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Design for All

Guest Editor : Debra Ruh,

CEO and Founder of Ruh Global IMPACT

Executive Chair and Co-Founder of Billion-Strong Organization

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Guest Editor:

Debra Ruh,

CEO and Founder of Ruh Global IMPACT

Executive Chair and Co-Founder of Billion-Strong Organization

Debra Ruh is a renowned international speaker and advocates who specializes in disability inclusion strategy, innovation, technology, and branding. She is an influential market leader, a published author, and a successful entrepreneur.

Debra hosts a widely acclaimed program called "Human Potential at Work," which has a broad audience in 92 countries and 113 regions. As the founder and CEO of Ruh Global IMPACT, she takes pride in her work, along with her role as the Co-founder and Executive Chair of Billion Strong.

As the creator and executive chair of TecAccess previously, Debra played a vital role in the early stages of the award-winning firm.

During the early 2000s, she generated significant revenue and built a team of technologists, with over 90% having disabilities. Despite her achievements, she remained humble and committed to promoting diversity and inclusivity in the workplace.

She strongly believes in all individuals' potential, stating that "the true disability is the inability to recognize human potential." With this conviction, she founded Ruh Global IMPACT in 2013 as a social enterprise and think tank to tackle global issues.

Debra and Ruh Global IMPACT founded a global nonprofit named Billion Strong (www.Billion-Strong.org) in 2021. Its mission is to promote disability identity and empowerment worldwide.

Debra has authored three books: Inclusion Branding, which is accessible in English, Spanish, and Arabic, and as an audiobook on Audible; Tapping into Hidden Human Capital; and Finding Your Voice Using Social Media. https://tiny.cc/DebraRuh or www.RuhGlobal.com .

Debra Ruh is a well-known public figure and speaker who was honored to address the United Nations General Assembly at the Conference of State Parties 9th session (COSP9) by the President's office of the UN on May 13, 2016. Recently, she was chosen to assist the United Nations (UN), International Labor Organization (ILO), and Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN). Moreover, in 2018, the U.S. State Department appointed Debra Ruh as a global speaker and ambassador for the United States. She talks about inclusion and disability while traveling to foreign countries. In 2018, she was chosen as a Global Goodwill Ambassador.

She is honored to hold the position of board director and officer at the World Institute on Disabilities (WID) since 2018. Additionally, I

have served as a board advisor for AI in Women and Ethics from 2020 to 2021. She is also a member of the Forbes Business Council, Forbes Women's Council, and Forbes Employment and Empowerment Council since 2021.

It is a great honor for Debra to serve as an ambassador for these incredible organizations: Zero Project, ConnectAID, Business Disability Forum (UK), Valuable 500 (Global), and Purple Light Up (UK).

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Guest Editorial :

I am deeply honored to serve as the Guest Editor for the June 2023 edition, Vol-18 No-6 of the Design for All Institute of India Journal. I want to sincerely thank Dr. Sunil Bhatia for entrusting me with this role and express my heartfelt gratitude to all the authors who have contributed to the journal.

Our journal's focus for this edition is on the themes of Inclusion, Disability, Diversity, Identity, and Accessibility. We're excited to share a compilation of articles that delve into the unique experiences and viewpoints of individuals with disabilities and the newest advancements and trends in assistive technology and accessibility.

In this issue, readers'll discover articles that delve into personal stories of resilience and triumph and offer insightful analyses of the intricate connections between disability and other identities, including race, gender, and sexuality.

Discover articles exploring the fascinating realm of assistive technology, highlighting the newest advancements that enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities by enabling them to live more autonomously, communicate more efficiently, and access information and services with greater ease than ever before.

Welcome to journal , which celebrates the resilience and diversity of the global disability community. We aim to inspire, inform, and empower you through the articles in this issue. We hope they will ignite conversations and ideas on how to collaborate to promote inclusivity and equality for all individuals with disabilities.

Thank you for joining us on this journey, and we hope you enjoy reading this issue of our magazine.

Design for All

Design for All (DfA) is an inclusive design philosophy that recognizes the importance of creating products, services, and systems accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities. Inclusion, identity, diversity, and accessibility are key components of DfA in relation to disability, ensuring that people with disabilities are valued, respected, and included in all aspects of life.

"Design for All" is designed for human diversity, social inclusion, and equality" (EIDD Stockholm Declaration, 2004). The European Commission "encourages manufacturers and service providers to produce new technologies for everyone: technologies suitable for older people and people with disabilities, as much as the teenage techno-wizard. Design for All originates in barrier-free accessibility for people with disabilities and the broader notion of universal design.

Regarding disability, DfA is particularly important as it ensures that people with disabilities are not excluded from using products, services, or systems due to inaccessible design.

Inclusion is a core value of DfA. It recognizes the importance of creating an inclusive society where people with disabilities are valued and included in all aspects of life. The inclusive design ensures everyone can use products, services, and systems easily and with dignity. It also promotes the social inclusion of people with disabilities by removing social participation barriers.

Identity is another important aspect of DfA about disability. For many people with disabilities, their identity is closely linked to their disability. Therefore, it is important to design products, services, and

systems that are not stigmatizing or exclusionary. By recognizing and respecting the identity of people with disabilities, DfA ensures they are not marginalized or discriminated against.

Diversity is also an essential component of DfA. Disability is a diverse experience, and DfA recognizes that there is no "one size fits all" solution for designing for disability. It is important to consider the diverse needs, preferences, and abilities of people with disabilities when designing products, services, and systems.

Accessibility is the cornerstone of DfA. Accessibility means designing products, services, and systems that everyone can use, regardless of their abilities. This includes designing products, services, and systems that are easy to use, intuitive and require minimal physical or cognitive effort. Accessibility also means ensuring that information is presented clearly and understandably, using appropriate formats and languages.

Disability inclusion and accessibility are fundamental human rights essential for creating a more equitable and just society. To achieve inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities, we need to shift our mindset from viewing disability as a problem or a burden to recognizing it as a natural and valuable aspect of human diversity.

This shift in mindset requires a comprehensive and intersectional approach that addresses the multiple barriers and challenges that people with disabilities face in different areas of their lives, including education, employment, healthcare, transportation, and social participation.

To achieve this vision, we must invest in accessible infrastructure and technology, promote inclusive design and universal access, and

provide comprehensive and culturally sensitive support and services for people with disabilities.

At the same time, we need to challenge the social, cultural, and economic structures that perpetuate ableism and discrimination against people with disabilities. This requires raising awareness and promoting a culture of respect, inclusion, and celebration of difference.

In final words, India has a large and diverse population, with a significant number of people with disabilities. As a result, Design for All has become an increasingly important concept in India in recent years, with various stakeholders working towards creating an inclusive and accessible society for all individuals, including those with disabilities.

Universal Design is becoming increasingly popular in India, with many architects and designers incorporating the principles of Universal Design into their work.

Whether you are a person with a disability, a caregiver, a researcher, a policymaker, or simply an interested reader, our magazine has something for you. Join us as we explore the rich and multifaceted world of disability identity and disability rights.

As an editor for the *"Design for All Institute of India"* issue, we aim to promote disability inclusion and accessibility through awareness and meaningful dialogue. Our collaboration with experts, advocates, and people with disabilities will offer diverse perspectives and insights to readers, driving positive change towards a more inclusive and accessible world.

In this "Design for All Institute of India" issue, we present 7 articles from leaders worldwide.

In his article *"The Power of Disability Identity: Uniting and Empowering a Global Movement," Dr. LaMondré Pough* emphasizes the crucial role of a positive disability identity in driving global change. The article introduces Billion Strong, a movement that aims to unite, elevate, and empower individuals with disabilities worldwide. With over one billion people living with disabilities, it is essential to recognize the importance of cultivating a strong disability identity. The article also highlights the potential consequences of neglecting this issue. It emphasizes the significant achievements a united and empowered global disability community can accomplish, as demonstrated by Billion Strong's initiatives.

In the second research, *Nabil Eid* discusses the importance of being prepared for natural disasters through *Disability-Inclusive Disaster Management - Leveraging ICT Accessibility*. It is crucial to have infrastructure and accessibility tools in place to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not left behind during emergencies. Inclusive disaster preparedness and response can save lives and guarantee that everyone can access vital resources and services. However, the challenges during disasters can be significant and complex, such as the loss of infrastructure and communication channels, which can create communication barriers and hinder people with disabilities from receiving critical information in real time.

In *Richard J. Streitz's "Smart Cities and Smart Communities: A Global Perspective,"* the third paper provides an overview of how

advanced technology transforms urban environments into more efficient, sustainable, and livable. Through the use of information and communication technologies, such as advanced sensors, data analytics, and automation, smart cities can optimize services in real-time, including transportation, energy, water, waste management, public safety, and healthcare. This article also examines the global perspective on smart cities and communities, highlighting how cities and countries adopt smart city initiatives to improve urban infrastructure and services. Finally, the paper explores the key challenges and opportunities of implementing smart city initiatives.

In the fourth article, *Puneet Singh Singhal* shares his *Vision for Promoting Disability Inclusion and Accessibility on a Global Scale*. He draws on his personal experiences with poverty, domestic violence, and non-visible disabilities to underscore the importance of inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) worldwide. The article highlights the need to eliminate stigma and misconceptions surrounding non-visible disabilities, foster truly inclusive environments, and recognize intersectionality. Singhal stresses the importance of collective responsibility among nations, sectors, and individuals in working towards a future that is diverse, inclusive, equitable, and free from discrimination.

***Jasmin Ambiong's* article titled *"The Significance of Inclusive and Accessible Banking for the Financial Freedom of Blind and Visually Impaired Individuals"* highlights the shared objective of individuals with disabilities to attain financial independence. They aim to have the resources to sustain their necessities, travel, live independently, and have financial security for possible healthcare expenses in the future.**

To attain financial independence, individuals should be able to manage their finances freely. It is crucial that persons with disabilities are provided with access to various financial institutions, particularly banks, and feel accepted within these establishments. A crucial aspect of attaining financial independence is having a reliable bank. Banks need to recognize that individuals with vision impairments can manage their finances, particularly with assistive technology that grants them access to banking applications.

David Pérez Rueda **in his article examines *the critical role of international cooperation in supporting Latin America's efforts to implement the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. It underscores the importance of a holistic approach in addressing the region's various challenges, including economic and social inequality, insufficient infrastructure, climate change, and political instability. The article advocates for continuous commitment, innovation, and adaptation in pursuing these goals and emphasizes inclusion's crucial role, particularly for people with disabilities. It concludes that despite its challenges, Latin America has the potential to make a significant contribution to global sustainable development while also benefiting from international collaboration.**

In his article *"Project Discovery, Share Solutions, and Create Impact " Sayomdeb Mukherjee* defined the term "Solution" as finding an alternative approach to overcome a challenge by circumventing the problem, allowing individuals to lead a life of dignity and independence. This can take the form of a product, workflow, or unique methodology that empowers people to perform tasks that would typically pose difficulties.

Most of us rely on simple yet creative solutions in our daily routines, often unaware of their significance. People with disabilities, along with their caregivers or family members, are no exception. Unfortunately, these solutions often go unrecognized and unrecorded.

Conclusion

I am honored to have been given the opportunity to guest edit the latest issue of the "*Design for All Institute of India*" Journal.

I am deeply grateful to the talented authors who have contributed their exceptional articles, which have shed light on the essential issues of identity, inclusion, diversity, and accessibility. Their insights have enriched the discourse on the disability community, and I appreciate their valuable contributions.

I would also like to recognize and commend Dr. Sunil for his invitation to edit this issue of the journal. Dr. Sunil's steadfast dedication to promoting inclusive design has been instrumental in shaping the journal's focus on these critical issues.

Thanks to his visionary leadership, we have been able to create a platform that empowers voices that are often marginalized in mainstream discourse.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone involved!

Debra Ruh

Dr. LaMondré Pough, ***CEO of Billion Strong Organization***

Dr. LaMondré Pough stands out as a prominent diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) authority with over 25 years of experience in the field. As a champion of DEIB, he dedicates his efforts to fostering diverse and inclusive environments where individuals can truly feel they belong.

Central to LaMondré's work is his position as CEO of Billion Strong, where his advocacy for global inclusion is making a significant impact. His unwavering dedication to disability justice, racial justice, and COVID-19-related issues affecting marginalized communities led to his induction into the Susan Daniels Disability Mentoring Hall of Fame, Class of 2020.

LaMondré's passion for creating a better world for present and future generations fuels his DEIB pursuits. Drawing from his unique perspective on the intersectionality of minority and marginalized groups and his personal experiences, he challenges individuals to find purpose and self-improvement in every situation.

As a fervent entrepreneur, LaMondré is committed to assisting others in leading authentic, fulfilling, and purposeful lives. His devotion to the arts is evident in his role as Chairman of Arts Access South Carolina. Together with his consulting work, LaMondré Pough is a driving force for positive change in both disability identity and global inclusion.

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The Power of Disability Identity: Uniting and Empowering a Global Movement

Why is a Positive Disability Identity Essential for Global Change?

Dr. LaMondré Pough, CEO of Billion Strong Organization

Abstract

Billion Strong, a global identity movement led by and for people with disabilities, is dedicated to uniting, elevating, and empowering the global community of individuals with disabilities. By fostering a positive disability identity and effecting positive change, this organization aims to bridge the gap between isolation and community, marginalization, and inclusion. With well over one billion people living with some form of disability, it is essential to understand the importance of a strong disability identity in order to create a more equitable world. Let us examine the importance of fostering a strong disability identity, the potential consequences of not addressing this issue, and the incredible achievements we could accomplish together with a united and empowered global disability community through initiatives like Billion Strong.

Keywords: ***Disability, Stigma, Identity, Solidarity, People with Disabilities, Community, Advocacy, Awareness, Intersectionality.***

Why is a Positive Disability Identity Essential for Global Change?

