

## Editor's Note

This issue of *TDSR* follows the successful completion of the fifteenth conference of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments, held in Kuwait in December 2016. The event was organized around the theme “Legitimizing Tradition” with the intention of exploring how traditions related to the built environment have been legitimated or used as tools of political and social legitimation, and how they have played a variety of roles in legitimating place-based or placeless built environments. All the articles in this issue were first presented at the 2016 conference, but have gone through an additional round of blind peer review and revision. The first two articles, by Asseel Al-Ragam and Joseph Godlewski, were also, respectively, the winners of the 2016 Jeffrey Cook Award for best paper by a scholar and the IASTE-Berkeley Prize for best paper by a young scholar in the field of traditional dwellings and settlements.

We begin with Al-Ragam’s examination of “the denial of coevalness” in representations of Kuwaiti urban modernity. The phrase is taken from the anthropologist Johannes Fabian, who used it to describe how processes of Western knowledge construction typically assign people of “elsewhere” a different historical time. The effect is to allow cultural developments to always be interpreted as originating in the West. In the Kuwaiti case, critics thus dismissed the urban transformation of the 1950s and 60s as derivative, even when it was embraced and appropriated by local Kuwaitis as evidence of a desired new identity. Al-Ragam argues it may be particularly important to challenge such cultural hierarchies today, because physical traces of this period are fast disappearing, based on claims they represent a largely foreign imaginary.

Godlewski’s article next examines the meaning of walled Nigerian compounds as an element in the construction of African identity. For colonial-era Europeans, residential compounds built by groups like the Èfik of Old Calabar once seemed to provide testimony of the barbarity of local cultural practices, which in part justified the missionary enterprise and the institution of slavery. However, the form of the compound was later reinterpreted by native Africans as a symbol of postcolonial national identity. Such places were built of impermanent materials, however, and little actual evidence of them remains. As architectural artifacts, Godlewski thus believes they may best be understood as “zones of entanglement,” whose symbolic significance “ensnar[es] real, constructed and often contradictory constructions.”

Our third article, by Mar Loren-Méndez and Ana Quesada-Arce, investigates conditions that threaten traditional Mediterranean cemeteries on the peripheries of towns and cities along the Malaga coast of southern Spain. The authors consider the changing place of death in contemporary society, the historical development of heritage narratives, and the impact of the present-day tourist economy. They argue that the preservation of these often starkly beautiful spaces is critical to understanding the history and structure of the region, and they propose a framework for their protection and continued operation. This is followed by an investigation by Gehan Selim of the Bulaq district of Cairo, an area of authentic urban fabric that originated as the city’s fourteenth-century port. Criticized for its present undesirable visual qualities, the area has been targeted for redevelopment by a series of government initiatives. Gehan argues that instead of envisioning it as a site for modernist highrises or New Urbanist residential schemes, the authorities should rebuild Bulaq from within by supporting local social and economic practices and traditional urban values. Finally, we present a field report from Ana Rosa Chagas Cavalcanti that considers the role of income-producing activities in Brazilian *favelas*. Cavalcanti investigates the origins and nature of these activities as vital elements within such settlements. And she argues that any successful housing program in Brazil — either to provide new social housing or upgrade existing environments — may benefit from understanding the way people there blend work and family life.

I would like to end by announcing that the next IASTE conference will take place in Coimbra, Portugal, October 4–7, 2018, and will be hosted by the University of Coimbra. The call for abstracts may be found at the end of this issue, and updates on the event will be posted in coming months on our website, <http://iaste.berkeley.edu>.

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