

Global Forum on Accessible Cities

Turin, 17 June 2011

Katerina Papamichail

**THE CHALLENGES OF
CHANGING AN
HISTORICAL CITY
- THE EXAMPLE OF
ATHENS**

Athens 2004 – Olympic and Paralympic City



Making the historical city accessible



Athens had to be made ready for visitors to watch the Games and to enjoy the city

Making the historical city accessible



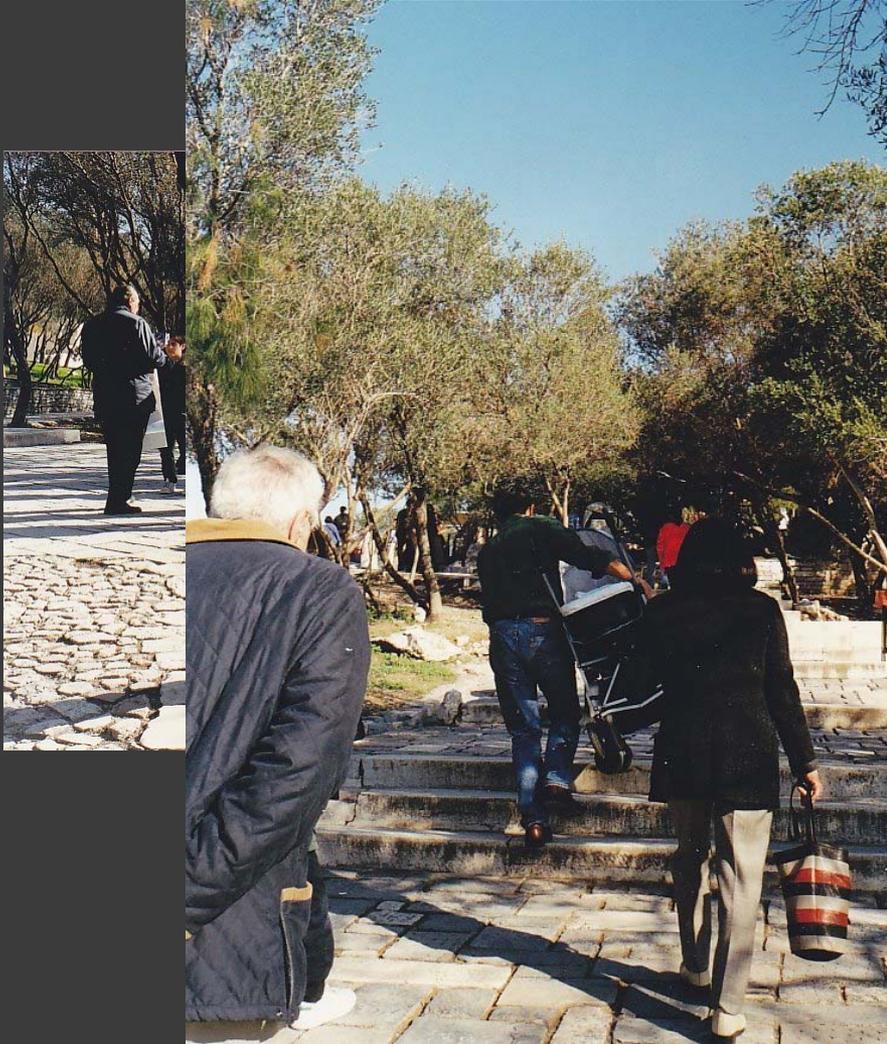
A more “friendly” and accessible city for citizens and spectators

Making the historical city accessible



All the visitors should be able to enjoy the many monuments and archaeological sites

Making the historical city accessible



Until this time, making the environment accessible for wheelchair users, people with walking difficulties, sight impairments, and others was not a priority and was often neglected

The Challenge

- ⦿ We had to find many compromises between respecting the cultural and architectural heritage and creating a modern, accessible city for all.
- ⦿ **Our tools** were:
 - The national legislation and access guidelines
 - Best practices in urban renewal, renovations and development.
 - The experience of Greek experts in universal design and accessibility
 - Teamwork – with the contribution of disability NGOs, Municipalities, the General Secretariat of the Olympic Games and the ATHENS 2004 Paralympic Division.

