an end to the ‘other’ in landscape architecture: poststructural theory and universal design
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poststructural theory and universal design

by

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an end to the ‘other’ in landscape architecture: poststructural theory and universal design

Abstract:

Accessibility in the landscape has gained increased attention in recent years, and the practice of Universal Design, rather than providing ‘accessible’ accommodations as separate, distinct elements within the landscape, attempts to address social issues such as segregation by proposing an integrated accessibility and design for a diverse society. However, while proposing integration, it can be criticized as designing to the lowest common denominator and clinging to the idea of a ‘disabled’ population which must be designed down to. It frequently fails to address the complexities arising from conflicts between the needs of individuals with different disabilities and lacks a theoretical framework which would place the philosophy’s ideals within a broader social and cultural context. The poststructural project is posited as such a theoretical framework, and a means for evaluating the principles of Universal Design along with the social and cultural beliefs upon which the accessibility issue rests. Poststructuralism is used to challenge the idea of separate ‘able’ / ‘disabled’ populations on the basis that this dichotomous opposition is based on limiting conceptions of disability and fails to acknowledge the complexities which comprise the diverse fabric of society. The project is explored here as an alternative means for advancing the ideals of Universal Design within the realm of landscape architecture. Using a matrix of poststructural practices, social concepts such as normality and disability are examined and ‘deconstructed.’ Ultimately a reconstruction of the paradigm, a Critically Integrated Design, is proposed based upon the reconceptualization and resituation of accessibility and social conditions.
To my parents,
who have been a constant source of support
and encouragement…
who have taught me
to pursue my dreams.

Imagine there's no heaven
Imagine there's no countries
It's easy if you try
It isn't hard to do
No hell below us
Nothing to kill or die for
Above us only sky
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Imagine all the people
Living for today
Living life in peace
You may say I'm a dreamer
Imagine no possessions
But I'm not the only one
I wonder if you can
I hope someday you'll join us
No need for greed or hunger
And the world will be as one
A brotherhood of man

Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

John Lennon
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Before the work even began though, there were those who inspired me to pursue certain paths of travel. Key among these individuals, Paul Kelsch sparked my interest in the power of design theory and the potential of poststructuralism for addressing issues of social inequality in design. I am grateful to Paul for his guidance and for his insistence on only the highest levels of work. It was my friend Lyn Mitchell who really inspired me to engage in work which I would not only be intrigued by, but which I would take pleasure from pursuing … Were it not for that inspiration, the intensity needed to advance this project would have been difficult to maintain if not entirely impossible to achieve.

Throughout the development of the project there was those times when the path seemed uncertain, when the knowledge seemed unattainable and incomprehensible. It was during these time when the guidance of Bob
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Accessibility in landscape architecture and architecture is too often only approached in terms of its formal implications. How can this landscape or this building, we ask, be brought into compliance with the accessibility codes, or be initially designed as ‘accessible’? These texts are an attempt to expand the limits of that conception, to engage the social and cultural agencies which influence our concept of accessibility. This is, inevitably, no less of a fiction than the current approaches to accessibility, and it is difficult to propose that what is written here is in opposition to some current way of thinking – as if I, or it, could ultimately transcend the conditions of the ‘reality’ from which it develops. Nor can I say that I have located all of the ‘right’ problems, although such an activity is definitely on the agenda – to challenge the complacent and the regressive, to question social conditions, to resist the structures and institutions that serve the powerful and perpetuate powerlessness. But, as author Lynn Tillman says, “I must contribute daily, involuntarily, but in small and big ways toward keeping the world the way it is” (Critical Fiction 2-3).^1

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^1 Throughout the text, single quotes are used to suggest a questioning of the concept within the quotes. These “scare quotes” as writer Susan Wendell calls them are intended to bring to the reader’s attention those concepts or ideas that the ‘author’ believes are in need of examination and critique. They are many times words used in everyday language which have come to have certain implications that the author intends to challenge and they are many times concepts which can have negative implications associated with them. They are also occasionally used as quotes within direct quotes and unless otherwise noted should be taken as such when they appear within directly quoted material.

^2 This discussion of the positioning of the author is based on a commentary by Tillman in Critical Fiction / Critical Self. Says Tillman, “I am wary or shy of proposing my fiction as written in opposition to, or to pronounce that I write differently, as if I – or it – could transcend conditions of birth and development – its and mine -- and was somehow able to escape them. Or even that I knew, and the writing could locate, the right problems. It’s certainly on my agenda – to challenge the complacent, to question the nation, familial, racial and sexual arrangements, to resist structures and institutions that serve the powerful and perpetuate powerlessness. But as I wrote of the narrator in my novel Motion Sickness – an American moving from place to place in foreign lands – ‘I must contribute daily, involuntarily, but in small and big ways toward keeping the world the way it is.’ (The question of agency haunts the novel.)” (2-3).
There is, within this project, an implicit and sometimes explicit call to action, which acts against the view of the designer as solely a formgiver. Architect Bernard Tschumi has said of architecture, that it is, “…about the design of conditions that will dislocate the most traditional and regressive aspects of our society and simultaneously reorganize these elements in the most liberating way, so that our experience becomes the experience of event organized and strategized through architecture” (“Six Concepts” 259). It is one of those regressive conditions in society which is being challenged here. Too many landscapes, and too many buildings might just as well have “Do Not Enter” signs aimed towards people with disabilities, and too many others actively segregate accommodations for people with disabilities from those for the able bodied population. Such segregation is no longer openly accepted on the basis of race or religion and, it is argued, it should not be accepted on the basis of disability. Accessibility can be conceived then, not solely as a problem of physical barriers, or an issue of economics or politics, but these and more, being at some level about our very conception of reality and the social construction of that perception.

This investigation examines the poststructuralist project as a means for advancing the principles of Universal Design in landscape architecture. Significant improvements in addressing integrated accessibility in the landscape have been brought about through the use of Universal Design, yet its implementation has been unsuccessful in dealing with many of the underlying social issues. The frequent segregation of the able and disabled populations is one of the continuing problems, where in lieu of providing an integrated accessible landscape, accessible accommodations exist in the landscape amongst a predominantly inaccessible whole. Such segregation exists as a significant social problem based not on malice, but rather entrenched concepts of disability held by our society. The poststructuralist project, by exposing and critiquing these conceptual beliefs, has the ability to address the underlying issues, placing Universal Design within a broader social and cultural context.

While accessibility is generally conceived as a problem of physical barriers, social and psychological barriers play a significant role in the separation of society into able and disabled populations. The problem can be characterized as a process of marginalization in which specific social groups are excluded from the mainstream. In order to justify their exclusion are defined
as ‘other’ and considered outside the norm of society. “Accordingly landscapes become
documents of power, palimpsests reflective of different value systems and dominance, position,
and influence of different social groups within them.”

Landscapes, in which significant portions of society are treated as second class citizens, still exist. While, with the advent of the *American’s with Disabilities Act* (ADA) of 1990 and principles of Universal Design, the built environment as a whole has become dramatically more accessible, separate, and far from equal, types of ‘accommodations’ still exist.

Universal Design can be characterized as an emerging philosophy in accessible design, which advocates the creation of products, buildings and environments that are accessible to the broadest range of people, without singling out any specific group for special treatment. As a basis for design, it promotes an integrated environment in which issues of accessibility are seen

- ‘accommodation’ as part of the overall design scheme and not separate
- able accommodations. ‘Separate but equal’ is generally considered
- ‘disabled’ unequal when it comes to discrimination based upon race or religion.
- integrated However, separate is exactly what many, if not most, ‘handicapped’
- ‘handicapped’ accessible accommodations continue to be. Universal Design argues
- equivalent at a very basic level that such separate accommodations are an
- experience inadequate solution to the problems of accessibility. Although the

concept has a strong civil rights component, it can be understood not only in the context of the ‘handicapped,’ but as an issue relevant to society as a whole.

Universal Design aims for a better designed environment for everyone, not just a small portion of society. Said Gordon Mansfield, former chair of the Architectural and Transportation *Barriers Compliance Board,* “Universal Design is ‘an approach to design that acknowledges the changes experienced by everyone during his or her lifetime. It considers children, old people, people who are tall or short, and those with disabilities. It addresses the lifespan of the

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3 In “Private Worlds and Public Places,” Matthews and Vujakovic explore the issue by examining the extent to which wheelchair users must overcome barriers in the urban environment. p. 1069. See also David Sibley, “Outsiders in society” in Inventing Places.
human being beyond the mythical average person” (Universal Design Information Network, par 1).

Even within the context of a better designed environment for the whole of society, Universal Design does not attempt to provide complete accessibility for everyone, all of the time. Rather, it suggests that a well designed environment is accommodating to the largest portion of society in a multitude of different ways. “In Universal Design, you need to consider all the equivalent experiences,” says Joe Meade, an access specialist for the United States Forest Service who is also blind (Leccese 74). An equality of experience is proposed such that an individual with a disability does not feel physically or psychologically segregated, while still recognizing that identical experiences cannot be provided for everyone. This issue gains greater significance when one considers that an environment needs to be ‘accessible’ not just to those with mobility impairments but also for those with visual or hearing impairments, or simply the very young or the very old. Ultimately, one of the overriding themes of the concept is the design of environments in which anyone, regardless of level of ability or age, can fully experience a place, without feeling as part of a separate and different population. When successful, Universal Design becomes part of the background, a barely visible presence, which nonetheless exists throughout the site.

Society today is conceived as a diverse, heterogeneous culture with, “broad textures, identities and fractures,” (Matthews & Vujakovic 1069) or in other words, a multitude of diverse and unique individuals instead of one homogenous population. Universal Design has brought about significant improvements in accessibility to the landscape for a major portion of society, moving beyond the reactive responses of legislation such as the ADA to propose designs which integrate accessible features into the overall design scheme. Yet, for all of the advances which have been made due to its implementation, the majority of projects built today are based on limiting concepts of disability and still designed for separate and distinct populations. Universal Design lacks the ‘foundation’ or structure to truly incorporate integrated accessibility into the mainstream. In large part this is because the systems of thought which separate the population into particular social groups, such as able and disabled, are strongly entrenched beliefs.

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4 Universal Design is as much about the invisible psychological barriers that can make individuals with disabilities feel segregated in the built environment, as it is about the physical barriers.

5 See chapter 2 of Wilkoff for an in-depth discussion of different types of disability and the needs and problems associated with them.
In order to understand the foundation of such belief systems, it is necessary to first look at the origins of pairs of terms such as able/disabled, referred to as binary oppositions. A series of such oppositions, proposed by the 19th century Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, was said to explain the structure of language (Martin 25). The concept can be traced back to Rene Descartes, whose philosophy of totality is based upon a series of opposing forces such as chance and reason, or inside and outside, (Benjamin, “Derrida” 9) and in 1967, the French theorist Jacques Derrida in De la grammatologie proposed that such oppositions – man/nature, good/bad, truth/falsehood – formed the basis for the dominant system of western thought. The structure of language then had far reaching implications, and these dichotomous oppositions essentially act as the foundation of the philosophical subject/object problem. In other terms, they can be characterized as an issue of ‘the same and the other,’ (Martin 25) in which a hierarchical system of order exists where one term is privileged over the other (Norris 8).

The poststructural project has been used to show that such hierarchical distinctions are arbitrary social constructs, and although many binary oppositions have been ‘deconstructed,’ the able/disabled pair is conspicuously missing. Such an opposition inadequately describes the makeup of society and enforces limits in thought which prevent a more inclusive landscape, such as that posited by the advocates of Universal Design, from being brought into existence. “The first barrier to Universal Design is the human mind. If we could put a ramp into the mind, the first

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6 Wendell notes that for all of the theorizing done about the role of the body and the social construction of ‘normality,’ within poststructural discourses, there is no recognition of the difficulties faced by individuals with disabilities.

7 “It is important to understand that there is no clear line between people who are categorized as ‘disabled’ and those who are not. A performance or ability distribution for a given skill/ability is generally a continuous function, rather than bimodal with distinctive ‘able’ and ‘disabled’ groups...In looking at such a distribution, it is impossible to simply draw a vertical line and separate able-bodied from disabled persons. It is also important to note that each aspect of ability has a separate distribution. Thus, a person who is poor along an ability distribution in one dimension (e.g., vision) may be at the other end of the distribution (i.e. excellent) with regard to another dimension (e.g., hearing or IQ). Thus individuals do not fall at the lower or upper end of the distribution overall, but generally fall in different positions depending upon the particular ability being measured” (Vanderheiden, p.2).
thing down the ramp would be the understanding that all barriers are the result of narrow thinking” (Kaufman 39).

Binary oppositions, such as those previously mentioned, form one part of what we can call a culturally constructed reality and their impact is not limited to conceptions of the composition of society. The representation of these oppositions can be seen in the design of landscapes which generally aim to meet the needs of the mythical average person. According to Kate Linker, “…critical discussion has come to view as the correlate of this cultural formation of reality that social relations and the available forms of subjectivity are produced in and by representation.”

A connection can be established between these socially constructed conceptions of society, such as separate disabled / able populations, and the physical form of the constructed environment. Regardless of intentionality, landscapes designed for the ‘average’ individual become partially or wholly inaccessible to a large portion of society. Within the realm of landscape architecture, efforts to improve accessibility have met considerable resistance and continue to play only a minor role. In many cases, ‘accessible accommodations,’ are peripherally placed within the design scheme, and even in cases where Universal Design principles are employed, problems persist related to conflicts between the needs of those with different types of disabilities. Such conflicts are often the result of misconceptions of disability rather than problems associated with design or construction difficulties.

The poststructural project aims to critique what is considered to be factual reality, such as the idea or belief that the division between the able bodied and people with disabilities is based on a natural inferiority of people with disabilities. One needs only examine the built environment to see that people with disabilities are treated as second class citizens who must accept segregated accommodations. Consider further the

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8 Linker’s discussion in “Representation and Sexuality” focuses on the role of representation in the gendering of society. Nonetheless much of the discussion can also be related to the issue of accessibility and the relationship between conceptions of disability and the physical form of ‘accessible’ accommodations. See page 392.

9 Refer to Chapter 2 of Wilkoff for a discussion of different types of disabilities, problems faced by individuals with different types of disabilities and conflicts which can arise due to the needs of people with these different disabilities in the built environment.

10 Says Wendell, a feminist theorist who has lived with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome since 1985, “The power of culture along to construct a disability is revealed when we consider bodily differences – deviations from a society’s conception of a ‘normal’ or acceptable body – that, although they cause little or no functional or physical difficulty for the person who has them, constitute major social disabilities” (Rejected Body 44). For further discussion see Chapter 2 of these texts.
representation of people with disabilities in film and television where even in today’s enlightened environment, they are degraded and shown as somehow less than fully human.11 Sibley has shown that the landscape becomes a representation of those in power and the mechanism by which that power is exercised (“Outsiders” 112+) where, furthermore, those considered outside of the norm of society are often times marginalized. The poststructural project opens up to criticism the power relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ inherent where we acknowledge the marginalization of specific groups of individuals. As Benjamin writes, “The distancing or displacement … is captured by Derrida when he writes of ‘norms’ being ‘taken into consideration’; being ‘reinscribed’; present but no longer in ‘command’” (Benjamin 10). In examining the social and historical foundations of the concept of disability and through exploring the contradictions which exist in the design of ‘accessible’ accommodations, the hierarchy of able over disabled can be challenged, the landscape opened up to a more integrated and inclusive population. It is not then a question of eliminating the conception or category of disability, but eliminating the hierarchy within which it is placed.

The poststructuralist paradigm raises two main questions…according to [Hal]

- meaning (destabilization of)
- conceptual pairs
- ‘natural’
- arbitrary

Foster…the status of the subject and its language and the status of history and its representation. Both are constructs shaped by society’s representation of them. In fact, the object of the poststructuralist critique is to demonstrate that all of reality is constituted (produced and sustained) by its representations, rather than reflected in them. History, for example, is a narrative with implications of subjectivity, of the fictional. Poststructuralism thus supports a proliferation of histories, told from other points of view than that of the power elite (Nesbitt 35, emphasis added).

The poststructuralist project though is not about a denial of reality, but rather an argument for the resituation of that reality both “historically and contextually” (Ryan 16). Deconstruction, a significant component of the project, can perhaps best be characterized as a process of destabilizing meaning, wherein underlying agendas...

11 Norden’s Cinema of Isolation explores the role of people with disabilities in film and the tendency to portray them as weak, helpless and isolated members of society. The book offers an innocence shattering examination of film history and the impacts that the portrayal of people with disabilities have had. In a remake of the classic 60s television series, The Outer Limits, an “attractive scientist,” who becomes a paraplegic after an auto accident is given the “perfect” female companion by his best friend, an “inorganic human” a.k.a. robot, yet again portraying people with disabilities as incapable of having ‘normal’ human relationships (Valerie 23).
can be exposed and evaluated (Kipnis 32). The project is engaged here because of its ability to expose the fiction of the able/disabled dichotomy. According to Derrida, this deconstruction of social beliefs… analyzes and questions conceptual pairs which are currently accepted as self-evident and natural, as if they hadn’t been institutionalized at some precise point, as if they had no history. Because of being taken for granted they restrict thinking (Meyer 18).

In order to advance the principles of Universal Design, the separation of the population into ‘able,’ and ‘disabled,’ must be challenged, along with the idea that such a population can be labeled as ‘other,’ or outside the norm of society. So long as such distinctions permeate the thinking of the public and designers, the problems of segregation in the landscape will continue. Yet this division of society exists for specific reasons and cannot simply be eliminated. It is within this realm, that the poststructuralist project has the potential for advancing the ideals of Universal Design, by exposing this division of society as an arbitrary social construct, which need not exist and which does not adequately describe the makeup of the population, and thus enabling a more integrated landscape to come into existence.

It is important to note that while one aim of this project is to challenge the existing hierarchical relationship between ‘able’ and ‘disabled,’ this is not an attempt to eliminate the categories of difference, but to question that hierarchical structure and challenge its dominance. Nonetheless one might question why it is necessary to investigate the potential of a theoretical foundation for Universal Design. It has been noted previously that the real problems of solving the accessibility dilemma lie not in the realm of design or construction difficulties, but at least partly within the narrow confines of the mind. If the arbitrary nature of the disabled/able opposition can be exposed, the potential exists for expanding those narrow confines and for opening up the whole spectrum of design problems to embrace the diversity of our multiplistic society.

Value judgments, it is argued by critics of the poststructural project, cannot be made within a position which argues for the contextually bounded nature of truth and reality. Yet one could make the same argument for most philosophical positions which, while relying on some source of absolute truth, appear also – regardless of their foundation – to be contextually bounded, evolving and changing with societies, interpreted differently by different societies and by the same society as different time periods. Poststructuralism exposes the relativity and political boundedness of such value systems and truth claims, arguing that they have always rested on a political consensus – whether by force of the military, police or other governmental force, or by force of social beliefs – truth and value are fundamentally bound up within social and historical contexts.
Poststructuralism has sought to expose such fictional ‘truths’, not to eliminate them but so as to form them and model them in accordance with social value systems, thus no longer being bound by values that mask themselves behind the facade of natural or eternal truths (Siegle).

This project then, must itself be socially bound, and situated within its context. Necessarily contextualized, the issues, beliefs, and socio-economic conditions can most closely be linked with western industrialized societies. Even within such societies, however, there exist segments of the population who are not influenced by the same conditions and factors as the ‘dominant’ society. Wendell\textsuperscript{12} characterizes these dominant societies as,

> ‘commercial-media-soaked societies of North America,’ to distinguish them from social groups who inhabit the North American continent while maintaining (or struggling to maintain) their own cultures and social forms. Prominent among the latter are native societies in Canada and the United States that, although they are inevitably influenced by the cultures imported and developed here by invading Europeans, have values and practices which are radically different from those and based in independent traditions. It is not accurate to refer to a single ‘European-based culture,’ because groups such as the Hasidic Jews and the Amish also came from Europe and yet maintain a way of life as separate from the commercial cultures created by Europeans as that of many native people. Nor is there only one, homogenous commercial-media-soaked society in North America ... (188).

Thus even this categorization is limited and one might choose to further define the specifics of any culturally bound critique or set of values. Nonetheless the point is perhaps best made without any further categorization, placing these arguments rather broadly within the mixed and diverse cultures which comprise the media cultures of the industrialized west.

Many more possibilities for investigation and critique will be opened up by this project than can possibly be dealt with, in part due to the very complexity of the issues involved. Rather than aiming for a clear

\textsuperscript{12} Susan Wendell is an Associate Professor of Women’s studies at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. She has lived with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome since 1985 and has written extensively on disability issues.
delimited and exhaustive theory which attempts to conclusively resolve the problems of accessibility, this project is seen as a process of investigation, critique and synthesis. A matrix of poststructural practices will be engaged to examine the social implications of what has been called normalization. This matrix will form the basis of the critique of social conceptions of the able / disabled opposition and by investigating and deconstructing the historical and social basis of disability, the subsequent problems of accessibility can be placed within a broader social context. Ultimately a reconstruction of the Universal Design paradigm will be proposed which incorporates this reconceptualization of accessibility and its underlying social foundation. This project though, the reconceptualizations that it posits, and the values it is based on are themselves no less socially constructed than the current fictions which are challenged and critiqued. There is then no ‘final’ or absolute resolution that can be offered, but what can be offered is a proposal for an alternative way of conceptualizing the issues and a broader understanding of the influences which continue to affect ‘accessibility.’
Poststructural theory and practice is engaged throughout this project as the method of critique of the current conception of accessibility and disability. The theory consists not of a single linear idea, but rather a network of interconnected and interrelated ideas within the overall system or matrix. While the fragments presented here can act as separate lines of thought within the matrix of ‘accessibility,’ what will become apparent is that one cannot limit and confine the effects of each into distinct, separate or independent entities, as these lines of thought cross and many times re-cross boundaries and limits.

If the matrix forms the framework for this collection of ideas, Roland Barthes ‘Text,’ can characterize the practice in which this entire project is engaged. The text, as with the matrix is conceived as a multiplicity, wherein many interconnected and juxtaposed ideas are engaged. Barthes characterizes it as, “not a coexistence of meanings but a passage, a traversal; thus it answers not to an interpretation … but to an explosion, a dissemination,” (“Work to Text” 171) which permits, even encourages, a multiplicity of interpretations which can only be partially defined and confined. The text itself is not the different potential meanings, but rather the process of their exploration and here acts as an exploration of the different ideas which are related to the issues of accessibility.

The text involves the, “activity of associations, contiguities, cross-references …” (171) oftentimes based on exceedingly disparate elements, where connections which would seem without basis, if considered from a standpoint of cultural consensus, begin to create new concepts or lines of thought. One of the problems in addressing an issue, such as accessibility, is the limited scope in which it is generally conceived, and it is here where the importance of the text becomes apparent. Rather than considering accessibility as solely a problem of physical barriers, it will be addressed here within the context of a broad range of ideas from the political causes of segregation and issues of power relations to the development of the concept of disability within society and the medical establishment. Although at first seeming to have only peripheral importance, these very points of investigation will come to have fundamental significance for the issue of ‘universal’ accessibility.

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1 This idea of the interconnected concepts is based partly on Gilles Deleuze’s concept of the rhizome, and the principles of connection and heterogeneity in “Introduction: Rhizome” A Thousand Plateaus. p. 7.
Barthes sites interdisciplinarity as a basis for a breakdown in conventional beliefs about the classification of things and systems (169), while Gilles Deleuze suggests that the lines of thought or concept contained within the multiplicity are always connected to one another thus eliminating dualistic dichotomies (9). Thus, each of the issues can be examined in a somewhat separate manner, but the lines, the multiplicities, and the connections are where the significance of the concepts can be found. Seemingly, the combination of situations, which had generally been conceived of as separate and independent, bring into play new conflicts and contradictions as well as new opportunities. The presence of opposing and separate systems, brought together in new ways, provides an opportunity for examining situations within a new context.

Oftentimes labels or classifications are placed upon things which confine them to places within a social hierarchy, however, the text acts as a force which tears apart such hierarchical structures (170). Even though many such classifications are rigidly confined and even minor collisions with an alternative process or system are sufficient to bring them asunder, this should not be seen as destructive but rather as a process of reconceptualization – albeit one without any ultimate resolution. The text acts as a means of developing relationships, or webs of connections across disciplinary or conceptual fields, outside of or at least peripheral to conventional boundaries. It becomes that place where lines of flight are continually crossing one another, forming points of significance, but no overall hierarchy.

A relationship develops between the ‘reader’ and the ‘text’ which then becomes part of the process by which the text works, such that “the Text requires that one try to abolish (or at the very least diminish) the distance between reading and writing…” (Barthes 173). It is through this diminishing of the distance that the participation of the reader becomes more than the act of reading. Fundamentally participatory, the text demands a ‘re-reading,’ or rather a reading which is not singular and confined but plural, not based on one perception but a multitude. In a way the text seems itself like the place where the hierarchical relationship between the writer and reader, or designer and user, is dissolved into nothingness. Says Barthes, “the Text achieves, if not the transparency of social relations, than at least of language relations: the Text is that space where no language has a hold over any other…” (174).
Kate Linker notes that there has been a significant shift in terms of this reader–text relationship, where only recently, the conception of the text has shifted from the idea of the “expressive self” and the “empathic reader” to that of a textual reader who is in a position to take up the text and re-construct it from their historical and linguistic perspective (391). This shift extends beyond the text, to include all those fields—photography, film, etc.—where language is the basis for the construction of reality (Linker 392), and one could further expand this field to include art, architecture, and nearly any physical representation of culture(s). This is not a question of perceptions, but rather an argument suggesting that meaning is no longer a one way street controlled solely by the artist, but is instead part of an interrelationship between writer and reader, where social and cultural contexts begin to surface as generators of meaning.

In the realm of the built environment, the question of meaning and representation can be linked with architect Bernard Tschumi’s concept of the ‘event.’ For Tschumi, an architecture of event does not exist as a series of isolated elements, free from the impact of the users of a space. It is within and precisely because of the relationship between architecture and its use, or in Tschumi’s terms program, that meaning is generated (Event Cities 011), and an architecture of event must at some level bridge the gap between the purity of design and the violence of use. Architecture is often engaged in acts and events which are purported to exist in a realm of their own—OBJECTS, THINGS, ARCHITECTURE—the event though, is something in which the user is as much the bearer of meaning and experience as is the architect, thereby eliminating the separation of the architectural ‘thing’ and its use.

Meaning itself becomes dependent upon social and contextual conditions. Rather than being firmly established and absolute—the absolute signified—it has become relative and dynamic. Hal Foster notes that while, “no longer defined in one code, practice remains within a field. Decentered, it is recentered: that is (precisely) ‘expanded’ rather than ‘deconstructed’” (195). Thus it is not a situation in which all meaning has become completely subjective, without any commonality, but rather that conventional models of an absolute belief—Truth and Reality for example—have been replaced with a broader conception which allows that meaning to be generated through a relationship between the reader and writer. As Ryan has noted, however, “The point of the poststructuralist theory of culture is not to eliminate the concept of materiality. Rather it resituated it both historically and contextually” (16), and it is this practice...
which is engaged to challenge the concept of able and disabled populations as separate independent conditions, and challenge the hierarchical nature of their relationship.

