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REVIEW

**of doctoral dissertation written by Najmaldin Al.-Taesh, MSc Eng. Arch.
entitled: *Sport for Everyone. Evaluating Accessibility in Outdoor Public Spaces with
Attention to People with Disabilities*,**

written under the supervision of Katarzyna Ujma-Wąsowicz, PhD, Eng. prof. at the SUT
in the scientific discipline of architecture and urban planning,
in the field of engineering and technical sciences

Basis for the review:

- request from the Chair of the Discipline Council for Architecture and Urban Planning at the Silesian University of Technology, Dr Alina Pancewicz, Prof. at the SUT, to review the doctoral dissertation of Najmaldin Al.-Taesh, MA: letter no. RD. AiU.512.2.3.2025 dated 29 September 2025 (received on 8 October 2025) and the related contract for specific work UMC/3603/2025;
- Act on Higher Education and Science of 20 July 2018, Article 187 (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742), as amended;
- doctoral dissertation (received on 11 June 2025): Najmaldin Al.-Taesh, *Sport for Everyone. Evaluating Accessibility in Outdoor Public Spaces with Attention to People with Disabilities*, Silesian University of Technology, Gliwice, Faculty of Architecture – bound A4 volume;
- statement on the individual substantive and percentage contributions of the co-authors of the doctoral dissertation (received on 10 December 2025).

1. FORMAL EVALUATION

1.1. Content of the work

The reviewed doctoral dissertation is a single-volume work, 110 pages long, presented in the form of an A4 printout, in a hardcover binding. The dissertation was written in English and takes the form of a series of articles supplemented by an introductory section (*1. Introduction*) and a conclusion (*6. Conclusion and recommendation*). Pursuant to Article 187 section (2) point (2) of the Act on Higher Education and Science, the form used is acceptable and may constitute the basis for further substantive assessment of the dissertation. However, a minor formal deficiency should be pointed out. Firstly, the work, within the compact volume, does not contain a summary in Polish - it was provided in a separate document; secondly, although the dissertation is based on co-authored articles, its content does not include information on the scope of participation of individual authors - this document was also provided to the reviewer separately and with a delay.

The substantive part is divided into six chapters, preceded by a summary in English and lists of all illustrations and tables contained in the work (including those that are an integral part of the scientific articles contained in the work). Although their numbering is logical from the point of view of the overall structure, it is inconsistent with the numbering under the illustrations in the text.

The bibliography has been compiled in numerical style (*Vancouver style*) and is scattered throughout the chapters. The lack of an integrated list of references makes it difficult to assess the overall source base, although its scope should be considered correctly selected and sufficient (Chapter 1 - 61 items, Chapter 2 - 74 items, Chapter 3 - 88 items, Chapter 4 - 38 items, Chapter 5 - 65 items, Chapter 6 - 49 items).

1.2. Structure of the dissertation

As mentioned above, the dissertation consists of 6 substantive chapters,

- Chapter 1 - *Introduction* comprises 15 pages of text together with a bibliography (3.5 pages) and is divided into 5 subchapters, the function of which is to present the significance of the research problem, identify research gaps within the discussed issue, describe the theoretical framework, formulate the research objectives and questions, describe the research concept, and present the structure of the dissertation.

The following chapters (2-5) contain texts from four articles published in scientific journals and post-conference monographs, incorporated directly into the dissertation.

