A Picturesque View to Able-Bodied Persons in the City and the Stigma of Disability

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Abstract

Today, in Turkey, the percent of the disabled is %12. Thus, there are 10 million disabled people and when you take the disabled into account with their families half of the Turkish society is affected directly from disability. In addition to that, if we take elders, pregnant, children, obsesses and very tall or short persons who suffer from a kind of temporary or permanent disability into account, we face an incredible situation. These people in city who are limited in terms of motion feel the necessity of design approaches which minimize physical and spatial hindrances in order to travel and wander around in a safe way in places. In addition to the accessibility of the physical environment by the disabled, environmental factors being the cause of disability is quite significant in terms of urban spaces. In this paper, what cities of Turkey, urban planning and design offer to the disabled and what they do not is

being investigated, in particular and in general, what is attainable by the help of a universal and inclusive design and universal and inclusive planning to reach a universal, accessible, livable, usable, fair and inclusive city.

INTRODUCTION

Today's cities which keep all kinds of variations and colored views-identities and where facilities of technology are widely used have each to become contemporary market places. These cities which are in this respect sold to their inhabitants cannot satisfy their needs in a broader sense. Though the customer is always right, some customers are often 'right-less': The disabled, the old, the child, the pregnant, the obese etc.

In fact, these people who have equal 'rights' and '(un)luck' at birth cannot keep up with the urban competition or become the last or can never enter the competition as time passes by in cities where there are so-called utterances in favor of equality. However, these utterances never reflect the reality. Utterances which are in favor of equality and freedom in terms of human and townsmen rights seem for everybody, in fact, they are only for 'standard'. Naturally, the disabled live in cities and places which are disabled and full of barriers despite a growing number of advances (Polat, 2002).

An accessible built environment is a key for a society based on equal rights, and provides its citizens with autonomy and the means to pursue an active social and economic life. For an individual to enjoy his/her rights as a citizen, he/she should be able to access buildings, premises and other facilities: an accessible environment means that a person will be able to seek employment, receive education and training, and pursue an active social and economic life.

Urban built environment displays a stretch from the inside places of buildings to the urban outdoor ones and even to the nature in the peripheries of the city. The perfect functioning of all these places in the city depends on the design of it as an accessible, usable, livable, universal place and on the fact that everybody should use it on equal terms and on one's own. In this respect, urban furniture should be for appropriate for the use of the disabled as well as all the functional areas and buildings such as housing areas, working areas, urban social and cultural infrastructures, public areas, education, health and sports areas, shopping areas, entertainment and relaxation areas and holiday places, open and green areas, transportation areas and means of transport within and between cities, roads, pavements, and passages.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE DISABILITY

Being disable is both a cause and a result. Factors, particularly like poverty, inadequacy of the standards of education and health define handicap in terms of both a result and a cause in a recycled way. That is to say, you can be a disabled person as a result of poverty and poor as a result of handicap.

Handicap / Impairment: Having serious using part of your body or mind fully because of injury or damage (WHO, 1980).

Disability: the process of the exclusion of the handicapped or the impaired (Porter, 2002).

However, in a dictionary disability is defined as handicap, deficiency, defectiveness or imperfection and the disabled are explained as handicapped, impaired or imperfect people (TDK, 1983). According to TSE (Standards Institute of Turkish): Disability is the limitation or loss in the use of the functions of the body (TSE, 1991).

According to another definition 'disability' is a handicap which has an effect on the normal growth, improvement or adaptation to life temporarily or permanently. However, though handicap is defined as imperfection in function or a deviation from the norm it does not always have an effect on the individual's normal life. We should take into account normal functions when a disability appears. Therefore, any imperfection which hinders any ability which requires motion can be the result of impairment. If the individual cannot develop a defense mechanism which will overcome this impairment becomes a disability (Bilir, 1984).

According to The United Nations (1994), disability is defined as a number of different physical limitations but disability is limitation or loss in motion of the individual when compared with other members in the society (UN, 1994). However it may appear, this imperfection or anomaly has always been viewed as a human defect which hinders the attainment of the norm. As a matter of fact, an individual who lacks bodily or psychological entirety temporarily or permanently due to birth or old age is 'disabled' and a person whose competence is not enough to match the requirements of the environment he lives in is a 'disabled person'.

Handicap has become a widely used utterance in most countries recently. This is why the causes of disability, its occurrence and typology draw different perspectives. In developing countries like our country and South Africa, questions to be asked to determine disability have recently been included in the census. There are other studies to collect data with different purposes (working proportions, voters etc.) in

other countries. There are also differences among countries in terms of the definition of the disability (Gleeson, 1999).

