

Calibrating the go-along for the Anthropocene

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This article contends that the ‘go-along’ contains more technical and ontological agility as a methodology for social research than is often assumed. After distinguishing central spectrums of technical and ontological agility rooted in different research designs and philosophical orientations, I examine how researchers can nourish it while refining the go-along’s moral purpose in the context of environmental and related mobility crises that define the Anthropocene. I argue researchers can cultivate the go-along’s agility and moral purpose by deploying it with quantitative context, comparing go-along case studies, moving past human supremacism and illuminating ecologically just forms of mobility that respect other species of life and their habitats. To show one way that the go-along can accomplish these things, I present two vignettes of cycling in urban Canada, drawing on a mobile video ethnography of cycling, a funded study in sociology, conducted between 2014 and 2018.

Keywords: go-along, mobile methods, cycling, cities, Canada

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Introduction

“Rampant road building has split the Earth’s land into 600,000 fragments, most of which are too tiny to support significant wildlife.” (Carrington 2006)

Go-along methodology – whereby scholars accompany their subjects on their journeys and focus on what they say, feel and/or do on the move – is fast becoming one of the most popular ways of

conducting mobile social research. Its growing salience owes in part to the “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry, 2006). Rooted in sociology, geography and other disciplines, the new mobilities paradigm challenges utilitarian and positivistic understandings of movement that tend to dominate urban planning, engineering and economics. Responding to the growing complexity and stakes with which sapiens, ideas and objects flow around earth, the new mobilities paradigm has successfully cultivated the go-along as a central tool within a larger, innovative suite of “mobile methods” (Büscher et al., 2011). Mobile ethnographers, in particular (Kusenbach, 2003; Jiron, 2011; Spinney, 2015; Vannini and Vannini, 2017), have been at the forefront of deploying walk-alongs and ride-alongs (two archetypical go-along methods) to advance social research. However, the go-along transcends ethnography (Carpiano, 2009), and is increasingly used across a wide variety of fields, from migration, tourism and transport studies to research on health, LGBTQ youth and dis/ability (Porta et al., 2017; Castrodale, 2018).

Despite the growing popularity of go-along methodology (hereafter simply the go-along), investigations into its theory and practice remain surprisingly sparse. Building on the most systematic of these investigations (Kusenbach, 2003; Carpiano, 2009; Spinney, 2015), this article seeks to refine the go-along while also highlighting its potential to help people understand and respond to the world’s most pressing problems: the biodiversity losses, climate catastrophes and related mobility crises that define the Anthropocene (Sheller, 2018). In this article I advance the argument that the go-along contains more technical and ontological variation, or what I call agility, than is often assumed. Furthermore, I suggest this agility offers a core strength of the go-along, and ought to be nourished along with the go-along’s moral purpose. By adding its moral purpose, I am suggesting the ends for which researchers deploy the go-along are as important as

the means in which they do so. To support this argument, I canvas previous literature that either deploys or directly examines the go-along, pulling out its central features in theory and practice, before synthesizing the go-along's strengths and limitations. I contend that researchers can nourish the go-along's technical agility by incorporating the go-along into pragmatic approaches to mixed methods (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005), following links between personalized practices and their socio-environmental contexts, and deploying multiple contexts as cases for comparison (Larsen, 2014). As for refining the go-along's ontological dexterity and moral purpose, I argue researchers can accomplish these goals by expanding attention to more-than-human entanglements (Kymlicka, 2018) and by adopting ecologically good forms of mobility, as both an object and vehicle for research, that acknowledge and respect other species of life and their habitats.

To showcase the go-along's central agilities, after synthesizing the go-along's strengths and limitations I present the case of cycling as an example of an ecologically good object and vehicle for go-along research. Drawing on a recently completed, mobile video ethnography of city cycling in Canada (Scott, 2016, 2020), I offer two vignettes, one on the sociotechnical practice of cycling and the other on moral ways of cycling that engage different visions of the good city. Together these vignettes show how the go-along can advance practical and philosophical insights on adapting to life on a fractured planet with less and less inhabitable land. They also illustrate how the act of advancing these ecological insights can, in turn, calibrate the go-along for pressing social research in the Anthropocene.

What is important to the go-along in theory and practice?

