Decolonising spaces through disability
A Struggle on Social Media to Achieve Inclusive Cities

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ABSTRACT

Despite decades of effort, the transformation of cities into accessible and inclusive spaces for people with disabilities remains unresolved. This study, which forms part of a larger thesis, adopts a post-qualitative approach to explore the sociopolitical dimension of disability culture. Its objective is to identify the needs and concerns that shape the group's agenda for an inclusive city. To this end, a digital and visual ethnographic methodology was employed on the social media platforms Instagram and X, utilising a digital diary, 21 semi-structured interviews, and a corpus of 100 images. The findings reveal the increasing presence of inclusive parks, beaches, races, and changing rooms, the denunciation of injustices, and the normalisation of equitable practices, contributing to the decolonisation of spaces and establishing collective well-being as the norm.

1. Introduction

Disability has come to be regarded as something strange and worthy of isolation, almost as alien to the category of the human (Calderón-Almendros et al., 2016). In order to create a link between disability and the supposed normality, it is urged to offer difference with obscenity (Pié-Balaguer, 2014), since the encounter with the strange arouses interest. The act of self-exposition is a necessary step in the process of disrupting the status quo, decolonising and deconstructing spaces and prejudices. Indeed, in recent decades, there has been a notable increase in such exhibitions, as Planella-Ribera (2013) asserts that all hegemonically discriminated minorities have transcended the boundaries of normality and revealed themselves, thereby highlighting that the issue resides with the rest of society rather than being a matter of individual responsibility. The advent of social media platforms, such as Instagram, has further facilitated this process of crossing boundaries and showcasing personal experiences, providing a novel perspective on previously concealed or taboo subjects (Parra-Gómez et al., 2024).

The issue of accessibility has been a central tenet of the agenda of people with disabilities (Williamson, 2015), yet it is imperative to understand the direction in which their concerns are currently heading. The objective of this paper is to ascertain the aspects of urban design that require enhancement to promote accessibility and inclusion for individuals with disabilities, with a particular focus on the role of social networks. To this end, a study was conducted on Instagram and X, leveraging the post-qualitative approach that prioritises the voices of the study participants. This approach diverges from the prevailing quantitative methods in this field, which often overlook the perspectives of those directly affected. This approach aligns with the model proposed by Ellingson and Sotirin (2020), who argue that "data are made rather than found, assembled rather than collected or gathered, and dynamic rather than complete or static" (p.819). This model is complemented by the information analysis of "thinking with theory" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), which aims to provide a coherent framework for understanding the nature of the work.

The following section will summarise the main aspects of the theoretical framework, i.e. the theory from which to think about the empirical information, i.e. accessibility, movement and disability culture. Subsequently, prior to the presentation of the results and the ensuing discussion in dialogue, the methodology will be presented, providing greater detail regarding the nature of the research and its post-qualitative analysis. Finally, the paper will close with its conclusions, in response to the objective.

1.1. Accessibility, Movement and Disability Culture

Accessibility, in its most literal sense, refers to the capacity to enter a place, that is, to move freely and autonomously. Conventionally, the concept has been predominantly associated with architectural dimensions concerning individuals living with disabilities. However, there is a growing debate within academic and activist circles that questions the continued centrality of this issue and the oversimplification of disability through the use of the wheelchair as a universal symbol (Williamson, 2015). However, it should be noted that, in a more abstract sense, the concept of accessibility also encompasses the notions of inclusion and the dismantling of prejudices associated with it.

In its origins, the social paradigm of disability (Barnes, 2020) already situated the setback in society, in the city as its space, i.e., the barriers were the disabling factor, not the conditions of the people. Consequently, accessibility emerged as the primary solution to address the issue of exclusion. A seminal example of this shift was provided by Ed Roberts, the founder of the Independent Living Movement (ILM), who, following his demand to complete his studies at the University of Berkeley, became aware that the university and other spaces were not designed to cater to people with disabilities. This led to the enactment of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in the United States, which aimed to ensure that individuals with disabilities were not excluded from activities or benefits (Nepveux, 2015).

In the intervening decades, a considerable number of steps have been taken to improve these circumstances. Indeed, the proliferation of associations and movements such as the MVI itself has ensured this change (Olivera-Poll, 2006), but Piepzna-Samarasinha (2022) points out the number of cities in North America that remain inaccessible:

> Detroit, Philly, Portland, Iowa City, Burlington, Atlanta, small-town Pennsylvania. You don't want to move here, it's so inaccessible. You don't want to move here, there's no disabled community

here. Oh you know, it's an old city, it's not accessible. Oh you know, it's a small town, nobody talks about it. Oh you know, it's a West Coast city, everyone's so "healthy" (p.106).

