

Preface

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The “spatial turn of the social sciences” is neither a novel nor a mere theoretical question for the community that creates *Hagar*. This academic journal is conceived and produced in Beer Sheva, a city in the southern periphery of Israeli national territory, and its two editors reside in a small community, still further south and into the Negev desert. Questions regarding the social meaning of space—particularly the embeddedness of spatial formations within relations of power, marginalization and deprivation—are critical when looking and writing from the margins, as we do in *Hagar*. Over the years, space and the construction of place have been main topics for many articles published in this journal. We have decided to dedicate an entire issue to the concept of space as it reveals itself in contemporary social theory and through various case studies.

Our guest editors, Yishai Blank and Issi Rosen-Zvi, two legal scholars from Tel Aviv University, offer this broad collection of essays, which follow Michel Foucault’s well known statement declaring the arrival of the spatial epoch. Decades after Foucault’s prophetic words, the importance of space in social analysis has become commonplace within a variety of humanistic disciplines, leading to an exponential growth of research and theoretical deliberations. We see this volume as a needed opportunity to look back on the important work done on the subject, offer a critical assessment of main theoretical formulations, examine the usefulness of spatial terms through a myriad of intriguing cases, and suggest directions for future research.

The political and oppressive nature of space is a common motif running through the articles of this volume. Power manifests itself in many ways in the construction of space: through the division of space between social groups, through legal formulations and through architectural designs. The writers of this volume deconstruct the taken-for-granted nature of spatial arrangements, explaining how space is imperative in exercising and exerting power, particularly in complex multi-national and multi-ethnic situations. They may offer future planners some ideas on how to imagine, create and rebuild social spaces that promote equality and tolerance, rather than reflect and enhance repressive power and secluding regimes.