

# INCLUSIVE SCENARIOS FOR HOSPITALITY

From integration to social inclusion between Interior Design and Culture

Maria Rosanna Fossati



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Over the last few years the international design research network has become an important reality, which has facilitated the sharing of ideas and opinions, improved understanding of the subject and increased awareness of the potential of design in various socio-geographical contexts.

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*for Paolo Padova  
for Agostino D'Ercole  
for Luca Scacchetti*

*Irreplaceable masters  
I always carry with me*



# Foreword

There are some key statistics that show some of the demographic changes expected in the first half of the 21st century (source: [universaldesign.ie](http://universaldesign.ie) website):

A child born today has a 50 percent chance of surviving to over 80 years of age.

- By 2021, it is predicted that 15 percent of the population will be over the age of 65.
- By 2021, the number of people over 80 years of age will have increased by two-thirds.
- By 2050 it is estimated that there will only be two 18-64 year olds for every one person over 65, in comparison to six for every one at present.

My PhD thesis (where this book directly comes from) represents the conclusion of my studies, begun at the Politecnico di Milano, in the first years of Bovisa Campus, during the period when Paolo Padova and Corrado Crisciani organised their laboratories, in the years when “Design” was still a curriculum of the Architecture Department. This wonderful period concluded with a Masters Degree in Interior Design in July 2007, with the thesis: *Morphology and semiotics of project focused on human diversity* (supervisor Arch. F. Scullica, co-supervisor Arch. G. Del Zanna).

After this degree, I worked as interior designer in a studio in Milan renowned for its feasibility studies in the field (among others) of Hotel Design.

Currently, I am in Siena dealing with architectural design for accessibility (in the public and private sectors) and for 5 years I ran a help desk called *AiutarSi* (funded by the European Social Fund), with the mission of promoting and supporting the rights of disabled people.

In summary, since 2007 I've developed work experience on accessibility, both through *consulting for individuals and organizations* (Amm.ne Provinciale di Siena - Observatory for the Elimination of

Architectural Barriers, Application Office of Siena European Capital of Culture 2019), and through the publication for FrancoAngeli Editore of the book *Human Hotel Design* - written in collaboration with architects Francesco Scullica and Giovanni Del Zanna - focusing specifically on accessible hotel design.

These experiences have laid the foundations for the pursuit of a path in **university research about accessibility in the Hospitality sector.**

My own life experiences, both professional and private, have motivated me to take on the very pragmatic issues related to **social inclusion**, and more specifically to Universal Design.

However, the theoretical assumptions of this research are inspired by Italian legislation and regulation, as well as by disciplines such as Ergonomics, Semiotics and even Sociology, through the school of thought that has formed since the 50s in the field of accessible design.

Adopting the *top-down* style, the reflection that led to start this **research is inspired by the aspects characterizing the Italian mandatory framework on accessibility**, its performance and prescriptive qualities.

On the other hand, in the *bottom-up* style, this research draws inspiration from the point of view of designers that get to know disability mainly through the law DM 236/89, an instrument that is perceived as stiff. In fact, there are very few innovative design experiences in the context of Accessible Tourism, since most of them have a “hospitalised design” due their specific target (characterised by severe disability or special conditions).

Furthermore, I believe that it is necessary to place the **focus of Design on the respect for human diversity**, consisting in differences and physiological characteristics, linked to age, stages of life (e.g. maternity or psychological conditions) and culture, as well as the presence of (temporary or permanent) diseases or functional impairments.

Design for disability represents the liminal case, providing a set of elements to focus on that ensure both comfort for people with sensory or physical impairment and the plus of “comfort” and “easy” qualities for everyone. Avoiding discriminatory and “hospitalised” solutions means designing organically for all, building tangible foundations for social inclusion.