Within the realm of poststructural thought, established beliefs and conventional boundaries begin to fall apart. Where once considered the bearer of meaning and original creation, the artist is seen as the one who exposes points of significance, transcending the boundaries of originality, promoting instead hybridity, instability and conflict. In “Six Concepts” Tschumi concludes by saying, “Architecture is not about the conditions of design but about the design of conditions that will dislocate the most traditional and regressive aspects of our society and simultaneously reorganize these elements in the most liberating way, so that our experience becomes the experience of events organized and strategized through architecture” (259). “…The event is the place where the rethinking and reformulation of the different elements of architecture, many of which have resulted in or added to contemporary social inequalities, may lead to their solution. By definition, it is the place of the combination of differences” (“Six Concepts” 258).

- hybridity
- instability
- categories
- violated
- natural

An architecture or landscape of event is not just about challenging current conceptions of social conditions. One of the many results of this transformation to an architecture of event is the opportunity to engender a sense of empowerment in the user, which provides an opportunity for the individual to be involved in the creation of the experience of a place. This opportunity is created because rather than tightly controlled systems of order which almost seem violated by the presence of an individual (Tschumi, “Violence” 44), places of event, such as at Tschumi’s Parc de la Villette (Image 14.1) which engage multiple systems of order which collide and conflict and which embrace the presence of outside forces and the intrusion of the individual. In fact, within spaces of event, the person is not considered an individual at all, but yet another aspect of the multiplicity.

Linker takes the situation further by noting that not only is there a shift in the basis of meaning, but that our conception of reality, based upon its representation is a constructed fiction of society and culture (392). This constructed fiction of society acts as a means of expressing the idea that reality and truth, and in particular the distinctions we make between different groups of people, are based upon social systems of belief rather than absolute ‘natural’ conditions. They are founded in the hierarchical organization of society and the belief that some groups represent the ‘normal’ while others exist outside of this conception.
Representation becomes a force which acts on individuals, over time transforming relative categories of individuals (such as class and gender) into definitive absolutes of difference, which then act as a basis for power relations (392).

These representations of reality, based on cultural and societal ‘norms’ are neither benign nor isolated conditions. They maintain the power to shape the very way in which we see, think, even act. Gender is the most frequently associated conception of these conditions, where cultural conceptions of gender are related to the patriarchal organization of society. Linker’s work suggests a connection between cultural fictions and their physical manifestations in the arts or seemingly any mechanism of representation (392). Once socially constructed, these systems of classifying individuals become reinforced by the environments in which people live, by the landscapes, by media representations, even by language. Says Linker, “It has become axiomatic that questions of signification cannot be divided from questions of subjectivity, from the processes by which viewing subjects are caught up in, formed by, and construct meanings” (392), and while focusing on the role of gender and the patriarchal organization of society, the concepts have the potential to address other situations of difference equally well.

Meaning and representation cannot long be dealt with without addressing the role of power structures and the hierarchical organization of society. This discussion has been based on the belief that there is a relationship between the writer and the reader wherein meaning is derived not from one or the other, but from both. What, however, happens when one is more ‘powerful’ than the other? The previous conception of the relationship between the writer and reader held that the writer had the power to create meaning. This critique must now address other problems bound up in the concept of power in relation not only to the questions of gender as raised by Linker, but of class and race and any of the other means by which groups of people are marginalized, left out of the ‘dominant’ culture of society?

The power relationship exists based on two indispensable elements: the entity which has power, and that over which power is exercised (Foucault, “Subject” 427). According to Foucault, power struggles tend to have many commonalities between them, things which transcend the specifics of the struggle, to characterize the nature of power struggles in general (419). These struggles transcend borders, while being intrinsically local in significance (420), thus while they tend to focus on specific issues which relate to one’s life on a local level, where the impact of power would tend to have the most significance to an individual, the struggles...
themselves are not limited to any one country or even to any one type of circumstance or political system. Yet, political energy tends not towards those local conditions but those struggles which seem to be against a visible tyranny. Thus the tendency is to ignore the multitude of power struggles that exist within our own borders. We ignore the impact that power has on local marginalized groups, the homeless, the ‘disabled,’ the young, the old, while concentrating instead on global tyrannies which perhaps have a greater apparent significance.

Power struggles offer a resistance to power itself and the means by which it is exercised, they are exceedingly concerned with the rights of the individual and struggle against what Foucault calls the “privileges of knowledge.” Above all else, however, they are concerned with the question and the role of identity, and with the forms of power which control the individual (420). The right to be different is asserted, as well as the right to be free from the constraints which can be tied to one’s identity (420). Thus a call is made for embracing the differences and the uniqueness among individuals while not using that difference as a means of control over the individual. It is not the institution of power which is of concern here, but rather the unseen mechanisms through which power is exerted, the subtle and not so subtle elements within daily life that exert control over the ‘others’ in society. Even the conception of the other, the labeling of groups of people, to place them within categories for classification, such as ‘disabled’ tend to group together individuals that are no more similar than any other group of diverse individuals. These ‘others’ are simply more easily classified as a homogenous group than as unique individuals, thus legitimizing their frequent exclusion from society.

Regardless of the group over which power is exercised, the mechanisms by which power is exercised ultimately have more to do with the nature of the relationship between the two opposing forces than anything else. Says Foucault, “…a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that the ‘other’ (the one over whom power is exerted) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up” (427, emphasis added). Thus the categorizations of people into definable groups, definable ‘others,’ is essential to the power relationship, and it is necessary to return to the earlier discussion of the text and the means of breaking up such conventional categorizations in order to destabilize such power relationships. Within those relationships actions, reactions and responses must also occur and thus the relationship cannot
exist without a definable, conclusive, and controlling connection. Thus, when such actions within the relationship are severed the effect of power is also severed or at least diminished.

Foucault sees the power relationship as a structure of actions (427) and if, in this case, we begin to examine the breadth of influences affecting accessible design, it is possible to question the very core conceptualization of disability. Linker explores similar conditions in terms of the role of power relationships as they relate to the role of the patriarchal organization of society (392). Representation is seen as the means by which power is exerted, maintaining the status quo of that patriarchal organization. The key aspect of Linker’s discussion is that for the system to be maintained it is necessary for women to be placed in an inferior position within the overall structure (393). Without the control of one group by another, the system would fall apart. Thus it is absolutely essential, within the conventional structure of society, to maintain the opposition between the group in power, and the group over which power is exerted. Similar situations act as the means by which the ‘disabled’ are controlled through limitations of access to the environment, as well as the placement of ‘accessible’ accommodations.

The discussion thus far can be seen in the context of hierarchical systems of order and the attempt to destabilize the strength that such systems possess. While the destabilizing of such oppositions is not the only act of a poststructural critique, it plays a dominant role in the endeavor. A comparison can be made between the notion of the matrix and the organization of hierarchical structures. The text operates as but one of the methods employed in the destabilizing of such structures, and the diminishing of the relationship between the writer and the reader enables us to question the power of meaning and representation. Above all, such hierarchical systems can be considered representations of power structures, and the exploration of such structures inevitably involves an examination of hierarchical systems.

Gilles Deleuze considers the role of such structures within his concept of the rhizome, examining the contrasts between the hierarchical ordering of a tree and the nature of the rhizome as a matrix of interrelated concepts. “…[A]ccepting the primacy of hierarchical structures,” says Deleuze, “amounts to giving arborescent structures privileged status…In a hierarchical system, an individual has only one active neighbor, his or her hierarchical superior” (16). With a hierarchical system organizing society, the concepts of the power relationship, discussed by Foucault, begin to take effect. The implications of these hierarchical systems involve significant questions about the nature of society and the role of dominant cultures. As Linker has
suggested about the role of representation, these systems cannot be seen as neutral entities, but must instead be viewed in light of the confinement(s) they impose on segments of society.

Recognizing these hierarchical systems is but the first step in the process of destabilizing them. Foucault in his introduction to Deleuze’s “Anti-Oedipus” suggests the development of, “action, thought, and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition and disjunction, and not by subdivision and pyramidal hierarchization” (emphasis added). A process seemingly coexistent with the notion of the matrix, where we engage the action of lines of force such that the points of significance occur where diverse systems collide in unexpected or even undesired ways. We can also examine the concept of such hierarchization in light of Deleuze’s notion of the map and the tracing. The tracing according to Deleuze, “has organized, stabilized and neutralized the multiplicities according to the axes of signifiância and subjectification belonging to it” (13). Hence the hierarchical system can be said to take the multiplicities and differences found in society, in any controlled system, and confine them within the rules of the system. This type of system controls and confines the multiplicities instead of opening up the system to allow for different perceptions and conceptions. The map on the other hand is open to interpretation, it is “open and connectable,” encourages modification and reworking (12), and is, in essence, a practice rather than a thing. Similar to the text, which exists not within the hierarchical structure, but at its periphery, mapping can be seen as a transcendence of limits through the destabilizing of conventional classifications. While the oppositional force of the hierarchies is strong, it is based on the stability of classifications, and when that stability is challenged, the hierarchy itself is open to reinterpretation. The hierarchies, however, are not eliminated, but rather in being opened up to interpretation, the different elements of the hierarchy exist in positions of diminished power (Benjamin 10).

What is being explored in this project is not a destruction of the social fiction of disability. It is not even a deconstruction of that or of the power structures upon which the accessibility issue rests. Rather this is an exploration of the deconstruction AND reconstruction of those issues. No single exhaustive definition of deconstruction can be offered and indeed this entire section of the project, is in part definitive of the practice. It is also intended to indicate the belief that deconstruction is as much about the reconceptualization of systems of classification as it is about their initial critique.

As discussed in the introduction, Derrida argues in De la grammatologie that the binary oppositions of Saussurean linguistics actually form the very foundation for all of western thought, ultimately acting as the
basis for the problem of subject and object or the ‘same’ and the ‘other’ (Martin 25). One purpose of Derrida’s deconstruction is to expose the ambiguity which exists in the reading of a text, proposing instead a multiplicity of potentials where the factual relationship between the sign and the signified is challenged. “Deconstruction could be defined as a reading and a production (writing) that attempted to reveal the absence of a transcendental signified,” (Martin 26) and is thus a practice which brings about a destabilizing of the power which one term in a binary opposition has over the other.

In and of itself, deconstruction is only part of the process though, and it is equally important to reconceptualize that which has been challenged, critiqued and deconstructed. Derrida, in his commentary on Tschumi’s Parc de la Villette, places strong emphasis on the idea that the ‘norms’ which are examined and challenged in the project are not destroyed, but are rather subordinated and placed within another context. Their dominance is challenged, but not their existence. Thus we can challenge the notion of an able / disabled opposition and can invert the pair to place the ‘inferior’ in the dominant position or we can place both on a level playing field, but they will both remain in existence. “What is in question in the Manhattan Transcripts,” notes Derrida on a theoretical project by Tschumi, “is the invention of ‘new relations, in which the traditional components of architecture are broken down and reconstructed along other axes’”

(La Case Vide 11).

Taken together, the concepts proposed here can be seen as an outline of the practices which are involved in a deconstruction – reconstruction. The idea of the matrix itself operates as a metaphor for an examination of the issues of accessibility from the standpoint of a single but extremely diverse group of people. Thus, there are differences, but no single dominant majority, as opposed to the hierarchical system of an environment designed for the able bodied, where accessible places and accommodations are then inserted into the overall design. The deconstructive process is an attempt to expose the socially constructed nature of disability and the implications that this fiction has for society as a whole, and specifically for designers. The process does not stop though at the point where the current conceptions of accessibility have been challenged and critiqued, but continues to propose an alternative position from which to examine the issue and from which architecture and landscape architecture can be designed. As with deconstruction, the concepts presented here are not considered the only means by which this can be accomplished, but as one of the multitude of possibilities.
These different concepts do not exist within a vacuum, independent of the implications and connections of each to the others. Instead, they can all be seen as part of a matrix which attempts to examine and critique conventional modes of interpretation. They represent not a fixed system, but rather an open, dynamic and ongoing activity and although fragmentary in nature – none completely whole in its conception or process – they act by transcending the boundaries and limits set for them, developing a web of connections which speak more of the in-between spaces, than of the individual ideas themselves. These lines of force are ultimately not things at all, but rather an ongoing practice in which even their own existence can be challenged.
Chapter 3  

*Deconstructing the social conceptions of disability...*  

While concepts of disability are wrought with conflicting definitions, approached from many points of view, all too often the issue of accessibility is conceived simply as a need for providing accommodations which meet the needs of a homogenous group of people with disabilities. Our constructed landscapes have typically been designed for a mythical average or ‘normal’ individual – a “young adult, non-disabled, male paradigm of humanity,” according to Wendell (Rejected 19) – making access to those landscapes difficult if not impossible for significant portions of the population. While accessible design provides access to the landscape for those who had been previously limited, it frequently provides access which is distinctly separate and clearly divided among accommodations for the able and those for the ‘disabled.’

Against this able / disabled opposition, an alternative view of society suggests a broader conception of the general population, whereby diversity is acknowledged as a fundamental component of society. Society can be conceived as, “exceedingly diverse – in size, shape, colour, texture, structure, function, range & habits of movement, and development – and … constantly changing” (Wendell 85). In opposition to this, however, the concept of disability is based on a socially constructed, normative paradigm of humanity that is exceedingly limited, and the belief that disability is a deviation from this normality. Such conceptions control not only the social status of people with disabilities, but have come to be a dominant force in the creation of the built environment, generating landscapes of exclusion and segregation. Even landscapes designed to be accessible frequently contain accessible accommodations within a predominantly inaccessible whole, and while there may be little doubt that in previous times individuals with disabilities were intentionally excluded from certain aspects of social life, situations still exist today in which accessibility is based on the same limited, but entrenched concepts of disability.

Bombarded with the images of the ‘perfect’ body on a regular basis, it can be difficult to actually figure out what it means to be normal in this society. An ideal exists that we are all constantly reminded of, even though it tends not to characterize the majority of people. And while few of us can live up to this ideal, for people whose bodily difference is far from this ideal, it acts as a mechanism by which they are marginalized in...
society. To be ‘normal,’ in terms of physical characteristics, generally suggests that all of one’s essential parts function correctly. But, what level of functioning is normal? One of the fundamental components of the conception of normality is the idea of independent functioning, thus being able to live without the assistance of others with one’s daily activities. Surely to require assistance for everyday things has to be seen as a sign of weakness and dependence. But are we all not dependent upon others for our daily activities? Were we suddenly deprived of technology how long would we all be able to survive truly on our own? To be dependent upon such technologies seems beyond questioning though, and it has become so naturalized that we do not even doubt its existence and certainly do not feel as though our dependence on technology is a sign of weakness. It is just part of our normal existence.

Why is it then that, when some people need assistance, they are considered helpless or dependent? Wendell notes that, “While most non-disabled people in industrialized societies believe that being able to perform the so-called ‘activities of daily living’ … such as washing, dressing, cooking, shopping, cleaning, and writing, by and for oneself is a necessary condition of independence, and therefore regard people with disabilities as dependent if they cannot perform them, they do not recognize their own dependence on services, such as the provision of water that comes from the tap, as obstacles to their own ‘independence’” (145). Clearly while some dependence on services has become a naturalized fact of life, independence in terms of activities of daily living is considered an aspect of normal existence. Those who cannot perform such activities considered abnormal and physically weak, subsequently becoming socially weak as well.

Disability is more though than a mere inability to perform the activities of daily life by oneself. Frequently disability is perceived solely on the basis of a physical deviation from the social conception of ‘normal.’ “The power of culture alone to construct a disability is revealed when we consider bodily difference – deviations from a society’s conception of a ‘normal’ or acceptable body – that, although they cause little or no functional or physical difficulty for a person who has them, constitute major social disabilities” (Wendell 44). Unfortunately, even considering normal to be that which is encountered on a daily basis presents a limiting conception of people with disabilities because the built landscape limits their active participation in daily life, denying not only their presence but their influence. Even if the images of bodily ideals constantly seen in the media are ignored, for the most part what is encountered on a daily basis is mostly an able bodied population in which people with disabilities play only a peripheral role. The built landscape, even the ‘accessible’
aspects of it, tends to reinforce stereotypes of people with disabilities, accentuating a perception of dependency and need for special accommodations.

While there are likely an innumerable reasons for this concept of normality, several distinct factors provide insight into the power of representations of body ideals, while suggesting potential reasons behind the continued segregation of accessible accommodations. Connections exist between what we might call normal functioning and health, whereby normality is parallel with good health and therefore a deviation from that norm is seen as less than healthy.\(^1\) One reason for the belief in the normal body as free from both illness and disability seems to be the fear that the presence of a disability means an end to one’s life either in terms of irreparable changes or even the belief that life with a disability is simply not worth living (Silvers 159).

According to Wendell, “The belief that life would not be worth living with a disability would be enough to prevent them [able bodied individuals] from imagining their own disablement. For example, the assumption that permanent, global incompetence results from any major disability is still prevalent; there is a strong presumption that competent people either have no physical or mental limitations or are able to hide them in public and social life” (54).

Thus people with disabilities have no ‘need’ for an ‘accessible’ environment since they are either totally incapable of living daily life, or are so able to hide their disability that they again require no changes in the environment in order to function. “Not only the architecture, but the entire physical and social organization of life tends to assume,” according to Wendell, “that we are all either strong and healthy and able to do what the average young, non-disabled man can do or that we are completely unable to participate in public life” (39). Rather than this image of individuals with disabilities, it is necessary to recognize that there are many physical limitations which do not globally incapacitate the individual and that as Owen notes, “some limitation in function is completely normal for an increasing number of citizens” (26). Unfortunately, this image of disability, as just another aspect of the life of normal individuals, conflicts with the belief in the ideal body which is healthy and free from physical limitation. Fear of having a disability can act as a basis for the conception of the individual as completely healthy and unimpaired. “To the non-disabled, people with disabilities … symbolize, among

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\(^1\) See Ron Amundson for a discussion of the relationship between disability and illness. While the focus here is on the implications of physical disability, any discussion of disability as a concept can be seen as related to notions of chronic illness and illness in general.
other things, imperfection, failure to control the body, and everyone’s vulnerability to weakness, pain and death.” (Wendell 60) and, “…since everyone tries to appear as ‘normal’ as possible, those who appear clearly ‘abnormal’ according to their society’s standards are constant reminders to those who are currently measuring up that they might slip outside the standards” (Wendell 89).

The normalized body is not just a flight from illness and disability, it is also related to the continuing idealization of bodily form. Ideals about what the perfect body should be like have existed throughout history and while the specific may have changed over time, the presence of ideals has not (Wendell 86). Whatever the ideals of a society might be, those with disabilities represent a deviation from this idealized appearance of the body, as well as ideals of strength, energy, movement, function and proper control (Wendell 86). Not only do these ideals affect the way in which those who do not or cannot meet them are perceived, but also the way in which the built environment is constructed. Throughout much of our history, the built environment has been designed to meet the needs of the ideal person who is always healthy, who is always in control and who lives a completely independent life. The paradox is that while today we are beginning to view the human body as more diverse in form and function, the images of the ideal body have begun to have even greater levels of significance. According to Wendell, “…never before in history have images of real people who meet the latest cultural ideals of beauty, health, and physical performance been so often presented to so many people. Now it is possible for the images of a few people to drive out the reality of most people we actually encounter” (86).

In the case of people with physical disabilities, the movie industry has perpetuated or initiated a number of stereotypes over the years as part of the general practice of isolation – stereotypes so durable and pervasive that they have become mainstream society’s perception of disabled people and have obscured if not outright supplanted disabled people’s perceptions of themselves … its more common representations include extraordinary (and often initially embittered) individuals whose lonely struggle against incredible odds make for what it considers heart-warming stories of courage and triumph, violence prone beasts just asking to be destroyed, comic characters who inadvertently cause trouble for themselves or others, saintly sages who possess the gift of second sight, and sweet young things whose goodness and innocence are sufficient currency for a one-way ticket out of isolation in the form of a miraculous cure (Norden 3).
The normalized view of society, based on an idealized human form and replete with stereotypical representations of people with disabilities, influences social conditions in society, as well as informing and being informed by the environment, whether in the form of a built landscape or a visual representation. According to David Sibley, “Space is implicated in the cultural construction of outsiders … marginal, residual spaces, places with which groups … are often associated, confirm the outsider status of the minority. They may be places which are avoided by members of the dominant society because they appear threatening – a fear of the ‘other’ becomes a fear of place” (“Outsiders” 112). Fear of the other is only one issue though and Sibley says further that, “Spatial structures can strengthen or weaken social boundaries, thus accentuating social division or, conversely, rendering the excluded group less visible … Space represents power in that control of space confers the power to exclude…” (113).

Whether intentionally or not, many landscapes operate as the mechanisms by which these social divisions are significantly strengthened, and even in those which are intended to be accessible, the separation of accessible accommodations from the overall environment creates physical, social and psychological segregation. Michel Foucault notes that rather than being a conflict between individuals, power is more a “question of government,” where government is seen not only as a political structure but also the, “designated way in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed” (“Subject” 428). The normalization of the ideal body then is not merely an issue of social stigma, it is a part of the structure of segregation between the able bodied and people with disabilities that becomes further reinforced by the structure of the built environment.

A significant example of such conditions is the ‘accessible’ entry or ramp indicated with the international symbol of accessibility. While there is nothing official in this symbol which limits its use only to those with disabilities, it is often thought by able bodied individuals that the entry or ramp is not for their use, that it is only for the use of the ‘disabled.’ While the wheelchair symbol has become a dominant visible representation of accessibility, it also acts as a mechanism of discrimination and segregation, suggesting that some accommodations are intended only for people with disabilities. Catherine Alguire, an occupational therapist and landscape designer with Barrier Free Environments, described the “subtle discrimination,” which she found at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. “At the ramp, there was a little picture of a wheelchair, which meant people in wheelchairs should go this way, and everyone else should go up the steps. If I were there with my kids in strollers,” Alguire continued, “I would never have realized I could go that
way, because I would have felt intimidated, like I was using facilities that only people in wheelchairs should be entitled to” (Leccesse 75). While it may be necessary to make ‘accessible’ accommodations known to those who need them – so long as accessibility in whatever form remains an exception rather than the rule – many of the methods used to highlight these accommodations do much to further the segregation of users.

The discussion has so far focused on the perceived deviation of people with disabilities from the norms created by society, however, it is necessary to examine how different conceptions of difference are generated and how even things which appear to be absolute conditions are informed by social consensus. A range of difference can be established between three of the terms often associated with issues of disability and accessibility. At one end of the spectrum, ‘impairment’ is conceived of as a purely medical condition, while moving through that range of difference, ‘disability’ is conceived as a loss of ability due to a medical condition and finally a ‘handicap’ is considered as a relationship between people with disabilities and the environments in which they live. While accepting the premise that there are different levels of social influence which define these terms, the influence of social and historical factors cannot be entirely eliminated, even when defining impairments in terms of pure objective medical standards.

Good definitions of impairment and disability should recognize that normal (i.e. unimpaired) physical structure and function, as well as normal (i.e. non-disabled) ability to perform activities, depend to some extent on the physical, social, and cultural environment in which a person is living, and are influenced by such factors as what activities are necessary to survival in an environment and what abilities a culture considers most essential to a participant. However, they should also take into account the possibility that some members of a society may have a vested interest in defining ‘normal’ structure, function, and ability for other members in ways that disadvantage those other members and/or mask ill treatment of them … In addition, some terms, such as handicap, may be useful to refer specifically to any loss of opportunities to participate in major aspects of the life of a society that results from the interaction of a disability with the physical, social, and cultural environment of the person who has it (Wendell 22-23).

Many definitions of disability recognize a relationship between a physical impairment and the environment in which the individual with the impairment lives and works (see Amundson 1992, Wendell 1996). Indeed this,
is often considered one of the greatest differences between handicaps and disabilities, such that the handicap is almost exclusively a result of social conditions, while a disability involves a specific relationship between social conditions, the physical environment and a physical impairment. What these definitions also point to is a relationship with the social context of that individual, where ‘normal’ functioning is related to the social and economic conditions of the person’s environment. Hence any attempt to define disability based on what a society considers to be ‘normal’ is inherently relative to the beliefs of that society and their social, economic and cultural conditions. While we rely heavily on the mechanization of food provision to survive, it is quite ‘natural’ in many countries to still be individually responsible for producing one’s own supply of food. Even within the United States, social and economic conditions vary to such a large extent that it is difficult to define any absolute ‘norms.’ It seems convincing to distinguish between what may be the physical limitations, and the affects of those conditions on one’s ability to function in a society. While a relationship between an impairment and the environment has the potential to create a disability, this is fundamentally bound up in a society’s conception of what it means to function ‘normally.’

Physical impairments, while brought about by specific physiological conditions, are affected by social conception. Although an impairment cannot itself be socially constructed, and there can be little doubt that the loss of an arm or leg, or any other physical condition, is a physical event and not a matter of social conditions, questions must be raised in considering how such impairments are perceived. While many conditions are readily recognized by the medical establishment, we are far from a point of complete knowledge about the body and all of the potential impairments which may arise throughout one’s lifetime. In our “modern, scientific world,” an illness or injury does not exist until the, “medical profession,” acknowledges it (Jeffreys 1982, quoted in Wendell 128). Furthermore, “It is a consequence,” says Wendell, “of the cognitive and social authority of medicine, combined with the limitations of medical knowledge and the unwillingness of medical practitioners to admit those limitations, that many people who are very ill and disabled are abandoned out of the reach of the social safety net” (129). Thus, even though impairments are physical occurrences, they are not beyond the scope of social and historical contexts. Jeffreys has noted that in previous historical periods it was perfectly natural for someone to become ill or disabled and yet never be diagnosed with any known condition. Yet today, when medicine is believed able to solve the problems of the body, a condition which cannot be confirmed officially is considered suspect (Jeffreys 1982, quoted in Wendell 128), thus reinforcing the deception nature of disability claims.

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2 For further discussion of the deceptive nature of disability claims, and the historical basis for such claims of deception, see the discussion in Chapter 4 of the relationship between disability and vagrancy.
In addition to the relationship of handicap, disability and impairment to social conditions, it will be helpful to establish a relationship between the normalizing agents mentioned earlier and the subsequent categorization of individuals who do not measure up to society’s standards of normality. Now that even impairments, the most medically determinable of characteristics, have been exposed as at least partial constructs of social conceptions, it is possible to examine the inevitable ‘us and them’ dichotomy which arises between ‘able’ and ‘disabled.’ It has been suggested that while there is a continuum of differences among human beings, there remains a “want,” on the part of some, to maintain the dichotomy between those who are ‘normal’ and those whose difference is simply too great to be considered normal (Owen 28). Even assuming for the moment that we are able to reach a point in which the differences among us do not place us in two opposing groups, categorization of some measure will likely continue, and thus the function of these categorizations becomes extremely important.

Some forms of categorization have been so naturalized that they mask differences among the members of the category, and are useful primarily in efforts to marginalize those segments of society. In grouping together ‘people with disabilities’ for example, significant differences in gender, race, class, sexual identity, age and most importantly, different disabilities are completely ignored (Wendell 71). It is possible that there is some benefit in being able to group together all forms of disability into a single category. Such broadly defined categories are almost completely useless within the context of the built environment. Consider the grouping together of two individuals with ‘disabilities,’ one a visually impaired individual and the other a user of a mobilized wheelchair, who doesn’t have the strength to walk around all day long. Place these two individuals in the landscape with a third person who, regardless of their physical condition, has a young child in a stroller. While we can classify the first two people as having different physical disabilities, the wheelchair user has needs from the landscape more in common with the parent than with the individual with the visual impairment.

