

Beyond Inclusion and Differences:

➤ Can Inclusion
Be the Natural
Consequence of
a Quality Space,
Fair to All?



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DESIGN HUMAN LIFE

↗ Context and Challenge

For too long, inclusion and accessibility have been considered **add-ons** – supplementary elements to standard design, side chapters to a project. **Our approach seeks to change this perspective:** by rethinking the hierarchy of design, **inclusivity can become an operational tool** to ensure that every space reaches a shared level of quality – one **capable of responding to the physical, cognitive, and sensory differences that define the very nature of human being.**

How many times has a space made us feel at ease without us knowing why? And how many times, instead, has “something” put us off – a harsh light, an intrusive noise, or a confusing layout?

Architecture plays a decisive role in our daily well-being. Yet well-being varies from person to person – by perception thresholds, habits, ways of orienting and inhabiting.

Designing for quality therefore means recognizing this diversity and translating it into spatial strategies that embrace it – so that the lived experience is authentically inclusive for everyone.

From this reflection comes our **IDEA framework:** an invitation to **anticipate differences** rather than design for them retroactively, integrating them into the intrinsic characteristics of the project.

In short: inclusive design is not the goal anymore, but the means through which every space can become high-quality for all – transforming diversity from a constraint into a design opportunity.

Written by:

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➤ 1. Inclusivity as a Means, Not an End Goal

What if inclusion were the natural outcome of a quality space? What if the key question were “What qualities must a space have to be inherently fair?” rather than “Whom should we include?”

Our approach overturns the traditional model: **inclusive design becomes a technical-critical tool**, not the end goal, to ensure that spatial quality is accessible and experienceable equally by all.

In other words, inclusion is not an added phase at the end of standard design – it is a structural element of the project, serving a **common goal: the qualitative experience of users, beyond physical, cognitive, or sensory differences.**

If a space is designed to **perform for everyone's experience and to ensure quality for all**, inclusion naturally follows.

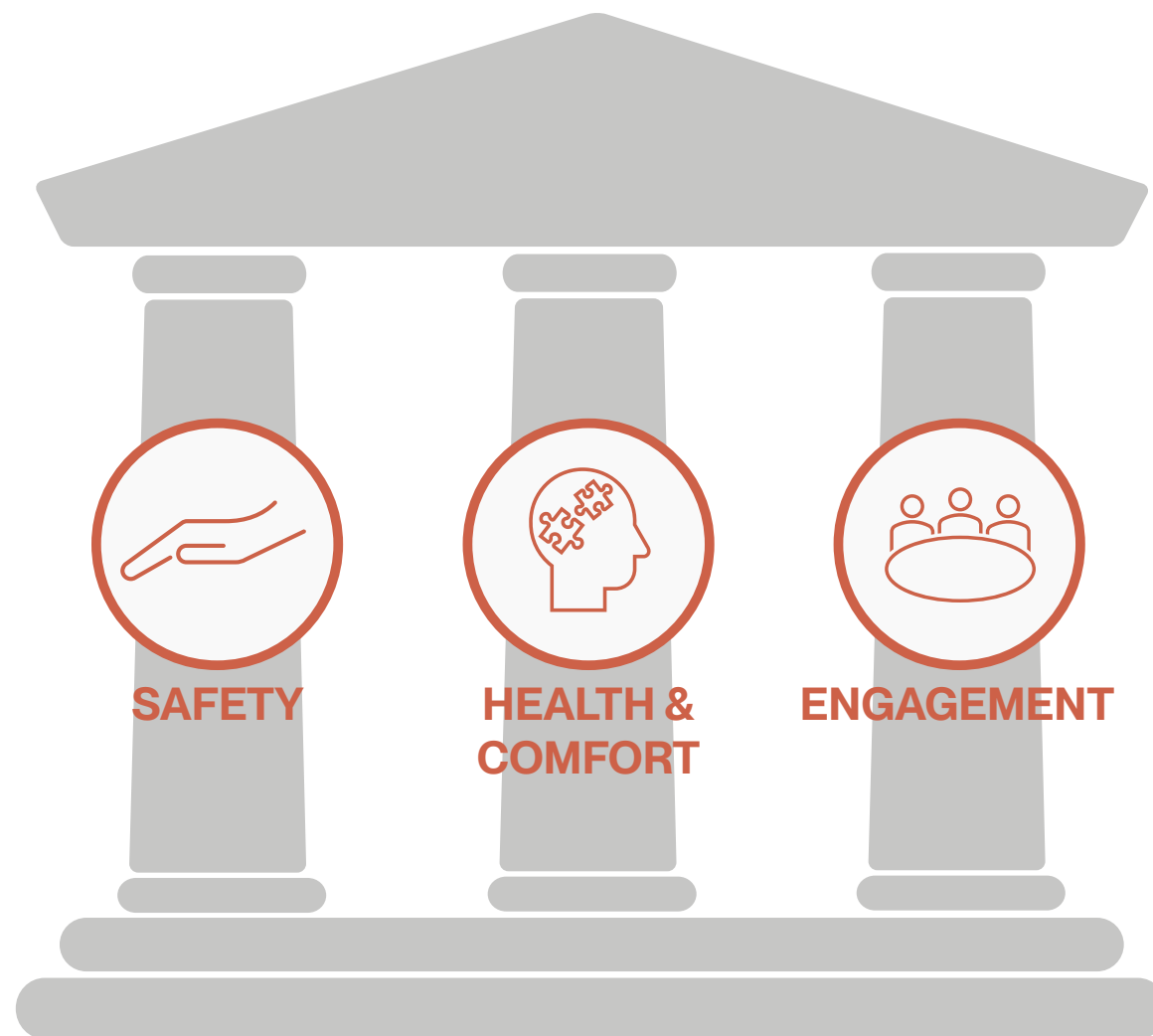
➤ 2. Defining Spatial Quality: A Shared Grammar