# Interior Design and Hotels in the contemporary scenario: main trends

by *Francesco Scullica*<sup>1</sup>

In contemporary hotels, the approach of interior design is to reflect the recent evolution of the global scenario of hospitality. New formulas and formats of hotels broke new ground with respect to the traditional types of hotels, dating back until the 80s and subject to several creations as well as research experiences<sup>2</sup> by the author over a long period of time. Firstly, hybridization and its forms which, in particular since the 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, have deeply changed hotel types. Hybridization may regard hotel and home (design hotel and co-living), hotel and retail spaces (Boutique Hotel and Design Hotel), hotel and galleries or museums (Art Hotel), but also hotel and palaces/historical artefacts (period hotels and residences), until the most recent hybridization between hotel and hostel (design hostel), and the latest researches on the relation between apparently distant types, such as offices and hospitality facilities.<sup>3</sup>

Interior design and contract design in high-end or luxury hospitality play a leading role within a great number of studies and firms, in particular

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1 Architect, Ph.D. in Interior Architecture, Associate Professor in Industrial Design at the Department of Design of the Politecnico di Milano.

2 In the summary of this scenario contribution the author refers in particular to his experience in research, education and consulting with the Politecnico di Milano from the end of the 90s to date, through researches and Ph. D. theses on hospitality, workshops and specialist master's courses, educational activity within the basic course of interior design, consulting and articles for publishing groups and design and trade magazines (Domus, Ottagono, Suite, CODE), entrepreneurs of the hotel accommodations sector (Gruppo Vestas hotels and Resort Lecce).

3 In this respect the following research activity is relevant: "Living, Working, Travelling: interior design for new scenarios between hospitality and workspace"- research group: F. Scullica (coordinator), S. Piardi, G. Simonelli, A. Anzani, L. Guerrini, M. Bertolo, E. Elgani, M. R. Fossati, C. Pagni, G. Veronese; Politecnico di Milano, Department of Design, announcement FARB, period: 2016-2018.

as regards the field of the Italian project. Also favoured by globalization-entailed processes and by the definition of new numerous global “elites”, the luxury sector seems to be the key driver of the hospitality market as well as of many interior design projects, above all in the field of Italian design project and production. Luxury hospitality spaces are increasingly planned on a strict relation with the customization of spaces-services systems, but also on satisfying the demands of super-exclusivity and privacy<sup>4</sup>. The private-space, the suite in particular in its various forms and dimensions, has therefore become the heart of a planning pattern that is focused on attention and experimentation on its external and internal spaces. Those services, which are traditionally carried out outside the room, e.g. catering as well as spa services, are also privatized, often in order to protect the guest’s “privacy”. On one hand, super-exclusive hospitality models move away from traditional luxury hotels. They offer an exclusive and limited number of suites and apartments<sup>5</sup> that are supported by exclusive services as well as exclusively accessed: the new international elites want and can ask for a higher customization than in the past, but also demand a greater “safety” and “privacy”, for example from the general public and the media. On the other hand, in the field of high-end hospitality the heirs of the “legendary Grand Hotels” still survive thanks to the “image” and “representativeness” of the big hotel groups they often belong to. Their distinguishing feature used to be the relations between people, the ostentation of one’s social prestige and wealth within a highly complex and varied system of common spaces. The luxury model is more oriented towards a dimension of “public” response than the previous one, which favoured a “private” dimension with a system that is equally rich in common spaces, also accessible to an external public for example in the case of hotels found in urban centres or in significant areas of international metropolises<sup>6</sup>. This model may also be adopted for new hotels belonging to international top brands, where interior design is enriched with the use of contemporary languages<sup>7</sup> in the same way as historical grand hotels value the reference to the past, to the historical and “historical-stylistic” identity of the hotel as the emblem of an “archetypal” idea of luxury, even though it is updated with new-generation technologies and services to suit guests and

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4 Scullica, F. (2011), “Star studded hotel heaven”, in *Domus*, special report hotel, July-August.

