



## Citizenship and the embodied practice of wheelchair use



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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 5 February 2014

Received in revised form 23 September 2014

Available online 25 November 2014

#### Keywords:

Citizenship  
Disability  
Mobility  
Embodiment  
Wheelchair use  
Practices

### ABSTRACT

Citizenship has been associated with members of a community that engage in paid work (Painter and Philo, 1995; Desforges et al., 2005). This idea constructs remunerated work as a key determinant of citizenship (Brown and Patrick, 2012). The outcome in terms of mobility is the provision of infrastructure and technologies that potentially privilege the movement of those considered to be 'productive bodies' between their workplaces and homes at specific times, while disadvantaging disabled people and their everyday mobility practices (Imrie, 2000). This paper explores the ways in which the formation of citizenship and movement, as embodied and sensory practices, and wheelchair use may be constrained by infrastructures, means of transport and social practices that are often insensitive to the needs of disabled people. In particular, the paper contributes to fleshing out the notion of 'embodied citizenship' in relation to women wheelchair users and the role played by their devices and other mobility technologies in their citizenship struggles. The paper is divided into three sections. First, I set out a framework for exploring the relationships between citizenship, mobility and disability with a focus on wheelchair users. Second, drawing on original qualitative research data, the paper concentrates on the embodied mobility practices of women wheelchair users who live in Greater London and Leicestershire, United Kingdom. Here I highlight the prejudices, barriers, discrimination and exclusions that they face, which, potentially, impact on their claims to citizenship. Finally, the paper concludes that an approach based on the subjective experience of the wheelchair user in context is useful in revealing the complexities of citizenship.

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### Introduction

Citizenship has been associated with individuals who are considered valuable 'member[s] of an everyday community of living and working' (Painter and Philo, 1995: 115; Desforges et al., 2005). This conception, as Brown and Patrick (2012) suggest, places emphasis on remunerated work as a key determinant of citizenship. Such a narrow notion of citizenship is problematic because it leaves out those groups of the population who are not always able to engage in paid work, as is the case with many disabled people<sup>1</sup> (Patrick, 2012). The outcome in terms of mobility is the provision of infrastructure and technologies that potentially privilege the movement of those considered to be 'productive bodies', or non-impaired bodies, between their workplaces and

homes at specific times, while disadvantaging disabled people and their everyday mobility practices (Imrie, 2000). For instance, means of transport intensely used by commuters, such as the underground, have limited access for people in wheelchairs, marginalising them and creating a sense that they are somehow 'lesser citizens'. This reflects the still pervasive influence of the individual/deficit model of disability in which people with impairments are expected to 'get better' and, thus, to be able to navigate the environment and use 'mainstream' infrastructure (Pfeiffer, 2002).

Although there are policy initiatives that seek to facilitate the mobility of disabled people, their implementation does not always work, partly because they lack engagement with everyday mobility issues. For instance, time is an important factor for disabled people when it comes to travelling. Sometimes they are excluded from the use of public transport at rush hours. Also, everyday practices of mobile bodies, such as walking and ideas about it, serve to stigmatise people with mobility impairments when attempting to move in and around the built environment. It is through everyday experiences of (im)mobility that (non)citizenship is produced. Although mobility and geography have featured in discussions around citizenship, hitherto they have been considered mainly in theorisations revolving around migration, diaspora and transnationality,

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'disabled people' instead of 'people with disabilities' following the British social model of disability (see UPIAS, 1976). This model separates disability and impairment suggesting that disability is any disadvantage caused by physical, structural and institutional barriers, which restricts people with impairments. According to this model, people have impairments; they do not have disabilities (see UPIAS, 1976).

largely overlooking *everyday* mobility (Blunt, 2007; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006; Sheller and Urry, 2006). While there are insightful writings exploring the everyday micro-geographies of citizenship such as Valentine and Skelton (2007) and Staeheli et al. (2012), there is relatively scant research examining how the ways in which people move daily intersect with social categories such as gender and disability, and impact in the formation of citizenship.

This paper seeks to contribute to bridging these gaps by exploring how citizenship unfolds through struggles, negotiations and conflicts in the *everyday* embodied mobility of disabled women. In particular, the paper contributes to fleshing out the notion of embodied citizenship in relation to women wheelchair users and the role played by their devices and other mobility technologies in their citizenship struggles. The paper explores two interconnected themes of this special issue: 'mobility, identity and practice' and 'hybrid citizens'. While the former concentrates on sensory and embodied aspects of mobility that create new identities and claims to citizenship, the latter addresses how the social value given to mobility practices is connected with 'hybridity and the materialities of movement' in the differential constitution of citizenship (Spinney et al., 2015). In this context, hybridity refers to subjectivities that are constituted by bodies and technologies relating to movement such as the car-driver (Urry, 2007). As I have addressed the constitution of the hybrid body-wheelchair elsewhere (see Gaete-Reyes, 2012), in this paper I explore how the social value given to the practice of wheelchair use and the materialities of movement influence citizenship formation.

In focusing on the *everyday*, this paper draws on the concept of *everyday life*. Sztompka (2008) defines everyday life as the materialisation of social existence. Consequently, it involves social relations, the body and emotions and it is situated in, and influenced by, space (Sztompka, 2008). Although everyday life and its social relations, experiences and practices,<sup>2</sup> are often (seen as) mundane, they are also dynamic, unpredictable and contradictory and, therefore, an interesting focus of social inquiry (British Sociological Association, 2014). The study of everyday life is a longstanding tradition in sociology. Contributions to the examination of everyday life include Erwin Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory, Schutz's (1970) phenomenological approach and Lefebvre's (2003) urban perspective to name but a few (for a review see Kalekin-Fishman, 2013). Also, feminist scholars Stanley and Wise (1993), who inspired my research, called for examining women's oppression and marginalization in their different everyday life contexts. Following Pink's (2012) everyday life approach, I explore the sensory, embodied and mediated elements of women wheelchair users' mobility practices and place as a route to understanding citizenship. I also draw on Latour's (1992) work on the exploration of the agency of mundane objects.

The paper is divided into three sections. First, I set out a framework for exploring the relationships between citizenship, mobility and disability with a focus on wheelchair users. Following Spinney et al. (2015), citizenship here is understood as a continually negotiated process, in which the disabled embodied subject engages through everyday practices of mobility and movement. In the case of wheelchair users, the process of claiming citizenship is mediated to a large extent by their mobility devices in context. I take up an approach which emphasises that barriers to movement and negative connotations of wheelchairs and wheelchair use are largely socially produced, while recognising the embodied and sensory aspects of struggling to claim citizenship when attempting to move around the built environment. As suggested earlier, gaining membership as a citizen is linked with moving in able-bodied ways and being productive, in the sense of engaging in paid work.

