The built environment is more than just a collection of spaces; it shapes our lives, influencing how we live, interact, and engage with marginalised or “othered” communities. This glossary invites readers to explore the intersections of decolonial thought and the built environment, offering a fresh lens to challenge colonial legacies in our spaces and practices. Whether you’re a student, practitioner, or curious reader, Glossary of Decolonial Language is an essential resource for fostering critical engagement and promoting inclusivity in shared spaces.

The Glossary of DECOLONIAL Language

Vol. 1

Felicity Atekpe
Sara Shafiei

The Glossary of Decolonial Language

Vol. 1

The built environment profoundly shapes our lives influencing where we live, how we coexist with others, and relate to those marginalised or "othered."

This perspective is crucial for addressing the intersections of decolonial thought and the built environment, highlighting the impact of physical spaces on social dynamics and power imbalances.

The built environment
is where we live,
how we live
with others
and the othered.

This work aims to develop an open-ended glossary of language used in the built environment. By demystifying terminology, the glossary empowers us to engage more effectively with decolonial discourse, offering comprehensive definitions, historical contexts, and suggested readings. It serves as a tool for understanding how the built environment can either perpetuate or challenge colonial influences, encouraging more informed approaches to design and urban planning.

Several organisations, including Dark Laboratory and UNESCO, are developing decolonial glossaries, highlighting the growing importance of this field. However, many of these "glossaries" lack traditional definitions and etymologies, instead offering essays on fostering learning environments. It became evident that a different approach was necessary. A word-by-word approach could better describe and define the issues and empower learners to see themselves reflected in the curricula and able to draw on their unique perspectives and knowledge systems as sources of strength and resilience.

Aligned with the objectives of the Cultures of Decolonisation of Research at UCL, this work addresses the need for decolonising methodologies and conceptual frameworks within higher education. By critically examining traditional Western research paradigms, we aim to cultivate a more inclusive and equitable teaching and learning culture. The glossary will facilitate this shift by offering insights into varied social, cultural, and historical experiences that shape our practices.

Our aim is to alleviate anxieties surrounding decolonisation by providing accessible tools for understanding terms and directing users to resources where these concepts have been applied. In doing so, we seek to facilitate meaningful knowledge acquisition and foster an inclusive discourse that resonates with the diverse communities engaged in the built environment.

This work adopts a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, drawing on expertise from diverse backgrounds. Through workshops and consultations, we have curated a list of decolonial terms relevant to the built environment, emphasising inclusivity and incorporating multiple lived experiences. The glossary serves multiple purposes: empowering engagement, contextualising impact, challenging colonial influences and fostering inclusivity. By focusing on terms specifically relevant to the built environment and taking a collaborative approach, this project contributes significantly to the growing field of decolonial studies in the built environment.

The Challenge becomes the Opportunity

When we began developing this glossary, we expected that identifying words with non-Western etymological roots would be a difficult yet achievable task, especially given the increasing focus on decolonising the built environment. However, we quickly realised the extent to which the language of the built environment—across research, education, and professional practice—is dominated by Western concepts and terminologies.

For example, terms like *urbanism*, *infrastructure*, *architecture*, and *modernism* all have European origins. While we were aware of the Eurocentric nature of the foundational discourse in these fields, we were surprised by how deeply ingrained this influence is throughout the built environment. A 2024 analysis of 53 main and glossary terms from "The Language of Architecture " by Andrea Simitch and Val Warke revealed that 100% had Western etymological roots. Expanding the scope to 234 terms from workshops and everyday language, only three words (less than 1.3%) lacked Western etymological origins. This linguistic dominance reflects colonisation's historical impact, where indigenous languages and knowledge systems were often marginalised or erased, resulting in a contemporary vocabulary ill-equipped to accurately represent non-Western perspectives in architectural discourse.

In contrast, many indigenous and non-Western traditions of spatial organisation, architecture, and community planning present sophisticated and contextually rich perspectives on the built environment. These systems offer alternative ways of understanding space, place, and sustainability. Yet, they are often overlooked or misinterpreted within mainstream teaching, learning and research practice.

The dominance of Western languages, particularly English, in academic discourse has led to a significant imbalance in the representation of non-Western concepts and terminologies in various fields, including the built environment. This linguistic hegemony often results in the loss of cultural nuances and specific insights when scholars from non-English-speaking countries are compelled to translate their work. Recognizing this disparity, our project aims to develop a comprehensive glossary that goes beyond merely cataloguing non-Western terms. Instead, we seek to explore alternative definitions and concepts, with the ultimate goal of identifying and amplifying non-Western vocabularies. By doing so, we hope to offer new perspectives that can enrich and transform the discourse in the field of the built environment, making this publication an evolving work that continually strives to address the linguistic and conceptual imbalance in academia.

Reference

— Ramírez-Castañeda, V. (2020). *Disadvantages in preparing and publishing scientific papers caused by the dominance of the English language in science: The case of Colombian researchers in biological sciences*. PLOS ONE, 15(9), e0238372. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0238372

Layers of Meaning

Layers

The glossary employs a nuanced strategy to present words, ensuring that each entry captures the intricacy and cultural significance of the concepts related with the built environment.