5 See for example the brand hotel “Palazzo Fendi” in Rome, which offers a limited, but super-exclusive number of suites (Dimore Studio project and architects’ office Marco Costanzi).

6 See for example the “Grand Hotel Gallia” in Milan (project of the design practice Marco Piva).

7 See “Mandarin Oriental Hotel” in Milan (project of the design practice Antonio Citterio & Patricia Viel).



their new needs<sup>8</sup>. In the interior design project for a contemporary luxury hotel, whether oriented towards the public or to the private, as mentioned above, fixtures and fittings, materials, furniture and expressive language make a difference. This happens in particular in the field of furniture as far as “iconic furniture” is concerned, whether it is historical (ex. some antique furnishing accessories) or an expression of contemporary design (with its increasing need to project design “icons”<sup>9</sup>). The aim is highlighting the idea of exclusiveness and therefore the personalization/customization of spaces/services/furniture up to the experiences. The experiential planning has become the core of the interior design project. It obviously does not only involve luxury hotels, but also a great number of internal spaces dedicated to different targets, however founding a relevant scope in projects regarding high-end buildings. In the market of global hospitality brands, the luxury market is shaped by the trend towards promoting brand extension operations in the hospitality/hotel field on the part of fashion-luxury top brands. This phenomenon is growing and booming<sup>10</sup>, carrying on a relation between fashion brands and hospitality interior design which, at the end of the 90s and in the early 2000s, began to lead the scene of hospitality with a significant presence of some historical brands of Italian fashion<sup>11</sup>. In the luxury market, the location of these hotels is of strategic importance to define a structure, as stated by Mauro Governato<sup>12</sup> on the occasion of a project and an interview. The location may be contemporary as well as historical. The European scene, in particular, witnesses the trend towards restoring the existing historical hotels, but also towards the use of peculiar formats to design hospitality facilities inside pre-existing historical buildings. For example, not only inside urban contexts but also outside them, thus preserving their recollection and value and giving new life to local micro-economic systems<sup>13</sup>. The driving force of the interior design

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8 See “Grand Hotel Ritz” in Place Vendome, Paris, which was recently restored and adapted to the new needs of contemporary travellers.

9 From the talk “Italian design icon makers”, promoted by INTERNI Mondadori Group, and INTERNI CHINA, within the Shanghai Design Week 2017 (Shanghai 22nd-24th November 2017).

10 As demonstrated in the researches carried out for educational purposes on this subject by Francesco Scullica and Elena Elgani for seminars and conferences at: HEAG (Haute Ecole de Gestion) Geneva; L’Oréal Luxe, Paris; MIP School of Management of the Politecnico di Milano; POLL.design Politecnico di Milano.

11 the brands: Armani, Bulgari Ferragamo, Fendi and Versace.

12 Mauro Governato, general manager Four Season Hotel Milano, “Il caso Four season”, lecture within the master course on design management for the luxury sector - module dedicated to the hospitality sector, MIP School of Management, Politecnico di Milano, March 2017.

13 In Italy, since 1995, the association “Abitare la storia”, in cooperation with the FAI (Fondo per l’Ambiente Italiano) has promoted the restoration of historical buildings for hotel purposes on the Italian territory.

project within these spaces is once again experience: the relation with the recollection of the context, the building, the personalities who lived there, their happenings, the illustrious or eminent guests who stayed there: every element often relates to original architectural features, fixtures and fittings and furniture. This trend may result in the restoration of whole villages as an example of a new type of hotel, the so-called “scattered hotel” which characterized many communities in Italian regions, also based on economic-management models theorized by scholars and economists <sup>14</sup>.

