Following a successful conference in Beirut, Lebanon, on the topic of “The Utopia of Tradition,” this issue of Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review explores many of the themes that emerged from that very productive encounter. Perhaps at this contemporary moment of revolution, in which the populations of countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa are struggling to redefine their political destinies, the notion of utopia as it relates to tradition can help us engage in an epistemic exercise to imagine alternatives.

This issue of TDSR begins with three articles organized around the theme “Fiction and Science Fiction.” The authors of these articles draw liberally from literary and filmic representations to explore the ideas of tradition and the built environment. First is Robert Brown’s analysis of the now-defunct cult television show Firefly. Brown posits that through this particular extended narrative we can understand utopian fantasies as emerging largely from a desire for a return to origins. Next, Yasser Elsheshtawy uses the film Code 46 to look at Dubai’s marginal Satwa district as a means of interrogating dystopian imaginaries. This expansion of his 2010 Jeffrey Cook award-winning paper goes on to advocate for these alternate views as a means to further understand contemporary cities. Finally, Patricia Morgado examines how the poet and statesman Pablo Neruda’s experience of adding to his writer’s retreat at Isla Negra on the Chilean coast influenced his work on The Heights of Macchu Picchu, a classic work of Latin American literature.

Our opening section is followed by two additional feature articles on urban development, utopia, and tradition. Jieheerah Yun explores a planned industrial city in South Korea whose landscape has undergone a series of transformations. The article argues that the perversion of initial planning goals has created the basis for a new community on a site once marked by dystopic conditions. Finally, Ted Shelton analyses five twentieth-century automobile utopias that sought to utilize the new technologies of speed and large-scale construction. The article reveals the tensions these plans hoped to resolve between modern tools of urbanization and traditional aspects of city life at a smaller scale.

It is my pleasure to announce that the iaste 2012 conference will be held in Portland, Oregon. Its theme will be “The Myths of Tradition.” Please review the call for papers at the end of this issue and check our website (http://iaste.berkeley.edu) for updates.

Finally, I wish to bring the attention of the TDSR readership to a recently completed project: iaste has managed to digitize and make available all back issues of TDSR from its inception in 1988. The issues can be found in their entirety, free of charge, on the iaste website.

Nezar AlSayyad