# TRADITIONAL DWELLINGS AND SETTLEMENTS REVIEW

JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS



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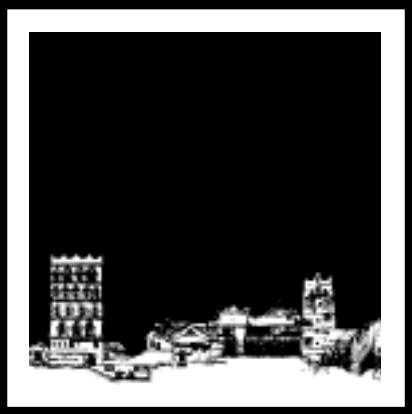



The International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE) was established at the First International Symposium on Traditional Dwellings and Settlements held at Berkeley in April 1988. IASTE is an interdisciplinary forum where scholars from various disciplines and countries can exchange ideas, discuss methods and approaches, and share findings. As opposed to disciplinary associations, IASTE is a nonprofit organization concerned with the comparative and cross-cultural understanding of traditional habitat as an expression of informal cultural conventions. IASTE's purpose is to serve as an umbrella association for all scholars studying vernacular, indigenous, popular and traditional environments. Current activities of IASTE include the organization of biennial conferences on selected themes in traditional-environments research, the publication of edited books on selected themes, a public outreach program which includes supporting films and documentaries, and the publication of the Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Working Paper Series, which includes all papers presented at IASTE conferences and accepted for publication.

*Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* is the official publication of IASTE. As a semi-annual refereed journal, *TDSR* acts as a forum for the exchange of ideas and a means to disseminate information and report on research activities. All articles submitted to *TDSR* are evaluated through a blind peer-review process. *TDSR* has been funded by grants from the Graham Foundation, the Getty Publication Program, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Center for Environmental Design Research, and the office of the Provost at the University of California at Berkeley.

IASTE membership is open to all who are interested in traditional environments and their related studies. In addition to receiving the Association's semi-annual journal, members are eligible to attend the biennial conference at reduced rates. Subscription to the journal is available only with membership in IASTE. Domstic annual order rates are as follows: Individual, $60; Institutional, $120; Corporations, $180. Foreign members add $15 for mailing. Libraries, museums, and academic organizations qualify as institutions. Subscriptions are payable in U.S. dollars only (by check drawn on a U.S. bank, U.S. money order, or international bank draft). Send inquiries to:

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*Journal of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments*

# Contents



COVER ILLUSTRATION: Rroma "Palace" near Sintesti, Romania. Photo by Elena Tomlinson.

# Editor's Note

This issue, the first of the 2007–2008 year, provides an opportunity to reflect both on continuities with and departures from last year's volume, and to preface next year's IASTE conference on "Interrogating Tradition," which will be hosted by Oxford Brookes University in the United Kingdom.

The issue begins with an article by Mona Khechen, "Beyond the Spectacle: Al-Saha Village, Beirut," examining the commodification of nostalgia through the example of a village/hotel owned by a Muslim charitable organization. By theorizing the relationship between simulation and its materiality, it grounds one of the key analytic positions of the 2006 IASTE conference in Bangkok on "hyper-traditions." An earlier version of Khechen's paper, presented at the conference, received IASTE's Jeffrey Cook Award for best paper by a scholar in the field of traditional environments. The award honors Professor Cook, who was one of the founders of IASTE and a key contributor to this journal.

This issue continues with two feature articles, by Trevor Marchand and by Michael Vanderbeek and Clara Irazábal. Marchand's article also focuses on nostalgia, but from a radically different direction, since it situates tradition as it relates to subjectivity, specifically with regard to a way of living and form of desire among a group of London-based woodworkers. Vanderbeek and Irazábal's article provides a comparative look at two grand architectural movements, Modernism and New Urbanism, in terms of their ideological goals and implementations in practice.

The concluding pieces both engage practices, but on different scales. Zhu Qian's article examines the difficult climate for conservation within Chinese cities, an enterprise undertaken by the state with political and practical consequences. The Field Report by Elena Tomlinson argues for an alternative reading of Romanian citizenship through the spatial practices and self-representations of the Rroma; far from receding from society writ large, this often maligned group is engaging precisely with it.

By this time, you should have received the Call for Papers announcement for the 2008 IASTE Conference. Please see the announcement in this issue and visit our website for further details. It marks an exciting turn for IASTE in its engagement with ongoing debates within traditional environments. We welcome your contributions to what will surely be an exciting year.

***Nezar AlSayyad***

# Beyond the Spectacle: Al-Saha Village, Beirut

MONA KHECHEN

**This article discusses al-Saha Village, a revenue-generating restaurant/hotel in Beirut, as a journey in hyper-reality. In the spirit of the commodity, al-Saha celebrates the thrill of the spectacle over the real; it is a model of the model of the Lebanese village of memory and collective imagination. Owned by a Muslim Shiite charity organization, al-Saha is simultaneously also a means of unification and a symbol of separation. Its stance is Lebanese, Islamic, anti-Western, and anti-global. The three main sections of the article shed light on the village concept, the nostalgic fantasies that inspired its architects, and its social and cultural invocations.**

With the growth of the tourist and entertainment industries, the demand for scenes and experiences that are simulations or representations of reality rather than reality itself has grown exponentially. Increasingly, historic-themed developments, theatrical events, and other hyper-traditions (i.e., traditions delinked from the times and places in which they originated) are being created and re-created as stage sets and sold to consumers seeking new experiences.[1] At the same time, advances in technology have altered notions of time and space and challenged doctrines of realism and authenticity in historical representation. More than ever before, simulation is being associated less with a "referential being," a real original, than with the hyper-real — "a real without origin or reality."[2]

Simulated heritage villages and living-history museums are perfect examples of the above trends. A perceived loss of traditional customs and ways of life, accelerated by contemporary patterns of global communication, has fueled interest in heritage-related development. Likewise, rapid urbanization has amplified the power of "the old village" as a theme, so that the idea of the heritage village has emerged as a prime strategy around which to present a staged re-creation of lifestyles long gone. Usually sold to city residents, such thematizations conjure the illusory image of intimate communities that were once models of social unity, harmony and security.

This article examines the manufactured thematic experience and symbolic connotations of one such development. Al-Saha Village in Beirut is a heritage-themed restaurant

***Mona Khechen** is an independent researcher who holds a Doctor of Design from Harvard University.*

and hotel owned by the al-Mabarrat charities of one of Lebanon's leading Muslim Shiite clerics, Sayyed Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah. Inspired by similar tourist developments elsewhere, popular concepts of Islamic architecture and the Lebanese village, and the work of the Lebanese writer Anis Freiha, al-Saha is an architectural work of collage and a simulacrum without a real original. However, its stage-set architecture and reinvented rural charm celebrate the thrill of the spectacle over the real, and problematize the distinction between one and the other.

In a recent newspaper article, the project's chief architect, Jamal Makke, described the idea behind al-Saha: "As cities are distorting our villages, which are becoming increasingly urbanized with small buildings springing up here and there, we thought of this project . . . of bringing the village into the city."[3] For al-Mabarrat, the choice of the village as a theme, albeit commercially attractive, also aligned with its character and values as an Islamic association, since it would commemorate social unity, local identity, traditions and customs.

Despite this apparent clarity of purpose, the architecture of Al-Saha Village evokes complex questions related to collective memory, cultural identity, and historical authenticity. The three main sections of this article address some of them. The first section describes al-Saha within the broader context of invented traditions and introduces its political and economic rationale. In doing so, it examines the birth of the concept of "heritage village," its defining characteristics, and its evolution in relation to emerging technologies and new, global patterns of communication and economy. The second section investigates how the makers of al-Saha absorbed and simulated cultural myths and nostalgic fantasies. It also critically examines the literary work of Anis Freiha, the image he constructed of the Lebanese village and its folklore, and the architectural techniques and language al-Saha employs in attempting to bring this image to life. The third section discusses al-Saha as a religious/political creation that addresses both a growing desire for a distinct Lebanese architectural identity and an Islamic kind of tourism. In conclusion, the article reflects on the debates that a cultural production like al-Saha arouses and the ways it shapes and is shaped by present socio-cultural conditions.

## THE VILLAGE

The concept of the heritage village can be seen as an outcome of the nineteenth-century "ideological labor" of inventing traditions, as epitomized by the rise of historical preservation movements and the museum culture, and as commodified in international expositions.[4] At the time, rapid urbanization had raised awareness of the value of heritage, and influential European architects, artists, planners and intellectuals had started calling for national preservation laws. Seeing industry as a threat to art, they considered the past a source of pride and identity. According to Victor Hugo, it was "[a] nation's most sacred possession, after the future."[5]

Different circumstances brought different responses in different European countries. In Scandinavia, concern for peasant life and folklore — simple and unromantic as it seemed — gave birth to a new type of showplace that combined a folk art center with an open-air architectural museum.[6] The first such institution was inaugurated in 1873 in Stockholm. It was followed by a series of others: the open-air branch at Skansen outside Stockholm (1891), the museum at Lund in southern Sweden (1893), and the Norwegian Folkemuseum in Oslo (1894). Aside from these large, privately funded institutions, several hundred folk museums of varying sizes were also founded, maintained by committees of farmers. Some have seen these living museums as artificial and destructive.[7] But their intent was to foster traditional arts and crafts and display typical rural structures and traditional customs and ways of life. Beyond being spectacles, they encouraged people to regenerate threatened folk culture and adapt old customs to changed living circumstances.

Nevertheless, the birth of living folk museums in Europe, and the coincident attempt to revive arts and crafts traditions, took place during a period Walter Benjamin has described as "glorif[ying] the phantasmagoria of the commodity."[8] Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, entertainment industries had begun to market nostalgic fantasies rooted in the past. The popularization of culture eventually made the previously elite practice of escaping into exotically themed environments widely available to a rising middle class. Historically or exotically branded attractions and objects (such as those displayed in the colonial sections of international exhibitions, or the "Skansens") became valued commodities to trade, and spectacles for all to see. Model villages, heritage-themed parks, hotels and restaurants became what Benjamin called the new "sites of pilgrimages to the commodity fetish."[9]

As these new artifacts of the leisure and entertainment industries gained popularity, museums, which had traditionally been viewed as educational establishments, felt it necessary to enter into competition with them. To broaden their appeal, some deliberately dropped the term "museum," and in its place, "village" became a favored suffix for many types of heritage-themed experience. The resonance of Skansen can be seen, for instance, in the birth of places like Sturbridge Village, Colonial Williamsburg, and Greenfield Village in the U.S., all conceived in the 1920s and 1930s.[10] In the rapidly urbanizing world of the second half of the twentieth century, the village theme became further glorified and romanticized. And, eventually, threats to place, national identity, and a sense of continuity with the past led to a mushrooming of the heritage or "live-village" concept. Especially in the U.S., heritage villages were invented to celebrate the history and traditions of certain localities or people, and even to regenerate economically depressed old towns

(e.g., Ukrainian Cultural Heritage, Spanish American Heritage, Dallas Heritage, Pinellas County Heritage).

Today, the concept of a heritage village is one of the most popular themes that the leisure and entertainment industries use to cater to short attention spans — not only in the U.S. and Europe, but worldwide. Thus, in the Middle East, Hatta Heritage Village, in Dubai, opened to the public in 2001, selling the experience of the desert to adventure-seeking visitors. Meanwhile, the traditional village-like environment of heritage-themed restaurants like Kan Zaman (in Amman) and al-Qariah (in Damascus) offer visitors a one-stop historical and cultural experience. The art of selling such places involves the promotion of both authentic, locally rooted traditions and cultural motifs unassociated with the places where they are reproduced.[11] This has been the case, for example, with the Old Souk of Zouk Mikhael in Lebanon, which was renovated in 1995 into a pedestrian area with restaurants, coffee shops, traditional ateliers, and stalls selling artisanal products. It is also evident in Beirut's Central District, which now includes restored showcase buildings, heritage trails, traditional events, and exhibitions.

Al-Saha Village belongs to this genre of self-conscious heritage place. Located off the busy airport road, in a congested area between Burj al-Barajneh and Haret Hreik (i.e., outside the main hub of Beirut nightlife), its challenge was to establish a destination that could compete with thousands of other restaurants and tourist enterprises **(FIG.1)**. The nostalgic recreation of a simulated old Lebanese village seemed an ideal way to distinguish itself. Al-Saha opened in 2004, selling the Lebanese village lifestyle to a predominantly middle-class Muslim Shiite clientele. In addition to the restaurant, it comprises a hotel and cultural center (a hall for cultural seminars, exhibitions and poetry) in an effort to be simultaneously entertaining, educational, cultural and social. At a time when almost all aspects of social life in Beirut are being commodified, it is not surprising that al-Mabarrat decided to pursue such a themed development.

In discussing his design for al-Saha, Makke (who heads al-Sanabel for Urban Studies and Architectural Design, a branch of al-Mabarrat), explained that nostalgia is one of the strongest human sentiments — and one common among Lebanese people, regardless of religion or occupation.[12] Al-Saha's largely urban clientele long for an experience that will take them beyond their everyday lives, and the displays of waning pasts are meant to take them to such a different time and place. The old village setting, with its *saha* (open space), *ain* (well), food services, and waiters in themed attire, provides an escape that aspires to be both entertaining and pleasant to the eye **(FIGS.2,3)**. But its design includes both the innovation and invention of tradition. Indeed, its creation, re-creation and exhibition of traditional cultural motifs follows a similar strategy of place-selling as that employed in the Old Souk of Zouk Mikhael, the reconstruction of Beirut's Central District, and other recent projects in Lebanon. Yet,

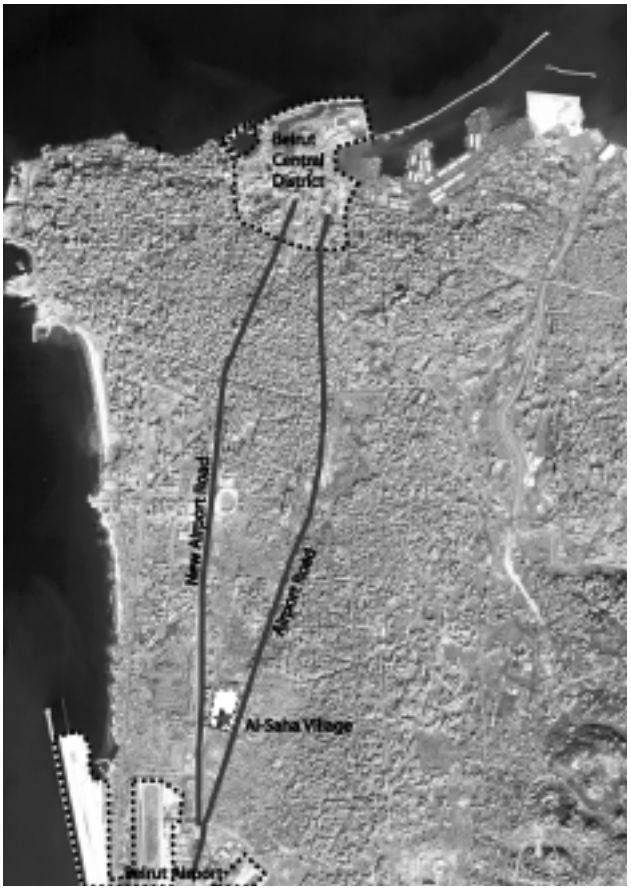


**FIGURE 1.** *The location of al-Saha Village in Beirut.*

unlike typical commercial projects, the motives behind al-Saha go beyond mere profit-making: it is specifically intended to help finance al-Mabarrat's growing social and charitable activities, among which are five orphanages and sixteen academic and vocational schools, including a school for the deaf and the blind. Its goal is thus multidimensional: economic, social, environmental, cultural, and tourism related.[13]

According to Makke, al-Mabarrat started to seriously consider the construction of revenue-generating projects in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States. After that time, Islamic charitable organizations came under increased scrutiny, and wary of being accused of "terror financing," some donors stopped supporting the association.[14] As an alternative, al-Mabarrat decided to establish a tourist-related enterprise to augment its other profitable projects, which include bookstores and several large gasoline stations, named al-Aytam (The Orphans).

However, Al-Mabarrat's interest in developing a tourist-related enterprise can also be understood in relation to larger trends in tourism in the Middle East. The 9/11 attacks not only affected funding of Islamic institutions but also the entire tourism industry in the Arab World. Since the "War

**FIGURE 2. (ABOVE)** *General internal view of the village with its pointed stone arches, wooden balconies, and traditionally dressed waiters.*

**FIGURE 3. (RIGHT)** *General view of the village square (*al-saha*), from which the project took its name.*

on Terror" began, the biggest loser in terms of income has been Tunisia, a country that relies mainly on European and North American leisure-oriented tourism. On the other hand, Lebanon has been the biggest gainer.[15] Of the more than one million tourists who visited the country in 2002, 59 percent were citizens of Arab countries, 38 percent were of Lebanese origin, and less than 3 percent were of non-Arab origin (as opposed to 15 percent in 2001).[16]

Across the Arab world such changes have alerted both the public sector and private developers to the need to invest in new tourism infrastructure and develop new long-term, multiconcept strategies. This is especially true in light of

reports by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) indicating that longer cultural-tourism visits in the region are losing out to short-stay leisure and shopping trips. In anticipation of further negative impacts on the sector, and in response to anti-Arab and anti-Muslim publicity, the idea of intra-Arab and intra-Muslim tourism has been seen as one possible response.[17] Al-Saha belongs to this sort of enterprise. For example, it respects the fundamentals of the Islamic religion, it is alcohol free, and it is run by a self-proclaimed Muslim organization. At the same time, it embodies a contemporary "commodity mind-set" in that it transcends its functional aspect to compete on the basis of experience.[18]

## A JOURNEY IN HYPER-REALITY

Al-Saha Village is intended to be a journey to the past, to the traditional village in which "our grandparents lived 100 years ago."[19] The inspiration for Makke's design, however, was the Lebanese village portrayed by the Lebanese writer Anis Freiha in a 1957 book *al-qaria al-lubnaniah: hadharah fi tariq al-zawal [The Lebanese Village: A Civilization on the Road to Extinction]*.[20] Freiha's interest in Lebanese village folklore stemmed from a fear that the Lebanese village — with its customs, traditions and lifestyles — was being obliterated by Western culture. His study focused on the villages of the Matn area (and mainly on his hometown of Ras al-Matn) because he saw a resemblance in their geography, people, and social and economic life to the villages of the Shuf and other spots in North Lebanon. Even in this limited geographical zone, Freiha was also mainly interested in tracing folkloric similarities and commonalities, and differences were largely dropped from his account.[21] Muslim folkloric traditions were also dropped, because he believed that those who had not lived in what was previously called Old Lebanon — the subject of his study — were city dwellers, not village dwellers, and their habits and folklore were "completely" different from those of the Christians and Druz.[22]

Freiha's book, therefore, looked at folklore from one perspective only. He drew a dichotomy between city dwellers and village dwellers, between Old Lebanon and the new lands acquired by the country in modern times; but most importantly, he drew a line between the traditional and the new. For him, folklife was a source of spiritual richness, and he wanted to record it before it was forgotten. It was "beautiful, simple and close to the heart, just like poetry and music."[23]

Freiha opened his book with a nostalgic, sentimental reprise of memories of the village of his birth and childhood. He recalled *al-ain* (the well) and the road to it, the apple tree, the roof terrace, the attic, and other features and places. He then argued, rather poignantly, that this culture was on its way to extinction. Western influences had invaded most Lebanese villages, even remote ones, and transformed them dramatically. Children no longer knew the place where their fathers lived. The houses had changed; so had the furniture, the local shop, the wedding, the funeral, the bread, the water source, and so forth. Villages now had modern bakeries that provided fresh bread daily. And the water fountain — where people had once met to chat, complain and quarrel — now lay deserted because water was being supplied directly to houses from a distant source.

It can be inferred from this account that Freiha's nostalgia was not only for the artifact of the village, but for its social life. On the one hand, he valued the village as a container of memories — both those of his childhood and those of his father and grandfather. On the other hand, he also saw it as representing a specific form of social interaction. Thus, all modern transformations, even beneficial ones like piped water, were a threat. With the modernization of water supply, *al-ain* lost its function as a public space, and as a result villagers no longer met to chat or fight or quarrel. In fact, what Freiha, and many of his generation, lamented most was the loss of shared feelings of pleasure and pain.

These views recall Ferdinand Toennïes's concept of *Gemeinschaft*, "[t]he very existence [of which] rests in the consciousness of belonging together and the affirmation of the condition of mutual dependence which is posed by that affirmation."[24] For Toennïes, *Gemeinschaft* is fulfilled in intimate communities where people live together, work together, and act together. He contrasted it to a *Gesellschaft* society, which "signifies the normal and the regular process of decline of all forms of *Gemeinschaft*," and the first appearance of which takes place in cities.[25] Toennïes's concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* have been largely misunderstood, however (the first being associated with virtue, and the second with vice), and Freiha's work seems to partake of this misunderstanding. His book evokes a simplistic dichotomy between the village and the city, leaving the general impression that the former was good and caring, while the latter was ugly and unpleasant.

Ironically (and contradictory as it may seem), Freiha also presented the old Lebanese village as a place of escape and spectacle for the superior urban dweller. The concluding chapter of his book lists the vices of the Lebanese villager, the first of which was a collective mind that lacked creativity and dynamism and that idolized customs and traditions. Freiha attributed this lack of individual thought or action to a lack of courage and an unwillingness and inability to embrace progress. Indeed, he related all transformations of the physical village and the lifestyle of its residents to external forces, and not to any internal desire for change or renewal.[26] He ascribed the villagers' "frozen" or "static mentality" to their lack of taste and ability to enjoy beauty and pleasure (as city dwellers do), and to their simplicity and easiness to be pleased and satisfied. His ideal old village, then — should it have remained untouched by modern construction (and, as he put it, by the destructive influence of educational institutions) — would have remained faithful to its old customs and

legends, which the conservative villagers would have continued to embrace generation after generation.[27]

It is unfair, however, to rest all blame for the homogenizing and romanticizing of views about rural life on modern sociology. The traumatic social and spatial transformation brought by modernity has given rise to contradictory reactions, and in Lebanon, as elsewhere, there is widespread acceptance of the idea of "loss": loss of traditional space, architectural identity, heritage, public life, community spirit, and so forth. This perceived end of tradition has generated dangerous remorseful sentiments and a desire to return to the past. In general terms, Richard Sennett has argued the construction of the past through images of "the rise and fall" of a treasured lifestyle gives rise to a perilous "sense of regret." In *The Fall of Public Man*, he wrote: "While it produces empathy for the past, and so a certain insight, regret induces resignation about the present, and a certain acceptance of its evils."[28]

However, the notion of an idealized lost past, as Sennett and other scholars have argued, is ultimately an illusion — as is the idea of a homogenous old way of life. In *The Uses of Disorder*, Sennett disputed the dichotomy between "village-community" and "city-group." With reference to empirical social evidence, he contended that the image of community homogeneity and purity is frequently false, and indeed, in opposition with real experience. He further argued that "stereotyped thinking about 'working class' or 'ethnic' culture . . . inhibits us from seeing the kind of variety cities [and villages] possessed in the past."[29] Similarly, the ideal rural community and traditional lifestyle that dominates a lot of the cultural production in Lebanon is a myth. In Pierre Nora's terms, Freiha's village and folklore are "*lieux de mémoire*," sites of collective cultural memory and identification.[30] They are "beautiful, simple and close to the heart," but they do not necessarily reflect people's actual former everyday practices and preoccupations.

In these terms, al-Saha Village can be considered an embodiment of the national imaginary and the collective memory. It is an example of what Umberto Eco has called the "hyper-real," and what Guy Debord has described as a "spectacle." Borrowing Jean Baudrillard's explanation of these concepts, al-Saha can be conceived as a simulacrum without an original, a copy of a real without reality. It is a model built upon the model of the Lebanese village — as created by Anis Freiha out of memories and collective imagery.

In actual practice, Makke set out to design a traditional Lebanese village, inspired by Freiha's description of the traditional Lebanese village. It would consist of a small tightly knit group of buildings around a central open square (*al-Saha* in Arabic). Named for this space, the project also included many characteristic features of the villages of Mount Lebanon described by Freiha: *al-ain* (the well), *al-qalaa* (the fort), *al-qabu* (the cellar), in addition to an artificial spring (FIG.4). Yet, at the same time, to make it more suited

FIGURE 4. *The water well* (al-ain).

to the character of the institution it represented, the village also became a museum for Arab and Islamic heritage. Thus, quite unlike Freiha's model, its design incorporated Islamic architectonic elements and motifs, like domes and arabesques (FIGS.5,6).

In producing this fantasy, Makke also mixed modern and traditional construction techniques (FIG.7). He used natural stone, glass, concrete, and recycled building materials such as stone, wood, tiles and discarded architectural artifacts salvaged from buildings bound for demolition. To make his creation look real, he also adopted a decorative aesthetic based on the reuse of old objects of everyday use. Thus, *al-nawraj* (rectangular pieces of wood once used to separate two different kinds of grain) were reused as tables and chandeliers (FIG.8). Large wheels from old carriages were reused in making two-seat benches (FIG.9). Old rifles and swords were used to decorate the walls (one of which Makke attributes to the Arabs of the seventeenth century), and other artifacts were inserted in corners and niches (FIG.10).[31] Finally, still tableaus and live performances (like coffee- and bread-making) have been used to make the village more entertaining and culturally enlightening (FIG.11).

Such were also the techniques of the World Fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The colonial

**FIGURE 5. (RIGHT)** *General internal view of the village.*
**FIGURE 6. (BELOW)** *An eclectic spatial composition showing a dome, the typical triple arch feature of traditional Lebanese buildings, and decorative frescos. In the foreground is a discarded water wheel decorating an artificial water stream.*

sections of these exhibitions combined various elements and motifs from different historic periods and buildings. One famous example was the Egyptian pavilion built by the French for the Paris World Exhibition of 1889, which included the Rue du Caire, a neighborhood of twenty-five houses carefully designed to imitate a chaotic, winding street in old Cairo. Dirty paint, musicians, dancers, artisans and donkey drivers were all deployed to give the street a spectacular, realistic appearance, and recycled architectural fragments, such as portals and *musharabiyyas* from demolished buildings, were integrated into the design. The outcome was an eclectic architecture, in which proportions and building heights were frequently adapted to the exhibition needs. Yet, its architects claimed it was more authentic than the real Cairo, because it was "untouched" by new construction.[32] Thus, they "purified" their creation in order to make it match their image of the Orient as an exotic place.[33]

Like the colonized sections of the world expositions, al-Saha discards unwanted reality, and in the name of nostalgia it purifies the image of the village from recent intrusions. But it does so by disguising its underlying modern construction and recycling of old items, making it impossible to tell the "real fake" from the "fake fake," or the recycled item from the new one that has been given an aged-look.[34] Its strategy, then, is to take artifacts from the past and put them to use in the service of a new clientele. Following the arguments of Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard, it moves artifacts from one system of practice to another, and pulls them away from yesterday's everyday practice to today. "Even dis-

FIGURE 7. *Mixing modern and traditional construction materials and techniques.*

tributed outside the patrimonial temples of memory and placed at the inhabitants' disposal, restored objects turn into museum pieces," they wrote. They become "theatrical, pedagogical, and/or scientific" objects and a subject of "curiosity, information, or analysis."[35]

Detached from time, space, and all aspects of real life, a spectacle like al-Saha Village offers, in Debord's terms, a "fragmented view of reality" that fails to recover the unity of the real. Instead, its "fragmented views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a separate pseudoworld that can only be looked at," deceiving everybody, even the deceivers.[36]

## SOCIO-CULTURAL INVOCATIONS OF THE SPECTACLE

Infatuation with the theme of the traditional Lebanese village might be interpreted as part of a larger quest for meaning and security in an epoch that seems increasingly homogenized. Indeed, the architecture of al-Saha induces numerous questions related to cultural identity — a topic intensively debated by Lebanese professionals and academics. According to Jad Tabet, the emerging building style in Beirut expresses "conflicting cultural values"; the architectural scene is overwhelmed with commercial clichés, concealing

FIGURE 8. *A discarded carriage wheel reused as chandelier.*

FIGURE 9. *Two-seat bench made out of discarded carriage wheels.*

**FIGURE 10.** *A niche displaying old daggers.*

**FIGURE 11.** *The spectacle of coffee: Arabic coffee, traditional Arabic costume, old brass kettles, and* mihbaj *(a traditional Bedouin implement used both as a coffee grinder and a musical instrument).*

modernity with traditional masks. In the name of reclaiming cultural identity, much contemporary architecture is a combination of "gingerbread historical detail pasted onto ill-conceived concrete structural boxes."[37]

Of such forms of decorative pastiche, Samir Khalaf has written:

> *Unfortunately, many of the public manifestations of nostalgia so rampant today in Lebanon have scant, if any, concern with what Christopher Lasch has called a "conversational relationship with the past." Instead, they assume either the construction and embellishment of grandiose and monumental national symbols, or the search for roots, the longing to preserve or invent often contrived and apocryphal forms of local and communal identities. More disheartening, this valorization of or escape into the past, particularly at the popular cultural level, has taken on some of the garish symptoms of commodification of heritage into kitsch and the vulgarization of traditional folklore and indigenous artifacts.*[38]

Whether al-Saha ultimately fits into this genre of commodified heritage is debatable. Makke's nostalgic design expresses conflicting desires — both for a "conversational relationship with the past" and present commercial success. Meanwhile, al-Mabarrat's endorsement of the traditional Lebanese village theme stems less from a nostalgic impulse or a rejection of modernity than an attempt to celebrate the local over the global and counteract the procedures of cultural homogenization.

Above all, al-Saha aspires to give the act of leisure and entertainment a more local and regional cultural context. It aims to reorient the visitor away from destinations loaded with Western culture, and toward Islamic historical and cultural sites. Thus, it endorses the objectives of Islamic tourism — which al-Hammarneh and Steiner have summarized in three points: "first, the revival of Islamic cultures and the spread of Islamic values; second, economic benefit for Islamic societies; and, third, the strengthening of Islamic self-confidence, identity, and beliefs in the face of negative stereotyping in comparison to other cultures and lifestyles."[39]

These objectives are controversial to a certain extent. Referring to articles in the bilingual Arabic/English magazine *Islamic Tourism*, al-Hammarneh and Steiner highlighted some radical phrases used in describing the objectives of this movement, including the protection of "spiritual beliefs of Muslims and Arab" from "attacks of other cultures." At the same time, they drew attention to the progressive goal of Islamic tourism. As disclosed in the magazine, this is "not to replace existing tourist activity . . . but [to open up] new and existing opportunities for growth, as well as [to market] a new type of commodity for which [Islamic countries] are convinced there is an urgent need."[40]

No doubt, the investment of a religious charity in the nostalgia industry is saturated with an ideology of piety and

charged with political content. Leaving the rhetoric of heritage and identity politics aside for a moment, al-Saha is clearly an ideological project. Its tourism profits are linked to specific political and cultural ends. Al-Mabarrat's mission is founded on the fundamental belief in the duty of Muslims to pursue justice. Above all, Sayyed Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah has said it is his aim to establish a "humane state" for everyone, one in which justice prevails and the social and economic oppression of the downtrodden is to be alleviated.[41] Quite explicitly, Fadlallah has asserted that he is not presenting the slogan of "humane state" as an alternative for a Shiite Islamic state in Lebanon. Nonetheless, some critics doubt his motives.[42] Although al-Mabarrat is completely autonomous, many associate it with Hizbullah, and with the Islamic Republic of Iran. A quick exposé of the political circumstances surrounding the position of Lebanese Shiites, and Fadlallah's own religious/political thought, is needed to understand these complexities.

Succinctly, following Lebanon's independence in 1943 the country's Maronite Christian-dominated government aggravated the existing socioeconomic and political deprivation of its Shiite Muslim population. In the late 1960s, however, Arab nationalist and socialist and communist organizations began to mobilize Lebanese Shiites politically. Worried about this increased secularization, Fadlallah — a Lebanese Shiite cleric born and brought up in Najaf in Iraq — moved permanently to Lebanon in 1966 (at the age of thirty-one). There he formed a political movement coextensive with the "Movement of the Deprived" of Musa al-Sadr, to present Lebanese Shiites with a viable political alternative.[43] The young, according to Fadlallah, "would go elsewhere unless given a Shiite Islamic response to their yearnings for political, social, and economic justice."[44]

Using the mosque as his center, Fadlallah advocated a "factually normative" Islamic tradition of conduct.[45] And he set out to teach a new generation of Shiites a socially conscious reading of Islam, as well as Islamic principles, morals and jurisprudence. It is thought that these theoretical formations influenced the political thought of the more radical Lebanese Islamist party, Hizbullah, but the actual connection between Fadlallah and Hizbullah remains vague. While some political observers, like Martin Kramer, believe that Fadlallah is Hizbullah's "oracle," both Fadlallah and Hizbullah assert that this information is erroneous. The spiritual leader of Hizbullah is the Iranian, Ali Khamin'i, the Wali al-Faqih (leader jurisprudent) — and not Fadlallah. Nonetheless, Fadlallah's ideological thought, as Cheikh Naim Qassim, Hizbullah's deputy secretary general, has recounted, guided Hizbullah through a "mature vision of Islam" during the early years of the party's creation.[46]

As Qassim has also pointed out, "Fadlallah refused any participation in organized factional activity, opting to remain a cleric, overseeing all fields from his vantage point and supporting those Party directives that he deems harmonious with his views."[47] In fact, as a preeminent religious cleric (*mujtahid*), Fadlallah has "a much higher social and political value than any association he might have had with a particular political party. If anything, his organizational affiliation with [Hizbullah] would have undermined his independence and alienated many of his followers who did not identify with the party."[48]

No doubt, Fadlallah's progressive thought, eloquent speech, and acceptance of cultural and religious plurality afforded him a position of great respect, not only among poor Shiites but also among many Lebanese intellectuals from all confessions. Unsurprisingly, however, Fadlallah's denunciation of U.S. political interference in the Arab region, support for Hizbullah resistance to the occupation of south Lebanon, solidarity with the Palestinians, and rejection of the legitimacy of Israel make him a highly controversial figure in the ideological War on Terror. Furthermore, although Fadlallah and Hizbullah are independent in the institutional and organizational sense, they both identify with a "single social environment and culture," or *al-hala al Islamiyya al-Shi'iyya* (the Islamic Shiite situation).[49] Both have numerous educational, social and religious institutions, and both perceive justice as one of the fundamentals of the Islamic religion. However, in Lebanon, Hizbullah's social services overshadow Fadlallah's in number — even if all help to fill the gap caused by the failure of the public sector.

This is an important issue that should not be overlooked. Lebanon's long history of unbalanced development, inadequate public services, and political and social marginalization has accentuated its division among religious/political factions. By way of serving their constituencies, these factions have engaged in social, human and developmental work, in many cases assuming the role of the state. A brief glance at the socio-spatial geographies of Beirut is enough to explain the severity of the country's political, social, and spatial fragmentation. Postwar reconstruction has also favored grand projects (Beirut Central District, the expansion of the airport, the sports city), while inadequately responding to pressing social problems. Thus, the reconstructed historic city center (Solidere) is today Beirut's spectacle and showcase, but it is also an elite district, isolated from the rest of the city by bridges and highways. Meanwhile, the rest of the city, mainly its southern suburb (al-Dahyieh), the turf of Muslim Shiites, has little that is similarly exotic or dazzling to exhibit. Reconstruction there has corresponded to the realities of everyday life. Ironically, al-Saha Village, fake and inauthentic as it is, has become Dahyieh's spectacle and showpiece.

Considering these conditions, it becomes apparent how Al-Mabarrat's choice of the Lebanese village as a theme can reflect a stance against globalization, but not modernism. To Sayyed Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, heritage — whether language, religious studies, philosophy, politics, literature or art — lends itself to multiple readings.[50] These readings are framed by what he distinguishes as two extremist attitudes. On the one extreme, strict modernists consider the traditional

to be the mindset of the past, an impediment to progress. They argue against customs and traditions because they conflict with the scientific knowledge and achievements of the modern era. Advocates of this view see in modernity the sole opportunity for progress and for coping with the predicaments of our epoch. On the other extreme, strict conservationists look at the present through the eye of the past. Within the Muslim world, they call for a severe adherence to the views of ancient scholars, intellectuals and philosophers who were supposedly closer to intellectual and spiritual sources of reality (i.e., authentic Islam). Such preservationists reject modernity, equating it with a loss of spirituality, and associating it with a secular and profane way of thinking that denies any religious reality, particularly that of Islam.

Fadlallah himself takes a middle stance regarding the question of heritage. To him, not all that is old is sacred, or even deserving admiration. As he has put it, there are only a few basic Islamic realities that are unquestionably divine; other than that, all Islamic thought, including Islamic heritage, is a byproduct of the human mind, and only represents reality when it meets our standards. Fadlallah has called for the critical study of intellectual ancestral experiences, beliefs and principles to assess them against contemporary intellectual arguments. Based on this inquiry, he has contended that a new methodology can be derived that has traditions for its intellectual basis, and modernity for its methods and aspirations.