We explored alternative definitions for everyday spatial words, shifting their meanings from traditional sources like the Oxford English Dictionary and established built environment texts such as *The Language of Architecture* to interpretations informed by decolonial literature and diverse conversations. Through extensive discussions, workshops, and consultations with a variety of voices, we developed a multifaceted approach to curating our glossary.

The glossary employs a nuanced strategy to present words, ensuring that each entry captures the intricacy and cultural significance of the concepts related with the built environment. Our methodology is designed to stimulate critical engagement and encourage readers to explore the rich tapestry of meanings inherent in each term. Some entries offer clear-cut alternative definitions that underscore their evolution and contextual significance, whilst others introduce culturally specific alternative interpretations that highlight diverse viewpoints on common concepts.

To challenge dominant narratives, each volume also includes two words, bookending each chapter, that do not conform to Western definitions but instead embody culturally specific meanings grounded in decolonial philosophies. These entries invite readers to consider concepts that challenge dominant narratives and offer new lenses through which to view the built environment.

Importantly, the glossary follows a non-linear structure, with no hierarchy in the order of words. This format reflects the nature of decolonisation— an ongoing process marked by layers of history, culture, and diverse perspectives. By offering varied interpretations and perspectives, we highlight the complexity of this work and encourage sideways thinking, education, and discovery.

8

Eight

The Number

Each volume contains 8 carefully selected words, reflecting the significance of the number 8 across different cultures.

Recognising that knowledge is dynamic, this glossary functions as a "living document", open to ongoing revisions and updates. Each term functions simultaneously as a definitional tool and a conceptual framework for analysing spatial power dynamics, identity, and representation strategies.

This first collection represents the first of a continuously expanding publication, each volume designed to engage with and reflect on the evolving landscape of decolonial thought in relation to the built environment.

The first volume contains **8** carefully selected words, reflecting the significance of the number **8**, a symbol of balance, renewal, and infinite potential across many cultures.

In Christianity and Judaism, the number **8** signifies new beginnings. In Japan, the number **8** (*hachi*) is regarded as auspicious. The kanji for eight (八) has a shape that broadens at the bottom, symbolising growth and expansion, much like the journey of understanding in diverse fields. In ancient Egyptian mythology, the number **8** represents cosmic balance and order, associated with the eight primordial deities known as the Ogdoad, who contributed to the creation of the world. This reflects the need for a balanced approach to knowledge that encompasses various perspectives.

In Mesoamerican cultures, such as the Maya and Aztec, the number **8** is related to cycles of time and cosmic balance, echoing the interconnectedness of all things, similar to the relationships among diverse social, cultural, and historical experiences. In Islamic culture, the number **8** is linked with paradise, as it is believed there are eight gates to Jannah (heaven). This association highlights aspirations for a more equitable and inclusive society.

Mirroring the publication's open-ended, evolving nature, this glossary serves as an adaptive and expansive resource. Much like the number **8** symbolises infinity, our understanding deepens, and the contexts in which we operate constantly shift. Consequently, the language we employ to articulate our ideas must evolve in tandem. This work embraces the dynamic nature of language, recognising its need to grow and transform in response to ever-changing social, cultural, and historical landscapes. By doing so, it ensures that our vocabulary remains relevant, nuanced, and capable of expressing the complexities of our ever-evolving world.

Reference

— Suzuki, D. T. (1994). *Zen and Japanese Culture*. Princeton University Press.
— Frankfort, H. (1978). *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature*. University of Chicago Press.
— Aveni, A. F. (2001). *Skywatchers: A History of Nature Astronomy in Mexico*. University of Texas Press.
— Leiser, G. (1995). *The Islamic Garden: Traditional and Modern Design in the Arab World*. The New York Botanical Garden.
— Eberhard, W. (2004). *A History of China*. Indiana University Press.
— Makhonjwa, G. (2009). *African Architecture: A Sourcebook*. Routledge.

Designing Meaning

The Aesthetic of Decolonial Thought

Designing Language: Encouraging Sideways Thinking and New Ways of Understanding.

The **Glossary of Decolonial Language** features a thoughtfully designed layout and typography that aims to provoke active engagement and reflection from readers. The word "decolonial" does not simply appear; instead, it wraps around the front and back covers, symbolising the complex, non-linear journey of decolonial thought. As readers navigate the glossary, they embark on an intellectual journey that challenges established norms and encourages a deeper understanding of language's power, cultural reclamation, and the intersectionality of global experiences. In this way, the glossary transcends its role as a reference tool, becoming a catalyst for critical thinking and a bridge to more inclusive, equitably worldviews.

The historiography and origins of the terms contained within these volumes are rich and multifaceted. The glossary serves not only as a compilation of definitions but also as a reflection of overlapping, contested meanings that resist simple categorisation. By acknowledging the complex narratives that inform each term, we underscore the importance of understanding the social, cultural, and historical contexts that shape our language and practices in the built environment.

