

BARCELONA.

FROM THE ACCESSIBILITY PLAN TO THE CITY FOR ALL

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book synthesises the results of a series of projects, initiatives, analysis, evaluations and visions of the future of the city of Barcelona, in which I have extensive professional experience in the field of Accessibility and Design for All.

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude, to the Barcelona City Council, for its support and confidence at the book's editing stage, and in particular, I would like to put on record my gratitude to both Núria Carrera, Fifth Deputy Mayor of the Barcelona City Council and to the President of "El Institut Municipal de Persones amb Disminució", Francesc Narváez, Mobility Councillor and President of the Working Group for the Improvement of Accessibility, who suggested that this book be written. I also want to express my gratitude for the confidence they have shown in me by not laying down any pre-conditions and so allowing me to enjoy total freedom of expression.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the professionals and politicians, with whom I was able to collaborate with during my time while responsible for urban accessibility, transport and technical assistance in the Institut Municipal de Persones amb Disminució de Barcelona (IMDB) during the construction of the installations destined for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, in particular, Marta Colomer, then manager of IMDB. Without their assistance it would not have been possible to achieve a city which was renewed, vivid and shared by its citizens during the celebration of the Olympic Games. Likewise, I would like to thank and point out the relevant role which the following persons have contributed – Eulàlia Vintró, Pasqual Maragall, Joan Clos, Xavier Casas, Lluís Armet and Joan Torres – all of whom, with their support and contributions to the Working Group for the Improvement of Accessibility, formed in March 1992, have safeguarded and promoted accessibility in Barcelona, in such a way that, nowadays, this concept is incorporated in each one of the projects and building developments that are undertaken in our city.

I would not like to miss out on this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all my work colleagues and professionals with whom I have shared my dreams, ideas, knowledge and even upsets, in developing Accessibility and Design for All projects in a efficient and effective way. - from the seven years in the public sector of design and management in the Consorci de Recursos i Documentació per a l'Autonomia Personal (CRID), to the present management of the company, ProAsolutions and the President ship of the Design for All Foundation.

On the other hand, it would be unjust, through these acknowledgements, not to point out the importance for me to have been linked professional matters, but above all for the opportunity that they have provided me to know them at a personal level, all those persons that form part of the associative level of disability of the city, with their positive assertion and energy have contributed to work hard after a working meeting in order to find the best solution to eliminate whatever type of existing architectural or transport barrier, and afterwards reached a consensus on all the components involved (politicians, associations, people with disabilities, professionals, etc.). All of these have formed and form part of different institutions and organisations like: Federació ECOM-Francesc Layret, Organización Nacional de Ciegos (ONCE) y Fundación ONCE, Federació Catalana APPS, Associació de Sords de Catalunya, Institut Guttmann, Centre Pont del Dragó, Centre de recursos educatius per a deficients visuals "Joan Amades", Fundació Pere Mitjans, Fundació Síndrome de Down, ASPAYM-Catalunya, Associació de Tallers de Barcelona and a lot more besides. But, I wish to thank, in particular, the collaboration received by organisation members and users that have formed and form part of the Junta Rectora del Institut Municipal de Persones amb Disminució de Barcelona (IMDB), specifically, Eugeni Pérez, M^a José Vázquez and Benito Duran.

Lastly, from the confidence to contribute with my professional and personal endeavour to pave the way so that cities are for all, I thank all those people who have collaborated in a selfless way in the elaboration of this book - Francesc Pérez, Director de Comunicació y Qualitat del Sector de Serveis Personals de l'Ajuntament de Barcelona and to Xavier Alegre, secretary to Grup Municipal de Treball per a la Millora de l'Accessibilitat de l'Ajuntament de Barcelona, and especially to Mar García de Sola, mother to my children, Anna and Jan, that stimulated me to continue and improve my dedication in the areas related to Accessibility and Design for All with the aim of developing and disseminating models and methodologies that can be used for other social , public and private agents , so that they are applied more and more and make Barcelona city a reality that all of us have a right to.

Francesc Aragall i Clavé

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS BOOK

The idea to write this book was born out of two motivations:

The first, to reflect on what has been achieved up to now in Barcelona in the field of Accessibility and Design for All and from this analysis, propose new focuses, new fields of intervention and the involvement of new social agents.

The second, to carry out a revision of the process that has taken us to our current situation, recognising the direction and the effort of the people that as citizens, politicians or technicians have committed themselves to the improvement of our city.

This revision, however, does not have a nostalgic significance, but aims to leave proof of the development of our city, some believe it has been slow, while others believe it has been notable, with the aim that those who also want to achieve that their city is more and more for All, and avoid the errors that we have made and inspire themselves with our successes.

I haven't tried, nor have I carried out a painstaking analysis of every detail but, even better, described the various sequences in the search for values desired by Barcelona, from the subjectivity of someone that has been participating actively and learning from this process for the last fifteen years, convinced that the stones in the streets and buildings form the will of people.

So that this book can reach the maximum number of readers, we are attaching a CD with this paperback, which contains the same text in Catalan, Spanish, and English. This ensures that people who do not understand our language can access this book and likewise, people with visual impairment who can read text in electronic format only.

HISTORY OF THE ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

When the Barcelona City Council suggested the need to draw up an Accessibility Plan with the objective that Barcelona would become a City for All in the near future, taking into consideration the real needs of its citizens, that is to say, it responded to the demand of the population for what is referred to as equal opportunities for everyone and each one.