This is what al-Saha seeks to do. It takes heritage and folklore as its theme, with all the cultural and social values they signify, manipulates them to suit the fundamentals of Islam, and then promotes them for the gaze of visitors. Thus it seeks to employ modern technologies and modern management and marketing tactics without digressing from the ethics of Islam. The pleasures it admits are of the *halal* (lawful) type — i.e., ones accepted by God. Whether singing, chanting, *dabkeh* (Lebanese folk dance) are *halal* or *haram* (lawful or unlawful), Fadlallah has explained, depends on their content and the rituals or practices that accompany them. Islam desires eternal, not temporary, happiness to human beings; Fadlallah has thus prohibited performances (music, singing, etc.) that provoke the instincts or desires. He has further added that Muslims have to act responsively on all occasions and should not deviate from God's path of truth. This is best put in the words of Imam Ali: "*I'mal li duniak kanak ta'ish abadan, wa i'mal li akhiratika kanak tamout ghadan* [Work for your life as if you will live forever, and work for your end as if you will die tomorrow]."[51]

All this is by way of arguing that, like Debord's spectacle, al-Saha "presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a means of unification."[52] It is a Lebanese village, a museum of Islamic art, a site for Islamic tourism, and a symbol of unity in a country that has lost its unity. Yet, as Debord has also warned, the very fact that the part of the society it represents is "separate" causes "the unification it achieves [to be] nothing but an official language of universal separation."[53] Thus, to some, the most fascinating aspect of al-Saha is its design concept and the fact that a religious charity lies behind it. However, to others, this might be what is most repelling about it. In particular, those who fear and reject the Islamization of Lebanon would certainly like to trivialize and vulgarize it and attribute it to a delusive model and a false national consciousness.

In the highly fragmented Lebanese society, social and cultural biases are to a high degree shaped by conflicting cultural values and ethnic prejudices. Goods are consumed as status objects that express the personality of the buyer. Through lifestyle choices and tastes — like association with certain places, brand names, and activities — people distinguish themselves and assert their belonging to certain groups or social classes. Often it is the religious/sectarian dimension of identity that generates antipathy and irreconcilable conflicts. The "tyranny of intimacy" — an expression coined by Richard Sennett — is thus not generated by force but rather by "the arousing of a belief in one standard of truth to measure the complexities of social reality."[54] Indeed, many Lebanese adopt a binary worldview made of Muslims versus non-Muslims, Christians versus non-Christians, Shiite versus non-Shiite, civilized versus vulgar, us versus them. Even the "ethics of compassion" is frequently divided; as Robert Mugerauer has observed in his analysis of traditional and nontraditional people and environments, it is more plausible to help *our* orphans and widows and those of *our* relatives, neighbors, comrades, fellow citizens and co-believers, than it is to help those of *others*.[55]

Despite all the controversial reactions it might arouse, al-Saha has proved to be successful. It primarily aims to win conservative Muslim visitors — a noteworthy and growing population, whether in Lebanon or elsewhere in the Muslim-Arab world, who have to date been largely alienated from the tourism industry. Nonetheless, it is also a place to which other locals and tourists come. And while the majority of the village's patrons are Shiites — presumably homogenous on ideological grounds — the apparent mix and diversity of visitors argues that social identity among Shiites is full of differences and contradictions. In other words, al-Saha's clientele provides good evidence that it is simplistic and naive to assume that lifestyle choices and tastes are singular. People have multiple identities, and possibly multiple lifestyles; where one goes with family is not necessarily where one goes with friends. Indeed, al-Saha attracts a wide variety of social and age groups — the conservative and nonconservative, the traditional and the fashionable, the Lebanese Arab as well as the foreign tourist.

Unlike Beirut City Center, which is being reconstructed as an inclusively elitist space, al-Saha also caters to popular taste and modest budgets. It is affordable, family oriented, and strategically located within an area that lacks other venues for leisure and entertainment. Moreover, as a pleasant private setting, it acts as a public gathering place in a city

where public open space is scarce. No doubt, al-Saha's *hallal* food and pleasures give its conservative clientele a sense of security, a guarantee that they will rub shoulders with people of similar social status, lifestyle and beliefs. But its ambience also attracts impartial customers, and it offers the pleasure of inquisitiveness to a curious visitor who, like Maxine Feifer's "post-tourist," knows that there is no such thing as "authentic" stage-set experience, but who may still be attracted to the inauthenticity of the spectacle and the way it is commodified.[56]

The project is also financially successful. According to its architect, it not only paid back the initial investments shortly after it was inaugurated, but it also generated additional funds to complete the remaining phases of construction. The restaurant alone served around one million clients in its first year, and those numbers are expected to increase once the hotel, now in the final stages of completion, becomes functional. The further success of al-Saha Village is evident in the number of other people who have benefited because of its construction. Profits from al-Saha today support more than 17,000 needy students, including 3,500 orphans and 350 physically disabled children sheltered by the al-Mabarrat association.[57]

Finally, the project has been recognized for its design, having recently been awarded the Arab Towns Organization prize. The prize aims "to promote innovation and modernization in architecture based on the Arab Islamic architectural style, and to preserve the identity and heritage of the Arab city, as well as to restore and maintain historic buildings and sites."[58] The arbitrating committee awarded al-Saha Village the prize for being "a viable project in harmony with social, economic and environmental circumstances."[59]

In its city context, the simulated village is both real and unreal. Its hybrid architecture, with its arched openings and heavy stone facades, stands out within a muddled and architecturally featureless urban surrounding **(FIGS.12,13)**.

Despite its eclectic discordant external composition, al-Saha is a catalytic project that could potentially trigger the social, economic and cultural development of an area that needs to be planned and restructured **(FIGS.14,15)**.

## WORLDS OF CONTRADICTION

Al-Saha Village is a journey of the imagination and an architectural work of pastiche and allegory. Like the colonial-era World Fairs, its simulated experience conveys a sense of theatricality and a real without reality. Like Freiha's ideal village, it is a fragment of history frozen in time, and a spectacle to an urbanite society. As Mike Robinson has described the phenomenon, al-Saha is also a "spatial fetish" that does not acknowledge "issues of belonging, 'placeness', and 'territoriality'."[60]

Instead, using the concept of the spectacle, it alters its spectators' notions of time and space. It brings the village into the city to offer its viewer snapshots of reality that pretend to regroup themselves into a new unity. It espouses Lebanese, Arabic, Islamic and contemporary architectonic forms and elements. But the result is a hyper-real, hyper-traditional, hybrid mixture that desires authenticity, and achieves it only "through the manipulation of images and experiences" à la Disneyland or a Wizard of Oz type experience.[61]

Yet, al-Saha is also imbued with cultural connotations that reflect the values of its manufacturers and consumers. Its aesthetic values respond to market demands, and its ethical stance adheres to the fundamentals of Islam. It Disneyfies cultural heritage by way of appealing to a consumer society. At the same time it deploys the concept of the spectacle for the benefit of less privileged sectors of society. In this regard, its theme and techniques have proved profitable and successful. The common concern for historical authenticity is clearly not an issue here. Al-Saha is a politi-

**FIGURE 12. (LEFT)** *The immediate context of the village: a traffic node surrounded by midrise buildings of no architectural or historical significance.*
**FIGURE 13. (RIGHT)** *Street view of the fortress-like motel.*

**FIGURE 14. (ABOVE)** *General street view of the village as it looked in December 2006.*

**FIGURE 15. (RIGHT)** *Detailed view of al-Saha still under construction. Taken from the southwest corner of the site.*

cally charged project, and to frame it "in terms of authenticity — of the choice of traditional values, authentic forms, undiluted identities — is to miss the point."[62]

The standard here is not the fake versus the real but the relative virtues of the imitation. There are good fakes and bad fakes, with the good ones presumably being an improvement on reality.[63] Al-Saha can claim this ability. It recycles memories, phantasms and building materials from the past, and puts them to use for another time and clientele. In doing so, the authenticity of the process of cultural remaking and reinvention no longer privileges the recycled object, but its present beneficiaries.

Paradoxically, while the village theme signifies unity, a decorative architectural production like al-Saha does not necessarily arouse any complete sense of collective memory or local identity. As Nezar AlSayyad has pointed out, tradition here has become "the rhetoric for both inclusion and exclusion."[64] Staged and promoted by an Islamic organization, al-Saha affirms the fragmentation of Lebanese society into political and social communities distinguished by different tastes, appearances and lifestyles. Despite its resemblance to many other contemporary cultural productions in Lebanon, al-Saha is politicized both by those who built it and by their reasons for doing so. Unsurprisingly, the investment by a religious organization in the heritage industry has stirred a sense of the religious dimension of identity, rather than any broader nationalist sentiment. This leads, as AlSayyad has speculated, "to the invocations of superiority and isolationist tendencies."[65]

Al-Saha attempts to anchor itself to the Lebanese village and connect to the sense among Muslims and Arabs of a golden past. Yet, despite being a politically and ideologically motivated heritage project produced by an Islamic group that rejects the cultural globalization and homogenizing tendencies of Western popular culture, it does not contest the society of the spectacle. To the contrary, it is itself consumed by it. It embraces market aesthetics and image-making strategies, and packages itself for visual consumption. Likewise, al-Mabarrat's new al-Saha restaurants in Sudan and Qatar are also designed — like the Beirut original — as romantic escapist wonderlands "mainly devoted to consumption."[66]

It might be helpful, by way of reflecting on all this, to recall the story, recounted by Nezar AlSayyad in the introductory chapter to his edited volume *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage*, of a Mexican merchant's success at producing accurate simulacra of Cartier products. What was striking about this story was not only its demonstration of "the primacy of the copy over the original," but also its embodiment of Robin Hoodian justice, since the merchant's copies were priced at "the true cost of producing [the originals] in Third World environments in the first place."[67] Fakery here seems justified as long as it involves stealing from the exploitive rich to give to the deserving poor.

The example of al-Saha transcends this distributive justice paradigm to adhere to the ideologies of the Islamic religion. Its concept of social justice is more in line with the definition provided by Iris Young. It is about "the elimination of institu-

tionalized domination and oppression" through educating and empowering unprivileged groups and individuals that have been hitherto largely excluded from society.[68] Yet, like the Cartier example, critical analysis of al-Saha leads "far away from cultural effects and . . . toward political-economic causes."[69] In this sense, al-Saha is another example in support of Dell Upton's views on the rhetoric of heritage, identity and authenticity. Here again, such rhetoric has been revived in a period of major political and economic upheaval, by "way of claiming or challenging power where — traditional political — economic authorities and ideologies close off more direct routes."[70]

Sept. 11, 2001, was surely a turning point in history. While the War on Terror that followed has jeopardized funding of Islamic organizations, regardless of their activities, the manufactured traditional architecture of the many al-Sahas challenges this injustice by attracting enough capital to sustain nonprofitable charitable ends. This is not, however, to suggest that thinking about revenue-generating activities did not exist before Sept. 11 — only that the risk of reliance primarily on alms donations has become clearer since.

That said, the crucial question remains whether the Islamic tourism and heritage industry will generate just another type of exotically commodified good targeting new markets and new consumers. It is only legitimate to fret the society of the spectacle if the long-term effect is to further colonize culture, architecture, events, and everyday life — to produce "Muslimlands" versus "Disneylands" in the name of rectifying the social ills and injustices generated by Western capitalism and materialism. What is at stake here is not "authenticity" but architectural creativity and innovation.

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18. For more on this topic, see B.J. Pine II and J.H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1990).
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68. I.M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.15.
69. Upton, "'Authentic' Anxieties," p.303.
70. Ibid.

All photos are by the author. All Arabic quotations are translated by the author except as indicated.

# Vocational Migrants and a Tradition of Longing

TREVOR H.J. MARCHAND

**This article challenges the assumption that "tradition" is a quality pertaining chiefly to objects, stylistic conventions, or the use of materials. Equally, it refutes the notion that tradition is merely the perpetuation of ritualized practices or skilled techniques. By considering the complex relation between vocational migration, heritage, and identity among contemporary fine woodworkers at London's Building Crafts College, it argues that tradition is a state of mind — a recurring nostalgia for an idealized past, or the desire for a utopian future. More specifically, the article investigates a "tradition of longing" for engagement in nonalienating modes of production, aesthetic work, and an authentic way of living.**

> *People interested in the details of the arts of life feel a desire to revert to methods of handicraft for production in general.*
>
> — William Morris, 1888

In September 2005 I commenced a three-year anthropological study of building craft and the transmission of skill-based knowledge among fine woodworkers at London's Building Crafts College. A key aim of the research is to produce a detailed ethnographic study of Britain's contemporary craft context that will also allow a cross-cultural comparative analysis with my previous work with masons in Arabia and West Africa.[1] The current project, supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), includes two years of fieldwork, during which I am attending the college as a full-time student in order to conduct a direct study of craft training and establish lasting professional relations with the next generation of fine woodworkers for long-term research.[2]

Based on interviews and data compiled during the first year, this article challenges the popular assumption that "tradition" is a quality pertaining chiefly to objects, stylistic conventions, or the use of materials.[3] Equally, it refutes the notion that tradition is merely the perpetuation of ritualized practices or skilled techniques. By considering the complex relation between vocational migration, heritage, and identity construction among

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trainees at the college, I will argue that tradition is a state of mind — a recurring nostalgia for an idealized past, or the desire for a utopian future. More specifically, the article investigates a "tradition of longing" for engagement in non-alienating modes of production, aesthetic work, and an authentic way of living.

The article begins with a brief historical account of London's Worshipful Company of Carpenters, including their growing interest in technical education and their role in founding the Building Crafts College in the nineteenth century. The following section explores a certain spirit of craftwork as expressed by one of Britain's recognized furniture makers. His practices and aspirations embody ideals of both the nation's rural past and a possible postindustrial future, and they communicate a strong commitment to locality, balanced with a responsible acceptance of duty to the global environment.

This sets the stage for a presentation of short case studies of these individual college trainees, whom I have categorized as "vocational migrants." These mature, generally middle-class men and women have quit former careers to seek meaningful and satisfying work and engage in a more aesthetic way of living. Each harbors individual goals, some of which differ, or are in conflict with, those of fellow colleagues. However, a number of common themes unite this group in their struggle against the hegemony of late-capitalist socioeconomic principles in Britain. These include the desire to forge a pleasing integration of work with life; to be part of an ancient tradition that retains a degree of contemporary relevance; to work creatively with their hands; and to participate in a practice that links sources of raw materials, processes of making, and the consumer in a direct and sustainable manner. This arguably utopian vision is checkered by a host of uncertainties and real risk, but all contend that the obstacles are potentially surmountable.

It is important to note that not all career-changers at the college share the aspirations of those represented here. Some have more straightforward commercial ambitions, or simply enjoy working with their hands without the drive to nurture the "craft" aspect of woodwork. However, in order not to diverge from the specific focus of the present article, I have chosen to address such alternative work-life strategies elsewhere. Likewise, the half of the trainee population who are school-leavers (i.e., who are coming to carpentry as their first vocation) will be considered in subsequent writings on building-craft knowledge and apprenticeship in Britain.

Following the section of personal studies, the article next explores an English tradition of "longing," and it contextualizes the aspirations of the vocational migrants and other contemporary furniture makers within its history. With Thomas More's *Utopia*, a genre of utopian writing was established, anchored in humanism and set in locations spatially or temporally displaced from the author's own. The culmination of this strain of socialist utopia arguably came with William Morris's *News from Nowhere*. Morris, like More, painted a future of fair economic distribution, social equality, and, importantly, pleasurable work. As a prominent figure in the English Arts and Crafts Movement of the late nineteenth century, his vision of craftwork has continued to resonate with generations of artisans. Morris's writings emphasized an intimate relation between small-scale handicraft production, the workshop setting, and the balanced life of the craftsperson. He maintained that meaningful work integrated mind and body through the skilled use of the hands and resulted in happiness and self-actualization.

Ruth Levitas has observed that utopias are not strategic plans for realizing revolutionary ideologies; rather, the key function of utopia is to educate desire and direct human longing toward a future of more pleasing and enriching possibilities. This view has been borne out by the "designer-makers" who first emerged in the 1970s British Craft Revival. Leading members of this community pointed to Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement as the inspirations for their drive to make quality objects and find pleasure in work. Many have also adopted a "green" agenda, integrating environmentally friendly approaches in their sourcing of materials and production methods. I argue that the utopian ideals they share are today "written" in their social and professional comportment and in the objects they create, and that these act as vehicles for the education of desire for successive generations of craftspeople — as well as for their clients, and, hopefully, the wider public of consumers.

In conclusion, the article addresses the disjuncture between the subject and the realization of utopian desire. The objects of longing — namely, satisfying work and self-actualization — are shown to be forever displaced, both temporally and spatially. Aspirations to gather together material resources, the processes of making, and a community of clients into a physical and spiritual sense of "place" are vexed by real global market forces that dislocate, abstract and alienate. Equally, the reproduction of the craft has been deterritorialized, as apprenticeship training, once embedded in the workshop and the community, has been supplanted by formalized training regulated by institutions and detached from the market. In this sense, the fine woodwork craft, with imagined associations to satisfying work and life, has been effectively rendered a "hyper-tradition," fed by nostalgia for an idealized past and a longing for an alternative future.[4]

Vocational migrants to the trade face multiple hurdles to success and slender possibilities for financial gain. Their choice to abandon lucrative careers for craft training must therefore be conceptualized as an attempt to reform their own subjectivity and secure a sense of integrated self within the disorienting flux of late capitalism and globalization.

## THE CARPENTERS COMPANY, TECHNICAL EDUCATION, AND THE BUILDING CRAFTS COLLEGE

London's Worshipful Carpenters Company received its first charter of incorporation from Edward IV in 1477. But a professional association seemingly existed at a much earlier date. Indeed, the first concrete evidence of the "Brotherhood of the Carpenters of London" appears with their "Boke of Ordinances" drawn up in 1333 and submitted to Richard II in 1388. Though the Carpenters Company was not included among the so-called "Great Twelve Liveries of the City of London," they came to possess one of the city's most substantial halls, and the company's freemen played a decisive role in the physical building of the city.[5] Throughout the late medieval and early modern periods, timber was the principal material for domestic construction in London, and the carpenter, not the mason, was the master craftsman in this realm.[6]

The Great Fire brought about enormous change to the construction industry and sparked a long decline in the status and authority of the city's working carpenters. As noted by the economic historians Alford and Barker, without its established property interests, survival of the Carpenters Company would have been unlikely. By necessity, the company underwent the transformation from a craft organization to a modern livery after 1666.[7] Instrumental to this change was the Rebuilding Act of 1667. Guided by the plans of Sir Christopher Wren and greatly profiting bricklayers at the expense of carpenters, it required that all exteriors be constructed in brick or stone with the exception of door cases, window frames, and shop fronts.[8] The enormous demand for skilled and unskilled labor during that period also brought a flood of "forrens" into London, ultimately resulting in declining wages by the early 1670s.[9] Despite the protests of several companies, including the Carpenters, Joiners, Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers, the authorities refused to expel the "forrens," who, importantly, bolstered both the workforce and the dwindling population of the city.[10] By 1739 the Carpenters Company ended its futile attempt to control the trade in London, and turned its focus instead to growing its prosperity as a livery.[11]

One of the original objectives of trade guilds was to provide relief for poorer brethren of the fraternity. Funds for this activity were drawn from "revenues and property bequeathed by charitable individuals."[12] Over the centuries, the Carpenters Company thus came to administer almshouses, make charitable donations, and, notably, support education. The company's interest in education began during the reign of James I with offers of scholarships to needy students attending Oxford and Cambridge. However, its role as a benefactor, especially for technical education, grew considerably throughout the nineteenth century in response to Parliament's call for educational reform as stipulated in the Education Act of 1870.[13] Also known as the "Forster Act," the bill laid the groundwork for Britain's modern systems of formal and technical education.

Until the late seventeenth century Britain was essentially a "one-way technological debtor," importing most of its industrial and manufacturing techniques from the continent. This situation began to reverse in the final decades of the seventeenth century. And by 1750, according to Epstein, premodern England had been transformed from "a technological and under-urbanised periphery to the most technologically innovative and urbanised country in the West."[14] Rapid technological development and urbanization, coupled with increasing industrialization into the nineteenth century, wrought monumental change in the work and lives of craftspeople. Economic quantification and rational standardization were deeply entrenched in all aspects of manufacture, as exemplified by the plethora of late-eighteenth-century publications like *Mr. Hoppus's Measurer*, which systematically categorized, graded and priced all trade materials required by the carpenter-builder.[15]

As the promotion of domestic industry came to dominate the concerns of Europe's mercantile states, the correlation between technological advancement and economics strengthened, and competition between nations to develop new and more efficient productivity intensified.[16] By the late nineteenth century, Britain's position as a leader in industrialization was being threatened by the manufacturing strength of other nations, most notably Germany, which invested more heavily in technical education. Looming worries about the nation's economic and trade prowess impelled the carpenters and other city companies to sponsor the development of available technical education in London.[17] In 1880 the City and Guilds of London Institute was founded as a joint central body for the promotion of technical and scientific learning; and, with generous support of the companies, construction of both the City Technical College and a national institute (to become South Kensington's Imperial College) was started in 1881.[18]

Sharing in the Victorian enthusiasm for exhibitions, the Carpenters, in conjunction with the joiners, hosted the first annual carpentry show at their hall on Throgmorton Avenue in 1884. It was during this period that the company also adopted an active role in promoting building-craft education and establishing recognized qualifications and trade standards. Banister Fletcher, a professor of architecture at Kings College London and a vocal advocate for technical schooling, was the chief initiator behind the first carpentry and joinery examinations administered by the company in 1888.[19] The three-day exam comprised theory and practical components and was mainly targeted at those aspiring to become foremen or clerks of work. In 1890 eleven successful candidates founded the Institute of Certified Carpenters (renamed the Institute of Carpenters in 1976), and the company's examination continued to serve as means of entry to the institute until 1956.[20] As one member who joined in 1898 later reflected, "There was enthusiasm and hope that the Institute would become to the craft a great and inspiring head to revive the nobility of the craft which it was said existed in some past age."[21]

The traditional seven-year apprenticeship, codified in the Statue of 1563, had been severely weakened by the sheer magnitude of social, economic and technological change in Britain during the nineteenth century. Craft learning was most noticeably affected in the nation's urban centers. Not only did industrial progress pose a threat to trades rooted in an early medieval past, but — more alarmingly — it jeopardized the continuing transmission of their skill-based knowledge, which had historically unfolded between generations of masters and apprentices in a workshop setting. This practical knowledge was not written and recorded, and its preservation relied on an ongoing physical engagement of craftspeople in their trades. The fervent attacks launched by the likes of Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris on the laissez-faire economics of the factory, and their rallying of support for a return to agriculture and skilled artisan work, drew considerable public attention to the plight of British craft.[22]

It merits quoting each since the essence of their messages retains contemporary relevance.

> *The haggard despair of Cotton-factory, Coal-mine operatives, Chandos Farm-labourers, in these days, is painful to behold; but not so painful, hideous to the inner sense, as the brutish god-forgetting Profit-and-Loss Philosophy, and Life-theory, which we hear jangled on all hands of us.*
>
> — Carlyle[23]

> *And the great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this — that we manufacture everything there except men; we blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages.*
>
> — Ruskin[24]

> *They are called 'labour-saving machines' — a commonly used phrase which implies what we expect of them: but we do not get what we expect. What they really do is to reduce the skilled labour to the ranks of the unskilled, to increase the number of the 'reserve army of labour' — that is, to increase the precariousness of life among the workers and to intensify labour of those who serve the machines.*
>
> — Morris[25]

In 1893 the Carpenters Company founded the Trades Training School in Great Titchfield Street, West London, to provide instruction in wood, masonry and other trades. The strategic aim was to promote traditional building crafts in the face of industrialization, rising mass production, and the widespread devaluation of handicraft. The college served this purpose throughout the twentieth century. In 1948 it was renamed the Building Crafts Training School, and this name was changed to the Building Crafts College in 1993. In 2001

**FIGURE 1.** *Fine Woodwork Department at the Building Crafts College in Stratford, East London.*

the college moved to a new and larger premise in Stratford, East London, built on land belonging to the Carpenters Company (**FIG. 1**).[26] The Carpenters continue to promote the craft, as demonstrated by the annual Carpenters Craft Competition, held jointly with the Institute of Carpenters, and it would seem that the future of fine woodworking will remain safeguarded in its present vocational form by the college and other similar training institutions throughout Britain.

The institutionalization of craft learning, however, has had the affect of entrenching a divide between trade theory and practice. The transfer of learning from operational workshops to college classrooms has translated into an increasing reliance on standardized examinations and the codification of knowledge in textbooks, starting with such early editions as the Fletcher brother's *Carpentry and Joinery* (1897) and Ellis's seminal *Modern Practical Joinery* (1902).[27] During the last century the Institute of Carpenters inaugurated its own series of examinations in addition to those administered by City and Guilds, including a "Pre-Vocational Certificate" for school-leavers intended to "bridge the gap

between school life and a vocation in wood."[28] In 1987, with the launch of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) framework, control over curriculum and carpentry standards was further distanced from the traditional master's workshop. NVQs are overseen by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and measure vocational competence against set national standards.[29]

In 2002 the Building Crafts College became a government-sponsored Center of Vocational Excellence, offering NVQs in Wood Occupations on behalf of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). In general, this program serves so-called "apprentices" who attend the college over three years on scheduled periods of block release from their paid work as site carpenters and laborers.[30] This scheme has attracted funding and enabled the college administrators to play a more direct role in the nation's construction industry. But there is a perceived risk that the overwhelming volume of work involved in training "apprentices" will overshadow the much smaller craft-intensive fine woodwork program that has historically been the flagship of the institution.[31]

Though the remit of the college has changed since its nineteenth-century beginnings, it retains a degree of its founding spirit. More specifically, the institution remains committed to fostering craft excellence and to meeting the ever-present challenge of perpetuating the craft traditions in wood, masonry and lead. These programs attract small but diverse student populations.

Based on my fieldwork with the trainees and recent graduates in fine woodwork, the remainder of this article will focus on those I call "vocational migrants." Demographically, this group comprises a mix of mature male and female students, most of whom would be described as "middle class." Though the majority reside in or near London, others travel from greater distances to attend the program. All have abandoned professional careers or other steady employment for what they perceive as a more fulfilling vocation and lifestyle.

Ultimately, the people in this group long to escape the atomizing effects of globalization, and they seek the possibility of new subjectivities that promise a greater control over their daily production and practices. Despite the real risk of poor wages and underemployment, they consistently justify the choice of fine woodwork as "satisfying" and "meaningful" work. They also associate handicraft with self-autonomy and the acquisition of personal virtues, which link contemporary practitioners to an imagined heritage of craftspeople stemming from Britain's nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts Movement, and extending further back to the medieval guilds and fraternities.

## THE SPIRIT OF HANDICRAFT

Tea structures the workday. But today, after morning break, we are directed from the canteen to a classroom in the training college. Heavy work boots shuffle in through the doorway, and saw-dusted bodies settle into seats. One woodwork student grumbles to his neighbor about missing bench time. Tools have been idled as project deadlines loom.

The speaker flashes a smile at the small gathering, shifting nervously and making final inspections of his Powerpoint presentation. He is dressed all in black and has a smart shock of silver hair; the broken arm of his black-rimmed spectacles is neatly mended with tape. His attire sniffs more of "architect" than carpenter.

The room quiets, and the program convenor introduces the man before us: he is Philip Koomen, an esteemed furniture maker and an active figure in the growing ecological movement in Britain for sustainable timber sourcing, use and design.

"Becoming a furniture maker," Koomen starts, "was a move toward a utopian ideal." The craft revival of the 1970s made that realization more possible, and today he considers himself fortunate to have played a part in it. At twenty-one years old and one year into a college social-science degree, Koomen explains, he left academia to seek the "nature and purpose of work" and a "practical approach to making a difference." For him, furniture-making would be a "path to self knowledge," bringing together "the designer and the maker as one." He recounts how the following year he set up a partnership with a fellow carpenter near Henley-on-Thames to repair furniture and do reproduction work. As a self-taught craftsman, learning and experience came through patient practice with his tools and materials, and his professional engagement was guided by a spiritual outlook and code of ethics. What began as a search for an appropriate form of work became an ongoing evolution of self as a designer-maker.

Koomen then explains how, with the launch of AGENDA 21 (the United Nations' declaration on environment and development for the twenty-first century), he and a small number of other British woodworkers responded to the call for a grassroots approach to sustainability. Not only did the 1992 Rio Earth Summit underline the need to combat deforestation and develop sustainable forestry practices, but it brought home how "the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries."[32] Koomen explains that correcting this situation will require the sensitization of both producers and consumers to the fragile relation between economy, lifestyle and environment.

He took this challenge personally. "I understood wood as a commodity, but I needed to understand the forestry debate," he tells his audience of college trainees. "I had to develop a fitting business model." The impetus of the model was to narrow the distance between the forest resources, the

process of making, and delivery to the consumer. Local sourcing and sustainable use of timber in his native Oxfordshire then became the focus of a doctoral study. And, Koomen explains, he has since become an advocate for the craftsperson as educator.

"Craftsmanship is a sort of universal language that connects the designer-maker with the client-consumer," he says. Producers have a responsibility to make clients aware of the ethical dimensions as well as the aesthetic issues in their consumer choices. He believes that educating people effectively creates markets for sustainable furniture design. As he sums up these relationships: "Craft is a model of sustainability," and we should be striving to "build things that last, things for the future."

Koomen's vision seems to engage both with the craft traditions of England's rural past and with an imagined future that honors locality while embracing the duties of global citizenship. And his weave of sustainability, self-sufficiency, emplacement, ethics and happiness resonates with a number of the trainees in the audience. As future "designer-makers," they share an aspiration to be employed in meaningful work and to forge direct relations with the raw materials of their craft and with individual patrons who will commission their creations. Ultimately, they covet a sense of control and a position to oversee their entire enterprise.

Others present also harbor this ambition, but are less persuaded by Koomen when his talk turns to the role that the Baha'i faith, spiritual growth, and Sufi Islam have played in his professional life. For a few of the young trainees who came directly to the fine woodwork program from secondary school, the spiritual message simply falls flat.

It is agreed by all, however, that Koomen is a master craftsman. And his business success provides a beacon of hope.

**FIGURE 2.** *First-year woodworking student, Karl, squaring-up a piece of softwood timber in the mill.*

## CASE STUDIES OF VOCATIONAL MIGRANTS

Karl left school with dreams of being an oboist, and decided to major in music at Nottingham University. By the end of studies, however, he came to the difficult realization that he wasn't likely to succeed as a performing musician, and soon afterwards he took a job with the British Broadcasting Corporation. He was employed for five years there as a program researcher for radio before making the break to retrain as a fine woodworker.

"I wasn't happy with my work, being just a cog in a giant machine," Karl says. "The BBC is a creative place, of course, but I felt completely removed from the audience. Some people might say 'Oh, great bit of research,' but most had no clue I was working on the program." He read stories in the papers about professionals who switched to vocational trades, and thought that he, too, would be better satisfied doing something more creative with his hands than pounding a keyboard.

The financial risks were high, as were the social ones. Karl was nearly thirty, with a mortgage and limited savings. "I had never contemplated NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) or manual work," he explains. "My school pushed everyone toward university. If you're middle class, you go to university. That's the mentality. Most of my friends have safe jobs, earning big salaries, and now here I am spending all my life's savings, but on something I really want to do."

Karl recognizes that the chances of reaping a huge financial reward from woodwork are slim, but he has discovered pride in being part of a historic profession, and in possessing skills that remain relevant but have become increasingly rare since the nineteenth century **(FIG.2)**.

A second fine woodwork trainee, Richard, tells a different story. "I had a complete lack of satisfaction with corporate, computer-based life," he says. "There were always bigger processes happening at higher levels over which I had little control. I had lots of responsibility, but little authority. I was always busy, always stressed."

After receiving an M.Phil. in social sciences, Richard took a job at a London-based environmental consultancy. "I joined, believing that I would be part of something that could make things better, but I discovered that in reality we were only making things less worse." Stress-related illness eventually forced him to resign at thirty-one and embark on a new road to living and working. Becoming a carpenter now promises the chance to be autonomous, and to be free to seek a professional identity that doesn't conform with the dominant Western ethos.

"Working with wood and hand tools is like a retreat, almost in a religious sense," he explains. "I feel that I can cut myself off from the negative manifestations of modernity — the noise, the constant material consumption — and return to being someone capable of completing something, from a thought to a finished product."

Richard describes how woodworking has given him a sense of integrity and transformed work into a satisfying way of living day to day. "I can turn up in any place and just be a carpenter, a woodworker. It's a skill that I think there'll always be a demand for, and to have it seems good and honest" (FIG.3).

A third student, Dawn, describes herself as never having quite known what she wanted to do. She finished a university degree in marketing, and later held posts in various business institutions. Her last job was in the IT department of the British Home Office in Croydon, earning what she describes as "nice money," and saving it with a view to making the next move.

"I wanted to work with my hands, to make things, and I liked wood because it's a natural material," she explains. "It was probably in my head for years, but not seriously. And finally having a pot of cash, I put the idea to the forefront."

When she arrived at the training college, Dawn was keen on learning architectural joinery, but as the course progressed into the second year, her interests, like those of most others, shifted to furniture.

As opposed to some male trainees who consider the craft to be "manly," Dawn believes furniture making is carpentry's link to the female and the domestic arenas. "I find working with wood a really feminine thing to do," she says. "To be making things, to be creative with your hands, whether with a paintbrush or whatever, is seen to be a quite feminine quality. In no way does it make me feel 'manly'. That's for sure! Doors, windows and stairs might be quite butch, but furniture is a girly thing. They [i.e., the male trainees] just don't realize it. They're a bunch of big girl's blouses!"

In a more serious tone, she adds: "A piece of furniture's like a little baby. You put all that love into making it and nurturing that wood to get it into the form that you want. It's incredibly female. I don't understand how it can be seen as 'manly'. That's a very traditional view of carpentry, being a man's thing, isn't it?[33] But there's absolutely no reason for it, even physically, unless you're doing heavy construction-type work."

For Dawn, furniture-making is also ultimately about "people pleasing," and her aim to fully integrate the client's vision with the production process is informed by her prior experience as a facilitator in the business world. "People should have an input rather than buying it premade," she asserts. "There needs to be some individuality in this mass-produced world of Ikea and Habitat. Furniture makers are in a position to help people realize their own art."

In contrast to the hectic pace and sense of fragmentation associated with her previous career, Dawn explains that woodworking allows her to focus in a calm and controlled manner. "I don't see myself as a high-end artist making the next fabulous 'one-off'." Nevertheless, she explains that putting all that energy into creating new and useful things is "a nice place to be."

"We're not academic failures," she adds. "Many of us are high achievers who decided to take a left turn. Maybe we should be in firms, project-managing for thirty, forty or sixty 'K', but we ditched all that for something better."

Nevertheless, a nagging uncertainty remains for her as to whether her imagined new livelihood will be tenable. "Most people probably think that wanting to be an independent furniture maker is a pipedream," she confides. "And I guess it remains to be tested" (FIG.4).

The views of a fourth student, Harvey, also turn to economics as a measure of success. "Gone are the days when we can really make much of a living," he says. "We've got a tough situation in fine woodwork. It's still a 'shed in the backyard' industry. As a rule, people set up on their own and try to make it work. A few of us may be lucky enough to make our mark, become one of the top ten in the country, and make some serious money out of it."

Yet, despite these concerns, Harvey regularly iterates that he is not in woodwork for the money. "Never have and never will be!" he exclaims. "I don't want a huge factory or anything like that. I just want to be able to release what I want to release."

Harvey is a final-year trainee, talented designer, skilled carpenter, and perfectionist. Unlike Dawn, he aspires to producing luxurious bespoke pieces for a privileged, art-savvy clientele.

FIGURE 3. *First-year woodworking student, Richard, at his workbench.*

FIGURE 4. *Second-year woodworking student, Dawn.*

"I need to be with people who are masters of their trades, who have passion. People similar to me," he says (FIG.5).

In contrast to Harvey, Anna had no background in woodworking when she began. At forty-one, after nearly two decades in nursing, she started out in search of a career where she could work artistically with her hands. "That aspect was absolutely fundamental," she says with conviction. "It's when I'm lost in the moment of creating that I feel most comfortable."

Anna regrets not having ventured into something "arty" during her school days, but her secondary modern in North London "tried to make everyone into something ready for a job in the bank."

There was no history of professional artists in her family, and "it all seemed very dangerous." As she recalls, "neither parent was particularly handy, so I normally came up with the solutions for fixing things. I knew this made me happiest, but I couldn't see how I could translate that into work."

Like many fellow woodwork trainees, she insists that money was never her prime motive. Given her science background, a vocation in nursing seemed a logical choice.

Yet, even though he strives for recognition, he denies that material gain is his key motivating force. Being able to create is what is vital, and being in that mode "is where other people like me to be, because they like me best when I'm happy.

"Doing fine woodwork," he contends, "makes me a better person."

Art has long been Harvey's main passion, and creating things is the key outlet for his emotions. He studied art in secondary school and was accepted into the interior design program at London Guildhall University. Contrary to his expectations, however, he soon found that the course was stifling his passion.

"Short bouts of freedom to think creatively were followed by what seemed like months of sitting at the drawing board," he explains in an exasperated tone. "There was lots of paperwork and searching though books and trade magazines for products and finishes — just the sort of thing that didn't interest me."