### **The sector of low cost budget hotels, design low cost hotels and design hostels: the new frontiers of hospitality facilities planning**

As the opposite of luxury, the low cost sector also includes budget hotels as well as new kinds of hotels offering affordable spaces-services within an acceptable standard of space, furniture, service and experience. Compared to economical hotels, which traditionally proposed “basic” solutions, types and offers are very different, as is the case for the luxury sector. Some hotels offer low cost spaces-services while paying great attention to spaces, details, fixtures and fittings and furniture, such as to deserve the label of “Design low cost hotels”<sup>15</sup>. These hotels may use new technologies both to cut down on management costs (reception services, entertainment, catering, ...) and to make spaces significant, e.g. by choosing new fixtures and fittings, materials and artificial lighting and video projection systems. Medium-high and luxury hotels may also offer lower costs as a function of the trend of the accommodation market: hospitality brands, as well as single hotels or even luxury hotels, strategically offer much lower-cost stays in some periods of the year, or by booking in good time, under special offers and awards. The low cost sector, however less “conventionally” with respect to more “traditional” cheap hotels, proposes new hotel formats: firstly, the so-called “accessible luxury” hotels<sup>16</sup>, which are to some extent related to the previously mentioned design low cost hotels. The quality of planning and interior design are crucial and show how accurate choices in planning, not only made on economic variables but also on aesthetic-communicative and experiential components, may produce significant results. One of the most interesting new formats of accommodation is the “design hostel”. This facility is a typical product of the trend towards hybridization, which is generating significant examples in hotels as well as in many other spaces. These hotels reflect a new relation between public and private, a mirror

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<sup>14</sup> [www.albergodiffuso.com](http://www.albergodiffuso.com).

<sup>15</sup> See for example the spaces in the chain of hotels “citizenM”.

<sup>16</sup> See the hotels of the “Mama Shelter” Group, design hotels at accessible costs designed by Philippe Starck.

image of the sharing society and the “Sharing Economy”, which supposes the creation of new “hybrid” accommodations: hostels with the same characteristics as design hotels. In these structures low costs, informality and the sharing of many services (from shared kitchens to rooms), which traditionally characterize hostels, go hand in hand with the attention paid to the aesthetic-communicative characterization and the customization of spaces, to the chromatic-decorative features and to graphics, and in general to details as with the more “blazoned” luxurious design or boutique hotels. Nevertheless, they offer a choice of more private spaces-services (e.g. rooms) with respect to traditional hostels<sup>17</sup>. In terms of “hybridization”, hospitality is increasingly attracting new formulas related to the temporary rent of housing units outside the system of more consolidated types of accommodations, supported by the net and by online platforms and apps. Many of these facilities prove competitive, for example in the low cost or cheap hospitality sector, often in terms of lower rent/lease costs with respect to accommodations in the same areas or contexts. In some cases this kind of accommodation, which is outside normal tourist facilities defined as such, is not only chosen thanks to the lower management costs, but following the search for more authentic experiences with the location. As regards these formulas, it ought to be reminded that many of the most interesting hotels and tourist facilities in the history of hospitality proved able to interpret their relation with their location through a keen cultural and project sensitivity, as demonstrated within the Italian culture of the hotel project.<sup>18</sup>

### **Global wellness, green living , sustainability and accessibility as the new frontiers of planning facilities for contemporary hospitality**

Starting in the 80s and in particular in the 90s, wellness spaces-areas began to spread both in luxury hotels and in accommodations planned for a wider range of targets, adding to thermal and healthcare hotels which had developed since the origins of nineteenth-century hotels. Since the 90s, traditional thermal and healthcare hotels have been reinvented, while in many types of hotels, especially in high and medium-high market segments, wellness areas spread over. In some cases the traditional fitness

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17 Scullica, F., with Elgani, E. M. (2014), “La Nuova Ospitalità”, in *Ottagono*, May 2014.

