

Outdoor recreation accessibility in France : findings and inspiring practices

Presentation abstract

Context: In order to develop accessibility to outdoor activities in Quebec, a team of researchers from the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières focused on the determinants influencing the development of such activities. Following a review of practices, a student involved in this team decided to pay attention to the many accessible actions and facilities that have been carried out in France since the 1990s. France has developed expertise in accessibility, both in public infrastructure than in nature or in design guides. The student therefore completed an internship to identify the conditions impacting the development of outdoor activities, as part of a collaboration between Quebec and France, with the Institut national supérieur de formation et de recherche pour l'éducation des jeunes handicapés et les enseignements adaptés.

Methodology: This exploratory study was conducted from field observations, professional interviews and a literature review. Seven site visits in four different regions revealed trends in accessible outdoor facilities. Interviews with 10 professionals in the field provided a portrait of the implementation of various offers. The analysis of the numerous design guides developed by French organizations as well as the labelling criteria for accessible sites specified the important determinants for accessible facilities. **Results:** The analysis of inclusive outdoor practices identified in France highlights several determinants that can influence the development of accessible outdoor activity. Political and economic incentives and the major role of a leader in organizations are the starting point for the development of these activities. In the implementation of the inclusive outdoor activities, we note the importance of practice associations and their commitment to offer these activities. Commitment strongly associated with a marked interest in nature and the benefits of engaging in activities in natural environment. As for the activity, the accessibility of the interpretation, by numerous technique, was noted as being a common point shared by each of the organizations met.

This study highlights, among other things, that the legal and regulatory framework, such as the Loi pour l'égalité des droits et des chances or the labelling process can be at the origin of the development of inclusive outdoor activity. The organizations we met, have set policies to welcome people with disabilities, which has led to concrete actions. Nevertheless, as a leader promoting accessibility within the organization was not systematically identified, shortcomings emerged, such as fewer visits or degraded facilities. It can thus be seen that the influence and involvement of the State and of leaders within the organizations are determinants impact offers of accessible outdoor activity.

As for the practice associations, they are the main providers of inclusive outdoor activities, through organized outings or the supply of adapted equipment. These associations rely on "able members" to accompany disabled people in the various outdoor activities organized. The supervision offered therefore focuses on the socialization and mix of participants, which promotes awareness and social participation of people with disabilities. Associations are consequently crucial in the offer of inclusive outdoor activity.

The study also reveals the design of several accessible facilities such as trails with disability-friendly security features or furniture for all. The various sites visited seemed to be developed according to a global vision of accessibility, that is, facilities that allow a complete visit, from parking, to the trail and through interpretation. In fact, even though not all sites were designed in this way, all of them gave special importance to interpretation. Access to nature, through interpretation or facilitated access,

mobilizing the potential of participants, is an important determinant in the offer of inclusive outdoor activity in France.

From these interviews and visits emerged some challenges common to all, namely recruitment, safety in the organization of outdoor activities, consultation between actors working toward accessibility and the development of offers with a global vision.

Thus, both the theses practices and these challenges allow us to think of prospects for the development of inclusive outdoor activity in Quebec. Both for the facilities, such as furniture or trails, as for the development of partnerships with associations. A certain culture of accessibility to the outdoors is conveyed in France and they have expertise developed over time, Quebec and the world are therefore gaining inspiration to improve accessibility to nature.

This presentation will examine the different practices developed in France as well as the challenges faced by the various actors to complete by specifying the conditions for an optimal offer.

Lead speaker : Alexandra Gilbert

Organisation : Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

City (Country) : Trois-Rivières(Canada)

Biography : Alexandra Gilbert is a second-year master's student in Leisure, Culture and Tourism, at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR) where she also completed a bachelor's degree in Leisure, Culture and Tourism. She previously completed collegial studies in Social Work. She had the opportunity to participate in research projects of the Laboratory of Leisure and Community Life of UQTR where she has written a guide for organizing a day of initiation to outdoor activities for people with disabilities. She is currently coordinating a research project aimed at developing the experience of people with limitations in urban parks. Her masters focus on elderly recreative walk in urban and natural environment.

2nd speaker : Frédéric Reichhart

Organisation : Institut national supérieur de formation et de recherche pour l'éducation des jeunes handicapés et les enseignements adaptés

City (Country) : Suresnes (France)

Biography : Frédéric Reichhart is a maître de conférences in sociology at the Institut national supérieur de formation et de recherche pour l'éducation des jeunes handicapés et les enseignements adaptés (INSHEA) in France where he lead the Master's degree in " Conseiller en accessibilité et accompagnement de publics à besoins particuliers ". A member of the research group on handicap, l'accessibilité et les pratiques éducatives et scolaires (GRHAPES), his research focuses on the social representations of disability in the French-speaking world and on accessibility, particularly in the field of tourism and cultural. In 2011, he published at L'Harmattan *Tourisme et Handicap: fondements idéologiques et institutionnels*.