In order to circumvent the fallacy of discussing inaccessibility exclusively in terms of architectural aspects, it is imperative to acknowledge the identification of four distinct categories of accessibility: accessibility to the built environment, accessibility to transport, accessibility to communication and interaction, and social and cultural accessibility (ONCE Foundation, 2020). According to a report by the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind/ Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE Foundation) and Citibeats, the types of disability that suffer most from inaccessibility due to the built environment and transport in cities are visual and motor disabilities, reaching up to 48% in the latter case (ONCE Foundation, 2020). These figures have been described as "high and worrying" by Olivera-Poll (2006), who conducted a study on accessibility and urban social geography. In this study, she referred not only to barriers in the city, but also within buildings, where these barriers accounted for 83% of the threshold to housing and 95% of the threshold to housing for people with disabilities. The same author subsequently identified five aspects of integral accessibility that must be given full consideration: accessibility to the city, within the city, to buildings, within buildings, and to each of their functions (Olivera-Poll, 2006).

Following the initial National Accessibility Plan (2004-2012), it is to be hoped that, at least in Spain, there has been an improvement, also with the Beach Accessibility Plan (Olivera-Poll, 2006). Nevertheless, there is a paucity of studies on this subject, and reports such as that of the ONCE Foundation do not focus qualitatively in order to hear the voice of the people involved. Consequently, the importance of conducting post-qualitative research that does not prioritise figures and quantitative data but rather emphasises the concerns and needs of people with disabilities regarding their experience in urban environments, is paramount.

Accordingly, the ideal of citizenship as independent, which values individualism and makes being autonomous a requirement for each person, must be avoided (Williamson, 2015). The exclusion and discrimination experienced by disabled individuals can be likened to a state of "social death," resulting in the denial of fundamental services. Consequently, the fundamental responsibility of society must be to transcend the "tragedy theory" (Oliver, 1990) —that portrays disabled individuals as inherently unhappy, unworthy of love, unwilling to live, seeking to be "normal" and to conceal their condition—; instead, the focus should be directed towards what Bárcena (2012) terms "awareness of life," a concept that is universally applicable to all citizens:

> The act of living, therefore, encompasses the notion of being active and present in the moment. It signifies the conscientious execution of daily responsibilities and the undertaking of actions that one deems essential for the betterment of humanity. However, it is also important to recognise the value of enjoyment, experience, and the ability to feel life in its fullness, and to allow oneself to be vulnerable in order to radiate one's inner light. The process of discovering the joy of existence, allowing oneself to be carried away by its music and rhythm. (Bárcena, 2012, p. 29)

As previously mentioned, demands of this nature have been made by people with disabilities since the late 20th century. Their social movement has been growing steadily, and by 2006, Olivera-Poll stated that, for example, in Spain, they had become a formidable pressure group, resolute in its mission to dismantle barriers and forge new avenues for inclusion. The transition from social movements to social networks has been instrumental in this transformation, as it has afforded the group heightened voice and visibility (Parra-Gómez, 2023; Parra-Gómez et al., 2024).

The present thesis is concerned with this phenomenon. Specifically, the study of disability culture offers an extensive theoretical framework for understanding the experience of disability across three dimensions: the historical-linguistic, the socio-political, and the personal-aesthetic (Parra-Gómez, 2021; Peters, 2008). In the specific context of accessibility and inclusive cities, the socio-political dimension has been identified as a pivotal area of focus, given the prevailing spirit of demands from disability rights advocates to governments and society at large for the fulfilment of fundamental rights and needs that remain unmet or are subject to limitations.

2. Methodology

In order to achieve the objective indicated in the previous section, which is to discover those aspects that still need to be improved in cities in order to favour the inclusion of people with disabilities in them, a digital and visual ethnographic methodology was chosen. This comprised three instruments for collecting information: a digital field diary, 21 semi-structured interviews and the creation of a corpus of 100 images. The subsequent subsections are dedicated to the presentation of the research details, including the participants, the study design, the data analysis, and the ethical considerations.

2.1. Participants, Study Design and Data Analysis

A total of twenty-one individuals participated in the research study, all of whom had active profiles on Instagram and/or X. The selection of these participants was strategic or of convenience (Ballestín-González & Fàbregues-Feijoó, 2018), as they were required to be accounts of people with disabilities or their families.

The geographical distribution of participants was not restricted to a specific region; participants from diverse countries including Wales, the United States, Australia, and Spain participated in the study. This approach aimed to address the limitations imposed by geographical boundaries, a concept that has been previously discussed by Llamas & Pagador (2014). The digital diary comprised observations from various locations worldwide, thereby enriching the content without constraints imposed by geographical boundaries.

