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# Experiencing movement through access: public transport in Johannesburg

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# Experiencing movement through access: Public transport in Johannesburg

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## Plagiarism Declaration

I **Katleho sera**

I here declare that this long paper is my own independent work.

Where I have consulted secondary sources, I have acknowledged the appropriately.

I understand what constitutes plagiarism and I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, I have not committed any plagiarism

**Signature:** *K.Sera*  ***Date:*** *08-06-2020*

## Abstract

The main research question for this research report is: How does accessibility to, and/or the experience of, public transport in Johannesburg shape the identity of a person with a disability? This thesis aims to understand the experiences of people with disabilities in terms of how public transport in Johannesburg accommodates their disabilities and aims to look at a number of questions around the shaping of the identities of people with disabilities when using public transport in the City of Johannesburg.

This research is based on an auto-ethnographic account of my own experiences, along with five participants who took part in semi-structured interviews. I found, through this research, that accessibility is far more than just ramps and lifts. The public transport sector in the city is a space that gives people different experiences that shape who they are as people – it hence raises questions around social understandings of personhood. Furthermore, it shapes certain strategies of navigating the city: in order to have some sense of independence some people with disabilities either endure the challenges that they come across in spaces like taxis and taxi ranks or some resort to using alternative routes while others use other modes of public transport available in the city.

The central argument of this research is: since most everyday public transport like minibus taxis and buses are not fully accessible for people with disabilities, this makes them question their identities and depend on others. The implications of this is that when people with disabilities use public transport they enter that space with a knowledge that it's not fully accessible to accommodate their individual disabilities and they would have to adapt themselves in whatever ways they can, and they also have to develop a certain understanding of how they are perceived by the public; as a result, how they interact with the space, and the types of interactions they have, shapes their identities.

# Chapter 1- Introduction, Rational and Research Aims

## 1.1 Introduction and Rational

The question of how people with different disabilities experience their world has always caught my interest and fostered a desire to do work that is centred around the sharing of real-life experiences regarding, through the viewpoint of the person with a disability, how people with disabilities interact and experience the different spaces of which they are a part of. This was depicted in my honours research work in 2018 which looked at The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) as a space entitled "The Ability to Experience." This research looked at the social experiences of students with disabilities at the Wits campuses in Johannesburg. The research focused on the viewpoints of students with disabilities, addressing the fundamental question of whether they think that Wits is a space that is accessible for students with disabilities or whether the university needs to do more to accommodate students with disabilities.

During the research process the major challenge I encountered was sometimes not being able to get access to some of the participants for interviews due to them not being able to travel since they couldn't have someone available always to accompany them to the meeting points that we would agree on , in addition to public transport not being accessible for them to use alone. This was, in a way, a restriction of their movement because they could not travel although they wanted to, and it was something that was beyond their control. Recent developments in Disability Studies show how important it is that we attend to the distinct and yet overlapping forms of differentiation that shape social aspirations and which structure ideas of personhood. Society has been insisting on how people with particular disabilities must be and how they should move, this can be seen as a subtle form of policing movement of people.

Ralph (2012) argues, regarding ‘movement politics’, the limitation of a person’s freedom of movement, from ancient times, has resulted in the enslavement of a person, and for a person to take action, freedom of movement is very fundamental as it’s one of the means for people to experience freedom in the world. His conception of movement politics states that marginal groups aim to accomplish, in some straightforward sense, "freedom," but freedom might also be a delusion, a noble aim or even imaginary (Ralph, 2012). Ralph (2012) states that it remains to be seen whether freedom can ever mean what it purports to be in its most ambitious repetitions. The situation for people with disabilities is that their movements are frequently restricted within particular spaces and this limits their capacity to pursue their aspirations. Because my participants during my Honours research couldn’t move on their own due to the two main reasons stated above, I would say that, at those moments, freedom was a fantasy or even a delusion because to them their freedom meant that they would be dependent on other people for assistance when it comes to them traveling due to public transport not being accessible enough for them to travel on their own.

Drawing from that challenge, this research report expands on the question of the experiences of people with disabilities further by looking beyond the university but focussing on Johannesburg more widely. The focus for this research is the public transport industry in Johannesburg due to the role it has in people’s movement in the city daily, with the minibus taxis being the biggest role players in this sector. There are also many other types of transport in the city such as Metrorail trains, the Gautrain , governments BRT buses, other buses ( such as Metro, Putco and municipal Buses) and Uber, these are the available types of transports that make up the public transport sector in the city.

Since the public transport industry is one of the sectors at the heart of the well-being of all social and economic sectors of a country, however, in most nations public transport systems don’t cater for the needs of persons with disabilities (Mashiri et al.2008). In South Africa a lot

of low-income residents do not have dependable transport to access opportunities due to the legacy of apartheid in the country (Rivasplata, 2006). The available public transport between townships, rural areas and cities is in most cases insufficient for people with disabilities, mostly physical disabilities due to the fact that their accessibility is not guaranteed.

South Africa was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007, and forms part of many human rights treaties guaranteeing economic and social rights (HRW, 2015).Although legislative steps supporting greater access commenced in the 1990s, the significant role of transport was pronounced in the government's recent White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SA Dept. of Social Development, 2016).

For this research the focus will be on public transport that caters to majority of the population for traveling purposes. And I will also be referring to assistive devices which are things like wheelchairs, walkers, canes etc. however, not as things that make a person with a disability whole like Dickson uses technology but as things that make the life of a person with a disability easier (Dickson 2016).

In the South African context public transport isn't just limited to only government provided transport such as the BRT and Metrorail but it includes forms of Private companies such as Uber and other private companies that form part of the transport sector in the country. In several cases these are public-private partnerships where the state owns a stake and the other is owned by other stakeholders (private and/or public),like Rea Vaya (BRT). This is just one example of such partnerships, the with other one is in a form of the state-owned enterprise like Metrorail.

All of these types of public transport function differently and are designed to cater to different groups in society. However, some like taxis which cater for majority of the population are not really equipped or designed to be accessible for people with disabilities. There are a few

exceptions such as BRT, Gautrain and some metrobus buses. This research will focus on the taxi industry because it caters for the majority of the population and in some areas, taxis cover more geographic ground, simply put they go to places that most other forms of public transport don't cover. But I will also look and mention a few others like Uber, buses and trains. The reason I will mention Uber specifically is because in most cases it is seen as the alternative mode of transport to taxis for the people in the city I have interacted with, for a number of different reasons. Like minibus taxis Uber is able to travel routes that trains and buses don't cover, but in most cases it's only an alternative to those who can afford it cause it can get very expensive at times as you will see in later sessions of this thesis. And those which the state owns or has shares in like BRT and Gautrain have some level of accessibility to them such as a wheelchair lift in the BRT and a voice announcer in the Gautrain that keeps passengers updated in terms of where they are and what station is next at all times.

Prior to starting this research, I spoke with a source that did not want to be identified in the research, who is involved in the taxi industry. He told me that government has no shares in the taxi industry in the country, the industry is fully owned by owners of the taxis. What happens is that each vehicle (minibus) that is licensed to carry people as a taxi on South African roads is affiliated to an association, and each association is affiliated to the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) and the National Taxi Alliance (NTA) . Membership of a taxi to the association is obtained through an affiliation fee per taxi and when membership is obtained the taxi is given a licence to operate in the routes that are ran by that particular association. The taxi is marked by a sticker that has the name and symbol of the affiliated association and that is how they are able to distinguish which taxi belongs to what association.

He also told me that it is the duty of the associations to ensure that there's peace and order in the industry in a way that they negotiate among each other in terms of which association is responsible for which routes and it is also the associations that are responsible for determining

the fee to charge people. There are many consequences for taxis that enter into the territory of another association without informing the affected association before seeking permission and these differ from fines to even impounding of the taxi. Johannesburg has many different associations operating in the city such as Home Sweet Home, ATA (Alexander Taxi Association), JVTA (Johannesburg Vosloorus Taxi Association) and many more.

Venter et al. (2002) argued that the minibus taxi is the main public mode of transport in South Africa, with about 60% of the South African population relying on this service to move around. In addition to that, the minibus taxi service, its infrastructure, as well as the routes and operating time schedules are informal and therefore not fixed. Venter et al. (2002) also discovered that in South Africa, minibus-taxi drivers at times do not want to load people with disabilities. More recently Lister and Dhunpath (2016:32) explained the reason drivers of taxis refuse to transport people with disabilities. The main argument of these authors is that taxis want 'to maximise on profits, so taxi drivers ignore the elderly and people with disabilities. This is due to the fact that they are perceived as a burden because they take longer to board the taxi and, in most cases, need a form of assistance, and "compromising the driver's ability to transport more able-bodied customers in order to improve their take-home pay for that day" ( Lister & Dhunpath, 2016: p.32). Bauman (2007) argues that "in modern society older people and people with impairments are disabled by a hegemonic culture of youth and consumerism driven by market forces." This gives insight into the ways the market that disables people with disabilities when it comes to the public transport sector in the country: for instance, in order to make a taxi accessible they would have to lose seats in that taxi and when that happens, they would lose money. Although there is research that shows evidence of this like the work of Lister and Dhunpath (2016), in my own research none of the participant have had an experience of any mode of public transport in the city leaving them behind on the bases of them having a

disability. However, they did hint on levels of stigma that they encountered within the space of the taxi and the taxi ranks.

Unlike my honours which just focused on Wits students only, research for this research report was not limited to only students in Johannesburg, rather it engages with a variety of people with disabilities that have experiences of public transport in Johannesburg. Sometimes people with disabilities cannot take advantage of the many emerging opportunities that are there due to the fact that they cannot access transportation. A way to getting people with disabilities more economically active and independent public transport facilities need to be enhanced (Venter et al 2002).

One of the core themes I look at in this research is the link between identity formation and disability. I explore how the public transport sector shapes the identities of people with disabilities that use it. This research report also looks at some of the challenges and experiences people with disabilities face when they travel in relation to the mode of public transport they prefer to use.

The reason this research is important is that it looks at how people with disabilities experience the challenges they face when they move from place to place in public transport in the city from the moment, they leave their homes, or where they stay, right through to their destination and back home. It aims to understand some of the challenges people with disabilities face when they navigate their way around a big busy city like Johannesburg. This was done through looking at how someone with a disability accesses the public transport in the city, including how people with speech impediments navigate in a public transport industry where verbal communication is so vital and has no time to be patient.

## 1.2 Research Question and Outline of Argument

The main research question for this research report is:

> How does accessibility to, and/or the experience of, public transport in Johannesburg shape the identity of a person with a disability?

Sub-questions include:

- How does a person with a disability see themselves when going to use a form of public transport.
- At what point does the experience shape their identity?
- How do they see accessibility in relation to their disability?
- When it comes to people with disabilities and public transport in the city, what informs people with disabilities decisions to use or not to use a certain type of public transport?
- What are some of the challenges they face when they use public transport in the city?
- How does the experience of public transport shape perceptions of people with disabilities?

In this research my main argument is that the inaccessibility of the public transport sector especially the taxi industry in the City of Johannesburg shapes the identities of people with disabilities that use public transport through experiences gained through the interactions with different people in those spaces. This argument acknowledges the inaccessibility of the public transport sector as a factor that shapes the identity of the person with a disability. Beyond this, however, it argues what the experiences of public transport are broader than simply access and that processes of identity-formation arise from the ways interactions (with both people with and without disabilities) in these spaces are narrated.