We cannot forget, however, that this demand came about as result of a social progression initiated during General Franco's dictatorship (the 1950s) with the continuous demands by people with disabilities.

On the other hand, we must also remember that these people, from that collective group, who fought for integration rights formed part of the legacy of the Spanish Civil War, as like in any war conflict, left a large number of people with disabilities that, depending on which side they fought on, received a different treatment (or were "battle wounded Heroes" or simply "cripples").

Once Democracy had been restored, the country began to emerge from that political framework, socially and politically undesirable, favoured by the demands of people with disabilities that continued their fight for their rights, laws and regulations began to come into effect that made reference to these rights such as the adaptation of environments (removal of architectural barriers) to promote the integration of this collective group.

Following this direction, in April 1982 the "Law of Social Integration for People with Disabilities" ("Ley de Integración social de los Minusválidos" LISMI) was passed and, afterwards in Catalonia, the Generalitat, passed the Decree 100/84 for which brought about its application in various fields, technical solutions and means to eliminate architectural barriers.

However, the considerations that the Law and Decree dealt with, those architects who were linked with people with some form of disability and those that were especially sympathetic towards those areas.

For this reason, the parliament of Catalunya, in November 1991, passed unanimously, the Law of Promotion of Accessibility and removal of architectural barriers (La Llei de promoció de L'Accesibilitat i supressió de barreres arquitectòniques), in which the following are clearly defined - the fields of implementation, the obligation by part of the municipality to draw up a Accessibility Plan with its time span and the need to constitute Municipal Accessibility Committees, as well as to create regulations that forms the Code of Accessibility of Catalonia (Codi d'Accesibilitat de Catalunya), Decree 135/95, March 1995.

The integration of people with disabilities in Barcelona

Just as in the rest of Catalonia and the other Autonomous Communities, in Barcelona people with disabilities fought for their rights through means of public acts, with the aim that politicians and the population would be made aware of their situation.

The continuous movements carried out came to fruition in 1974 a movement of social repercussions began, later on named the "Rebellion of the lame" ("Rebelión de los cojos"), which reached its climax in June 1976 in which people with disabilities, mothers and fathers and onlookers that wanted to join in demonstrated in Plaça Sant Jaume demanding employment, adapted transport, accessible streets and buildings, education integration and a dignified pension.

So, from the very early stages of re-established democratic reform, it was made obvious the need to change this social reality, fruit of the post-war regime, organising and structuring the actions of the City Council concerning Accessibility, with the aim of involving all municipal areas to achieve that the development process of any project took into consideration all the real needs of all its citizens.

The continuous claims of this collective group favoured that in 1978 a decree was passed relating to the removal of architectural barriers in the public thoroughfare.

The articles of this decree regulated the removal of obstacles or architectural barriers that caused transport difficulties in public thoroughfare and, moreover, favoured the framework that from then on dropped kerbs were built to facilitate wheelchair users.

That same year, the Mayor of Barcelona met with representatives of disability group's organisations with the intention of creating a Board that would study and search for solutions to the different aspects of the problems of the people with disabilities in the city of Barcelona.



The construction of “barca” kerb cuts was one of the first actions undertaken by the City Council to eliminate barriers from the public thoroughfare

So, from the 1980s onwards, the present **Institut Municipal de Persones amb Disminució de Barcelona (IMDB)** promotes activities aimed at people with physical, psychological, and sensory disabilities as well as people who suffer from mental illnesses, overseeing their social integration, personal development and the improvement in quality of life.

Again, I would like to emphasise that the IMDB, with the aim of studying the real needs of people with disabilities, uses a singular management model that consists of the formation of a governing body in which 50% of its members (10 persons) are representatives of people with disabilities in Barcelona and are elected, every 4 years, by direct vote by city residents certified with disabilities. The other 50% are members of the City Council.

Continuing in their work, the design of the project, Pont del Dragó₁, began in 1985 and the Labour Assessment Team (Equip d'Assessorament Laboral -EAL) was formed.

Pont del Dragó is a public non-profit making training centre, which is based on the principles of normalisation of services and the recognition of the rights for social integration for people with severe physical disabilities.

That same centre was a pioneer in the use of new technologies and the adaptation of computers as learning tools and nowadays, it still develops methodology supported by many European countries.

EAL has been working since then in the search ways and solutions to achieve the implementation of laws currently in force and the training and integration of people with disabilities in the ordinary Labour system.

Apart from that, IMDB began to offer an Advise Service in the fields of technical help and the elimination of architectural barriers, since apart from social and Laboral integration of people with disabilities, it was necessary to bring about the integration of this group in society, in other words, it made it very clear the necessity to create accessible physical spaces (streets and buildings).

So, in the 1990's accessibility began to become a reality in new urban projects: the Barcelona City Council began to participate actively in giving professional and overseeing the various infrastructural building projects and promoting a training programme and awareness among architects.

As proof of its involvement in urban projects, the IMDB signed an agreement with the College of Architects (Col·legi d'Arquitectes) with the aim of elaborating a benchmark that would facilitate a review of accessibility in architectural projects and, in 1991, approximately 150 architects from our city held a meeting with the aim of explaining the importance of building a city without barriers.

