

## **Design for All in Luxembourg**

***Silvio Sagramola, Design for All Luxembourg.***

***<http://www.d4aluxembourg.info/index.php/design-for-all>  
silvio.sagramola@pt.lu***

### **Abstract**

**When the concept "Design for All" gained increasing importance at political level in Luxembourg, the challenge consisted in promoting its correct understanding and implementation.**

**A promising way to achieve that goal was the creation of the non-profit organization "Design for all Luxembourg" in 2015. The initiators of that new association were members of the "European Concept for Accessibility Network – EucAN", having been the (co-)authors of a number of publications presenting strategies and international showcases on how to understand, build up and maintain solutions "for all" in various contexts.**

**A very popular EuCAN achievement had been the definition of "seven interdependent factors for a successful implementation of Design for All" presented in 2010 with the publication "ECA for Administration". Translated into 7 languages, the "7 IFS" have been adopted and copied in a huge number of projects and initiatives.**

**The "7 IFS" are based on the following headlines: 1. commitment of decision-makers, 2. coordination and continuity, 3. networking and participation, 4. strategic planning, 5. knowledge management, 6. optimization of resources, 7. Communication and marketing.**

**It was obvious since the beginning, that the "7 IFS" would also be the starting point for the development of the project "Erliefnis Baggerweier", which literally translated means "Experience Gravel Pond".**

**Keywords: *Design for All, Baggerweier, Schengen, 7 IFS, lake, ponton, Tourism for All, social inclusion.***

## **Context**

### **The origins of the project "Erliefnis Baggerweier"**

**The appearance of the local recreation area "Etangs de Remerschen" (lakes of Remerschen) in the municipality of Schengen along the southern Moselle region in Luxembourg, goes back to the 1960s, after the end of local gravel and sand quarrying. The remaining pits filled with water, creating thus an area with several natural lakes, and the local fauna and flora quickly regained the upper hand over the fallow land.**

**That "renaturing" was even accelerated as the area borders directly on the national and international bird sanctuary (Ramsar and Natura 2000 area) "Haff Réimech", the most species-rich wetland in Luxembourg.**

**With the time passing, the whole area has more and more evolved towards the today attractive area for swimming and nature walking.**

**Whereas the municipality of Schengen invests considerable effort for managing and maintaining the whole area, it is a fact that the available resources are limited. In consequence, a series of incidents and accidents had lead to negative publicity in the media.**

**It was in that context, that the idea came up to entrust the management of the area to a non-profit organization responsible for transforming the project in terms of tourism in the sense of a "destination for all".**

**However, all measures were to be based on the three pillars of sustainability - social, ecological, economic, which for the initiators of the project "Erliefnis Baggerweier" are part of a correctly implemented "Design for All – approach", for example:**

**A stable and permanent destination, accessible to all, inclusion and integration, focus on regionality, economic factor for the region, protection of the natural environment, joining the national quality label(s)**

**The organisation "Erliefnis Baggerweier" was created in 2018 to start negotiations with the municipality of Schengen, a series of ministries and sponsors.**



***Image 1.- Panoramic view of the lake Baggerweier.***

## **The project**

**As already mentioned, the “Baggerweier-area” has become a popular bathing and fishing area located in a nature reserve. As it is located in the so-called border region “three-countries-corner” its visitors and guests are coming from Luxembourg, France and Germany.**

**So, the project is about welcoming guests and offering appropriate infrastructure and services while respecting sustainability goals.**

**From the very beginning, it has been a main concern of the project management, that the initiative has to provide new perspectives to employees who, for a variety of reasons, have encountered difficulties in finding their way in the open job market.**

**Before starting the project, contracts were successfully concluded with:**

- **the municipality of Schengen entrusting the use of the area and guaranteeing the support of municipal services**
- **the ministry for labor and attached administrations guaranteeing the salaries of the employees**
- **the ministry for family and integration guaranteeing correct infrastructure and equipment**
- **the ministry for tourism supporting investments aimed at increasing touristic attractiveness**
- **the ministry of the environment supporting the organization of a preliminary sustainability study**
- **several partners and sponsors supporting the cost of infrastructure work and specific equipment**
- **experts in the field of design for all and sustainability.**

In January 2020, the project “Erliefnis Baggerweier” could be launched with 24 employees, despite the critical situation due to the COVID pandemic.

## First steps

Important transformation work had to be executed to improve the accessibility of the entrance area to the site, including the building with toilets and showers, such as the ticketing office and the ramp connecting the entrance area with the lakes area.



*Image 2.-Complete retrofit of changing rooms Image 3.-Height change in ticket office*



*Image 4.-Construction of smooth ramp*



*Image 5.-Creation of wooden paths*



**Special equipment had to be bought to clean, on a daily basis, the beaches around the lake from the excrements of the massive wild geese (Canada geese and Nil geese) occurring there and being under protection.**



***Image 6.- Nil and Canadian geese***



***Image 7.- Some swans are also present***



***Image 8.-Cleaning the lakeshore***

**The pathway around the lake needed to be repaired in several places to allow a more easy use by the visitors and guests.**

**Visitor's toilets "for all" had to be installed at different places.**

**Watch towers had to be installed to guarantee the safety of the swimmers.**



**Image 9.- Watch tower to guarantee Image 10.-Comfortable pathway swimmers safety**



**Image 11.-Terrace in front of children beach Image 12.-The paths connect all areas.**

**A special “ponton” was installed to allow all interested swimmers to get into the water, including users of wheelchairs, blind persons or any others persons with reduced mobility.**



