



ENRIQUE TOVAR / EETOV

México – 1994

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

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

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

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

The Accessibility Debt in Architecture

Keyword: Accessibility, Universal Design, Architecture, Population, Disability



01_Unnamed_ ©Igor Rodrigues

In 2008, as part of the joint efforts of different sectors of society, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was created. This document set a precedent since article 9 was integrated into it, the specific scope of which is focused on accessibility, implying a direct relationship in the way we develop architectural and urban spaces.

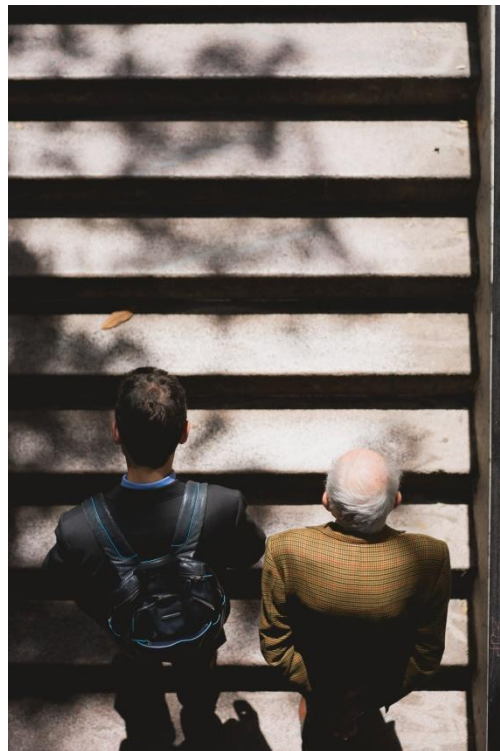
During most of our history, the way we conceive the world and therefore architecture was raised by the conditions that were considered "normal". This fact caused part of the population to find barriers produced by the built environments themselves, which made it difficult and sometimes did not allow in any way to experience architecture in its entirety.

Currently, the accessibility situation has suffered a setback as a consequence of the paradigm shifts in the practice of architecture. Although there is still a long way to go. This text will give an

overview of the current situation of accessibility and universal design, as well as the challenges that may arise in the future.

Population Characteristics and Trends

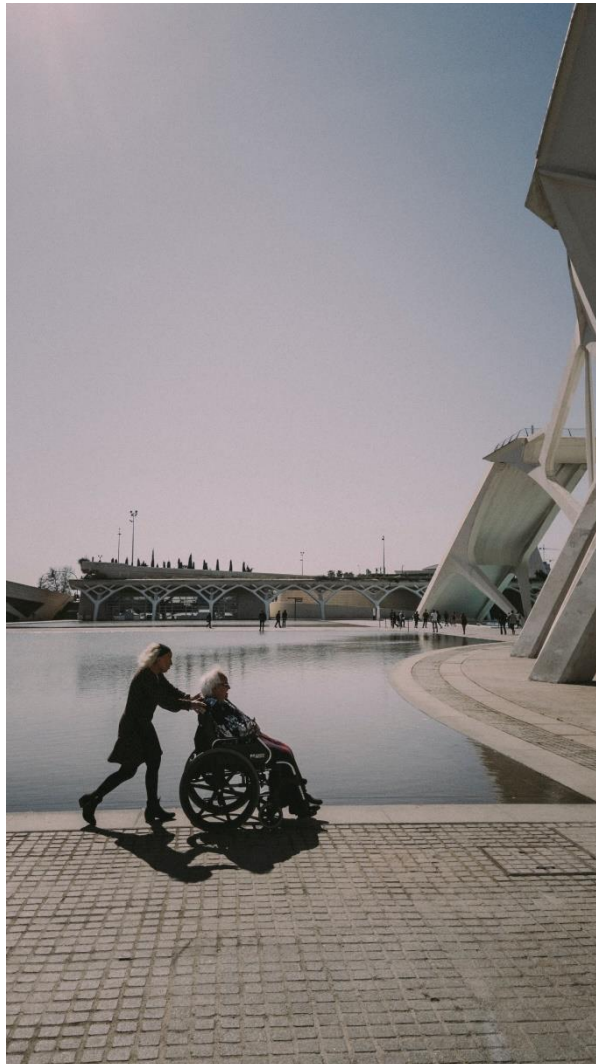
Many of the projections about the future of the human population indicate that soon our world population will have a large majority of adults. This aging of the population will require responses that can deal with the problems associated with this fact, where the main challenge will be to address mobility problems sustainably and safely where we will probably be facing a rethinking of our urban development strategies that, in addition, must be consistent with the climate agenda.



