outdoors. Nature never judged me, and it always gave me a spot to be free and just exist. There's a lot of good feedback coming from the outdoors.*



6.- Final Ideas and Future Research

I have posed many questions along the text, not with the aim to answer them, but rather to make you think about the kind of social interactions you participate in, how you live those interactions in relation to your gender and what kind of spaces you are producing. In other words, if you are a cis person reading this, I hope I have made you rethink about your privileges. If, on the other hand, you are a trans person, I hope this reading has made you feel related and connected to our experiences, and you were drawn upon going to the outdoors.

Another important aspect that I wanted to highlight with this thesis was what Tuck & Yang (2014) call desire-based research. As they explain, “pain narratives are always incomplete. [...] Desire-centered research does not deny the experience of tragedy, trauma, and pain, but positions the knowing derived from such experiences as wise. [...] Utilizing a desire-based framework is about working inside a more complex and dynamic understanding of what one, or a community, comes to know in (a) lived life” (p. 10). Trans research has tended to center on our pain narratives, as it also shows in the article that was supposed to focus on trans experiences in the outdoors (Grossman et al., 2005). However, I wanted to pay attention to the positive stories that we build, narrate and live. This is not only done regarding the research topic, but also taking care of the methodological aspects. Paying special attention to my methodology was also important to approach, as a way not to portray trans experiences (again) as a spectacle, as lurid knowledge for cis people. This is nicely pointed out also by Tuck and Yang (2014), who ask: “How do we learn from and respect the wisdom and desires in the stories that we (over)hear, while refusing to portray/betray them to the spectacle of the settler colonial gaze?” (p. 2). Breaking the insider/outsider dichotomy, putting the trans people's experiences in the center and combining interviews with autoethnography were some of the actions carried out to achieve that. As Adams & Holman Jones (2011) say: “Perhaps telling the story of the story you can't tell [...] is necessary precisely because they are not sanctioned and, therefore, considered legitimate stories worthy of our attention and respect. And perhaps this is what a reflexively queer autoethnography adds up to, *just* stories, texts that tell and don't tell about bodies literally affecting one another: human bodies, discursive bodies, bodies of thought” (p. 109). It is time to start doing trans research about our stories, the stories that we want to tell and hear (or read), and not the stories that cis people want.

On another note, Rodó-de-Zárate (2016a) explains that the right to the city “is based, on the

one hand, on appropriating the urban space in the sense of the right to use it fully and completely and, on the other, on the right to participation, to take a central role in the decision-making process in relation to the production of urban space” (p. 8, my translation). Thus, I ask, who has the right to the wilderness/outdoors? In my argumentation I argued that condemning trans people to the urban context is ‘killing us softly’, as it creates disempowered subjectivities, which is also affecting our health negatively. In our conversations the participants stressed how, in the wilderness, our gender expression isn't the focus anymore, but rather our movements. The need for social spaces which are in certain degrees de-gendered may actually occur in the outdoors. Strongly gendered places such as public toilets or gender markers like clothes are not anymore so present. Thus, what the outdoors represent is not only going out to nature and breathing, but rather a social space which is in fact more flexible in relation to gender.

This research has also contributed to start thinking and looking at outdoor activities through a different lens. An important aspect of being queer is also about questioning the normativities that exist, and that also implies questioning the ones that remain in nature. The traditional discourse of the outdoors is one of conquering and domination. Cis women are slowly taking up more space in the wilderness, as the literature has shown, although as Laurendeau & Sharara (2008) pointed out, they are picking up white, middle-class and liberal-feminist discourses of participation. However, in this research I aimed to show that our view of nature is different, and our presence in the outdoors is challenging the space and changing how it works. Unmapping these counter-geographies that we create when doing outdoor activities constitutes also an important feminist, anticapitalist and transformative contribution. Katz (2001) explains it as it follows: “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” (p. 1215). Hence, unmapping the geographies of our bodies in doing outdoor activities constitutes an empowering process. Moreover, queer research aims to make substantial contribution to society, as well as support and help to fight against the cis-hetero-pathriarchy. I hope that this research helps to draw new landscapes of the outdoors that escape gender normativities.

Finally, Adams & Holman Jones (2011) say that “we write to leave room for interpretation, for misunderstandings, for not knowing. We write to leave things unfinished and unanswered”

(p. 109). On the last, but not least, part I will think about what the future of this research may have opened doors to, and ideas on how to keep researching and producing knowledge in this area.

Future research routes. Climbing towards new research ideas.

Time and space were some of the limitations I faced while writing this thesis. Moreover, while I was working on it more topics appeared, as well as interesting research ideas or aspects that haven't been looked into them yet. Giving the fact that, as said already, there is a lack of research regarding trans people in the outdoors, these next matters constitute only a small part of what is still to be done.

