

NEEDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND DESIGN FOR ALL IN TOURISM – ECONOMICAL IMPACT

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Education as a Need of the Tourism for All

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Abstract

“Design for All is design for human diversity, social inclusion and equality”. It aims to go beyond accessibility, to give answers to people unexpressed needs, wishes, aspirations, not just to their primary needs.

Tourism is a privileged crossing application field: it aims to ensure inclusion and active participation to all people in the social life, and has also a positive economic repercussion.

Build for All can be a challenge and a chance in crisis time, to offer services and facilities compatible with the needs of a broader number of customers.

Milan will guest Expò 2015 and the machine for welcoming millions of tourists to be drawn by the North of Italy: were be ready for this challenge? Analysing some design solutions in tourist field and town services in our towns, it seems that there are so much to do.

Who will make the built environment accessible, usable, attractive for all if architects and urban planners are not educated in Design for All? Education and training in DfA and tourism is a weak link, it must be improved because it has a fundamental role to make young people aware of the issue in order to apply it to their future work sector.

1. Education and Design for All

“It is normal to be different” , ”We are all from different backgrounds”.

Professionals involved in design for all know this statements very well, but how much is this awareness widespread to all people? As teachers, architects and ergonomists we have a special role on it.

What causes a situation of handicap? The lack of responsiveness of the built environment, or of the product, to differentiated needs. Every person in this perspective is a potential disabled in front of the objects that surround him.

I am used to say: the lack of ability is an handicap only if the project has not taken it into account. The handicap occurs only in the case of an interaction between subjective situations (eg a leg in plaster) and objects (eg a step) that can become a potential handicap.

On last October 30 an architect from Kabul, Afghanistan got her master degree in Structure and Technology in Architecture about “Urban quality and Design for All” at the Politecnico di Milano, Department of Structural Engineering with full marks. It was the first time that this topic was discussed there.

At the workshop “Architectural and Urban Quality” held at the Politecnico (Faculty of Architecture and Society), I have just started to teach “Economical sustainability of the project: the Design for All approach”

Most of the students haven’t ever heard about architectural barrier free design and legislation about it before my lessons and just 3 by 40 of them had heard about Design for All before.

In previous workshops run in other towns some younger enthusiastic students said that it was the first time they thought about their urban environment in a critical way, focused on accessibility.

What does this mean?

We must not take accessibility for granted, after 40 years of our first technical legislation in Italy, we need to keep awake new generations on this topic.

“Design for All is design for human diversity, social inclusion and equality”. Design for All aims to go beyond accessibility, to give answers to people unexpressed needs, wishes, aspirations, not just to their primary needs. “Design for All is design for human diversity, social inclusion and equality”.

Today, Planning and Design for All are being recognized increasingly as necessary elements in pro-active strategies for sustainable development.

Although today’s world is a complex place, and designing is a complex activity we have the responsibility to base our designs on the principle of inclusion.

Design for All approach enables to pursue solutions for social inclusion (think about people who were relegated to their houses in the past and were an high cost for the society). It also pursue to realise compatible environments to the broadest range of people’s different needs and expectations (even more usable and attractive for everybody) instead of adapting existing buildings and spaces with special solutions later (as stairlifts for people with motor difficulties, tactile guidepaths for blinds, houses for elderly etc.) Sustainable economical development respects also people’s biological, social, cultural diversity .

What we are doing at the University in Milan tends to give the basic knowledge to the implementation for Design for All as common designing approach, part of each design process, not just a temporary binding legislation or fashion.

2. Tourism for All

Tourism is a privileged crossing application field of Design for All: it includes public and private transportations and buildings, organisation of public space as pedestrian only area, bicycle routes, crossings, services, accommodations, restaurants, communications, ICT, etc.)

Tourism for all aims to ensure inclusion and active participation to all people in the social life, and has also a positive economic repercussion.

Our new Minister of Tourism in Italy said that there are 38 MILION of weak people travelling in Europe, about 3,5 MILION of these people travel in Italy (e.g. disabled people, mothers with prams, people with food allergies) and that for 1 Euro spent on accommodation there are 3 Euros spent on related activities (restaurants, transportation, leisure, culture, etc).

Planning and build for All can be a challenge and a chance in crisis time, to offer services and facilities compatible with the needs of a broader number of customers.

Our new Tourism Minister declared that they will take into account the needs of all, and the Ministry of Tourism established a National Commission for promoting and supporting accessible tourism.

