IMPROVING THE PROVISION OF TRANSPORT FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES IN CAPE TOWN

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ABSTRACT

This study explores ways in which transport in Cape Town can better serve youth with disabilities, encouraging their participation in arts activities and facilitating their integration into society. In South Africa, youth with disabilities face institutional barriers left in the aftermath of Apartheid, and are often confined to historically-disadvantaged areas and deprived of societal benefits. Access to affordable transport is essential, especially for disadvantaged persons, and interaction through the arts is a creative way of providing these youth with the necessary tools to empower themselves and pursue life opportunities. This paper begins by offering a summary of the existing state of transport for persons with disabilities. After providing a literature review of topics related to transport for disadvantaged persons with disabilities, it presents a brief description of Cape Town's public transport system and its historic shortcomings. A summary of the research methodology follows, along with the study's key findings and policy implications. This paper concludes that increased emphasis should also be placed on providing youth with disabilities with reliable transport and opportunities to learn from cultural activities.

1.   INTRODUCTION

In the recent past, community leaders and planners have identified the need for greater access to cultural and educational centres. Nowhere is this more crucial than in the developing world, where persons with disabilities often have limited options for travelling to social, educational and cultural activities, such as arts performances. Research has shown that participation in these activities can provide opportunities for persons with disabilities (Smith, 1988; Sulewski et al., 2012). For example, disability arts and culture play important roles in expressing a positive identity for youth with disabilities.

South Africa is home to about three million persons with disabilities, approximately 7.5 percent of the country's total population (Stats SA, 2011). For statistical purposes, this total comprises individuals with a physical, sensory or mental disability. These figures highlight the need to make public services (including public transport) accessible to all.

For the performing arts to be inclusive and a stepping stone for growth and opportunity, it is important that transport provide youth with disabilities with safe and reliable transport to/from arts activities. Cape Town has sought to improve public transport for all and has recently taken actions to extend services to persons with disabilities. However, transport for persons with disabilities is limited, and focused on home-to-work journeys. A major challenge is to ensure that public transport provides affordable and convenient services to non-work destinations, especially for persons with disabilities in disadvantaged areas.

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This study examines how youth with disabilities access the Artscape Theatre Centre in Cape Town, one of the few theatres with an Inclusive Arts Department charged with introducing these youth to the arts, offering them opportunities to participate in productions and projects, and effectively encouraging their integration into society (Artscape, 2016).

Nevertheless, the world can be a disabling place for women, persons of colour, persons living in poverty and persons with disabilities (LeRoux, 2017). Too often, persons with disabilities do not have access to cultural activities and are isolated from society. Interaction through the performing arts can provide the tools with which youth with disabilities can empower themselves, enhancing communication skills and establishing social connections that can open employment opportunities. This paper explores current patterns and ways transport can connect these youth with the arts (Sulewski et al., 2012).

2. ACCESSIBILITY TO TRANSPORT

Transport is central to the social and economic well-being of all sectors, however, in many nations public transport systems fail to serve the needs of persons with disabilities (Mashiri et al., 2008). In South Africa, a legacy of apartheid has been that many low-income residents do not have reliable transport through which to access opportunities (Rivasplata, 2006). Whilst the provision of transport between townships and cultural centres is limited, for persons with a physical disability, access is not guaranteed.

2.1 Transport as a vehicle for the urban poor

Transport is widely seen as a key factor in both economic and social development, largely because it enables the effective movement of persons, goods and services. In turn, this movement promotes commerce through better access to markets. Economic and social development allow for widespread improvements in employment, health, education and social services, providing opportunities to those in greatest need (Potgeiter, 2006).

Prior to the 1980s, the relationship between transport and poverty was not widely discussed, as the transport sector was dominated by engineering considerations, with scant discussion of poverty-reduction criteria, gender and social issues (De Grassi, 2005). In the 1960s, such institutions as the World Bank were focused on investments in transport infrastructure, and did not normally target poverty alleviation (Bryceson et al., 2008). Subsequently, such authors as Dimitriou (1993) and Gannon and Liu (1997) highlighted the need to design transport improvements that more directly benefit the poor.

Currently, research on the relationship between transport and poverty is centred on one of three areas: social exclusion theory; spatial mismatch/entrapment; and social justice (Titherge et al., 2014). The first focuses on the effects of transport deprivation (Lucas et al., 2007). The second is concerned with spatial barriers faced by the poor in access job opportunities (Jocoy and Del Casino, 2010). Finally, social justice studies transport-related disadvantages and their relation to poverty (Harvey, 2010).

