

“Moving together” PhD fieldwork report: York Bike Belles “Cycling Without Age” programme

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With thanks to...



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Introduction

The aim of the overall research project was to investigate an emerging form of volunteering which I term in the thesis “movement volunteering”. Movement volunteering involves volunteering activity which is centred around the physical movement of the body. In the thesis I explore the following research questions;

- How did the programmes enable movement?
- How were the programmes purposeful?
- How did the moving-volunteering bodies intervene in the physical and social landscape?

The overall aim is to investigate the novel ways in which the body is mobilised for philanthropic purpose, and to explore the implications of this for how we think about and promote physical activity, volunteering, and health.

Although in the thesis I move between three different movement volunteering programmes, this report covers material gathered specifically through the York Bike Belles Cycling Without Age programme. The intention of this report is to feedback to the York Bike Belles group findings from participatory and immersive research conducted as a pedaller volunteer in the Cycling Without Age programme. It may be used by the York Bike Belles however they see fit, for example for publicity or grant application purposes.

All names have been changed in line with ethics procedures. All participants signed up to the project via an information sheet and consent form.

I begin by giving an overview of the Cycling Without Age movement and then the programme in York during the fieldwork period (October 2018-August 2019). I then go on to discuss methods and present key findings. I finish with a reflection on how the programmes not only impact on but help us re-imagine health and wellbeing.

Cycling Without Age

Cycling Without Age is not a charity but a grassroots organisation and global “movement”. It began in 2012 in Copenhagen with Ole Kassow, who wanted to help older people back onto bikes. He bought an electric “trishaw” (a three wheeled bike), and started offering free bike rides to local nursing home residents. The concept grew and Cycling Without Age is now operative in 50 countries around the world. They work on an affiliate model whereby individuals and organisations can set up their own Cycling Without Age “chapter” where they live. Their tagline is to give older people the “right to wind in their hair”. Their principles (described on their website) are as follows;

Generosity: *Cycling Without Age is based on generosity and kindness. It starts with the obvious generous act of taking one or two elderly or less-abled people out on a bike ride. It’s a simple act that everyone can do.*

Slowness: *Slowness allows you to sense the environment, be present in the moment and it allows people you meet along the way to be curious and gain knowledge about Cycling Without Age because you make time to stop and talk.*

Storytelling: *Older adults have so many stories that will be forgotten if we don’t reach out and listen to them. We tell stories, we listen to stories on the bike and we also document the stories when we share them via word of mouth or on social media.*

Relationships: *Cycling Without Age is about creating a multitude of new relationships: between generations, among older adults, between pilots and passengers, care home employees and family members. Relationships build trust, happiness and quality of life.*

Without Age: *Life unfolds at all ages, young and old, and can be thrilling, fun, sad, beautiful and meaningful. Cycling Without Age is about letting people age in a positive context – fully aware of the opportunities that lie ahead when interacting in their local community.* ¹

The York Bike Belles Cycling Without Age programme

In York, the Cycling Without Age programme is co-ordinated by the York Bike Belles, a community organisation aimed at encouraging and enabling walking and cycling around York. They were initially formed in 2014 to support women into cycling. Amongst various activities they offer buddy rides, bike loans, “cake confidence” sessions, bike maintenance workshops, and a walking book group.

York Bike Belles were keen to begin a Cycling Without Age “chapter” in York. They sought funding for this, and were approached by a local businessman who committed to sponsor the project for the first year. This funded the electric trishaw and its maintenance and storage costs, and a part-time volunteer co-ordinator. As the pilot project developed, care homes also began contributing towards the costs of the project. Volunteer recruitment and training for volunteer “pedallers” began in the summer of 2018 and there was another volunteer recruitment wave in the winter. Numbers of volunteers fluctuate but there was between 8-15 active volunteers at any one time during the fieldwork period.