Since most everyday public transport like minibus taxis and buses are not fully accessible for people with disabilities, this then makes them dependable on others. As a result of taxis and buses not being fully accessible some people with disabilities negotiate the barriers that they come across in spaces like taxis and taxi ranks in order to have some sense of independence and some resort to using more of their money by using alternative routes like Gautrain and others use privately owned modes of transport like Uber as the alternative choice of transport in Johannesburg regardless of the huge price differences. These forms and shapes their identities in a way that when they use these forms of public transport they interact with different spaces and people, and it is out of those interactions that the shaping of their identities is enhanced. This research also aims to be a tool that can be used to educate fellow commuters on how to relate with people with disabilities when sharing the same public transport: this is in terms of the type of assistance they should offer and how not to make people with disabilities feel isolated on the bases of their disabilities when sitting next to them in a public transport: I hope to publish this research or certain parts of it in the future. This research report will not have a single literature review: each section will engage relevant literature. However, in this introduction I will outline some key background debates and context relevant for framing the thesis: 1) narratives of identities, 2) conceptualising disability, and 3) Debates on disability in South Africa

## Narratives of Identity and Disability

Knowledge of narrative and narrativity has developed over time with the recent understandings seeing narrative and narrativity as concepts of social epistemology and social ontology, this is a shift in understanding from being understood to be restricted to only the representational type (Somers ,1994). This gives an idea that peoples knowledge, how they understand and relate to the world around them is mainly through what they see and hear in addition to that peoples social identities are constituted through narratives and narrativity (Somers,1994). Somers also

argues that people become people through being positioned or locating themselves unconsciously in social narratives which are not of their own making. Experiences that people with disabilities go through in their daily lives are stories that form the narratives about identities of people with disabilities in society (Somers ,1994). This argument links with Dickson when she states that peoples realities socially are gained through how they relate socially, and she also states that a cyborg is a mixture of machine and organism, something that can be seen as a social reality by some people and seen as fiction by others (Dickson, 2016).

Marginalisation and 'othering' of bodies, minds, affects, and sexualities that do not fit certain culture's fantasy standards of the ordinary is reinforced and justified in society through the conception of normalcy (Mohamed and Shefer, 2015). Jones (1996) states that most descriptions of being disabled are bordered predominantly by "the eyes of others." This perspective could be the inspiration behind the word "disability" as it echoes a meaning that is centred on oppositional relationship to ability. And thoughts that find expression through this perspective can be seen to be limited as those thoughts mainly come from viewpoints of people without disabilities. There are two central eminent approaches to identifying disabled people as a group. The medical understanding of disability, views disability as a result of physical impairment and emphases the need for alteration of the body, While the social approach views disability as something that is caused by oppressive social relations, and stresses that the burden to change lies with society and not with the person with the disability (Shakespeare, 1996).

A starting point for understanding the concept of disability is distinguishing the difference between what an impairment and what disability is (Western Cape Association for persons with disabilities, 2015). From the view of the American Medical Association (AMA), Impairment refers to a medical concept involving a change in one's health status and is as a result of an illness or a disease. While disability is a non-medical phenomenon; basically, it refers to the

social barriers in society that hinder the person from being an active member of society, disability is seen to be more like an occupational concept (Walker 1993).

According to the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (WPRPD) of 2015, an impairment "is a perceived or actual feature in a person's body or functioning that may result in limitation or loss of activity or restricted participation of the person in society with a consequential difference of physiological and/or psychological experience of life." In contrast, a "disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" according to The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed and ratified by South Africa in March 1997 (Western Cape Association for persons with disabilities, 2015).

Society's perceptions on disabilities are highly influenced by the medical model of disability and this has also an impact on how the person with a disability perceives themselves. This is the reason we cannot speak about conceptualizing disability without looking at the medicalization of disability (Oliver ,1986). The term medicalization refers to two organised processes, firstly it suggests that behaviours or conditions of disabilities must be understood in relation to health and illness. With the second process suggesting that problematic experiences seen as deviant should be removed or controlled by medical practices (Riessman, 2012). When looking at disability from this view it means people with disabilities are given a medicalized identity in society, and their exitance and identity is defined through this model. With their disability viewed as a negative or something that must be changed through medical procedures such as surgery (Riessman, 2012). This view of disability becomes the foundation of biased or discriminatory medical care because treatment is filtered through the diagnoses of the disability. This becomes problematic in situations where the person with a disability has an illness that has nothing to do with their disability and doctors focus on treating the disability

instead of treating illness, because they have a view that the illness is caused or linked to the disability (Riessman, 2012). This rarely happens to non-disabled people unless they have chronic illnesses because the doctor takes time to do the necessary investigations needed to determine the root cause of the illness before they are diagnosed (Riessman, 2012). The people with disabilities that are most affected by this are people who have a form of mental disability as their physical symptoms may be overlooked and accredited to 'psychosis' or their mental disability when they need treatment. Similarly, overweight people are also medicalized, when an overweight person goes to the doctor with a form of a breathing problem, the doctor is likely going to firstly link the breathing problem to the weight of the person and will tell that person to lose weight and not look at the cause of the breathing problem (Riessman, 2012).

The person with a disability may also start shifting the blame of their disability on themselves in instances where they feel more and more isolated from their communities. This for them is a way of accepting responsibility for their own incapacity ,instead of fighting the main order of thinking in that community. The focus may also shift to the body and the and the individual, the person with the disability may feel judged to the extent that it results in them looking down on themselves and having very low self-confidence (Shakespeare, 1996). Young, (1990) and Charlton, (1998) argue that people with disabilities still experience gaps in social, cultural, political, and economic status . This could be attributed to the involvement of the profession of medicine and the health professions, this can also be linked to the change from a feudal to a capitalist economy and developing capitalist relations of production, which function through the commodification and classification of the body (Foucault, 1980, Oliver, 1990).

Barnes (1985) argued that the presence of disabled people is seen as a threat to the health of others in society and as a result it was necessary to isolate, reject and discriminate people who were viewed as 'different' or 'other'. Mike Oliver and Colin Barnes disputed the medical model by hypothesizing that disability is due to the failure of society, and this method is

consciously intended to take the needs of individuals with impairments into consideration (Oliver, 1990; Priestley, 1998). This socio-materialist viewpoint makes disability better understood as linked to material relations of power between those with disabilities and those without disabilities in a specific historical context, this is why a person's capacities are mediated through the relation between the material context and the individual (Oliver, 1990).

Oliver (1996; 2004) argues that it is not the impairment which is the cause of the social stigmatization of people with disabilities , but rather society's response to people with impairments. This approach differentiates between impairment and disability. Barnes (1991: 2) defines impairment as a "physical, mental or sensory functional limitation within the individual", and disability on the other hand is defined as the "loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers." (Barnes, 1991: 2). Barnes also maintains that disability can also be seen as a type of social oppression and people with disabilities experience significant inequality in all areas of social life, comprising of things like employment, education, health care, housing, and – particularly relevant for this discussion – transportation (Barnes et al, 1999).

### Debates on disability in South Africa

This section is devoted to a brief literature review of the South African context on disability. It will be a very brief review because each chapter has its own literature review section integrated within each chapter. There has not been much research done in South Africa on disabilities and public transport. Most research around disability and disability grants looks at HIV/AIDS. For instance, Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala who looks at negotiating AIDS, poverty and antiretroviral treatment in South Africa (Leclerc-Madlala, 2006). Disability continues to be an understudied field in South Africa and more widely in Africa; this although there is an emergent literature in particular around the intersectionality of gender and disability (Mohamed and Shefer, 2015). Another barrier faced by people with disabilities in South Africa is access, this is in terms of

things like economic opportunities, public transport and even education. Access to education and higher education has been reduced to the unaccommodating or insufficient physical environment (Engelbrecht and de Beer 2014).

Research on access to education for disabled people raises concerns about the retainment of people with disabilities in universities and schooling systems and how they can help them prosper in a tailor curriculum. This is a condescending type of approach as they predetermine what the students can be able to pass in order to increase the pass rate (Lichiello 2012). Access to higher education institution for disabled students is not propagated and at best encouraged as it should be this is because there are still universities that are not fully equipped to accommodate disabled students (Matshedisho, 2007). Because of this access is not reached and enjoyed the same at all tertiary institution in South Africa, as there is the issue of Historically Advantaged Universities (HAU) and Historically Dis-Advantaged Universities (HDU) (Matshedisho, 2007). The former refers to the Universities that catered for whites only and the latter refers to the universities that catered for black people. The arrangement was as such as it was the policy of Apartheid and the legacy of this separate development policy manifests itself and it is plaguing access of disabled students to higher education institutions. Tertiary institutions like University of the Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town have the best facilities for disabled students. This is because it is at their own discretion without government support (Matshedisho , 2007).

This contributes to the low enrolment of disabled students in higher education institutions as there are only two institutions that are at the moment able to accommodate disabled students. Of the 30% disabled students at secondary school only 2% go on to tertiary education meaning that there are more people with disabilities that are not pursuing higher education (Engelbrecht and de Beer, 2014). The major constraints of access to higher education is a lack of mechanisms to support disabled students like access to facilities, the physically impaired are the ones who

are faced with major issues of accessing facilities (Engelbrecht and de Beer, 2014). The architectural challenges are also a reflection of attitudes of the able-bodied people or people with no disability the lack of changes in the architectural lay out in universities is the sign of low attitudes. Access and lack of access is a combination of factors that lead to the exclusion of a significant number of disabled students to higher education (Engelbrecht and de Beer, 2014). Though access to higher education for disabled students is propagated and protected through policy and legislature, their integration to tertiary institution is difficult and at times a lonely journey and process (Matshedisho, 2007 and Engelbrecht and de Beer 2014).

While this thesis is not focused on education, but rather transportation, this literature raises the wider social and institutional context in which disability and access to resources are intertwined. However, even with the emerging research that there is on disabilities in South Africa, most of it takes the viewpoint of looking at people with disabilities as the other, this means that most of the research is done through the perspective of non-disable people. Hence, this research report also encompasses my own experiences through autoethnography.

### Policies and Legislation on the accessibility of public transport

The objective of this section is to show the different policies and legislations in place put by government on access in the transport sector for people with disabilities. Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, 2006, enforces that People with Disabilities of member states of the United Nations should have equal access to transport and the physical environment (United Nations, 2006). When it comes to South Africa besides the Article 9, there is a Charter of Fundamental Social Rights in South African Development Community that South Africa adopted in 2003, which promotes the social integration of People with Disabilities by forming an enabling environment that seeks to include transport, mobility and accessibility relating to the work force. (South African Development Community, 2003). In addition to that there is also the White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997 in South Africa also

advocates for the removal of barriers in society which will enhance equal participation for all members of society "in all spheres of life" (Department of Welfare, 1997).

The South African White Paper on National Transport Policy (1996) acknowledges the constitutional rights of people with disabilities to have accessible transport (Department of Transport, 1996). The above-mentioned policy says that "the needs of special categories of passengers should be identified by the responsible transport authorities, especially at metropolitan and local level, and these should be addressed in their passenger transport plans" (Department of Transport, 1996:48).

The significance of accessible transport is highlighted further in the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy of 1997. The policy states that without an accessible public transport system, "people with disabilities will continue to remain largely 'invisible'" and hence unable to benefit from "the services and commercial activities available to most of their fellow citizens" (Government of South Africa, 1997:32). South Africa as a signatory member of the United Nations is bound by Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, to ensure that new or improved policies are formulated and implemented to improve the lives of people with disabilities (United Nations, 2006). South Africa's main problem is that as noted previously there are policies and legislation in place on paper that is designed to make public transport in the country accessible for people with disabilities but in practice people do not abide by the policies and legislation in place. So now what is needed from government is structures, policies and legislation that will be aimed at the enforcing of the already in place policies and legislation. This thesis highlights that, in spite of these legal protections for people with disabilities, in practice access and stigma are shaped spatially and socially and are not only matters of law.

## 1.2 Thesis Outline

This thesis comprises of six chapters. The first three chapters (1 and 2 ) are about the research introduction and research process, while the last three chapters (3,4, and 5) are designed in a way that they capture the experiences of people with disabilities have while using public transport in the city based on my fieldwork.