Second, drawing on original research data collected in a qualitative study, the paper focuses on the mobility practices of women wheelchair users who live in Greater London and Leicestershire, United Kingdom. Here the paper explores the ways in which the formation of citizenship and movement, as embodied and sensory practices, and wheelchair use may be constrained by infrastructures, means of transport and social practices that are largely insensitive to the needs of disabled people. I argue that the prejudices, barriers, discrimination and exclusions faced by women wheelchair users, potentially, impact on their sense of citizenship. Finally, the paper concludes that an approach based on the subjective experience of the wheelchair user in context, which explores emotional and sensory dimensions of mobility and movement, is useful in revealing the complexities of citizenship. The paper also highlights the relevance of connecting the subjective experiences of mobility of disabled people with broader socio-political values, as citizenship may be constrained by disabling and disablist socio-political processes.

### Citizenship, disability, mobility and wheelchair use: an embodied account

This section presents a framework for exploring the relationships between citizenship, mobility and disability with a focus on wheelchair users. Citizenship has been understood as a collection of practices, rights and responsibilities that determine membership and status (Isin and Wood, 1999; Patrick, 2012; Rankin, 2009). Dominant models of citizenship, such as the liberal, communitarian and civic republican, highlight engaging in paid work as the main obligation and prerequisite for citizenship (Ellis, 2000; Patrick, 2012). This, as Patrick (2012: 5) suggests, brings 'exclusionary citizenship consequences for those who do not engage in the formal labour market', as is the case with many disabled people. It is well documented that disabled people have been excluded from citizenship (see Linton, 1998; Oliver, 1992; Rankin, 2009). As Rankin (2009: 2) asserts, 'the established division between citizen and outsider has acted as a formative dimension of the disability rights movement and their quest for empowerment and autonomy, inclusion [and] valued citizenship'.

Although the disability rights movement began to take shape four decades ago, many disabled people are still excluded from citizenship. Such exclusion is characterised by 'the denial (or non-realization) of the civil, political and social rights of citizenship' (Imrie, 2014: 3). A prerequisite for exercising citizenship rights such as inclusion, participation and autonomy is having access to means of transport and public spaces. The marginalisation of disabled people is materialised, for instance, in socially produced barriers to movement and in specialised transport measures that regulate where and when disabled people can move (Imrie, 2014). As Imrie (2014: 10) asserts, 'disabled people's abilities to express autonomy [are] constrained and curtailed by socio-political and institutional practices that de-value particular bodily dispositions, capacities and experiences, and, consequentially, may reproduce disabling relations of dominance'. The devaluation of disabled people stems from the links between citizenship and those seen as 'productive bodies', and the deficit or individual model of disability, which defines the body with impairments in medicalised terms.

Such interpretation of the body with impairments relates, in part, to citizenship theory and public policy being largely informed by instrumental conceptualisations of the body (Bacchi and Beasley, 2002; Oliver, 1990). As Dean (2000: xi) suggests, 'social policy and processes of social welfare have always been focused on bodies: on bodily potential, bodily functions and bodily needs'. For instance, health professionals focus their expert gaze on the ability of bodies to produce (Dean, 2000; Oliver, 1990). This exemplifies the ways

<sup>2</sup> Practices are compounded by four interconnected elements: 'practical knowledge, common understandings, rules, and material infrastructures... which are reproduced at particular moments in time and space' (Strengers, 2010: 3).

in which the expert knowledge of medicine is positioned as an authority in relation to decisions shaping citizenship (Bacchi and Beasley, 2002). Likewise, policy makers and administrators scrutinise the bodies of welfare beneficiaries positioning them 'in time and place; which determines the 'needs' and therefore the visibility of such bodies' (Dean, 2000: xi). As Grabham (2007) suggests, our bodily status impact on how we are seen as citizens.

Welfare policy assumes a distinction between those who can control their body and are acknowledged as 'autonomous citizens', and those who are seen as 'controlled by their bodies' and labelled as 'lesser citizens in need of forms of control' (Bacchi and Beasley, 2002: 324; Giddens, 1991; Longhurst, 2001). Echoing Bacchi and Beasley (2002) I seek to challenge these binary differentiations of bodies and citizens by putting forward the notion of 'embodied citizenship', which captures the view of embodied subjects whose sense of citizenship is shaped, in part, by their interactions with other subjects and socio-technical and legal systems. The concept of embodied subject derives from embodiment, a notion developed by Merleau-Ponty (1962) that sought to dissolve the Cartesian mind/body dichotomy (also, Gibson et al., 2007; Paterson and Hughes, 1999). In this view, as human beings we experience the world and ourselves through a lived body in which corporeality and mind, or psyche, are merged in a unique body-subject (Gibson et al., 2007). The body-subject at the same time perceives 'and creates the world' (Paterson and Hughes, 1999: 601; Gibson et al., 2007).

Movement is important when perceiving the world and other subjects. As Urry (2007: 48) asserts, 'the body especially senses as it moves'. In their theorisation of citizenship, Bacchi and Beasley (2002: 325) consider a wide spectrum 'of intersubjective bodily experiences – based on movement and communication, the bodily requirements of sustenance and attention [and] the social relations around touch and non-touch' (Bacchi and Beasley, 2002: 330). Movement and mobility have the potential to defy fixed conceptions of citizenship as they stress its 'contingent nature... as uncertain and unfolding' in the experiences of embodied subjects (Spinney et al., 2015; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006; Mansvelt, 2008). As Valentine and Skelton (2007: 124) point out, citizenship 'is constituted through situated everyday practices and thus is both fluid and ambiguous' (also, see Staeheli et al., 2012). I suggest that intersubjective experiences of movement and mobility are essential to understanding embodied citizenship, because travelling implies moving bodies with diverse abilities and fragilities, ages, gender and ethnicity, which experience the world, and are perceived by the world, in different ways (also, see Cresswell, 2010; Urry, 2007).

Disabled people have distinctive sensory experiences of movement as some impairments may involve partial or total absence of hearing, sight, feeling and movement of body limbs (see Gollidge, 1993; Allen, 2004). These experiences influence their geographical understanding and also, potentially, their sense of citizenship. When moving through 'sensescapes' not only the body-subject is involved; mobility practices often encompass the use of technologies such as walking boots, cars and bicycles, which mediate the sensory experience (see Sheller, 2004; Spinney, 2006; Urry, 2007). As Rodaway (1994: 12) asserts, 'perception... is mediated by our bodies and the technological extensions employed by the body (such as walking sticks, spectacles and hearing aids, and even clothes)' (also, see Ingold, 2000). I suggest that the wheelchair, as a mobility technology and an extension of the body, provides the user with particular perceptions of the world (Gaete-Reyes, 2012; Papadimitriou, 2008; Winance, 2006). For instance, the world may be seen from a lower point of view than when walking and pavements feel different when moving in a wheelchair (Gaete-Reyes, 2012).