Across volumes, each cover presents the word "decolonial" with slight variations, reinforcing decolonisation as a dynamic, ongoing process. This variation reinforces the concept of decolonisation as a dynamic process—ever-evolving—while highlighting the uniqueness of each term and its contextual significance. By presenting the term in diverse forms, we invite readers to engage with the glossary as a living document, one that grows and shifts in response to the conversations it fosters.

The design aims to break down barriers to understanding and encourage deeper reflection on the language we use. It is a call to action for readers to question and critically engage with the concepts of decoloniality, fostering a more inclusive discourse that resonates with diverse communities and their experiences within the built environment.

Reference

— Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
— Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. Sage Publications.
— Grosfoguel, R. (2013). *The Structure of Knowledge in Western and Non-Western Societies: A Critical Re-examination of the Coloniality of Power*. In: Racialization of the Other in the World Economy. Harvard University Press
— Bennett, T. (2006). *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/ Global Transformations*. Duke University Press.

Sara Shafiei is an Associate Professor (Teaching) at The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment, where she also serves as the Vice Dean of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Her academic work advocates for curriculum reform and pedagogical innovation in architectural education. Sara developed the pioneering MSci Architecture Programme, marking the most significant shift in architectural education in over 50 years. She also launched Bartlett Alternative, an online platform aimed at internationalising and diversifying the curriculum.

Throughout her career, Sara has taken on roles that have shaped her understanding of education, which she views as a lifelong journey. Growing up with a poet uncle, she was captivated by the depth and musicality of Persian, a language that resists simple translation into English. This experience fostered her appreciation for the origins of words and their cultural significance.

The idea of creating a glossary of decolonial language emerged from her diverse encounters and roles, including her experience as Vice Dean of EDI, and was reinforced by her discovery of the book *Literally: Amazing Words and Where They Came From*, which she bought for her son. The book's exploration of word origins, including one in Persian, highlighted for her the beauty of language as a bridge between cultures and a repository of history.

Felicity Atekpe is an Associate Professor in Professional Practice, Director of Practice and Design of Practice at The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL where she provides academic practice leadership across all programmes. She was the founder of White Table Architects, a practice which specialised in sustainable design, interiors and architecture and landscape. Her academic research includes innovative pedagogies, which address the role of education, ethics and alternative routes to qualification and equitable urban landscapes. She has also written about Home and Belonging, sustainable urban landscape and the Everyday.

Words hold special significance to her because her native language is Ewe, a Gbe language spoken in Ghana and Togo. Ewe's linguistic importance stems from its tonal nature and unique system of logophoric pronouns. These features allow for precise expression of people, place, mood and tone, giving the language a musical quality that she finds challenging to convey in English.

The following chapter examines six universally used words—such as COMMUNITY, COMFORT, and GARDEN—alongside two newer terms, MEMORYSCAPE and PLACEKEEPING.

While the universally familiar words reveal diverse cultural interpretations, Memoryscape and Placekeeping emerge primarily in specialised academic and community-led contexts, where they capture nuanced concepts that are absent in traditional dictionaries.

Memoryscape

Pronunciation

MEM-uh-ree-skayp

Etymology

Memoryscape is a recent blend of memory (from Latin *memoria*, meaning "remembrance") and -scape (from Old English -*sceap*, meaning "shape" or "view"). Together, Memoryscape combines these roots to mean a "landscape of memories" or a conceptual space that contains or evokes memories. Its recent usage is evident as it doesn't appear in older dictionaries and has mainly emerged in modern fields to describe spaces shaped by personal or collective memory.

Alternative Definition

Whilst evocative and could be interpreted in many ways, we did not find this term in any of the traditional and everyday sources, only finding it in alternative definitions.

Definition

Memoryscapes encompass not just physical landscapes and built structures, but also the collective memories, histories, and narratives associated with them. It can be seen through critical perspectives that aims to challenge dominant narratives and give voice to marginalized experiences within these memoryscapes.

This concept is often discussed in academic fields such as cultural studies, history, anthropology, and geography, particularly within the context of postcolonial studies or critical heritage studies. It can be found in scholarly articles, books, or discussions focusing on topics related to memory, identity, place, and power dynamics.

References

— Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (2009). *Practices of Memory: Theories and Methods*. In *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford University Press.
This chapter discusses memoryscapes in the context of visual culture and examines how collective memories are embedded within physical spaces.
— Edensor, T. (2001). *Memoryscape: Landscape, Heritage and Memory*. In *Cultural Memories: The Geographical Point of View*, edited by Susan M. Pearce. Routledge.
This chapter delves into the intersection of landscape, heritage, and memory, framing memoryscapes as dynamic spaces where collective memories are inscribed and contested.
— Nora, P. (1989). *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. Representations*. In this article, Nora explores the concept of lieux de mémoire (sites of memory), which can be considered as memoryscapes, and discusses their role in shaping collective memory.
— Smith, L. (2006). *The Uses of Heritage*. Routledge. Smith discusses memoryscapes within the broader context of heritage studies, emphasising the importance of recognising diverse narratives and experiences within heritage sites.
— Harvey, D. (1990). *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Wiley-Blackwell. While not explicitly using the term "memoryscape", Harvey's work explores how contemporary landscapes are shaped by historical processes and collective memories, aligning with the concept.