Were we able to look beyond artificial differences, the need for broad categories, such as disability, would surely be diminished. Says Wendell, “If we were willing to assess realistically what each person needs to participate as fully as possible in the major activities of our society, medical classifications would have far less social importance than they have now. Moreover, a category such as ‘disability’ would either become more inclusive or else lose much of its social
importance” (132). All too often, categorization is used as a mechanism for exclusion and segregation, rather than for assessing the needs of different individuals. Sibley argues that there is historical continuity in the exclusion of ‘others’ and that, “there are many recent instances of collective action against groups who appear to threaten the perceived spatial and social homogeneity of localities, where the threat comes from difference in ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or lifestyle” (“Purification” 410). Indeed, normalizing agents, which have become so prevalent in our society, create division between those conforming to society’s standards of normality and those who represent a deviation from the norm. While perhaps not an explicitly exclusionary tactic, such conditions effectively exclude large segments of the population from the social landscape.

Being placed within the disability category grants to individuals the status of the ‘other’ in our society. “When we make people ‘Other,’ we group them together as the objects of our experience instead of regarding them as subjects of experience with whom we might identify, and we see them primarily as symbolic of something else – usually, but not always, something we reject and fear and project onto them” (60). In the grouping together of people with disabilities, it is easier to dismiss their differences as things which ‘could never happen to me.’ Fear acts as a basis for the concept of normalization, and plays a significant role in the creation of the ‘other.’ Whether because of the association of disability with illness and weakness, or the widespread belief in the ability to completely control one’s body, or still further the inevitability of death, “In the societies where there are strong ideals of bodily perfection to which everyone is supposed to aspire, people with disabilities are imperfect ‘Others’ who can never come close enough to the ideals; identifying with them would remind the non-disabled that their ideals imply a degree of control that must eventually elude them too” (Wendell 63). Ultimately the normalization of the absolutely healthy body without any physical impairments will place everyone beyond the scope of normality, unless as Owen has suggested, normality is reconceptualized as being inclusive of some limitations of functioning (26).

This characterization of people with disabilities as ‘other’ has permitted their exclusion from society. Perceived as objects of the experience of able bodied people and not subjects of their own experiences (Wendell 60), the importance of people with disabilities in society can easily be discounted, where even further distancing between ‘us’ and ‘them’ can be set up by the creation of boundaries in the landscape. Landscapes accessible only to the typical ‘normal’ person limit the interaction between segments of society, which only further enhances the ‘other’ status of people with disabilities. Says Wendell, “This is a self perpetuating social system, since the exclusion of people with disabilities from many aspects of life in a
society prevents non-disabled people from getting to know them, and also prevents people with disabilities from making their own mark on culture, both of which contribute to their remaining a symbolic ‘Other’ to non-disabled people” (64).

Linguistic usage and the physical landscape continue to perpetuate the other-ness of people with disabilities, and the terminology used to describe them is replete with negative terms, situated against the positive nature of the majority population. “We are de-formed, dis-eased, dis-abled, dis-ordered, ab-normal, and most telling of all, an in-valid,” according to the author of *Cinema of Isolation*, Martin Norden (12). The status of those with disabilities as the ‘other’ is even further strengthened by physical landscapes, and as Sibley has noted, spatial structures have the ability to either diminish or accentuate social boundaries, with space itself can act as a mechanism for the exercise of power and the exclusion of those who do not conform to society’s standards of normality (“Outsiders” 113). Clearly, the inaccessibility of a place will limit the users of that place. However, even places which have been made ‘accessible’ can reinforce segregation. Limited accessible accommodations or those which provide access to only certain areas of a site, act to reinforce a division in society, but there are differences in the extent to which physical boundaries segregate users. A staircase will always be inaccessible to those who use wheelchairs, while a ramp is accessible to a larger, though not exhaustive, population. However, when a ramp is labeled as ‘accessible,’ the separation of users is dramatically strengthened.

Sibley discussed such conditions in terms of strongly and weakly classified boundaries. Strongly classified boundaries act to rigidly delineate the different elements or categories, keeping them distinctly separate, while weak classifications have more loosely defined boundaries, and are less concerned with rigid classifications (“Purification” 412). This is not to say that there are not still boundaries which some individuals will be less likely to cross. Artificially set divisions, such as those which suggest accommodations only for one segment of the population, create much stronger boundaries. These divisions also occur when so-called ‘accessible’ accommodations are set significantly apart from the rest of a site. Often times, the ‘accessible’ entrance to a building will be located at a position of secondary importance, and the primary entry will continue to be ‘inaccessible.’ Such divisions help to maintain the ‘otherness’ of people with disabilities, and implicitly suggest that they have no need to experience the
main entrance so long as another one is ‘provided’ for them. In contrast to strongly classified structures which only enhance the division of power between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots,’ Sibley says that, “A weakly classified structure … is a tolerant one in which new ideas are absorbed. They do not threaten existing nonhierarchical power relationships precisely because power is diffuse” (“Purification” 412). Much the same can be said for landscapes in which the separation between different populations is only loosely defined. Such landscapes provide opportunities for people with disabilities, without calling attention to aspects of difference in the population. There continue, however, to be a significant number of landscapes in which the division between the able bodied and those with disabilities remains strong. Now, almost seven years after the passage of the *ADA*, landscapes still exist which completely exclude significant segments of the population and others which continue to segregate people with disabilities from the general population.

Until recently little if any concern was given to issues of access to the outdoor environment. Most of the issues addressed here, relate equally well to buildings and to landscapes, but it is significant that far less access has been available to the outdoor environment than to buildings. It has been argued that the materials used, even in the most constructed of landscapes, make accessibility a more difficult issue. The natural environment, it is also argued, is inherently inaccessible and no accommodations should be made for anyone, and the landscape is a more dangerous place, and therefore safety issues must be very carefully considered, ‘especially for the disabled.’ It would seem that anyone who does not measure up to standards of what the average normal person is, should simply confine themselves to the safer, more controlled, indoor environment, where special access can be provided.

Some of these concerns are addressed by author Joseph Sax when he writes: “The concern that has been expressed for the elderly and infirm in debates over parkland developments must be taken with a measure of skepticism … Neither the elderly or infirm, if they were active at other times, are at the forefront of those advocating intense development of parklands … I myself have climbed in Montana with a fifty-seven year old totally blind man, who was continuing – to the best of his ability – to pursue the kind of activity he enjoyed before his injury…” (80). In the natural environment, accessibility may not be as clear cut as in more developed areas, but a greater level of difficulty and risk is expected and desired by those who visit such
areas.\(^3\) The existence of landscapes which either entirely exclude those with disabilities, or provide separate segregated accommodations for them suggest problems which go beyond an increased level of difficulty that may be expected in more rugged terrain.

Frequently the arguments against an increased level of accessibility in the landscaped environment seem to only further expose the mistaken belief that people who have some form of disability must be completely incapable of having the same types of experiences as everyone else. But, there is another and potentially more disturbing prospect which needs to be explored. The impact of being an ‘other,’ as it concerned the role of experience was discussed earlier where, as an ‘other,’ an individual was seen as incapable of having experiences that ‘normal’ people have (Wendell 60). While home environments are often seen as protected enclaves and our public buildings have been deemed important enough to be made more accessible, the outdoors seems to be an inessential place. Landscapes are commonly considered places of recreation, contemplation, even exploration, and the lack of necessity to those experiences, suggests no need to make them as accessible.

Similar situations seem to exist even in more developed landscapes. The War Memorial Plaza on the campus of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia is an example of this kind of thinking. In 1984 the university reaffirmed its commitment to a ‘Barrier-Free’ environment (Master Plan 42), and there can be little doubt that significant strides have been made to ensure a much higher level of access on the campus. However the plaza, which offers a significant vantage point for viewing the campus and the surrounding landscape, is inaccessible to anyone who cannot use stairs. While there is only a minimal change in elevation from the surrounding area, the few shallow stairs might as well be a gate for some people. The plaza, which is a significant space on campus, visually if not functionally, is given even more prominence by its elevated position, but now, almost 15 years after the university reaffirmed its belief in a barrier-free campus, it remains inaccessible. But, why should it be accessible, no one needs to go there, and if they do for some reason have to be there, surely special provisions can be made to help someone up to the level of the plaza. Because this is a place not of necessity, but of contemplation, or relaxation, there seems to be

\(^3\) See discussion of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (R.O.S.) and expectations of accessibly in Universal Access to Outdoor Recreation and throughout Mountains Without Handrails.
no need to make it accessible. Unfortunately, what results is a landscape of exclusion, and while only one example, it illustrates that in spite of concerted efforts to promote accessibility, there is still a dramatic difference in how people with disabilities are treated on this campus.

It becomes even more evident that people with disabilities are seen as a separate distinct minority on the campus if we examine those places where ‘accessible’ accommodations are treated as distinctly separate from ‘normal’ accommodations. As the administrative center of the university, **Burruss Hall** is one of the most significant buildings on campus. Many members of the university population have a stake in the activities which occur in the building, and the visual dominance of the building is hard to discount. Located atop a grand honorific staircase, the building achieves an even greater presence on the campus and provides a specific type of experience when approaching and entering the building. In keeping with current **guidelines** and the university’s own position on accessibility, entry into the building, for people who cannot approach by way of the main entry, is also accommodated. However, those who must by necessity use these entries are relegated to a secondary service oriented entry at the side of the building, immediately adjacent to the service loading dock.

Accessibility is certainly accommodated in this building, but the experiences offered are drastically different and far from equal or equivalent. The honorific landscape at the main entry into the building provides not only a backdrop against which the building is viewed, but an experience for those who use it which is unilaterally denied to those who use the ‘accessible’ entries. One could argue that the current accessibility requirements are being met in the best and most efficient manner possible. Indeed, not only would some form of accommodation need to be made to allow access to the main entry of the building, but some changes would also be necessary once inside the atrium of the building. It is not suggested here that there is some form of explicit attempt on the part of the university to segregate different types of users, however, once again a situation exists in which those with disabilities are seen and treated as second class citizens. It would be unacceptable today to have a separate entrance for different races, however, it remains acceptable to do so based on disabilities.

Nonetheless, this is a situation in which the renovation of a landscape and structure might be seen as economically prohibitive, and most definitely it is a situation in which changes in both societal perspective and government regulations are different than when the keystone of the building was laid in 1934. The...
The Seattle Center project can be considered in light of the previous discussion of strong and weak classifications of spatial boundaries. Although only at the stage of a masterplan, ‘accessible’ accommodations appear to have been incorporated into significant aspects of the design. Through the southern portion of the site, however, several sets of honorific stairs run through the central axis, setting up a strong visual axis, while linking significant spaces. A ramp is then set off to the side of this main axis running through a garden. Although providing an alternative experience, there is still a denial, to a specific population, of the experience of that main axis of the site. It is a question, particularly in this project, not of malice or intentional exclusion of people with disabilities, but rather of how society is conceived and what segments of society are considered and designed for.

For people meeting a society’s standards of ‘normality,’ the built environment offers few barriers of exclusion or segregation. However, an issue more complex than barrier removal is exposed when one considers the development of a concept such as disability. The values a society has in terms of what constitutes a normal individual are often based not on the people we meet on a daily basis, but the cultural ideals represented in the images which are constantly presented in front of us (Wendell 86). While few of us may be able to meet these idealized standards, people with disabilities come to be considered so far from those ideals that they are perceived to be beyond any conception of what is considered normal. Because they come to present the failure to achieve that idealized body, they are not considered people ‘like us,’ but as ‘others’ who simply reside outside of the boundaries of society.

Whether by design or by chance, the built environment seems only to reinforce the ‘other-ness’ of people with disabilities. Some barriers may be greater than others, but in many cases the built environment seems to be designed for a single group of people. Only by transcending this normalized view of society, which most of us can only meet for a short period in our lives, and
which some of us can never meet, can we begin to address the issue of accessibility not as an issue of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ but as an issue which affects all of our lives. The current paradigm of humanity is one in which those who do not meet a society’s view of what is normal are treated as second class citizens. In constructing a view of society based on these idealized representations, the differences and diversities amongst people are seen not as a normal part of our existence but as somehow deviant or deficient. What results is a situation in which an opposition comes into being between those that meet society’s standards – the ‘able’ individuals – and those who cannot meet these standards of the human body. Yet at some point in our lives are we all not this ‘other’ person? Is this view of the typical ‘normal’ person not based more upon our fear than upon the current fabric of society?

It could be beneficial if accessibility could be viewed as an issue which was significant for everyone, rather than an issue of providing accommodations for ‘them.’ Unfortunately not only does much of the current landscape reinforce the ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy, but these conceptions of normalization and disability are ingrained into our collective experience. Before we can even begin to understand how accessibility might be reconceptualized, we need to examine how these concepts, which place ‘us’ in an ‘us’ and ‘them’ situation, came into being. While there is a difference between the regulation of disability by governmental authority and the social conceptions of disability, those official regulations have had an exceedingly strong influence on how the entire disability category is conceived, and although vast improvements have been made, many of the biases and prejudices which effected the initial conception of the category continue to have influence today.
Chapter 4  

Historical examinations of disability expose the conception of people with disabilities as outsiders in society. The development of disability policies in various societies, can be traced in relation to social concepts of disability, such that the significant progress, made from times when those with disabilities were banished from society or even killed, becomes apparent. However, remnants of many early belief systems continue to influence contemporary practices and social beliefs, and from ancient civilizations in Greece and Rome through the modern welfare state, those with disabilities have been treated as inferior and unable or undeserving of participation in mainstream society. Rather than merely examining the social policies which have addressed the issue of disability, this examination will explore the mechanisms of marginalization in social policies and what Foucault calls the “manifold forms of domination that can be exercised within society” (“Two Lectures” 96). Concern is given not only to governmental policies directed towards those with disabilities, but to the minor forms of power and control exercised over their daily lives.

“That old age, childhood, and disability should be conditions automatically entitling people to social aid seems entirely natural to us in the present day,” according to Deborah Stone (25). How such beliefs have come to be considered natural, and how the relationship has developed between the belief in social aid and the tendency to place some people outside of the mainstream of society requires a rigorous examination. It has become a naturalized belief, even among advocacy groups, that people with disabilities have always been marginalized, and while this was not always the case, what will become clear, is that throughout history some people have been considered so different that they were deserving of special treatment which, rather than coming in the form of social changes, was generally provided in the form of public monetary assistance. Examining this special treatment will offer insight into the continued segregation of people with disabilities and suggest that, while significant progress has been made, people with disabilities continue to be seen as inferior – to the point when during the 1970s and 1980s the disability rights movement gained momentum, there was surprise outside the ‘disability community’ because it was assumed that “they” were either incapable of organizing political action or content with their government handouts (Pfeiffer 724).
This investigation while not an exhaustive analysis of the socio-historical basis for the current concept of disability, aims to expose some of the fundamental belief systems that have changed little since ancient times. Social concepts of disability will be explored within historical contexts, and in specific relation to the disability policies which have been generated in Europe and the United States. It is important to question not only what the history of the concept of disability is, but rather how different concepts of disability have operated within their social and historical contexts. What are the mechanisms by which different societies have marginalized people with disabilities and what ‘logic’ have they used to justify their actions? Most importantly, in looking at these historical circumstances, it is necessary to ask how the moves of different societies have helped to naturalize the belief in the inferiority of people with disabilities and their separation from society.

Some of the earliest archeological evidence suggests that disability has been a component of society from at least the Neanderthal period, and that within early “traditional” societies, people with disabilities frequently performed the role of shaman (Albrecht 36-37 citing work of Solecki 1971). While the prevalence of such conditions in early societies can only be speculated upon, intriguing questions are raised by the situation. Distinguished from the majority of society, the shaman is placed in a position of reverence and power in relation to the society. Thus the person, rather than being dependent on society for help, was the individual whom society depended upon for help and guidance. In shamanistic cultures, it is believed that an individual is born into the role, distinguished from the rest of society by some form of physical difference (Britannica “Sacred offices and orders”). However, this was surely not the case with all individuals who exhibit differences from the norms of the society, and evidence also suggests the prevalence of trepanning. Where, by drilling holes into the skull of a person, evil spirits would be allowed to escape (Albrecht 37).

In the ancient world, the mechanism for control of people with disabilities seems to have been based either on philosophical grounds – as espoused by those such as Plato – or societal beliefs. The ancient Greek world aimed to eliminate people with disabilities from the society, and to prevent others from being born with disabling conditions. A society based on individualism and strength, the Spartans left the elderly and people with disabilities to die in the countryside, while Plato viewed those with disabilities as barriers to the perfection of society and advocated that they be put away in “some mysterious unknown place”
Those with disabilities were then not people at all, but rather defectives undeserving of assistance or any existence at all. The Romans, while giving assistance to adults with disabilities, often abandoned children with disabilities or deformities to die (Morris 1992, cited in Albrecht), and in both societies, people with disabilities were dealt with in an exclusionary manner. A “network of obligation” existed in the Roman world, whereby the strong felt a responsibility to the less fortunate (Morris 92). Thus, people with disabilities were considered dependent upon the generosity of the ‘strong,’ and more deserving of ‘charity’ than the able bodied poor, filling a need of the strong and wealthy to be the benefactors of the ‘weak.’ Says Morris, “There was one strain of socializing moral thought that treated the helping of another as being a virtue in itself…” (96). Thus, in contrast with Plato’s conception, the existence and dependency of people with disabilities could be considered a necessary component of the culture, but in both the Greek and Roman worlds, people with disabilities were considered inferior members of society.

One commonality among many ancient cultures, particularly amongst Judeo-Christian peoples who ostracized those with disabilities, is the belief that disability results from past misdeeds or from the displeasure of God (Mackelprang 8, Livneh, “Origins”). Such beliefs instilled in people a fear of those with disabilities (Livneh 340), creating a social system which prevented integration. Judeo-Christian belief has also taught that humans are made in God’s image (Mackelprang 8), thus placing people who exhibit some form of permanent impairment in a position of being less than human. This positioning could, as Livneh contends, place people with disabilities in a position equal to that of non-human members of the animal kingdom (“Monstrosity” 282), justifying their domination by the able bodied. Hence the primary mechanism for ‘dealing with’ people with disabilities in such cultures becomes consistent with a dehumanization, permitting both domination over them and the belief that they would be unable or were undeserving of participation in human social interactions.

Many of the ancient myths and stereotypes of people with disabilities still exist. Although few persons currently subscribe to abandoning or killing people with disabilities, many do associate disabilities with sin and the Devil. They either consciously or subconsciously think that disability is a synonym of bad. More often than not, able-bodied is associated with good, i.e. .... cleanliness and virtue. None of the great artists ever created angles with disabilities. Conversely, persons with disabilities have been associated through the ages with all that is bad. (Henderson and Bryan, qtd. in Norden 8).
The ‘modern’ belief that people with disabilities are essentially incapable members of society who fully depend upon the charity of others can be traced to the English Poor Law policies of the 17th century (Ianacone 953). These laws were the first policies to have a direct impact on conditions and beliefs in the United States (Scheer and Groce 32). Several aspects of the laws are significant, including the development of disability in relationship to vagrancy laws and the subsequent assumption that people with disabilities are merely ‘vagrants’ who are ‘faking it’ (Stone 29); the granting, to people with disabilities, of the right to beg (Stone 37); the affect of categorization both as a method of control and an aid in restoring the illusion of social order (Stone 51); and finally, the inability to perform work (Stone 51). While no doubt one aim of these policies was to provide assistance to the ‘needy,’ the policies operate as one of the first concerted efforts to classify people with disabilities as fundamentally dependent upon society and can be considered not only methods of assistance, but methods of control.

Vagrancy and disability appear to be significantly distinct and separate, however, both were characterized in their times as being either legitimate or illegitimate conditions (29). The English Poor Laws regulated the type of assistance given to the “impotent or worthy poor” and the “able-bodied or unworthy poor” (Scheer and Groce 32). A fairly common belief, according to Stone, was that people with disabilities were vagrants, faking their condition in order to receive assistance (32). The association with vagrancy still places people with disabilities in the position of having to prove the legitimacy of their illness or impairment, the assumption being that disability doesn’t exist until medically proven. Whether correct or not, reports of vagrants faking disability established a “social truth,” which by the time the disability category was firmly established in the 19th century had inextricably linked the category and the potential for deception (Stone 32). Little has changed, as illness or injury exists today only when confirmed by medical science (Wendell, Rejected 128). People must still suffer the indignity of having to prove that they don’t meet the normalized standards which society has set for them.

The granting of the “right” to beg under the Poor Law system was actually an exemption from punishment for begging rather than a right (Stone 36). The conclusive presumption, according to Ianacone, was that anyone with a form of disability automatically belonged to the ranks of the indigent poor (953). They were thus completely dependent upon the charity of others, and while the exemption from prosecution for begging must have enabled some to survive, it would likely have had the further effect of creating a paternalistic
system whereby people with disabilities were seen not only as incapable of working, but incapable of caring for themselves or participating in social life. The categorical inability to work not only ‘allowed’ begging to persist, but also justified the exclusion of people with disabilities from mainstream society. People with disabilities then, while perhaps not being likened to animals as in ancient cultures, remained in an inferior position within the social hierarchy.

The process of determining who was “able-bodied” and thus fit to work was one of separating out all of those who could not work (Stone 41), thereby creating not a system of positive abilities, but negative disabilities. As such, disability became a characteristic of a person who was essentially less than whole, incomplete or inferior. Categorization had another important function in the society though, providing a method for controlling segments of society which were considered less than desirable, thus permitting assistance to those who were deserving while allowing punishment and harsh treatment for the undeserving (Stone 50). The disability category functioned not as a positive move to provide a better life for those with physical impairments, but as a means of controlling the population and determining who would be “allowed” to be poor.

The entire Poor Law system was based on a need to control the working population and prevent those who were capable of working from relying on begging and charity (Stone 54). In relating the disability category with the inability to work, two issues come to light, beginning with, the belief that disability was a deceptive condition of people who had chosen not to work. Although an accepted exemption from the requirement to work, disability was often conceived as a deceptive condition, and even those who legitimately were not required to work were considered inferior because of their condition. However, it is the belief in the globally incapacitated person which had an even greater effect. While Poor Law policy dealt with disability as distinctive conditions, the commonality amongst them was the perceived inability of the person to work. Yet, this inability to work was not solely a condition of the physical impairment, but rather a result of societal beliefs. People with any form of disability were considered incapable of working and rather than addressing that condition, the Poor Laws only further reinforced the belief in their dependency on assistance.

Aspects of the German Social Insurance system, as with the English Poor Laws would come to influence American disability policies (Berkowitz 196), and Stone suggests that the German policies became the model for all subsequent social insurance programs (56). Although significantly different from the English system in its recognition of disability as a limit to specific areas, the German policies continued the tradition of...
fundamentally constructing disability policies as methods of control over the working populous (Stone 66). Ironically enough, disability was seen as a means of maintaining ones social status when they were no longer able to work. Not unlike the legitimization of begging in the English system, it created the disability category as a mechanism for controlling the hierarchical organization of society. The implementation of the German system allowed for the maintenance of existing social distinctions amongst the classes while still permitting some within those classes to leave the “work-based system” (Stone 67).

The Law of 1889 exemplifies, according to Stone, all of the principles of the concept of disability as found within the German system, including the definition of disability in relation to earning capacity, the concept of boundaries between those who would contribute to the distributive system and those who would receive assistance from the system, and finally the idea that incapacitated workers could be required to perform any other “suitable” work (58-59). It is the final aspect of the policies, the expectation that someone could be held to perform other work only within a certain “sphere of activity” which Stone briefly discusses as a mechanism for the maintenance of “social boundaries within the occupational structure” (59). Upon initial examination this would appear to give the people additional rights, where they could not be forced to change their occupation to the extent that it was outside their experience. The existing social hierarchy though is also maintained, such that a person could not be ‘forced’ to take another position outside their experience, because it was also outside their “sphere,” and therefore outside of the work performed by members of their social class.

That both the English and German systems can be seen as methods of control over the working populous helps to further explain many of the normalization concepts previously discussed. As mechanisms by which a differentiation could be made between the work and need-based economic systems, the very creation of the disability category was based on dependence. It is significant that these policies were based on the belief that disability was a fundamental component of the individual and not an issue of the environment in which that individual existed, as such beliefs would come to have significant impact on the current conception of disability. Even within current systems of entitlements, benefits are provided to make up for inadequacies of the individual and not the environment in which that person lives. The belief in the dependent nature of people with disabilities is now so firmly entrenched that it has become a naturalized ‘truth’.
Out of the Enlightenment era came the belief, both in the United States and Europe, that human beings could be perfected (Mackelprang 8). The earliest social policies in the United States which dealt with the issue of disability appeared the middle of the 19th century, where those unable to achieve a certain level of education, and labeled “feebleminded,” were helped to achieve a certain level of social and vocational ability (Pfeiffer 724-725). The medical model of disability emerged in connection with Enlightenment beliefs in the perfection of the human body, and where “cures” could not be found, individuals could at least be taught to function at some level within society (Longmore 355).

These social efforts resulted in the creation of special institutions for dealing with those who did not meet ‘normal’ standards and expectations. In Boston, Samuel Howe created a school whereby children with disabilities could be taught “useful knowledge” and then returned home (Pfeiffer 725). Unfortunately, Howe’s efforts at returning the children to their families were largely unsuccessful and the foundation was laid for the “dehumanizing institutionalization” of people with disabilities (725). Initially combining people with disabilities and the “unworthy poor” in an institutional setting, the advent of the medical model of disability saw a transition to the sheltering and education of people with disabilities (Rothman, 1971 cited in Scheer and Groce 33). The effect was the same, and the foundation solidified to the point where it was considered appropriate to segregate people with disabilities from mainstream society (Scheer and Groce 33).

If in the United States at the end of the 19th century it was considered common practice to isolate and segregate those with disabilities, one system of beliefs would seek to even further dehumanize the existence of those who were considered defective or deviant. By the end of the century the philosophy of Social Darwinism and ‘science’ of Eugenics had come to prominence (Mackelprang 9). Darwin’s theory of natural selection, as espoused in The Origin of Species in 1859, was used as a justification for the contempt and mistreatment of those with disabilities (Ianacone 954, Note 10). Eugenics was used to justify, among other things, forced sterilization¹ and the belief that the ‘handicapped’ had only a limited right to live, not to mention the continued segregation and isolation of people who failed to measure up to the standards of society (Ianacone 956). According to Ianacone, “…the handicapped have been limited in so basic a right as appearing in public places by statutes prohibiting an appearance by any person who is ‘diseased, maimed, malnourished, unable to take care of the necessities of life’” (Ianacone 956).

¹ See Pfeiffer for a brief discussion of some of the legislation addressing the issue of disability, in particular the role of sterilization. p. 726.
mutilated, or in any way deformed so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object’’ (957). The belief had become as firmly established in the United States by the start of the 20th century, as it had been in ancient cultures, that people with disabilities were at best inferior human beings and at worst not human at all. Social policy, philosophy and legislative action all sought to eliminate the presence of people with disabilities from society.

In light of such explicitly dehumanizing beliefs and policies, many of the social policies established in the United States would seem to greatly expand the rights of people with disabilities. Social attitudes were slow to change though and even while many policies were designed to grant more rights and provide increased assistance to people with disabilities, they were still largely based on the belief that people with disabilities are inferior and fundamentally dependent upon the handouts of others. American social insurance programs are largely based, both in theory and administration, upon their European predecessors (Berkowitz 196), and just as the almshouse had been brought over from Europe in the 1800’s, the social insurance policies, which would eventually include the disability category, were largely modeled on German and British precedents (Berkowitz 199-201).

