

Understanding emplacement of community mobility and participation for persons with disabilities within a South-North perspective: a narrative-in-action inquiry

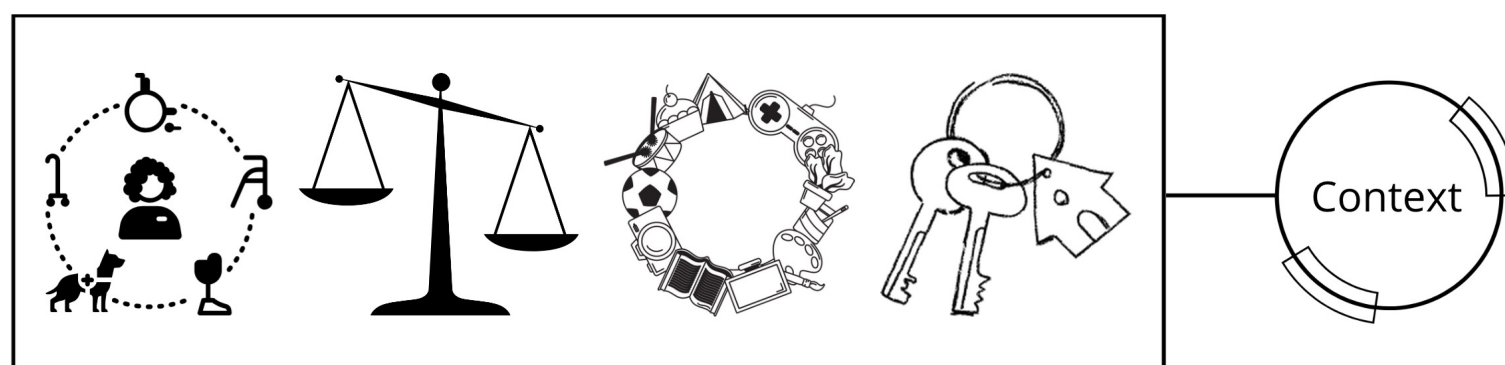
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Introduction

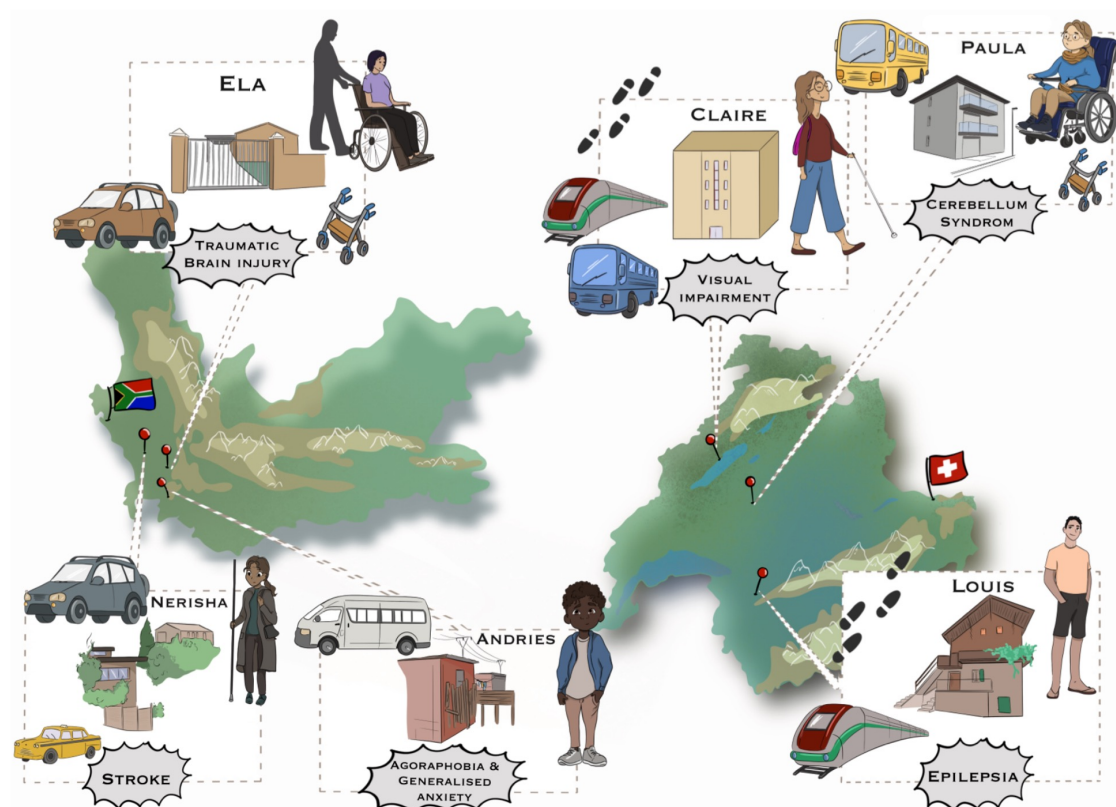
- Persons with disabilities face **unequal opportunities** in community mobility and participation in everyday occupations, particularly when **navigating places outside their home**.
- The way these challenges are navigated in everyday life occupations within **diverse and dynamic contexts** remains under explored.
- A South–North perspective enriches this narrative, highlighting **cultural and enacted variations** in experiences of community mobility and the multiplicity of stories that shape these landscapes.