The Consequences of Ignoring Disability Identity

When the identity of people with disabilities is not nurtured and developed, several negative consequences may arise, including:

a. Internalized Stigma: **Without a positive disability identity, individuals may internalize societal prejudices and misconceptions, leading to feelings of shame, low self-esteem, and isolation. This internalized stigma can perpetuate harmful cycles of self-doubt and may prevent people with disabilities from pursuing opportunities in various aspects of life, such as education, employment, and social participation.**

b. Limited Access to Resources: **A weak disability identity can make it more challenging for individuals to access essential resources, support, and accommodations, as they may not feel empowered to advocate for their needs. This lack of self-advocacy may result in barriers to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, further exacerbating the disparities faced by people with disabilities.**

c. Disconnection from the Disability Community: **A lack of connection to the disability community may exacerbate feelings of isolation and limit opportunities for mutual support, collaboration, and advocacy. By not engaging with others who share similar experiences, individuals with disabilities may miss out on valuable**

networks, mentorship opportunities, and the chance to build a stronger sense of identity within a supportive community.

d. Hindered Progress: **Without a strong disability identity, the collective voice of the disability community may be fragmented and less influential, ultimately slowing the progress towards achieving equal rights, accessibility, and inclusion. When individuals with disabilities do not identify with their disability or engage with the community, their collective bargaining power and influence in advocating for systemic change are weakened. This may result in slower progress toward policy reforms, improved accessibility standards, and the dismantling of societal barriers that hinder the full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.**

The Need for Global Unity and Solidarity

As the global community of people with disabilities faces many shared challenges, it is crucial to come together to:

a. Foster a Collective Voice: **A united global movement amplifies the voices of individuals with disabilities, making it more difficult for governments, institutions, and society to ignore their needs and demands. By joining forces across borders and cultures, the disability community can leverage its collective power to advocate for change, ensuring that the rights and needs of people with disabilities are taken into account in policymaking and public discourse.**

b. Share Knowledge and Resources: **By working together, the global disability community can pool knowledge, expertise, and resources to develop best practices, identify successful strategies, and support one another in overcoming barriers. This collaborative**

approach allows for the exchange of ideas and solutions, ultimately fostering innovation and more effective interventions to address the challenges faced by people with disabilities worldwide.

c. Raise Awareness and Combat Stereotypes: **A unified global movement can help to challenge and dismantle harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about disability, promoting understanding and respect. Through coordinated awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and media representation, the global disability community can work to shift public perceptions and attitudes, ultimately reducing stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities.**

d. Advocate for Systemic Change: **Through solidarity and collaboration, the global disability community can more effectively advocate for policy changes, increased accessibility, and equal opportunities for all. By presenting a united front, the disability community can exert pressure on governments and institutions to enact legislation, adopt policies, and implement programs that promote the inclusion, well-being, and empowerment of people with disabilities. This collective effort can lead to significant advancements in areas such as accessible infrastructure, inclusive education, and employment opportunities.**

The Risks of a Fragmented Disability Community

If the global disability community does not unite and strengthen its collective identity, several risks may emerge:

a. Inefficient Use of Resources: **Without coordination and collaboration, resources may be wasted on duplicative efforts or not reach those who need them most. A fragmented community may**

result in organizations and advocates working in isolation, leading to an inefficient allocation of funding, time, and expertise. By working together, the global disability community can ensure that resources are used effectively and strategically, maximizing their impact on the lives of people with disabilities.

b. Reduced Advocacy Impact: **A fragmented community may struggle to advocate effectively for systemic change as the collective voice and influence are diminished. When individuals and organizations within the disability community work in silos, their messages may become diluted, and their lobbying efforts may lack the strength and cohesion needed to sway policymakers and public opinion. By uniting under a shared mission and message, the disability community can present a powerful, unified voice that is more likely to drive meaningful change.**

c. Increased Vulnerability: **Divisions within the disability community may be exploited by opponents of progress, further marginalizing individuals with disabilities and hindering the achievement of equal rights and opportunities. Fragmentation may weaken the disability community's ability to resist attempts to undermine their rights, making it more challenging to maintain and advance the gains that have been made. By fostering unity and solidarity, the global disability community can better protect and advance the rights and well-being of all people with disabilities.**

The Power of a United and Empowered Global Disability Community

By fostering a strong disability identity and uniting the global disability community, incredible achievements become possible:

a. Accelerated Social and Political Change: **A united, empowered disability community can be a formidable force for change, pushing for policies and practices that promote equal rights, accessibility, and inclusion. This collective action can result in more effective lobbying efforts, increased political representation, and, ultimately, the creation of a more equitable society where people with disabilities can fully participate and thrive.**

b. Improved Access to Resources: **As a cohesive global movement, the disability community can more effectively advocate for and distribute resources, ensuring that all individuals with disabilities have the support they need to thrive. This includes improved access to healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and assistive technologies, which can significantly enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities.**

c. Greater Public Awareness and Understanding: **By coming together, the global disability community can more effectively challenge societal misconceptions and stereotypes, promoting empathy and respect for the unique experiences and contributions of individuals with disabilities. This shift in public perception can lead to the dismantling of barriers, both physical and attitudinal, that have long limited the opportunities available to people with disabilities.**

d. Enhanced Self-Esteem and Well-being: **A strong, positive disability identity can help individuals with disabilities develop greater self-esteem, resilience, and mental well-being, enabling them to participate more fully in and contribute to society. This**

increased sense of self-worth and belonging can have profound effects on overall mental health, reducing feelings of isolation and fostering a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment.

e. Increased Innovation and Problem-Solving: **A diverse and inclusive global disability community can generate novel ideas, solutions, and innovations, as individuals with disabilities bring unique perspectives and experiences to the table. This diversity of thought and experience can lead to groundbreaking innovations and creative problem-solving in various fields, such as technology, design, and public policy, ultimately benefiting society as a whole.**

The Importance of Inclusive Dialogue and All Voices

For the global disability community to truly thrive, it is essential to ensure that all voices are heard and valued. This includes:

a. Intersectional Perspectives: **Recognizing that individuals with disabilities may also belong to other marginalized groups (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status), it is crucial to address the complex and interrelated barriers they face. By adopting an intersectional approach, the global disability community can work to develop more inclusive policies and practices that account for the unique challenges faced by those who experience multiple forms of discrimination and marginalization.**

b. Representation and Participation: **Ensuring that individuals with disabilities are actively involved in decision-making processes, both within the disability community and in broader societal contexts, is essential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable world. By providing opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in leadership roles, share their experiences, and**

contribute to decision-making, the global disability community can help to break down barriers and create lasting change.

c. Encouraging Diverse Voices: **Actively seeking out and amplifying the voices of individuals with different types of disabilities and experiences helps to create a richer and more nuanced understanding of disability, challenging stereotypes and promoting respect for the full spectrum of human diversity. By engaging with diverse perspectives and embracing the unique contributions of each individual, the global disability community can work to create a more inclusive and empowering movement that benefits all people with disabilities.**

The importance of a strong disability identity cannot be overstated. By fostering a sense of unity, inclusivity, and empowerment within the global disability community, we can work together to effect meaningful change and create a more equitable world for all individuals with disabilities. Organizations like Billion Strong play a vital role in this process, helping to bridge the gap between isolation and community, marginalization and inclusion. By embracing the full spectrum of human diversity and actively engaging with diverse voices, we can build a more inclusive and powerful movement that is capable of driving positive change on a global scale. The time is now for the world to recognize and harness the incredible power of a united and empowered global disability community.

Richard J. Streitz

Mr. Streitz oversees both domestic and international operations for Ruh Global. In addition, he serves as the Vice-Chairman and Co-Founder of Billion Strong, where he actively advocates for accessibility inclusion strategies. His duties include developing strategic business plans, implementing global growth strategies, and supervising the expansion of the company's services in North America, Europe, and the Middle East. Richard focuses on establishing a strong client-based organization and improving operational efficiency across all aspects of the business. He also manages day-to-day responsibilities related to the company's finance, marketing, logistics, and information technologies. Richard's experience in accessibility and universal design concepts dates back 30 years, starting from his days as a Walt Disney Imagineer. He significantly created immersive and engaging themed rides, attractions, and environments during that time. He has contributed to designing and constructing numerous attractions,

including four major Disney theme parks and destination resorts worldwide.

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Smart Cities and Smart Communities: A Global Perspective

Richard J. Streitz, COO for Ruh Global IMPACT
Vice-Chairman and Co-Founder of Billion Strong

Abstract

This article provides an overview of the concept of smart cities and communities, which utilize advanced technologies to create more efficient, sustainable, and livable urban environments. The use of information and communication technologies, such as advanced sensors, data analytics, and automation, enables cities to optimize urban services in real-time, including transportation, energy, water, waste management, public safety, and healthcare. Additionally, the paper explores the global perspective on smart cities and communities, with many cities and countries adopting smart city initiatives to improve urban infrastructure and services. The key challenges and opportunities associated with implementing smart city initiatives are also examined.

Keywords: ***Smart cities, ICT, Infrastructure, Investment, Economic, Sustainability, community, urban, environment, Data.***

Smart Cities and Smart Communities: An Overview

Smart cities and smart communities are defined as urban areas that use information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance the quality and performance of urban services, reduce costs, and improve sustainability. These technologies include advanced sensors, data analytics, automation, and communication systems

that enable cities to collect, process, and analyze vast amounts of data in real-time. This data can then be used to optimize various urban services, such as transportation, energy, water, waste management, public safety, and healthcare.

Smart communities, on the other hand, are smaller-scale versions of smart cities that focus on improving the quality of life in specific neighborhoods or communities. Smart community initiatives aim to enhance social cohesion, promote citizen engagement, and foster community resilience through the use of ICTs.

Global Perspective on Smart Cities and Smart Communities

The concept of smart cities and communities has gained momentum across the globe, with many cities and countries adopting smart city initiatives to improve their urban infrastructure and services. According to a report by the International Data Corporation (IDC), global spending on smart city initiatives is expected to reach $158 billion in 2022, with Asia-Pacific leading the way in terms of investment and adoption.

Asia-Pacific

Asia-Pacific has emerged as a global leader in smart city initiatives, with cities such as Singapore, Tokyo, and Seoul leading the way. These cities have implemented a range of smart city technologies and initiatives, such as smart transportation systems, energy-efficient buildings, and intelligent public safety systems. In addition, many countries in the region have developed national smart city strategies to promote the adoption of smart city technologies and improve urban sustainability.

Europe

Europe has also been at the forefront of smart city initiatives, with cities such as Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Copenhagen implementing a range of innovative technologies and solutions to improve urban services. These cities have focused on developing integrated, data-driven systems that can optimize various aspects of urban life, such as mobility, energy, and public services. The European Union has also established the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative to support the development of smart city projects across the region.

North America

North America has been relatively slower to adopt smart city initiatives, but many cities in the region are now investing heavily in smart city technologies and solutions. Cities such as New York, San Francisco, and Toronto have launched a range of smart city projects, such as smart parking systems, intelligent transportation networks, and energy-efficient buildings. In addition, the US government has established the Smart City Challenge, a competition that provides funding and support for innovative smart city projects across the country.

Challenges & Opportunities

While smart cities and communities offer numerous benefits, they also present significant challenges and obstacles that must be overcome to ensure their success. Some of the key challenges and opportunities associated with smart city initiatives include:

Infrastructure & Investment

Developing the infrastructure and securing the necessary investment to implement smart city initiatives can be a significant challenge. Smart city projects require significant investment in new technologies, infrastructure, and systems, which can be costly and time-consuming. In addition, many cities may lack the necessary funding or resources to invest in smart city technologies and solutions.

Data & Privacy

Smart city initiatives rely heavily on the collection and analysis of vast amounts of data. However, this data must be collected and used in a way that protects citizen privacy and ensures data security. This can be a significant challenge, as many citizens may be hesitant to share their personal data with city authorities.

Citizen Engagement

Smart city initiatives require strong citizen engagement and participation to ensure their success. Citizens must be involved in the planning and implementation of smart city projects, and their feedback must be taken into account. However, many citizens may be unaware of the benefits of smart city initiatives or may not feel engaged in the process.

Regulatory Frameworks

Smart city initiatives often require regulatory frameworks to ensure that they are developed and implemented in a way that promotes social equity, privacy, and sustainability. However, these frameworks may not exist or may be inadequate in many cities, which can make it difficult to implement smart city projects.

Opportunities

Despite the challenges, smart city initiatives also offer numerous opportunities for cities and communities. Some of the key opportunities associated with smart city initiatives include:

Improved Quality of Life

Smart city initiatives can significantly improve the quality of life for citizens by providing more efficient, sustainable, and effective urban services. For example, smart transportation systems can reduce congestion and improve mobility, while energy-efficient buildings can reduce energy consumption and lower carbon emissions.

Economic Growth

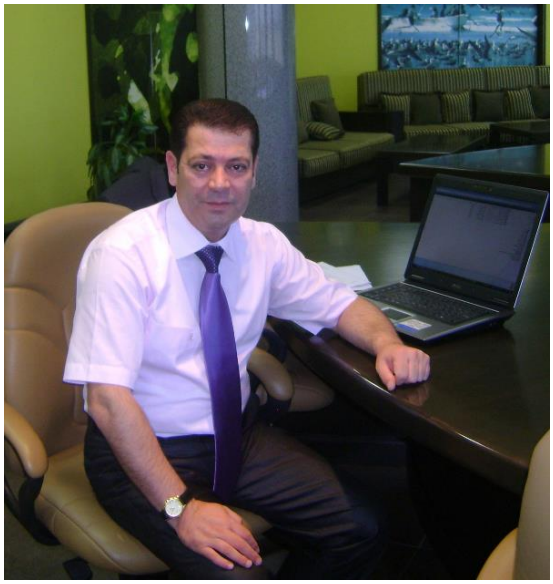
Smart city initiatives can also stimulate economic growth by creating new industries, jobs, and investment opportunities. For example, the development of smart transportation systems can create new jobs in the technology and transportation sectors, while the adoption of renewable energy can create new opportunities in the energy sector.

Sustainability

Smart city initiatives can also promote sustainability by reducing energy consumption, lowering carbon emissions, and promoting sustainable urban development. For example, the adoption of renewable energy and energy-efficient buildings can reduce the environmental impact of urban areas, while the promotion of sustainable transportation can reduce congestion and promote healthy living.

Conclusion

Smart cities and smart communities are rapidly emerging concepts that offer significant opportunities for cities and communities around the world. By leveraging advanced technologies and data analytics, cities can optimize various aspects of urban life and enhance the quality of life for citizens. However, these initiatives also present significant challenges, such as the need for significant investment, strong citizen engagement, and regulatory frameworks. As cities around the world continue to invest in smart city initiatives, it will be critical to address these challenges and ensure that smart cities and communities are developed and implemented in a way that promotes social equity, privacy, and sustainability.



Nabil Eid

Nabil Eid is Chief Information Officer for Ruh Global IMPACT and Chief Strategy Officer for Billion Strong Organization.
He is Engineer and Specialist in ICT Accessibility & Disability Inclusion in International Development.
Nabil has 25+ years of experience in disability and digital inclusion strategies.
He held several positions and worked with UN agencies: UNDP, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and International Telecommunications Union (ITU).
He worked with German Organization (GIZ, GTZ) to build telecentres for people with disabilities in refugee camps.
Also, he worked as the Regional Director of the Telecentre Foundation for the MENA Region.
Nabil wrote 8 books in English and Arabic about disability inclusion and ICT accessibility.
The last two books are "Accessible and Inclusive Libraries in the Smart City" and "Disability and Bridging the Digital Divide - ICT Accessibility and Assistive Technology for People of All Abilities.

Nabil researched developing policies for developing, integrating, and empowering persons with disabilities, developing innovative programs and activities to train the organizational approach, and building an accessible environment. Addressed issues and worked with other stakeholders to find the most effective solutions for Universal Design, inclusion, and integration of Assistive Technology into existing services. E-mail: nabil@ruhglobal.com & nabil@billion-strong.org

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Disability-Inclusive Disaster Management

Leveraging ICT Accessibility

Nabil Eid, CIO, Ruh Global IMPACT & CSO, Billion Strong Organization

Abstract

Natural disasters can strike at any time, and being prepared is essential. When infrastructure and accessibility tools are in place, it can help ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind during emergencies. Inclusive disaster preparedness and response can save lives and ensure everyone can access essential resources and services.

The challenges during disasters can be significant and complex. The loss of infrastructure, including communication channels, can create communication barriers, making it difficult for people with disabilities to receive critical information in real-time.

One of the important things is to rely on ICT accessibility and sharing across all levels of government, between the public and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), and within communities to protect people with disabilities.

Keywords: ***Disasters, infrastructure, ICT, accessibility, People with Disabilities, Emergencies, Inclusive, Preparedness, OPDs.***

Photo Credit " International Disability Alliance, IDA"

Introduction

People with disabilities should retain their rights even in crises and emergencies. Although difficult decisions, prioritizations, and sacrifices may be necessary during disasters and other crises, it is essential to ensure that the rights and lives of people with disabilities are not compromised.

Disasters such as natural calamities, conflicts, or pandemics can exacerbate existing barriers to access and hinder the ability of people with disabilities to communicate, receive information, and access essential services. It is, therefore, necessary to ensure inclusive ICT accessibility during emergencies to support their needs.

In this article, we will discuss how to ensure inclusive ICT accessibility in crises and how to face challenges during disasters to help people with disabilities.

ICT accessibility becomes even more critical for people with disabilities in these crises.

Inclusive ICT accessibility is critical to disaster management, ensuring people with disabilities are not left behind during crises and emergencies. As a result, it is essential to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to the information and resources they require during times of crisis. Emergency managers should prioritize accessibility in emergency planning, use accessible communication methods, ensure accessible ICT infrastructure, provide assistive technologies, train emergency responders on disability inclusion, and collaborate with disability organizations. Addressing these challenges can help to ensure that people with disabilities are included in emergency planning and response efforts and that their needs are met during emergencies.

The recent earthquakes in Syria and Turkey have highlighted the challenges faced by people with disabilities during natural disasters. These challenges can be exacerbated by the lack of accessibility tools and infrastructure, leaving people with disabilities vulnerable and unable to access critical resources and services. The world must come together to address these ongoing issues and work towards a more inclusive and accessible society. The inclusion of People with Disabilities in Disasters is a Human Right and is a priority for the community of disabilities.