- Chapter 2 is an article entitled *What factors Influence the shaping of urban public spaces for sports cities? A systematic review*, published in 2023 in *Architecture, Civil Engineering, Environment* (Volume 16, Issue 2, June 2023) – a journal of the Silesian University of Technology, listed in the MEiN with a rating of 70 points and an IF of 0.5 (in the year of publication).
- Chapter 3 is an article entitled *Introducing the physical barriers in the city in-between buildings for disabled runners*, published in 2021 in *Current Urban Studies* - a journal not included in the MEiN list. The journal is not indexed in the JCR Web of Science or Scopus databases, so no official IF is estimated, but the journal's publisher, Scientific Research Publishing (SCIRP), estimates a Google-based Impact Factor of 1 based on metrics from Google Scholar.
- Chapter 4 is an article entitled *Enhancing accessibility and usability of outdoor recreation spaces for individuals with disabilities: A case study of the Activity Zone in Chorzów City, Poland*, published in 2024 in a monograph entitled "Interdisciplinary Research by Young Scientists", edited by Barbara Balon, published by the Silesian University of Technology Press. This monograph contains post-conference publications prepared by participants of the InterTechDOC'24 conference.
- Chapter 5 is an article entitled *Comparative study on the evaluation of accessibility and usability of parks and play areas for people with disabilities: a case study of Hungary, in the monograph Poland, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia*, published in 2025 in the post-conference publication: *Young Scientists 2.0. Volume IV*, edited by Jarosław Korpys et al., published by the Centre of Sociological Research Foundation. The monograph contains post-conference articles by participants of the 4th International Multidisciplinary Doctoral Conference organised by the University of Szczecin on 19-21 June 2024.
- The work concludes with Chapter 6 – *Conclusion & Recommendations* – comprising just over 14 pages of text, together with a bibliography (3 pages).

The parts of the dissertation written exclusively by the author are: Chapter 1 – *Introduction* and Chapter 6 – *Conclusion & Recommendations*. The remaining chapters (articles) were co-authored with the supervisor, Dr. Katarzyna Ujma-Wąsowicz, with the doctoral student's declared contribution to all articles being 80%, while the Supervisor's contribution, specified as 20%, includes only the approval of the research methodology and supervision of the entire study, which allows us to conclude that the main burden of research and editorial work rested with the PhD student, and that the cooperation falls within the standard scope of supervisory care in doctoral proceedings.

1.3. Language and style

The language of the dissertation is correct and communicative, and the terminology used is consistent and appropriate to the subject matter. However, there are some reservations about the style of the argument, which is largely descriptive and report-like. The language of description and summary of results predominates, with limited use of analytical and interpretative language that would allow for the construction of a coherent doctoral argument.

2. SUBSTANTIVE EVALUATION OF THE DISSERTATION

2.1. Choice of research topic

The topic of accessibility and inclusiveness of recreational and sports spaces for people with disabilities, which is addressed in the dissertation, is in line with current and important trends in research in the field of architecture and urban planning, related to universal design, the quality of public spaces and the social dimension of planning. This issue is important both in terms of knowledge and application, as it concerns the real design and planning challenges facing contemporary cities. The analysis of spatial barriers and accessibility conditions allows for a better understanding of the relationship between the form of space and its usability by diverse social groups, which remains one of the key problems of contemporary urban planning. Thus, the subject matter of the dissertation is important for the development of the discipline, especially in the context of the growing importance of issues of inclusion, equal access and social responsibility in design.

2.2. Evaluation of individual parts of the dissertation

Chapter 1 – Introduction to the dissertation has been prepared in a formally correct manner and fulfils the basic introductory functions, including outlining the research context and justifying the topicality of the subject matter.

The diagnosis of research gaps is generally accurate at a general level, as it points to the fragmentary nature of previous research, the limited number of comparative analyses and the insufficient consideration of the perspective of people with disabilities in research on recreational and sports spaces. However, these gaps have been identified mainly in empirical terms and to a lesser extent as cognitive or theoretical gaps.

Next, a **conceptual framework** is presented, which primarily serves to organise the basic concepts and the relationships between them. Its placement in the introduction, before the precise formulation of the research objective and questions, gives the impression that it is more of an extension of the overview of the issue than an analytical tool deriving the further logic of the research. It therefore remains a rather general reference model, whose role in further research is ambiguous.

Only at this stage are the **aim of the dissertation** and four **research questions** formulated. The aim of the dissertation is defined as: *“To comprehensively explore the critical key factors influencing the physical characteristics of outdoor public spaces in promoting accessible sports for all, in explain it focuses on evaluating the accessibility and usability of features of the revitalized outdoor recreational areas across different geographical contexts, based on universal design principles and international and local accessibility standards, thus helping people with disabilities to independently participate in outdoor recreational places.”* It is overly elaborate and stylistically imprecise, combining a general exploratory declaration with a description of the evaluation procedure and a practical postulate. As a result, it remains a descriptive-normative objective that does not specify the scientific problem or the theoretical logic of the analysis and does not serve an integrating function for the doctoral dissertation.