Titherage et al. (2014); and Starkey and Hine (2014) examined the relationship between poverty and sustainable transport, testing the theory of social exclusion. In addition, other publications have comprehensively explored the role of informal transport in the provision of mobility for the poor (Behrens et al., 2016). Studies highlighting the transport-related problems of the urban poor have included the work of Roberto (2008), which analysed the commuting patterns of the poor; and Faiz (2011), which described the relationship between transport infrastructure and displacement. Research by Lucas (2010) and Huby and Burkitt (2000) has shown that transport can effectively encourage social inclusion.

2.2   The role of transport in providing access to persons with disabilities

Recent efforts to ensure mobility rights for persons with disabilities have been driven by changes in perception, with advocates calling for a transition from the "medical model" to the "social model." The medical model has viewed disability as a problem of persons with disabilities, requiring that they receive medical oversight; whereas, the social model sees the issue of disability as a problem created by society, advocating for the integration of individuals into mainstream society (Langtry, 2010). The social model can effectively improve transport for persons with disabilities (Oliver, 1996). For example, the universal design of transport seeks to remove the barriers restricting persons with disabilities.

Transport could effectively empower persons with disabilities, however, they are often unable to access these services (Roberts, 2004). Shah (2006) argues that a lack of reliable transport prevents youth with disabilities from gaining access to facilities and events that are crucial to their emotional and intellectual development. In addition, in many societies, decisions for children with disabilities are made without consulting them.

Similarly, little is done to incorporate the needs of this community into the provision of transport (Venter et al., 2003). For example, Casas and Delmelle (2014) performed a content analysis on a transport-related blog in Colombia to identify sources of social exclusion and found that obstacles, such as lack of wheelchair access, prevented persons with disabilities from taking public transport. Nevertheless, the New Urban Order has called for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making (UN, 2016).

In the cases of South Africa, Malaysia and Latin America, Rickert (2001) concluded that a progressive national transport policy should address the barriers to employment experienced by persons with mobility, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. Poor access to transport results in an inability to participate in education, training, health or social services, and a failure to escape poverty. (Rickert, 2001).

The lack of accessible transport is a barrier to the integration of persons with disabilities (SA Dept. of Social Development, 2016). According to Ribbonaar and Verster (2004), authorities, planners and operators do not carefully consider the needs of persons with disabilities. In Durban, Lister and Dhunpath (2016) argue that "unless consensus is reached…public transport for persons with disabilities remains uncertain." Similarly, in Cape Town, residents with disabilities face poorly-designed transport facilities (Ntongana, 2016). Without a plan of action, most persons with disabilities find transport impossible to use, leading to isolation and an inability to fully participate in society (Ribbonaar, 2005).

3.   CAPE TOWN: BACKGROUND

The city has sought to eliminate some of the historic barriers to access through service improvements, however transport still lags behind, with variable urban services and gross inequities between income groups (Clark and Crouse, 2010). The following section describes the local transport network and efforts to expand mobility.

3.1 Public transport in Cape Town

Local authorities have focused on providing a network of commuter rail, standard bus, bus rapid transit (BRT) and minibus taxi services, transporting over a million daily passengers (TCT, 2012). To this end, the South Africa's *Transport White Paper* (SADOT, 1996) and Cape Town's *Moving Ahead* (CMC, 1998) have supported effective, equitable and affordable services. In addition, public transport is one of eight strategic focus areas identified in Cape Town's Integrated Development Plan (TCT, 2012).

Nevertheless, public transport is not always accessible to disadvantaged persons in the city and services are not widely coordinated. Government plans have recognised the need for public transport integration (e.g., fare, service and institutional coordination), but few existing services have been modified to serve persons with disabilities.

For example, according to census data, over 58 percent of students with disabilities in the Western Cape walked to school (Stats SA 2014), a noteworthy statistic, given that the province includes smaller towns where street infrastructure is scarce (see Table 1). In general, persons with disabilities are at a clear disadvantage when compared to able-bodied persons. The former are often required to travel longer distances, but move more slowly and often require assistance to board and alight public transport (Stats SA, 2011).

