

Removing Barriers, Unlocking Routes and Cities

The “TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)”—an Italian Project

Arjun Pfaffstaller

Abstract: *This report describes the project “TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)”. TBfA is a small project in the field of accessible and inclusive tourism. The project was launched during the Global Campus online (GloCo) project, introduced by the UNESCO Chair of Global Citizenship Education (Culture of Diversity and Peace) at the University of Klagenfurt. Currently, this project is in its pilot phase. Its central objective is to develop and write accessible and inclusive travel guides. Through this, TBfA aligns with the SDGs and the GCED framework. At the end, a part of the inclusive travel guide is shown. The normal layout structure of a text in easy/plain English was not used.*

Keywords: *Inclusion; Accessibility; Tourism; Global Citizenship Education; Sustainable Development Goals*

Project Members

Arjun Pfaffstaller, Italy: *“For me, working at Global Campus Online (GloCo) was the chance to bring my effort, skills, and competencies into a diverse and global setting.”*

Christian Franchetto, Italy: *"The Global Campus Online excited me since I saw social impact and learning were embedded in an international and connected framework."*

Introduction and Motivation

Traveling is the opportunity to change one's daily routine by visiting new places, acquiring new knowledge, and getting in touch with new cultures and people. However, traveling is not a freedom for everyone. It is not only a privilege reserved for those who have enough money, but also for those who do not have a disability. This means that people with disabilities face significant disparities when it comes to mobility, to cultural programs, and to other aspects of traveling. And this, consequently, causes people with physical disabilities, cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, learning differences, chronic illness, etc., to face barriers and exclusion. And not to forget, also elderly people, who might not be generally recognized as people with disabilities, face exclusion when it comes to traveling.

One member of the project personally knows what barriers are and how they exclude people with disabilities from travel activities. Arjun Pfaffstaller, head of the project and main responsible, has a strong vision impairment, and during all his travels—alone or with others—he personally suffered from the lack of accessibility and how this negatively impacts the travel experience. A concrete example for this was Pfaffstaller's trip to Ostuni, a city in the region of Puglia. Pfaffstaller observed that most buses linking the train station with the old town are not accessible. Some buses have stairs, some do not. Furthermore, the information systems on the buses and at the bus stops are not accessible. For Arjun Pfaffstaller, a person with vision impairment, using public transport was cumbersome due to the described barriers. In his opinion, a clear audio-visual information system would be desirable. Another barrier that Pfaffstaller faced was that reaching specific points in the old town is not

very easy. The (most) buses in Ostuni do not enter the old town. Furthermore, the wonderful old town in Ostuni, in terms of accessibility, is characterized by many construction barriers (Figure 49).

Fig. 49: A street of Ostuni at night. The photo does not show the bad illumination.



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And in the evening hours, the streets in the old town are not adequately illuminated. Therefore, people with disabilities, who may also transport their luggage, have severe problems reaching their accommodations or other points in the old town. Obviously, one can take accommodation in the newer parts of the cities, which are easily reached by

bus. Nonetheless, some accessibility measures must be implemented so that people with disabilities can reach the old town. Undoubtedly, this requires a differentiated mobility concept, as normal buses cannot reach many places in the old town. Of course, these are only two concrete real-life examples. To mention all would require a few hundred pages, leaving out what other people with disabilities have experienced in their lives.

Since Ostuni is a wonderful city with numerous barriers for people with disabilities, the project team decided to write TfA's first accessible and inclusive travel guide on the famous "white city".

The motivation for the project "TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)" stemmed from the need for greater accessibility in the travel industry. Both members, Arjun Pfaffstaller and Christian Franchetto (the project's financial head), jointly perceived this need and that traveling must become more accessible and more inclusive.

TBfA: A Pilot Project to Explore How an Inclusive Travel Guide Could Look

It is true that "TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)" is a small project that has not even gotten off the ground yet. Nonetheless, its vision is one we all have a stake in: an accessible and inclusive world, where everyone can live, travel, and learn for their well-being. Therefore, TBfA's current mission is to provide a meaningful contribution to the creation of an accessible and inclusive tourism, thereby enhancing the travel experiences of individuals with disabilities. Undoubtedly, there are many ways to contribute to this type of tourism. For instance, one could focus on accessible mobility, whereas another could aim to increase awareness by organizing expert panel discussions. However, the "TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)" project team decided to focus on developing accessible and inclusive travel guides.

Such travel guides should contain historical and current facts about the city or region of interest. Furthermore, information on mobility and urban structure should not be neglected, as it is central to tourism and to people with disabilities. Therefore, the project's objective is to provide

travel guides that not only inform people but also boost their travel experience, and this in an accessible and inclusive manner.

In the current project phase, the main drivers and aspects for the project team's work are accessibility, inclusivity, and sustainability. In fact, the travel guide puts attention on the sustainable public transport system, which consists of the walkability, trains, buses, and other people-moving systems.

Currently, "TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)" is a pilot project. That is, TBfA in the context of the Global Campus online (UNESCO Chair of Global Citizenship Education—Culture of Diversity and Peace) was carried out as a pilot project, which could be scaled up and diversified in the future.

An inclusive Travel Guide

As already written, the pilot accessible travel guide was prepared for the city of Ostuni (Region of Puglia, Southern Italy). It is worth noting that only one part (Piazza della Libertà) of the elaborated travel guide is presented in this section.

Introduction

- Ostuni is a city in Puglia. Puglia is a region in southern Italy.
- Ostuni is on a hill. Ostuni is near the sea. From the city you can look at the sea.
- The old town of Ostuni has a lot of white houses. The houses have flat roofs. Ostuni is also called the "White City".
- Ostuni has many small alleys. Ostuni has many small stairs. Some Bars and Restaurants are directly on the stairs. Many stairs have a lighter color.
- Ostuni also has an old defensive wall. A defensive wall was used to protect the city. The many parts of the defensive wall are also white.
- The city is not very accessible. Some people might have problems walking. There are many stairs. The streets have many potholes.

