OCHRONA DZIEDZICTWA KULTUROWEGO

ACCESSIBILITY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT Accessibility is fundamental for enjoying cultural heritage. It has also helped different theoretical and practical projects reach critical-conservative solutions. The first step is to conserve archaeological objects and sites so as to preserve their historical layers and the impact they have had on their surroundings. For archeological sites, it is necessary to acknowledge the historical solutions that inspired the Venice Charter. The second step concerns the urban dimension of accessibility at the historical centers, specifically tour itineraries. The values of Riegl can be divided into two main groups. Firstly, there are commemorative and historical values, and secondly – present-day values regarding artistic and innovative character. In case of conflict between utilitarian and historical values, the latter should be considered more important. This principle is the main guideline for accessibility. Many such problems can be resolved with appropriate planning. This reintegration of the image is even for the urban restoration than for the conservation of environment. This chapter aims to present different ways of making cultural heritage accessible to everyone, not only in terms of physical accessibility but also regarding accessibility as a form of understanding and experiencing.

KEYWORDS: accessibility; security; knowledge; entering historical sites

Introduction*

Access to cultural heritage is about consciousness, knowledge, creativity and balance. It is therefore meaningful only in encounters with people. Accessibility is fundamental for enjoying cultural heritage. It has also helped different theoretical and practical projects reach critical-conservative solutions. This chapter aims to present different ways of making cultural heritage accessible to everyone, not only in terms of physical accessibility but also regarding accessibility as a form of understanding and experiencing.

Accessibility involves three qualities of historical sites: (i) being easily reached and entered (fig. 1); being easy to obtain and use (fig. 2); and finally, being easily understood and appreciated[1] (fig.3).

Although problems of accessibility to historical monuments began to be taken in consideration during the 1970s, it was only in 2008 that Italian lawmakers defined the general guidelines for addressing these problems. Before, cultural organizations developed some ideas on the subject. For example, at the 2001 General Conference of Unesco, the Unesco Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity was passed. In article five, this document specifically addresses cultural diversity. In 2007, the "Commission for the analysis of problems relating to disability in the field of Cultural heritage and activities" was set up by the cabinet of the Italian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Cultural Activities and Tourism in order to identify problems and develop tools to enhance the accessibility of cultural heritage sites. Already on the first page, the 2013 Burra Charter urges to "do as much as necessary" as well as "to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained." Many laws or charters address accessibility in new buildings, but these regulations cannot be applied in the case of heritage sites, which demand greater flexibility.
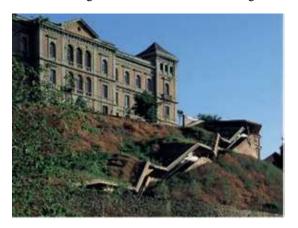

Fig. 1. To be reached or entered as the stairs in Toledo, Spain.

Fig. 2. To obtain or use as in Imperial Fora in Rome.

1   After the Oxford English Dictionary and the Battaglia Dictionary.

Fig. 3. Understood or appreciate as in Domus Aurea in Rome.

Accessibility as the quality of being easy to reach and enter*

Accessibility of monuments and historical centers is a difficult, complex problem that may be "activity aimed at promoting knowledge of the heritage and ensuring the best conditions of use and fruition"[2]. Since monuments are part of cities and landscapes, it is difficult to consider them in isolation and protect them through restrictive classifications that often contradict one another. What must be taken into account are changing urbanistic solutions or plans (regarding entrances, levels, lights, etc.) as well as questions of maintenance, including its economic aspect. The first issue regards access and problems of topography: arriving at historic districts in cities and overcoming obstacles of all kind, as shown in examples below.
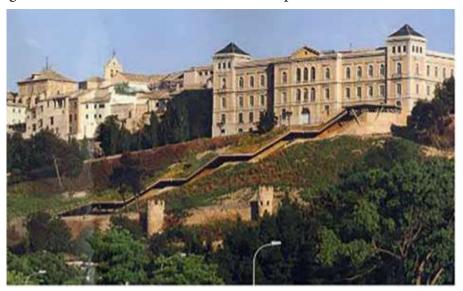

Fig. 4. Toledo: stairs to the city.

For example, in Toledo (Spain), new stairs were designed by Elias Torres and Jose Antonio Martinez Lapeña (fig. 4) at the beginning of 2000. They connect the old and the new city with parking space for cars and buses.

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2   "attivitá diretta a promuovere la conoscenza del patrimonio e ad assicurare le migliori condizioni di utilizzazione e fruizione" (article n.6 d.lgs. 42/2004).

Fig. 5. New lift in Pamplona.

A new lift was built in the Mendilori quarter of Pamplona (Spain), connecting the city with the historic fort of San Bartolomé (fig. 5).

Fig. 6. La Seo in Lerida.