As a global community, we have an ethical and moral obligation to ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect regardless of their abilities. We are responsible for creating an inclusive and accessible world where everyone has equal opportunities to succeed.

The UN CRPD follows decades of work by the United Nations to change attitudes and approaches to people with disabilities. It takes to a new height the movement from viewing people with disabilities as "subjects" with rights that can claim those rights and make decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent and being active members of society.

Article 11 – Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies states that nations must take "all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of people with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies, and the occurrence of natural disasters."

Challenges During Disasters

The challenges during disasters can be significant and complex. The loss of infrastructure, including communication channels, can create communication barriers, making it difficult for people with disabilities to receive critical information in real-time.

Physical barriers, such as damaged roads, buildings, or inaccessible shelters, can also restrict access to services for people with disabilities.

Moreover, many people with disabilities have additional health concerns and may require specific medical equipment or medications, which may not be readily available during a crisis. Therefore, these challenges can be summarized through the following points:

- **Evacuation and transportation*: People with disabilities may face difficulties during evacuation and transportation,***

such as inaccessible transportation and lack of accommodations for assistive devices.

- **Access to information***: People with disabilities may face challenges accessing critical data during emergencies, such as alerts and warnings.*
- **Communication barriers***: Communication can be difficult during emergencies, and people with disabilities may face additional communication barriers, such as a lack of access to accessible communication methods.*
- **Access to healthcare:** ***People with disabilities may have difficulties accessing healthcare during emergencies, such as inaccessible medical facilities or a lack of accommodations for assistive devices.***

Photo Credit: Adem Altan, AFP

Effective Management of Emergencies and Crises

One of the important things is to rely on ICT accessibility and sharing across all levels of government, between the public and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), and within communities to protect people with disabilities. This can be understood in the following ways:

- ***In today's digital age, communication, and information-sharing are critical during emergency situations. People with disabilities often face barriers to accessing information, which can put them at greater risk during crises. By ensuring that ICT systems are accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities, they can receive timely and relevant information during emergencies and take appropriate actions to protect themselves.***
- ***Emergency situations require coordination and collaboration between various levels of government, including national, state, and local authorities. By sharing information and resources, governments can ensure that people with disabilities are included in emergency planning and response efforts. This can also help identify areas where support is needed for people with disabilities, such as accessible shelters or transportation options.***
- ***People with disabilities often rely on disabled organizations and community groups for emergency support. By fostering partnerships between these organizations and the wider community, people with disabilities can receive greater support and assistance during crises. This can include sharing information, resources, and expertise to ensure that people***

with disabilities are included in emergency planning and response efforts.

Communities can play a crucial role in protecting people with disabilities during emergency situations. By raising awareness about the needs of people with disabilities and providing training and support to community members, people with disabilities can receive assistance during crises. This can include identifying and removing physical barriers, providing support with daily tasks, and ensuring that emergency plans consider the needs of people with disabilities. Overall, effective emergency management requires a collaborative and inclusive approach that ensures the participation of people with disabilities at all levels. By promoting ICT accessibility, sharing information and resources, and fostering partnerships between organizations and communities, we can protect the rights and safety of people with disabilities during crises.

Steps to Ensure Inclusive ICT Accessibility During Crises and Emergencies

To ensure that people with disabilities have access to information and resources during emergencies, several measures can be taken. Here are some steps that can help:

- ### Ensure Accessibility in ICT Infrastructure:

  Governments and organizations should ensure their ICT infrastructure is accessible to all individuals, including people with disabilities. This may include providing alternative formats for information dissemination, such as audio or video recordings, captioning, or sign language interpretation.

- **Ensure digital accessibility: Ensure digital communication channels are accessible to people with disabilities, including those who are deaf, blind, or have mobility impairments. This includes accessible websites, mobile apps, and social media platforms.**

  Ensure that use accessible digital communication tools compatible with assistive technologies such as screen readers, magnifiers, and alternative input devices.

  Make sure that text, images, videos, and other multimedia are accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Use plain language: Use clear and concise language in digital communication, avoiding jargon or technical terms that may be difficult to understand. Use simple language that is easy to read and understand for all audiences.**
- **Conduct Outreach to People with Disabilities: Outreach efforts should be made to people with disabilities to inform them of available services and resources during a crisis. This can be done through targeted communication, such as accessible websites, social media, or text messaging, that can provide real-time updates.**

  Accurate information during crises and emergency situations is so important when providing updates regularly and ensuring that the information is relevant and up-to-date.
- **Conduct accessibility testing: Conduct regular accessibility testing of digital communication channels to ensure they are accessible to people with disabilities. Use user testing to identify and address accessibility issues.**
- **Provide Accessible Transportation: Governments and organizations should ensure that transportation services are**

accessible for people with disabilities during a crisis. This may include providing accessible transportation options, such as adapted vehicles or shuttle services, to help individuals with disabilities reach essential services. Providing digital communication content in multiple languages is vital to cater to the population's diverse needs.

- **Ensure Accessibility of Emergency Shelters: Emergency shelters should be designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities. This may include providing accessible facilities, such as wheelchair ramps, accessible bathrooms, and shower facilities.**
- **Collaborate with Disability Organizations: Collaborating with disability organizations can help governments and organizations identify the needs and requirements of people with disabilities during a crisis. This can help ensure the resources and services are relevant and meet the community's needs.**

Photo Credit "Scott Strazzante - The Chronicle 2018"

Emergency Preparedness: Ensuring Accessibility for All

Photo Credit: International Institute for Sustainable Development. ANTOINE TARDY/UNDRR

Natural disasters can strike at any time, and being prepared is essential. When infrastructure and accessibility tools are in place, it can help ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind during emergencies. Inclusive disaster preparedness and response can save lives and ensure everyone can access essential resources and services.

We need to address the need for preparedness in emergencies and crises through:

- **Prioritize accessibility in emergency response planning: Emergency response planning should prioritize accessibility. Emergency managers should consider the unique needs of people with disabilities when developing emergency**

plans, procedures, and communications strategies. This may include providing accessible formats for emergency alerts, ensuring accessible transportation, and providing accessible shelter options.

- **Use accessible communication methods: In emergencies, communication is critical. Emergency alerts and warnings should be provided in accessible formats, such as sign language, captions, or audio descriptions, to ensure that people with disabilities receive the information they need. Communication methods should also be flexible, allowing for different modes of communication, including speech-to-text, text-to-speech, and video conferencing.**
- **Ensure accessible ICT infrastructure: During emergencies, access to technology is critical. Emergency managers should ensure that the ICT infrastructure, including websites, mobile applications, and other digital tools, is accessible to people with disabilities. This may include providing alternative text for images, providing closed captioning for videos, and ensuring the website is navigable using assistive technologies.**
- **Provide assistive technologies: Emergency managers should provide assistive technologies to support people with disabilities. This may include devices such as hearing aids, screen readers, magnifiers, and accessible ICT software, such as speech recognition software or alternative keyboards.**
- **Train emergency responders on disability inclusion: Emergency responders should be trained on disability inclusion to ensure that they can effectively support people with disabilities during emergencies. Training should cover disability**

etiquette, accessible communication methods, and assistive technologies.

- **Collaborate with disability organizations: Emergency managers should collaborate with disability organizations to ensure that emergency planning and response efforts are inclusive. Disability organizations can provide valuable insight into the unique needs of people with disabilities and help to identify barriers to accessibility.**

From Planning to Action: Best Practices for Managing Disasters

There have been several successful experiences using Accessibility and Assistive Technology to protect people with disabilities in emergencies and crises that affected the world, such as earthquakes, volcanoes, storms, etc. Here are some practical examples:

- **Earthquake in Mexico City (2017): Following the devastating earthquake that struck Mexico City in 2017, the government worked with disabled organizations to develop a response plan that would ensure the safety of people with disabilities. The project included using accessible communication technologies like video conferencing and social media to share information and coordinate rescue efforts. Additionally, emergency shelters were made accessible for people with disabilities, with accessible toilets, ramps, and other assistive devices provided.**
- **Hurricane Katrina (2005): The hurricane that struck New Orleans in 2005 highlighted the importance of accessible transportation in emergencies. Many people with disabilities**

could not evacuate the city due to a lack of accessible transportation options. Following the disaster, the government developed a program to provide accessible transportation for people with disabilities during emergencies.

- **Typhoon Haiyan (2013): The Philippines government worked with disabled organizations to develop an emergency response plan for people with disabilities in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. The project included the provision of accessible shelters, accessible communication technologies, and the deployment of trained personnel to assist people with disabilities.**
- **Wildfires in California (2018): During the wildfires that struck California in 2018, the government worked with disabled organizations to ensure that emergency shelters were accessible for people with disabilities. Additionally, emergency communication systems were made accessible for people with hearing and visual impairments, and assistive technology devices, such as braille displays and screen readers, were provided to ensure that people with disabilities had access to critical information.**
- **COVID-19 pandemic (2020): The pandemic highlighted the importance of accessible communication technologies for people with disabilities. Many governments and organizations developed accessible information resources, such as sign language interpreters, captions, and audio descriptions, to ensure that people with disabilities could access critical information about the pandemic. Additionally, assistive technology devices, such as telehealth platforms and remote monitoring devices, were used to provide healthcare services**

to people with disabilities who could not attend in-person appointments.

These examples demonstrate the importance of accessibility and assistive technology in emergencies. By ensuring that emergency response plans include people with disabilities and providing accessible communication technologies, transportation options, and emergency shelters, we can better protect the rights and safety of people with disabilities during emergencies and crises.

Conclusion

Ensuring inclusive digital communication during crises and emergencies is essential for everyone to access accurate information and necessary resources. By using ICT-accessible communication tools, providing multilingual content, ensuring digital accessibility, using plain language, providing timely and accurate information, and conducting accessibility testing, we can ensure that our digital communication channels are accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

The recent earthquakes in Syria and Turkey are a stark reminder of the challenges faced by people with disabilities during natural disasters. We must unite as a global community to create a more inclusive and accessible world where everyone has equal opportunities and access to critical resources and services. Doing so can create a more just and equitable society that works better for all people, including people with disabilities.

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Three Questions about Inclusive Emergency Preparedness for People With Disabilities

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David is a seasoned Political Scientist and diplomat from Costa Rica, holding an MBA alongside a master's degree in diplomacy. His expertise lies in international cooperation, where he has made significant strides in public policy implementation, development, evaluation, and consultancy services for leading organizations like UNESCO and other European Union affiliated NGOs.

David's advocacy work is underpinned by his firm belief in the power of communication as a tool for global transformation. As a social media specialist and communication strategist, he employs these skills to amplify the voices of minorities, ensuring their rights are upheld and accessible.

At the heart of David's professional pursuits is his dedication to expanding the global vision of Ruh Global IMPACT. His leadership aims to improve the lives of People with Disabilities in both

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Recognized for his profound insights on disability inclusion, the Future of Work, and his adept communication skills, David has been invited as a Visiting Professor at the University Del Norte in Barranquilla, Colombia. His recent keynote speech at one of Colombia's first conferences on the Future of Work and the Employment of Persons with Disabilities further highlights his prominence in the field.

Fluent in both Spanish and English, David is a vocal advocate for Spanish-speaking Americans across the continents. Given that 15 to 20% of the US population are Spanish Speakers, often disenfranchised, David's advocacy work is especially crucial. His commitment to fostering an inclusive environment through communication and international cooperation continues to drive his impact worldwide.

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Inclusive and Sustainable Development in Latin America: Implementing the SDGs with Global Cooperation

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Abstract

This article examines the critical role of international cooperation in supporting Latin America's efforts to implement the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It underscores the importance of a holistic approach in addressing the region's various challenges, including economic and social inequality, insufficient infrastructure, climate change, and political instability. The article advocates for continuous commitment, innovation, and adaptation in pursuing these goals and emphasizes inclusion's crucial role, particularly for people with disabilities. It concludes that despite its challenges, Latin America has the potential to make a significant contribution to global sustainable development, while also benefiting from international collaboration.

Keywords: ***SDGs, People with Disabilities, MDGs, UN, Development, Latin America, inclusion, sustainability, challenge, community.***

Introduction: The importance of global cooperation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the inclusion of all

International Development Cooperation has its roots in the United Nations Charter, which in its Article 1 establishes the importance of global collaboration to solve international problems of an economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian nature, promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without any distinction (UN, 1945). However, throughout history, development has not always considered human rights, let alone the inclusion of historically neglected populations such as persons with disabilities (PwD).

During the first 40 years of the existence of the United Nations, human rights and development were addressed separately, focusing on the economic and political aspects of action but leaving aside the freedoms and rights of historically neglected populations (Acebal Monfort, Fernández Aller, & Luis Romero, 2011). This approach was influenced by the tensions between the UN members during the Cold War and the opposing positions they held on Civil and Political Rights (CPR) and Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR). During this period, the development focus was purely economic, with social improvements expected as an automatic consequence of economic advancement and growth.

With the end of the Cold War, international cooperation began to change. In 1997, under the direction of Kofi Annan, the United Nations began to directly link development with human rights. In 2001, the first Inter-Agency Workshop was held at Princeton University, where it was decided to integrate human rights into development assistance programs and country evaluations, laying the foundations of what is known as the human rights-based approach (Acebal Monfort, Fernández Aller, & Luis Romero, 2011).

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, subsequently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda has further strengthened the relationship between development and human rights. These goals, designed to be universally applicable, promote state accountability to their citizens and the financing and execution of existing development and human rights commitments (UN Costa Rica, Government of Costa Rica, 2022).

The human rights-based approach in international cooperation implies a profound transformation in the understanding and action on development. In this framework, the populations targeted by development efforts are not simply passive beneficiaries, but rights holders. This means they have the right to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives and demand accountability from those with the duty to fulfill and protect those rights. In this context, governments are not just service providers or benefactors, but take on the role of rights guarantors. They are obliged to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights, which implies taking positive steps to facilitate the enjoyment of rights, prevent rights violations, and provide redress when rights are violated. This shift in approach has profound implications for international cooperation, as it requires a stronger and more rights-focused commitment to the dignity of individuals in all development activities.

This leads us to reiterate that true development cannot be spoken of without including and empowering historically neglected groups, including the PwD community. These are fundamental aspects to achieve the SDGs, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) should guide their implementation (AECID, 2018). International development cooperation can only be inclusive

and accessible if a Human Rights-Based Approach is concretely and entirely applied in the planning, evaluation, and execution of projects and programs.

In this context, it is crucial to work together to ensure that countries in Latin America and the rest of the world progress in the implementation of the SDGs and protect our planet and all its inhabitants, promoting inclusion and ensuring respect for human rights.

In the following sections, we will explore the region's progress in implementing the SDGs, the challenges faced by Latin America, some key strategies, and the importance of international cooperation at both the regional and global levels to achieve significant development. This approach will encompass the Human Rights-based perspective and include historically neglected communities.

A brief overview of Latin America's progress in implementing the SDGs

In Latin America, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has significantly advanced, although there is still much work to be done. The region has demonstrated its commitment to the global agenda by adopting laws and policies that address issues such as social inclusion, the environment, and the reduction of inequality.

One piece of data that reflects this progress is that all 33 countries that make up Latin America have signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), thus demonstrating their commitment to inclusion and human development. (UN, 2023)

A distinctive feature in Latin America has been the affirmation of the rights of PwD, with the implementation of legislation and policies aimed at ensuring their inclusion and well-being. Many of these laws originated in the 1990s (Stang, 2011), in parallel with the publication of the United Nations Standards on Equal Opportunities for PwD. This fact underscores the region's trend to align with initiatives and proposals led by the United Nations, such as the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, evidencing its persistent quest for international cooperation.

Latin American governments have worked to comply with what the United Nations has requested, as international cooperation has been crucial for the progress and development of the region's countries. Maintaining an excellent international reputation is essential for receiving cooperation, establishing international relations, and achieving the development goals proposed by the United Nations.