A Cycling Without Age ride, we were told in our training, was not simply a bike ride, or getting from “A to B”, but a sociable, community experience for both pedaller and passenger. It is about experiencing movement, being outdoors, and interacting with people, places, and things. On a typical ride, the pedaller will pick up the bike, named “Trixie” by the volunteer pedallers, complete basic checks, and cycle over to the care home. There, they are met by a care home co-ordinator who assists in creating a list of people to go on the rides and helps them on to the bike. Bike rides typically last between 20 and 40 minutes. The bike rides take place between 2-3 days per week in the York Bike Belles Cycling Without Age programme, and continued throughout the winter months.

The York Bike Belles Cycling Without Age group met on a regular basis to socialise and share experiences and ideas for the bike rides. These monthly meet ups were arranged by the volunteer co-ordinator and took place in a pub. There was no set agenda for these meetings, but it was an opportunity to come together to discuss how the rides were going and for the volunteer co-ordinator to collect this information and make any necessary changes. Mostly the meet ups involved sharing stories about the rides.

Term	Meaning
Pedaller	Also called “Pilots” in some cycling without age chapters, the pedaller is the volunteer riding the trishaw bike
Passenger	The older person who sits in the seated area at the front of the bike

¹ (<https://cyclingwithoutage.org/about/>)

Trixie	The electric trishaw used by the York Bike Belles Cycling Without Age programme
Trishaw	A trishaw is a three wheeled bike. The Cycling Without Age bike has two wheels at the front, underneath the seat, and one wheel at the back, behind the pedaller.
Chapter	A local Cycling Without Age programme is called a “chapter” because it is part of the bigger, international, Cycling Without Age “story”

Cycling Without Age terms and meanings

Methods

The overall research design was ethnographic. Ethnographic research involves immersion within the phenomena of study, in this case the York Bike Belles Cycling Without Age programme. I (Emily Tupper) took part in the programmes as a pedaller volunteer between October 2018 and August 2019. Over this period I took part as a volunteer in 23 bike rides, including 10 “buddy rides” where I accompanied another pedaller, riding alongside on a bike. I also attended 7 pedaller meet ups over this time.

7 volunteer pedallers signed up to participate in the research and 4 passengers signed up. Passenger consent was negotiated alongside with the care home wellbeing co-ordinators, who advised on capacity to consent.

Data included informal observations written up as fieldnotes and recorded interviews.

Key findings

The PhD thesis is still in the writing up stage (as of 12.3.2021) however I present here some preliminary findings based on fieldwork in the Cycling Without Age programme.

I structure these findings through two main constituents that were impacted by the programme; volunteers and beneficiaries. A third constituent – the environment – is also considered to be impacted by the programmes however I consider the environment and place in relation to volunteers and beneficiaries throughout. All three constituents were interwoven in the event of the Cycling Without Age ride, and the movement of the bike through the landscape initiated unique interactions between volunteers, beneficiaries, and the environment.

Volunteers

An interesting and active volunteering opportunity

The volunteer pedallers involved in the Cycling Without Age programme all had some connection to cycling and/or volunteering activity and this was often what initiated them to sign up to the programme. Cycling Without Age offered a compelling, interesting, active, and rewarding way to volunteer and generally participate in society, in a way that departed from traditional volunteering models, as Hilary explained in an interview. I asked her what interested her about the programme and she replied;

“It was volunteering, and it was what it was...the fact that it was, it was kind of outdoor, exercise type volunteering, because I’d always thought when I – so I’ve reduced my hours as part of changing my job – and I thought if I’m doing less hours, I’d love to do some

volunteering, but I thought - I don't know what that will look like, I don't know what kind of volunteering...but when something came up that was outside and kind of a bit - well not really exercise...but you know what I mean, it was an active kind of volunteering - it just kind of seemed really great really and I got way more out of it than I ever thought...I mean the interaction with the passengers and actually, being at the care home, we were doing it every fortnight, so you really got to know people really well, and although some of them didn't remember you, some of them definitely do, so that was really nice - and to see how much they got out of it, it just makes you feel so, so good...so even on not a great day where you kind of think mmm - you go and do it and you are absolutely buzzing..." (Interview with Hilary, pedaller-volunteer, June 2019)