Mobility technologies, which in conjunction with body-subjects have been conceptualised as 'hybrids', not only provide the users

with distinctive sensory experiences but also with emotional experiences that are influenced by cultural representations (Sheller, 2004). For instance, automobiles endow their owners/drivers with significations such as being 'competent, powerful, able and sexually desirable' (Sheller, 2004: 225); whereas wheelchair users are perceived as incompetent, powerless, disabled, and asexual (see Keith, 1996). As Watson and Woods (2005: 98) suggest, the wheelchair is frequently associated with 'injury, illness, passivity and dependency' (also, see Keith, 1996; Papadimitriou, 2008). It is evident that the social value given to the 'hybrids' car-driver and body-wheelchair is different (Gaete-Reyes, 2012). Also, the ability to walk has been infused with meanings such as 'being human', and those unable to walk are often seen as falling 'short of being fully human' (Cresswell, 2010: 21; Oliver, 1996). Such contrasting representations of mobility technologies and practices promote disablist attitudes that often trigger distressing emotions in wheelchair users, which may affect their sense of citizenship (see Bondi, 2005 about emotions).

Wheelchair users experience disablist attitudes in interpersonal encounters when moving through public places and using transport. For instance, Papadimitriou (2008: 700) found that wheelchair users are frequently treated 'as invalids or useless people'. Wheelchair users often encounter what one might term 'nonperson' treatment in public environments, which may render them as invisible people (Cahill and Eggleston, 1994; Zitzelsberger, 2005; Keith, 1996). This invisibility of wheelchair users can be equated with constructing them as lesser or non-citizens. For instance, wheelchair users accompanied by someone propelling their chair, are frequently ignored in interpersonal encounters (see Cahill and Eggleston, 1994; Thomas, 1999). This section illustrated how wheelchair use as a mobility practice is stigmatised. It also explored how the ways in which people move and the technologies they use are tied to their social identity. The next section of the paper examines the ways in which women wheelchair users struggle with other citizens in their attempts to move around, become visible and ultimately claim a degree of citizenship.

### Negotiating citizenship in everyday spaces of mobility: the case of women wheelchair users

Spinney et al. (2015) suggest that empirical research on citizenship and mobility lacks 'a sustained engagement with the notion of 'spaces of mobility' such as 'streets, roads [and] paths... as everyday landscapes where citizenship is [claimed and] acted out'. This section seeks to contribute to bridging this gap by exploring, empirically, the negotiation and articulation of citizenship through everyday practices of mobility in geographical spaces and means of transport, such as buses, taxis and trains. I divide the section into two themes. First, I discuss women wheelchair users' struggles when attempting to travel in means of transport and trying to claim citizenship. Here, I contend that such difficulties occur partly because of the pejorative conceptualisations of disabled people and the inability of technology, in and of itself, to enable their mobility.

I use Actor Network Theory (ANT) in some cases to interpret the ways in which exclusion is produced by different actors and actants (Latour, 1992). ANT is an approach to the study of the social world derived from Science and Technology Studies, which considers that humans and non-humans (i.e. technologies, mechanisms, paperwork) have agency and are part of the social networks (Latour, 1996). ANT is useful in this case as wheelchairs and other mobility technologies and assemblages play a part in enabling or disabling mobility and, therefore, citizenship as practiced. Although citizenship can be theorised as 'becoming' in Massey's (2004 in Desforges et al., 2005) terms, or, in other words, as an incessantly negotiated process, in some instances it rarely

'becomes' because the assemblages governing mobility prevent it from doing so. Some assemblages stop wheelchair users becoming mobile citizens, reproducing their marginalised status.

Second, I examine the (in)visibility of women wheelchair users, which I associate with their social status as non-citizens. This theme highlights the social and physical ambivalence of the wheelchair and the ways in which female users attempt to assert themselves as citizens negotiating their presence in public spaces and venues.

This section is based on a qualitative study that investigated the embodied mobility of women wheelchair users (Gaete-Reyes, 2012). The research focused on disabled women for various reasons, which include challenging the patriarchal values ingrained in much disability research. These values are revealed in the substantial omission of the subjective reality of females in disability accounts (see Morris, 1992; Shakespeare, 2006; Shakespeare et al., 1996). Also, patriarchy, disability and citizenship are linked; women and disabled people have been seen as controlled by their bodies and, therefore, as lesser citizens (Bacchi and Beasley, 2002). In this respect disabled women can be considered as doubly disadvantaged. Through this study I sought to give voice to the views and experiences of disabled women. The research attempted to understand the challenges that the built environment presents to the movement and mobility of the research subjects, how they seek to overcome those challenges, and what ought to be done to make the environment more conducive to independent mobility.

The main empirical component of the research was case-study work conducted with twelve participants (nine of them lived in Greater London and three of them lived in Leicestershire at the time of the interviews). I selected case-study as my research approach because I sought to produce detailed context-dependent knowledge (see Flyvbjerg, 2006). The case-study work consisted of a mixture of methods including unstructured and semi-structured interviews, participant observation of places where the participants moved around, and keeping a field-diary as one of the observational tools. A total of 58 interviews with women wheelchair users were conducted. The observation of participants' movement and mobility was also documented by the use of visual methods such as photographs and videotaping. This approach has been called co-present immersion as researchers may be 'copresent within modes of movement and then employ a range of observation, interviewing, and recording techniques' (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 218).

The use of different methods serves to verify the validity of findings through triangulation (Baxter and Eyles, 1997; Bryman, 2008). I triangulated my research findings by comparing data collected through different methods (i.e. interviews and videos) on the same phenomena (i.e. attitudinal barriers experienced by my research participants). In addition to enhancing the validity of my findings, the use of different data sources meant that I gained a deeper understanding of the phenomena (Fielding, 2012). For instance, I understood the mobility body techniques developed by my participants more thoroughly when, in addition to the interviews, I recorded videos. The use of different data sources also enabled me to illustrate some of the findings from the interviews with my participants (Fielding, 2012). For example, I took photographs of the physical barriers that my participants face when moving around the built environment.