The development of disability policies in the United States has, according to Stone, always been discussed within the context of the expansion of other programs and, as with its predecessors in Europe, the American system, which grew out of the social insurance policies, was largely based on the concept of providing compensation for the inability to work (Berkowitz 200). That U.S. policies developed through the expansion of other systems of social insurance may seem like a minor issue, however, if we look at it in the same context as the development of English Poor Law policy, it is possible to understand how the connection of one set of policies to another can have significant impacts.

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2 “United States legal history evidences very many public laws and court decisions that banned individuals with disabilities from such institutions as public schools, marriage, air travel, and even from being seen on public streets. Lest anyone believe such exclusions to be a phenomena of a distant clouded past, it should be understood that, for example, it took the 1988 Air Carrier’s Act to secure the right to air transportation for ticketed disabled passengers. Until that legislation was implemented, airlines could and did arbitrarily refuse to carry ticketed disabled passengers, regardless of whether the passenger traveled with no need of assistance and regardless of whether the airline had any factual basis for its fear of the passenger’s disability. In this country at this time, relatively few disabled adults have escaped experiencing segregation and exclusion arising out of false beliefs about or fears of, their disabilities” (Silvers, “Reconciling” 1995, note 14, p. 54).
The slow growth of disability policy from other social insurance programs, and the continued connection of disability with the inability to work, have slowed the development of a more inclusive conception of disability. Policies were established to provide assistance (usually in the form of money) to people with disabilities, however, once again it was not the disability or impairment which limited their access to fulfilling working lives, but rather the inaccessibility of transportation systems, the built environment and misconceptions held by employers. By establishing a system of dependence, early social insurance policies, when they did eventually include the disability category, succeeded in further entrenched the belief that people with disabilities were incapable of working. Furthermore, according to Ianacone, “Many of the handicapped who find employment have been relegated to low paying or menial jobs, thereby perpetuating the fallacy that the productivity and financial needs of the handicapped are less than those of other members of society” (959). While the early systems of rights were problematic the situation was far better than that of the ancient Judeo-Christian cultures and the early disability policies in Britain and Germany. Unfortunately, while the official policies were becoming more inclusive and assistive, they were still largely based on beliefs thousands of years old, which held that people with disabilities were inferior, dependent and helpless.

The ‘problem’ of disability is often conceived as a need to provide assistance to the needy out of public funds. Such assistance, however, is often based on an ultimately faulty assumption, that people with disabilities are totally incapable of living lives which are as interdependent as those of the rest of the population.

The critical distributive problem for all societies is how to decide when people are so poorly off that the normal rules of distribution should be suspended and some form of social aid – be it from kin, neighbors, church, or state – should take over. In the modern societies with which we are familiar, this problem appears, crudely drawn, as a conflict between work and need as a basis of claims on resources. The essence of the modern welfare state’s approach has been to establish categories of need in order to determine who should be allowed to make need-based claims, and to provide for people in these categories out of public monies administered by state agencies. Thus childhood, old age, sickness, and disability became legally recognized as conditions entitling individuals to social aid (Stone 13).
The issue is not whether some form of social assistance is needed, particularly where significant levels of stigmatization of disability still occur, rather it is necessary to examine the impacts of such assistance, and the limitations it imposes upon people who receive it. Many programs such as Medicaid and Medicare, initially designed to help people, are so outdated in their administration and basic assumptions that they frequently force people into inescapable cycles of dependence (Shapiro D4). While such social assistance programs continue to be needed, the current form forces people to rely solely upon assistance and imposes restrictions which confine people to lives of ‘isolation’ and ‘dependence.’

With the existence of need-based economic systems, there is the continuing managerial difficulty in assuring that the primary work-based system maintains its precedence over the need-based system (Stone 21). When, as, Stone argues, work is done only for its instrumental value (16), any potential to leave the work-based system and enter the need-based system would be taken advantage of, resulting in the development of need-based systems designed to discourage those seeking an easy way out and thereby only providing subsistence level support (Mackelprang 10). Because the system is designed to maintain the precedence of work, anyone within the need-based system automatically becomes inferior and subordinate to those in the primary system. Disability policies are thus based on a socially constructed hierarchy which devalues much of the society it is supposed to serve. Many such programs were developed at a time when a large number of people who were ‘globally’ incapacitated had no hope of living outside of nursing care facilities, and it is because of such conditions, that current systems support full care facilities while limiting access to less intensive care (Shapiro D4). Based initially on faulty assumptions that people with disabilities were completely dependent, the systems are even more arcane today and force people into controlled environments, segregated from society, family and friends. For all of the money that is spent on these systems (some $60 million in 1990), they are based on the presumption that people would choose not to work and thus remain dependent on the system, rather than providing educational and vocational training that would allow people to move from the need-based to the work-based system (Shapiro D4). Programs such as Medicare literally force people to remain inactive while within the system, with the possibility of losing not only disability payments, but medical coverage a constant threat, should they decide to return to work (Mackelprang 10). It is then, not necessarily the system of providing support, but rather the rules that limit activity, for those receiving benefits, that keeps people with disabilities from pursuing otherwise productive lives and forces them to remain on the lower end of the social hierarchy.
While Stone recognized that the development of the English Poor Law system had laid the foundation for the current “support services” administered by the modern welfare state, what she and others fail to recognize is that such support services, by categorizing people with disabilities as eligible for charity, relegate many people to a subsistence level existence, where they are forced to rely on an “ever-eroding baseline of services” (Mackelprang 10). Such conditions have impacts far beyond the scope of social welfare programs. They have come to play a dominant role in the development of so-called accessible accommodations since the earliest moves in this country to improve access for its citizens with disabilities. In fact, most accessibility measures can be likened to entitlements, where accessibility is frequently thought of as a device or program designed to provide assistance to a specific group of people whose needs are far different than those of the majority of society.

Following the first World War, the first federal measures designed to address the issue of disability were developed. Congress passed the first vocational rehabilitation programs, initially designed to only assist veterans returning from W.W.I. with disabilities. Only two years after initially being passed, coverage was expanded to the general population (Longmore 360). The act, intended to provide aid to the states which would be used in the procurement of services and employment for people with disabilities (Wilkoff 13), continued to associate disability with the inability to perform work. The development of those initial acts, in the aftermath of the war, is significant because while it was still possible to assert that civilians with disabilities were inherently unproductive, it would have been more difficult to simply institutionalize veterans who had been seriously injured fighting for their country. Such disabilities were not derivative of some sin committed by the person (Livneh, “Origins” 340), but rather a direct result of involvement in the defense of the nation. However, while there was an increase in assistance, the foundation of the concept of disability remained that of, “a defect residing in the individual and therefore requiring individual medical rehabilitation, special education, and vocational training to improve employment prospects” (Longmore 362).

In the aftermath of World War II, increased attention was paid to the ‘problem’ of disabilities among the civilian and veteran populations. During the war, concern was expressed over employment opportunities for people with disabilities due to a decrease in the available workforce (Wilkoff 13). Such concern is telling in that it shows how, in times of need, misconceptions can simply be placed aside. The global incompetence of people with disabilities was ignored, as soon as there was a shortage of workers. The perception that people with disabilities were less productive (Mackelprang 1996), was put aside when the need arose for an expansion in the workforce.
Following the end of WW II, the population of people with disabilities dramatically increased in the United States, due to large numbers of injured veterans and hundreds of thousands of polio victims (Driskell 10). In 1947 the U.S. Congress established the President’s Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, an offshoot of which was the Barrier Free Design committee (Wilkoff 14). Another 14 years passed, however, before the first guidelines were established that began the move towards making the built environment accessible to a broader range of people. The President’s Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped, along with the National Society for Crippled Children and the American Standards Institute, began developing the first national standards for accessibility in 1959 (Driskell 11). Two years later the project resulted in the publication of the first American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accessibility standards, ANSI A117.1, *Making Buildings Accessible to and Usable by the Physically Handicapped* (Driskell 11).

A significant step had been made within the barrier free design movement, and the very conception of the disability category. Until this point there had continually been a belief in the connection of disability with the ability or lack thereof to work. However, for all of the policies which had been designed to increase possibilities for employment, no concern had ever been expressed that the built environment played a role in the handicapping of a person with disabilities. While substantial changes were still needed, both in policy and in societal beliefs, this albeit ineffective set of guidelines, was indeed a watershed event. Unfortunately, it would also lay the groundwork for the near complete segregation of ‘accommodations’ for people with disabilities from those of the general population. Perhaps it was inevitable in view of the historical conception of disability, that from the start of the accessibility movement, there was a conception of accommodations for people with disabilities that had absolutely nothing to do with the needs of the general population. By conceiving of the problem as a need to provide separate accommodations for people with disabilities, these initial moves were little more than an additional mechanism for entrenchment of the commonly held belief that people with disabilities were so fundamentally different that they could never hope to be active participants in the general population.

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3 These three organizations are now known respectively as The President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, the National Easter Seal Society, and the American National Standards Institute.
Significant social changes occurred throughout the 1960’s and with them, yet another increase in the awareness of the problems of architectural and social barriers, as well as another telling example of how people with disabilities faced continued segregation from society. The **Civil Rights Act** became law in 1964 and while expanding rights for other minorities, it failed to recognize the continued discrimination of people with disabilities as a significant problem (Driskell 12). The **Vocational Rehabilitation Amendment Act**, the first piece of federal legislation to directly address accessibility, and the **Architectural Barriers Act**, the first federal requirements for accessibility, resulted from this exclusion (Steinfeld 1978, cited in Driskell), but were applicable only to new construction and renovations funded at least partially by the federal government (Driskell 12-13). While there were numerous problems with the latter act, including the fact that it applied only to federally funded buildings, thus leaving unaffected the majority of public places, the most significant problem was its lack of consequences for non-compliance (Wilkoff 17). No means existed for people with disabilities to ensure that they were provided access, even to these federally funded projects. While moving in the right direction, these events made it evident that little progress could be made without significant changes in social beliefs. Policies, acts and laws, whether enforceable or not, could do little unless backed by social beliefs, and the beliefs of the late 1960’s still held (and in many places continue to hold) that people with disabilities had only a minimal right, if any right to active participation in life’s activities and that they (and not the environment) were fundamentally flawed.

In 1971 the ANSI 117.1 standards were adopted in final form, addressing requirements for the removal of barriers in public buildings and facilities (Driskell 11). Still brief and somewhat ambiguous, the standards also had a singular view of accessibility, in relation only to the needs of wheelchair users (Wilkoff 18). This would continue to be a dominant theme and tend to focus the entire issue of accessibility on a single type of user, while ignoring the physical and social barriers faced by people with visual, respiratory, auditory or any other types of impairments. The **Rehabilitation Act** became law in 1973, and established the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (ATBCB), “as an independent regulatory agency with authority to enforce the 1968 ABA” (Driskell 13), and in the subsequent 17 years additional changes would occur within the body of disability policy which further expanded the role of accessibility in the built environment. Section 504 of the **Rehabilitation Act**, which was amended in 1978, prohibits discrimination of people with disabilities in programs associated with the federal government (Driskell 14). Yet, as Longmore argues, “the 504 regulations perpetuated differential treatment by rejecting, for reasons of political and financial expediency, a standard of total architectural accessibility, in favor of ‘program accessibility’” (362). While this measure would lay the groundwork for the later **American’s with Disabilities Act** of 1990, the
combined measures could, at best, be characterized as patchwork bandages on a problem which went far deeper than the removal of physical barriers from the built environment. The end of discrimination in federally associated areas did little to increase the accessibility of other publicly used facilities and there was no guarantee that people with disabilities would not be prevented from entering a facility simply because the owner felt uncomfortable with their "condition."  

By the 1970’s and 80’s, people with disabilities in the United States could expect to be allowed in many areas where they had previously been prevented by law. In some places, they could even expect that provisions had been made, ‘especially for them,’ to allow them access to federal buildings and programs. The disability rights movement, after decades of work, had succeeded in bringing issues, important to people with disabilities, to the forefront of the national political scene (Pfeiffer 728). Yet social attitudes had been exceedingly slow to change. Justice Department figures suggested that by the early 1980’s, disability had surpassed race and sex as the most frequent type of civil rights complaint (Fiser 93, citing Handicapped American Reports from January 27, 1983). The belief that people with disabilities were inferior continued in the wake of thousands of years of history in which people with disabilities were subjected to murder, cruel ‘treatments’ and patronizing social programs.  

In many ways the belief that people with disabilities were inferior had been so naturalized within western culture that to imagine another conception was unthinkable. Disability policies have, by way of providing separate ‘accessible’ accommodations which segregate people with disabilities from the general population, been characterized in Deleuzian terms as machinic assemblages which continue to maintain the hierarchical significance of the able bodied population over people with disabilities. These socially constructed policies which, while on the surface have increased the rights afforded to those with disabilities, do much to further entrench the normalization of the ideal body and the subsequent inferiority of the population they were designed to assist. In this context, Stone’s contention, “That old age, childhood, & disability should be conditions entitling people to social aid …” (25) looses some of the innocence which surrounds the allotment of social aid to marginalized groups. This is not because some people are not deserving of assistance, but because the form of that assistance often places its recipients in subservient positions, where they are bound

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4 See “Doors opening for the disabled,” in Washington Post, dated May 25, 1990: Section A, p. 1. In part, the article discusses the discrimination experienced by one individual at a movie theater, an experience most definitely shared by most people with disabilities at several points in their lives, according to Silvers (1995: 54).
to a certain lifestyle, unable to seek fulfilling lives and forced to live a meager existence simply because they fail to meet the standards which society has set as ‘normal.’ The lack of productivity, so often associated with people with disabilities, can easily be found to reside not in the individuals, or even in the presence of an impairment, but rather in the inaccessibility of the built environment, which prevents people from seeking work they are fully capable of performing, and limited conceptions society has of certain populations.

While the disability policies of the latter half of the 20th century have, for all appearances, greatly improved conditions for people with disabilities when compared to previous historical periods, many of the beliefs that justified killing in some ancient cultures, or the forced sterilization programs, continue to influence contemporary disability policies. Even the most recent policies continue to define disability as some form of deviation from the norms of society, rather than recognizing difference as a fundamental characteristic of society. Thus the early measures to remove barriers from the built environment have had little effect and succeeded in significantly promoting the marginalization of people with disabilities. Measures designed to assist people with disabilities have tended towards paternalization – based on the belief in the globally incapacitated person. They have furthermore subordinated people with disabilities to the point that where they are permitted participation in society predominantly in positions of inferiority relative to the able population, and marginalized them such they limited access to the built and natural environments has forced people with disabilities to live lives of isolation, limiting the interaction with the able population, and further limiting the impact of people with disabilities on society. These forces have been developing for thousands of years. Ignorance of their impact only serves to further entrench the naturalization of the belief that they have always existed and are somehow an absolute condition and not socially constructed. Only by understanding what the historical conceptions of disability have done (and continue to do) is it possible to resist those limiting forces and attempt to reconceptualize the problem of accessibility.
Chapter 5  

Critique of contemporary accessibility paradigms...

Current approaches to accessibility, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Universal Design included, continue to depend upon and are influenced by many of the limiting forces – normalization, power relations, and patronizing concepts of disability – that are explored in this project. While these current approaches are significantly more inclusive than their predecessors, the continuing influence of such limiting factors hinders their effectiveness and reinforces negative stereotypes of people with disabilities to the point that they have taken on the power of naturalized truths in our society. Several of the dominant forces in current ‘accessibility’ policy and implementation are examined here, including methods by which the population is categorized, the ADA – including both a critique of the law as well as an examination of how the act has denaturalized many of the predominant beliefs about people with disabilities – and the Principles of Universal Design which although currently the most inclusive of all paradigms of accessible design, still relies on assumptions which contradict its own tenets of inclusivity and equality.

Many of the problems currently associated with issues of accessibility are founded in the limited context in which accessibility is generally discussed. For all appearances ‘accessibility’ is an issue which affects a small segment of the population. We have already explored the many ways in which people with disabilities are limited, not by their impairments, but by the ways in which their differences are conceived. What becomes evident is that ‘accessible’ accommodations, while generally aimed at a narrow portion of the population, effect and benefit a much broader cross section of the population than they were intended to ‘assist.’ Furthermore, some accommodations, advocated on behalf of people with disabilities, actually cause conflict for those with disabilities other than mobility impairments. In exploring the naturalized assumptions upon which these latest accessibility measures have been based, and exposing some of the hidden agendas achieved through their implementation, it will be possible to examine their impact in a much more critical context and begin to understand the potential for resituating these practices more inclusively.

While the categorization of people into broad based groups such as ‘people with disabilities’ raises serious questions about the role of categorization and the potential marginalization of those so categorized, there can be little doubt that current concepts of accessibility are fundamentally linked with such categorization. How that category has been defined can expose some of the underlying agendas which continue to act as...
influences on both conceptions of those within the group and the accommodations which are intended to support them.

In 1983, the United Nations offered the following series of definitions:

*Impairment*: Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function. *Disability*: Any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. *Handicap*: A disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors, for that individual (U.N., qtd. in Wendell “Toward...” 107).

It is unnecessary here to revisit an already lengthy discussion of the implications that ‘normal’ conditions entail. However, it is important to note, as Wendell comments, “Not only the ‘normal’ roles for one’s age, sex, society, and culture, but also ‘normal’ structure and function, and ‘normal’ ability to perform an activity, depend on the society in which the standards of normality are generated” (“Toward...” 107). Thus to accept these definitions at face value is to accept that an individual can be disabled, but not handicapped by certain regressive aspects of their society, such as gender based roles that consider a woman’s ability to read unnecessary, or age based roles that limit the activity of the aged to lives of dependence where it is no longer necessary that they be able to perform otherwise ‘normal’ activities (Wendell 107). Such criticisms are discussed here not out of a desire to eliminate any concepts of ‘normality,’ but to make explicit the underlying agendas that have the potential to be re-affirmed when normative conditions are used to define characteristics such as disability.

It is also important to question the apparent medicalization of impairment, in opposition to the social derivation of disability and handicap. While impairments have been discussed as the most medically determinable of the three classifications, the influence of social and cultural conditions has also been explored. Beyond questioning what Wendell has called the ‘cognitive authority’ of the medical profession, the illusion that impairments are determined on purely physiological conditions, establishes potential points of connection to disciplines such as Eugenics, which sought to eliminate the presence of people with disabilities.
on the basis that they were so physically deficient that they were essentially inhuman. Perhaps, however, the strongest criticism which can be rendered against the United Nations definitions is the suggestion that the ‘normal’ paradigm of humanity, against which disability is measured, is a universal or absolute condition rather than a socially constructed reality. Even while recognizing the relationship between disability and social or cultural influences, these definitions imply a naturalized paradigm of normality, such that what is considered ‘normal’ for a society is born somewhere outside of that society.

The definition of disability, in the American’s with Disabilities Act, while it cannot be removed from its political and historical context, is able to broaden the conception of disability without resorting to such normalizing assumptions. Nonetheless it does – by implication at least – place disability in a negative relationship towards the paradigm of society that it offers.

The term “disability” means, with respect to an individual (a) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; (b) a record of such an impairment; or (c) being regarded as having such an impairment (ADA 1990).

Disability is defined in terms of a lack of ability to perform certain activities, and arguments could be made once again that any language which places people with disabilities in a negative relation to some paradigmatic culture, inevitably places those individuals in a position of diminished social status. However, such arguments tend to mask other even more significant aspects of the definition. Certainly the ‘major life activities’ of a society have the potential to differ from those of another and thus disability remains a construct of socio-political conditions. Furthermore, the recognition that a disability can involve solely the perception that an individual has an impairment, and not necessarily the presence of a physical or mental limitation, allows the ADA to recognize that an individual can suffer from discriminatory treatment and yet not have any medically provable conditions that warrant their inclusion within the disability category. The inclusion of impairment within the definition suggests a recognition of differences between physical or psychological limitations and the disabling circumstances brought about by those limitations. However, by implication an ‘impairment’ seems to be considered as a solely medical condition, itself unaffected by those same socio-political factors which influence the conditions of disability. The term impairment, used within the text of the definition but not itself defined, suggests that no definition is needed and that thus there is
some universal or natural condition – an absolute or fundamental truth – that is ‘impairment.’ Thus, by implication, an impairment, as the foundation of disability in the ADA is considered a fundamental characteristic of an individual, apparently unaffected by social, cultural or political conditions.

According to recent United States Census Bureau statistics, approximately 49 million Americans exist within the disability category (McNeil par. 1). However, this number is likely an underestimate of all persons in the United States who would qualify as members of the disability category as defined in the ADA. Although an increase of about 6 million persons over the figure that was included in that act, it excludes institutionalized persons and like the ADA – which has been criticized for underestimating the number of children and elderly with disabilities, as well as the number of people with mental illnesses (Pfieffer 727-28) – the current figures may also not reflect the ‘total’ number of people with disabilities. Yet, such potential discrepancies are of little significance because these figures are of little value themselves without an understanding of specific types of disabilities that are included in the very broad category of disabilities.

The disability category can be subdivided into four different classifications – mobility, dexterity, sensory and cognitive disabilities (Wilkoff 35) – which can each be further sub-divided. However, while providing more information than ‘disability,’ they are still limited to only one aspect of categorization, ignoring social, cultural, racial and economic conditions, among other factors. Many times individuals manifest several different types of disabilities, and even a partial listing of different types of disabilities – not including consideration of the interaction between them – can become rather lengthy. People with mobility impairments include not only wheelchair users, but also those with arthritis, diabetes or other mobility impairing diseases, people with agility or stamina problems and those with broken bones or missing limbs (Wilkoff 40). Dexterity impairments commonly encompass two broad categories of limitation, problems in the grasping of objects, and problems in the operation of controls (Wilkoff 41) and like sensory impairments which also fall under two broad categories, visual and hearing, they are influenced by the form of the built environment and as with all types of disability are dramatically affected by the severity of the impairment.

As with the disability category itself, myths about people with disabilities fall into several broad classifications, all of which might be traceable to the limited interaction of the able population and people with disabilities, as well as all of the interrelated issues connected with this limited interaction. These can be broadly situated as myths about: (dis)-abilities, the disability as the person, and the disability – society relationship. Perhaps, however, the greatest myth of all is the disability category itself. Even a brief look at a
still broad list of different types of disabilities reveals the complexity involved and suggests that the differences among people with different types of disabilities are great indeed. Yet the category has remained prominent and even gained significance in recent years. Laws such as the ADA rely on being able to define a specific group of people to protect and yet perhaps one of the only commonalities among members of this group is their continued subjection to discrimination.

Myths relating to (dis)abilities include the concept of the globally incapacitated individual, and the belief that people with disabilities are more susceptible to hazards in the environment. Because the term disabled fails to describe any actual impairments or limitations, it implies a level of total incapacity and yet, as Wilkoff suggests, “the vast majority of people who are classified as ‘disabled’ are not as dysfunctional as this label suggests” (29). The myth of total dependency persists, however, along with the idea that their disability limits functioning in a totalizing manner. The belief that people with disabilities are more susceptible to dangerous situations is yet another myth which has been naturalized. Yet according to at least one recreation specialist who has dealt with the issue of children and safety, they may be more aware of their limitations than others (Oestreicher 53) and thus would potentially be less susceptible to environmental risks than others.

The prevalence of the disability category often suggests a significant amount of similarity among people with disabilities as well as the belief that ‘they’ should want to be acquaintances with each other in order to be “with their own kind” (Wilkoff 30). However, such beliefs tend to mask the great differences among people with disabilities and to further entrench the myth that the disability is the person. Even though a disability is only one characteristic of an individual, it is likely to be one which determines how an individual is approached, and interacted with, according to Wilkoff (31). People with disabilities are frequently treated as though they were children and helpless. A blind individual at an ADA conference told of an occasion when, asking for directions, her guide dog was given the directions instead of her (Wilkoff 31). Such incidents illustrate the extent to which the dependency of people with disabilities is ingrained into society. In that case the woman’s guide dog was considered more cognizant, more human than she was — simply because she was blind. “Like other human beings, individuals with disabilities,” according to Wilkoff, “are more inclined to seek out and develop friendships with those who share their interests and professions than with those who share their physical traits” (30). However, because, people with disabilities are frequently thought of as less than fully human, their status as ‘others’ in our society reinforces the idea that ‘they’ must all want to be together, and further that they would want to be excluded from the activities that everyone else is actively involved in. Unfortunately the belief that people with disabilities desire exclusion from society operates as a
justification of mainstream fears about interaction with them and further separates their experiences from those of the able bodied.

The prevalence of the generalized disability category masks more than just myths about the nature of disabilities and the lives of those who have them. Conflicts which arise between the built environment and the needs of those with different disabilities have significant impacts on the built environment – to the point that to talk about ‘accessible’ accommodations is itself a mask which hides more differences than it accommodates. The broad disability category also suggests that its members would have a certain level of common understanding about living with disabilities, as evidenced by the occasional opposition between ‘us’ – the able, versus ‘them’ – people with disabilities (see Germer, for example). But, to assume that all people with disabilities understand the needs of all other people with disabilities also masks the frequently vast differences among different members of these populations. According to philosopher Karen Fiser, who has experience living with a disability, “Though the dominant culture may lump together in one group called the disabled those whom they regard as physically defective or damaged, the fact is that, for example, people with orthopedic disabilities do not automatically understand the problems of blind people, and the community of deaf and hearing impaired persons does not naturally identify with the problems of persons with cerebral palsy or developmental disabilities” (93). Such problems are confounded when considering the issue of a predominately able population trying to implement what it feels are ‘accessible’ accommodations.

The influence of the built environment on the social construction of disability has been discussed at length, but one aspect which has not previously been approached is the relationship of these social constructions to the minority status of people with disabilities. An argument which has been repeatedly made in these texts is that disability, and in particular issues of accessibility, need be considered as issues which are significant to the population as a whole. Anita Silvers highlights the problem of minority status by saying that, “hypothesizing what society would do were persons with disabilities dominant rather than suppressed, it becomes evident that systematic exclusion of the disabled is a consequence not of their natural inferiority, but of their minority social status” (168-69). In other words, the issue of accessibility is an issue precisely because of the perception that it supports and assists only a minority population, and not society as a whole. By examining the multitude of conflicts which arise between the needs of those with different types of disabilities, it becomes clear that one type of ‘accessible’ accommodation will never be sufficient to make the landscape more inclusive. Rather, many different types of accommodations are needed for the many different types of individuals (those with recognized disabilities or not) and only in considering this diversity of
accommodation can we construct landscapes which not only meet the needs of the majority and assist a minority, but which meet the needs of the society as a whole.

However, conflicts do arise, and barriers which are removed to the benefit of one segment of the population frequently create barriers for another segment of the population. “An asthmatic, for instance, may find climbing a few stairs less exhausting than walking a much longer distance on a ramp” (Soloman 102). How can both populations be accounted for and more importantly how can this be done without segregating different populations in rigidly defined boundaries? The stair is often a barrier for people with certain types of disabilities, while the ramp is seen as an accommodation for this population. However, when considering that such a population includes not only those who use wheelchairs or other assistive devices, but also those whose stamina is lessened by age or disease, it becomes evident that no barrier is a barrier to everyone and that the removal of one can cause another to come into existence.

Wilkoff highlights another example of conflict, in this case between the needs of people with visual impairments and those with mobility impairments. “Initially curb cuts were placed directly in the path of travel, allowing those with mobility disabilities to cross streets easily. This seemed appropriate until it was discovered that people who are blind and use canes could not distinguish between the curb cut and the natural surface undulation of concrete, thus losing the shoreline orientation and ending up in traffic as a result. The conflict was eventually resolved with a combination of two features: first the curb cut was moved off to the side so as not to be in the direct line of pedestrian traffic and second, the curb cut was given a textured surface to alert people who are blind” (47). While conflicts are perhaps inevitable it seems as though they arise many times out of a limited conception of disability, such that disability is synonymous with the wheelchair user and the ramp.

