

# Importance of accessibility in architectural heritage

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The determination of importance is essential to the definition of heritage and accessibility.

Architectural heritage is understood as unique buildings. But in my view, we must expand the concept of heritage to actions, objects, and open spaces such as streets and neighborhoods. These new spaces have been marked by our culture and everyday life. For example, studies must consider visits to industrial, Olympic, maritime, medieval, and contemporary, heritage sites. Barcelona urbanism is very important and defines buildings. Urbanism adapts to the needs of its citizens and is open and accessible.

Accessibility has changed the history of architectural heritage. Heritage has had a fluid history, as it always has changed and adapted to new concepts of accessibility. Accessibility has always questioned the authenticity of its heritage. The question is: can we change architectural heritage to make it accessible? Is important to define what has to be preserved and how. Historically there have been many heritage spaces have been designed with mobility problems. But in fact, often later alternations, or destruction from war change spaces, making them more inaccessible. An example is the Acropolis of Athens. So, the question is what is authentic? Accessibility has always been regarded as an “added thing.” In fact, it should be seen as part of heritage.

People with disabilities have been seen as foreigners when visiting heritage architecture. Like women before, people with disabilities do not control and design these spaces. Therefore, it is established power that decides what is heritage and what is accessibility. Diversity in accessibility challenges power and builds a better world and a better design. Darwin already said that is better to create diversity. Accessibility is never the same for each person. Every person has different needs and forms of accessibility that is diverse. People should have the same opportunities to enjoy architectural heritage. It is democratic that everyone has the same opportunities. This complies with democracy and the natural evolution of the moral social-ecosystem.

People should not adapt to heritage spaces, but heritage should adapt to people. It requires a great effort to make heritage spaces accessible. Heritage sites often discriminate against some types of visitors because of problems with accessibility. A balance between accessibility and historical relevance is essential.

It is important to remark that the production of accessible heritage space beckons for a new creativity in design. To renovate a building to make it more accessible adds to the advantages of the building. Accessible spaces are more productive and generate more income and benefits. We must stop understanding that it is a waste of money to make heritage accessible. Changes always offers new possibilities.

Accessibility must be seen as a new way to use and appreciate architectural heritage. Accessibility promotes new experiences of space. That is what we have to achieve in our promotion and preservation of architectural heritage.