#### *Struggling for citizenship while attempting to move in means of transport*

Discourses of mobility and movement in Western modern societies have privileged the mobility of non-impaired bodies, over impaired corporealities (Imrie, 2000). Imrie (2000: 1643) suggests that 'political and policy assumptions about mobility and movement are premised on a universal, disembodied subject

which is conceived of as neutered, that is without sex, gender, or any other attributed social or biological characteristics'. However, mobility is 'socially produced motion', which is 'practiced, it is experienced, [and] it is embodied' (Cresswell, 2006: 3). Likewise, citizenship is 'practiced and experienced as people move through their daily lives' (Staeheli et al., 2012: 630). This theme focuses on understanding the struggles of citizenship as they develop on the ground and through means of transport, shaped by embodied intersubjective experiences and policy initiatives. In particular, I explore how policy that aims to facilitate the mobility of disabled people put into practice, and the interactions with (other) citizens, affect the formation of citizenship for women wheelchair users when attempting to use different means of transport. Many London buses are equipped with wheelchair accessible features such as retractile ramps and space for a wheelchair. However, as a range of participants recalled, they are not always usable. For instance, Paula said:

'I got on a bus round the corner from my house, and I got on with the ramp and then the ramp wouldn't go back into the bus so he couldn't go anywhere and everybody had to come off the bus. And then the next bus came along and that happened, so everybody had to come off the bus and then the third bus came along and the same thing happened, and there was like about a hundred people waiting at the bus stop, all ready to mob me because I'd stopped their journey'.

Here, the right to mobility of wheelchair users that in theory is enabled by the provision of bus ramps is restricted by their poor maintenance. While this was an extreme case, several participants reported situations whereby they were unable to make a bus journey or were severely delayed because ramps were broken in consecutive bus services. The differential maintenance regimes (i.e. governance) of bus parts reflect the marginal positioning of wheelchair users in relation to ambulant passengers, reproducing that position. In other words, the fact that the majority of bus parts are well maintained but the ramp is not shows that this element and its users are not deemed important. Also, Paula felt that the other passengers blamed her for the disruption of their journey. In drawing attention to the individual with impairments, non-disabled passengers were 'blaming the victim' (also, see Imrie, 2014). This indicates an inability to attach moral weight to non-human actors, such as the broken ramp and its mechanism (see Latour, 1992). The moralisation tends to fall heaviest on the human actors, and in particular those immediately present such as the disabled person rather than the maintenance personnel and ramp designers. This example illustrates how citizenship struggles unfold as a set of processual, performative everyday relations between the state (in the form of transport policy), different materialities (ramps and bodies), and the dynamics between subjects attempting to become mobile citizens.

In some cases, although bus ramps may be working, for several wheelchair users it is impossible to use them independently due to the kinaesthetic effort required to manoeuvre up them. For instance, Diana, another participant, said: 'there are buses but because I have trouble pushing, I don't have a lot of upper body strength, the ramp is very steep, so I find... I can go on buses if I go with somebody'. Likewise, Paula said:

'I can't use public transport in my manual chair, just, I mean ramps on buses, unless you've got a degree in weight-lifting or you're two stone you're not going to be able to negotiate... getting onto the ramp of a bus'.

These accounts suggest that bus ramp design is premised on a particular body type, someone who is fit and has non-impaired upper body strength and movement, such as wheelchair athletes.

These accounts also relate to wheelchair design; although there are lightweight wheelchairs that would make mobility easier for some people, they are not easily affordable, thus creating another layer of discrimination. Another interpretation is that bus ramp design is simply disembodied, because it does not consider the differences between wheelchair users' bodies. In neglecting such differences, these technical solutions create physical struggle for disabled people and promote their dependence on a third party. This highlights the difference between impaired and non-impaired bodies constructing the dichotomy non-citizen/citizen. As [Dean \(2000\)](#) suggests, citizenship has been based, in part, on (physical) autonomy.

The challenges faced by women wheelchair users when attempting to use buses go beyond the technicalities of bus ramps and the interaction between these elements and different bodies. Several participants indicated that bus drivers avoid picking them up in rush hour. As Sandy, another respondent, said:

'[in] rush hour, you have to be really assertive. . .because the kind of rules are, of London Transport, is that wheelchair users should get priority. The reality is that [if] the bus is crowded, they let on the foot passengers, the ambulant passengers, and then tell you it's full up, which makes it a real hassle'.

Sandy's testimony illustrates how official designations include disabled people as citizens through mobility policy but the reality as practiced shows that they are excluded. In this context, bus drivers are the 'gatekeepers' of mobility having the power to choose who gets on the bus, and they often prioritise the mobility of those seen to be 'productive bodies' ([Imrie, 2000](#)). Sandy asserts that although all citizens are entitled to use public transport, 'bus drivers work on the basis that the poor person in the wheelchair won't argue'. Some bus drivers assume that disabled people do not work and strip them of their equal rights to mobility and, in doing so, of citizenship.

A few respondents have had the experience of competing with non-disabled people to use the space designed for wheelchair users on buses. As Toni reflects: 'unfortunately people use it for their prams, for their shopping, or for. . .instance, for their luggage. . .although it's meant to be for wheelchair users'. These disabling practices of non-disabled people show that the rights to mobility of disabled people and their citizenship status are not a given reality. Citizenship is based on continual and, in occasions, conflictual negotiation ([Massey, 2004](#) in [Desforges et al., 2005](#)). Likewise, Rebecca said:

'there are other people who use the buses. . .who like to take the space for people in wheelchairs, and that's usually mothers, parents with buggies and their children, but there are signs on the bus that say that priority should be given to people in wheelchairs, but often drivers don't want to get involved in asking people to fold up their buggies to make way for the person in the wheelchair. So occasionally I've had problems with that, and sometimes drivers won't let me on the bus if there's a mother with a buggy on the bus already'.

Rebecca's testimony illustrates that, on some occasions, buses represent a kind of 'no man's land'. Although the wheelchair user's space is clearly demarcated, the driver, who in this case represents the service provider, and as such, should ensure disabled people's access under the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#), avoids taking control of the situation, and sometimes deals with it by denying wheelchair users' mobility rights.

Also, several participants have experienced bus drivers and other mobility 'gate keepers', such as taxi drivers, having unwelcoming attitudes towards them. As Nicky says:

'you get the impression they [bus drivers] feel you're such a hassle and so much effort because of you want to get on the

bus. . .you ask them to put the ramp down and they just go 'Not working.' And won't even look at you and just kind of put their hand up or something. . .or they say 'All right then, I'll put the ramp down.' But like make a really big fuss and like really sigh as they're doing it and stuff, to make it like really. . .you're causing them loads of problems because you actually want to get on their bus'.

