

For Immediate Release



International conference explores interplay of utopia and tradition in 21st Century

Beirut, Lebanon- 14/12/2010 - Around 300 scholars and practitioners from all over the world will congregate to explore the interplay of utopia and tradition at the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE) twelfth annual conference, hosted by the American University of Beirut (AUB) from 15-18 Dec. 2010.

The four-day event, titled "The Utopia of Tradition," will seek to study how tradition inspires and informs changing concepts of utopia. Furthermore, the conference will examine how the historical development of utopia both draws upon and creates new traditions of space, citizenship, and government.

More than 160 scholars from nearly 40 countries will present papers examining the play of utopia in traditional realities, spaces of difference, and the politics of tradition. The conference will attract an interdisciplinary group of academics and practitioners from the fields of anthropology, architecture, art and architectural history, city and regional planning, cultural studies, geography, history, landscape studies, sociology, and urban studies.

The conference will commence at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 15, with opening remarks from Nezar AlSayyad, IASTE president and professor at the University of California, Berkeley; Mark Gillem, IASTE director and professor at the University of Oregon; and Howayda Al-Harithy, local conference director and professor at the American University of Beirut. Peter Dorman, president of the American University of Beirut, will also welcome the delegates at this time.

The conference will feature six keynote speakers and plenary panelists. Among them are David Pinder of the Queen Mary University of London; Ananya Roy and Michael Dear of the University of California, Berkeley; and Ghassan Joseph Hage of the University of Melbourne.

The conference is sponsored by the AUB Center for Behavioral Research and Department of Architecture and Design, as well as the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. Co-sponsors include the College of Environmental Design and Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, along with the University of Oregon School of Architecture.

Registration is required for attendance and participation. Please refer to the IASTE website (<http://iaste.berkeley.edu>) for more information.

IASTE is a nonprofit organization devoted to the comparative and cross-cultural understanding of traditional habitat as an expression of informal cultural conventions.

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of more than 7,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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