All four research questions at the formal level concern the broadly understood accessibility and capacity of urban space to include users with disabilities in sports activities. However, at the level of research logic, they do not form a sequence that gradually deepens the analysis of a single problem, but rather constitute a set of parallel, partially disjointed threads corresponding to individual articles.

The first question (*What factors facilitate or hinder sport participation, and how do they shape urban public spaces to create inclusive, accessible sport cities for everyone?*) is the most general and ambitious, referring to factors that promote and limit sport participation and how they shape cities as *“inclusive sport cities”*. This is an explanatory and systemic question, suggesting an analysis of the relationship between participation, spatial structure, urban policies and planning processes.

The second question (*What physical features in urban spaces create barriers for physically and visually disabled street runners, and how can these barriers be identified and addressed to improve accessibility in the running environment*) significantly narrows the perspective, focusing exclusively on physical spatial barriers for a specific group of users (runners with physical and visual disabilities). This is a diagnostic, technical question, different in scale from the first one; this question does not develop the previous one, but rather changes the level of analysis from systemic to micro-spatial.

The third question (*What specific design interventions and accessibility improvements are needed to optimize the inclusivity and usability of the Activity Zone in Chorzów City, Poland, for individuals with disabilities, based on universal design principles and local standards?*) is purely design- and application-oriented, referring to one very specific case study (the Activity Zone in Chorzów) and to the optimisation of design solutions based on universal design principles and local standards. It is not logically related to the previous questions and is rather a separate task, set in a different scale and methodological regime.

The fourth question (*What are the differences in accessibility and usability of outdoor play spaces for individuals with disabilities in urban public parks across Hungary, Poland, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and how do national policies, awareness, and planning practices impact the design of inclusive play environments in these countries?*) again changes the perspective, introducing an international comparison and referring to public policies, social awareness and planning practices in four countries.

As a result, although the research questions are thematically related, they do not form a logical analytical sequence. Instead of gradually deepening a single research problem, they rather correspond to the structure of ‘one article - one question’, which gives the impression that they were formulated secondarily to existing empirical research, rather than as a coherent research apparatus for a doctoral dissertation. Thus, they do not constitute a clear starting point for the construction of the conceptual framework, but appear after its presentation. As a consequence, the relationship between the identified research gap, the methodological framework and the research questions remains unclear. The link between the questions and the aim of the dissertation is also insufficiently convincing.

The description of the **research design** is clear and methodologically justified in relation to the declared objective, indicating the use of review, audit and comparative methods as adequate research tools.

In summary, both the adopted sequence of the sections of the introduction and its relatively modest scope mean that it does not sufficiently fulfil the structural function of a “compass” guiding the reader through the subsequent stages of the research process. The individual elements are presented as a set of parallel components rather than a logically connected sequence of research activities. The reader is not given a

clear picture of the sequence and interrelationships between the individual stages of the research, nor clear indications of how the announced methodology leads to the achievement of the dissertation's objective. The lack of such a procedural narrative weakens the function of the introduction as an intellectual guide to the further structure and logic of the work.

Chapter 2 contains an article entitled *What Factors Influence the Shaping of Urban Public Spaces for Sports Cities? A Systematic Review*. It addresses an interesting research problem at the intersection of urban planning, spatial planning, and research on physical activity and public health. The authors' intention is to identify the factors influencing the shaping of urban public spaces conducive to sports activities, which, in the context of a doctoral dissertation, should be considered a valid and valuable topic, especially as an element that organises the state of research and builds a conceptual framework for the doctoral student's further analyses.

However, already at the conceptual level certain problems arise that affect the methodological correctness of the entire chapter. First of all, there is no clearly and precisely formulated research objective. On the one hand, the authors declare an analysis of indicators and characteristics of urban public spaces, while on the other hand, the theme of "*sport participation*" is very strongly emphasised in the course of the analysis and in the structure of the results. This concept has not been clearly anchored in the research objectives, the literature search strategy, or even in the set of main keywords. The fact that sports participation becomes one of the dominant themes in the results, even though it was not explicitly included in the publication identification stage, raises serious doubts about the conceptual consistency of the work and suggests the possibility of secondary adjustment of interpretations to the desired results.