This discussion is intended not as an exploration of the different conflicts which arise between the needs of those with different disabilities, but rather to show that just as the disability category is less than meaningful in terms of understanding the different people who fall within the category’s boundaries, ‘accessibility’ is also a category which tends to mask a significant amount of difference. Thus in considering both the ADA and principles of Universal Design, it is important to keep in mind that no accommodations meet everyone’s needs, and that the removal of barriers does not automatically make a landscape more accessible or more inclusive. A level of skepticism needs to be maintained when examining these policies and practices, both in
relation to the issue of conflict and in relation to the earlier discussions of naturalized assumptions that tend
to mask sometimes hidden, sometimes evident agendas.

The ADA is one of the most recent measures designed to ensure that American’s with disabilities are as
protected from discrimination as other minority groups. What essentially began in 1961 with the initial ANSI
standards, has over the years been expanded to cover a greater number of situations and conceptualize
disability within a broader context. While previous accessibility measures had been designed to remove
barriers, they were predominantly aimed at those programs sponsored by the federal government, thus
leaving out a vast majority of public programs and facilities. What the ADA has done, according to Evan
Terry, is to fill “in the ‘cracks’ where state and federal laws do not cover programs or facilities,” covering
companies and agencies whether or not they received federal funding (7). The day following the passage of
the act by the United States House of Representatives and still more than two months from its signing into
law by the President of the United States, the Washington Post noted the “sweeping expansion of legal
protections and rights … extending provisions of the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act to millions of
American’s with physical and mental handicaps” (Kenworthy A1).

“When completely implemented, it will protect persons with disabilities from discrimination on the basis of
disability in areas of employment, transportation, access to public facilities and communication” (Pfeiffer
731). Above all, a civil rights measure intended to extend the protections of the 1964 Act to include those
with physical and mental disabilities, the act was signed into law on July 27, 1990, in an effort “To establish a
clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability” (ADA, 1990: 1). Although
significant time could be spent in an examination of the implications of this law, several aspects are of
immediate importance to this discussion, including the relationship between disability and social conditions,
and the issue of integration.

One of these issues is found not in the act itself but in the preceding Congressional findings which state that,
“historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities,” and that, “such forms
of discrimination against individuals with disabilities continue to be a serious and pervasive social problem”
(ADA 3). In recognizing the isolation, segregation and discrimination of people with disabilities, this act
dramatically differs from all previous disability and accessibility measures, which almost without exception
had considered disability to be a fundamental defect of an individual that subsequently placed them at a
disadvantage. Subsequently, the measures attempted to counteract such forces by providing some form of
compensatory assistance. The ADA takes a nearly opposite stance in recognizing that disadvantage comes not from the defect of the individual but from the social conditions in which such individuals live.

Nonetheless, we are again faced with the dilemma of addressing differences which have historically been used to marginalize a group of people and the question of whether acknowledging those differences legitimizes that marginalization. “What is important to notice in this regard,” according to Anita Silvers, is that “…the ADA neutralizes difference without deligitimating it. Acknowledging, rather than ignoring, whether social institutions have historically embraced or excluded certain kinds of selves alerts us to how what we take to be essential conceptions of these excluded persons may in actuality be the product of historical contingency. Historical counterfactualizing then strips differentia of their negative meanings by disclosing that the source of adverse signification lies in the remediable accidents of social arrangement, not in the immutable inferiority of the alienated group” (“Reconciling” 50). If we accept Silver’s analysis of the act, then the ADA is able to accomplish something significant indeed. In recognizing difference while simultaneously removing the negative connotations associated with that difference, the ADA places us in a position to recognize that differences of physical condition need not place individuals at different positions within the social hierarchy and need not disadvantage people.

While the ADA and its associated guidelines do not set specific standards for integration, the intention of the act is relatively clear. Unless entirely unfeasible, any and all accommodations which are designed for people with disabilities, should be fully integrated with other accommodations and with the overall design of a place. According to the act:

*It shall be discriminatory to provide an individual or class of individuals, on the basis of a disability or disabilities of such individual or class … with a good, service, facility, privilege, advantage or accommodation that is different or separate from that provided to other individuals unless such action is necessary to provide the individual or class of individuals with a good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, accommodation, or other opportunity that is as effective as that provided others (ADA, section 302).*
Thus a very specific instance exists when it is acceptable to provide separate accommodations, that being when such a separation is necessary in order to provide accommodations that meet the needs of those who are being accommodated. However, one of the problems with the act is that it also provides exceptions due to financial burden, in which case it is often less expensive to provide separate accommodations.

The issue of financial burden highlights yet another example of the ‘other-ness’ of people with disabilities. Economic expense is one of the most common criticisms of accessibility and the ADA in particular. While the issue of economics is exceedingly complex, what is clear is that accessible accommodations are perceived to be for the benefit of a small minority. Said Blair Taylor, a Denver, Colorado restaurateur who, in 1993 was forced to make alterations to bring the restaurant into compliance with the ADA, “We are making 100% of all public buildings 100% accessible for a group that is 1/100th of a percent of the people of the United States” (Germer par. 6). Taylor’s argument expresses the belief that accessibility is intended to accommodate a small percentage of the population, and while he would likely disagree, I argue that the economic exemptions in the ADA even further entrench the belief that it is designed solely for people with disabilities. Economics tends to be less of an issue when something is for the benefit of everyone – or perhaps just the ‘majority’ – however, when something is perceived to be of benefit to only a small minority, economics becomes a deciding factor. Thus, that the ADA provides economic exemptions and that economics are one of the common criticisms of the act indicate the extent to which people with disabilities are considered an insubstantial minority in this country.

While recognizing that disability is influenced by social considerations, and advocating that ‘accessible’ accommodations must – with rare exceptions – be integrated accommodations, the ADA is based on one aspect of disability – that the needs of people with disabilities are fundamentally different from those of the able bodied – which is challenged here. Perhaps it is of necessity, and perhaps it returns to the notion of recognizing difference without accepting negative connotations of that difference, but the ADA is based upon the belief that people with disabilities require protection from a predominantly able bodied government. This is brought up, not because it is felt that such protection is not needed, but rather because it illustrates the extent to which must be gone to in order to achieve integration of people with disabilities into the societal mainstream.

In the 1980s, discrimination and segregation of people with disabilities was still so ingrained and acceptable in society that it was necessary to generate a law in prohibition of them. And, while the ADA does succeed in
forcing this integration in many areas, it also succeeds in furthering the belief that people with disabilities are fundamentally a separate “class of individuals,” to borrow the language of the act. While advocating integration, it makes such integration more difficult by focusing on the different accommodations which are needed by people with disabilities – particularly the needs of wheelchair users, as far as accessible accommodations are concerned. Again perhaps this is of necessity, for if the act were to address the similarities, than it may not be able to address the ‘needs’ of its intended population. Nonetheless, in focusing on those differences, the act ignores the commonalities amongst the needs of people with disabilities and the able population. And, while perhaps the world’s strongest civil rights protections for people with disabilities (Devroy A18), and perhaps a far reaching set of protections, the American’s with Disabilities Act does not itself promote the integration it so vehemently espouses.

‘Accessible’ designs can frequently have benefits even for those without impairments or limitations (Vanderheiden 10, citing Newell & Cairns 1987). Ramps are accommodations which, although designed for wheelchair users, have potential benefits to others, such as those with small children or delivery personnel. Curb cuts are an even more common occurrence, and according to Vanderheiden, “it is estimated that for every individual in a wheelchair using a curb cut, somewhere between ten and one hundred bicycles, skateboards, shopping carts, baby carriages and delivery carts use the curb cut. It is also not uncommon to see individuals walk slightly out of their way in order to walk up a curb cut rather than stepping out onto the curb, indicating a preference for the curb cut even when walking” (10). Designs intended to provide experiences for those with sensory impairments can provide a multi-sensory experience for all users, and information portrayed in raised text or through auditory as well as visual means can reinforce the impression of that information on an individual. The point here is not to examine all of the ways in which such elements are beneficial to more than just their intended users, but to suggest that thinking about accessibility in a broader context is itself beneficial and enables us to conceive of ‘accessible’ accommodations not as separate and distinct entities but integrated aspects of a design. Furthermore, there are less tangible benefits to the able bodied population including, as Wendell says, “better knowledge of the forms of difference among people, better understanding of the realities of physical limitations and / or suffering, and a lessening of the fear of becoming disabled, which is exacerbated by the assumption that disability means exclusion from major aspects of social life” (Rejected 47).
The practice of Universal Design considers such integration to be one of its fundamental tenets and promotes accessibility as an issue not for a small minority, but for all of the small minorities which make up our population. Said Gordon Mansfield, former chair of the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, the group which generates the guidelines for the ADA, “Universal Design is ‘an approach to design that acknowledges the changes experienced by everyone during his or her lifetime. It considers children, old people, people who are tall or short and those with disabilities. It addresses the lifespan of the human being beyond the mythical average person’” (Universal Design Information Network par. 1). Universal Design then, aims for a better designed environment and products for the ‘whole’ of society, not only for small segments of that society, and thus while it can be considered an aspect of civil rights for marginalized groups, it considers this within the context of designing for an exceedingly diverse society.

Universal Design is a philosophy of accessible design which advocates the creation of products, buildings, and environments that are accessible to the broadest range of people possible without separating this population into different categories of need. Consideration is given to more than just physical form, and the practice of Universal Design is as much about designing without the psychological and social barriers previously discussed as it is about the physical barriers which are often associated with accessibility. It is Universal Design which has the potential to achieve the greatest level of integration, because it is based on a philosophy of a diverse ‘us’ as opposed to previous measures and philosophies – the ADA included – which are based more on an ‘us’ and ‘them’ approach.

While there are many approaches to Universal Design, this text will engage one specific set of principles developed by advocates of the practice. Although Universal Design seems to offer the greatest potential for an integrated conception of accessibility, critique of the philosophy can be generated and some aspects of it need to be questioned. While advocating integration and designs accommodating to a diverse population, some aspects of Universal Design are based upon the belief in a separate population of people with disabilities. Furthermore some aspects seem to suggest that ‘accessibility’ is about providing solely an easy level of access which would conflict with the tenet that Universal Design is not about providing separate access, and some aspects of the practice seem to suggest that everyone will benefit from the same type of accommodations, a seemingly contradictory condition for a diverse population. The philosophy and practice...
of Universal Design can be distinguished by examining the differences between the principles espoused and
the guidelines which are intended to facilitate the implementation of those principles.¹

**PRINCIPLE ONE: Equitable Use**
The design is useful and marketable to any group of users.

**Guidelines:**
1a. Provide the same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible; equivalent when not.
1b. Avoid segregating or stigmatizing any users.
1c. Provisions for privacy, security, and safety should be equally available to all users.

While on the surface, the usefulness of a design to “any” group of users is suggestive of a fully integrated and
accessible design, the initial guideline suggests that all users would benefit from identical accommodations.
While it can be argued that identical accommodations can meet the needs of a broad and diverse population,
identical use for all users – when that includes those of different needs and abilities – is a relative impossibility
and has the potential to lead to a normalizing situation where what is best for the ‘majority’ becomes the
basis for design. It would seem that a design “useful … to any group of users” would employ that which
Foucault would call multiples and differences rather than “identical” or uniform accommodations. Designing
for all users suggests existing in the realm of diversity and difference without segregation and isolation.
Accessibility has been criticized in these texts for segregating the ‘accessible accommodations’ from other
aspects of designs and that Universal Design promotes the avoidance of such segregation is significant. One
discussion offered on the ADA is applicable here in terms of advocating difference without advocating the
marginalization which can accompany that recognition of difference. The avoidance of segregation brings
into play many of the conflicts which have characterized disability and accessibility, particularly in relation to
the interaction amongst different populations. Avoiding segregation has the potential to denaturalize the
perceived inferiority of people with disabilities, implying that differences are accepted and embraced.
Furthermore, this first principle brings into play many of the issues previously discussed, not the least of
which are matters of power relations and the differences in boundary definition between those which are rigid
and unchanging and those which are flexible. There appears to be an early attempt to break down rigid
structures, to eliminate or at the very least diminish boundaries that have the potential to segregate users on a
social or psychological level, as well as a physical one.

¹ *The Principles of Universal Design*, as engaged in this text were compiled by Bettye Rose Connell, Mike Jones, Ron Mace, Jim
Mueller, Abir Mullick, Elaine Ostroff, Jon Sanford, Ed Steinfeld, Molly Story, and Gregg Vanderheiden and published through
The Center for Universal Design at NC State University, with funding provided by The National Institute on Disability and
Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education.
**PRINCIPLE TWO**: Flexibility in Use  
The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.  
**Guidelines:**  
2a. Provide choice in methods of use.  
2b. Accommodate right- or left-handed access and use.  
2c. Facilitate the user's accuracy and precision.  
2d. Provide adaptability to the user's pace.  

One of the greatest barriers in accessibility is choice. Within the built environment, the individual that meets society's standards of 'normality' is often times provided with a wide variety of choices, while such choice has rarely been provided for people with disabilities. Even where accessible accommodations are available, those accommodations frequently offer little if any choice. A universally accessible place provides such choices, once again eliminating or at least lessening the strength of barriers. The significance of this principle lies in the recognition that there is not a single accommodation or feature that can meet the needs of society, but that a range of choices is needed and that such a range of choices exists regardless of the user's ability or disability. Such choices would not only apply to different people with different needs but to people whose needs and preferences are dynamic and changing, thus one can apply the principle to a diverse society, rather than examining it as an issue of providing choice to one segment of the population or another. Once again difference over uniformity, choice over control and heterogeneity over homogeneity characterize the principle.

**PRINCIPLE THREE**: Simple and Intuitive Use  
Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.  
**Guidelines:**  
3a. Eliminate unnecessary complexity.  
3b. Be consistent with user expectations and intuition.  
3c. Accommodate a wide range of literacy and language skills.  
3d. Arrange information consistent with its importance.  
3e. Provide effective prompting for sequential actions.  
3f. Provide timely feedback during and after task completion.  

While on the surface the goal of promoting understanding regardless of a user's knowledge is admirable, this principle masks one of the criticisms which has already been raised in relation to previous disability policies and to the conception of disability in general. Underlying the apparent promotion of simplicity is the belief that people with disabilities need to be designed down to, that they need to be provided an easier or more
simple and intuitive environment. With the exception of people with severe mental impairments, such a belief would seem to fall into the trap of considering those with disabilities as somehow fundamentally flawed in their ability to comprehend their environment. The argument, that a lesser degree of complexity is needed in order to accommodate the needs of a diverse population, suggests the belief that people with disabilities require simple environments and are incapable of the same types of experiences as the ‘able’ population. Such conditions, rather than neutralizing the differences between people, only further entrench the concept of people with disabilities as less capable and dependent, thus threatening an even greater level of paternalistic care and dependence which, on the surface appears to be beneficial, but when closely examined further entrenches existing stereotypes. This is not to suggest that designs should be unnecessarily complicated, but rather than simplicity for the sake of people with disabilities tends to create repression, dependence and marginalization, not equality and neutral differences.

**PRINCIPLE FOUR: Perceptible Information**

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities.

**Guidelines:**

4a. Use different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile) for redundant presentation of essential information.
4b. Provide adequate contrast between essential information and its surroundings.
4c. Maximize “legibility” of essential information in all sensory modalities.
4d. Differentiate elements in ways that can be described (i.e., make it easy to give instructions or directions).
4e. Provide compatibility with a variety of techniques or devices used by people with sensory limitations.

Once again the concepts of multiplicity and difference can be addressed, as the use of multiple modes of interpretation enables a design to meet a wide variety of needs, and when these different modes of representation are integrated with one another, to do so without segregating any one group or type of user. One could make the previous argument that there is a tendency to design down to people with disabilities and over simplify situations. However, it is the issue of essential information which, although it may go unnoticed, is perhaps of greater concern here. Certain elements which may be considered “essential information” for the general public a.k.a. able bodied public may be considered extraneous or unnecessary information for people with disabilities. We have already discussed conditions where people with disabilities have been considered so dependent and helpless that they were treated as children and not
considered full participants in social life. Such beliefs, on the part of certain individuals, have the potential to influence that which is considered essential information? Could some information be considered non-essential for visually impaired individuals or for those with some other form of impairment? The presence of the phrase “essential information” suggests that there is some information which is not essential and which need only be conveyed to the able population, thus setting a dangerous precedent.

**PRINCIPLE FIVE: Tolerance for Error**
The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

**Guidelines:**
5a. Arrange elements to minimize hazards and errors: most used elements, most accessible; hazardous elements eliminated, isolated, or shielded.
5b. Provide warnings of hazards and errors.
5c. Provide fail safe features.
5d. Discourage unconscious action in tasks that require vigilance.

Again, a situation exists in which, on the surface, the intention appears to be a desire to provide a safe environment or product, and in consideration of the tenet within Universal Design of designing for a diverse population, this principle could be read as a call for providing a greater level. Yet, it can also be seen as a need to provide a greater level of safety, specifically for people with disabilities. Here, criticism that accessibility is designed for the lowest common denominator may be valid. Environments, in which all hazards and risk have been removed, may lack the very qualities for which the environment is appreciated, and to assume that people with disabilities desire a less hazardous environment, once again suggests a double standard in design. To create an environment in which the perceived needs of people with disabilities demand the elimination of all hazards and risks, once again places them in the status of ‘others’ who must be protected and cared for, and who do not have the same ability to recognize risk as do other people. It has been argued that people with disabilities present a safety problem and hence require additional measures to ensure their safety (Oestreicher 53), yet such assertions seem more a result of narrow thinking about people with disabilities than the actual needs of this population.

There may be instances in which some people, whether due to age or ability, are more at risk than others, in which case an approach that acknowledges such differences may be needed. Landscape Architect, Susan Goltsman comments that, “To structure and formalize the goals of universal design, landscape architects can use a ‘Levels of Accessibility’ system to create and manage diverse opportunities … Such systems provide a
variety of graduated challenges, allowing an individual to make choices based on his or her ability level (1992: 85). This can be considered in relation to earlier discussions of strong and weak boundaries, where the diversity of opportunity provides a choice for the user and while not eliminating the boundary, lessens its strength. This argument is not to suggest that safety issues should be ignored or considered of diminished importance, but that in establishing a paradigm of absolute safety or even greater safety, the potential exists for the establishment of a paternalistic relationship where once again people with disabilities are perceived to be in greater need of protection.

**PRINCIPLE SIX: Low Physical Effort**
The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

**Guidelines:**
6a. Allow user to maintain a neutral body position.
6b. Use reasonable operating forces.
6c. Minimize repetitive actions.
6d. Minimize sustained physical effort.

An implication exists here that universally accessible design needs to be easily accessible to everyone and that there is a necessity to provide for a lower level of physical effort than might otherwise be needed or desired. While it would seem evident that in many cases such an assertion is warranted, the principle seems in direct contradiction with the earlier advocacy of flexibility and choice. Is the intention now to design only for those activities or on those sites which demand a minimum of physical exertion and if so, does this not limit the effectiveness of Universal Design to a small set of conditions? If the intent, as expressed earlier, is to provide opportunities for a wide diversity of users and a “range of preferences,” only providing for a low level of physical exertion would seem to be extremely limiting. Once again, the principles seem to fall into the same trap as previous accessibility measures, assuming that people with disabilities – or maybe it is all people – desire activities and environments which require a low level of physical exertion. Perhaps this is true of some people, but it was Sax who noted that people who were active at one point in their lives tend to remain so, even if they find themselves with a disability later in life (79-80). An easy level of accessibility and a minimum level of physical exertion would not seem to meet the needs of such individuals, and it appears as though an assumption is being made that either everyone, or perhaps only those with disabilities, desire experiences which are easy and not physically taxing. It is difficult to reconcile this principle with earlier mandates for ranges of preferences and abilities. While it is possible that some people do indeed desire such minimal levels of physical activity, it is likely that this is not the preference of
‘everyone’ and that again, a levels of accessibility system might better serve the needs of a diverse population.

**PRINCIPLE SEVEN: Size and Space for Approach and Use**

*Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.*

**Guidelines:**

- 7a. Provide a clear line of sight to important elements for any seated or standing user.
- 7b. Make reach to all components comfortable for any seated or standing user.
- 7c. Accommodate variations in hand and grip size.
- 7d. Provide adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistance.

This principle of Universal Design provides final insight into the limited conception of disability held by even this most inclusive of philosophies. The ADA views accessibility almost exclusively in terms of the needs of the wheelchair user, while Universal Design seems more inclusive, it too focuses on certain types of disabilities, namely mobility impairments. In considering the issue of approach and use, it would seem that mobility issues would cover only a portion of the necessary considerations. No consideration here is given to issues which may arise from sensory impairments, and this is perhaps one of the overall criticisms which might be generated of Universal Design. While advocating integrated accessibility and promoting a consideration of the population including all of its diverse aspects, the principles and guidelines tend to focus – where consideration is given to specific practices – on the needs of certain segments of the population. It generally focuses specifically on those with mobility impairments, and only in some places acknowledges issues related to sensory impairments. In examining closely the issue of universally accessible design it would seem essential to acknowledge the notion of multi-sensory design, where even those with certain sensory impairments would be able to experience a place with their other remaining senses. Although implied in principles which advocate flexibility, choice and different modes of representation, this aspect of Universal Design seems conspicuously missing from some of the established principles.

An earlier discussion raised the issue of ‘accessibility’ in the natural environment, which would seem to take on new significance in consideration of Universal Design principles. While the principles spoke of flexibility and choice on the part of the user, such flexibility would also seem essential in terms of the environment in which a design was created. That which fits a highly developed urban area might not succeed on a wilderness.
Daniel Hunter, a graduate student in landscape architecture, and a wheelchair user, commented on another aspect of accessibility in the natural environment, which applies to historical sites as well. “The question of how much ‘access’ we should make in primitive settings is ALWAYS an issue, always has been. This problem in design has always been a problem, and I sometimes feel that folks think it only just sprung up with the ADA! I’ve seen many wonderful natural sites ‘destroyed’ by providing folks in the 1940’s and 1950’s with lookouts from their cars, so they need never ever leave their car to ‘experience’ nature … there’s nothing new about this debate, and the things done to ‘primitive’ settings so we can get our RV’s there go basically unnoticed, but God help us if we put up a handrail or a wheelchair ramp!” (Hunter 1997). Mr. Hunter’s points rings true with both ‘natural’ and ‘historic’ sites, where modifications have been made in the past to accommodate the needs of the public. Perceived as meeting the needs of the majority such modifications frequently go unnoticed, while “accommodations” for a minority group generate significant critique.

A conception of accessibility is needed which is not limited to the needs of a single population and does not view the population of people with disabilities as globally incapacitated, but rather considers the wide range of needs and preferences of all members of society. Universal Design moves well beyond previous accessibility measures to the point of neutralizing the physical differences in the population and designing for a diverse society. Nonetheless in examining the principles and practices of the philosophy, it becomes evident that aspects of Universal Design still rely on certain limiting conceptions of disability. At times these limitations are obvious and apparent and at times they are well masked by practices which appear to be beneficial, but which still help to maintain the dichotomy of ‘able / disabled.’ Examining Universal Design in the context of the issues engaged in these texts, makes it possible to reconceptualize the philosophy, to place it within a broader social and cultural context, and critique those aspects which are influenced by narrow conceptions of disability. Thus, the philosophy can be resituated, such that the influence of those limiting factors is negated or at the very least significantly diminished.
Chapter 6  

Reconceptualizing Universal Design or the Critically Integrated Landscape...

Having examined the implications and influences of cultural beliefs and legislative action on accessibility, Universal Design can be resituated within a broader context. No longer a question of form and accommodations, it is a practice with far reaching social, political, economic and cultural implications that is in turn influenced by these same conditions. While a discussion of form is now at hand, the situation is not one of considering the form that a poststructural landscape would take, having completed a poststructural critique. The consideration of form is simply another aspect of the critique. The reconceptualization of Universal Design and the form of the poststructural landscape are not separate, conclusive or final results of the critique, they are additional lines of flight within the critique, they are additional mechanisms by which the critique is engaged and ultimately they too are seen as constructed fictions without any final or absolute presence and authority. Different modes of production are engaged in order to offer this reconceptualization, including a transitory revisiting of the implications and influences of the poststructural project for issues of disability and accessibility, an exploration of the formal characteristics of the theory and a resituation of the fiction of Universal Design as what may better be called Critically Integrated Design.

The critical examination of accessibility has involved numerous lines of investigation which work interdependently of one another, forming a multi-level critique. Initially questioning the conditions within the disability issue that have remained unchallenged, the process denaturalizes the assumptions and beliefs, that act as though they were some absolute conditions, and positions them instead as socially constructed fictions. The very concept of disability is one such condition, viewed throughout history as a condition inherent in an individual and only recently conceived as a socially constructed phenomena. The forms and conditions of social relations are brought to the surface, where they can be examined and questioned, engaging in a process that may best be called de.myth.ification, which examines the myths perpetuated against people with disabilities and conceptualizes such naturalized truths as mechanisms of control, and expressions of fear in regards to ‘others’ in our society. The idealization of the human form, and the portrayal of this ideal as that which we must all aspire to, has been explored as a cause of the inaccessibility of the built environment and reason behind the marginalization of people with disabilities.

Mechanisms by which power and control is exercised over the individual come both in the form of institutional policy and seemingly minor forms of power, such as implied and explicit boundaries in the built...
environment. Institutional policies addressing the issue of disability, for instance, have been examined not as benign, neutral entities, but as products of conditions which influence and are in turn influenced by the social conditions within which they were constructed. These policies, along with the cultural processes that set them in motion, exhibit conditions of power relationships, mechanisms by which social hierarchies can be established and maintained. Programs, policies, and cultural practices, all intended and promoted as assistance to certain marginalized groups within society, often reinforce that very marginalization. It is though, in examining the power relations which “work at the level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted process which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviors, etc.,” (Foucault “Two Lectures” 97) where issues of power and control have even greater significance. Thus power and control are not only issues of governmental mandate, but also the minor mechanisms such as boundaries in the physical landscape, and the socially constructed limits, which have their cumulative affects on daily life and exert significant levels of control over people with disabilities.

The critique of disability, offered in these texts, has attempted to expose many of the beliefs which operate to reinforce limiting concepts of disability. Moving across disciplinary fields – politics, society, culture, the arts – the critique is itself a mechanism, not unlike that which it challenges, that seeks to, in a Deleuzian manner, destratify the structure within which issues of accessibility and disability are generally discussed. Ultimately, within such a rhizomatic structure, one discovers that each investigative turn leads to others, the chain, an infinite series of connections and relationships, relying on successive fictional foundations, each in turn built upon the others. Thus there really is no ultimate finality to such a critique. By its very nature it precludes a conclusion, deferring the very condition of absolute-ness that such a conclusion would mandate, forming instead plateaus of intensity, areas of conclusiveness upon which we can settle, but which themselves are no more solid or foundational than any other concepts.