We design and create quality spaces: *Design Human Life*, the human being has always been at the center of our reflections and research.

But what do we mean by “quality spaces”? How can we be sure we are truly designing quality – and designing within quality?

The quality of a space is defined by the experience of the person who lives and interacts with it. We have identified archetypes through which humans perceive and relate to space and organized them into key concepts to redefine **the grammar of quality** — creating a common language to reflect on strategies and interventions that make quality accessible to all.





We have defined **three pillars that encompass the environmental qualities of a space**:

- **Safety. Trust**, not merely the absence of danger: clear orientation, easy legibility of thresholds and functions, privacy protection, reduction of sensory overload and environmental microaggressions.
- **Health & Comfort**. Light, acoustics, air quality, temperature: the body responds to environmental stimuli through the five senses. Controlling environmental parameters according to individual needs ensures an equitable quality experience.
- **Engagement**. A space that welcomes rather than rejects, that **creates belonging** by offering multiple ways of engagement, encouraging relationships **without denying intimacy**. An engaging place communicates a shared identity and reduces distance between users and the environment.

This shared language provides the foundation to think, measure, and design quality as an equitable experience for all users, beyond differences. As a result, the question “What makes a space high-quality for everyone?” finally has shared, performance-based – not merely formal – criteria.

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➤ 3. From Standards to Awareness: A Performance-Based Method, Not a Manual

