# "Is This Seat Accessible for Me?": An Autoethnography of a Person With a Mobility Disability Using Interactive Seat Plans for Public Events

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## ABSTRACT

Spectating sports matches or concerts is a popular activity, but these public live events have yet to become more accessible to people with disabilities. Inspecting the corresponding interactive seat plan before purchasing tickets online can be necessary to avoid or prepare for barriers at these venues. Unfortunately, these representations often lack valuable accessibility information. To explore how this can affect the disabled community, we leverage autoethnography to provide an in-depth introspective account through the lens of a person with a mobility disability. We apply Thematic Analysis to synthesise field notes from his research diary. The crafted themes showcase the lacking accessibility support in seat plans and illustrate the first author's adaptation strategies to facilitate accessible experiences. We further contextualise his social relationships as a key factor throughout this process. Grounded in these results, we reflect on the provision of accessibility information, the categorisation of seats, and interdependent relationships within and through these systems.

## CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing → Accessibility**.

## KEYWORDS

Disability, interactive seat plans, autoethnography

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Leisure activities, such as attending live public events, have significant positive effects on our well-being [8, 29], and they play a key role in improving the quality of life of people with disabilities [44].

These days, many live public events, such as sports matches or concerts, are attended by thousands of people, and therefore take place in large stadia or arenas. Unfortunately, these venues are associated with significant access barriers for people with disabilities, ranging from a lack of compliance with legislative guidelines on (wheelchair) accessibility to the holistic journey experience, enabling them to participate in public events on an equal basis with others [33]. Underpinned by the legal obligation to enable people with disabilities to participate in public life [45, Article 30], there have been attempts to make stadia and arenas more inclusive and accessible, e.g., through the provision of wheelchair-accessible spaces or audio guides for people who are blind or have low vision [13, 42]. Further, many venues employ staff to provide assistance for people with disabilities, including guidance at the location, providing radar keys for accessible toilets, or for catering services (e.g., [40]).

However, a key challenge that people with disabilities experience when participating in live public events already occurs prior to arrival at the venue: Considering that these venues are often located further away and lack proper accessibility, travel planning is highly important. Here, related work has already documented that people with disabilities extensively prepare trips to indoor environments [43], highlighting their unique information needs at the planning stage. Travel planning may include organising accessible transportation, but, in the context of public events, also expands to acquiring accessible seats, i.e., seats that are easily reachable and that can accommodate the spectator without barriers. Such seats can typically be booked by directly contacting the venue, or by using online booking systems that highlight available seats in their interactive seat plans (see Figure 1 for an example).

Yet, little is known about the utility of such seat plans for people with disabilities, and it is unclear to which extent they meet the information needs at the time of booking. Further, their potential to interfere with or facilitate leisure experiences remains unexplored: While there exists research on the general accessibility of stadia [18, 33, 42, 50] – to the best of our knowledge – there have not been any research efforts to understand and improve the corresponding seat plans. Here, it is essential to understand the experiences and requirements of people with disabilities when booking seats for these large events in order to highlight design considerations for interactive seat plans that meet their information needs.

As a first step towards understanding the role of digital technology for the accessibility of live public events at the time of purchasing one's ticket, we leverage autoethnographic methods that provide introspective and in-the-field accounts of the researcher

as subject of inquiry [17, 32]. Applying this method, the first author of this work explored their interaction with interactive seat plans through the lens of their mobility disability. This enables us to explore and analyse lived experiences related to seat plans and public events in-depth and over a longer period of time, providing a unique account to reflect on the role of technology in fostering inclusion in society. Through this approach, we seek to address the following research questions:

**RQ1:** How does a person with a mobility disability experience the online booking process for public events when working with seat plans?

**RQ2:** What are challenges and opportunities when leveraging interactive seat plans to communicate accessibility information?

Our research process to address these questions was as follows: In their self-inquiry, the first author kept a research diary over the course of six months, detailing experiences of planning and attending public events, such as football[1] matches or those of the performing arts. These field notes especially focused on the utility of interactive seat plans and online booking portals through the lens of their mobility disability. Additionally, the diary was used to record interactions with other involved stakeholders, reflecting on their social relationships with the first author within the context of interactive seat plans.

We then leveraged reflexive Thematic Analysis [7] to analyse the data. Resulting themes show that state-of-the-art representations of seat plans fail to represent the first author and their disability. They fail to support the first author in their preparation for journeys and rather put them in a disadvantaged position. Our analysis also shows that the first author adapts to this by supplementing missing information from other sources and by their willingness to risk being confronted with barriers. Nevertheless, this process can be emotional, also affecting their personal development and congeniality with their disability. Ultimately, we centre their experiences around sociocultural considerations and illustrate their interdependent relations to their intermediate surrounding, the fan support, and other peers, showcasing the relevance of other stakeholders in the design of interactive seat plans.

Our contribution is threefold:
**1)** We provide an autoethnography with a deep introspection of the first author's experiences, and demonstrate missed opportunities in the design of interactive seat plans with an emphasis on the first author's dedication to circumvent barriers regarding their mobility.
**2)** Leveraging the first author's experiences as a person with a mobility disability being interdependent of their environment, we appraise sociocultural considerations evolving throughout their process.
**3)** We derive points for reflection that discuss the implications of this self-inquiry, focusing on an improved design of interactive seat plans and autoethnography as a method for examining underexplored issues in accessibility.

## 2 RELATED WORK

To the best of our knowledge, there does not exist work that discusses interactive seat plans for public events through the lens of disability. In this section, we contextualise our work within general

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[1]We use this term to refer to the European game of football (US "soccer").
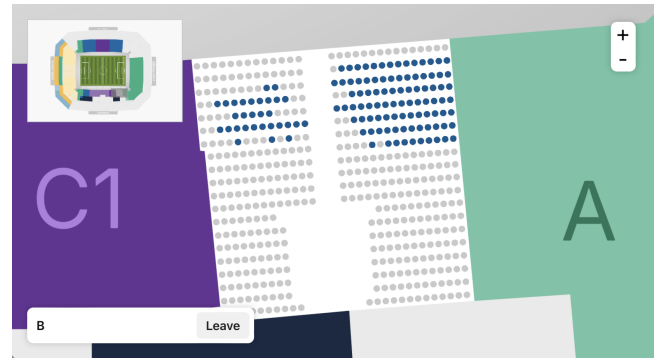


**Figure 1: Zooming in on a section of a seat plan for a German football stadium that contains little information on accessibility [71].**

accessibility considerations around visiting these venues, and we summarise relevant research in HCI that also leverages first-person methods, primarily with a focus on their application in the field of accessibility.

### 2.1 Accessibility at Large Venues

Regarding large venues, we outline general considerations for accessibility, such as in architectural design (Section 2.1.1), and we describe broader accessibility considerations within the whole spectator journey (Section 2.1.2).

*2.1.1 General Considerations.* The removal of barriers at leisure activities, which include various kinds of public events, enhances the quality of life of people with disabilities [47]. Our research and related work mainly focuses on the accessibility of sports venues, such as stadia and arenas which also host concerts, but similar considerations for large public events were also made for other venues, e.g., academic conferences [15, 69].

Research regarding sports venues has primarily focused on compliance with legislation. For instance, researchers report on a poor application of the Americans with Disabilities Act [70], discussing the implementation of accessibility guidelines in stadia [42, 49, 52]. This dominantly refers to requirements of wheelchair users, such as in the design of ramps, or the availability of accessible bathrooms, seating, and parking [42, 55]. In practice, these requirements often result in a physical segregation of accessible and standard seating at these venues [55].