The poststructural project also operates as a multi-level production or in other words, not only is there a component of the project which seeks to dismantle existing conceptions and classifications, but a simultaneous resituation of those challenged aspects of the critique. The paradox here is that there can be no outside point of reference from which to examine an issue – one is always, already bound within the confines of the machinery being examined – yet a tendency also exists towards exteriority, in that a concept or an idea is conceived in relationship with a multitude of seemingly external forces which influenced it. Thus one plays at the margins, at the boundaries of disciplines, of ideas, of conceptions – inhabiting a place on the interior and pushing outwards, while pulling in those seemingly exterior conditions.
Conventional modes of classification were analyzed within the context of binary oppositions, pairs of supposedly opposite conditions which exist in a hierarchical relationship to one another. It is the inversion of such binaries that is necessary in order to expose the arbitrary nature of their construction. The process involves a tripartite operation, whereby the terms are initially identified and the hierarchical relationship is established, the possible inversion of the relationship is then shown, where the ‘inferior’ term is placed in the dominant position and finally a pattern is established whereby the entire structure of an argument or concept is shown to rest upon such reversible hierarchies (Norris 10). An inversion of the opposition is produced, such that it becomes evident that the hierarchical relationship can itself be called into doubt. Such an operation does not attempt to eliminate the ‘originary’ categories of the opposition, but rather challenges the hierarchy between them, where rather than acting in opposition to one another there is a sliding or melding of one into the other and thus a relationship of interdependence.

Systems of difference are then established which, lacking hierarchical relationships themselves enable us to expose the problem of the ‘other,’ as not only different from the majority but subordinate to that majority. Discussion of the disability category occasionally centers on whether similarities or differences between the able population and people with disabilities should be emphasized. In other words, is equality or difference that which should take precedence? Silvers argues for a reconciliation of the two (“Reconciling...” 31), an acceptance of the differences without the inherent hierarchical relationship which accompanies those differences. According to Silvers, “research has shown that American’s with disabilities are subject to persisting and generalized negative bias in social relations” (33). Equality though, is riddled with the influences of the dominant culture and the marginalization of minority populations, and similar difficulties have been raised in debates over difference and equality within feminist discourses. Says Silvers, “In the service of equalizing, it is charged, our Enlightenment tradition imposed uniformity on the core descriptions of moral agents ... Far from liberating members of groups subordinated on account of difference by demonstrating their underlying identity with dominant kinds of persons, the conceptual device of abstracting from difference to uniformity is thought by feminist critics and others to become just another instrument furthering social oppression” (32, emphasis added).

The problem then is one of recognizing difference without promoting the marginalization that has historically been associated with difference and deviation from the ‘accepted norms of society.’ In retrospect, an examination of difference and equality would find not two divisive and antithetical conditions, but rather
terms, definitions only possible in relation to one another and which rather than being antithetical to one another, are deeply interrelated. “Fixed oppositions,” according to Joan Scott in *Deconstructing Equality versus Difference*, “conceal the extent to which the things represented as oppositional are, in fact, interdependent – that is, they derive their meaning from a particularly established contrast rather than from some inherent or pure antithesis” (137). Thus, rather than an opposition of equality to difference, by advocating a condition of difference without the hierarchy that has accompanied that difference, the two terms can be reconciled, and the interdependent nature of their relationship established.

It is perhaps necessary to make a digression here. For, in advocating an acceptance of difference without hierarchy, a critical challenge to the poststructural project is engaged. Does one argue for the elimination of all hierarchies and thus the elimination of value judgments? The short answer is essentially yes – if one is inclined to argue that value judgments have some sort of absolute or universal presence outside of the social conditions within which they are constructed. An alternative position, one taken within these texts, is that all such value statements are equally without absolute foundations, built instead upon political and social consensus. The poststructural project is seen as a mechanism for exposing the relativity and political boundedness of that situation – difference without hierarchy, operating to expose the relativity of the social hierarchies which have heretofore been associated with difference, and employed as the means by which the ‘other’ is marginalized – exposing fictional truths not to eliminate them, but so as to form them and model them in accordance with social value systems, instead of being bound by value systems which mask themselves as natural or eternal truths.

In the acceptance of difference though, one is perhaps forced, perhaps encouraged to also accept the disjunction which can accompany difference. In opposition to the hierarchical relationship, Foucault argues for the development of “action, thought and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition and disjunction” (“Anti-Oedipus”). Such disjunctive conditions arise out of the acceptance of difference. Without the purity and control afforded to the oppositional hierarchy, one’s ability to limit and control the relationships between systems is diminished. In other words, juxtaposition and disjunction arise out of the interconnections between different elements in a theory, or a design, or a population. The breakdown of conventional classifications, argues Roland Barthes, can be brought about by encounters among previously disparate disciplines (“Work” 169). Thus in the very act of bringing together disjunctive elements, for example in a landscape, one is able to weaken the boundaries between seemingly separate elements, such as the able population from people with disabilities.
Architect Bernard Tschumi suggests that in celebrating both a culture of differences, and embracing the fragmentary nature of reality, the notion of defamiliarization should be embraced, even intensified (“Six” 237). In such cases one has the potential to take the familiar and make it unfamiliar, using the purely functional – chain link fence, asphalt, concrete blocks – as ‘design’ elements, thus establishing the possibility of challenging one’s expectations of that which is ‘normal’ in landscapes, as well as society. It is the potential – and not necessarily the certainty – for meaning to be generated by a design move that is significant. Says Tschumi, “In culture in general, the world of communication in the last twenty years has certainly helped the expression of a multiplicity of new angles … airing the views of women, immigrants, gays, minorities, and various non-Western identities who never sat comfortably within the supposed community” (“Six” 237). Could one then design for everyone except the dominant paradigm of humanity? The problem with such an approach, is that in and of itself, it engages an aspect of the fiction which it is attempting to expose, and furthermore without consideration of its implications, little more than an idiosyncratic landscape is likely to develop, in which no one is able to develop or create a meaning and which still are limited to the use of only certain populations. Just as the lines of flight created certain paths through the fictions they were engaging, but were also connected with other concepts, these approaches must be considered in relation to other practices, other approaches, and not as singular or independent conditions.

Barthes’ arguments that interdisciplinarity is that which enables conventional modes of classification to be broken down, in albeit uncomfortable ways, has a correlate in the realm of design. The role of ‘function’ in a building or a landscape can be an important issue for a designer. Yet the function for which a design is originally intended is likely to change. Gas Works Park is a prime example, a dichotomy of a park which arising out of the ruins of an industrial plant. How then can function be approached, and is there a potential to engage the uncertainty that seems almost inevitable today as yet another mechanism of critique? Again we can turn to Tschumi, whose discussion of architecture is equally valid within the realm of the landscape. “If architecture is both concept and experience, space and use, structure and superficial image – nonhierarchically – then architecture should cease to separate these categories and instead merge them into unprecedented combinations of programs and spaces. ‘Crossprogramming,’ ‘transprogramming,’ ‘disprogramming,’” then become the means by which the categories can be substituted, challenged – function and form interact (“Six” 254).
This design for Cowgill Plaza on the campus of Virginia Tech sought to explore the potential of the inversion of systems as a mechanism of design. The plaza structure was designed to invert expectations of material and structure – allowing an ephemeral steel screen ‘ramp’ to slice through layers of stone, distorting that more solid structure. Guided by experimentation in different methods of representation, the sketches (above) along with traces of the existing plaza drove the form of the project which was intended to provide a place for any number of different activities and events. In leaving open the ‘function’ of the structure – there is the potential of the function, but no defined function, the plaza could act as an amphitheater, seating area, classroom, or even play area – and by sloping the extruded stone slabs at a shallow incline, the plaza provides opportunities for different users as well as uses.
Interdisciplinarity had brought together modes of thinking, different professions, different areas of so-called expertise and in their juxtaposition found new areas, new connections, and concepts which had been limited and masked by old classifications. Could not the same occur with the notion of cross-programming? Could not the functions of different groups be brought together to form new conditions? One perhaps pragmatic, but nonetheless key example is multi-generational design. The bringing together of the functions of caring for the young and providing the elderly with assistance and a sense of purpose, can be made possible by combining day care and nursing care facilities. “The first day-care center that we put into a skilled nursing care facility … had an astonishing impact. People accustomed to staying in their beds were suddenly coming into the dining room … because there were children there to play with and be with and talk to … Such coupling of generations is so significant in terms of what it can produce … By putting generations together, we can solve our problems simultaneously” (Kaufman 46). Conventional wisdom considers such different functions as inherently separate, but might in that process be masking similarities in needs and truly interdependent functions.

One of the means by which this critique has been engaged is through examining all of the interrelated issues and disciplines which affect or influence the concept of accessibility. One might propose to use the same technique in developing a landscape, pulling to the surface all of the traces of past uses, or conditions at a site as remembrances of that site. Peter Eisenman, an architect frequently held in association with the philosophy of Jacques Derrida, explained his process for a museum in Long Beach, California. Although ultimately arriving at the point or construction of a building, what is interesting is the process, and what becomes evident is that for Eisenman, the final building held no greater presence than the process itself. “…[D]esign is begun by deconstructing superimposed texts or fictions: traces of water at the site (river, coastline, channel), traces of the fault line, traces of the first white settlement of 1849 and of the first land division in 1949. Transferring each of the tracings, or mapped fictions, to a computer makes possible the swift rotation and rescaling of all superpositions … In the final steps, the building is filled in … as a continuation of the game” (Mugerauer 70). This process can be related to Deleuze’s concept of the map which is described as “open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” (Plateaus 12). Eisenman’s task is to expose all of the traces of past conditions at the site, engaging these as his formal tools. It would seem evident though that Eisenman is concerned only with the past uses of the site, the tracings left at the site, and not with the myriad of functions of his project. While Eisenman would likely argue against any inclusion of use or function and certainly any inclusion of the needs
of the users, the potential exists for an even greater level of deconstruction, where not only the site is deconstructed, but the proposed use – engaging not only the past, but both the present and the future, all as part of the continuing game.

In taking the different mappings of a site, and manipulating them, one ultimately must resituate them in a formal composition. As with the idea of cross-programming, it is in the connection of different elements, and the juxtaposition of forms, that potentially unconceived ideas come into being. At the Parc de la Villette, Tschumi has engaged the juxtaposition of three ‘independent’ systems: points, lines and planes, which while composed of fragmentary elements, have systems of formal order and structure that help to unify each of these separate systems or layers, that are finally juxtaposed within and upon one another. These individual systems collide in disjunctive manners, creating specific points of conflict and disturbance which none of the individual systems exhibit on their own. It is in these points of conflict and disjuncture where the event has the greatest impact, but also where the project exhibits the greatest tendency to transcend the limits of theory and practice. “…[T]he process of superimposition, permutation and substitution which governed the Parc de la Villette plan could only lead to a radical questioning of the concept of structure – to its decentering – since the superimposition of three autonomous (and coherent) structures (points, lines, surfaces) does not necessarily lead to a new, more complex and verifiable structure. Instead, they open up a field of contradictory and conflictual events which deny the idea of a pre-established coherence” (Tschumi La Case Vide 4).

The concept of the event can be conceived as originally advocated by the Situationist’s discourse through and following the events of May, 1968 in Paris, as well as that which enables an individual to take an active role in the environment, to become a mechanism through which experience is engendered. “For Foucault,” says Tschumi, “an event is not simply a logical sequence of words or actions but rather ‘the moment of erosion, collapse, questioning, or problematization of the very assumptions of the setting within which a drama may take place – occasioning the chance or possibility of another different setting.’ The event here is seen as a turning point – not an origin or an end…” (“Six” 256). Tschumi goes on to say that the “event is the place where the rethinking and reformulation of the different elements of architecture, many of which have resulted in or added to contemporary social inequalities, may lead to their solution. By definition, it is the place of the combination of differences” (“Six” 258). In being that place of the combination of differences, the event operates as the very mechanism through which many of the previous practices – cross-programming, mapping, juxtaposition – can themselves be combined and brought into connection. The event is situated
then not as a single formal device or a single point of interaction, but rather a ‘space’ in which multiple actions, programs, or users collide and interact.

The issue of power relationships is also raised, as one of the means by which those relationships exist is through the control of the user within the built environment. The implications of strong and weak boundaries begin to take on additional significance within the context of the event. An event, in this case, would become one of the mechanisms by which meaning is engendered, not within the design or the thing itself, and not solely in the perceptions of the users, but in the interrelationship of the two. The issues of boundaries can be taken further, engaging the individual in the production or even deconstruction of boundaries. Control, and more precisely the degree of control, is what is at question here. How much control over the development of experience can the designer give to the individual? One might propose the relinquishment of all such control over the user, landscapes where no power is exercised. It is doubtful whether such a conception could ever be called a place or whether one could even conceptualize the total elimination of power over the user. What needs to be considered and brought onto the field where design elements are brought together, is the issue of power and control, and a desire to explore those relations, to be aware of their implications and the influences they can exert on a project.

One of the most significant practices offered by the poststructural project is the inversion of binary oppositions. Deconstruction centers on this activity, exposing the opposition and inverting the hierarchical relationship to expose the arbitrariness of the construction. The practice though has implications well beyond the realm of linguistics and philosophical discourse. Silvers suggests that, “By hypothesizing what society would do were persons with disabilities dominant rather than suppressed, it becomes evident that the systematic exclusion of people with disabilities is a consequence not of their natural inferiority, but of their minority social status” (“Defective” 168-69). Taken beyond a philosophically hypothetical situation, it is possible to explore the potential of such an inversion in design exercises which seek to accomplish formally what Derrida has sought to do linguistically.

“Suppose,” asks Silvers, “that most people used wheelchairs? Would we continue to build staircases rather than ramps?” (“Defective” 168). Throughout history the stair has been
The ‘NEW’ Capitol lawn, And
path paved with the ADA.
even without its honorific
members-only stair, the United States
Capitol building remains
a powerful symbol, or is that a
symbol of power?
imbued with highly symbolic meanings, espoused as a means of ascending to heaven and used to separate the mundane from the honorific (see Blanc, Templer). However, the stairs existence is meaningful because it was and is useful for many. Were none of us able to use the stair, these meanings would surely not have developed. It could be argued though that the staircase is an inherently discriminatory element and as such should be eliminated. Thus we would have to develop ways in which the same function could be accomplished without the stair. It is not difficult to image the replacement of stairs in the landscapes with ramps and in buildings with ramps or elevators. Surely, were we to argue that NO stairs could be built, it would not be long before designers would likely find or rediscovered ways in which the ramp or other elements could fill the vacuum. The point is not to mandate or legislate the removal of stair, but rather to remove the barrier in the mind that the stair represents, transcending problems and finding possibilities. Yet, as has been discussed earlier, the stair does not meet the needs of everyone, and there are those for whom the lengthy distances of a ramp can be more of a barrier than a few shallow stairs.

The exercise can to be taken even further, where not only do we eliminate the use of the stair, but the ramp as well. We position ourselves in a landscape where only minimal changes in level are permitted and only those which can be accommodated without the constraints of the stair or ramp. But how, designers would no doubt argue, does one create the spatial definition, the hierarchical relationship of spaces, the significance offered by the stair and the ramp? How is precisely the question, and although a hypothetical situation, it demands that one conceive of new ways in which to accomplish old tasks. The crutch that was / is the stair and the ramp is removed and one must struggle with other conditions, tactile, auditory, visual, temperative experiences… in order to achieve the same affect. We have literally inverted the binary – the majority of the population moves by wheeled chair as opposed to walking. How, it must be asked, can this be designed for? A heavier reliance on the senses would be needed and desired in the creation of different situations in the built environment, generating multi-sensory experiences. It is suspected though that in exploring such multi-
A level or shallow sloped path of travel need not necessitate a flat landscape. Adjacent ground planes can be designed to create different spatial conditions and respond to the needs of different segments of the population. Quarry Cove (above) and Ira’s Fountain (right) illustrate different aspects of groundplane manipulation. While in their present form, the floating planes at Ira’s Fountain would be problematic for some, they illustrate how differentiation between levels can create powerful affects.
sensory experiences, benefit might be gained not for a single minority within the population, but for the population as a whole without regard to specific abilities or disabilities.\footnote{The move toward implementing special ‘\textit{Gardens for the Blind,}’ must be addressed. Because what is being suggested here is that increased sensory experiences are likely beneficial to the population as a whole rather than just a single aspect of the population. Such specialized gardens, although intended to provide the visually impaired with certain experiences, would seem to even further reinforce negative stereotypes and ignore an obvious situation in which everyone could gain from ‘accessible’ accommodations.}

Perhaps though we should place an even greater limit on the exercise and investigate what would be the ‘norm’ were the majority of the population completely visually impaired. Color would cease to have importance. Tactile and auditory conditions, combined with olfactory sensations would play dominant rather than subordinate roles. The landscape and all of its ‘information’ would need to be conveyed in some way without direct visual clues. Touch would become exceedingly important and signs would be three-dimensional instead of two, auditory instead of silent. Sounds would act as wayfinding tools and pavements would in their construction need to indicate changes in direction or important conditions without the ‘benefit’ of being seen long before they are encountered.

But, pragmatically how can it be suggested that we eliminate changes in elevation – the world after-all isn’t flat – how can we eliminate changes in color – most people, even the visually impaired, are not completely without the benefit of sight, and how can we simply eliminate the stair and rely on the ramp when not everyone can use the ramp? The point this digression has attempted to make, is that it is possible to reconceptualize the world, making anything the dominant condition in a dichotomous opposition, thereby suggesting that the present condition is itself a culturally constructed and accepted fiction, but not an absolute condition. These exercises, though only hypothetical, have the potential to enable designers to discover ways to design which they are oblivious to because they live in a certain reality. In so doing, ways might be discovered in which the environment could be made not ‘accessible’ to certain segments of the population, but potentially meaningful to those populations as well. Yet such exercises also expose the degree to which an environment designed to a single segment of the
This transformative collage of Mondrian’s *Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow*, from 1930 explores the means by which with or without color, texture can come to play a dominant role in a composition. It would seem that while without a doubt a significant component of perception, color can be transformed into textures such that textures come to represent if not the different colors themselves, than at least the differences between them.
population ignores the needs of the others. The tactile but colorless environment being less significant to the sighted individual and the flat landscape ignoring the desires of those who can and want to use stairs. But then the current landscape does exactly the same thing to those who do not meet the current conception of the paradigmatic culture, and this is perhaps the greatest lessen to be offered by such exercises. One begins, hopefully, to understand the absurdity of designing for only one type of individual and the need for embracing the differences among the population. Ultimately the product of such a landscape is perhaps a lessening of the difference between the elements of the hierarchy of able / disabled. The space, both literally and phenomenally, between the two supposedly separate populations can be diminished.

The line of division between the two terms of the opposition, also known as the separatrix, is that which Derrida has constantly pursued, “so as to twist it, turn it back on itself, and poke holes in it in order to expose the inseparability of those terms that it separates” (Kipnis 32). The practices proposed here have sought to question that apparently oppositional nature in accessible design and can be taken to the point of proposing conditions of design which seek not to address separate populations, but to meet the needs of different interdependent and interrelated populations. Furthermore and more importantly this, “Deconstruction … does not pursue the separatrix to destroy it and the laws it enables; it does not seek the chaos that would result from the destruction of … the separatrix … It seeks, instead, to expose the hidden agenda behind and untenable reification of the order that the separatrix imposes” (Kipnis 51).

Derrida in commenting on the work of philosopher Levi-Strauss has said, “What I want to emphasize is simply that the passage beyond philosophy does not consist in turning the page of philosophy (which usually amounts to philosophizing badly), but in continuing to reading philosophers in a certain way” (Writing 288). This comment is significant when considering the implication of the design moves mentioned above and for the issue of reconceptualizing accessibility and Universal Design. What is proposed here does not constitute a new or different way of designing for accessibility, but rather a certain way of ‘reading’ and hence ‘writing’ the issue. Thus the design practices or moves, along with the critique, challenge us to ask what certain of our inherited practices and beliefs – myths about disability and the equality versus difference argument for example – do in both socio-cultural terms and as controlling factors in the development of form.

Myths about people with disabilities have long driven society’s conception of this population, these self-supporting myths (Amundson 114), being further reinforced by the form of the built environment. Yet by removing obstacles in the built environment which handicap people with disabilities, the hold of such myths is
loosened. The myths have been perpetuated in many places by the fact that the landscape has been so globally inaccessible that people with disabilities were themselves conceived as globally incapacitated. As Barthes has noted, myths function as mechanisms that naturalize certain assumptions, making them unquestioned or even unquestionable. Thus the landscape which questions issues of accessibility, and inverts accepted norms has the ability to denaturalize such myths, challenging their originary status and thus rendering them less powerful.

The question of minority versus majority status has been examined in these texts, in part as a justification for the exclusion of people with disabilities from the built environment and a reason why so much of the landscape is inaccessible. Yet even the condition of minority status must be challenged. In a reading of the accessibility issue, such as has occurred here, the very question of a majority needs to be questioned, the function of the distinction being a means to conceptualize the ideal, not the average, in society. The ideal was discussed as the basis for the ‘majority’ conception of society, when in ‘reality’ it seems as though the landscape is designed for a paradigm of humanity that removes the consideration of the young, old, women of all ages, and people with disabilities, not to mentioned differences of race, religion, etc… Thus the mythic majority is itself a minority. Furthermore, it is the one – the minority – which creates the other – the majority, and a close examination would likely reveal that one is never fully within one or the other category, seemingly in the majority in terms of one characteristic and the minority of another.

Boundaries could easily be set within any of the investigative exercises or design practices discussed above. Yet the appearance of such boundaries can be questioned and challenged as a product of the conceptual scheme from which they were developed, and in being susceptible to questioning, the very existence of any boundaries can be called into question. Boundaries can be considered in relation to the perpetuation of myths about people with disabilities and to the conception that they are unproductive and have less earning potential than the able bodied. Indeed the belief that people with disabilities are less productive workers can easily be equated with the inaccessibility of the built environment and the boundaries in the landscape, the space between buildings, and the buildings themselves. This argument could be taken even further to connect also with the issue of power relations, as boundaries, both the intentional and the accidental – if such a division can be made – are the very mechanisms of control in the built environment. While they function not as legislative power over the individual, and for all appearances have little to do with issues of control, they operate as mechanisms of control, directing our daily lives. Perhaps it is even because they appear benign that they are so powerful. It is only in questioning their significance, and examining the means by which they
control the individual – through different paths of travel, the representation of information to different populations – that power can perhaps be returned to the individual, removed from the sole control of the powerful. The disenfranchised and the powerless have little if any control over the form of their environment, and like the myth of the globally incapacitated individual, such control is self-perpetuating – limiting the control one has over their environment, at times limiting access and ultimately limiting influence – thereby maintaining the status quo.

Whether to advocate similarities and equality over differences and inequality has long been an issue with advocates for people with disabilities. It is often conceived as a situation of either advocating one position or the other, as if they were two independent and dichotomous terms. However, a poststructural critique of the issue reveals the interdependence of the terms, exposing their meaning “relative to a particular history,” and constructed for “particular purposes in particular contexts” (Scott 137). Such is the case with the difference or equality issue, where each term is fundamentally bound up in the context of its opposite, and the two are exceedingly interrelated. Thus rather than being a situation of either equality or difference, it can be conceived as a situation of both equality and difference or rather difference without hierarchy.

The argument then follows that the landscape should be integrated, allowing for the interaction of diverse populations without segregating anyone in that population. But, in opposing segregation to integration, as has often been done here, a key issue is left unchallenged. Neither integration nor segregation is a wholly independent condition or situation, and as with the majority / minority opposition, integration and segregation create one another, ultimately conceivable as interrelated terms. In attempting to invert the hierarchy of the pair – placing integration in the position of power, when in the built environment it is often in the inferior position – has not the existing of the opposition been justified? In other words, in the very act of recognizing one term over the other, has not the one which is being challenged been naturalized in the process? Perhaps integration is little more than a useful fiction from which to act and engage a problem. Furthermore, to claim that total integration is preferable over total segregation ignores the consideration that people sometimes choose to partially segregate themselves, for religious, cultural or personal reasons. “[F]or example the Deaf, do not want to be integrated into non-disabled society,” according to Wendell (Rejected 56), and ultimately, totalizing either integration or segregation ignores the interdependence of the ‘opposing’ conditions.

Perhaps now, it is possible to return to the Principles of Universal Design, to resituate and transform them. Many of the issues which may at first have appeared only peripheral to accessibility have come to play.
significant roles in this critique, correspondences having been found between the underlying concepts of universally accessible design and the more critical aspects of this investigation. Not the least of these being the fiction of integration, and issues of power relations and normalization. The argument for integrated accessibility has been made for years by advocates of Universal Design, yet for all of the movement which has occurred in the intervening years, old classifications and inherited beliefs in the myths of disability, continue to have significant influence over so-called accessible design. Designers may not be able to address all of the socio-cultural issues which have been investigated here, but in advocating integrated accessibility it is necessary to understand the issues, impacts and influences that they have on the design of the built environment. The ‘problem’ of accessibility is not solely a lack of knowledge or ability to implement accessible designs, or even a lack of money, but rather a problem of the limited ways in which the issue is conceptualized.

The, or perhaps A, question which arises, however, is how one judges the effectiveness of such a critique and how in turn one is able to resituate the practice and philosophy of Universal Design within this context, or this reading of the issues? If a criticality is necessary even within some form of resolution – as if a final resolution were at all possible – one might be able to use such a criticality as a judge of the resituation of the concept. Indeed Derrida has argued that, “The quality or fecundity of a discourse are perhaps measured by the critical rigor with which this relation to the history of metaphysics and to inherited concepts is thought” (Writing 282). Thus one can ‘judge’ the ‘quality’ of a discourse or a critique by the rigor with which the interrelations and influences are exposed and explored, and this ultimately applies equally to the resituation of a concept such as Universal Design, as it does to the critique which came before it and of which it is a part.

As a means by which conventional classifications can be broken down, the concept of interdisciplinarity has a certain significance for this critique. However, that significance can be taken even further as a means by which the designer / author involves the user / reader. The issue of the generation of meaning through the interrelationship between an individual and the environment has already been discussed, but such interaction between the two is not possible if the designer works in a vacuum. Just as this text has not been written in a vacuum and has engaged the work of some who are closely connected to the issues at hand – including writers already mentioned within these texts who themselves have disabilities and are thus able to speak from a position within the discourse – no design which aims to meet the needs of a truly diverse population can expect to meet those needs without relying on the knowledge and experience of a broad cross-section of society, including people of different ages, sexes, socio-economic backgrounds and disabilities / abilities.
order to create what might be called Critically Integrated Design, designers must not only engage a multitude of disciplines but a multitude of individuals. In such a context, the first two ‘principles’ of a Critically Integrated Design address the ways in which such design is achieved.

- Expose with a critical rigor the multitude of relationships between a design or a concept and its past(s), its inherited ‘foundations’ and its implications; in doing so be acutely aware of the potential influences of power and control in the built environment.
- Within such an activity, embrace not only a diversity of interdisciplinary machines in the critique, but engage the ‘knowledge’ and beliefs of diverse individuals.

A Critically Integrated Design, unlike Universal Design, does not aim for a single level of accessibility, or even for easy levels of accessibility, but rather expects that a diverse society has diverse needs and desires. Thus no single ‘accommodation’ could be expected to meet the needs of the population, and a variety, a multiplicity of experiences needs to be accounted for. Such landscapes challenge the notion of rigidly defined boundaries, accepting the differences in the population it seeks to engage, but advocating the elimination of hierarchies between populations. Thus there can be no single ‘norm’ against which to measure an aspect of the landscape. ‘Access’ is thus made available to the broadest range of people possible, yet without resorting the assumption that accessibility is equal to the easiest level of access possible, and thus ultimately not relying on a single accommodation or type of accommodation to meet the needs of the entire population. Different levels of accessibility can be provided, where choices can be made by individuals and where boundaries between different types or levels of access are defined by the needs and desires of the user rather than strict boundaries of the accessible and inaccessible. The universally accessible society, according to Wendell is not one where everyone can do absolutely everything, but rather where “with respect to the major aspects of life in the society, the differences in ability between someone who can walk, or see, or hear, and someone who cannot would be no more significant than the differences in ability among people who can walk, see, or hear” (Rejected 55-56).

