

Reflection P5

This graduation project has been a challenge where I have stepped out of my comfort zone to create a design focusing on physically disabled individuals. My personal fascination with both the physically disabled and architecture is what motivated me. It was my desire to create a building that empowers people with physical disabilities. In architecture and the built environment, designing a space for accessibility is not just a professional obligation but also a moral and ethical duty towards those with limitations.

At the beginning of this year, I mentioned that I wanted to create a building not only for physically disabled individuals but also as a place for social inclusion, a theme that emerged strongly in my research. However, formulating strict guidelines for wheelchair users in combination with the concept of social interaction was quite a challenge.

For me, social inclusion meant not only ensuring physical accessibility but also creating an environment where everyone, regardless of their physical abilities, feels accepted and understood. To address this challenge, I used various design elements such as flexible seating arrangements and inclusive spaces like a restaurant and a bar. I focused on the thing that they all share: the desire to enjoy time away from home. I strongly believe that inclusivity extends beyond ramps and elevators; it's about creating a sense of belonging and understanding of all individuals.

Besides inclusivity, the primary focus of the building was on accessibility, independence, and proportion for wheelchair users. Translating these principles into a coherent architectural design was a difficult task. In my architectural design, accessibility was of great importance. I ensured that all areas of the building were easily reachable for wheelchair users, including wide hallways and doorways. The choice to use only one floor level, without height differences, was justified by the focus on accessibility. I also made the decision to avoid sharp 90-degree corners in the design. This decision was made because wheelchairs have a turning radius, and abrupt angles can pose a risk of damaging not only the wheelchair itself but also the walls and furniture. To promote independence, I integrated features such as automatic sliding doors, accessible kitchen facilities, and adaptable living spaces. These elements allow wheelchair users to move freely and comfortably without relying on assistance from others.

Additionally, creating an inviting, cozy ambiance that does not feel like a clinical atmosphere, often associated with healthcare facilities, was of great importance in my design. To achieve this, I selected natural materials such as warm wood finishes, earthy rammed earth walls, and bio-based materials for insulation and finishes. These materials not only contribute to a visually pleasing environment but also enhance the overall sense of comfort and well-being. In line with my goal to avoid clinical associations, the color white was strictly forbidden in the design. Instead, I used a color palette inspired by nature, featuring earthy tones, muted greens and greys.

As I progressed through these design phases, I encountered difficult moments, particularly when designing the floor plan that had to meet all project requirements. I decided to create a small model to test the floor plan. This approach helped me better understand the desired ambiance and feeling I aimed to create. This process allowed me to examine various possibilities, and it was during this phase that the architect within me emerged more prominently.

With the final floor plan in place, stages of the design process proceeded with more easily. I had a clearer vision of the desired atmosphere, making the selection of materials, compositions, and facade openings more intuitive. This phase enabled my architectural creativity to flourish.

In conclusion, this project has challenged me in numerous ways, from combining accessibility and social inclusion to translating design principles into a coherent architectural design. However, it's through these challenges that I've grown both as a designer and as an advocate for inclusivity in architecture.

I'm grateful for the positive feedback from my tutors. They've been crucial in shaping my project. Their support and encouragement have motivated me to create a this project, and I'm fortunate to have such dedicated mentors.

Looking forward, my focus will be on sharing my project effectively. My ultimate goal is not only to meet academic requirements but also to inspire discussions and innovation in inclusive architecture. Furthermore, I aim to ensure that the wheelchair users have a clear understanding of the project and feel as it could really work. I'm eager to see how my project will be received by my mentors and the wider community.