Only limited research explicitly addresses a broader range of people with disabilities. For instance, Yazigi et al. [75] consult people with reduced mobility and report on their frustration because of lacking accessibility signage at the venue, and Paramio-Salcines et al. [48] discuss accessibility requirements that older spectators and spectators with mobility disabilities often share. But overall, research lacks the perspectives of people with disabilities [33], raising questions about whose voices are currently represented in work on accessibility of large (sports) venues.

*2.1.2 Considering Accessibility Within the Entire Journey.* Accessible experiences go beyond merely removing barriers at large public events, requiring researchers to investigate the complete spectator

journey, including the purchase of accessible tickets. While HCI has not addressed the accessibility of such events that take place in stadia or arenas, other fields explored their accessibility more broadly.

For football, Paramio-Salcines et al. [50] suggest a sequence model for accessible experiences at stadia which starts at the preparation phase. Their framework includes steps preceding the visit, such as accessible travelling, however, they do not discuss the availability of accessibility information on websites. Dickson et al. [18] model the customer journey for fan zones, including "research & booking" as one step, but rather focus on aspects of travelling and parking, not discussing the design of seat plans. Furthermore, Mestayer et al. [42] examined the accessibility of sports venues and found that accessible tickets on websites were hard to find, hence, suggesting easy to find tickets with clear instructions on how to buy them. Sanford and Connell [55] report on separated ticket sales (wheelchair and standard seats). They suggest to keep the sale of tickets flexible, e.g., to add more than one companion of wheelchair users, and advertise accessibility services for other people with disabilities. Regarding the provision of information, Paramio-Salcines et al. [50] discuss the role of disability liaison officers that assume responsibility of serving as contact persons for people with disabilities who have various kinds of concerns. However, despite their key role in the ticket purchasing process, we have not found work that explicitly discusses seat plans as part of preparing for accessible experiences at large venues.

In related fields, the HCI community reflected on accessibility as a key component of the journey preparation phase. Especially for people who are blind or have low vision, researchers designed representations of the built environment that help this community during their journey preparation phase to unfamiliar buildings [27, 39]. With a focus on larger areas, and addressing a larger audience of people with disabilities, researchers presented and evaluated urban maps that show accessibility information from a more abstract viewpoint [54, 58], e.g., that highlight the accessibility of traffic areas or sidewalks.

There are various strategies and requirements for travel preparation, and these can differ across disabled communities. However, many individuals share similar experiences and requirements, particularly since they may have multiple disabilities [22, 43]. Müller et al. [43] found a large information gap and lack of available, high-quality indoor maps for people who are blind or have low vision and people with mobility disabilities, requiring them to plan ahead, often several days in advance. Gupta et al. [22] showcase that the perceived benefit of communications with other stakeholders at traffic areas depends on the conversations partners' experiences, and that often, provided information is nonsensical or misleading. Such lacking or incorrect information may affect the trustworthiness of information and people [41]. This underlines the necessity of providing accurate information, and if possible, transfer power to people with disabilities to independently prepare for their journeys.

## 2.2 First-Person Methods in Human-Computer Interaction

The HCI community has shown a growing interest in first-person methods throughout the last years [32]. These qualitative methods

centre the researcher as the subject of inquiry [17]. Instead of focusing on repeatability and objectivity in third-person methods, first-person methods embrace subjectivity and aim to provide rich descriptions of personal experiences [17].

### 2.2.1 Autoethnography in HCI Research.
Autoethnography is a first-person method that involves first-hand experiences of social or cultural phenomena [32], with the HCI community focusing on the role of technology in these experiences. HCI researchers have leveraged this method in various sub-disciplines: For instance, Fassl and Krombholz [19] provide the first author's in-the-field reflections, showcasing how they experience failure in planning and conducting authentication ceremonies. Spiel [61] investigated technological infrastructures that encode gender, offering a deep introspection as a non-binary person. Their account involves, inter alia, emotional reactions when navigating through a challenging state-of-the-art misrepresentation of non-binary people. In contrast, other approaches report on practices during a researcher's design process, i.e., their experiences do not focus on existing technologies, but on the creation of new ones [12, 31].

### 2.2.2 Lived Experience in Accessibility Research.
Lived experiences of people with disabilities, e.g., autoethnographies, have been published at multiple venues in HCI, such as CHI, DIS, or ASSETS. These contributions include, for instance, accounts of people who are blind or have low vision (e.g., [64]), people who are deaf or hard of hearing (e.g., [25]), or people who are chronically ill (e.g., [38]). However, there also exist other methods to leverage lived experiences as a lens for research. For example, Spiel et al. [62] conducted a critical literature review through the lens of neurodivergent readers, underlining that positionality and perspectives of marginalised people should be reflected on in HCI research (cf. [35]).

Concerning autoethnographies, ASSETS offers a track to invite researchers to submit their experience reports in the field of accessibility [2]. Here, researchers with disabilities can share their experiences when interacting with technology: For instance, Felzer and Rinderknecht [20] reflect on using different input devices with a neuromuscular disease affecting the upper limbs, and Stephens et al. [64] report on the experiences with technology as a traveller who is blind. Fussenegger and Spiel [21] leverage autoethnography to illustrate the significant impact of assistive technologies in the first author's daily live as a wheelchair user.

Likewise, venues such as ASSETS and CHI have featured autoethnographies in the context of accessibility research published in the full papers tracks. For example, Wu et al. [74] leverage the expertise of a person who stutters to explore their lived experience in the context of video conferencing tools and further discuss implications for this technology. Through the lens of a person who is hard of hearing, Jain et al. [30] reveal the "tensions and nuances" during travelling and discuss how personal and customised technology could aid in these situations.

Overall, this implies that autoethnographies have been established as valuable research methods in the area of accessibility, leveraging the researcher's expertise (with disability) as a critical lens when interacting with technology (cf. [10, 28, 74]).

## 3 METHODOLOGY

Our research aims to establish an in-depth understanding of the experiences of a person with a mobility disability who uses interactive seat plans to purchase tickets for live events, thereby answering our research questions, (RQ1) How does a person with a mobility disability experience the online booking process for public events when working with seat plans? and (RQ2) What are challenges and opportunities when leveraging interactive seat plans to communicate accessibility information?. We do so through an autoethnographic research approach, which centres the first author as the data source of an in-the-field exploration, enabling us to provide an in-depth introspection of using interactive seat plans through the lens of a mobility disability.

In contrast to quantitative methods that emphasise aspects such as generalisability, scholars in qualitative research engage with the assessment of rigour under consideration of the specific characteristics of the method (cf. [63, 68]). To constitute research validity in our work, we orient towards Le Roux [34]'s five criteria for achieving and evaluating rigour in autoethnographies: (1) Subjectivity or *visibility of the self in the research* and (2) self-reflexivity or *awareness of one's own role and relationship with the research*, which is reflected in our work through provision of a rich biography of the first author and the subject of their inquiry (see Section 3.3), as well as our chosen analytical approach (see Section 3.2) and the discussion of subjective experience (see Section 5). (3) Resonance or *opportunity for the audience to connect with the work* is facilitated through detailed description and provision of ample examples as part of the resulting themes (see Section 4), the vignette representing a typical research diary entry (see Section 4.1), and supplementary information (see Table 1). (4) Credibility is given to our work by these detailed accounts, which we hope will place readers in a position to assess the accounts. Finally, (5) contribution is evidenced by the discussion of our work (see Section 5) which, for example, offers insights into avenues for future work, and relates to the quality criterion of autoethnography needing to *inform*. We further want to highlight that our research approach is in line with best practice summarised in a recent literature review within the HCI research community that explored autoethnographic methods [32].