- Design for the benefit of diverse needs and desires, providing the means by which users – regardless of age, sex, race or ‘disability’ / ‘ability’ – can be accommodated; engaging different...
levels of access for different abilities and desires, rather than a singular ‘normal’ accommodation,
while also eliminating and hierarchical distinctions between different levels of access.
- Diminish the significance, whether implicit or explicit, between those differences, providing
boundaries which are loosely defined, flexible and open to change; provide choice not for a single
group of users, but for all, thereby limiting the influence and control over the user

In designing for a diverse population, and having already acknowledged that singular ‘norms’ can not meet
the needs of such a population, the idea of simplicity advocated by Universal Design no longer seems
appropriate. One could no more make an argument for absolute simplicity over complexity than for total and
completely equal accessibility over total inaccessibility. Thus perhaps akin to the notion of uniformity within
diversity, the range of difference between the simple and the complex needs to be acknowledged. In this
context one cannot ignore the significance of information and its representation. Thus as before, information
needs to be represented in a variety of ways to anyone who potentially needs such information, regardless
again of age or ability. Issues such as safety and hazards cannot be ignored when designing for a critical type
of integration, but such issues should be considered for the population as a whole, but understanding also that
two standards of safety are not beneficial – in that they act to reinforce stereotypes – and that issues of
safety need to be carefully weighed in relation to aesthetics, social issues and ‘functional’ concerns.

- Design neither solely for complexity nor for simplicity as the two are inherently interrelated, each
playing a role in the built environment. Once again, rather than providing solely a simple and
intuitive design, provide users of different abilities with choices and different ways in which to
understand and experience a place – choosing multiplistic interpretations over uniformity
- Communicate information to the different users of a site, not only through different modes of
representation, but through the design itself, understanding that ‘information’ arrives to the
individual not by way of a single message independent of other perceptions but through the
multitude of different perceptual experiences of a site
- Situate the mitigation of undue hazards within the context of users’ desires and needs as well as
aesthetics, social concerns and functional requirements; mitigate undue hazards and dangerous
situations, without detracting from the experience of the place or providing different levels of
safety for specific groups of individuals
The design of a Critically Integrated Landscape acts to provide the greatest level of accessibility possible to the broadest range of people, providing for a multitude of different needs, desires, disabilities and abilities without placing a hierarchical structure on those differences. Thus different levels of accessibility can be expected, as not everyone can or will want to have the same exact experiences, and different ways of experiencing a landscape will exist, while opportunities and choices are provided for all of the different aspects of the population. Within such landscapes, boundaries will no doubt still be present in some form, but the power to exercise control and segregate different users or uses is diminished through the juxtaposition of programs and levels of accessibility. Such landscapes allow us to move in the direction of Wendell’s goal of the elimination of the disability category altogether, where we “simply talk about individuals physical abilities in their social context” (“Toward” 108).

Whether or not such a goal is ultimately achievable or even desirable is left open to speculation. This project has aimed from the beginning not at the elimination of the categories but of the current structure of the relationship between the categories. It is in this way, along with the deconstruction of many of the current stereotypes, myths about disabilities, and the stigmatization of people with disabilities, that allows for issues of accessibility to be situated as issues relevant to society as a whole. Wendell believes disability to be socially constructed by factors such as “social conditions that cause or fail to prevent damage to peoples bodies; expectations of performance; the physical and social organization of societies on the basis of a young, non-disabled, ‘ideally shaped,’ healthy adult male paradigm of citizens; the failure or willingness to create ability among citizens who do not fit the paradigm; and cultural representations, failures of representation, and expectations” (Rejected 45, emphasis added). Perhaps not all of these conditions fall within the realm of deconstruction when it focuses on the form of the built environment, but all of them do fall within this realm when considering the relationships which can be established between the form of the built environment and all of the culturally constructed fictions which lead to the development of that form. Thus it has been an aim of this project to examine issues ranging from disability policy and the welfare state to the idealization of the human form and its representation in the mass media.

There are, no doubt, many questions which have been left unanswered by these texts and perhaps even more questions which have been exposed than answered. Perhaps one of the most significant of such questions is what it would and perhaps does mean to talk about difference without hierarchy in terms of disability. Wendell poses the question in slightly different terms, asking what it means to value disabilities as differences (Rejected 84). “It would certainly mean,” she suggests, “not assuming that every disability is a tragic loss or that everyone with a disability wants to be ‘cured.’ It would mean seeking out and respecting the knowledge
and perspectives of people with disabilities. It would mean being willing to learn about and respect ways of being and forms of consciousness that are unfamiliar. And it would mean giving up the myths of control and the quest for the perfection of the human body” (84). Wendell’s comments are indeed closely related to the idea of difference without hierarchy. In all of her charges is the implication that those differences which we now place a negative value on must be brought onto the same playing field as those attributes which we place a positive value on. In such a way, the differences themselves are what might be valued and the hierarchy among them eliminated.

Whether this is possible given the current move towards even greater levels of control over the human form is unknown, and how many of the problems associated with the built environment and accessibility can be deconstructed is perhaps uncertain. It can and has been argued that while the poststructural project does not challenge the existence of the material world – reality – it aims to place all what is perceived as reality within a social historical context, and to understand the ‘reality of reality’ is perpetually, contextually bounded. Thus, on the one hand it is possible to argue that none of the issues or relationships influencing concepts of disability and ‘accessible’ constructions, exist outside of this contextualized reality. Simultaneously, however, there are aspects of disability that cause heavy personal burdens for the individuals with the disabilities and these conditions, such as “pain, illness, frustration, and unwanted limitation” (Wendell, Rejected 154), cannot be eliminated by any critique or deconstruction of the social contexts within which the implications of these burdens are constructed.

Tschumi has said that he does not believe it is possible to design deconstruction, but that by “understanding the nature of our contemporary circumstances and the media processes that accompany them, [there exists] the possibility of constructing conditions that will create ... new relationships between spaces and events... Architecture is not about the conditions of design, but about the design of conditions that will dislocate the most traditional and regressive aspects of our society and simultaneously reorganize these elements in the most liberating way ...” (“Six” 258-59). It has been said from the start that no final conclusion can be offered to these texts, and while one may say that we have arrived at an end point, ultimately we are still in the middle of the discourse. Even built works which aim themselves to deconstruct certain regressive social tendencies are themselves not final conclusions to that deconstruction. Not only does the project aim to reconceptualize and resituate that which it has dislodged from its natural and absolute foundations, but it considers this reconceptualization to be equally open to further critique and resituation. This can and is disturbing to many who seek absolute answers and final conclusions, but it can also be liberating. One aim is to maintain the status of an event, which in the production and re-production of its texts remains open to...
change. Another aim being to simultaneously play at the margins of different disciplines – following the paths that each of the issues engaged in the text has implied – while remaining in those in-between spaces, speaking neither solely of architecture or landscape architecture, sociology, psychology, economics, or linguistics.

Deleuze has said that the rhizome “has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo,” suggesting further that foundations be done away with, endings and beginnings nullified and that that middle, contrary to being the average “is where things pick up speed” (Plateaus 25). It is in such places that this project can be situated. Robert Kennedy called for something akin to a charge for asking not why things are the way they are, but why they are not the way they might be. Rather than being either one or the other of these positions, this project has aimed for both, offering a critique of the way things are perceived to be by this author and arguing for a different way, not of what they might be, but how they might operate in their social contexts. The poststructural project enables us to challenge and critique aspects of society and culture, to reconceptualize the built landscape in a way that it acts as a mechanism of change, rather than something which maintains the status quo, and in this rather being neither nihilistic nor destructive, but liberating and affirmative.
Author’s Note: At times a note is included in the description of an article indicating that the author has a disability, and if known what type of disability. This has been done hesitantly for fear of highlighting a single, and at many times insignificant aspect of an author. However, in this context it can have a great deal of significance as all too often work on disabilities is done by fully able-bodied individuals without any reliance on people with firsthand personal knowledge. Works were used here because of their value to this work, however, it is this authors belief that the inclusion of ideas and beliefs of people with disabilities is important for any work which aims for a diversity of knowledge and experience, but especially when the implications of disabilities are at issue.

  Amundson discusses several conceptions of disability, examining the causes, definitions and implications of the issue. He analyses the issue in terms of functional limitations, restrictions in opportunities, and the interaction between disabilities and the built environment. The relationship between disability and chronic illness is also examined, along with the social implications of this relationship, ultimately offering a discussion of the ethical implications of disability and the issue of rights and the social construction of disability. This philosopher is one of a small but growing group of individuals who are writing about disability outside of the traditional aspects of when death is preferable to disability and when a fetus is too ‘disabled’ to be allowed to live.

  This work which discusses the economic aspects of disability policy was used only briefly for its references to ancient historical conditions and the meaning of disability within certain cultures.

Although seemingly a discussion of two modes of writing, one called a work and one a text, this brief article explores the significant differences between two different ways of thinking, where the work characterizes that which is limited and confined, the text that which is open and transformable. Issues such as the classification of ‘things,’ the concept of originality and filiation, the relationship between the signified and signifier, and the relationship between the reader, writer and text are explored.


Bedini, Dr. Leandra A. and McCann, Carrie A. “Tearing down the shameful wall of exclusion.” Parks & Recreation. April, 1992: 40-44.

This brief article examines the implications of the ADA within recreation landscapes.


The development of the Cartesian view of the world is briefly explored, focusing of the development of the opposition of significant terms such as chance and reason, and the implications of Descartes architectural metaphor. Derrida’s critique of this system of thought is then explored as a challenge and critique to the logocentric position.


The author explores the problems of deconstruction, including attempts to define the term. The affirmative nature of the theory is examined against the charges of nihilism and destructiveness often rendered against deconstruction in general and Derrida in particular.

This discussion of disability policies in the United States is set within the context of the modern welfare state. However, while offering insight into several key relationships between American policies and their European predecessors, the article was of only limited assistance.

  The argument is often made that accessibility is not possible or feasible within the context of historic landscapes. These authors briefly discuss several ways in which accessibility can be incorporated within historical landscapes, providing accessible accommodations that do not infringe upon the historical significance of the landscapes.


  This brief article discusses the tendency of people to shun family and friends who either have suffered the loss of someone due to suicide or who have become disabled. It focuses on this tendency which manifests itself in forms ranging from total avoidance, and hence social avoidance of the individual, to treating the individual as the disability, not as a person.

  These seven principles, developed by advocates of Universal Design establish the means by which this philosophy and practice of integrated, accessible design addresses the needs of a diverse population. The principles, while considered to be valuable in their attempt to broaden the concept of accessibility to include the entire spectrum of human needs, can be criticized for designing to the lowest common denominator and at times relying on a limiting conception of disability.

  This book, used here only for its discussion of Derrida and the concept of différance, discusses literary deconstruction.

This text was primarily used for its introduction which examines and explains the author’s concept of the rhizome, exploring aspects such as the issue of connection and heterogeneity, the concept of assemblages of thoughts and ideas, the idea of the multiplicity and other important aspects of this non-hierarchical structure.


Derrida discusses the significance of Tschumi’s red follies at the Parc de la Villette, addressing issues such as an architecture of event and the deconstruction - reconstruction of architecture brought about by the follies.


While exploring Derrida’s conception of structures or organizational schemes, and offering a critique of the work of Levi-Strauss, this article is most significant for its explanation of value and how one determines the effectiveness or quality of a poststructural critique.


Although primarily dealing with specific design conditions of the outdoor environment and the implications of accessibility for such environments, this book also addresses some of the history of the disability rights movement and the policies generated out of this movement.

The author, experiences in living with a disability, examines the philosophical implications of disability in relationship to minority populations, assumptions about people with disabilities, and the implications of oppression.

- Foster, Hal. “Re: Post.” Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation. Ed. Brian Wallis. New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984. 189-201. Foster investigates the theory of postmodernism, not as a style or a period of time, but as a theoretical construct which responds to specific characteristics of the modernist doctrine. In order to do this, the author provides specific characterizations of modernism, citing as significant factors the pursuit of purity, originality, and uniqueness in realms of artistic endeavor that were seen as separate and distinct entities. Against such concepts, the theories of postmodernism can be seen to cut across a wide range of disciplines to inhabit the spaces and places which were seen, in the modernist doctrine, as of secondary importance.


- ---. “Two Lectures.” Power / Knowledge. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books. 1980. Foucault explores the role of power relation in society, focusing on the differences between legislative power (in the form of the sovereign) and the everyday mechanisms through which power is exercised. The author explores the effects of power and knowledge, exposing the ways in which seemingly insignificant actions can be seen to have significant controlling implications, and contrasting the apparent results of power with the hidden reasons behind its acquisition and use.

This brief preface discusses the Deleuze and Guattari work as what Foucault considers the first book of ethics to have been written in France for some time.


This article explores one of the most common criticisms of the ADA, the expense to which some business and individuals must go in order to ‘accommodate’ the needs of people with disabilities. While addressing some of the very real problems with the ADA and the limited manner in which accessibility is conveyed in that act, the article highlights one of the major issues addressed in these texts, the idea that people with disabilities are a decidedly distinct and separate class of individuals who must be ‘accommodated.’


Landscape architect Susan Goltsman briefly explores the concept of levels of accessibility and different aspects of the universally accessible landscape, such as access points, paths, seating, surfacing, and signage.


In opposition to the minority group model of disability, the author proposes an alternative “conceptual framework” based on values of personal appearance and independence, for assessing the “anxiety aroused by persons with disabilities.”

Hunter, Daniel G. E-mail to the author. 9 Jan. 1997.

In personal correspondence with the author, Hunter, a graduate student in landscape architecture (who uses a wheelchair) discusses his personal perspective on the accessibility of both historical landscapes and wilderness areas.

The historical basis of disability, from the English Poor Law system through the United States Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are briefly discussed, in the context of the implications of various attitudes towards those with physical disabilities.

  This compendium includes a discussion of poststructural theory which was used in attempting to clearly define some of the terminology used in these texts.
  This collection of brief articles resulted from a conference on Universal Design and discusses a wide variety of issues and practices, but offers only peripherally important information to these texts.
  The ‘philosophical’ work of theorist Jacques Derrida is discussed in conjunction with the work of architect Peter Eisenman. The separatrix is that which separates terms in a binary opposition, the ‘/’ mark, and this article explores the ways in which both Derrida and Eisenman seek out the naturalized status of the division of terms in such oppositions, exploring methods in design and theory that can denaturalize such oppositions and challenge the hierarchical relationship of the terms.

This author discusses the role of accessibility, and particularly universal accessibility in light of having traveled to Washington D.C. and experienced instances of segregated accommodations. He ultimately provides a brief outline of principles of accessible design as conceived by the participants in the tour including Joe Meade an access specialist for the U.S. Forest Service who is blind and Ron Mace, the architect who coined the term Universal Design and uses a wheelchair himself.


The role of meaning and significance in a work is discussed by this author as that which can be generated in the interrelationship between a reader and a text. This discussion is offered within the context of the role of sexuality as a representative device, whereby reality itself is perceived within the context of its representations. In the case of this article, the discussion focuses on the role of a gendered reality and the reinforcement of this reality by the representations of gendered subjects.


Activist art, operating both inside and out of the world of “high” art, acts to both challenge the power structure and empower marginalized groups of people. Lippard, through a four part essay places activist art within the context of cultural and social structures as well as within the traditional art world. While advocating being politically informed, she leaves room open for art which both engages the political realm, as well as that which deals solely with aesthetic concerns.


Dr. Livneh is an associate professor and the director of the rehabilitation counseling program in the Department of Counseling Education as Rhode Island College. He discusses several different approaches to the connection of disability with monstrous and evil people. The role of sin as a reason for disability, as well as the relationship of disability to death and the role of physical
representations of people with disabilities in film are discussed as is the relationship of disability to dehumanization.

Negative attitudes towards people with disabilities have many causes, and this article explores several key foundations for such negative attitudes including socio-cultural norms and the belief that disability is a punishment for sin.

A brief history is offered of the problems faced by people with disabilities in American society, addressing the specific implications for the deaf community as well as the influence of President Roosevelt’s attempts to hide his disability.

While primarily concerned with the role of social workers in assisting people with disabilities, this article offers an account of the history of the treatment of people with disabilities from brief mention of the Neanderthal period through the American’s with Disabilities Act. Although only a very brief account of historical beliefs, it offers a good starting point and suggests additional source material.

The work of architect Bernard Tschumi is examined within the context of different theoretical positions, starting with the events in Paris of May, 1968 through Tschumi’s later works in the academic and professional realms. The article is particularly insightful in its examination of the relationship between Tschumi’s theoretical positions and the translation of theory into specific works of architectural design.

This paper, predominantly a discussion of space – the barriers it creates or has the potential to create for people who use wheelchairs, and the implications of these boundaries – was used primarily for the initial discussion of the role of boundaries in society and a conception of a diverse society as opposed to a homogeneous one.


  Distributed through the Census Bureau WWW site, this brief article outlines the concept of disability as it relates to the latest United States census statistics.


- Nesbitt, Kate ed. Theorizing a new agenda for architecture: an anthology of architectural theory 1965-1995. New York : Princeton Architectural Press, 1996. This extensive collection of writings on architecture and theory has been compiled in such a way as to provide a clear outline of contemporary thought on the role of design theory within architectural discourses and provides a broad overview of the vastly different approaches which have been taken in the last 30 years. Nesbitt provides a valuable introduction which not only discusses the need for theory, but explores the basis for many of the writings included in the volume.

The presence and absence of people with disabilities in films, along with the perpetuation of stereotypes by the film industry is explored. The significance of such representations should not be underestimated as the extent to which stereotypes and myths are perpetuated by mass-media images becomes increasingly evident in this work which documents the role played by people with disabilities since the first motion pictures were created, through and beyond the passage of the *American’s with Disabilities Act* in 1990.


The author discusses the ‘metaphysics of presence’ espoused by Plato, Rousseau and Saussure, discussing the means by which deconstruction performs its operations, offering ‘definitions’ of deconstruction – to the point that such an operation is possible – and examining the work of Derrida in terms of linguistic deconstruction. Norris finally addresses the political implications of deconstruction in contrast with post-modernism, discussing issues such as power-relations and the implications of deconstruction for design fields including the architecture of Peter Eisenman.


This article is only peripherally related to the discussions in these texts, as it focuses on the practice of normalization as it applies to people with psychological impairments. However, it briefly addresses the belief in the deviant nature of those who do not meet societies standards of normality.


The inaccessibility of recreation areas is discussed in conjunction with commonly held myths about people with disabilities and within the context of integrating accessible accommodations within recreation areas.
This unpublished paper examined the landmark American’s with Disabilities Act from the standpoint of its implementation in the built and natural landscapes.

Aspects of the philosophy and practice of Universal Design were explored, and a critique offered of Universal Design principles developed by Ron Mace and other advocates of the practice. A series of projects were ultimately examined as case studies in the implementation of Universal Design within different types of landscape architectural scenarios.

Owen, who is herself blind, discusses the implications of accepting disability as a normal aspect of human life, the role of economics and accessibility, and the definition of who is disabled – along with the resulted ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy which arises.

The history of the disability rights movement, beginning with early social policies of the 19th century is examined, with attention given to issues such as Eugenics. The articles offers a basic discussion of the concept of disability and the political forces acting on the disability rights movement.

Some of the dilemmas faced by people with disabilities, in particular relation to the rehabilitative process are discussed along with several case studies of particular individuals’ issues in terms of their perception of disability and the problems of ‘overcoming’ that disability.

This article offers a brief synopsis of the English Poor Law system, originally codified at the end of the 16th century and based on a need to control a rising level of vagrancy.
Although we may be want to believe that visible and vocal discrimination has all but disappeared from our society, this article shows how stereotypes about people with disabilities can still have significant impacts. The article focuses on a Texas cheerleader who was removed from the squad after parents of other cheerleaders complained about her presence on the team. Callie Smart, who uses a wheelchair, was kicked off of the team, based on a belief that her safety was in danger, and most likely due to misconception about people with disabilities, and the fear society has of those who are different.

This introduction examines the poststructural critique within the context of its political significance, providing insight into the relationship between culture and the poststructural project.

This brief article was used to gather information on shamanistic cultures, and although very general in its discussion, provides a basic understanding of the role of the shaman within these cultures and the implications of physical difference as they apply to the belief that shaman are born into their roles in society.

The difficulty in providing a greater level of physical access to areas which have been dominated by wilderness and minimal levels of development is discussed in relation to the types of experiences that people choose to have in wilderness or parkland, as well as the implications of development. The author suggests that extensive development is neither truly wanted nor warranted.

A historical and cross-cultural perspective on the development of the concept of disability is explored on the basis that all societies include some members with physical disabilities.
   The author examines the appropriation of several terms from the poststructural project – language, discourse, difference and deconstruction – by feminists, using a sex discrimination case brought against Sears as a basis for discussing the interrelatedness of equality and difference as concepts.

   Many people with disabilities are forced to rely on government assistance in order to survive, but those assistance programs are based on outdated concepts of disability and force those who could live independent lives to reside in nursing care facilities at great expense when lesser intrusive assistance could benefit them. This article focuses on the life of one person in such a situation.

   This examination of the role of spatial structures in furthering the segregation of groups perceived as outside of the norms of a society focuses mostly on gypsy cultures but offers insights into the place of other marginalized groups within dominant cultures.

   This article, more in-depth than the previous examines the issue of boundaries and the maintenance of homogeneity in societies. The definition of boundaries, as strongly or weakly classified, plays a significant role in the extent to which different populations are perceived to be outside of the norms of a society and the degree to which certain populations can be excluded, both literally and phenomenally from a culture.

   The syllabus for this course, offered through the English department at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia addresses the ways in which the
poststructural paradigm operates by closely examining the work of writers who have had major impacts. Available (Spring, 1997): http://athena.english.vt.edu/~siegle/theory.html

  The issue of ‘normality’ and its relationship to disability and people with disabilities is explored in this article, which focuses mostly on the social history which lead to the American’s with Disabilities Act and the influence that the social history had on the construction of the civil rights legislation. A critique of David Wasserman’s arguments (see below) is also offered by the author, along with a discussion of the minority status of people with disabilities.

  Silvers examines the problem of difference and equality, arguing that neither condition can be beneficial to people with disabilities, within a feminist framework and that only in reconciling the two seemingly opposite terms can differences be accepted without the negative connotations they carry and equality be granted to those who have historically been treated as unequal.

  The concept of disability, as it applies to the modern welfare state, is examined here from the standpoint of historical conceptions of disability as a system of welfare, the problems of disability in relation to the work based and need based economic systems, the origins of this problem within the English Poor Law system and the German Social Insurance policies as well as early American versions of social welfare policy, the means by which access to the need based system is restricted, the forces which seek to expand the definition of accessibility (internally and externally), and finally the political implications of such expansion.


This manual, intended to provide assistance to those who must comply with the regulations of the ADA, also provides a brief narrative of the act’s history and its relationship to other civil rights legislation.


This personal narrative explores the role and function of the author within the realm of literary works.


This project which consists of a series of drawing plates from Tschumi’s 1985 competition entry for the Parisian park, also includes essays by Jacque Derrida (see above) and Anthony Vidler as well as a brief introduction by the author.


The author discusses the role of violence in the built environment, not in terms of what he calls evil and destructive violence, but rather the continual and everyday violence which can be seen as a metaphor for the relationship between the individual and the built environment.


This article addresses six different positions or beliefs held by Tschumi in relation to architecture and theory, addressing the conditions of postmodernity and the implications of these conditions on the nature of design and theory.


This U.S. government document mandates the manner in which the ADA is applied to buildings and facilities, providing specific guidelines for the Act’s implementation.

This episode of The Outer Limits television series depicts a scientist who was injured and uses a wheelchair, and his friend’s attempt to find the perfect women for him – who is not human at all, but rather an android. The episode exhibits the extent to which the inhuman nature of people with disabilities is still very much ingrained in our social conscience, to the point that it seems impossible for people with disabilities to have ‘normal’ human relations.


The cultural make-up of the population of people with disabilities is explored in this paper, along with a discussion of the implications of accessibility for different impairments. Although generally focusing on the design of products and the implications of disability and impairments for this task, the author provides insight into the significance of different population of people with disabilities within the overall broad characterization of the group as a whole. The economic implications and the benefit of ‘accessible’ accommodations to the able-bodied are also discussed.


This critique of the American’s with Disabilities Act addresses the problems of that legislation as a civil rights measure and the assumptions that go along with the civil rights component of the legislation. The author unfortunately resorts to many of the stereotypes and myths which have been deconstructed in these texts, occasional misrepresenting aspects of the legislation. Although no specific critique of this author’s views are discussed in this project, Silvers offers a critique of Wasserman in “‘Defective’ Agents: Equality, Difference and the Tyranny of the Normal.”

Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language. 1982.


This extensive discussion of disability issues comes from both a personal and a philosophical perspective, questioning how we define disability, who is disabled, and what the implications of
society’s current conceptions of people with disabilities have for this population and society in
general.

  This article offers a condensed version of what would become The Rejected Body, discussing the
  oppression of people with disabilities, cultural ideals, the ‘other,’ and the social construction of
disability. The author, a professor of women’s studies has written extensively on feminist ethics
  and politics and has lived with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome since 1985.

  Environments.
  This brief account of Universal Design discusses the concept of designing for a broad and diverse
  population, where ‘accessibility’ exists behind the scenes, as an underlying concept which cannot
  be separated from the rest of a design.

- Wilkoff, Wm. L. and Abed, Laura W. Practicing Universal Design, An Interpretation of the ADA. New
  This source provides in depth information on the concepts of Universal Design, as well as the
  foundations of the practice and information on different types of disabilities, the myths about
  disabilities and the conflicts which arise in the built environment and between the needs of those
  with different disabilities.

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Appendix B

LEXICON...

Author’s Note: unless otherwise noted, terms have been derived from definitions offered in Webster’s New World Dictionary. The following “definitions” should be viewed not as absolute symbols of meaning (nor as completely exhaustive), but rather as indications of the direction in which certain terms should be considered within these texts. They are presented here in an effort to provide some clarity to the author’s intention, with the caveat that one such intention is that they develop new meaning for each ‘reader’ based on that reader’s own views and experiences.