In practice, all go-alongs require mobility. But exactly how researchers “go along” depends on a number of variables, notably mode of travel, the mobility skills of the researcher and research participants, the nature of the terrain(s) in which they are moving and the purpose of the go-along itself. While moving together, the researcher and participants generally engage in an unstructured or semi-structured dialogue about the people, spaces and places they encounter and other topics connected to, or inspired by, the journey. By observing and inquiring about people’s mobile practices as they actually unfold *in situ*, researchers and participants can more readily explore and deeply reflect upon the latter’s stream of perceptions, memories and experiences and how these relate to, and flow from, specific social and material contexts. Before delving deeper into variations among go-alongs, I turn to a particular example, a study of cycling that forms the basis of my analytical vignettes presented later in the article, to show the go-along’s conventional phases.

Between 2014 and 2018 I used go-alongs to explore how people successfully accomplish everyday travel through cycling in a car dominated context (Canada). I started with a short discussion before disembarking to build rapport and gather baseline details on my participants’ biographies. While talking in their homes, workplaces and yards, I was also able to observe how they plan for, and imagine, their voyage beforehand. Once on the move, I experimented early on in my research with different distances and positions in relation to my participants (e.g. cycling directly behind, parallel and on the rear side). This allowed me to find optimal configurations for tracking and recording cyclists of varying skills and paces in my sample, and to identify vantage points from which I could collect data that addressed my research question. I found that, in general, moving back and forth between a position closely behind and on the rear side of people

cycling, while recording them with a single, wide lens camera fixed on top of my helmet, afforded opportunities for dialogue and a flexible, first-person video perspective that met my needs. I then used the footage, loaded on a laptop, as a prompt in video-elicitation interviews shortly after the ride. In so doing, I was able to pose follow up questions about specific moments during the voyage that for reasons of traffic or noise were difficult or impossible to discuss while moving, and also probe into fleeting experiences of which participants were not fully cognizant. This three-phase model—biographical discussion, recorded voyage and post-voyage interview—covers the conventional phases in conducting the go-along. However, other models are possible.

Two core spectrums of variation in go-along research entail level of technological mediation and natural-versus-contrived research design. Some go-alongs rely on the researcher's senses, memory and note-taking, refraining from recording audio and/or visual data. While this may in some cases reflect the preference of the researcher, more often it reflects some practical constraint in the field whereby recording devices are either infeasible or inappropriate. For example, while going along with children on their way to school in sub-Saharan Africa to better understand their future life chances, Porter et al. (2010, p. 94) avoided tape-recording because it threatened to shift open-ended interviews toward the researchers' own observations rather than those of their young, often shy respondents. In another example, Gallagher and Prior (2017), during a group listening walk in Edinburgh, not only refrained from using their phones but also asked participants to stow away theirs, so they could all listen to the city in a different, deeper way.

On the other side of the technological spectrum, many go-alongs rely on mediation through increasingly sophisticated recording devices. Again, this primarily reflects practical

considerations of getting closer to experiences that would otherwise be difficult, if not impossible, to access. For instance, Spinney (2011) and Popan (2018) analyzed cycling practices using mobile video data. Their capacity to go back and pause, fast-forward, rewind and edit video, and use it as a prompt to elicit further insights in post-go-along interviews, expanded their access to fleeting and embodied aspects of cycling. Vannini and Vannini (2017, p. 181) see such technological interventions as crucial, arguing that “cameras, lenses, filters, field recorders, shotgun microphones equipped with windscreens, and related technologies are increasingly becoming recognized as essential tools of the walk-along method.” If cinema mediates a richer way of elucidating what it is like to walk somewhere with someone, it demands a rather skillful go-along practice. Walking with a videocamera entails unique rhythms, technique, fatigue and relations with weather (Vannini and Vannini, 2017, pp. 183-184). The same goes for cycling (McIlvenny, 2015), flying (Vannini, 2017) and other ways of moving with a camera (Brown et al., 2008). As technology for the go-along continues to evolve – from GPS-enabled electroencephalogram and galvanic skin response sensors (Spinney, 2015) to lightweight and discrete eye-tracking glasses (Simpson et al., 2018) – researchers enjoy ever more ways to “bear witness” to pre-contemplative aspects of life-on-the-move.