Concept

Pronunciation

/ˈkɒnsɛpt/ KON-sept

Etymology

Concept has multiple origins, partly borrowed from Latin and partly a variant or adaptation of other lexical items. It is modelled on the Latin *conceptum* ("something conceived") and related to conceit (n.), reflecting the idea of something held in the mind or imagined.

Definition

I.2. (1561 – Present) *Originally in Philosophy*: A general idea or notion; a universal or mental representation of essential or typical properties of something, considered without regard to specific or unique details. Often used with of, as in the meaning realised by a word or expression.

I.3. (1891 – Present) *Modern Usage*: An idea underlying or governing the design or content of a product, work of art, entertainment, etc.

II.4. (1536–1891) *Obsolete Usage*: Refers to a person's capacity or faculty for imagining things; imagination. Also: a fancied or imagined thing; a conceit.

Source of above
Oxford English Dictionary

Alternative Definition

These are not translations of the word "concept" but related terms or concepts across various languages that emphasise specific cultural, functional, and environmental aspects of the built environment within those regions.

African (Swahili: Dhana / Wazo - Dhana)

Africa's linguistic diversity is unparalleled, with an estimated 1,000 to 2,000 languages spoken across 54 countries, representing about one-third of the world's languages. This diversity embodies complex histories and cultural richness, meaning that direct translations may lack the full nuance of each language's interpretations.
In Swahili, *Dhana* or *Wazo*, *Dhana* denotes "concept" or "notion," often used to describe foundational ideas or guiding principles in architectural design.

Reference
— Keshavjee, M. (2006). *Swahili Architecture and Islamic Traditions*. Oxford University Press.
This book examines architectural traditions in Swahili-speaking areas with a focus on Islamic influences, offering insights into the cultural philosophies underpinning architectural concepts.

Persian (افکار Afkār)

In Persian, *Afkār* translates to "ideas" or "thoughts" and conveys a collection of ideas and inspirations integral to design and conceptualisation processes, highlighting the creative and philosophical underpinnings of Persian architectural concepts.

Reference
Gharipour, M. (2009). *Persian Gardens: Geometry and Paradise*. The Muslim World, 99(1), 122–131.
This article discusses the symbolic and philosophical principles of Persian gardens, providing context to Persian architectural concepts, even though it does not directly reference *Afkār*.

Japanese (発想 - Hassō):

In Japanese, *Hassō* means "idea" or "conception" and is often used to describe the initial creative inspiration or spark behind a design concept in architecture.

Reference
— *Young, D., & Young, M. K. (2007). The Art of Japanese Architecture: History / Culture / Design. Tuttle Publishing.*
This book delves into Japanese architectural history, highlighting the cultural importance of *Hassō* in the creative process.

Indian (विचार - Vichār)

In Hindi, *Vichār* means "thought" or "reflection" and denotes the intellectual process behind conceptual development in design, emphasising critical thinking and reflection.

Reference
— Brown, P. (2016). *The Architecture of India: Buddhist and Hindu*. Laurence King Publishing.
This book explores India's architectural heritage with a focus on Buddhist and Hindu traditions, discussing the role of *Vichār* in design, especially in fostering critical reflection and intellectual development.

Comfort

Pronunciation

/ˈkʌmfət/ KUM-fuht

Etymology

A borrowing from Old French *confort*, which itself derives from Latin *confortare*, meaning "to strengthen greatly." Initially, the term referred to strengthening or encouragement but has evolved over centuries to encompass physical ease and emotional solace.

Definition

1.a. (c. 1225–1769) *Strengthening; encouragement, incitement; aid, succour, support, countenance*. Often used in the phrase "in aid and comfort." Now mostly obsolete, except in certain archaic legal uses.

1.b. (1455–1577) † Concrete. *A person or thing that strengthens or supports; a source of strength*. Obsolete.

2. (1377–1631) † *Physical refreshment or sustenance; a refreshing or invigorating influence.* Obsolete in this sense today.

Source of above
Oxford English Dictionary

Alternative Definition

These are not translations of the word "comfort" but related terms or concepts in various languages that emphasise specific cultural, functional, and environmental aspects of comfort within the built environment in their respective regions.

African (Swahili - Faraja)

In Swahili and various African languages, *Faraja* means "comfort" or "relief." It refers to creating spaces that provide respite from external stressors, fostering a sense of security, connection to nature, and community well-being.

Reference
— Denyer, S. (1978). *African Traditional Architecture*. Africana Publishing Company.
— Rapoport, A. (1969). *House Form and Culture*. Prentice-Hall.

Persian (آسایش - Asāyesh)

In Persian, *Asāyesh* translates to "comfort" or "ease." It highlights the importance of environments that promote physical comfort and mental peace, often through natural materials, thoughtful spatial designs, and elements that connect people to their cultural and natural heritage.

Reference
— Ardalan, N., & Bakhtiar, L. (1973). *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture*. University of Chicago Press.
— Grigor, T. H. (2009). *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture, and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs*. Prestel Publishing.