He struggled to finish, and then spent the next few years drifting from one venture to the next before heading to Stafford, where he enrolled on a college art foundation course. He built props part-time for the college theater, working under the direction of a senior carpenter who he described as "an old-school type." "When I got it wrong, the guy threw spanners and hammers at me," Harvey tells me half-jokingly. "But I learned lots from him."

After six years of "earning a pittance," he deemed it time to get proper qualifications and hone the wood skills he had acquired. Now, with his fine-woodwork diploma complete, he proudly distinguishes himself as a "craftsman," and hopes to never find himself in a "factory-type shop just knocking things out.

FIGURE 5. *Second-year woodworking student, Harvey, with his design for a posture chair.*

"What I confused at the time was that just because something is vocational, doesn't mean that it's necessarily going to satisfy you. What I really needed was a creative outlet."

While working at a hospital in South Wales, Anna and her partner bought a house which served as her testing ground for "DIY" work. She also arranged with the hospital to spend one day a week on a garden-design course. "That was fantastic! I really enjoyed that, but I came to the conclusion that I didn't want to draw pictures of people's gardens and have them made by someone else. I wanted to do the whole thing. But in reality that sort of work was just physically too challenging."

"When I started fine woodwork," Anna recounts, "my partner was a bit skeptical. Not about me making money, but about whether I would ever 'think' again. Would we ever have proper conversations again? Who would I be mixing with? How much intellectual stimulation was I going to get?"

These concerns reflect popular misconceptions in Britain that building and craft trades are for the intellectually and academically challenged, she believes. "An awful lot of people from educated backgrounds have thought carefully about why they want to do this," she says, referring to her fellow fine woodworkers. This is a profession that requires "patience, dexterity, a degree of creativity, a holistic approach, and . . . yes, more patience."

"I've got so much pride!" she announces jubilantly. "When I actually tell people, 'I'm a carpenter,' the reaction is amazing! 'Oh, that's so unusual!' they say. I'm absolutely delighted with myself that I've done this. I'm almost smug about it. I don't feel the need to apologize for my profession in any way."

Like Dawn, Anna isn't driven toward the superstar status enjoyed by some of Britain's elite designers: "If I really wanted to make it as a top furniture maker in this country, I'd have to put so much of my time into advertising and promotion rather than being a craftsperson, and I really don't want that. It's not why I made the change."

Anna believes there is enough work in London to make a decent income. "I can make enough money doing carpentry and joinery work, and do fine woodwork on the side . . . and if I'm lucky, that will eventually become most of what I do." At the end of the day, she hopes to be producing things that people want and that she takes pleasure in making (FIG. 6).

Oliver provides my last short case study. After completing a philosophy degree at University College London and making a stab at entry to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, he took an interim job as an agent with a London real estate broker. It was financially rewarding, and he found himself surrounded by people in the building industry, including architects and developers. This sparked an interest in the building trades, and he soon realized that lots of contractors were doing a poor job.

"I always had a leaning toward doing something creative," he tells me. "But for some reason I put it off.

FIGURE 6. *Second-year woodworking student, Anna, with her design for an Art Deco-style chair.*

Perhaps because it's not seen . . . well, there just aren't many of those sorts of careers that make financial sense," and he had allowed the pragmatic side of his mind to take control.

He recalls his enthusiasm for artwork when he was a boy, and declares, "if you have that inside you, you'll always find an outlet for it. For years I was really into cooking." He came across a telephone number for the Institute of Carpenters, and from there was directed to the Building Crafts College.

"At first I was interested in the whole building side of things." During his first year in woodwork he even took an evening course in plastering. "My idea was that I could run a more efficient business if I knew as many trades as possible. I wanted to buy places, do them up, and sell them. The thought of working for other people just didn't appeal."

His introduction to furniture-making changed all that, and by his second year he was rigorously exploring his potential as a designer. Importantly, he discovered that there was "something quite magical" in realizing an idea.

For Oliver, carpentry is less about some finite body of knowledge of craft technique as it is about "practical problem-solving."

"That's the beauty of all practical disciplines — you can rely on your wits. There's a huge scope of possibilities and maybe that's why so many engineers find their way into the field."

Oliver ranks "personal satisfaction" tops, and states that "to succeed in life you have to enjoy what you're doing."

"Financial success is not my main motivator; otherwise, I would have stayed working as a property agent," he says. But money did figure more strongly in his future goals than most other vocational migrants. "I'm a competitive person, ambitious, and that's the sort of thing you relate with wealth . . . so it's always been at the forefront of my mind, but ultimately it isn't my main drive."

He describes his ideal situation as one in which he can generate enough income as a recognized furniture designer to invest in property for restoration, interior design work, and future sale.

"In a world where everything's being homogenized, there'll always be people looking for something individual — something special and different from the rest," he concludes confidently **(FIG.7)**.

**FIGURE 7.** *Second-year woodworking student, Oliver, with his design for a modular unit.*

## SHARED ASPIRATIONS AND ANXIETIES

Karl values the opportunity to be creative with his hands; Richard cherishes control over his production and his environment. Dawn underlined the importance of human relations and the need to bring clients into the process. She alluded to the appeal of working and shaping natural materials into functional and aesthetic artifacts, while Harvey spoke of channeling his passion and energies into the design and creation of unique objects that fuse art and technology. Anna discovered self-esteem in possessing specialized skills and in being part of a craft tradition. Oliver thrives on the constant challenges, problem solving, and the broad scope of possibilities that hand-crafting furniture offers.

The values and assets cited by these men and women echo those esteemed by the majority of vocational migrants in the fine woodwork program. They perceive carpentry to be a wholesome profession rooted somehow in humankind's early cultural beginnings and basic needs. These associations serve to connect contemporary practice with an ancient heritage that finds universal expression in the woodwork of all peoples at all times, as well as in the unique expressions that have evolved in particular regions and places.

In an almost Rousseau-like sense, these people construe the heart of the craft as "noble" and "honest," uncorrupted by Western modernity's division of labor, technological abstraction, speed, placelessness, and alienation from the meaning and value of work. They believe a clear, unambiguous connection exists between the fine woodworker and his or her environment of tools, materials and marketplace.

Hand tools are particularly important to this vision. They are conceived to be an extension of the limbs, hands and fingers, and regular practice with them is thought to result in a coordinated integration of mind, body and tool, forging direct and animated relations between one's subjectivity and things-in-the-world **(FIG.8)**. One writer recently noted how woodworking hand tools "have become probably the most complex, numerous and varied of all categories of hand-craft tools."[34] Yet their design, mechanics and function are readily available to scrutiny and logical contemplation — and to practical alteration, renewal and repair when necessary. Many tool parts are also discussed with biological metaphors: "the 'head' and 'claws' of a hammer, the 'frog' and 'throat' of a plane, the 'jaws' of a vice, the 'eye' of an adze," making them conceptually and physically familiar.[35]

The materials, tools and methods employed in the workshop are also tangible and can be appropriated by the body through direct engagement and hard-earned experience. The body serves as the primary vehicle for learning and performing craft skills, thereby blurring the boundary between theory and practice, and uniting mind, body and spirit in activity.

This unity was recognized by Ruskin in his nineteenth-century writings on ironwork:

FIGURE 8. *Workbench training and evaluation.*

> *All art worthy of the name is the energy — neither of the human body alone, nor of the human soul alone, but of both united, one guiding the other: good craftsmanship and work of the fingers joined with good emotion and work of the heart.*[36]

Unlike the traditional on-site apprenticeship systems I have studied in Yemen and Mali (or, for example, those studied by Dilley in Senegal, or Simpson in western India[37]) theory and practice remain somewhat divided by the Building Crafts College curriculum, with scheduled separations made between reading and writing assignments and workbench time. Nevertheless, the unanimous preference for instruction among trainees, including those with backgrounds in higher education, is for demonstration and practice. They deem a combination of watching, imitating and practicing the most effective means of learning. Ralph Waldo Emerson also observed that

> *. . . [words] cannot cover the dimensions of what is in truth. They break, chop and impoverish it. An action is the perfection and publication of thought. A right action seems to fill the eye, and to be related to all nature.*[38]

In the activity of woodworking, physical performance and problem-solving are coupled, each informing and modifying the content and progression of the other in an unfolding dialogue. Attitude and emotion also have a profound impact on the quality of work experience and creative output. The program at the Building Crafts College encourages trainees to invest themselves fully in the processes of design and making by tapping into their passion for the craft, and into their sensitivities for tools and materials.

Working with wood has frequently been described as "sensuous," stimulating and invoking the senses of sight, touch and smell: the mellow coloring of resinous redwood, the aromatic cedar of Lebanon, chocolaty American walnut, and the spicy tannins of oak that purple the fingertips. Every plank of timber possesses distinct properties — grain, figure, texture and durability — and each behaves differently under the blade of the plane (FIG. 9). As Walter Rose eloquently wrote in his classic, *The Village Carpenter*:

> *To the woodworker the varied dispositions of woods are almost human: even in the same species they differ, some yielding to his wishes as though glad to co-operate, others stubborn and intractable.*[39]

Auditory senses, too, are important, providing "information on the effectiveness or accuracy of a movement."[40] Again in Rose's words:

> *The sound of tools properly used is a pleasing tune. The craftsman has no need to examine a saw to know if it is sharp, or if it is handled properly. Nor need he look at a plane to know if it functions at its best. The ill-used tool makes a discordant noise which is agony to the trained ear.*[41]

A "sixth sense" employed in woodworking is that of the somatic system, bodily perception associated with the position, location, orientation, movement and muscular tensions of the body and limbs. Mature trainees and seasoned woodworkers

FIGURE 9. *Woodworking student, Toby, cramping a component for a piece of furniture at the workbench.*

often describe their engagement at the bench using such terms as focused, meditative and calming. At the college, all claimed that working with tools hones the sense of discipline and control over thought, and coordinates actions and movements. Somatosensory data is what sensitizes the carpenter's awareness to such things as stance at the workbench, the angling of a chisel in the hand, the rhythm of sawing, the force of the mallet, and the pressure applied with a plane. Practice and experience fine-tune somatic perception to the task at hand, enabling the confident performance and rapid recalibration of position, applied force, and movement that characterizes the "expert."

For several vocational migrants, the satisfaction derived from a direct bodily engagement is further heightened by their zeal for hand tools and their appreciation of the "naturalness" of wood as a material (FIG.10). The program at the college emphasizes the importance of mastering hand tools and promotes their use over power tools whenever practicable. Proper care and maintenance of cutting edges is stressed, and trainees are encouraged to buy old tools and restore them to working condition for regular use at the bench.

Among those I met there, Karl and Richard were strong devotees of salvaging rebate planes, molding planes, grooving planes, marking gauges, dovetail saws, and mortise chisels, purchasing them from websites, markets, and second-hand shops. Not only was there a financial motivation in this, but both equally appreciated the often-superior quality of the steel and iron castings manufactured in the past. Restoring tools also contributed to the broader ethos regarding sustainability and green politics voiced by Koomen.

Coordinated efforts were also being made by trainees to ensure that college timber supplies were harvested from sustainable sources and, if possible, from Western European forests in order to reduce transport distances and environmental impact. According to a recent World Wildlife Fund report, the U.K. imports more illegal timber than any other European country, constituting an estimated 28 percent of its foreign timber intake.[42] A barrage of reports linking illegal timber sourcing with environmental degradation, global warming, and Third World poverty influenced trainees' selection of timber species for projects and their decision to use off-cuts from the timber racks when possible.

FIGURE 10. *Overview of a workbench and the hand tools used for a crafting a bedside table.*

Dawn was a particular advocate of these practices. She developed a method of glue-laminating available off-cuts of oak to produce the thicker sections needed for a display unit. And she spoke ardently of one day settling in Eastern Europe to start a small furniture-making industry using salvaged timber from construction waste and demolitions, and thereby fostering regional awareness of forestry resources.

Fine woodwork was also associated with quality and the production of "heirloom" pieces that would be passed down through generations, as opposed to being disposed after a contemporary trend or fashion had run its course. In sum, environmental conservation and responsible use of materials figured prominently in the strategies of many vocational migrants.

However, for vocational migrants, the above tactics for revolutionizing life and work were offset by a number of deep-rooted anxieties and the sense that serious obstacles loomed. Emphasis during the two short years of study at the college is on the acquisition of carpentry skills — not preparation for the marketplace or how to manage a profitable business. By contrast, in traditional on-site apprenticeships, skill training is typically integrated with the economics of the shop, and apprentices are exposed to daily interactions with a spectrum of actors, including other tradespeople, merchants, suppliers, brokers, accountants, tax officials — and, importantly, clients, with all of their idiosyncratic expectations and demands.

In the words of one former graduate of the fine woodworking program, "the college is set apart from everything else, which I suppose is part of its appeal, but it's sort of like it's operating in a little bubble." This holds true of most institutionalized vocational programs. They offer the luxury to explore ideas, make mistakes, learn a wide variety of skills, and progress at a personal pace. But this is weighted by the impossibility of inculcating the sort of rounded experience needed to launch a business venture. Arguably, these economic aspects may be considered part and parcel of one's postcollege education under the aegis of more experienced employers; but given their late ages, previous experiences, and ambitious expectations, all vocational migrants sought professional autonomy on the not-too-distant horizon.

Ideals of professional success and financial goals varied widely — from those who aimed to make their mark on the glittering stage of British design, to others who aspired to earn a simple but secure living as small-scale carpenters and furniture makers. But if there was a commonality, it was that all renounced money as a main incentive; this was borne out by the fact that several had left careers that offered more certain financial reward.

There were, however, underlying tensions that revolved around money matters. "Can I afford the tools, machinery and the space to set up shop?" (The question of affordable space is especially salient for London residents.) "Can I generate enough work?" "Is there a sufficient market for fine furniture, and for my ideas?" "Will I earn enough to survive and carry on as a carpenter?" And, perhaps most worryingly, "Will I have to go back to my desk in the city?"

At the 2006 "New Designers Show" in Islington, twenty-eight colleges and universities leased space to exhibit the latest furniture designs by graduating students. It was apparent here that the sheer number of designer-makers churned out annually by British higher education far exceeds the market's buoyancy for costly ingenuity and bespoke pieces. By necessity, most graduates will explore other, more commercial niches, and many will eventually abandon the field. Thus, for many, the prospect of a dystopic future, once again staring into a computer screen or enduring dreary board meetings, looms threateningly on the horizon.

Other anxieties simmering below the surface include uncertainty about one's potential as a designer and craftsperson. Fine woodwork demands exacting precision in marking out, cutting, chopping and planing; minimal tolerances in fitting and joinery; and near perfection in veneering, polishing and finishing. Design requires vision, novelty, knowledge of historic styles and contemporary trends, aesthetic judgment, understanding of proportion, and an engineer's sagacity of structure. A designer-maker must also possess the aptitude for drafting and reading scale drawings and rods **(FIG.11)**.

**FIGURE 11.** *Woodwork student producing scale technical drawings for making a new furniture project.*

This represents a daunting skill set, which still doesn't take account of the social and business skills needed to run a workshop. And despite this complex array of expertise, for some trainees the nagging question of whether carpentry was a "worthy" pursuit persisted, echoing concerns of parents and partners, and conditioned by a prevalent undervaluation of manual vocations in the U.K.

Perhaps the most pressing worry, and that to which all other anxieties ultimately related, was the question of autonomy and self-realization. The desire for autonomy was not a quest for isolation, but a search for a self-supporting life free from the numbing, mechanized constraints of state bureaucracy; free from the abstract economics and marketing structures imposed by corporate interests; and free from the alienating conditions of late-capitalist urban culture. Fine woodworking held the promise of uniting mind, body and spirit in pleasurable activity; of liberating creative potential; and of engaging in a mode of production that linked producers and consumers through the demand for, and making of, meaningful objects.

The well-established furniture maker Fred Baier has posted these words of encouragement for neophytes on his website manifesto:

> *If you want to make it in the field of making things, you need single-mindedness, determination preferably without arrogance and an inner confidence in the face of nay-sayers. . . . It's frowned upon nowadays to choose a career for its life qualities rather than its pecuniary rewards, but that's the only real way to prevent work being something you don't like doing. . . . If you want to release your full creative potential, resist as far as possible, for as long as possible, the urge to be secure. . . . Deal with your customers very carefully. Don't let them dilute your ideas, and watch the lure of patronage.*[43]

## A TRADITION OF LONGING

The social position of vocational migrants can be better understood by considering it within a far-reaching tradition of utopianism in Britain, which looks both to the past and to the future. In 1888 William Morris wrote:

> *People interested, or who suppose that they are interested, in the details of the arts of life feel a desire to revert to methods of handicraft for production in general; and it may therefore be worth considering how far this is a mere reactionary sentiment incapable of realisation, and how far it may foreshadow a real coming change in our habits of life as irresistible as the former change which has produced the system of machine-production, the system against which revolt is now attempted.*[44]

Of course, Morris's prediction of "a real coming change" never materialized. But the spirit of his revolt survives in agendas nurtured by numerous twenty-first-century communities of craftspeople, as it does among the trainees I interviewed.

In Britain, the longing for an alternative way finds perhaps its earliest literary manifestation in the fanciful fourteenth-century poem "The Land of Cokaygne."[45] But it was not until 1516, under the reign of Henry VIII, that Thomas More published *Utopia*, a book that established a new and lasting genre for the expression of political will.

*Utopia* (meaning "no-place") is set, like "Cokaygne," on a distant island. There, all citizens are involved in agricultural production, and each is taught a special trade, including wool and flax processing, stone masonry, blacksmithing and carpentry.[46] More argued that private property should be abolished bacause it was the root of the inequitable distribution of goods, the cause of the dissatisfying organization of human life, and the reason why a handful of powerbrokers lorded over a vast majority of impoverished laborers.[47] He wrote, "where money is the only standard of value, there are bound to be dozens of unnecessary trades carried on, which merely supply luxury goods or entertainment."[48] By contrast, the main impetus behind *Utopia's* straightforward economy is to provide an abundance of time away from the drudgery of labor to pursue intellectual cultivation, the "secret to a happy life."[49] Pleasure and happiness, More later contended, should be sought in "any state or activity, physical or mental, which is naturally enjoyable," and which serves basic human necessities without inflicting harm on others.[50]

After more than four centuries, these communal utopian ideals would resonate again under the pens of Ruskin and Morris. But in the interim, Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627) charted a different path for More's utopian genre. Unlike the devoutly spiritual and superstitious world of the early Tudors, Bacon's era stood at the brink of the Enlightenment, and his support of scientific inquiry and assertion that "knowledge is power" colored his utopian account.[51] As A.L. Morton has described it, Bacon's outlook was one that "confidently believed that the whole universe, from the solar system to the mind of man, was a vast complex machine and could be mastered absolutely by a sufficient understanding of the laws of mechanics."[52]

According to Morton, a theme of enlightened self-interest endured from Bacon's era into the next century, where it was much in evidence in works such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Here, "utopia is a one-man colony where the individual owes everything to his own efforts and is neither helped nor hindered by anyone."[53] Like other utopias of the eighteenth century, Defoe's — aside from its island setting — had little in common with More's communal ethos, universal equality, and insistence on pleasurable work. Indeed, it was not until the full thrust of industrial capitalism blackened the landscape and menaced all traditional modes of production that the English utopia returned sharply to these earlier romantic aspirations.[54]

"The foundations of society were never so shaken as they are at this day," thundered Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice* (1853). "It is not that man is ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure."[55] Ruskin championed the creative freedom liberated by the arts and crafts in place of the soulless grind that plagued the nineteenth-century laborer. It was his chapter on "The Nature of Gothic," in particular, that deeply inspired Morris.[56]

The central theme explored in Morris's seminal utopian work, *News from Nowhere* (1890), was the relation between work and pleasure. Here, utopia is set not on an island, but in a twenty-second-century Britain that has reconstituted its rural heritage and embraced a return to an agrarian economy and a medieval tradition of craftwork. Corrupt parliamentary politics have given way to a socialist form of decentralized popular democracy; money has been abolished; formal education has been replaced by experiential learning and apprenticeship; and useless, repetitive toil at industrial machines has been superseded by meaningful forms of work that dissolve the division between intellectual and manual labor.

Morris was not adverse to machines that freed people from repetitive and mundane tasks; but he maintained that, though "wonders of invention," the bulk of industrial machines merely served the production of "measureless quantities of worthless makeshifts."[57] As opposed to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, published two years earlier (a utopian vision of machines and industrial armies in which the United States of America is organized as one great business corporation run by the people and fulfilling their collective capitalist interests[58]), *News from Nowhere*, published in 1890, called for the revival of the medieval workshop with its small-scale, ecologically sustainable, high-quality craft production.

Then, as now, the argument against Morris's vision was that handmade items are considerably more costly than mass-produced ones. Therefore, his prescribed role for craft is criticized for merely serving the indulgences of the elite. Indeed, this contradiction continues to challenge the socialist persuasions of some trainees at the Building Crafts College. It also conflicts with the views of established members of the fine woodwork trade who wish to see individual, quality workmanship one day replace the homogenous, assembly-line furnishings that crowd shops and homes. Morris, too, was a self-declared and politically active socialist, and was conscious of the problem. Thus, in his tale, demand and production are based on need, not excess or profit; and without monetary exchange to drive the market, people choose to engage in work for pleasure and self-actualization.

Morris rejected the existing capitalist industrial society of his time. And by at once turning to a romantic image of England's medieval past and innovatively reconstruing this into something new (as he did so successfully in his artistic designs), he was able to project a future of alternative possibilities. As Ruth Levitas has written, by rearticulating and propelling the backward-gazing nostalgia of Carlyle and Ruskin into the future, and by supplementing Marx with a dimension of the individual's sensibilities, values, and desire for self-realization, Morris "effected a synthesis between Romanticism and Marxism which enriched and transformed both."[59] Thus, his dream of the transformation in life and labor was to be realized not through centralization and state governance of regulations and communal principles but through the willed and "active participation of individuals in all aspects of the social process."[60]

Utopia, Levitas has argued, is not a blueprint for change, like Marxist ideology; rather, its key function is the education of desire and longing.[61] Utopia "enables people to work towards an understanding of what is necessary for human fulfilment, a broadening, deepening and raising of aspirations in terms quite different to those of their everyday life."[62]

Paul Ricoeur has also differentiated between the concepts of ideology and utopia. He has drawn a dialectical relation between the two, whereby the former functions to preserve and legitimate the identity of a person or group, and the latter is a vehicle for challenging the status quo and exploring possible ideals toward which we are directed, but which we realize we will never fully attain.[63] Utopia guides this exploration and educates desire.

According to Levitas, *News from Nowhere* offers a poignant critique of alienation, and "invites us to experience what it would mean to be in full possession of our humanity."[64]

## THE TRADITION OF LONGING AS A HYPER-TRADITION

In 1973 the economist Ernst Schumacher published the influential book *Small is Beautiful*, in which he called for an entirely new lifestyle for Britain and the West. This new life would be based on alternative methods of production and new patterns of consumption: "a lifestyle designed for permanence."[65]

Schumacher's vision was unquestionably utopian, and its objective was to educate desire and human longing for something better. He squarely challenged the industrial methods and technological basis of the twentieth century, calling for complete reforms for agriculture and manufacture based on small-scale, ecological, user-friendly technologies. In line with utopian writers from More to Morris, Schumacher underscored the necessity for people to derive pleasure from daily work. The machines of modernity have strictly reduced or eliminated the need for productive, skilled handwork with real, natural materials, he wrote. In our society, "such work has become exceedingly rare, and to make a decent living . . . has become virtually impossible." Engagement in craftwork has become a luxury, he observed; and he provocatively diagnosed modernity's "neuroses" as rooted in our disengagement from satisfying, creative handwork.[66]

A new national movement referred to as the Seventies British Craft Revival emerged around the same time as

Schumacher's publication. Pioneering craftspeople of the movement included Jeremy Broun, Fred Baier, David Colwell, Martin Grierson, John Makepeace, and Alan Peters, who apprenticed with the famous Arts and Crafts furniture maker Sir Edward Barnsley. Their common aim was to engage in small-scale bespoke productions that tapped into the turn-of-the-century English Arts and Crafts traditions of quality, honest use of materials, and pleasurable work. At the same time, they desired to lay the foundations for a new and forward-looking tradition of British furniture making.

In a website history of the so-called "designer-makers," Jeremy Broun notes that the gradual postwar replacement of the traditional apprenticeship with college training resulted by the 1970s in a loosely connected group of graduates who had set up "cottage workshops" and forged a professional network through the exhibition circuit (i.e., Prestcote Gallery, Oxfordshire) and the emerging media on handicraft, including the newly formed Crafts Council's magazine.[67]

The movement was reinforced throughout the 1980s and 90s by graduates from various colleges, including Parnham, Rycote and Buckinghamshire, as well as by a growing number of independently established, self-taught furniture makers.[68] One of a few remaining carpenters in the Chilterns' town of West Wycombe conceded, "Some of today's best furniture makers are those older people who changed careers and chose carpentry. They're intelligent and usually self-trained. They're not making overly complicated pieces like craftsmen in the past — with carvings and cabriole legs — but they're making good-quality, straightforward pieces with simple geometries and uncomplicated joints." Yet, like Morris, today's "designer-makers" are not Luddites; they recognize a place for the machine in their production. According to Broun, machines serve "a vital part of economic survival"; but they are to be used on a scale that preserves the "character and significance" of the artisan.[69]

With the passing of decades and spreading concern for the environment, growing numbers of Britain's designer-makers, like Koomen, Colwell, and Malcolm Baker, have taken on board the issue of sustainability in their sourcing of materials, production methods, and (ideally) local deliveries. Their green approach is marketed as being integral to their product. Not only are they producing and selling functional wares, but they are crafting values and lifestyles for themselves — and, hopefully, their clients. Ideally, clients are selectively acquiring pieces that are deeply imbued with original histories of pleasurable creativity and making, and with a distinct ethos of quality and sustainability.

In striving to shape the aesthetic appreciation and ethical choices of the consumer, such craftspeople are, as in Morris's utopia, educating desire. A few have chosen the written word as a medium to express their vision. But perhaps all craftspeople communicate most effectively through their physical and social comportment, professional activities, materials they use, and objects that they make. All of these are manifested materially in the world as performance and artifacts, and are thus available for observation, use, scrutiny, interpretation and, possibly, emulation.

In seeking their inspiration from a community of artisans and craftspeople working more than a century ago, a handful of today's designer-makers have attempted to breathe new life into this imagined past by rearticulating its values and ethos in their present work and in their visions for tomorrow.

It is within this established tradition of longing for radical change and a better future that many of my fellow career-changers at the Building Crafts College have positioned themselves. At tea and in the pub, daily discussions and debates turn to world issues, the environment, and the place of craftwork in the global economy. Their individual anxieties, concerns and devotion to the craft combine to perpetuate the tradition of longing and redefine it with contemporary relevance. Utopia, however, is forever displaced temporally and physically, and so too is its object of desire. In short, the realization of utopia is always postponed because its existence as a concept lies in its dialectical relation to the present, and is therefore in a perpetual state of transformation. Longing, therefore, produces a necessary and agonizing disjuncture between the subject and the possibility of attaining one's vision.

More concretely, many craftspeople over the past century have longed for the recovery of "place": an anchoring of materials, making and market to a physical location that promotes the nurturing of a regional expression and a sense of belonging. The present reality for many, however, is complex and contradictory: most tools and materials are imported from distant places; the timber on racks may be sourced illegally; financial dependency on commercial commissions and mass production evolve; direct relations and engagement with clients are superseded by a chain of marketing middlemen; design and choice of materials succumb to globalized tastes; and clients are scattered across the nation, and sometimes the world. In sum, the alienation of the laborer and abstraction of relations produced by those world market forces so vehemently condemned by Morris pose an ever-present obstacle to self-actualization and the search for "emplacement."[70]

A sense of dislocation applies equally to the reproduction of the fine woodworking tradition itself. With small student-instructor ratios and an emphasis on hand tools and disciplined conduct, the college environment endeavors to conjure idealized notions of apprenticeship and personal formation. But the compression of training into two years, as well as a standardization of curriculum and examinations, results in an education substantially different from that experienced by the "medieval journeyman." Specifically, the transfer of on-site learning to an institutional setting has segregated training both from the operational constraints of the workshop and from consumer demands. In effect, reproduction of the fine woodworker has been deterritorialized from the workshop and marketplace, rendering the craft and its imagined historic integration of learning with lifestyle a hyper-tradition.

By contextualizing the study of vocational migrants within a history of ideas from More to Morris and onwards, this article has illustrated that longing for a recovery of handicraft and its associated lifestyle is not unique to our era. Indeed, this established tradition of longing continues to lure a small but steady flow of vocational migrants from mainstream professions into such fields as fine woodwork. This is occurring despite the trade's relative isolation from the wider economy and technological trends, the financial obstacles it presents, and its confinement to institutions, conservation interest groups, and elite niche markets.

Based on my ethnographic experiences and interviews, the decision to abandon conventional (often well-remunerated) occupations to retrain in craftwork must be duly recognized as an individual coping strategy and an attempt to reform subjectivity in the face of a disorientating flux of global forces, world markets, and environmental degradation. By relocating the self within an imagined heritage of craft production, and by embodying the ethos of a future utopia that promises satisfaction and actualization, vocational migrants are ultimately striving to realize a unity of mind, body and spirit: an aesthetic integration of work with life, and a harmonious balance of autonomy with community.

## REFERENCE NOTES

1. T.H.J. Marchand, *Minaret Building and Apprenticeship in Yemen* (London: Curzon, 2001); and *The Masons of Djenne*, forthcoming.
2. My three-year study, entitled "Building-Craft Knowledge and Apprenticeship in Britain," has been supported by a Fellowship sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council. Supplementary support has been provided by the School of Oriental and African Studies.
3. The term "tradition" is set in quotations on first reference here to indicate that much of the rest of the article will examine its definition in practice, specifically as a "tradition of longing."
4. The term hyper-tradition is used here in reference to the definition contained in the call for papers for the tenth IASTE conference, held in December 2006, in Bangkok, Thailand.
5. The Great Twelve Liveries of the City of London included, in descending order of precedence (as established in 1515), the Mercers, Grocers, Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Merchant Taylors, Skinners, Haberdashers, Salters, Ironmongers, Vintners and Clothworkers. Based on economic and political influence, the Carpenters were ranked twenty-sixth of the forty-eight liveries in existence at the time.
6. B.W.E. Alford and T.C. Barker, *A History of the Carpenters Company* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968), p.28.
7. Ibid., p.128.
8. E.B. Jupp, *An Historical Account of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters of the City of London* (London: William Pickering, 1948), p.280.
9. "Forrens" was the term used to describe those who came to London from other regions seeking work. From the view of the city companies and free craftsmen, those who had not apprenticed in London and been granted the freedom of the city did not have the right to work in the city or the surrounding region under its authority.
10. Alford and Barker, *A History of the Carpenters Company*, pp.114–16.
11. Ibid., p.138.
12. Jupp, *An Historical Account*, p.251.
13. The 1870 Education Act was largely a result of the Second Reform Act of 1867 and the government's objective to have an educated electorate. Changing attitudes toward education, and growing positive valuation, began much earlier, starting with Samuel Whitbread's 1807 Bill for reforming the Poor Law, as well as the Factory Acts of 1833, 1844 and 1867, which imposed restrictions on child labor and opened the possibility for national education. The year 1869 saw the establishment of the secular Education League and the more conservative and Anglican National Education Union, both of which played an important part in Britain's adoption of the Education Act the following year. A further Education Act in 1891 established free elementary education.
14. S.R. Epstein, *Transferring Technical Knowledge and Innovating in Europe, c.1200–c.1800* (London: LSE Department of Economic History, 2005), p.30.
15. *Mr. Hoppus's Measurer Greatly Enlarged & Improved*, published by E. Hoppus, 1790.
16. Epstein, *Transferring Technical Knowledge*, p.29.
17. Alford and Barker, *A History of the Carpenters Company*, p.158.
18. G. Thorogood, *One Hundred Years History of the Institute of Carpenters, 1890–1990* (London: The Institute of Carpenters 1990), p.21.
19. Ibid., p.3.
20. D.R. Wilson, "The Institute of Carpenters Examinations," in *The Cutting Edge: Journal of the Institute of Carpenters*, 2006, pp.10–11.
21. W.T. Sweett, "Commentary," *Journal of the Incorporated Institute of Certified Carpenters*, April 1940.
22. More than four hundred years earlier, Thomas More's *Utopia* had also promulgated the social importance of every person participating in both agriculture and a trade. T. More, *Utopia*, trans. by P. Turner (London: Penguin, 2003), p.55.
23. T. Carlyle, *Past and Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1918), pp.168–69.
24. J. Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," in Ruskin, *On Art and Life* (London: Penguin, 2004), p.19. "The Nature of Gothic" was first published in *The Stones of Venice*, 1853.
25. W. Morris, "Useful Work versus Useless Toil," in Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2004), p.304.
26. In 1767, the carpenters purchased "a freehold farm consisting of sixty-three acres of marshland tithe free lying in the Parish of West Ham," and made further property investment there in the nineteenth century. Alford and Barker, *A History of the Carpenters Company*, pp.136,145.
27. B.F. Fletcher and H.P. Fletcher, *Carpentry and Joinery* (S.l.: Whitaker, 1914, orig. 1898); G. Ellis, *Modern Practical Joinery*

(London: Stobart Davies, 1989, orig. 1902).
28. Thorogood, *One Hundred Years History*, p.19.
29. Note that graduates of the two-year, full-time fine woodwork program receive a City and Guilds diploma, not NVQ qualifications. These may be acquired separately, based on work experience.
30. The modern apprenticeship scheme (now called "apprenticeships" and "advanced apprenticeships") was established in 1993 to provide young people with work-based training in a number of vocational fields, and to close Britain's skills gap, which is much larger than other European countries.
31. The current ratio of "apprentices" enrolled at the college to full-time fine woodworkers is approximately 10:1.
32. United Nations Division for Sustainable Development, AGENDA 21, 1992, Chapter 4, article 4.3.
33. On the relation of American masculinity to handiness with tools, see D. Hohn, "A Romance of Rust: Nostalgia, Progress and the Meaning of Tools," *Harper's Magazine*, January 2005, p.46.
34. J. Thornton, "How an Adze is like an Atlatl and Other Aspects of Non-Western Woodworking," paper presented at the Wooden Artifacts Group Session of the 2005 AIC Annual Meeting in Minneapolis.
35. Hohn, "A Romance of Rust," pp.45–63.
36. J. Ruskin, "The Work of Iron," in *On Art & Life*, p.69. "The Work of Iron, in Nature, Art and Policy" was first published in *The Two Paths*, 1859.
37. R. Dilley, "Secrets & Skills: Apprenticeship among Tukolor Weavers," in M.W. Coy, ed., *Apprenticeship: From Theory to Method and Back Again* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989); and E. Simpson, "Apprenticeship in Western India," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 12 (2006), pp.151–71.
38. R.W. Emerson, "Nature 1836," in R.W. Emerson, *Nature and Selected Essays* (London: Penguin, 2003), p.61.
39. W. Rose, *The Village Carpenter* (Hertford: Stobart Davies, 2001, orig. 1937), p.40.
40. Thornton, "How an Adze is like an Atlatl."
41. Rose, *The Village Carpenter*, p.55.
42. M. Hickman, "Britain Leads EU Imports of Wood Logged Illegally," *The Independent*, November 22, 2005.
43. F. Baier, http://www.fredbaier.com/alt.htm.
44. W. Morris, "The Revival of Handicraft," in C. Poulson, ed., *William Morris on Art and Design* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp.186–87. The essay was originally published in 1888.
45. This English poem of nearly two hundred lines describes a fantastical earthly paradise on an island located off the western shores of Britain. A.L. Morton has suggested that "The Land of Cokaygne," "anticipates some of the most fundamental conceptions of modern socialism," and is the "beginning of a dialectical growth of the concept of utopia, which has its culmination in the greatest and the most fully socialist work of this type, William Morris' *News from Nowhere*." Morton, *The English Utopia* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1952), p.33.
46. More, *Utopia*, p.55.
47. Despite espousing notions of equality, More's patriarchal stance relegated the "weaker sex" to lighter jobs, while men performed the heavier ones, illustrating that persistent association between woodwork and "manliness" that some male trainees invoked, and that Dawn so fervently contested. A gendered division of labor was later also strongly evoked by Ruskin, who wrote that "a happy nation may be defined as one in which the husband's hand is on the plough, and the housewife's on the needle." See "The Work of Iron," p.81.
48. More, *Utopia*, p.45.
49. Ibid., p.59. Note that Henry David Thoreau also praised the idea that when the laborer's day ends, "he is then free to devote himself to his chosen pursuit, independent of his labor," as opposed to the employer who never finds respite from worry. Thoreau, "Walden," in *Walden and Civil Disobedience* (London: Penguin, 1986), p.114.
50. More, *Utopia*, p.73. Note that More was not advocating hedonistic pleasure (he was deeply religious and conservative), but pleasure found in noble and moral cultivations of mind and body.
51. F. Bacon, *Essayes; Religious Meditations; Places of Perswasion and Disswasion*, (London: Haslewood 1924, first published in 1597).
52. Morton, *The English Utopia*, p.63.
53. Ibid., p.100.
54. R. Eglash has noted that the revolt against Enlightenment conflations between technological and social progress began "most famously in the writings of Emerson and Thoreau." See Eglash, "Technology as Material Culture," in Tilley, Keane, Küchler, Rowlands and Speyer, eds., *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: Sage, 2006), p.331.
55. J. Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," pp.16–17.
56. C. Wilmer, "Introduction," in Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, p.xii.
57. W. Morris, "News from Nowhere," in *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, p.126.
58. E. Bellamy, *Looking Backwards: 2000–1887* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1888).
59. R. Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), p.114. Here Levitas is discussing the views of E. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Merlin Press, 1955). See also Morton, *The English Utopia*, pp.162–64, for a discussion of Morris's synthesis of history with the present in his projection of a socialist future.
60. Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, p.108.
61. It could be argued, however, that Saint Simon and Fourier did try to realize their non-Marxist socialist utopias.
62. Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, p.122.
63. G.H. Taylor, "Editor's Introduction," in *Paul Ricoeur: Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p.xxi.
64. Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, p.122.
65. E. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful* (London: Vintage, 1993, orig. 1973), p.9.
66. Ibid., pp.122–23.
67. J. Broun, http://www.designermakers.org.uk/historyofdesignermakers.html.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Morris, "News from Nowhere," p.124.