As we approach the 2030 deadline to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is clear that, although we have made progress, there is still a long way to go. According to the United Nations 2022 Sustainable Development Goals Report, interconnected global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and the conflict in Ukraine, have hindered progress towards the SDGs worldwide.

As for Latin America and the Caribbean, the situation is equally complex. According to the latest Regional Trends projections by ECLAC for 2030, the region shows mixed performance. One-third of the SDGs targets are on track to be achieved by 2030. For the remaining two-thirds, political actions are required to accelerate

current positive trends (46% of the targets) or to reverse stagnation or backsliding trends (22% of the targets). (ECLAC, 2023)

Despite this mixed performance in the region and the fact that a third are on track to be achieved, it is essential to admit that the reality is far from ideal. While current laws have been a valuable resource for civil society organizations committed to the inclusion of PwD to achieve their full potential, Latin America still faces significant challenges on its path to inclusion and sustainable development.

Indeed, there is a clear and concerning gap between policy formulation and its subsequent implementation, execution, and practical evaluation that allows a real impact on the lives of historically neglected populations. The title of the document published by ECLAC by María Fernanda Stang, "Persons with Disabilities in Latin America: From legal recognition to real inequality." (Stang, 2011), clearly encapsulates this reality, reflecting that, on numerous occasions, efforts to advance towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the guidelines proposed by the United Nations can become stagnant in the political arena, without achieving a tangible translation into improvements for these groups.

Challenges Faced by Latin America in achieving inclusion and sustainable development

As evidenced in the previous sections, Latin America's performance in adopting Sustainable Development Goals has been heterogeneous. This reality reveals that both governments and organizations committed to promoting sustainable development in the region are

facing constant and significant challenges. Among these challenges are:

1. **Economic and social inequality**: ***Latin America is characterized by high levels of income and opportunities (Lissardy, 2020). This reality limits access to basic services, such as education and healthcare, for a large population sector, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting human development potential.***
2. **Insufficient infrastructure**: ***The infrastructure challenge in Latin America focuses on the need for social investment and infrastructure as fundamental drivers for growth and shared prosperity, according to a World Bank report. Although the region's economies have recovered to pre-pandemic levels, low growth rates are expected for the coming years, which is insufficient to make significant advances in terms of poverty reduction. In addition, the region has to face global uncertainty caused by various crises, such as the war in Ukraine and inflationary pressures. (World Bank, 2022)***
3. **Climate change and environmental degradation**: ***The region is especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as droughts, floods, and extreme events. In addition, it faces issues of deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and pollution that threaten the sustainability of its ecosystems and natural resources (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2020).***
4. **Corruption and political instability**: ***These factors undermine trust in institutions and hinder the implementation of effective and transparent public policies in critical areas such as education, health, and the environment. (STATISTA, 2022)***

5. **Barriers in the inclusion of PwD: The inclusion of PwD, who comprise 14.7% of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean, is crucial for the region's sustainable development. According to the World Bank, the exclusion of this group can cause a loss of up to 7% of a country's GDP and perpetuates poverty. The challenges are even more significant for vulnerable groups such as women and rural and indigenous populations. Overcoming these barriers is fundamental to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. (World Bank, 2021)**

Overcoming these challenges requires a comprehensive and sustainable commitment that involves cooperation between the governments of Latin America, civil society, and the private sector in conjunction with the international community at large. In this sense, strategies should include strengthening institutions and improving governance, investing in infrastructure and basic services, promoting education and skill development, and safeguarding regional ecosystems and natural resources. It is essential to ensure the inclusion and active participation of all parts of society, particularly PwD, in implementing and monitoring the SDGs. In the next section, we will address the role of international alliances on the path toward genuine inclusion and the response to the challenges we have identified.

The Role of international alliances in addressing Latin America's Challenges

Global collaborations are essential to confront Latin America's challenges and promote sustainability in the region. These

international links enable cooperation between nations and entities from various regions, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and resources. (OECD, 2019) The purpose is to strengthen public policies and development strategies, focusing on sustainability and overcoming development obstacles, emphasizing inclusion, and strengthening internal institutional capacities and human rights.

Collaborations can take multiple forms, from bilateral and multilateral agreements to partnerships between governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Forums and cooperative efforts where best practices, efforts, successes, and failures are exchanged are essential to ensure the sustainability of these advances. Through these alliances, Latin American countries can boost their development by benefiting from other countries' and international organizations' experience and resources, strengthening their capacities in vital areas such as education, health, environmental management, and social inclusion.

On the other hand, international alliances can play a decisive role in promoting the inclusion of PwD in Latin America. International cooperation is essential to support the efforts of countries, especially developing countries, to comply with the objectives of the CRPD.

Governments must adopt appropriate and effective measures to foster international cooperation among States parties, particularly South-South and triangular cooperation, in partnership, where appropriate, with international and regional organizations and relevant civil society organizations, especially organizations of PwD.

By sharing knowledge and best practices, countries in the region can learn from each other and the international community how to improve accessibility, ensure the rights of PwD and promote their full participation in society. (Devandas, 2020).

In conclusion, international alliances and global cooperation represent a strategic axis for sustainable development and ensuring inclusion in Latin America. Advances in these areas largely depend on the ability of the region's countries to leverage and adapt the experiences, knowledge, and resources available internationally. The diversity of existing collaborations and cooperative efforts is a testament to the vitality and potential of these exchanges.

In particular, the emphasis on including PwD demonstrates the region's commitment to a vision of comprehensive and equitable development. This perspective leads us to the next section, where we will explore key strategies for promoting inclusion and sustainable development, drawing on the rich experience of international cooperation and the lessons learned from existing alliances.

Key Strategies to promote inclusion and sustainable development in Latin America

To promote inclusion and sustainable development in Latin America, it is crucial to adopt a series of key strategies:

1. **Institutional strengthening:** ***To improve governance and the effectiveness of public policies, it is essential to strengthen institutions at all levels of government and promote transparency, constant evaluation, accountability, and citizen participation, including historically underserved populations.***

2. **Investments in infrastructure and essential services:** ***It is necessary to increase investments in infrastructure, such as transportation, energy, water and sanitation, and information and communication technologies, to improve access to essential services and promote sustainable economic growth for the entire population, including those in the peripheries and rural areas.***
3. **Education and skills training:** ***To break the cycle of poverty and promote inclusion, it is vital to improve the quality and accessibility of education and provide skills training opportunities for all, including PwD and all historically underserved populations, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or income level.***
4. **Environmental protection:** ***To ensure the sustainability of the region's natural resources, it is crucial to adopt policies and practices that promote environmental conservation, adaptation to climate change, and the transition to a green and inclusive economy.***
5. **Active participation and regional collaboration: In the current context of global interdependence, it is essential that Latin America and the Caribbean actively engage in global conversations and actions around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The region has the opportunity to share its achievements and challenges, learn from the experiences of others, and contribute to the formulation of sustainable development strategies globally. This active participation and regional collaboration reinforce the region's capacity to address its unique challenges and meet its sustainable development commitments.**

Adopting the critical strategies outlined above and many others is imperative to achieve sustainable and inclusive development in Latin America. However, it should be noted that these strategies can be considerably strengthened through collaboration and support from the global community.

Institutional strengthening, investments in infrastructure and essential services, education and skills training, environmental protection, and active participation and regional collaboration are fundamental pillars to promote resilient and sustainable development. Through alliances and cooperation, the international community's involvement can act as a catalyst for effectively implementing these strategies.

The Latin America and Caribbean region, like other regions of the world, has an essential role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. To achieve these goals, it is vital that the region actively engages in global discussions and actions, sharing its achievements and challenges, learning from others, and contributing to the generation of sustainable development solutions globally. In this sense, international cooperation supports Latin America's efforts and strengthens the global capacity to address shared challenges and promote development that benefits us all.

The importance of involving the global community in supporting Latin America's efforts.

We cannot fail to reiterate that the involvement of the international community is an essential component to ensuring success in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Latin

America. As the UN rightly points out on its page dedicated to the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, the technical, financial, and political assistance of the global community is indispensable to strengthening the capabilities of Latin American countries and promoting the adoption of sustainable development policies and practices (UN, 2023).

In addition, the international community plays a crucial role in promoting the inclusion of PWD in Latin America. By highlighting the relevance of inclusion and the rights of PwD in global agendas, the international community can influence governments and other relevant actors to take concrete measures in this area, and the same can be done on all issues related to the SDGs; this push can have real effects on the lives of the most vulnerable populations.

The global community is also vital in supporting Latin America's efforts to address the challenges of economic and social inequality, insufficient infrastructure, climate change, environmental degradation, corruption, and political instability. According to the United Nations, international cooperation is a powerful means to help Latin American countries develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable solutions to these challenges (UN, 2023).

While the global community has yet to solve all of its problems, cooperation with Latin America can greatly enrich these global solutions to global problems. **The technical, financial, and political assistance of the global community is indispensable to strengthening the capacities of Latin American countries in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, thus promoting sustainable development policies and practices. Working together, the global**

community and Latin America can develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable solutions, thus contributing to solving problems of global scope.

Conclusion: The Path Forward for Latin America and the World in Implementing the SDGs

Latin America has a clear path to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - one of continuous commitment, cooperation, innovation, and adaptation. To overcome the challenges the region faces, adopting a holistic and multifaceted approach that recognizes and addresses the interconnection between various aspects and stakeholders of sustainable development and inclusion is essential.

First, it is imperative that governments, civil society, and the private sector in Latin America continue to engage with the SDGs and work together to implement policies and strategies that promote equitable and sustainable development from a human rights-based approach. This involves strengthening institutions, increasing investments in infrastructure and essential services, improving education and skills training, protecting the environment, and fostering active participation of rights holders and the collaboration of duty bearers at the local, regional, and global levels.

Second, Latin America must make the most of international alliances and cooperation. Collaboration with the global community can enrich the region's development strategies, provide resources and technical and financial support, and help address shared challenges like climate change, inequality, and exclusion.

Third, it is crucial that Latin America continue to innovate and adapt in response to emerging challenges and opportunities in the context of sustainable development and inclusion. This involves staying abreast of scientific and technological advances, learning from the experiences of other regions, and adapting to the changing circumstances and needs of its population.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is essential that Latin America remains firm in its commitment to inclusion. This means ensuring that everyone, including people with disabilities, can fully participate in society and benefit from sustainable development. *Inclusion is not only a human right but also a precondition and the primary indicator of sustainable development.*

Despite the challenges it faces, Latin America has the potential to make a significant contribution to sustainable development and inclusion at the global level. At the same time, the region can greatly benefit from collaboration with the global community. The commitment to leave no one behind must be at the heart of these efforts. With conviction in this motto, we can work together to make the SDGs a reality for all, ensuring that each individual has the opportunity to thrive in a more sustainable and equitable world.

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Jasmin Ambiong

Jasmin has amassed six years of experience in the telework industry and has occupied various roles during that time. She has worked as a finance transcriptionist, online English ESL Tutor, virtual assistant, General Transcriptionist, Usability Tester, and Social Media Coordinator. Through these roles, she discovered that the ones that brought her the most satisfaction were those that, in some way, positively impacted the lives of people with disabilities like herself. Jasmin holds a degree in Business Administration - Management Information Systems. She never envisioned a career in telework or the disability inclusion/accessibility field. Her aspirations were always geared towards corporate success. Nevertheless, life had a different and better plan in store for her.

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The Important Role of Inclusive and Accessible Banking for the Financial Independence of Blind and People with Vision Impairment

Jasmin Ambiong - Partnership Development Manager - Billion Strong
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Abstract

The Significance of Inclusive and Accessible Banking for the Financial Freedom of Blind and Visually Impaired Individuals" highlights the shared objective of individuals with disabilities to attain financial independence. They aim to have the resources to sustain their basic necessities, travel, live independently, and have financial security for possible healthcare expenses in the future.

In order to attain financial independence, individuals should be able to manage their finances freely. It is crucial that persons with disabilities are provided with access to various financial institutions, particularly banks, and feel accepted within these establishments.

A crucial aspect of attaining financial independence is having a reliable bank. Banks must recognize that individuals with vision impairments can manage their finances, particularly with assistive technology that grants them access to banking applications.

***Keywords**: Inclusive, Bank, Blind, Visually Impaired, financial, people with Disabilities, Online Banking, accessibility, Assistive Technology, Community.*

The Important Role of Inclusive and Accessible Banking for the Financial Independence of Blind and People with Vision Impairment

Financial independence is what most people with disabilities (PWDs) aim to achieve in their lives. This comes with the ability to provide for their daily necessities, travel, live independently, and the safety of not worrying about future health expenses.
To achieve the goal of financial independence, one must have the freedom to manage their finances. With that said, persons with disabilities must have access to and feel welcome in different financial institutions, especially banks.
However, this is not the case.

According to International Finance Corporation, Inclusive Banking means ensuring that persons with disabilities can access all banking products and services, either directly or with assistive technologies, on an equal basis. Unfortunately, to this day, many banking institutions are not inclusive and are not welcoming to persons with disabilities, particularly in developing countries like the Philippines. For example, people who are blind and have vision impairment face a lot of struggles for their basic right to open their bank accounts. Most online banking applications also have screen reader accessibility issues. This is a huge hindrance to achieving financial independence. It shows that these institutions simply do not care for the community of persons with disabilities. It is a heartbreaking situation because Blind and People with Vision Impairment need the freedom to manage their finances for them to live independently.

Benefits of Cashless Transactions and Accessible Online Banking for the Blind Community

Over the past years, cashless transactions and online banking have been the trend around the globe. The convenience of these has immensely benefited the Blind community. One of these is being able to secure and manage their own money.

Philippine Peso bills are not accessible for people with vision impairment. It is hard to distinguish each denomination just by touch. Due to this reason, there were many instances wherein people in the blind community were cheated when doing cash transactions. Now, almost all public establishments, such as groceries, department stores, convenience stores, cafes, and restaurants, are already doing cashless transactions. Paying is now simply done by either swiping a card or scanning QR codes on cell phones. This is not only convenient for people with vision impairment, but it is also helpful in avoiding being taken advantage of when it comes to money. People with vision impairment can now monitor the ins and outs of their money through mobile banking applications.

Other benefits are the convenience of paying bills online and online money transfers. There is no need to go out of the house and worry about unnecessary transportation expenses when doing these transactions anymore. Also, many people in the blind community are doing remote freelance jobs. Therefore, the ease of transferring their money through online banking is a huge help for them.

The Harmful Effects of Non-inclusive Banking Institutions

In the Philippines, most banking institutions still do not practice inclusive banking. As a result, accessibility to their online banking applications is not prioritized. Also, the process of opening a bank account for someone who is blind is very difficult. Many banks do not allow People with vision impairment to open their account unless it is a joint account with a guardian or a trusted family member. It will take a lot of convincing and explaining for the blind applicant to be allowed to have one. Some banks turn away blind applicants and do not at all allow them to open their accounts. There are also instances wherein even if they let them open a joint account, the bank will refuse to release an ATM card under the name of the Blind account holder. Only under the name of their joint account guardian.

One recent example is Ms. Lleona Lyn Santos, a blind virtual assistant. She wanted to open a new savings account, so, she went to one of the well-known banks in the Philippines. As expected, she was asked many questions, but some of them are just insulting, such as, "How will you understand our terms and conditions if you can't read them? Even if someone reads it for you, you still won't be able to see it. And even if you can sign, it is still impossible because you can't write your personal information." After all of these rude questions, she would still only be allowed to have a joint account. Ms. Santos agreed to it because she needed a savings account. However, she could not agree when the bank manager told her that they would only release an ATM card under her brother's name, the joint account partner. She also needs the authorization of her brother before she can withdraw her own money. Ms. Santos disagreed with these conditions because it is her hard-earned money. So, why does this bank think she needs anyone's permission to do whatever she wants with it? She went home feeling sad and

disappointed in the banking system. This behavior of banks towards people in the blind community is dehumanizing and emotionally exhausting.