**Image 13.- This newly designed ponton allows everyone to enter safely in the water**





**Image 14.- Children may jump to the water**



**Image 15.-A ramp allows a smooth entrance to those afraid from water**



**Image 16.- The ramp is also used to enter in the water with the amphibious wheelchair**

## **The “7 IFS” in the project**

**During all the preparation steps and since the official start of the project, the “7 IFS” have always been the “fil rouge” in every decision making.**

**Searching for the commitment of various decision-makers to be contacted at many different levels has always been the first**



**prerequisite to guarantee the success of the project. It has precisely been the differences in expectations that brought up the obligation for the project to being broadly approached and organized right from the beginning.**

**The coordination of all initiatives was and is ensured by a dedicated and competent manager who is very well connected in the community and has been able to further expand this advantage with the ongoing development of the project.**

**The networking works very well through the regular exchange with the many different donors, all of whom have become real partners, but also through the contacts with many local stakeholders and businesspeople. Of course, the employees are actively involved in all planning and execution. And finally, there is permanently an open ear for suggestions from the guests and the local population.**

**The original action plan is constantly revised and adapted to new circumstances. It was therefore also possible to continue the project despite the corona pandemic. When no guests could come, work was done on the infrastructure and the repair of the area.**

**With a view at the specificity of the employees, the knowledge management is of course an essential factor for the success of any new initiatives. Ongoing training courses are being organised, such as lifeguard training, the correct use of hedge trimmers or chainsaws, de-escalation strategies in conflict situations with aggressive guests, etc.**



***Image 16/17/18.- Work and training activities were adapted with flexibility to changing circumstances***

**In addition, with the support of external experts, studies in the fields of security and safety, waste management, sustainability, etc.. are carried out to ensure that the project can evolve in the intended sense at ecological, touristic, and social levels.**

**These measures, including their internal communication, are supported through regular supervision by a specialist in Human Resources.**

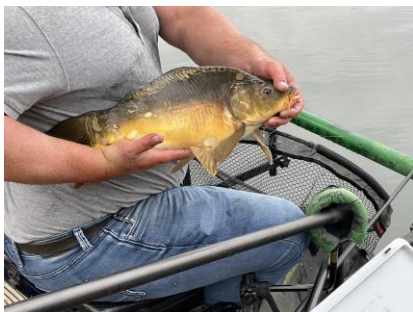
**Admittedly, the touristic orientation of the project facilitates the design and implementation of new ideas, but this also has a financial impact. It is therefore necessary to check for possible optimisation of existing resources before looking for new ones.**

**One example is the creation of our carp pond, the so-called "Carpodrome". The massive growth of algae was difficult to control and the solution consisted in using carp, which use mainly the bottom of the pond, where they whirl up the ground and thereby clouding the water. Cloudy water hinders the sunrays to reach the bottom, thus**

slowing down the growth of algae. At the same time, it was possible to gain new clients, namely carp anglers, who otherwise had to travel miles abroad. In addition, the practised "no kill procedure" means a win-win situation for fish and anglers.



*Image 19 and 20.- Fishing areas where "no kill procedure" is practiced*



*Image 21 and 22.- Fishermen returning the fish to the water*

Another example for the optimisation of resources is the area of increasing importance of event management, such as staff celebrations, weddings, children's birthday parties, etc., which allows for using the existing infrastructure even when the weather is not ideal for bathing.



***Image 23 and 24.- Different events when the weather is not ideal for bathing.***

**Supplemental activities, such as a Christmas market, a national garden fair, a Halloween party, etc. also contribute significantly to the local integration of the project.**



***Image 25 and 26.- Christmas market***





*Image 27 and 28.- Halloween party*

**Not to be forgotten is the appreciation for our employees' experience at level of client-contacts.**

**The successful visibility of the project makes communication and marketing relatively easy, and yet it remains an important challenge for not forgetting the original values of the project.**

### **The future**

**The "Baggerweier Experience" project offers the possibility and flexibility to develop a wide range of new ideas and, at the same time, of tasks to be carried out by the employees with the aim to identify and further develop their talents.**

**On the other hand, the project also offers the possibility to create new offers basing on special talents or skills from the employees. For example, thanks to the special experience of one employee in permaculture, the idea came up to create herb garden and to sell the products to local restaurants.**

**However, as tempting as it can be to keep talented employees within the project, the main goal remains placement on the open job market. Appreciation and mutual respect continue being the driving forces. Networking with our partners and many other actors in the region facilitate contacts between the employees of the project and potential employers and offers chances for professional development in the open labor market.**

## **Conclusion**

**Through its wide and multifaceted orientation, the project "Erliefnis Baggerweier" allows for proving that the concept "Design for All" is far more than just a strategy to implement accessibility in the built environment to only benefit persons with disabilities or elderly people.**

## **References**

***Association "Erliefnis Baggerweier***

***<https://www.baggerweier.lu/en/whoweare/>***

***Design for All Luxembourg***

***<http://www.d4aluxembourg.info/index.php/design-for-all>***

***EuCAN -The European Concept for Accessibility Network - ECA documents***

***<http://www.d4aluxembourg.info/index.php/documents/category/3-eucan-documents>***



***Antoni Remesar, Associate professor at the University of Barcelona. Director of CR POLIS. PI of the HAR2017-88672-R project; Coordinator of the Master in Urban Design: Art, City, Society. Member of the CRIT research group (Creation, Innovation and Urban Transformation) at the University of Barcelona (UB). He has been coordinator of the PhD programme Public Space and Urban Regeneration at the University of Barcelona (1999 - 2017). He has been Vice-Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies (2006-2016) at the Faculty of Fine Arts (UB). He has supervised 32 doctoral theses and 10 competitively funded research projects on Public Art, Urban Design, Urban Regeneration.***