Fig. 50: Train station of Ostuni. The photo shows the guiding system (guiding lines and stop signals).



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Mobility

- You can reach Ostuni by train. You must take a bus from the train station to the city. There are no buses in Ostuni's old town.
- The train station of Ostuni is quite accessible. There are elevators. There is a guiding system for people with vision impairment. The platforms are elevated. When you arrive with one of the new local trains, getting off the train is easier.

- The buses from the train station are not very accessible. There is no clear information system. The buses do not enter the old town. You may call a taxi to reach your hotel.
- There are some services for people with disabilities. There are also some accessible beaches near Ostuni. You can also book some accessible excursions. You can also book some special vehicles. You may need them.
- Not all streets have good lights. At night, you may have problems.

Piazza della Libertà

- "Piazza della Libertà" is the main square of Ostuni. This square is between the old town and the newer parts of the city. The main square is different from the old town. The main square is large. "Piazza della Libertà" means "Square of Freedom". "Piazza" means "Square". "Libertà" means "Freedom".
- The town hall of Ostuni is on the main square. In the past, it was a monastery. The town hall is not white. The houses in the old town are white or light-colored. In the middle, there are three big doors. These doors have the shape of an arch. Also, the windows have the shape of an arch. The town hall of Ostuni has a ground floor and a first floor. The town hall also has a second floor. The windows of the second floor are bigger than the windows of the first floor. The roof of the town hall is flat. There is a small clock in front of the roof. This clock is centered.
- On the main square of Ostuni, there is also the statue of Sant'Oronzo. The statue has a darker color. The statue is higher than most houses on the main square. The statue is about 20 meters high. There are about 4 levels. The levels are different figures of holy people. On the tip of the statue, Sant'Oronzo is the bishop Sant'Oronzo.

Fig. 51: Town Hall of Ostuni (Piazza della Libertà)



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Fig. 52: Statue of Sant'Oronzo (Piazza della Libertà)



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The challenge of Accessibility

The project team is aware that accessibility is a broad and complex field. Therefore, the recommendations provided are not intended to fully meet the theoretical definition of inclusiveness and universal accessibility. Nonetheless, these recommendations represent a good practice standard for the pilot phase, as they are used for the accessible travel guide.

First, it is worth noting that the required complexity of the information determines how accurate the travel guide must be. For instance, an accessible (travel) guide for a museum is of higher complexity, as the structure of the museum and the details of the exhibits must be considered. Thus, in such a case, the accessible and inclusive (travel) guide must be written with high accuracy. Since TBfA is in its pilot phase and the accessible travel guide is meant to be less detailed, the level of accuracy of

the presented travel guide is low. Of course, it provides interesting information about the city of Ostuni.

The second accessibility measure is the use of simple language for the entire travel guide. One sentence should include only one piece of information, and the length of a sentence should be as short as possible (max. 14 words). Furthermore, subordinate clauses and other forms of nested sentences must be avoided. Complex terminology should not be used. When such terminology cannot be avoided—since information must not be lost—they must be described.

Noise description can be part of an accessible and inclusive travel guide, but it must be implemented with a high degree of caution. Here, it is important to provide information without “playing the ears” for a person. For sure, it is not easy to decide whether to write a noise description. An aid for this could be the following questions: *Who benefits from the noise description? Will you benefit from the noise description, because you are striving for completeness? Or will a possible reader benefit from a noise description, since this measure could provide real insights and knowledge?* When you will benefit, then do not write a noise description. When a possible reader could benefit from a noise description, then you might choose to implement this measure. It is always important to note that a noise description should not be very detailed—You are not permitted to “play the ears” of another person, and *the less you write, the better it might be*.

The same rules can also be applied to visual descriptions of rooms, exhibits, places, and other locations. However, here the degree of caution could be argued to be lower. That is, writing a visual description is useful in many cases, or maybe most cases. Nonetheless, unnecessary details should be neglected.

TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA) in the Context of GCED and SDGs

Without a doubt, the project “TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)” is strongly aligned with the SDGs and the GCED. The project’s mission, which consists of providing a real contribution to fostering accessible

and inclusive tourism, is firmly linked to the Sustainable Development Goal of reducing inequalities (SDG 10). This stems from the fact that such travel guides are meant to provide information about culture, history, current facts, etc. Therefore, the SDG on reducing inequalities, as well as the values of equality and sustainability, which is one GCED dimension, are aligned with the development of accessible and inclusive travel guides. The analysis of the sustainable public transport system aligns directly with GCED's knowledge dimension, as it shows how people with disabilities cannot use climate-friendly transportation systems. In other words, the sustainable public transport analysis places the problems of reduced accessibility and climate change in the same context.

Lesson Learned

The project team learned numerous lessons from the project “Travelers-Book for Accessibility (TBfA)”, which is currently a pilot project. One of the most important lessons was that developing an accessible and inclusive travel guide is a continuous self-education process, where making mistakes cannot be avoided. For Arjun Pfaffstaller, the field of inclusion, ableism, and accessibility is not new. However, he observed that during the writing process, the complexity of traveling, mobility, urban structure, education, culture, accessibility, and inclusion is not easy to handle. For instance, describing a city's architecture, culture, and history is easy. But making this in an accessible and inclusive manner creates issues that, in many cases, are visible during the development process, and not before. Therefore, the complexity of a city and the complexity of accessibility cannot be easily controlled during the planning process. Obviously, in later phases of “TravelersBook for Accessibility (TBfA)”, the complexity issues will be reduced as experience and learning effects increase.