These banks often use the excuse of not allowing blind and people with vision impairment applicants to have their accounts because the order came from the head office. Also, they are just trying to protect them from losing their money. They will say thumb marks are insufficient to secure their accounts, but even if the blind person can sign their signature, they will still be treated similarly. And how is having a joint account partner protecting the blind account holder? Not everyone has someone whom they can trust with their money. It can be that this joint account guardian is going to be the one who will take advantage of the blind account holder.

Conclusion

One reason these discriminations from the banks keep happening could be because, until now, they are not aware of the importance of financial independence for people with disabilities. They need to spend more on their day-to-day lives than someone without a disability. Some have to have medicine maintenance, some need carers at home, and some, like people with vision impairment, need to spend twice for transportation expenses when they need to go somewhere because developing countries like the Philippines are not designed for independent traveling for people who are blind. With that said, PWDs constantly worry about earning and saving money.

The blind community hopes that banking institutions will realize that people with vision impairment went through many struggles before having employment where their money came from. Also, that the banks will see how the benefits of inclusive cashless transactions

and online banking, like the examples mentioned above, are important factors for vision-impaired people to live a more independent life.

So, the least thing that the banks can do for the community is make their institution safe. After all, blind people are also paying customers. So, they should be treated with respect like any other customers. Banks are a huge part of achieving financial independence. It is time for them to see that people with vision impairment are capable and can manage their finances, especially now that they can access bank applications with the help of different assistive devices.

Puneet Singh Singhal

Puneet Singh Singhal, a resident of New Delhi, India. Despite an undiagnosed learning disability and stammering, Puneet has emerged as a strong disability activist. He believes that his life's journey is shaped by the intersection of poverty, domestic violence, and multiple non-visible disabilities. Puneet's mission is to advocate for a more inclusive and accessible society for people with diverse disabilities, including visible and non-visible ones. He founded a non-profit organization called SSSTART, which aims to normalize speech and communication disabilities. Puneet is also associated with prominent organizations such as Billion Strong, Diversability, and IUCN.

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Vision for Promoting Disability Inclusion and Accessibility on a Global Scale

Puneet Singh Singhal, disability activist SSSTART Founder

Abstract

This article shares the personal experiences of its author with poverty, domestic violence, and non-visible disabilities. These experiences have shaped the author's passion for promoting inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) globally. The article highlights the importance of eradicating stigma and misconceptions associated with non-visible disabilities, creating a truly inclusive environment, and understanding intersectionality. The author stresses the need for customized support to achieve equity and for education systems to teach about neurodiversity and inclusion from a young age. The article also calls for universal design principles to enhance accessibility in the digital world. Finally, the author emphasizes the need for collective responsibility among nations, sectors, and individuals to work towards a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible future without any discrimination.

Keywords: ***Inclusion, disability, IDEA, ADHD, education, society, people with disabilities, diversity, environment, accessibility.***

Vision for Promoting Disability Inclusion and Accessibility on a Global Scale

In the bustling lanes of a Delhi slum where I grew up, I witnessed firsthand the multidimensional impacts of poverty, domestic violence, and the profound impact of having multiple non-visible disabilities. It was a crucible, an amalgamation of trials and tribulations that shaped my perspective and ignited my passion for making this world more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible (IDEA). Today, my vision for promoting disability inclusion and accessibility on a global scale is deeply rooted in the lessons learned from my personal experiences and the resilience that emerged from them.

In a world that's constantly evolving, brimming with potential, it's a disheartening paradox to see the stark disparities that exist. The World Bank estimates that one billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability, yet they are often left on the periphery of societal discourse. The struggle is compounded for those like myself, grappling with non-visible disabilities like dyslexia, dyspraxia, and stammering, where the impairment is not immediately apparent, leading to a lack of understanding, empathy, and often missed opportunities for inclusion.

The first component of my vision is to eradicate the ignorance and stigma associated with non-visible disabilities. This calls for a shift in societal narratives to recognize and appreciate neurodiversity - the understanding that neurological differences like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia are natural variations of the human brain. We need to spread awareness and debunk misconceptions, showing the world

that these differences are not deficits but unique abilities that can contribute to societal progress in unparalleled ways.

I believe in fostering an inclusive environment that goes beyond tokenism. Inclusion is not merely opening doors; it's about ensuring everyone has an equal opportunity to participate, contribute, and flourish. This is only possible when we systematically dismantle the physical, informational, or attitudinal barriers that hinder their participation.

My vision revolves around creating a truly equitable society where resources and opportunities are allocated fairly, considering each individual's unique needs and circumstances. This means acknowledging the intersectionality of disability - how it overlaps with other aspects of identity, such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status, to create unique experiences of oppression or privilege.

The quest for a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible world is not a solitary pursuit; it's a collective journey that requires the participation and commitment of all stakeholders. I firmly believe that the IDEA paradigm is not an idealistic dream; it's a tangible reality within our grasp if we commit to the path of empathy, understanding, and action.

The journey towards IDEA begins with a crucial step – understanding. Understanding that people with non-visible disabilities, like myself, aren't seeking sympathy or special treatment. We advocate for equal opportunities, an equal platform to showcase our abilities and contribute to society. Understanding that disabilities don't define us, they are just one aspect of our complex

identities. And understanding that inclusion isn't a concession but a fundamental human right.

As we strive to improve awareness, education plays a pivotal role. Education systems worldwide need to be reimagined to accommodate diverse learning needs, teaching students about neurodiversity and the importance of inclusion from a young age. By instilling these values early on, we can foster a new generation that views diversity as a strength and inclusion as a norm.

Next, let's talk about accessibility. We live in an era where technology has seamlessly integrated into our lives, revolutionizing how we interact, learn, and work. Yet, the potential of technology to enhance accessibility remains largely untapped. Imagine an online world with universal design principles at its core - websites, apps, and digital platforms that are equally accessible to all, irrespective of their physical or cognitive abilities.

In the physical world, accessibility should not be an afterthought but an integral part of infrastructure planning. Accessible public transportation, ramped entrances in buildings, tactile paths, and signages are not luxuries but necessities that enable people with disabilities to navigate their environments independently.

Now, onto equity – the principle that everyone doesn't start from the same place and might need different resources to reach the same outcome. This concept is especially crucial when we consider intersectionality. For example, a person with a disability from a low-income background, like my past self, has a significantly different set of challenges than someone from a high-income background. Equity means acknowledging these differences and customizing support accordingly.

Diversity is not just about representation but about creating an environment where diverse voices are heard, valued, and have the power to influence decisions. This means fostering diverse leadership within organizations, implementing policies that protect against discrimination, and creating safe spaces for dialogue and collaboration.

We stand at a crossroads today. On the one hand, we have the status quo, a world where people with disabilities continue to be marginalized. On the other, we have the potential for a global society that thrives on diversity, champions inclusion, values equity and is universally accessible. The choice is ours to make, and I fervently hope that we choose the path of IDEA, for it's not just the right thing to do but the smart thing for a vibrant, resilient, and equitable future.

As we envision this future, we must recognize that this is not a task for a few but a collective responsibility. It involves collaboration across nations, sectors, and individuals - each playing a unique role in fostering IDEA. Governments must enforce and strengthen laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities, ensuring accessibility is a non-negotiable standard in public infrastructure, services, and digital spaces. Businesses and organizations can drive change by fostering diverse and inclusive work environments, investing in accessibility, and ensuring equitable practices.

While these systemic changes are vital, the role of communities and individuals cannot be underestimated. It's in our everyday interactions, attitudes, and choices that we shape the culture around us. Let's challenge our biases, learn about disabilities, and foster empathy. Let's choose to consume media that represent disability

accurately and inclusively and support businesses that prioritize accessibility.

Advocacy is also crucial. As someone who has experienced the challenges of living with non-visible disabilities, I am dedicated to raising awareness and advocating for change. But advocacy isn't just for those who live with these challenges. Everyone can use their voice to amplify the message, challenge ableism, and advocate for inclusive policies.

Let's celebrate diversity, recognizing the strength that comes from a multitude of experiences and perspectives. Our global community's immense potential remains untapped simply because we've failed to provide the right environment for everyone to thrive. Let's acknowledge the achievements of people with disabilities, listen to their stories, and learn from their experiences.

Promoting IDEA globally isn't just about improving the lives of people with disabilities. It's about enhancing our shared humanity, enriching our societies, and fostering innovation. It's about creating a world where every person can contribute their unique strengths and thrive.

Reflecting on my journey from the slums of Delhi to becoming a passionate advocate for disability rights, I am reminded of the power of resilience, the strength of diversity, and the potential for change. I am reminded that no barrier is insurmountable when we have the will to change.

As we move forward, let's carry these lessons with us, creating a world that is not just inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible but also compassionate, understanding, and full of opportunities for all. It's a massive task, but I believe it's a challenge we can meet. The

time for IDEA is now, and the future we can create is compelling. Let's step into it together with commitment, courage, and the belief that everyone deserves to belong, contribute, and thrive.

Sayomdeb Mukherjee

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Project Discovery, Share Solutions, and Create Impact

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Abstract

The meaning of the word 'Solution" is to find an alternative method of overcoming a challenge by working around the problem to live a life of dignity and independence. It could be a product, workflow, or a unique way of doing something that enables a person to perform the task they normally would have difficulty in accomplishing.

Many of us use such simple yet innovative solutions daily, sometimes without realizing their importance. Persons with disabilities and their caregivers or family members are no exemption from this. However, such solutions mostly remain undocumented.

Project Discovery is a platform aimed at collating different solutions in the form of short videos and making them available to ALL.

Keywords: ***Solution, People with Disabilities, Awards,*** **dignity, independence, community, approach, inclusion, innovations, Impact, Grassroot.**

Project Discovery, Share Solutions, and Create Impact

Introduction

"Necessity, as they say, is the mother of inventions".

Whenever faced with a challenge, our innate curiosity pushes us to find solutions. Innovations come about as a result of our natural need to find solutions to all problems that confront us. The main idea of *'Project Discovery'* is to find thousands of such innovations, which emerge organically and continuously in the disability sector and create a repository.

Overcoming barriers by finding path-breaking innovations is a crucial need for all human beings. However, the humungous amount of information about useful innovations is scattered, not easy to discover, and often lost. It was imperative to collect and collate all this data so that it was easily available to all those who needed it. To enable easy discovery and dissemination of information about these vital and useful innovations, Project Discovery initiated the process of documenting and cataloguing them in a scientific manner.

For this project, the definition of the word 'solution' is an alternative method to overcoming challenges by working around a problem to *live a life of dignity and independence*. It could be a product, workflow, or a unique way of doing something that enables a person to perform or contribute to a task they normally would have difficulty accomplishing.

Project Discovery aims to collect the maximum number of solution videos from the community, store them systematically in an open-access repository, and publicise them for everyone around the world to see, *while also giving all innovators with disability and stakeholders their due credit!*

Formation

While working on this project, the back-end team realized that by giving credit to the grassroots innovators, the process of restoring agency is happening. Integrating all forms of disability into a single platform helps to develop a grassroots connection between the organization and stakeholders, to interchange their expertise and knowledge.

The story behind developing every assistive solution is unique. Despite the uniqueness, the same solution has the potential to help and empower or inspire someone on the other side of the world. The development of a solution-centric mindset in the entire ecosystem of disability should include parents, caregivers, and professionals.

Bringing in every stakeholder in the process of inclusion was important. It is beautiful to see the existence of an ecosystem with the absolute include-ability of each person with a disability, whose life changed with a solution, and the person who empathized to make or curate that solution.

Community First Approach

When we talk about assistive solutions for persons with disabilities, we often think of high-tech solutions. In daily life, a person with a disability may use many low-tech, simple, non-tech, or even self-invented solutions to break or bypass barriers and become productive. The world over, we have seen that people with disabilities (PwDs) and people in their support networks, regularly come up with new solutions to effectively contribute in promoting accessibility and inclusion. The solution-centric mindset in the

disability sector has the potential to help scale the factors of empowerment for persons with disabilities.

We bring you Project Discovery/*Discovery Awards*, with its novel idea of having a competition of assistive solution videos. We aim to develop the community beyond the barriers of international boundaries. The idea is to unite one billion persons with disabilities and all stakeholders, to understand the value of solutions in the lives of people with disabilities. With the help of this competition, *Team Project Discovery* intends to *crowdsource* assistive solutions for the upliftment of persons with disabilities and bring productivity in various forms including economic empowerment.

To repeat the adage that 'necessity' is the mother of all inventions,' the solution-centric mindset is rooted in the belief, that '*Everyone is an innovator'*, and has the potential to scale up the empowerment of persons with disabilities.

Discovery Awards is an international platform which recognizes innovative solutions and showcases the stories of grassroots innovators around the world!

Project Discovery from its inception has been a community-driven, volunteer-led project. There is no one individual or organization at the centre, community directs the show in every season.

The conceptualization, structuring and branding of the project were done keeping in mind the core concept of the community first! Even though EnAble India has ideated the project, this project capacity is replicable anywhere in the world.

Integrating all forms of sociocultural diversity of disability, various economic backgrounds and stakeholders gives this project *the flavour of inclusion in the "backyard" in the disability sector*.

Conclusion

Project Discovery has touched the lives of people with disabilities and stakeholders, by bridging the silos and integrating the sector. The platform of *Zero Project* has the potential to recognise inventors and innovators and to bring in the mindset of always *thinking of solutions*. Every identifiable problem has its own solution in the sector which needs to be identified by the grassroots innovators.

Keeping the problem in the centre and co-creating with the person and the stakeholder, helps to develop functional and acceptable solutions. Person centric approach to identifying Solutions is the way forward which needs to be accepted both in and outside the sector.

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Letter from the Chairman's Desk By Sunil Bhatia PhD

One day a writer in her teenage has published an article in her blog " The Pursuit of Perfect: What Is the Ideal Breast Shape?". I was a little disturbed by the way our society is moving toward the artificial direction where the real meaning of life for real progress for human development is pushed back and such types of activities that have the power for enhancing beauty for attracting others.

One day my father was wearing a dress that was not properly ironed and wrinkled were visible. My mother raised her voice for such a dress. He did not answer and went out of the house.

One day I noticed his friend's dress was a little torn but he did not say anything to him. I was a child and out of curiosity I asked " His dress was not proper and his body was visible from his torn dress ." He advised "Never makes such comments. If you are pointing that issue it might hurt his emotion. It might be possible he could not be financially strong enough to attend to such issues or he is ignorant of his dress condition. Raising such a point affects our relations. Have you ever heard someone pointing toward a pregnant woman? It is a naturally well-established fact. Similarly, we should not laugh if someone has suffered due to an accident or passed through a

natural process that went wrong and turned a differently abled person. It is morally correct to help in performing his tasks. He concluded by saying " If you are meeting someone and allowed not to cross his limit of contact. You should not cross his set limit and perform what way he wished to allow to perform his meetings."

Reverting to the article and I question. 'What is the purpose of the breast in a woman? Is it an asset that common people comment by cursory looking at her breast'?

Nature has made the breast for feeding infants. You will be surprised to note that a human newly born child's stomach is so small that one tablespoon of breast milk is sufficient for his hunger for growth and survival. Lactation is possible when a child is about to deliver and continued till the child is enough strong to take care of his body with supplements like food, water, etc. Nature has another purpose as long a woman breastfeeds she will not conceive. Some women fear the distortion of body shape by breastfeeding lives the wrong notion and are not aware that during pregnancy child repairs the defective organs of the mother by sending his cells. It gives longevity to her.

When I read items that cosmetic surgeons are in demand and that a normal woman visits him for her desired shape breast makes me a ridiculous step. Why only round and teardrop implants are the most popular breast implant shapes? It is hype created by marketing people and psychologists emphasizing on the ideal breast shape brings the woman wearing it confidence and empowerment, regardless of breast size, shape, or symmetry. Round implants give a fuller, symmetrical appearance that enhances cleavage. The pursuit

of the perfect breast shape has become an obsession for many. They say perfect breast is associated with women having firm, ample, proportional, and well-shaped breasts that fill out clothes.

