



What is Universal Design

Barbara Chiarelli, UniTS

Goals for Sustainable Development

Making cities liveable for all, inclusive, sustainable and safe is an important step towards sustainable development and combating social inequalities.

Are our cities **inclusive, safe,**
resilient and sustainable?



**Make cities and
human settlements
inclusive, safe,
resilient and
sustainable**

Right to access

“People with disabilities continue to face obstacles to full inclusion and participation”

Disability and Development Report, **2018**

“Six years away from the deadline for the 2030 Agenda, the Report shows that persons with disabilities are being left behind”

Disability and Development Report, **2024**

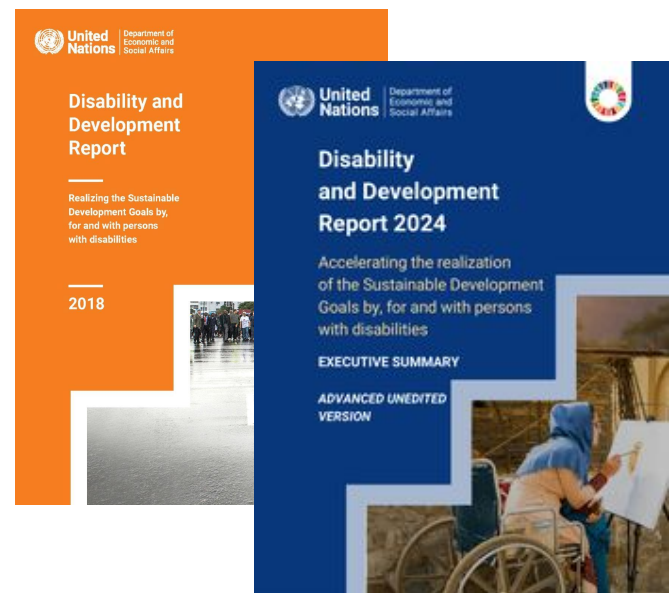


Image from: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

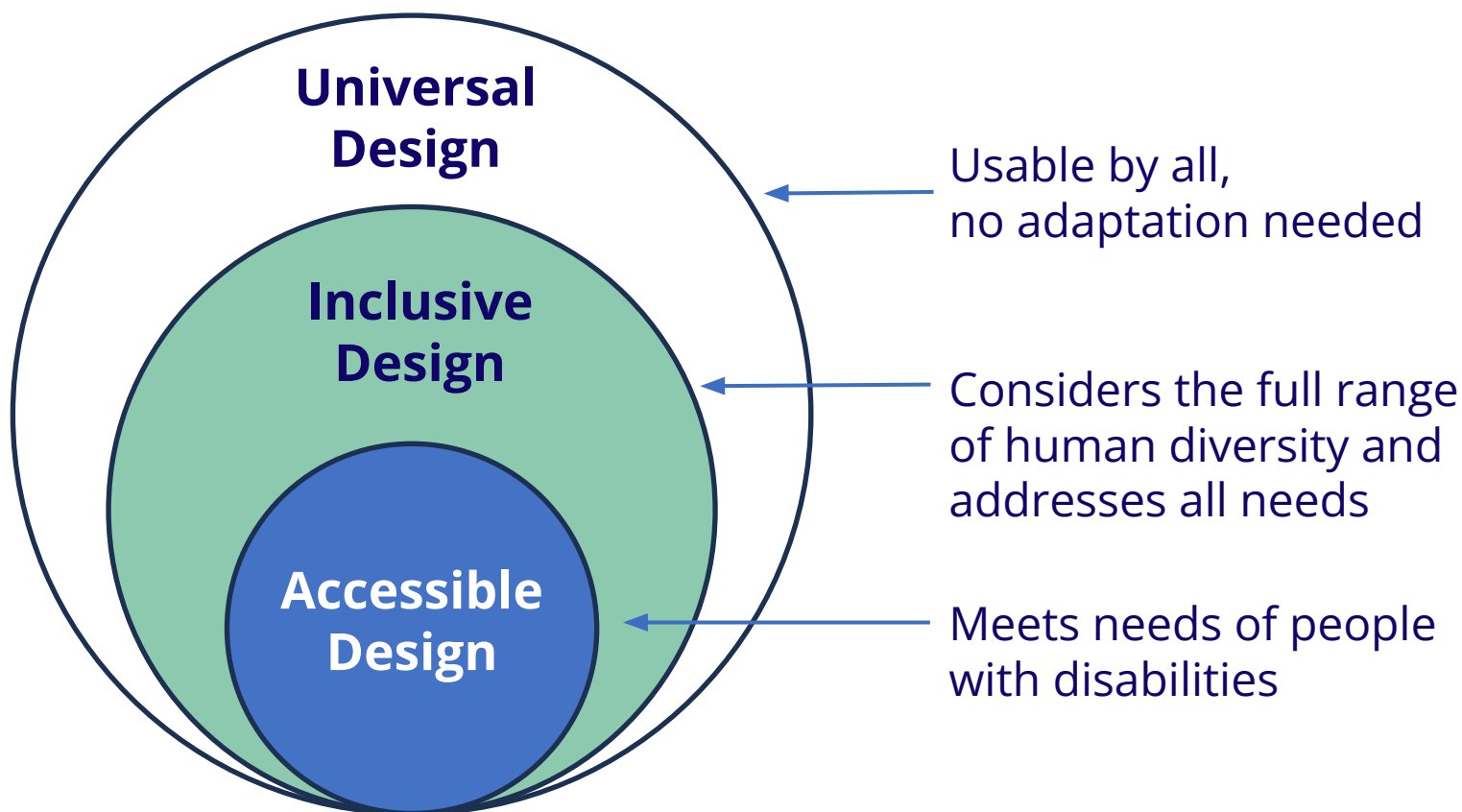


Image from: Design for Inclusivity, Proceedings of the UIA World Congress of Architects Copenhagen 2023

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