It should be noted that the development of the work went through different stages, namely:

- Preliminary design and observation. As part of a doctoral dissertation, this study began with a preparatory phase in which the main and specific objectives were defined, the instruments for data collection and the types of data analysis were determined.
- Fieldwork. We went out into the field to use the three instruments for collecting information already mentioned: the digital diary, the semi-structured interviews and the corpus of images.
- Data analysis. The analysis was carried out according to the "thinking with theory" initiative (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), which lacks a delimited dogma. This post-qualitative approach is based on three basic actions: (1) combining theory and data from the collected information, (2) determining how they shape or construct each other, and (3) continuously reviewing the information to identify connections and tensions between concepts and their meanings (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Furthermore, this post-qualitative approach promotes the messiness and interconnectedness of the data, which is reflected in this work, where information is linked both to the theory and to each other. Thus, the information was transferred to the NVIVO platform, as it allows for in situ analysis of the images and can handle the large amount of information in a convenient way.
- Identifying and narrowing down the topics and writing the final report. The exit from the scenario clarified the main themes of the research, which were synthesised for clarity after deep reflection, and then captured in the final research report.

2.2. Ethical Considerations

As these were individuals and a particularly vulnerable group, as might be expected, this work took the ethical side of the research very much into account. Firstly, participants were informed of their rights and the nature of the study, as well as of any changes to the process. Following this, informed consent was signed by them. Similarly, on the part of the researchers, Ellingson and Sotirin (2020) guided this work by pointing to two specific commitments – pragmatism and compassion – to engage with the research. Pragmatism, as previously outlined, focuses on the opportunities that data offer both humans and objects with agency, orienting research practices towards the future. Conversely, compassion entails the establishment of an emotional connection with the experiences and feelings of others. This implies an important approach towards others, which the authors argue should be carried out under the umbrella of the feminist ethic of care, balancing care for self and others through compassionate communication.

3. Results and Discussion

As a consequence of "thinking with theory" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), this section presents the primary concepts that address the study's objective, while contrasting them with previous theory. That is to say, the results and discussion are offered concurrently in accordance with the framework of a post-qualitative study, as previously indicated. In the socio-political dimension that characterises the culture of disability, four aspects are denounced through strong activism in the social networks of the study (Guerrero-Hernandez, 2023): children's playgrounds, beaches, careers, inclusive changing rooms, and, in short, a point where other demands about unfair and/or discriminatory needs and practices of various kinds, both negative and positive, are collected. The ensuing discussion will methodically summarise the results obtained.

3.1. Inclusive Playgrounds

According to Olivera-Poll (2006), the first spaces to be identified in urban areas requiring re-evaluation are children's playgrounds, which represent a particular instance of accessibility, in this case to a leisure function. Numerous publications on X and Instagram have highlighted the lack of accessibility of swings and other components of these playgrounds. Indeed, there is a prominent community on X that persistently voices its concerns regarding this issue.

Marie Pierre shared an example on her X profile. The video, which was eight seconds in duration, depicted two children, Bruno and Aruna, who both had functional diversity, rocking on a seesaw with space for their strollers (see Figure 1). Despite its brevity, the scene offers a compelling illustration of the potential for inclusive playground design. Children with such special needs would never be able to use a traditional children's play area. This form of positive activism serves to highlight the merits of such initiatives, demonstrating the ideal and the current shortcomings in the provision of inclusive spaces. As Marie Pierre herself noted in her tweet, such environments are few and far between.

Figure 1. Bruno and Aruna on an inclusive swing

Source: Pierre-Caire [@PierreCaire], 2022. https://twitter.com/PierreCaire/status/1479929126081421314

During the interview, the mother expressed her sense of accomplishment in her efforts to contribute to the enhancement of the situation:

> I have visited the town hall on multiple occasions. I am known there. Bruno has a name there. We are currently engaged in a project focused on the development of inclusive parks in Barcelona. Consequently, there are councillors who are acquainted with me, and even architects who are familiar with my perspective on the issue and who cite me as a reference. They solicit my opinion and I have been contributing to the city council's xarxa for independent life initiative, which aims to create ten fully accessible parks. There is no inclusion if there is no accessibility.