# New Urbanism as a New Modernist Movement: A Comparative Look at Modernism and New Urbanism

MICHAEL VANDERBEEK AND CLARA IRAZÁBAL

**This article situates New Urbanism, and neotraditionalism more generally, on the ideological continuum of Modernism — as a neo-Modernist movement. By comparing the social and environmental goals of Modernism and New Urbanism as laid out in their respective charters and questioning the ability of New Urbanism to achieve its goals where Modernism failed, it offers a contextual analysis of the motivations behind the movements and their implications in practice. It then presents the cities of Brasilia, in Brazil, and Celebration, in the United States, as examples of the difficulty of putting the altruistic rhetoric of Modernism and New Urbanism, respectively, into practice. Finally, it offers the lessons of history as a way to reflect on the challenges facing New Urbanism and its prospects for success.**

New Urbanism has been the most important movement in the area of urban design and architecture to take hold in the United States in the last two decades, on par with the City Beautiful and Garden City movements of the early twentieth century.[1] In addition to more than five hundred New Urbanist developments planned or under construction in the country today, the convergence of New Urbanists on the hurricane-devastated Gulf Coast region since September 2006 has further raised the profile of the movement by giving its practitioners an opportunity to act on their planning and design principles on a scale previously unimaginable and leave an indisputable mark on twenty-first-century U.S. architecture and urban design. Of course, the question of what this mark will ultimately be remains unanswered.[2]

Interestingly, though considered progressive in most planning circles, New Urbanist principles and the values they engender also align with the apparent revival of U.S. neoconservatism over the past several years.[3] This is evident in the close tie between New Urbanism's brand of urban values and its explicitly stated desire to return to certain past

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development models — what Christopher Alexander has referred to as "the timeless way of building." The result is a sort of "back-to-the-future" approach, complete with quasi-traditional design typologies inspired by pre-Modernist, largely colonial architecture.[4]

Some New Urbanists have even invoked religious rhetoric to market their ideas, as when Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk's declared Seaside, Florida, to be "the second coming of the American small town."[5] And religious institutions, themselves, are even beginning to get on board.[6] In 2005, for example, the Religion News Service published the following:

> *Across the country, influential Christians are thinking theologically about urban design and applying its principles to the church. They advocate for New Urbanist concepts because they force people to share with one another, dwell among their neighbors and allow for a healthy exchange of ideas.*[7]

This attempt to link nostalgic, though not necessarily historical, formal properties to simultaneously progressive and conservative social outcomes has proven to be a successful means of appealing to a broad slice of the U.S. consumer public in a socio-political context in which diverse values such as community involvement and the proliferation of an "ownership society" coexist with environmental conservation and growth management.[8] Thus, in what seems like an ideological paradox, by virtue of its conservative formal language and strong normative call for a return to "traditional," "objective," and "universal" urban values of the past, New Urbanism has become for many a beacon of progressive planning theory, and is increasingly perceived as a potential antidote to the anomie and alienation of today's postmodern condition.[9] Ironically, however, evidence abounds that the "traditional" urban values promoted by New Urbanists — community, socioeconomic integration, and environmental conservation — though often trumpeted at both ends of the political spectrum, are largely at odds with historical, as well as present-day, U.S. development traditions, including actual New Urbanist developments.[10]

This article explores the extent to which New Urbanism has adapted the rhetoric and essential ethos of Modernism, even while positioning itself as a neotraditional — and therefore anti-Modernist — movement. It further explores inherent discrepancies between the ideals and outcomes of New Urbanism as a normative design-based movement whose goals are ultimately social in nature. Finally, using the cities of Brasilia and Celebration as examples, it discusses the many challenges New Urbanists face in pushing a reform agenda grounded in environmental determinism and social control.

## TRADITION AND TRADITIONS: TOWARD A NEO-MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE

The built environment of most of the United States is the result of the relatively sudden and formulaic imposition of various European, primarily Protestant, values and eclectic colonial building styles on what was perceived at the time to be a vast carte blanche.[11] For many years, the lack of long-range transportation technology combined with the industrial-based economy of most U.S. cities necessitated a certain degree of centralized, high-density development. This made downtowns the economic and cultural hearts of cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco for some time. But for the most part the close association of early settlers' religious values with ideas about individual liberty, proximity to nature, and female domesticity made urban development and the values associated with it highly undesirable. Indeed, unlike every other historically affluent civilization, people in the U.S. have idealized the private home and yard rather than the public neighborhood or town.[12]

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, rather than being viewed as an ideal form of development, dense urban centers have literally been regarded by the majority of Americans as a necessary evil.[13] The massive escalation of suburbanization that took place all around the country with the arrival of the automobile and its supporting infrastructure, which continues to this day, demonstrates that the core values that brought many early European settlers to North America not only persist, but remain a powerful force. This is largely as true of policy-makers as it is of the public at large. Given the option to expand and live in intensely private spaces, many Americans, if not most, still will.[14]

This is not to say that everyone living in the U.S. shares these values; this is clearly not the case. Yet, as Robert Bellah et al. contended in their treatise on U.S. society, *Habits of the Heart*, "Individualism lies at the very core of American culture."[15] For better or worse, such values must be recognized as a cultural heritage — that is, as one of many U.S. "traditions." Similarly, despite its acknowledged negative impacts, suburban sprawl must by now be considered at least as much a U.S. development tradition as more compact, preautomobile development.[16]

Yet, while acknowledging sprawl as the predominant development paradigm in the U.S. during the second half of the twentieth century, the neotraditional rhetoric of New Urbanism fails to recognize this status quo as a tradition in its own right, preferring to define tradition narrowly as strictly pre-Modernist.[17] Such a selective definition of tradition establishes a binary condition in which the traditional and the modern — in this case the Modernist — are mutually exclusive. Ironically, this very condition aligns New Urbanist goals much more closely with those of Modernism than with those of pre-Modernist development — what New Urbanists refer to as "traditional," because New Urbanism's conscious

effort to devalue the contemporary built environment in order to instigate sweeping changes to it works against a variety of existent traditions in the current U.S. context.[18]

The discrepancy between the communitarian values advocated by New Urbanism and the individualistic values that have served as the foundation of much American culture and development for nearly two hundred years belies the notion that New Urbanism is a return to a universal American tradition. Even the much revered sense of community that New Urbanists hope to "reintroduce" into the urban fabric is closely tied to individualistic ideas about relative insulation and exclusion. As Denise Hall has written, it is most often created by "homogeneous circles of individuals" who feel a certain affinity for one another because they "share similar beliefs, values, and styles of life."[19]

While such calls for social harmony may be inspiring, they may also offer an inherently problematic model for contemporary urbanism, particularly within the U.S. Many American urban contexts cannot accurately be said to consist of a homogeneous, monocultural population. And the incongruence of such an interpretation of the past with the realities of the present and probable future calls into question the validity of the New Urbanist vision and the degree of social control needed to achieve its goals in a diverse, multicultural, and increasingly global society.[20] Thus, as Jill Grant has written, New Urbanist claims of equity and diversity "may offer little more than rhetoric that masks practices that increase disparity."[21]

Certainly, criticizing the status quo built environment is neither new nor unique to Modernism or New Urbanism. In fact, such criticism could even be seen as a necessary component of all urban planning and design. However, using such criticism as an engine to transform not just the spaces of the built environment, but the values embodied within them in order to "restore the moral health" of the city to an idealized state must be interpreted as a decidedly, though not uniquely, Modernist ethos — one which New Urbanism has adopted to the core. Thus, New Urbanism can simultaneously be understood as both neotraditional, due to its explicit desire to undo the negative impacts of Modernist development, and neo-Modernist, due to its efforts to actively "traditionalize" areas in need of physical restructuring according to a specific set of idealized, often nostalgic urban values. It is precisely this selective and retrospective assigning of the identity of "traditional" to one preferred historical development model and accompanying set of values at the exclusion of all others that distinguishes neotraditionalism from tradition itself. And it is here that similarities between New Urbanism and Modernism become most clear.

## NEW MODERNISM?

Though it is often viewed as the philosophical antithesis of Modernism, New Urbanism is better described as a continuation of Modernism, or even as a neo-Modernist movement. Grant has even suggested that New Urbanism be called "a 'traditionalized Modernism' rather than a return to traditional values."[22] This unlikely hereditary relationship is particularly apparent from an analysis of the charters of the two movements.

The most obvious similarity between the 1933 Athens Charter (AC), produced by the fourth Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, or CIAM, and the 1996 Charter of the New Urbanism (CNU) is that both resulted from the coming together of prominent groups of planning and design professionals to develop a formal manifesto to address the greatest urban challenges of their respective eras. But the similarity goes even further: the CNU clearly seeks to take up the Modernist gauntlet by emulating the organizational structure and rhetorical framework of the AC. The Afterword of the CNU even acknowledges the influence of CIAM as an ideological predecessor, stating that "Not since the City Beautiful and Arts-and-Crafts movements at the turn of the century, or the CIAM in the 1920s, has there been an attempt to create a design vision that unifies the differing scales and disciplines shaping the built environment."[23]

Thus, while the formal qualities each movement has chosen to advocate are starkly different, the CNU clearly borrows much of its rhetoric from the AC, including its linking of "good" city form to desirable urban values. Yet, while New Urbanists have been explicit in adopting some of CIAM's representational signs, such as the style of its charter, they have adamantly asserted that they are anti-Modernists — or conversely, that the Modernists were anti-urban.[24] New Urbanists have thus placed themselves at the opposite end of the spectrum of urban ideologies vis-à-vis Modernists.

Among prominent advocates of these views, Emily Talen has described New Urbanism as a synthesis of historical forces in American urbanism, which she defines as "the vision and the quest to achieve the best human settlement possible in America, operating within the context of certain established principles."[25] These "recurrent principles" include "diversity, equity, community, connectivity, and the importance of civic and public space."[26]

In her book *New Urbanism and American Planning*, Talen identifies four planning "cultures" from which New Urbanism draws: incrementalism, plan-making, planned communities, and regionalism. Surprisingly, she does not recognize Modernism in this historical lineage, claiming that it constitutes "an anti-urbanist ideology that represents more of an antithesis than a source."[27] In a chapter on "Urbanism vs. Anti-Urbanism," she then explains how she perceives this polarization between New Urbanism and Modernism — which she asserts is "the near embodiment of anti-urbanism" with its "tendency toward separation, segregation, planning by monolithic elements like express highways, and the neglect of equity, place, the public realm, historical structure and the human scale of urban form."[28]

At least three items merit criticism in Talen's approach. First, it is worrisome that she claims that Modernism had an explicit ideology that fostered "conditions that impede the principles of diversity, connectivity, and equity." It has actually been widely acknowledged that Modernism strongly advocated these very values, particularly that of social equity, albeit through different physical means than New Urbanism.[29] She further uses her distinction between urbanism and anti-urbanism to discriminate between what she considers the positive and negative aspects of her planning cultures. Thus she selectively reconstructs the historical lineage of New Urbanism, weeding out all the "anti-urbanist" traits of Modernism from her antecedent planning cultures.

Second, Talen discusses social equity as "largely a matter of spatial equity, meaning that goods, services, facilities and other amenities and physical qualities of life are within physical reach of everyone."[30] By defining social equity as spatial equity, Talen seems to be undoing a painstaking attempt in her previous writings to deconstruct the accusation of New Urbanism as environmentally deterministic.[31] She is also setting New Urbanism up for the more trenchant criticism that it fails to accomplish spatial equity in practice, since many New Urbanist developments increase social segregation and effectively function as exclusive "club goods" for residents and guests.[32]

This leads to the third criticism of Talen's approach, namely, that she advances a disparate comparison between Modernist failures in practice and New Urbanist ideals in theory. This criticism will be elaborated on later in this article. But for now some exploration of the language of the respective charters of the two movements will provide a comparative context.

At numerous points in the AC and CNU, the language is sufficiently similar that a person unfamiliar with the histories of the two movements might think the two documents were written about the same urban context, perhaps by the same authors. This is especially true of the two movements' common disdain for the ubiquitous suburb, a development paradigm which was quite commonplace well before the principles of the Modernist movement were conceived. The accompanying table offers an extensive, though not exhaustive, comparison of some of the common language found in the two charters (FIG.1).

FIGURE 1. *Common Language — 1933 Athens Charter/1996 Charter of the New Urbanism.*

| | **Athens Charter (1933)** | **Charter of the New Urbanism (1996)** |
|---|---|---|
| Issue | Article : Clause — Text | Chapter : Page — Text |
| Importance of region | 1 : 1 — The City is only one element within an economic, social, and political complex that constitutes the region. No undertaking may be considered if it is not in accord with the harmonious destiny of the region. | 1 : 15 — The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world. Some of our most vexing problems need solutions that recognize the new economic and social unity of our regions. . . . |
| Comprehensive plan | 3 : 83 — The city must be studied within the whole of its region of influence. A regional plan will replace the simple municipal plan.<br>3 : 86 — It [the program] must bring together in fruitful harmony the natural resources of the site, the overall topography, the economic facts, the sociological demands, and the spiritual values. | 2 : 23 — Regionalism — the idea that metropolitan regions are stronger when they harmonize with their natural environments — is making more sense than ever. One way regions can begin fostering this link between economic and ecological health is by marshaling a comprehensive plan...<br>5 : 44 — It's important to design with the features of the land to define urban boundaries and establish a sense of identity. |
| Interrelationships between political, social, economic, and environmental factors and land and design ordinances | 3 : 91 — The course of events will be profoundly influenced by political, social, and economic factors. It is not enough to admit the necessity of a "land ordinance" and of certain principles of construction. Yet, it is possible . . . that the necessity of building decent shelters will suddenly emerge as an overriding obligation, and that this obligation will provide politics, social life, and the economy with precisely the coherent goal and program that they were lacking. | Preamble : v — We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.<br>17 : 109 — The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change. |
| History, preservation, tradition | 1 : 6 — Throughout history, specific circumstances have determined the characteristics of the city. . . . One can still recognize in city plans the original close-set nucleus of the early market town, the successive enclosing walls, and the directions of divergent routes.<br>1 : 7 — The spirit of the city has been formed over the years the simplest buildings have taken on an eternal value insofar as they symbolize the collective soul they are the armature of a tradition...<br>2 : 65 — Architectural assets must be protected, whether found in isolated buildings or in urban agglomerations. They form a part of the human heritage, and whoever owns them or is entrusted with their protection has the responsibility and the obligation to do whatever he legitimately can to hand this noble heritage down intact to the centuries to come. | 6 : 51 — Throughout time, people have developed vernacular design and building practices in response to their needs, desires and environments.<br>6 : 49 — In some places, we can still recognize the piece that each town and surrounding farmsteads played in shaping the pattern of the region's landscapes. We can see the precedents that give us bearings within patterns such as street grids and downtown cores.<br>27 : 173 — Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban society. For this urban evolution to occur successfully, there must be an implied "contract" about the nature of city building in which the contributions of previous generations are understood and creatively reinterpreted. . . . |

FIGURE 1. (CONTINUED)

| | Athens Charter (1933) | Charter of the New Urbanism (1996) |
|---|---|---|
| Issue | Article : Clause — Text | Chapter : Page — Text |
| Human scale, walkability, job-housing proximity | 2 : 41 — In the past, the dwelling and the workshop, being linked together by close and permanent ties, were situated near one another. The unforeseen expansion of machinism has disrupted those harmonious conditions. . . .<br>3 : 76 — The natural measurements of man himself must serve as a basis for all the scales that will be consonant with the life and diverse functions of the human being: a scale of measurements applying to areas and distances, a scale of distances that will be considered in relation to the natural walking pace of man. . . .<br>2 : 46 — The distances between places of work and places of residence must be reduced to a minimum. | Postscript : 181 — For five millennia, our human settlements were built to human scale, to the five- or ten-minute walk that defined neighborhoods, within which all of life's necessities and many of its frivolities could be found. Now we have elevators and cars allowing our cities to expand upward and evermore outward.<br>12 : 83 — Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy. |
| Schools as important elements of neighborhoods | 1 : 19 — . . . schools, as a general rule, are badly situated within the urban complex. | Foreword : 7 — The failure of school systems . . . is another massive problem, aggravated by the concentration of families with the most severe economic and behavioral difficulties in older urban areas. |
| Disdain for suburbs | 2 : 22 — Seen from the air, it (the suburb) reveals the disorder and incoherence of its distribution to the least experienced eye.<br>2 : 20 — The suburbs are laid out without any plan and without a normal connection to the city. . . . It (the suburb) has seriously compromised the destiny of the city and its possibilities of growth according to rule.<br>2 : 22 — The suburbs are often mere aggregations of shacks hardly worth the trouble of maintaining. Flimsily constructed little houses, boarded hovels, sheds thrown together out of the most incongruous materials. . . . Its bleak ugliness is a reproach to the city it surrounds. | 6 : 49 — Viewed from above, America's landscape now shows the enormous changes that human habitation has wrought over hundreds of years. The suburban patterns of alternating strip malls and circuitous street systems may be visually seductive, but they suggest an underlying lack of order, an endlessly repetitive, piecemeal approach to development.<br>Postscript : 182 — The strange objects we have flung about our landscape are built only for today. Most are cheap and shoddy. Grouped into strips, they constitute a hostile and aesthetically offensive environment. We have built a world of junk, a degraded environment. It may be profitable for a short term, but its long-term economic prognosis is bleak. |
| Criticism of contemporary urban approaches | 2 : 23 — By abruptly changing certain century-old conditions, the age of the machine has reduced the cities to chaos. | 6 : 51 — After World War II . . . traditional neighborhood building was replaced by radically transformed patterns. . . . |
| Negative externalities of suburbs | 2 : 21 — The population density is very low and the ground is barely exploited nevertheless, the city is obliged to furnish the suburban expanse with the necessary utilities and services. . . . The ruinous expense caused by so many obligations is shockingly disproportionate to the few taxes that such a scattered population can produce. | 9 : 69 — Low-density sprawl also is encouraged by building communities at densities that can't be served by public transit and with infrastructure costs that the existing tax base can't sustain. The same local fiscal pressures that encourage low-density development to enrich the tax base contribute to unnecessary low-density sprawl. |
| Parks and open space | 2 : 32 — The remoteness of the outlying open spaces does not lend itself to better living conditions in the congested inner zones of the city. | 18 : 119 — Parks and open spaces should be distributed within neighborhoods, and should be created and maintained to help define and connect neighborhoods. |
| Communal life | 2 : 35 — Contrary to what takes place in the "garden cities," the verdant areas will not be divided into small unit lots for private use but, instead, dedicated to the launching of the various communal activities that form the extensions of the dwelling. | 18 : 113 — Neighborhoods appear as balanced living environments when parks are the linchpin of a community. . . . Parks and open areas are the places that support neighborhood life and its celebrations. |
| Regional, multi-modal transportation systems | 2 : 56 — Traffic channels intended for multiple use must simultaneously permit automobiles to drive from door to door, pedestrians to walk from door to door, buses and tramcars to cover prescribed routes, trucks to go from supply chain centers to an infinite variety of distribution points, and certain vehicles to pass directly through the city. | 8 : 59 — The physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives. Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems should maximize access and mobility throughout the region while reducing dependence on the automobile. |

Rhetorical positioning common to the two charters such as that illustrated in the table could be cited at length.[33] This is precisely because it is the contexts of the two movements and the formal solutions each advocates, and not the ideology behind their common approach, that differ so notably. Thus, the paradigm shift advocated by Modernists in response to the negative outcomes of "the machinist age" is clearly different than that advocated by New Urbanists in response to the neg-

ative outcomes of the Modernist age. But the faith that both movements express in a "superior" design paradigm as a prescription for the myriad social, economic and environmental problems of their respective eras speaks to their common ethos. Stated another way, New Urbanism has established itself as Modernism for a new generation — a New Modernism — by adopting an explicitly anti-Modernist (neotraditional) formal language. Meanwhile, it has sought to accomplish Modernism's same essential goals in response to many of the same problems that Modernism failed to resolve.

From its ideological beginnings as expressed in the AC, Modernism was, above all, a formal response to the chaos of European urban centers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This had resulted primarily from the economic change provoked by the mechanization of various agricultural and industrial production processes, which brought a sudden migration of millions of workers to these urban centers. Simultaneous advancements in transportation technology, including streetcars and the introduction of the automobile, compounded the conditions of densification and disorder by creating new traffic and safety concerns.[34] As noted earlier, Modernists also abhorred the already abundant suburban expansion — now commonly referred to as sprawl — occurring in various metropolitan areas around the world, particularly within the U.S. The AC even went so far as to characterize suburbs as "one of the greatest evils of the century."[35]

The product of European leftist intellectuals, CIAM was initially closely tied to a socialist agenda, including ideas of land redistribution, social solidarity, and labor reform. Modernists decried the "machinist age" and called for regional planning efforts that would focus on allocating spatial autonomy to each of the four principal functions of the city: habitation, leisure, work and traffic.[36]

Among the most significant rationales used to justify the sweeping physical and social urban reforms advocated by CIAM was the idea that basic human values had gone awry in urban contexts due to environmental, economic and political imbalances resulting from the machinist era and its failure to respect the fact that "the city admits of a considerable moral value to which it is indissolubly attached."[37] Thus, by articulating its will to "restore" to the city the morality it once had, Modernism effectively established itself as a normative movement dedicated to improving the then current state of the pre-Modernist (what New Urbanists now refer to as "traditional") city.

In retrospect, it is essentially agreed today that Modernism's goals were largely utopian in scope and overly dependent on architectural, urban design, and physical planning solutions to primarily socio-political problems.[38] Nonetheless, the rapid rise to ubiquity of Modernist projects during the mid-twentieth century, which earned the movement the status of an international style, is evidence that its values had great appeal among design professionals, policymakers, and even the general public in some cases.

Yet, despite its laudable social goals, the selective application of Modernist principles in practice failed to realize the urban revolution the movement's founders had hoped for. Instead, they contributed to the exacerbation of conditions of social inequality and polarization through the creation of corporate downtowns, ghettoized public housing projects, greater sprawl and traffic gridlock, and a general decline in the quality of urban environments. Thus, not only did Modernist reengineering of "traditional" urban spaces not accomplish the socio-political agenda articulated by CIAM in the AC, but such reengineering also created spaces that were generally unsuitable for pedestrians, and that contributed to a general sense of anomie, alienation and estrangement in both urban and suburban settings.[39]

However, while Modernism has deeply affected the shape and, more importantly, the character of cities around the globe, most of the ills of contemporary urban life cannot be attributed to the physical urban transformation it caused. Nevertheless, the tendency to blame the disfunctionalities of cities on Modernism is deeply entrenched among architects, urban designers, and planners, perhaps most notably among New Urbanists. Such blame can be traced back to the writings of Jane Jacobs and Charles Jencks, among others.[40]

Kate Bristol has attempted to reveal this connection by arguing that the association of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing project's demolition with the failure of modern architecture has constituted a powerful myth: "By placing the responsibility for the failure of public housing on designers, the myth shifts attention from the institutional or structural sources of public housing problems."[41] Mary Comerio has expanded on this notion:

> *While it is natural for architectural critics to focus on the stuff design is made of: space, proportion, structure, form and other essential elements of building, it is unnatural to ignore the social, economic, and political structure of society that ultimately shapes what architects do, how they do it, and why.*[42]

Nevertheless, the legacy of Modernism has been widely disparaged in cities around the world — particularly in the U.S., where the separation of urban functions, focus on automobile spaces, and creation of nondescript architecture led to the deterioration of downtowns and other older urban areas. And it is in this context that New Urbanism's mission to "restore" urban centers and reconfigure suburbia using architecture that celebrates "local history, climate, ecology, and building practice" has been presented as a direct contestation of Modernism, and synonymous with redressing the negative effects of Modernist design.[43]

As defined in its charter, New Urbanism, is, therefore a formal response to the decline of downtowns in the U.S. Yet, the widespread abandonment of inner cities occurred as a result of the market- and policy-sustained preference for sub-

urban landscapes, and to the unsustainable, economically and racially segregated, low-density, automobile-oriented way of life that they allowed.[44] Yet, like Modernists, the reaction of New Urbanists to these societal ills has been to break conceptually with the design status quo and establish an entirely new paradigm that extols the urban values, though not necessarily the urban forms, of a previous era. For Modernists the supposed moral foundation of the preindustrial city was a key source of inspiration, whereas the pre-Modernist city's assumed "sense of community" has been the principal mantra driving the New Urbanist charge.

Also like Modernists, by dismissing the value of the predominant development style to evolve in the U.S. — the single-family-home suburb — as a tradition in its own right, New Urbanists have taken a position antagonistic to "traditional" development. This position is Modernist in spirit in that it seeks to ascribe the identity of "other" to the contemporary built environments of the majority of U.S. metropolitan areas. Indeed, these areas are largely considered as unsuitable spaces in need of comprehensive, rationalistic reworking — much like Modernist developments in Africa, East Asia, India, and Latin America toward the end of the colonial period and beyond.[45] In this sense, the grand design of Le Corbusier's Chandigarh is no more divorced from the historically compact urban form of Northern India than is Moule Polyzoides' pedestrian-oriented urban village concept for Playa Vista, California, from the historically auto-oriented suburb composed of single-family homes so common throughout the U.S. Similarly, neither is Costa/Niemeyer's ultramodern Brazilian capital city more imposed upon its previously undeveloped natural surroundings than is Robert A.M. Stern's New Urbanist Celebration, Florida, on its own previously undeveloped wetlands.

To fully appreciate the philosophical similarities between the two movements, despite their apparent formal polarity, it is necessary to look beyond the rhetoric of their respective charters and proponents, and take a closer look at the built results of their values, and what these values reveal about their common ethos.

## MOTIVATIONS BEHIND NEW URBANISM AND IMPLICATIONS IN PRACTICE (IT'S THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ECONOMY, STUPID!)

Just as there was a gap between the aims of the Modernist charter and the actual impacts of Modernist projects, so too New Urbanism has struggled to achieve its stated goals in built form. In her comparison of Modernist failures in practice and New Urbanist ideals in theory, Talen recognized that "[t]he initial rhetoric coming from CIAM might have sounded right, but the translation of principles into city building was recognized as highly problematic."[46] However, she failed to perceive the same phenomenon in the case of New Urbanism. A fairer approach, and the one advanced in this article, is to compare the similarities between Modernist and New Urbanist *ideals*, and to a lesser extent, Modernist and New Urbanist *outcomes*, while acknowledging the stark contrasts in design approaches.

New Urbanist projects to date have had mixed results regarding the theoretical premises of the movement. Like Modernists, New Urbanists have expressed high hopes of serving the disadvantaged, yet after a quarter century of practice, they have done more to suppress cultural differences, reduce social diversity, serve the interests of developers, enable sprawl, and reduce housing affordability and public housing.[47] And without being able to deliver the socio-political changes identified in its charter, New Urbanism is beginning to show signs of suffering the same fate as Modernism, as developers retain the most marketable elements of the movement (its aesthetic elements) while dismissing those that are more controversial and difficult to attain (its socioeconomic and environmental elements). As can be seen in many New Urbanist developments, so-called traditional architecture in the form of front porches and well-manicured tree-lined streets has become ubiquitous, while other aspirations such as higher density, greater pedestrian and transit choice, greater affordability, social diversity, and income mix have largely failed to materialize.[48]

This is not imputable to New Urbanists alone. The status quo of political and economic power, consumption patterns, and cultural norms is formidable and clearly difficult to change. But the fact is that the sprawling automobile-dependent, single-use, and placeless urban and suburban settlements decried by New Urbanists are less the result of willful Modernist designers than of development practices established and perpetuated by institutions such as the Federal Housing Administration, municipal zoning and subdivision regulations, and discriminatory bank red-lining and home-loan policies. Yesterday as today, without a paradigm shift in the cultural, political and economic institutions that support inequitable and unsustainable development practices, "good" design is at best an exercise in wishful thinking, and most likely little more than a superficial embellishment of the status quo. To date, many New Urbanist projects have proven relatively homogeneous in both design and socioeconomic composition. They have even at times exacerbated social segregation by not only neglecting to produce more affordable housing, but actually contributing to its destruction (e.g., some HOPE VI projects), or by contributing to increased property values. While it is not within the scope of this article to evaluate whether such impacts are good or bad, it is clear that they are not in line with stated New Urbanist objectives.

The search for "the public good" or "the good community" that characterizes New Urbanism has always been an integral part of urban design and planning, and probably always will be. However, these abstract notions also have been, and probably always will be, deeply contested by social theorists

who highlight the need to plan for diverse publics.[49] So far, however, instead of accepting and celebrating difference and diversity, New Urbanist developments have largely addressed such ideas with an assimilationist approach, using middle-class — primarily white protestant — taste as a model.[50] This prompts a questioning of the motivations behind the movement and its implications in practice.[51] As Hall has argued:

> *New Urbanism's use of the term community to imply social and economic plurality is largely symbolic, disguising continued advocacy of conventional real estate development practices. That the movement claims to remedy complex social and economic issues without serious consideration of non-mainstream populations amounts to a willful disengagement from issues of race, ethnicity and poverty.*[52]

Peter Marcuse's claim that New Urbanism is neither new nor urban, legitimating as it does a suburbanization of the urban fringe, is well known.[53] But in *Planning the Good City*, Jill Grant further asserted that "[w]e have shifted from a modernist paradigm in which we concentrated on function over form to a practice that increasingly privileges form as a mechanism to attract investment."[54] About the Modernist values of New Urbanism, she writes:

> *It retains a commitment to the model of planner/designer as expert. It relies on an expanding economy. It continues to try to accommodate the car and rising consumer expectations. It employs codes and rules to order society. . . . It represents a reform of the modern settlement pattern rather than a replacement of it.*[55]

Thus, despite the call for sustainability and equity embedded in its charter, the developments built to date under the New Urbanist crest "problematize the character of space rather than the social structure that generates it," Grant writes.[56] "The key values driving urban form in the contemporary period include capital (property values and return on investment), security (fear of difference and crime), and identity (need for status and self-actualization)."[57] This makes developers favor New Urbanist projects because they usually carry a market premium and appreciate faster than other projects.[58] New Urbanism will therefore only thrive for as long as it continues to respond well to those values — assuming a radical change to those values does not occur. Thus, like Modernism before it, the altruistic goals of New Urbanism have largely fallen prey in practice to the more immediate need of self-preservation.

The avoidance in practice of a more focused contestation of the socio-political economy that creates social and spatial inequalities has rendered New Urbanists virtually powerless in resolving these inequalities. They may even be complicit in sustaining them, given their focus on what Mike Pyatok has called

> *. . . the symptoms of these deeper problems as they manifest themselves in the physical environment, and on the immediate policies that shape it, like zoning, fire and building regulations. As a consequence, their charter's principles of environmental justice ring hollow when compared to their actions in practice.*[59]

Focusing on how to plan the "good community" through design has consequently been not only myopic, but damaging, by virtue of having diverted attention from issues of social justice, and by appeasing those who have the power to confront them.

## TWO CITIES ON THE EDGE OF UTOPIA

The city of Brasilia and the new town of Celebration are case studies that illustrate the social ethos common to both Modernism and New Urbanism, as well as the difficulty of putting the altruistic values shared by the two design-based movements into practice.

There is by now a sufficient body of literature on the design elements and spatial patterns of Brasilia and Celebration that neither a complete description of these elements and patterns, nor a review of this literature, will be included here.[60] However, Brasilia and Celebration can be interpreted as the pinnacles of the utopian visions of their respective movements and the ultimate physical embodiments of the values of their respective designers. As such, they provide an ideal dyad for examining the ethos common to Modernism and New Urbanism.

On the surface the two places seem unrelated and utterly different. Where Brasilia is grand, Celebration is quaint. Where Brasilia emphasizes the rational, Celebration emphasizes the emotional. Where Brasilia presses untiringly toward the values of a brave new world, Celebration defines itself by replicating the old values of small-town life and the "American Dream." Yet, as different as these two environments are, it is all the more intriguing that they were planted from the same philosophical seed, namely, the belief that urban form can actively, and predictably, determine social behavior.

## BRASILIA

> *Inviolable rules will guarantee the inhabitants good homes, comfortable working conditions, and the enjoyment of leisure. The soul of the city will be brought to life by the clarity of the plan.*
>
> *— Athens Charter*

Brasilia will forever loom large as the crowning achievement of Modernist city planning.[61] Vast, wholly new, and rationally conceived, the Plano Piloto, or Brasilia proper, was

intended to leave nothing to chance. Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer's masterpiece is an iconic city, reflecting intense confidence in the future, and equally intense faith in the ability of spatial order (and the creators of this order, the master architect and planner) to effect social change **(figs.2–5)**.

Writing in 1989, James Holston eloquently captured the fundamental raison d'être of the Brazilian capital, stating that "more than merely the symbol of a new age, its design and construction were intended as means to create a new age."[62] This overarching intention permeates the entire metropolis, and marks every aspect of its physical form with the values of its designers. Yet, while symbolism in Brasilia, at least for its own sake, is clearly secondary to efforts to instigate real change in a nation whose political leaders at the time were fixated on modernization, it is equally clear that symbols — in this case spatial symbols — were always intended by Brasilia's designers to play an important role in a planned process of ambient socialization.

As Holston has pointed out, "The CIAM architect is therefore not merely a designer of objects. In the context of total planning, he is primarily an organizer of a new kind of society; he is an organizer of social change."[63] In the Plano Piloto, the result is an architecture and overall urban form whose elements become symbols reinforcing the process of socialization. Yet, this is accomplished while maintaining just enough familiarity and connection to certain past typologies to achieve the desired disorientation and social conformity without sacrificing existing mechanisms of control. First, a uniform but monumental scale told inhabitants that the powerful forces of change behind the city's creation could not be fought, and austere materials and standardized formal properties communicated that life would be better due to the arrival of a more efficient and egalitarian age. Second, functional separations told inhabitants that traditional ways of using space had lost their validity, and constant, mechanized movement communicated that rapid change would be the new status quo.



**figure 2. (top left)** *Barren pedestrian realm along the avenue of ministries (the sign reads "electronic policing"). Photo by Josué Torres, 2005.*
**figure 3. (top right)** *A semi-permanent informal market in the central area of Brasilia. Photo by Josué Torres, 2005.*
**figure 4. (bottom left)** *An itinerant informal market of street vendors in the central area of Brasilia. Photo by Josué Torres, 2005.*
**figure 5. (bottom right)** *Poor people and people of color in public space in Brasilia. Photo by Josué Torres, 2005.*

Taken together, these spatial symbols of scale (both of individual buildings and whole blocks), material, adjacency (both separation and proximity of land uses, services, and structures), and movement were the principal didactic conduits through which the modernization of all of Brazil was eventually intended to take place — not only on the ground, but in the collective psyche of the people. In this sense, in Brasilia one finds a master plan of spatial relationships and building typologies developed with the sole purpose of imposing a new set of social values upon an existing, albeit dislocated, population.

These forms and spaces embodied the spirit of the Modernist agenda of "collective social organization," and represented a complex system of semiotic codes that operated at the functional level of daily activity by altering the private and, even more so, public behaviors of both individuals and the collective. This happened through a sweeping resignification of traditional spaces — or, in the context of a Brasilia built entirely from scratch, of spaces traditionally found in other, older cities. As Holston put it: "In this embodiment of intention, they [the designers] propose an instrumental relation between architecture and society: the people who inhabit their buildings will be forced to adopt the new forms of social experience, collective association, and personal habit their architecture represents."[64]

In Brazil in 1960, this meant that streets were suddenly no longer for pedestrians, public spaces were no longer for chance encounters or impromptu activities, and private dwellings were no longer ostentatious markers of socioeconomic status. Rather, Holston wrote, "Modernist architecture redefines each of these elements and develops their classification as an instrument of social transformation."[65] This transformation was intended to be implemented via physical forms and spatial relationships that were so completely different from those of status-quo development models — such as traditional (pre-Modernist) urban environments — that their newness would force users into a particular and predictable pattern of behavior. This is the essence of the philosophy of environmental determinism.