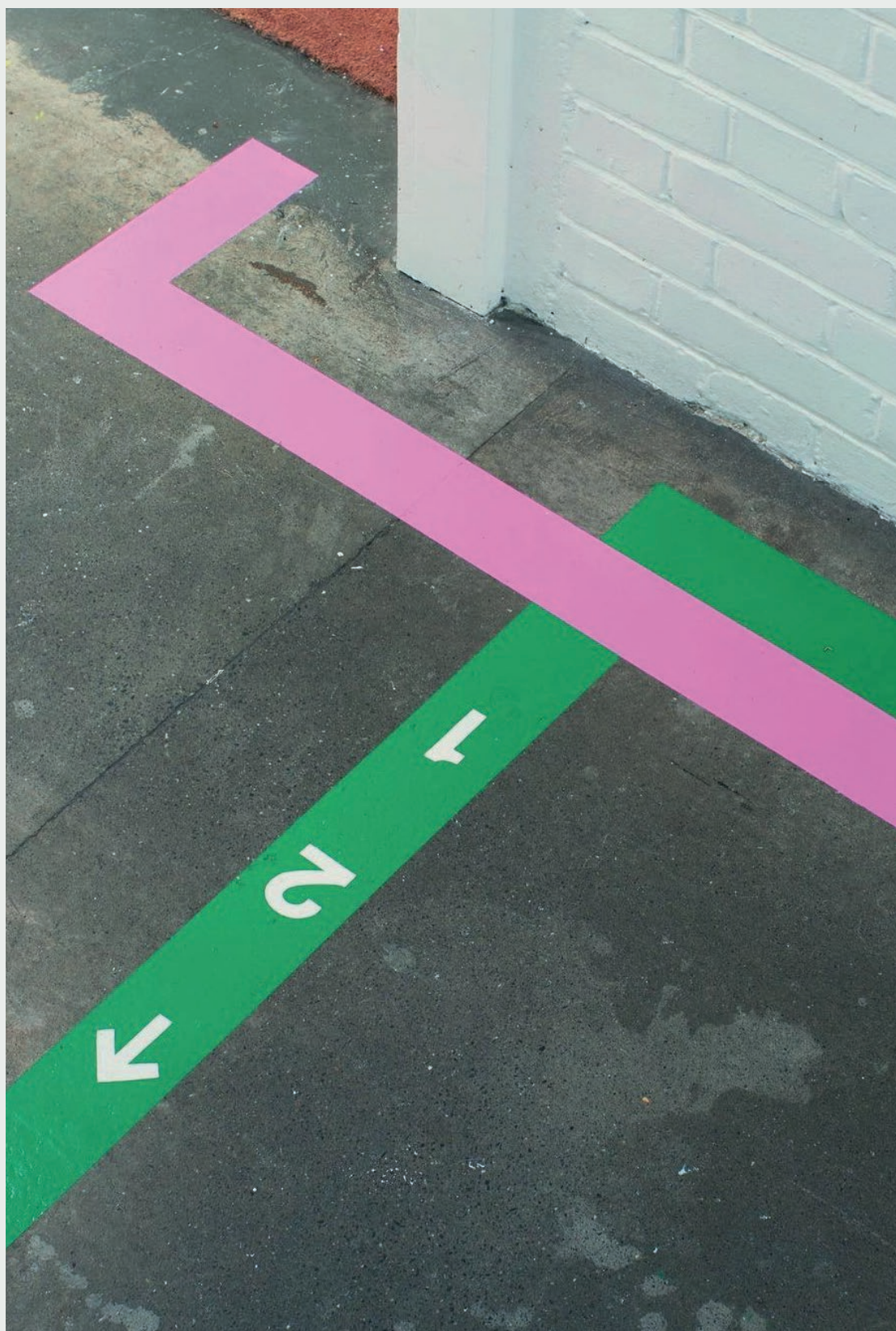
Having defined our concept of 'quality', we can build a shared understanding: recognizing which elements contribute to creating equitable and accessible environmental quality.

Thinking in terms of objectives – what the space must effectively accomplish to meet everyone's needs and deliver a quality experience – helps develop a critical design awareness.

This means describing the space not for what it is, but for what it does: identifying the performances it must guarantee to its users.

We therefore developed a performance-based method, building upon existing standards, as our research is grounded in a systematic analysis of the literature: from regulatory frameworks to the most recent scientific studies.

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We studied how individual spatial elements contribute to creating a quality experience – analyzing each element, its relationships, and how the space is used, conceiving the building as an organism.

From this process, IDEA was born.

IDEA is a method, not a manual. It has a **performance-based, not prescriptive approach**.