Those who are normal by birth but market-driven forces made them disabled by narrating such useless stories about breasts. It is a trap and we should avoid such things that can make us feel like disable. A new breed is emerging that are normal humans but feel disabled. This journey of looking in perfect ideal shape was from ancient times. People started coloring their bodies for enhancing and highlighting for getting attraction of others. Sometimes it was associated with power and status. The design of ornaments was another step. One day an African tribe woman was sitting over the smoke of the scented burning fire so that she will be properly noticed by her husband during sex. Sex is not designed for entertainment it has the purpose of producing springs for the next generation. It does not require scented or proper ideal shape private parts. Dying and coloring hair appears small act compared to those women goes under the knife for getting the desired shape. It is mental sickness and it was visible in America's icon Michel Jackson who died with such mental sickness disability. One of my friend's wife went to the surgeon for her eyebrows tattoos in black color for overlapping her grey hair in it due to her age in her fifties. She asked my opinion about her act. I kept mum and said your selfie will be good. She could not understand what I am saying. I was thinking when she will be in her sixties and her face will be full of wrinkles her same eyebrows will appear ugly because it is an unnatural manmade effort and the rest of her face will behave naturally so there will be discord in shaping her face.

I can understand the role of the breast in controlling its movement while walking or running disturbed. But wearing it to enhance the shape for attracting others appears ridiculous to me. Nose or ear piercing is a painful process for wearing ornaments for looking beautiful or powerful in society beyond my imagination. It is my advice never to feel disabled by what market-driven forces are making for profiteering. I will appreciate it if someone's face is distorted in accidents and lowering this confidence of not feeling normal that time role of cosmetic surgery is appreciated. It is wrong when nature has provided you normally that serves the purpose and comes under the market-driven forces that realize what you have is improper and needs proper shape for feeling normal.

I am thankful to Debra Ruh, CEO and Founder of Ruh Global IMPACT , Executive Chair and Co-Founder of Billion-Strong Organization for accepting our invitation in spite of her other social commitments. She has the recent setback of the death of her husband but her exemplary courage and social commitment are a real driving force in her. I am happy that she made this special issue a truly international publication.

Lambert Academic publication for celebration of 150th special issue by publishing a book by compiling editorials "Design For All, Drivers of Design" was translated into eight different languages from ENGLISH to French, German, Italian, Russian, Dutch, and Portuguese. Kindly click the following link for the book. "Morebooks", one of the largest online bookstores. Here's the link to it:

https://www.morebooks.de/store/gb/book/design-forall/isbn/978-613-9-83306-1

Enjoy reading, be happy, and work for the betterment of society.

With Regards
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Forthcoming Issues

July 2023 Vol-18 No-7

***Manisha** is a thought leader in the power of thinking from the edge and has appeared on Big Ideas on Radio National, Sydney Writers festival and fronted the Disability Royal Commission. She has over 20 year's experience in strategic marketing, communication, transforming cultures and creativity and now leads the Centre for Inclusive Design as the organisation's CEO. She has a unique ability to bring together industry experts and global partners to identify areas ripe for disruption where we can make the greatest impact. Manisha has worked in government, community, and technology sectors. She is passionate about social*

justice and business growth and believes that when we combine the two, we get gold.

August 2023 Vol-18 No-8

Divya Chaurasia *is an award-winning industrial designer, with a background in engineering and user experience. An expert in user centered research, sustainable practices and design for manufacturing, she has a Masters in Industrial Design from Pratt Institute, New York and Bachelor's in Technology from Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, India.*

Currently, Divya works as a senior industrial designer and user experience lead at Spitfire Industry, a design consultancy based in Brooklyn, New York. She designs products and experiences for brands like Clorox, All Clad, Tefal, Bausch & Lomb, Cook's Direct, Hunter Douglas, GoTrax, and Nectar. Divya's work is inspired by the everyday pursuits of people. She is fascinated by the connection between humans, objects and environments, and captures this relationship in delightfully functional products. Her work has been exhibited at NYCxDesign (New York Design Week) and NYC Media Lab Annual Summit and received recognition by Chicago Athenaeum

Good Design Award in 2021 and International Design Awards 2023. Being a strong advocate for sustainable practices in design, Divya has given guest talks at the Industrial Design Society of America Technical Deep Dive and North Carolina State University on the topic. Divya also volunteers her time for supporting young designers. She serves as a mentor for Masters students at Virginia Tech University and the Offsite program, and as a Creative Liaisons Coach for the London International Awards.

October 2023 Vol-18 No-10

Dr Dolly Daou *has 23 years of academic and industry experience leading global academic programs and non-profit associations and initiating practice-based research projects for medium-large organisations in Australasia, Europe and the Middle East. Dr Daou's professional background is in interior architecture and urban design research, her career path led her to France where she became the Director of Food Design Lab at l'École de design, Nantes Atlantique. During her leadership to the lab Dr Daou developed and implemented system-based and food entrepreneurship education strategies. Combining her*

multidisciplinary and my international industry and academic experience Dr Daou developed workshops that transform theoretical research into impactful commercial outcomes and strategies with ecological benefits particularly in the food sector. Dr Daou is currently the co-founder and co-chair of Food Think Tank Research Working Group at Cumulus Association. Dr Daou established the Interior Architecture Program at Swinburne University of Technology and implemented its transition and rebranding, was the Director of the non-profit Association of Professional Interior designers/Architecture (MENA) in the Middle

East and North Africa, where Dr Daou was awarded the title AlSafeer Congress Ambassador by Dubai Business Events, a Community Manager for a team of start-ups at the European Innovation Council (EIC), European Commission and invited Quality Assurance reviewer for TEQSA and for international quality assurance agencies for higher education in Australia and in Bahrain.

November 2023 Vol-18 No-11

Dr. Soumyajit Bhar is currently an Assistant professor of environmental studies at Krea University, India, where he offers and coordinates a course on Design Thinking. Soumyajit straddles action and academic research with

more than 14 years of experience (both volunteering and full-time) working with various environmental and sustainability issues. He holds a Ph.D. in Sustainability Studies (with a specialization in ecological economics) from Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) as part of a unique interdisciplinary Ph.D. program. His dissertation attempts to understand socio-psychological drivers and local and regional scale environmental impacts of conspicuous/luxury consumption basket in India. Soumyajit is furthering postdoctoral research at the intersection of rising consumerism, sustainability concerns, and inequality levels in the context of the Global South. He is also keen to explore how design education can broaden students' perspectives and help them delineate pathways to a better world. He has published in international journals and popular media. He is also interested in larger questions of philosophy and ethics, particularly pertaining to environmental issues.

New Books

it is available on www.morebooks.de one of the largest online bookstores. Here's the link to it: https://www.morebooks.de/store/gb/book/design-for-all/isbn/978-613-9-83306-1

The Ultimate Resource for Aging in Place With Dignity and Grace!

Are you looking for housing options that are safer and more accommodating for independently aging in place? Do you want to enjoy comfort, accessibility, safety and peace of mind – despite your disabilities, limitations and health challenges? The help you need is available in the Universal Design Toolkit: Time-saving ideas, resources, solutions, and guidance for making homes accessible.

This is the ultimate resource for individuals and professionals who want to save time, money and energy when designing, building, remodeling or downsizing a home. The Universal Design Toolkit will help you take the steps to design homes for your clients or yourself while eliminating the costly trial and error challenges you'd inevitably encounter if faced with this learning curve on your own.

Rosemarie Rossetti, Ph.D., teamed with her husband Mark Leder in creating this unique Toolkit. They bring ten years of research, design and building expertise by serving as the general contractors for their home, the Universal Design Living Laboratory– which is the highest rated universal design home in North America.

Within the Toolkit's 200 richly illustrated pages, you'll find: Insights that distinguish *essential* products, services and resources from the *unnecessary*.

Proven, realistic tips for finding the right home.

Home features you need to look for. Nothing is assumed or left out.

Handy home checklists and assessments.

Interview questions to help you hire industry professionals with knowledge and experience. Photographs that provide a frame of reference to inspire, clarify and illuminate features andbenefits.

Valuable resources to save you time, money and energy.

Helpful sources of funding.

Space planning dimensions for access using assistive devices such as wheelchairs andwalkers.

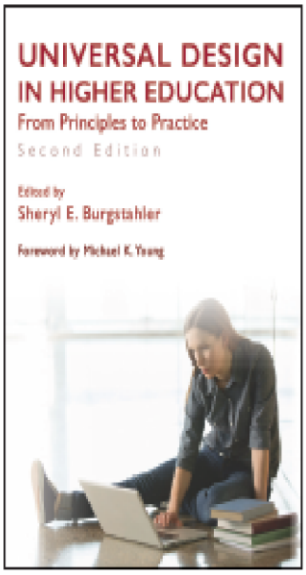
And so much more!

If you want useful, dependable advice and easy to implement ideas from respected experts who know the ropes, you'll love Rossetti and Leder's perspective. As a speaker, author and consultant who uses a wheelchair, Rossetti has helped hundreds of people design their ideal homes. Now her comprehensive Toolkit is available to help and support you! Get the Universal Design Toolkit now to start your project!

"Fresh, comprehensive, and engaging, *Universal Design in Higher Education* is expertly written, thoughtfully crafted, and a 'must-add' to your resource collection."

–STEPHAN J. SMITH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATION ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND DISABILITY

Harvard Education Press



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UNIVERSAL DESIGN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

From Principles to Practice, Second Edition

EDITED BY SHERYL E. BURGSTAHLER • FOREWORD BY MICHAEL K. YOUNG

This second edition of the classic *Universal Design in Higher Education* is a comprehensive, up-to-the-minute guide for creating fully accessible college and university programs. The second edition has been thoroughly revised and expanded, and it addresses major recent changes in universities and colleges, the law, and technology.

As larger numbers of people with disabilities attend postsecondary educational institutions, there have been increased efforts to make the full array of classes, services, and programs accessible to all students. This revised edition provides both a full survey of those measures and practical guidance for schools as they work to turn the goal of universal accessibility into a reality. As such, it makes an indispensable contribution to the growing body of literature on special education and universal design. This book will be of particular value to university and college administrators, and to special education researchers, teachers, and activists.

SHERYL E. BURGSTAHLER is an affiliate professor in the College of Education at the University of Washington in Seattle, and founder and director of the university's Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DO-IT) and Access Technology Centers.

"Sheryl Burgstahler has assembled a great set of chapters and authors on universal design in higher education. It's a must-have book for all universities, as it covers universal design of instruction, physical spaces, student services, technology, and provides examples of best practices."

–JONATHAN LAZAR, PROFESSOR OF COMPUTER AND INFORMATION SCIENCES, TOWSON UNIVERSITY, AND CO-AUTHOR OF *ENSURING DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH PROCESS AND POLICY*

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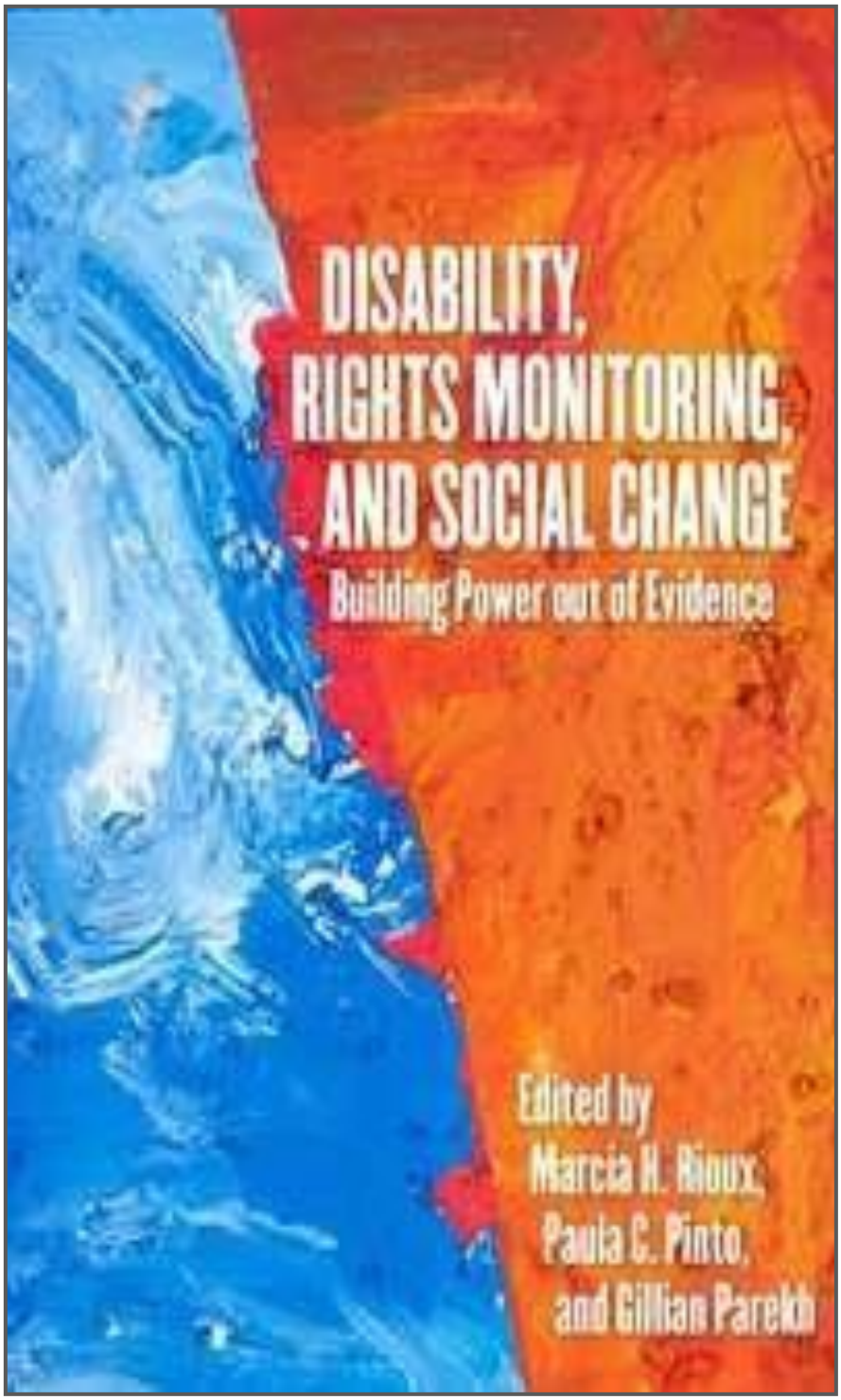
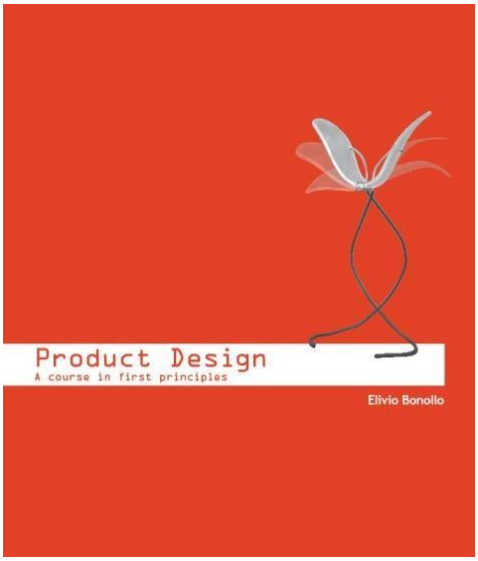


New Update: ELIVIO BONOLLO (2015/16) PRODUCT DESIGN: A COURSE IN FIRST PRINCIPLES



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17.3, and on amazon.com).
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Surface devices using readers such as the Microsoft *freda*ePub reader. The Kindle (mobi file) reader isflexible and suitable for reading the eBook on PCs; Kobo readers can also be used to read ePub files on MacBook and iPad. All formats are very interactive with very good navigation.