Highlighting 3 examples

1. Improving the urban transport system by renovating the old railway stations and creating a New Metro line.
2. Making - at last - the Acropolis of Athens, the symbol of Greek civilisation, accessible for All.
3. Joining up the archaeological sites with a pedestrian walkway; and the New Acropolis Museum.

Universal design principles were a parameter in the re-modelling of the city and transport system, but 'access for all' was not achieved to the same degree in all projects.

Example of good practice

Title: Upgrading the Athens public transport system:
Renovation of railway stations and
construction of the new Metro.

Country: Greece

City / Place: Athens

Date(s): From 2000 to 2004

Reference: <http://www.ametro.gr/page/default.asp?id=2375&la=2>

Submitted by: Katerina Papamichail, Architect, Greece

Theme/Subject: Renovation and reconstruction of all existing railway stations and their surrounding areas in Athens – Piraeus. Taking account of access needs of all passengers, the historical characteristics of each station; and contributing to improved aesthetic experience.

City of Athens Metro system, fully accessible for all.

Piraeus station

Before



Electric Railways Athens – Piraeus AE.



After

Faliero station

1950s



After renovation, 2004

1990s



Each station should have its own 'character'



Omonia station

Before



After

Access improvements

Tactile routes, with colour contrast, on platforms and approaches, and tactile markings at the platform edge.



Access improvements

- Lifts, where necessary, on both platforms, with Braille control buttons and announced stops
- Escalators wherever possible



Access improvements

At 3 stations , there is a gap, where the platform edge is curved, so a transportable ramp for wheelchair users is provided at the first door of the first carriage.



Access improvements

Underpasses and/or new bridges were added or renovated at all stations.



Access improvements

- Trains have audible stop announcements and, since 2010, also visual announcements of the stations
- Signage directs wheelchair users to use the front carriage, where the driver can assist if necessary
- Ticket offices with low counters

Access improvements



- Security cameras and personnel who can guide and assist passengers are at every station throughout the day and night
- Toilets at stations for wheelchair users

Access improvements

- surrounding pavements and access routes with dropped kerbs, etc.
- kiosks were moved from pavements where they were blocking access



Athens Metro



The metro was opened in January 2000 and has two lines.

(Red and blue on the map).