### Chapter 2: Research Site ,Research Methodology and Ethics

The chapter provides a brief description of the research methodology, research site, the ethical considerations that were taken in this research and lastly a brief biography of the participants that took part in the research.

### Chapter 3: Transportation and Personhood

Chapter three shows how someone with a disability has a story to tell through and related to their identity that they gain with every experience that they have. It explores the following themes: dependency, identity and narratives of disabilities, as these are the three core themes because they shape and form a person's identity, the themes in this chapter are centered around the idea of wholeness

### Chapter 4: The Public Transport sector as a Space of Experiences.

Chapter four is centred on the idea of conceptualising of space of the taxi and taxi ranks as a space of experiences that shape the identities of the people who interact with it daily and discusses themes such as ableism and stigma. This is focused on space in terms of getting to the rank and the type of experience a person gets inside the taxi rank.

### Chapter 5: The Environment: Taxi routes and Ranks

Chapter Five presents a central argument of does the way people with disabilities experience the environment shape their experiences of the taxi ride itself. This is focused on space in

terms of the experience beyond the taxi rank focussing more on the environment in which taxis operate in.

## Chapter 2- Research Site, Research Methodology and Ethics

### Introduction

This chapter aims to outline the research site, research methodology and ethical considerations that were used in the research. The chapter provides an overview of the research process and describes the research site. The chapter also gives a brief participant biography that is aimed at introducing and gives a brief background on all participants that took part in the research, this also outlines the types of disabilities the participants have. Lastly the chapter also has a section on the note taking process and ethical considerations that were taken into consideration in order to protect the participants.

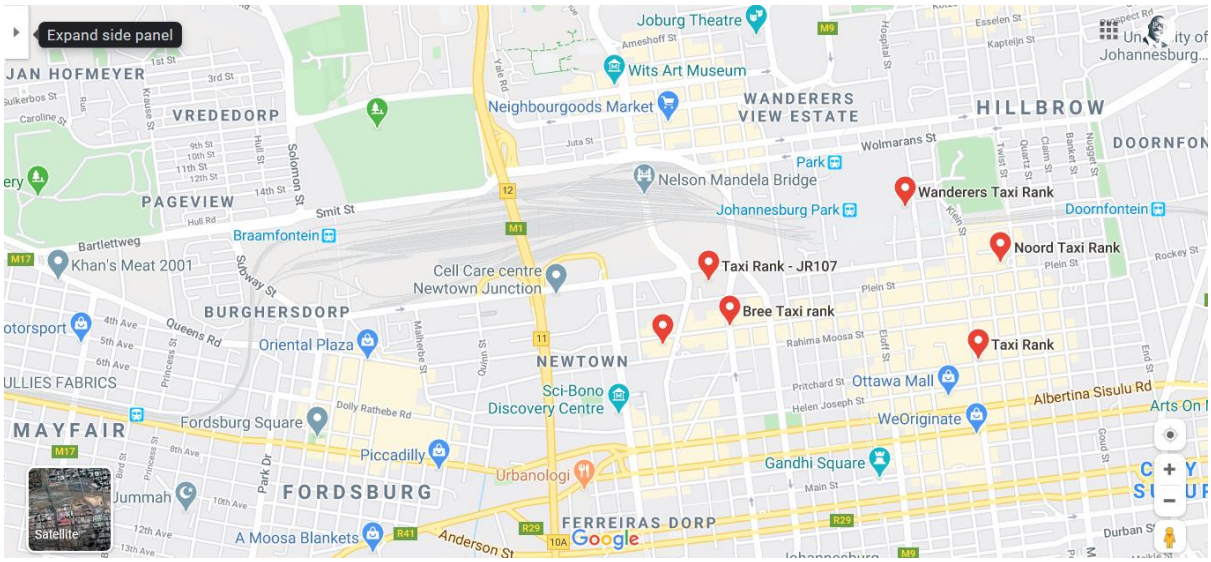
### 2.1 Research Site

This research focused on the combination of two core themes being identity and accessibility of the public transport in Johannesburg, it did not have a specific research site however it was centralized in different parts of Johannesburg such as three taxi ranks including Noord (MTN), Bree and Wanderers Taxi Ranks. This method is known as a multi-sited research and I will discuss it in more detail in the research methodology section of this research that is to follow.

The image below is a Google map of the three taxi ranks that the research focuses on in Johannesburg. The important thing that one must take note of in the map is the distance between the ranks and the distance of each rank from Wits University marked in the map as Wits Arts Museum as this is something that is important in understanding some of the experiences that are shared in the research. The placement of Wits as the central location of this research although the research wasn't focused on students only was because of the fact that most interviews were done at wits; and all the participants that took part in the research have an experience of moving through the city from or to Wits so that was the easiest place to reference as the starting point for the research. The usage of Wits as a central point of the research was

also due to the fact that I am being the researcher at some point during the year which the research was conducted navigated through the city with each participant to the taxi rank they each used from Wits and in most cases that was the most comfortable experience for them, and the participants were comfortable in using that experience as a reference point in the formal interviews for the research.

### 2.1.1 Map of Site




https://www.google.co.za/maps/search/bree,+noord+an+wanderous+taxi+rank/@-26.1998685,28.0327037,15z/data=!3m1!4b1?hl=en

## 2.2 Research Methodology

The approach that was taken for the research was a qualitative case-study research approach where the experiences of each participant that took part in the research were used to show different parts of the main arguments of the research; this approach gave the researcher strength to explore and understand participants' experiences. Qualitative research looks at "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2004).

The method that was used for this research was a multi-sited ethnography, adopting both participant observation and interviews. I, as the researcher, participated in the research by going in some of the sites of the research with them and interviews. Five participants were interviewed in this research , with the focus of the interviews aiming to capture the experiences of each of the participants when they used public transport in the city. This research also engages some of my own personal reflections of my experiences of public transport as someone with a disability and how my experiences are linked with the experiences of other participants. The sharing of my own experiences in the research is known as autoethnography, which is a method to research and writing that tries to describe, analyse and code personal experiences (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). This method can be a tool for the challenging of current systems of doing research and representing others in research and, in this method, the researcher integrates autobiography and ethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). The research was also based on observations conducted in different environments such as the route to Bree taxi rank and crossing Mandela Bridge, personal experiences that were linked to the experiences some of the participants.

During the research I faced various challenges and I had to think outside the box to do them. The first challenge I had to overcome as the researcher was my safety as a researcher: this is because the research required me to do a lot of observation and the three sites that were selected for the research are not safe for anyone; they are the places that have among the highest number of crimes in the city with mugging being the most common type of crime. I had to ask a friend of mine to accompany me when I was doing my observation. Due to the crime rate, we could not draw attention to ourselves, we could not take notes and pictures while we were in the different sites , and so I observed then wrote whatever we observed only when we were on campus.

The second challenge that I faced is that I couldn't approach random people to ask them their views or to participate in the research because they were always in a rush or some didn't trust me that I was doing research. Some would think that I was trying to scam them, so I decided to stick to the people that I knew who had experiences of public transport in the city. A third challenge I faced had to do with the safety of the participants in the city during the research: what I did was to arrange with those who could come to Braamfontein to come on a day and time that would be safe for them and those who couldn't come I arranged that I would go to them or meet in a neutral place that was convenient for everyone. A final critical challenge I faced during the research process had to do with the interview process. Interviews were semi-structured and conducted in a way that would point the research in a particular direction and as the research developed and started to take shape the original direction changed, and I couldn't go back to the participants to do follow up interviews due to the difficulties outlined above. As a result, some of the interview material did not link directly to the new direction of the research. The change in direction of the research was mainly motivated by insights from my participants that gave me a broader perspective on accessibility of taxis.

Like I stated previously the methodology used in this research is a multi-sited research methodology drawing on Marcus (1995) focuses on multi-sited ethnography, which is seen as developing a methodological wave in anthropological research that involves the adaptation of long-standing approaches of ethnographic practices to more multifaceted objects of study. Ethnography that is done using this methodology moves from one location to multiple locations of observations and participation that have a shared connection. Multi-sited ethnography is set up around links , combinations, or comparisons of locations in where the ethnographer has to develop arguments base on the links between the sites, it also allows for the integration of discourses from interdisciplinary fields that change the techniques on how modern cultures and societies are studied, and it's theorists like Latour and Haraway that are leading the

advancement of this type of research (Marcus, 1995). I showed this through the linking of two things that one would not normally link, and this is public transport and personhood. A multi-sited research allows the researcher to use life histories that shows a contrast of social backgrounds through sharing of experiences that might be hidden in the structural study of processes as such. Ethnographies conducted using this method define the things they research using many different modes or methods. The research needs to be conditional and flexible as it develops, and in the field the ethnographer needs to be fully aware of the changes they might encounter, and their identities must also change as they move between different sites of the research (Marcus, 1995). Marcus, (1995) also says:

> "Only in the writing of ethnography, as an effect of a particular mode of publication itself, is the privilege and authority of the anthropologist unambiguously reassumed, even when the publication gives an account of the changing identities of the fieldworker in the multi-sited field" (Marcus, 1995 p. 112).

When doing multi-sited research, a person will find themselves in all types of intersecting and contradictory entanglements. These conflicts may be resolved through a person being a type of 'ethnographer-activist' that renegotiates their identities in different sites. Lately sometime while in the field the ethnographer will find him or herself being confronted with situations where, they have to collaborate with participants in terms of working together and at other times they will be forced to work against participants. Changing ones position depending on one's participants or what one finds in a site creates a sense of doing more than ethnography on the side of the ethnographer (Marcus, 1995).

### 2.2.1 Note taking process

There will be a time after weeks or months of writing field notes where the ethnographer needs to drawback from the field (Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). This is to analyse the material

that he/she has written from the field. Thus, they will start to analytically thrift through the notes related to the incidents and accounts from the field (Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). The ethnographer instigates a focused analysis and writing by looking and reading the field notes in a new way, with more focus and with a structured look at what they had observed and recorded. This allows them to treat the field notes as a data set, re-examining, re-experiencing and reviewing everything that has been written down, while self-consciously looking for themes, patterns, and differences within the records (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011).

An ethnographic interview is a form of speech that intends to understand a cultural phenomenon mainly from an insider's viewpoint, prompting expressive information about their own (subjective native language) understanding of a cultural phenomenon. This reasoning and ethnographic interview that represents qualitative study and systemic analysis of an informant's cultural knowledge in that it aims to discover a subject matter within its own background field. ethnographic interviews consist of three essential elements, a clear purpose, ethnographic explanations and ethnographic questions (Spradley 1979). A clear purpose involves the ethnographer making the purpose of every interview obvious to the informant. Stressing the reasons of every interview is to remind the informant about the aim of the study. Consequently, the ethnographer has to lead every interview to make sure that the interview being conducted provides insight into the cultural knowledge of the informant.

The writer offers five different kinds of ethnographic explanations (native language, recording, project, interview and question) they aim to ensure that the objective of the study in its wholeness remains known to the person as well as the need for the adoption of different tools (i.e. voice recorders) to accomplish the aims of the study (Spradley 1979, 59-60). To conclude, ethnographic questions consist of three kinds of questions: descriptive (allows the ethnographer to describe the on-going events), structural ( helps the ethnographer to build lists

of domains of informants cultural knowledge) and contrast (enables the ethnographer to collect disparate dimensions of meaning in the informant's terms) (Spradley 1979).

For this research semi-structure ethnographic interviews were conducted with the participants that took part in the research. Each participant had a formal interview in which consent to record was given and it was recorded, and the second interview was an informal one that wasn't recorded it was mainly in a form of a conversation while I was walking with the participants in places that were difficult to get a clear recording. Follow up interviews were not possible mainly due to the unavailability of the participants due to various reasons that were impossible to work around in the timeframe of the research.

