

Equal Accessibility For People With Different Disabilities

Improving Accessibility In Community Centers In Amsterdam.

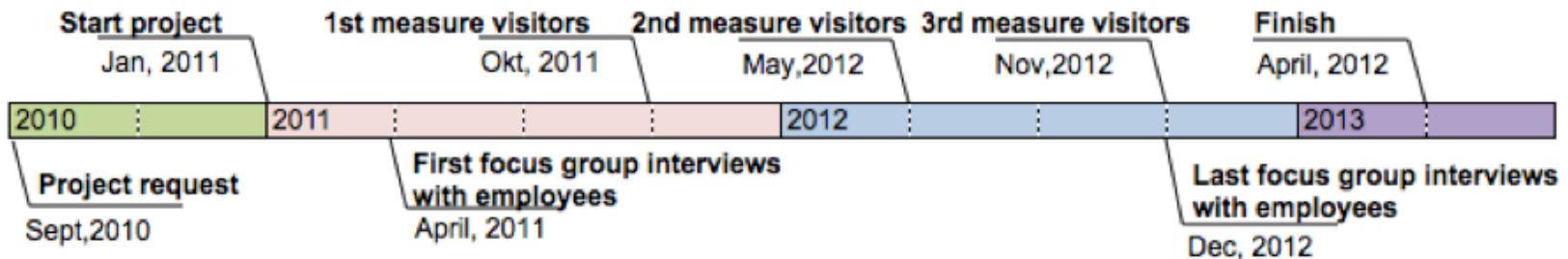
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Research For Amsterdam Municipality

I have done a two and a half year longitudinal research with multiple measures for the Amsterdam municipality.

About accessibility as a means of improving social inclusion.



An Increased Emphasis On Accessibility.

Goals:

- Improving social inclusion
- Stimulating participation of people with disabilities.

Means:

- Providing a barrier free environment



The Social Model Of Disability

- Disability is a form of social exclusion.

Impairment: medical ‘difference’ with a healthy person.

Disability: the ways in which the environment ‘disables’ someone to participate.



Impact Of This Model

- We are now all capable of ‘enabling’ people with disabilities by improving accessibility
- It has strengthened the position of disability on the political agenda.

Critique:

Not equally applicable or useful to all people with disabilities.



Not Applicable To:

- People with chronic fatigue syndrome (Taylor, 2005)
- People with invisible physical disabilities (Valeras, 2010)
- People with psychiatric disabilities (Link *et al.* 1989)



Interviews With Employees

- 15 focusgroup interviews
- In 9 community organizations in Amsterdam
- In total 80 employees were interviewed.

They gave an overarching view of their difficulties with improving accessibility for the different groups: people with physical, intellectual, psychiatric and sensory disabilities.



3 Factors

- Intelligibility
- Stigma
- Communication



Intelligibility

- (In) visibility
- Legitimacy
- Variable or fluid

This makes it more difficult for employees to offer help or make adjustments



Stigma

- A stigmatized view by visitors
- A stigmatized view by employees

Employees struggle with how to create acceptance and make people with eg. Psychiatric disabilities feel welcome

Communication

- Communicating a need for help
- Lack of interpersonal or social skills
- A disability can influence behavior

People who can clearly communicate their need for help/adjustment in a socially accepted manner are more likely to receive what they need.

Differences In Accessibility

Because of the factors:

- Intelligibility
- Stigma and
- Communication;

Employees experience difficulty in providing an equally accessible environment for people with different disabilities.

This makes relying on barrier removal as opposed to individual support, unjust for people with certain types of disabilities.

What I've Tried To Tell You

- Improving accessibility is necessary but not automatically the key to participation.
- The factors intelligibility, stigma and communication are more accurate predictors of possible difficulties in improving accessibility, than is the type of disability.



THE ROAD AHEAD



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