At that time, Rafael de Caceres and his team, designed the avenue, Rambla Catalunya, with the Kerb 120 (known outside the city as the Barcelona kerb), which was the first urbanistic element designed with a total consensus from people with disabilities, and furthermore, for the first time, the kerb was designed for the use of everyone (and not just for wheelchair users).



The ford "Barcelona" spread out as a solution for pedestrian crossings in streets with wide pavements.

With the design of Rambla Catalunya, it demonstrated that aesthetics and functionality do not necessarily clash.



The Portal de l'Angel one of the first public works in Barcelona that tried to recover the space for pedestrian use.

Having completed a piece of public work like this and coinciding with the 1992 infrastructure, accessibility in the Carmel district was tackled taking into consideration that, being one the more hilly districts of the city with narrow pavements, it would be a challenge for technicians, of whom, once the project had been completed, they would see a solution to many of the design problems in other less problematic districts in the field of accessibility.



Protection of tree holes “Carmel”

For this task Montserrat Perial designed a special perimeter layer for tree holes, which won the Delta del Fad prize.

At the same time, the first low floor bus was unveiled, and 20 more were later acquired for use during the Paralimpics.

The preparation for 1992 also acted as a definitive impetus relevant to accessibility in the city, since for the first time in history an urban infrastructure capable of accommodating the athletes and visitors for the Olympic and Paralympic games.

The great feats that were carried out regarding level streets of equal level and pedestrian streets in the old quarter of the city, as well as accessibility the Underground, Line 2 and all the new main lines. All this meant that soon, streets were full of people with disabilities going about their business in an independent way.



The Olympic Villa was one of the spaces the city won.

On the other hand, the image of the Paralympic athlete, Antonio Rebollo, carrying the Olympic torch to the Olympic Flame of the Olympic Stadium, facilitated that many people worldwide observed the integration of this collective group as normal and necessary and especially the people of Barcelona, who packed the stadium during the Paralympic competition.

As an illustrated anecdote of the grade of sensitivity on behalf of professionals that carried out the re-structurisation of Barcelona, referring to accessibility, I recall the Palau Sant Jordi project, presented by Arata Isoaki, that initially didn't contemplate accessibility and so, he was asked to redesign it. Days later, the architect returned from Japan with a new totally accessible project.



Sant Jordi Palace

Coinciding with these events, the first trials for accessible beaches were also carried out and, as a prelude to the Accessibility Plan, data on accessibility from 57,000 public and commercial premises was compiled from Barcelona, that could be consulted by means of a geographical information system that, nowadays would seem rudimentary, but It was of great benefit at that time to inform citizens and visitors as well as Paraolympic athletics of the services they could avail of and enjoy.

Another significant step in this field was the constitution, in March 1992, of the Working Group for the Improvement of Accessibility (Grup de Treball per a la Milora de l'Accessibilitat) by agreement of the Plenary, with the objective of promoting and overseeing the application of the Law passed and strengthening the improvements on accessibility, at the same time that the necessary activity started for the report on the Barcelona Accessibility Plan.

The Group had an inter-departmental nature under the leadership of the Urban Councillor.

In view of how the city was progressing and positive assessment that would become detached in the field of accessibility, in 1994, the Diputació de Barcelona, along with the IMDB, took the initiative to set up the **Consorci de Recursos i Documentació per a l'Autonomia Personal (CRID)**.

With the constitution of CRID, two aims were to be achieved:

1. Generalise and offer other municipalities the experience acquired by the City of Barcelona in the field of accessibility.
2. Introduce the concept of Design for All, in other words, when thinking of accessibility, one is considering all the population, and not solely people with disabilities.

The objective of CRID, at that time, was to improve the quality of life of everyone through intervention on the environment.

On the other hand, in 1995 CRID was appointed Spanish Branch of the European Institute for Design and Disability (EIDD), favouring the fact that Barcelona was the city chosen to celebrate the Meeting (Design for All and the General Assembly of EIDD). With this event, which coincided with the European Congress "The City and the People with Disability", organised by IMDB, the city of Barcelona became involved with accessibility at European level and proclaimed its involvement in this reality through the "Barcelona Declaration".

From Design without barriers to the City for All Design

As I explained previously, in the 1990's the concept **Design for All** began to spread and, with that, **Cities for All**.

This new perspective leaves aside the division of the population of people with or without disabilities, to focus on **diversity**, in other words, defending the rights of individual differences regarding culture, language, capacity, gender, age, physical dimensions, etc.

The philosophy on which the Design of the City for All is based on means equal opportunities for everyone and each one of the people that form the social framework of the city.

To achieve that equal opportunities become a reality, it is necessary that everyone can easily access, with maximum independence the various activities and services the city has to offer: culture, entertainment, education, transport, sporting activities, shopping, citizen services, business, technology, etc.

So, when outlining of the benefits of accessibility, the concept of people with disabilities continued being substituted by **persons with reduced mobility or persons with interaction problems with the environment**, making it much broader since, apart from people with permanent disability, it takes into consideration temporary interaction problems with the environment that some of us experience at some time in our life, be it pregnancy, a fractured arm or leg, allergies, age, loss of sensitivity due to cold, conjunctivitis, that is to say, whatever physical, psychological or sensory change that can have repercussions on our relationship with the environment (if we visualise these interaction problems by means of a graph, we would see that 40% of the population need an accessible environment).

But moreover, Design for All should ensure the integration of people of different cultures, language and customs (new citizens or tourists) and, therefore, it is essential to provide the city with the elements or mechanisms necessary for a harmonious co-existence among all citizens.