### 2.3 Brief Participant Biography

As stated before, this research reflects on my experiences as a person with a disability who also uses public transport in the city, and it will be supported and linked with the experiences of five other people with different disabilities but focused mainly on youth's with disabilities because of the limited people that were available to take part in the research . For this research one formal interview that took approximately 90 minutes to 2 hours was conducted with each participant that took part in the research and that was supplemented with informal discussions with each participant in the field while I was walking with them as stated in the previous section of the research. When it comes to follow-up interviews with all the participants, they were scheduled but could not happen due to difficulties faced by the participants highlighted in this research and adding to that at the time that follow-up interviews were scheduled the country and the world was hit by a pandemic known as Covid-19 and the country was forced to a hard lockdown that restricted the movement of everyone including the participants, so I was forced to cancel the follow-up interviews. Since this research is mainly focused on the taxi experiences of people with disabilities, I tried to get a variety of disabilities represented in the research, and each interview focused on the experience of each participant in relation to their disability.

### Katleho

I am a male who is in his early thirties, I was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at a young age, I am from Vosloorus, I am doing master's at the University of the Witwatersrand. And I am also the researcher of the research.

### Tebogo

Tebogo is a man who is in his early twenties, he was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at a young age. He is from Katlehong a township near Vosloorus in Boksburg in the East Rand.

### Sicelo

Sicelo is a man who is in his late twenties who was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at a young age after a car accident. He is also from Katlehong a township near Vosloorus in Boksburg in the East rand. He is studying in Braamfontein.

### Sizwe

Sizwe is a man who is in his late twenties, he got his disability that affected his legs and his movement after he was recently bumped by a car. He is from Soweto and currently studying at the University of the Witwatersrand.

### Lesedi

Lesedi is a woman who is in her mid-twenties, she has type 1 Bipolar which is a psychiatric disability. She is a graduate from the University of North West, Vaal Campus. She is from the Vaal.

### Mkhuseli

Mkhuseli is a male who is in his mid-twenties, he has a visual disability. He is a graduate from the University of Pretoria. He is from Vosloorus in Boksburg in the East Rand.

## 2.4 Ethics

When it comes to ethics, participants were given the opportunity to give both a written and/or verbal consent. Participants were told of the option to withdraw at any time from the study and the interview and it was explained to the participants how they could use this option before each interview commenced; this was to ensure that all participants understood fully their rights in the research before taking part in the research. An option to remain anonymous throughout the duration of the research was also given to all participants and, if they chose this option, pseudo names were to be given to participants. All participant gave permission for their real names to be used in the research. Participants were informed that referral to an appropriate social service practitioner would be arranged if the need arose after interviews/discussions. The research also passed the Wits HREC which is one of the committees that looks and approves the ethics for research done focussing on human participants.

## Chapter 3- Transportation and Personhood

Hobsbawn & Ranger (1983) argue that an individual's or a community's identity may be a creation arising from dominant power relations. These identities also influenced by a number of intricate interconnected factors like wealth, resources and education. Additionally, identity is neither singular nor unchanging and needs to be understood in relation to both historical and contemporary circumstances (Hall, 1991). Tom Shakespeare views the disability identity as something that is about stories, having the opportunity and space to tell them, and having an audience that listens. It is moreover about identifying differences and isolating the important characteristics and experiences which constitute disability that can be changed, others to improve or celebrated (Shakespeare, 1996). Ken Plummer further adds to this by stating the following: "Stories need communities to be heard, but communities themselves are also built through story telling. Stories gather people around them: they have to attract audiences, and these audiences may then start to build a common perception, a common language, a commonality" (Plummer, 1995, p.174).

Through this chapter I aim to show that something as simple as a taxi ride can shape someone's identity by the experience that they create for a person with a disability; this experience may take the form of a story that shapes their identity that gets narrated by everyone that shared that experience. Through the experience they can be seen differently by different people in society and in many cases whether a person is seen to have a disability or not is based on the type of interactions a person has with people. This chapter aims to explore the themes of dependency, identity and narratives of disabilities, as these are the three core themes in relation to my disability because they shape and form my identity. These themes are all centered around the idea of wholeness, in terms of the question I pose to myself: could I be a whole person with my disability in relation to the standards of what is 'normal' to society? This will mostly be

autoethnographic, but I will also draw on some content from the interviews done with participants.

Being someone that was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at a young age has come with a lot of challenges in my life; some I have managed to overcome through time but there has been one particular challenge that has always bothered me throughout the course of my life and which has been difficult to overcome, as it is something that has to do with my existence: it is, in fact, the basis of my existence and that is the question of my identity. As a person living with a disability my identity seems to be more and more philosophical as it is sometimes questioned by some people while others can overlook the fact that I am a person living with a disability. At times, based on some interactions, I am left questioning my own identity mainly because of how some people relate to me and my disability. Through my attempts to overcome the philosophical question of my identity, I have learnt that my disability can sometimes have an identity of its own based on what people choose to see. Narratives of my identity will be constructed based on what they see.

This links to what Goffman (1963) writes about the ways that people with disabilities experience 'stigma' – this can impact on how an individual with a disability is perceived because of the way it is so powerful as a discrediting label. He argues that there are two main types of stigmatizing conditions. The first one is discrediting conditions which are visible or can be seen at face value such as eczema; secondly, there are 'discreditable' conditions that are typically not visible to others and which can be hidden such as epilepsy, HIV and depression. Goffman also argued that at times the 'discreditable' condition is the first thing that other people see, meaning that no matter what else he or she might be or accomplish, people will always see the condition over others, consequently making the condition the person's 'master-status' (Goffman, 1963). Goffman (1963) also states that the 'stigma' can also move beyond the person with the disability to the people who are closest to them through a concept that he

termed ‘courtesy stigma’, which he defined as a “tendency for stigma to spread from the stigmatized individual to his close connections.” (Goffman, 1963, p.30). This, to some extent, also suggest that I may not even get to a point where people look beyond my disability regardless of what I may achieve in life – as Crow (1996) says “for many disabled people personal struggle related to impairment will remain even when disabling barriers no longer exist.” (Crow 1996, p.58).

Home for me is in Vosloorus a township in Boksburg in the East Rand which is not that far from Johannesburg. Public transport in Vosloorus is limited in terms of choice because there are just two modes of public transport which are a Putco bus and minibus taxis going to places like Johannesburg. The one that I use the most is the minibus taxi since, unlike the Putco buses, taxis do not travel within certain time intervals and they cover more places than the bus. The main taxi ranks that I use are MTN taxi rank also known as Noord taxi rank in the CBD of Johannesburg, which is the largest rank in the city, along with Bree taxi rank which is near Newtown in the mornings on weekdays from 6am to 9am. The taxi is the only feasible mode of public transport that moves us in and out of Vosloorus daily.

Navigating to these taxi ranks for me is not always an easy experience depending on the time and day it is. Because I only use Bree mostly in the early hours of weekdays mornings I can say that my navigation from Bree to Wits is a calm experience because it’s not that busy in terms of less people but there are more cars and taxis that one needs to look out for when crossing roads and they are usually in a rush so they travel at high speeds, but when walking to Wits from Bree one always feels safe because there are visible securities in almost coroner and along the route of Mandela Bridge. I do get those occasional funny looks from people on the route, but they are miner since everyone is in a rush and I just walk past the people fast when I am alone. Navigating to Mtn for me usually happens in the afternoon usually when I am going to vosloorus. The walk has many challenges because they are also many cars and taxis that I

must look out for and to add there are also many people in the streets, with the many people walking in the streets the element of crime becomes a concern, and the area is a high crime infested area. The walking paths are  also filled by street venders that sell different products and make it very difficult to finding my way to the rank.

### 3.1 Dependency

Jeffrey Weeks looks at identity as something that is shared. He states,

> 'Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some other people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic, it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality' (Weeks, 1990, p. 88).

This entails that a person's identity is dependent on others and when coming to people with disabilities their disability is in most cases defined based on their dependency on other people. In other words, it means that the more someone is dependent on others, the more disabled they are in the eyes of those people they interact or encounter (Ratzka 2013). Since every person has a level of dependency in them, for people with disabilities the type of dependency they have when entering different spaces is a social dependency based on social interactions; they depend on the relationships they form in these spaces for them to get where they are going. However, as much as the individual with the disability depends on other people for help, I would argue that even those other people also depend on the taxi driver to drive at a speed that ensures that they get home or to work safely and on time.

Often when it comes to dependency in relation to disabilities, both scholars and society overlook that a person's dependency on others is mainly determined by the type of disability that person has: the more severe a person's disability is the more the person will be dependent on others. There are also other factors that can make a person dependent on others outside the severity of their disability and these are the financial standing of that person. For example,

when a person has the funds to afford things like an electric wheelchair that makes that person more independent from others; as a result, society will see that person as someone that is less disabled than others who cannot afford the same wheelchair. However, the type of independence that a person has relies largely on access to things like an electric wheelchair and that is dependent on the person's ability to afford that type of wheelchair; the person who can't afford an electric wheelchair in this example isn't independent because of the type of disability but they are made dependent on others as a result of their financial situation.

Black people with disabilities are not fully incorporated into this society the same way that white people with disabilities are, although white people with disabilities also experience levels of stigma and isolation but in most cases, they are incorporated better. As a replacement for not being incorporated, they are treated as outsiders to a society on a number of levels (Gamble, 1974; Levitas, 1986). Stuart (1992) says that discriminatory distribution of resources is another important type of oppression with which black people with disabilities have to struggle with more than white people with disabilities, because they are in most cases more dependent on the government for limited resources such as information, equipment, financial support and health care. Stuart does admit that white people with disabilities also experience marginalization, however they are marginalised as generally economically privileged members of South African society. The experiences of white people with disabilities while they may experience humiliation and discrimination – also become a norm against which black people with disabilities and their experiences of impairment are judged (Stuart, 1992). Stuart further argues that this judgement puts black people with disabilities in danger because they are given an identity and perceived as outsiders both within their own communities and within wider communities around disability. As a result of this black people with disabilities access to services and support is compromised (Stuart, 1992). There is also an idea that black people with disabilities in most African countries have to learn English if they are to make it or exploit

the services available (Levitas, 1986). Some black people with disabilities are also rendered powerless within the family because of their inability to contribute financially to the family due to their reliance upon the state, and limited employment for black communities. However, in the event where they can make some contribution (most cases a financial one) they will be given a level of saying in the running's of the family (Stuart, 1992). At times a person's social background can determine or indicate a how far a person will succeed in live. As it is believed the wealthier a person's family is the greater their chances are of succeeding in life, because they have access to resources that give them an advantage over a person that doesn't have access to the same resources. This is also link to gender as it can determine a career and the amount of power in society a person holds. When it comes to people with disabilities their social background and gender doesn't just only determine their success or career path, it determines their independence and the way they are in society and the amount of respect they are granted by the people around them (Shakespeare ,1996). This highlights Stuart's rejection of double oppression and leads him to advocate for the concept of simultaneous oppression that is qualitatively distinct. When he suggests that: "The oppression that black disabled people endure is... unique... it is necessary to construct a distinct and separate black disabled identity" (Stuart, 1992, p. 94) that also takes the intersectionality that is looked at by Mohamed (2015) of gender and disability.

At the heart of the issue of dependency is a question of wholeness. For Dickson (2016) wholeness is in relation to personhood as they are socially constructed. Dickson conceives personhood is relational in terms of at the core of personhood are interactions and relations with others. Dickson draws attention to a Western ideal concept of personhood focusing on the self-conscious individual (Dickson 2016). Nyamnjoh (2017) argues from an African perspective incompleteness does not take centre stage in how Africans see an individual, in a way that incompleteness can be the norm or the order of the day in that community. This is

taken from a perspective that it takes a community to raise a person. What he points out is the fact that Africans recognise that no one can be fully complete, and out of that recognition is the foundation of social relationships with the warm understanding of working together to build and improve each other for the advancement of the community. He suggests that African people have a way of finding maximising their interest in the way they organise each other's strengths to work together with each other's incompleteness and his conceptions of 'frontier Africans' and 'conviviality' indicate alternate ways of a functioning community (Nyamnjoh, 2017).