Yet, despite the intentions and comprehensive planning of both Costa and Niemeyer in designing, and the Brazilian government in building and populating, the new capital city, the failure of this philosophy in the Plano Piloto is by now clear. This is primarily because the design of Brasilia, and its strict codes of conduct, negated almost entirely the history of the people whose lives it intended to improve. Such negation inevitably provoked a rejection by many inhabitants of the very concept of the utopian city and its expectations of behavioral conformity.[66] This rejection has continued to manifest itself in multiple ways: unanticipated utilization and modification of space, unregulated peripheral development, the rise of peripheral squatter settlements, and general social stratification. All of these adaptations and subversions of the master plan, while they cannot necessarily be characterized as negative per se, have certainly had the effect of deconstructing any illusion of utopia; and this fact in itself belies the notion that urban design can predict or shape social behavior. In the ultimate, most ironic disassociation between its physical design and its ideological legitimations, Brasilia has served to advance either a critique of bourgeois society or its establishment, depending on the political leaning of the Brazilian ruler in turn.

This is not to say that social behavior, or even societal values, are not affected by physical planning and design. On the contrary, there is plenty of evidence in Brasilia, as well as countless other contexts, that the design of physical spaces can and does have a significant impact on what users do and/or don't do and value. Just one example is the dramatic reduction in pedestrian activity in Brasilia compared to that of other Brazilian cities, due both to the significantly higher capacity of Brasilia's automobile infrastructure and the Plano Piloto's lack of pedestrian-supportive circulation elements. As a result of this increased focus on motorized travel, the value that the city's inhabitants place on owning an automobile is higher than for other Brazilians, since essentially everyone who has the option to drive does.

However, while there can be little doubt that physical design affects individual and group behavior to a certain extent, neither can there be much doubt that individual and group behaviors reciprocally affect physical design, perhaps even to an equal extent. In Brasilia this is demonstrated by what Holston has called the "familiarization" of the Modernist city, in which "traditional" values and long-held perceptions of how urban space is used (and, perhaps more importantly, how social relations are conducted) have battled the strictly prescribed uses and social interactions intended by the master plan to a stalemate. The result is an altogether new, largely hybridized urban form, and a unique urban culture that is neither traditional nor modern.[67]

## CELEBRATION

> *The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change. It's therefore not a question of whether to control land development, but rather what to control, and to what end.*
>
> *— Charter of the New Urbanism*

Aside from Seaside, Florida, the "new town" of Celebration is perhaps the most significant New Urbanist project yet constructed.[68] And, like Brasilia, Celebration is a seminal work of socially didactic urbanism. Designed by Robert A.M. Stern and Cooper, Robertson and Partners, among other prominent New Urbanist firms, this "neotraditional stepchild" of Walt Disney's Experimental Prototype


FIGURE 6 (TOP). *Disney advertisement of Celebration.*
FIGURE 7 (CENTER). *Children playing at a fountain in Celebration. Photo by Vicente Irazábal, 2006.*
FIGURE 8 (BOTTOM). *Mixed-use, retail street in Celebration. Photo by Vicente Irazábal, 2006.*
FIGURE 9 (TOP RIGHT). *Streets of cafes and restaurants in Celebration. Photo by Vicente Irazábal, 2006.*

Community of Tomorrow, or EPCOT, was envisioned to showcase how a high quality of life can be achieved in the future by returning to the pre-Modernist small town as a development paradigm (FIGS.6–9).[69]

As the original developer of the town, Disney made certain that Celebration "got the full new urbanist treatment."[70] True to form, Celebration exhibits all its design staples — abundant green spaces, centralized "Main Street" shopping, narrow streets with a pedestrian focus, varied housing types packaged in nostalgic architectural styles, pre-Modernist lot configurations (narrow frontages, back-alley garage access, front porches, narrow street setbacks, etc.), and strict building codes, to name a few. The town's spatial configurations, architectural details, and overall *esprit* were all deliberately planned to create a deep sense of history, identity and community in a place that was created out of whole cloth. They were also intended to serve as spatial symbols of a rejection of extant forms of development, particularly suburban sprawl.

According to Andrew Ross, a former Celebration resident-researcher, this should come as no surprise, since "like most blueprints for the pursuit of happiness, the reason for Celebration was rooted in repulsion for the existing order of things."[71] This repulsion is communicated through the neo-traditional urban design of Celebration at multiple levels, according to a network of semiotic codes that work together not only to tell people that life is better "in here," but to sell them on the "traditional" values that made life in the past preferable to life today. For example, Celebration's pedestrian scale and infrastructure are intended to tell inhabitants that walking, not driving, is the preferred mode of travel. And "traditional" architecture, rooted in American colonial styles, announces that the pioneer spirit and "American dream" have been reborn. Meanwhile, abundant public places communicate that social interaction and community ties are more an expectation than a choice. And the town's very name tells inhabitants exactly how they should feel about living there.

As the previous discussion of Brasilia shows, this use of architectonic form and spatial order at the service of a larger social agenda is nothing new, and certainly not unique to the

New Urbanist movement. But this pedagogy-by-design is especially clear in Celebration's old-town character. Like Brasilia, the master plan of Celebration is a "subversive search for origins," denying other aspects of U.S. history for strategic purposes.[72] Specifically, Celebration characterizes the normative vision of neotraditionalism as the way urban life should be, as the natural continuation of age-old urban values. And it situates the predominant design paradigm of the past half-century — suburban sprawl — in direct opposition to this "natural" continuum. In this way, Celebration's New Urbanist designers successfully frame "nontraditional" (e.g., Modernist and suburban) development models as the anomalous "other," a mere mistake in the long history of urbanism — and a brief one at that. So framed, "nontraditional" (more accurately in this case "non-neotraditional") urban design is divorced from history, no longer a tradition in its own right, and therefore without legitimacy and/or merit. As Ross has pointed out: "Flush with utopian assurances handed down from centuries of American pioneer settlement, Celebration [is] yet another fresh start in a world gone wrong," albeit one that reverts to the past, rather than the future, for inspiration.[73]

Indications of this rejection of existing Modernist and suburban development models are abundant in Celebration. Particularly obvious is the choice of available architectural styles, as listed in the original Celebration Pattern Book, and as now visible on the town's not-so-vintage streets: Classical, Victorian, Colonial Revival, Coastal, Mediterranean, and French. In the context of a former wetland near Orlando, these references invariably evoke an exoticism of distance, be it physical or temporal — and so too a mythos of long-held tradition. Yet, it is not just any tradition, but specific traditions; and it is not just any historic period, but a specific historic period that these styles point to, namely, the colonial United States and its predominantly white, Christian, pre-Modernist urban values.[74]

As already discussed, the central values promoted by New Urbanism and showcased in Celebration, such as community interaction, socioeconomic integration, and resource conservation, are largely at odds with the values demonstrated in both historical and present-day U.S. development traditions. Ironically, however, they are largely consistent with those outlined in the Athens Charter. Thus, given that the socialist context within which Modernism originally developed and took hold has long since disappeared in the U.S., the New Urbanist rewriting of the progressive values of the Modernist movement as timeless (i.e., deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of Christian Europe as embodied in the architecture and spatial order of the colonial United States and resurrected in Celebration) has allowed the movement to have enormous and simultaneous appeal to both conservative and liberal consumers.

This reframing of Modernism's core values from a bold vision (almost to the extent of being revolutionary) to a nostalgic "return to tradition," but without the loss of modern conveniences, demonstrates how the social ethos that Modernism and New Urbanism share has been shaped into two diametrically opposed urban forms by two vastly different socio-political contexts. Clearly, Celebration is not Modernist in form. Yet, there can be no doubt that this quaint company town with high-tech amenities is a transfiguration of the Modernist aspirations of the EPCOT vision to suit the traditionally oriented values of the turn-of-the-century U.S. consumer. Thus, despite its emphasis on pre-Modernist urban form, and its attempts to engender pre-Modernist urban values, Celebration's philosophical origins are clearly rooted in Modernism.

While Disney no longer owns or operates the town, the controlled social environment dictated by the strict rules of its urban form is still the norm. This degree of formal control is not uncommon in other contemporary planned communities, and architecture in urban settings has indeed always subscribed to some sense of aesthetic order. Yet, the coordinated orderliness of Celebration is a decidedly Modernist invention, given that historically "authentic" places are undeniably messy.[75]

The messiness of history, however, has caught up with Celebration with each passing year, and despite its strict controls, unexpected deviations in both form and the behavior of residents, have become commonplace. Again, this is primarily due to the fact that the city's design and strict codes of conduct largely negate the history of the predominantly suburban population that relocated to fill its homes, churches and schools. As was the case in Brasilia, such negation has provoked a rejection on the part of many of Celebration's residents of the unfamiliar social environment, and of its constant formal reinforcement of the simultaneously pre-Modernist and progressive urban values that they are expected to embrace.

As was also the case in Brasilia, this rejection has manifested itself in multiple ways: unanticipated utilization and modification of space, undesired polarization of political interests working in opposition to the planned order, and residents driving out of town to do their shopping at big-box stores due to the boutique-dominated shopping on its main commercial street. Interestingly enough, exactly as was the case in Brasilia, the result is an altogether new, largely hybridized urban form/culture that is neither traditional nor Modernist, neither small town nor suburb.

Residents of Celebration have paid a premium to participate in this experiment in the "good community."[76] However, despite its form as a small town, critics have dubbed Celebration "a conventional suburban subdivision," and they have decried its lack of social diversity, affordable housing, and neighborhood-related retail.[77] Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins have attested to the lack of racial diversity in the town, claiming that most of the African Americans appear to be the nannies of white babies.[78] Additionally, the damage to natural wetlands and creation of its artificial lakes

has raised questions about the real level of ecological commitment within the New Urbanism.

Finally, Celebration's design authenticity and diversity has also been questioned, as its buildings make use of faux windows and columns, and its codes dictate taste in areas like front porch furniture and window coverings.[79] In Marshall's impression, "The relative commercial success of Celebration shows a continuing American appetite for the fake, the ersatz, and the unreal."[80] Although the formal expression of this "design totalitarianism" in New Urbanist projects is very different than that of Modernism, there can be no doubt that it echoes a Modernist abhorrence of difference and disorder, and that standardization of the designers' taste is paramount.[81]

## ONE CONTINUUM, ONE ETHOS

This article has challenged the common perception of the New Urbanist movement as a return to "traditional" urban development models and the values associated with them, as well as the self-identification of the movement's followers as strict anti-Modernists. It has done so by placing New Urbanism and Modernism on the same historical continuum, and by showing that the philosophical similarities between the two movements are as abundant as are the formal and contextual differences.

On the one hand, Modernism and New Urbanism can be interpreted as independently constructed reactions to two distinct urban phenomena — central city deterioration due to overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure in the case of the former, and central-city decline due to suburban outmigration and peripheral sprawl in the case of the latter. These occurred at different points in time and within notably different political contexts — one more forward-looking and socially progressive (pre-fascist Europe), and the other more backward-looking and socially conservative (present-day United States). Yet, on the other hand, due simply to the chronology of the two movements, New Urbanism (and neotraditional development more generally) must also be understood as a direct continuatation of the legacy of Modernist city planning, since it relies on essentially Modernist principles as the backbone of its philosophy.[82]

By virtue of its call to revisit "traditional" — explicitly defined in the Charter of the New Urbanism as pre-Modernist — forms of development, New Urbanism advocates a decidedly anti-Modernist urban form which has, simultaneously, decidedly Modernist ambitions — namely, a comprehensive restructuring of the status quo. Framed as such, the neotraditional values of New Urbanism become a normative mechanism for damage control vis-à-vis the failed social and environmental urban restructuring efforts of Modernism beginning in the late 1920s.[83] This reading of New Urbanism's relationship to Modernism is consistent with the view of a number of contemporary thinkers who consider that, like sound and silence, the very concepts of the traditional (and so too the neotraditional) and the modern are simultaneously mutually exclusive and codependent. What this means is that any discussion of one requires implicit reference to the other; or, as Jane M. Jacobs put it, "tradition is (not) modern."[84] At the very least, a comparison of the original charters of the Modernist and New Urbanist movements reveals that New Urbanism belongs to the Modernist genealogy, born as it is out of a similar approach to the spatial analysis of, and physical response to, the perceived social, economic and environmental ills of its contemporary society.

Perhaps the strongest evidence that the two seemingly opposed movements fall along the same ideological continuum, despite their vastly different contexts and formal language, is their mutual faith in physical planning as a mechanism for social reform.[85] Thus, the spirit of the AC, that "Architecture is the key to everything," is carried on in the CNU, which identifies "the reassertion of fundamental urban design principles at the neighborhood scale" as "the heart of New Urbanism."[86]

The expert capacity and conscious duty of design professionals (architects, urban designers, planners, and developers) to bring about social change is also central to both Modernism and New Urbanism. Thus, each movement has envisioned how the design professional may offer a physical image at different scales (from the residential, or cellular, to the regional, or systemwide) of a socially healthy city which can be brought into being by formal means.[87] Yet, even New Urbanist supporter James Howard Kunstler has pointed out that New Urbanism is largely dependent on the same economic mechanisms as the "sprawl-meisters," and that there is little reason to believe that "just tweaking the municipal codes and building slightly better housing subdivisions and squeezing chain stores under the condominiums and hiding the parking lots behind the buildings" will make our "derelict towns" habitable again.[88]

New Urbanists' concentrated efforts to undo the effects of Modernist or "nontraditional" development amount to a conscious process of social and ecological reverse engineering which, paradoxically, flows through the same basic philosophical conduit of environmental determinism that brought about such effects in the first place. Thus, New Urbanism's a priori diagnosis of lack of community as a fundamental cancer of both urban and suburban contemporary contexts, and its subsequent prescription of neotraditional design principles as a way to treat, or perhaps even cure, this ill, is reminiscent of Modernism's attempts to address centuries of structurally ingrained socioeconomic inequities and growing environmental degradation by returning to the preindustrial "raw materials of urbanism," and providing the urban working class with adequate "sun, vegetation, and space."[89]

The fundamental lesson to be learned from comparing the ethos of "erasure and reinscription" common to both

Modernism and New Urbanism is that normative visions based on the philosophy of environmental determinism do, in fact, have the power to effect social change.[90] However, these visions cannot be implemented in a vacuum — that is to say, in completely neutral or homogeneous cultural contexts — because such contexts do not exist. This fact effectively precludes these visions from accomplishing their complete set of objectives, since the visions themselves are compromised as soon as the specific values embodied in their formal manifestations (e.g., the spaces they create) differ from the values or behaviors of the users of these spaces. Thus, normative movements such as Modernism and New Urbanism that define themselves largely by the extent to which they can control not only social behavior, but social values, are predisposed to fail because the ideal social conditions that they seek, by virtue of being ideal, fail to allow for the compromise of values between old and new, traditional and nontraditional, that must occur during the very process of change that they seek to instigate.

In this sense, the spirit of scripted revolution that can be said to characterize both Modernism and New Urbanism greatly negates the unscripted process of evolution that will inevitably lead to a reciprocity of influence between form and function, such that the multiplicity of values enacted upon, and embodied in, a given space by its users alters its intended use — and so too the urban values that it engenders. This negation results in an ongoing tension, and, as Talen has pointed out, this tension "between the idiosyncrasies of the everyday life of local residents, and the counter force of centralized, Haussmannesque authority, is not easily resolved."[91]

Ultimately, both Modernists and New Urbanists have been right to assume that their respective design paradigms can and will change the social behaviors of the inhabitants of their developments. However, as Brasilia and Celebration demonstrate, they have been wrong to assume that they can control these processes of change, or predict the behavioral outcomes to which strict formal controls will eventually lead. It is therefore inherently problematic to suppose that a given set of values can be fossilized into a given urban form. As the legacy of Modernism has shown, the best-designed, most comprehensively planned cities are still replete with racial tension, crime, class segregation, and largely unequal distribution of resources. Today New Urbanists acknowledge the complexity and interconnectedness of issues that affect urban transformations, advocate for a multidisciplinary approach to resolving socio-spatial problems, and market themselves in a way that appeals to a broad cross-section of the U.S. consumer public. Yet the goals of New Urbanism are ultimately still unduly influenced by faith in social control, and they are excessively reliant on environmental determinism as a strategy for social harmony, much as was the case with Modernism.

If New Urbanism hopes to reshape the U.S. urban fabric (and, more importantly, the urban values of people that call the U.S. home) in a comprehensive way, vastly different social, economic and cultural groups will eventually have to live together in their developments. While this may be the dream of progressive thinkers, it is evident that not all of these groups share the same idea of how space ought to be used. Nor are they all likely to have the same notion of what constitutes "traditional values." Recent endorsements of New Urbanism by Christian organizations, for example, have expressed explicitly that such support is due to the perceived potential of neotraditional urban spaces to provide "opportunity for spontaneous ministry."[92] Such micro-motivated support for neotraditionalism at the grassroots level makes two things clear. One is the degree to which a self-selected population predisposed to the "traditional" values espoused by New Urbanism is likely to dominate its proliferation. Another is just how unlikely it will be that "new" forms of physical urbanism designed to encourage a strict interpretation of "good" social behavior can accommodate the diverse values of a diverse world, and thereby eliminate the fundamental social problems that the CNU identifies.[93]

New Urbanism is by now widely acknowledged as both a sophisticated and mature, if idealistic, urban design movement, and it is increasingly apparent that its contribution to twenty-first-century urbanism, as well as its historical legacy, will be significant. The principal challenge facing New Urbanists as their movement continues to gain momentum and popular support is how to evolve as an ideology. This will require accepting compromises without yielding base values to the extent that the movement itself, and its laudable efforts to make needed improvements to the U.S., and increasingly global, urban landscape, lose all meaning. This said, the time has come for New Urbanists to accept their philosophical lineage in order to learn from the failures of Modernism, and so too be able to look in the mirror to acknowledge the limitations of their vision, in addition to its considerable power.

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On Conservation

# Historic District Conservation in China: Assessment and Prospects

ZHU QIAN

**This study examines policies and practices related to the conservation of historic districts in China, where urban conservation has become a significant concern and pressing issue in the present era of economic reform and urban redevelopment. In addition to illustrating the evolution of approaches to historic district conservation, the study reveals some of the social and political problems that have arisen as a result of the weakness of current state-led urban conservation practice. It concludes by proposing a collaborative approach to urban conservation among state and nonstate actors, facilitated by changes to current institutional and funding frameworks. Such an approach might help meet the challenge posed by conflicts between the country's urban conservation and redevelopment agendas.**

Tremendous changes have emerged in Chinese cities since 1980 as a result of the incorporation of market forces into the economy and the revival of land and property development. At the same time, the transition from a command to a market economy has provided an excellent opportunity to examine the Chinese urban built environment under conditions of profound institutional and administrative change.

Among the major shifts brought by this transition has been a desire to maximize the economic potential of scarce inner-city land. In the past two decades this has resulted in the demolition of old buildings, the clearance of slums, the resettlement of populations from central-city areas, and the erection of new buildings at a furious pace. This push for change has also greatly threatened urban heritage, one of the main embodiments and expressions of local identity. For instance, urban redevelopment in Beijing is now blamed for the wholesale demolition of *hutong*, the traditional lanes and quadrangle houses of the city, without heed for heritage controls or the social consequences for displaced residents.[1]

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Driven by an ideology of globalization, capital flows into urban redevelopment in China present a major threat to the nation's cultural heritage; and recently, contentious issues related to conservation vis-à-vis redevelopment have gained prominence on the urban planning agenda. On the one hand, this climate of conflict reflects the pressures of the present real estate boom and the issuance of much stricter rural land expropriation policies in the mid-1990s. But it also reflects recognition of the detrimental impacts on urban heritage of redevelopment-dominant urbanization.

The term "historic district conservation" (*lishi jiequ baohu*) first appeared in Chinese conservation contexts when the State Council recognized a second group of 38 Famous Historic Cultural Cities in 1986. The policy embodied an attempt to address the limitations of the conservation approach employed with regard to the first group of 24 such cities identified in 1982, and the need to respond to threats posed by a new surge of urban redevelopment nationwide. Since then, historic district conservation efforts have aimed to reclaim urban heritage as a means of promoting and solidifying evidence of a collective past. Since these activities began, however, the search for consensus in resolving conservation/redevelopment conflicts has been complicated by the plurality of interests in historic districts, and by the uneven impact of state-led conservation programs on different socioeconomic classes.

In China, culturally, economically and politically elite conservation activities have increasingly raised concerns that cannot be resolved by the state alone.[2] For example, powerful, state-determined conservation practices have often been based on arbitrary determinations of what is (and what is not) worthy of preservation, and have tended to sacrifice the interests of more socially and economically marginal groups.[3] Evidence indicates that the weakness and ineffectiveness of current conservation efforts can only be overcome through collaborative action involving the multiple stakeholders typical in historic districts.

This study provides an empirical investigation of how China has conducted historic district conservation, with a particular focus at the municipal level. Its purpose is to understand some of the reasons behind the choice of legal, institutional and funding mechanisms — and ultimately to propose policy recommendations. It argues that the localization of China's urban planning structures and the regional diversity of its urban heritage make it important to decentralize urban heritage conservation activities. However, local state-led historic district conservation activities within a market economy are presently limited by a lack of public resources as well as by conflicts between state and nonstate interests. In addition, such efforts are hampered by weak conventional institutional and funding mechanisms and gaps in relevant legal frameworks. These problems have become increasingly noticeable at a time of rapid urbanization and redevelopment, when every attempt is being made to define a new modern image for Chinese cities. A collaborative conservation approach addressing the various interests together through a series of legal, institutional and funding changes would seem to be the most effective response to this situation.

## THE EVOLUTION OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION PRACTICE

Contemporary policies on heritage conservation in China can be traced back as far as 1922, when the Archeology Research Institute, the country's first heritage conservation agency, was established at Peking University. In the years that followed, the promulgation of the Cultural Relics Preservation Act (1930), the Cultural Relics Preservation Bylaw (1931), and the Organization Regulations of Central Cultural Relics Preservation Committee (1932) established a legal framework for heritage conservation and management. World War II and the ensuing Civil War eventually rendered enforcement of these statutes impossible. Nevertheless, they provided a foundation for China's post-1949 heritage conservation measures.[4]

Such early conservation activities were primarily led by professional architects and historians trained in Japan or the West. However, between 1949 and 1966 the introduction of a series of heritage ordinances and regulations, the establishment of central and local administrative agencies, and the development of heritage research institutes all contributed to an incipient new heritage conservation system in China. Tragically, as if conservation statutes did not exist, the "Demolishing Four Olds" (*po si jiu*) movement of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1967–1976) caused the destruction of much of the country's built heritage. Moreover, the spiritual "revolution" against history and traditional culture did not cease with the end of the Cultural Revolution. The slogan "to destroy old and create new" (*po jiu li xin*) had a lingering influence and continued to create barriers to heritage conservation. Indeed, it was only in the latter half of the 1970s that the state began to restore heritage conservation work through the reenactment of legislation and the adjustment of administrative systems. The milestone of a fully established ancient-monument-oriented heritage conservation program was only reached in November 1982 through enactment of a new PRC Cultural Relics Preservation Act.[5]

Also in late 1982, the publication of the first 24 national Famous Historic Cultural Cities by the State Council marked the beginning of a new era of historic city conservation. It extended China's heritage conservation movement beyond a first stage, which, in most cases, had covered only cultural relics and ancient monuments. And it was followed in 1983 by the Announcement on Strengthening Famous Historic Cultural City Planning, issued by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction and Environment Protection (later the Ministry of Construction). Among important changes, this

new policy distinguished between the administrative responsibilities of the National Cultural Relics Bureau, which would deal with ancient monuments, and the Ministry of Construction, which would oversee the Famous Historic Cultural Cities program. Ever since, historic city conservation has been an issue of urban planning, supervised by the Ministry of Construction, the same administrative unit responsible for urban redevelopment.

As already mentioned, the term "historic district conservation" was first articulated in 1986 when the State Council publicized a second list of Famous Historic Cultural Cities. The concept was intended to lessen conflicts between historic city conservation and urban development, provide a basis for historic city conservation, and articulate the integral components and key issues involved in historic city conservation.[6] The second designation of Famous Historic Cultural Cities also established standards for historic cities, requirements for conservation and planning, and specific recognition of "historic conservation areas."

Importantly, formal recognition of historic district conservation as an independent activity opened up opportunities for all districts deserving preservation — whether in urban or rural areas. There are now 103 listed Famous Historic Cultural Cities in China. However, there are many more historic districts deemed worthy of preservation than those located within Famous Historic Cultural Cities as defined by State Council criteria.

Following these initial steps, the State Council enacted several additional statutes in the 1990s that also included articles on historic district conservation. Among these were the PRC Urban Planning Act (1990) and the PRC Environment Protection Act (1990). The Regulations on Plan Making for Famous Historic Cultural Cities (1994), promulgated by the Ministry of Construction and the National Cultural Relics Bureau, further facilitated the integration of historic conservation into urban planning. In the years since, some of the listed Famous Historic Cultural Cities have made use of these rules to implement conservation plans, explore conservation approaches, and promote conservation education programs.

One of the earliest critical historic district conservation efforts was the Liulichang Street rehabilitation in Beijing in 1986. This 400-meter-long street is famous as a center for traditional Chinese stationery, painting, calligraphy and antiques. Implementation of the rehabilitation plan for the street has provided lessons for many other historic district conservation efforts in Beijing and elsewhere (FIG.1).

Such achievements would not have been possible without support from the relevant academies. The Chinese Society of Urban Planning founded the Academic Committee of Famous Historic Cultural Cities Conservation Planning in 1984; two years later the Chinese Research Society of Urban Sciences set up the Research Society of Famous Historic Cultural Cities. The State Council also approved establishment of the National Committee of Famous Historic Cultural Cities Specialists in 1994. The committee helps enforce historic city conservation statutes and provides technical consultation. The municipal governments of Famous Historic Cultural Cities have been eager to seek advice from the committee on scientific aspects of historic conservation.

**FIGURE 1.** *Liulichang Historic District is a cultural-tourism-oriented conservation effort in Beijing. The rehabilitation project was conducted in the mid-1980s, one of the earliest historic district conservation practices in China. This image shows its current situation.*

A third stage of China's heritage conservation effort arrived in June 1996 when the International Historic District Conservation Symposium was held at Tunxi, Huangshan City, Anhui Province. The Tunxi Symposium clearly articulated the importance of historic district conservation, stating that it "has been a critical link in heritage conservation, and an integral part of the entire conservation system."[7]

Concurrent work on a pilot project for Tunxi Old Street also raised such important issues as designation criteria, conservation plan making and implementation, legal frameworks for historic districts, and conservation funding.[8] The Tunxi Symposium contributed greatly to the Provisional Regulations of Tunxi Old Street Historic District Conservation and Management, enacted by the Ministry of Construction in 1997. These were intended to articulate characteristics, principles and methods for conservation, and give specific guidance to the historic district administration.[9]

As a legal framework — even if only a municipal-level one — the effort marked the beginning of China's historic district conservation system. The year 1997 also saw the establishment of the National Famous Historic Cultural City Foundation to provide financial support to major projects, mainly applied historic district conservation projects.[10] And in 1998 the first state standing agency for historic city conservation, the National Research Center for Famous Historic Cultural Cities, was established at Tongji University in Shanghai. The agency provides technical consultation on historic city conservation, executes theoretical and practical heritage conservation planning research, and assists the government in conservation policy-making.[11]

## HISTORIC DISTRICT CONSERVATION THEORIES IN CHINA

There is a great deal of literature on the practice of conservation in the West, and recently there has been a rapidly growing body of theoretical work as well.[12] For Asian countries, however, there is neither a strong empirical nor theoretical base.[13] This dearth of academic attention fails to reflect the great number of urban historic districts in Asian countries.

Cultural heritage in Asian cities is shaped by philosophies and religious systems that emphasize the intangible rather than the tangible. Thus, the preservation of the built environment is often not as important as in the West, where it is a more significant container for cultural memory.[14] This leads to several key differences in the conservation approaches of Western and Eastern cultures. For example, the replacement of fabric is often acceptable in Asian cities because of the continued spiritual meaning and symbolic value related to everyday use.[15]

Recognition of such differences led to the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity and the draft Hoi An Protocols promulgated in 2003 by UNESCO Bangkok. An effort to promote cultural pluralism and social inclusion led both documents to take a fresh approach that acknowledged local traditions and intangible values that did not correspond with Western notions of intact fabric. Nara and Hoi An both encouraged cultures to develop analytical processes and tools specific to their natures and needs.[16]

While conservation policy initiatives have been mentioned from time to time in Chinese literature, often with a traditional focus on built environment, detailed theoretical investigations are very limited. Those that exist can be categorized under three headings: organic renewal, small-scale self-help rehabilitation, and community cooperative renovation.

Of the three approaches, Wu's theory on organic renewal is arguably the most influential for urban area conservation in China.[17] Developed through a series of studies and projects in Beijing since the 1950s, it recognizes that certain aspects of historic urban structure have lasting value. In an effort to preserve these, it stresses the establishment of a new organic order based on adaptation to modern life rather than complete replacement. The concept owes much to the work of Jane Jacobs in response to the drastic slum-clearance and urban-renewal programs in American cities in the mid-twentieth century.

The organic renewal theory was originally presented in the late 1980s to frame the specific case of Ju'er Hutong [Chrysanthemum Lane], a traditional housing area in Beijing. Its theoretical premise was that the city is a living organism whose parts and tissue undergo a metabolic process. If solutions could be uniquely tailored for each building quality and historic value type, a highly complex problem might be broken down into simpler parts. Each of these could then be pursued with an appropriate strategy, even with limited available funds.

The primary weakness of the theory is that it mainly focuses on physical aspects. Wu's work touches only very briefly on the social, economic and cultural facets of urban conservation such as the return of original residents or joint funding by the state, work units, and individuals.

Derived from the theory of organic renewal, the second approach to urban historic district conservation, small-scale self-help rehabilitation, is less a theory than a practical approach. It was initiated in 1995 through a pilot project in Beijing — the Guozijian Historic District Conservation Project. As a strategy, it attempts to resolve issues concerning historic district use by encouraging small-scale socioeconomic and construction activities, including housing renovation, maintenance and restoration. Additionally, it involves a limited amount of government-resident cooperative neighborhood environmental enhancement.[18] Interestingly, small-scale self-help rehabilitation was widely practiced in China before policies after the 1949 Liberation put strict restraints on it. For hundreds of years, most residences were erected and rehabilitated by residents themselves according to their own preferences. Recognizing this metabolic process has now been proposed as a way to leverage spontaneous public participation toward the larger goal of urban conservation.

Small-scale self-help is often not permissible under present planning regulations. Nevertheless, it exists in urban centers, and in a few cases on the urban fringe, mostly with illegal status, where it plays an important role in daily life. Frequently, those who either have no other housing options or cannot afford housing in the open market employ it to accommodate an increase in family size without losing the convenience and advantage of living in the urban core. Pragmatic academics and consultants have thus suggested that municipal governments consider policies to support it both financially and technically.

The argument for this approach is that rehabilitation practitioners know their own expectations best, and that to be effective, rehabilitation should meet these needs. In addition, small-scale self-help rehabilitation may reduce costs by skipping many intermediate steps, making housing more affordable.[19] Furthermore, the type of adaptive change brought by the small-scale self-help approach reduces negative impacts on the surrounding area, helping to realize a significant goal of historic district conservation.

The third approach to historic district conservation in China, community cooperative renovation, was influenced by the community architecture movement that emerged in Great Britain in the 1960s. In China, housing cooperatives first appeared as a feature of historic district conservation and rehabilitation in Beijing in 1988. As nongovernment bodies, they were organized either by neighborhood committees or work units (*danwei*).

A key principle of this approach is that the state, work units, and individuals collaborate in the financing of housing conservation or rehabilitation. As such, housing cooperatives have changed longstanding attitudes among residents toward housing, which were frequently formed during the years of the planned economy when the government took full financial responsibility. They have also provided opportunities for negotiation and cooperation among residents, developers, architects and planners.

Based on the experience with housing cooperatives and small-scale self-help, Fang has proposed a concept of conservation and rehabilitation that emphasizes community cooperation and resident self-help.[20] It involves internal community agents (such as community groups and local residents) as well as external agents (such as local government, developers and financiers). The approach emphasizes resident participation, cooperation (not only among residents, but also among local authorities, residents, professionals and external investors), self-help, and small, flexible conservation and rehabilitation plans.

From an institutional perspective, Fang has suggested the establishment of housing cooperative associations, resident self-help and self-managed nonprofit grassroots organizations, and joint-stock housing companies combining investments by residents, a housing cooperative, and external agents.

## SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXT OF HISTORIC DISTRICT CONSERVATION

China has experienced increasingly rapid urban development since the beginning of the 1990s. During this time, a number of major forces have been driving the demand for urban land. Among these, the promotion of the tertiary sector has triggered an enormous new demand for commercially zoned land. A market for high-quality residential property has also resulted from the Open and Reform policy and income diversification. And cities have been adding new functions — e.g., central business districts (CBDs) — to their urban centers. Although a number of new plans have introduced subcenters, or new centers, into urban areas, inner city districts remain the most important areas in most Chinese cities. Such centralization has caused problems. For instance, Beijing's inner city, representing only 5 percent of its entire urban area, now sustains more than 50 percent of its traffic flow and commercial activity.[21] The price of land and property in inner cities has also increased continuously in recent years due to a lack of appropriate planning.

As Chinese cities modernize, large-scale urban construction is unavoidable. Current urban function, physical structures, infrastructure, and human settlement quality all need substantial upgrading. However, these nationwide urbanization pressures have created special problems in historic districts. Historic urban districts are an integral part of urban economic dynamics; they are rarely autonomous functional zones, and they usually have a symbiotic relationship with the rest of city.[22] Thus, in the larger context of urban transition, historic districts are faced with the need to both better their economic profile and satisfy conservation restrictions and controls designed to preserve their physical form. This may greatly increase the cost of their transformation.

Compared with living standards in newly developed districts, the living conditions in historic districts are also frequently very poor. Indeed, inner-city historic areas often contain many households living well below the minimum national standard. Because of chronic overcrowding, residents of these areas occupy houses originally designed for far fewer households. In the inner city of Beijing, for example, it is easy to find more than ten households occupying a 300-square-meter courtyard house.[23]

Such overcrowding, along with insufficient maintenance and failure to execute necessary partial renewal, have led to the present dilapidated state of much of the housing in historic districts. Around 80 percent of the houses in the historic districts of Beijing urgently need either rehabilitation or renewal.[24] The long-neglected infrastructure within historic districts is also frequently unable to meet the demands of modern life. Sewage systems constructed before 1949, or even in the Qing Dynasty, are still operational in some historic districts of Beijing.[25] Such backward conditions have placed serious constraints on the improvement of life in historic districts, creating a sharp contrast with the rest of the city.

Since the 1970s residents of historic districts in China have been calling for the betterment of housing conditions. Proposals have been brought to city authorities almost every year; however, municipal officials have rarely sought to address the specifics of this long-existing political issue. Instead, they have resorted to large-scale redevelopment under the illusion that it can benefit both local residents and the municipality.

Such an approach is deeply influenced by a physical-design-oriented bias within the urban planning theories and methodologies in China. Thus, the architects and planners in charge of inner-city planning and management projects usually hold a negative attitude toward the "functional and spatial disorder" of the traditional city. Accordingly, they emphasize strict functional division and separation of land uses, and seek to impose "rational" urban spatial form and uniform visual spatial order. Under the guidance of these "modern" theories, inner-city planning practice is likely to take the form of large-scale redevelopment. The model is to a certain degree invariable: relocate original residents, demolish houses, and build commercial towers and highrise apartments.

Large-scale redevelopment was introduced under China's planned economy. But in those early years it did not pose a serious threat to historic districts because of financial limitations. However, driven by an urban real estate boom that began in the early 1990s, such a simplistic approach has now caused great damage to urban historic and cultural environments.

The problem is made worse because both faculty and students in Chinese architecture and planning schools must rely on actual projects to generate funding, while urban design and research institutes have been run in the style of professional firms. The result is that both planning practitioners and funding authorities now show little concern for the social objectives of research on historic urban areas, creating further barriers to conservation research and practice. This is highly problematic because the social dimension of urban conservation is arguably its most important component; physical conservation can only be achieved through a continuity of urban life.[26]

## LOCAL TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL REVITALIZATION

Current historic district conservation practice in China operates within a fundamentally different physical context than in the West. Unlike downtown areas of Western cities, Chinese inner cities did not experience significant and widespread decline as a result of post-World War II urban spatial restructuring. Mao's postwar policies meant that urban centers needed to become places of production as well as residence. During this time, many Chinese inner cities became the sites of major manufacturing complexes, such as 798 in Beijing, Moganshan Road and Shanghai Sculpture Space in Shanghai, and People's Glass Factory and Hangzhou Steel and Iron Factory in Hangzhou.

During this time, some of the building stock in inner-city areas was not properly maintained — often because a work unit (*danwei*) would decide not to use it anymore, or simply for other of financial reasons. But this was never a widespread phenomenon, and, rather, posed an individual and case-by-case problem in only a few locations in certain cities. However, ever since a movement began to relocate many of these work units to suburbs and rural areas in the 1980s, the building stock in these inner-city areas has either been adaptively reused or wholly destroyed as a part of urban redevelopment efforts.