We should take into account that people from other cities or countries who feel at ease in our city have benefits on the economy, from the affluence of tourists, more and more of an elderly nature, to the creation of new companies or businesses.

In short, the design of the City for All should take into account the diversity of the population:

- People with permanent congenital disability.
- People with permanent disability as a result of accident or illness during their life.
- Temporary interaction problems with the environment.
- Changes during one's lifetime (from birth to old age).
- Persons with alterations to physical, psychological and sensory capacities.
- Immigrants and tourists (culture, language and customs).

On the other hand, the City for All cannot close the doors to progress. Therefore, we should foresee technological and industrial development, the free circulation of people (for employment or other motives), the fact that people are living longer due to the improvement in quality of life, new social changes (people moving away from urban centres without renouncing services or the growing presence of women in the job market), the development of public transport, etc.

Lastly, the design of the City for All should oversee the quality of life of future generations and, therefore, all the interventions for the improvement of accessibility should be based on the principles of sustainability i.e. the environmental impact of each intervention must be foreseen and not affect the future of our natural environment.

This philosophy that promotes the development of Design for All, is what, from the beginning has inspired the Barcelona Municipal Accessibility Plan and, therefore, all the persons and organisations involved in this project feel committed to the improvement of the quality of life of all citizens, taking into consideration that what we improve for those who have more problems ultimately benefits everyone.

However, this concept, clearly Mediterranean, varies from the social services model of the Nordic countries that, with a greater number of resources than us, tried to cover up the needs of people with disabilities in their own home, which in the long term did not prove economically viable and that has created a spread of our approach as examples of good practices around the world.

THE BARCELONA ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

In Barcelona, accessibility continued gaining ground: politicians, technicians and citizens demonstrated their desire to live in a better city and also their will to work and get involved in this task.

The Decree passed by the Generalitat in 1995 defined the legal framework that the City Council needed to carry out planning in the improvement of accessibility.

Although, before the decree was passed, there had already been tasks carried out relating to these issues, now it was necessary to take a census, or to find a reliable way of, what had been achieved relating to accessibility up to that moment, using new legal parameters, and what was left to be done.

For this reason **the Barcelona City Council empowered CRID, through a collaboration agreement with the Institut Municipal d'Urbanisme (IMU), the design of the Barcelona Municipal Accessibility Plan (Pla Municipal d'Accessibilitat de Barcelona)**, with the conviction that establishing a good management accessibility system would invest with more efficiency the budget, but above all, it tried to ensure that accessibility would be included in every investment undertaken by the City Council, and therefore working towards the same direction.

The **PRINCIPLES** that guided us to carry out the development of the Plan were the following:

- The quality of life of all the population.
- Autonomy of all citizens, regardless of their age, cultural baggage or physical, psychological or sensory capacities.
- Accessibility as a base element in all new projects, and not just an added extra or supplement to the initial design.
- Citizen participation in the design of the city.

- Citizen information before and during the process of the intervention.
- A correct relationship between: person/environment, esthetics/functionality, vehicles/pedestrians, diversity/equal opportunities and consumption /sustainability.

In other words, to achieve that Barcelona was a City for All, a common effort and fluid co-ordination was necessary among the various agents involved: citizens, technicians, politicians, and private enterprise.

The **FINAL OBJECTIVE** of the Accessibility Plan was that **the city of Barcelona was totally accessible by the year 2006**. For this to be possible, it was essential to define clearly the desired results in each task field.

1. **Public thoroughfare:** Not forgetting the fact that there are streets in Barcelona that can never be accessible due to their gradient, the ideal result would be that, as regards the rest of the streets, they would have pavements sufficiently wide enough so that two pedestrians could pass by each other, whether they are using a wheelchair or pram (narrow streets should be pedestrianised or of equal level). The security of users must also be guaranteed. The positioning of urban furniture, proper street signs (e.g. danger and road work signs), the design of different elements, the relationship between pedestrians, vehicles and cyclists, all of which must be given prior thought.
2. **Buildings:** any person should be able to access and move around the different outbuildings (those destined for the public in general and those specifically for employees) in an independent way and be able to avail of the services on offer
3. **Public Transport:** Everyone should be able to use the network of public transport in an autonomous way, from boarding, use of vehicles and stops or stations, to information on timetables and routes. These means of transport should also cover the entire territory.

On the other hand, those people, who according to their circumstances cannot use the public transport system, should be able to receive a “door to door” transport service.

4. **Parks, gardens and beaches**: these public spaces were not included in the Accessibility Plan at the design's initial stages due to the importance that they have as open public spaces destined for free time and recreation activities. They were incorporated later with the aim that every citizen's security would be guaranteed and it would ensure that everyone would be able to use the installations and carry out the various activities on offer. So, in 2001 the data gathered by CRID, at the behest of the City Council, was included in the Accessibility Plan.

To achieve the final object of the Accessibility Plan we carried out a study on the different areas of intervention, with the aim of finding out the true status of accessibility and, subsequently, being able to define the priorities.

Therefore, in the field of **public thoroughfare**, the following conditions were taken into account:

- State of pre-existing accessibility.
- Proportional investments among districts.
- Programme of investments anticipated prior to this.
- Localisation of buildings of interest at district level i.e. schools, Health Centres, civic centres, etc.
- Areas of adapted public transport in influential areas.

