

Design for All and Urban Planning: is it possible to protect everybody against infection?

Accessibility, Equity and Health Safety for All Persons, Despite Covid-19 and after it.

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The challenge (not “problem”): to protect as many people as possible, respecting their needs, their aspirations, their human diversity and their individuality and taking all these factors into account.

Why “challenge” and not “problem”?

Designers are creatives: they react better to positive stimuli than to the negativity of problems.

And no: it’s not just semantics.

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What can design do?

Adopt an holistic approach to the entire challenge:

- Places (architecture and urban planning)
- Products (product design)
- Communications (communication design: graphics, interfaces, wayfinding, web...)
- Services (service design: e.g. optimising call centre service flow and experience)
- Systems (system design: e.g. optimising customer or patient flow through complex systems, so customer and patient experience)

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The method: Design for All.

“Design for All is design for human diversity, social inclusion and equality”

Source: EIDD Stockholm Declaration, 2004: <http://dfaeurope.eu/what-is-dfa/dfa-documents/the-eidd-stockholm-declaration-2004/>

How is this achieved? How do we get it right?

“The practice of Design for All makes conscious use of the analysis of human needs and aspirations and requires the involvement of end users at every stage in the design process.”

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Design for All is not one design for everyone: it is not “one size fits all”.

Nor is Design for All mere design in compliance with standards.

The standards (and the stipulations of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities) are the baseline: design is the creativity that goes beyond compliance.

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How can IT and AI contribute to the design agenda... and viceversa?

1. Designers are not just people who give a pretty face to existing technologies
2. Technology is one of many variables for the design process, sometimes a major one, but never the only one.
3. Designers and IT developers should work together to create custom IT solutions to meet real situations for real people in the real world.
4. The principle is this: People Come First.

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Can design guarantee 100% protection for everyone?

No, no more than technology can, at least not in a democratic society.

Design – even good design – will not function if it is imposed top-down: people are irrational and resist imposition.

That is why the Design for All approach is vital.

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If long-term imposition is unsustainable in a democracy, what alternatives can design offer?

The Design for All process envisages the following steps:

Acquisition of **all** the variables (patent and latent) – Consultation with experiencers – Analysis – Consultation: Listening – Learning – Co-creation – Verification – Consultation – Modification

The design is not just the product: design is the method.

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Consultation (not just questionnaires and boxes to tick) and involvement generate a sense of identification with the result (the “product”).

Without that sense of identification, every product, no matter how good, remains an imposition and will be perceived as an imposition. It will be resisted, against all common sense. Recent experience with face masks confirms this thesis.

If we intend to maintain a functioning, sustainable democratic society, design and technology must collaborate with experiencers to generate that sense of identification and maintain it credibly.

To paraphrase Caesar’s wife, it must not only **be** credible: it must be **manifestly** credible.

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My apologies to anyone in the audience who expected to get an illustrated presentation of 15 minutes of random attractive design solutions.

Solutions are only relevant if they are viewed in the context of a specific, perceived challenge. One size does not fit all and one solution is never good for all situations.

Good design is the coherent consequence of a coherent method.

Today my primary concern has been to discuss method.

Thankyou for your attention

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