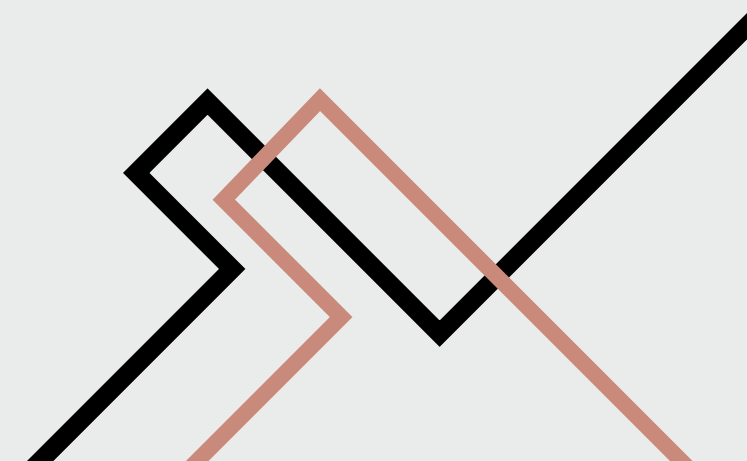
Once the spatial objectives are clearly defined, it **proposes strategies to embrace human diversity in various actions and interactions with the environment**.

For instance, if a transitional space's primary function is movement from one point to another, it must facilitate legibility, orientation, and perceptual continuity – so that this activity can be carried out autonomously and effortlessly.

Regulations remain essential – they are the project's baseline – but **not sufficient: diversity must be internalized as a design opportunity**, integrating strategies that improve users' experiences beyond individual differences.

In this sense, IDEA offers a **conscious methodological framework**, combining **technical rigor and design sensitivity** – translating human complexity into an **operational language of quality**.

Design awareness – recognizing one's own biases, discerning different perceptual thresholds, anticipating invisible sources of stress – is worth more than any dimensional guideline or prescriptive rule: we don't need more rules; **we need more open eyes**.



7 4 IDEA: Impact, Dignity, Empowerment, Awareness

IDEA is a shift in perspective: diversity finds a value framework that gives it meaning and amplifies its potential, elevating it as both resource and design driver.

