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Special Edition No.2: UD2022 Conference

**5 more selected papers from the International Universal Design Conference
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[Ageing Neighbourhoods and Social Inclusion](#)

This paper discusses the issue of ageing neighbourhoods, both built environment and residents. Older people spend more time in their local area and urban renewal projects need to take this into account. Ira Verma presents a case study based on a research project involving older residents. She proposes a universal design approach which includes integration of all resident groups.

Abstract

The built environment is aging, and at the same time the share of the oldest resident cohorts is growing. The neighborhood built environment and social cohesion become important for vulnerable groups, such as older people, who spend a lot of their time at home and in the surroundings.

Urban densification and renewal of the old neighborhoods need to take into consideration the local population structure, their needs for the physical and social

environment.

This paper presents an ongoing case study. The objective was to recognize the meaningful spaces for inclusive social activities in the neighborhood, focusing on aging residents.

Qualitative and mixed methods were used to study older people's lived experiences and their relation to the neighborhood. The case study neighborhood is undergoing an important urban development process. A new service hub, with commercial and public services as well as a new metro station, is attracting seniors to move to the area.

As most activities are concentrated in the new service hub, access to local services become more difficult for vulnerable groups. The spaces for informal social encounters within the neighborhood are getting fewer and more people of all ages are living in one-person households than previously.

To build socially sustainable communities, the integration of all resident groups is important. Successful urban transformation benefits new residents, but also include current residents. The densification and renovation taking into account Universal Design principles can support the vitality, social cohesion, and attractiveness of a neighborhood.

[The Emancipatory Design Manifesto:](#)

[Let's suppose that disability does not exist](#)

The authors discuss emancipatory design as an assistant to the broader concept of universal design. Emancipatory design is based on an idealistic premise that architecture can liberate human beings. They argue that design projects should be highly critical against "business as usual". This paper is a philosophical discussion about being human and the role of design. If we did not have the word or term "disability", which continues to promote stereotypes, we would treat as equal regardless of circumstance. The conclusion is thoughtful and dovetails with the notion that universal design goes beyond "disability design".

Abstract

In this paper we present and propose the concept of Emancipatory Design (ED), which is an alternative way of thinking about the human being and the ever intricate relations between people, design, architecture and the built environment.

The paper is given the form of a manifesto and has the overall aim to reflect critically on the possibility of design as a practice that potentially carry emancipatory effects in the everyday lives of particular human beings.

Defining ED, we draw on notions from philosophy and the history of ideas to challenge

the concept of human disability often at play in writings concerned with design and architecture. This approach allows for a provocative, disruptive and experimental attempt to relativize and cancel the notion of disability – and, subsequently, to explore the possibilities inherent to this manoeuvre in the realm of design thinking. With ED we propose a concept that works as a contribution to the community engaged in Universal Design (UD), as well as a gentle objection and critique of the abstract and intangible element of universality at play within this tradition.

Does Pure Contemplation Belong to Architecture?

The Denied Ramps at the Church of San Salvatore in the Santa Giulia Museum in Brescia

Although Australian buildings are relatively new compared with those in Europe, heritage values are sometimes used to prevent workable access solutions to older buildings. This paper discusses the issue of pitting two different values against each other using the case study of a complex museum structure in Brescia. Similarly to contemporary projects, when ancient buildings are opened up to the public for the first time, accessibility should be considered first, not when the complaints come in. The authors conclude, "... accessibility to culture and cultural heritage is to be understood as synonymous with democracy and sustainability".

Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of balancing the two values underlying the accessibility and conservation of cultural heritage: its use and its protection. These values are often, wrongly, regarded as opposites, or as incompatible. The reason for this contrast originates in the way of understanding ancient architecture and in the value of the relationship between architecture and people.

This issue is considered by presenting a recent case concerning the Museum of Santa Giulia in Brescia, a multi-layered complex that preserves evidence ranging from the prehistoric to the contemporary age, housed in a monastic complex of Longobard origin.

The recent failure to build some ramps proposed for increasing accessibility to the church of San Salvatore, an integral part of the museum's itinerary, offers an opportunity to reflect on the need for better integration between different, and only apparently opposed, instances.

The topic is dealt with by referring to the most recent disciplinary reflections in the field

of conservation carried out in Italy with respect to the issue of accessibility to the cultural heritage, without neglecting juridical-normative aspects and international documents, such as the Faro Convention.

This multidisciplinary reading aims to highlight the main significance of accessing cultural heritage, with reference also to the objectives of sustainable development and the human development of the individual and the reference community.

Communities, Sport, Inclusion.

Social reactivation through sport practice promotion

This paper from Italy is specific to places of worship, their surrounding environments and their heritage values. The issue is about opening up the private spaces within and between ecclesiastic buildings to encourage physical activity, health promotion and social inclusion. Several parishes would like to offer sports for people with and without disabilities and different age groups. However space management, funding and maintenance need to be accounted for.

Abstract

The following contribution presents some findings deriving from the research project “Sport is Society” by Politecnico di Milano. The research reflects on the built heritage and its ability to be accessible and usable for different users with different needs in its structures and offer of services, focusing on sports activities and spaces.

The study refers to collective ecclesiastical structures in the contemporary city. The research in this area demonstrates the possible degrees of innovation regarding the increase in the inclusiveness of private facilities with a public vocation, where sport represents a driver of social inclusion for the community.

The research proposes advice to guarantee inclusive sports facilities for the community, highlighting the strict relationship between the inclusive city and the ecclesiastical heritage, as an emerging issue to be investigated and solved.

Starting from its relevance and the potential of the structures to become a truly “accessible patrimony”, the tool suggests strategies for policymakers and ecclesiastical administrations to make them become “open services” – usable and accessible by all – for and inside the urban community.

Improving Accessibility and Usability in the Built Environment.

Case Study: Guidelines by the Lombardy Region, Italy

This paper presents guidelines informed by national and regional requirements including the European Disability Strategy. The goal is to eliminate barriers by adopting a systemic approach which involves all decision makers and stakeholders from the very beginning of the process. The Lombardy Guidelines provide methodological support and help with adopting accessibility plans. They contribute to spreading the culture and skills necessary and promote participatory methods.

Abstract

Accessibility of the built environment, including open spaces, products and services, is essential for people with disabilities and people with special needs such as the elderly and children to access, move, use and enjoy the services and the urban spaces, exercise their rights and fully participate in social life. Local administrations can, and must, identify strategies and tools that are useful for achieving this goal, with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction.

The case study of the “Lombardy Region Guidelines for Accessibility Plans” that each Municipality of the Region is required to draw up and implement will be illustrated. The Guidelines were drawn up in a very short time, promoting a participatory method, involving decision makers and stakeholders since the very beginning, and providing indications for building up Accessibility for All, inclusive and non-discriminatory.

The founding concept was that of a City for All or of a “Plan for the accessibility and usability of the built environment, social inclusion and environmental well-being”.

Considering the different characteristics, abilities, needs, conditions and preferences of people, this concept extends the recipients of the Plan to all citizens, as well as to occasional visitors such as tourists. They were approved by the Regional Council in November 2021.

The approach adopted complied with the most recent normative, legislative and cultural indications, both national and international. Training courses have been scheduled for municipal officials, technicians and plan editors. Synergies have been established with universities and UNI, the Italian standardization body.

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