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Graduated as technical architect by the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. She started her professional work as a construction director and as a structure calculator. She has been working at Fundación ONCE for 25 years in the field of Universal Accessibility, carrying out actions aimed at promoting design for all people, specific awareness and training activities at national and international level. She also has written several publications, coordinated awards and organized accessible events and presence in fairs, like Construtec, Hostelco, Sima or Cevisama. Carmen is part of the teaching team of the Master in Accessibility for Smart City, the Global City at the Universidad de Jaén, the Universal Accessibility Course at the Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid and different MOOCs. Since 2013, she organizes, coordinates and participates in the training project "Design cities and towns for all people" at the national level.



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She also serves as an expert International Consultant in Accessible Tourism for the World Bank. The Accessible Tourism Plan for the Urugayan Government is one of the last projects she has participated in. She also leads the "Gender, Dependence and Social Exclusion" Research Group at the Regional Government of Andalusia.

Sense recovery: From Pompeii to the Sustainable Development Goals

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It is time s to reflect on a key issue for the present and the near future, the new city and housing models centered on the person.

Something was changing in the world of urban design, and the pandemic came to speed it up. A friendly city model that promotes relationships between people and the spaces in which they carry out their day-to-day activities is making its way to leave behind the old model of city isolation. Time to avoid individualism and short-termism has arrived: we are nothing when we stop being a community. We need to park the cars and explore the city, promote sustainable mobility and practice personal relationships. Urban designs must be implemented understanding the physical and virtual relationships that take place in the city, avoid unnecessary travel to carry out daily activities and take advantage of innovative Information and Communication technologies.

We are talking about urban design centred on people. Far from thinking of cities as a set of buildings, monuments and infrastructures, the important thing defended by David Sim, author of the book "Soft City", one of the pioneers of the idea of urban design centered on the person, is to promote relationships between people and spaces, with nature and between one person and another. The person-centered urban planning model is based on three key concepts: connectivity to achieve a better integration of space, accessibility to guarantee inclusion, and value generation to strengthen identity and urban heritage.

Cities require new approaches that maintain "small" scales to strengthen the compact city, as this provides benefits for both the public and private sectors, to be more easily managed, increase the quality of life of people, decrease traffic and reduce pollution. From this point of view, a friendly or "soft" city would be one that makes all these connections possible.

How can we know if we live in a soft city? Pay attention to a series of details: Do you have shared spaces, such as squares, parks or patios where you can interact with other neighbour's? Is it easy to meet people on the street or do you rather live inside the house? Do you have to drive to get to the nearest cafeteria or supermarket? Is it full of cars or is it easy to cycle or walk? Are there places where you can sit? Can you speak to the person at the kiosk who sells the newspaper? Can the retailer recommend you because he knows your tastes?

Cities have to be fair to their citizens, and to do so they must evolve at the same time as societies. We are at a moment when comfort and adaptation of the environment to the different needs of citizens is essential. People with disabilities, the elderly and children must be taken into account in the new city designs so all of them can experience the city with a feeling of belonging.

If a city is designed for children, the elderly and people with disabilities, then it will be "friendly" to all its inhabitants. Mobility inside and outside the home is also key when detecting the friendliness of a city. We must promote inclusive environments so that all generations can enjoy.

Perhaps we don't have to invent nothing new, we just have to recover empathy and apply common sense. If we look back and think about...

On October 24th, 79 AD. Pompeii, one of the most prosperous and best organized cities of Roman civilization, was submerged in a blanket of ashes, lava and dust by the eruption of Vesuvius; This caused life and infrastructure to freeze as they were at that precise moment. Approximately 1,500 years later, the site was excavated and, in addition to important infrastructure, hundreds of buildings and well-connected networks of streets and highways were discovered. The first “pedestrian crossing” appeared in the streets, made up of large stone blocks, designed with the users in mind, to allow people to cross the streets on the same plane as the pavement without having to step on the road. There were also layouts so when cars had to pass where people were crossing, they had to slow down. Will the same thing happen in the current situation?





We are all human beings, but we are also urban beings, as it can be seen in [Goal 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). It is clear that cities will play a very important role in achieving these Sustainable Development Goals, but to do so we must consider the person as the center, the strengthening of interpersonal relationships, the relationship between planning and urban design, the inclusive city, integrating the city and sustainability by developing landscape infrastructure as a primary asset. Green areas, public spaces, buildings, transport, services, etc. will be accessible, inclusive and safe for women and children, the elderly and people with disabilities in particular and for all citizens in general.

According to data from the [World Bank](#), more than half of the world's population live in cities and this proportion will reach 70% in 2050⁷. To ensure that cities provide opportunities for all, it is essential to understand that the concept of inclusive cities involves multiple factors: spatial, social, and economic. When

⁷ *"Migration and Cities, new collaboration to manage mobility", International Organization for Migration,*

these factors interact in a negative way, they trap people in poverty and marginality. On the contrary, if the interrelation is positive, they can improve people's lives and reduce exclusion.

In 2015, around 3 million people were migrating to cities every week and urban built-up land was doubling. Today, given the socio-political situations in many countries, this figure is skyrocketing. In order not to exclude anyone, it is essential not only the physical environment to be inclusive and empowering, but also virtual and social environments as a result of co-creation and Design Thinking.

We need to see the environments that surround us in a different way, the most important thing is people and they must always be at the center of any action or policy. But together with the requirements and needs of people, we must consider the limits that Mother Nature sets for us, and thus respect the slopes of volcanoes, coastal limits, river beds and banks, avoid runoff areas or areas of extreme temperatures among other natural issues, as they are essential to monitor uncontrolled urbanization, which in addition to lack of accessibility and exclusion, affects the mental health of the inhabitants.

Facing this reality can cause problems and challenges, but we must not forget that in many cases innovation is the solution and progress, and true progress must have a social component, which responds from the design of cities to all people, regardless of their abilities, seeking a safe and inclusive urban planning.