

Adrian McNaught and Alfonso Valdés Maldonado

EDITORIAL

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With a built portfolio that has explored the artificial distinction between culture and nature, his research asks - can design of the simple Scottish hut engage and empower our relationship with context?

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His research explores the intersections of cultural identity, architectural heritage, and digital innovation within the regional context of Northern Mexico.

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Editorial

Architecture is often understood through the language of permanence, authorship, and formal production. Current narratives tend to privilege traditional forms of practice and established modes of development. Yet beyond these frameworks, architecture continually emerges through acts of adaptation, resistance, negotiation, and care. Spaces are [re]claimed not only through construction, but through memory, occupation, representation, and the day-to-day practices of those who experience and inhabit them.

The 40th issue of Edinburgh Architecture Research [EAR40] explores these conditions through the theme [Re]Claiming Place. The contributions collected here examine how architecture is continually [re]imagined outside conventional systems of production, foregrounding practices that emerge from lived experience, cultural memory, collective action, and political tension, among others. Across diverse contexts, this issue asks what it means to reclaim space in moments of uncertainty and transformation, and how alternative spatial practices challenge inherited assumptions about architecture itself.

The issue opens with a reflection on decolonial spatial practices within the South Asian collection at Kedleston Hall. Through a collaborative research project between students and academics, *Decolonising Research* questions how institutional heritage spaces may be reconsidered through decolonial frameworks and participatory forms of engagement. Questions of authorship, positionality, and collective learning establish an important base for EAR40: reclaiming place also involves reclaiming narratives, voices, and modes of knowledge production.

From institutional heritage, the discussion moves toward wider questions of community and urban memory. James White's article *UNESCO World Heritage: Communities in Time* revisits the inscription of Edinburgh as a World Heritage site to examine how the notion of 'community' has evolved within heritage discourse. Rather than understanding heritage as a motionless condition, the article promotes the living nature of urban environments, considering how institutional frameworks might better engage with the complex social and more-than-human realities embedded within the city.

Questions of memory and resistance continue in *Towards Kaszëbsczi Contiguity* by Charles Drożyński, where a vernacular space becomes a subtle yet powerful form of opposition to ideological homogenisation. Through the story of Mieczysław Różycki and the transformation of a vernacular cottage under a Communist Poland, the paper explores architecture as a close act of reclaiming cultural identity, continuity, and agency against systems of imposed 'uniformity'.

The issue then shifts on material and vernacular transformations in rural northeast Mexico. Ana Gómez de León's *Filtered Modernities* examines how traditional construction practices coexist with industrial materials and contemporary aspirations, producing hybrid conditions that resist simplistic distinctions between 'traditional' and 'modern'. Here, vernacular architecture is not framed as static, but as a transformational process through which communities negotiate environmental, cultural, and social change.

From these rural settlements, the issue moves into conditions of displacement and precarious urban occupation. Hafsa Olcay's *Digital Anchors of Displacement: Reclaiming space on the unsettled grounds of Athens* examines how digital infrastructures operate alongside physical ones in contexts where access to space is unstable. Through practices of solidarity, communication, and visibility, the paper reveals how digital and material spaces become interconnected territories; spaces through which displaced communities assert presence and maintain forms of spatial agency.

Questions of representation and spatial ‘translation’ continue in *Affective Cartographies: Using Space as a Translation Device in Collaborative Processes*. Challenging the dominance of “perfectly measurable spaces”, this article proposes affective mapping as a means of engaging with lived experience, atmosphere, and attachment. Through collaborative methodologies the space is understood not as a neutral scene, but as an active intermediary capable of translating between varied experiences and forms of knowledge.

Finally, the issue concludes with Youfeng Liu’s *Designing with Non-Human Things*, which extends the discussion of alternative architectural practices into ‘emerging’ digital territories. Rather than treating artificial intelligence as a neutral instrument, the paper positions generative AI as an active collaborator, one that reshapes creative work and authorship. In doing so, it raises broader questions regarding influence, interpretation, and the evolving relationship between human and non-human actors within present architectural practice.

The contributions in this issue reveal reclaiming place not as a singular act, but as a continuous process progressing across scales, territories, and mediums. They range from decolonial heritage work and vernacular adaptation to digital solidarities, mappings, and AI-mediated design experience. The issue traces architectures that exist at the edges of formal systems while simultaneously redefining them. These projects remind us that architecture is never solely about buildings or objects, but about its social, political, cultural, and material relations.

As a collection, EAR40 reflects upon architecture not as a fixed discipline, but as an open field through which space is continually produced and contested [shaped by negotiation, diversity, and lived experience]. In doing so, it invites readers to reconsider where architectural knowledge is produced, whose voices should be amplified, and how places might be continually reclaimed through acts of making, remembering, inhabiting, and imagining otherwise.



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