A second central spectrum of variation in go-along practices runs from naturalistic walks and rides, rooted in subjects’ familiar routines, to more contrived go-alongs, where researchers influence, if not actively direct, where and how subjects move together (Vannini and Scott, forthcoming). This spectrum comes with a notable tilt: most go-alongs adopt a naturalistic research design. This tilt could reflect the fact that systematic investigations of go-along methodology (Kusenbach, 2003; Carpiano, 2009) define it as such, contending that go-alongs

ought to only follow subjects' familiar settings and avoid novel places and spaces. Kusenbach, in her seminal account (2003, pp. 464-63) argues, "for the purpose of authenticity, it is crucial to conduct ... 'natural' go-alongs ... that follow informants into their familiar environments and track outings they would go on anyway." Kusenbach contrasts these with "contrived" or experimental go-alongs wherein "researchers take informants into unfamiliar territory or engage them in activities that are not part of their own routines." The latter "might produce appealing data," she adds, "but not of the kind of that would greatly enhance our understanding of the subjects' authentic practices and interpretations." Related to, and complementing, this naturalistic conception of the go-along is a critique, articulated by Vannini and Vannini (2017, p. 179), who argue that the walk-along has grown "too methodical, systematic, and pre-determined by a priori research agendas." They worry walk-alongs, when reduced to a mere "instrumental method," become disembodied and detached from affect, emotion and wilder, more-than-representational ways of walking and learning.

Contrived research designs for the go-along, however, do not always privilege disembodied, positivistic knowledge; some help advance the kind of immersive and more-than-representational research for which Vannini and Vannini (2017) advocate. Listening walks, for example, as Gallagher and Prior (2017, p. 165) demonstrate, "function as an aesthetic performance and a method of inquiry, a form of intensified human sensory perception and a way of connecting to the more-than-human-world, a meditative experience-in-the-moment and a participatory pedagogy." Another valuable form of contrived go-along is the site visit, especially where researchers converse with their subjects to co-create empathetic understandings of a place or environment (Bates, 2017; Holgersson, 2017). Subjects may comprise residents and

marginalized people, or the city planners and powerful developers who often displace them (Jiron, 2011). Kusenbach's foreclosing of contrived go-alongs for the sake of capturing "authentic" experience begs the (ontological) question: theoretically, what kinds of worlds can the go-along animate?

As with technical practices of the go-along, theoretical concerns for which the go-along is thought to be well suited range widely. A core spectrum of ontological variation in the literature runs through 1) phenomenology (Kusenbach, 2003), 2) "post-phenomenology" (Spinney, 2015) and 3) non-phenomenological knowledge (Carpiano, 2009). Kusenbach (2003, pp. 457-8) positions the go-along as uniquely disposed to illuminate the phenomenological structures of the lifeworld (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973), defined broadly as the lived experiences and meanings of place and space from the first person perspective of subjects. Her great insight, as Holgersson (2017, p. 73) and Carpiano (2009, p. 266) have noted, was to show how the go-along overcomes methodological limitations of both conventional interviews and ethnographic observation. As Kusenbach (2003, p. 459) puts it:

Because people usually don't comment on 'what is going on' while acting in 'natural' environments, it is difficult to access their concurrent experiences and interpretations through a purely observational approach. On the other hand, conducting sit-down interviews usually keeps informants from engaging in 'natural activities,' typically taking them out of the environments where those activities take place. This makes it difficult to grasp what exactly the subjects are talking about. (Kusenbach, 2003, p. 459)

By accompanying and actively observing subjects on their “natural” comings and goings, while exploring interpretations of “what is going on” as “it” unfolds, through a loosely structured dialogue (and/or an interview that takes place afterwards), the go-along brings the researcher as close as possible to subjects in the process of experiencing phenomena. Kusenbach (2003, p. 466) argues the go-along as phenomenological method is particularly well equipped to examine perceptions of environments, spatial practices, personal biographies, social architecture and distinct social realms.

A second terrain of theoretical work by the go-along recognizes phenomenology’s failures while carrying forth its core focus on first-person perspectives of lived experience. For Spinney (2015, p. 234), three elements put the “post” in post-phenomenology: moving beyond phenomenology’s anti-science reputation; recognizing the more-than-human nature of collective social and technological life (Ihde, 2009); and, building on non-representational theory, attending to “pre-personal” experiences that escape conscious thought or expression. Such a renewed approach, Spinney contends, may not only aid in the recollection of fleeting, pre-personal experiences but also animate more empathetic understandings of lifeworlds, including their quiescent or lethargic and passive moments that often escape the attention of researchers focused on the more active dimensions of mobile experience (see Bissell, 2010).

A third theoretical terrain for the go-along encompasses an ontology arising outside the world of post/phenomenology. As Carpiano (2009, p. 264) elaborates, “[i]n terms of epistemology, the go-along method is compatible with a range of classical and contemporary theoretical approaches within sociology,” from those that emphasize how humans experience the

world to approaches that try to arrive at more general, causal explanations. For example, naturalistic designs need not privilege phenomenology; they can pick up important details that contribute to explanatory models. This ontological flexibility of the go-along feeds positively back into its practice by expanding its complementarity with other research methods, from other qualitative techniques such as photovoice participatory action, to quantitative methods, where go-alongs augment, for example, GIS data maps.