Moreover, the focus should extend beyond the provision of adapted swings or seesaws to encompass the accessibility of parks for individuals with mobility impairments, as Noemí Font and her #revoluciodelsparcs campaign have advocated, and as Ana Mourelo and her "First Inclusive Park in Barcelona" (@1erparqueinclusivo_barcelona) have highlighted. While some parks may already be accessible, this does not guarantee their inclusivity. The following is an account of how the project came to be by the mother involved:

> It came about because I have an 11-year-old boy, Aitor, and since he was 6, when he started having epilepsy and so on... we realised that we could no longer take him to the park because he was getting bigger and heavier and the parks near our house were not adapted for him. So we were more restricted than a person with a disability already is. In this case a child. So when I saw the call for participatory budgeting, I thought it would be a good time to build a park that my son and the other children with disabilities could use. And enjoy. I applied and there it is... we are working on it.

As has been previously indicated, and as Ana herself has acknowledged, the overarching objective should be the proliferation of inclusive parks, rather than merely accessible ones. On 8 November 2022, Ana published a post on Instagram that elucidated the distinction between accessible, adapted, and inclusive parks (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Types of playgrounds

Source: 1er Parque Inclusivo Barcelona [@1erparqueinclusivo_barcelona], 2022.
https://www.instagram.com/p/CksmyWCszXS/?img_index=1

As you can see in the picture, accessible parks are those that have no architectural barriers and allow wheelchair access. Adapted parks are those that have one or more elements that can be used by people with disabilities. Inclusive parks are those that combine both concepts and are suitable for everyone. The construction of such a park in the city of Barcelona, as Ana reported, is underway and will be completed in 2025. This is news that shows how much remains to be done in this and other cities.

However, this issue is not only about access and equal opportunities, but also about the possibility of having diverse children in spaces that give them visibility:

> There are many times when my daughter has gone down to the park... and that's how they see her. If she didn't go down, they wouldn't know her. To show the reality, we are all different, we all have needs... I have needs too and I don't have autism... Coexistence is the most important thing for inclusion.

In short, inclusion in this case can be not only accessibility, but also a way of teaching about difference, of showing and making people live together, that is, of exhibiting difference (Pié-Balaguer, 2014), thanks to which this future generation of children who have lived with disability will not see it as denaturalised.

3.2. Accessible Beaches for People with Reduced Mobility

Another recurring issue is the accessibility of beaches, as mentioned above with Olivera-Poll (2006) and the Beach Accessibility Plan initiated. Although many steps have been taken in the right direction, it is still said that not enough has been done. For example, under the hashtags #beachaccess and #beachaccessibility, images such as that of Helen (Figure 3) are being shared internationally as she walks along the beach with a special wheelchair for the sand, with thick wheels that do not get stuck. In this publication, accessibility is shown by making visible advances in orthopaedics, in this case, but at the same time this information is shared with other people in the group who are probably unaware of the existence of these objects and are potential users.

Figure 3. Helen strolls on the beach with an adapted chair

Source: Ring [@helens_fnd_journey], 2022. https://www.instagram.com/p/CbfkZMDolWL/

As Helen's written message highlights, there are two aspects that must be given due consideration and thus serve as a paradigm for the "accessible beaches" theme. Primarily, as is the case for all individuals, this woman desires to partake in a walk along the beach that is both relaxing and enjoyable, despite the presence of inclement weather. This assertion underscores the notion that individuals with disabilities should not be deprived of the same leisure and recreational opportunities as their non-disabled peers, thereby challenging the "theory of tragedy" (Oliver, 1990). Conversely, while acknowledging the complimentary wheelchair service in Pembrokeshire, Helen also highlights the constraints imposed by the limited availability of wheelchair resources, emphasising that there is only

one adult and one child wheelchair, which might result in an overcrowded and suboptimal service during summer months.

Returning to the subject of childhood, Marie Pierre continues to play an active role in promoting beach accessibility, sharing images and videos on an annual basis during the summer months of her son, Bruno, engaging in recreational activities along the Catalan coastline. One such publication, in addition to depicting the joyous child, featured a clipping of a news item shared by Nius Diario (Figure 4), accompanied by a headline that detailed how this mother was endeavouring to procure more amphibious chairs and more accessible beaches in the city of Barcelona.

**Figure 4**. News about Marie Pierre's struggle on the beaches

Source: Pierre-Caire [@con_otra_vision], 2023.
https://www.instagram.com/p/Cv4JzK3NVFN/?igsh=MXYwM24wcDk0cGsxdg%3D%3D

Again, this is an example of information on beach adapted orthopaedics, important information to be shared within and outside the community for the reasons explained above. It also indicates that there is still a need to increase the number of accessible beaches, i.e. it indicates a shortage.