In Lerida (Spain), a new lift was designed to connect the Cathedral with the new city (fig. 6). Some of the historical solutions in cities with unusual topography are problematic, as demonstrated by the examples of Bilbao, Pamplona and Lisbon. Other examples of stairs, small elevators or funiculars include structures in Perugia (fig. 7), Spoleto[3] (fig. 8) in Umbria (Italy), and Fort Bart (fig. 9) in Valle Aosta (Italy).

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3   Designed by Kenzo Tange in the years 1980-1990. He acknowledges preexisting conditions in his approach to interventions in urban centers that are densely populated and rich in history.

Fig. 7. Stairs to the old city in Perugia, Umbria, Italy.

Fig. 8. Stairs climbing on rock in Spoleto, Umbria, Italy.

Fig. 9. Funicolar in Fort Bart, Valle d'Aosta, Italy.

New additions are invariably causing debate, but appropriate solutions follow certain general principles: minimal intervention, distinguishability, harmonization, protection of existing values, minimal technical complexity and reversibility (if possible). Upon arrival, aid should be provided to the blind and profoundly deaf using tactile signals, maps and writing, e.g. in Braille. Different routes of varying difficulty should be clearly marked, proposing the easiest ones that offer scenic views and lead to crucial places at the right time. In short, information should be provided for all types of people. Large cities pose different problems, chiefly relating to traffic and security. For example, there are squares where inner and outer parts have different accessibility (fig. 10): higher inside and lower outside.[4] This foregrounds the problem of arriving. One exemplary case is Piazza del Popolo in Rome (fig. 11).

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4   Accessibility is addressed in "Guidelines to overcome architectural barriers in cultural heritage sites," drafted by the Italian ministry in 2007.

Fig. 10. Piazzale Flaminio
in Rome, Italy.

Fig. 11. Piazza del Popolo
in Rome, Italy.

It is important to set the entrance at the proper level (where possible), as demonstrated by the design of the new Ara Pacis Museum (figs 12-13).

Fig. 12. Museo dell'Ara Pacis
in Rome , Italy.

Fig. 13. Museo dell'Ara Pacis
in Rome, Italy.

Importantly, architecture is always a part of its surroundings, which can make it difficult to find solutions to accessibility issues in the urban context, e.g. in the case of "Horti Sallustiani" (fig. 14), Piazza di Spagna in Rome (fig. 15) and Piazza Pretoria in Palermo (fig. 16).

Fig. 14. Horti Sallustiani
in Rome, Italy.

Fig. 15. Piazza di Spagna
in Rome, Italy.

Fig. 16. Fontana Pretoria in Palermo, Italy.

Accessibility means the quality of being easy to obtain or use**

Accessibility is compromised by the morphology of places and traditional typologies regarding the fabric of ancient cities. Accessibility also means flexibility in terms of opening hours and the time required to visit, which should be made clear upon arrival. Everyone should be able to tour the site freely. In result, different types of people could reach and enter the site.

Fig. 17. Pyramid in Louvre, Paris, France.

Fig. 18. External transparent lift in Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain.

Fig. 19. Stairs in Reichstag, Berlin, Germany.

Sometimes it is necessary to add new elements to facilitate entering the site and even seeing it, but physical accessibility is not always possible. Practicality must go hand in hand with conservational integrity. Good examples are offered by the new entrance to the Louvre (fig. 17), the new lift at the Reina Sofia Museum (fig. 18) or the new Reichstag in Berlin (fig. 19). Historical spaces such as atria prepare one for the visit and thus must be conserved, as in the case of Villa Giulia (fig. 20).

Fig. 20. Atrio in Villa Giulia in Rome, Italy.

Stairs and other avenues of communication may change their function and be fitted with new technology, but they must also retain the idea behind the original design. Such elements ought to be studied alongside other problems.[5] Historical stairs sometimes offer better accessibility than newly added ones (figs 21-22).

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5   A new organization aiming to establish the design of the Etruscan Temple and its proportions.

Museo di Villa Giulia

Fig. 21. Ancient stairs in Museo di Villa Giulia, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 22. Stair lift in Museo di Villa Giulia, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 23. Stair lift in Museo di Villa Giulia, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 24. New stairs in Museo di Villa Giulia, Rome, Italy.

Solutions to problems such as small differences of levels and inside elevators should be reversible, although this is sometimes impossible (fig.23). Attention needs to be given to the placing of new lifts or elevators so that they do not impede learning about the character of the site (figs 24-27).

San Giovanni degli Eremiti in Palermo

Fig. 25. San Giovanni degli Eremiti in Palermo, Italy.

Fig. 26. San Giovanni degli Eremiti in Palermo, Italy.

Fig. 27. New stairs in Museo Arqueologico, Madrid.

