

BRAZILIAN PRODUCTION OF TACTILE CERAMIC TILES: CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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In spite of the large size of Brazil's ceramic sector, there have been few initiatives in the areas of environmental management and social responsibility. In recent years the focus has been on raising the world's awareness of the quality products made in Brazil and its modern, competitive industrial products in international markets. Nowadays, Brazil's ceramic industry has solid foundations, with modern, highly productive companies and a large internal market that has tremendous potential for growth. However, this rapid growth means there are gaps that still need to be filled. Among the most pressing concerns are environmental management and social responsibility. When it comes to social responsibility and the inclusion of visually impaired persons, Brazil has enacted new accessibility laws, regulations and standards in the last 10 years to guarantee the rights of all people to be included (Figure 1).

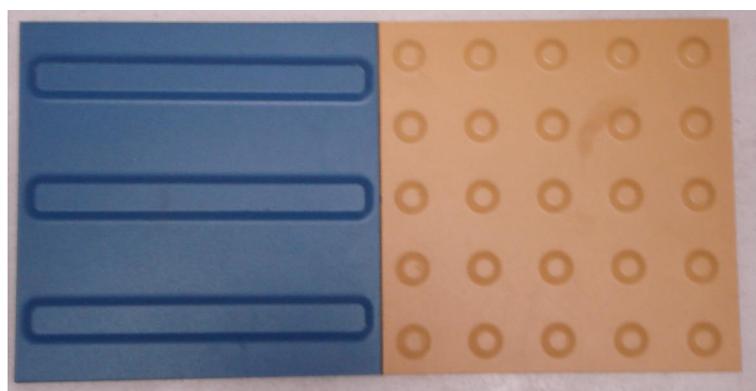


Figure 1: Example of ceramic flooring for a visually impaired person

Despite the progress made in terms of regulations, most open and built public areas in Brazil are still not accessible to disabled users (Figure 2).

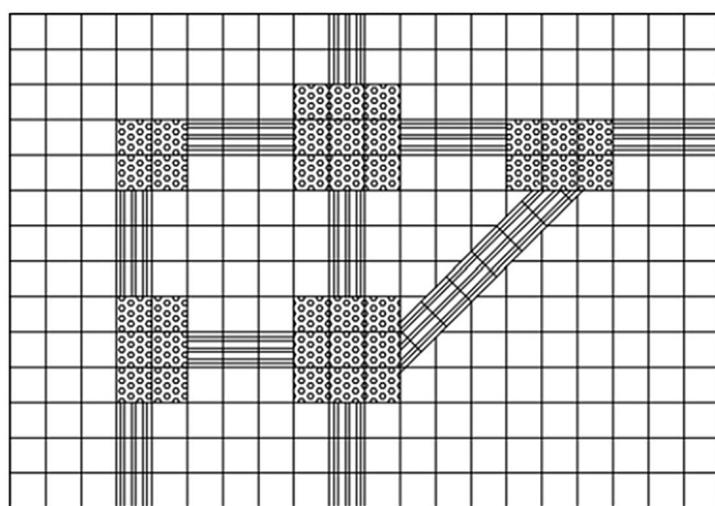


Figure 2: Example of composition model for warning and direction

To fully implement this kind of inclusion, there must be a change in culture and attitude as well as legislative and political reform. Adaptation to the physical

setting and provision of technical assistance are particularly important, because it is essential that objects and spaces should meet the needs of disabled people to guarantee accessibility to the space, thus contributing to their social inclusion. In this sense, certain advances have been made in the last few years to enhance accessibility in urban areas, principally using outdoor hydraulic cement concrete and ceramic tile. However, there are still few products available for use in built environments and internal conditions lack more extensive applications of techniques and aesthetics. Taking into account the lack of public spaces adapted to this need and the ceramic industry's search for market niches, further technological development is required that allows development of the technical features, inherent to ceramics, needed in public areas. Large-scale production will only be possible after technical viability has been achieved, given the internal demand for adaptation of private and public spaces. As well as social concern and the production of accessibility, there is also concern for the environment, the adoption of sustainable industrial practices, such as the incorporation of production waste into the bodies themselves. This work therefore establishes a list of possible initiatives adapted to the real situation in Brazil, which may help to reduce environmental impact and maximise the use of natural resources to obtain tactile products. The expected impact is development, raising the awareness of the business community and public organisations for the large-scale production of tactile ceramic tiles and including in the project a reduction of the environmental impact, which opens up the possibility of extensive use in public areas and flooring for the social inclusion of people with disabilities.