



## **ENRIQUE TOVAR / EETOV**

**México**

***Eetov is a design studio focused on accessibility, sustainability and experimental design based in Mexico City.***

***Founded in 2019 by Enrique Tovar, architect member of the College of Architects of Mexico City, LEED Green Associate by the USGBC and Certified Professional in Accessible Built Environments (CPABE) by the IAAP.***

***The formal expression of his work focuses on the forcefulness and pure forms of its projects, where each of them responds to the historical, social, economic, and environmental context, seeking to create a strong identity in the relationship between the object and its user.***

***His work has earned him publications in media such as The Wall Street Journal, Dezeen, RTF and Architectural Digest, he has also participated in international firms where he is a member of the design team for projects of various typologies and scales***

## **Unconscious barriers: A challenge for inclusion in built environments**

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**Keyword: Barriers, inclusion, built environments, disability, accessibility**

**During any planning and design process, it is usually essential to take the particular needs of the client as the main premise to develop a project, but sometimes the needs of a few do not usually satisfy those of many. That is where the unconscious barriers are largely born.**

**When we talk about inclusion in built environments, it is essential to address the primary aspect of accessibility, such as adopting appropriate measures to ensure access for people with disabilities, on equal terms with others, to the physical environment, as indicated by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**

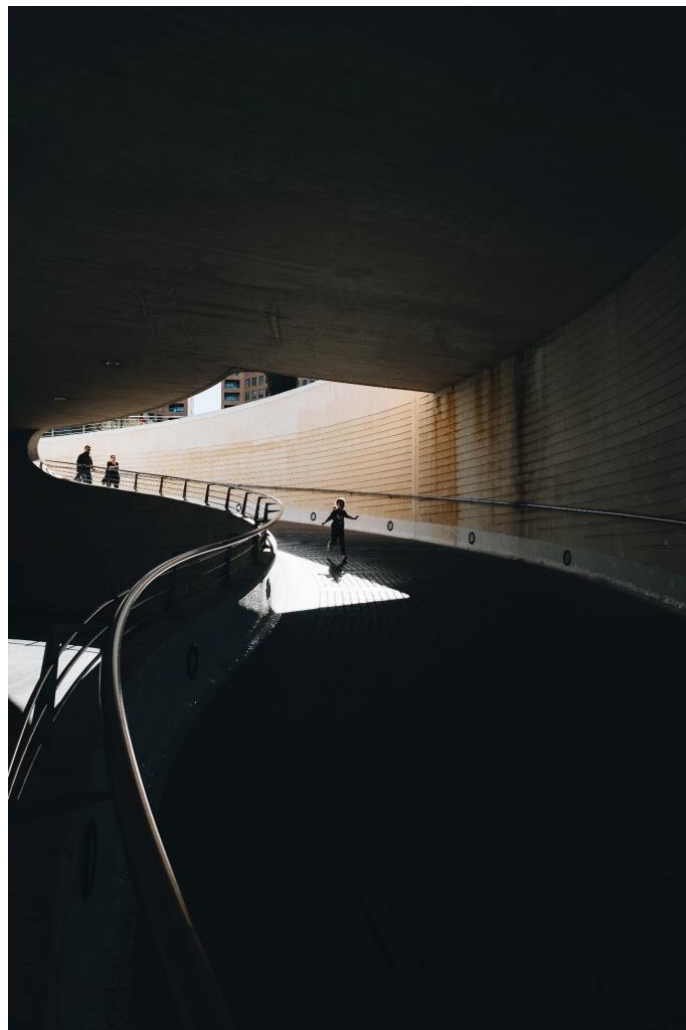
**It is a fact that no one is openly or deliberately seeking to create architecture that is hostile to people with disabilities. But the consequences of the decisions and actions taken, are a determining factor to create unconscious barriers. This text will address some examples.**

**Assume that universal design is not required in the project**

**Assuming that the user for whom it is being designed in no way lives or will live with a disability is one of the most common**

**misconceptions. It is important to understand that accessibility benefits us all so that the decisions made today can be the inclusion of tomorrow.**

**In many architectural projects, it is common to have programs with extremely particular needs, which is why it is common to see projects such as “A building for the railway heritage of a small city in South America” being developed. Within the specificity of these projects, there is a false conception that it is not necessary to integrate universal design strategies since this is only reserved for large public spaces of mass assistance.**



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**The reality is that universal design is not an independent discipline from design, it is an inherent part of built environments in the same way that structural calculations or lighting design are contemplated, so its integration in any planning process is essential for a satisfactory result.**

**Beyond basing design decisions on plastic or aesthetic elements of sophisticated argumentative complexity, our main premise must be the inescapable fact that we are designing for human beings in their different facets and therefore designing for everyone is the only way to ensure inclusion in built environments.**

**The barriers are not always the absence of accessibility (Sometimes it is its misapplication)**

**How many buildings have only one staircase as the only access route to the upper levels? How many times have we come across ramps whose slopes far exceed the recommended slopes? Cases like this are found recurrently in spaces whose objective is to comply beyond providing a solution.**

**It is not a question of compliance, but rather that the strategies must be articulated with each other. What is the point of having accessible access doors in a building if there is no way to reach them? It is necessary to understand that accessibility and universal design are a global concept that is made up of different elements that together create the necessary conditions for the access of people with disabilities, on equal terms with others, to the environment. It is vital to know the particularities of inclusion strategies to apply them effectively, recognizing the differences of individuals consciously.**



***Unnamed\_ ©Vidar Nordli-Mathisen***

**Usability must always prevail over the need for mere compliance. To achieve this goal, a great solution is to strengthen the basic concepts of inclusion in built environments in architecture schools, so that inconsistencies in the application of inclusion strategies can be corrected from an early stage.**

**The accessible design appears until the building is already built**

**In a certain way, built environments speak and their accessibility conditions say a lot about them. It is to be expected that in buildings of the last century, conditions that would allow the inclusion of people with disabilities were not contemplated.**

**The real problem lies in those contemporary buildings that are still waiting for a wake-up call to implement reasonable adjustments. It is never too late to improve the accessibility of a building, but the best stage to incorporate universal design is always during the schematic design phase.**

**During the pre-design and schematic design stage, we will be able to ensure not only the accessibility of the building itself, laying out its basic premises, but also the best way in which we can connect with accessible infrastructure from public transport stations or simply through the better roads to approach the building from the sidewalk.**



***Unnamed\_ ©Mufid Majnun***

**In subsequent stages, such as the development of design and construction documents, it will be possible to ensure that the general design of the project will be homogeneous with those basic accessibility strategies implemented by code, as well as possible additional approaches that will ensure universal design in the building.**

**Inclusion in built environments is not optional and it is up to us that conditions improve day by day for everyone, since a more accessible world is one of the solutions to face not only the challenges in the matter but also in favor of sustainable development goals (SDGs).**

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