

Example of understanding disability in the city report

[Transportation](#)



Abstract

The United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities estimates the world population of people with disability to be approximately 10% of the world population. As a minority, people with disabilities have been greatly overlooked. In fact, very little is actually understood concerning the relationship between community mobility and urban planning. Urban planning not only influences settlement in the neighborhood and accessibility but also plays a big role in determining the inclusion or exclusion of people living with disabilities in the day to day happenings of the city. Is there justice in the urban life for the people with disabilities? This essay provides a report on the visual, hearing and flexibility limitations and the consequence of urban space on individuals with disability, citing Port Moody, Canada. The paper also addresses the values that determine the urban environment for people with handicaps and the possible barriers to their mobility in the urban environment.

Understanding Disability in the City

Historically, urbanization has not dealt justly with people living with disabilities. Disabled people have often been viewed as dependents or persons with particular problems, which distinguish them from the other ‘normal’ people (Imrie, 1996, p. 63). Most importantly, their ability to access places has been greatly limited as urban designers have failed to come up with an all-inclusive city prototype. In many cases, their mobility and comfort is often ignored as society has often failed to integrate their needs. It is known that the operative ability of every individual is reinforced when

environmental encumbrances are eliminated and when the needs of all users are addressed. However, according to Golledge's (1993) ableism, problems that come with disability are caused by the individual and a disability in their own right. Thus a geographer 'knows' the needs for the disabled and is perfectly able to design a place for them in society (Golledge, 1993, p. 252). Spatial challenges facing the disabled may be a product of personal experiences. However, the external environment is largely to blame for most of these problems (Imrie, 1996, p. 68). For instance, while urban centers are perceived as zones of solace and opportunities, they are also sources of great inhibition and oppressions especially so for people with disabilities. Many modern cities have been structured in a manner that physically, institutionally and even socially and culturally imposes barriers that result into disparities, deprivations and segregation, which are factors that hinder disabled people from fully taking an active role in the standard urban social life (Imrie, 1996, p. 69).

Port Moody's environment, though inclusive enough, hinders the ability of people with disability to access the locality. The pedestrian environment is not all accessible for the physically disabled. The city's broken surfaces on streets, inaccessible pavements and gutters, limit the effective movement of people with disability especially those in wheelchairs and those using walking frames. Land utilization and internal architecture of buildings in some parts of the city have resulted into discrete spatial connections that exclude people with physical disability. These include stairways and hand operated doors that prohibit the disabled alienating them further (MacAree, MacAree, & Hutcheon, 2009, p. 58).

The local public transport system is no exception. Most people with disabilities cannot drive while others need constant help while getting around. For those who can drive, they still require special equipment or vehicles to do so. The buses and taxis pose particular challenges to the disabled. The city's transport system is mostly based on the assumption that every other passenger is capable. While they are fully available to everyone regardless of their physical ability, most buses are designed in such a way that traveling for the physically disabled is excruciatingly uncomfortable. These include narrow doors, slippery floors, narrow maneuvering space and high steps that characterize the conventional taxis and buses. For most, their equipment cannot fit in the passenger space and are thus forced to pay higher fares. There are no audio signals on the roads to serve as warnings for the visually impaired pedestrians. While there are few pedestrian paths that connect residential areas to each other and to transit centers, majority of the disabled cannot use them because of the poor state of the curbs. Consequently, the local public transport sector's lack of awareness on the people with disabilities' needs, negative attitudes and the underhanded manner of helping them travel, not only hampers them from reaching every part of the city as often as they would love to but also becomes a major contribution to low self-esteem among them. Many people with disability in the area rarely use the public transit not because of their disability but because of the discomfort that come with it. As a result, many disabled passengers are obliged to use private vehicles or walk in order to make travelling more comfortable and easier. Considering the comparatively low incomes for the disabled, this becomes another barrier.

Lack of visual transport signs in some parts of the city have posed challenges to the visually impaired as they struggle to establish the appropriate vehicle to catch or where to alight. At times the passengers with hearing impediments are abused as most cannot understand or hear what is being said. Sign language is little understood by transport workers and passengers making it extremely difficult for the passengers with auditory impairments to communicate their needs. While most of the services in the area, especially the schools, libraries, recreation places and community grounds, give enough aid and assistance that can encourage the disabled to take part in normal activities, some facilities are extremely wanting. Many recreational facilities are not equipped to accommodate the disabled. Lack of accessibility in some recreational places and inability to use some facilities are the main causes of social isolation for people with disabilities.

There is a necessity for a more comprehensive proposition to urban convenience, which integrates a wide range of disabilities and transcends the elemental measure of physical admissibility. People with disabilities should be accorded an equal chance to interact normally with the rest of the city dwellers. This can only be achieved when issues affecting people with disabilities are made part and parcel of conventional social public life. The disabled should be genuinely empowered through breaking down the greater barriers to their mobility. Urban city designers ought to listen to the disabled and understand their needs before embarking on spatial utilization on the assumption that they are the best placed to know the needs of the disabled (Imrie, 1996, p. 70).

The environment ought to benefit all people in society and not exclude

others on whichever criteria. This means that the private sector, the Canadian government and individuals all have special and important roles in ensuring that people with disability are wholly incorporated into the society. The private sector should make their services anomalously attainable, and the government ought to invest more in mobility services infrastructure, supervise and promote housing arrangements that encourage self-reliance. Individuals on the other hand can help by speaking out for people with disability towards reachable and less costly housing, suitable social, cultural and entertainment facilities, and equal chances for work and education. In conclusion, while people with disabilities may require aid sometimes, such a condition does not necessarily mean they constantly need help or social assistance (Imrie, 1996, p. 65). Disability is a reality that should be dealt with favorably and effectively. The city environment has a significant impact on an individual's ability to function properly and actively. Therefore, there is not only the need for city designers to bear in mind the needs of the disabled but also for policy makers to thoroughly consider their needs in order to fully integrate them in the urban life and development.

References

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