Table 1. Western Cape Mode Split: Persons with Disabilities vs. All Persons

Travel Mode	Adult Work Trips (%)		Youth School Trips (%)	
	Persons with Disabilities	All	Persons with Disabilities	All
Train	10.8	13.3	1.4	2.1
Bus	9.0	7.2	11.1	6.2
Minibus Taxi	11.3	15.1	9.3	10.1
Car - Driver	32.0	35.4	0,0	0.4
Car - Passenger	13.2	10.8	14.9	23.6
Walk	21.1	16.8	58.6	56.2
Other	2.6	1.4	4.7	1.4

Sources: Stats SA 2014

3.2 Transport for persons with disabilities

South Africa was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007, and is party to a number of human rights treaties guaranteeing economic and social rights (HRW, 2015). Whilst legislative initiatives supporting greater access began in the 1990s, the vital role of transport was articulated in the government's recent *White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (SA Dept. of Social Development, 2016).

In response to legislation supporting system integration, specialised transport for persons with disabilities was introduced in the 1990s. The City of Cape Town tested a door-to-door "Dial-a-Ride" (DAR) system, however, it has been limited in scope and in 2012, only carried 200 persons with disabilities a day (Stats SA, 2014).

In an effort to reach out to all sectors, The City of Cape Town developed a Universal Access Policy (TCT, 2014), bringing a fresh approach to the planning, provision and regulation of equal access measures. This new policy aims to make transport accessible,

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recognising the diversity of the community of persons with disabilities, i.e., each disability presents a unique set of challenges and accommodations (Mashiri et al., 2008).

The next section explains the approach taken in this paper to establish and analyse the primary forms of access available to these youth.

4. METHODOLOGY

The larger research project upon which this study is based took a qualitative approach, identifying the primary travel patterns of disadvantaged youth with disabilities, as well as the societal barriers that they have experienced (Bowen, 2009). This approach provided these youth, which represent one of the least empowered and most vulnerable sectors of society, with the opportunity to tell their stories. A key objective of this study then, was to learn individual perspectives on the inadequacies of transport, the adverse impacts on this community, and potential areas of system improvement and integration (Le Roux, 2017).

In this study, one of the major issues faced in undertaking qualitative research was the ability to devise a research strategy that would yield explanations applicable to most or all youth with disabilities. This approach allowed for a more descriptive explanation of phenomena, with the ultimate aim of better understanding local services and developing strategies for reaching out to persons with disabilities (Le Roux, 2017).

In examining travel patterns, the following research objectives were established:
1. Describe the travelling experiences of youth with disabilities that have attended a performance at the Artscape Theatre Centre.
2. Describe potential options for youth with disabilities travelling to Artscape.
3. Identify relevant factors influencing travel patterns of youth with disabilities.

For this study, the target population comprised disadvantaged youth with disabilities who had been audience members at past Artscape events. These included youth that had attended a performance or social event in the past.

A purposive sampling strategy employing registers of attendance was used to select the following focus group participants:
- 12th Grade students from a high school for the deaf in the Western Cape;
- Students from the Tertiary Training College for the Deaf; and
- Audience members with a disability attending an event at Artscape.

Primary data was drawn from three focus group discussions and an interview. The focus groups were comprised of disadvantaged youth with disabilities from the Western Cape. Discussion focused on the primary travel modes used by these youth, as well as their perceived barriers to travel (Le Roux, 2017). Also, one of the authors interviewed a disadvantaged black woman with disabilities, who provided valuable personal insights.

In addition, secondary data was acquired from multiple sources: local government reports, such as universal access reports (TCT, 2014), a survey funded by the Western Cape government; as well as summary reports from the Artscape Accessibility Task Team.

In sum, the data collection employed for this study included:
- Focus groups and an individual in-depth interview;
- Open-ended questions designed to prompt responses from focus group and interview participants; and

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- Document analysis of local government and Artscape Universal Access and Design Task Team reports (secondary).

The primary data were informed by analysis of secondary data. The triangulation of these sources of data provided an enhanced understanding of how interactions with transport facilitate or encourage youth with disabilities to participate in community activities.

5. RESULTS

This section focuses on the findings that emerged from the data analysis. Focus group responses identified ongoing issues, such as safety risks; the lack of access to transport; and the need for some respondents to transfer between modes (Le Roux, 2017).

5.1 Focus group findings

Transport was found to be a major challenge for participants to overcome. Two principal modes of concern were identified in these discussions: public and private transport.