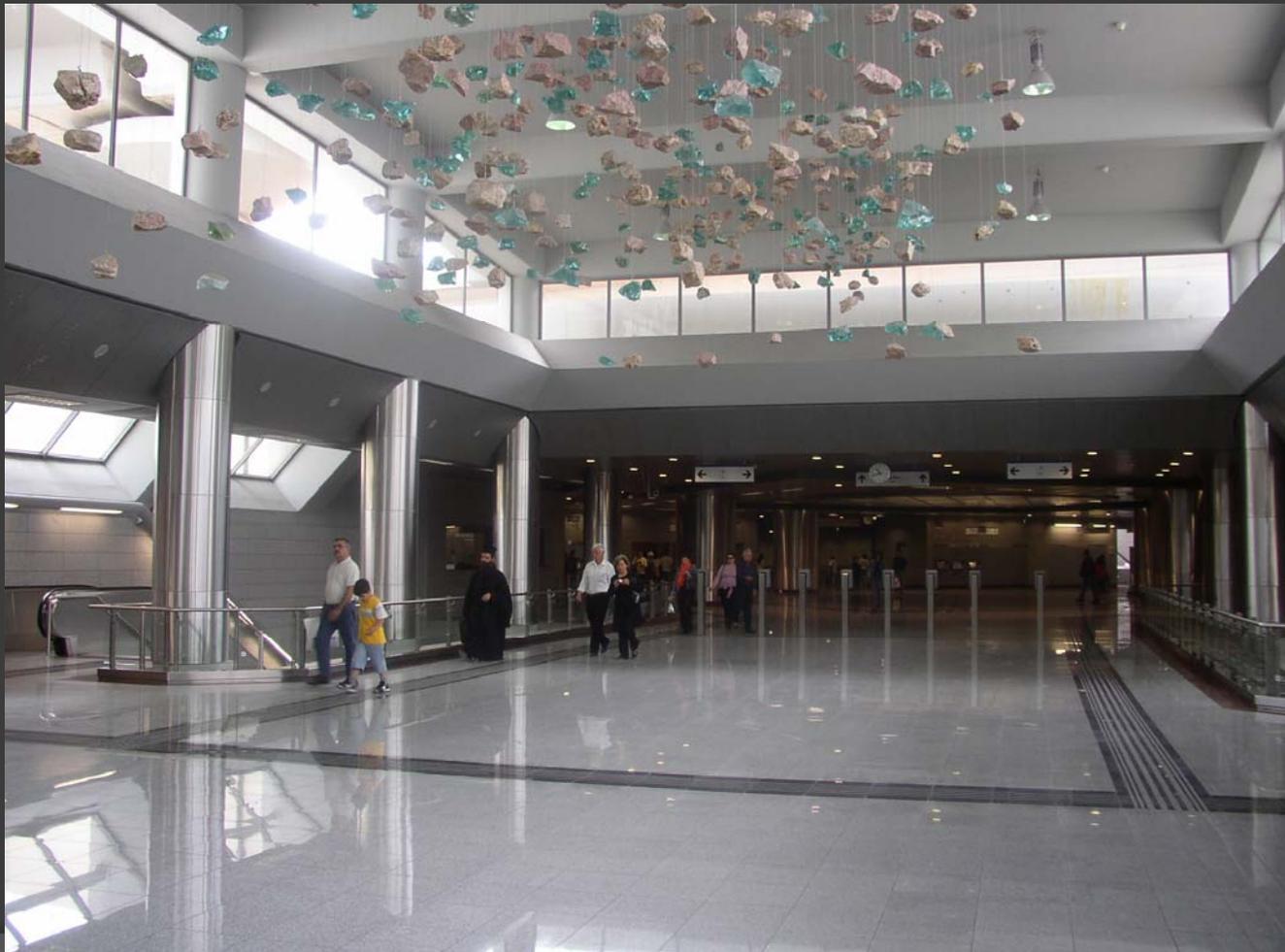
The electric railway, is marked with green.

The new metro system is completely below ground and is designed to transport around 450,000 passengers daily.

When it opened it had 20 stations and covered a total distance of about 18 kilometres. New stations have been added, as the line has been extended since then, going all the way to the Athens International Airport.

Athens metro

Stations have a unique style or character and specially commissioned works of art are a special feature in every station



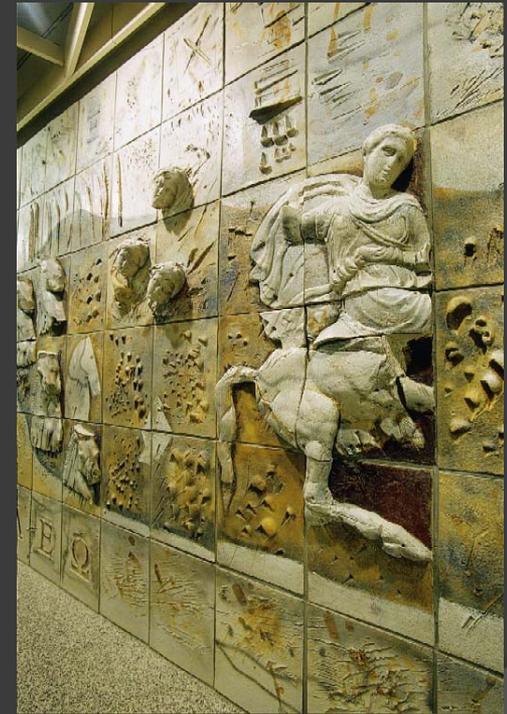
Athens metro

The art works take many forms, for example paintings, sculptures, collages, light installations....



Athens metro

Tiling and reliefs...