Likewise, Anne outlines:

'sometimes it's more stressful getting in and out of a taxi, because a lot of the cab drivers don't like to take you, even though it is the law to take you, they'll try to get out of it. . .because they don't want to get out of the car and get the ramp out of the boot'.

These accounts show that bus and taxi drivers sometimes act as if providing access to disabled people was a case of charity, making them feel uncomfortable. Following [Painter and Philo \(1995: 115\)](#), if people cannot use public transport 'without feeling uncomfortable, victimized and basically 'out of place', then it must be questionable whether or not these people can be regarded as citizens'. Using the notion of distributed agency from ANT, which refers to the participation of the different parts of an assemblage in enabling or disabling action, it is also relevant to look at the agency of the ramp ([Latour, 1996](#)). The additional work created by the ramp operation for drivers suggests that the bus and the taxi as assemblages (of driver, ramp, maintenance, etc.) work against including the wheelchair user hence denying them the mobility required to claim full citizenship.

The unwillingness of taxi drivers to transport people with mobility impairments in London might also be related to the system through which they are paid when they do these jobs. The Taxicard scheme is an initiative managed by the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee to provide subsidised trips in licensed taxis for people with mobility impairments unable to access public transport ([Transport for London, 2009](#)). This scheme in some cases creates difficulties for disabled people, as Nicky reflects:

'you. . .do have problems getting taxis, because the taxi drivers get the money back from the council, Harrow council or whichever local borough you're in, but apparently it's quite a lot of paperwork to get the money back, so a lot of taxi drivers don't like doing the Taxicard jobs. Cos they don't get the money straight away and it's not cash in hand'.

Nicky's testimony illustrates that the paperwork created through this special programme becomes part of the assemblage, and in this case, one of the actants that distributes agency and, ultimately, denies citizenship. Also, special programmes that aim to facilitate disabled people's mobility are generally underpinned by medical discourses pervaded by notions of the malfunctioning body ([Imrie, 2000](#)). Disabled people are depicted as lesser citizens and 'as a population requiring particular forms of regulation, discipline and control by state programmes and policies' ([Imrie, 2000: 1643](#); [Bacchi and Beasley, 2002](#)). This is confirmed by Sandy's account. She says: 'if you meet eligibility criteria you get a Taxicard, which gives you so many trips a year. . .I think it's a hundred and four'. Also, the scheme only subsidises part of the journey for longer trips. The eligibility criteria for this scheme are related to 'state's measurements of bodily capacities and capabilities' ([Imrie, 2000: 1645](#)).

Taxicard trips can be booked by telephone or via the internet ([Taxicard, 2009](#)). However, as the service provider confesses, 'Taxicard is not a guaranteed service' ([Taxicard, 2009: 3](#)). The unreliability of this service sometimes creates feelings of vulnerability in the users, as Louise reports:

'sometimes if I'm going... [out] I'll use computer cab or Taxicard but I find that's really hard to use because a lot of times they don't turn up when you want them to... They say it's how the system works. It's like your call goes out and then someone who wants the job can respond to it, but what happens a lot of the time they don't respond to it so you're just left, and Taxicard keeps on phoning you fifteen minutes later saying, 'Do you still want the cab?' Which means that if you go somewhere it makes you feel really vulnerable because you don't know if you're gonna get back or not'.

Situations like this one create sudden immobility or, in Cresswell's (2010) terms, they produce 'friction', which renders disabled people less mobile. Becoming a citizen is based on reliable mobility; knowing you can get there and back, whereas the system for wheelchair users does not provide this. Also, Louise's testimony confirms that wheelchair users are not considered citizens who have to be in certain places at specific times. Thus, their mobility is conceived of as 'a function of the state's benevolence and the possible provision of fixtures, fittings, and welfare payments to facilitate some form of mobility and movement', instead of a civil right (Imrie, 2000: 1645).

In advancing towards an understanding of how practising citizenship is obstructed, the railway system is also a useful example. As a number of participants reported, the way in which accessibility is conceived by this system does not allow spontaneity for wheelchair users. As Nicky said:

'you're supposed to phone and let them know you're going at least forty-eight hours in advance and the weekend doesn't count... once or twice I've wanted to go into London on a bank holiday so there's nobody in customer services to call on the telephone so I've just turned up and then they get in a bit of a fluster cos you've just turned up. They say, 'Oh, you should let us know.' But it's like, well, did you know three days ago what you wanted to do today?'

Nicky's account shows how transport welfare measures seek to regulate disabled people's time, while highlighting bodily difference. Cresswell (2006) asserts that any reflection about movement (and mobility) needs to take time into account. In this context I contend that time needs to be considered in the process of becoming a citizen. As Lister (1997: 133) suggests, time 'is a resource that has profound implications for the ability of women and men to act as citizens in the public sphere and to pursue the process of self-development... critical to effective citizenship'. In her work on feminist perspectives of citizenship, Lister (1997) stresses that time is an unequally distributed resource between men and women and more so, if the latter are disabled. Time-consuming domestic work, which traditionally is undertaken by women, tends to be more burdensome for disabled women. Time inequality is also related to travelling. According to several participants, railway station staff do not always know when the trains have the wheelchair space booked until the train arrives. As Diana explains:

'it's quite frustrating if you miss your train, they don't know if the wheelchair space is booked on the next train until the train turns up. There's no system of knowing if the wheelchair space is booked on the next train'.

This means that if a wheelchair user misses a train, the person could potentially wait for hours until they can start their journey. Another problem of 'special' welfare measures is that on some occasions they do not deliver what they promise even if disabled people follow the procedures set. As Anne says:

'[sometimes] when you get on the train... you find that they've not even booked the seats. So having spent twenty minutes on

the phone then you get in the train and someone's sitting in the space for your PA and there's all the baggage and luggage in the space for the wheelchair. This happens continually'.

The way in which the railway system conceives of disabled people's mobility is problematic as it assumes and emphasises their dependence, reinforcing their non-citizens status. When a wheelchair user books the assistance, a member of the railway staff places a mobile ramp from the platform to the train when the latter arrives in the station. Moreover, sometimes they fail to provide the ramp even when it has been booked in advance. As Nicky recounts:

'when you get on the over-ground trains they provide you with ramps to get on and off the trains, but they're kept at each station, I have had some problems... with the ramps not being where they should be at the time they should be there'.

This account shows that disabled people must claim the right to mobility whereas it is a given to non-disabled people.