Japanese (快適 - Kaiteki)

In Japanese, *Kaiteki* translates to "comfortable" or "pleasant." Within the built environment, it embodies a sense of physical and psychological well-being, achieved through thoughtful design, natural materials, and harmonious spatial arrangements.

Reference
— Brown, A. (2012). *Just Enough: Lessons in Living Green from Traditional Japan*. Tuttle Publishing.
— Reynolds, J. (2001). *Japanese Architecture and Design*. Tuttle Publishing.

Indian (सुख - Sukh)

In Sanskrit and many Indian languages, *Sukh* denotes "pleasure" or "comfort." In architecture, it reflects the idea of creating spaces that promote well-being, tranquillity, and harmony through natural materials, cultural symbolism, and spatial layouts.

Reference
— Acharya, P. K. (1997). *An Encyclopaedia of Hindu Architecture*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
— Rao, M. S. (1995). *Vastu Architecture: Design Theory and Application for Everyday Life*. Lotus Press.

Chinese (舒适 - Shūshì)

In Chinese, *Shūshì* means "comfortable" or "cozy." It refers to a state of physical ease hnd contentment, often achieved through careful ventilation, natural lighting, and harmonious spatial organisation in architecture.

Reference
— Keswick, M. (2003). *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*. Harvard University Press.
— Steinhardt, N. S. (1990). *Chinese Traditional Architecture*. China Books & Periodicals.

Arabic

In Arabic, *Rahat* signifies "ease" or "comfort." This concept encompasses both physical and spiritual well-being in architectural design, often achieved through shaded courtyards, water features, and orientation that maximises natural ventilation and sunlight.

Reference
— Rice, G. (2004). *Doing Business in the Middle East: A Cultural and Practical Guide*. Routledge.
— Ali, A. J. (2005). *Islamic Perspectives on Management and Organization*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

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Building(s)

Pronunciation

/ˈbɪldɪŋ/ BIL-ding

Etymology

Building originates from Middle English, evolving as a derivative form based on the verb to *build*. It has since come to represent both the physical structures that people create and the act of constructing them.

Definition

1. (c. 1325 – Present) *A structure that is built or constructed; specifically, a large, permanent structure with a roof and walls, enclosing an interior space that can be entered and used for specific purposes, such as a dwelling, workplace, or school.*

2.a. (c. 1382 – Present) *The act of building; the action of constructing, assembling, or setting something up, both literally and figuratively.*

2.b. (1387–1748) † *The form or quality of something designed or constructed; its structure, style, or nature.* Obsolete in modern usage.

Source of above
Oxford English Dictionary

Alternative Definition

These are not translations of the word "building" but related terms across various cultures that convey distinctive cultural, functional, and environmental aspects of architecture within their respective regions.

African (e.g., Zulu - Isibaya)

In Zulu, *Isibaya* refers to a communal structure serving multiple purposes, such as residence, social gatherings, and ceremonies. Traditionally, it signifies a "fold" or "kraal," an enclosure for livestock such as cattle or sheep, highlighting the cultural importance of livestock within the community. Constructed using materials like mud, thatch, and wood, Isibaya reflects sustainable building practices deeply rooted in local traditions.

References
— Rapoport, A. (1969). *House Form and Culture*. Prentice-Hall.
— Denyer, S. (1978). *African Traditional Architecture*. Africana Publishing Company.
— Colenso, J.W., D.D., *The Right Reverend Bishop of Natal*. (1861). Zulu English Dictionary.

Japanese (建物 - Tatemono)

In Japanese, *Tatemono* refers to a building or structure designed to harmonise with the natural environment. Traditional Japanese buildings emphasise simplicity, natural materials, and a seamless integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, reflecting the cultural value placed on balance and respect for nature.

Reference
— Reynolds, J. (2001). *Japanese Architecture and Design*. Tuttle Publishing.
— Brown, A. (2012). *Just Enough: Lessons in Living Green from Traditional Japan*. Tuttle Publishing.

Indian (e.g., Vastu Shastra)

In India, *Vastu Shastra* denotes architectural principles that align buildings with cosmic and natural forces to promote harmony, health, and prosperity. Structures designed according to *Vastu Shastra* principles consider orientation, spatial geometry, and natural elements to create a balanced and auspicious environment.

References
— Acharya, P. K. (1997). *An Encyclopaedia of Hindu Architecture*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
— Rao, M. S. (1995). *Vastu Architecture: Design Theory and Application for Everyday Life*. Lotus Press.

Chinese (建筑 - Jiànzhù)

Jiànzhù in Chinese refers to a building designed in harmony with Feng Shui principles to ensure the flow of energy (Qi) and balance within the environment. Traditional Chinese buildings often feature courtyards, symmetry, and the use of natural materials, embodying both functionality and cultural symbolism.

Reference
— Steinhardt, N. S. (1990). *Chinese Traditional Architecture*. China Books & Periodicals.
— Keswick, M. (2003). *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*. Harvard University Press.