Accessibility:

Ticket machines and ticket counters are at a low height, for wheelchair users.
Platforms are provided with tactile routes and warning tiles at the platform edge



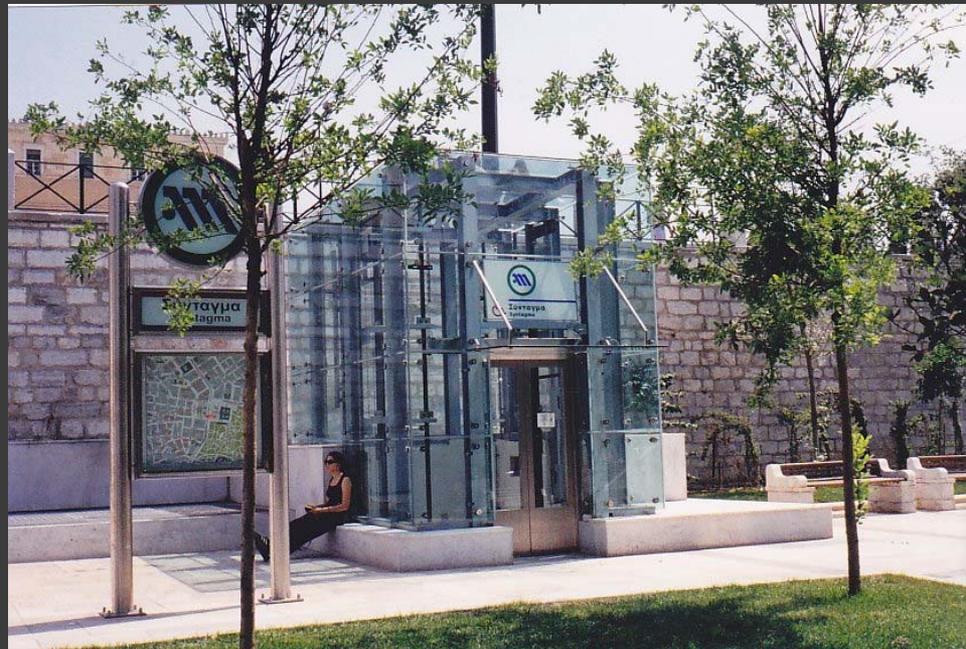
Athens metro - access



In a few places, where needed, there is a platform lift for wheelchair users.

On every platform there is level access to the train and there is only a very small gap between the platform and the train.

Athens metro - access



- Every station has lifts and level or ramped access points.
- Lifts have control buttons with Braille text, and stops are announced verbally
- Escalators are provided at all stations

Athens metro - access



Seating is provided on all platforms

All trains arrive at the station from the left-hand end of the platform and depart to the right.

Athens metro – revealing the past



Many valuable relics - dating back 9,000 years - were found during tunnelling works

Athens metro – revealing the past



Relics are displayed today in glass cases and exhibits in the stations, **making the Athens Metro a museum in its own right.**

Example of good practice

Title: Making the Acropolis of Athens Accessible for All

Country: Greece

City / Place: Athens

Date(s): From 2000 to 2004

Reference: <http://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.forums.1056>

Submitted by: Katerina Papamichail, Architect, Greece

Theme/Subject: Infrastructure works: pathways and lifts to enable wheelchair access to the top of the Acropolis; installation of a lift to the (former) Acropolis Museum and disabled toilets.



The Acropolis



Making the impossible possible ...



The Acropolis



The lift can carry one disabled visitor in a wheelchair and their companion, in addition to the lift operator.



Katerina Papamichail, Turin 17 June 2011

The Acropolis



In archaeological sites in general, there is always some hesitancy about laying paths or other “modern” interventions.

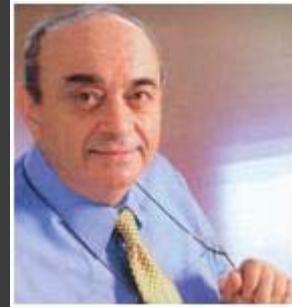
In this case, the chosen solution gives the minimal possible intrusion.

Acropolis – access to the old Museum

In 2004 access was also made possible to the former Acropolis Museum, which was located on the hilltop.