### 3.1 Data Collection

The first author kept a research diary with field notes which served as the data source for the following analysis. The diary contains 27 entries, of which 23 were added during the main collection period from February to July, 2024. Together with four retrospectively added entries from 2023, these offer a representative compendium of experiences involving the interaction with interactive seat plans, online booking systems, and the attendance of public events with a mobility disability.

Each entry is linked to a certain event or event series such as a football match or a concert (also see Table 1 for an overview). It contains the author's thoughts and experiences when interacting with the seat plan or with involved stakeholders in situ, a retrospective reflection on the local circumstances, if the event (series) was attended or they are planning to attend it (eleven entries), and screenshots, e.g., of the seat plan (17 entries).

The first author added field notes only if they seriously engaged with attending an event. The diary does not document shallow interactions with seat plans of other events. For instance, notes on inspecting seat plans solely out of curiosity (e.g., for far-away American football games) are not included. The length of each entry varies between 50 and 500 words. To protect the first author's privacy, the diary is not published in its entirety. However, we provide an overview of the data source in Table 1.

Overall, the diary represents the first author's subjective experiences with seat plans through the lens of a mobility disability. During this time, we want to be transparent that the first author adapted their typical behaviour and increasingly engaged in attempting to attend public events, something which they only did occasionally in the past.

### 3.2 Analysis Method

The data were analysed using Thematic Analysis, following Braun and Clarke [6, 7]'s approach, which they refer to as *reflexive*, and which underlines the inherent subjectivity of the researcher. This approach may thus be particularly suited for synthesising data involving self-inquiry as well as for compliance with Le Roux [34]'s criteria.

We followed an inductive coding process, i.e., not informed by any theoretical frameworks or other research in the field, and guided by the process outlined by Braun and Clarke [6]. The analysis was primarily conducted by the first author, only involving the second and third authors in certain steps of the process: First, the first author coded their research diary, assigning multiple codes to each entry. Upon collecting all codes, they clustered them and crafted initial themes. This initial set of themes was then discussed among all co-authors, a thematic map was presented and themes were re-arranged together, examining the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations. Themes were further developed by the first author and finally discussed again with the team. These steps were added to reassure the quality of the process, and to contribute additional points of view. To illustrate these additional perspectives, in the following, we also provide a positionality statement of the co-authors along with the autoethnographer profile.

### 3.3 Autoethnographer Profile and Research Team Positionality

We now provide our positionality, and especially focus on my biography as the first author. In this self-inquiry, data were solely collected from and by me. Consequently, despite the involvement of my co-authors in the analysis, results are inherently subjective and need to be interpreted through the lens of my biography. To understand these experiences and to provide a detailed account, I give an overview of my demographics, relation to public events, my expectations, and my social network with respect to my disability:

I am a white man who grew up in a wealthy Western country that can be considered as WEIRD [36]. Throughout my life, I was always engaged with different sports, such as football, handball, swimming, or cycling, and I also enjoyed watching and taking part in various competitions. Especially as a teenager, I started attending football and handball matches in larger stadia and arenas, mostly together with friends or family.

Now that I am in my twenties, my disability affects how I take part in sports, both actively and passively. Using crutches and being limited in my mobility, affecting, for example, the distance I can walk at a time (which may also vary from day to day), I am more hesitant when it comes to attending large public events. Once I felt more comfortable being around people after the COVID pandemic, I slowly began re-exploring public events,now, however, with a strong emphasis on planning an accessible experience. Being confronted with various types of online seat plans, for instance, to book tickets for a football match, I started to engage deeper with these representations. This mainly resulted from the fact that these plans often were the only way for me to study the accessibility of a venue, such as a stadium, before purchasing a ticket. As I found the limited provision of information and interaction there to be frustrating, I became motivated to integrate these aspects into my research.

Personally, I like the company of my friends, partner, and family. I do not mind receiving assistance from people close to me. However, I do not want to centre my disability when meeting new people or moving in public spaces. If possible, I prefer to navigate challenges independently, but I understand and appreciate that help is provided by strangers. Consequently, I get frustrated when preparing for public events involves obligatory interaction with corresponding staff, e.g., the fan support. While I fully support that assistance is provided, I still wish for more independence. I believe that providing people with disabilities with information that helps them prepare for their journeys independently (if they wish to do so) is a key component of accessible public events. This affects stadia, arenas, or other venues, and I believe that how we design interactive seat plans will have a major effect on accessible experiences.

Extending my account, we also want to supply information on the other authors of the work. One is a researcher in HCI and accessibility, and a neurodivergent person who has lived experience of the (in)accessibility of large public events and the relevance of detailed venue information to determine whether an event will be suitable. Overall, they rarely attend events associated with crowds; when they do (e.g., going to the theatre), they also leverage seat plans to ensure their needs will be met as well as possible. However, we want to be clear that the neurodivergent perspective was not central to the account provided here. The other author likewise has a research background in HCI, and has regularly participated in watching both live sport and performing arts since an early stage of their live. Having no movement-related disability or apprehension to venture into crowds, they largely base their decision of going to an event on its entertainment factor, as well as its reachability by public transport.

We also recognise the risks inherent in such personal research approaches. We further reflect on this aspect of our research in Section 5.4.

## 4 SYNTHESIS

We crafted the following three main themes that illustrate my experiences as a user of interactive seat plans who has a mobility disability: (1) State-of-the art seat plans do not comprehensively represent and support my needs as a person with a disability, (2) Whether I like it or not, I learn and grow through my experiences,
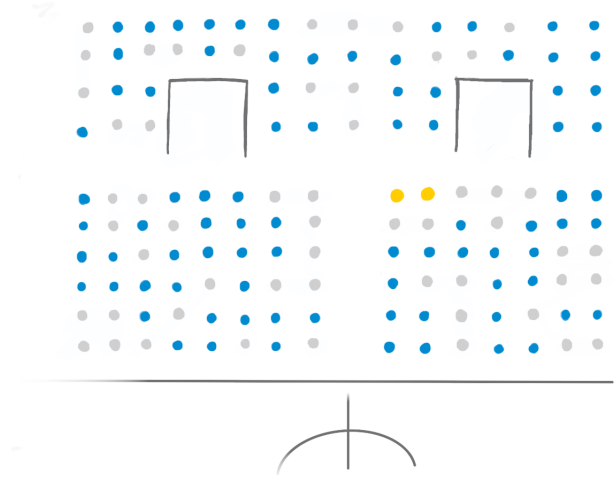


**Figure 2: Corresponding visual vignette representing a usual seat plan representation for a section in a football stadium that I frequently encountered and which has a particularly frustrating visualisation. This sketch is inspired by representations such as seen in Figure 1. Here, I used blue points to represent empty seats, yellow points are the ones currently selected for purchase, with the hope that they are fairly reachable without stairs.**

and (3) My process is inherently shaped by relationships, interactions, and the community. For each theme, we provide an overview, explain sub-themes, and offer examples drawn from the data source, i.e., descriptions from single experiences. To assist readers with the understanding of the process I experience when booking a seat and to provide an opportunity for resonance, I first present a vignette that represents a typical entry in the research diary (also see a corresponding seat plan drawing in Figure 2, and Table 1 for an overview of the entries).