NON-USERS AND USERS OF THE CITY

The physical environment is, both in theory and practice, a continuity of space. Therefore, barrier-free or universal design means giving users the possibility to use the space in a continuous process - to be able to move around without limitation.

The built environment could be defined as a transformation of the natural environment into a new shape, generally. At the same time, as space is changed physically by human beings, it is normally divided and categorized along new artificial dimensions such as "public", "private" and "functional". The right to use space and the possibility of using space, which is termed accessibility, is restricted, not only by physical barriers, but also by a complex of cultural, social and economic rules.

When discussing a barrier-free society, this basic consideration of space as continuity is often forgotten or neglected. Evidence of this is found in the manner that legislation for accessibility is introduced in most countries. Normally a step-by-step policy is used. Step-by-step policies always seem to start from administrative, economic or technical divisions of space, such as between "private" and "public" space, housing and public buildings, buildings and street environment, as well as between buildings and transport. This way of thinking results in the erection of barriers to full accessibility or free movement. Unless those barriers are eliminated, the disabled will not be able to participate fully and avail themselves equally of the opportunities that exist in society.

The creation of a building or a space is always preceded by some kind of planning, design and decision-making. In industrialized societies, this process of planning and decision-making is regulated by legislation and praxis, that is, custom. The process is accomplished by professionals and overseen by authorities. Normally, in theory at least, this process is under democratic control, following laws, codes and standards. In these countries where the administrative structure is weak, the planning and building process is informal and more open to individual wants and means. This occurs even if the central or local government has adopted legislation, complemented by by-laws and standards.

The owners of each and every part of the city, all the places and buildings are the townspeople. Can users of the city who make it existent by their existence, who live different spatial phenomenon in different times and make them lived, today

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really use the cities and urban places having equal rights and in a meaningful way?

There are differences in the profiles of these users who use urban places in terms of sex, age and physical or bodily structure. When there is a categorization in terms of sex, male and female users are mentioned. When there is a categorization in terms of age there are the children, the young, the adults and the old users. It is possible to put users into two groups as the 'abled' and 'disabled' when there is a categorization in terms of bodily structure. The 'Abled' users are a general category and it also includes sex and age categories whereas disabled users have more subcategories. With respect to abled users there are also short term and long term users, thin and fat users, fast and slow users and healthy and unhealthy ones. Disabled users can also be called 'handicapped users'. With this point of view, the disabled, the pregnant, the old, the obese or the thin and people who carry loads, in general people who are restricted in terms of motion can be put in this category.

Some sociological or socioeconomic conditions like racial discrimination, social and economic positions do not have a great effect on the diversity of the users. At this point 'the process of the rights' starts from the qualification of users as 'human beings' and goes up to 'citizen'. So we can talk about a wide issue covering points from human rights (HR) to the rights of the disabled (DR), pedestrian rights (PR) to citizen rights (CR) (Figure 1).
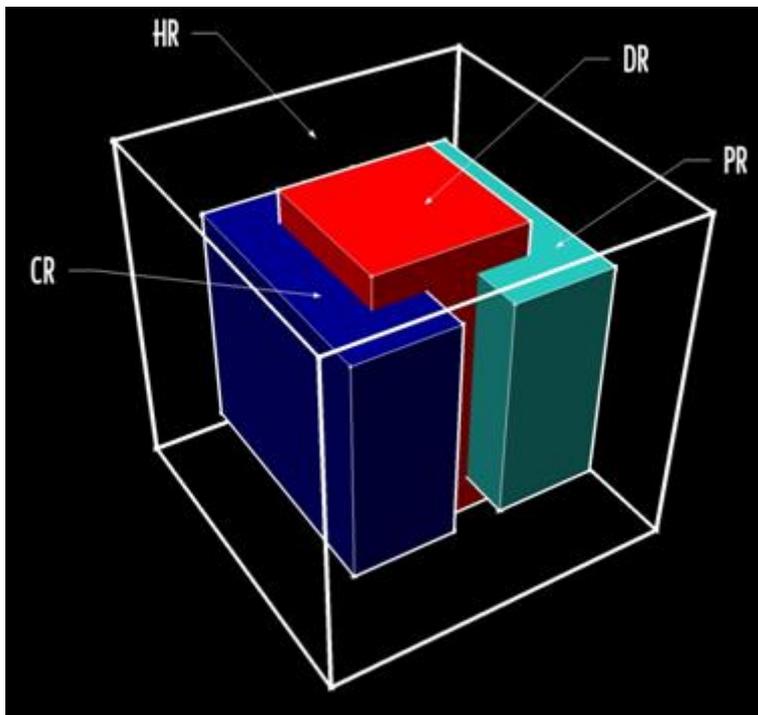
Figure 1. All-togetherness of rights.