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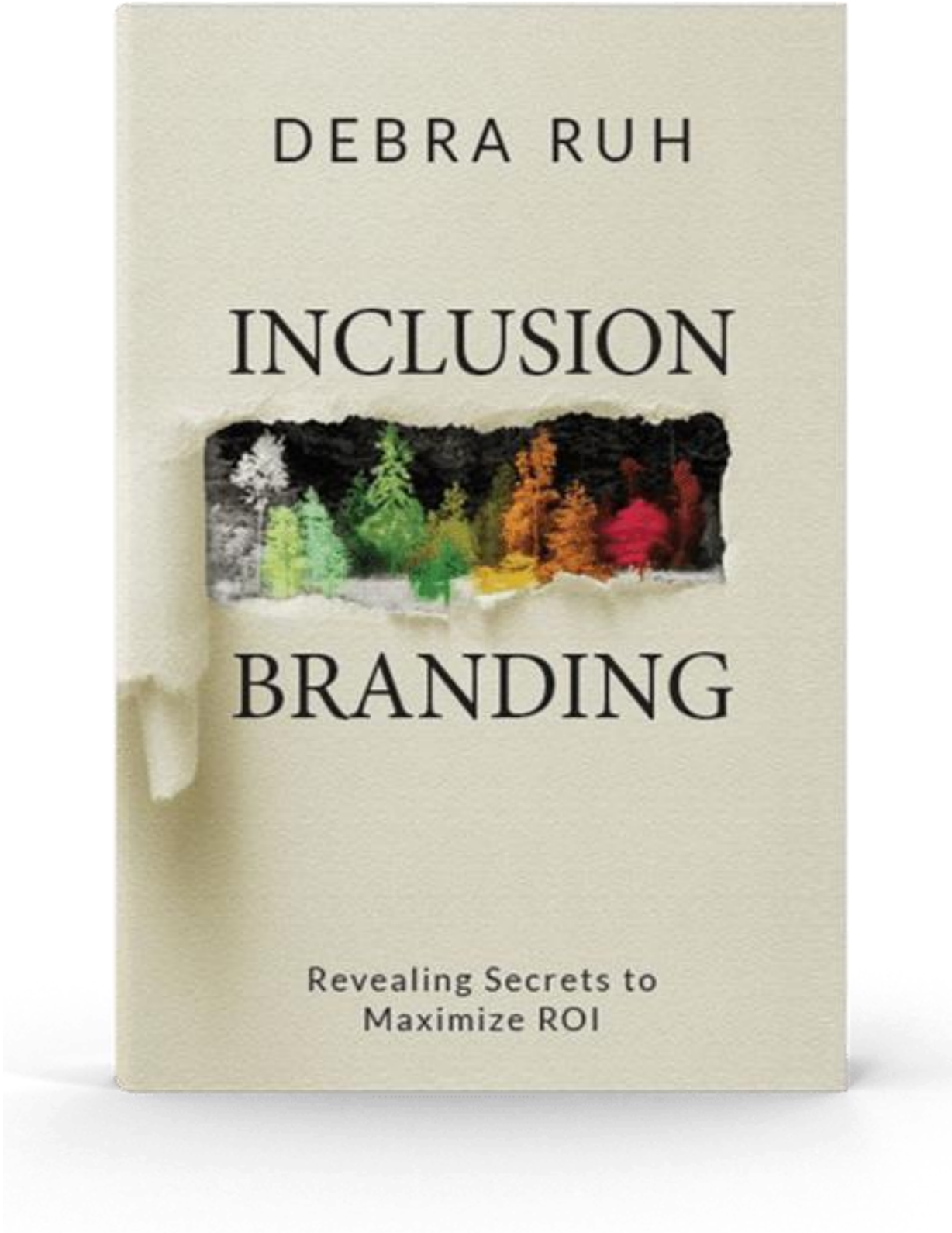
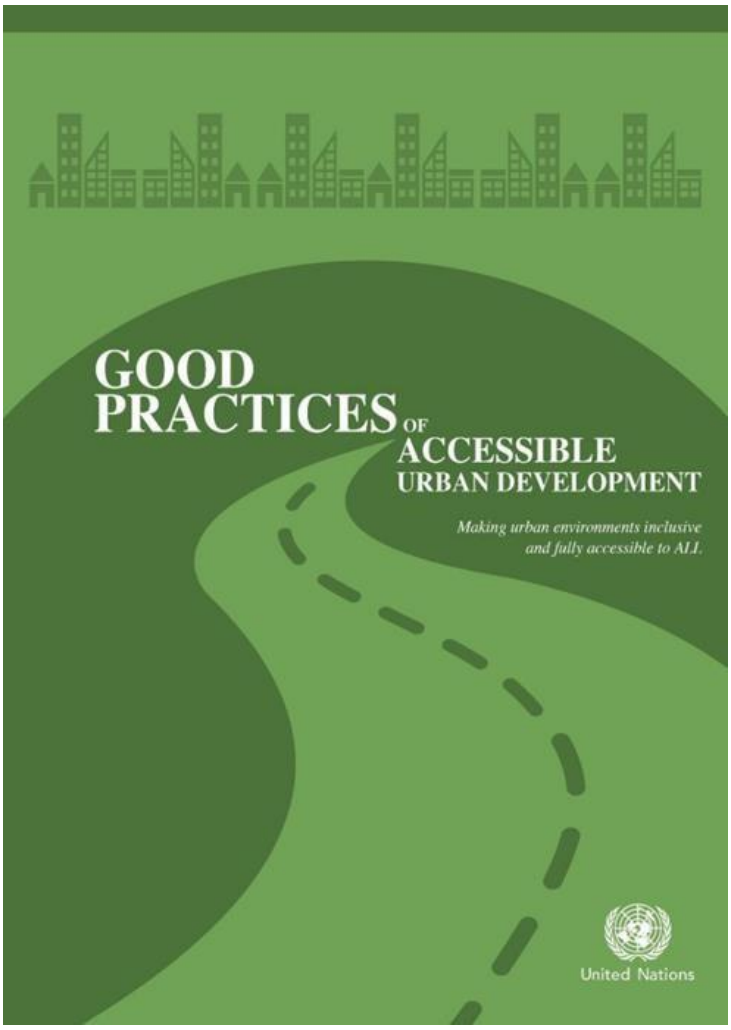
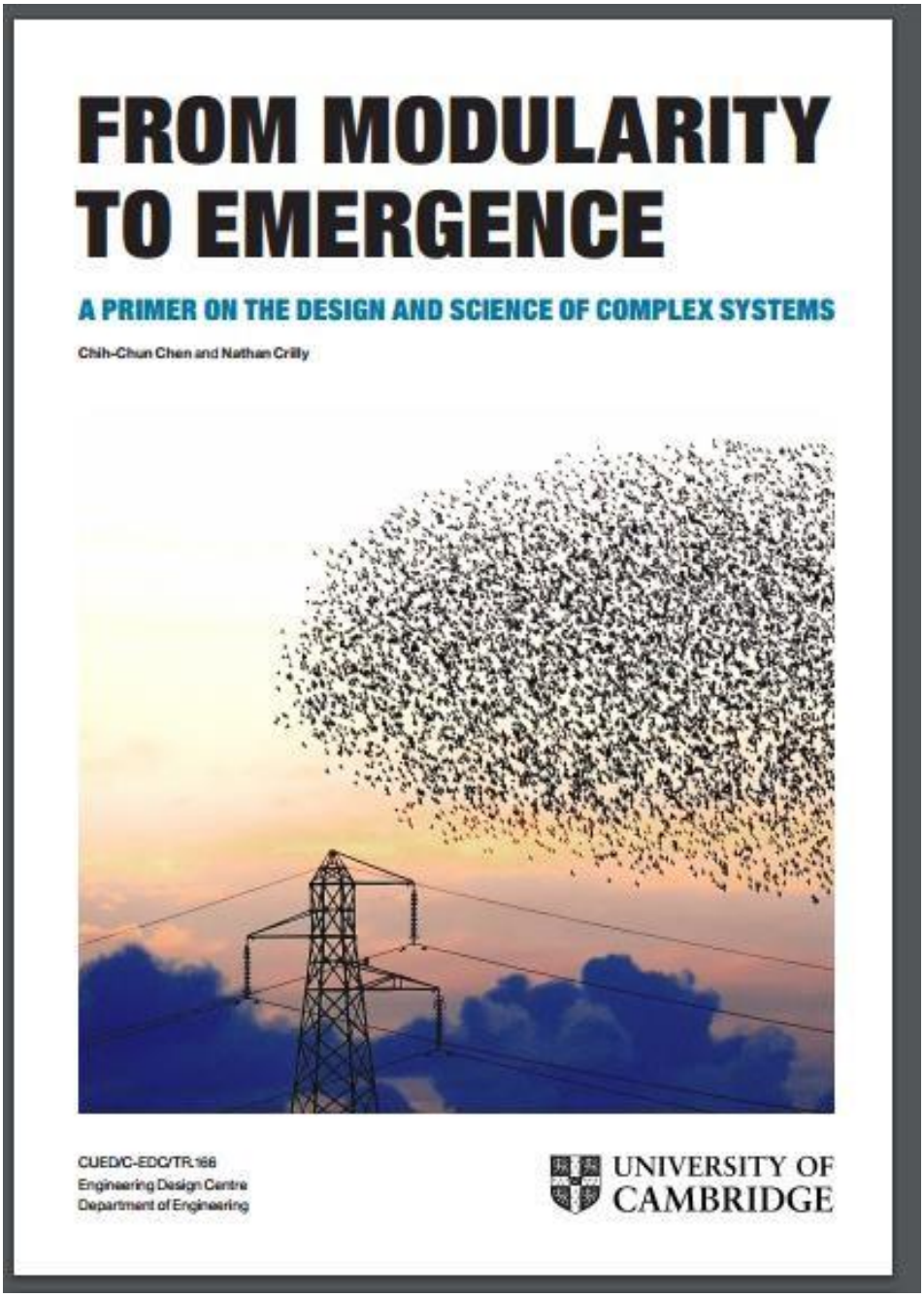




In light of the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (HABITAT III) and the imminent launch of the New Urban Agenda, DESA in collaboration with the Essl Foundation (Zero Project) and others have prepared a new publication entitled: "Good practices of accessible urban development".

The publication provides case studies of innovative practices and policies in housing and built environments, as well as transportation, public spaces and public services, including information and communication technology (ICT) based services.

The publication concludes with strategies and innovations for promoting accessible urban development. The advance unedited text is available at:http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/desa/good_practices_urban_dev.pdf



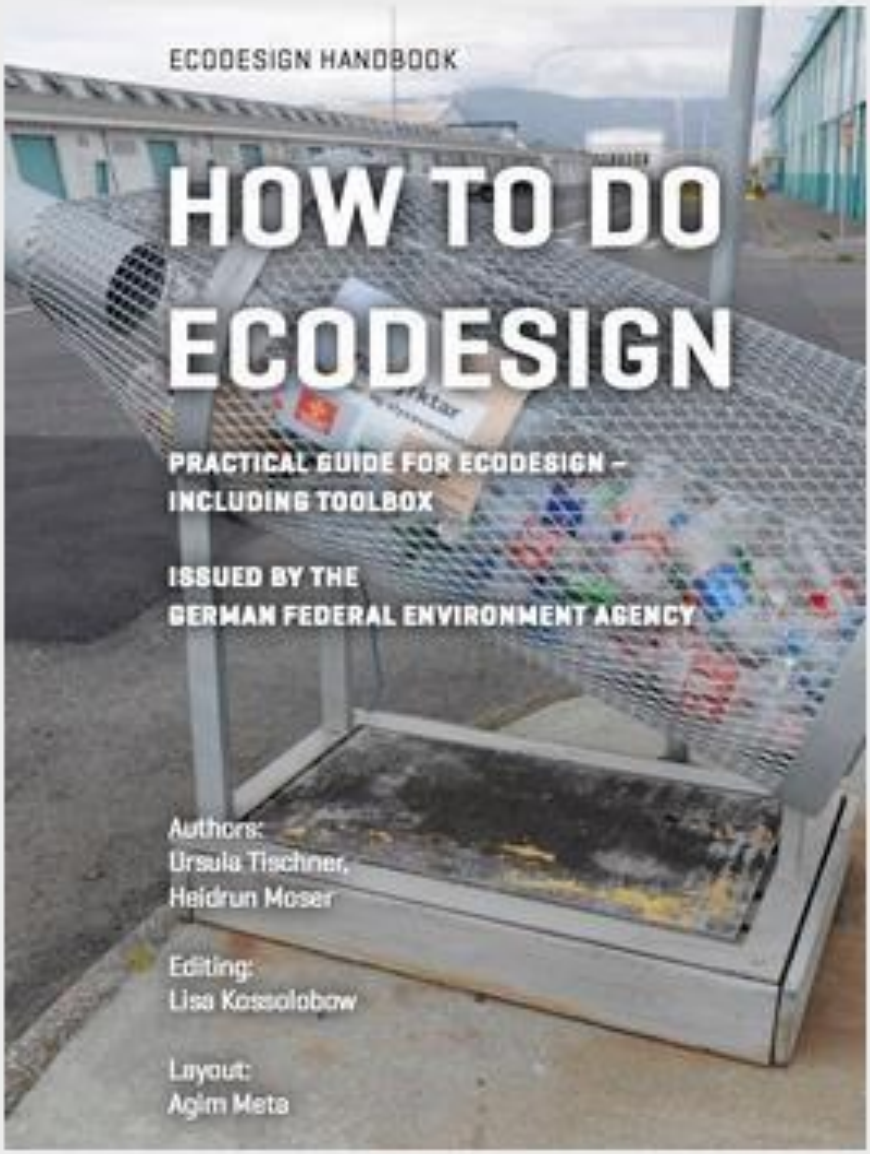
Dr Chih-Chun Chen and Dr Nathan Crilly of the Cambridge University Engineering Design Centre Design Practice Group have released a free, downloadable book, _A Primer on the Design and Science of Complex Systems_.

This project is funded by the UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EP/K008196/1).