At the same time, even recent widespread suburbanization has not diminished the inner city's status as the political, economic and social center of Chinese urban areas. Nevertheless, some historic districts have experienced obsolescence as a result of changes in local economic structure. In particular, traditional commercial activities have often been forced to leave places where they existed for decades, or even more than one hundred years. As a result, the agglomeration of traditional commercial and cultural activities is gradually disappearing in historic districts.

As part of this change, some old brand-name stores or restaurants (*lao zihao*) have experienced desperately low revenue, changes in ownership, or closure because of high rents. Others have declined as their traditional functions have moved to cheaper, more convenient locations — or even disappeared. And in many cases their old locations have been gradually occupied by high-revenue modern businesses **(FIG.2)**. *Lao zihao* are extremely vulnerable to these pressures because they usually do not have property rights (like state-owned enterprises), and have not been protected by any effective statute.[27] But the larger problem is that redevelopment near historic districts has driven up rents, forcing traditional commercial activities to relocate. And in most cases, it is impossible to bring such businesses back because of strong competition from contemporary businesses and ongoing inner-city redevelopment.

Physical revitalization results in an attractive, well-maintained public realm. However, revitalization that is merely physical may be unsustainable and short-lived. As Rypkema has written: "a rehabilitated empty building does not particularly add to an economic revitalization strategy in those areas, in the way that a building filled with tenants does. People and economic activity ultimately add economic value."[28]

A deeper traditional economic and cultural revitalization is required to promote activities within buildings and the spaces between them that will pay for maintaining historic character. However, the Chinese experience with efforts to boost investment in historic locations has been problematic. Generally, it overemphasizes tourism-oriented economic growth, while ignoring local community services. And it either excludes suitable modern uses of historic buildings or


**FIGURE 2.** *Cultural imperialism also threatens the identity of Chinese historic districts. The picture shows a newly opened McDonald's in Hefangjie Old Street, a historic district in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, where the residences and stores were built between the Qing Dynasty and the 1930s. The McDonald's occupies a magnificent business structure built in the 1920s. Starbucks finally shut its store in Beijing's 587-year-old Forbidden City in July 2007 after a storm of opposition from patriotic mainland Chinese, who saw the installation of the Seattle-based coffee chain in one of China's most historic sites as "an erosion of Chinese culture," rather than globalization.*

it includes too many of them. A compatible mix of uses would seem to be more realistic for tourism/economic growth initiatives within historic districts. But municipalities are more likely to welcome investment that produces immediate revenue growth (sometimes speculatively) than to pursue long-term, but more sustainable, investment, such as in traditional education or activities related to vernacular culture.

Excessive historic district development, in the name of "positive conservation," has further threatened the quality of historic districts.[29] In this regard, the involvement of real estate companies makes things worse, as bogus historic attractions are accepted by municipalities as an alternative to sustainable revitalization of the local economy. Traditional economic and cultural activities in historic districts are imperative not only to create and retain employment but to maintain, and more importantly, to respect valued historic environments.

## CONFLICTS BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND REDEVELOPMENT

The long history of Chinese cities, particularly ones that function as regional centers or provincial capitals (many of them now designated as Famous Historic Cultural Cities), has shaped their unique urban fabrics, social and cultural milieus, and characters. The inner areas of Chinese cities remain the cores of their surrounding metropolitan areas, even under new urban-district construction trends. However, new urban functions are today increasingly overloading these areas, which were originally designed decades, or even hundreds of years, ago.

At the same time, historic district residences, mostly of brick-and-timber construction, have recently come to seem dilapidated, especially in comparison to newly built residential buildings outside historic urban areas. As a result, many residents of historic districts today desire to leave, or at least to have their districts rehabilitated so they can attain better living conditions. At the same time, the successful development of new districts and the real estate boom ongoing since the early 1990s have accelerated the flow of urban construction capital, which has financially enabled many cities to transform historic districts — or more broadly, the inner city.

Unfortunately, early historic rehabilitation efforts largely proceeded according to the view that such districts were a liability rather than an asset. Such irrational behavior caused the destruction of their original social structure, cultural heritage, historic character, and vernacular built environment — which was replaced with monotonous, identical, modern highrises. In the process, Western architectural styles were replicated in the name of "modernization," often with little respect for local cultural, climatic or building needs.[30]

Other problems have surrounded decisions by municipalities to convert the primarily residential nature of historic districts to commercial or entertainment uses to take advantage of their location and increase lease prices. Contrary to its intention to improve the environment of a historic districts, the municipality then finds that it needs a new round of redevelopment in order to solve the problems brought by increasing population, traffic, and overburdened infrastructure.

Ironically, high-density housing areas outside historic districts are often as deserving of redevelopment as are relatively low-density historic districts. But where strong redevelopment interest exists for inner-city areas because of lower relocation expenditures and greater increases in floor-space ratios, high-density areas have largely been ignored because they have denser populations and less land area, and would present higher relocation costs. Inner-city redevelopment is necessary, and should be exercised in appropriate locations; but the principal criterion for assessing which areas deserve rehabilitation has too often been the potential commercial value of a district, not the degree of decay of its housing stock.

Several players have contributed to this unfortunate triumph of redevelopment economics over conservation.

Developers are attracted to city-center areas because of their high land value and potential profits. Municipal leaders regard rapid and dramatic changes in central-city areas as more appealing and more likely to be recognized as a political accomplishment. Meanwhile, some planners and architects have only superficial knowledge of historic conservation, cater to political leaders, or look forward only to benefiting financially from large-scale redevelopment.

Among these players, the attitude of municipal leaders is the most significant. Many conflicts between historic district conservation and redevelopment could be resolved if they would guide the other players toward a sustainable future by carefully weighing tradeoffs between short-and long-term benefits.

## TOURISM- AND CULTURE-LED CONSERVATION

Tourism is now widely perceived as a growth industry in China, partly because of increased levels of income, leisure time, and mobility among the population. As a result, municipal officials have frequently sought to build tourism and cultural activity into the revitalization of cities. The officials recognize that tourism has an economic ripple effect. Although the image and attractiveness of an historic area is usually what induces tourists to visit a particular place, their spending includes transport, supporting facilities, and related services.[31] Indeed, ancillary spending can have a greater local economic impact than spending on the historic attractions themselves.

Another benefit of tourism is that it generates heritage awareness. Appreciation of historic districts by visitors can increase local interest in the urban environment, potentially providing an important catalyst for safeguarding historic fabric and initiating conservation on a citywide scale.[32] For example, after a decade of efforts to develop sustainable tourism in Tunxi Old Street in Anhui Province, a survey indicated that most local residents closely linked their own interests to the quality of the historic district conservation project. In addition, well-preserved buildings were being effectively used to encourage the realization of further conservation projects, and there was greater local involvement and demand for conservation. Local economic surveys of Tunxi Old Street also indicate that the commercial land use ratio rose from 34.4 percent in 1979, to 45.7 percent in 1985, to 77.6 percent in 1993.

More recently, the Tunxi achievement has been shadowed by a much more well known historic district conservation project — Xintiandi in Shanghai.[33] The Xintiandi area is a two-hectare complex of restaurants, bars, and chic shops in an open, lowrise style. Xintiandi's houses are traditional *shikumen* (literally "stone gate") structures built along narrow alleys. Middle-class professionals once flocked to them for a sense of community and safety; indeed, *shikumen* made up 60 percent of the city's residential housing between the 1880s and the 1940s.

Among Chinese visitors, the $170 million Xintiandi project has now made this area Shanghai's number one tourist attraction. One of the most important historic sites in the area is the Chinese Communist Party's first meeting site (1921). And Shui On, the Hong Kong developer of the project, has spent years preserving original materials there, like Shanghai's unique gray bricks and Art Deco features, and following original drawings to replicate structures that had decayed beyond repair (FIG.3). The preservation has also revitalized the surrounding area and pushed nearby property prices to among the highest in Shanghai (FIG.4). The strategy in Xintiandi has been so successful that efforts are now being made to replicate it in cities throughout China, such as in the West Lake Waterfront (Xihutiandi) project in Hangzhou.

Considering all these potential merits, many municipalities in China have attempted to adopt tourism as a strategy


FIGURE 3. *This narrow lane illustrates the outside structures, decorations, and functions of a segment of the Xintiandi area.*

FIGURE 4. *The Xintiandi area in Shanghai, with heritage buildings in a* shikumen *style, is surrounded by highrise buildings such as those in the background.*

for the conservation of their historic districts. Yet while most historic districts have unique milieus and characteristics deserving careful conservation and rehabilitation for tourism purposes, municipalities have often attempted to create fake historic scenes. Among these are such newly built historic streets as Jinli Old Street, Wuyi Mountain Old Street, and Nanping Old Street in Fujian Province; Xiangyang Old Street in Hubei Province; and Fuyang Paper Making Old Street in Zhejiang Province.

Traditional markets and even theme parks have also been created, such as Wolong theme park in Sichuan Province; Liuhuang theme park in Yantai, Shandong Province; Tang Dynasty theme park in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province; and Song Dynasty theme park in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. These developments have not only directed limited funding to unnecessary projects, but they have had a negative influence on authentic historic environments.[34] For example, tourism development in historic districts requires careful and informed historical background research. Instead, under one ill-informed program, a Han Dynasty (202 BC–220 AD) commercial street was developed in one Famous Historic Cultural City without knowing that such streets did not appear until the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1126 AD).[35]

As Stille has pointed out, Chinese museums frequently tend to favor reconstruction over conservation.[36] Reconstruction affords them the freedom to reinterpret the original over its accurate replication, a decision often driven by economic benefit and/or national pride. Some historic district tourism plans are influenced by the same attitude. They relocate the original residents elsewhere, renovate the historic buildings, convert them to tourist facilities, and then fill them by invited tender.

In Lijiang Old City, a listed World Heritage Site in Yunnan Province, for example, about 80 percent of the residences have been occupied by various businesses from other parts of the country, while the original residents have been relocated to a "new city" development nearby.[37] Among 200,000 native Naxi people, only 10,000 still live in the Old City. Meanwhile, businesses from other regions threaten local cultural identity **(FIG.5)**.

History is continuous, and the people are the masters of history. Original residents are an integral component of any historic district. Without them, a historic district is left to be only a vacant stage **(FIG.6)**.

## RELOCATION OF RESIDENTS

Because of limitations on policy, funding and conception, the problems of historic districts — such as overcrowding, an aging population, a declining local economy, decayed buildings, and overburdened infrastructure — are being solved only partially, and not without negative results.

Historic district residents increasingly see a disparity between the living standards in their districts and newly built areas. Yet there are major issues involved with relocation that result in antagonism between residents and developers, and even local authorities.

One major problem is that property ownership in historic districts raises complicated and tricky problems that are difficult to clarify in the rehabilitation process. Nevertheless, the comparative stability of property boundaries is an important means of maintaining a diverse streetscape and community structure in an historic area.[38]

**FIGURE 5.** *A restaurant in Lijiang Old City run by an owner from Wenzhou City, Zhejiang Province, clearly indicates their Wenzhou-style food (the letters on the right in Chinese are "Wenzhou").*

**FIGURE 6.** *In Lijiang Old City, the original residences have been converted to restaurants, tea houses, bars, shops and hotels. This is a hotel converted from native local residence in the Old City.*

Another problem involves the need to relocate a certain proportion of historic district residents to suburban areas to lower the costs of rehabilitation for developers and/or local authorities. Some suburban areas simply lack the facilities to support such resettlement. Additionally, relocated residents must then spend much more time commuting between work and home.

For relocated residents, compensation plans submitted to local authorities are also too general. Their details are then worked out through closed-door negotiations between individual households and developers, without adequate oversight by local authorities. Furthermore, some historic district residents who are temporarily housed in apartments arranged by developers or local authorities spend several years longer there than they are supposed to because of extensions of the rehabilitation process.

Finally, the original populations of historic districts tend to be diverse in terms of income level, status and lifestyle. But the rehabilitation and relocation process often sifts out low-income or even middle-income households, effectively destroying an organically formed social milieu.

This last point illustrates how conservation of historic districts generally involves gentrification, as higher-income residents and economic activities supplant poorer ones. In other words, successful rehabilitation benefits municipalities and developers, while it tends to expel low-income families and less profitable economic activities. Mitigation of this social inequity often requires interventions involving significant local government subsidy, a price few municipalities can afford. Moreover, because of the enormous profit from rehabilitation and redevelopment, local authorities, under the slogan of national economic construction, sometimes side with developers, instead of seeking to maintain social equity and siding with the local population.

While it is possible to reinvent a desired physical landscape, the cultural mosaic of an area is dependent on the people who patronize and interact with it.[39] Social and cultural continuity within the groups that make up a place is one of the most important elements in heritage conservation **(FIGS.7,8)**.

## HISTORIC DISTRICT CONSERVATION FUNDING

Inadequate funding for conservation can be another problem. Such projects frequently have a low priority within budgets when there are pressing demands for accelerated industrialization and urbanization. Further problems arise as a result of insufficient funding for training and educating professionals or specialists to undertake and organize conservation work. Thus, even where municipal conservation legislation exists, historic district conservation may suffer from inadequate professional oversight or lack of financial assistance.

**FIGURE 7 (TOP).** *At Hongcun Old Village, Anhui Province, a listed World Heritage Site, most original residents still live in the village. The social fabric of the old village is preserved well. Source: Liu Xingming,* Ancient Villages in Southern Anhui: Xidi and Hongcun *(Guangzhou: Guangdong Tourism Publishers, 2001).*

**FIGURE 8 (BOTTOM).** *The picture taken from Longmen Historic District (Ming and Qing Dynasty residential districts) in Fuyang, Zhejiang Province, shows the reliance on slogan-based propaganda efforts to mold public behavior in historic districts. The Chinese on the wall of a traditional street reads as "family plan gives you a blissful life." The original economic and social fabric is well preserved in this historic district.*

Generally, municipalities play a lead role in historic district conservation funding.[40] They may contribute to or influence such funding in several ways. One is to provide state-owned land to relocate inappropriate enterprises from historic districts. Recently, market-oriented land use and real estate laws have, however, made this approach more problematic (as, for instance, in Suzhou and Chengde). A second way is to require that a developer strictly implement conservation plans within a historic district in exchange for a relatively free hand in projects outside it (as in the Tongfang Xiang Project in Suzhou). A third way is for the municipality to appropriate a portion of local tourism revenue for conservation. And a fourth is for it to allocate a percentage of annual industrial and commercial revenue to conservation work (as in Yangzhou, Shaoxing and Jingdezhen). Finally, a municipality, particularly one with a history of commerce, may encourage government agencies and state-owned enterprises to withdraw from its historic districts. This creates additional space for profitable commercial uses, such as banks, hotels and clubs. Rent revenue may then be used for conservation, as the historic business district restores its original function interrupted during the planned economy era (the Bund of Shanghai).

Despite this array of options, direct funding by municipalities of historic district conservation is very limited, and often inadequate. The transition from a planned to a market economy, however, has made multichannel and multilevel funding initiatives possible. And, realistically, from an economic perspective, neither local authorities nor any single nongovernment entity can expect to complete a conservation project on its own. Indeed, recent successful initiatives indicate that full participation by national, local and social entities is needed.

In comparison to new district construction, however, historic district rehabilitation faces many construction obstacles and socioeconomic conflicts that require oversight or guidance by local authorities. Every historic district is unique, and any sustainable conservation plan will require in-depth and careful field study. By contrast, most developers prefer the simplified approach of large-scale redevelopment. But this not only impairs the original character and milieu of a historic district, but creates unresolvable problems and conflicts.

When the power of rehabilitation implementation is in a developer's hands other issues may also arise. For instance, conservation requests from the cultural relics administration may be ignored, and destruction of heritage may happen periodically when construction units disregard the cultural relics administration in order to save time and money.[41] Meanwhile, planners and designers usually do not have enough time to reflect on a historic area's unique urban design qualities because developers want to see a return on their investment as soon as possible. Generally speaking, there is only long-term return on investment for rehabilitation when it is properly done.

Finally, major investors in old city rehabilitation processes create strong pressures to transgress planning guidelines. This means that under the current legal system, planning administrations are frequently forced to compromise with developers because of the huge fiscal burden of urban redevelopment.

The long-term nature of old city rehabilitation also means that it is greatly influenced by the real estate market and government macroeconomic policies. When government urban construction budgets become tight, the process has to be slowed down and even stopped, bringing complaints from residents who are supposed to be able to return on certain dates, but cannot. Meanwhile, overdependence on profits from real estate sales creates imbalances in investment composition and supply/demand relationships, as well as turbulence in real estate and financial markets.

Redevelopment in historic districts often leaves a legacy of a few large, unoccupied, newly developed real estate properties in place of a larger number of lively, small— and medium-size enterprises owned or operated by local residents. Unreasonable historic district rehabilitation may also waste the built environment. Some 50 percent of the old houses in Beijing's historic districts can safely accommodate residents after a basic renovation, and there are a certain number of other houses in fairly good shape already.[42] These houses could provide residences not only to middle- and low-income households but to high-income ones as well. Demolishing almost all of them during a rehabilitation process is wasteful, given the serious shortage of housing within old cities.

## HISTORIC DISTRICT CONSERVATION IN CHENG NAN, QUANZHOU

Quanzhou is a prefectural-level city located on the north bank of the lower reaches of the Jinjiang River in Fujian Province. The Quanzhou municipality, which administratively includes the surrounding six-county region, encompasses 10,865 square kilometers and has a total population of 6.5 million, among whom 850,000 residents were registered as being in nonagricultural resident status (urban *hukou)*.[43]

The historic and administrative core is comprised of the Old City district and adjacent areas. Although it is now only a medium-sized urban center, Quanzhou was historically one of China's most important windows on the world, leading the State Council in 1982 to designate it one of the nation's first 24 Famous Historic and Cultural Cities. Quanzhou was the starting point for the "Maritime Silk Road" in the Middle Ages, and when its commercial fortunes decreased, it became a departure place for people leaving China. The number of overseas Chinese originally from Quanzhou totals about six million, and more than eight million Taiwan compatriots have their ancestral homes in Quanzhou.[44]

In 1979, the Fujian coast was opened to foreign trade and given more autonomy in national economic develop-

ment policy. As a result, Quanzhou attracted much direct foreign investment, especially from overseas Chinese communities. Continuous, strong ties with relatives abroad influenced not only its economic development, but also its architecture, culture and society.

In the post-Mao era, early efforts to conserve historic Quanzhou included the establishment of the Quanzhou History and Culture Center in 1983.[45] The center played a significant role in the renovation and rehabilitation of many of the city's important ancient buildings throughout the later 1980s. The Old City also remained well preserved through the 1980s because of three interlinked factors related to the city's particular history and geography. One was a relative lack of state investment during the period of the centralized command economy due to what was seen to be its vulnerable position on the Taiwan Straits. A second was the maintenance of a high degree of private control of property in the city. A third was that almost all houses and properties of good quality belonged to (or were connected to) overseas Chinese, and the local government almost always tried to avoid damaging these connections.[46]

The situation in the Old City started to change fundamentally as a result of rapid urbanization after the 1980s, however; and in the 1990s there were two urban redevelopment trends at work in the Old City. On the one hand, residents have tried to improve their housing conditions through small-scale, but widespread, self-building. The other more destructive force has been large-scale urban redevelopment initiated by the local government **(FIG.9)**. Many unique and historically valuable buildings and historic areas have been lost in the process, even though traditional materials, styles and motifs have been proudly adopted and used in new buildings. Furthermore, without assurance that their own neighborhoods would not be razed for redevelopment, many residents deliberately let their houses deteriorate through a failure to perform necessary maintenance.

A common belief in Quanzhou in the 1990s was that redevelopment was an inevitable road to modernization. Some considered preservation of one-story housing in the urban core technically impractical or economically unfeasible. Others thought that too much of the city had already been redeveloped to leave room for "preserving the historic core as a whole."[47] However, redevelopment projects eventually changed the historic urban center so much that even the local authorities became uncertain about what future large-scale redevelopment would bring. As a result, they began to seek alternative development models. Municipal leaders and planning authorities attended a series of international seminars and entertained study visits with scholars from Canadian, Chinese, French and Norwegian universities. They also worked with designers from prestigious universities and planning institutes in China, who had a great appreciation for local architectural elements. These experiences gradually shifted local leaders toward a preservationist attitude.

At least two current strategies indicate a shift of official attitude toward conservation and development. First, in its master plan for 1995–2020, the municipal government included tourism as a strategy for taking advantage of comparatively well-preserved heritage sites. This document was the first that considered historic sites to be tourism resources and an integral part of the Old City. Second, Quanzhou's planners ceased using the term "old [i.e., obsolete] city redevelopment" (*jiucheng gaizao*), and instead spoke of "old [i.e., historic] city preservation and construction" (*gucheng baohu jianshe*).[48] New planning processes and ideas for the historic districts of Quanzhou have since adopted the small-scale, house-based conservation and rehabilitation practices first introduced to the Old City of Beijing.

The officially designated Cheng Nan conservation area consists of approximately 40 hectares in the south part of Quanzhou (Cheng Nan literally means "South City"). It has a population of 8,000, including 1,200 migrants, and is home to 22 heritage sites or cultural relics of varied importance.[49] In the past, Cheng Nan was a retail and residential area, largely for local people. But the high rate of housing production in the eastern part of the city and on the urban fringe has pushed the urban boundary outward and encouraged rapid abandonment of older homes in areas like Cheng Nan. These trends have also damaged the vitality of the traditional small business community.

**FIGURE 9.** *Before (top) and after (bottom) urban redevelopment in Quanzhou. Source: Quanzhou Municipal Urban and Rural Planning Bureau.*

Given its newfound focus on conservation, the municipal government's response to the situation of Cheng Nan has been a series of conservation and rehabilitation plans. Their ultimate goal is "to reillustrate the wealth of history and culture, the delicate vernacular architecture and prosperous commercial tradition in the area," and "to combine preservation and renovation with tertiary and tourism development of the city."[50] As such, the Cheng Nan area is in need of strategies for conservation as well as economic revitalization.

In Cheng Nan, the Zhongshan Road Conservation and Renovation Project (March 1998 to November 1999) illustrates an effective collaboration among different interested parties.[51] The seventy-year-old Zhongshan Road is the primary historical and cultural arterial of the Old City. During the project period, local government, the public, the private sector, planners, and a developer all cooperated closely and set up an implementation system to ensure the success of the project.

The total cost for the renovation of Zhongshan Road was more than 18 million RMB, of which 10.71 million was paid by homeowners and 7.6 million by the local government.[52] The concept of "beneficiaries share the cost" was adopted; this meant that property owners paid to repair or rebuild their houses, while the government paid an allowance, and the balance was shared between relevant departments. The costs for conservation management, design and plant/building removal were the responsibility of the government, while the various departments shared the infrastructure costs. The municipal and district administrations divided the governmental part of the costs equally.

The Zhongshan Road project has afforded the municipal government a chance to see how collaboration among various interest groups is an essential component of a successful conservation and development policy. It has also given the government more confidence in further developing participatory neighborhood planning processes in the Old City **(FIG.10)**. To facilitate further horizontal collaboration between relevant local agencies, the municipal government established the Quanzhou Famous Historic and Cultural City Conservation and Construction General Headquarters in 1996. This is an administrative unit designed to cut across boundaries between the planning bureau, the cultural relics bureau, the construction commission, and so on.

In Cheng Nan, self-initiated construction by nonstate actors has also come to be accepted by the local authority, instead of being condemned and triggering only stronger restrictions. The municipal planning bureau has even proposed guidelines and regulations for use by individual property owners in Cheng Nan, rather than an overall plan requiring sweeping property expropriation and resident relocation.[53] The official recognition of legal self-help renovation means that property owners (most of whom indicated in a survey that they could afford to renovate or rehabilitate their own properties[54]) have become a major contributor to conservation funding. The other primary sources of funding for conservation work in Cheng Nan are loans, government subsidies, contributions from businesses (especially developers), work unit donations, and sponsorship by overseas Chinese.

**FIGURE 10.** *Same segment of Zhongshan Road before (top) and after (bottom) conservation and rehabilitation. Source: Quanzhou Municipal Urban and Rural Planning Bureau.*

Interviews with Cheng Nan residents indicated that despite all the complaints about living conditions, most households preferred to remain in the area, whether or not it was renovated. Residents cited its better access to amenities, a strong personal attachment to the neighborhood, and affordability. Small private business is the typical and dominant type of enterprise along the commercial streets of the area.[55] Property owners switch business types or leaseholders frequently, trying to maintain or maximize income from their properties **(FIG.11)**.

Neighborhood committees are the most active community organizations in the Cheng Nan area. The four neighborhood committees of Cheng Nan not only assist local

FIGURE 11. *Traditional businesses in Cheng Nan.*

authorities with issues such as clarification of property ownership, rehabilitation/renovation applications and supervision, and resident relocation, but they also foster community economic development (revitalization). In addition, Cheng Nan has an array of traditional nonstate community societies, including kinship associations, folk musical associations, temple associations, and associations organized for cooperation with overseas Chinese. A great deal of Quanzhou's preservation work has focused on temples, and been funded through temple associations. Similarly, neighborhood temple restoration in Cheng Nan is a significant part of conserving the area's urban landscape.

As a medium-size, but comparatively wealthy city, Quanzhou has been able to hire outside professional or academic architecture and planning agencies. The latest plan for the Old City suggests that the municipality establish an exclusive expert consultative agency to maintain the compatibility and continuity of conservation work. This long-term institution has brought a further step away from the old model of hiring one or two senior architecture specialists that was used in the rehabilitation of Zhongshan Road.

## A SHIFT IN ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES

The path China has taken in its urban transformation during the reform period, from early concern with large-scale redevelopment to current recognition of the importance of historic district conservation, needs to be set in a wider context. After a period of evolution during which various urban renewal processes have been employed, including demolition, redevelopment and conservation, the country is starting to recognize the importance of reclaiming its urban heritage. Functionally, however, historic district conservation only became a substantive practice after the mid-1990s, and it still faces complex and changing political, economic and social challenges as the country moves from a command to a market economy. Inadequate legal, institutional and administrative frameworks to regulate and guide conservation projects also remain a persistent problem. Clearly, China's historic district conservation agenda continues to search for an effective institutional and administrative framework, and for legislation that can reconcile the contradictory goals of rapid urban development and heritage conservation.

An important realization, however, is that the urban historic district does not have a single owner, but many owners, users and claimants, who are linked through a complex web of potentially conflicting relationships. As the main agency of the state in this process, local government should seek to break down boundaries between different interests and guide collaboration. However, the political ideology of state-socialist China continues to approach historic district conservation as a state-led activity. The weaknesses of such an elitist approach to heritage conservation is now becoming apparent in practice. It is especially apparent with regard to historic district conservation, where the scope of conservation activities must be extended from renowned ancient monuments to everyday neighborhoods of local importance. In such instances the state alone is unable to shoulder the conservation burden in all its various aspects.

Today, administrative and fiscal decentralization and urban planning localization have made the local municipality the lead actor in urban conservation. Local government is also gradually recognizing the obstacles to successful urban conservation programs, especially in terms of funding sources and processes of implementation. As a result, it is beginning to experiment with conservation initiatives involving multiple actors in pilot projects. Collaborations for historic district conservation between local governments and property owners/occupants are one example of this kind of initiative. Such arrangements may effectively resolve local government funding shortages while restricting the input of property owners/occupants to implementation.

Experience from the West suggests that local governments need to involve more nongovernment organizations (e.g., neighborhood committees, business associations, religious associations, etc.) in historic district conservation efforts. Comprehensive and mature legal, institutional and administrative frameworks are also needed to ensure citizen participation in conservation decision-making as well as implementation. Current historic district conservation practice in China is moving in this direction, but there is still a long way to go. A diversity of cultural traditions and levels of progress toward economic reform in different regions and provinces means that a spectrum of municipal efforts in historic district preservation in China will be required, and that no single solution can help all.

The introduction of new legal frameworks for historic district conservation may eventually give local authorities considerable freedom to develop policies toward designation

and enhancement of conservation areas that reflect the regional political, economic, historic and cultural diversity of Chinese cities. However, historic district conservation administrative units at different levels, with clearly defined mandates capable of comprehensively planning and coordinating responsibilities, still do not exist. Moreover, a nonadministrative local conservation management agency is needed to help accumulate and arrange capital for historic district conservation. Nongovernment organizations such as conservation district advisory committees could also facilitate communication between state and nonstate organizations, enabling deeper and more extensive involvement by the latter in conservation processes.

Municipal governments, the private sector, the general public, and professionals all can potentially play important roles in historic district conservation. However, careful analysis will be needed to understand what each interest group can best offer within a collaborative framework. Municipal governments, the key initiator and only purveyor of urban heritage conservation under the command economy, will need to adapt to this new system. Under the new market economy they will need to become more of a guide or coordinator of actions in a system where nonstate actors adopt increasing responsibility.

Recent evidence from Hangzhou, Quanzhou, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Suzhou has shown that issues of historic district conservation are gradually being bound up with private development interests. The extent to which municipalities are associated with these capital-driven interests is one of the most critical aspects for sustainable historic district conservation. Issues in urban historic district conservation around the intersection and collaboration of state and nonstate interests embody broader cultural, historical, political and social interactions.

Legacies of the past, the pluralities of the present, cultural politics, and even democratic ideologies are all implicated. The search for an urban historic district conservation agenda in China therefore involves much more than urban design, and must reach far beyond the conventional physical perspective.

## REFERENCE NOTES

Part of this study, including the Quanzhou fieldwork, is based on the author's masters thesis at the University of British Columbia, advised by Michael Leaf, School of Community and Regional Planning at UBC, and Daniel B. Abramson, Department of Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington in Seattle. The author is indebted to them. The author is also grateful to three anonymous reviewers for their constructive and insightful comments, and to David Moffat for his helpful editorial support. However, any errors are the author's own.

1. R. Howe and W.S. Logan, "Protecting Asia's Urban Heritage: The Way Forward," in W.S. Logan, ed., *The disappearing "Asian" City: Protecting Asia's Urban Heritage in a Globalizing World*. There is a huge body of literature on China's urbanization and changing urban form. For instance, Duanfang Lu has recently charted the evolution of Chinese urban built environment as it revealed a divided landscape — a modern functional urban world of work units and the large self-contained entities which integrated workplace, housing, and social services in her book. See D.F. Lu, *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space 1949–2005* (London: Routledge, 2006). Peter Rowe and Seng Kuan's edited volume, *Shanghai: Architecture and Urbanism for Modern China* (Prestel, 2004), includes essays that cover the cultural and historic aspects of the city and offer topical analyses of preservation and development of the city. Bernard Chan's *New Architecture in China* (Merrell, 2005) discusses and documents emerging new built environment concepts and practices. Earlier investigations of China's urbanization can be found in many journal papers, such as M. Leaf, "Inner City Redevelopment in China: Implications for the City of Beijing," *Cities*, Vol.12 No.3 (1995), pp.149–62; K. Olds "Globalizing Shanghai: The 'Global Intelligence Corps' and the Building of Pudong," *Cities*, Vol.14 No.2 (1997), pp.109–23. For a more comprehensive understanding of traditional Chinese residences that closely relates to this research, Knapp and Spence presented their excellent investigation of traditional residences with powerful graphic illustrations, see R.G. Knapp and J. Spence, *Chinese Houses: The Architectural Heritage of a Nation* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2005).

2. Heritage conservation is used to reflect dominant values and designed to serve the economic, social and political interests of cultural, economic and political elite. One of the latest books from the heritage management point of view is H. Du Cros and Y.S. Lee, *Cultural Heritage Management in China* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007). As Dan Abramson has also commented: "concern for architectural heritage, as elsewhere in the developing world, remains a predominantly elite concern in China. Its proponents often find themselves opposing both the political establishment's profit-making visions for the city center, and also the aspirations of residents to improve their living conditions." D. Abramson, "Beijing's Preservation Policy and the Fate of the Siheyuan," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol.13 No.1 (2001), p.9.

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6. R.T. Ye, "Zai lishi jiequ baohu (guoji) yantaohui shang de jianghua" ["Speech at Historic District Conservation (International) Symposium"], *Jianzhu Xuebao [Architectural Journal],* September 1996, pp.4–5. Also see Wang, Ruan, and Wang, *Lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu lilun yu guihua.*

7. Ye, "Zai lishi jiequ baohu (guoji) yantaohui shang de jianghua."

8. Initially a research project of Tsinghua University in cooperation with the Ministry of Construction, the Tunxi Old Street Preservation project started as early as 1985. With its more than eleven years of ongoing study, it is a rich case for further discussion.

9. Wang, Ruan, and Wang, *Lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu lilun yu guihua.*

10. The foundation provides only 30 million RMB per year to around ten projects. However, this symbolic financial aid has a greater political meaning. Under the fund, municipalities have to provide larger contributions (including monetary ones) to government-financed projects, which are also more likely to attract nongovernment investment.

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12. For the practice of conservation, see D. Appleyard, ed., *The Conservation of European Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979). See also G.J. Ashworth and J.E. Tunbridge, *The Tourist-Historic City: Retrospect and Prospect of Managing the Heritage City* (Amsterdam: Pergamon Press, 1993); and P. Hubbard, "The Value of Conservation: A Critical Review of Behavioral Research," *Town Planning Review,* Vol.64 (2000), pp.359–73. Among theoretical works, see P.J. Larkham, "Conservation and the Changing Urban Landscape," *Progress in Planning,* Vol.37 (1992), pp.83–181. Theoretical work has been proliferating since the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994) which provokes the rethinking of earlier assumptions. See, for instance, M. de la Torre, ed., *Heritage Values in Site Management: Four Case Studies* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2005); and S.M. Vinas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (London: Elsevier Publishers, 2005).

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52. Ibid.

53. For instance, these guidelines and regulations include that (1) the planning bureau simplifies the procedures for property ownership applications and renovation/maintenance applications, and waives some kinds of related fees; (2) the local government offers to assist financially strapped property owners with façade rehabilitation by helping them obtain loans and governmental subsidies; (3) the local government allows the deferment or (partial) waiver of construction matching fees for property owners with financial difficulties, and provides subsidies to them for the renovation of dilapidated housing.

54. It is helpful to learn how the property owners plan to use various resources to invest in self-help rehabilitation. Among 38 interviewees in the Qing Long Xiang neighborhood of Cheng Nan, fifteen believed they could pay for it through personal savings,

seven would resort to help from friends or family locally, five would consider help from family overseas, six would consider loans, and only four would ask for government subsidies. For more information regarding the statistical results, see D.B. Abramson, and M. Leaf, "Urban Development and Redevelopment in Quanzhou, Fujian, China: A Field Studio Report," Asian Urban Research Network Working Paper #26, Centre for Human Settlements, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 2001.
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All photos are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

Field Report

# The "Palaces" of the Romanian Rroma: A Claim to Citizenship

ELENA TOMLINSON

**The eclectic language of "Gypsy palace" settlements in Romania has to date been largely defined through an essentialist understanding of the Rroma's oppositional relationship with the cultural norms of the majority. This report proposes an alternative reading of the mansions built by the formerly nomadic Rroma, one that accounts for a more reciprocal relationship between hetero-representation and auto-representation. It argues that the conspicuous consumption associated with the "palaces" should first be attributed to social rituals taking place within the Rroma clans, and second to a desire by owner/builders to broadcast respectability to the outside world. In examining Rroma built space, this report emphasizes and qualifies the discursive implications of auto-representation through the account of owner/builders, and of hetero-representation through the lens of the architecture profession and the Romanian mass media.**

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Gypsies ("Roma" in Romani, "Rromi" in Romanian[1]), constitute one of Romania's major ethnic groups. According to the 2002 national census, they represent 2.5 percent of the country's total population, although unofficial sources claim they may number as many as two million, or approximately 8 percent.[2] The Rroma are also Romania's most socially and economically disadvantaged minority, and most continue to live in slums to which the authorities in post-Communist Romania remain indifferent. However, a minority of well-to-do Rroma have garnered considerable attention in recent years by building settlements of so-called "palaces." These peri-urban communities have triggered an indignant, derisive backlash in the national media. The production of such housing does mark a turning point in the history of the Rroma. But I propose to examine it here against a

larger discourse of European integration and multiculturalism that situates Romania in the intellectual struggle of "self" and "other."

The interrogation of built space can inform and problematize ethnographic research on Rroma identity construction. However, rather than solely analyzing the palaces as a reaction to structural economic constraints or to the norms of Romanian culture, this report will also highlight Rroma social rituals as a source of spatial practices, using accounts of owner/builders. It builds on Cerasela Voiculescu's study of social associations within Rroma communities, and attempts to employ this analytical framework to inform a reading of Rroma dwellings and, most importantly, Rroma patterns of consumption.[3] It accepts that the economy of the Rroma communities is essentially informal, and that consumption, production and commerce are founded on a set of extralegal norms that define hierarchies and regulate social relations. Consumption in this case not only signals status within the community, but establishes social capital in the context of a quasi-feudal and nuclear community.

This report also refers to existing analytical frameworks within the study of vernacular environments. It will use these to interrogate the morphology and architectural symbolism of Rroma communities in two villages illustrative of the palace phenomenon. During fieldwork in June of 2007 I photo-graphed and conducted interviews in the Rroma communities of Sintesti, ten kilometers south of Bucharest, and Buzescu, in southwest Romania, which is thought to be the origin of the palace phenomenon (FIG.1).