Another transport system, which overtly privileges the mobility of 'productive bodies', is the London underground. People who are fully reliant on wheelchair use for mobility are greatly prevented from using the underground system because many lines and stations are still not accessible. Underground networks are provided for 'productive bodies' that commute from home to workplaces 'in specific social, geographical and temporal ranges' (Imrie, 2000: 1644). Although the vast majority of the respondents were not able to use the underground due to physical barriers, Sandy, who can leave the wheelchair to overcome some obstacles, has used it, but not without compromising her independence. As she says:

'if I go in my manual chair it takes about an hour to get to Kew Gardens by tube, if I go in my electric wheelchair by bus it takes two hours, and that's why it's a real problem. I don't quite know, I mean I can do four hours travelling to go and then travel by myself and I'm there or I can do two hours travelling but have someone who has to push me. So it's kind of a bit difficult'.

This testimony shows that the level of adaptation required to travel in the underground system is so great that it often stops wheelchair users from using it completely. An equitable system would be one that minimised but required the same level (although not forms) of adaptation of all its users. Sometimes wheelchair users are put in a precarious position where they need to compromise their bodily integrity and independence, in order to optimise the use of time. The other option is that they spend a farcical amount of time travelling (in this case four hours) but they retain their independence. The struggles of women wheelchair users in attempting to travel by means of transport that privilege mobile bodies making them feel like non-citizens, illustrate what Paterson and Hughes (1999) refer to as the 'dys-appearance' of the body.

Paterson and Hughes (1999) draw on Leder (1990) who suggests that in everyday life the body disappears from awareness. Nevertheless, in the presence of pain and illness the body 'dys-appears' or it 'appears as a thematic focus of attention, but... in a dys-state' (Leder, 1990: 84). Paterson and Hughes (1999: 603) assert that the 'disablism and disabling socio-spatial environment produces a vivid, but unwanted consciousness of one's impaired body'. The impaired body 'dys-appears' socially when facing attitudinal and physical barriers, and at the same time, it is confronted with itself (Paterson and Hughes, 1999). Here, the body "dys-appears" as a consequence of the profound oppressions of everyday life' (Paterson and Hughes, 1999: 603). The next subsection focuses on the ambiguous experiences of dys-appearance or invisibility of women wheelchair users in public spaces.

*Physical and social (in)visibility of women wheelchair users: an exploration of the non-citizen*

In developing an understanding of citizenship that considers the experiences of women wheelchair users moving through public spaces, a focus on their literal and figurative social (in)visibility, is relevant. Zitzelsberger (2005: 393) argues that disabled women live paradoxical 'experiences of visibility and invisibility' in social spaces as a result of a 'narrow range of normative standards of 'acceptable' bodies that inscribe cultural meanings and values upon their embodiments'. Dyck's (1995) work insinuates that the (in)visibility of disabled women is shaped by the interactions between the gendered impaired body, and the physical and social environment. I seek to associate the invisibility of women wheelchair users with their social status as non-citizens. Some participants' accounts suggest that their experiences of (in)visibility are the result of the combination of the social meanings attributed to the ageing female body and the wheelchair, and also, of being physically at a lower level, almost out of the 'visual field', of 'standing up' people, literally and metaphorically. As Ellie says:

'I think my experience is that people... tend not to see you. It's not that they stare at you it's just that they don't see you, you're invisible. I think as a woman, as you get older and less attractive, you become invisible anyway, whether you can walk or not... Partly it's a physical thing, you're actually below their eye line, and I think that's part of it. I think... they just don't care, people walk around, particularly in the city, very much within their own kind of physical psychic space, and they walk into you'.

Ellie feels that the (in)visibility of wheelchair users is also related to the careless attitude of non-disabled people when navigating the city. She gives an example of when she felt invisible to the eyes of non-disabled people. Ellie says:

'I went to see, this was another Bill Viola [exhibition] and I went to the National Portrait Gallery... but I was sat there in my wheelchair, my mate was stood next to me and two American guys came and stood in front of me, and I, I was just, this is unbelievable. So I just said, 'I don't know whether you are unsighted or partially sighted but you are being incredibly rude to me.' Really loud, 'You are being incredibly rude to me, you are standing in front of me.' Well, these two guys kind of looked at me as if I shouldn't have opened my mouth and that... that can happen in any number of ways'.

In her testimony, Ellie shows feelings of anger and frustration when she faces non-citizen treatment, and when she expressed how she felt, she received a further dismissive attitude expressed through body language, from the people that had the oppressive attitude towards her in the first place. Ellie's feelings in this situation seem similar to the 'anger in and at the social order' experienced by people with speech impairment, in circumstances of exclusion (see Paterson and Hughes, 1999: 604). Her account also illustrates what Paterson and Hughes (1999: 605) assert: 'it is often suggested that disabled people are 'hyper-sensitive' about non-disabled people's responses, reading disablism in social interactions where there may not be'.

In addition to the reduced height of the person in a wheelchair, being out of the 'visual field' of standing subjects, and the carelessness or distractedness of the latter, other factors shaping the experiences of (in)visibility of women wheelchair users relate to proprioception. Proprioception can be defined as 'somatic awareness of the basic dimensions of space' (Tuan, 1993: 35). In other words, proprioception provides bodily consciousness of immediate spatial dimensions. This sense is fundamental for the

safe movement of wheelchair users, because they not only need to be aware of their bodily dimensions but also of the spatial dimensions of the wheelchair when moving through space. Several participants commented that in crowded places, people tend to trip over them. As Jo says:

'Leicester's a big city, it's very crowded most of the time, and when you're going round the town, especially on Gallowtree Gate, which is more or less a pedestrianised area, you've got people going from across ways, you've got people coming up and down, people going diagonally and so you really do have to keep your eyes open. People walking along even reading the paper. So it's obvious... they can't see what's in front of them, so I have to move out the way, and often I've just stopped when I can't see a way to go, I just stop, and people still walk into me'.

This account illustrates how technologies orient us to the world, and how using a wheelchair means that users are oriented in relation to the standing subject in a way which requires adaptation from the latter, which is not always achieved. Also, in elucidating everyday forms of citizenship it is important to consider fixity and constraint regarding how differently embodied subjects can access and move within public space (Bloomey, 2004; Imrie, 2000; Mitchell, 2003).

As suggested earlier in the paper, wheelchairs are ambivalent objects as they can facilitate mobility when used in accessible settings, but they also have the potential to stigmatise, due to the social meanings attributed to them and their users (Gibson et al., 2007; Watson and Woods, 2005). Keith (1996: 78), a woman wheelchair user, explains some of the complexities of these meanings:

'at the same time as the wheelchair is an artefact that most people associate with illness and old age, it is also a wheeled chair, which is not very far from a push chair, the cultural significance of which is babyhood and childishness. This should not surprise us as the states of babyhood and old age are already linked in our minds... Everyone else is taller than us, we go about in wheeled chairs, sometimes we need to be pushed—we must be babies'.