5.1.1 Public transport
It became clear through the group discussion and the in-depth interview that for youth with disabilities, transport played a key role in everything, including interaction with society and access to work or entertainment. Group participants described the ways in which public transport practices have made it very difficult for persons with disabilities to be mobile. In order to make use of transport services, persons with disabilities often require assistance (from friends and family) to take public transport and endure additional challenges, including high costs, capacity constraints and poor vehicle seating (Le Roux, 2017).

Youth from the Artscape Focus Group remarked that it was a challenge to merely access public transport, as conditions often make it difficult (or impossible) for persons with disabilities to enter transport vehicles. For example, assistive devices (e.g., wheelchairs) are often not equipped to manoeuvre in certain areas, making the use of public transport a risky proposition. Participants also remarked that Dial-a–Ride taxi services largely focus on work trips, effectively excluding them from using the service to access recreational, cultural and social activities and events. They suggested funding service enhancements.

Finally, participants expressed concern over the fact that public transport systems are often designed without taking into account the diverse needs of persons with disabilities. For example, many of these services have limited operating hours, making it difficult for these youth to access activities, such as theatrical performances (Le Roux, 2017).

5.1.2 Private transport
In contrast, for the focus groups from the High School for the Deaf and the Tertiary Training College for the Deaf, access to transport was not listed as a challenge to participants. This was due to the fact that both of these institutions have private transport systems designed to accommodate their students within their secured learning structures.

However, access to other private vehicles (cars) posed a problem to some of the focus group participants, especially the black and coloured students living in disadvantaged areas. Some participants pointed out that in order for youth with disabilities to interact with society, transport must be designed to serve these individuals (Le Roux, 2017).

5.2 Interview with a black woman with disabilities

In order to gain insights into barriers faced by youth with disabilities, the authors conducted an in-depth interview with a black woman with disabilities that grew up in a disadvantaged community of Cape Town. As a professional dancer at a performing arts company, she was familiar with barriers to inclusion. She noted that in many cases, youth with disabilities must be accompanied, as trains are not easily accessible, platforms are over-crowded, and passengers must step-up to board the train (Le Roux, 2017).

The interviewee also mentioned that many persons with disabilities are unable to attend performances, or arrive late because transport is often not available. She told the story of a boy in a wheelchair from Khayelitsha that came to Artscape in a minibus taxi. He arrived late because it took him two hours to find an operator willing to assist him and was also required to pay a separate fare for the space occupied by his wheelchair.

5.3 Secondary data from Artscape

An analysis of secondary data from the Artscape Universal Access and Design Task Team survey identified factors influencing the participation of persons with disabilities at Artscape events, providing information concerning the travel patterns of these individuals.

5.3.1 SBA-Artscape Survey
SBA and Artscape (2016) conducted a survey of youth attending Artscape events and performances (see Table 2). About 150 students with disabilities participated, most of them from Worcester, a rural town. The survey found that a higher proportion of survey respondents travelled by bus when going to/from Artscape than they did when going to/from another destination, highlighting the value of school-sponsored transport.

Table 2. Travel Mode Split for Youth Travelling to Artscape and Other Areas

Transport Mode	Travel to Artscape	Other Travel
Bus	89	47
Minibus Taxi	5	13
Car	4	22
School Transport	0	9
Combination of Modes	2	9

Source: SBA and Artscape, 2016

5.3.2 Other smaller surveys of youth with disabilities
A survey of 150 youth with disabilities attending the 2016 Epilepsy South Africa graduation revealed that a higher proportion of survey respondents travelled by bus to/from Artscape than to/from any other destination. In contrast, a separate accessibility survey of youth with disabilities in Cape Town revealed that whilst most respondents arrived at Artscape by minibus taxi, they largely took public transport for other travel (Le Roux, 2017).

In summary, the physical, social and attitudinal environments in which we live often do not guarantee the inclusion of youth with disabilities. The electronic survey data highlighted the need to identify the principal barriers preventing youth with disabilities from accessing such cultural centres as Artscape, and the need to develop innovative transport strategies.

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5.4 Secondary data from government sources

Government data in Cape Town revealed recent efforts to assess and improve transport accessibility, including the expansion of MyCiTi Bus into township communities. Thus far, it is the only service to guarantee universal access, with accessible vehicles and platforms at major stops (TCT, 2015). However, few disadvantaged persons with disabilities have benefitted, as it is only in its second phase of implementation. Service times and locations are often not readily available, and the long distances to bus stops act as barriers.