Another problem is the accessibility of historic and archeological sites as they may require visitors to cover long distances on foot or overcome differences of levels, as in Valladolid (fig. 28) or Spoleto (fig. 29). Analysis should encompass various challenges: orientation, distance, changing levels and the safety of internal parts. From the prospective of all forms of disability, it is necessary to develop alternative solutions, as was done in the case of Imperial Fora in Rome (figs 30-32).

Fig. 28. Sant Benedict, Vallidolid, Spain.

Fig. 29. Spoleto, Umbria, Italy.

Fig. 30. New lift in Imperial Fora, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 31. Platform at Arch of Titus in Imperial Fora, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 32. New mechanical platform in Imperial Fora, Rome, Italy.

Itineraries must take into account different surfaces and their texture. It is not only a question of design.[6] In Fori (fig. 33), solid handrails and temporary ramps will be installed along paths. Also, plans include weatherproof resting areas (figs 34-35) with telephone access, baskets, fountains, information points, toilets, etc.

Fig. 33. Ramps in Imperial Fora, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 34. Ramps in Imperial Fora, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 35. Stairs in Imperial Fora, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 36. Stairs in Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo, Italy.

Fig. 37. Footbridge in Mercati di Traiano, Rome, Italy.

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6   The problem of pavements in historic areas is discussed in Atti del 32° Convegno di Bressanone (luglio 2016) and the Italian d.P.R. (24 luglio 1996, no. 53).

However, accessibility must not be reduced to the material dimension. It also helps to enjoy a given space, including both its architecture and other aspects. Functional solutions should not be eclipsed by design, as in the case of stairs at Palazzo Abatellis (fig. 36).

In case of conflict between utilitarian and historical values, the latter should be considered more important. This principle is a guideline for accessibility. Many such problems can be resolved with appropriate planning. Consider Markets of Trajan in Rome (fig. 37). Reintegration of the image is even for the urban restoration then for the conservation of the image.

Accessibility as the quality of being easily understood or appreciated*

To understand and appreciate a monument, museum or site, the visit must be prepared with the help of technology and design, offering places to seat and rest, catering for the needs of different types of people (figs 38-40).

Fig. 38. Indication in Arch of Titus, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 39. Arch of Titus, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 40. Map of Mercato di Traiano, Rome, Italy.

The first step is to conserve objects and sites so as to preserve their historical stratification and acknowledge their impact on surroundings. The second step is to enhance the urban accessibility of historic centers and pedestrian itineraries. Entrances prepare for the visit, making it easier through tactile maps and writing, e.g. in Braille (figs 41-42).

Conservation criteria will invariably evolve in response to the changing needs and values of society. At the same time, new tecwhnical solutions will come to light as architects and designers respond to the demands of society, as shown by the case of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome (figs 43-45). Still, technology should not prevail or compete with reality as it sometimes happens (figs 46-51).
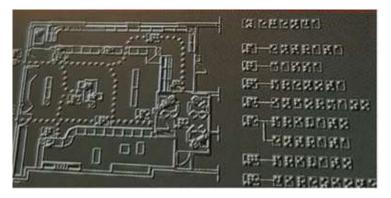

Fig. 41. Tactile maps in Omero Museum, Ancona, Italy.

Fig. 42. Tactile Omero Museum, Ancona, Italy.

Fig. 43. Ramp in Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 44. Indications in Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 45. Technological explanation in Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 46. Domus Aurea, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 47. Entrance to Domus Aurea with new indications, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 48. New technologies applied in Sala della Sfinge, Domus Aurea, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 49. New technologies applied in Sala della Sfinge, Domus Aurea, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 50. New technologies applied in Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 51. New technologies applied in Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, Italy.

Final considerations* · **

The problem of accessibility in heritage, understood as conservation of living heritage, demands an holistic approach. Accessibility problems are part of the wider and more complex field of compatibility-driven conservation and collective enjoyment of cultural heritage. Architectural works strive to conquer people's hearts but their design has to be logical. The point here is to reflect and develop arguments that could help find the right solutions so that the richness of heritage is open to everyone, regardless of their circumstances and qualifications. Importantly, in many cases choices will be made between the right to accessibility and the right to history and knowledge. Indeed, beyond a certain point accessibility could damage the heritage, making

knowledge hidden or even lost, which may disconnect it for ever from everyone.[7]
Conservation criteria will always evolve in response to the changing needs and values of society. Accordingly, awareness of value-related choices must increase. A particular instance of this are historic centers in European cities, many of which have specific topography. In practice, accessibility must be considered as part of urban planning, which involves connecting roads with parking areas and flat escalators where necessary. Visual impact should be minimized but there ought to be a variety of exits leading to important sites, with useful information about them. Certainly, this may privilege some itineraries over others, leaving certain historical parts neglected, leading to important economic considerations.

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7   The Proceedings of the International and Interdisciplinary Symposium "Bringing archaeology to life," organized by the European Parliament in Brussels on 4-5 October 2005, are useful in this respect.

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