The go-along's philosophical flexibility and complementarity with other methods, however, is not boundless. Underlying recent examinations of the go-along lie a shared commitment to post-positivism. Whether wrapped in phenomenology or not, the go-along labours to retire the role of objective, disembodied and emotionally detached interrogation in favour of getting involved, feeling if not caring about what (and whom) we are studying (Spinney, 2015, p. 242).

Synthesis: strengths, limitations and firmer footing for the Anthropocene

The go-along wields formidable strengths as a research methodology. Besides overcoming key limitations in previous techniques for interviews and ethnographic observation (Kusenbach, 2003), the go-along equalizes traditional power imbalances and forges deeper connections with place and environment. Conventional interviews often remove subjects from familiar contexts, putting them on the spot so the “expert” can scrutinize the “layperson” from behind a table or a desk and a microphone. In contrast, walking or riding with someone, especially vulnerable or shy people, can reduce their anxiety and limit lulls in conversation (parents who first talk about sex with their child while driving know the power of limited eye contact and distraction of mobility).

Co-mobility levels the playing field, wherein subjects can, like a tour guide, regale their own expertise. This helps researchers build rapport, secure respect among gate-keepers and enhance access to elusive populations, such as children, for example, by limiting interruptions from hovering parents (Porter et al., 2010, p. 94). More generally, go-alongs excel at illuminating how social and environmental contexts shape individual lives (Garcia et al., 2012).

The go-along also faces important limitations. Concern with weather or “mother nature” (Carpiano, 2009, pp. 267-8) permeates the methodological literature. However, while weather can, indeed, exert a profound effect on the nature of outdoor go-alongs (see Porter et al., 2010, p. 45), I support Vannini and Vannini (2017, p. 185) who argue that to think of weather merely as a limitation is really to miss the point of a go-along. Weather is a critical part of environments and atmospheres, animating not only *what* humans (and nonhumans) perceive (or don’t) but also *how*. Ultimately, weather should be a legitimate piece of doing mobile research rather than something to be vilified or eliminated.

A much bigger limitation facing the go-along than weather, one that receives less attention, is that the go-along is neither useful nor appropriate for some research settings, populations and questions. At the end of her analysis, Kusenbach (2003, p. 477) acknowledges that go-alongs “are clearly unfit to explore the many sites and activities that do not accommodate conversation, such as physically exhausting activities or rituals that require silence,” and do not apply well to sedentary situations in which people focus inward rather than outward on their surroundings. Other situations ill-suited for the go-along include those in which people cannot, or do not want to, move. For example, while examining disabled and Mad persons’ spatial knowledges, Castrodale (2018, p. 46) confronted conditions “when research participants would

rather not go-along.” The limited capacity or willingness of disabled, elderly and other populations to move about their environments limits the go-along (even as it illuminates the politics and planning of differential mobilities). So does the fact that some settings are simply too dangerous to go along in a safe, and thus ethical, manner (Carpiano, 2009).

If the go-along is not always a good tool, this is not always clear amidst the rush by many scholars to embrace the mobile method. Among skeptics, Merriman (2014) challenges the sense among go-along proponents that it leads to more accurate knowledge of peoples’ authentic experiences. Merriman points out that “closeness” with phenomena and high-tech recordings do not necessarily reveal a more truthful “real life” so much as a different reality, one that more traditional methods also have some capacity to shed light on. The issue here, however, is not about the go-along *per se* so much as problematic assumptions guiding its use. Instead of emphasizing access to authentic, true experience, a stronger path forward rests on recognizing that the go-along, especially as enhanced by film, generates its own impressions and illusions (Vannini and Vannini, 2017). Spinney (2015, p. 236) usefully describes mobile video ethnography as creating “new reductions and abstractions,” and good go-alongs as those that create “distortions with a purpose.”