Hilary also refers here to the relationship formed between pedaller and passenger which built up over time. This relationship was formed not only through repeated visits but also in the event of the ride itself and the way in which movement "eased" social interaction;

"If you were to go in and sit and have a cup of tea with them, it could be a bit forced and a bit strange, but because you are taking them out, they're relaxing, and you're kind of relaxing, and things just come out..." (Interview with Hilary, pedaller-volunteer, June 2019)

Hilary also describes the "buzz" felt after a ride, that combination of having done something positive for someone else, along with the effects of the "active" element of the outdoor volunteering. This "buzz" was experienced by other volunteers too; the pedaller meet-ups were always bursting with stories from the rides, the sense of fun and enjoyment for the volunteers was evident. Indeed, one volunteer participant even resisted the label of "volunteer" because they felt it carried with it connotations of nobleness and sacrifice in a way that didn't reflect the joy of the rides.

[Contributing to and transforming society](#)

As well as fun and enjoyment, the volunteers also described other intentions and meanings associated with the programme in their interviews. They saw Cycling Without Age as having an impact on society, beyond the immediate impact of the rides. A common motivation for participating as a volunteer was the hope and expectation that Cycling Without Age was something that would be there for them when they themselves could no longer cycle a bike independently. This showed the passion the volunteers had towards cycling - and simply "being" on a bike. Here, Bruce describes how he hopes that society will start to focus more on "quality of life" for older people soon, and saw Cycling Without Age as step in the right direction. He saw his participation as contributing to this culture of respect and care;

"I'd like to think that by the time I get to sort of 80s, then society will have caught up with the fact that there are older people who are human beings and have wants and likes and stuff, and there will be stuff there to make that quality of life continue. I have to contribute to that, I can no longer go, that's somebody else's problem - it's my problem. (Interview with Bruce, pedaller-volunteer, May 2019)

Other volunteers expressed how they saw the societal impact of Cycling Without Age. In his interview, David described this in terms of space and mobility. He saw cars – or more specifically the “un-questioning use of cars” as the antithesis to sociability and health. He was critical of what he saw as an “increasingly isolationist” society and saw Cycling Without Age as an antidote to this because of the way in which the bike facilitated engagement and social interaction as it moved.

Re-imagining cycling, bikes, and their possibilities

Another impact of the programme described by the volunteers was that of the heightened awareness and/or new perspective brought about by the rides. This was compared to their experiences of cycling and being on the road generally. This was usually in the context of urban cycling, or more generally cycling for travel purposes.

A common theme from interviews and my own experiences of the Cycling Without Age rides was that cycling Trixie as opposed to a “normal” bike changed the pedaller volunteers experiences of being on a bike, which in turn made them think about cycling differently. This happened in various ways. Firstly, the experience of being on the road - volunteers commented that the interaction with motorists was much more positive when you are cycling Trixie;

“People are nicer...and whether that’s because you clearly have elderly people on board, or whether that’s because it’s a quaint or an unusual sight, or whether that’s because they just recognise the passengers and they need to be more careful...and if only the same courtesy was shown to us generally, the world would be a nicer place”...(Interview with David, pedaller volunteer, June 2019)

David speculates here as to why motorists act differently – “nicer” – when around the trishaw. He does not know for sure but concludes that it would be good if that was the norm around cyclists and bikes in general. Riding the trishaw bike in the Cycling Without Age programme then, allowed volunteers to reflect on their own experiences of being on the road as a cyclist. They often commented that you are generally “safer” on Trixie because of the way in which other motorists react; slowing down, giving space, etc. This allowed possibilities to be imagined, as David comments – the world would be a “nicer place” if the same courtesy was shown to all cyclists. So although there was a general satisfaction with the experiences on the road in the Cycling Without Age programme, it brought to light their own negative experiences of cycling normally, and also, as Amber says, shortcomings in cycling infrastructure, for example the “calming streams” (barriers, gates, narrow paths etc.);