Regarding **municipal buildings**, the data gathered from the study carried out in 1994 was analysed and the criteria of the Districts and every Area of the City Council (Education, Sports, Social services, etc.) was taken into consideration at the time outlining the priorities.

Regarding **the field of transport**, unless it was not in direct competition from the City Council, we obtained information on future interventions, acquisition of new materials, such as accessibility in the Underground Networks of Barcelona i.e. Metro and Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat.

Data was also gathered regarding the number of **reserved parking spaces** next to public buildings or next to areas of interest.

On the other hand, we collaborated with ONCE in the design of an **audible traffic light** that was activated by remote control to avoid noise pollution (which would be caused if they were permanently activated). A survey was also undertaken to ascertain where they should be located for people with visual impairment.

Once the priorities had been identified, they were presented to IMDB, the organisations for people with disabilities and the various resident associations to incorporate the modifications that we believed appropriate.

The Barcelona City Council Accessibility Plan, designed according to the findings, was passed in the Plenary on December 20 1996, with a proposal of 5 biannual steps.

Once the proposal had been passed, the **MANAGEMENT** Plan commenced, which consisted of:

- Carrying out the projects and building projects that corresponded to the specific budget of accessibility budget.
- Oversee all construction developments to ensure the requirements of accessibility were being adhered to.
- Advise all the city's agents (Parks and Gardens, Maintenance, Districts, IMU etc.) on the design of new elements and their location, new projects, renovation of buildings, etc.

- Introduce all the improvements and actions undertaken in the Accessibility Cartographic System (Sistema Cartográfico de Accesibilidad – SCA) that records the city's progress in this field.

Managing the interventions of the Working Group for the Improvement on Accessibility has allowed us to adapt the criteria to the new needs, furthermore, it has defined a way of work characteristic of Barcelona, of which can be defined clearly and contains the following characteristics:

- Interventions on the catalogued buildings of public interest; unless the law permits the exemption of these building to make them accessible. The criteria of the City Council makes clear that any building destined for public use must be accessible.
- As I outlined earlier, parks, gardens and beach areas were subsequently included, motivated by the interest citizens have for these spaces.
- The decree did not call for a level of commitment concerning the barriers of communication, however, the Working Group commissioned a compilation of a report that was integrated into the plan, so that people with hearing disability or visual impairment were guaranteed access to information (fax, telephone helplines, elevator voice systems, road/street signs in public thoroughfare).
- Bus lanes were introduced as a step towards improvement of sustainable accessibility in the city.
- Therefore a manual on building works on public thoroughfare was compiled with the aim of defining how to inform the public of its presence, how to generate alternative itineraries when working on new building projects, maintenance services and the repair of facades.

- The Group defines accessible transport as something that can be used by any person, therefore, apart from accessibility of vehicles and platforms, it should be taken into account that the maximum distance till the next stop or station must be no greater than 250 metres, since the means of transport are an essential element to guarantee the independence of people.
- Referring to accessibility in the means of communication, the Group proposes to tackle the issue regarding new technologies. Presently, the issue of accessibility on the City Council Website is under construction.

DATA AND IMAGES OF THE EVOLUTION OF ACCESSIBILITY

If the current data is compared with data collected in 1996, one can see a significant improvement in all fronts, although, to achieve the predictions regarding buildings, more resources will have to be made available.

Therefore we have the following table of evolution:

	1996	Final Prediction 2003
Buildings	122 buildings	383 buildings
Public thoroughfare	360 km.	703 km.
Beaches	2	5
Buses	16 Routes	93 Routes
Number of buses	46	696
Underground (Metro)	12 stations	42 stations
Taxis	11 units	42 units
Audible Traffic Lights	24 crossings	174 crossings

Therefore it can be stated that Barcelona, in its combination of teams and services, has approximately tripled the reality of accessibility with respect to 1996.

This evolution in accessibility in the city of Barcelona, reflected in actual data presented in the earlier indicators, is possible thanks to two factors.

- The close collaboration between politicians, technicians and citizens.
- The will to co-ordinate all the agents involved and programme the interventions.

In this way, it has been achieved that for every Euro that is spent on accessibility, four more are added on that have come from the budgets of the new contracts and acquisitions and maintenance of the city.

In fact, Barcelona has been the first city in the world to apply this criteria of efficiency in accessibility, and cities like Helsinki and Stockholm have been inspired to design their own Plan of action.

On the other hand, constant visits of experts in accessibility from Europe, the United States, and Japan has favoured the spread of our experience among other countries and continents.

PUBLIC SPACE



Carmel, Meridiana and Paral-lel are three examples of how the city kept changing so that all pedestrians could enjoy it



Ronda del Guinardó



Covering of the Ronda del Mig



Cycle lane in Provença St



Street of Clot turned passage for pedestrians



Lifts and ramps in Cerdà Square



The Diagonal reaches the sea





Mistral Avenue turned into a civic axis



Levelled down kerb in Nou de la Rambla St.



Change of Gran de Sarrià in pedestrian axis

Tree grate protection in Gran de Gràcia



Detail of the retractable pillars that limit traffic of vehicles in Gran de Sarrià



Beaches with wooden pathways, showers, accessible toilets and specific fitting rooms are now a space for everybody to enjoy



There are designs of accessible urban furniture whose usage has not yet become widespread throughout the city.