Ultimately, the go-along enjoys more technical and ontological agility than is often assumed, encompassing variable uses of technology, research designs and ontological orientations. To further cultivate the technical agility of the go-along, I suggest weaving it into pragmatic approaches to mixed methods (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). A pragmatic approach means relaxing the rigid epistemological and ontological assumptions researchers often make about the nature of knowledge, including positivistic assumptions that trivialize affective, non-

rational experiences, and equally stubborn phenomenological assumptions about authentic lived experience. A pragmatic go-along can leverage quantitative data to help follow links between personal experiences and their sociospatial contexts and select good, comparative case studies to deepen cross-contextual insight (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Larsen (2014), for example, by (auto-ethnographically) going along with himself, shows how different urban contexts demand different tactics and “affective capacities” for cycling. To nourish the go-along’s ontological agility and moral purpose in the Anthropocene, social researchers should expand their attention to more-than-human entanglements that trouble anthropocentric conceptions of human supremacy and recognize nonhuman beings (e.g. crows, rivers and trees) as intelligent agents that, like sapiens, deserve moral regard (Kymlicka, 2018). In an era of runaway biodiversity loss, habitat destruction and mass extinction of nonhuman life—interspecies injustices that feed perniciously into systems of inequity and domination among humans (Glasser, 2011)—go-alongs can help illuminate better ways of moving and dwelling together that prevent the annihilation of other animals, plants and eco-systems on which all life on earth depends.

Go-alongs might trouble human supremacy and elucidate ecological repair in any number of ways (e.g. exploring how people gather ingredients for vegetarian diets in food deserts to tracking the protest movements behind anti-environmentalism). One important way entails deploying transit, walking, cycling and other sustainable mobilities as vehicles for go-alongs and examining how people accomplish everyday travel without the car. But this will require challenging how the ride-along is often understood as being synonymous with the car, or a go-along “conducted while driving” (Carpiano 2009, p. 264; Kusenbach, 2003) (which may help explain the widespread discomfort with weather). Pragmatic go-alongs can follow linkages

between personal practices of sustainable mobility and their sociospatial contexts, such as structural conditions wherein wealthy elites increasingly dominate access to the urban environments that foster transit, walking and cycling. Personal practices include not only planned, functional mobilities (i.e. getting from point A to point B), but also the “regime of familiar engagement” (Thévenot, 2002), or the making of customized habitats through idiosyncratic linkages with nonhuman beings who, unlike mere instruments, take on agency and animate relationships like an “entourage.” Equally important to consider is the “regime of public justification” (Thévenot, 2002), wherein people link their personal mobility practices to the common good. Liberal democracies feature a plurality of common goods, for example market, industrial, civic and domestic common goods based on, respectively, profit, efficiency, social justice and tradition (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006[1991]). Ecology continues to struggle to find political expression as a common good (Latour, 1998), opening an intriguing site for go-along intervention around the question, how do people come to notice and value nonhuman beings and more-than-human environments in the first place?

In what follows, I present two empirical vignettes on accomplishing everyday cycling that showcase the go-along’s technical and ontological agility with an eye for enhancing its moral purpose. The vignettes draw on results from a mobile video ethnography of cycling I conducted in major Canada cities between 2014 and 2018 (Scott, 2016, 2020). The first vignette focuses on the way wild nature enters personalized cycling habitats in the city and shapes cyclists’ regimes of familiar engagement. Challenging the bias in the methodological literature toward naturalistic research design, this vignette shows the value of contrived go-along design for understanding urban phenomenology. The second vignette, incorporating elements of both

naturalistic and contrived designs, shows how go-alongs advance insight into the public justification of cycling according to the common good, including an ecological common good that supports the welfare and agency of nonhuman beings. Exploring a variety of urban and neighbourhood contexts for comparison, together the vignettes illustrate the power of the go-along, with and without the assistance of sophisticated recording devices, to advance phenomenological but also explanatory accounts of cycling as a form of sustainable mobility.

Shadowing familiar habitat: wilderness cycling

The nature of cycling varies by, among other contexts, the city in which it unfolds (Larsen, 2014). In Canada, a low cycling nation, bike activity and infrastructure vary substantially across the country's large urban centres or "census metropolitan regions" (CMA), reflected in their different percentages of commuters who regularly cycle. This macro variation in cycling points to good case studies for comparative bike-alongs in diverse environments. Lagging cycling cities in Canada like Halifax and Toronto saw 2016 percentages of cycling commuters of 1 and 1.4. Leading cycling cities like Vancouver and Ottawa in the same year saw percentages of 2.3 and 2.4. Additionally, notable growth in cycling commuters in Vancouver and Toronto since 1996 hints at a pace of change in these cities not seen in others (Statistics Canada, 2017). While abstracted from the lived experience of cycling, the influence of this variation across city contexts nevertheless reaches all the way down into the most familiar of micro cycling habitats – and not just for cycling to work.

