

## editorial

Architecture is often understood through tangible manifestations—buildings, monuments and urban landscapes. However, the discipline extends beyond these visible structures, encompassing processes, narratives, and actors that operate in the margins. The 39th issue of *Edinburgh Architecture Research Journal* (EAR39), titled “Beyond the Visible”, invited proposals that move beyond the immediate materiality of architectural surfaces to reveal the hidden memories and stories embedded within them. EAR39 explores the discipline beyond its visible structures, illuminating hidden and often overlooked dimensions of architecture. Building on our previous issue “Beyond Human”, which challenged anthropocentric views of the built environment, EAR39 aims to push the boundaries of architecture as a discipline and to redefine it as an open-ended process rather than a finite product.

The issue opens with Tokie Laotan-Brown’s case study, which explores the Hope Waddell Institution’s Premier Building in Calabar, originally built with prefabricated Scottish materials, to show how intangible cultural narratives and memories must shape physical restoration. By harnessing local expertise, environmental practices, archival materials from Edinburgh University and regional craftsmanship, Laotan-Brown reframes restoration as a dynamic endeavour balancing historical detail, cultural identity and sustainability to maintain Calabar’s architectural heritage. Following this, Julie Næss Karlsen bridges the intangible heritage with the material landscape by exploring São Jorge Island, on the periphery of Portugal, the European Union and the Azores, where volcanic eruptions and earthquakes pose a constant risk. This persistent seismic threat unveils a critical invisible structure, illuminating the dichotomy between intangible heritage and recovering landscapes.

Moving from these broader conceptual explorations, Athulya Aby’s contribution goes beyond the traditional focus on the tangible, highlighting invisible actants—stories, myths, and archived narratives—shaping the community identity and memory of two Chinatowns in Calcutta, India. Through the study of archival documents and historical maps, Aby foregrounds the often-overlooked Chinese intangible heritage of Calcutta and offers an alternative understanding of architecture as a repository of marginalised heritage, narratives and memories. Catalina Lucía Agudin and Joaquín Trillo then extend the

issue's focus to Indigenous perspectives, examining how participatory design can reframe the architecture of Wichí communities in Argentina with a decolonial approach. Drawing from design exercises, the authors challenge centralised, development-driven methods while honouring local knowledge and past experiences. Their research values mobility, material connections and cultural respect, criticises modernity-oriented education, and advocates for integrating Indigenous perspectives into architectural practice.

Anna Johnson and Richard Black follow with a reflective piece on regional communities in Victoria, Australia. They reveal how existing built fabric offers insights into community resilience and heritage by examining Castlemaine, where architecture weaves heritage, community identity and issues like homelessness. Acknowledging Dja Dja Wurrung histories and marginalised narratives, Johnson and Black employ truth-telling and collaborative design to propose inclusive, sustainable spaces that respect Indigenous cultures. Further, Morwal investigates everyday spatial practices in Ahmedabad's dense housing typology, exploring how invisible social norms shape architecture. The study examines how the close-knit chawl interweaves communal identity with individual inhabitation. Using oral history and ethnography, Morwal re-examines the relationship between collective invisible agents—behaviours, movements, gender norms—and spatial demarcations of public/private and home/settlement, revealing how the architectural fabric accommodates and shapes these practices.

An alternative approach is presented through Nikola Beim's reinterpretation of Alois Riegl's seminal work "The Modern Cult of Monuments" in the digital age underpins architecture's relationship with intangible heritage. Building on Riegl's work, Beim introduces "Cult Beyond the Digital", revealing how digital technologies and non-contact recording preserve invisible aspects—memory, ageing, and intangible values. Through AI and digital documentation, this redefines preservation as a process transcending physicality, uncovering hidden narratives redefining the role of architecture and the environment in monument preservation. Finally, Guo's study of unplanned commercial districts in Guangzhou offers a contemporary urban perspective on spatial logics. Employing Actor-Network Theory, Guo treats spaces as actors, asserting that spatial conditions shape the arrangement and interaction of structures. By examining an unplanned clothing wholesale district, the research reveals invisible logics that shape urban dynamics, illustrating how spatial configurations influence

socioeconomic activities, urban growth and relationships between human and non-human actors.

The contributions to EAR39: Beyond the Visible collectively challenge conventional understandings of architecture, highlighting the invisible processes, narratives, and agents that shape our built environment. From intangible heritage and community memory to the unseen forces of seismic activity and urban logics, this issue underscores the need to expand architecture's disciplinary boundaries. By transcending materiality and embracing diverse perspectives—whether cultural, digital, decolonial, or environmental—these works redefine architecture as a dynamic and inclusive process. EAR39 invites readers to reconsider architecture as a field deeply intertwined with hidden histories, marginalised voices, and contested heritage. The issue underscores the importance of examining the unobserved dimensions of architecture, which continue to shape spaces, communities, and identities in profound and enduring ways.