“It’s (cycling Trixie) made me much more aware of other sorts of bikes, and whether you need the calming streams that get you on to footpaths that can’t be used by different bikes...and there’s a lot of such bikes in York...there’s a lot of interesting bikes and there are places they can’t get to, even though there are supposed to be cycle paths, and that’s just a shame, we need to make it accessible to everybody” (Interview with Amber, pedaller volunteer, June 2019)

Here, cycling Trixie encouraged reflection on inclusive mobility. Cycling a bigger bike specially designed to accommodate people who cannot cycle independently drew the volunteers attention to similar unusual bikes designed to make cycling more inclusive, and the physical barriers they faced when out and about.

Another way in which cycling Trixie changed people's experiences of being on a bike was the embodied and sensory nature of cycling the electric Trishaw, and how this created relationships of trust and empathy. Amber describes;

"I mean I've done a lot of cycling in my time...the most difficult thing is knowing the boundaries of the bike, judging where the edges of it are and what the turning circle is like so yeah I found that really difficult at first...when we did our training session which was in January or something, it was a really cold day - really cold, and there was a lot of us - so really we didn't do much cycling at all ...so when I started the rides I was really worried about any little bump in the road, it felt like it was going to tip the whole bike up - but it didn't take me long to realise actually its pretty stable, and you start thinking just about where the front wheels are and let that guide you...but it took me a while to get there actually..."

(Amber)

Peddler volunteers described getting a "feel" for the bike, which meant knowing its boundaries, mechanics, balance, power, turning circle and so on. This allowed the pedaller volunteers to have control over the bike but also the experience of the passenger, negotiating bumps in the road for example. Getting the "feel" of the bike therefore also involved imagining what it must be like to travel in the bike as a passenger, something which you pick up through practice;

"That again, is confidence and experience, you start off quite nervous, and I think after a while you realise that the drivers are fascinated by it, so they tend to treat you with respect, even the taxi drivers, who are impatient...so I think ...I feel more secure on the Trixie bike than I do on an ordinary bike...you are exceedingly vulnerable on an ordinary bike, but on the Trixie bike, you fill the road, you know, they can't do a lot...the trouble with the Trixie bike is navigating the humps - it doesn't do that very well...if I can I try to go between the bumps but you have to go into the centre of the road - which I do if there's no traffic...I'm always intrigued about how the passengers feel because they are right ahead of the wheels and the first thing that hits anything - if we go into anything - is their feet, and so you wonder how they feel - but again, they build confidence..." (Interview with Thomas, pedaller volunteer, June 2019)

Thomas describes here the way in which the "Trixie bike" moves and takes up space on the road. He wonders out loud about how the passengers must feel, being exposed at the front of the bike, and as he says, the first thing that hits anything. But just as he as a pedaller gains confidence and experience on the bike, so does the passenger - they build confidence through riding regularly and becoming familiar with the experience, (as I will describe in the section on beneficiaries). We see with these examples that riding Trixie involves an extension of the pedaller volunteer's own sensory and embodied capacity, "feeling" the bike and its mechanics as it moves, but also imagining what being on the bike might feel like as a passenger.

Cycling Trixie allowed the pedallers to reflect on their own cycling experiences but this was two-way; their own histories as cyclists and their attitudes towards bikes influenced how they approached the rides. Many of the pedallers had been cycling most of their lives, for both transport and leisure.

David, for example, enjoys cycle touring because you can see and experience more, while moving quicker and covering more ground than you would normally. He elaborates on the “seeing” element;

“Well seeing is almost too limiting...it’s about “being in” more...seeing, smelling, feeling...you know” (David)

Here, David alludes to cycling as a total sensory experience whereby the cycling body is incorporated intimately into the landscape. The total sensory experience that cycling brings about then, was realised by the pedaller volunteers in their own cycling experiences, but was then realised to new effect in the Cycling Without Age rides, whereby the sensory element was extended to both a bigger bike, and multiple passengers. The pedaller volunteers also sought to encourage this kind of engagement through verbal interactions with passengers, pointing out visual cues or checking that they feel warm enough on a cold day.