From my personal experiences of being in these spaces I get what Nyamnjoh is saying when he speaks about incompleteness especially in instances when I am in a taxi or at the taxi rank when it seems like I am struggling with something and the person next to me helps me just because they can see my disability, the look of relief they have on their face is one that says that I might be struggling or might not have anything but I was able to help someone whose in a worse state than me, that suggests that they are aware of their incompleteness but as long as there is someone who is more incomplete than them and they can help them in any way they can, life can go on for them. Although Nyamnjoh was mainly pointing out that everyone is incomplete, and social relations are based on the fact that we are interdependent, recognition and personhood is based on this interdependence; we should not look at incompleteness in terms of levels that one can be more or less incomplete than the other because if this is done it is a source of stigma and oppression.

In my case my cerebral palsy gives me more balanced movement in my lower body and although I do have balance in my upper body its limited. I cannot write using a pen which means that I have to use a device like a computer or laptop at all times in order to write. My disability also affects my voice which as a result means that most people take time to hear what I am saying. With all that said about my disability, people who are close to me like my family and friends don't see me as a person living with a disability but as a person who is independent

and to them my disability doesn't define my identity. Even though I am partially dependent on them when it comes to things like writing at times and sometimes speaking on my behalf, they are still able to look beyond my disability. However, there are also those people who see my disability before my personhood; for example, the biggest challenge for me in a taxi experience is the communication when it comes to me getting off because of the speech element of my disability. Normally I would ask the person that is seated next to me to announce for me when I want to get off just to avoid the miscommunication between myself and the driver. When I ask that person to speak on my behalf, this is a moment where I put my wholeness as a person to them under question because to them one of the things that make a person whole is his ability to speak and with my speech problem the question that comes to their mind is that what type of person is he that speaks like that.

This links with another experience of one of my participants Mkhuseli. His disability is one where he struggles to see objects which makes it very difficult for him to read things; this becomes a problem because in a system like the taxi industry a person's sight is very important because one needs two see the surroundings at every point of the way and if you can't see the way it is then easy for a person to get lost. But where his personhood is question is at the rank when it comes to him reading the signs that states were the taxis are going in ranks like MTN that have signs that are written where the taxis are going but put up high and they are written in a small font, he struggles to read them due to his disability. Sometimes there is no one near him to ask for assistance in reading whatever is written on the sign. At a stage where he does ask someone one to tell him what is written, he stated that he sometimes can feel or see the judgement from that person. He stated that what he sees or feels from the person is a question of 'why can't you read it yourself?' or 'can you even read?'. Incidences like these reveal that it's not just his personhood that gets questioned but a level of his intelligence is also questioned. When one has a disability that affects one's speech like Tebogo and I have, we face a similar

problem to Mkhuseli, since we are more comfortable traveling with people. Tebogo said that: "I personally hate it when I ask someone for a taxi, and I am with my friend and then the person responds to my friend and not me. But what gets to me the most is the way that person speaks about me in the conversation as if I'm not standing there." What Tebogo is referring to is a situation in which someone speaks about us with the person that we are with as if we are objects or children; it's not only what they say or ask but it's also the manner in which they say or ask as if they are speaking about someone with no thinking capacity. Sizwe stated that in the beginning stages of his disability he was dependent on those who were close to him everywhere he went but what became a huge problem for him in spaces like taxis and taxi ranks whenever he was with someone that is helping him is that he lost his sense of being because people would start speaking over him to the person helping him as if he was not there and he said that was the painful part of being dependent on someone you end up losing your identity in the process.

### 3.2 Vision centred personhood

These accounts show the ways in which vision is closely connected to conceptions of personhood. And Oyeronke Oyewumi adds to Dickson's criticism of western theories of personhood where she looks at how Western cultures are very vision focused. She says that people make judgments based on sight, which places an added importance on the 'body'. The world is primarily perceived by sight and this gives the body presence in the west; arguably people will always be body-focused as a result of this as it leads to judgments of people's bodies. It seems like in western countries like the USA the body is given a logic of its own. So, people make the distinction between the self and the body and through these beliefs one can tell a person's social position or how they are formed (Oyewumi ,2005)

Oyewumi (2005) criticized the Western thinking that difference indicates disintegration. Although Oyewumi's article looks at the gendered body there is a key insight that can be applied to people with disabilities: for someone on a wheelchair or using a cane whose

disability is clearly visible, what then becomes important for people is how the body that they are looking at appears and how different it looks from theirs since people will always be body focused. As a result, this can lead to judgments of those bodies. The judgments that follow what the eye can see are ones that Oyewumi (2005) says make the distinction between themselves or the self. The viewpoint of the body in this case is mainly from people without disabilities in terms of focusing on how different the body looks like and what that body cannot do, and they separate the body from the person. This is because they are focusing more on the assistive device that the person is using more that on the person using it. All of this can be linked to Nyamnjoh's argument of everyone is incomplete in a way, and social relations are based on the fact that we are interdependent. From Sizwe's experience I got the sense that people are indeed body-focused because he states that the type of interactions, he has with people are dependent on what they can see. he said that " people interact with me depending on what they can see and what I am wearing at that moment. This is because sometimes I choose to leave my cane behind when I go somewhere, so because my disability is only mainly visible when I walk due to the fact that I limp when walking, so I can see people's faces change when they realize how I walk especially when I'm wearing long pants because that's the only time they realize I have a disability, but when I am walking with my cane or wear shorts they interactions are different from the onset because they can see my cane or my injury from far."'

The body can also be commodified in this aspect through other people's perceptions as the body is viewed in line with what a person is capable of (Sharp, 2000). The body is viewed within the framework of usefulness, and whether the person can perform the work demanded of them in the labour market (Sharp, 2000). This is intertwined with dependency as to say whether a person living with disability can function without asking for assistance as that would make them a liability. The body is valued for its potential of productivity hence usefulness of the body is most valued and therefore commodified (Sharp, 2000). Seemingly most aspects of

the human body revolve around how much labour a person can perform and how much money a person/people can make with their bodies (Sharp, 2000). This is one of the reasons people with disabilities are questioned when it comes to economic participation.

This dynamic was illustrated from an experience I had when I went to Bree taxi rank one day as part of the observation part of the research process. The aim of it was to observe random people with disabilities who were not directly part of the research in terms of the interview process. I was hoping to see how they navigate their way in the taxi rank and how they used the taxis. On the day I was able to observe a few people with disabilities. I got to the rank at around 6:30 am and left around 10:00 am. The first thing that I saw at Bree which struck me was in the morning during peak hours. As a result of the long lines that one could stand in for about three hours, people with disabilities and school children in uniform did not join the queues from the back. Rather, they were told by the martial to go straight to the front of the queue and were given preference when a taxi loaded people. This was something that I had not seen being done so formally in other ranks in the city especially during peak hours.

I also realised through the observation that for someone with a visual disability, the queue martial is the first person they need to locate at the rank but finding the marshal on their own is a mission because they are always on the move and very busy. So, the person has to then depend on kind random people for guidance and sometimes they themselves do not know where the taxis are so the person with a visual disability has to keep asking random people for taxis to their destination. However, they are sometimes met with a lot of resistance from the public because there are also random people that walk around the rank with someone with a visual disability asking people for money. There are two ways one can look at this from the eyes of the public with the first being that the person with the disability is being used by the other person for personal gain because of the way the asking is done and the difference in dress code between the person with the disability and their helper, this is in terms of the fact that in

most cases the helper seems to be the one who is better dressed than the person with a disability, the second way this can be looked at is that the person with the disability is using their disability for petty from the public and they do not want to work as they want everything for free. The two views of the public towards people with visual disabilities in these spaces has a negative perception and this intensifies the level of resistance from the public to help people with visual disabilities in these spaces as the public assumes that when they are approached in these spaces by someone with visual disabilities are asking for money and not directions or another form of non-monetary assistance.

The dependency on random people is not just limited to someone with a visual disability but even a wheelchair user goes through a similar type of dependency. The first obstacle for a wheelchair user is navigating their way around the taxi rank between the taxis and the lines, sometimes being forced to face oncoming taxis putting them at a risk of being crashed by taxis because they are in a rush to get out of the rank to avoid traffic. They also have to depend on kind people and the martials for assistance to get them on and off the taxi and also put their wheelchair in and out of the taxi. This observation shows how vision is at the core of people's perceptions of personhood because I saw how people in the taxi rank make conclusions based on what they see at face value, for example when they see a person with a visual disability, the first assumption that comes to their minds is that they are going to be asked for money. The commodification element comes across as something that was linked to sight mainly from the taxi drivers in terms of when they see someone using a wheelchair getting on a taxi; they see it as a loss of a seat or how they were going to load the wheelchair on the taxi in a way that they would still be able to get a full load of passengers in their taxi. In my case people in the spaces of taxis do not always see my disability unless when I speak so in most cases when it comes to me getting different treatment it only happens when I have spoken with someone in that space and when they tell me to go to the front of the line. Sometimes I do not want the special

treatment of skipping the line because I think that it is using ones disability when it benefits me and sometimes it is not necessary.

### 3.2 Disability and Self-identity

People that grow up with disabilities and those that get disabilities later in their lives through accidents or illnesses face the same challenges of working out comfortable identities and social roles even in a socially marginalized group. There is also a mutual barrier to psychological wholeness that has nothing to do with the disability itself, but has to do with ways which family members, professionals and communities frame the impact of disability for the person with the disability. Telling the person to seek value in parts of their life that is functioning and that hasn't been impaired by the disability. The implications of this are that the individual with a disability can never be fully socially integrated. In order for one to get to the standard "normality" the individual must try as hard as they can to overcome their defective, invalid parts (Gill 1997). Calhoun argues that politics of personal identity and that collective identity are indistinguishably linked: "Identities are often personal and political projects in which we participate, empowered to a greater or lesser extent by resources of experience and ability, culture and social organisation" (Calhoun, 1990,p. 28).

These politics of personal identity was revealed in discussions with Sizwe and Sicelo. These two participants got their disabilities after being involved in car accidents at different points in their lives, with Sicelo being involved in an accident at a very young age and Sizwe's accident being more recent at a later stage of his life. What is interesting about them is how each one sees their disability. Sicelo said "to be honest I see my disability as a blessing because if it wasn't for my disability, I don't really know what or where I would be in life, I have managed to achieve so much with my disability motivating me to do more." While Sizwe on the other hand seemed to be struggling adjusting to life with a disability due to the fact that it is a recent change to his life. He said, " I never realised there were so many challenges people with

disability face on a daily basis till after my accident and having a disability has been an eye opener for me and it has really changed my life. For example, I am doing a performance-based qualification, my disability has an impact on my studies because there are certain things that I can't do and sometimes I get pains that are so bad that they even prevent me from attending lectures for up to two weeks sometimes." What is important to note from this is the fact that both participants view their disabilities as something that changed their lives. The change is more in terms of how their lives changed not in terms of how their bodies or they have changed, which really speaks to how they see themselves in relation to their disability. I got a sense that they did not see themselves as changed but rather that they do certain things differently in their lives. This shows how a narrative of someone's identity is also dependent on how that person relates to how they see themselves. What I found from Sizwe when we were speaking about his disability and his self-identity was that he has created a new identity for himself around his disability that has a lot to do with his fashion style to accommodate his cane and to avoid questioning himself when people react strangely toward his disability and the way he walks.

## Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the fact that perceptions of disabilities are limited to what people see therefore limited to the body. The body in the case is the site of close scrutiny as the limitations are closely monitored to see the degree of dependency. Thus, to analyse how useful a person can be as that is the value that is attached to the body, usefulness and productivity are the currencies in which people with disabilities are valued and perceived. A person's wholeness is questioned in relation to the body and not in relation to their interactions with society, hence their wholeness will be at the centre of question. This shows that identity is created through human interactions and it has been limited by people's perceptions. In this chapter I have aimed to highlight how someone with a disability is sometimes given an identity based on what is happening around them. This identity is created by interactions with people; the way people

relate with a person living with a disability is founded on the time spent with them as well as the proximity to them and not on how dependent a person may be on them.

## Chapter 4– The Public Transport Sector as a Space of Experiences

### Introduction

This chapter will be centred on conceptualising minibus taxis and taxi ranks as a space of experiences that shape the identities of the people who interact with them daily. The central argument of this chapter is that the taxis and the taxi ranks enable interactions with both people and space. The way a person interacts in and with this space is based on how a person experiences space in terms of getting to the rank and the type of experience a person has inside the taxi rank. Since, for people with disabilities, space is at the core of their experiences in a way that they make sense with the world around them, this space can also isolate a person with a disability as we will discover in this chapter. The theoretical framework for this chapter is going to be drawn from authors such as Homecker (2005), Cresswell (2004) and others that play an important role in theorising space and this will be link to some ethnographic work and material from the interviews from the participants.

There are many ways to conceptualise space. These include space as a structural and geometrical quality of the physical environment. However, beyond this, space creates a platform to inspect how knowledge, power, and experience become entangled in spatiality and the construction of meaning and is continuously inhabited and situated. Qualities of space shape how one understands and interrelates within place (Honecker, 2005). Space is also "formless and intangible and not an entity that can be directly described and analysed" (Relph, 1981). Space can also personify intricate concepts of the physical environment (Cresswell, 2004). It can also be seen as "structures that are neither static nor accidental but are, instead, social activities: they carry messages about collective conceptions of people and places, conceptions which themselves come into existence through such social structures and activities" (Titchkosky 2011). In order to get a full understanding of the way space impacts

the socio- spatial interactions there is a need to consider place. Place, in this case, is a set identity "that includes the dimensions of lived experience, social interaction and use of a space by its inhabitants" (Homecker, 2005). Basically, place contextualizes space and shows how everyday situations reveal the discursive and material form of power relations (Hornecker, 2005) and "places are continually recreated through everyday routines and habits" (Cresswell, 2004). Drawing from Honecker's (2005) multiple conceptions of space, I argue that space could also be experienced to enable ableism. In the context of the taxi and taxi rank, people entering these spaces may expect that everyone that they interact with should be a of a certain level that reflects themselves and how the public transport system is designed to function – mainly for the able-bodied people of society.

### 4.1 Internalising Ableism in Transportation

Ableism is defined as :

> " a set of beliefs, processes and practices that produce - based on abilities one exhibits or values - a particular understanding of oneself, one's body and one's relationship with others of humanity, other species and the environment, and includes how one is judged by others. Ableism reflects the sentiment of certain social groups and social structures that value and promote certain abilities, for example, productivity and competitiveness, over others, such as empathy, compassion and kindness." (Wolbring ,2008 p.252/253)

There is so much to link the transport sector in the city and ableist norms. However, I will just focus on what stands out the most for me which is the internalization of ableism. With this I aim to show how my participants when entering the space of public transport in the city adjust to the ableist norms by adopting an identity other than their own. When faced with thoughts on whether we should hide our disabilities or draw attention to them, we mostly choose hiding our disabilities from the public because it seems like a safe thing to do at that moment. Mkhuseli

opts into paying more money to take multiple modes of transports to get to a place, for example instead of him taking a taxi from Vosloorus to Johannesburg and another one to Bryanston and back; he would rather take a taxi from Vosloorus to Sandton then take a GauBus to Bryanston even though this option is more expensive.

I also decide to choose to hide my disability from the public, for instance, when choosing where I sit when using a taxi. When I am alone, I personally prefer sitting at the far end of the back seat. The seat that is designated or recommended for someone with a disability is the first seat behind the driver because of its easy entrance and exit, but I try by all means to avoid that seat because when people pay, as the money moves through that seat to the front and due to my coordination of my movement I fear dropping money and I don't like the looks that I get when people realise that I have a disability because it's one of those looks that makes me feel really belittled. After that happens it really gets uncomfortable for me because the people in the taxi would automatically change their behaviours towards me because simply, they are not use to a person with a disability being independent and traveling alone. The reasons I stated here are also the same reasons I also avoid the next two seats that follow. A second example of hiding of my disability is connected to the biggest challenge for me in a taxi experience which is the communication part, in particular when it comes to me getting off, because of the speech element of my disability. Normally I would ask the person that is seated next to me to announce for me when I want to get off. My other option is to get off with the first person that gets off near my destination and walk the rest of the way but that only happens when there is someone who has announced that they are getting off, or lastly I wait to be the last one in the taxi to make the announcement myself because the driver becomes more patient and understanding when we are the only two people in the taxi. I do all of this for two main reasons: firstly, to avoid the miscommunication between myself and the driver and, secondly, because I avoid people seeing my disability.

### 4.2 Time in a space

Carol Delaney (2004) states that time is relative to space. Neither is it absolute and they are mutually constitutive; nor is there any independent position of measurement. And she further states that the idea and experience of time are also relative. She says that people sometimes experience time as something that flies meaning that it moves very fast and on other times as something that drags meaning that it moves very slow (Delaney, 2004). From this we can see that Delaney is stating that time, space and experience are relative to each other. I agree, however I would also add, based on some of the participants in this research, that time, space and experience are also relative to the nature of the disability a person has. What I am saying here is that the nature of the disability the person has, is at the core of how they experience their time in a space, how they interact with the space and the type of experience they will have in a particular time and space. I saw this with two of my participants Lesedi and Tebogo who have different experiences of time and space with their disabilities being at the core of how they both experience time differently in a space and as a result of that it also has an impact on the type of experiences they have in a taxi.

Lesedi has a type one Bipolar which is a psychiatric disability. When Lesedi uses a taxi, she prefers sitting in seats that are in the middle the ideal seat for her would be the 2$^{nd}$ and 3$^{rd}$ row of seats behind the driver because those are seats that she is more comfortable in sitting. She tries by all means to avoid the front seat because she fears making a mistake with people's money and she also doesn't like the back seat because it gives her too much anxiety that might lead to her having a panic attack. However, sometimes when she uses the taxi, she has fights with people that force her to go sit in the back seat because of her body size being of a small structure and in a taxi small structured sized people are preferred to sit at the back because more of them can fit comfortably but for Lesedi it gives her anxiety and even when she explains her condition to the people, they don't take her seriously and still insist on her sitting at the

back seat. When that happens, it changes the way Lesedi experiences that taxi ride because she would be more concerned about what would happen in the event where she gets a panic attack. That is also the reason she prefers short distances when she travels with a taxi because she fears having panic attacks on the way and she knows that people in that taxi won't know how to handle the situation in the event when she would have a panic attack.

Tebogo on the other hand was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. Tebogo's cerebral palsy gives him balanced movement in lower body and better upper body coordination as he has better control over his body. What is more severe with Tebogo's disability is the way it affects his voice which is very difficult for him to get some words out due to the stutter, as a result making it hard for people to hear what he is saying, and people need to be more patient to hear and understand when he communicates. A challenge for Tebogo in a taxi experience is also communication when it comes to him getting off; this is because of the speech element of his disability. He has to ask the person that is sitting next to him to announce for him when he wants to get off just to avoid the miscommunication between him and the driver, or he also wants to be the last one in the taxi to make the announcement himself because the driver becomes more patient and understanding when there are only two people in the taxi. He prefers to travel with someone he is familiar with for support because then he is more comfortable in the taxi and he does not feel lonely or judged by everyone in the taxi. He also said that this experience of the taxi differs from when it is a short distance and a long distance because the longer the distance is the more, he gets use to people and when that happens that's when the people in the taxi gets used to him and his disability. This tells me that time and the relationships that build over time have an impact on the way people see people with disabilities.

The type of disability a person has does have an influence on how a person experiences time relative to space and that determines how the person experiences space. Just like we see in the instant of Lesedi and Tebogo. Where Tebogo needs to spend more time in a space so his

experience could be one that allows him to form relationships in that space, Lesedi's Bipolar is the type that entails when alone she can't spend a lot of time in that space to avoid a bad experience.

Gleeson views society and space as mutually constituting material dynamics and as a territorialisation of "deep structural forces" that "devalues the capacities of impaired people" (Gleeson, 1996). In addition to that Kitchin (1998, 345) says space "reproduces and maintains the processes of exclusion" through keeping disabled people 'in their place" and "social texts that convey to disabled people that they are 'out of place'." And it for people with disabilities to be fully accepted in society one cannot just only depend on making physical spaces accessible, this is because the root of the problem is engraved in the hegemonic power than is preserved by the way society is socio-spatially organized and the solution is to question and critique the power systems (Kitchin ,1998)

## Conclusion

This chapter was centred on the idea of conceptualising of space of the taxi and taxi ranks as spaces of experience that shape the identities of the people who interact with it daily. The central argument of this chapter was that the taxi and the taxi ranks are spaces that are subjective, and the way personal interactions shape how a person relates to these spaces. For people with disabilities, space seems to be at the core of their experiences. This is because it forms an immediate relation with the world around them, one which can also isolate a person with a disability as we have discovered in this chapter. We have also seen in this chapter that space enables things like stigma and ableism but people with disabilities can also internalize ableism and at times when entering the space of public transport in the city they adjust to the ableist norms by adopting an identity other than their own. When the thoughts on whether they should hide their disabilities or draw attention to themselves, they mostly choose hiding their disabilities from the public because it seems like a safe thing to do at that moment. Lastly, the

chapter also looked at how time is relative to space and experience and found that the type of disability a person has influences how a person experiences time relative to space and that determines how the person has in a space. These dynamics were illustrated in the accounts of Lesedi and Tebogo. Where Tebogo's needs more time in a space so his experience could be one that allows him to form relationships in that space, Lesedi's Bipolar is the type that when alone she can't spend a lot of time in a taxi, so that she doesn't have a bad experience in that space.

# Chapter 5: The Environment: Taxi routes and Ranks

## Introduction

In most cases the question of accessibility is raised when this type of research is done in relation to ramps and other infrastructures that make it easier for people with disabilities to access things like buildings. This chapter will also look at access in terms of these aspects. Beyond this, however, it will also look at the accessibility of various types of transport in the city of Johannesburg and how people with disabilities interact with those modes of transport when using them in the city. The central argument of this chapter is that the way people with disabilities experience the environment of going to the taxi rank, in the taxi rank and in the taxi itself shapes the type of experience they are likely to have in the taxi ride . This is focused on space in terms of the experience beyond the taxi rank focussing more on what happens on the routes in which taxis operate in. The theoretical framework for this chapter is going to be drawn from authors such as Mashiri et al., (2008), Venter et al., (2002) and others who play an important role of theorising accessibility and public transport – this will be link to my ethnographic work on the experiences of people with disabilities of the routes and taxi ranks.

## 5.1 Accessibility and Public Transport

Another dynamic to accessibility is space, understood in terms of the person with a disability conceptualizes the accessibility of the space and what it means to them. When it comes to accessibility and transport, space is at the core due to the fact that in order for a taxi to be fully accessible for someone in a wheelchair that taxi needs a space that will accommodate that wheelchair user and their wheelchair.

As stated, before the restriction of a person's freedom of movement from ancient times has been one of the causes for enslavement of a person, and in order for someone to act freedom

of movement is very vital. In addition to that it is through this action that people experience freedom in the world (Ralph, 2012).