Another example is a publication by Courtney, also on the beach (Figure 5). Here a blonde girl with long hair, wearing a blue bikini top with a silver print and white cotton shorts, is smiling at the camera. She is also wearing fluorescent sunglasses and a purple and yellow DIY hat. She is sitting on a blue wicker beach chair, the kind that sits low in the sand. She is in the middle of the beach, not near the shore. Her cheerful image is accompanied by the text: "Because what you love can be taken away, so live like it's your last day". This inspiring message is addressed above all to the group of people with disabilities themselves, because despite the lack of access or the obstacles they may encounter, it is important to maintain this philosophy of awareness of life (Bárcena, 2012), of not being dead in life. And this means entering the beaches or whatever space they want to inhabit.

Figure 5. Courtney posing happily at the beach
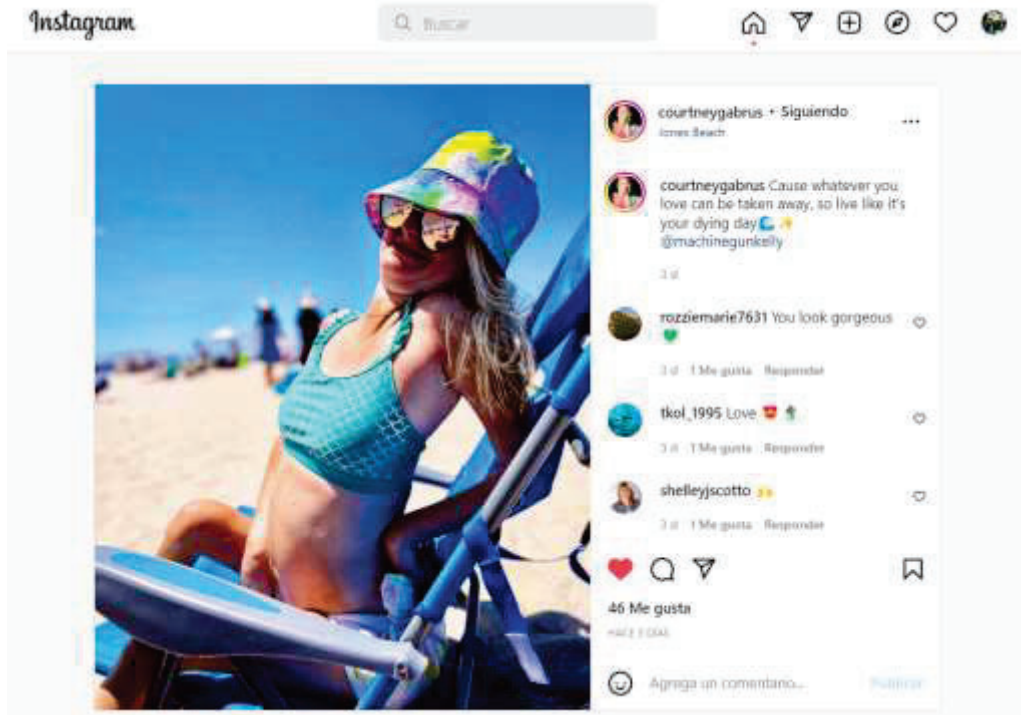
Source: Gabrus [@courtneygabrus], 2022. https://www.instagram.com/p/CfcLmdmpx7i/

In turn, this presence of disability and different bodies everywhere has an impact on representation, on breaking the canon (Pié-Balaguer, 2014; Planella-Ribera, 2013). These people also need to be represented in social media (especially traditional media), they should not only appear in awareness-raising campaigns, because that does not fail to make them seem extraordinary and special, but they should be found everywhere. They need role models of all kinds. These people stress the importance of being seen so that they no longer feel like aliens.

3.3. Child-Friendly Races

The subject of races adapted for children has its own appellation and patronymic —Noemí Font @ratolinaemma –and its own social network– X— as this mother transformed a modest concept into a revolution that traversed neighbourhoods and cities, ultimately culminating in an annual occurrence in various parts of Catalonia and beyond the autonomous community. Numerous publications, images, texts, and news items have been shared by Noemí, her followers, and other users, announcing or reviving these races.

Of all of them, the one that forms part of the corpus of images analysed has a special place in this research, a photograph shared by Noemí on 4 June 2022 (Figure 6) of the Vilassar de Mar race. It is a scene in full sunshine, in the middle of the road. There are people —spectators— on both sides of the image; in the centre are two participants, two children, a girl and a boy (judging by their hair), flanked by family members —the boy is accompanied by his sister and encouraged by his mother, and the girl is helped by her mother—, at their feet is the asphalt marked out for the race, and a blue sky crowns the scene above. The attitude of the protagonists is one of concentration. They are in the middle of the race, working hard at their task. The family members appear animated and happy. The image conveys both of these feelings, it is cheerful, colourful, it has life, it vibrates with light and colour.