Study Aim

This study explores the layers of meaning of mobility, unfolding while persons with disabilities participate in out-of-home occupations.

Methods



- Design: **Narrative-in-action** approach.
- Data collection: We conducted **in-depth sit-down and mobile interviews** with each participant.
- Narrative analysis: Participant stories built up to construct **two exemplars**, along with their **possible interpretations**.

Figure 1. Participants represented in their context: region, area of residence, housing type, transport modes, assistive devices, and impairment.

Findings and Discussion

Social stigma

Persons with disabilities must navigate a world where being visible doesn't guarantee being understood, making inclusion feel conditional and often uncomfortable.

Pressure around intimacy

Societal discomfort with bodily functions fosters internalised shame, turning intimacy into burden and dependence that restricts both public and private possibilities for participation.

In a fast-paced society, spontaneity becomes constrained for persons with disabilities, who must engage in extensive, often invisible preparation that turns outings into over-negotiated processes.

Crippling time

The first exemplar reveals how intersectionality piles up into **cumulative burdens**, creating situations where **the outside seems too complex to reach**.

Safety concerns

Everyday situations require persons with disabilities to constantly calculate risks which shape their choices for participation in daily life.

This often overlooked but profound layer shapes daily rhythms, reinforces isolation, and further narrows the scope of occupations for persons with disabilities.

The most visible barrier is only one layer within a deeper web of exclusion, where inaccessible design not only restricts movement but also restricts meaning and belonging.

Financial precarity

Physical inaccessibility

The second exemplar illustrates how persons with disabilities **navigate liminal spaces** and **layers of meaning** using **occupations, places, and objects** to reinforce opportunities, identity, and foster community participation.

- **Familiar places and occupations** become **anchors in uncertainty**, transforming routines into meaningful supports for navigating an unpredictable world.
- **Meaning shifts across contexts and places**. The same occupation takes on different meaning depending on the place, and the same place evokes different meanings depending on the occupations realised.
- **Objects** (e.g., assistive devices, car key) can become personal **extensions of identity**. They offer not only functional support but also continuity and meaning that persist, even if transformed, through changing circumstances.

Conclusions

- **Community mobility and participation are intertwined in various dynamic and often invisible layers**, unequally narrowing the scope of possible occupations for persons with disabilities.
- By applying narrative-in-action, this research **captures the unfolding, emplaced character of occupations**. Occupations are not merely done in places but shaped by them, **contexts being active agents** in defining the boundaries of the possible.
- Findings call for a more **contextually grounded understanding** of community mobility and participation. It invites a shift in understanding mobility, not as static access, but as a **dynamic negotiation between many layers of vulnerabilities** in the face of uncertainty.

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