The authors declare that they have used a systematic literature review procedure, which is a perfectly justified approach in a doctoral dissertation. At a general level, the article uses good secondary research practices, such as multi-source searching, a multi-stage publication selection process, and the involvement of more than one researcher in the evaluation of the material. At the same time, however, the description of the methodology remains too laconic to consider the study fully transparent, and especially replicable, which would be of great value in the case of a doctoral dissertation. In particular, there is no precise description of the databases used and how information was obtained from them. Each of the databases mentioned has a different search mechanism, different options for filtering results, and a different range of indexed publications. Meanwhile, the dissertation does not present the number of records obtained from individual databases, nor the procedure for combining, deduplicating, and standardising them. Providing only the total number of search results does not allow to assess whether individual sources had a comparable impact on the final set of analysed publications. The lack of a methodological description of this stage is one of the most serious shortcomings of the chapter.

Similar reservations apply to the search strategy. It is not clear whether the keywords used were treated as a conjunction or an alternative, or whether the search covered titles, abstracts, keywords or full texts. There is no information on the dates of data collection.

The publication screening stage, which is crucial for the quality of a systematic review, is described in a fragmentary manner and does not allow for an unambiguous assessment of how and on what basis individual items were rejected. The method of evaluating the quality of primary research also raises doubts – the authors use a point-based assessment scale and an arbitrarily adopted threshold of 50%, but do not explain whether the research tool used is an adaptation of existing checklists or was developed as an original tool. There is also a lack of reflection on the consequences of adopting such a threshold and on alternative strategies for weighting research quality. Although the authors declare the participation of two reviewers, they do not report the measures of agreement between the opinions, which makes it difficult to assess the reliability of the selection procedure.

In summary, the chapter should be considered substantively interesting and potentially important for the structure of the doctoral dissertation, but it is burdened with significant methodological weaknesses. In its current form, it is an extensive, partially systematised review of the literature that does not fully meet the rigours of a systematic review. For the purposes of the doctoral dissertation, it would be necessary to refine it significantly, in particular in terms of the precision of the research objective, the transparency of the search and selection procedures, and the consistency between the methodology and the structure of the results.

Chapter 3, containing the article entitled *Introducing the Physical Barriers in the City In-Between Buildings for Disabled Runners*, addresses the important and topical issue of the accessibility of public spaces for people with disabilities, focusing on the identification of physical barriers that hinder running in an urban environment. Thematically, it fits in with the main assumptions of the dissertation and raises

an issue that is important both from the perspective of research on public space and inclusive policies and universal design.

From a methodological point of view, the article is based on a survey on the perception of physical barriers by people with disabilities who run, supplemented by basic statistical analysis. The adopted methodology is correct and adequate for an empirical article of an exploratory nature; the results are presented in a clear manner and the conclusions are logically linked to the data obtained. At this level, the chapter meets the requirements of an independent scientific publication with a relatively narrow thematic scope.

However, when assessed from the perspective of its contribution to the doctoral dissertation, this article must be considered too detailed and illustrative, rather than an analytical chapter with a comprehensive and in-depth approach to the problem, as would be expected in a research paper at this level. The scope of the study was narrowed down to one type of sporting activity and one specifically defined group of users, without sufficient reference to the broader theoretical framework concerning the accessibility of public spaces, inclusiveness or the concept of "*sport for everyone*", which constitute the core of the dissertation's subject matter.

These limitations are also evident at the interpretative level. The analysis is based almost exclusively on the respondents' perceptual perspective, without supplementing it with other research approaches, such as spatial analysis, reference to design norms and standards, or studies of specific locations. As a result, the chapter does a good job of identifying perceived barriers, but it does little to explain the mechanisms behind their creation or ways to systematically eliminate them. There is also a lack of clear reflection on the transferability of the results beyond the perceptual context of the studied group of respondents. As a result, the chapter does not contribute an in-depth methodological or theoretical concept to the structure of the entire dissertation.

