

# I never tried the swings before



## Perspectives on urban greenspace from children with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities

LENA HANSES

12 September 2019

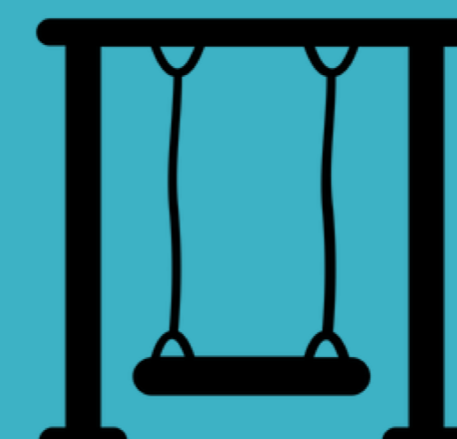
**SDG 11.7** aims to provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible greenspaces. In addition, the positive health effects of greenspaces are well documented. The aim of this project was to gather perspectives on urban greenspace from children with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities, in order to learn how to create accessible greenspaces for this user group.

**KEY RESULTS** include that, despite the dominant view, it is possible to include children with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities in research practices. Results also show themes such as immersing oneself into nature and the interaction of person and environment. Further, the views on accessibility are subjective and depend upon the individuals capabilities.



**GO ALONG INTERVIEWS** was used as a method to gather data. Interviewing while in the park facilitated the interview situation. The geographical location was Långbroparken in the south of Stockholm. The interviews were analysed through the theoretical framework of Environmental Justice.

**ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION** in the form of sign language, pictures and symbols was used. Every child uses personalised communication, requiring the researcher to be well prepared in order to create a suitable interview situation. Personal assistants were more or less active during interviews.



### A DISABLING ENVIRONMENT

According to the relational model of disability, a person does not hold a disability, but is disabled by hinders in the environment.

This is demonstrated as Oscar, 13, interacts with a gazebo in the park. He points to the gazebo and says: "I want to go inside. I can't. It makes me sad."

To enter the gazebo, you need to climb stairs. The stairs create a hinder, and the environment becomes disabling. Accessibility is achieved when the environment meets the individual's capabilities.

### DIFFERENT VIEWS ON ACCESSIBILITY

In documents from the city, Långbroparken's many benches are believed to improve its accessibility. Hugo, 10, says the following:

"This bench is important because people can sit and rest on it. I never do, but you're doing it now."

If you're already sitting in a wheelchair, a bench does not hold the same value as a resting place. A resting place might instead be somewhere you can immerse yourself into nature, for example under a tree or close to a pond. As accessibility is individual, personal accounts are needed.

### PERSON-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTIONS

Vincent, 15, had never tried the swings before.

Below the big swing was loose gravel, making it impossible to get close to the swing with his wheelchair. His assistant and I therefore carried him to the swing. Once on the swing, Vincent shouts: "I'm a little crazy! I want to do it again!"

Trying the swings for the first time was a positive experience for Vincent. It is concluded that this diverse group of individuals has the right to experience the park and to benefit from its positive health effects as much as anyone else.