First of all I would like to highlight that I wasn't able to work as intersectional as I would have wanted with other oppression axes such as race, class and dis/ability. The outdoors and the adventure activities are very often connected with capitalist consumer culture, as well as the separation of work from leisure. Moreover, people of color and people with dis/abilities are also highly underrepresented in the outdoors. Further research should engage with these axes, in addition to queer and trans experiences. Likewise, further research which approaches trans feminine identities in the outdoors is also needed.

Secondly, I believe it is necessary to go further into the idea of the outdoors as a safe space for gender variant people. Further literature about gender and the city could also be added for this, as well as looking deeper into the theories regarding safe spaces. In relation to this, I believe that the application of the methodology of 'Relief Maps' (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013 and 2016b) could provide with significant outcomes in regards to this topic. Relief Maps are a "tool for studying the Geographies of Intersectionality, as they show the relationship between three dimensions: power structures (the social), lived experience (the psychological) and places (the geographical)" (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013, p. 925). The use of this tool would be a way to work on unmapping the counter-geographies that trans people create when doing outdoor activities. Following Katz (2001) idea of contour lines, the Relief Maps "connect places analytically and allow different processes, which might be intersected, to be analyzed" (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2013, p. 940). Moreover, the Relief Maps don't follow a linear structure, as there is no centre and no margin, rather it is a dynamic, fluid complex mixture of margins and centers. Hence, they would be considered as a queer method.

Thirdly, and in a bit of a different direction, I think it would be really interesting applying queer pedagogies into the outdoor pedagogies. I believe there are many issues regarding the break of normativities in both of them, although it is something that outdoor pedagogies haven't paid enough attention to. Significant resemblances exist between them and both could benefit from the experiences of the other.

Lastly, outdoor narratives are impregnated with colonial and misogynist language. Phrases such as 'conquering the mountains' and 'going to virgin mountains' appear in all kinds of outdoor narratives, from movies and books to more academical texts. We do not 'conquer the mountains' and there are no 'virgin territories'. Decolonizing the epistemology of the outdoors, as well as looking into the patriarchal structures that are imbedded in its language, should be a priority.

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8.- Appendices

8.1.- Interview questions

1. Presentation talk for both of us (age, pronouns, what you do, how you identify, etc)
2. What outdoor activities do you participate in now (and or in the past)? How often do you participate? With whom?
3. If you are no longer pursuing adventure/outdoor recreation, what factors influenced you to stop? Would you like to still be doing these activities?
4. Why do/did you want to do these types of activities? Why going to the outdoors? How did you get started? Why do you continue?
5. What are your relations with nature/the natural environment?
6. How has the landscape of mountaineering affect you when imagining yourself going to the outdoors?
7. How do you think that outdoor activities may relate with your gender/gender expression?
8. “Challenging situations often inherent in adventure experiences may help participants develop adaptive systems that will aid them during future uncertain and demanding events” (Overholt & Ewert, 2015, p. 42). How do you relate with this statement? How do you see the significance of outdoor activities in relation to your transition processes?
9. Do you stay in the wilderness for several days? If so, how are your experiences with that?
 1. How do you feel when going back to the city after a few days in the outdoors? (in case you live in the city)
10. How has your gender identity and/or sexual orientation been relevant (to you and/or others) in the outdoors' contexts?
11. How do you see the meanings of outdoor activities in relation to our bodies?
12. As a general closure, have you felt welcomed/ found a place in adventure recreation as

a trans person?

13. Anything you would like to add, something that came to your mind during the interview that you think might be important and that I missed, etc.

8.2.- Autoethnography

- 26th of February: “I’ve had many scares with dogs in these two weeks, it was something I hadn’t considered when preparing the trip. I’m going alone, this time I can’t hide behind someone; many times I don’t know if it’s better to cycle faster, stop, shout at them...For now it seems that I react by accelerating. I think that if I give everything I’m definitely faster than them, or so I hope. I’m quite afraid of loose dogs, in the middle of the field without an owner nearby.”
- 27th of February: “I start cycling and I realize that I have tailwind, and it is very strong. Maybe I’ll go directly to Valladolid, instead of staying halfway and camping.”
- 3rd of March: “I spend the day looking at the sky, it’s supposed to start raining at 2:00 p.m. At 13h I look at the sky and decide that it is still more than an hour until it starts to rain, so I have a quick lunch because 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...”
- 4th of March: “I’m going to meet Alec and Pilar, two good friends from Barcelona who are about to start traveling with their van. I’m also meeting Erik from Zaragoza, a friend and a trans activist. It’s very nice to meet people I know, talk, share...I feel very like myself around these people, I needed it. It’s very nice, pleasant and beautiful to meet people along the way, but they are short, shallow interactions. With beautiful friendships like these, my soul fills more, it makes me happy in another way.”
- 5th of March: “It’s getting dark, I get water and it seems that there’s a small group of trees next to the village chapel to put my tent. Today I feel my tent as my refuge, I need to go in and feel safe, wrapped up in it. As time passes, I’m starting to feel it more like my room, a room that comes with me on a trip. I recognize its “walls”, everything has its place, it shelters me.”