“The design of **products** and **environments** that can be used by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptations or special aids”

R. Mace, 1985



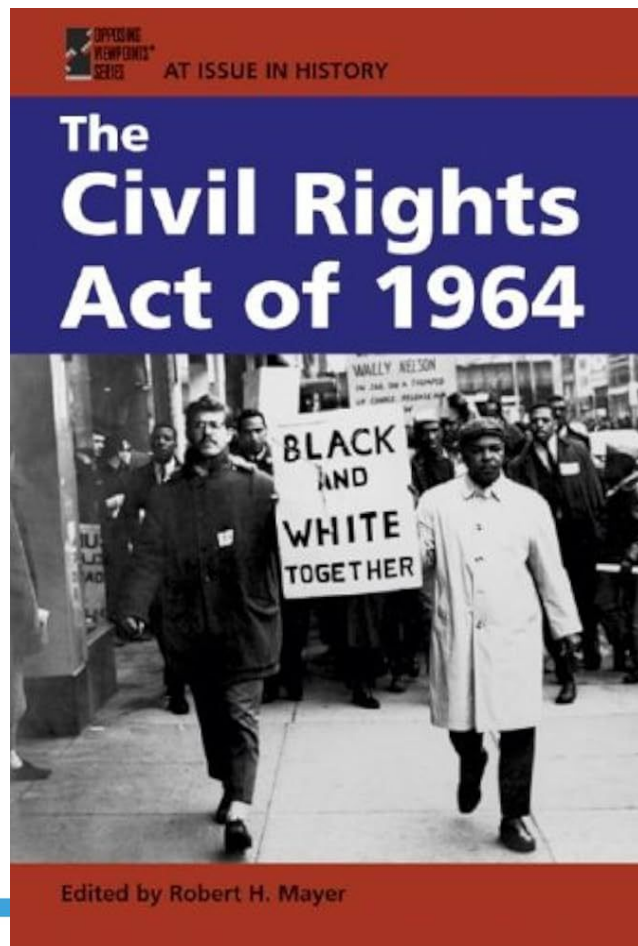
Image from: <https://www.udinstitute.org/post/scientists-make-a-breakthrough-on-cloning-of-endangered-species>

THE ORIGINS OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Equality of access to the environment
as a civil right

Image from: <https://www.amazon.it/Civil-Rights-Act-1964/dp/0737723041>

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THE CHANGING SYMBOLS

The symbols used in the movement provide a good indicator of how far that change has come.

The International Symbol of Access (1968)

The Accessible Icon Project (2013)



Image from: <https://accessibleicon.org/>

Universal Design beyond architectural barriers

Urban and built environment can be more accessible not only for the absence of barriers, but also for the presence of elements designed with care and quality to facilitate the usability of spaces to the widest number of people.