As part of a contrived go-along project, I asked Noel living in downtown Toronto to cycle to a place he associates with "wilderness" (Vannini and Vannini, 2016). While the destination is

“authentic” in the sense of comprising a wild place to which he already felt the “pull of remove” (Vannini and Taggart, 2014), the voyage is contrived; it is not a trip he would have taken had I not asked him to, bringing into play unexpected traffic, weather and novel passages mixed in with well-worn routes. Such a go-along, shorn of the temporal pressure and repetition of the instrumental commute, opens access to a wider cycling habitat and more-than-human cycling phenomenology.

At the same time, Toronto poses a challenging context for contrived wilderness go-alongs. Most of its wilder nature hides in river ravines (where Noel leads me) beneath the city’s formidable concrete crust, and Toronto’s cycling network, while growing, remains patchy at best, frequently dissolving into car-choked arterial roads without bike lanes. Moreover, recent growth in this network has turned cycling into a populist target in a discursive “war on the car” (Walks, 2015), compelling Noel to develop tactics for eluding the small but persistent group of motorists who openly express hostility towards cyclists on Toronto’s streets.

Before I follow Noel to the river, to familiarize myself with his way of cycling I follow him riding on short trips around his neighbourhood. I also walk along the “cycling paths” inside his apartment and shared backyard as he interacts with his “entourage” of cycling parts, artworks and things that blur these lines. His entourage acts like a procession as wheels, pedals and a frame slowly assemble into the bicycle with which Noel prefers to cycle nature. Ready to roll, I follow Noel down his driveway into a hectic, car-choked street in front of his apartment, filming his cycling habitat as it grows beyond his home. His familiar paths with idiosyncratic linkages to other beings start to branch out and multiply.

Unlike conventional *roads*, functional instruments for getting from A to B, familiar *paths* form the non-intentional consequence of becoming acquainted with a local environment. “Created through habitual frequenting as much as physical topography,” Noel’s cycling paths reveal “perceptual and kinaesthetic clues” (Thévenot, 2002)—from Sumac trees and sewer smells to particular cracks in the pavement—that make sense or become registrable to him in an unthought manner. These clues enable Noel to feel his way through his neighborhood in much the same, seemingly effortless way he glides on “autopilot” through his busy apartment. Where we reach novel passages on this contrived voyage, I watch Noel “thinking on his wheels,” searching for nearby memories of familiar pathways. He frequently changes his track and technique to maintain a pleasurable flow: linear celerity on arterial roads; slower, curvilinear sweeps on side streets; and spontaneous play in the parks that meander down and ultimately merge into the river ravine. I mimic and try to feel these transitions in speed and handling to “hang onto” the ways in which Noel cycles to, and with, wilderness. Occasionally, he exceeds my own skills and affective capacities for cycling and escapes the gaze of my GoPro camera.

Outside Toronto, some other cities in Canada create stronger access to cycling wilderness, expanding its phenomenology. In Winnipeg, with a slightly higher percentage of cycling commuters than Toronto in 2016 (1.7), I shadow Rose as she winds her way from her home via multi-use pathways to the major intersection of rivers that forms the city’s historical and geographical core. Her lack of helmet and the ease with which she retraces thousands of earlier pedal strokes to a more mindful, quiet and biodiverse place by the water hints at stronger affordances for cycling nature. A sharper contrast with Toronto can be drawn with a leading cycling like Ottawa. In Ottawa, which enjoys the highest percentage of cycling commuters

among large CMAs in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017), I shadow Nancy on an extensive pathway network along rivers, canals and greenbelts. Like Noel and Rose, she starts off working through an exhaust-filled, cacophonous streetscape favouring the fast car. But before long, as if passing through a portal, river pathways usher Nancy into an assemblage of wilderness possibilities. Her playful technique as well as her city's more favourable cycling conditions help explain why she can more fully embrace a "wilder" way (Vannini & Vannini, 2017) of cycling; familiar plants, animals and water bodies join her entourage across her more-than-human environment.

In the end, video-recording Noel, Rose and Nancy in their familiar habitats plays a moderate role in shedding light on their wilderness cycling phenomenologies. The usefulness of my GoPro footage is mixed: not of high enough calibre to create cinema (Vannini, 2017), yet coherent enough to analyze and spur insightful conversations about fleeting experiences felt along the way. The film helps us reconstruct a range of experiences from tense, adrenaline-shrouded scenes and quiescent, zen-filled meditations to ephemeral moments of interspecies empathy with wildlife. Some subjects escape the frame. Others do not want their homes filmed for sake of privacy. Still, the film adds "distortions with a purpose" (Spinney, 2015, p. 236) by enhancing access to lived experiences of cycling the urban wild.