Indigenous Australian (e.g., Yolngu - Gunyah, Goondie, Wurley)

In Indigenous Australian cultures, structures like *Gunyah, Goondie*, and *Wurley* serve as shelters and community spaces closely connected to the land's spiritual significance. These structures are often temporary or semi-permanent, reflecting a nomadic lifestyle and a cyclical relationship with nature.

Reference
— Memmott, P. (2007). *Gunyah, Goondie + Wurley: The Aboriginal Architecture of Australia*. University of Queensland Press.
— Oliver, P. (2014). *"Aboriginal Architecture"* in *An Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*. Cambridge University Press.

Climate

Pronunciation

/ˈklʌɪmɪt/ KLIGH-muht

Etymology

The term *climate* partly derives from French *climat* and Latin *climat-* or *clima*, with origins that refer to a region's atmospheric conditions, especially those affecting the land and its inhabitants.

Definition:

1. (1548 – Present) *The characteristic weather conditions of a country or region; the prevailing pattern of weather across a region throughout the year, particularly in terms of temperature, humidity, precipitation, wind, and other factors that affect human, animal, or plant life.*

2. (1661 – Present) Figurative usage: *Refers to the prevailing attitudes or conditions among a group or nation, often modified by specific terms such as "climate of opinion" or "economic climate".* (See also atmosphere n. 4)

Source of above
Oxford English Dictionary

Alternative Definition

These are not translations of the word "climate", but culturally specific concepts related to climate that emphasise how various regions consider environmental, functional, and cultural aspects in the built environment.

African (Swahili - Hali ya Hewa)

In many African languages, the terms for "climate" and "weather" are closely related, often using similar words or phrases to encompass both concepts. For example, in Swahili, *Hali ya hewa* can refer to both weather and climate, depending on the context. When addressing climate change specifically, some African languages have developed specialised terminology. In Swahili, for instance, *mabadiliko ya tabianchi* is used to refer to climate change, meaning "transformations in the behaviour or nature of the land/country." Understanding these terms is essential for effective communication about climate and environmental issues across Africa's diverse linguistic landscape. This diversity underscores the importance of translation and localisation efforts to ensure climate information is accessible and culturally relevant. Many African languages use phrases to convey the complexity of climate-related issues rather than encapsulating them in a single term, reflecting a nuanced approach to discussing environmental changes across different regions.

Reference
— González, J. B., & Sánchez, A. (2022). "Multilevel Predictors of Climate Change Beliefs in Africa." PLoS One, 17(4), e0266387.

Persian

Persian cultural understanding of climate incorporates the seasonal cycles and environmental changes that inform traditional Persian architecture, especially as they relate to agricultural practices and water management. While there isn't a direct translation that encapsulates "climate" as a single concept, Persian architecture traditionally integrates climate-responsive design, using features like wind towers (badgirs) to manage temperature and airflow.

Reference
— Ardalan, N., & Bakhtiar, L. (1973). *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture*. University of Chicago Press.

Japanese

In Japan, architectural practices are deeply informed by the seasons and the climate's impact on natural resources. Design concepts prioritise ventilation, natural light, and harmony with the surrounding environment, reflecting a cultural appreciation for the cyclical nature of seasons. Although there is no specific term for "climate" unique to Japanese, architecture is shaped by this sensitivity to seasonal transitions and local weather conditions.

References
— Brown, A. (2012). *Just Enough: Lessons in Living Green from Traditional Japan*. Tuttle Publishing.
— Young, D., & Young, M. K. (2007). *The Art of Japanese Architecture: History / Culture / Design*. Tuttle Publishing.

Indian (Vastu Shastra)

While *Vastu Shastra* does not directly translate to "climate," it involves principles of spatial alignment that consider natural forces, such as sunlight, wind direction, and temperature. Indian architecture following Vastu principles aims to create spaces that harness the natural environment for comfort, health, and harmony with nature.

Reference
— Rao, M. S. (1995). *Vastu Architecture: Design Theory and Application for Everyday Life*. Lotus Press.
— Acharya, P. K. (1997). *An Encyclopaedia of Hindu Architecture*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

Chinese (风水 - Fēngshuǐ)

Feng Shui principles incorporate environmental and climatic factors to create harmony within spaces. Traditional Chinese architecture aligns buildings with natural forces and climatic conditions, such as wind flow and sunlight, to enhance balance and well-being.

Reference
— Yang, X. (2017). "Climate Adaptation Strategies in Chinese Traditional Architecture." Journal of Architectural Engineering Technology, 60(4), 315–327.
— Lip, E. (1995). *Feng Shui: Environments of Power*. Academy Editions.
— Zhou, W. (2015). "Feng Shui and Its Application in Modern Architecture." Journal of Architectural Engineering Technology, 2(3), 89–98.
— Chuen, L. K. (1998). *The Feng Shui Handbook: How to Create a Healthier Living and Working Environment*. Gaia Books.

Indigenous Australian

Seasonal Cycles: Rather than a specific term for "climate," Indigenous Australian communities reference seasonal changes, such as the wet and dry seasons, which guide architectural practices and inform relationships with the land. This understanding of natural cycles influences Indigenous Australian structures, with shelters and buildings oriented to accommodate seasonal variations and maintain a connection to the environment.

