

Editor's Note

As the world faces major environmental crises — from climate change, to the destruction of natural habitats, to urban sprawl and pollution — some IASTE members may choose to reflect on the future by looking to the past. This issue of *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* continues this practice by examining ongoing discourses of tradition in the built environment.

We open with an article by Adnan Morshed exploring the connection between domestic space and social empowerment in Bangladesh. In the mid-1980s, the micro-credit organization Grameen Bank created a subsidiary program offering small loans to impoverished rural women to upgrade their homes using more modern, durable materials. Morshed argues that this self-help program combined a neoliberal foundation with a more idealistic concern for human capital development. It has also helped redefine aspects of “traditional” dwelling in the flood-prone region by empowering women socially and protecting their homes as sites of economic production. Next, Eliana Abu-Hamdi describes how Jordan’s King Hussein attempted in the 1980s to use a proposal for centralized government planning in Amman to undercut the power of local East Bank tribes. The top-down effort to establish a modern bureaucracy in the place of existing village councils ultimately fell victim to the country’s economic crisis. But Abu-Hamdi explains how the monarchy was nonetheless able to insert its legitimacy into existing traditional forms of development control through a neopatrimonial system of allegiance among a co-opted, pro-monarchy tribal elite.

Sumayah Al-Solaiman’s article on the King Abdulaziz Historical Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, next turns to the use of architectural form as an instrument of nation-building — a longtime IASTE concern. As she points out, however, in this case two entirely different approaches were used in the design of major new buildings on the historical site (which first had to be cleared of “foreign” stylistic contamination). Nevertheless, the goal of both projects — one stylistically modern, the other neotraditional — was to edit history to promote the city’s claim to cultural and political preeminence. At a far smaller scale, Shaikha Almubarakhi next analyzes representations of domestic space in the adaptation of Naguib Mahfouz’s *Cairo Trilogy* to film in the 1960s and early 70s. In their mise-en-scène and décor, the films narrate the formation and transformation of spatial and social relationships within the cinematic home of a single middle-class Cairene family during the years 1917–1944. As such, they define and critique such aspects of traditional Arab dwelling practice as hyperpatriarchy, subjugated femininity, and strictures against haptic intimacy. We end with a field report by Velika Ivkowska analyzing the design of the “Macedonian Village,” a government-funded re-creation of typical vernacular dwelling forms at an “open-air” site near the capital Skopje. This effort to use cultural tourism to promote national identity is flawed, she argues, because its formal amalgam of disparate facade elements masks a fundamental lack of concern for intangible, “lived” heritage. Indeed, its calculated inauthenticity may do more harm than good when it comes to valuing and preserving the nation’s cultural assets.

I should note that while we start this issue of *TDSR* with the work of a senior scholar, we are pleased to end with the work of several younger contributors who are just setting out in their engagement with the field. To conclude, I encourage all of you to join us for the 2016 IASTE Conference in Kuwait City, December 17–20.

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