Abstract title: Spatial orientation of visually impaired people in built environment

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Introduction: This article presents part of a dissertation in progress. This is, especially, about the importance of built environment ergonomics in the processes of accessibility and spatial orientation of visually impaired people in built environments. It is known that the visually impaired have a different environmental perception from the perception of sighted people, given their visual impairment. In a city where information and visual cues predominate, they use other senses to interact with the built environment, in search of accessibility. This group of users often have their compromised independence when the spaces do not contemplate their specific needs of spatial orientation, factors that put them in disadvantageous situations or the dependence on the other people. Therefore, the objective of this article is to understand how visually impaired people orientate in a built environment, through a multimethod approach.

Practice innovation: The paper reports an immersion held in the Orientation and Mobility program for people with visual impairments, at the Institute of the Blind of Paraíba. This immersion aims to understand how people are instructed to develop their daily activities through orientation techniques and use of remaining senses to environmental perception. The semi-structured interviews were applied to the visually impaired participants in order to present the most significant aspects of the program.


Findings: Results show the importance of remaining senses for perception and spatial orientation, and also seeks to expose the latest theoretical contributions that approach on human interaction with the built environment.

Discussion: Results show the importance of remaining senses for perception and spatial orientation, and also seeks to expose the latest theoretical contributions that approach on human interaction with the built environment. The article presents implications that may impact the commercial sector and the professionals involved in architectural projects, sensitizing them to create spaces compatible with the needs of spatial orientation for persons with visual disabilities.