The connection between the case studies is twofold: first, Buzescu precedes and influenced what was built in Sintesti; second, both communities are populated by members of the same Rroma clan, the Caldarari, who have been engaged in metal trading since the end of the Communist era. The two case studies do not offer the basis for totalizing conclusions about the character of Rroma built space, but they do offer evidence of a common morphology shared by Rroma communities in different regions.


FIGURE 1. *Regional map of southeast Romania indicating the location of the villages of Sintesti and Buzescu.*

Despite being persecuted during World War II and forcefully assimilated under the subsequent Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, the Rroma are the largest transnational minority in Europe today, estimated at ten million members.[4] Often seen by outsiders as a homogenous group, they are actually a very heterogeneous population. Will Guy wrote that the Rroma are a "truly European people." But he then went on to ask: "Can a people be truly European if Europeans don't recognize them as such?"[5] Indeed, the process by which the Rroma have been represented has for centuries been mostly determined by non-Rroma (or *gadje*, as they are disparagingly referred to in Romani). In speaking of the Rroma built artifacts, I will thus try to qualify the discursive implications of auto-representation (where the Rroma represent themselves), and hetero-representation (representation by others).

The so-called "Rroma palaces" that have been so maligned in Romanian mass media are testimony to the divisiveness of these competing views of the Rroma. I will attempt to describe them both through accounts by their owner/builders, and through the lens of architectural professionals and the media. Although I employ the term "palace" here, it should be understood that this carries pejorative connotations as it is used in present-day Romania.

## THE ROMANIAN RROMA — A BRIEF HISTORY

"A traditional approach to the written history of Romania, would typically include no mention of the Rroma," Viorel Achim has written.[6] In his recent and complete study of the social and political history of the Rroma in Romania, he has dated the arrival of the westbound nomads in the Romanian Principates to around the second half of the fourteenth century. After being subjected to four centuries of slavery, the Enlightenment brought the emancipation of the Rroma starting in the mid-nineteenth century. But legal emancipation was not accompanied by economic freedom. Furthermore, the gap that separates the Rroma from the majority population today has been reinforced by continuing periods of violence and oppression, and by the fact that no serious measures have ever been taken to integrate the Rroma into mainstream Romanian culture.

The end of official enslavement prompted another westward migration — often referred to as the "second migration," during which many Rroma moved on to other European countries.[7] However, after the unification of Romania in 1918, the remaining Rroma began to mobilize, form organizations, and engage in political activities. This was a significant step toward their participation in public life

and auto-representation. However, the anti-Rroma politics of World War II subsequently brought the deportation and murder of thousands of Rroma in a holocaust that is only now gaining official recognition.[8]

After the war, the Communist Party attempted to erase ethnic differences according to the egalitarian rhetoric of the new socialist state — although the differences always remained in the minds of the majority Romanian population. Thus, under the postwar government, the last Rroma nomads were forcefully settled, rarely in places of their choice. And since the Communist Party regarded the informal economy of the Rroma as "social parasitism," most Rroma were forced to abandon their traditional trades and seek unskilled laboring jobs.

The Communist Party attempted to erase Rroma identity through erasing memory. Marxist-Leninist policies considered the Rroma mostly a social problem, with no regard for ethnic specificity. Conversely, since the fall of the Communist government, new multiculturalist policies have been instituted that regard the Rroma question as mostly one of ethnicity. These policies promoting difference and ethno-cultural neutrality may be more conducive to Rroma auto-representation, but they have also required less funding than a more substantial policy of social support.

In 1991 the Romanian government recognized the Rroma for the first time as a national minority. This offered the Rroma the first opportunity to express themselves publicly and organize politically.[9] The self-proclaimed Emperor of the world's Rroma, Iulian Radulescu, announced in 1997 the creation of the first Rroma state. As Iulian I, he proclaimed an impoverished district of Târgu Jiu in southwest Romania to be "Cem Romengo," or "State of the Romanies." In asking Romanian authorities to officially recognize the right of ownership to this land, Radulescu argued "This state has a symbolic value and does not affect the sovereignty and unity of Romania. It does not have armed forces and does not have borders."[10]

## "THEY ARE NOT OURS!" — PATTERNS OF EXCLUSION AFTER COMMUNISM

The Romanian Rroma are mostly mentioned in the European press today for their tireless attempts to migrate to the countries of Western Europe. Since the collapse of the Communist regime, reactions to this migration have generated a range of debate on both the Western and Eastern European sides, multiculturalist discourse converging uneasily with widespread xenophobia. In the eyes of contemporary Europe, the Rroma are crossing borders they should not be allowed to. But where the West sees unskilled Rroma migrants with anxiety and urges countries like Romania to keep its Rroma at home through policies of integration, Romania is more concerned with the image backlash that results when Rroma reach Western metropolises and engage in informal activities. Not only have impoverished Rroma migrated to a West that is unreachable for most Romanians, but they have provoked a clash with modernity that sits uneasily both within the Western metropolis and with Romania's progressive aspirations. Not allowed in and not allowed out, the Gypsies are trapped at the fringes of modern society.

Recently, the socioeconomic condition of the Rroma has become an important issue in negotiations over Romania's inclusion in the European Union. Political debate has focused on E.U. requirements for democratic and economic reform, and the most intense controversy has focused on Romania's policy toward ethnic minorities, particularly the Rroma. The patterns of exclusion and discrimination are indisputable, naturalized within Romanian society. However, the fact that they have been strictly ascribed by Western critics to structural racism, and that therefore various remedies must be prescribed by the E.U., has also shown how images of Romania respond to European stereotypes of the Balkans.

The fact that overt xenophobia has triumphed in the current climate of ethno-racial tension in Romania may also be partly attributed to a battle for representation of "self" and "other." Because Romania (as well as neighboring Balkan countries) has a problematic image within the hegemonic discourse of Western liberalism, it must define its own "others" to affirm its identity and legitimacy. Thus, as Maria Todorova has argued, the European Union enlargement process has provoked an indefinite set of criteria that align with an Orientalist discursive framework in which Balkanism is an inherently regressive and politically incorrect mode of thinking that belongs in the "East."[11]

Throughout Eastern Europe, the poverty of Rroma has also taken on a new dimension since the fall of Communism. Structural forces have been seen as the main reason the Rroma have been transformed from a lower class during socialism to an underclass today. But the sociologists János Ladányi and Iván Szelényi have argued that Gypsies in Eastern Europe experience two dimensions of exclusion: economic and social.[12] Economic exclusion is dominant today, describing a division between classes. But social exclusion may be an equally powerful, if more subtle force.

According to Ladányi and Szelényi, if socially based cleavages become extreme, socially excluded groups may be transformed into castes.[13] Caste formation normally also requires divisions marked by ethnicity, since such boundaries are sanctioned more rigidly than boundaries between classes. However, in these cases, "Caste boundaries are drawn with reference to purity and impurity in an almost religious way."[14] Furthermore, the undercaste can be understood as composed of social "untouchables," meaning that physical contact or intermarriage between them and members of mainstream society is unacceptable.

There is little doubt that comparisons to other pariah castes may inform present-day understanding of the social

condition of the Rroma. This is particularly true since a large number of Rroma engage in economic activities deemed inappropriate, dirty or illegal.

## RROMA ARCHITECTURE: AN ALTERNATIVE AESTHETIC

Nezar AlSayyad has written of the concept of "hybridity" and how it can be used to understand identity in nonessentialist ways. Referencing Pnina Werbner, he has written that the "constructedness" of identity is more relevant than its "rootedness."[15] In this regard, what is particularly striking about the Rroma palaces is the display of imagery associated both with the Romanian and European ruling majority and with the Orient.

The diversity and multiplicity of the Rroma identity when manifested in architecture also consistently repeats a distinct lexicon, no matter where in the country it is located. From the village of Buzescu in southeastern Romania to the urban palaces of Sibiu in Transylvania all such structures exhibit the same caricatured opulence and dissonant mixture of architectural styles (FIGS.2,3). Towers resembling Japanese pagodas mix with Classical Greek columns, Neoclassical and Viennese Baroque elements, colonial verandahs, marbled pediments, details from Alpine chalets, and glazed facades echoing post-Communist bank architecture (FIG.4). Unrestrained by cultural norms, the Rroma assimilate a seemingly unlimited repertoire of identifiable references into a cacophonous but studied monumentality (FIG.5A,B).

In most instances construction is performed without permits or skilled oversight. The finishes fall apart easily and decorative tin roof elements are often blown off in stronger winds. The ornate columns that support multiple stories and large slabs of concrete often appear too fragile to withstand an earthquake. With no architect or other building professional involved, the design of a typical structure may involve little more than the head of a household voicing his wishes to local, usually Romanian workers, or tracing the outline of rooms on the ground.

Reaction in the media to this uninhibited and eclectic architectural language has been unanimously negative. The structures have even been denounced as a sort of contamination of Romanian culture. Such media derision has been fueled by the new affluence within the Rroma community and its expression through informally built and highly visible signifiers.

Most architecture professionals have tended to echo this view. One of the few who has not is the architect and architecture critic Mariana Celac. Together with the artist Iosif Kiraly and the architect Marius Marcu Lepadat, she has applied an anthropological lens to the phenomenon as it emerged in the southeast region of Romania in the early 1990s and then spread to the rest of Romania and across Eastern European borders. Celac described her views in an article in a French architectural journal in 2001, and with Kiraly and Lepadat she subsequently organized an exhibition entitled "Tinseltown" in 2003 in Bucharest that caused significant controversy and critical interest.[16]

FIGURE 2 (LEFT). *The Imperial Palace of the Rroma from Around the World, built in the City of Sibiu, in Transylvania, by Iulian, the self-proclaimed Emperor of all Rroma. The Romanian national flag is inset in each of the lucarne decorating the roof.*
FIGURE 3 (RIGHT). *Back yard of a Rroma "palace" outside of Bucharest, on the road to Sintesti.*

**FIGURE 4.** *The glazed facade of a "palace" in Buzescu echoing the language of office towers in Bucharest.*

## LEARNING FROM BUZESCU

While the city of Alexandria in Teleorman County — the "deep south" of Romania — makes no claims to urban identity, with its landscape of drab socialist apartment blocks, ten kilometers down a country road, the village of Buzescu is building for utmost visibility. Approached from Alexandria, Buzescu seems no different than any other agrarian settlement in the southeast: cornfields, modest masonry peasant homes, and a police station and post office each hardly larger than a small cottage. However, as soon as one turns the corner at the village church, an entirely different landscape emerges. For almost a kilometer, lined up along the main road as if part of a stage set, are dozens of towered mansions with glistening Japanese pagoda-like roofs, colossal colonnades and cupolas, elaborate ironwork, corbels, capitals, and patterned facades. Articulating a surreal and sublime urbanism, they create a spectacle of verticality, monumentality, symmetry, and heroic scale in comparison with the houses of their not-so-affluent neighbors.

The setting of Buzescu's "palatial" main street is eminently urban, evident not only in the public-private gradient, but in the way the buildings occupy the land. Closely spaced with a solid wall typically running along the depth of the lot, the homes abut the road, sometimes encroaching on the sidewalk **(FIGS.6,7)**. All the attributes of a rich, vibrant, dense urbanism are present here. Yet, although these structures reproduce a great variety of historical styles, their origins elude any familiar reference, modern or historic. It matters little what the context is. The owners/creators/builders — all

**FIGURE 5A,B.** *The palaces of two brothers, Gruia (left) and Nita (right), flanking the road that leads to the village of Sintesti, at Gara Progresul, outside of Bucharest.*

FIGURE 6. (TOP) *The view east on Buzescu's main street.*
FIGURE 7. (ABOVE) *The view west on Buzescu's main street.*

converging into one — inhabit the ever expanding "palaces," united in their determination to outdo and outbuild each other. Perhaps this is because for the first time the Rroma can afford to build and for the first time collectively express themselves through building. When asked why he built a house with ten towers, the head of a family usually responds that he wanted to have the largest and most ornamented house. A similar rationale is typically given for the elaborate rooftop metal decorations that list the names of family members and highlight status and symbols of affluence (FIG.8).[17]

The setting in Buzescu is typical of many other Rroma settlements in the country today. Scattered at the outskirts of cities or clustered along the main streets of small country towns, the towered Rroma mansions have become a widespread phenomenon, albeit one that still connotes marginality. With almost no regional variation, such structures can be found everywhere well-to-do Rroma clans live. Moreover, as Celac noted, the phenomenon has spread to Rroma communities throughout Eastern Europe — into Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria.[18]

FIGURE 8. *Metalwork bearing the name of the owner on the roof of Banu' Mondialu's house in Buzescu. Traditionally a clan of metal craftsmen, the Caldarari display their craft in elaborate rooftop decorations.*

Buzescu is today known as the epicenter of the Rroma palace phenomenon. The owners of the mansions come from the Caldarari, a Rroma clan that before World War II lived mostly a nomadic life, where the tent was the primary form of shelter. Under the Communist government, when most Rroma were forcefully relocated to existing housing as part of a systematization program, they were among the last clans to be settled.[19] As a group, therefore, they had no tradition of building or engaging in homeownership prior the fall of the Communist government. But in the legislative vacuum that followed the 1989 revolution, the Caldarari Rroma in Buzescu, traditionally a clan of metal craftsmen, prospered trading nonferrous metals. The construction of their mansions over the last eighteen years has occurred in a similar void of building or zoning legislation.

After almost twenty years, Buzescu is still a laboratory. As if making up for lost opportunities, the Rroma are tireless builders, and Buzescu's main street is a scene of nearly perpetual construction. During my fieldwork one constant reminder of this centrifugal force of renewal and expansion were piles of sand and construction materials in front of one out of every two or three homes. The homes were inhabited, but they were undergoing seemingly continuous expansion, addition and refinishing. Pagoda-style roofs were being replaced by cupolas, which were making way for Swiss-chalet roofs; loggias were becoming colossal colonial porches. Seen in this light, one might say that the Rroma are not just producing architecture; they are producing a culture of perpetual construction. Indeed, Celac wrote of a "static nomadism," arguing that such building could be regarded as a symbolic extension of their former lives.[20]

The village of Buzescu is in fact a "strip," a voyeuristic corridor highlighting the "see and be seen" of Rroma's newfound dwelling practices. A totally collective, but at the same time individual act, this neovernacular is reproducing an international catalog of cultures and aesthetic norms **(FIG. 9)**.

FIGURE 9. *The entry to the Village of Buzescu. A typical example of a "palace" with a rhetorical facade, where architectural systems surrender to the overall form.*

Imagination and everyday desires are unleashed with what appear to the outside observer to be no social and cultural inhibitions. Symbols of a public, urban life that the Rroma never had but perhaps encountered in their travels, these structures must be seen to perform as signifiers before they function as dwellings. The palaces must be read first as rhetorical statements rather than systems of space and program. Furthermore, in Buzescu's pragmatic universe, location means everything. Only those families who can truly afford it get to build on the main street. Meanwhile, an impoverished local population continues to live behind this strip in modest rural homes.

## OUT WITH THE OLD: CRISIS IN RROMA ARCHITECTURE

During my visit in 2007, I encountered a relatively new addition to the landscape in Buzescu. At the fork in the main road stood an imposing Neoclassical edifice. Together with the village church, it formed a sort of gateway to the main street, its decorative austerity and grand colonnade providing a powerful contrast to the stylistic cacophonies down the road.

Heroic in scale, this Palladian-revival villa was a quintessential "duck."[21] It may also have provided an uncanny sense of déjà vu to some, given that it was in fact a replica of the courthouse in Caracal, a municipality in the neighboring county of Olt (FIG.10A,B). The building's owner and the head of the household was a Gypsy music impresario alleged to have run into trouble with the law. After his experiences with the criminal justice system (including the court of Caracal), he built a replica of its courthouse as his private residence.[22] Above the colonnade, instead of the word "Judecatorie" (Courthouse) displayed on the original structure, he ordered written his own name and the date: "Dan Finutu — 2003."[23] Although it is not clear whether Dan Finutu's confrontation with the law ended in acquittal or conviction, the rhetorical object resulting from this encounter has provided a provocative break with the language and symbolism of the older Rroma palaces in Buzescu.

A bigger surprise, however, is revealed as one walks down the village main street. Rearticulated, exaggerated, or sometimes reduced to parodic miniature, Dan Finutu's colonnade has appeared on the facades of a number of newly renovated palaces (FIG.11). And as if the spectacle of perpetual change were being played out in real time, rather than scraping away their old facades, some of these villas have applied the colonnade as a simple mask over other designs that have fallen out of fashion. As an instantaneous upgrade, the portico has been juxtaposed over "outdated" loggias, blocking existing windows, and in apparent disregard for pagoda-style dormers still visible in the back (FIG.12). "We are changing it because it's out of fashion," stated the owner of one home under reconstruction.

In the relational link between the Caracal Courthouse, Dan Finutu, and the new portico facades, the iconography of the "original" has been reduced to a rhetorical gesture. Flattened into an applied ornament, the colonnade has become the new reigning icon of Buzescu's "architecture without architects." It is also a symbol of the astonishing reversibility and mutation possible within Rroma architecture, the outer sign of an always mobile community, defined by an equal mix of sameness and difference.

As the Rroma palaces across the country became a recognizable typology, they had also become more formulaic. But Dan Finutu has imagined a new face of the Rroma palace,


FIGURE 10A,B. *The house built in Buzescu in 2003 by Dan Finutu (left), after being tried at the Caracal Courthouse. Its original referent, the Courthouse Building, City of Caracal (right).*

**FIGURE 11.** *An example of a newly renovated palace with a colonnade in Buzescu.*

**FIGURE 12.** *Residence under construction in Buzescu. The colonnade is applied on top of the old facade, blocking existing windows, leaving decorative dormers still visible in the back.*

while perhaps unwittingly causing an aesthetic and ideological crisis. Each homeowner is now faced with a dilemma: continue to build bigger versions of the "traditional" Rroma palace, or follow Dan Finutu's new language. This evolution of palace imagery has disrupted Rroma building and place-making as a social practice. Dan Finutu's gesture, which gained him instant notoriety, has also exponentially expanded the possibilities of palace architecture as a symbol of status and upward mobility.

## SINTESTI

The village of Sintesti is located in the county of Ilfov, ten kilometers south of Bucharest. Part of the larger commune of Vidra, Sintesti has a population approaching 2,500. Home to another prosperous Caldarari Rroma community, the village is mostly known for having the largest number of firms trading nonferrous metals.[24] Sintesti has a troubled relationship with the local and national authorities. It is not unusual for the Romanian media to cover police raids there, during which large quantities of metal may be confiscated and their owners fined or arrested. The palaces provide a theatrical backdrop for this sensationalist narrative, as criminal allegations are complemented by images of the "palaces of the Rroma millionaires" with their illegal connections to local electric lines **(FIG.13)**.

Lenuta, who brought me to Sintesti, explained that she used to work as a cook in the home of one of the well-to-do families there. In fact, she told me, "the people who clean their homes, cook for them, or the workers who build their homes are all Romanian." This is another prominent aspect of media accounts: outrage over an unprecedented class conflict — Romanians working for the Rroma.

**FIGURE 13.** *Metal-trading Rroma of Sintesti often trade merchandise from their homes. Here, a large quantity of aluminum tubing is stored in the front yard of one of the mansions.*

Sintesti is a largely linear settlement, strung out along a main road. Just as in Buzescu, this main street is where most of the Caldarari have built their homes — particularly where it crosses the highway to Bucharest. As in Buzescu, the Rroma in Sintesti do not form the majority of the population, and the remainder of the townspeople live further down the main street, where the real estate is less valuable.

The lots along the main road are all similar in size and proportion. However, unlike Buzescu's mansions, those in Sintesti are set ten to fifteen meters back from the street. Nevertheless, their front facades are just as important as in Buzescu, and their rear facades, which overlook cornfields, are either unfinished or treated without detail. Despite the different configuration of houses on village lots and a generally lower density, the experiential quality of Sintesti's main street is very similar to that of Buzescu. And there is greater stylistic uniformity, since a Dan Finutu-inspired Neoclassical makeover has not yet been made manifest here.

When I asked Ionut, an eighteen-year-old businessman and head of household, how he intended to complete the unfinished facade of his "palace," he promptly corrected me: "We do not build palaces. We build homes!"

I was then repeatedly asked if I was a journalist. "We don't allow them here anymore. Every time they come, they publish lies about us the in newspapers," I was told.

I was eventually allowed to take photographs inside. While the house was under construction, Ionut, his wife, and one-year-old son lived upstairs. "I have all the marble for the floors already bought," he told me, pointing to stacks of tiles against the wall. "From Paris. That's also where I got the idea for the plan of the house" **(FIG.14A,B)**.

The similarity of architectural language in Sintesti is striking; there is also a less noticeable drive to build ever bigger homes. The result is an eminently cohesive urban form — even though there are no spatial constraints, or anything resembling "design guidelines."

Likewise, the interiors of the houses follow a common, rigorous symmetry. The public side consists of a grand entry with two or three stories of galleries and a monumental staircase, typically marble **(FIG.15)**. Multiple rooms open onto the galleries, but have no access between them.

From the two houses I visited in Sintesti, I determined that the typical mansion contains between seven and twelve rooms. Most are unfurnished and uninhabited, but their number is considered more a matter of prestige. The rooms do fill up during family events such as weddings and funerals. As mentioned by one Sintesti resident, "It is a great embarrassment to have wedding guests and no place for all of them to sleep."


FIGURE 14A (TOP), B (ABOVE). *Sintesti. The home of eighteen-year-old Ionut and his wife.*

FIGURE 15. *Multiple rooms open into the galleries surrounding a monumental stair in one of the mansions of Sintesti.*

## A CONTEXT FOR DISCUSSION

In contrast to other forms of vernacular dwellings and settlements in rural Romania, the Rroma palace phenomenon remains largely unstudied. In fact, rather than being regarded as the embodiment of a living culture, the houses have been dismissed as kitsch. The right wing and the media have even argued that the palaces represent a Trojan horse, the harbinger of a coming "Gypsyfication" of Romanian culture. A similar form of cultural backlash has been directed at the equally eclectic *manele* music that originated in post-Communist Rroma slums. However, unlike the palaces, *manele* has enjoyed tremendous popularity and become an immensely profitable industry.

Indignation against the palaces within the Romanian architecture profession has been situated strictly within an exclusionary modernist trope of aesthetic purity. The theoretical and cultural lag caused by decades of Communist rule and cultural isolation has created the grounds for this intellectual struggle. Forty-five years of socialist-realism arrested Romania's cultural development and delayed its encounter with postmodernism.[25] Today, this has created great difficulties when it comes to making sense of a phenomenon that does not have familiar references — certainly not when measured against a normative "West."

Within this cultural milieu, Mariana Celac's taxonomy of Rroma palaces in Buzescu represented a coming of age of sorts — which is perhaps the reason it was so compelling to intellectual elites. The public is arguably still not ready to bridge the gap; however, Celac, Kiraly and Berescu created a healthy controversy and a belated *Learning from Las Vegas* moment with their "Tinseltown" exhibition in Bucharest. Yet, unlike Venturi, Izenour and Scott-Brown's stance, "Tinseltown" did not make a moral plea to rediscover the forgotten architecture of the common man. Rather, it simply proposed a deconstruction of the language of the palace, and of its subjectivities. The thesis involved an orderly resolution of discordant signifiers, trying to make sense of "design" moves that appear to surrender to the imperatives of global consumption, yet are still locally based and ethnically charged.

By examining the palaces through a single Rroma culture of former nomadism, however, "Tinseltown" unintentionally reproduced an Orientalist/exoticist discourse. Through systematic logic, it framed the extrovert consumption reflected in the "palace" architecture back toward an essentialized portrait of the Rroma as a marginal population. It thus used an overly simple approach to the Rroma's complex construction of "self." It thus indirectly linked the conspicuous consumption of the Rroma to a need to signal their legitimacy to the non-Rroma outside world or to broadcast opulence to the Rroma community.[26]

This hypothesis may be called into question by ethnographic studies such as that of Cerasela Voiculescu in Sângeorgiu de Mures.[27] Voiculescu's far more nuanced understanding of Rroma community culture and social associations may inform a reading of their dwellings — and more importantly, their patterns of consumption.

According to Voiculescu, the economy of the Rroma is essentially informal. Within this world, consumption, production and commerce are founded on a set of extralegal norms that define hierarchies and regulate social relations. Consumption, then, not only signals status within the community but, in the context of a quasi-feudal and nuclear community, establishes social capital. Moreover, it provides an economic strategy and a way to establish trust, because most Rroma rely on each other for financial help. Weddings, funerals, and particularly the size and appearance of homes are thus defined by a set of norms and conventions, respect for which consolidates social capital, and disrespect for which may lead to a loss of prestige.[28]

The conspicuous consumption of the Rroma palaces may thus be attributed to social rituals, rather than to mimicry or to a desire to broadcast respectability. By contrast, Celac has proposed that the construction of identity is the primary determinant of the palace phenomenon, adding that the Rroma are attempting to express through architecture a status they have been historically denied. However, the names and symbols inscribed on the roofs of the palaces, besides being an indication of idiosyncratic social process and community networking, demonstrate that the palace is primarily an expression of status within the community. For an outsider, these nicknames and symbols would have little significance.

It can also be argued that a form of transgression can be read into the Rroma architecture. The villas are almost always built without permits, and any request for compliance from the authorities is typically met with categorical refusal. The language of the palaces also appropriates and rearticulates the symbols of authority with deliberate irony and subversive intent, as the case of Dan Finutu demonstrates.

According to Celac, Rroma have a very strong sense of identity, that is always expressed through the same means. "I realized that the Rroma have chosen architecture to express their identity because it was precisely what was missing from their nomadic past."[29]

It should also be noted that the Communist regime forcefully ended nomadism by settling the Rroma primarily in leftover spaces within the urban fabric, particularly in dwellings that were not compatible with their way of life (i.e., modernist flats). Thus, the similarity in manifestations of Rroma identity formation today could be attributed to a common reaction against such systemic forces imposed on them in the past. As I argued above, referring to Ladányi and Szelényi, a similar view can be applied to the analysis of Rroma social status throughout Eastern Europe.

This still does not explain how Rroma palaces elude most conceptions of vernacular while at the same time owing very little to the historical styles they reproduce. The houses are both traditional and postmodern. They are neither high design, nor truly vernacular; neither rural dwellings, nor spontaneous settlements. How can one interrogate this condition using existing scholarship?

According to Amos Rapoport, vernacular built environments can be conceptualized in terms of environmental quality, social settings, and the cultural landscapes in which they exist.[30] Built environments should thus be seen as more than artifacts. He situated traditional design along four variables: space, time, meaning and communication.

In an effort to derive a set of operational attributes that would classify groups as more or less traditional, this methodology establishes a subtle gradient that avoids classification based on ideal types. This emphasis on processes and product characteristics can serve as a starting point when examining the intersection of Rroma architecture and the study of traditional environments.

Referencing Paul Oliver, Nezar AlSayyad has also argued that "there is no such thing as 'traditional building; there are only buildings that embody traditions."[31] He went on to argue that viewing a building as such, "rather than it being the means by which the building came to be allows us to see the continuities between form, content and process."[32]

Indeed, it is clear that a solely spatial perspective cannot suffice to navigate the concept of tradition with respect to Rroma architecture. The process of transmitting recogniz-

able architectural traits from generation to generation is what establishes a chain of tradition. But the Rroma culture of perpetual building and the rapid changes their structures undergo problematize the idea of transmission and raise questions about the nature of what is being transmitted.

Celac's concept of nomadism "in place," attributed to the Rroma of Buzescu, likewise complicates and expands the practice of transmission.[33] Although an essentialist view, it identifies a continuum — the practice of nomadism reappearing in the form of the constant renewal of the Rroma house.

A third possible frame with which to view the Rroma mansions is Yi-Fu Tuan's notion that the analysis of tradition can be coupled with the idea of "constraint-vs.-choice."[34] He took as axiomatic the fact that choice is limited in "nonliterate and folk societies." At the same time, he established that the exercise of choice allows for creativity, while constraint hinders it. Thus, he considered choice — a prerogative of modernity — to be at odds with the idea of tradition.

Could Tuan's conception of choice be applied to the complex equation of the Rroma settlement? Could the Rroma palace be regarded as a traditional artifact, even though it is undoubtedly an exercise of choice? Constrained neither economically nor by social or legal norms, the Rroma palace is the epitome of free will.

Existing analytical frameworks in the study of vernacular environments, such as these, may facilitate understanding of the Rroma vernacular and help interrogate its morphology and symbolism. However, the introduction of the term "vernacular" may be problematic, because some of the essential qualities of the palaces do not appear to qualify as such, particularly if read against Rapoport's polythetic framework of product and process characteristics.[35]

The palaces are clearly identifiable as a type. However, they are "academically" rather than "traditionally" inspired, to use Rapoport's words.[36] Furthermore, the morphological characteristics of the Rroma settlements are in continuous transformation — as a physical environment as well as a language. This aspect problematizes their analysis as traditional environments, because the process of transmission does not involve an artifact as much as a practice.

Can we speak of a Rroma architectural style? No matter how diversified, the elements are typically composed according to a common syntax: eclectic language, strong symmetry, theatrical monumentality. However, the Rroma architecture does not seem to be derived from a borrowed aesthetic. Rather, it may be considered a neovernacular style. One important reason for this distinction is that visual practices in the Rroma communities must be understood in context of global and capitalist modernity, not just the Rroma's nomadic past. How else can one understand the range of forms out of which it is produced?

The peri-urban Rroma palace is a manifestation of a social imaginary, an "identity artifact" that functions as a material object and a sign — an embodied practice that shapes the identity of the individual, as well as the group. The palaces are deeply meaningful, a full expression of the aspirations of the Rroma. Yet the people who create them rely on prestigious models and signifiers drawn from what they see as "essential" in various types of formal architecture around the world.

To date, the study of folk housing in rural Romania has not been matched by a similar interest in the emerging architecture of the Rroma. I contend that the vibrant presence of this new Rroma architecture is a manifestation of a vernacular practice that engages a global language, and one of the most valuable forms of vernacular architecture in Romania today.

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16. M. Celac, "Roumanie: les hautes toitures du Baragan," ["Romania: The Pitched Roofs of Baragan], *L'architecture d'aujourdhui*, No. 335 (July/August 2001).
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. See Guy, ed., *Between Past and Future*; and D. Grigore, "Rromii, locuire si locuri de munca," in the weekly political journal *Revista 22*, ANUL XV (853), July 14–20, 2006.
20. Celac, "Roumanie: les hautes toitures du Baragan."
21. R. Venturi, S. Izenour, and D. Scott-Brown, *Learning from Las Vegas: Revised Edition: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977).
22. The story of Dan Finutu has been repeatedly featured in the Romanian popular press. Publications such as *Ziua* and *Maxim* have referred to his encounter with the legal system, but have not elaborated on the nature of his legal difficulties.
23. An English translation of the Romanian name is Dan "Fine-Guy."
24. One example, in Romanian, of such an expose can be found at http://www.infonews.ro/article45049.html.
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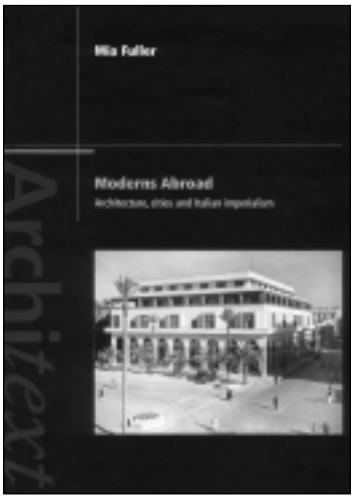
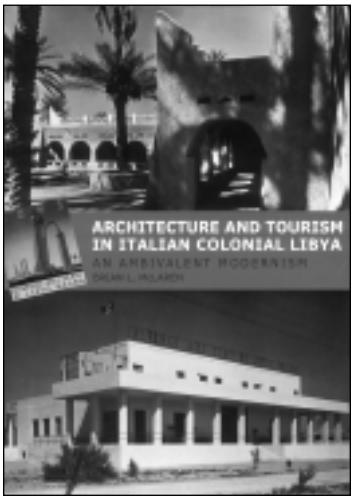
All photos and diagrams are by the author.

# Book Reviews




***Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism***. Mia Fuller. London and New York: Routledge–Taylor & Francis Group, 2007. 273 pp., b&w illus.

***Architecture and Tourism in Italian Colonial Libya: An Ambivalent Modernism***. Brian L. McLaren. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006. 287 pp., b&w and color illus.

While the first wave of research on nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial architecture and urbanism focused on Britain and France, scholarly activity has recently gravitated toward lesser-known episodes involving countries with equally interesting yet less conspicuous "achievements." Two recent books, by American scholars Mia Fuller and Brian McLaren, investigate Italy's changing approach to colonial activities and strategies in Northern Africa from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century. These studies contribute to a growing body of literature (mainly in Italian) that historicizes such contentious issues as the representation of power and identity to colonial architecture, urbanism and the arts.

The colonial studies that have flourished since the 1990s are in part an offshoot of exhaustive studies conducted since the mid-1970s on architecture, urbanism and the arts in Italy under the interwar fascist government. Within colonial studies, Italy holds interest for having been home to one of the ancient world's "superpowers," and for having crafted modern colonial-imperial strategies that sought to exploit the prestige of this past. While modern Italy was no match for European superpowers like Britain and France, it attempted to catch up and "civilize" other populations with "Italian" visual culture.

Mia Fuller's book *Moderns Abroad* is written in a prose whose directness parallels her organizational clarity and makes it eminently readable for specialists and laypeople alike. A cultural anthropologist and Associate Professor in Italian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, Fuller extends her range beyond exclusively architectonic issues to the "human geographies" dear to the Berkeley milieu. Her outsider position in relation to "pure" architectural history and her dexterity with interdisciplinary studies shield her against the jargon to which more specialized studies sometimes fall prey.

At the outset she states that her research "is not strictly a work of architectural history; it is a historical anthropology of Italian nationalism and imperialism as these were embodied in physical constructions and in the debates and plans that led up to these construction." As such, this book is a perfect fit for the Routledge Architext series (edited by Thomas A. Markus and Anthony D. King), whose mandate is to study buildings as "social objects in that they are invested with social meaning and shape social relations." I wish more publishers of architectural books (both university and commercial presses) were as courageous in promoting book-size essays as an alternative to the ubiquitous monograph.

Fuller makes important framing decisions that serve her narrative and research well. Her overview of the political, economic and social forces behind Italian colonialism in

Africa from 1869 to 1943 forms an important backdrop for the presentation of the changing strategies related to architecture and urbanism. She identifies three periods — "pre-architecturalist," "architecturalist," and "uniformalist" — whose temporal arc moves from a fairly lax and undirected approach to identity toward a more prescriptive strategy of self-representation. Thus, the reader is presented with historicist designs of the late-nineteenth-century Banca d'Italia in Asmara (1895–1905) to Luigi Piccinato's model for a colonial house displayed at the V Triennale of Milan (1933).

Fuller's penchant for ordering phenomena in threes (the book is also subdivided into three parts) spills over to identifying three aspects of the "internal logic" of Italian colonialism that she feels have been overlooked — the roles of metaphor, fantasy and ambiguity. Fuller could have enhanced the effectiveness of this generally convincing approach by bringing in discussion of such pioneering Italian ethnographers as Lamberto Loria, who first "discovered" and photographed the indigenous people of Eritrea in the late nineteenth century.

Whereas Fuller's "geographies" include Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia, Libya, the Dodecanese Islands, and Albania, Brian McLaren focuses exclusively on Libya. His *Architecture and Tourism in Italian Colonial Libya* has been published as part of the Studies in Modernity and National Identity series edited by Sibel Bozdogan and Resat Kasaba for the University of Washington Press. Trained as both an architect and a historian, McLaren has produced a beautifully illustrated book (with abundant color as well as black-and-white images) that draws on a wealth of primary and secondary sources to investigate the role of tourism in Italy's colonial relationship with Africa.

Unlike Fuller, who dedicates a chapter to developments in Italy that had an indirect impact on the colonies, McLaren is not so much interested in architecture in Italy as with Italian architects who designed buildings and towns in the newly colonized Libya. In his introduction he writes that "the central argument of this book is that the tourist experience in Libya existed in a space of interaction where the modernization of this colony and the preservation of its indigenous culture were negotiated."

The confluence of the political and economic strategies that fueled much of the Italian government's propaganda in support of the tourist industry in Libya is an underlying theme. Five chapters cover different aspects of this experience, including the incorporation of Libya into metropolitan Italy, colonial tourism and the experience of modernity, the indigenous politics of Italian colonialism, touring and the framing of indigenous culture, modern colonial architecture, and the search for regionalist expression.

