

Editor's Note

The world continues to undergo massive political transformation in this second decade of the twenty-first century. The rise of strong-man rule and the sudden and powerful return of authoritarianism, as precipitated by new populist movements, has confused the world of scholarship. The rise of Trump in the U.S.A., Putin in Russia, Erdogan in Turkey, Modi in India, Sisi in Egypt, and Duterte in the Philippines has brought major changes not only to their regions but also to the world. The study of traditional settlements is not immune from these changes, as apparent in the interests of IASTE members. More than 300 abstracts have been submitted for consideration for the IASTE 2018 conference, and many attempt to deal with these global currents. Such an outpouring may herald another change in the direction of the association, similar to that which took place in 2000 at the start of the millennium.

In this issue, as is our practice, we present five articles on diverse topics from around the world. First, Rick Miller focuses on Ulaanbaatar's rapidly expanding informal settlements, which have resulted from a vast influx of former nomads to the city since the end of socialism. Miller shows how migrants seek urban advantage by selectively navigating the changing legal regime to either benefit from or skirt its restrictions, and he emphasizes how autoconstruction, as evidence of a claim to the land, is a major aspect of this strategy. In the second article, Clare Robinson researches the work of the architect A. Quincy Jones in the 1940s American Southwest to critique the basis for contemporary assessments of built heritage. Since one of the tenets of Modern architecture was the affordable use of common materials, she argues that changes to Jones's houses by a different demographic group reflect modernism's tradition of change and do not detract from their heritage value.

Sura al-Sabah next looks at some of the forces driving the resurgence of the multiuse house in Kuwait. Her examination of the "workhome" there traces the early development of Kuwait, causes for the loss of the multiuse house in the post-oil era, and some of the qualities individuals are seeking to reinstate by reviving the practice of home-based work today. This is followed by Triatno Harjoko's piece on the use of public space in Jakarta for various informal economic activities. In it, he challenges the dominant paradigm of legitimation as conceived through formal institutions and structures, arguing that the informal economy's capacity to dwell in public urban space must be seen in light of processes of informal legitimation as understood through a communicative-action approach.

Finally, in the Field Report section, Mohammad Ashraf Khan and Lian Loke analyze why villagers in northern Pakistan whose homes were devastated by a massive earthquake in 2005 have failed to take up safe, new, low-cost building alternatives. Deprived of traditional timber resources on account of deforestation, they have either become dependent on high-cost, unsustainable practices introduced by outside agencies or reverted to the unsafe post-and-lintel construction that failed with such tragic consequences. Without better strategies of communication, Khan and Loke conclude, the outcome of disaster risk reduction in such communities is often to decrease social justice.

Nezar AlSayyad