- ‘able’— term most commonly associated in discussions of disability as referring to those with no physical impairments, illnesses, or injuries (author)
- able-bodied – healthy and strong
- accessible – that which is theoretically usable by people with disabilities (author)
- accommodation – an adaptation or adjustment made in order to reconcile differences
- agency – an active force; action; power … by which something is done
- almshouse – formerly a home for people too poor to support themselves
- architectural barrier – an element in the built landscape which, for a segment of the population, limits or excludes access (author)
- arbitrary – based on one’s preference, notion, or whim
- ‘average’ – implication of normal or typical conditions, which when used in context of disability issues often refers to able-bodied individuals, or to a more ideal conception of human form (author)
- belief systems – ways of knowing the world; the basis upon which a society judges their understanding of what they know and what they do not (author)
**binary opposition** – pair of words which are said to represent distinctive and contrasting conditions (author) see also **separatrix**

**category** – a class or division in a scheme of classification

**charity** – a) a voluntary giving of money or help to those in need b) money or help so given c) an institution or other recipient of such help

**classification** – arrangement according to some systematic division into classes or groups

**compensation** – anything given as an equivalent, or to make amends for a loss, damage, unemployment, etc. [Psychology] a mechanism by which an individual seeks to make up for a real or imagined defect

**conceptual pairs** – see **binary oppositions**

**conflict** – opposition of interests, ideas, etc.

**context** – the whole situation, background, or environment relevant to a particular event

**contradiction** – a condition in which things *tend to be* contrary to each other; inconsistency, discrepancy (author’s emphasis added)

**critique** – process of analysis and evaluation

**culturally constructed reality** – reference to the idea that what we know of reality is bound up in our conceptions of it, which in turn are based on social systems of belief and understanding (author), a re-situation of reality in a cultural and historical context (Ryan 16)

**deconstruction** … “analyses and questions conceptual pairs which are currently accepted as self-evident and natural, as if they hadn’t been institutionalized at some precise point, as if they had no history” (Derrida in Meyer 18); deconstruction is something akin to a radical form of analysis, it is analytical as
indicated above, but radical in the sense that it seeks to take that analysis beyond its generally perceived limits (author)

- **defective** – a person with some bodily or mental defect

- **dehumanizing** – to deprive of human qualities, as pity, kindness, individuality, creativity, etc.; make inhuman or machinelike *[or animal like]* (author’s addition)

- **dependent** – relying (on another) for support or aid

- **destabilize** – to expose the contradictions or remove foundations of a concept; to accept all potential determinations of a belief or concept (author)

- **deviation** – a) a sharp difference from normal behavior b) divergence from the official ideology or policies of a political party *[or social group]* (author’s emphasis and addition)

- **diacritical** – a system of differences without positive value (Siegle)

- **dichotomous opposition** – opposition of terms in which contrasting conditions are emphasized (author) see binary opposition

- **différance** – term coined by Derrida which is, “deliberately ambiguous (and therefore not translatable), being derived from the French différer which means both ‘to defer, postpone, delay’ and ‘to differ, be different from’. The two senses of différance are needed to explain the fact that any element of language relates to other elements in a text, and the fact that it is distinct from them. The function or meaning of an element is never fully present because it depends on its association with other elements to which it harks back and refers forward” (Jefferson and Robey on Derrida 114)

- **difference** – a condition, quality, fact, or instance of being different (i.e. unlike, not the same as)

- ‘**disabled**’ – reference to people with disabilities which emphasizes the disability and not the person first (author)
- **disability.1** – that which makes unable, unfit, or ineffective; something that restricts, limits or disadvantages

- **disability.2** – with respect to an individual
  - a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual;
  - a record of such an impairment; or
  - being regarded as having such an impairment. (ADA 1990)

- **disability.3** – any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being (U.N. 1983, cited in Stone 13)

- **discrimination** – a showing of partiality or prejudice in treatment, specifically directed against the welfare of minority groups

- **diversity** – state, fact, or instance of being different or dissimilar

- **dominant** – that which has the power to exercise authority, influence or control

- **dominate** – to rule or control by superior power or influence

- **dynamic** – relating to or tending toward change or productive activity

- **empower** – to give authority or ability to

- **entitlement** – a government program providing rights or benefits to members of a specified group (WWWebster’s online dictionary)

- **environment.1** – of or referring to ‘natural’ conditions in which an organism lives (author)
- **environment.2** – of or referring to any conditions, natural or man made, in which an organism exists (author)

- **equal** – having the same rights, privileges, rank, etc.

- **equivalent** – that which has the same or equal value or meaning but which is not exactly the same as something else

- **Eugenics** – the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally (Mackelprang 9)

- ‘**event**’ – the place of the combination of differences; “the place where the rethinking and reformulation of different elements of architecture, many of which have resulted in or added to contemporary social inequalities, may lead to their solution” (Tschumi “Six Concepts” 258); concept of an architecture or landscape which encourage active participation between the user and the environment, in which meaning is generated through that interaction and in which a sense of empowerment may be generated by engaging the user in the creation of the experience of a place (author)

- **exclusion** – so as to keep out, bar, etc.

- **experience** – the act of living through an event or events; personal involvement in or observation of events as they occur

- **fiction** – reference to the socially constructed nature of reality, used as a mechanism to illustrate the relativity of concepts held to be absolute and natural (author)

- **foundation** – the base on which something rests, the fundamental principles on which something is based

- **fracture.1** – a break, crack or split

- **fracture.2** – in reference to society, the quality of being composed of multiple, overlapping and diverse groups of people (author, in reference to Matthews and Vujakovic)
- **fragments** – detached and separated components which nonetheless maintain connections to other fragments and are never completely independent (author)

- **framework** – the basic structure, arrangement or system *which while holding components in relation to each other, remains open to change and adaptation* (author’s addition)

- **function** – the normal or characteristic action of anything; esp., any of the natural, specialized actions of an organ or part of an animal *note the relationship of function and normality*

- **global incompetence / incapacity** – concept in relationship to disability which espouses the belief that any disabling condition leaves an individual incapable of any independent existence (author)

- **handicapped.1** – those disadvantaged, hindered, or impeded by a physical disability *currently considered a derogatory term* (author’s addition)

- **handicapped.2** – A disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a *role that is normal*, depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors for that individual (emphasis added) (U.N. 1983, cited in Stone 13)

- **handicapping agent** – mechanism which causes a difference in physical condition to limit the activities of an individual (author)

- **hierarchical system** – an organizational structure arranged by way of rank, class etc., frequently discussed in these texts in relation to issues of power and control (over one class or group of individuals), and which implies that one entity dominates over another (author)

- **homogenous** – the same in structure, quality, etc.

- **honorific** – that which refers to a significant or important experience, i.e. honorific stairs represent the primary entry sequence, designed to convey a sense of significance to the entry of a building or landscape (author)
- **hybridity** – the condition of having a mixed origin

- **ideal** – thought of as perfect or as a perfect model; exactly as one would wish

- **identities** – reference to the multiplistic nature of society, where the combination of differences is seen as a fundamental component, as opposed to a group of exactly similar individuals (author, in reference to Matthews and Vujakovic)

- **illegitimate** – contrary to law or rules; not in keeping with accepted usage

- **impairment** – any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function (U.N. 1983, cited in Stone 13)

- **independent** – not depending on another or others for support

- **instability** – lack of absolute-ness, or constancy (author)

- **integrated** – that which is made whole or complete by the combination of different parts

- **intentionality** – a purposefulness or act done on the basis of specific plans or aims (author)

- **interconnected** – connection is defined in Webster’s as a relation between things that depend on, involve or follow each other; interconnection is intended to connote the idea that the relationships between things involve a further level of involvement where the effects of the relationship can be seen to involve a large number of interrelated influences (author)

- **interdependent** – status of dependence which indicates a relationship whereby the act of dependence occurs in both directions, in other words, neither party relies solely on the other, both rely upon each other (author)
interdisciplinarity – concept whereby the strict definition of disciplines is broken down and exchange occurs between seemingly disconnected professions, belief systems, etc. “Interdisciplinarity is not the calm of an easy security; it begins effectively ... when the solidarity of the old disciplines breaks down – perhaps even violently ... – in the interests of a new object and a new language, neither of which has a place in the field of sciences that were brought together peacefully: It is precisely this uneasiness with classification which permits the diagnosis of a certain mutation” (Barthes “From Work” 169)

interrelated – see interconnected

investigation – a careful search or examination

isolate – to set apart from others, place alone; (medicine) to place (a person with a contagious disease) apart from others to prevent the spread of infection

juxtapose – to put side by side or close together

landscape.1 – an expanse of natural scenery seen by the eye in one view

landscape.2 – any of the constructed or ‘natural’ areas in which a person finds themselves and which are part of their immediate experience (author)

legitimate – conforming to or abiding by law or custom

limits – points, lines or edges where something ends or must end; boundary or border beyond which something ceases to be or to be possible [often used in these texts to refer either to those boundaries which exclude some members of society, or in reference to boundaries of thought which place certain concepts beyond that which is thought to be possible] (author’s addition)

lines of flight – Deleuzian concept whereby ideas are seen as leading off in a multitude of different directions, fleeing from any confining conception of an idea, moving along linear paths which act to destabilize conventional classifications (author)
- **lines of thought** – similar to lines of flight, but intended for the most part to symbolize the concept that many ideas lead off in different directions, that these ideas have the infinite potential to connect with other ideas within the text and particularly outside of the text to exterior realms of thought and idea (author)

- ‘logic’ – that realm of justification whereby ‘reason’ is used to warrant certain moves or directions taken by a society or an individual

- **logocentrism** – that which describes all forms of thought which base themselves on some external point of reference, such as the notion of truth (Jefferson and Robey on Derrida 113)

- **machinic assemblage** – Deleuzian concept used to indicate the constructed nature of an idea; “In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation, of segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow of these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or on the contrary of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage” (Plateaus 4); machinic assemblages then add a level where they are considered as elements which have at some point been institutionalized, naturalized or otherwise brought into being (author)

- **map** – in reference specifically to Deleuze, a concept which “is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation” and in opposition to the “tracing,” which “has already translated the map into an image; it has ... organized, stabilized, neutralized the multiplicities...” (Plateaus 13)

- **marginalization** – the act of being placed at the edges (or the outside of) an act, experience, situation, environment, landscape, etc. (author)

- **materiality** – a.k.a. reality, or at least the physical structure of said reality (author)

- **matrix** – multi-dimensional model of interconnected lines of thought, ideas, concepts, etc. which meet at a multitude of different points of significance (author)
- **meaning.1** – that which attains a level of significance for its recipient (author)

- **meaning.2** (production of...) – meaning is constructed within the discourses that articulate it, in an interactive context of the reader and the text (Linker 391)

- **meaning.3** (destabilization of ...) – to maintain (a respect for) all of the meanings possible, as a consequence of the congenital instability of writing (Kipnis 32)

- **mechanism** – the physically or socially constructed ‘thing’ which allows an event, a belief, or anything for that matter to come into existence [hence stereotypes are one mechanism by which people with disabilities are marginalized in this society] (author)

- **Medicaid** – a public health program through which medical and hospital expenses of those having no income, or a low income, are paid for from State and Federal funds

- **Medicare** – a national health program through which certain medical and hospital expenses of the aged and the needy are paid for from Federal, mostly social security, funds

- **medical model of disability** – concept whereby disability is seen not as derivative of some sort of sin or misdeed committed by an individual, but as a result of specific medically detectable conditions which can then be fixed or corrected (see Mackelprang, Wendell, Livneh)

- **move** – an act or mechanism which sets in motion a series of ideas or concepts for a certain affect (author)

- **multiplicity** – that within which any sense of absolute independence and isolation is removed; that in which the ‘unique’ has been removed and which includes only interconnected and heterogeneous elements. see also rhizome (author, based on Deleuze)

- **multiplistic** – the characteristic of belonging to a multiplicity, used to describe people and things as interconnected elements (author)
- **multitude** – a large number of things gathered together as a unit

- **myth** (of disability, etc.) – that which purifies and naturalizes a concept such that it appears to have always been or to have some “eternal” absolute justification “Myth does not deny things, on the contrary its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural or eternal justification” (Barthes *Mythologies* 142-43, 146)

- **naturalized** – that which is believed to be absolute or fundamental; concepts which are naturalized are considered to be of fundamental truth, considered to be a condition which has always existed and which has some sort of ‘absolute justification’ (author)

- ‘**natural**’ – that which is considered to be free from human / made-made intervention, but which although appearing natural has been influenced by human factors (author)

- **need based economic system** – aspect of the welfare state, discussed by Stone, which describes a method of distributing resources on the basis of necessity or deprivalion of the recipient (author, based on Stone)

- **nihilism** – the belief that there is no meaning or purpose in existence

- ‘**normal**’ – that which conforms to a society’s accepted standards and beliefs; an inherently relative condition that needs to be understood within social and historical contexts but which is frequently naturalized and considered absolute (author)

- **normalization** – the process by which a society’s standards of ‘normality’ are imposed on all members of a society (author)

- **nothingness** – state of non-existence, or absence of everything

- **opportunities** – combination of circumstances favorable for a purpose
‘other’ – that which is considered or thought to be beyond a standard of normal; a person or persons who are felt to greatly deviate from human averages to the point where they are no longer viewed as fully human (author)

palimpsest – a parchment, tablet, etc. that has been written upon or inscribed two or three times, the previous text or texts having been imperfectly erased and remaining, therefore still, partly visible

paradigm – a pattern, example or model

participatory – that which involves a sharing of ideas, beliefs, activities

paternalization – the act of governing or controlling (a country, group, etc.) in a manner suggestive of a father’s relationship with his children; [within disability discourses, the term refers to the care and consideration of people with disabilities as if they were themselves children who needed to be cared for, as if they were helpless] (author’s addition)

patriarchal – condition in which government, control, and systems of belief are formed in and by male dominated concerns (see Linker)

perfection – the state of being complete in all respects; without defect or omission; sound; flawless

peripheral – only slightly connected with what is essential or important; merely incidental

philanthropy – a desire to help mankind, esp. as shown by gifts to charitable or humanitarian institutions

physical – of the body (as opposed to the mind)

points of significance – within a matrix of ideas, those points which have a greater level of importance than their surrounding or adjacent ideas; such points represent minor hierarchies within a largely non-hierarchical structure, they are the points where multiplistic ideas collide to form significant insights (author)
poststructuralism … works to examine a text (by which is meant any ‘thing’ which can be said to articulate an idea or concept) and to expose the forms of contradiction which litter the text’s formation, the ‘naturalized’ beliefs upon which the arguments of the text rest and without which the text lacks stability; to describe a thing as ‘poststructural’ is meant to connote the idea that the thing is actively engaged in such a critique, hence a poststructural or poststructuralist critique can be considered an investigation or examination which seeks to expose the contradictions and naturalized beliefs mentioned above (author); in contrast with structuralism, which attempted to develop a series of logical or rational rules by which words (a.k.a. signs) and their potential combinations could be said to account for the form and meaning of a text, poststructuralists attempt to investigate the mechanisms within the text which subvert those meanings (Culler 22), arguing instead for a derivation of meaning not inherent in the text but rather arrived at through the interrelationship between the text and its subsequent read(ers),(ings)... (Linker 391) and the infinite deferments of any transcendental signified (a.k.a. meaning)... (Barthes “Work” 171); akin to a radicalization or furthering of postmodernism, poststructuralism acts to denaturalize institutions and beliefs which have remained unquestioned, to bring to the surface the cultural implications of social history and their (perceived) benign nature, to question and critique the dominance of any and all systems of belief (itself included), and finally to prevent the possibility of any sense of finality or closure, leaving open the possibility for an even further critique. The theory/practice of poststructuralism involves embracing the exteriority of ideas and beliefs (in that there is always already a relationship to conditions commonly viewed as external to a concept) while simultaneously recognizing the impossibility of ever taking up a position on the outside of anything (thus leaving open only the possibility of inhabiting a space within the concept and expanding its current conditions), it promotes the concept of difference without hierarchy, the ‘fictional’ status of truth machines and the interconnectedness of its forms and relations to other potentialities and concepts… (author, based on an interpretation of Siegle). There is ultimately no “IS” of poststructuralism, rather there is a current conception of that which the theory/practice does or is engaged in…(see also deconstruction, opposition of différance to logocentrism, Plateaus, …)

power – “less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government ... ‘Government’ did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick.” (Foucault 428)
Practice – to do or engage in frequently, to work at, to do as an application of knowledge (there is a relationship between theory and practice according to Foucault where, “The intellectual’s role is no longer to place himself ‘somewhat ahead of and to the side’ in order to express the stifled truth of collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of ‘knowledge,’ ‘truth,’ ‘consciousness,’ and ‘discourse.’ In this sense theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice”) (“Intellectuals and Power”) Key to the issue of poststructural practices is the concept that theory is fundamentally bound up in the act of doing, and particularly with the struggle to do and redo the act (author)

Process – the course of being done; a continuing development involving many changes [a difference from practice exists in that process implies a direct singular route from beginning to end, where by following a series of steps a result is achieved, on the other hand practice is discussed in terms of less concern for the result than the act of doing] (author’s addition)

Progress – advancement toward perfection or to a higher or better state; improvement [or at least the perception of such movement] (author’s addition)

Project (poststructural, etc.) – term frequently used in postmodern discourses to ascribe characteristics not of singularity and finality, but rather continuity and evolution (author)

Public – of, belonging to, or concerning the people as a whole; for the use and benefit of all

Reconceptualization – the process of re-examining a situation in the context of a broad based ‘deconstructive’ analysis and the subsequent situating of a concept within a historical and social context (author)

Reconstruction – the act of reassembling the various components of a concept in light of an analysis which examines a multitude of different lines of thought relating to the originary concept; part of an analysis based on deconstruction (author)

Relative – meaningful only in relationship to something else; not absolute
- **relationship** – an instance of connectedness

- **representation** – a substitution for something that isn’t there (author, based on Siegle)

- **re-reading** – process by which one engages a piece of material, or a concept to the point where what is ‘said’ is challenged and critiqued (author)

- **resistance** – a force that retards, hinders, or opposes motion [or, the exact opposite in which resistance refers to that which proposes, or promotes motion in lieu of maintaining the status quo] (author’s addition)

- **resituation** – the process by which an idea, concept or belief can be placed within an alternative context (author)

- **rhizome** – Metaphor used by Gilles Deleuze to represent an idea which encompasses principles of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, rupture (see fracture, lines of flight) and cartography (see map) (Plateaus 5-13)

- **segregation** – the policy or practice of compelling racial groups to live apart from each other [note: consider the act of segregation in light of Foucault’s discussion of power as a means of control and particularly what we might call the micro-fascisms or minor forms of everyday power struggles] (author’s addition)

- **separate** – to set or put apart into sections, groups, sets, units, etc., to cause to part; divide; disunite; sever

- **separatrix** – “...the incision of decision, the cut that is the possibility of management, of rendering complexity manageable, of keeping things in line, keeping things straight. Throughout his work, Derrida relentlessly tracks the separatrix in all its operations, overt and covert, so as to twist it, turn it back on itself, and poke holes in it in order to expose the inseparability of those terms it separates” (Kipnis 14); that which keeps terms in a binary opposition separate and isolated, the ‘/’ (author)
- **shaman** – a priest or medicine man within a religion based on a belief in good and evil spirits who can be influence only by the shamans

- **signifiáncé** – see significance

- **significance** – “What is significance? It is meaning, insofar as it is sensually produced” (Roland Barthes “The Pleasure of the Text”)

- **sign** – “arbitrary, conventional, linear (in time), diacritical: a system of differences without positive value. As a thinking machine, the concept of the sign shifts us from a concern with reference, to one with how systems of meaning function, are made, are subject to remaking. That is, if the basic system of coherence is arbitrary and conventional, it is also subject to review, intervention. If it is diacritical, than there is no transcending signified (truth, god, reality) to (completely) regulate or arrest the play of differences” (Siegle)

- **signified** – the cultural concept to which the signifier is attached (Siegle)

- **signifier** – the material medium of the sign [sounds, marks *(i.e. language, letters on a piece of paper, or images which are said to have some sort of meaning in and of themselves)*] (Siegle, author’s addition)

- **social** – of or having to do with human beings living together

- **social barrier** – that which excludes or segregates, not only by its physical condition but by the beliefs or assumptions upon which the barrier is constructed (author)

- **social construct** – an idea or belief which is built upon a social consensus; that which comes into being (at some point in history) by way of an idea or concept (author)

- **social fiction** – see fiction

- **society** – all people, collectively regarded as constituting a community of related, interdependent individuals *[within these texts, society is considered to be that of the population of the United States at*
the end of the 20th century, although most of the discussion is applicable to other industrialized societies as well.] (author’s addition)

- **stigmatization** – the act of associating a thing which detracts from an individual as the fundamental component of that individual [in reference to disability, the act of characterizing the disability as the individual] (author, based on Webster’s)

- **subject** – the act of being controlled by another or depending on another (i.e. ‘subject to one’s control’); the act of being tied to one’s identity by way of self knowledge ... “Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to” (Foucault 420)

- **subjectivity** – the process by which subjects are caught up in, formed by, and construct meanings (Linker 292)

- **subordination** – subjection to or being placed in a position of lower rank, power or importance

- **synthesis** – the putting together of parts or elements to form a ‘whole’ [note potential relativity of ‘whole’] (author’s addition)

- **Text** – a methodological field or process of demonstration which, according to Roland Barthes, “practices the infinite deferment of the signified,” involves a series of associations, contiguities and cross references, is open to an explosion of interpretations, requires that one attempt to eliminate the distance between reading and writing, and inhabits the space in which is achieved a transparency of language relations if not social relations (Barthes “Work” 171-74)

- **text.1** – as used in these pages, that which represents or can be said to represent ideas or concepts (hence the textual nature of architecture, film etc.) and which coincides with the characteristics of Barthes concept (author)

- **text.2** – (rare usage); the principle matter on a printed or written page
- **textures** – in reference the overall composition of society, which maintains all of the differences and diversities in an interconnected system of relationships (author, in reference to Matthews and Vujakovic)

- **theory** – a speculative idea or plan designed to act as a basis or foundation for something (author)

- **Universal Design** – an emerging philosophy in accessible design which advocates the creation of products, buildings and environments that are accessible to the broadest range of people possible without singling out any group for specific special treatment (author)

- **vagrancy** – shiftless or idle wandering without money or work

- **violated** – state of being infringed upon or desecrated

- **violence** – “a metaphor for the intensity of a relationship between individuals and their surrounding spaces” (Tschumi “Violence” 44)

- **work** – employment at a job or in a position

- **work based economic system** – aspect of the welfare state, discussed by Stone, which describes a method of distributing resources on the basis of actions performed in return for goods, or financial reward (author, based on Stone)
Sites in cyberspace do not live forever, so this list will eventually become – like the traces of a city that is no longer inhabited – a piece of digital archaeology. Link rot will gradually set in; many of the listed addresses will cease to exist, and much of the online material will be deleted or lost. But even if you are a latecomer, and find that this zone of cyberspace is mostly a ruin when you reach it, you should still find that it gives at least a few entry points to active areas.

The information to be found out is of very variable quality. Caveat Surfer! (City of Bits).

http://www-mitpress.mit.edu/City_of_Bits/

Accessibility / Universal Design:

The Center for Universal Design, School of Design, North Carolina State University
http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/

San Antonio Formal Gardens (incl. a “Garden for the Blind”)
http://www.tristero.com/sabg/formal.html

Adaptive Environments Center
http://www.adaptenv.org/

Disability:

Animated American Sign Language Dictionary
http://www.feist.com/~randys/

Beau's World Wide Web Home Page
http://www.senate.gov/~wyden/beau/beau.htm
Human Disability and the Service of God Emory University Conference – 1996
http://www.pitts.emory.edu/disability/DisabilityAndGod.html

The National Federation of the Blind
http://www.nfb.org/

**Disability Policy:**

U.S. Department of Justice
Americans with Disabilities Act
ADA HOME PAGE
http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm

ADA Statute, Regulations, ADAAG (Americans with Disabilities Act
Accessibility Guidelines), Federally Reviewed Tech Sheets, and Other
Assistance Documents
http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/kinder/

Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board
http://www.access-board.gov/

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964
http://www.dot.gov/ost/docr/CR64LKS.HTM

**Poststructural Theory:**

Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text
http://www.cc.gatech.edu/people/home/lara/Pleasure_of_the_Text/Title.html
basilisk: an online journal of film, architecture, philosophy, literature, music, and perception.
http://swerve.basilisk.com/

Contemporary Critical Theory
http://athena.english.vt.edu/~siegle/theory.html

Deleuze and Guattari internet resources

the Deleuze and Guattari Rhiz-o-mat
http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/~messiah/rhizomat/rhizomat.html

Essays in Postmodern Culture, University of Virginia

Hommage a giLEES DELeuze
http://www.higashi.hit-u.ac.jp/~jwijwi/odha/deleuze.html

Jacques Derrida and Deconstruction, English 112, Brown University
http://twine.stg.brown.edu/projects/hypertext/landow/cpace/theory/derrida2.html

Philosophy & Theory Index
http://www.mtsu.edu/~jpurcell/Philosophy/philosophy.html

Postmodern Philosophy
Baudrillard | Deleuze (and Guatarri) | Derrida | Foucault | Gadamer | Habermas | Hegel | Heidegger |
Hermeneutics | Journals and E-zines | Kant | Lacan | Lyotard | Marx and Critical Theory |
Merleau-Ponty | Nietzsche | Semiotics | General

RHIZOME: THE NEW MEDIA ART RESOURCE
http://www.rhizome.com/
The World Seen From Within: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Events
http://calliope.jhu.edu/journals/theory_&_event/v001/1.1patton.html

Writing in Reserve: Deconstruction on the Net Jacques Derrida Online
http://www.hydra.umn.edu/

**Power:**

f8 An experimental design and production group for new digital and democratic photo and multimedia journalism on the World Wide Web.
http://www.f8.com/index.html

Structure out of Chaos is a documentary of American shanty towns that have manifested as a result of homelessness
http://www.bridge.net/~marylou/

**Theory:**

politics ARCH 4214/5134 *Topics in Architectural History and Theory*
Department of Architecture, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
http://www.politics.arch.vt.edu/

Ferdinand de Saussure, Father of modern linguistics
http://www.infodesign.ch/Genevascope/People/Saussure.E.html

Saussure, Ferdinand de from Biography.com
**Virginia Tech Resources:**

Blacksburg Electronic Village  
[http://www.bev.net/BEVhome.html](http://www.bev.net/BEVhome.html)

Burruss Hall  

Department of Landscape Architecture  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
[http://www.lar.vt.edu](http://www.lar.vt.edu)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
[http://www.vt.edu](http://www.vt.edu)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Campus maps  
[http://www.unirel.vt.edu/map/map.page.html](http://www.unirel.vt.edu/map/map.page.html)

War Memorial Pylons  

**Misc.**

Architecture and Building Resources  
[http://refserver.lib.vt.edu/refhtml/subjects/Arch.html](http://refserver.lib.vt.edu/refhtml/subjects/Arch.html)

The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disability in the Movies  
A review by Robert Klepper  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
http://www.nga.gov/

The OuterLimits TV show
http://www.theouterlimits.com/standard/home.html

Posters of the Revolution. May, 1968
http://burn.ucsd.edu/paristab.htm

Seattle Center site
http://www.pan.ci.seattle.wa.us:80/seattle/center/

Washington Post newspaper
http://www.washingtonpost.com/
David is the oldest son of Maxine and Steve Orens and was born in Silver Spring, Maryland in January of 1972. He earned a Bachelor of Architecture Degree, cum laude from the School of Architecture at Syracuse University in 1995 and has previously worked for Steven J. Karr AIA, Inc. in Wheaton, Maryland as an intern architect.

While pursuing his Master’s Degree in Landscape Architecture at Virginia Tech, David worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant and was the recipient of the 1996 Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant award. A member of Sigma Lambda Alpha, the international Honor Society of Landscape Architecture, the American Society of Landscape Architects and the American Institute of Architects, David was a 1997 recipient of the American Society of Landscape Architects National “Award of Honor.” A participant at the 1997 annual conference of the Environmental Design Research Association in Montreal, Canada, David had the opportunity to present work derived from this thesis in an interactive poster and paper presentation.

Following graduation, David will be moving to Boston, Massachusetts to pursue a career in architecture. He hopes to be able to continue exploring, within the realms of architecture and landscape architecture, the relationship between design and theory, and anticipates a continuing emphasis on the relationship between design theory and Universal Design.