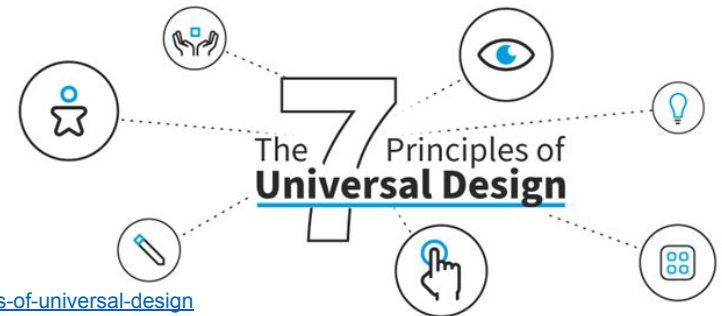


Image from: <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/the-seven-principles-of-universal-design>

Barriers

Architectural barriers are those elements that do not allow a person to adequately enjoy the real or virtual world

They can be physical, perceptual, sensorial, economic, gender...



Image from:

Barriers meanings

Some barriers are physical, some are social, cultural or psychological.

Breaking downs barriers can allow people who are disadvantaged or oppressed, in a literal sense, to gain access to resources.



Image from: Wikipedia

Barriers meanings

The same physical features can both facilitate and impede the achievement of goals.

The psychological nature of barriers is always open to interpretation by individuals and groups.

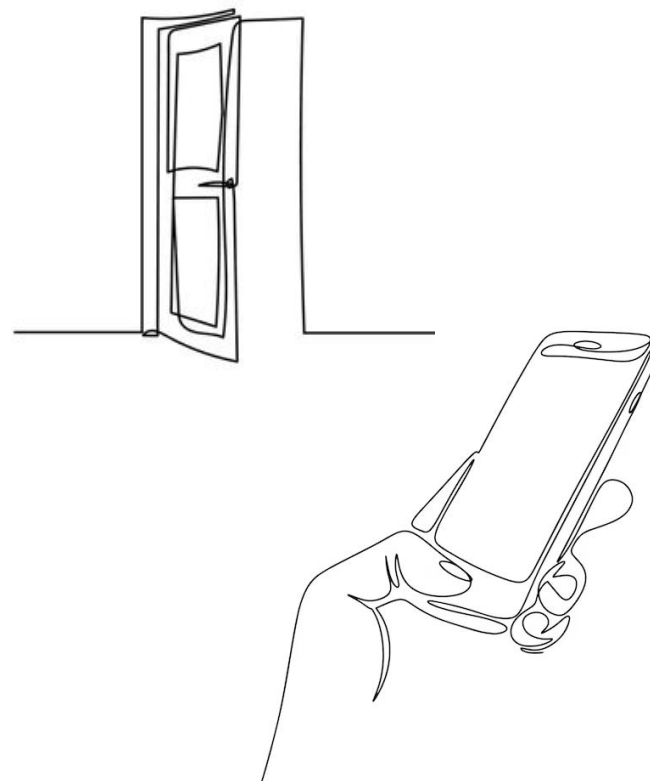


Image from: www.dreamstime.com

Who can benefit from Universal Design?

