

## Transport Research Board (TRB) 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting 8-12 January 2023, Washington DC

**Wambũi Kariũki**

### Summary Report

In early January 2023, I had the honor of presenting my paper at the Transport Research Board (TRB) 102nd Annual Meeting held in Washington DC. The article titled *Choices, Constraints, and Women's travel experiences: The case of Nairobi, Kenya*, was co-authored along with my PhD supervisor Prof. Karel Martens. I was part of a diverse four-person lectern session that explored women's unique experiences with transport, based on data drawn from India, Europe, Korea, and Kenya. The session was sponsored by the Standing Committee on Women and Gender in Transportation (AME20).

Our paper focused on understanding how much agency women in Nairobi actually had over their daily mode choices, as well as evaluating the importance of safety in mode selection. Based on our data, we concluded that women in Nairobi are constrained by what is readily accessible and affordable, and hence regularly use informal paratransit because they have no other "options," despite the illusion of choice presented by the availability of other modes (e.g., walking, motorcycle, car, train, taxi). Resultantly, given the prevailing circumstances of crowding, unsafe driving behavior and occasional harassment on paratransit, women continue to risk their personal safety in their daily travel.

For a first-time attendee, the TRB Annual Meeting is both invaluable and daunting. I will explain why. The annual meeting hosts thousands of transportation administrators, practitioners, policy makers, and researchers from over 70 countries. There are more than 600 workshops, lectern sessions, committee sessions, and poster sessions over the course of five days. The venue is enormous and busy, with a lot of people moving in and out of sessions. As a first-time attendee to the Annual Meeting, this can be quite intimidating. Having been forewarned, I was able to prepare. I share below the tips and tricks shared with me that made the experience less daunting:

- 1) Prior to attending the conference, take time to identify the committees that resonate with your research interests, and register to become a "friend" of these committees. This will allow you to receive emails and updates on the sessions taking place, and how to participate in future activities.
- 2) Also, before arriving at the Annual Meeting, download the TRB mobile app, and view the list of participants who will be in attendance. You can then use the chat feature to reach out to selected persons of interest, such as scholars you have cited in your research. Often, they will be happy to meet with you over a coffee in between sessions.

3) During the Meeting, make time to attend poster sessions where you can chat directly with researchers with interests like yours. The poster sessions give you an opportunity to chat one-on-one with authors.

4) As a first-time attendee, it is a wise idea to join the New Attendee Orientation, the meetings organized by standing committees of interest as well as the less formal receptions hosted by participating sponsors, organizations, and academic institutions.

5) Washington DC is a beautiful city with numerous historic monuments and buildings within proximity of the meeting venue. Visiting these institutions and museums during the TRB is an excellent opportunity. In addition, you will be able to experience the transport network of the DC area as a student interested in transport research.

As mentioned, the TRB is also very insightful. In my experience, the lectern session gave me the opportunity to present my research findings to more than 100 people within transport academia and industry. This provided me with excellent feedback and questions relevant to improving my research. Additionally, I was able to network with my fellow panelists and other students allowing for future research collaborations. I was also able to interact with other participants during the poster presentations in order to gain insight into their methodologies and similar studies. For anyone considering participating in the next TRB Annual Meeting, I would highly encourage them to submit their papers, and benefit from this knowledge sharing network.

I am grateful to the Israeli Smart Transportation Research Center for supporting my participation in the TRB Annual Meeting.