

Thank you for inviting me here. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international legal document, adopted by the 192 member states of the UN General Assembly at the end of 2006. 143 countries have signed it until now, so they agree on the text and are on the way to implement it. 70 countries have ratified, that means, that they can be held responsible on whether or not they have changed national laws according to this Convention.

Article 20 gives us, persons with disabilities, the right to personal mobility, including to have a live assistant on affordable costs. Article 30 gives us the right to have access to cultural activities and to the services of those involved in the organisation of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.

So, I have the right to travel and go on holidays like anybody else. I can be included in the travel of my choice. I mean included, that means, that the travel has attractive aspects for me like for anybody else. The travel and destination is adapted to my needs and that is called "inclusive tourism".

That means, that for me as a deafblind, blind and hard of hearing person, a lot is going to be changed.

Advertising in catalogues and on internet is very much focussing on vision: wonderful attractive pictures and panoramas. wonderful women on a beach. Absolutely not attractive to me. It looks as if tourists only have eyes and not much else. Therefore advertising websites will have a text only part, with a description of all the travel possibilities. Travel agencies will produce text versions in Braille.

Descriptions of the travels will also include the use of other senses: what can I hear, what can I smell, what is there to be touched, what food or drinks can I taste. Advertising will be multi sensory oriented to make me hungry or thirsty to go somewhere.

Booking tickets will be made easy for me, by having text versions on the websites.

A list of accessible hotels is available, not only for people using wheel chairs.

Travel agencies will make arrangements to make it affordable for me to have an assistant with me. Assistants are not really going on holiday, when they travel with me, their first task is to support me, moving around, getting food or describing the surroundings or getting me connected to people I want to be with. There will be travel agencies providing me an assistant, if I can not find one. Travelling, I have the right to sit where I want. I can understand that putting me at the emergency exit in a plane does not look clever, but some companies only let me sit at the window, so all others can run out of the plane faster before me. I pay the same price as others. I have my dignity.

And then the loud speakers on airports, planes, busses, trains and cultural sites. People will be instructed to pay attention to the level of sound before speaking. They also know not to speak too close to the microphone, so thinking about this all, more people will be able to understand what is being said. Induction Loop systems will be installed in busses, trains and planes. That is not so difficult. Staff is aware of sign languages and may even have some basic knowledge. During my holiday, there will be a lot to hear, smell, touch and taste, while the others are using their eyes. Arrangements are made with museums, galleries and other cultural attractions, to make it possible to touch, smell or taste. I mean, it makes for me not so much difference to sit in a bus and listen to a guide or to stay home and read a good book where the same travel is described. At least at home, I can sit on the sofa, smoke my pipe and drink my wine at the same time. Craft markets, where I usually can touch things, will have a more local character, showing products made in the region I am in. they are now all the same over the world, boring again, even to look at.

There will even be Braille menus in restaurants. Hotel rooms will have number signs in relief and or Braille, very visible for those with low vision. The same with elevators: not only on the inside, where I can find out which button I have to press, but also on the doorframe on the outside, to make sure for me, that I am at the floor I have chosen to be. There are talking elevators, but then I have the language problem: I don't understand Portuguese.

Information about the hotel is available in Braille and large print.

All this will also happen in the increasing amount of conference tourism. There is a lot of conference tourism within disability organisations. You should in all this work involve organisations of persons with disabilities, for example EDF. The World Federation of the DeafBlind is within 3 weeks organising a world conference in Uganda. The conference hotel has executive rooms, easy accessible for people using wheel chairs, except the bathrooms, they are inaccessible. There are also executive suites, with the most accessible bathrooms you could imagine, but they are on a gallery on the first floor, no elevator, only a steep staircase. So, there is still a lot to do and I wish you all of success.

Thank you for listening to me, Lex Grandia