### 4.1 A Vignette Representing a Typical Experience of Purchasing Seats and Attending a Live Event

A football club I follow on social media announces the sale of tickets for their upcoming games. In response, I create a reminder on my phone for the time when the sale starts so that I can access the website in time to be able to purchase tickets for good seats. There are usually only a few seats that can be reached without extensive use of stairs, and that are located in an ideal position right next to the isle. Also, I have previously seen that the website mentions seats for wheelchair users, but there is no information on other accessible seats. Since I am not really familiar with this venue yet, I try to be prepared for all access barriers. Following past experiences, I have little faith in contacting the organisers regarding my requirements, leaving this preparation to myself: I view web pictures of the stands and try to access a seat plan from another game, the latter without success. From the stadium pictures alone, I know that only the stairs at section A have banisters. So, I am primarily looking for those in

hope that nothing has changed in the stadium since the pictures were taken.

When the sale opens for the public, only a few tickets are available, but luckily, I manage to buy two tickets that mostly meet my criteria. I only worry about the amount of stairs I will need to take. For instance, reaching the restrooms from my seat will probably require extensive effort with my disability, and using crutches. Especially for drinks, I know I will depend on my friend, who comes with me, to carry the cup for me. Apart from helping me at the event, my friend also needs to trust me purchasing the tickets, so probably, my needs are the ones primarily met, rather than theirs.

Later, at the game, we do not arrive too early, and we have to walk a longer distance to the section. It is difficult to find the seats in the row, and staff is not really helpful. Unfortunately, the stairs are pretty steep, requiring a bigger effort than expected to get to the seats. While our seats are still empty, the row is already occupied, and there is little legroom. This makes it difficult for me to reach my seat, and to store the crutches. In consequence, I decide not to leave the seat during the game. Apart from that, the experience is good. I now know the venue, and what to expect. I have more contextual information that could have helped me choose better seats, and I wish that I could have accessed it when making my booking. Maybe I will be more lucky with my tickets next time.

## 4.2 Theme: State-of-the-art Seat Plans Do not Comprehensively Represent and Support My Needs as a Person With a Disability

The state-of-the-art seat plans lack important accessibility information for me, and I can be disadvantaged at high-demand ticket sales. On top of that, some circumstances also force me to enter a separate booking process. Due to this lack of support for the disabled community through this technology, I do not feel that my needs are represented or supported.

*4.2.1 Sub-Theme: Seat Plans Do not Correctly Reflect My Situation and Miss Important Details.* I found that seat plans usually contain certain types of information that are relevant to spectators with(out) disabilities who want to buy tickets. This may include photos from the pitch that show the view from the corresponding stand, or information about prices. In my case, this information does not suffice to make an educated purchase of tickets for accessible seats.

In terms of accessibility information, seat plans most commonly contain information on wheelchair-accessible spaces, i.e., where to find them; sometimes, the according tickets can also be booked through the system like other tickets (as opposed to requiring contact via email or phone). Beyond wheelchair-accessible seats, a few seat plans also contain separate categories for people who are blind or deaf, for example giving information on where to find their dedicated sections.

However, disability is more complex than such crude categories, and I do not feel that my requirements are represented in a way where I would be meaningfully supported when purchasing a ticket: I do have a mobility disability, but do not use a wheelchair and instead visit stadia with my crutches. Thus, there are no *accessible* seats I can purchase because I do not require nor do I want to occupy a wheelchair-accessible seat. However, I do have specific

requirements and preferences, and this institutional barrier forces me to inspect the seat plan, and try to identify accessible seats based on my own criteria.

As seat plans are usually only clustered collections of points that represent stands (see Figure 2 for a schematic example), this is a time-consuming task, and relevant information is often missing. For instance, in my case, the path to the seats is very important, and I primarily need to know the seating arrangement including legroom and location towards aisles, the location of stairs, their steepness, whether there are banisters along them, and which entrance to use to access the stand. Beyond concrete information on seating, I require additional context information such as the location of (accessible) restrooms, the availability of lifts, and the distance to parking or transportation from a specific seat.

When only provided with an abstract depiction of the venue through seat plans, I thus need to infer a lot of relevant information. This can be easy, for example, when locating stairs because they usually separate stands (e.g., depicted as clustered points, see Figure 2). However, to acquire additional details, I need to include secondary sources such as web images, hoping that this information is not outdated (also see Section 4.3.1).

*4.2.2 Sub-Theme: Time Pressure Can Reinforce My Disadvantages.* As some events are very popular, the demand for tickets can be very high. Consequently, the sale is limited, e.g., via queuing, and not everyone may get a chance to purchase a ticket. This affects me disproportionately since there is only a limited number of seats that are accessible for me when compared to the selection people without disabilities typically have. For example, from the seat plan, I can infer that only a subset of seats is reachable with few or no stairs, i.e., preferable for me, but these seats are not reserved for people with disabilities, and everyone can purchase them.

Here, I want to note that it is difficult to access seat plans before the start of the sale, which leaves me with no option to appropriately prepare for this time-sensitive phase of acquiring tickets. In consequence, time pressure forces me to inspect the seat plan very quickly while other people with(out) disabilities can, probably in most cases, simply proceed after looking at a small number of seats or even accept a random allocation of tickets, without worrying about access requirements. Likewise, strategies that seek to fairly allocate tickets create access barriers in the case of disability: For one concert I really wanted to attend, a lottery system was used to allocate seats, and there was no option to make an individual selection. Consequently, when I am not lucky in this or other kinds of lottery and I have little influence on the location of seats, I either give up on my plan to attend the event, or I am forced to accept the risk of being confronted with certain (unknown) barriers (also see Section 4.3.2).

Despite alternative channels for booking tickets (also see Section 4.2.3), I am not very confident I can successfully book tickets via a hotline or emailing the organiser as I do not fit into what is advertised as *traditional* categories of disability by organisers (cf. Section 4.2.1). Also, when I bought tickets directly at the venue, similar problems arose since I still could not inspect stadia or arenas beforehand, and time pressure persisted when I stood in line at a ticket booth (also see Section 4.2.3)

*4.2.3 Sub-Theme: Various Circumstances Force Me to Adapt the Booking Process.* Booking via interactive seat plans is not the only way to purchase tickets. Tickets may be bought directly at the venues if the event is not sold out or, as mentioned before, emailing or calling the fan support to get accessible tickets is an alternative option. In my case, in some instances, I was forced to choose an alternative because there were no other options where I could successfully acquire accessible tickets.

For some events, booking non-standard tickets is only possible by contacting the fan support, possibly due to the requirement to prove eligibility, i.e, disability. However, I believe that this not only excludes me from the main booking process, leaving me no opportunity to select the seats myself, but also disempowers me by letting other people judge the extent to which I need support and accessible options. This forces me to accept these disadvantages, either by adhering to this process or by entering the general ticket sale where I can only select from a smaller number of seats compared to other people (without disabilities).

Despite this dilemma, I had positive experiences when choosing alternative ways to acquire tickets. When interacting with motivated and engaged contact persons, I was able to select good seats. However, being favoured in this way also led to a sense of guilt, wishing to not have received special treatment, i.e., not worrying about balancing (dis)advantages. This further confirmed my desire to simply be included in the traditional process using seat plans, however, in a way that would also offer suitable accessibility information.

