

# IASTE 2012

# THE

# MYTH

# OF TRADITION

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON | PORTLAND, OREGON, U.S.A. | 4-7 OCTOBER 2012 | **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Recent IASTE conferences have explored traditions as they relate to the formation of boundaries, the politics of consumption, and utopian futures. Building upon these earlier inquiries, this conference will examine the role of myths in the creation and endurance of particular traditions of space and practice. In many cultures, narratives based on little more than a story retold ever so eloquently are used to establish and perpetuate traditions that guide behaviors, customs and actions. Through constant repetition, myths become regimes of truth, as well as structures of shared meanings in the making of tradition.

The roots of the term “myth” stretch back to the Greek word “mythos,” and it remains a term with different meanings in different cultures. A myth is often a story whose origin is beyond anyone’s memory or any group’s history. For some, it is used to suggest “fiction” or “illusion.” Among certain scholars of culture, it refers to stories coded among primitive societies over time, which constitute “living myths.” Many of the myths we hear as children have been passed down to numerous generations, becoming deeply embedded in the landscapes of our imagination. Myths, however, are not merely stories to read aloud — they are regulating narratives with a rhetorical function. They impart a particular ethos, map out morality, and define the parameters of accepted behavior, making legible the boundaries of religion, culture and practice. Traditions, then, constitute the ways in which myths maintain their hold, and space becomes key in their manifestation and perpetuation. Indeed, spatial traditions may continue to operate even when the myth upon which they were founded has disappeared.

While myths and the traditions they engender often emerge as devices that dictate certain codes and norms, they have tangible effects on space and place, and the analysis and use of myth in urban planning and the design professions has a long history. For the most part this has focused on the design of urban utopias or religious places such as the mosque, the synagogue, and the cathedral. However, traditions based on myths have also shaped the profane spaces of the everyday. For instance, in the twentieth century, many architects and planners operated under the belief that particular spatial fixes could provoke the modern condition. Striving to configure spaces for development and progress, their work ranged from the high modernism of Brasilia to Soviet collective housing. But these projects demonstrated that environmental determinism was little more than a myth — a fictitious story masquerading as a theory, which influenced a generation of practitioners and theorists who sought to shape society through space. The New Urbanism movement, responding to the perceived failures of modernism, has itself reinvented the myth of the perfect small town. Discourses on sustainability are also often based on myths regarding efficiency and productivity. Meanwhile, in the global South, what is arguably the myth of the entrepreneurial slum-dweller, perpetuated by both academia and popular media, has led to a new transnational tradition of slum upgrading and microfinance. The myths that have justified these traditions all have their inherent problems, which, when exposed, raise new questions regarding spatial productions. Moreover, they often have tangible political and spatial implications. For example, the tradition of urban renewal, carried out at different times and on sites as diverse as Boston’s downtown, London’s docklands, Abu Dhabi’s central market, and Mumbai’s Dharavi district, perpetuates in its name a myth: that renewal can reinvigorate inner cities — when it sometimes simply furthers the logic of accumulation that privileges certain groups, sustaining the myth of the free market.

IASTE scholars have weighed in on many aspects of tradition, but the focus in this conference turns to a critical examination of one of tradition’s important foundations. This IASTE conference will attract an interdisciplinary group of scholars and practitioners from around the world, working in the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, city and regional planning, art and architectural history, sociology, transportation planning, geography, urban studies, cultural studies, anthropology, religious studies, archaeology, and environmental studies. They will present papers related to the following three tracks.

## **TRACK 1. The Politics of Myths in the Construction of Traditions and the Placemaking Process**

The selective pursuit of certain myths necessarily privileges one story over another and injects political motives in the making of place. The founding of nation states by colonial powers continues to shape political actions today, where democratic desires are meeting resistance from leaders of states based on artificial boundary lines, foundational myths, and colonial dreams. Ongoing revolutions in different parts of the world have questioned the meaning of citizenship, the myth of the nation-state, and the end of history. Understanding the political landscape within which myths operate is fundamental to understanding the places that these myths produce. Papers in this track will probe the complex relationships between tradition, politics and myth, and investigate the role of state and nonstate actors in the deployment of myths to advance socio-political agendas that shape the built environment.

## **TRACK 2. Foundational Myths and Invocations of Tradition in Socio-Spatial Practices**

A key objective of this conference is to uncover ways in which myths have shaped traditions, which in turn have been used to structure space and place. Inquiries into ways this has occurred in religious, civic and urban spaces, buildings and complexes are encouraged. Many ancient civilizations have cultivated myths and legends to shape their built practices. But what role do myths play in the contemporary world? From ideas about the stabilizing role of subsidized homeownership to the sustainability benefits of urban growth boundaries, myths influence today’s economic systems, environmental policies, and spatial practices. Papers in this track will distinguish between tradition, myth and habitual current practice, explore foundational myths, and analyze ways in which these myths have been used in the placemaking process.