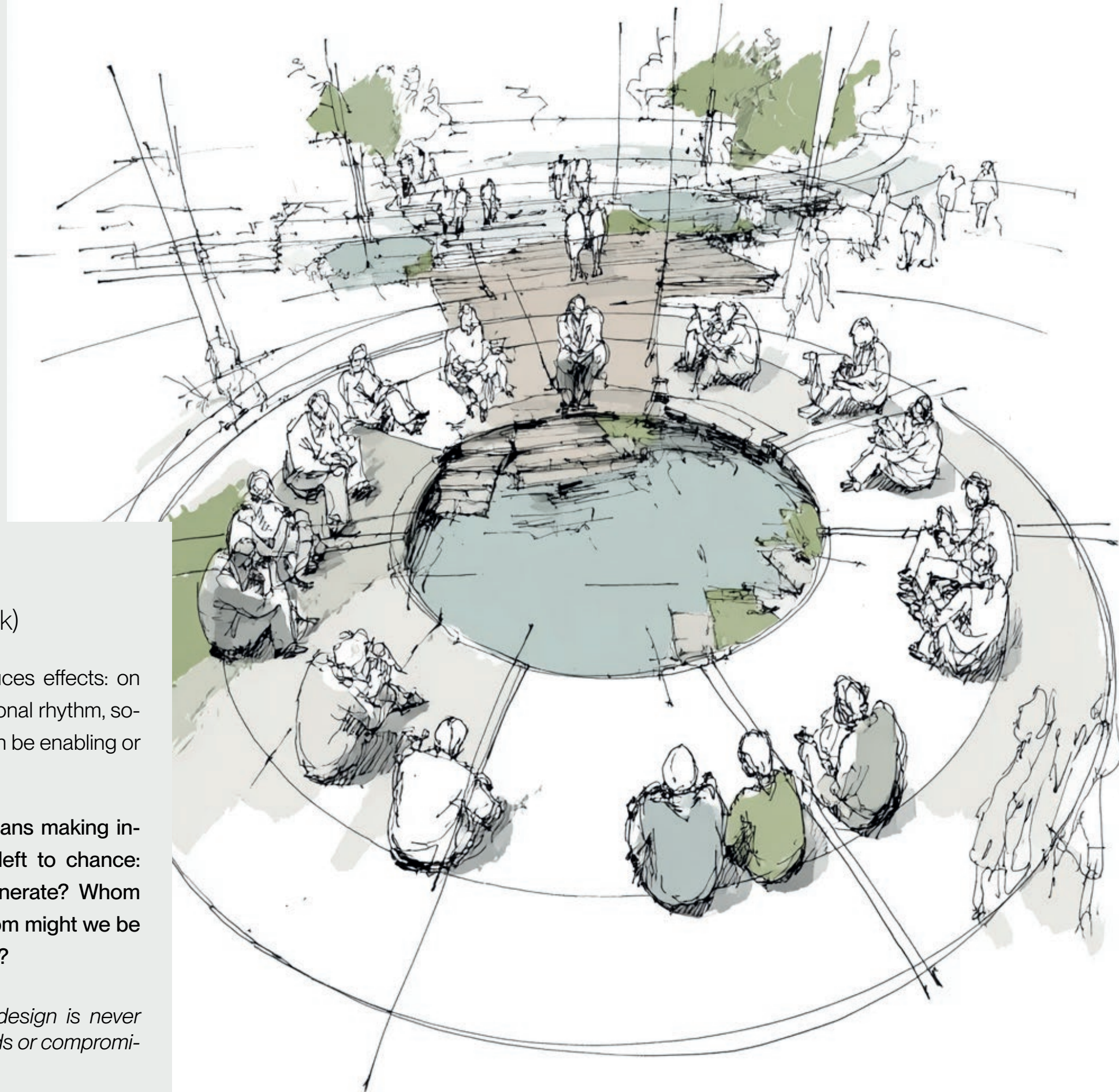
I – Impact

(Space leaves a mark)

Every environment produces effects: on the body, attention, emotional rhythm, social interaction. Impact can be enabling or subtly excluding.

Designing with IDEA means making intentional what is often left to chance: What feeling do we generate? Whom are we legitimizing? Whom might we be unintentionally excluding?

Impact reminds us that design is never neutral. Every choice builds or compromises relationships.