In the same way that it is unthinkable to produce a comprehensive analysis of any social formation that does not account for competing systems of political influence or the way that gender, sexuality and race define social belonging, administrative formulations of disability are at the heart of understanding social life (Ralph, 2012) The concept of disability comes from bureaucratic accounts that were used for people who were injured on the job and couldn't work anymore. Disability was mainly linked to vagrancy, a shortness born of economic dislocation, this is usually a social category that would be given to someone who is immobilized through medical illness or physical impairment and who was bureaucratically categorized as such (Ralph, 2012).

### 5 .2 Accessibility and Social Exclusion

For some people to move around to work or social events they depend highly on public transportation, in terms of people with disabilities this can be seen when it comes to people with visual disabilities (blind and partially sighted) because they cannot ride bicycles or drive on their own (Casas, 2007). Their dependence on public transport is not however matched by what is seen as realistic accessibility features for blind and partially sighted customers, this could lead to the population being at a disadvantage and then social exclusion occurs (Casas, 2007). According to Henry, Abou-Zahra, and Brewer (2014) the issue of social exclusion due to a lack of access to society can be fixed by making public utilities and services accessible for people with disabilities.

I also looked at disability and the self-identity as this will help in understanding how the person with the disability relates with their own disability as this relation is at times the one which determines the type of public transport people with disabilities prefer to use in terms of their

disability. When looking at accessibility of some public transport one focuses on how accessible that public transport is in terms of it being disability friendly and, lastly, accessibility and social exclusion refers to how people with disabilities are sometimes excluded from participating in society in terms of things like the economy because of having no access to public transport.

Research conducted in South Africa on transportation of special needs passengers policy formulation gives a good indication of the variety of responses received from participants in the research relating to challenges that they face when it comes to access to public transport in the country that are worth highlighting: firstly, the size of the minibus-taxis in South Africa in general provide better physical access but they exclude wheelchair access. The South African taxi industry and drivers are famous in the country for their bad driving behaviours, attitude towards passengers and at times overcrowding of taxis, these were also some of the things that were highlighted as barriers by the research. People enjoy the ability to move freely when they in the city, however for people with disabilities that ability to move in the city becomes restricted in most cases as designated areas are unmaintained to the standard that allows them to move freely and at times, they are narrowed by people that are stationed in these designated areas trying to provide for themselves by selling different products (Stanbury and Hugo, 2000).

I will outline my own experience of the city outside the taxi, the Noord Taxi Rank also known as MTN, since it is situated in a very busy and compact area in the middle of Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD). Walking to this rank for me is quite a challenge and an experience on its own as it is a combination of bumping into people and avoiding being bumped by taxis as I navigate my way from street to street. The robots are not always constantly functional some work some do not work, and this creates a situation where the pedestrians and the drivers must cooperate with one another when it comes to crossing the streets. Unfortunately, there is no cooperation as the taxi drivers bully us the pedestrians in these

situation as they would be reluctant to stop for pedestrians to cross. In all of that chaos the streets are populated with informal traders who put their stalls along the pavement. By doing this they narrow the walk so when you walk one has to duck and dive sometimes to avoid bumping into people. The routes to Noord taxi rank are mostly used by taxis so one has to constantly negotiate crossing the streets until I get to the rank. The setting and the infrastructure of the rank itself is a challenge it is very compact as it is quite close to the road. The pavement inside works to divide the taxis according to the destinations that they are headed to. There are no signs that are visible and no names of the different destinations so one is forced to always ask which queue which is to be sure if I do not want to stand in a wrong queue. There is a tendency to sometime change and mix taxis as the system that is in place is not consistently followed and that is inconvenient

At Bree Taxi rank, on the other hand, the journey is literally straight forward as you just have to walk on Jan Smuts avenue from Wits and cross the Mandela bridge and you are there. The journey is less busy unless it is peak times in the mornings and late afternoons. The Taxi rank is much more spacious, and the taxis operate well in the structure. The only busy parts are the streets outside as they are the ones that the taxis use to enter and exit, the pavements are also much bigger.

Well from the get-go it is very evident that it is not just the taxi's that are not accessible but even the space that they operate in is far from being accessible for people with disabilities. By space I am referring to the taxi ranks because in most cases in Johannesburg in order for a person to use the taxi they would have to go to the ranks and if they are not accessible themselves that becomes the first obstacle for a person with a disability. For someone who has a visual disability when it comes to using the rank the first problem is that there are no signs in terms of the destination of the taxi's and even if there were they wouldn't be in brail so in order for a person with a visual disability to get a taxi they would have to rely on the marshal to point

them in the direction of the right taxi, well finding the marshal on its own is a mission for someone with a visual disability, so they have to depend on kind random people to guide them.

The dependency on random people is not just limited to someone with a visual disability but even a wheelchair user goes through similar challenges. The first obstacle for a wheelchair user is navigating their way to the taxi ranks, often being forced to face the cars because that's the easiest way for them to navigate to the ranks is by them being on the road putting them at a risk of being crashed by cars only because the walkways are too crowded with street venders and people walking making it very difficult to move when using a wheelchair. Then when they get to the actual taxi as stated before, there are pavements that divide the taxis and at Noord taxi rank there is no space for a wheelchair to move between the taxis because the space between the taxis and pavements is too narrow to fit someone using a wheelchair. When one includes the large number of people who also use that taxi rank, this makes it impossible for a wheelchair user to move around the rank, and when they get to the taxi, they depend on kind people to assist them to get on the taxi and also put their wheelchair in the taxi. Bree rank on the other hand has more space and it is not crowded so both a wheelchair user and the person with a visual disability can move more easily in the rank. I also asked the participants about their routes to taxis and this is what each one had to say: Sizwe, who is a wheelchair user when he is on campus but mostly uses his cane or crutches, made it clear that from his experience so far taxis are not accessible at all for people with disabilities and said, " I personally prefer using Uber over using a taxi." His reasons for this are that he sees Uber as being more accommodative in terms of access for people with disabilities and he also said, "the main difference between Ubers and taxis is that Uber drivers seem to be more patient and more client-centred unlike taxi drivers who are more money-centred". Uber is an app based privately owned form of service. Users request an Uber through an application that they install on their mobile phones and a user has the option to make a cash or a card payment on the app. To request an Uber a user just has

to put in their current location where they would like to be picked up and where they are going (destination) and then the nearest driver will pick them up and take them to their destination. Although Uber is a private company and more expensive than most other forms of public transport in South Africa it is seen and included as a form of public transport.

However, Sizwe's only problem with Uber is that it gets too expensive when going to places that are outside the city like Soweto, that is when he is forced to use the taxi in order to go home. I then asked him which taxi rank he uses in Johannesburg and how does he get there? He responded by saying: "I use both MTN and Bree taxi ranks depending on where I'm going but getting to the ranks is a big issue for me so due to this, I take an Uber from my place in Braamfontein to the taxi ranks then take a taxi to wherever I'm going meaning that I end up using about 3 times the amount on a single trip every time I go somewhere". I then asked if the taxi ranks were accessible for people with disabilities? He simply responded: "No they aren't".

When Tebogo and Sicelo come to Johannesburg they use Bree Taxi rank, the journey is literally straightforward as you just have to walk over the Mandela bridge. It was the same route that they used on the day of the interview. When they were asked about their experience of the taxi rank, they said that they did not have much of a problem with the rank as such. But where Tebogo faces a huge challenge at the rank is where he has to ask for a taxi going somewhere where he doesn't know, he has to ask the people there to direct him and that's when he feels judged by the people because of his speech impediment; he also said that at times he isn't even given an opportunity to finish asking the person when the person already has lost attention in what he was saying. After that he has to repeat because they become impatient with him and then he feels like he has to explain his disability to those people just to make them understand that it wasn't his fault that he speaks the way he does.

When Sicelo was describing his journey from his house to the taxi rank he said, “the only time when I feel that I am different from other people is when I get close to random people.” This is because, he says, from far people cannot see that he has a disability but as he gets closer, they start to see is disability through his right hand and leg. As a result, they give him strange looks and even go as far as to laugh at him because of his disability and when that happens, he becomes more self-conscious that leads to him also doubting himself. When I asked Sicelo about his experience of the taxi rank he said he doesn’t have much of a problem with the rank but has a problem with the looks that people give him when he is in the line waiting for the taxi as they sometimes keep staring at his right hand and this makes him feel judged by the people because of the way his hand is like. Then he also feels like he has to explain himself and his disability to make them understand.

Tebogo and Scielo being more self-conscious links with what Giddens says about self-identity where he writes, “Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography” (Giddens, 1991, p.53). He further says that identity connects the social and the personal, it requires the person to put themselves in a collective context (Giddens, 1991). The self-doubt that Tebogo and Scielo get when they get self-conscious also links with what Paolo Freire examines as self-depreciation that he defines as “another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing, and are incapable of learning anything - that they are sick, lazy and unproductive - that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness” (Freire, 1972, p.38). This is because Tebogo and Scielo become convinced of how different they are in relation to the people that make them have doubts about themselves.

For Mkhuseli the route to getting to the taxi rank is not much of a problem even though he has a challenge with his sight cause if he goes to a place that he is familiar with, he mostly relies

on his memory of the place more than his vision but he said “where I find it very challenging is when I have to go to a place which I am not familiar with because that’s when I need assistance from other people in terms of finding my way around the place, that’s where I have to depend on other people to help me find my way around and at times I feel vulnerable in terms of being scared I might ask someone who would take advantage of my situation and rob me while I’m asking for assistance”. Another problem that Mkhuseli faces at the taxi rank is that some taxi ranks have signs that are written where the taxis are going and because the signs are put up high and are written in a small font, he struggles to read them due to his disability and sometimes there is no one near him, for him to ask for assistance in reading whatever is written on the signs and then he would feel lost.

During the interview Mkhuseli sighted an incident that happened to him in June 2019 at Noord taxi rank, where he had to go to training in Bryanston for a week, he was traveling from Vosloorus alone he was told that he will find taxi’s to Bryanston at Noord taxi rank. He then took a taxi from Vosloorus to Noord taxi rank. And when he got there he was first told to stand in about 5 wrong lines then he was taken to the right line but he wasn’t told that the taxis he was waiting for only started operating where he was waiting for them only after 9am and before that time he had to find them outside the rank. So, he was left stranded in the rank for more than 2 hours up until he was spotted and taken by his friends that were going to the same place. From that incidence Mkhuseli told himself that he would avoid Noord taxi rank by all means if he can by instead of taking a taxi from Vosloorus to Johannesburg and another one to Bryanston and back, he would rather take a taxi from Vosloorus to Sandton then take a GauBus to Bryanston this option is more expensive, but he sees it as a better option because he feels safer and its easier for him.

Lesedi on the other had uses the 3rd taxi rank in the city which is Wanderers Taxi Rank the most which is right next to Park Station not far from MTN taxi rank (Noord) when she comes

to Johannesburg, she is not limited in terms of choice of transport because there are trains and buses to Johannesburg, but she prefers taking the taxi. Since Lesedi's disability is a psychiatric one it is considered as an invisible disability because it is not one that people can see, unlike someone with a physical or visual disability were the disability is evident to the eye. One would usually overlook people with invisible disabilities like Lesedi when it comes to issues of accessibility because they are not seen as people with disabilities by society.