Witnessing mobility justice: good cycling

While the nature of cycling varies by city contexts, the largest, politically most important differences lie between city neighbourhoods. In Vancouver's central municipality, for example, percentages of commuters who cycle range from less than 1 percent in postwar neighbourhoods

on the city's southern periphery to 16 percent in Strathcona, one of Vancouver's oldest neighbourhoods just east of downtown. Only comparing the cycling percentages *between* metropolitan regions (2.3 for Vancouver) misses emerging bastions of cycling *within* cities, not to mention differences of postwar/prewar urban form that increasingly explain Canada's neoliberal politics of mobility and decide its elections (Walks, 2015). Prewar neighbourhoods near the core with double digit percentages of people biking to school and work foment political conditions wherein people start connecting their cycling to collective ideas about the good city. While go-alongs enjoy broad access to functional and familiar ways of cycling, they also catch glimpses of another kind of cycling, one off the radar of transport planners and phenomenologists alike. This less frequent, moral kind include everyday political situations in which people link up cycling to the common good.

Go-alongs in urban bastions of cycling glimpse how people, relying on other, morally qualified beings, publicly judge cycling and its expansion across Canada. Canada's urban growth and politics continue to privilege car-driving suburbs. In Strathcona, however, on both naturalistic and contrived go-alongs, I witness cyclists appeal to a plurality of incompatible ideas (Boltanski and Thévenot (2006[1991]) about the good cycling city. For instance, parents co-cycling with children, running into cars blocking bikeways and risky intersections, regale emotional stories about confronting motorists and lobbying city officials for bikeway protections (expanding cycling's *domestic worth*). Commuters of all stripes (including Nancy), as we enter new bike lanes, offer their own "expert" opinion about the best, most efficient kinds of infrastructure (animating cycling's *industrial worth*). A cycling activist in Chinatown encounters a local bottle collector she knows just as a white male hipster happens to ride by, coffee in hand,

prompting her to critique gentrification for displacing the area's original residents (energizing cycling's *civic worth*). And go-alongs with tourists using Vancouver's bike-share program glimpse how luxury brands catch the eyes (and wallets) of cycling consumers (optimizing cycling's *market worth*). These moral moments of cycling, as fleeting as (yet more memorable than) familiar and functional cycling, show something unique: ways in which people are moved to defend and publicly qualify "good mobility" – good for the local community, productive circulation, urban equity or economic profit. Notably, all of these qualifications are anthropocentric, referring only to the flourishing of humans.

A more justifiable common good includes the subjective wellbeing of nonhuman lives. My cycling go-alongs to the urban wild but also (albeit to a lesser extent) naturalistic ride-alongs to work and school, created mobile access to some moral moments that transcend the grammars of anthropocentric political philosophy. I followed and filmed as the attention and reverie of people cycling were seemingly caught or "hailed" by crows, trees, rivers and skies. These sometimes quiescent moments enjoy a rich phenomenology, or "post-phenomenology" (Spinney, 2015) because they flash with affect and empathy for more-than-human lifeworlds, even those of plants (for example, rhizomatic Sumac trees in Toronto) and atmospheres (darkening skies with fast approaching thunder and lighting over the Ottawa river) that challenge human notions of "individual" versus "collective" beings. These moments also raise important explanatory questions surrounding, for example, who gets to access cycling nature in the city, as living in the city becomes ever more expensive and exclusive. But what is arguably most salient here within these go-along results are nascent elaborations of good trans-species relations.

My cycling go-alongs, wherein I and my research participants were moving slow enough that we could enjoy the full use of our sensory organs while appraising our local surroundings, point to but one way of identifying and cultivating what I call “interspecies mobility justice.” It is often a particular place or individual animal or plant—encountered on the move—that inspires and elevates a flash of reverie, therapy or play into a desire to protect and fight for the flourishing of other species of life. My go-alongs suggest that, at least in urban bastions of cycling across Canada (prewar suburbs shaped by streetcar systems), political ecological potential exists to grow cycling, not merely as familiar or functional mobility, but also into the basis of a good city, one that might countenance such things as citizenship and personhood for other animals, plants and water bodies. Cycling, of course, can only translate its fleeting moments of connection with urban wilderness into more durable, democratic forms of political ecology with the help of other ways of moving (in Canada, four out of five folks use the car for their main daily objective) and by making access to cycling and good bike infrastructure more equitable (along gender, ethnocultural, dis/ability and social class lines). Nevertheless, cycling already provides both a good form of go-along and way of going in general, one that researchers should make more use of for understanding life in the Anthropocene.