The disabled users are a 'visible minority' in cities or urban places and they cannot use their rights in a fair way but in

fact they are the 'invisible majority'. Even we are in the first quarter of the 21st century, especially in developing countries like Turkey; there is not the realization of accessible, livable, usable on one's own space design and planning approaches. That is why, apart from the disabled users the handicapped users cannot use urban places and thus they cannot be visible in cities as a whole. Especially families with bodily or mentally disabled individuals do not or cannot send their children to school a little due to the lack of education or economic conditions and naturally these individuals are left in a position where they cannot become independent individuals and have to live dependently. If this individual is a daughter, she has fewer opportunities.

FROM UNIVERSAL AND INCLUSIVE DESIGN TO UNIVERSAL AND INCLUSIVE PLANNING

From the view of this point, universal design approach is mainly used for defining of spatial needs on the architectural or built environments. This system that will be used until a definite scale on the urban design level is not properly used for urban planning. However, if the process from the universal design to universal planning can be defined truly, it will attain to a city that on all scales and for everyone; in other words, from barrier-free spaces to universal cities.

However, whatever the scale and complexity of the concept, the design and planning control objectives are universal. So, a realistic and achievable goal here is the successful delivery of inclusive environments. Universal and inclusive spaces are the concern of everyone involved in the development and planning process, including:

• Users and members of the public, particularly disabled people, older people, women, children, parents, careers and anyone disadvantaged through poor design.

• Planning officers at development control and policy level;

• Planning inspectors;
• Councilors;
• Developers;
• Architects and designers;
• Building control officers and approved inspectors;
• Occupiers;
• Investors;
• Access officers;
• Highways officers;
• English Heritage;
• The statutory fire authorities.

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On this point, all decisions and applications in the design, planning and development process should recognize the benefits of all actors and endeavor to bring about universal and inclusive design.

Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design (Mace, 1997). The intent of universal design is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost. Universal design benefits not only for the disabled but also for people of all ages and abilities. There are seven principles (The Center for Universal Design, 2006; Preiser and Smith, 2011; Null, 2014):

1. Equitable Use: The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

• Provide the same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible; equivalent when not.

• Avoid segregating or stigmatizing any users.

• Provisions for privacy, security, and safety should be equally available to all users.

• Make the design appealing to all users.

2. Flexibility in Use: The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

• Provide choice in methods of use.

• Accommodate right- or left-handed access and use.

• Facilitate the user's accuracy and precision.

• Provide adaptability to the user's pace.

3. Simple and Intuitive Use: Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

• Eliminate unnecessary complexity.

• Be consistent with user expectations and intuition.

• Accommodate a wide range of literacy and language skills.

• Arrange information consistent with its importance.

• Provide effective prompting and feedback during and after task completion.

4. Perceptible Information: The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

• Use different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile) for redundant presentation of essential information.

• Provide adequate contrast between essential information and its surroundings.

• Maximize "legibility" of essential information.

• Differentiate elements in ways that can be described (i.e., make it easy to give instructions or directions).

• Provide compatibility with a variety of techniques or devices used by people with sensory limitations.

5. Tolerance for Error: The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

• Arrange elements to minimize hazards and errors: most used elements, most accessible; hazardous elements eliminated, isolated, or shielded.

• Provide warnings of hazards and errors.

• Provide fail safe features.

• Discourage unconscious action in tasks that require vigilance.

6. Low Physical Effort: The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

• Allow user to maintain a neutral body position.

• Use reasonable operating forces.

• Minimize repetitive actions.

• Minimize sustained physical effort

7. Size and Space for Approach and Use: Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

• Provide a clear line of sight to important elements for any seated or standing user.

• Make reach to all components comfortable for any seated or standing user.

• Accommodate variations in hand and grip size.

• Provide adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistance.

A barrier-free space or city is one that successfully strives to prevent and remove all obstacles in order to promote equal opportunity and participation by citizens and visitors with disabilities. On this meaning, barriers may include:

• Physical barriers, such as stairs, uneven pavements or narrow pathways;

• Architectural barriers;

• Information or communication barriers, such as a publication that is not available in large print;

• Attitudinal barriers, such as assuming that a person with a disability cannot perform a certain task;

• Technological barriers, such as traffic signals that change too quickly or meeting rooms without assistive listening systems for persons with hearing disabilities; and

• Barriers created by policy or practices, such as not offering different ways to complete a test as part of a job interview.