18 Note the experiences by Gio Ponti and his projects of some significant hotels, e.g. the Parco dei Principi in Sorrento and the Parco dei Principi in Rome, but also, more recently and to date, the planning activity of the architects’ office Luca Scacchetti, including some hotels in Lecce (e.g. the Grand Hotel Risorgimento) or in Naples (e.g. the UNA Hotel Napoli).

areas of American-originated health clubs<sup>19</sup> were combined with spaces-services of a wellness area, but also with a “beauty centre” offering customized aesthetic treatments. Frequent, broad experiments in planning changed these areas from “service” spaces into areas with specific aesthetic, communicative and experiential identities, thus overcoming the standardized and anonymous formulas that had characterized them for a long time even in exclusive contexts<sup>20</sup>. Wellness has recently become an increasingly across-the-board topic in hotels. It now extends over the planning of dedicated areas and impacts the planning of many common spaces, e.g. catering or relax areas, noise-protection up to rooms, their fixtures and fittings and furnishings (e.g. beds and textile complements, linen, etc.), bathroom areas, any external spaces, etc. The concept of “green living” and its related lifestyles is gaining a wider and wider influence on hospitality, affecting new generations in particular and also regarding the new utilities, especially for the millennials. Wellness is no longer limited to specific areas of a hotel, which however still exist with their own identity, e.g. under a fashion brand<sup>21</sup>. A holistic wellness experience is now sought as a combined approach to a healthy lifestyle, which cares for the environment and its values and, also due to the globally high levels of pollution, is becoming an increasingly widespread goal, not limited to the targets of the luxury segment. The general interior design of the hotel spaces/services is more frequently to take care of issues related to an optimum sound insulation, both against external and internal noises (including but not limited to private spaces), to the use of architectural and plant-technological components, materials, fixtures and fittings, furniture, air conditioning and lighting systems, which shall be globally ecological and environmentally sustainable in terms of project, management, maintenance, use, disposal-recycling and recovery. The guests’ rest and relax shall be ideally designed within the dedicated spaces-services, therefore optimally defining many complements and accessories (drapery, carpeting and carpets, bed and bath linen) in order to safeguard their personal, physical and psychological wellness (with non-allergenic materials, but also thanks to the use of proper colours, lights, scents, thermal and hygrothermal regimes). At the same time, severe environmental impacts shall be avoided during the general maintenance of spaces-services as well as of all of their components and accessories (e.g. the change of linen, but also the use of certain detergents and products for the daily cleaning of the spaces). Planning a holistic wellness experience in

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19 On the North-American approach to the planning of tourist accommodations: Penner, R. H., Adams, L., Rutes, W., (2013), *Hotel Design, planning and development*, Routledge.

20 Rizzi, G. (2007), *Il benessere in hotel*, Idea Books, Milano.

21 For example, the fashion-luxury brand “Chanel” operated a significant brand extension for the spa-wellness centre inside the Grand Hotel Ritz in Paris.

the pursuit of a green living may also imply, in terms of a general sustainability, the care of food and enogastronomic aspects for catering spaces-services: from the selected raw materials and their origin (growing agricultural products in garden plots situated within the tourist accommodation complex is very frequent following the “zero km” approach), also including their preparation and consumption. The sustainable approach to the project calls for the total accessibility of tourist accommodations on the part of an increasingly wider public, as already stated within a previous research and experience<sup>22</sup>, as one of the new project and management objectives to set as a priority; the ultimate purpose is to achieve a truly “democratic” tourism, with a greater number of users, having different characteristics although within more homogeneous economic-social targets, that are allowed to enjoy the tourist-accommodation experience as a fundamental “right” to their life. The in-depth analysis of this subject, also including topics related to the “experiential” use of spaces-services and not limited to the spaces and furniture they contain, is one of the objectives that led to the research work within the Ph.D and to the publication of the thesis, which is the subject of the present publication. The hope and purpose of this work is therefore the greater and greater focus on the individual within the hotel planning process, as well as in other multi-faceted sectors of design, interior design in particular.

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<sup>22</sup> See on this subject: Scullica, F., Del Zanna, G., Fossati, M.R. (2012), *Human Hotel Design*, FrancoAngeli, Milano.