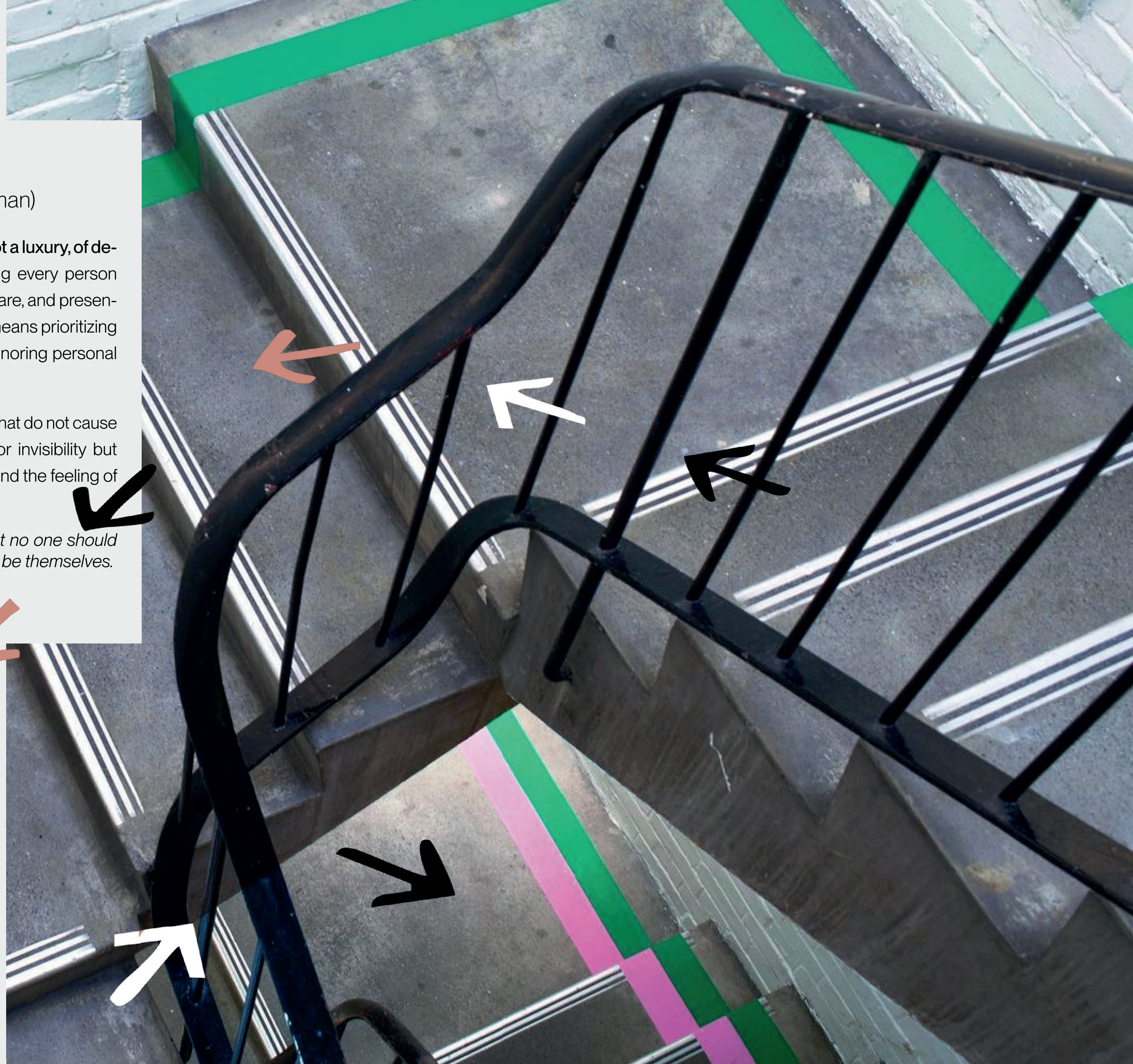
D — Dignity

(The right to feel human)

Dignity is a foundation, not a luxury, of design. It means recognizing every person as deserving of respect, care, and presence. Designing for dignity means prioritizing self-determination and honoring personal stories.

It means creating spaces that do not cause embarrassment, stigma, or invisibility but instead foster belonging and the feeling of being cared for.

Dignity is the promise that no one should have to ask permission to be themselves.





E — Empowerment

(Restoring the power of choice)

Inclusion is not just about “being allowed in”, **it’s about being able to choose**: alternative routes, levels of stimulation, adjustable light and sound, suitable postures. Empowerment means designing **spaces that offer autonomy, possibility, and agency**: adaptable to changing needs, inclusive of diverse abilities, physical characteristics, and ways of living. An empathetic environment doesn’t presume normality; it works to provide choice, flexibility, and alternatives.

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A — Awareness

(Awareness that transforms design)

The starting point is **critical consciousness**, not compliance: **recognizing one's own biases**, looking beyond standards, **designing with, not just for**.

It's an attitude that runs through every phase: from user listening to post-occupancy evaluation to spatial evolution over time. **Awareness makes IDEA a living process, not a checklist.**

Awareness is the beginning of every ethical change. It is knowing that every space can either enable or hinder transformation.

IDEA unites values and performance: we believe designing equitable, high-quality spaces for all is not only an ethical and moral duty but an inescapable responsibility.



➤ 5. Quality as a Shared Experience

It takes so little to make the world a fairer place”: **we start from spatial experience – not spatial measurement**; from awareness – not checklists; from diversity as a design lever – not an exception to manage. **That’s our new IDEA**: if what helps one can help many, then inclusive design doesn’t add, it enables; doesn’t separate, it integrates; doesn’t homogenize, it recognizes.

In the next chapters, we will explore the tools and strategies to achieve this goal. For now, we wanted to explain why inclusive design matters so deeply: to leave a mark (Impact), to recognize people (Dignity), to restore power (Empowerment), and to cultivate awareness (Awareness).

Only then does inclusive design become what it is meant to be: the most effective tool to make quality a common good.



➤ Contacts

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