The Acropolis



Spyros Stavrianopoulos
President,
Hellenic Paralympic Committee

“I believe that it’s a work that had to be done in Greece, because it symbolizes the right of access to art and culture, which nobody can forbid”.

Example of good practice

Title: Joining up the Archaeological Sites; and
the New Acropolis Museum

Country: Greece

City / Place: Athens

Date(s): From 1997 to 2004 (Acropolis Museum, 2009)

References: <http://www.astynet.gr> and
<http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr>

Submitted by: Katerina Papamichail, Architect, Greece

Theme/Subject: Unification of the archaeological sites with a continuous pedestrian route; removal of vehicular access, upgrading of squares, streets, buildings, pavements, regulated parking areas. Design and construction of the New Acropolis Museum.

Joining the Archaeological Sites



Joining the Archaeological Sites



Visitors can move freely, without crossing traffic, along a 5 km. route between the main archaeological sites and the central metro stations,

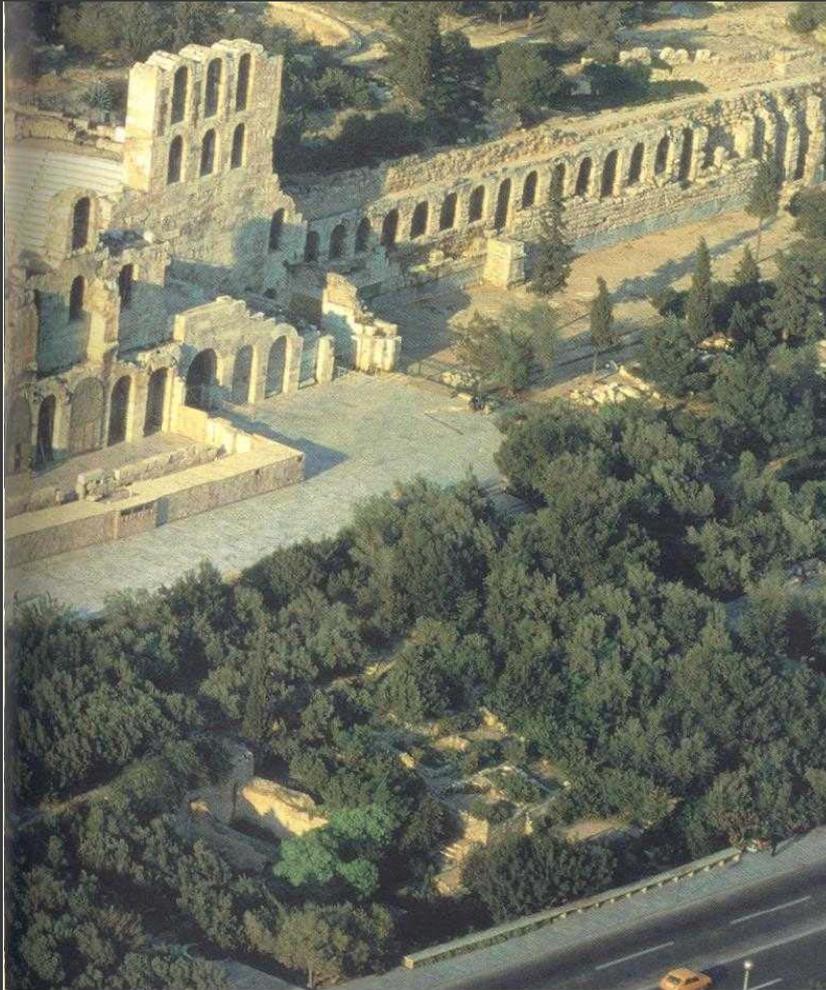
Joining the Archaeological Sites



Pathway to the Acropolis, designed in the 1950s by the renowned Greek architect Pikionis.

An integrated smooth path is missing and I believe that it should be added.

