

Editor's Note

During this time of economic uncertainty, we are delighted that readers continue to support *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*. This issue is particularly illustrative of the interdisciplinary approach of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE). In it, a range of scholars — geographers, historians, architects and planners — present compelling work from across the globe, showing how questions of tradition, in its many forms, continue to have tremendous impact on how we interpret the built environment.

The issue begins with an examination of hyperrealism in China and the United States — a fascinating juxtaposition that allows a deep interrogation of questions of authenticity, reproduction, and cultural identity. The author, Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, looks in particular at the invocation of the past in China and at “Disneyfication” in the United States to uncover how two different cultures create a sense of authenticity that is, in essence, a mental construct. The next article, an adaptation of one of the best student papers at our 2010 conference, looks to the contradictions inherent to nationalist imaginaries in Israel and Palestine. Its author, Ron Smith points to the concept of the nation-state as both a space of utopian possibility and dystopic violence and repression. Following this, Mohamed Gamal Abdelmonem examines the complex idea of “home” in the neighborhoods of Old Cairo. His purpose is to argue for an understanding of flexible socio-spatial dwelling practices as a means to improve future housing and preservation efforts in Egypt and elsewhere. Our fourth feature article, by Yael Allweil, recounts the conflicts attendant on the development of early Israeli housing policies. She explains how repeated change in these policies in response to a series of perceived threats eventually created the basis for a contract between state and citizen that remains a core political principle in the country to this day. The issue concludes with a field report from Sarawak (Malaysian Borneo) by Ian Ewart examining how “traditional” architecture is rarely stable. In this case, the agent of change is the arrival of the globalized logging industry, which has introduced local people to new materials, building technologies, and cultural images.

Exciting plans are underway for our biennial conference, to be held this year in Portland, Oregon. I hope to see many of you there October 4–7 to examine “The Myth of Tradition.”

Nezar AlSayyad
