

From the editors

Dear readers,

After a rather long break, we are happy to bring you this issue that deals with accessibility in historic cities and focuses on the accessibility project of the public space in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Historic cities are not a simple challenge when it comes to accessibility. The Old City of Jerusalem seems to be a particularly complex challenge due to a combination of a variety of factors and circumstances: complex topography, extremely dense construction, abundance of sites of historical-religious-archeological value, a complex and sensitive political situation. On a rather small area within the walls lives a population of several tens of thousands of residents, most of whom are people in poor socio-economic status, quite a few are elderly people and people with disabilities. That same area is also a destination for visits by millions of tourists from all over the world.

In order to make such a place accessible it is necessary to maneuver and find the appropriate balances between accessibility needs and stringent conservation requirements, and to take into account, with extreme caution, the set of complex environmental conditions.

We have endeavored to bring to the fore all the topics covered by the project, from the overall policy, conducting a comprehensive survey, setting priorities, building a work plan, to the step-by-step implementation of this plan. One article also discusses the analysis of what remains still to be worked on - they are neither few nor simple. At the end of this issue, there is an article by Architect Meirav Davish Ben Moshe, which deals with the initiative to develop in the Old City a program of an open-air museum, an idea formulated during the years of the project. In this context, physical accessibility will be an important component that will allow more people to enjoy the treasures of the Old City, not to mention the cultural accessibility that will contribute to a deeper understanding of the city on its long history and present life.

We hope that what is being said here can spur other historic cities in Israel, and also outside it, to move towards becoming convenient and inviting for all people, residents and tourists, with and without disabilities.

And a word to conclude, we wish to thank the editorial member, Architect Yael Danieli Lahav for her extensive assistance in preparing this issue.

We wish you all a fruitful reading, good health and a successful year.

Leah Ofer
Avi Ramot