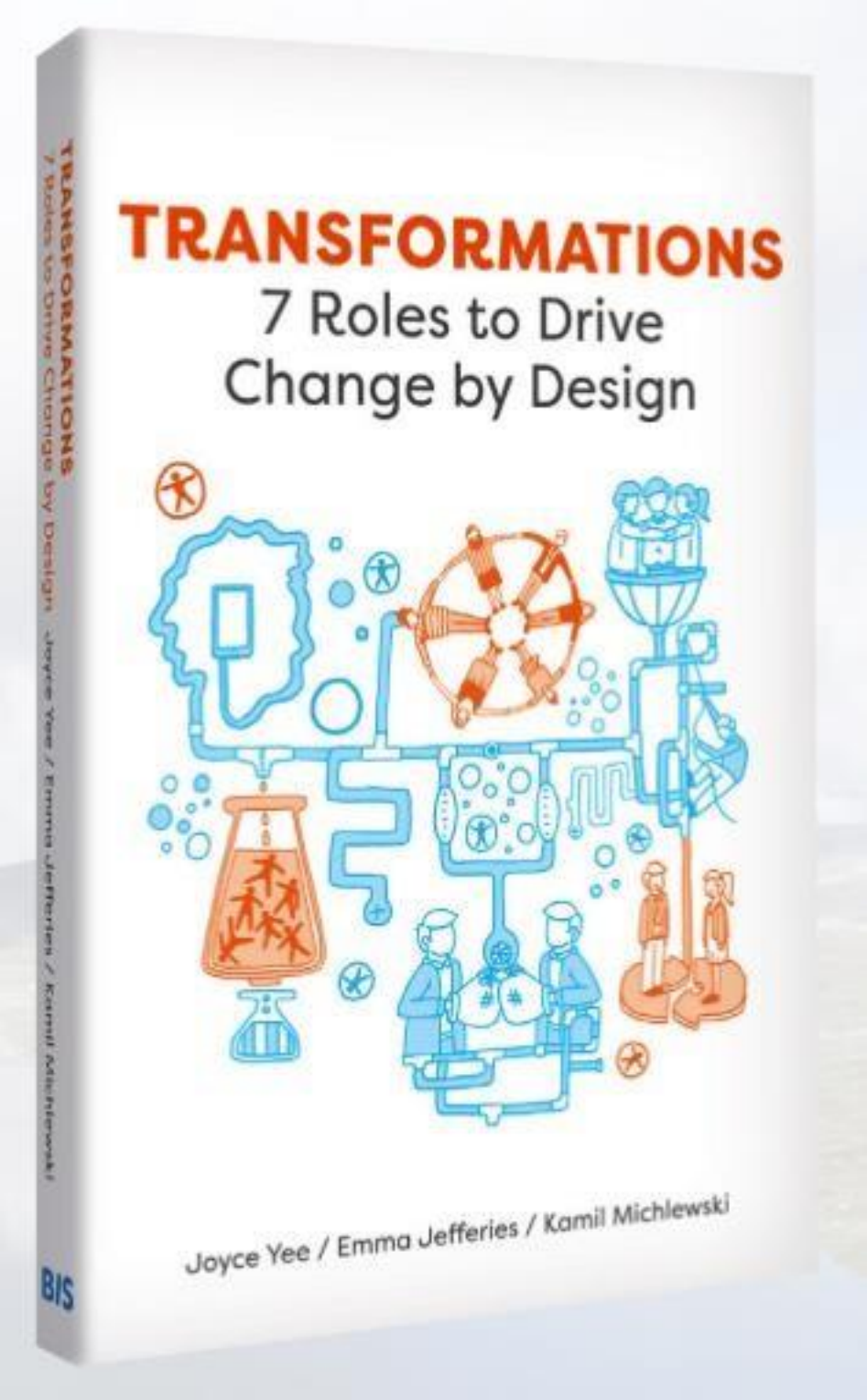
The book is available at URL: http://complexityprimer.eng.cam.ac.uk

Changing Paradigms: Designing for a Sustainable Future

New iBook / ebook:
HOW TO DO ECODESIGN



Practical Guide for Ecodesign – Including a Toolbox
Author: Ursula Tischner


TRANSFORMATIONS
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Joyce Yee / Emma Jefferies / Kamil Michlewski
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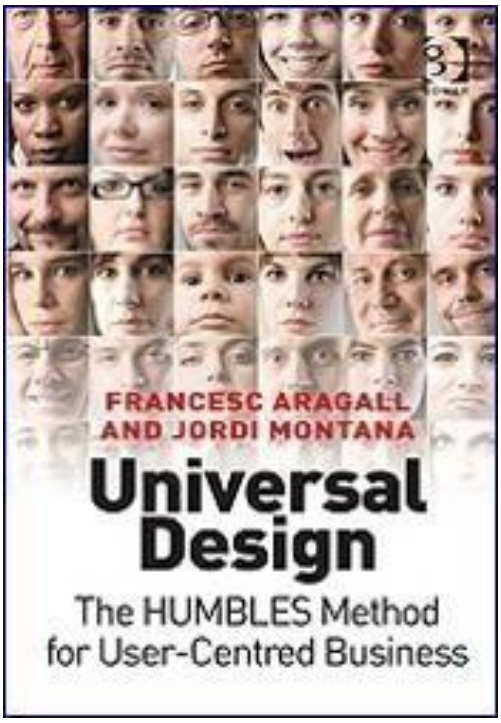
Arnar Árnason and Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson
DEATH AND GOVERNMENTALITY
Neo-liberalism, grief and the nation form

Universal Design: The HUMBLES Method for User-Centred Business



"Universal Design: The HUMBLES Method for User-Centred Business", written by Francesc Aragall and Jordi Montaña and published by Gower, provides an innovative method to support businesses wishing to increase the number of satisfied users and clients and enhance their reputation by adapting their products and services to the diversity of their actual and potential customers, taking into account their needs, wishes and expectations.

The HUMBLES method (© Aragall) consists of a progressive, seven-phase approach for implementing Design for All within a business. By incorporating the user's point of view, it enables companies to evaluate their business strategies in order to improve provide an improved, more customer-oriented experience, and there by gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. As well as a comprehensive guide to the method, the book provides case studies of multinational business which have successfully incorporated Design for All into their working practices.

According to Sandro Rossell, President of FC Barcelona, who in company with other leading business professionals endorsed the publication, it is "required reading for those who wish to understand how universal design is the only way to connect a brand to the widest possible public, increasing client loyalty and enhancing company prestige". To purchase the book, visit either the Design for All Foundation website

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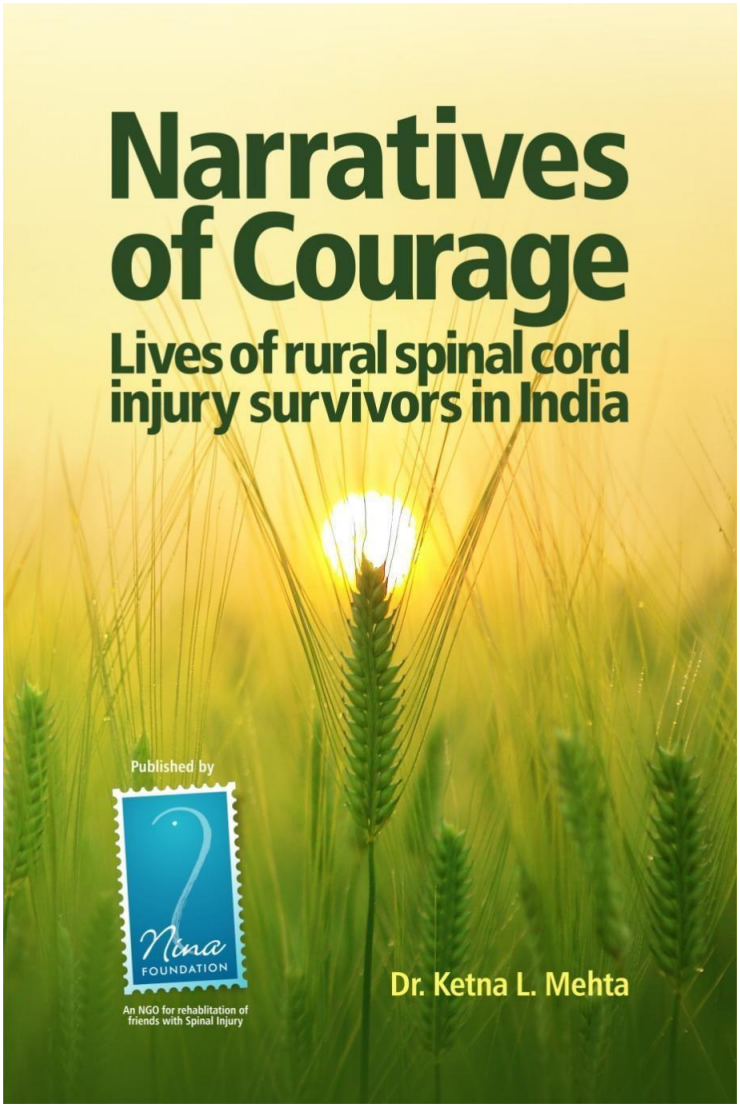

NOW AVAILABLE
Case Studies in Applied Behavior Analysis for Individuals with Disabilities (Second Edition)
Keith Storey, Ph.D., BCBA-D
Linda Haymes, Ph.D., BCBA-D
This book responds to a critical need for highly qualified personnel who will become exemplary professionals because of their advanced knowledge, skills, and experiences in working with students and adults that have varying disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Since Board Certification for behavior analysts was introduced, there has been an expansion of training programs in Applied Behavior Analysis to meet the demands from school districts, health insurers, and families. In spite of these developments, a case studies book has not been available that uses the Behavior Analyst Certification Board Task List, Fifth Edition (BACB) guidelines for educating individuals receiving their BCBA, or for those in the field such as teachers, and service providers. The goal of this book is to fill that need. In this newly revised second edition, eighteen case studies are provided—case studies with complete analysis, case studies with partial analysis, and case studies without analysis. The format, readability, and detailed description of instructional methodology makes this text a valued resource for instructors and behavior analysts responsible for improving the skills of people with disabilities.
Charles C Thomas, Publishing is proud to announce the release of this second edition.
For more information, or to order your copy, scan the QR code below!
$59.95 [paper] ISBN 978-0-398-09400-3
$59.95 [eBook] ISBN 978-0-398-09401-0
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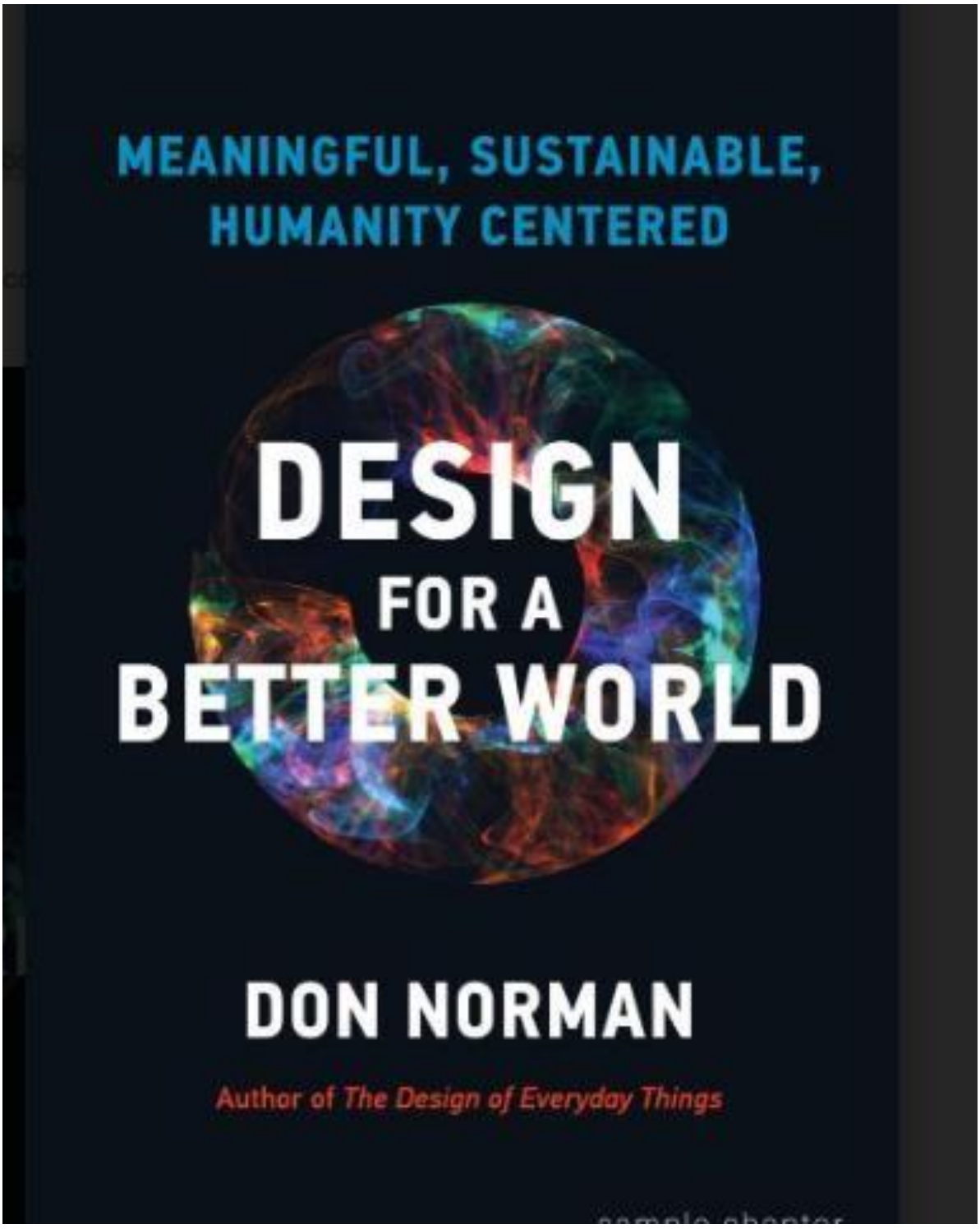
MEANINGFUL, SUSTAINABLE,
HUMANITY CENTERED
DESIGN
FOR A
BETTER WORLD
DON NORMAN
Author of The Design of Everyday Things

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News

1.

How to use UDL-inspired technology to reengage students

UDL principles guide teachers in how to customize instruction to meet the individual needs and preferences of each student

Key points:

- ***To improve student engagement, strive to create a positive learning environment***
- ***Offer multiple means of engagement using technology inspired by UDL such as voice/screen capture or different ways to present a project***

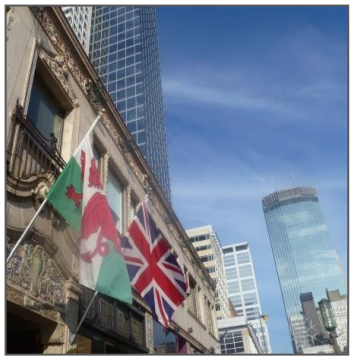
While schools have largely returned to normal classroom instruction, some ripple effects of the pandemic remain. Educators are searching for a spark to re-engage students in the learning process. According to a recent survey, 38 percent of students reported decreased motivation to excel in school. In comparison, 80 percent of educators feel the pandemic made students less motivated.

In some cases, children traumatized by the pandemic struggle with mental health issues. In most cases, teachers may only need to provide different opportunities and multiple means of engagement to increase participation.

Motivating students starts with building a positive learning environment. The first steps require educators to create a physically and emotionally safe classroom where each student is valued and respected. Fostering student connections, encouraging voice and choice, adding relevance to lessons, and nurturing student ownership results in a supportive community where students feel comfortable as active participants in their learning.

Each student approaches learning uniquely. Prior knowledge, interests, learning styles, language skills, and physical abilities affect a child's aptitude for learning and achievement. Meeting children where they are and differentiating instruction can mean the difference between a fully engaged learner and a passive learner who tunes out.

Coutsey: (e school Newsw)

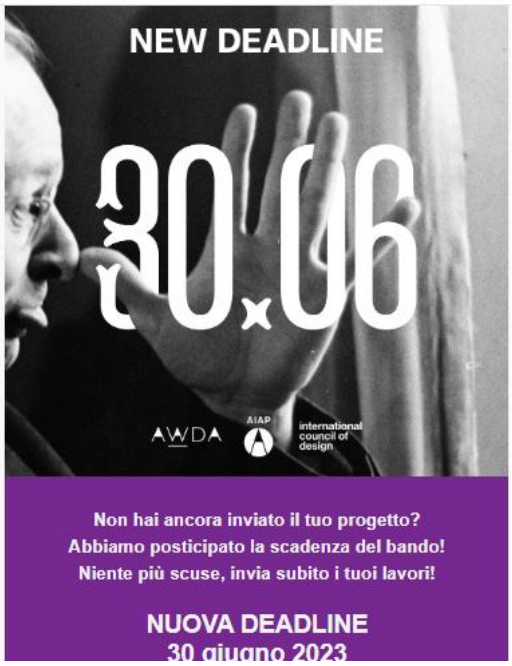


Programme and Events

DEAWARDS CALLS FOR 2023 ENTRIES

Competition 'Design Educates Awards' (DEAwards) goes a step further as it combines architecture and design with an educational impact. The aim is to push aesthetics to reach and obtain a lasting, informative influence on society. Visual arts have always been perceived and used as means of expression socially and politically, but the competition seeks to change this through original concepts and ideas revolving buildings or products that can be implemented for their function and effectiveness. Renowned Architects like Toyo Ito and Anna Heringer make part of the jury panel that is set to select the outstanding projects based on implementation, aesthetics, feasibility, and quality of the informative layer.

To join the Awards and register click the link here before it's too late! **Deadline for submissions is February 2, 2023.**



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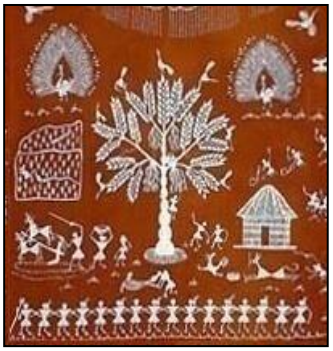

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