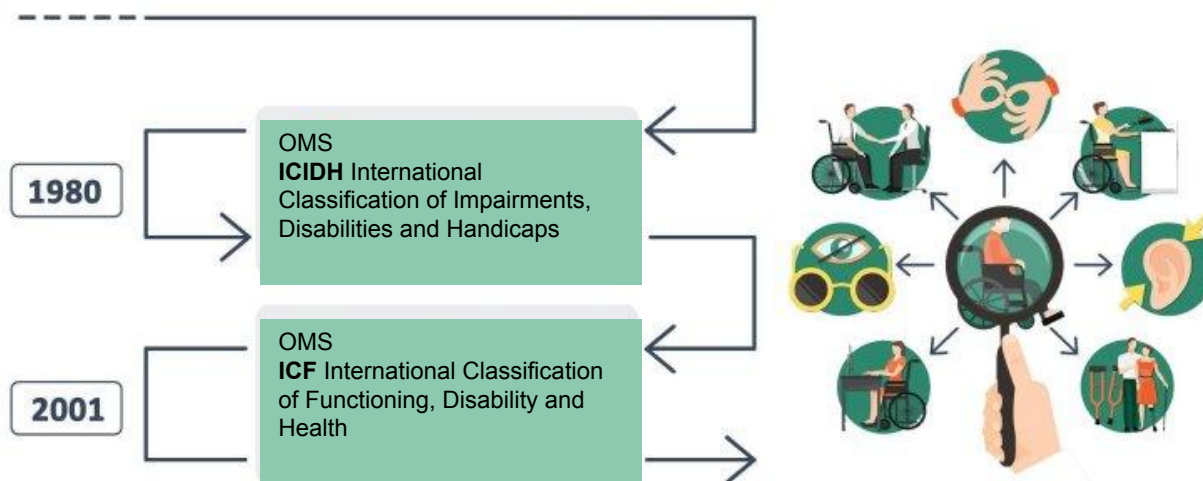


Image from: avrildesign4all <https://x.com/avrildesign4all>

ICF (2001)

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health

Disability as a part of being human that almost everyone will experience temporarily or permanently at some point in their life