BUILDINGS AND MUNICIPAL EQUIPMENTS



Clot Market, like other municipal markets, that were adapted, ensuring everybody can “go to the market”



The adaptation of the three bodies that make up the City Hall building was an important challenge.



Ramps in the Zoological museum and installation of an audio-guide that allows visitors with visual impairment to visit the museum through sounds and touch.



Adaptation of the Pedralbes Monastery

PRIVATE INITIATIVE HAS ALSO JOINED UP



Automatic doors ease the access to everybody



Bank branches also try to make all their facilities and services accessible to their clients.



The Design for All Foundation has also adapted one building of Poble Espanyol to establish its headquarters



Miró Foundation is one of the first examples of accessible building.

TRANSPORT



With the lift in Plaça Catalunya, access to the underground network is now possible.



Metro station in Plaça Universitat



Metro platforms have a sign pavement for blind people



The wagons have also a space for wheelchairs and baby pushchairs available.



Low floor buses have notoriously improved the quality of transport on surface and the platforms avoid vehicles to park in the stops and ease the access to the vehicles.



Technicians in Barcelona did also intervene in the bus shelter that Norman Foster designed in order to make it comply with ergonomic and accessible criteria.



Although there are not many units available so far, taxi has contributed flexibility for the mobility of people with physical functional limitation.



Blue zone is free for drivers with reduced mobility problem.

SIGNALLING, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION



Informative panel in Ciutadella park and the beach.



The signposts on traffic lights helps us be better oriented.



Traffic lights have also improved their "leads" since they are more visible, while the fact that they make sounds when they are activated via remote control by blind people who own one makes it easy for them to get oriented without increasing acoustic pollution.



Acoustic and visual information in the underground



Both FGC and Metro have adapted ticket vending machines in different languages and accessible to blind people.



With the Seradap, the phone line 010 can inform about accessibility of streets and transport.

A lot accomplished, but a lot more to accomplish

As I mentioned earlier, the objective of the Accessibility Plan is that by the year 2006, Barcelona will be totally accessible.

But, although it is hoped that the Plan's objectives are carried out, there are fields in which there is still much to do.

- Some urban furniture is still not accessible (telephone cabins, fountains and children's playgrounds). Moreover, there are some areas yet to be resolved, for example, the repositioning of litter bins on kerbs or sign posting of public thoroughfare works.
- It is important that accessibility is been adhered to at the time of granting licences to property developers for building contracts. The impossibility of inspecting all works means that the end result is frequently inaccessible.
- Not only at the level of Barcelona, but at an international level, the great pending issue of accessibility are systems of evacuation in cases of emergency, which still do not sufficiently take into consideration the evacuation of people with disabilities.
- It is necessary to adapt, like what has been done with ticket vending machines in the underground network, the information and services to the different languages that are spoken our city, taking into account immigration and the constant presence of tourists.
- When designing citizen information services, we cannot avoid the infinite opportunities that new technologies offer us, without forgetting that these services should be accessible and comfortable to use. Therefore, it is necessary to continue the search for new tools and new means to facilitate the relationship between the City Council and the citizen (Internet, Mobile Telephone, GPS, etc.).

- It is also necessary that citizens participate more actively in the improvement of accessibility because, although some people with disabilities collaborate with IMDB or participate on the District Committee or local resident associations, it is necessary that all citizens are aware that cars, rubbish bags, bar terrace tables or the indifference in maintenance of the city are obstacles that can only be avoided by improving our community spirit.

On the other hand, we cannot forget that, without changing the objective, the Plan is subject to changes, especially in reference to priorities, coming from social events or initiatives of other agents involved in the development of the city.

An example of this is the International Forum of Cultures (Fórum Internacional de las Culturas) that will be celebrated in Barcelona in the year 2004.

This event aims to be a meeting point and discussion of the problems and opportunities of the world. An infrastructure is expected to be designed to accommodate five million visitors and design a new district of the city.

Although it is true that this challenge is similar to the one Barcelona undertook when it was nominated as location for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, in this case diversity is a factor that must be considered, because ignoring this fact the objective or theme of the Forum would have no significance.

For this reason it is imperative that the location of the Forum of Cultures is capable of reflecting all that we have learned on Accessibility and Design for All in our city and that it a lasting fact regarding quality of urban spaces.

BARCELONA: A CITY FOR ALL

One of the aims of the City Council is to achieve that Barcelona is a City for All, in other words, that everyone of its citizens can participate in the different activities offered; choose jobs for which they are technically prepared without encountering any physical, social or cultural obstacle; to enjoy public recreation spaces in their district; benefit from the latest technologies; access training and information; use urban spaces or transport in an autonomous and independent way and to participate actively in the evolution of our city.

Therefore, the aim of the City of Barcelona is to achieve that in the City of Barcelona **anybody** can develop himself or herself entirely, in an autonomous and efficient way.

The tool to achieve this aim is **Design for All**, which calls for the need to adapt environments, products and services, with the aim that everyone, including future generations, can participate in the construction of our society, with equal opportunities and participate in economic, social, cultural recreation and entertainment activities, as well as access, use and understand the various parts of the environment in an autonomous way, regardless of age, gender, capacities or cultural background.

However, to achieve that the City for All is a reality, it is necessary that everyone involved in the development take into consideration the same fact: **diversity**, and the same objective: **equal opportunities** for everyone and each one.