## 4.3 Theme: Whether I Like It or Not, I Learn and Grow Through My Experiences

Because my preferences and needs are unmet by current implementations of seat plans, I find myself in a position where I am forced to adapt to the state-of-the-art processes, while simultaneously still learning about my disability and finding the most suitable solution for me. For example, I noticed that I continuously develop skills to interact with and understand what information is or is not encoded in seat plans. At the same time, I acknowledge that the process can be emotional and that I cannot be in control of everything. I also need to prepare for things to go wrong, as there are risks of being confronted with substantial access barriers I cannot prepare for.

*4.3.1 Sub-Theme: Developing Skills to Utilise Other Sources.* Finding secondary sources to retrieve accessibility information was almost always part of purchasing tickets. Throughout my experiences, I therefore needed to develop certain information retrieval skills.

In terms of my process, I primarily consulted web images showing the venues from the inside, and street views for the outside. Additionally, I used social media to gain insights into experiences of other people (with disabilities) who had previously visited a specific venue. For instance, before visiting the ski jumping event (see Table 1), I did a Google image search to find out what the stairs looked like, and which seats would be most accessible for me. I also leveraged Google street view to get a closer look at the stairs outside to determine how I would be able to access the stand. When the sale opened, I then had to quickly align the images I saved on my computer with the seat plan until I could proceed to the checkout.

Besides this main approach, I engaged in more specific retrieval strategies when relevant. For example, I would align the seat plan with satellite images or images of the outside, helping me find the best venue entrance. Likewise, aligning images with the seat plan was central to locating section entrances, stairs, legroom, or other spaces not occupied with seats. However, this was not always successful, as it sometimes only provided a limited and coarse level of detail. For example, for one football match, I was certain that I had purchased seats next to the entrance, but in the end, getting there required me to use stairs as well as passing other people already sitting in the row. As a consequence, I considered cancelling my seats before attending the match, but was worried about the cancellation fee. In the end, I did attend the event, and realised that people did not adhere to the assigned seats. Ironically, this turned out to be positive for me as I could use an aisle seat. However, in another situation, not being able to use my assigned seat might have created an access barrier for me.

*4.3.2 Sub-Theme: Willingness to Accept That Something May Go Wrong.* I quickly learned that booking tickets using seat plans and attending public events required me to accept that there is a large degree of uncertainty when purchasing accessible seats. In particular, information on accessibility was often unclear, and even if I had known about all the barriers, this would not resolve the uncertainty of whether I would be able to handle them on the day. Consequently, in these cases, I need to decide whether I, nevertheless, want to buy tickets or skip an event.

Obviously, in an ideal scenario, such issues would not exist, neither for people with nor for people without disabilities. There are always things that cannot be controlled, such as getting ill on the day of an event. However, I felt that these situations occurred more frequently because of my disability (or the lack of accessibility). For instance, the concert that was expected to be sold out quickly had no seat plan to inspect beforehand with seats just being randomly assigned to the customers. Forced to act quickly, I decided to buy these tickets and later search for more information on accessibility. Hence, I had to be willing to risk being confronted with accessibility issues at the venue.

Coping with these situations, I usually reflect on my motivation to go, what barriers to expect, and I weigh the financial loss in case I am unable to resell tickets. Hence, my willingness to take a risk increases if I really wanted to attend an event. Besides that, I noticed that I preferred events with easy access to secondary markets where I expected to be able to sell my tickets again. While this gives me more flexibility, I do consider it unfair to other people when reserving tickets that I either sell later or do not even claim. This later also influenced my decision to get a season ticket for a local football club since knowing about the venue and keeping my accessible seats for the whole season would, ultimately, decrease such risks.

However, I also consider it a privilege to be able to take such risks (even if they are small), or to spend money on tickets that later go unused – options which may not be granted to everyone who may relate to my account.

*4.3.3 Sub-Theme: Getting to Know My Disability Better.* Through my engagement with seat plans and attending a range of public events, I also got to know my own (dis)abilities better. At the start of my research, I already had some experience and expectations regarding accessibility in stadia or arenas, e.g., about how I required barriers to be depicted in seat plans. However, throughout the entire process, my understanding of my own needs became more detailed and structured, which in turn helped me make better ticket purchases. This included learning about my own physical strength because I found myself in situations that I did not know I could handle. For instance, being unexpectedly confronted with steep stairs, long paths, or crowds of people helped me navigate these situations with more ease in other situations. However, I went into this experience as an individual willing to expand my comfort zone. Here, it needs to be acknowledged that my view may be one in which I retrospectively romanticise what could otherwise be called ableism and a lack of access, and that such situations could have been dangerous for other individuals.

Yet, on a general level, I feel that my experiences helped me to assess and weigh my personal requirements and needs, and increased my comfort and confidence overall, despite initial setbacks, worries, or frustration.

*4.3.4 Adaption Can Be an Emotional Process.* In general, this research was fuelled by curiosity, since I wanted to explore how well seat plans represented me and my disability. But, even though I largely enjoyed these experiences, being confronted with my disability and barriers was often an emotional process.

I consider going to football matches, concerts, or other events to be pleasant activities that, in general, are a privilege to many people. However, parts of the process, also involving seat plans, evoked negative emotions, such as anger, frustration, or fear. For instance, I felt angry and envied other people (without disabilities) who could easily obtain tickets for certain events, since seats with limited or unknown accessibility seemed to be available most of the time. I felt frustrated when contacting the organiser via email or the ticket hotline was not successful, or their answers sometimes were generic and (unintentionally) unhelpful. In some situations, I was anxious, not knowing what to expect or because I was not confident I could manage barriers, for instance, when fearing that I could hurt myself falling down steep stairs.

Still, I value most of my experiences, and I continue to be hopeful that these situations will improve, also because with time, I learn how to better manage and avoid various barriers.

## 4.4 Theme: My Process Is Inherently Shaped by Relationships, Interactions, and the Community

My experiences need to be viewed against the backdrop of social interactions and human relationships: Public events attract many people, including me and my companions, other people with disabilities who may require assistance, and attendees without disabilities. Here, I want to highlight how my encounters with these different groups of people have shaped my experience as well as the accessibility of events.

*4.4.1 Sub-Theme: Spectating Is no Solitary Experience.* I enjoy attending public events with companions, e.g., with friends, family, or my partner. They are an active part of my experiences and can also provide assistance if needed, e.g., carrying my drink to the seat.

Yet, my situation meant that I mostly centred my own experiences when interacting with seat plans and attending the corresponding public events, despite always sharing these experiences with my companions. During the booking process, I often felt regret that the needs and preferences of my companions were neglected due to my focus on accessibility. For instance, my criteria for acquiring seats seem imperative, while the price of the seat and view of the pitch are secondary, forcing others to make compromises to support my accessible experience. This is further reinforced by my requirement to take the lead in the booking process. Especially when others buy tickets for me, I not only have to specifically communicate my needs, but also trust their assessment and ability to read an often suboptimal seat plan.

*4.4.2 Sub-Theme: Expressing and Communicating Needs Is Difficult via the Existing Channels.* I value independence, and typically do not explicitly seek the help of others. However, sometimes alternatives to booking tickets on the seat plan are favourable for me or enforced by the organisers (cf. Section 4.2.3). I mainly contact the fan support, e.g., the disability liaison officer, or consult people I know that have already visited the venue before. For instance, I write emails to the fan support to ask what kinds of accessible seats there are and if a club membership would grant earlier access to accessible seats. I also ask about transportation issues, such as parking, mainly because I need to know how much walking on crutches will be required.