## **TRACK 3. The Myths and Traditions of the New Digital Age**

New social practices are being shaped today by both new technologies and entrenched systems of belief. Digital social networks have become increasingly important in daily life in a manner that is connecting virtual space to physical space. The recent uprisings in the Middle East are a reminder that revolutions do not happen in cyberspace, even if they start there. New media, which can be analyzed as the mix between traditional cultural conventions and digital technology, is now used to shape more flexible spaces that serve multiple purposes. Papers in this track will investigate the connections between virtual and physical space and its impacts on tradition.

## **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Please refer to our website <http://iaste.berkeley.edu> for detailed instructions on abstract submissions. A one-page abstract of 500 words and a one-page CV are required. For further inquiries, please email IASTE Coordinator Sophie Gonick at [iaste@berkeley.edu](mailto:iaste@berkeley.edu).

Proposals for complete panels of four to five papers are welcome. Please indicate the track the panel supports. Panel submissions will include an overall abstract as well as abstracts and CVs from all proposed speakers. IASTE may accept the panel as a whole, or only accept individual papers and place them in appropriate tracks.

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. IASTE awards a cash prize (the Jeffrey Cook award) to the best paper submitted prior to the conference deadline by a scholar and by a student.

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 hotel or designated travel agent. Registration fees cover the conference program, conference abstracts, and access to all conference activities, including continental breakfasts at the conference hotel, receptions, keynote panels, and walking tours.

## **CONFERENCE SCHEDULE**

<b>November 1, 2011</b>	Deadline for abstract submission
<b>January 15, 2012</b>	Acceptance letter for abstracts/ conference poster
<b>May 1, 2012</b>	Deadline for paper submission
<b>August 1, 2012</b>	Notification of acceptance in Working Paper Series
<b>October 4–7, 2012</b>	Conference program
<b>October 8–9, 2012</b>	Post-Conference Tour — Historic Oregon: From the Cascades to the Coast

## **CONFERENCE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**

**Nezar AlSayyad**, IASTE President, University of California, Berkeley

**Mark Gillem**, IASTE Director and Conference Chair, University of Oregon

**Sophie Gonick**, IASTE and Conference Coordinator, University of California, Berkeley

**Emelia Day**, Local Conference Coordinator, University of Oregon

**Vicky Garcia**, CEDR Conference Administrator, University of California, Berkeley

## **CONFERENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Hesham Khairy Abdelfattah, Heba Farouk Ahmed, Howayda Al-Harithy, Duanfang Lu, Sylvia Nam, Mrinalini Rajagopalan, Romola Sanyal, Ipek Tureli, Montira Horayangura Unakul

## **LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Howard Davis, Kingston Heath, Deni Ruggeri, Alison Snyder, Yizhao Yang, Jenny Young

## **CONFERENCE SPONSORS**

School of Architecture and Allied Arts, University of Oregon  
Department of Architecture, University of Oregon  
Urban Design Lab, University of Oregon

## **CONFERENCE CO-SPONSORS**

Center for Environmental Design Research, University of California, Berkeley  
Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley

## **CONFERENCE SITE AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

The Nines  
<http://www.thenines.com/>

## **POST-CONFERENCE TRIPS**

Following the conference, two optional one-day trips will be offered for an additional fee. These trips will be by luxury coach and will take participants to historic sites in Oregon from the Cascade mountains to the Pacific coast. Participants can sign up for one or both trips.

**Monday, October 8:** Participants will begin with a drive up the scenic Columbia River Gorge with stops at key historic sites. Dinner will be at the Timberline Lodge, a National Historic Landmark at Mount Hood built during the Great Depression. The day will end in Portland with accommodations at the conference hotel.

**Tuesday, October 9:** Participants will travel to the Oregon Wine Country and visit historic sites along the Oregon coast. The day will end back in Portland with a dinner and drinking tour of Portland microbreweries. Accommodations will be at the conference hotel.

## **INQUIRIES**

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

## **MAILING ADDRESS:**

**IASTE 2012**  
Center for Environmental Design Research  
390 Wurster Hall, #1839  
University of California  
Berkeley, CA 94720-1839

Phone: 510.642.6801  
Fax: 510.643.5571  
E-mail: [iaste@berkeley.edu](mailto:iaste@berkeley.edu)  
Website: <http://iaste.berkeley.edu>