Beneficiaries

“Getting out and about”

One of the benefits I heard most often in the rides from the Cycling Without Age passengers was the opportunity it gave them to “get out and about”.

For almost all of the passengers, getting out and about was no longer something they could do independently. This meant that the spontaneous element of getting out was not present, however, one of the regular passengers, Peggy, still described the rides as her “freedom” and said the opportunity of getting out on the bike as “too good to miss”. The freedom and opportunity experienced by Peggy was influenced by her past experiences of riding a bike, which she remembered as being an “interesting” experience – she didn’t do big rides in the countryside or anything like that but going around town she said “you always see something, theres people to talk to”. When I asked what she enjoyed about the rides she brought up the social opportunity again, saying that she enjoyed being “among people, and you get to see things, places, where you used to walk, its nice”. Peggy noted that people often just “walked by” and didn’t directly engage with her and the bike, but nonetheless she expressed her enjoyment about just being part of shared spaces and flows of movement created by other road users and pedestrians (Go-along interview with Peggy, Cycling Without Age passenger, June 2019).

Though being “out and about” may not seem a significant activity for many people, for Peggy, getting and just *being* “out and about” constitutes an important event; a sociable and sensory opportunity, and a time and space in her week which she cherishes and looks forward to. “Being out and about” is both “social” and “sensory” because it involves interaction with other people and places, but also it is about being outside, in the fresh air and even just seeing the sky (*“just look at the sky – isn’t it beautiful!”*) (Go-along interview with Peggy, Cycling Without Age passenger, June 2019). The “in situ” nature of the interview brought out this valued aspect because the interview was conducted outside while Peggy was on the bike.

Although moving through beautiful and quiet green spaces was appreciated by many of the passengers, there was variety in what they were seeking out of the rides. In her interview, Hilary talks about a new route that had been created for the passengers which took them into the centre of town;

"Recently they've extended the ride into town, through the Minster, so they love that, one of the residents actually - her mother in law saw us and came over and there was a big kind of hugging - and that was just great, and she was just buzzing for the rest of the ride, like 'I can't believe it, I can't believe it'...and it was just fab - it's that kind of, it's almost that unexpected like "what are you going to see" when you go just that bit further afield...there's so much more to see, and you've got the Minster, you just come round the corner and it's there, it's looming..." (Interview with Hilary, pedaller-volunteer, June 2019)

This example shows the importance of offering variety in the rides. In this example, the bustling urban environment of town offered up the possibility to "bump into" people. We can see how place unfolds throughout the ride here - you turn the corner and the minster was "looming", and then there was the spontaneous interaction with the mother in law. The passenger really valued the spontaneity of this encounter, and so the value of the rides is that it places people dynamically in the landscape, as they themselves become cues for engagement.

Telling stories

This easing of social interaction through the movement of the ride as mentioned by the volunteers was also a really important element for the beneficiaries or "passengers" of the Cycling Without Age rides. The movement of the bike through the landscape was productive for the process of recalling memories and telling stories. This was sometimes related to specific places, as was the case of Mildred in Rowntrees Park:

Mildred is 99 years of age and has lived in York all of her life. She has a rich memory of the park and the surrounding area, as she used to live in a house by the river. There are certain stories that always emerge during rides with Mildred in the park; her swimming from one side of the river Ouse to the other when she was 8, is a popular one. She was top in her class at school and wanted to go into administration at the Rowntrees Factory but at 14 she was too young and so she worked in the factory for two years first. Even when she retired, she continued to volunteer for Rowntrees by visiting the elderly retired workers who were no longer mobile. She has been in walking groups all her life and loves being active and getting out and about. She reminisces about the swimming pool that used to be in the park until the 80s. Now nearly 100, she often offers to ride the bike herself and helps her less mobile friends into the seat (Mildred's story)

In Mildred's case, it was the specific landscape that triggered rich memories and stories. Mildred's story and her experience of the park is so richly tied in with her past experience that history almost seems to unfold every time we go. It is specifically her history too, her memories of swimming and walking, and her work with the Rowntree organisation. The bike, along with the pedaller and passenger, therefore "stirs up" places as they are moved through, sparking memories. It is a gentle

intervention in the landscape, as its slow movement allows time for elements of the landscape to unfold and become “cues” to be engaged with. The possibility to move differently here activated Mildred in the landscape, and in doing so activated landscapes of the past. This re-constituted the physical and social landscape as experienced by Mildred. Her experiences of the park in the past play out in the present.