Reference
— Memmott, P. (2007). *Gunyah, Goondie + Wurley: The Aboriginal Architecture of Australia.* University of Queensland Press.
— Davison, G., & May, S. (2015). I*ndigenous Architecture and Place.*

Community

Pronunciation

/kəˈmjuːnɨti/ kuh-MYOO-nuh-tee

Etymology

The term *community* is borrowed from French *communité*, with origins that reflect a shared life or mutual association among people, often bound by geography or shared interests.

Definition

1. (1426 – Present) *A body of people who live in the same place, typically sharing a common cultural or ethnic identity. Hence, the physical space where such a group resides.*

2. (c. 1525 – Present) *A body of people living communally according to a shared religious rule; a religious society or monastic community.*

3. (1813 – Present) *A body of people practising communal living, often on ideological or political grounds; more generally, a commune.*

Source of above
Oxford English Dictionary

Alternative Definition

These are not translations of the word "community" but culturally specific terms or concepts that convey the essence of community, highlighting how diverse societies emphasise communal, functional, and environmental aspects within the built environment.

African

Across African cultures, various terms reflect the emphasis on communal values, cooperation, and shared identity within society. Some examples include:

Harambee (Swahili, East Africa): Meaning "Pull together," this concept embodies community self-help and cooperation and serves as the national motto of Kenya, symbolising unity and social progress.

Ujamaa (Swahili, East Africa): Meaning "Familyhood," Ujamaa is a concept of African socialism that promotes cooperative economics and mutual welfare within communities.

Sankofa (Twi, Ghana): Meaning "Go back and get it," Sankofa highlights the importance of learning from the past to build a successful future, valuing wisdom and heritage.

Alafia (Yoruba, Nigeria): Meaning "Peace, health, or well-being," Alafia signifies the value placed on harmony and community welfare.

Reference
— Mafumbate, R. (2019). *The Undiluted African Community: Values, The Family, Orphanage and Wellness in Traditional Africa.* Information and Knowledge Management, 9(8). University of Eswatini. https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/Undiluted%20African%20Community.pdf

Persian (محله - Mahalleh)

In Persian, *Mahalleh* refers to a neighbourhood or district marked by a strong communal identity and shared public spaces. Key social activities occur in places like bazaars, mosques, and hammams, which serve as centres of social, economic, and cultural life, fostering close social ties within the Mahalleh.

Reference
— Ardalan, N., & Bakhtiar, L. (1973). *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture*. University of Chicago Press.

Chinese (社区 - Shèqū)

In Chinese, *Shèqū* denotes a residential community where social networks and mutual support are essential. Chinese communities often feature shared courtyards, parks, and communal facilities, which foster daily interactions, close-knit relationships, and collective activities, reinforcing a strong sense of communal belonging.

Reference
— Zhang, L. (2001). *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China's Floating Population*. Stanford University Press.

Indigenous Australian

For Indigenous Australian communities, the concept of community is deeply intertwined with the land and spiritual beliefs. The built environment includes structures like meeting places and ceremonial grounds, emphasising the connection between people, place, and nature, as well as the social and cultural practices rooted in the landscape.

Reference
— Memmott, P. (2007). *Gunyah, Goondie + Wurley: The Aboriginal Architecture of Australia*. University of Queensland Press.

garden

Pronunciation

/ˈgɑːdn/ GAR-duhn

Etymology

The term *garden* is borrowed from French *gardein* or *gardin*, originally meaning an enclosed space where plants are cultivated.

Definition

1.a. (1279 – Present) *A piece of ground, usually enclosed, where flowers, fruits, or vegetables are cultivated. In British English, it typically refers to an area adjoining a building, such as a private home, often with grass, flowers, and trees, used for recreation.*

1.c. (1612 – Present) I*n both singular and plural, an enclosed park or grounds adorned with plants and trees, or featuring other displays, used for public recreation or entertainment.*

Source of above
Oxford English Dictionary

Alternative Definition

These are not translations of the word "garden" but culturally specific terms that convey unique approaches to gardens, highlighting how different societies emphasise aesthetic, functional, or environmental aspects within their garden spaces.

African (Shamba - Swahili)

In Swahili, a *shamba* is a cultivated piece of land primarily used for growing food crops and is deeply connected to sustenance and community life. Unlike ornamental Western gardens, the shamba is a communal space focused on agricultural productivity and subsistence, embodying values of cooperation, shared labour, and respect for local ecosystems.

Reference
— Sheridan, M. J. (2004). *African Environmental History: Silences and Debates*. Oxford University Press.
— Zeleza, P. T. (1997). *A Modern Economic History of Africa: Volume 1*. East African Publishers.

Persian (باغ - Bāgh)

The *Bāgh*, or Persian garden, is designed as a symbol of paradise, integrating natural beauty, water, and architecture to create a microcosm of spiritual harmony. With roots in ancient Persia, these gardens typically follow a quadrilateral layout that symbolises the connection between humans and the divine. Flowing water and lush greenery in these arid landscapes showcase mastery over the environment and serve as spaces for reflection and solace.