A lot of work has been already done. Many means of transportation are accessible and many public and touristic places have pavement tactile signals and Braille signals for blind people, communication and welcoming are attentive to a broad range of needs and skills (as Handyturismo, a website set out to give detailed information about barrier free tourism in Rome)



Fig. 1 NH Hotel in Milano-Rho Fiera, Italy.
A convenient coat hanger.



Fig. 2 Hotel in Merano- Italy.
A both accessible and nice bathroom

An interesting project in the touristic field is “SpiaggialiberAtutti” (free beaches for everyone), within politic actions toward accessible seaside resorts. This project connects environmental and social sustainability by using eco compatible materials, alternative energy, common spaces and facilities for All, thus avoiding segregation of people and needs.

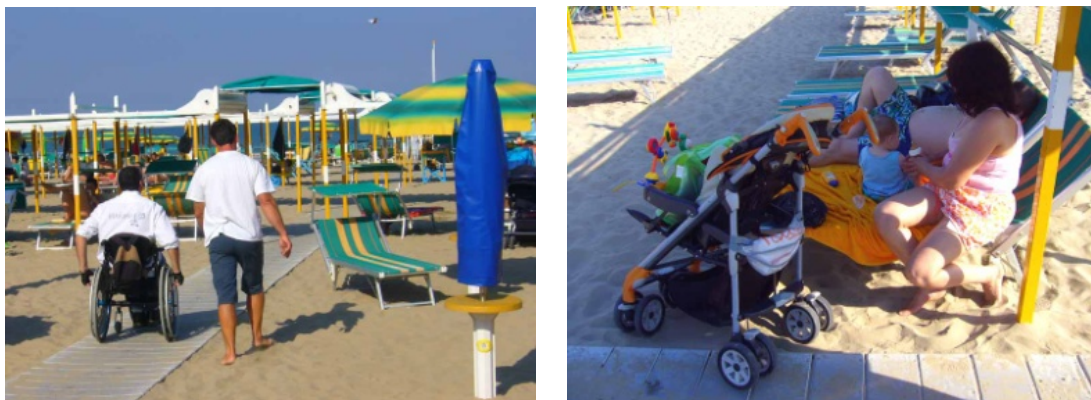


Fig. 3-4 “Free beaches for everyone” in Rimini- Italy.

3. How is our town system?

Accessibility also relates to the usability of the geographical territory and the mobility of the users; that includes urban parameters connected to the organisation and management of urban spaces and road traffic so that the pedestrian citizen is the main actor of the urban scene.

To make long pathways can be made easier with the help of public benches or seat for short rest: in Rome the route Trevi Fountain/ Pantheon has been supplied with tactile guide paths and info panels. After 7 years this route is deteriorated and hidden by the tables of the restaurants: maintenance is also important.

Milan will guest Expò 2015 and the machine for welcoming millions of tourists (about 29 millions are expected) to be led by the North of Italy. Are ready for this challenge? Analysing some design solutions in tourist field and town services in our towns, it seems that there are so much to do.



Fig. 5 Milano, Italy. This station has just been renewed: a lost occasion to use tactile colourful materials to show the way to the train and to the underground



Fig. 6-7 Venice, Italy. This picture shows a new bridge not for All at all.

4. The need for education and training in Toursim for All

Who will make the built environment accessible, usable, attractive for all if architects and urban planners, decision makers are not educated in Design for All?

We must not forget accessibility and constant maintenance as pre-requirement for quality of life and tourism for everyone We must not take accessibility for granted, after 40 years of our first technical legislation in Italy, we need to keep awake new generations on this topic, as pre-requirement of DfA.

Teaching DfA in planning and designing field is necessary, but we need to spread it not just in there, not just at the Universities, but also since primary school.

Tourism for all is a challenge, for sure. It requires a broader planning scale, an accessible and sustainable town network, that is attentive to mobility, accommodations, services, communications, welcoming and details.

It could also be a chance in times of crisis, on social and market perspectives: its create new job opportunities to offer services and facilities that are compatible with the needs of a broader number of independent customers, in prolonged seasons.

Education and training in DfA and tourism must not be a weak link, it must be improved even in other University (Tourism, Economy, Politics Sciences, etc.). It has a fundamental role to make young people aware of it in order to apply the DfA inclusive approach, methods, and tools to implement it to their future work sector.

“Tourism for All” should be a process of proofing decision-making for the achievement of social inclusion. It should be driven by decision makers at all levels of government, local government, and corporate business, industrial and commercial sectors together with final users and designers: we must have an improving teaching system to train all these actors.