

Editor's Note

As we start the 2015–2016 cycle of *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, we are also preparing for the IASTE 2016 Conference. It was our pleasure to announce in the Call for Abstracts for the upcoming conference that it would be held in Kuwait City, and that the theme would be “Legitimizing Tradition.” By this time, many of you have received the call for abstracts poster and we hope you have shared it with your colleagues. In the next few months, you will receive a poster detailing the sessions of the conference. We hope you will all submit abstracts and join us in Kuwait in December of 2016.

IASTE, as an organization, is not only reflective of its activities, but also of its members and their scholarship. Since we received so many high-quality papers at the last conference, we are pleased to include revised versions of two more here, reflecting the theme “Whose tradition?” We open with Andrzej Piotrowski’s Jeffrey Cook Award-winning paper on historical churches in Armenia, Cappadocia and Greece. His analysis reveals how architecture’s abstract representational quality allowed heretical traditions to persist in the symbolic programs of these early Christian spaces. He argues this indicates that the dynamic complexity of the contemporary world is not unprecedented; indeed, that the categorization of knowledge has routinely obscured complex cultural negotiations for the benefit of dominant groups. Our second article is a revised version of a keynote presentation by Ashraf Salama examining contemporary architecture and urbanism on the Arabian Peninsula. Using Dubai and Doha as examples, Salama makes a compelling argument that the region’s urban traditions, formerly shaped by common people, are now fully the purview of the elite, especially its rulers. He concludes by calling for a new cycle of investigation to better align the lived, conceived and perceived qualities of the region’s urban traditions.

From the Middle East we move to Brazil, where Cristina Schicchi proposes a new theoretical and methodological approach to cultural heritage preservation. As the area surrounding the city of Campinas, in São Paulo state, is restructured in response to a new phase of capitalist development and recent population flows away from big cities, heritage management will require a cross-scale analysis of processes and policies at a regional level. Its goal, she argues, is to preserve cultural memory through the identification of “diachronic” and “dispersed” heritage sites. The concluding articles both engage with Chinese ethnic communities, but in vastly different contexts. Chuo Li examines how the urban expression of Chicago’s Chinatown has evolved in response to changing cultural, political and economic forces. Where it once reflected struggles over identity and political affiliation internal to the Chinese community, it passed through a period of self-Orientalization as a business-development strategy, to a present condition where generic icons are reproduced as markers of “Chineseness” as a global brand. Donia Zhang’s field report, by contrast, examines an ongoing project to renew dilapidated courtyard housing in central Beijing. Her study uses architectural and ethnographic methods to document its flaws and offer lessons for future practice. Among these is that the reconstructions are not only materially poor, but fail to return these habitations to their original state by eliminating encroachments within their outdoor areas. They thus fail to provide adequate residential settings for their inhabitants.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *TDSR*. I will conclude by encouraging all our readers to join us for IASTE 2016, the Association’s fifteenth biennial conference. The Call for Abstracts is included at the end of this issue. We welcome your contributions to what will surely be an exciting event.

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