02_Time_©John Moeses Bauan

In addition to the imminent fact that our population is going through a change in its configuration by age groups, the need to understand disability through the percentage of people they represent is also present. It is estimated that currently between

10 and 15% of the population, or 650 million people, live with a disability, representing the largest minority in the world.



03_Spain_©Eugene Chystiakov

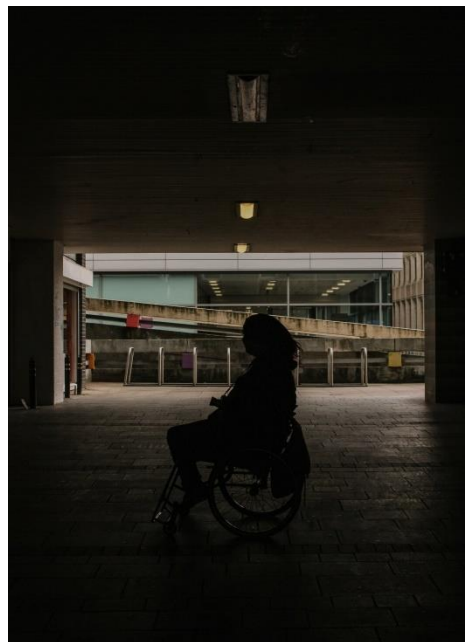
Considering that in typical design processes the user turns out to be the main axis for decision making and spatial configuration, it seems scandalous that in many cases the fact that the building in question will probably be used by a person with a disability is ruled out.

Young Architects as Promoters of Accessibility

It is clear that, although the efforts to integrate the concepts of accessibility and universal design have been present for several

years, it is important to consider that this is an extensive process that will require constant evolution through the following generations of architects.

Just as today there are in all architecture schools subjects focused exclusively on sustainable development strategies, it will be necessary to incorporate in regular courses subjects that consider as part of the training, the basic concepts to create inclusive spaces and that in everyday life turn out to be strange for professionals who are not specialized in the subject.

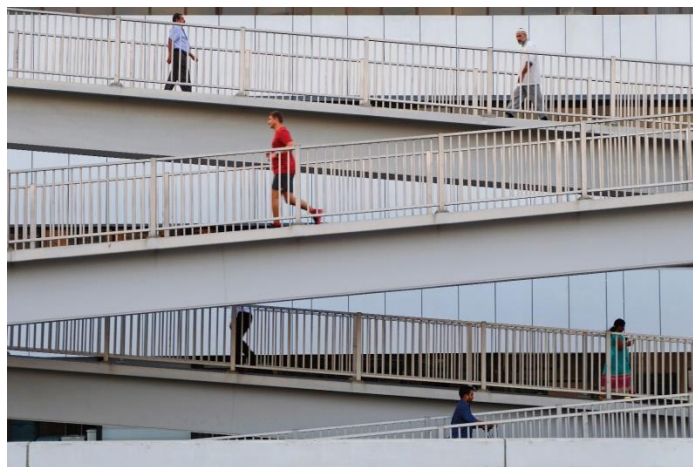


04_Shadow of a Man_©Nathan Mcdine

Having general knowledge could be an invaluable tool to improve decision-making in all professionals in the practice of architecture. Creating a fresh vision through the new architectural proposals that arise in parallel with the new generations will help change the panorama of accessibility and universal design, which is currently seen as an element of additional value instead of being considered as an essential element within a conscientious design process.

Understanding Disability as a Global Concept

On many occasions, the vision around accessibility is limited to thinking of a single type of disability, whose solutions are restricted to the use of ramps for horizontal circulation and contemplate elevators to solve vertical mobility. But based on this approach, the fact that there are different types of disability, which require much more complex and multidimensional approaches, is being completely ignored.



05_Unnamed_©Franzie Allen Miranda

Understand that designing for all, under a vision of universal design, not only benefits people who live with a disability, but also that its approach also encompasses the elderly, pregnant women, people of short stature, and, in many cases, individuals who have suffered a temporary injury as could happen to any of us.



06_Accessible Parking Spot_©Jakub Pabis

The architectural barriers that can be found in built environments are not synonymous with physical barriers, in many cases elements such as furniture, lighting, signage, and selection of finishes, as well as determining architectural details can be the differentiator for the inclusion of a person. Universal design is so subtle that most of the time it could go unnoticed, but it is not until we individually experience that barrier that we realize that the way we design and our decisions as architects can have an impact on others.

Recognizing the value of accessibility is an important part of following a path where decisions are made more consciously for new projects, in addition to seeking ways to achieve optimal accessibility conditions in existing buildings of high urban or historical value, supported by associations such as the IAAP whose objective is to promote and improve accessibility in its different facets through certification and the creation of networks of certified professionals on accessible build environments to jointly promote a world without barriers.

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