Universal design creates environments that respond to the needs of the population to the greatest extent possible. It is an evolution from accessible or barrier-free design to one that is even more inclusive. While barrier-free design refers to specific solutions for specific disabilities, universal design acknowledges that people come in various sizes and have various strengths and abilities (City of Winnipeg, 2001).

When you look from the urban point of view you can see that barriers become more different and they are more related to accessibility and mobility (Figure 2):
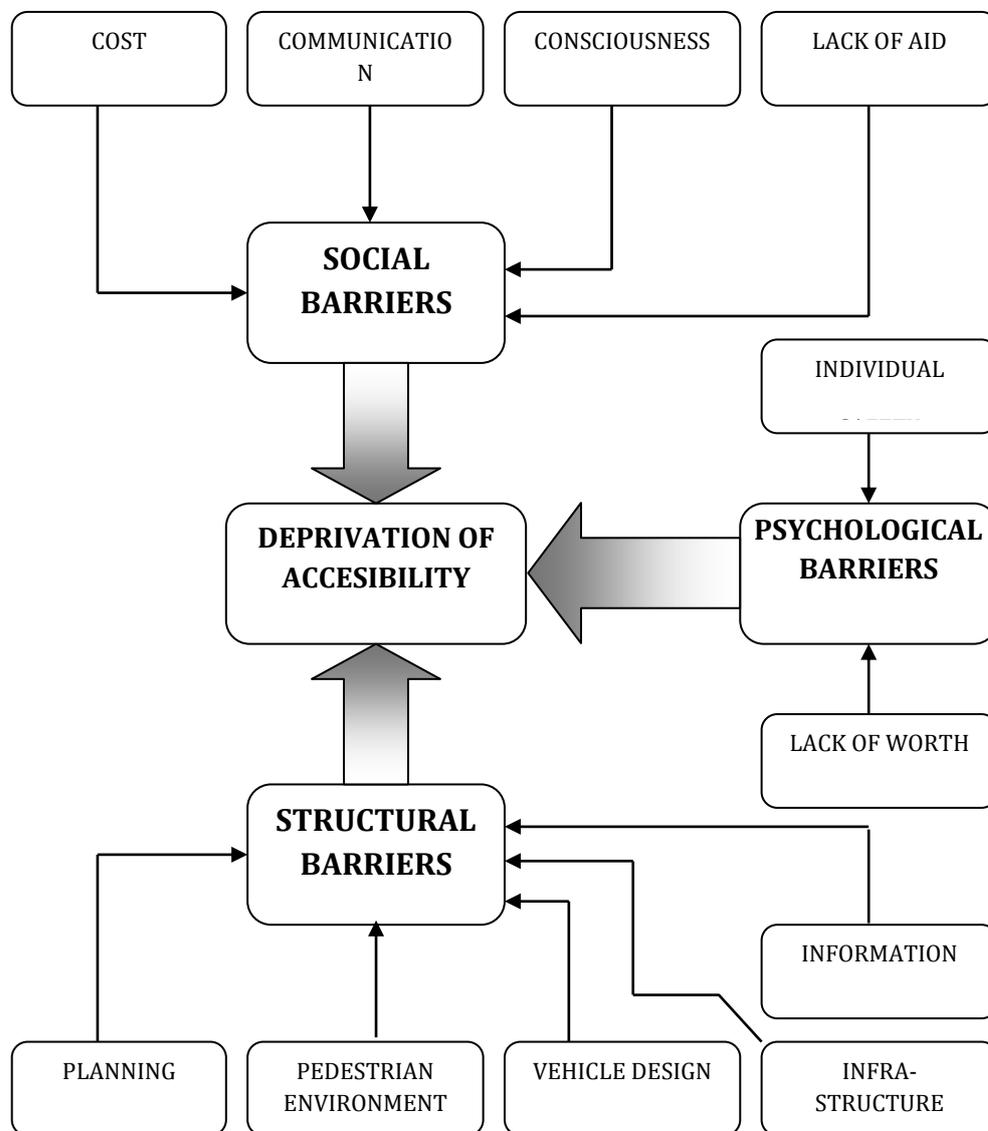
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Figure 2. Barriers which have an effect on accessibility in urban places.

At this point, it appears important that the level which is attained by universal and inclusive design when you move from

spatial scales to urban scales should be attained in a universal and inclusive way in terms of planning. When this is achieved, accessibility from one's room to all the buildings and places of the city will be ensured.