In summary, this chapter is a correct and substantively justified empirical article that can serve as one of the elements illustrating the problem of accessibility. As a separate chapter of a doctoral dissertation, however, it would require significant theoretical and methodological deepening.

Chapter 4 contains the content of the article entitled *Enhancing accessibility and usability of outdoor recreation spaces for individuals with disabilities: A case study of the Activity Zone in Chorzów City, Poland*. The narrative is clear and logical. Methodologically, the chapter is based on the analysis of a specific case study, which is justified for the study of the practical aspects of the usability and accessibility of space and constitutes a valuable empirical example. However, as a separate chapter of a doctoral dissertation, this structure has its limitations. The authors focus primarily on describing the observed barriers and their implications, without explicitly referring to the broader theoretical framework of conceptualising accessibility, universal design or accessibility policies. From the point of view of a doctoral dissertation, such a lack of in-depth methodological reflection is a serious shortcoming, since a piece of work at this level is expected to ground its findings more firmly in current theories and conceptual models, which would allow not only to describe the case, but also to draw more generalised theoretical conclusions. The article also fails to provide a detailed justification for the choice of methods or a critical analysis of their limitations. Furthermore, the transferability of conclusions beyond the case study is not discussed, which limits the possibility of making generalisations.

In summary, this chapter represents a solid case study that can enrich the doctoral dissertation with a practical perspective on the issue of accessibility for people with disabilities. The inclusion of this text in the dissertation would be valuable provided that it is developed as part of the empirical section, with a clearer link to the theoretical and methodological literature of the work.

Chapter 5 is an article entitled *Comparative study on the evaluation of accessibility and usability of parks and play areas for people with disabilities: a case study of Hungary, Poland, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia*, which presents a comparative analysis of the accessibility and usability of urban recreational spaces and playgrounds from the perspective of persons with disabilities, using a comparative analysis of four public parks located in different countries (Hungary, Poland, Iraq, Saudi Arabia).

The analysis is based on a consistent audit tool (PARCS) that complies with international accessibility standards. The authors clearly describe the park selection process, data collection procedure, scope of components assessed, and method of analysing the results. Particularly noteworthy is the systematic nature of the assessment and the attempt to ensure the comparability of results between different national contexts, which strengthens the credibility of the results obtained. In this sense, the article meets the criteria of methodological correctness required at the doctoral level.

As an independent scientific article, the work presents a solid substantive and methodological level, providing valuable and unambiguous findings. However, its contribution to the doctoral dissertation is

primarily empirical and diagnostic in nature. The research approach adopted, characteristic of audit and technical work, focuses on identifying gaps, barriers and unmet accessibility standards. To a much lesser extent, the work develops a reflection on the design, planning and institutional mechanisms that lead to these deficiencies.

In the context of the doctoral dissertation, it is also important that the article does not sufficiently operationalise the concepts of inclusiveness and participation. Although the results clearly indicate barriers limiting the use of space by persons with disabilities, the relationship between physical accessibility and actual participation in recreational activities remains only implicit. As a result, the article mainly answers the question “where and to what extent do barriers exist” and, to a lesser extent, the question “how can their elimination translate into real accessibility of space and user activity”.

At the structural level, the text is coherent, logically organised and constitutes a valuable and methodologically sound empirical chapter, which contributes to the doctoral dissertation a solid comparative diagnosis of the accessibility of selected recreational spaces. As a separate chapter of the doctoral dissertation, however, it is too strongly focused on the audit and description of one type of phenomenon to be able to address broader research questions concerning the shaping of accessible sports cities or mechanisms for supporting participation. For the dissertation to be fully coherent, it would be necessary to embed it more clearly in the theoretical framework and integrate it with the other parts of the work through a synthetic and interpretative layer.

Chapter 6 – conclusions and recommendations – which ends the dissertation – has been divided into four subsections (6.1-6.4), which formally organises the final narrative, but in terms of content does not lead to a complete conclusion of the work at the doctoral level.

Subsection 6.1, which serves to re-outline the subject matter of the dissertation, largely repeats the content of the introduction. This in itself is not a mistake, but the conclusions are expected to reinterpret the problem context in the light of the research conducted, rather than simply restating it. In its current form, this section does not serve as a reflective “return to the problem”, but rather as a repetition of the starting point, without a clear indication of how the understanding of the topic has been deepened or modified in the course of the work.

