

ADAPTABILITY/AACCESSIBILITY

"Universal Design is an approach to design that incorporates products as well as building features which, to the greatest extent possible, can be used by everyone. Universal Design is a simple concept, but one that requires a fundamental shift in thinking. Traditionally, design has catered to averages - creating a world that few people can actually thrive in. Universal design strives to encompass the widest possible ranges of size, strength and capability, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The intent of Universal Design is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications and the built environment usable by as many people as possible".

Ronald L. Mace, architect and founder of the Center for Accessible Housing

According to Dr. Marc Dujardin, Universal Design is a design concept that recognizes, respects, values and attempts to accommodate the broadest possible spectrum of human ability in the design of all products, environments and information systems. It requires sensitivity to and knowledge about people of all ages and abilities. Sometimes referred to as "lifespain design" or "trans-generational design", Universal Design encompasses and goes beyond the **accessible, adaptable and barrier-free** design concepts of the past. It helps eliminate the need for special features and spaces, which for some people, are often stigmatizing, embarrassing, different looking and usually more expensive.

'Universal design principles'

1. equitable use
2. flexibility in use
3. simple and intuitive use
4. perceptible information
5. tolerance for error
6. low physical effort
7. size and space for approach and use

Dr. Dujardin states in his A methodological prolegomenon, that Universal Design is a contextually integrated universal matter. 'Contextual' because dealing with the concept requires a full understanding of the spatial and cultural context of the place where it is being introduced and adopted. 'Universal' because Universal Design is truly a human-centered concept and applicable to everyone of us, both the disabled and non-disabled.

Accessibility and accessible design are dated terms with a mere focus on 'design for special needs'. the idea behind this thinking is whatever is designed for the disabled may well be beneficial for the non-disabled too.

- Universal Design brings unveils that accessibility has to do with braking away 'barriers' and 'thresholds'. We can distinguish to sorts of thresholds:
- spatial of physical barriers/thresholds and temporal
 - mental barriers/thresholds.

To measure whether a building is fully accessible, four levels of accessibility are distinguished in the following order, according to Dr. Marc Dujardin:

- Reach (how to reach the area, the site and the building)
- Enter (how to enter the building and its parts)
- Use (how to read the plan logic and design concept)
- Understand (how to avoid mental barriers and stigma)

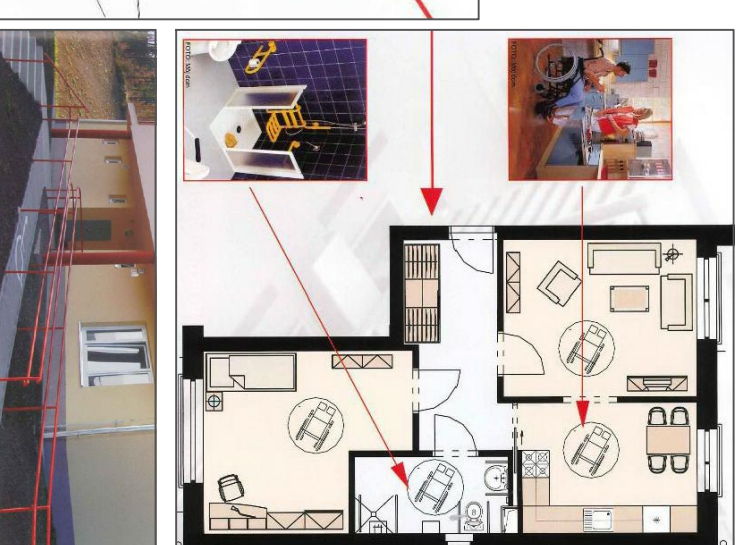
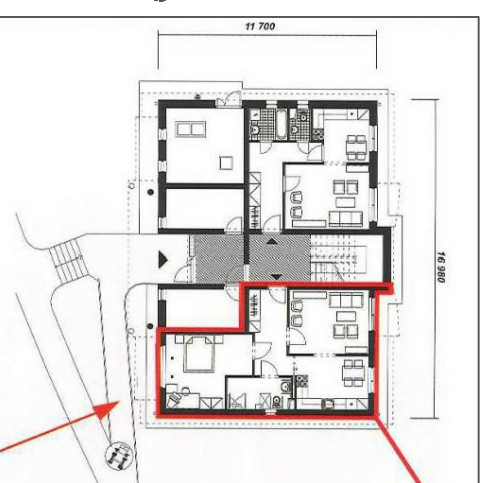
Apartment house

Proma

Banská Bystrica,

Slovakia

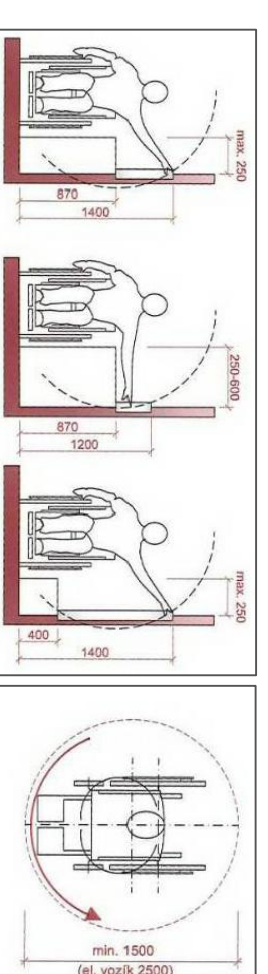
In this apartment house the accessible, adaptable and barrier-free design was applied. The apartment was adjusted to the accessibility requirements, we can notice the 4 levels of accessibility that were applied here (as according to Dr. Marc Dujardin): reach, enter, use, understand.



Maison à Bordeaux

Rem Koolhaas

Bordeaux, France



"Best Design of 1998"

The house was designed to accommodate a man who was confined to a wheel chair after an automobile accident. We may notice that the universal design principles were applied in this house. The house was designed for simple and barrier-free use, low physical effort, but as well for full accessibility, flexibility and adaptability.

Koolhaas describes the building as three houses because it has three separate sections layered on top of one another.

The Maison à Bordeaux is a private residence of three floors on a cape-like hill overlooking Bordeaux. The lower level is a series of covers carved out from the hill, designed for the most intimate life of the family; the ground floor on garden level is a glass room - half inside - for living; and the upper floor is divided into a children's and a parents' area. The heart of the house is a 3x3.5m elevator platform that moves freely between the three floors, becoming part of the living space or kitchen or transforming itself into an intimate office space, and granting access to books, artwork, and the wine cellar.