Joining the Archaeological Sites



The Herodion Theatre

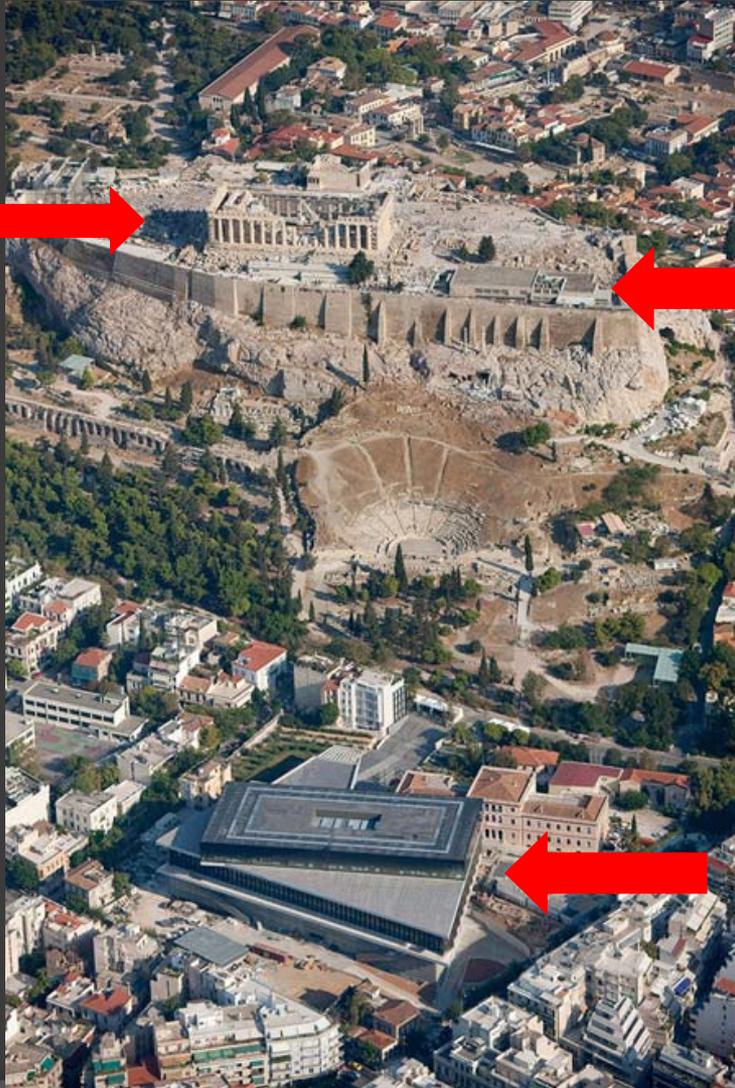
Joining the Archaeological Sites



Wooden ramps and a platform area have been added at one side of the terraced rows of seating, making the ancient theatre accessible for wheelchair users.

The Herodion Theatre

New Acropolis Museum



This view from the air shows the Acropolis with the Parthenon and the old museum, a low building at the eastern corner of the Acropolis, and the new Museum in the foreground.

New Acropolis Museum



Designed by the Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi and opened in 2009.

The new museum had to fit into a very small plot among other buildings and have a direct view to the Acropolis.

New Acropolis Museum



A design and engineering solution was found by placing the building higher up, on 43 columns... so that the excavations could be protected and displayed.

New Acropolis Museum



Visitors can now see a working excavation site under the museum.

New Acropolis Museum



The museum is fully accessible for wheelchair users.

New Acropolis Museum



The upper gallery and the view to the Parthenon

Athens today...

- ⦿ is a better environment, where everyone can move around more easily and reach the main attractions and archaeological sites
- ⦿ Planners, designers and builders are now aware of the problems and possibilities of access: they do not think the combination of **accessibility and good urban design** is impossible...

The steps to achieve accessibility for all in historical areas and sites

- ⦿ The decision, by public authorities, to make access a priority
- ⦿ Awareness of the need for inclusive solutions
- ⦿ Deep knowledge / expertise about universal design and accessibility
- ⦿ Careful application of standards and creative solutions
- ⦿ Working as a team, transforming and communicating knowledge to different actors: finding compromises
- ⦿ Experts following the planning, design and implementation closely, on-the-spot.
- ⦿ Common standards for accessibility of historical sites and monuments

Athens – Accessible for All

You are very welcome to visit and experience
Athens for yourself!

Thankyou

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