It is fascinating how many people are watching the race. There is no doubt that this is an important mobilisation of people. It is important because, as always, it helps to make visible, in this case, children with reduced mobility (to normalise their orthopaedic devices: walkers and splints) and to promote inclusive and adapted sport, where it is not important to compete, but to finish.

Figure 6. Adapted race of Vilassar

Source: Font [@ratolinaemma], 2022. https://twitter.com/ratolinaemma/status/1533029576116523009

In light of the dearth of recreational facilities, these initiatives stand as a rare novelty in the realm of children's leisure. Regrettably, children with disabilities face a paucity of opportunities for leisure activities. These children are often overlooked, with their participation in leisure activities being limited to the end of the school day, if at all. The initiative instigated by Noemí aims to enhance the frequency and inclusivity of recreational activities for these young individuals, fostering their active participation and ensuring their visibility. It is therefore vital to promote accessibility to all the functions of cities (Olivera-Poll, 2006), not only to the buildings themselves.

3.4. Inclusive Changing Facilities

In the context of accessibility within buildings, a notable absence is that of inclusive changing facilities (Olivera-Poll, 2006). Their presence is virtually non-existent in most public places in urban areas, including restaurants, museums and schools. This oversight is particularly problematic for families with highly dependent members, who are compelled to change nappies in the most inhospitable locations. While this deficiency does not preclude them from exploring all areas of the city, it does impede their mobility.

The publication, dated 8 June 2022, is by Marie Pierre and features two photographs of her son Bruno —one lying on a changing room bench in an unorthodox manner and the other on an inclusive changing table— companied by a text calling for such changing tables for the dignity, in this case, of children with disabilities (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Publication calling for inclusive changing facilities

Source: Pierre-Caire [@con_otra_vision], 2023.
https://www.instagram.com/p/CejOm7xqGqu/?igsh=eDZqYmI2am5rcmk3

Until recently, the subject was considered taboo, but the advent of social networks has facilitated the dissemination of images depicting situations where children and the elderly are depicted in compromising positions. Such scenes are profoundly impactful, leaving viewers unable to ignore the issue. It is incumbent upon those with the capacity to effect change to take action. Primarily, the responsibility lies with the hospitals themselves to provide such facilities. These institutions, being frequented by the general public, are obliged to provide inclusive changing facilities. The issue at hand is twofold: firstly, it affects the dignity of the individual requiring change; secondly, it also has a detrimental effect on the carer. As illustrated in the above image from Marie Pierre's publication, the transfer of Bruno to the bench requires greater force and involves carrying his weight in a manner that is not necessary in the inclusive changing table, which is equipped with an electric lift. This serves to underscore the extent to which the duties associated with caring for others can be overlooked (or were prior to the advent of social media) and the necessity to elevate these responsibilities to a centralised political agenda, thereby extricating them from the insularity of localism (Tronto, 2013).

3.5. Other Claims

Finally, although grouped together, there are other situations that require attention in order to continue the fight for a more inclusive city. These comprise recurring cases of inaccessibility and discrimination, new initiatives, and normalised situations that must continue to be addressed.

In relation to the recurrence of cases pertaining to inaccessibility and discrimination, it is observed that these continue to occur and dominate social networks, as evidenced by hashtags such as #Equity, #Accessibility and #Accessibility, along with their respective negative iterations. An observation of the digital field diary revealed a publication on X by CERMI Madrid on 4 December 2021 (Figure 8). In this publication, the organisation drew attention to the improper installation of a Christmas tree on a podo-tactile paving route in the street for the festive season.

It is noteworthy that an ostensibly trivial decorative element has effectively rendered the pavement more accessible and inclusive for visually impaired individuals. Undoubtedly, local governments are responsible for these practices, yet there appears to be a lack of consideration for the potential repercussions on vulnerable groups. Greater awareness would either lead to a better choice of where to place decorations or to prioritise inclusion over aesthetics.

Figure 8. Inaccessibility of podo-touch paving
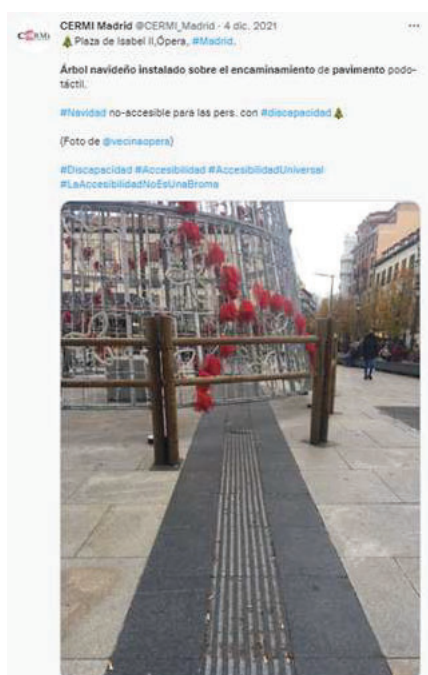
Source: CERMI [@CERMI_Madrid], 2021. https://twitter.com/CERMI_Madrid/status/1467220043226300416