Conclusion

The recent explosion of research using the go-along (Castrodale 2018; Gallagher and Prior, 2017; Porter et al., 2010; Vannini and Vannini 2017; Popan, 2018; McIlvenny, 2015; Bates, 2017; Holgersson, 2017), exploring not only mobilities but a diverse, interdisciplinary array of other issues of interest to social scientists, shows that the go-along offers important technical and

philosophical advantages over previous, more sedentary methods. However, the methodological literature has yet to fully synthesize and demonstrate the full range of these advantages.

Systematic investigations into the theory and practice of the go-along are sparse and biased towards sophisticated recording devices, naturalistic research design, a theoretical orientation towards phenomenology and automobility. On that last point, the car was so deeply taken for granted by Kusenbach (2003) in her seminal account of the go-along, which was based on her ethnography of everyday life in Los Angeles, that she fails to even mention it. This article seeks to broaden the go-along's horizons. It builds on systematic accounts of go-along methodology (Kusenbach, 2003; Carpiano, 2009; Spinney, 2015), not only by providing a deeper look into the technical and ontological agility of the go-along, but also by charting pathways for nourishing this agility, along with the go-along's moral purpose. I suggest the go-along's moral purpose during the Anthropocene—an epoch defined by biodiversity loss, habitat destruction, mass extinction of nonhuman beings and climate change—should include learning how to move and dwell together in ways that are less destructive to life on earth.

My brief vignettes on wilderness cycling and mobility justice demonstrated some key ways in which to nourish the go-along in theory and practice. They showed how the go-along can grow stronger through pragmatic approaches to mixed methods (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005) that use quantitative data and comparative case studies (Larsen, 2014) to illuminate links between personalized cycling practices and their socio-environmental contexts. While city contexts are significant to cycling rates, neighbourhood differences are even more important to consider, particularly when examining how and where cycling is becoming widely connected to the common good. Deploying such cases and contexts, in turn, strengthens the ontological agility

of the go-along with respect to advancing explanatory models (e.g. where and why people choose to cycle) that can help transport planners justify the expansion of cycling infrastructure. Explanatory models can be part of a post-phenomenological project to enhance the go-along's value for a wider range of researchers, including those who may not be that interested in "structures of the lifeworld" (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973) but who can nevertheless appreciate the rapport, more equal power relations and deeper exposure to space, place and more-than-human environments generally provided by the go-along. Additionally, I showed that phenomenological knowledge itself, contrary to Kusenbach (2003), does not depend on research designs that only focus on "authentic" experiences or "natural" voyages that track outings research participants would go on anyway. By contriving with my participants to ride to the urban wild, including novel routes and places, I was able to better appreciate how familiar and unfamiliar nonhuman beings animated my participants' cycling lifeworlds.

My cycling vignettes also demonstrated a specific way of advancing the go-along's moral purpose: adopt an ecologically good form of mobility. The research practice of using environmentally sustainable mobilities like walking and cycling instead of driving or flying as vehicles for go-alongs reinforces, and is reinforced by, research on these sustainable mobilities. Going along with people of diverse social classes, genders, identities, etc. deepens insight, for example, into how to grow sustainable mobilities for people facing systemic exclusion from good transit, cycling and walking based on complex social inequalities reinforced by built environments (Carpiano, 2009). Conversely, knowing more about environmentally sustainable mobilities, such as how to make cycling safer and more desirable for people who currently lack fair access (e.g. women and mothers in Canada), opens the door to more kinds of researchers

who want to use sustainable go-alongs like the bike-along to study their topics. While the “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry, 2006) helped increase the salience of go-along methodology, mobilities comprise but one topic for current and future go-along research. Other go-along topics that would benefit from slower, sustainable ways of moving wherein people share a deeper, multi-sensorial sense of their surroundings include, *inter alia*, perceptions of environments, spatial practices, personal biographies, social architecture and distinct social realms (Kusenbach, 2003). One topic that will be important for future go-along research in the Anthropocene to investigate involves the elucidation and advancement of interspecies mobility justice. Because of environmentally destructive ways in which many sapiens move and dwell together, time for understanding the (im)mobile lives of nonhuman beings, in all their complex relationships with people, is running out.

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