

Marked by devastating and discriminatory governmental policies, 2018 has brought us together in a movement that is fighting for quality of life in the city of Buenos Aires. The *principle of accessibility*, shaped by the struggle of people with disabilities, has become a cause that is shared by large segments of society, currently deprived of their right to education, healthcare, housing and employment. Our activism strengthens in the face of adversity. We face 2019 with the hope of a better future.

SHARP DEMAND FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN URBAN PLANNING AND CITY BUILDING CODES



Real estate moguls successfully lobbied to water down previous legislation we had fought hard for regarding the city's urban planning and building codes. For all practical purposes, accessibility guidelines are no longer enforceable.

With a myriad of organizations concerned with a wide range of urban issues, we coordinated activities throughout different neighborhoods, carrying out workshops and meetings, not only to oppose this lobby, but to develop proposals regarding the kind of city we want to live in. This led to a neighborhood proposal with 12 key items.

Rumbos and REDI (National network for the rights of persons with disabilities) focused on the Building Code bill, which ignores human rights previously guaranteed, and violates national anti discrimination legislation. Likewise, it fails to comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We presented our complaint before the Urban Planning Commission of the Buenos Aires City Legislature and put forward our observations and suggestions. We successfully called for the establishment of a working group on accessibility with legislators, professionals and organizations. We participated in public hearings, met with legislators, and prepared a Consensus Document on key accessibility issues for the Building Code with members of the Commission of Professional Practice of the Central Society of Architects (SCA), CIAHG/SCA (Gerontological Habitat Research and Consulting Center) and APEBI (Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association).

Despite widespread public support, our key demands were not taken into account, and the bill was passed with the exclusive votes of the governing party. We asked the Head of Government to abstain from enacting the law and decided to initiate legal actions to protect our fundamental right to accessibility.

THE NEW BUILDING CODE DISSOLVES AND ELIMINATES OBLIGATIONS IN TERMS OF ACCESSIBILITY:

- It left out technical requirements that should be included in the body of the law: ramps (private right of way) and elevators, among others. We are uncertain about how these will be drafted.

- It perpetuates discriminatory items present in the current Code that should be removed: It allows that existing buildings that are opened to the public remain inaccessible, such as stores, restaurants, cultural centers, among others.

- It excludes the participation of representatives of people with disabilities, the elderly and children in following up on the design and building process. As a result, money may be ill spent.

- It allows for homes with meager dimensions (18 m2 studio apartments, and inaccessible bathrooms, to satisfy developers' interests with total disregard for real housing needs.



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A GOVERNMENT BILL THAT POSTPONES SUBWAY ACCESSIBILITY



The governing alliance rushed to impose a bill that postpones for 20 years the obligation to eliminate all existing architectural barriers in the city's subway system. Once again, they voted in solitude and were soundly rejected by NGOs of people with disabilities and neighborhood associations.

We communicated our standpoint with a statement read during the parliamentary session, which was backed by over 60 neighborhood, community, and human rights organizations. In addition, we received the recognition from opposition legislators, who after intense work on the subject made our proposals their own and unselfishly put them forward.



Support Plaza Clemente!

In February, neighbors warned about the presence of bulldozers in a piece of land where there should be a park according to a bill presented 11 years ago. A construction site sign announced a shopping center was to be built on public land. We went out in its defense and by holding meetings, festivals and making complaints we were able to stop this.

Then we went for more: we wanted “to decide what park we wanted”. We drew a design in weekly meetings and workshops. Accessibility requirements intertwined with three premises: neighborhood identity, social inclusion and native vegetation.

During 2019, we will continue participating in the construction stage to make sure people with disabilities become involved in the decision making process.

“We joined neighborhood struggles, and at the same time, the neighborhoods have made our struggle for accessibility their own. It has been and it will always be a collective project to build a city we all can enjoy” (Eduardo Joly, President of Fundación Rumbos).



GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY IN PUBLIC SPACES

Safe and accessible sidewalks



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With the collaboration of the Disability Program of the University of Buenos Aires School of Philosophy and Literature, and the "IT elements" course of the Geography Department, along with a group of students, we surveyed the accessibility conditions around the school premises. Research findings were presented in the *Comuna 6* center, in the program "Desde la vida," which was broadcast on public TV, and in the Disability and University conference held at the Dental Sciences School, UBA. In 2019, we will continue working on this project, and broaden the area to be covered.

THE PUBLIC DIMENSION OF ARCHITECTURE

This was the ARQUISUR Rosario motto for its 2018 call. And there we were. We condemned violations of established rights and shared our experience in defending accessibility norms in the City of Buenos Aires. We also took part in the 2nd ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN WORKSHOP, an effort we have been carrying out with the aim of including this subject in the college curricula, in this case, based on our experience in the Arts and Architecture School, USAL.



Eduardo Joly was invited to give a series of lectures public on his life experience with disability for social work and special education students and professors at Ramapo College of New Jersey, USA. He stressed how important it is that people with disabilities play a leading role in making the decisions that affect their lives and in building their own life projects.

Join us to make this possible.

Your donation will help the physically disabled and the elderly gain freedom of movement.

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www.rumbos.org.ar - fundacion.rumbos@gmail.com