In this respect, legal and political regulations are more important than physical or spatial arrangements and thus planning and decision making are critically important processes.

In reality, the differences among countries are less and the true situation more complex. In most countries, the legal prerequisites for the planning process differ, for example, between urban and rural areas, and between state-owned and private-owned buildings. The planning and decision-making process concerning building may be viewed as an area wherein institutionalized and informal interests struggle for their positions.

Planning, design and building may be viewed as integral stages in a continuous decision-making process. When the physical environment is created and in use, the production stage changes into one of management and maintenance. Accessibility is dependent on each stage of this development.

Good guidelines are necessary tools for the creation of accessible environments. Many existing documents have an uncertain quality and limited scope. An important weakness of most handbooks is that they are restricted to certain disability groups.

In many developing countries, the necessary professional, land and economic resources have not yet been allocated to support research and development work in this field. An increase in interregional, regional and sub-regional exchanges of experiences in this field is recommended. Of certain value is the development of research methods applicable to a variety of national and local conditions. Studies of access issues in rural areas are important and remain to be undertaken. Research to obtain feedback from users is also required. In this regard, the experiences of persons with disabilities and their organizations need to be channeled back to planners. Differences in cultural and economic prerequisites must be taken into consideration.

Planning and design processes in most countries are governed by a series of administrative instruments. Normally, these instruments can named:

- Regional or sub-regional plans;
- Master plans;
- Town/urban plans;
- Building permission documents; and
- Construction documents.

CONCLUSION

In spite of significant political and regulative changes providing people with disabilities greater independence and opportunities for greater participation in Turkey cities. Changes in public attitude and regulative improvements about disability have followed at a slow pace in response. Disability plays a role in how people view and treat each other in society and city.

Self-control, free will, individual responsibility and expects values coupled with ignorance have led to a public view of disability as a sign of character flaw-whether of the person or of the family. Erroneous views create prejudicial attitudes, which often result in exclusion of the individual by the community (or even by the family).

Shame, fear, insensitivity, bias and guilt are basic stigmatic contributors of disability. A stigma becomes attached to the individual or the entire family, while at the same time elevating temporarily able-bodied persons (at least in their own mind) allowing them to justify rejecting, neglecting, or even eliminating the disabled.

So, it's necessary to answer of "what are some core societal beliefs about disability?" question. Based as they are on misinformation, these attitudes about disability and the disabled reflect fear, embarrassment, guilt, anger, prejudice, or lack of caring. These lead to equating disability with something negative or wrong-a valuation which easily attaches to the individual. So that the disabled person is seen as negative, diseased, incomplete, unworthy of living, or someone to be ignored or discarded.

Is being different than you mean we are disposable? This is not to suggest a nationwide effort of "disability profiling". But disabled people are not considered a minority class or part of a recognized community. They can too easily become "The Others".

A principal element of subjugation of a minority group is the assumption of biological inferiority by the majority. The physical, mental & behavioral differences of people with disabilities have perpetuated the perception of subordinate status. For these people disrespect is common, tolerance of it varies, true understanding and acceptance are uncommon outside of personal or family experience.

We also have our own identity issues. For example, some of us don't acknowledge or identify themselves as disabled. They view themselves as a separate culture or another group's member. Others "declare" their status in a political manner and refer to themselves as disabled persons.

In this view, it is the environment and society that create the condition of disability. To change this external limitation is to

confront that system of control-similar to the Women's Rights, La Raza, and other racial movements. The largest segments of this group look at themselves as a person with a disability. This "person first" language stresses the individual value & humanity of each individual who happens to also have a condition/s creating functional limitations in certain environments and situations.

Disability stereotypes and public mythology notwithstanding, in nearly all situations, for real people living with disability it is not something you overcome, change, or cure. It is managed by many coping and compensatory strategies. Consider the balancing act necessary to be a part of the community rather than be apart from it.

Today, to be a disabled person in Turkey is a challenge for most people. They are not superheroes for finding ways to do what other people take for granted. If disability were a country on world it would be the 3rd largest behind China and India with 750 million people. And if disability were a city in Turkey it would be the largest behind Istanbul with about 10 million people.

And whatever differences may be about the nature and experience of being disabled in Turkey, there is growing recognition that values and desires for quality of life and fair treatment are unifying forces for change. This change seeking to create and live in is a post-disabled world, city and all related spaces.

Where we are viewed as whole human beings, not human beings with holes in them, we invite you to help build a world that will solve for others what we have struggled with so much ourselves. It's time a way to get involved and contribute to the universal dialogue about being disabled in the city.

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