Mobility

It would be simple to see the volunteer as active and the passenger as passive in the rides. However, it was not as clear cut as this. Simply moving on to the bike was an immense challenge for some of the passengers, and it was a process that often involved physical assistance, time, maneuvering, and determination from the passengers. The bike was designed to make transitioning on to the bike as easy as possible but it was still a novel and challenging experiences for passengers. I describe this process through fieldnotes:

February 2019 Fieldnotes: “Getting out”

When we arrive at the care home there are loads of cars parked in the driveway, blocking our usual spot for parking Trixie. It means that the ramp usually used by the passengers is blocked and I can't bring the bike as close as I'd like.

I park Trixie and get the blankets out and the footrest off, to make her as accessible as possible and to minimise disruption in the transition on to the bike. Wendy (another pedaller) leans her bike against the pillars outside and we head in. The receptionist recognises us and calls for Ben, (care home wellbeing coordinator) on the radio. She says they've got a band on at the moment and we are to head on in because people might be busy. We go inside to the main atrium area - there is indeed a big band playing and residents are sitting around listening and socialising.

We come across Mary who is dressed in her coat and scarf and bopping along to the music as she walks with her stick. She sees us and smiles and waves. This is the first time I've actually been further into the building to pick the passengers up for their rides. We then pick up Janice, who shuffles out her room with her walker. We edge slowly along the corridor. I try not to walk too far ahead of Janice, I don't want her to feel as if she is slow or holding us back.

Mary says to me, oh I do love it when Ben comes to the door and says its time to go out! I say she's not wearing two scarves this week like she sometimes does and she replies no, its getting warmer isn't it!

Once outside, they go down the other ramp this time as the usual one is blocked. It is a squeeze getting past all the cars, particularly with Janice's walker. Janice goes in first as usual, sitting on the left of the bike (from my perspective behind her as the pedaller). I am holding the bike steady. I notice that her movements themselves don't appear any faster but Janice goes about getting on to the bike

with a kind of familiarity and confidence now - with each ride her body must have worked out the spaces between things and how she must move into them, reaching out behind her for the side of the bike, backing in to the space where the footrest goes, sitting back on the seat, and shuffling along to her left to create space for Mary. She always says in a jokingly helpful way that she doesn't mind her putting her hand on her knee if she likes, as Mary backs into the seat next to her, rolling her eyes.

She always remembers to move her feet for the footrest coming on, and reminds Mary to do the same. Ben and I tuck them in with the two blankets. He says he thinks they should get the wheelchair for coming back in, for Janice. We leave her frame where it is, but Mary takes her stick with her as usual, holding it between her legs.

The act of "getting out" is a complex one here which requires co-ordination and effort both on the part of the care home and the volunteer co-ordinator in the lead up to the event; the consent forms, the risk assessment and "recce" rides, not to mention the training up of volunteers to ride the bike. After the advance co-ordination is the choreographing of the event itself, making sure the residents are ready to go out and that all the relevant mobility aids are in place. Much of this comes from the care home - the pedallers are not trained to help move the passengers (e.g. helping them get up) and as a result I tend to be an onlooker in this event, my only role being to steady the bike (by holding it down) so that it doesn't tip over when someone gets on or off. Then there is the transition onto the bike - the moment whereby time seems to slow down and the passengers work through the learned, habitual movements, with determination and resolve - not passive recipients of help but co-constitutors of the movement experience. Obviously once the passengers are on, seatbelts fastened, footrest in, blankets on, I am much more in control of the event;

After all the shuffling and manoeuvring its always a lovely feeling "releasing" the bike, putting the throttle on a little, and moving out of the front drive. I do feel (as many of the passengers describe the rides) that it is their freedom, that they relish and treasure it, I imagine what it must feel like to have been inside all day and then glide off on a bike into the sunshine (Fieldnotes, 11.02.19).

