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Travel as a way to know architecture

Typically, buildings are far from portable. Architecture can be studied at a distance through magazines like this one, alongside books, websites, blogs, and social media – in drawings, photography, text, and video. But such media can only substitute inadequately for the experience of visiting in person. In his 'letter from … the road' concluding this **arq** (pp. 425–431), César Daniel Sirvent-Pérez argues that 'travel is a powerful tool for the education of architects' with potential 'to transform individuals by nurturing latent ideas within them'. Recognising decolonial critiques of the so-called Grand Tour, as undertaken by gentleman architects in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, he asks what 'the traditional architectural journey offers in the twenty-first century?' 'Does it still make sense?'

In this **arq**, Mohamed Derbal studies the formative years of German architect Hermann Muthesius in London from 1896–1903, arguing that Muthesius's interpretation of English visual culture became foundational to the national style he envisioned for his homeland (pp. 361–374). Ceren Hamiloğlu and Ahsen Özsoy reflect on Turkish architects' journeys to Italy in the period following the Second World War, focusing on the media by which they 'brought back' their experiences to address ideas about modernity (pp. 375–386). Further articles collected here explore travel knowledges of other kinds. Jing Yang and Jonathan Hale engage with an 'augmented reality' guide to the Louvre-Lens Museum, exploring how travel in virtual space provides visual stimulus to explore and understand real architectural space (pp. 350–360). Melih Kamaoğlu's theorising of Physarum Computation in architecture, meanwhile, travels to the more-than-human world of slime mould, investigating its cognitive capacities for architectural design (pp. 387–398). Cristián Simonetti and Eduardo Wiegand, meanwhile, propose imaginative travel to appreciate what historians term the *longue durée*. They compare concrete and timber to examine 'the vital cycle of the built environment', where architectural design can be metabolically responsive to deep geological history (pp. 399–409). Creative research is a vital medium for taking imaginative journeys, as surveyed here by George Themistokleous and Yasser Megahed, who speculate about an emerging third phase of architectural design research (pp. 411–418).

Travel is habitually imagined to be enriching: an opportunity to foster cultural, personal, and intellectual exchanges. But it brings difficulties. Travel can be carbon intensive, its expense renders it inaccessible to many, and over-tourism can extract scarce resources, potentially damaging local communities. Albert Brenchat-Aguilar reviews the 2024 competition to rework the western range of London's British Museum, won by Lina Ghotmeh Architecture, in the context of decolonial calls for the repatriation of artefacts extracted under duress (pp. 419–424). Brenchat-Aguilar reflects on the injustice of displaced objects, the powerful colonial gaze contributing to their appropriation, and the challenges of making architecture with potential to mediate contemporary transactions between cultures, places, and people. Returning to Sirvent-Pérez's question: what, indeed, do architectural journeys of different kinds offer in the twenty-first century?.

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