- 8th of March: “I start the 8th of March going to the doctor to do an analytic to control my hormone levels and get the recipes for the injection of Testex 250. Because of logistical reasons of space and weight, I cannot take my Testogel for this trip. I have to find six doses of a medication that is not currently supplied, which means that I walk around 25-30 pharmacies in Sant Antoni and El Raval for two hours until I have them all. I go back to the CAP so that the nurse can teach me how to inject myself, first time I'm going to puncture myself. On the first try the needle does not penetrate, but the second time works.”
- 11th of March: “It's curious how much one can miss mirrors when there are none.”
- 12th of March: “It's as if I already wanted to finish, as if I didn't feel like cycling for 5 more months to get there.”
- 12th of March: “It's curious how I always know on what numerical day I am thanks to this diary, but I have completely lost the notion of the day of the week. For me now, a Monday, Friday or Sunday are the same, they no longer have that normative burden of the routine of the cities, it is so relaxing.”
- 18th of March: “I am sleeping very close to civilization and I do not feel safe.”
- 19th of March: “I find easily a place to camp, next to a river (surrounded by snow) that I take advantage of to wash my hair and armpits, as well as the dishes. How cold is the water! Today I write listening to the river. I feel very much in the mountains and it's fabulous, it fills me with happiness.”
- 24th of March: “I feel so happy cycling.”
- 25th of March: “At some point along the way, I get a little lost, with the good luck of ending up on a paved bike path next to a canal that goes in the my direction. Is it possible to get lost when you do not have a destination or a set way?”
- 25th of March: “I really want to sleep in the safety and intimacy of my tent. To find refuge in my tent: my house.”
- 26th of March: “I rest much better in the tent than when I sleep in a roofed area of a town.”

- 27th of March: “Today I don't talk with almost anyone all day, and I don't need it either, every time I get less bored thinking alone.”
- 30th of March: “At least the dead will not bother me.”
- 1st of April: “Today I rode the bike and let my legs flow, without forcing them. I leave things prepared and go down to the beach. I sit on the shore, I put my feet in the water, and without a T-shirt I write these lines while having a snack, while I warm myself in the sun and listen to the sea in this paradisiacal beach.”
- 2nd of April: “It was a windy night, and I'll have a very windy day, in all directions except for tailwind. I take it with patience, it will be more bike hours, fewer stops, but in the end I will do kilometers and the day will pass. In the end, I think I prefer the wind to the rain that threatens the next few days.”
- 3rd of April: “As I cross the border to Bosnia and Herzegovina they ask me if I have something to declare; alcohol, tobacco, medicines. I hope they believe me and do not look for it, I have 4 doses of testosterone with me that are quite probably illegal.”
- 5th of April: “Why are the borders always on the highest part of the mountains? I had a huge climb to get out of Bosnia, it was almost endless.”
- 6th of April: “We have breakfast and leave together. It's weird, I feel like I'm not going to have the freedom to do whatever I want whenever I want. It has been interesting to be able to talk along the way, and we have shared interesting conversations...Life is like going by bike, there are uphill but you always know that it will end and go down, that the effort and work it's going to be worth.”
- 6th of April: “I spend the afternoon thinking about loneliness, what it means for me, in resignifying the negative charge that I have associated with it. I love being alone, so why be afraid of loneliness?”
- 7th of April: “I appreciate being back alone, to keep thinking about it. I like to be alone, but loneliness scares me, I relate it to what is not chosen, to death without anyone knowing.”
- 9th of April: “The weather is nice, it's sunny and a little hot, without it being too much,

but I feel dirty and I feel the salty sweat on my skin.”

- 10th of April, Hostel in Sarandë, Albania: “I think I haven't been in a place surrounded by so many people since I started the trip. I think this is a bit too much socialization for me, I stay quiet and I speak little.”
- 12th of April: “Today is one of those days that I feel I have done, enjoyed and experienced so much, that it couldn't have been more. I feel happy.”
- 13th of April: “I cook rice with some spring onions that I found on the side of the road today, it's delicious.”
- 16th of April: “When I'm arriving in Athens, tears of emotion come to my eyes. I cannot believe I'm here, a part of me thought I wouldn't make it, but here I am...the Acropolis is already there.”
- 19th of April: “I want to sleep in my tent, I had already the idea that I would be sleeping in it for 4 nights, and in the end it will be only 2. I really enjoy the nights of refuge in it.”
- 21st of April: “During the night there were animals grazing around me, and I spent the night with the paranoia that they were going to eat my bicycle. In addition, I also dreamt that a man was coming to steal my bike, the dream was very violent.”
- 21st of April: “My host today has quite a few very straight details in her conversation, it seems strange after my queer stay in Athens.”
- 27th of April: “After the border with Bulgaria, a long descent awaits me, in which I shout with astonishment at the breathtaking views. When turning around, in front of me huge, snowy mountains appear, surrounded by other green and wooded mountains, and a lake just before them.”
- 30th of April: “It will be a day of going through small towns and many stops, some quite long. Luckily, all the towns have a bus stop where I can have refuge, with three walls and a roof. I don't let the rain bitter my day, I decide to enjoy it. I stop, I listen to it, I look at it...I take two long naps listening to it.”
- 1st of May: “I take water and I go to look for a place to sleep. I find a place that I like

