Editors' Preface/Forward/Note

Place is both a given datum and a construct. Without it, nothing is possible, and nevertheless its existence is contingent upon construction, not only in the physical sense – like building a nest, or a doghouse, or a multi-roomed house with a yard and a garden, or a city, or a country with borders. It also, and more so, requires consruction in the cultural sense – the creation and transmission of language, text, myth, history, ethos, borders, and law. What defines a piece of land, a point, a landscape, or a particular structure as a space is a shared socio-cultural conception, as expressed in discourse and local conversations, which involve relationships and connections, even if these may be hostile relationships or negative connections. A place is established and situated among people and within concepts, and thereby opens itself to difference and change, to cultural relativity, and to limitless human invention (Zeli Gurevich, *On the Place*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2007, p. 11).

Issue 10 of *Architext* is devoted to ancient agricultural landscapes, which are living evidence of a tradition of local agricultural cultivation along a mountainous route. The terraces serve as a form of agricultural land cultivation in small plots bounded by stone walls. These were built throughout different periods of history to create continuous land surfaces for agricultural crops by preventing soil erosion and creating seepage zones. In this manner, farmers prepared agricultural areas for cultivation on the steep slopes. Although this technique is not common in the modern world for agricultural purposes, it offers lessons about sustainable land development that is relevant to architectural and landscape planning in our time. UNESCO's World Heritage List includes sites and spaces defined as “cultural landscapes,” spaces that have been affected by human presence, and the traces of activity that are preserved in them are of extraordinary interest. Analysis of cultural landscapes seeks to address questions that include the emergence of a cultural narrative from the local written and architectural heritage. The typology of the terraces in the land of Israel inevitably involves an intercultural historical debate as well - between Jewish and Arab culture. In these typologies, in all their varieties, theory and practice are intertwined. Mapping and type-characterization of terraces in a selected space do more than demarcate a physical space, as they also situate that space within a multicultural narrative that will enable the development of a discourse about a multi-voiced cultural agricultural heritage. The relevance of the discourse is not applicable solely to the documentation of spaces from the past, but lies also in the desire to learn from them and to put forth interpretations of these spaces that allow us to think about the development of different urban spaces or marginal settlements.

The article by Dr. Daniel Mishori and Firas Hamad gives expression to the ecological-environmental debate and activist research that deals with the renewal of traditional and ecological agriculture. Their research brings together traditional ecological knowledge, ecological fracking and spatial ethics, through a discussion of traditional and modern Palestinian terraces. Their article shows that both traditional and new forms of construction of terraces, which might seem like a simple technical matter of convenience or an individual economic consideration, also involve values-based decisions.

The article by Dr. Yair Varon and Hagit Leshem discusses the existing methodology for writing documentation files of cultural landscapes, from a multicultural approach that strives to enable the ethical representation of different cultures that share a common space. Their research is based on the claim that a multicultural ethical approach requires proposing a complex temporal dimension to the documentation files—“time” that is not “pure” physical data but is also not a subjective interpretation of one side or another, nor a simulated synchronization between opposing narratives. This is a time that is conscious of being a moment in the synchronous present, and hence of the limitations of its representation of the past on the diachronic axis.

In this context, but in a different way, Dr. Liat Sabin Ben Shoshan explores the hidden and visible cultural landscape of the Palestinian village of Lifta, bringing to light the architectural imagery of spaces of conflict, between the aesthetic and ethical, through an examination of images that were created in the course of the seven decades of conflict over the vI illage.

From another direction, and moving the evidence outside the borders of the region, Dr. Zhang Shekuyang invites a discussion on the location of the terrace system of the Temple of Heaven in China in a religious context, and compares this to other Chinese ritual devices. Her analysis reveals that some of the symbolism and functions of this temple, which are expressed in the terraces, effectively recreates the functions of certain Bronze Age Chinese ritual and architectural objects, which perpetuated the universal order through architectural space.

קריאה מהנה,

Dr. Edna Langental (architect)

Mr. Itzik Alhadif (architect)