However, I often did not feel comfortable sharing details of my disability that I think are required to assess the situation on their side or to negotiate possible solutions. Additionally, fully expressing all needs is difficult via the existing contact channels. For instance, calling the disability liaison officer on their mobile phone or contacting a hotline does not enable me to confidently express everything I believe is important because I do not want to be a bother and overstrain them. Also, discussing seating arrangements can be difficult in a non-video call.

As a result, I mostly did not benefit from such contacts. I also often perceived the answers to my questions to be generic. So in my case, there was usually no gain of knowledge, and I frequently felt frustrated after these conversations, reducing my motivation to seek contact again.

*4.4.3 Sub-Theme: Relating My Experiences to Those of Other People (With Disabilities).* Fuelled by my curiosity in this research, I often reflected on how important better seat plans might also be for other people. I did not explicitly consult other people for this research, and these experiences stem from observing other people with disabilities at public venues, or from talking to friends about their preferences.

I rarely saw other people at these events who also had (visible) disabilities, and it felt like they were under-represented in the crowds. There were always a few wheelchair users in their designated sections, but these were often not exactly where I was sitting. However, I observed that the tickets for these dedicated wheelchair

spaces seem to sell out quickly, and there is little flexibility regarding how they are supposed to be used. For instance, wheelchairs only seem to belong in one place, making it probably impossible to park the device next to the seat and walk the rest. Because some wheelchair users are able to walk short distances, this could be a reasonable consideration. At about half of the events, I saw other people with crutches, including those who may only temporarily use them, e.g., due to an injury. I also reflected upon the situation of the neurodivergent community, wondering whether their needs are overlooked when providing accessibility information, e.g., on seat plans: The atmosphere in stadia can be noisy, crowded, and sometimes there are unpleasant smells, but there are seats that are less prone to disruption, which may be more suitable for people with sensory sensitivities. I feel that they may also benefit from more accessibility information, because like me, they do not fit into a clear category of people with disabilities (as found in various seat plans), requiring more context to appropriately prepare for their journeys and experiences.

Overall, I want to close with the thought that equitable access to public venues, such as stadia, seems to be a multifaceted and personal issue, and that my account can only cover my own limited perspective of it.

## 5 DISCUSSION

We now explore how my experiences apply more broadly to our research questions. Then, we discuss starting points for the design of interactive seat plans that account for the information needs in the context of mobility disabilities, and we reflect on tensions when leveraging autoethnography as a method for accessibility research.

### 5.1 RQ1: How does a person with a mobility disability experience the booking process for public events when working with seat plans?

Our synthesis shows that the first author's experience of the booking process was complex and often emotional, requiring thorough preparation, as well as resilience when dealing with insufficient software systems and being forced to access additional resources. In particular, booking processes that leverage seat plans currently do not offer nuanced accessibility information for users with disabilities, foregrounding an experience of uncertainty throughout the process: How well does the seat plan represent a specific venue? Is it possible to determine whether an event will be accessible on the basis of the available information? And, in the end, is it worthwhile to purchase a ticket and look forward to the event? At the same time, booking processes that did not rely on seat plans and relied on human assistance instead led to a reduced sense of agency (e.g., having to disclose very personal information), suggesting that a mere replacement of technology – in this case – does not improve the booking experience. Even though the experiences centre the needs of the first author, these processes naturally also involve their friends, partner, or family, simultaneously as companions with their own requirements but also as sources of assistance at the venue. Overall, the booking endeavours required the first author to adapt, grow, and learn through their experiences as a response to, in their opinion, an inaccessible and non-inclusive state-of-the-art.

### 5.2 RQ2: What are challenges and opportunities when leveraging seat plans to communicate accessibility information?

The synthesis suggests that there are a number of challenges and opportunities inherent in seat plans, both with respect to an individual's information needs as well as approaches to information visualisation. Seat plans often include information for the typical spectator, such as price of the seat and the view of the pitch or stage. Accessibility is addressed by presenting wheelchair spaces but these only serve a subset of people with disabilities. Here, disability is only viewed within categories, missing a perspective that views it as a spectrum of abilities, and empowers people with disabilities to self-assess the barriers and their abilities. Through the lens of a person with a mobility disability, this information comprises details on the path to the seat, on the seat itself, and its surroundings. If information is included in the plan, it is often too abstract or can be incomplete, e.g., stairs separating the stands may be included, but they lack information on their steepness or the existence of banisters. Further, seat plans are restricted to the field and the stands only, and miss relevant information about their environment, including inside areas with restrooms and catering but also the outside with access to transportation. Adding this information could further help assess the distance to be walked within the venue. Because all this information was usually not included in the visualisation, the first author did additional research on other platforms to augment missing details, presenting an opportunity to expand these current representations, also making it easier to comply with bookings that are made under time pressure.

### 5.3 Starting Points for the Design of Interactive Seat Plans for People With Mobility Disabilities

Based on our synthesis of the first author's experiences, we outline starting points for the design of interactive seat plans: We reflect on the integration of accessibility information in seat plans, question the traditional categorisation of people (with disabilities) through ticket sales, and we discuss how seat plans can support agency of people with disabilities during the booking process. For each point, we also reflect on existing initiatives, and provide suggestions for future research avenues.

*5.3.1 Point 1: Integrating Nuanced Information on Accessibility.* Lack of accessibility information was a central issue in the first author's experiences (see Section 4.2). Here, we revisit their information needs when planning to attend public events, and we discuss possible alterations of the seat plan interface. In the case of mobility disabilities, accessibility information does not only comprise information on wheelchair-accessible seats (which may not be relevant at all). Instead, information about stairs (location, steepness, banisters), shortest paths (to exits, restrooms, catering), and the direct surrounding of the seat (legroom, adjacent seats) is highly relevant, but frequently not included in the seat plans. To appropriately prepare for a journey and to choose accessible seats, this information should be collected and included in the representation (e.g., see Figure 3a for an adapted seat plan containing information on stairs). As some of this is not relevant for all customers, leveraging different

(a) Seat plan section with highlighted stairs.