just above the cemetery of a village. I hope to be able to spend the night here. I like cemeteries, they're beautiful, quiet and have a special energy. Every day I see death: snails, lizards, bees, bumblebees, snakes, hedgehogs, rabbits, cats, dogs, foxes, squirrels, otters, owls, birds...in all states. Then there are the plaques for deaths in traffic accidents. In Greece they were every km, here in Serbia they're always accompanied by photos. There are so many...I have death very present in this journey that gives me life.”

- 2nd of May: “And in spite of everything, it doesn't matter, the days are perfect as they are.”
- 3rd of May: “The hardest part of this trip is the lack of physical contact, I miss a good hug, touching, feeling another person nearby. Greetings with a strong hug.”
- 4th of May: “I go for a walk with my hosts in Belgrade. We're meeting a Chilean and a guy from the Canary Islands (he's also traveling by bike). The latter one leaves immediately, and the Chilean talks too much. It's getting very late, I'm falling asleep. She's worried about me (my host), because when I'm so tired I shut up and I look very antisocial. The Chilean guy and his macho comments make me miss my loneliness.”
- 9th of May - Transforming through sport: “For me, transitioning is a journey, maybe it has a beginning, but it is a journey without an end, a journey to enjoy throughout my whole life. This trip that I'm now doing has a beginning, yes; and I think it also has an ending, I'll see it when it arrives; but it's also a journey to enjoy it, and that I do as a means of self-care, just as it was, and it is, to transition.

On February 13th 2013 was the first day that I applied testosterone gel to my body. Interestingly, also on February 13th, but in 2017, I took the bicycle in Malaga and started a trip that is taking me along and through numerous countries and cultures in Europe.

It's a challenge with myself, with my body, to listen to it and to see how far it can go. There were fears and doubts, but I didn't want to let them lead my life, I want to be the one who decides over my body, my life, and my way of living it. There are times when I wonder why I am doing this, what is the point of this trip. Then I meet other trans/queer/feminist activists on my way and I give meaning to this trip, to the

different ways of being trans and experiences in each country.

I arrive in Athens. I'm in the Panathenaic stadium, where the first Modern Olympic Games were held, there's a special energy. I have cycled 8 weeks and 6300km since I left Malaga to come here, or has the way until here meant more than being here? I may never be an Olympic athlete, but for me, this trip is meaning much more than that. The corridors to the changing rooms are in what was an ancient cave where women did witchcraft, you can feel that magic, along with the energy of the athletes who walked here to try to get as far as possible with their bodies. The body...so present sometimes in trans lives, so present in sport, and the engine and fuel in this journey, my body.

Many times I'm aware that it's much easier for me because people read me as a man, but sometimes I'm afraid...what if I get caught "going to the bathroom" (which has happened several times) and then they follow me? I'm crossing borders with a passport that says that I'm a woman, and although I've changed the name, I know I can have problems. For now I have been in Montenegro, Bosnia, Albania, Macedonia...but the fear comes back on each border: Do you have alcohol? Drugs? Medicines? "No, no" (and I think, well, 5 doses of testosterone, which I don't even know if they are legal in this country...).

The journey continues, my transition continues."

- 12th of May: "I don't feel like taking a shower at the gas station, so I take water and go to a nearby forest. I'm happy, I run forest up and forest down to find a place to camp...it doesn't seem like I have done more than 100km by bike today, the forest gives me so much energy. It starts to rain and I quickly go into my tent, leaving everything half way done outside. I identify the sound of the birds searching for food among the dry leaves, it sounds a bit like human footsteps. Finally it stops raining and I can go out to finish preparing everything. As I write, I hear the roar of a deer, strong...I turn and see it, it's looking at me, it "speaks" to me. Oh fuck. He surrounds me, 'talking to me' and leaves.

And everything is green around me.

I love forests."

- 20th of May: "I arrive in Prague early, and go to a street festival where I meet up with

Viktor, a person from the trans association in Prague. There is a queer bar and trans events throughout the day. I enjoy being able to share with other trans people, chat and rest.”

