

# Building Accessible Environments: Integrating Policy, Space, Education, and Society Toward a Well-Being-Oriented Inclusive Society

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Population aging has become a shared global challenge. Data from the World Health Organization indicate that around 2020, the number of people aged 60 and above outnumbered children younger than five years, marking the transition into a phase of rapid global aging<sup>[1]</sup>. China is also experiencing an unprecedented aging process. Within the built environment, aging residential communities commonly suffer from steep steps and outdated facilities, which have become critical barriers to the daily lives of older adults and people with disabilities. In the context of urban regeneration, spatial interventions should go beyond superficial improvements and instead engage with the deeper fabric of the city. In this regard, the development of accessible environments should be considered a key pathway to addressing pressing social needs and advancing spatial justice<sup>[2]</sup>. As a crucial medium, the systematic construction of accessible environments not only safeguards the fundamental spatial rights of vulnerable groups, but also serves as a cornerstone for building a well-being-oriented society. It plays a vital role in promoting social equity and safeguarding human dignity, while reflecting national soft power and the potential for sustainable development.

On September 1, 2023, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Building Accessible Environments came into effect, marking a shift from policy encouragement to law-based governance. The construction of an accessible well-being-oriented society requires coordinated efforts across multiple dimensions. At the policy level, initiatives such as the promotion of elevator retrofitting in old residential communities by the Ministry of Housing and Urban–Rural Development, and requirements for accessible services in railway and highway systems by the Ministry of Transport, provide clear strategic direction. At the spatial level, measures including

the installation of ramps and elevators in residential areas and the improvement of accessible connections at transportation nodes help ensure continuous accessibility in public spaces<sup>[3]</sup>. At the educational level, integrating “barrier-free design” and “universal design”<sup>[4]</sup> into both general and professional education systems<sup>[5]</sup> helps reshape the value systems of future designers, while also fostering public awareness and a culture of empathy and inclusion. At the societal level, breaking down attitudinal barriers is essential to promote an expansion of design paradigms from barrier-free design to universal design and further toward inclusive design<sup>[6]</sup>, enabling accessibility to be embedded in everyday life through both technological innovation and human-centered care.

However, in advancing the development of accessible environments, implicit barriers rooted in social perceptions and cultural norms remain a central challenge that must be addressed. A persistent misconception among the public is that accessibility facilities are merely special provisions for older adults or people with disabilities. Such a narrow view often leads to these facilities being overlooked, misused, or left idle in everyday contexts, thereby hindering broader societal recognition and support for inclusive spaces. In fact, accessibility is not an exclusive demand of specific groups but a universal need across the human life course. Parents with strollers, travelers carrying heavy luggage, individuals with temporary mobility limitations due to injury, and middle-aged populations experiencing declining physical capacity all directly benefit from accessible environments. It is therefore essential to foster a societal shift in perception, reframing accessibility initiatives from a welfare-oriented provision for particular groups to a universally shared right.

The realization of a well-being-oriented society depends on

fine-grained interventions at the community and household levels<sup>[7-8]</sup>. From the installation of indoor handrails and sensor-based lighting to age-friendly retrofitting, to multi-stakeholder negotiations in community-level elevator installation, and further to the optimization of end-point public service provision such as accessible transportation, all require incremental interventions at the micro scale. These efforts gradually remove both physical and attitudinal barriers. Coupled with sustained educational initiatives, accessible and inclusive environments can become a normalized foundation of social operation.

Meanwhile, with the comprehensive digital transformation of society, the scope of accessibility has extended from the physical built environment to virtual digital spaces. The digital divide is increasingly emerging as a structural barrier that limits the integration of vulnerable groups into contemporary society. Addressing this challenge requires a deeper commitment to digital inclusion and the effective leveraging of technological innovation. Stakeholders across sectors should actively embrace the principle of “tech for good,” accelerate age-friendly adaptations of smart devices, and promote the adoption of artificial intelligence applications such as voice interaction and screen reading. Furthermore, by harnessing the Internet of Things and smart city systems, it is possible to advance the deep integration of digital services with physical spaces and to build a seamlessly connected smart ecosystem. This approach not only helps diverse populations bridge the digital divide, but also reshapes patterns of social interaction in a more inclusive way, repositioning accessibility from a form of basic spatial accommodation to a comprehensive enabler of everyday life for all.

In conclusion, the development of accessible environments is a long-term and systematic social endeavor. Moving forward, it is essential to take policy frameworks as the guide, spatial optimization as the core, education as the foundation, and social collaboration as the support, in order to further explore design methods and technical pathways centered on accessibility. Only by fostering a highly inclusive and accessible well-being-oriented society can diverse populations overcome physical and physiological constraints and equally share spatial rights. This is not only a fundamental demand for social well-being, but also a key trajectory in the evolution of modern civilization.