Another particularly challenging case study was that of Sonia and the absence of adapted taxis (see Figure 9). In a video testimony, the mother detailed her experience of attempting to find an adapted taxi after spending several hours in the emergency department with her son, who suffers from cerebral palsy. Despite the late hour of 10 p.m., she was unable to locate a taxi that could accommodate her son's wheelchair.

Figure 9. Video of Sonia reporting the absence of adapted taxis after leaving hospital.

Source: El mundo de Enzo [@elmundodeenzo_], 2022. https://www.instagram.com/p/CZsQllbjtS6/

Sonia has referred to the experience as "institutional mistreatment", a term she has employed in previous complaints of a similar nature. The truth of the matter is that it is difficult to understand how it is possible that, depending on the time of day, her son could not receive a service of this kind. This is

a matter that should provoke introspection on the part of the taxi company, with a view to extending the range of services available on a 24-hour basis.

Secondly, in terms of new initiatives, the online community of people with disabilities is constantly sharing information that is useful within the community and that demonstrates how the city is becoming a more open and welcoming space for differences. This phenomenon is exemplified by Maria and the Instagram post shared on 21 May 2021 (Figure 10), which is also part of the corpus of images in this study.

Figure 10. Shopping with an adapted trolley

Source: Pedrero [@my_princess_africa], 2021. https://www.instagram.com/p/CRXHagJAKw2/

The scene under consideration is an everyday occurrence within a shopping centre and features two children. The boy is positioned in close proximity to a shopping trolley of a size that corresponds to his own. Adjacent to him is a large, adapted shopping trolley, in which the girl is seated. She is wearing sunglasses and is looking intently at the camera. Her demeanour is relaxed. She is seated within her designated trolley, and according to María, her mother, as reported in the same publication: "It's wonderful and the good thing is that Africa has had a lot of fun. She has a passion for shopping and has become much more at ease".

Everyday life once again takes centre stage. Few things are more routine and mundane than going grocery shopping at Carrefour. It is an ordinary scene, yet one that embodies inclusion and accessibility. Until recently, it was rare to see individuals with multiple disabilities in public spaces—not only because of the uncomfortable stares they might face but also due to the practical challenges, such as managing both a wheelchair and a shopping trolley simultaneously. Therefore, the availability of trolleys like the one shown in the image represents a step forward towards inclusion in all types of spaces. Everyone has the right to something as simple as going shopping. This is yet another example of accessibility in practice (Olivera-Poll, 2006).

As has been previously stated, Maria's objective is to disseminate information. She became aware of these carts via social media and has since taken the initiative to inform her followers, thereby extending the reach of the chain. Maria frequently shares information about therapies or orthopaedics, a practice that Shayda Kafai (2021) has termed "mutual aid" within the social disability movement. This term is used to describe a distinctive and significant form of collective action that is characterised by its overwhelming nature and specificity.

As a closing point, in what can be termed "normalised situations" and, once again, as an example of positive activism, it is important to highlight narratives that express gratitude for what is already functioning well. One simple example is that of Noemí Font and her stroll through the city (Figure 11). The scene depicts an ordinary street, specifically a pavement (explicitly referenced in the text), where a mother and her daughter are walking (the rest of the family seems to be out of frame). The daughter is seated in a wheelchair, while the mother, walking beside her, has one hand on the wheelchair's handle and the other holding a walker. We see both from behind. It is winter, as indicated by their clothing—particularly the mother's boots and coat—and by the bare trees visible in the background. Little can be inferred about their expressions or mood, except that they seem to be walking along the street untroubled, in a scene of complete everyday normality. "Les voreres amples ajuden" ("Wide pavements help"), Noemí notes in her tweet with gratitude.

Figure 11. Tweet thanking for wide pavements

Source: Font [@ratolinaemma], 2022.

The most striking aspect of the image is, once again, the utilisation of quotidian life as an indirect denunciation of those pavements that do not comply with the required width. A mother and her daughter are depicted simply walking down the street, a commonplace occurrence. However, the scene is imbued with a sense of political engagement, serving as a poignant moment of activism concerning the fundamental issue of accessibility. In this instance, the positive sentiment is evident, as Noemí expresses gratitude for the wide pavements at the present moment. However, her perspective extends beyond mere satisfaction, as she also articulates her concerns regarding the less-than-ideal conditions of narrow pavements. This prompts a reflection among viewers. It is a criticism, while also expressing gratitude.