McLaren was a contributor to *Italian Colonialism*, a collection of essays recently edited by Fuller (with Ruth Ben-Ghiat) (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Along with the two books under review, this publication significantly enhances recent scholarship in English on the topic. While these American-led initiatives build on Italian scholarship, they also benefit from their authors' critical distance from the politics of national identity that continue to characterize, albeit in subtle ways, Italian scholarship. ■

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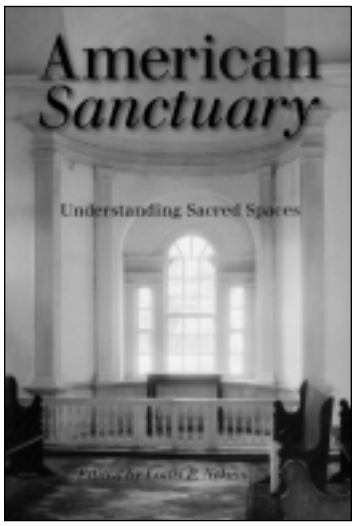
***American Sanctuary: Understanding Sacred Space.*** Edited by Louis P. Nelson. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006. 280 pp., b&w illus.




*American Sanctuary* is the product of ten contributors from diverse backgrounds who bring their particular disciplinary perspectives to the study of religion and architecture. The timely collection stems from two iterations of a graduate-student seminar and a concomitant symposium on "American Sacred Space" led and organized by Louis P. Nelson, an Assistant Professor of Architectural History at the University of Virginia. What connects the chapters is their examination of specific environments in relation to the religious practices of the people who built and used them.

The main sections of the book reinforce three premises adopted by Nelson and the other authors: that belief and repeatedly performed human actions make a place sacred; that sacred places invoke individual and collective memories and are tied to sociopolitical identities; and that the experiences and interpretations associated with a place change over time. Because these spaces are appropriated and contested by competing or successive groups, sacred meanings are not stable.

In his introductory chapter, Nelson describes the limitations of two interpretive models that have dominated the study of built religious form — comparative religion and aesthetic theory. He and his collaborators instead propose an approach that weds the study of religion and visual and material culture. This approach not only draws upon the new social history, with its consideration of the points of view of common people in addition to those of people in positions of authority, but is influenced by postmodern theories, which posit that consideration of human agency is essential to the interpretation of events, places and objects.

Buildings and spaces, oral interviews, newspaper accounts, diaries, sermons, and diverse artifacts used in wor-

ship or in ritual practice all have a place in the authors' analyses. Use of appropriate illustrations, plans and photographs further help to ground their explanations of the connections between built form and cultural phenomena. The final essay on method invites scholars to pursue the investigations presented in the preceding case studies.

The essays often present architecture as a vehicle through which a religious community negotiates its relationship vis-à-vis a larger culture — or, more specifically, secular society. Despite the common casting of the United States as a secular society and a nation founded on the precepts of Protestant Christianity, the collection successfully demonstrates that American culture is and always has been comprised of a mosaic of people of different origins and spiritual beliefs attempting to coexist on the same territory. Indeed, most religious building campaigns and ritual events strive to build the cohesiveness of a faith group through shared experience, while also seeking to distinguish that group from others holding divergent worldviews.

Each group thus shapes the environment and gives it meaning according to its beliefs. But this religious landscape is constantly changing. And the authors of these essays take care to reveal contingencies of meaning associated with particular places, changes over time in rituals and practices, and inconsistencies between two groups or individuals regarding the interpretation of a given sacred building or site.

I applaud the authors for extending the notion of sacred space beyond the traditional houses of worship. By resorting to the word "sacred," in addition to "religious," they are free to consider any space set apart for purposes of spiritual activity. One example is Jennifer Cousineau's essay on the *eruv*. She reveals the ways a Jewish population imaginatively conceived its New York City neighborhood as an enlarged household to allow the faithful to comply with certain religious prescriptions, using boundaries demarcated by visible urban infrastructure. John Beardsley likewise explores the ephemeral yard shows of African Americans as expressions of the spiritual quest for personal salvation. The exuberant sculptures and altars these artists create additionally make socio-political statements out of the salvage of other people's refuse. Both these essays show groups or individuals creatively enlisting the everyday stuff of city life for religious service. In so doing, they transform profane spaces into sacred places.

The semantic distinction between sacred and religious also helps the authors blur the line between civil and faith-based religion. For example, Jeffrey F. Meyer compares the rituals and pilgrimages that have grown up around such civic monuments as the Lincoln Memorial and Tiananmen Square with more traditional sites of worship such as Buddhist temples and Christian churches. The latter, in some countries, have become equally the terrain of tourists and believers. In a similar vein, Paula A. Mohr examines the religious connotations and architectural vocabulary used by the designers of Central Park to create spaces conducive to polite recreation at a time when nature was exalted for its redemptive properties. And Erika Meitner's study of the hanging of a *mezuzah*, a tiny scroll of scripture hidden in a decorative case, in various Jewish homes illustrates how religious artifacts are sometimes used more to affirm cultural identity than to engage in liturgical practices.

Houses of worship are also treated here in essays by Gretchen Buggeln, Louis P. Nelson, Joanne Punzo Waghorne, Jeanne Halgren Kilde, and Paula M. Kane. Buggeln shows how such structures were used by ministers of Puritan and Congregational churches of New England as an instrument of doctrine. Nelson shows how the aesthetics of the church building, the headstones in its yard, and the music played inside contributed as much to the construction of the eighteenth-century Anglican worldview as the theology dispensed in its sermons. Waghorne shows how the evolution of Hindu temple construction in the Washington, D.C., area reveals the cultural adaptation of Indian- and American-born generations, and the marriage of the two cultures. Kilde shows how new evangelical megachurches recall the architecture of suburban office complexes, auditoria, and shopping malls to create environments that appeal to consumers of religious doctrine. And Kane shows how Catholic churches wanting to play an important role in contemporary society have had to think about selling off underused buildings in older parishes for conversion to secular use, returning to older models of worship, and reinventing church facilities to attract new worshippers. All these essays remind us that religion is integral to social, economic, and even political life in America.

One limitation of this volume is its focus on consecrated spaces, sanctuaries of sorts, spaces set apart from the ordinary in some fashion. Omitted are those common buildings built by religious congregations and devout benefactors. Among these are educational facilities such as parochial schools, seminaries and madrassas, and institutional buildings such as hospitals and orphanages. Religious beliefs and practices were and are transmitted from one generation to the next in these places, and, in turn, are subsequently contested and transformed.

In this book, the United States is implicitly presented as a "sanctuary" to many different religious groups who have successfully carved places for themselves there. Thus, the collection provides a much needed addition to the overly simplistic story of a territory colonized by Puritans and other groups persecuted for their worldviews. Taken together, the chapters complicate that story by showing it to also encompass the trajectories of successive waves of immigrants who (by choice or circumstance) have established themselves in the New World.

A greater understanding of the ways that religion forms a part of a person's culture, his or her individual and group identity, leads to an appreciation not only of the built heritage of people outside mainstream White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant

culture, but also yields new insights into religious cultures that have long dominated the U.S. built environment. This book, in tackling this diversity and complexity, is a welcome step in that direction. ■

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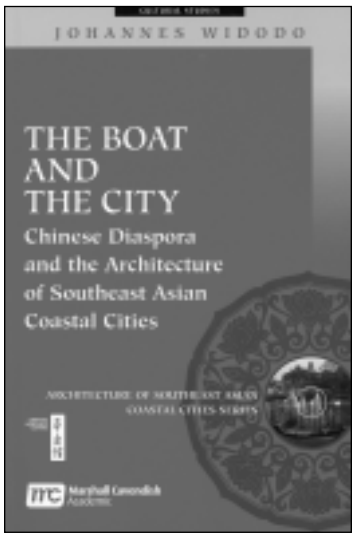
***The Boat and the City: Chinese Diaspora and the Architecture of Southeast Asian Coastal Cities.*** By Johannes Widodo. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish and the Chinese Heritage Center, 2004. 246 pp., b&w illus.




*The Boat and the City* highlights the contributions of the Chinese diaspora to the formation of coastal cities in Southeast Asia. Johannes Widodo suggests that various forms of discrimination against the Chinese, including nationalist policies of assimilation and urban riots, demonstrate how this Chinese contribution has been forgotten. His book hopes to redress this neglect by studying the history of these coastal cities, from their beginnings in villages to their development into trading posts, entrepôts and emporiums. Widodo's argument is that immigrant Chinese were key to the founding of these cities and the development of tolerant, multiethnic societies in them.

*The Boat and the City* covers a large geographical region through two millennia. It is planned as the first in a series on "Architecture of Southeast Asian Coastal Cities" sponsored by the Singapore Chinese Heritage Center and edited by Widodo. Grand narratives may be long out of fashion; nevertheless, the book describes the "Mediterranean of Asia" in bold brush strokes to provide a base from which other, presumably more localized, narratives will spring.

The book consists of five chapters, illustrated with more than one hundred neat diagrams, black-and-white photographs, and maps. The diagrams depict the layout of cities in relation to their socio-spatial makeup — i.e., the residential quarters occupied by different ethnic communities, their hierarchy of urban spaces, and topographical features.

Widodo makes extensive use of morphological analysis. Yet, in *The Boat and the City*, this methodology serves primarily to draw connections between different locations in the region, and between different time periods.[1] Widodo writes that "the city is a product of collective memory and the materialization of the culture of its inhabitants along history." Indeed, he likens the urban fabric to a "pile of tissue," with the layers representing different historical periods. Those elements that persist "keep the memory and identity of places and events."

The author also suggests that morphological analysis alone is not enough to understand the development of cities. Such work needs to be enriched by sociological and philosophical "layers" to arrive at a "totality of architecture." In other words, morphology needs to be linked to cosmology, to places of origin, as well as to "mental blueprints."

The name of the book is drawn from one of these blueprints, the Chinese boat. Widodo explains there were both literal and metaphorical connections between the boat and the city. "The city is like a boat or a vessel, loaded by people, goods, activities, rituals, and symbolism — a vessel of civilization, sailing across history, from the past heading towards the future." He then makes the provocative argument that the spatial configuration of the Chinese immigrant ship, including its shrine to the Goddess Mazu, was transplanted into adopted lands.

The book's first chapter, "Southeast Asian Morphology," functions like an introduction, presenting methodological and theoretical concerns such as the links between history, culture and cosmology. It observes that the original morphologies of capital cities in the region were based on the Hindu cosmological order, with the palace occupying the highest point, the ordinary people dwelling on the slope, and the harbor and market set up by the waterside. But as maritime trade brought different temporary and permanent populations, including the Chinese, this original pattern became more complex.

The remaining four chapters of the book are organized chronologically. The first provides a historical overview of the trade links and the beginnings of coastal cities in the region from the first to the sixteenth centuries. It discusses the links with mainland China and the role of the Chinese Admiral Zheng He's voyages (1405–1433) in establishing trading posts in the region. Admiral Zheng, a Muslim, protected Muslim communities and helped spread Islam and cultivate tolerance between different religious and ethnic communities. Other early Chinese contributions to urban form included markets in front of temples and near the harbor, the shophouse architectural typology, and the introduction of permanent building materials.

Some of the early trading posts established by the Chinese developed into entrepôts in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Widodo's third chapter uses the examples of Tuban, Gresik, Surabaya, Semerang, Demak, Pattani, Palembang, Singga-pura, and early Melaka to discuss this trend. The Chinese typically lived in a fortified area close to the water in these settlements, alongside relatively less dense indigenous settlements. Even though fortifications were

later removed, the distinct characteristics of each part persisted. Some of these entrepôts later started exchanging their own commodities and developed into emporiums.

The book's fourth chapter examines the cases of Ayutthaya on the mainland and Banten and Sunda Kelapa on the island of Java in the archipelago. Emporiums eventually built fortifications to protect the native royal core from European naval attack in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The city continued outside the fortifications in the form of urban villages. The foreigners, forbidden to dwell in the core, established their own settlements next to the Chinese and royal quarters. In addition to this separation based on race, quarters were segregated within themselves according to religion.

The fifth chapter covers the period of European colonization. Widodo observes that the colonial "layering" resulted, in historical order, in trading posts, castle towns, fortified cities, racially segregated cities, and the prewar modern city. He traces the individual developments of Melaka, Penang and Singapore under British rule, and Batavia and Semerang under Dutch rule.

Despite being nearly half the book, this chapter is its least satisfactory, primarily because of its emphasis on European impact rather than on the "production of space" — for instance, indigenous processes that contested the spatial politics of colonization. This privileging of the European perspective undermines the book's main goal, which is to highlight the role of one ethnic community in the building of a multicultural society. In this chapter, the Chinese seem to be consigned to a role as intermediaries between the colonizers and the colonized.

Another troubling aspect is Widodo's argument that these cities were "cosmopolitan." To back up this assertion, he points to aspects of architectural form and ritual practice as evidence that different groups were influenced by each other. But his examples remain anecdotal. For instance, he writes that pork was forbidden in a Mazu temple in Palembang "as an expression of respect to the Chinese Muslim Navigator who was buried behind the main altar." Because of its tombs, the whole temple was oriented similarly toward the *qibla*. In this example, the architecture becomes a representation of peaceful "cohabitation" that is then generalized to the region.

He also explains that people of different religions, ethnicities and races came together in marketplaces fostered by the Chinese. Yet one can't help wonder about this. If there were such a dialogue, why did residential boundaries remain in place even after the dissolution of walls? How and why did different groups preserve their unique identities and restricted quarters? What did "unity in diversity" mean in the premodern era? And how was it reinterpreted in modern times?

Widodo frequently characterizes Southeast Asian coastal cities loosely as "multicultural" and "cosmopolitan." The concept of cosmopolitanism has been in vogue in the description of early modern cities for some time now. One attitude has been to locate cosmopolitanism in (elite) individuals who can make themselves comfortable in different cultural settings. Another is to extend it to places, endowing them with characteristics that nurture cosmopolitan types. Yet different groups who did not mingle existed in every ancient city, and the copresence of different groups is not in itself satisfactory as an account of multiculturalism or cosmopolitanism.

By using these concepts without problematizing them, authors run the risk of pasting contemporary concerns with cultural homogeneity onto the past. It verges on nostalgia to say, as Widodo does, that until the arrival of European colonialists, all sorts of differences were positively received and absorbed. And by privileging the Chinese community — and to some extent that of the European colonizers — he inevitably downplays the contributions of "indigenous" as well as other, non-Chinese communities (such as Arabs, Indians and Persians) in the rise of these cities.

For the uninitiated reader, the broad approach employed in the book is very useful in understanding the general organization of cities and the links between them. The author brings together a great collection of evidence and makes it accessible to a general audience. This book would be a good addition to courses on Southeast Asia if complemented by other sources that portray the finer grain of social life and social change. Upon completing the book, however, this reader wished this impressive work could have been complicated by other types of primary research to examine inter- and intra-community negotiations and the way space activates social formations and relations between them. One hopes this will be included in subsequent volumes in the series. ■

1. Typological and morphological research proved immensely popular throughout Europe in the 1960s and 70s as a form of resistance to what was then seen as the homogenizing tendencies of Modernism. Such studies emphasized continuity in urban forms and the role of architecture in shaping collective memory in hopes that the recovery of typologies could restore an authentic public realm. Later, this approach lost its critical edge, subsumed in the U.K. and U.S. within the rubric of commercial postmodernism.

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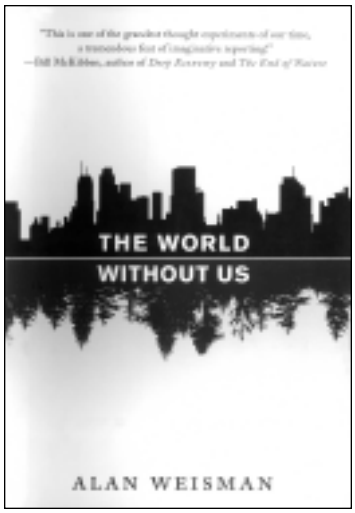
***The World Without Us.*** By Alan Weisman. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007. 324 pp., b&w illus.




The struggle over turf, historically a politically motivated kind of warfare, has become instead over the past half-century our collective conquest of nature itself. The concept of sustainability (that these days so fashionably sustains our illusions of doing the planet some good) really only asks how we can continue to have enough for the things that we will continue, in ever-increasing amounts, to want. The conservation of oil, considered by many the most valuable of the world's resources, is in reality only the means toward the ever-expanding ends of the acquisition and exploitation of our beautiful world. These and other paradoxes of planetary stewardship are implicitly and explicitly present in Alan Weisman's new book *The World Without Us.*

If the book were a film, it would be the kind of documentary in which individuals speak from their own expertise and passions (their faces filling the large screen), whereupon the director literally and figuratively pans out to the global picture and the broader implications of their words. In this docu-book, Weisman introduces his characters as though they were our friends. He describes their countenance and their clothing; he reveals them in all their humanity, and at the same time pays tribute to their expert knowledge. They take us in turn into such highly specialized worlds as hydro-engineering, forestry, art conservation, and the science of polymers. They demonstrate the links between the seemingly disparate worlds of animals and architecture, of the wilderness and the city. Weisman links us to them, and them to each other, to paint a picture of the world were we, humankind, to suddenly disappear.

The book begins with a prologue — an allegorical but true story of the Zapara Indians of Ecuador, whose stable Stone Age existence was forever extinguished when Henry Ford invented a machine that needed rubber for its wheels. Ana Maria Santi is one of only four people who still speak the native language; she is the only one who refuses to partake of the flesh of the spider monkey, from which the tribe is imagined to have descended. "'When we are down to eating our ancestors,' she asked, 'what is left?'" As with much of Weisman's book, this microcosmic tale of the rape of nature and the culture that it spawned sends out hyperbolic reverberations that encompass the globe; yet it does so without making us all into villains. He loves humankind, and his tale of the world without us is, in the end, a story of hope.

Weisman spends no time on the probable causes of our hypothetical disappearance. He presents it as a *fait accompli* that facilitates a succession of inquiries into the subsequent fate of forests and farms, plastics and nuclear fallout, tunnels and pyramids, birds of the present and mammals of the past. The mammoths that he describes in the chapter "The Lost Menagerie" are enormous, the size of buildings. (Have we not replaced their extinct mass with the masses of buildings that will themselves in time turn to husks and bones?) He tells us how Thomas Jefferson, the architect president, played with his fossil collection while the rest of the administration grappled with the fallout from an untimely embargo. And he asks, "Had we never appeared, would those now missing mammals still be here? If we go, will they be back?"

In the chapter titled "The City Without Us" he illustrates, with the help of his engineer and biologist experts, how nature might reclaim the city. He describes the ambitious project of Eric Sanderson, a landscape ecologist, who is producing a detailed digital model of the island of Manhattan as it was before the Dutch bought it from the Indians. The chapter on "The Fate of Ancient and Modern Wonders of the World" is devoted largely to the Panama canal; in essence its excavation and construction in the late nineteenth century erected a fence between the two Americas. In opening the passage for humans from east to west, it cut off the passage for animals from south to north. This sort of historical/ecological paradox recurs frequently throughout the book.

In one chapter Weisman outlines the amount of human energy it now takes yearly, daily, and even hourly to keep nature at bay in the metropolis. He quantifies the seemingly incalculable cubic yards of water that would rush the New York subways if not pumped uphill, and the probable result were there no humans to operate the machines. In another chapter he writes of how, while one kind of war can ". . . damn Earthly ecosystems to hell," another kind can be nature's salvation. We might imagine a memorial to 9/11 that would have simply left the World Trade Center site completely alone, and hence allowed into being a fragment of Sanderson's wilderness fantasy.

Weisman is part journalist, part humanist; his glass alternately half empty and half full. Portraying the orphaned architecture of a New York without humans, he writes: "Buildings groan as their innards expand and contract. . . ." But are they, perhaps, groaning with pleasure rather than with pain? It's not a bad book for an architect to read. ■

***Jill Stoner***
*University of California at Berkeley*

# Conferences and Events

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA

***"Sensory Urbanism,"* Glasgow, Scotland:** January 8–9, 2008. Organized by the Multimodal Representation of Urban Space research group, this interdisciplinary conference will examine how urban space could benefit from a keener recognition of all sensory factors within the design process. For more information, contact raymond.lucas@strath.ac.uk.

***Sixth Annual Hawaii International Conference on Arts & Humanities,* Honolulu, Hawaii:** January 11–14, 2008. Jointly sponsored by the University of Louisville's Center for Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods and the *Baylor Journal of Theatre and Performance,* the conference organizers welcome interdisciplinary submissions in the arts and humanities. For more information, visit http://www.hichumanities.org.

***"Instant Cities: Emergent Trends in Architecture and Urbanism in the Arab World,"* Sharjah, United Arab Emirates:** April 1–3, 2008. The Center for the Study of Architecture in the Arab World (CSAAR), in collaboration with the School of Architecture and Design at the American University of Sharjah, will host its Third Annual Conference to examine the impacts of rapid urbanization fueled by speculation and geopolitical transformations on architecture. For more information, visit http://www.csaar-center.org/conference/2008A/index.htm.

***"A Suburban World? Global Decentralization and the New Metropolis,"* Reston, VA:** April 6–8, 2008. This conference, hosted by the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech, will examine changes in urban form and the new challenges of sprawl, congestion and affordable housing. Details can be found on the institute's website http://www.mi.vt.edu.

***"British Architecture and the Vernacular,"* London, England:** May 17, 2008. The Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain (SAHGB) and the Vernacular Architecture Group present a symposium on the interrelationship between vernacular studies and architectural history in British contexts. For more information, visit http://www.sahgb.org.uk/index.cfm/display_page/EventsSymposium.

***"Sustainable Humane Habitats: Architectural Education, Research and Practice,"* Mumbai, India:** January 25–27, 2008. The Tenth International Conference on Humane Habitat (ICHH) is organized by the International Association for Humane Habitats (IAHH). Architects, planners, educators and engineers are invited to participate. For more information, visit http://humanehabitat.org/conferences/10th-ichh-2008/.

***Heritage 2008 International Conference on World Heritage and Sustainable Development,*** **Vila Nova de Foz Côa, Portugal:** May 7–9, 2008. The conference will examine the relationships between heritage, human development, the natural environment, and building preservation. Attention to case studies, and innovative approaches, and research are welcome. For more information, visit http://www.heritage2008.greenlines-institute.org/.

***"True Urbanism: Designing the Health City,"*** **Santa Fe, NM:** June 1–5, 2008. The Forty-Sixth International Making Cities Livable Conference will focus on a range of topics including the built environment and health, new designs for mixed use development, and sustainable design. For more information, visit http://www.livablecities.org/.

***"Urban Growth Without Sprawl: A Way Towards Sustainable Urbanization,"*** **Dalian, China:** September 19–23, 2008. The International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISoCARP) has announced its 44th International Planning Congress. Visit http://www.isocarp.org/ for more information.

## CALL FOR ARTICLES/PAPERS FOR PUBLICATION

***"Climate Change and Place," Places: Forum of Design for the Public Realm,*** **summer 2008 theme section, call for submissions.** What defines the character of places, and how can their design respond to the shifting climate? The journal *Places* invites scientists, essayists and designers to engage in a discussion of the impacts of climate change on the diverse dimensions of place and the role of design in minimizing the impact of climate change on human and ecological wellbeing. Deadline for submission of two-page proposals is November 30, 2007. Deadline for completed manuscripts (1,500–3,000 words, with illustrations) is January 15, 2008. Questions should be directed to Marina Alberti (malberti@u.washington.edu) and Nancy Rottle (nrottle@u.washington.edu).

***"Bridging the Divide: Celebrating the City,"*** **Chicago, IL:** July 6–11, 2008. The fourth Joint Congress of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) and the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) invite papers, organized sessions, and roundtable discussions on a number of tracks from gender, ethnicity and diversity in planning to urban design. Visit http://tigger.uic.edu/cuppa/upp/congress/ for details.

## RECENT CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA

***"History, Heritage & Regeneration: The Future of Traditional Architecture in Eastern Europe,"* Sibiu-Transylvania, Romania:** September 23–25, 2007. The conference of the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture and Urbanism (INTBU) aimed at examining the challenges faced by the emerging economies of the former Eastern bloc in the field of heritage preservation of traditional places. More information is available on http://www.intbau.org/SibiuConferenceEN.htm.

***"What's the Matter? Cultural Studies and the Question of Urgency,"* Edmonton, Canada:** October 25–28, 2008. The annual conference of the Canadian Association of Cultural Studies was organized to critically engage cultural studies and issues of urgency that are intellectual and political in scope. For details, visit http://www.culturalstudies.ca/english/eng_newsconferences.htm.

***"Solidarity in Action: Creating Cohesive Cities,"* Gdansk, Poland:** November 21–24, 2007. In the face of demographic change in many European cities, the 2007 annual EUROCITIES conference was convened to pay close attention to the demands of cohesion and inclusion in development and policy. For more information, visit http://www.eurocities2007.eu/.

# INTERROGATING TRADITION

## EPISTEMOLOGIES, FUNDAMENTALISMS, REGENERATION, AND PRACTICES

# IASTE 08 12–15 DECEMBER 2008 OXFORD, UNITED KINGDOM

Tradition has become a keyword in modern global practices, its meanings inextricably bound today with the issues it seeks to explain. As tradition is a keyword, the exercise of interrogation becomes essential in understanding the social and political contexts in which it is mobilized. Examining the intersecting discourses of tradition and the politics of its organization moreover become critical in identifying how socio-political identities and differences are pursued. Tradition thus can be seen to bind the dialectic of the cultural imaginary and the material reality of the built environment. Here, the historical realities and the political economies that have marked the development of local traditions and their attendant discourses become relevant considerations. For example, tradition is often a marker of nationalism and economic progress orchestrated in part to stabilize local cultures, legitimize invented histories, and frame social practices. The invocation of tradition has accordingly become instrumental in various nationalisms, regionalisms, and fundamentalisms.

The paradoxes of this global moment necessitate a recalibration of our operative epistemological frameworks in the study of traditional environments. The aim of such a recalibration is to critically forge two broad avenues of inquiry undertaken in prior IASTE conferences. In an earlier phase, IASTE scholarship had focused on the historical development of tradition as a means to understand the cultural ecology of places. A later cycle of scholarship examined tradition as a contingent and flexible form unsettled by globalization and the conditions which linked or dismantled assumed cultural coherence from its context. Whether in the explorations of shifting geographies of tradition as nostalgia and authenticity, the manufacture of heritage as part of struggles over space, or hybridity in a globalizing world, these examinations have been critical in understanding the constitutive dimensions of tradition. This scholarship has unsettled the belief that identities are geographically bounded and fixed, speculated the "end of tradition" and identified "hypertradition" in which the real and the virtual become mutually constitutive in an inseparable continuum. From this perspective it is possible to assert that what has ended, then, is not tradition itself, but the idea of tradition as a harbinger of authenticity, a container of specific cultural meanings, or a static authoritative legacy that carries the weight of history with it.

Why is interrogation important at this time? We use the term "interrogate" to refer to the epistemic exercise of understanding, framing, and questioning the rationalities of traditions, their constructions of authoritative knowledges, and the contingent practices and politics through which spaces and subjectivities are constituted in the 21st century. The conference seeks to underscore the co-constitutive linkages between the epistemologies and the practices of tradition. To that end, interrogating tradition is a re-engagement with how tradition is also mobilized and deployed in the making of space and its sustenance.

As in past IASTE conferences, scholars and practitioners from architecture, architectural history, art history, anthropology, archaeology, folklore, geography, history, planning, sociology, urban studies, and related disciplines are invited to submit papers that address one of the following three tracks:

### I. Epistemologies of Tradition

The relationship between tradition and epistemology is key to the conference theme. Some issues relevant to this line of inquiry include whether tradition is independent of its deployment. And if this independence is untenable, then is the deployment of tradition in fact its epistemology? Within these debates, some have argued that tradition is the absence of choice. Consequently, tradition emerges where choice is delimited or where the number of practices and social forms available are relatively proscribed. It can be argued then that tradition is about constraint, though it is often described in active terms such as "having," "being" and "belonging." This line of inquiry on the epistemologies of tradition is critical in two ways. One, it allows for the theorization of tradition appropriate to this current moment. Accordingly this track will examine emerging definitions of tradition and the epistemic modalities that frame these definitions. In addition, this track will identify those epistemologies that constitute tradition itself. Secondly, interrogating tradition moves examinations away from an orthodox perspective that views tradition as a static legacy of the past; a viewpoint that is apolitical. Rather, in following IASTE's intellectual perspective, tradition can be identified as a dynamic project for the interpretation and re-interpretation of the past from the point of view of the present towards the promise of its deployment in the future.


OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

**ELEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS**

## II. Fundamentalism and Tradition

A key field of inquiry in the study of traditional environments has been the spatial practices of various idealogical movements and their broader social implications. Such examinations have led some to theorize fundamentalism as an ideological apparatus that is hegemonic in intent and substance. In order to move beyond this static conceptualization, this track will investigate the specificities of fundamentalism where fundamentalism—as established forms of aesthetic and political governance—itself becomes a fundamentalist exercise. In examining the convergences between fundamentalism and tradition in the context of globalization, papers can investigate how traditional knowledge is formulated and deployed in the political sphere, including the post-conflict reconstruction of societies and environments, the use of tradition by the "state" as a means of co-optation or governance, or the manner in which fundamentalism is "framed" and used by different interest and social groups. Papers in this track can also question how tradition becomes the deliberate means of defining the past in relationship to the present and future.

## III. Regeneration and the Practices of Tradition

Tradition as practice can be oriented around the formation, negation, and negotiation of socio- political identities that occur through discursive as well as spatial politics. Papers in this track should explore contemporary and historical geographies of practice where tradition is produced and inscribed as articulations, social movements, or as forms of embeddedness in place. Politics and practice are prominent factors in the circulation and the construction of forms of legibility embedded in tradition. Papers can also engage with the concept of tradition in pedagogic discourses or in professional practice in addition to the discussions of revival, regeneration, and preservation of vernacular traditions. As new methodologies for the study and regeneration of vernacular traditions emerge in the twenty-first century, the role of the built environment has been critical in processes of cultural revival and sustainability. A productive critique of the spaces of tradition or the tradition of space is thus premised on the assumption that tradition may in fact be the most powerful catalyst for change.

# CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

### SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Please refer to our website **www.arch.ced.berkeley.edu/research/iaste** for detailed instructions on abstract submissions. For further inquiries, please email Sylvia Nam at **iaste@berkeley.edu**.

Proposals for complete panels are welcome. All papers must be written and presented in English. Following a blind peer-review process, papers may be accepted for presentation in the conference and/or publication in the Working Paper Series.

Contributors whose abstracts are accepted must pre-register for the conference, pay registration fees of $400 (which includes a special discounted $25 IASTE membership fee), and prepare a full-length paper of 20–25 double-spaced pages. Registered students may qualify for a reduced registration fee of $200 (which includes a special discounted $25 IASTE membership fee). All participants must be IASTE members. Please note that expenses associated with hotel accommodations, travel, and additional excursions are not covered by the registration fees and have to be paid directly to the designated travel agent. Registration fees cover the conference program, conference abstracts, and access to all conference activities including receptions, keynote panels, and a short tour of nearby sites.

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

| | |
|---|---|
| February 15, 2008 | Deadline for receipt of abstracts and CVs |
| May 1, 2008 | E-mail notification of accepted abstracts for Conference Presentation |
| July 15, 2008 | Deadline for pre-registrations and receipt of papers for possible publication in the Working Paper Series |
| October 1, 2008 | Notification of accepted papers for the Working Paper Series |
| December 12–15, 2008 | Conference Presentations |

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Travel arrangements should be made directly with your designated travel agency.

### INQUIRIES

Please use the following information when making inquiries regarding the conference.

### MAILING ADDRESS:

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# Guide for Preparation of Manuscripts

1. GENERAL

The editors invite readers to submit manuscripts. Please send three copies of each manuscript, with one copy to include all original illustrations. Place the title of the manuscript, the author's name and a 50-word biographical sketch on a separate cover page. The title only should appear again on the first page of text. Manuscripts are circulated for review without identifying the author. Manuscripts are evaluated by a blind peer-review process.

2 LENGTH AND FORMAT

Manuscripts should not exceed 25 standard 8.5" x 11" [A4] double-spaced typewritten pages (about 7500 words). Leave generous margins.

3. APPROACH TO READER

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the journal, papers should be written for an academic audience that may have either a general or a specific interest in your topic. Papers should present a clear narrative structure. They should not be compendiums of field notes. Please define specialized or technical terminology where appropriate.

4. ABSTRACT AND INTRODUCTION

Provide a one-paragraph abstract of no more than 100 words. This abstract should explain the content and structure of the paper and summarize its major findings. The abstract should be followed by a short introduction. The introduction will appear without a subheading at the beginning of the paper.

5. SUBHEADINGS

Please divide the main body of the paper with a single progression of subheadings. There need be no more than four or five of these, but they should describe the paper's main sections and reinforce the reader's sense of progress through the text.
*Sample Progression*: The Role of the Longhouse in Iban Culture. The Longhouse as a Building Form. Transformation of the Longhouse at the New Year. The Impact of Modern Technology. Conclusion: Endangered Form or Form in Transition?
Do not use any numbering system in subheadings. Use secondary subheadings only when absolutely essential for format or clarity.

6. REFERENCES

Do not use a general bibliography format. Use a system of numbered reference notes as indicated below.

*A condensed section of text might read as follows:*

> In his study of vernacular dwellings in Egypt, Edgar Regis asserted that climate was a major factor in the shaping of roof forms. Henri Lacompte, on the other hand, has argued that in the case of Upper Egypt this deterministic view is irrelevant.[1]
>
> An eminent architectural historian once wrote, "The roof form in general is the most indicative feature of the housing styles of North Africa."[2] Clearly, however, the matter of how these forms have evolved is a complex subject. A thorough analysis is beyond the scope of this paper.[3]
>
> In my research I discovered that local people have differing notions about the origins of the roof forms on the dwellings they inhabit.[4]

*The reference notes, collected at the end of the text (not at the bottom of each page), would read as follows:*

1. E. Regis, *Egyptian Dwellings* (Cairo: University Press, 1979), p.179; and H. Lacompte, "New Study Stirs Old Debate," *Smithsonian* 11 (December 1983), pp.24–34.
2. B. Smithson, "Characteristic Roof Forms," in H. Jones, ed., *Architecture of North Africa* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p.123.
3. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see J. Idris, *Roofs and Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).
4. In my interviews I found that the local people understood the full meaning of my question only when I used a more formal Egyptian word for "roof" than that in common usage.

7. DIAGRAMS, DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Illustrations will be essential for most papers in the journal, however, each paper can only be accompanied by a maximum of 20 illustrations. For purposes of reproduction, please provide images as line drawings (velox, actual size), b&w photos (5" x 7" or 8"x 10" glossies), or digitized computer files. Color prints and drawings, slides, and photocopies are not acceptable.

Digitized (scanned) artwork should be between 4.5 and 6.75 inches wide (let the length fall), and may be in any of the following file formats. Photos (in order of preference): 1) b&w grayscale (not rgb) TIFF files, 300 DPI; 2) b&w grayscale Photoshop files, 300 DPI; 3) b&w EPS files, 300 DPI. Line art, including charts and graphs (in order of preference): 1) b&w bitmap TIFF files, 1200 DPI; 2) b&w grayscale TIFF files, 600 DPI; 3) b&w bitmap EPS, 1200 DPI. Zip cartridges are the preferred media for digitized artwork.

8. CAPTIONS AND FIGURE PREFERENCES

Please mount all graphic material on separate 8.5" x 11" sheets, and include as a package at the end of the text. Caption text should not exceed 50 words per image and should appear on each image sheet. Please do not set caption text all in capital letters. The first time a point is made in the main body of text that directly relates to a piece of graphic material, please indicate so at the end of the appropriate sentence with a simple reference in the form of "**(FIG.1)**." Use the designation "**(FIG.)**" and a single numeric progression for all graphic material. Clearly indicate the appropriate fig. number on each illustration sheet.

9. SOURCES OF GRAPHIC MATERIAL

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*Sample attribution*: If the caption reads, "The layout of a traditional Islamic settlement," add a recognition in the following form: "(Courtesy of E. Hassan, *Islamic Architecture*, London, Penguin, 1982.)" Or if you have altered the original version, add: "(Drawing by author, based on E. Hassan, *Islamic Architecture*, London, Penguin, 1982.)"

10. OTHER ISSUES OF STYLE

In special circumstances, or in circumstancesnot described above, follow conventions outlined in *A Manual for Writers* by Kate Turabian. In particular, note conventions for complex or unusual reference notes. For spelling, refer to *Webster's Dictionary*.

11. WORKS FOR HIRE

If you have done your work as the result of direct employment or as the result of a grant, it is essential that you acknowledge this support at the end of your paper.
*Sample acknowledgement*: The initial research for this paper was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA]. The author acknowledges NEA support and the support of the sabbatical reasearch program of the University of Waterloo.

12. SIMULTANEOUS SUBMISSION AND PREVIOUS PUBLICATION

Submission of a manuscript implies a commitment to publish in this journal. Simultaneous submission to other journals is unacceptable. Previously published work, or work which is substantially similar to previously published work, is ordinarily not acceptable. If in doubt about these requirements, contact the editors.

13. COMPUTER DISK

Please include a version of all written and graphic material on a CD or other electronic media in addition to the printed copies.

14 NOTIFICATION

Contributors are usually notified within 15 weeks whether their manuscripts have been accepted. If changes are required, authors are furnished with comments from the editors and the peer-review board. The editors are responsible for all final decisions on editorial changes. The publisher reserves the right to copy-edit and proof all articles accepted for publication without prior consultation with contributing authors.

15. SUBMISSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

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