- 2nd of June: “As soon as I stop, hordes of mosquitoes start attacking me. This is starting to worry me a lot, and it scares me. I had been warned about Finland and Sweden, but not about Poland, but if this is how it's gonna be the rest of my trip...”
- 3rd of June: “Today I thank the headwind, because with wind the existence of mosquitoes is more complicated. Today I haven't had problems with mosquitoes at any break, just with the bites that I already have.”
- 3rd of June: “This is a special cemetery, at night some tombs have an artificial candle that is lit, with a yellowish tone. The hedge next to me reflects in my tent, and moves with the wind. All this is exciting, and I enjoy the calm and beauty.”
- 5th of June: “As time passes I'm less attracted to the villages and cities, I barely stop in them and I don't take photos of them. I prefer afternoons in nature listening to the water breaking on the shore and the birds. I can spend time thinking without doing anything in particular, I don't feel it like like a waste of time as in the city.”
- 6th of June: “I slept in a forest, and last night I had a nightmare. Wild animals, wolves, boars, elks, deers, bears and even a lion began to come. Everyone is in this forest. After surviving somehow to all of them, a herd of cows comes. 2-3 of them start to touch my tent, they end up rolling over it and breaking it. My tent is broken. I was very scared. In the end it looks like the cemeteries are the best place, also against my fears.”
- 6th of June: “I feel like I'm always fighting the wind. It's as if my motivation is carried away by the wind.”
- 6th of June: “They say it's the way, sometimes it's the places. Yesterday's beach, that bath, is still in my head. I find places and I lose them. I know people and I lose them. Sometimes I do not know if I'm winning or losing more during this trip.”
- 7th of June: “I had a nightmare again, this time a woman came to steal my bike, I go out of the tent taking off my eye-mask, I take her and threw her down an

embankment.”

- 17th of June: “The place is perfect to spend the afternoon, a meadow, a small entrance to the lake, sun and grass. I spend the afternoon sitting in my underpants, without the glasses on and walking barefoot on the lawn. It was a long time ago since I felt the ground under my feet. I love it, that direct connection with nature.”
- 21st of August* (actually June): “The wind is very cold, and I will have it against me practically all day. And rain, running away from it all day. For a moment the cloud on my left was going behind me, and ahead of me I had others that were leaving before I arrived, but just right where I was it was not raining. I escape the rain, but it drains me mentally to run away from it.”
- 22nd of August* (actually June): “I'm cycling with my friend, we go next to each other talking. It's strange to talk so much to someone, but I feel it nice too. Company, company that I know and with whom I feel safe.”
- 7th of July: “I feel a deep sense of loneliness, I find it hard to think that tomorrow I have to go back to cycling alone, without the company of my friend.”
- 8th of July: “Loneliness on a bicycle is a good companion. It allows me to listen to my body and observe my way. They're my traveling companion. Today I'm accompanied by the beauty and energy of this place. Can the energy of a place accompany me? Its silence? I feel this company.”
- 10th of August: “My second night was in Seville, surrounded by good friends. My penultimate night is in a cemetery, surrounded by dead people, in this tent, which has become my room. Its walls represent everyday life, refuge, security, it's my space, and I'll miss it so much.”
- 11th of August: “Sometimes I look at my legs, the cranks, the bottom bracket, that cyborg assemblage of my body that has brought me here. I look at my cyborg body with incredulity.”
- 12th of August: “I'm in Aurich, the end of my trip. Tears come to my eyes, I look at my legs, how they move the cranks. This, my body, has brought me here. 14,246km. WOW. I have arrived. I'm here. This is it. Happiness. Joy. I've been able to do it.”

- 15th of August: “I'm going to miss my bike, and my cyborg body...my body extended beyond my skin, and my feet were just one more part, the one that boosted me indirectly, without even touching the ground.”

8.3.- Interview to Bart

I'm 28 years old. I started going to the outdoors when I was little with my parents, so my first contact going outdoors and hiking it was with my parents and with my sister. My father carried me with a backpack and when I could walk a little bit I started also walking...and then when I was eleven years old I entered a mountaineering club on my neighborhood and there I also started climbing and I started going more camping, although I had already being camping with my parents before, but here it was more often that we went camping, at least once every two or three months we went for a weekend camping and then we usually did some trekking or hiking and we went up to a mountain usually, most of the time we were going up to the summit of some mountain.

[...] This mountaineering club had an inside climbing wall, and I used to go there on Saturdays to go climbing a little bit, and side bouldering. And then cycling has always also being a big part of my life, my first long cycling trip was also with my parents when I was sixteen years old, and it was in the Netherlands and the north of Germany, and then I started going with them once every two years more or less, to some cycling trips, so mostly I would say that my first connections with the outdoor activities were with my parents and through my mountaineering club. Nowadays, I go cycling, hiking, climbing, bouldering, skiing...I've also been skiing since I was eleven, but that is something that I've never done with my parents.