Keith's (1996) reflection elucidates how wheelchair users are represented and the ways in which the technology of the wheelchair is implicated in such pejorative conceptions. Her work also suggests the reasons why wheelchair users are sometimes invisible citizens. Children and older people, who are pushed in prams and wheelchairs, do not feature in the dominant models of citizenship, as they are seen as not belonging to the working group and, therefore, they are not considered autonomous subjects. Paterson and Hughes (1999: 606) affirm that the 'infantilisation' and the supposition of 'lack of... social competence' of some disabled people is an embodied response to their body and its movement. Here, age, disability, interdependency and cultural norms interplay, because there are social expectations, related to aesthetic judgments, about how the body should look and move.

Sometimes wheelchair users feel the paradoxical situation of (in)visibility being heightened when they are pushed. For instance, Sandy said: 'when I was iller and I was being pushed, I mean, quite often... they wouldn't even look at me, they'd just talk to the person who was pushing me, because I didn't exist.' These suppositions are related to what Sandy observes: 'when people see somebody in a wheelchair, I mean, quite often it feels like they're seeing no legs, no brains'. Similarly, Jan feels that some non-disabled people associate intelligence with the ability to move around independently. She says:

'I think they [people] treat you...as...less intelligent, I think, when you're in a manual chair to when you're in a powered chair...I think it's related to the actual whether you can move, how much you can move around'.

Jan's testimony suggests that the correlation between mobility and intelligence could be associated with the productive citizen as the not only able-bodied but also intelligent citizen. Here, 'citizenship can be theorised as conferred (or not) in particular bodily orientations and practices' (Spinney et al., 2015). As Spinney et al. (2015) point out, the ways in which people are oriented to their environment in relation to how they move and their visibility, 'position them as being more or less 'engaged'...with others whilst on the move' (also, Sennett, 1994). These testimonies also confirm how non-disabled people's judgments and preconceptions of citizenship 'are based, primarily, on aesthetic 'evidence' as if (somehow) appearance is an omnipotent guide to competence' (Paterson and Hughes, 1999: 606–607).

Another shade of invisibility that wheelchair users experience relating to how they are seen as citizens, occurs in the spaces of mobility that, in the eyes of non-disabled people are accessible, but that create diminishing treatment for wheelchair users, as Rebecca's account shows:

'there are some pavements that are really lovely and smooth, but sometimes quite often roads, the road surface of a street is better than the pavement, if the pavement is old and broken, so I go in the road sometimes rather than the pavement which is putting myself in danger but if it's just a short distance and I can see that there is no much traffic I just take the risk because it's more comfortable to do that'.

Rebecca needs to trade safety for comfort. She puts her life at risk in order to avoid the discomfort of going over pavements in bad condition due to lack of maintenance (see Fig. 1.1). In some cases, she is left with no other option. Rebecca's account illustrates how citizenship in the *everyday* sense, can be hindered by the inability of individuals to occupy spaces without compromising their bodily integrity (see Painter and Philo, 1995). As Painter and Philo (1995: 115) suggest: 'if citizenship is to mean anything in an everyday sense it should mean the ability of individuals to occupy public spaces in a manner that does not compromise their self-identity, let alone obstruct, threaten or even harm them more materially'. This is similar to some instances of pavement cycling where cyclists may use the pavement to avoid the risks posed by other road users but are then seen as a danger to everyone else.



Fig. 1.1. Broken pavements. These compel wheelchair users to use the road risking their lives.

They feel forced to do so by poor design in the built environment but through adapting to it they are positioned as irresponsible and, thus, less than citizens (see, Spinney, 2011).

Allen (2004) suggests that visually impaired people use the sense of touch to develop knowledge of environments to move around safely. Likewise, wheelchair users develop forms of environmental learning and adaptation, in order to ensure access and avoid discomfort and pain when navigating the built environment. The majority of the participants asserted that they do not like the experience of going over cobblestone pavement. Some of them talked about Covent Garden in London as an 'off zone', not because it has different levels (stairs or steps), but due to the discomfort when navigating over the cobblestones. For instance, Rebecca said:

'I avoid places with cobbles completely like Covent Garden...because it makes my whole body judder and shake in the wheelchair and it's really uncomfortable...a friend of mine was walking behind me the other day when I had to go through some cobbles and she took hold of the handles of my wheelchair to try and make it less bumpy for me and she couldn't believe how bumpy it felt through the handles, I think people don't really appreciate it, until, unless they're actually in a wheelchair themselves, so they feel the effect, and she said it was like being in a really choppy bumpy storm on a sailing boat, you're being thrown in all different directions, lose control so that yeah...'

Public spaces, such as Covent Garden, are also spaces of transit, in which daily mobility becomes an important channel for enacting citizenship (see Matless, 1998). This testimony illustrates that for wheelchair users this is not always possible because they are often excluded from the use of such spaces. Rebecca's account also reveals that to enable the mobility of people in wheelchairs it is not enough to provide level surfaces, it is also important to consider their sensory experiences of place. This account illustrates that when someone has experienced going over a texture that feels uncomfortable, after a couple of times the body-subject knows what it feels like, just by looking at it. In these cases individuals may self-exclude, and withdraw from enacting citizenship, to avoid pain.<sup>3</sup> Tuan (1993: 96) suggests that the 'visual world is both sensual and intellectual. It is sensual, not only because of its colors and shapes, but also because of its tactile quality: we can almost feel what we see' (see Fig. 1.2). This can be explained by the two dimensions of perception described by Rodaway (1994: 11): '*Perception as sensation*... is grounded in the environmental stimuli collected – and mediated – by the senses' and '*perception as cognition*... involves remembering, recognition, association, and other thinking processes'.

Wheelchair users feel the pavement through their devices in a similar way to how cyclists feel it through their bicycles (see Spinney, 2006). Moreover, in circumstances of sustained effort, touring cyclists feel pain, that is a kinaesthetic feeling of burn, as wheelchair users feel pain when moving in their devices, sometimes, due to uneven pavements. Jo recounts:

'if you're going over rough ground, you know, that is a very physical thing, because it makes your legs spasm, it's very uncomfortable physically because it creates, in my body it creates muscular spasms in my abdomen, in my legs, it can even arch my back if it's really powerful'.

The difference here is that touring cyclists choose to navigate the environment on their machines, but for people unable to walk at all, or unable to walk long distances, there is no other option to

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, deaf people who only communicate through sign language sometimes withdraw or self-exclude from hearing environments that are not sensitised to their needs (see Valentine and Skelton, 2007).





