



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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COURSE OF TERRITORIAL, URBAN, ENVIRONMENTAL  
AND LANDSCAPE PLANNING

*Abstract*

**Towards an inclusive urban environment.  
Assessment of paths in parks for people with  
disabilities**

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This discussion derives from the encounter between the academic and non-academic fields, respectively that of experts in the field and people with disabilities. Both aspects have raised my attention to the relevance that the issue holds socially within the environment and for urban planning.

My goal has been to research the topic deeply while interpreting the literature as well as Italian best practice, in order to produce a qualitative assessment that simultaneously considers the visual, hearing, motor disabilities and assesses factors which determine quality and actual usage in a park.

Initially, the relationship between man and the environment, that is, a fundamental and bidirectional link, has been addressed. This link has always had a psychological and physical role in the marginalization of the most vulnerable populations. Therefore, life and movement in space should be guaranteed, in a calm and secure psychological situation.

Furthermore, analysis was undertaken on a path in two urban Turin parks, based on the qualitative analysis and assessment of some of the elements relevant to accessibility and usability. From these elements the following were selected: visibility and orientation; sound and noise; slope and floor materials; signs and panels; handrails and balustrades, sitting and stopping points; obstacles and danger situations. Each of these factors has been considered for both paths which cross the urban parks longitudinally.

Following the paths' analysis, a summary of the aspects and the most critical parts for use on the route was prepared, depending on the disability.

This field research approach assesses the effect and perception of urban elements (which are variable depending on the subject) rather than using a descriptive analysis of the phenomena through the use of technical instrumentation. The choice of discarding descriptive tools is based on the desire to focus on perception. The significance of the elements has highlighted that depending on the presence, absence or maintenance quality each element can have a dichotomous nature, that is, it can simultaneously be a facilitator for a specific disability while being the opposite for a different disability.

Following the first analytical phase of objective assessment, verification of the results performed with an experimental approach provided me with the opportunity to place myself in a different perspective, as far as possible, of a temporarily disabled person.

As the results obtained later were sometimes very different from the initial results, reconsideration about the aspects that really affect accessibility and usability was required. Besides, this phase has determined the role of spatial awareness as well as the possibilities for reaching autonomy of movement along the path.

Complexity of the theme, due to the versatility of usage and the changing nature of urban elements, makes it difficult to define an analytical and project-planning method. However, this should be an incentive for reaching a design suitable for everyone, which not only raises the level of urban quality but it avoids spaces such as parks being socially excluded areas. The path taken with the disability simulation was crucial for the comprehension of those needs with a new view for planning.

To this end, the architecture and urban planning is and must be geared to cater for comprehensive and specific users' needs.

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