[...] At the beginning it was things that I did with my parents, so I didn't really think about it, because it was like: “we're doing this, and we're doing that” so I was their child and I was doing those things with them. When I entered the mountaineering club that was already a little bit more of a conscious decision, they asked me if wanted to go, although they actually pushed me a little bit because I was really shy, so it was very to shy to go there and meet many people, I was very shy, so they pushed me a little bit, but I wanted to go so it was already a conscious thing. I really wanted to be more outdoors and I wanted to do more hiking trips so I really enjoyed it.

[...] I'm still doing outdoor activities, it depends... My last year, it has depended a lot of where I was living if I did more or less, so the last three years have been more significant, between 2016 and 2019. In 2016 I was actually doing a Master degree in Outdoor Tourism Management, so I would say that about every two or three weekends a month we would go outdoors, so then I was doing a lot, and it also was a way for me to realize that I was actually really missing that, because before I was living in Barcelona and I was really disconnected from the outdoors when I was living there. So it was a way to come back to the outdoor activities and to realize how much I was missing them and how much I needed it. After that, I was for six months on a cycling trip, so then it was six month of outdoor actually, it was like a lot (Bart makes a little laugh of excitement). After that, I moved to Göteborg, and actually that was last year 2018 and that year actually was a year where I did quite a lot in relation to hiking trips, I didn't do any cycling trips but I did more hiking and also did more climbing in the city. In Göteborg I do more indoor climbing and then, the thing is that for going hiking or some outdoor trip, last year I went mostly to north Spain, to the Pyrenees, to go hiking and I did a few trekking trips. This year I went skiing a couple of times, I think if I would have more money I would do it more often, like I need money and time. The thing is that I only get paid if I work, if I don't work I don't get paid, so it's like even though I might have money, if I go somewhere that time I'm not going to earn any money, I'm just going to spend, it's not like another kind of job where you get paid during the holidays, my holidays are not being paid.

[...] Göteborg has a good thing is that I live two minutes walking distance from a forest, so feel like I'm closer to nature than any other place, in any other city, that I've lived in. That's something that actually comforts me, if I don't go to an adventure outdoor trip I feel like I'm craving it. And I become a little bit obsessed with that.

[...] When I'm in the wilderness, I would say that it's when I feel most like myself. It's when I feel that I'm myself. I get super happy, that's one thing. When I'm in nature it's the best version of myself, and if I want someone to really know me, you won't really know me until you see me outdoors, cycling or hiking somewhere, it's the best version of myself. And I also feel confident and secure, I feel safe, and curious. I think nature has this thing that enhances your curiosity, there are so many little things that you can see, that you can hear, that can smell, or feel...all of that. When you're in the city, just walking and doing things you don't

smell or hear or feel the things around you, while in the wilderness you let yourself go and feel.

[...] It's about what there is. There are no expectations in the same way as there are in the city. In the city you are expected to act in a certain way, dress in a certain way, be in a certain way, while in the outdoors, those expectations are not there anymore, you're not so much immersed in the society, but you're immersed in nature and nature doesn't have those expectations from you.

[...] Being in nature, I get to breathe, in a mental, physical and psychological way, I get to breathe. The air is better there, but mentally you get also relaxed from the city, so your mind gets to breathe. And when your body is breathing, your mind is breathing, you're physiologically breathing in a different way, it's more metaphorically than physically.

[...] When I was growing up, I was raised as a girl, and I identified as a girl for many years, so when I was growing up for me it was about seeing other women being outdoors, other women climbing. For example, in climbing I felt I couldn't do it because I was a woman. When I was a child I only saw guys climbing and, for example, even in the mountaineering club it was very mixed, it wasn't a majority of guys or something like that, but when we started climbing, most of the people that were climbing were the guys not the girls, the girls weren't climbing. So, for example, I couldn't imagine pursuing climbing in a harder way. For hiking, I think for me it's very evident that the kind of bodies that you see are cis, fit guys. That's what you have to be. When you're looking at high-altitude mountaineering it's a lot of older cis men, they are 50-60 years old, pretty old, so I thought it was maybe something that I couldn't do until I was super old...I thought maybe, yeah...you get better when you're old so why should I try this now when I'm only a teenager, if people that are outdoors are 40 years older than I am. One thing that helped me is that in Spain there is a mountaineer called Edurne Pasaban, and she was a role model for me growing up. I tried to look for female role models, so I had a cyclist role model too. In regards to doing cyclist trips, for me has also stopped me the fact that when you're raised as a woman, you also learn to be scared of doing things alone, of going camping alone, of going on a trip alone...things are going to happen to you, and actually nowadays I feel that more things can happen to you in a city than when being in the outdoors, there are less people there. There are less chances that something happens.