Fig. 1.2. Cobble stones; we can almost feel what we see.

move around, but to rely on wheelchairs and scooters. Bendelow and Williams (1995, cited by Paterson and Hughes, 1999: 603) suggest that pain reorganises 'our lived space'. For Jo, areas of uneven pavements are off-limits. Thus, as Hughes and Paterson (1997: 335) argue, bodily experience cannot be separated from social experience, as pain cannot be separated from politics, 'because pain... is clearly far more than a carnal sensation'. Jo's account suggests that bodily pain can be socially produced. Yet, it is not just uneven pavements that may create kinaesthetic struggles for disabled people. Another characteristic of the spaces of mobility, which sometimes impedes ease of movement of wheelchair users is the discontinuity of access in pavements (see Fig. 1.3). For instance, Paula says:

'this office is literally opposite Sainsbury's, which is where a lot of us go for snacks and lunch and sandwiches. Now, in order for me to go I can't go directly across the road because there's no dropped kerb opposite, so I have to go like half a mile up there, across the pelican crossing, and then half a mile back, do you know what I mean, in effect. All just to get a sandwich, so what's the point of that. It's more hassle than it's worth. Or if I'm out with people and we're walking along a kerb and we get to the

edge and there's no dropped kerb I can't just walk off the edge of the pavement'.

This discontinuity of access in the 'micro-architecture of urban streetscapes', illustrates that mobile bodies 'are culturally formative of the codes and idioms which condition the norms of movement and mobility' (Imrie, 2000: 1652). This also illustrates how wheelchair users are invisible when planning pedestrian paths, because they may not be considered as citizens moving around the city.

The empirical section has contributed to elucidate the concept of non-citizen for the case of women wheelchair users through examining their everyday experiences of mobility. The non-citizen status can be understood as the invisibility experienced by women wheelchair users not only when their needs are neglected or misinterpreted in the planning and design of the built environment and transport systems, but also, and equally important, when they are ignored in interpersonal encounters.<sup>4</sup> Also, as traditional conceptualisations have implicitly pronounced able-bodiedness as a precondition to citizenship, the lack of physical autonomy originated by design solutions that do not consider the embodied needs of disabled people render them non-citizens. This also applies to policy initiatives that in solving issues of movement create the physical dependence of disabled people (i.e. railway assistance service). Here, it is relevant to reflect on the importance given by Western society to physical independence or autonomy. As human beings we are all (inter)dependent in different ways and this should feed into conceptualisations and expectations of citizenship to avoid stigmatising those who have impairments.

## Conclusions

This paper has sought to develop an understanding of citizenship by employing a perspective that takes into account socio-spatial aspects of disablement, which affect the embodied and sensory experiences of movement of female wheelchair users. It has been seen that the meaning of (non)citizenship for women wheelchair



Fig. 1.3. Example of discontinuity of access in pedestrian pavement.

<sup>4</sup> The experience of being ignored in everyday spaces is not exclusive of wheelchair users, deaf people who are unable to communicate in oral language are often neglected too (see Valentine and Skelton, 2007).

users is constructed through the experience of the sensory and emotional body in movement, when navigating through places in the wheelchair. For example, level access and ramps are often equated with wheelchair accessible places. However, many places and technologies, which appear to be, in theory, accessible, may not be so, and this becomes evident only when the person in the wheelchair experiences the place sensuously and feels kinaesthetic discomfort or pain due to the presence of textures such as cobblestones. These embodied experiences affect the meaning of citizenship. As Spinney (2006) suggests, the meaning of place is embodied. For some research participants, venues such as Covent Garden are places of exclusion, rather than spaces for participation and transit.

The paper has revealed that social inequalities relating to citizenship and mobility are materialised through the interaction between personal, intersubjective, socio-technical, institutional and environmental factors. For example, the 'dys-appearance' of the bodies of women wheelchair users and their construction as non-citizens occur in their embodied everyday experiences of place, during their intersubjective encounters with non-disabled people. The impaired body dys-appears in the presence of physical barriers and the disablist attitudes of non-disabled people. This exposes the contingent and emergent nature of *everyday* citizenship.

Following Cresswell (2006: 166) I suggest that there is the necessity to recognise that mobility and citizenship are socially constructed in a context of 'asymmetrical power relations', rather than through the capability 'of an autonomous body'. Cresswell (2006: 165) argues that 'the way in which rights, mobility, freedom and citizenship have been wrapped around each other in liberal discourse has... naturalized mobility as the property of the individual, moving, able-bodied subjects'. However, as the paper has illustrated, mobility and citizenship are particular to specific bodies that are gendered and have different abilities (also, see Cresswell, 2006; Imrie, 2000). In relation to this, the respondents' testimonies confirmed that the impaired body is not fully considered in transport planning, as the needs of disabled people are misinterpreted or simply ignored (also, see Imrie, 2000). This, as the research has revealed, is influenced by the way in which disabled people are constructed as (lesser) citizens by policy makers (see Bacchi and Beasley, 2002).

Another nuance of citizenship, which has been revealed through this experiential approach, is its unstable nature. Mobility and the sense of citizenship may be influenced by immaterial variables such as time. At particular times, public spaces may be crowded impeding ease of access, and therefore participation of wheelchair users. Buses tend to be full at rush hour, and the mobility of non-disabled people, who are perceived as productive bodies and, therefore, fully-fledged citizens, is privileged over wheelchair users' travels by 'gatekeepers' of mobility services. This illustrates the temporality of citizenship reflected in disabled people's (im)mobility, that is to say, disabled people are more likely to become citizens only at certain times of the day. Finally, this paper identifies the need for a citizenship research agenda, which takes seriously the sensory and emotional experience of movement of people with different impairments. Such an approach may constitute a useful foundation for developing transport policy and building regulations that are potentially more sensitive to bodily differences and, in general, to the needs of disabled people.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the editors of the special issue Justin Spinney, Rachel Aldred and Katrina Brown for inviting me to write the paper and for providing constructive comments about the draft of the paper. My thanks go to Rob Imrie for his guidance during the

research upon which this paper is based and for commenting on the draft of the paper. I would like to thank especially the research participants for sharing their experiences with me. Without their valuable testimonies I could not have written this paper. I am also grateful to Pdraig R. Carmody and two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments, to Marian Hawkesworth for helpful discussion about the concept of everyday life and to Alice Haynes for proofreading the article. The research was funded by the Chilean National Scholarship Program for Graduate Studies. I also received financial support from King's College London, Funds for Women graduates (FFWG) and the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) RGS-IBG.

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