Upon further consideration, what does the evidence reveal? Orthopaedics. The subject is a girl who requires her wheelchair when she is unable to walk, as well as her walker when she is strong enough to change instruments. It is both positive and necessary that these devices populate the streets so that they are readily visible, as they are an integral part of the lives of many children (and adults), and they can no longer be concealed in the privacy of the home; they are designed to move through the streets and parks with ease.

In this vein, perhaps even more commonplace, is the final example featuring Álex—@silleroporelmundo—dining at a restaurant (Figure 12). The photograph shows a young man with an amused expression sitting at a table laden with food. The presentation of the dishes and the people in the background indicate that it is a public venue, not his home; it appears to be the terrace of a restaurant. Álex's expression is comical, as he playfully enacts a reaction of surprise to the food. This humorous touch is a hallmark of his account. The scene exudes optimism and cheerfulness, with the delicious-looking food and the ambient lights in the background adding a sense of comfort and hedonism.

Figure 12. Alex dining in a restaurant with an amused gesture

Source: Sillero por el mundo [@silleroporelmundo], 2020. https://www.instagram.com/p/CBX4-dtqB4Q/

Álex's playful and humorous gesture is, in itself, another form of advocacy. He has every right to be cheeky and appear in photos however he pleases. His disability does not preclude him from engaging in any activity or adopting any attitude. Yet, his actions challenge the stereotype of the so-called "tragedy theory" (Oliver, 1990). No, Álex is not confined to his home, lamenting his life; instead, he is out and about—on the street, on a plane, or wherever he chooses to be. He places his body on any (real) stage and breaks barriers (Pié-Balaguer, 2014), refusing to let disability remain hidden in the shadows of sorrow. Travelling, indulging in delicious meals, and posing in a humorous manner dispel numerous myths. This is the magic of Álex's blog. Together with his partner, Sandra, they refrain from showcasing the mundane details of their everyday life or their intimate moments. They do not focus on caregiving tasks or moments of frustration, but they still practise a powerful form of positive activism. In their case, this activism is primarily directed inward: to empower and guide others within the community, and to reclaim spaces, such as restaurants in this instance, for their rightful use and enjoyment.

In short, all these demands place on the movement's agenda aspects that are already well known, such as urban barriers or lack of access in buildings, but also relatively new demands, such as the creation of inclusive parks or careers, which shows that not only is the achievement of basic rights being demanded, but that equality in leisure and cultural areas is also very much being considered. This refers more to the function of the different places themselves (Olivera-Poll, 2006) and not just to barriers or lack of access.

4. Conclusions

Finally, it is worth highlighting some ideas already mentioned in the previous section, which have to do with the importance of maintaining activism in social networks in order to give visibility and recognition to the group of people with disabilities, i.e. to give them the place they deserve as human beings.

Throughout these pages we have seen complaints about accessibility, some of them more serious, such as CERMI's or Sonia and the taxis, but not all of them negative. Many activists today do their work from an optimistic point of view, from the point of view of gratitude, even when they point out scarcity or transience. This was the case with Helen and her special beach chair, or Noemí and the wide pavements, to name but two. The good thing about these publications is that, as well as continuing to highlight the bad from the good, they also serve to empower and open the eyes of the collective to achieve greater strength. However, it is important to be careful with those services that are 'scarce', because the absence of scarcity leads back to inaccessibility, to exclusion. Providing a minimum service is not enough to speak of accessibility and inclusion. These must be extended to all citizens; this should be the objective. The collective cannot be satisfied with less.

All in all, the presence of the disabled in the streets favours coexistence. Coexistence with difference becomes a pedagogy that can in itself promote inclusion in all possible areas of the city. As already indicated in the theoretical framework, the magnetic power of the display of the collective makes (or should make) the difference (Pié-Balaguer, 2014), allowing society to rethink spaces and better consider which options should be prioritised or discarded for the benefit of all the people who inhabit each city. Following Piepzna-Samarasinha's (2022) ideas, it is necessary to envision a future where "queer, trans, black, indigenous, people of colour, women, girls and non-binary people live in a world where disability is the norm and where access is no longer a question but a fait accompli" (p.169). What is being experienced today in social networks such as those in the study is an online decolonisation, so that by seeing difference in all kinds of settings, directly and indirectly an offline decolonisation is achieved, and in fact their wellbeing is the norm.

5. Acknowledgements

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