[...] When I decided to physically transition, it was more about the fact if I could continue

doing sports in the same way. But the thing is that, when I started to transition, it was more about other kinds of sports, that I had some issues, like if I want to participate in a popular course like a running course or something, then I need to be like male or female to register, I was like, I won't be able to do that. When going to the outdoors I didn't have that problem, I didn't have to register as male or female to go on a hiking trip, it didn't matter. I just go there and hike with a group of people, we're not competing, there are no categories. When I go hiking it's a different experience than other sports, that I've practiced or practice nowadays. So that was something that I knew that I wasn't going to lose that. Actually, when I started taking testosterone I thought that I was going to lose many other sports that I did and wanted to do, but mountaineering, and hiking and cycling I knew I wasn't going to lose that. I didn't know how it was going to be, I didn't have any role models, but I knew I would be able to continue, and that was good. Maybe I'll lose that part of my sport life, but I'm going to still having the other one. Also, I don't compete in climbing or haven't really done that in a serious way.

[...] I studied sports sciences, and I used to think that if I took hormones I was not going to be able to compete again, that I was never going to have those things again.

[...] When you go to the outdoors people would dress more similarly. The clothes that you use, you think about if they're practical, useful, comfortable...and even though when you go to a shop to look for clothes, if they're gendered, they look pretty similar, the colors are different. Because I was very tomboy, so when I went outdoors I didn't feel so different. Everyone was dressing more or less in the same way. I'm thinking of the trips that I did with my mountaineering club, most of the girls were dressing in men clothes, just because 20 years ago there weren't that many outdoor shops or outdoor clothes in Spain, so it was more about what it was comfortable.

Somehow, with the gender expression that I had as a teenager, I felt more free than when I was in the city, where it was more evident that my gender expression was different, people looked more at me because of that, and in the outdoors I was not so targeted, and that also felt good. This is a very personal experience, but in my mountaineering club, because when you're in the scouts, in some places there are girl-scouts and boy-scouts, but in another places, or in a summer camp, they very often segregate where you sleep between boys and girls. But actually, in my mountaineering club, even though it was in a catholic school and religion was

a big part of it, we weren't segregated in relation to our gender, not in the tent, not when we were in a hostel, we all slept mixed. I think that's a very special experience that not many people have with other mountaineering clubs. Even nowadays, when you go somewhere during a hiking trip, and you're gonna go to sleep, it's like girls with girls and guys with guys, in the tent or dormitory. I didn't have that in my mountaineering club, and I really liked that. Sometimes I went to other summer camps, where the sleeping facilities were segregated, that produced some kind of anxiety in me. In my mountaineering club, if we were segregated it was by age, which makes a more sense, and nobody questioned it, that we were gender-mixed, even though it was quite catholic.

[...] There are some things, in my experiences of going outdoors, where gender is not so important. Even now, the cycling trips that I have done with my parents, and in those everyone slept also together, it's not about men on one side and women on another. Everyone sleeps in the same space. If we sleep in tents, we sleep with whoever we share the tent with during the trip, and if we sleep in common areas, every one sleeps in a common area. Sometimes there's just one bathroom and everyone uses that bathroom and that shower, and that's not a big thing. I'm trying to think of the hiking trips, for example "la Carros de Foc", in the mountain refugees there's just one space where everyone sleeps. It wasn't about our gender, and I feel it's like that quite often in the outdoors.

[...] The activity of the new mountaineering club that I went there in October, when we decided who sleeps with whom, it wasn't about the gender wither. When climbing, the climbing partner is also more about the ability and not about the gender.

[...] When you're hiking, or in an adventure trip of any type, there are a lot of things that can come up, and you have to come up with solutions to those problems, small things... sometimes when you're going up a mountain it's difficult, you're tired, you think why am I doing this, why am I here, or why am I walking, or my feet hurt, it's too hoy, or too cold and rainy, there are many things. But then, for me, I know that at the end of the day I'm going to be super happy. It doesn't matter if I end up going up the mountain or not, but I'm gonna be happy that I tried, and I'm gonna be happy about the experience. Sometimes you go and you don't manage to go up all the way as you had planned. There are many things that come up, or problems, but it's about knowing that at the end is gonna be good and you're gonna be happy. With transitionning is more or less the same, although there's no end, but there are many steps.

So at the end of a step, even though many things can happen along the way, at the end you know you're gonna be happy.

[...] It's also about keep going when you don't feel at your best moment. You keep going, it's difficult but you keep going, it's like transitioning, it's hard, but you keep going .

[...] I go quite often and I stay overnight and I've done it with my parents, alone, with friends in different countries, with tent and without a tent, in a vivac. I really like it, I think it's much better than just going and coming back the same day.