Therefore, it is necessary that politicians show enthusiasm and decisiveness in these matters; that technicians receive all the necessary information on accessibility and that they are certain that the real objective of their projects is to satisfy needs, and that the citizens also receive the necessary information to be able to demonstrate a subjective attitude on their surroundings, because **the City for All should be a social project** that continues to be enriched with the proposals and suggestions of its citizens, independently of their capacities, beliefs, power or their district they live in.

Achieving this aim means Barcelona being a harmonious city with its inhabitants and visitors.

However, to achieve that the city is really a City for All, it is essential that we are aware of our citizen's characteristics and needs.

What does “All” mean?

When I refer to All, I mean each and everyone. On the one hand, a **group** referring to: common needs, as human beings, the ones who live or visit a city. And, on the other hand, an **individual**: referring to the particular needs of each person, the right to differ and the right to choose the life we want to lead and to choose the same opportunities as our co-citizens.

But, referring also to All, we must take into account the fact that people change, that needs change (individual as well as social needs), that technology is advancing and other generations will follow after us.

So, in designing the City for All we must think about diversity, in other words, we must have the conviction that each individual is unique and unrepeatable and, therefore, contributes unique and unrepeatable experiences to society.

According to this, when designing a product, service or area we must take into account:

- **Dimensional and functional diversity:** height, weight, age (babies, children, adolescents, adults and the elderly), velocity, vertical reach, visual or audible sharpness, intellectual capacity, etc.
- **Cultural diversity;** values, wishes, interests, beliefs.....
- **Changes:** apart from biological changes related to age, individual changes exist due to personal choice (change of address, pregnancy, etc.) and other times as consequence of an accident or illness, all of which have repercussions affecting our interaction with the environment.

These very changes may be temporary (leg or arm fracture, loss of sense of smell due to a common cold, etc.) or permanent (hemiplegia, paraplegia, etc.).

However, when designing and taking into account diversity, we cannot forget that a person may have two, or more, of these interaction problems with the environment (a child with a fractured foot visiting a country with a foreign language, pregnant and visually impaired, a deaf immigrant, etc.).

On the other hand, we must bear in mind that immigrants and visitors (from towns, cities, regions and other countries) encounter the necessary elements to ensure their integration and so are no longer immigrants or foreigners, in other words, a friendly and respectful environment with the cultural differences and new customs of the new citizen generates friendliness and respect from him or her towards the culture and customs of the environment and, therefore, being easier to live among and with other cities.

In short, the concept “All” consists of all, each and every one of the citizens, respecting the changes that individuals undergo in life and the characteristics that make them different towards others. However, it also includes future generations, referring to seeing sustainability as well as the demonstration of new needs or desires.

Our needs: autonomy in daily life and necessary journeys

Autonomy in our daily life refers to the activities that are carried out every day, from the moment we rise until it is time to go to bed.

Carrying out these activities in an autonomous way means not having anyone to help us to get out of bed, shower, prepare and have breakfast, leave home, go to work or school walking or by means of transport (public or private), access the building in which the activity is carried out, to having lunch at home or at a restaurant, returning home, enjoying recreation and entertainment activities, having dinner in a chosen location and going back to bed.

For all this to be possible, it is necessary that households, products and product packaging, buildings, streets, services, means of communication and transport can be used by everyone independently of their capacities of cultural background.

But it is also essential that the journeys that link the different activities or spaces (the necessary journeys) are accessible.

Necessary journeys are the journeys that a person undertakes throughout the day to carry out daily activities: to go from home to a shop, college, work, to the doctor, an entertainment venue, a park or visit a member of family or a friend.

According to the City for All concept, every person should be able to carry out these journeys in an autonomous way, without the help of anyone and, furthermore, to be able to choose whether to go on foot, by public or private transport.

If the city has been designed taking into consideration "All", any individual will be able to carry out necessary daily journeys without problems. However, if one of these elements or components is no longer accessible (an out of order elevator, a bus with no low floor, a car parked on the pavement, or a building contract (that does not comply with security rules and regulations) then the journey will be no longer feasible.

So, when designing a City for All we must take into consideration that all elements (buildings, urban furniture, bus stops, train stations, homes, etc.) are accessible and, likewise, the journeys that link the different stages in between must also be accessible.

On the other hand, for all of us to be truly independent, it is necessary that each one of the objects and products that we are in contact with on a daily basis are safe and easy to use by everyone.

We must remember that from the moment of having covered this basic necessity of autonomy, we can confront, with guarantees of success, our personal development and the quest for happiness.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Having experienced Barcelona's will to become a City for All and outlined the basic needs citizens have, we must ask ourselves. **And after the Accessibility Plan, what then?**

The answer is evidently in the hands of the City Council that channels the lines of activity that it deems correct, but I do not want to waste this opportunity, that the very City Council offered me, to express, through this publication, what I believe is necessary for the immediate future.

Continuing the Management of the Accessibility Plan.

Although for its scope, maybe it would be more exact to name it City Plan for All, I believe the present Working Group should be maintained to promote the new directions they initiate, but also to continue overseeing projects and improving the interventions, studying in depth the aspects that are still unresolved, for example, children's playgrounds or fountains, as well as other details that, day to day, a solution is necessary to: ensuring that the building projects are not an inconvenience to anybody, that audible traffic lights are being continually installed in locations where they are needed.

And, especially, that the City Council's resources are destined for the improvement of accessibility of the city and with maximum efficiency.

Remember, also, the need to pressure administrations that offer services to our city so that their buildings are adapted swiftly.