The flipped perspective on disability

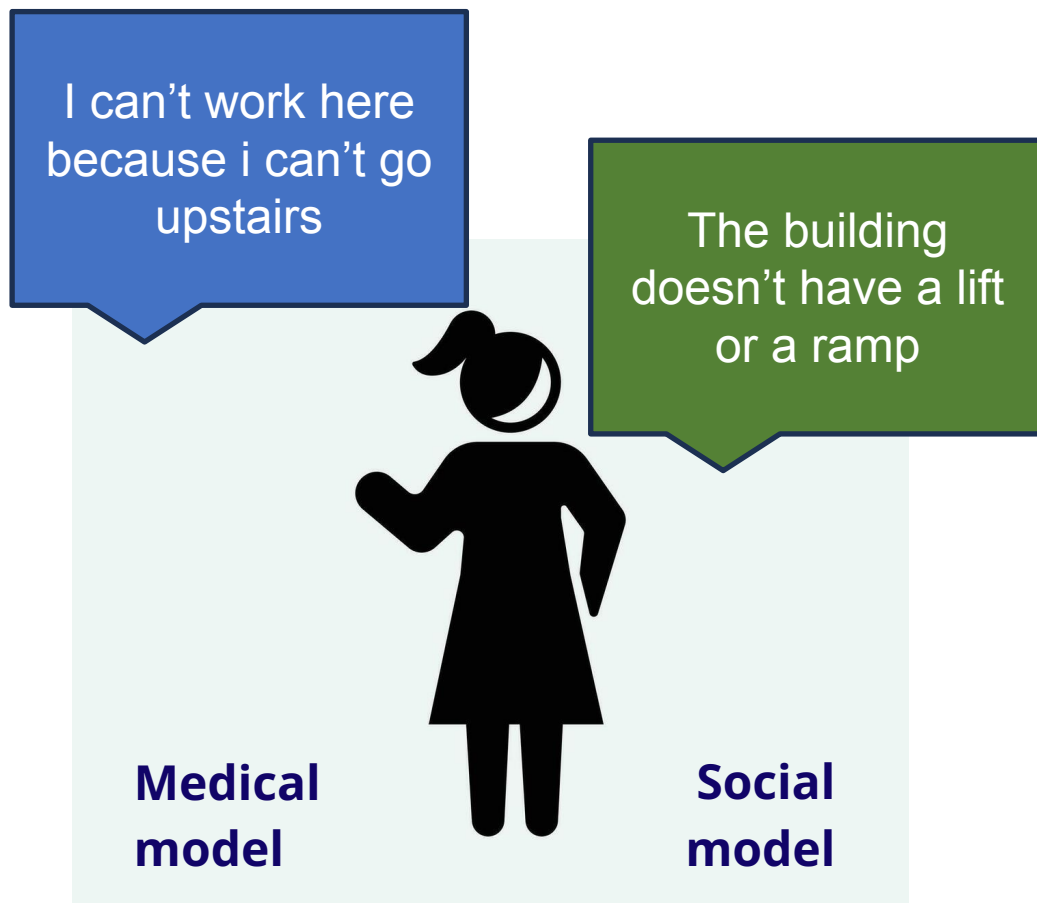


Image from: author

A broader view of the target population

very short

very light

children

very heavy

people with
psychosocial
conditions

single
mothers

people with
behavioural
limitations



caregivers

*Low- and middle-
income populations*

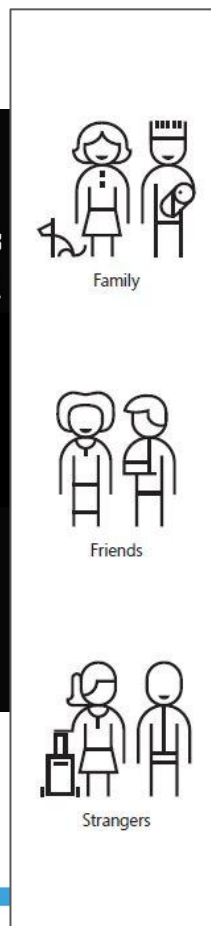
minority ethnic
groups

pregnancy
women



Image from: Microsoft Inclusive Design Toolkit

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	Permanent	Temporary	Situational
Touch			
	One arm	Arm injury	New parent
See			
	Blind	Cataract	Distracted driver
Hear			
	Deaf	Ear infection	Bartender
Speak			
	Non-verbal	Laryngitis	Heavy accent

Users' involvement to listen to their needs

One of the most important missions of any designer is to be able to respond to the needs of the project's target users.

A key action is to **LISTEN**.



Image from: <https://www.brampton.ca/EN/City-Hall/Accessibility>

Co-design means: active involvement and sharing decisions

It is a design approach that seeks to actively involve stakeholders to help ensure solutions that meet their needs and capacities.

The key action is **SHARING**.

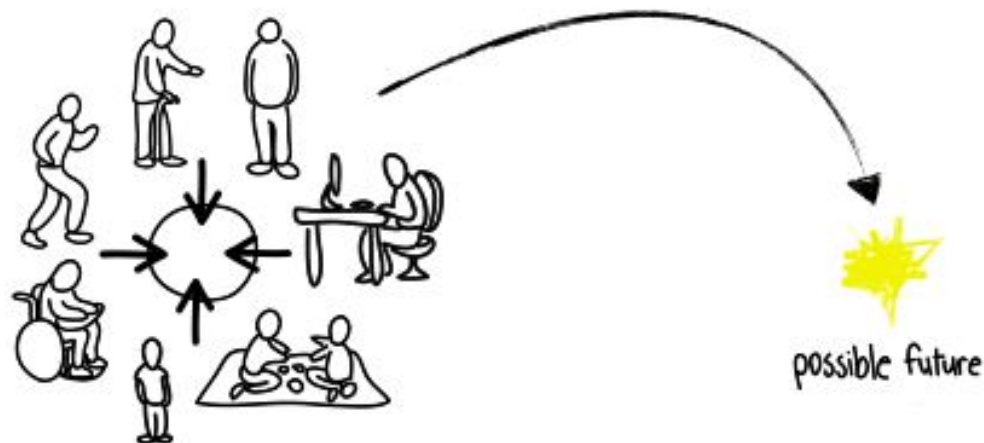


Image from: <https://www.smallfire.co.nz/2013/09/27/doing-co-design-ux-australia-2013/>

UNIVERSAL DESIGN as continuous process

There are various
applications even if
“universal design” is not
explicitly mentioned:

WAYFINDING as an example

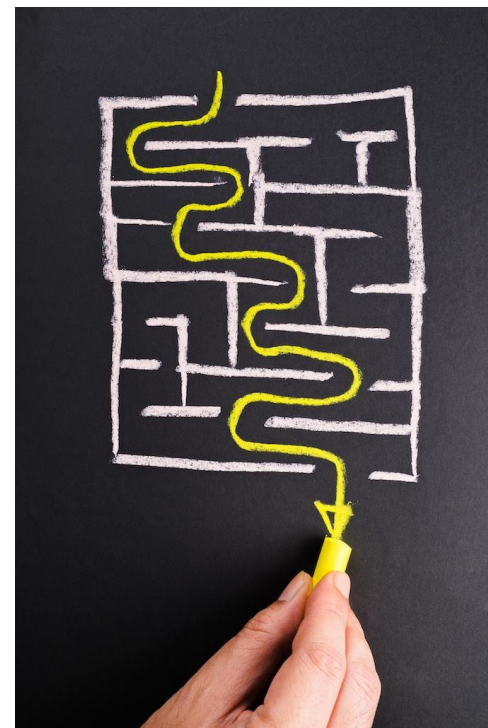


Image from: <https://www.diadromi.it/wayfinding-che-cosa-significa-e-perche-e-importante/>

Interreg



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Italy – Croatia



Universal Design and Sustainable Tourism

Webinar, 21th February 2025

A decorative graphic element consisting of a white wave-like shape with a green outline, positioned on the left side of the slide.

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