[...] When I come back to the city I feel noise. One of the first things that I notice, is the noise, the cars, mostly, but also buses and trams, it depends from the city. There's a lot of noise and fast movements. I feel that when I'm in the outdoors the things don't move as quickly around you. If you're walking the trees don't move, the mountains don't move. If there's something that moves it's an animal, but is something isolated. Everything moves slowly around you, and you get used to that, your view gets used to that everything is slow and doesn't move so fast, and the noise is different...you can hear the water, the wind, you can hear the mountains. But it's a different kind of noise, in the cities there's noise and there are a lot of movements, and that feels overwhelming. It's too much noise, too much movement. It also depends from the city, but I'm thinking Sevilla and Barcelona, they don't have many green areas, everything is more like brownish, and the smell is different in the city too. I'd say that I feel overwhelmed by all of these things. Also, when I go back to the city, I start to feel again all the pressure from society, all the expectations, all the things that I have to do. It's like, I've been a few days in the outdoors and I haven't thought about all the things that I have to do. It's the moment I get back to the city I start to remember the things that I have to do, this thing for next week, etc. While in the outdoors, you're just being there.

[...] For one part, my gender was relevant with the fact that I was stopping myself when I identified as a woman, I thought that many thing weren't possible for me because I was a woman. It has also been relevant regarding that it was not relevant. The thing was, that quite often when being outdoors my gender identity wasn't that relevant, it wasn't about who I was, it was more about what we had to do and where do we had to go and how to get there. But also it has been relevant, because every time I go to a hiking trip with people that I don't know, I think about it. About the strategy that I will have to do to be safe during that trip. I don't know what kind of people I'm going to meet, I don't know if they're going to be open or

not, if they are going to be transphobic, or homophobic or whatever. I don't know the kind of things that I'm going to encounter when being to the outdoors with other people that I don't know from before. Because if I go with friends, I know that if something happens I'm going to have support, that I'm not gonna be alone, they are going to be there for me. But if I'm going alone, by myself, I know that I'm gonna have to pretend to be cis to be safe, during most of the trip, if not the entire trip to feel safe. Having to pretend to be cis when going with other people it has two parts. For one part, I have to think more how I act and I have to think about my gender expression and somehow perform a cis man gender, but it's also a way of not having to deal with transphobic stuff that may occur, so it's a way to just enjoy the trip and enjoy being in the outdoors without my gender identity coming in the middle. Because if I'm going to go with a group of eight people that don't know and probably they are going to be cis and straight, and if I come out as trans and queer, that might become a big part of the trip and I don't want that. I wanna be hiking, I wanna be with myself, I want to enjoy just being outdoors without having to deal with that, with people that I don't know. Probably if I were cis I would go to more hiking trips with strangers because that wouldn't be an issue, but because I'm trans, every time that I do that I take a conscious decision that I really, really wanna do that trip, or need to go outdoors. So it doesn't matter that I'll have to be with cis straight people. But I do prefer going with friends, with people I know, or going alone, because then I don't have to perform any gender identity.

[...] I was very proud of my body, of taking me to those places, that I could do it. There were some years that I actually almost didn't go outdoors, but it was also the years that I didn't care about my body, it was the years where I was very confused, it was the years I started to know that I didn't identify as a woman, where I was questioning everything about my gender identity, and those years I didn't feel well. I started going again when I was feeling better. During those years, I didn't feel that my body could do those things, and when I started hiking and climbing and doing all those things again, I started to feel proud again of my body and the things that it could do, and the places it could take me. I feel strong in the outdoors, whereas in the city very often I don't feel that strong. When I'm outdoors I feel happy, but I also feel strong and it's a mix, I get so happy that I start feeling strong. And when I notice that I start feeling strong, I also get more happy and proud of my body. And I don't feel strong in a macho way, I feel strong in a way that I can survive in that place...I think it's a mix of strength and agility. I think that for climbing, hiking or cycling you not only need to be

strong, you need a body that can move in an unstable ground. There's no stability because in the outdoors everything changes the whole time, that's also nice, everything changes, you're not expecting something. In the city, there's a moment when you know the streets or where the things are, where you live, but in the outdoors is a different scenario, and even though you go to a place many times there are things that change, a tree can fall, it's a different season, etc. so it's not as stable as the city.

[...] as a Trans person I haven't really found a place in outdoor recreation. I've felt welcomed because I've created and made my space, but I haven't felt welcome as a trans person and I had to fight for it, more than if I were cis.

[...] When you're for a longer time in the outdoors your rhythm changes. Whatever activity you're doing, you wake up, you have breakfast, you walk or cycle, you eat when you're hungry, and then you get to the place where you're gonna spend the night, you set up the tent or whatever you need to prepare to be overnight there. It's kind of a different routine than in the city. You go more with the day...if you're doing something in the winter the days are shorter, so you're days are gonna be shorter and so on. In the city you keep going, it doesn't matter if it's day or night, there are some things that are done. It's about what time it is, that the shops are going to be open or not, it's not about if it's day or night. It might be in the winter and it's dark, but the shops are open because it's 6pm. While outdoors, the things that happen go with the light.