Designing wayfinding systems for (neuro)diversity

Neurodiversity

We all read the world in our own way and depend on different means of information to find our sense of direction. Neurodiversity is a relatively new term describing the diversity of human cognition and including neurodivergent conditions such as Autism Spectrum Condition, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dyspraxia as part of that natural diversity.

Designing wayfinding for all, taking neurodiversity into consideration, requires an understanding of how to communicate as intuitively and simply as possible as well as taking sensorial stimulation into account. By choosing the right materials and combining different means of communication, e.g., colours, architectural elements, raised patterns on walls or floors, sound and pictograms, we ensure that as many as possible, irrespective of their preconditions, can decode the space and the wayfinding systematics.

Overviews & Maps

A simplified overview of the space aids orientation because it makes it easier for us to understand where we are in relation to the whole space.

Colours & Wayfinding

Using colours, can make spaces more memorable and the colours can be used correspondingly as an element in the wayfinding system. However, contrasts as well as brightness of colours should be considered.

Surfaces & Reflections

Shiny surfaces cause reflections which is undesirable both for the blind and partially sighted, who can mistake the surfaces for windows and doors, but also for those who become overwhelmed by the sensory stimulation it causes.

Sightlines

If you can look all the way to your destination, signage becomes superfluous. Avoiding clutter also makes spaces more overseeable and physically accessible.

Noise & Acoustics

Noise can be reduced using noise cancelling materials creatively. This can create better acoustics and a pleasant soundscape even though it is a large space.

Pictograms & Sound

Sign messages can be communicated in many different ways. Using sound and pictograms makes sign messages more accessible because they cater to various levels of language and reading skills.