Sensory aspects

The openness of the bike creates a wide visual field and facilitates connection with the outside. This provides a unique experience for passengers who find unassisted movement challenging. Unlike being in a car, there is the added sensory element of being connected to the moving landscape.

The openness of the bike means that sights, sounds, touches, and smells are accessible experiences. Changes in temperature (cold/warmth/wind/sun) are enjoyed and commented on during the rides, bringing an awareness to the body and to the experience of being outside. Feeling cold is not always necessarily a negative experience for the passengers, as some have said it makes them feel more alive/awake, or on the other hand, it makes them appreciate going back into warmth after the rides, and they look forward to having a cup of tea on their return. Comments such as "that'll last me the week!" Show that the experience of being on the bike carries through well after the ride is over - the experience is banked/cherished and looked forward to.

The rides also bring about a general sense of the changing seasons and time passing by. This emerges out of visual cues such as the changing colours of the trees, the freezing of the lake in Rowntrees Park, the rise and fall of the river Ouse, the emergence of the daffodils and ice cream vans, and the number of people out and about. “Slowing down” (one of the Cycling Without Age guiding principles) is key in facilitating sensory engagement, not just for the passenger, but for the pedaller too. As a pedaller, I have noticed how the slow pace focuses my attention on details and small changes in the environment, and other pedallers have commented too, on how it makes them really pay attention to where they are going, and the details and sensitivities of the route, rather than just being on “autopilot”.

Pedaller and passenger of course have different sensory and embodied experiences and awareness during the rides. For example, as a pedaller I find that I often warm up from pedalling and don’t notice the cold as much, meaning that I have to rely not just on my own sensory experience of cold/heat in order to know whether the passengers are comfortable – a verbal check is required. Knowing the route and looking ahead for hazards as the bike moves along means that the pedaller’s visual experience might be slightly different from the passenger, but off the roads, the slower pace means that visual experiences can be shared.

Movement facilitates this; features of the surrounding landscape are commented on as they come into view, and as the terrain and route are negotiated. Bumps, potholes, and turns are sometimes remembered or anticipated by the passenger can play an active role in the rides by looking out for cars coming along at junctions for example, where it is difficult for the pedaller to see. This makes the rides a collaborative and shared experience.

Conclusion: Health and wellbeing through shared movement

The Cycling Without Age programme undoubtedly impacted the health and wellbeing of both volunteers and beneficiaries in a positive way. In this final section I would like to offer a brief reflection about how part of this impact involved a re-imagining of health and wellbeing.

The rides were joyous and fun events for both pedaller and passenger. However, “getting out” was so important to the passengers, and so the rides were more than just a “luxury” but a necessity. This was seen in the way in which they allowed passengers to actively participate in public space, landscapes, and flows of movement. Health (and care), in this sense, becomes about more than just meeting basic needs but offering joy, adventure, and escapism.

We can also see that ageing and frailty pose challenges to independence and movement. Correspondingly, the Cycling Without Age programme showed how the combination of bicycles and people can offer innovative solutions that go beyond current available options. Bikes were acknowledged by the volunteers as positive and hopeful tools that enabled movement. The Trixie bike, specifically, allowed volunteers to reflect on their own experiences of cycling and being on the road as well.

Through the Cycling Without Age programme, we also see new ways in which intergenerational relationships can be formed. As discussed in the section on mobility, passengers were not passive recipients of movement but active co-constitutors. They had to manoeuvre themselves and their bodies in new ways in order to access the bike and experience the rides. Volunteers often commented on their respect and amazement of the way in which passengers did this. The programme therefore allowed people to re-imagine what is possible and achievable in old age, as well as build intergenerational relationships through trust, care, respect, and shared movement experiences.