Rules and Regulations

It is obvious that at present, the Decree that establishes the criteria of accessibility, in a lot of respects, clearly overtaken by experience and that, on the other hand, presents important gaps, especially in areas of communication.

Therefore, I believe the City Council should demand and collaborate in its update and, in the case of this not being possible, establish its own decrees to guarantee that private enterprise takes responsibility with regard to this and that, referring to services and public spaces, they demand practices (habitual in our city) like: the alignment of urban furniture, the provision of boarding platforms at bus stops that require them or information in different formats so that people with visual impairment or hearing disability may access it.

Participation

Experience demonstrates that citizens collaborate and get involved in the city when they are asked to and the adequate participation tools are chosen.

Therefore, taking into consideration that urban projects carried out in our city with the aim of improving the quality of life of the citizens, it is necessary those technicians begin to learn to gather the demands, desire, and expectations that the residents of the area in which the intervention will take place.

This does not mean, in any case, that the citizens design the space, but they can be confident that their demands are being attended to and that the technician responsible is sufficiently approachable and flexible enough to communicate with and reach agreement on, without destroying the real result of the project, which is to satisfy the real needs of all the citizens.

Housing

Considering the demographic ageing of our population, something which, on the one hand, we should be content with because we are living longer and enjoying a better quality of life. And dealing with what I have mentioned earlier in this book about the fact that 40% of the population have problems interacting with their habitual environment, it is necessary to urgently modify the minimum living requirements of housing to ensure a person who sees a decrease in their physical capacity is not forced to change home because their wheelchair cannot enter the toilet or kitchen

Therefore, beyond what is obliged from us by current standards, all housing should be designed in such a way that its transformation into an accessible home is possible through a small investment.

We must also think of the pedagogical role that the Municipal Board of Housing may have concerning the study of new housing models. Because, taking into account that the structure of families today is far different from that of 40 years ago, it seems to be essential to move ahead and stop building inflexible apartments with a fixed number of rooms, and open the door to accessible housing, flexible in their interior distribution for, in this way, adapt itself to each stage of life and with common spaces flattering the co-existence.

Transport

Considering that there will always be persons that will not be able to use public transport and a good deal of these will not be able to use it because of age, it should be foreseen that the current door to door service not only benefits those that possess a Certificate of Disability, but everyone who may need it.

On the other hand, considering that the majority of times we take a taxi as a means of transport is because we are carrying a heavy load or baby pram, or we have to travel to less accessible areas of the city. It would be interesting that taxis were a vehicle planned not solely private use but public use and that, would be therefore, like other public transport in the city – an accessible service.

Metropolitisation

The heading is very inaccessible but its meaning shouldn't be.

What I would like to convey in this section is that four million people live in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and that we move from one municipality to another without even noticing.

So, as in the field of transport, it is necessary that the municipality that makes up this area begin to share common accessibility criteria and hence, the level of urban quality and ease of use of public space in a particular municipality could be compared with a neighbouring one.

New Technologies

Although previously I wrote that the City Council is adapting its website so that it will be accessible to people with visual or manipulation problems, we should also bear in mind the infinite possibilities that these technologies offer us to improve management processes, communication and even, citizen participation.

Therefore, it is necessary to group the efforts into two complimentary meanings:

On the one hand, explore the possibilities of new services through Internet, mobile telephones, radio, television or GPS, etc.

And on the other hand, promote the knowledge and the use of these technologies on the behalf of all the citizens, if we don't, we run the risk that, more and more, there is a bigger gap among people who can access and enjoy new services and those that don't know or can't.

New abilities

Its evident that throughout the years, abilities and priorities of municipal governments have been changing and, recently, the City Council, apart from offering services, has been formed more and more as an element of intermediation between the interests and wishes of the citizens and what the private sector offers.

Having said this, I believe that the Barcelona City Council should progressively establish itself as the mouthpiece for the citizen-consumer and defend their interests.

This can be initially done through two lines of action.

On the one hand, giving priority to the contracting of services and products to those companies that who demonstrate their will to make themselves more and more designed for all and demonstrate their social responsibility.

And, on the other hand, demanding from companies situated in our municipal limit that they offer the most accessible services possible. For example, more user friendly cash dispensers, easily understood receipts or information in formats which people can access.

In this way, the City Council would contribute this necessary sensitivity to the private sector.

Learning and Training ourselves

Finally, I believe it would be necessary and beneficial for the city that all of us together made an effort so that this city improves. To achieve this, it would be necessary to establish ongoing training courses for municipal technicians as well as for those who collaborate in the construction of the city ensuring the updating of knowledge relating to this field.

On the other hand, considering that Barcelona has been leading for a long time, this tendency that cities must be more and more for All, I believe that it is necessary to broaden the relationship ties with other cities that could inspire new solutions for the future.

Bearing in mind that when that the Accessibility Plan works are finished, Barcelona will be a more accessible city, guaranteeing the total autonomy and equal opportunities for all the citizens, it is a quest that goes well beyond.

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Text: Francesc Aragall i Clavé

Photography: Marc Sol

Translation: Design for All Foundation (English)

Mar García de Sola (Spanish)

© Edition: Design for All Foundation

April 2003

Graphic design and production: Despunta

Printing: Imatge i Producció Editorial

2^a Edition: November 2003

D.L.: B-46.126-2003

With collaboration of City Council of Barcelona