Accessible Streets

Disabling and enabling environments in cities: a pedestrian perspective

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Overview

• What characterize human beings?
• Human rights
• Universal Design and accessibility
• The importance of the street
• Shared space reviewed from a pedestrian perspective
Human diversity
Disability is a human condition

- Medical model
- Social model
- Relational model
- Universalistic
- Rethinking normality
- Life span
Life span perspective

As embodied human beings are vulnerable.

- Sightloss
- Walking impairments
- Mental health issues
- Cognitive impairments
- Hard of hearing
- and more…
Human rights

Article 1 Purpose:

The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.
Article 9
Accessibility

1. To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation.

These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter alia:

(a) Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities,
“Universal design” means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. “Universal design” shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.
Holistic approach to accessibility

• Who: Embodied people in different ages
• Where: Built environment
• What: Participation and democracy

• Accessibility
• Usability
Historical perspective

On equality and equal opportunities:
Jacobus tenBroek: *The right to live in the world* (1966). *If the disabled have the right to live in the world, they must have the right to make their way in to it and therefore must be entitled to use the indispensable means of access.*

Susan Schweik: *The Ugly Laws* (2009). People have been excluded from public areas because of appearance and disabilities. Enforced by new legislation, this is now changed. Thus accessibility needs to be highlighted as an important characteristic by good urban design.
Democratic importance

Public places must be public and accessible.

All people are citizens, with the right to be included and be able to live in a facilitating environment.
Importance of the street

Accessibility is also about equal opportunities and justice. Martha Nussbaum’s capabilities approach includes the ability to move freely from place to place as one of the central capabilities:

3. *Bodily integrity: Being able to move freely from place to place*

Public streets are of great importance

Necessary to include the fact that people as embodied are vulnerable
PhD project: Humans in the city

- Accessibility has physical, psychological and social (also political) dimensions
- People do not use the city and urban environment as much as they wish to do.
- Experience of risk and not feeling safe hinders the interviewees’ use of urban places.
- Being pedestrian in Oslo is hard work: The city gives priority to privat car drivers and the most mobile and flexible pedestrians.
- The interviewees experience difficulties in communicating with other people, car drivers, cyclists and also pedestrians.
Shared Space normativity

- Communication
- Individualisation
- Individuals are free to make choices
- Flexibility
- Co-operate with others
- Social inter-action
Limits of communication

- How sophisticated can communication in urban places be?
- Information that is different from the persons phenotypic appearance cannot be communicated.
- Communication without using the eyes?
- The limits of empathy. How deep can you understand the situation of a stranger?
Pedestrians areas under pressure
Walkability

• Walkable = Barrier-free: A walkable environment is traversable, without major barriers. Walkability can be refined to mean traversable to children, elderly, handicapped or those wearing high heels.

• Walkability = Safe: A walkable environment is safe in terms of perceived crime or perceived traffic.

Ann Forsyth and Michael Southworth (2008)
The reason for public planning

• Protect the right to live in, and have access to the world
• Protect the right to participate fully in all aspects of life
• Give sufficient protection to the most vulnerable
• Give room and place for all people throughout the life span in public areas
Referanser:

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- http://www.prosjekt-levende.oslo.kommune.no/om_levende_oslo/
- Siebers, Tobin, *Disability and the right to have rights* DSQ volume 27 nr. 1-2, 2007.