(b) Seat plan section with categorised seats.
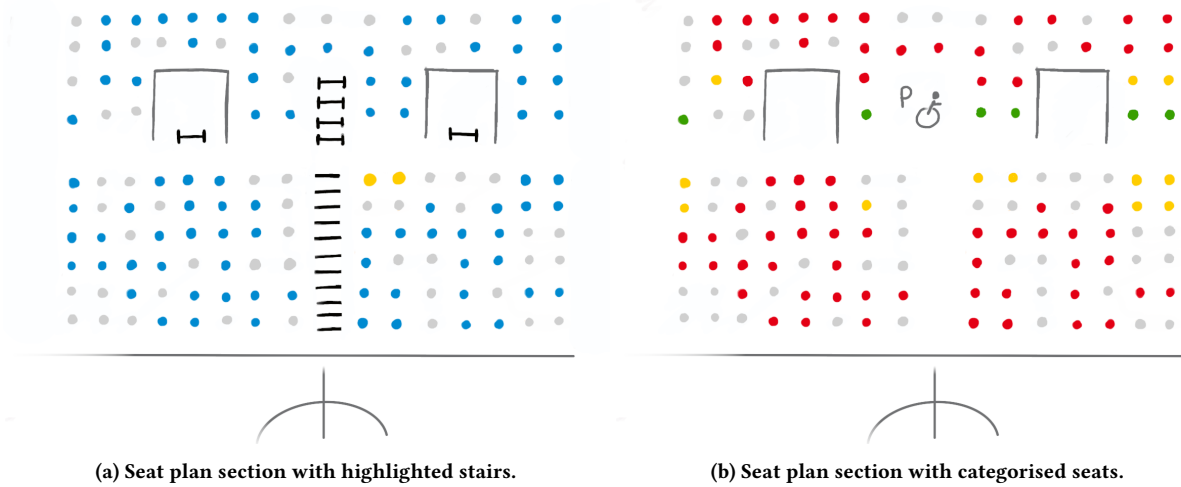
Figure 3: Two different adaptations to the sketch from Figure 2 highlighting different aspects of displaying accessibility information. (a) shows a section of a seat plan with highlighted stairs. Those with orthogonal lines have banisters. (b) shows a section of a seat plan for a different, and more accessible, stadium highlighting the accessibility of seats. Green seats do not require stairs to be walked and are close to the wheelchair and walker parking spot (assuming that there are also dedicated wheelchair spaces). Yellow seats are fairly accessible via few stars, and red seats require more effort to reach. Categories may be dynamic and adjusted by the user.

layers could be an appropriate option to hold this information so that people can access it when needed (e.g., [57]). Here, we also want to highlight the relevance of including information needs of broad groups of people with disabilities, and including relevant details in a similar manner. We also want to emphasise that event accessibility does not just depend on the venue itself, but also on other factors (e.g., travel to and from the venue as previously highlighted in the context of commutes [43]), which is something that should be considered when providing accessibility information.

**Existing initiatives.** Current efforts to include accessibility in floor plans or maps already gathered information for people with disabilities, e.g., on a coarser level [60], or dedicated to the neurodivergent community [65], showcasing that there are endeavours that promote the provision of more accessibility information for public places. However, detailed information about the direct surroundings of the seat or the design of the stairs needs to be included as well, for instance, using photos, or alternatively, leveraging emerging technologies such as virtual reality (cf. [51]). For instance, football clubs already provide 3D models of their stadium [3] or 360-degree virtual tours [1]. However, these current efforts lack proper integration with seat plans, e.g., by visually highlighting the selected seats. Likewise, existing initiatives also provide information on public spaces more widely, e.g., accessible parking opportunities and public transport [60], which should also be considered when discussing accessibility of large public events.

**Avenues for future research.** Future work should further explore the information needs of people with disabilities, identifying converging and conflicting perspectives, generally involving people with a range of different disabilities and experiences. Researchers and the disabled community could then prototype interactive seat plans that regard the necessary accessibility information, possibly

leveraging these existing initiatives. This should include people who are blind or who have low vision to ensure that increased use of seat plans does not thwart accessibility of booking processes for specific groups of people. Here, we also see a research opportunity for the information visualisation research community to contribute to the creation of visualisation standards that address the information needs of people with disabilities (e.g., as achieved in the context of web accessibility [11, 72]), enabling users to quickly transition between systems while displaying information in comparable ways. Also, organisers could benefit from such empirically grounded guidelines that clarify uncertainties and speed up the implementation process. Additionally, we want to highlight that such efforts should take an integrated approach, viewing seat plans as one element in a broader context within which accessibility information needs to be provided. This implies that design efforts should also consider information on travel to and from venues as well as on the surrounding areas, and designers should work together with disabled communities to identify further relevant aspects.

*5.3.2 Point 2: Thinking in Categories of Seats Instead of Categories of People.* Existing efforts to include accessibility information in seat plans often involve grouping people by disability (or assistive device), e.g., people who are blind or wheelchair users. Here, we wonder whether relying on coarse categorisations of individuals with disabilities risks misrepresentation, thereby missing a substantial part of the community, including those whose disabilities can be diverse and rather lie within a spectrum [26]. For instance, some wheelchair users may be able to walk short distances. Thus, they would not only be restricted to wheelchair spaces. Someone using crutches to navigate the venue may not be interested in wheelchair-accessible seats at all, but may also require shorter paths to exits.

Also, there are many people who have multiple or complex disabilities [67]. In that context, the experiences of the first author suggest that a categorisation of seats instead of people, i.e., providing extensive information on the characteristics of a seat and its surroundings, may empower people with disabilities to characterise their seating preferences and needs and allow them to effectively identify potential barriers (also see Section 4.2 and Figure 3b for a sketch of an alternative seat plan with categories of seats). However, while the first author's account supports this perspective, we want to be mindful that such an approach may shift the burden of assessing the accessibility of seats to people with disabilities. Also, opportunities to provide safe spaces for people who are vulnerable, e.g., in dedicated accessible areas, should not be neglected.

**Existing initiatives.** There are existing efforts exploring the provision of accessibility information in a way that enables people to make informed decisions, shifting the focus from people's characteristics to environmental barriers. Kitchin et al. [33]'s research on the accessibility of stadia is positioned around work discussing the social model of disability. This model argues that disability is caused by the barriers faced in society, not the impairments people with disabilities have [46]. In the context of interactive seat plans, a shift towards a focus on barriers instead of people's disabilities, i.e., by highlighting the inadequacies of a seat in the representation instead of a person, corresponds to the principles of the social model of disability. However, this approach may not fully reflect the lived experiences, e.g., requiring additional considerations around "impairment effects" [14, Chapter 13]. Here, the involvement of disability liaison officers to address individual requirements could be discussed.

**Avenues for future research.** We see an opportunity for future research that explores how people with disabilities prefer to receive accessibility information during booking processes, exploring opportunities to move beyond one-size-fits-all communication of accessibility information: This may include a discussion of the extent to which the provision of detailed venue information can improve experiences at public events, who should carry the burden of determining venue accessibility, and what facilitators and barriers to access should be considered. Here, there is an opportunity to branch out beyond large public events that take place in stadia, also exploring other settings in which seat plans are relevant, e.g., travel by train or plane, or smaller venues such as movie or live theatres.

*5.3.3 Point 3: Negotiating Agency, Expertise, and Privacy Within an Interdependent Social Environment.* Seat plans currently do not account for the fact that life with a disability often is a life of interdependence [23] that is lived in close community with others: The first author's experiences reflect relationships with multiple stakeholders, sometimes closer ones, such as accompanying friends, and sometimes more formal ones, such as a football club's fan support (see Section 4.4). While appreciated, these relationships may also lead to conflicts, mainly regarding agency, expertise, and privacy, that further highlight challenges in the context of interactive seat plans:

Separate booking processes, e.g., when being required to contact a disability liaison officer, can channel non-typical requirements on the organiser's side. However, they also enforce dependence on

others and disclosing personal information about a disability can increase discomfort and compromise privacy. Booking seats via interactive seat plans may, on the other hand, support agency and privacy, especially if the representations provide rich information on accessibility, but it also places the burden of finding accessible seats on people with disabilities. Additionally, both options limit opportunities to support mixed-ability groups, as they primarily centre accessibility requirements of people with disabilities. As a consequence, companionship and especially the requirements of accompanying friends, family, or partners may get neglected.