Subsection 6.2, entitled *Summary of main findings*, is particularly problematic in the context of closing the dissertation. It is structured question by question, with the clear intention of showing that the individual articles that make up the dissertation provide answers to them. However, this narrative strategy is largely reportative and defensive in nature, rather than synthetic. Instead of integrating the research results and leading to overarching conclusions, this subchapter comes down to assigning empirical findings to previously formulated research questions, which reinforces the fragmentary nature of the entire work. In particular, there is a lack of critical reflection on the extent to which individual research questions have actually been resolved and to what extent the answers are partial, conditional or dependent on the scale of analysis adopted. Subsection 6.2 does not attempt to go beyond the logic of “one article - one question”, does not reconstruct the relationships between the results obtained at different levels of the scale (micro, meso and macro), nor does it indicate how these results complement, correct or contradict each other. As a result, instead of a synthesis, we obtain confirmation of the structure of the dissertation as a collection of separate empirical analyses, without a clearly outlined doctoral argument.

Subsection 6.3, devoted to the limitations of the research and suggestions for further work, meets the basic formal requirements, indicating the limitations of the scope of the research, the selection of cases and the methods used. However, this reflection is rather general in nature and has not been clearly linked to the earlier conclusions. The limitations are not used to critically evaluate the results obtained or to indicate which conclusions are more universal and which are strongly dependent on the research assumptions. The suggestions for further research also remain at the level of general postulates, without clear reference to the theoretical problems revealed in the course of the work.

Subsection 6.4, concerning policy and planning recommendations, is consistent with the application nature of the dissertation and provides a logical conclusion to the diagnostic research. However, these recommendations are formulated mainly on the basis of empirical observations and existing standards, with limited reference to a broader theoretical framework or critical analysis of public policies. As a result, they are normative and postulative in nature, but do not seem to result from the analysis of the relationship between the accessibility of space and planning and institutional practices. As part of the doctoral dissertation, this section reinforces the practical dimension of the dissertation, but does not compensate for the conceptual shortcomings.

In summary, Chapter 6 in its current form concludes the dissertation in a formally orderly manner, but one that is insufficient in terms of content. The individual subsections fulfil their partial functions, but do not constitute a coherent, in-depth synthesis corresponding to the ambitions formulated in the introduction. The conclusions do not lead to an unambiguous indication of the main contribution of the doctoral dissertation or to a re-examination of the research problem in the light of the results obtained, which weakens the function of this part as the intellectual culmination of the dissertation.

2.3. Evaluation of responses to research questions

In the conclusion section, the author attempts to demonstrate the extent to which the research questions have been answered, referring to the results presented in the individual articles that make up the dissertation. Using similar logic, the reviewer refers to each research question in turn, analysing the scope and nature of the answers provided in light of the objective of the work and the research concept used.

The first article, devoted to factors influencing the shaping of urban sports spaces, reliably identifies a wide range of barriers and factors conducive to sports participation, based on a review of the literature. It thus answers the question of *what factors* influence participation in sport, but only to a limited extent explains *how* these factors materialise in the form and organisation of urban spaces.

The second article, which focuses on the physical barriers experienced by runners with disabilities, convincingly answers the question of identifying the physical characteristics of urban space that are perceived as barriers. However, this answer is based almost exclusively on the users' perceptual perspective, which narrows the scope of the conclusions. Only to a limited extent does the article refer to ways of systematically addressing the identified barriers, and the recommendations are more postulative than analytical in nature.

The third article, based on a case study of the Activity Zone in Chorzów, provides a detailed and locally grounded analysis of the problems of accessibility and usability of recreational space. It answers the question of specific interventions and improvements in a specific spatial context, but this answer remains limited to a single case and has not been fully operationalised in relation to universal design principles or local standards and regulations.