Lesedi said she doesn't usually have a problem when she walks to the taxi rank in places that she is familiar with and that are not very busy and crowded. However, where her disability affects her the most is when she enters spaces that she is unfamiliar with and they are crowded. Lesedi tries by all means not to walk alone in the Central Business District (CBD) of Johannesburg where Noord and Wanderers Taxi Ranks are situated. The area is always busy and crowded with people at all times of the day and is also full of street vendors that sell all types of products so when a person is walking in these areas, they will be approached by strangers trying to sell things to them and this causes Lesedi to have anxiety that result to her having panic attacks. So, whenever Lesedi is in the CBD or has to come to Johannesburg for something she always ensures that she has someone she knows to walk with her making her dependent on someone because the role of that person would be to meet with Lesedi from when she gets to Johannesburg, get on the taxi with her and take her back to the Vaal taxis that are at wanderers taxi rank.

### 5.3 Buses, Trains and Ubers

Buses as a public mode of transport are not seen as the ideal choice of mode of public transport for people with physical disabilities as they are not accessible for most of them. One of the main reasons that can be attributed for this is the steps used for boarding the buses being a deterrent for people in particular those using wheelchairs. Venter et al. (2002) found in a study that passengers with physical disabilities like wheelchair users ,who use crutches and those

passengers who have difficulty walking, were compromised to board these buses independently. They mainly referred to the high entry steps which is about 50 cm from the ground as the main reason they have difficulties using Golden Arrow buses.

Another restriction in using buses like Golden Arrow buses for example is that they are not designed to accommodate a wheelchair, nor a person using a wheelchair. Adding to that these buses do not have the necessary fitted devices, such as proper handrails which makes the buses inaccessible for most people using wheelchairs (National Department of Transport, 2012).

Research done by Oxley and Gallon (1995) found that people with disabilities would only use buses if: firstly, buses had lower steps , secondly, they were to be fitted with a lift or ramp to be able to accommodate a wheelchair, and lastly if the buses had a space to accommodate a wheelchair. Government has tried to alleviate this by the introduction of buses like the Ria-Viya bus system in major cities like Johannesburg that have most if not all the features listed as obstacles for people with disabilities, but their routes are limited, and they mainly operate in cities and on certain times.

The rail system operated by the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa isn't accessible at all for mostly people with physical disabilities, like those using wheelchairs for mobility. Research by (Oxley & Gallon, 1995; Venter et al., 2002) found that trains had a barrier for people with disabilities as the platform and floor entrances of trains are not level enough for people in wheelchairs to use, consequently it makes it difficult for a wheelchair to board. Additionally, (Venter et al., 2002; Litman, 2015) found that people with physical disabilities had difficulty moving around train stations, as the multitude of steps and stairs are barriers and hence stopping people with disabilities from using this mode of transport. I personally don't like using the bus from Vosloorus to Johannesburg because of two main reasons: firstly, the operation times both in the morning and in the evenings don't work for me because it leaves too early in the morning and too late in the evenings so I would get home very late. The second reason I don't use the

bus is the way the routes are structured; it takes a very long route that takes about 3 to 4 hours due to the number of places it has to cover from and to Vosloorus and it also drops me too far from my house, so I have to walk home after getting off. Me not using the bus has nothing to do with the buses not being accessible for people with disabilities but has more to do with how the bus operates. I don't also use trains to Vosloorus because there is no rail system in Vosloorus and even if there was, I highly doubt I would use it because of its boarding time being too fast for my liking. Sizwe said: "I can't use the bus due to the fact that my leg needs to sit in a particular way because of the thing that is joining my bone in my leg and the seats on the buses don't have enough space especially when the bus is full. We did not get to Mkhuseli's bus experience due to time constraints on the day of the interview, but he did say that he uses the GauBus. The rest of my participants do not use busses and trains except for Sicelo who said he sometimes uses the train from Katlehong.

Sicelo believes that the people who use the train are more disability friendly than those who use the taxi based on his experiences of the two modes of transport and says that this could be because people spend more time on the trains, and they get to know each other due to the time they spend together on the trains. However, Sicelo highlighted the fact that in terms of the train what needs to happen there in order for it to be more accessible for people with disabilities in his view is that the train stations need to have better infrastructure for people who have visual disabilities and people using wheelchairs, the boarding times of the trains also needs to be extended so that people with disabilities can also use it because there are people with disabilities who are slow in their movement.

When it comes to Uber there was one participant in this research that said that they use Uber and that was Sizwe, he said that he personally prefers using Uber over using a taxi. His reasons

for this was that Uber is more accommodative in relation to the access for people with disabilities and he also said that Uber drivers are more patient, and more client centred unlike taxi drivers who are more money centred. His only problem with Uber is that he can only use it mainly for his movements within the city due to how expensive it gets when going to places outside the city. I also have used Uber on a number of times, and I had no problems with the service, but I have the same communication battle just like I have with the taxi drivers. But in the case of Uber, it doesn't happen when I have to get off like with taxis, it happens when the driver and I have to communicate with regards to our locations because it's an app-based system we communicate through calling and that is where the problem manifests because of my speech but the good thing about the Uber app is that it also has a texting option where we can communicate using text which is easier for me.

I also found an interesting thing about Uber through my experiences of Uber, I have so far used uber in three different provinces, which are Gauteng, KZN and Eastern Cape. What stood out from these experiences for me is the difference in the type of cars used in these provinces for the entry level Uber option. For Gauteng and KZN the entry level is a sedan car which is big and spacious while in the Eastern Cape on the other hand the car used there for the same option is a hash back car which is a lot smaller and with no boot space in some of them. This might seem like a small difference, but it is not especially when it comes to questions of accessibility and experiences of people with disabilities using that option.

The reason this is so important to the experiences of people with disabilities using that option because it tells me that for Uber someone using a wheelchair, they would have a different experience of their service in terms of their accessibility in Gauteng than the one they would have in the Eastern Cape just because the cars are not the same size. I can therefore conclude

that when it comes to Uber for a person with a disability their experience of accessibility would be judged more based on the type of car used than the service they get, unlike with taxis were the service is more important than the type of car.

## Conclusion

The central argument of this chapter was aimed at looking at the way people with disabilities experience the environment of the taxi rank and surrounding routes and how that shapes their experiences of the taxi ride itself. It has shown that it is not just the taxis that are not accessible but even the spaces that they operate in are far from being accessible for people with disabilities. The chapter also highlighted the fact that sometimes a person does not use the bus because of not being accessible for people with disabilities but they are not using it because of how the bus operates. Lastly in terms of Uber it concluded that when it comes to Uber for a person with a disability their experience of accessibility would be judged more based on the type of car used than the service they get unlike with taxis were the service is more important than the type of car.

## 6. Final Conclusion

For the many people who use the public transport system in the City of Johannesburg on a daily basis especially the taxis, to them the route to the taxi rank is just a routine easy walk that they do daily, the taxi ranks are just central points to catching a taxi to wherever they are going and lastly a taxi is just a mode of transport to get them from point a to point b without a hassle. What the people don't realise is that there is more to these places than just a simple routine, the three things that I mention here being the route, the taxi ranks and the taxis are not just things but they are spaces that each have a unique story to narrate about the people who interact with them on a daily bases without most of the people even realising it. When you combine the three spaces what you will find is, they are all spaces that give a person different experiences that shape who they are and who they become.

When I started this research, I was just interested in the accessibility of the taxis and why they weren't accessible to people with disabilities, I was motivated by the fact that I wasn't able to get access to some of my participants for interviews for my Honours project due to them not being able to travel because they didn't have someone accompanying them to the meeting points at the agreed times, and public transport wasn't accessible for them to use alone. I guess, I just wanted to find answers on how to make taxis accessible for people living with disabilities using the City of Johannesburg as a starting point of my quest to finding a solution of giving people with disabilities the agency to travel alone whenever they wanted to, using taxis or any other form of public transport that is available in the city.

Back then I looked at access in the aspect of just ramps, lifts and other related things that make it easier for people with disabilities to access places like buildings. However, as the research developed, I soon realised that in the case of people with disabilities there is way more to accessibility than just ramps and lifts and I also realised that disability itself is not as simple as it looks.

Through me trying to conceptualise disability as a concept for this research I found that disability can be looked at from two main approaches that look at people with disabilities as a group very differently. And disability can't be conceptualized without looking at the medical and social models of disability, this is due to the fact that the two models of disability have such a massive impact on how disability is seen by the individual with a disability and how society views disability and a person with a disability.

When I looked at some of the policies and legislation in place when it comes to people with disabilities and their access to public transport, I've picked up that there are great policies in place on paper that speak to the accessibility of public transport in South Africa. However, the main problem is that the legislation does not force public modes of transport to implement what is in the policies and accommodate people with disabilities as they should and not the way they are currently doing in some instances. That is the reason that public modes of transport such as taxis are not really accessible for people living with disabilities.

I have learnt that someone with a disability has a story to tell through their identity that they gain with every experience that they have and through this they can be seen differently by different people in society and in many cases whether a person is seen to have a disability or not is based on the type of interactions a person has with people. Through exploring themes such as dependency, identity and narratives of disabilities I learnt that these are the three core themes that shape the identity of a person with a disability in these spaces.

As a person living with a disability, I realized that how much me using taxis shapes who I am and how I see myself and how I am seen by other people. My identity and intelligence will sometimes be questioned by some people while others can overlook the fact that I am a person living with a disability. At times, based on interactions, I will also question my own identity mainly because of those relations and interactions with people around me. I will be at times

depended on other people to speak on my behalf. These themes are all centered around the idea of wholeness in terms of could I be viewed as a whole person with my disability in the standards of what is normal to society.

I have also developed the idea of conceptualising the taxi and taxi ranks as spaces of experiences that shape the identities of the people who interact with them daily. The central argument of that chapter was that the taxi and the taxi ranks are spaces that are subjective, and the way people interact with these spaces is based on how a person relates to the space. I found that for people with disabilities space seems to be at the core of their experiences, this is because mostly it is how some of them make sense with the world around them and it can also isolate a person with a disability. I have also learnt that space can also be a space that enables things like stigma and ableism but people with disabilities can also internalize ableism and at times when entering the spaces of public transport in the city they adjust to the ableist norms, by adopting an identity other than their own and when they are confronted by thoughts on whether they should hide their disabilities or draw attention to them, they mostly choose hiding their disabilities from the public because it seems like a safe thing to do at that moment.

Finally, this research report focused on the environment and argued that looking at the way people with disabilities experience the environment of public transport in the city and how that shapes their experiences of the taxi ride itself. I learnt that from the get-go it is very evident that it wasn't just the taxi's that are not accessible but even the spaces that they operate in are far from being accessible for people with disabilities. I also highlighted the fact that sometimes a person does not use the bus because of it not being accessible for people with disabilities but they are not using it because of how the bus operates. Lastly in terms of Uber I concluded that when it comes to Uber for a person with a disability their experience of accessibility would be judged more based on the type of car used than the service, they get unlike with taxis were the service is more important than the type of car.

Overall, I personally learnt a lot about how I relate with people when using taxis and about my disability through this research. Although this thesis was mainly about sharing the experiences of people with disabilities using different types of public transports in the City of Johannesburg. It may seem that it is mainly for people without disabilities to learn more about experiences of people with disabilities, but I think it should not be limited to educate people without disabilities, this is because people with disabilities could also learn from the insights in this thesis. This is due to the fact that there are certain things in the thesis that a person with a disability can learn about themselves and about public spaces such as the public transport sector in a city like Johannesburg. In general I hope insights from this research will be used when cities plan on issues that have to do with space because it's one of the ways that people with disabilities make sense with the world around them and I also hope that this thesis contributes to the limited research that is available especially from the perspective of people with disabilities. Since the real voices and experiences of people with disabilities rarely get in the hands of policymakers and commuters, I also intend to make the experiences in this thesis easily accessible for both groups through publishing the thesis or sessions of it. And lastly, I also hope that insights from this research report can also be used as a tool that can be used to educate fellow commuters on how to relate with people with disabilities when sharing the same public transport, in terms of the form of assistance they should offer and ways of how not to isolate people with disabilities when sitting next to them in a public transport just because they have a disability.

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