Acknowledging that choosing an option is a personal decision but also context-dependent, we argue that these systems should therefore be built on the basis of shared expertise and empowerment: People with disabilities are experts regarding their abilities and people working for the organisers are experts regarding venue features. Consequently, to effectively work together, their interaction should reflect this reciprocity and, where possible, empower people with disabilities to take control of decisions affecting their own body. Nevertheless, these perspectives still need to embrace the lived reality of people with disabilities, including that solutions for one group of people often do not simply generalise to others, but need to be jointly crafted to meet broader needs.

**Existing initiatives.** Current booking systems further fuel the segregation of people with and without disabilities, for instance via separate booking processes (e.g., [53, 59, 66]). Mostly, companions and peers are only regarded in the context of limited categories for people with disabilities, such as wheelchair users, but lack flexibility and agency in the booking process. This further supports the dichotomy of disabled and non-disabled bodies, neglecting the complex reality and lived experiences in research and our society (cf. [26]).

**Avenues for future research.** Bennett et al. [4] discuss interdependence as an additional lens, contrasting and expanding on the predominant call for independence in assistive technology. They argue that interdependence can challenge ability-based hierarchies, as it does not simply assume people with disabilities to be less capable, and therefore, in need of independence (cf. [73]). Breaking the dichotomy between people with and without disabilities was also discussed by Branham and Kane [5] who introduced the concept of "collaborative accessibility". While their argument concerns people who are blind and their companions who are sighted, the notion of co-constructing accessibility in shared environments may transfer to the preparation of public events as well. These concepts could thus provide suitable frameworks for the design of interactive seat plans that consider the presented conflicts and acknowledge the inherent relationships between people with disabilities and their environment, including their close companions.

## 5.4 Tensions When Applying Autoethnography in the Context of Disability

Autobiographical research, such as autoethnography, can induce various tensions that the corresponding researchers have to manage [16]. In our work, we specifically experienced the tension between empowerment through sharing a nuanced account, and self-disclosure of intimate details (e.g., on individual disability and reflections on emotions during the booking process).

This mirrors related work outlining that providing rich introspective detail can add valuable perspectives to a research area, and can lead to empowerment [16], which is particularly relevant for people with disabilities who remain under-represented in academia [9]. However, when researchers are expected to publish high-quality work, leveraging transparency is common to argue rigour [16, 32, 34, 37]. But this expected rigour may create new challenges for scholars with disabilities. For instance, Lucero et al. [37] defined *"seven criteria for successful auto-ethnographies"*, including *"[s]elf-revealing writing"*, i.e., the revelation of *"unflattering details"*. This creates a tension between transparency and privacy, which requires reflection on self-disclosure and implications thereof [16, 30], including (dis)empowerment, something which has also been acknowledged in other research involving marginalised communities [56], and where negative consequences have ranged from prejudices in the review process to (threats of) violence due to race or sexuality [35].

Overall, we hope that the dilemma of self-disclosure and its direct consequences for empowerment fuels a discussion among the (disabled) research community in HCI, reflecting on the risks and benefits of autoethnographic research in the context of accessibility.

## 6 LIMITATIONS

Our work needs to be read in light of a number of limitations. This autoethnography presents the perspectives of the first author who reflects on their experiences through the lens of a person with a mobility disability. The results provide an in-depth introspection from within the field, yet, due to a limited breadth of experiences, they may only serve as a starting point when engaging with the disabled community. Thus, additional perspectives from people with disabilities who have potentially different lived experiences should be included in future work in this area. Also, the experiences of the first author were primarily connected to European sports events, thus, contributing perspectives on interactive seat plans from within these perspectives. Here, further work could additionally explore interactive seat plans for other types of events within other sociocultural environments. Possibly, exploring seat plans in other contexts and without a focus on leisure could also provide additional insights, e.g., for booking a seat on a train. Further, we consider ourselves privileged, and we believe that this aspect influenced this research as well. For instance, being able to buy and sell tickets again or decide to not attend an event, and the choice to mostly avoid external help only reflect one perspective. Additionally, exploring social relationships in other sociocultural environments may also expand our considerations. Here, we also want to highlight intersectionality as a factor that affects sociocultural conduct and the individual's lived experiences [24].

## 7 CONCLUSION

To explore in-the-field lived experiences with interactive seat plans through the lens of a mobility disability, we leveraged autoethnography and illustrated the first author's experiences using this technology. Through Thematic Analysis, we crafted three main themes, showcasing that the state-of-the-art lacks appropriate support for people with disabilities, that the first author involuntarily adapts to it and grows through their experiences, and that these experiences

are inherently dependent on social relations. Consequently, we argue for the integration of more accessibility information into these seat plans, carefully evaluating the requirements and information needs of the disabled community. Here, we advocate for a change of perspective: In line with the social model of disability, instead of focusing on people's impairments, we consider it worthwhile to approach the issue through categories of seats, carefully providing anyone booking a seat with detailed information on its characteristics. Finally, changes need to cautiously reflect on interdependence and agency of individual persons, since the provision of accessibility information and related social interactions can (dis)empower people with disabilities, and they must be considered in the context of existing infrastructures and relationships.

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| Case | Entry date | Event type | Venue capacity | Attendance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 27.06.2023* | American Football game | ~ 55 000 | Already sold out |
| 2 | 31.08.2023* | Ski Jumping events | ~ 25 000 | Attended |
| 3 | 14.09.2023* | Ski Flying event | ~ 25 000 | Decided against |
| 4 | 08.12.2023* | Football game | ~ 30 000 | Decided against |
| 5 | 16.02.2024 | Concert | ~ 100 000 | Attended |
| 6 | 14.02.2024 | Football game | ~ 10 000 | Already sold out |
| 7 | 22.02.2024 | Football game | ~ 50 000 | Decided against |
| 8 | 14.03.2024 | Football game | ~ 35 000 | Bought for friend, not for me |
| 9 | 16.03.2024 | American Football game | ~ 30 000 | Decided against |
| 10 | 17.03.2024 | Football game | ~ 75 000 | Already sold out |
| 11 | 17.03.2024 | Football game | ~ 30 000 | Sold tickets again |
| 12 | 18.03.2024 | Football game | ~ 35 000 | Bought for friend, not for me |
| 13 | 19.03.2024 | Football game | ~ 30 000 | Decided against |
| 14 | 21.03.2024 | Handball game | ~ 15 000 | Attended |
| 15 | 22.03.2024 | Musical | < 5 000 | Attended |
| 16 | 25.03.2024 | Football game | ~ 15 000 | Already sold out |
| 17 | 27.03.2024 | Football game | ~ 10 000 | Attended |
| 18 | 04.04.2024 | Football game | ~ 15 000 | Attended |
| 19 | 04.04.2024 | Paralympics | ~ 80 000 | Decided against |
| 20 | 15.04.2024 | Football game | ~ 10 000 | Sold tickets again |
| 21 | 19.04.2024 | Football game | ~ 15 000 | Attended |
| 22 | 24.04.2024 | Football game | ~ 10 000 | Attended |
| 23 | 03.05.2024 | Football game | ~ 10 000 | Attended |
| 24 | 18.05.2024 | Football game | ~ 25 000 | Already sold out |
| 25 | 28.05.2024 | Cycling event | < 5 000 | Attended |
| 26 | 29.05.2024 | Football season ticket | ~ 10 000 | Planning to attend |
| 27 | 25.06.2024 | American Football game | ~ 75 000 | Already sold out |

Table 1: Overview of the entries in the research diary. The asterisk marks retrospectively added entries. In cases where I decided against attendance, it was either because of accessibility barriers, financial costs, or lack of company.