Inclusiveness enables care and shapes the future.

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# 无障碍环境建设： 政策、空间、教育与社会协同构建福祉导向的包容性社会

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人口老龄化问题是全球面临的共同挑战。世界卫生组织的数据显示, 2020年前后, 全球60岁及以上人口数量已超过5岁以下儿童人口数量, 标志着全球进入快速老龄化阶段<sup>[1]</sup>。而中国也正经历着前所未有的老龄化进程。在城市建成环境中, 老旧小区普遍存在台阶陡峭、设施陈旧等问题, 已成为老年人与残障人士日常生活的核心痛点。在城市更新的背景下, 空间改造不应局限于表层美化, 更需深入城市的深层肌理, 将无障碍环境建设作为纾解民生痛点、提升城市空间正义<sup>[2]</sup>的关键路径。无障碍环境设计作为重要载体, 其系统性建设不仅是对弱势群体基本空间权利的保障, 更是构建福祉社会的重要基石, 对促进社会平等与个体尊严具有深远的现实意义, 同时也体现了国家软实力与社会可持续发展的潜力。

2023年9月1日, 《中华人民共和国无障碍环境建设法》正式施行, 标志着我国无障碍建设已从“鼓励引导”全面迈向“依法治理”的新阶段。构建无障碍福祉社会需从多方面协同推进。1) 政策层面: 住房和城乡建设部推动老旧小区加装电梯, 交通运输部要求铁路、公路等提供无障碍出行服务, 一系列顶层设计为无障碍建设指明方向。2) 空间层面: 通过住宅增设坡道、电梯, 交通节点完善无障碍接驳等措施, 实现公共空间的连续性无障碍通行<sup>[3]</sup>。3) 教育层面: 将“无障碍设计”与“通用设计”<sup>[4]</sup>等概念纳入国民与专业教育体系<sup>[5]</sup>, 重塑未来设计师的专业价值观, 并在公众层面普及无障碍通识, 培育社会的共情与包容文化。4) 社会层面: 打破观念壁垒, 推动设计范式由“无障碍设计”拓展至“通用设计”乃至“包容性设计”<sup>[6]</sup>, 通过科技赋能与人文关怀, 使无障碍理念融入日常生活。

然而, 在推进无障碍环境建设的进程中, 社会观念与文化层面的隐性壁垒仍是亟待破除的核心挑战。公众长期存在一种认知误区, 认为无障碍设施仅是为老年人或残障人群提供的特殊照顾。这种狭隘视角容易导致相关设施在日常中被忽视、侵占或闲置, 从而阻碍全社会对包

容性空间的认同与支持。事实上, 无障碍并非少数群体的专属诉求, 而是贯穿人类生命周期的普遍需求。推着婴儿车的父母、携带沉重行李的旅客、因意外而暂时行动受限的人群, 以及体能逐渐下降的中年群体, 均是无障碍环境的直接受益者。因此, 有必要在全社会层面推动认知转变, 将无障碍建设由针对特定群体的福利性安排, 提升为全民共享的普惠性权利。

福祉社会的实现依赖于精细化的社区与家庭干预措施<sup>[7-8]</sup>。从户内扶手、感应照明等适老化设施的配置, 到社区加装电梯等公共治理中的多主体协商, 再到无障碍交通工具的普及等公共服务供给的末端优化, 均需通过微观尺度的渐进式干预, 逐步消除物理与观念的双重障碍。结合教育体系的持续引导, 让“无碍”环境成为社会运行的基础性常态。

与此同时, 随着社会的全面数字化转型, 无障碍的内涵已由物理建成环境拓展至虚拟数字空间。当前, 数字鸿沟正逐渐成为弱势群体融入现代生活的结构性障碍。为有效应对这一问题, 亟需深化数字包容理念, 并发挥科技赋能的关键作用。社会各界应积极践行“科技向善”理念, 加快推进智能终端适老化改造, 推广语音交互、屏幕朗读等人工智能技术应用。进一步依托物联网与智慧城市体系, 推进数字服务与物理空间的深度融合, 构建无缝衔接的智慧生态系统。这不仅有助于各类群体跨越数字鸿沟, 也能够以科技温度重塑社会交往模式, 使无障碍从基础性的空间补偿, 拓展为面向全人群的综合性生活赋能。

综上所述, 无障碍环境建设是一项长期性、系统性的社会工程。未来应持续以政策制度为先导, 以空间优化为核心, 以教育启智为基础, 以社会协同为支撑, 进一步探索以无障碍为核心的环境设计方法和技术路径。唯有致力于构建高度包容友好的无障碍福祉社会, 方能使各类群体突破生理与物理限制, 平等共享空间权利。这不仅是民生发展的核心诉求, 更是现代文明演进的重要方向。

无碍, 方有爱; 无碍, 方见未来。