The fourth article, comparing the accessibility and usability of playgrounds in urban parks in four countries (Hungary, Poland, Iraq, Saudi Arabia), provides a clear and methodologically sound answer to the question of *differences in* the accessibility and usability of these spaces. At the same time, it only addresses the question of the impact of national policies, awareness levels and planning practices on the creation of inclusive recreational environments to a very limited extent. References to these conditions are illustrative and are not systematically linked to the results of the spatial audit.

In summary, it should be noted that all four articles provide convincing answers to the research questions in their descriptive and diagnostic scope, providing rich empirical material on barriers, deficiencies and differences in the accessibility of recreational and sports spaces. However, in order for the answers to the research questions to be considered comprehensive at the doctoral dissertation level, it is necessary to clearly separate the empirical and interpretative layers, systematically link the results to institutional conditions, and introduce a synthetic analytical framework for the entire work. Only such a supplement would allow the research to be completed and the ambitions of the formulated research questions to be fully justified.

2.4 Assessment of the dissertation in terms of the originality of the scientific problem solution

The dissertation addresses an important and current scientific problem related to the accessibility and inclusiveness of recreational and sports spaces for people with disabilities, which undoubtedly falls within the scope of architecture and urban planning. The originality of the work is manifested primarily in the selection and compilation of research cases, including an attempt to combine analyses conducted in different spatial and geographical contexts and a focus on the practical aspects of the functioning of public spaces. However, the contribution of the dissertation is mainly empirical, diagnostic and applicative in nature. To a lesser extent, the work offers an original solution to a scientific problem in a theoretical or conceptual sense. The research does not lead to the development of a new conceptual framework or to a significant transformation of existing theoretical approaches. The originality of the dissertation lies rather in the organisation and illustration of known issues based on case studies than in the formulation of new generalisations or explanatory mechanisms. In its current form, the dissertation solves the scientific problem in a partial manner, focusing on its practical dimension, with limited development of the theoretical dimension, which is crucial at the doctoral level.

3. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The reviewer fully supports the formula of doctoral dissertations prepared in the form of a work consisting of articles, which is generally accepted and widely used in international practice. However, a prerequisite for the success of such a formula is the existence of a clearly developed, substantively in-depth synthesising part that integrates the results of partial research. In recognised international standards, this part constitutes a significant segment of the dissertation and serves as the overarching theoretical and analytical core, without which the article-based work is easily reduced to a collection of thematically related but scattered publications. In this dissertation, the proportions between the volume and substantive weight of the articles and the total volume and quality of the framework sections remain inadequate, which means that they do not sufficiently fulfil their synthesising function. This impression is reinforced by the way the research questions and conclusions are constructed, which organise the existing articles rather than integrating them into a coherent scientific narrative. As a result, the core of the dissertation, consisting of articles, functions largely autonomously from the framework sections of the work, and the results of the partial studies are not integrated into a coherent scientific argument. In places, the dissertation gives the impression of a set of empirical studies rather than a consistently developed solution to a scientific problem.

Additional doubts are also raised by the issue of co-authorship of the publications that make up the dissertation. Although the doctoral student's contribution to individual articles has been formally declared as dominant, at the level of a doctoral dissertation it would be reasonable to expect that at least one of the key articles would be a fully independent publication. This would constitute unequivocal confirmation of the doctoral student's scientific independence and his ability to carry out the entire research process, from formulating the problem to interpreting the results. Furthermore, regardless of the substantive quality of the articles, which have been assessed in detail in this review, it should be noted that these texts have not been published in widely recognised journals with an established international reputation. This circumstance does not in itself constitute grounds for a negative assessment of the dissertation, but in combination with the limited theoretical synthesis, it further weakens the argument for recognising the work as a fully original solution to a scientific problem at the doctoral level.

In summary, the presented doctoral dissertation addresses an important and current research problem and contains significant empirical material. The doctoral student also demonstrates general theoretical knowledge in the discipline of architecture and urban planning. However, despite the noticeable amount of work put into the preparation of the dissertation, the requirements specified in Article 187 section (1) of the Law on Higher Education and Science have not been sufficiently met, in particular with regard to the original solution to a scientific problem and the demonstration of independent research at the doctoral level. Therefore, I conclude that the dissertation in its current form does not constitute a sufficient basis for awarding the Candidate a doctoral degree.

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Magdalena Belof