In addition, a survey by the Western Cape government determined that some public transport is not physically accessible to persons with disabilities in rural areas, as well as in Cape Town (SA Western Cape Dept. of Transport and Public Works, 2011). It found that whilst "limited transport services are provided by non-governmental organisations to improve the access of special needs users to job opportunities and healthcare," small budgets often prevent organisations from providing adequate service.

6. DISCUSSION

Whilst the focus group and interview work revealed that the level of access to mainstream society varies greatly (according to the nature of a person's disability), it is ultimately the government's obligation to ensure that transport services are designed to accommodate all forms of disability, and are responsive to the mobility needs of youth with disabilities. How can government resources be more effectively distributed?

Our findings indicate that in Cape Town, these youth presently have limited access to public transport, such as rail and bus. Minibus taxis provide a unique service, entering most disadvantaged areas to pick up/drop off passengers at taxi ranks; however, some youth with disabilities require assistance to board minibus taxis and often, take risks to gain access. In addition, minibus taxis are more expensive than rail and bus services.

From the focus groups and in-depth interview, we also learned that a number of issues need to be resolved; however, these appear to be solvable in the medium-term. Whilst the design and implementation of a set of universally-accessible transport services will incur costs; persons with disabilities and society in general will reap significant benefits (e.g., social interaction, economic opportunity) if future transport planning efforts involve persons with disabilities in the design of services (Pinto and Slevin, 1989).

Focus group participants also noted the need for authorities to ensure that universal access projects are planned and implemented in an effective manner. At present, the national government provides subsidies for rail and bus, however the participation of local and provincial governments in providing sources of revenue will be crucial.

Whilst My CitiBus is committed to serving the physically impaired, it is still limited, only providing service in certain areas of the townships (TCT, 2015). In addition, this service is urban-based and does not reach rural areas, leaving youth with disabilities without access. For this reason, minibus taxis and other collective services must play a key role. Recent work mapping minibus taxi routes in the city highlights the potential that these have for reaching youth with disabilities (Where is My Transport, 2017).

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7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our findings lead us to conclude that despite its other challenges, Cape Town must continue to focus on providing access for all. South Africa has supported a more inclusive society by honouring the rights of persons with disabilities; however, to be truly successful, the city must fully commit to improving the quality of life of all persons.

Research in the area of disability and social exclusion has shown that whilst persons with disabilities primarily require access to employment and health care, increased emphasis should also be placed on providing these persons with opportunities to enjoy and learn from cultural activities. Participation in these events is especially important for youth with disabilities, helping to integrate them into mainstream society and providing them with new opportunities to grow and work toward securing a better quality of life.

In Cape Town, planners have identified the roles that rail and bus systems must play in providing universal access, but they have also highlighted the importance of working with existing modes to accommodate persons with disabilities. Whilst much of the minibus industry lies outside regulation, the government must work with owners to address the concerns voiced in the focus groups. For example, government could incentivise owners to better accommodate persons with disabilities through wheelchair-accessible vehicle upgrades, user-friendly information systems, and a state-subsidised voucher system.

There are potential areas of growth in the provision of transport to youth with disabilities that require focused attention and political commitment. In addition, further study should inform development of an affordable system. Furthermore, it is recommended that the following efforts be implemented:
- Development and adoption of the National Learners Transport Policy, which guarantees inclusion and subsidised transport for students with disabilities;
- Increased funding for educational centres and institutions to provide flexible transport to persons with disabilities travelling to/from arts centres;
- Increased local funding for the expansion of the MyCiTi Bus system to all disadvantaged areas, reducing the financial burden of this service through the introduction of such mechanisms as vehicle registration fees or business taxes; and
- Further dialogue with minibus operators serving disadvantaged areas, so that services cater to youth with disabilities (e.g., the efforts of Dr. Herrie Schalekamp and Dr. Roger Behrens of the University of Cape Town have provided educational services to the minibus taxi industry, including service training for drivers).

Regardless of the societal barriers that have prevented Cape Town from guaranteeing equal access to all of its residents and visitors, the city must continue to improve the quality of life, carrying through with the implementation of proposed measures that facilitate the inclusion of youth with disabilities, a potentially productive sector of society. A transport system that provides equal access to youth with disabilities and effectively empowers them to be an integral part of society could play a central role in the development of a more adaptable model of social inclusion for cities worldwide.

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