References
— Hanaway, W. L. (1999). *Persian Gardens and Garden Pavilions*. Mazda Publishers.
— Khansari, M. (1998). *The Persian Garden: Echoes of Paradise*. Mage Publishers.

Indian (बगीचा - Bagicha / Charbagh - Mughal)

In India, gardens hold both practical and spiritual significance. The *bagicha* is a domestic garden often used to grow food and medicinal herbs. In contrast, the *charbagh*, a fourfold garden layout from the Mughal period, symbolises the Garden of Eden and is inspired by Islamic principles. These gardens incorporate symmetry, water features, and architectural elements, blending nature and built structures to evoke a sense of paradise and spiritual contemplation.

Reference
— Koch, E. (2001). *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of Its History and Development* (1526–1858). Prestel.
— Chakravarti, K. (2009). *Indian Gardens: A Cultural History*. Oxford University Press.

Mesoamerican (Milpa - Mayan)

The *milpa* is a traditional Mesoamerican agricultural system, particularly significant among the Maya, where crops like corn, beans, and squash are rotated in a sustainable cycle. This polycultural system reflects a deep understanding of biodiversity and ecological balance. Far more than a "garden," the milpa embodies Indigenous knowledge and a profound respect for the earth's role in providing sustenance.

Reference
— Ford, A., & Nigh, R. (2009). *The Milpa Cycle and the Making of the Maya Forest Garden*. Routledge.
— Gómez-Pompa, A., & Kaus, A. (1999). *From Pre-Hispanic to Future Conservation Alternatives: Lessons from Mexico.* Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Indigenous Australian (Bush Garden - Yolngu)

For Indigenous Australians, especially the Yolngu people, the concept of a garden is inseparable from the land itself. A "bush garden" reflects traditional methods of using native plants for food, medicine, and tools, emphasising a harmonious relationship with nature. Cultivation is not about dominance but collaboration, respecting the land and its flora as interconnected living entities with spiritual significance.

Reference
— Rose, D. B. (1996). *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*. Australian Heritage Commission.
— Pascoe, B. (2014). *Dark Emu: Aboriginal Australia and the Birth of Agriculture*. Magabala Books.

placekeeping

Pronunciation

PLAYSS-kee-ping

Etymology

Placekeeping is a modern term blending the words *place* (from Latin *platea*, meaning "open space" or "broad street") and *keeping* (from Old English *cepan*, meaning "to care for" or "to protect"). Together, *placekeeping* signifies the active stewardship and care for a specific location, focusing on preserving its cultural and social significance.

Alternative Definition

Although widely evocative and open to interpretation, *placekeeping* does not appear in traditional dictionaries or everyday sources. It primarily appears in alternative, specialised definitions within academic and community-led contexts.

Definition

Placekeeping involves the active stewardship and care of places by local communities, especially in response to gentrification, displacement, and other forms of urban change. It focuses on preserving cultural heritage, social networks, and community identities within the built environment. Moving beyond Western-centric views, placekeeping acknowledges diverse histories and the role of place as a repository for memory and identity. It emphasises the importance of local engagement and cultural preservation as essential elements in managing urban change and resisting displacement.

References

— Frederickson, N., & Baum, H. S. (1999). *Community Organising and Place-Keeping: Reclaiming Spaces for Marginalised Groups*. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 18(3), 197–208. SAGE Publications.
This article explores how community organising and placekeeping efforts can reclaim urban spaces for marginalised groups, focusing on maintaining cultural and social identities.

— Jones, P., & Evans, J. (2012). *Urban Regeneration in the UK: Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications.
This book examines various urban regeneration projects across the UK, highlighting the role of placekeeping in sustaining social networks and community identity amid urban change.

— Samuels, R. (2015). *Place-Keeping in Action: Community Work at Castlefield, Manchester. Urban Design and Planning*, 168(6), 299–309. ICE Publishing.
This paper presents an analysis of placekeeping initiatives in Manchester, focusing on community -led efforts to preserve local heritage and social cohesion.

— Contini, A. L., & Goldstein, B. *Cultural Placekeeping Guide*. ArtPlace America.
This guide offers strategies for cultural placekeeping, focusing on how communities can actively preserve cultural heritage within changing urban landscapes.

— District Six Museum, Cape Town, South Africa.
This museum is dedicated to preserving the history of District Six, a vibrant community forcibly removed during apartheid. It serves as a model for cultural placekeeping, maintaining historical memory and fostering community resilience.

— Sandercock, L. (2003). *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century*. Continuum. Sandercock's work on multiculturalism in urban planning critiques Western-centric frameworks and argues for planning approaches that respect diverse cultural practices and voices in urban space.

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Vol. 1

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Language

DECOLONIAL

The Glossary

The built environment is more than just a collection of spaces; it shapes our lives, influencing how we live, interact, and engage with marginalized or "othered" communities. This glossary invites readers to explore the intersections of decolonial thought and the built environment, offering a fresh lens to challenge colonial legacies in our spaces and practices. Whether you're a student, practitioner, or curious reader, Glossary of Decolonial Language is an essential resource for fostering critical engagement and promoting inclusivity in shared spaces.