The ‘place’ of children and young people in society is perhaps more visible and contested than ever before. There are unprecedented levels of public and media debate concerning young people’s behaviour, health, education and leisure time.

With papers drawn from a cross-section of current research, this issue addresses the relationship between young people and built space in different socio-cultural contexts. Importantly, the contributors explore built spaces that are outside the predominant foci of research about young people and built environments: schools, houses and playgrounds. Further, several authors highlight the lack of ‘fit’ between the methods used by academics to foster young people’s participation, and those that can be effectively (and efficiently) employed by built environment professionals to the same end.

It is hoped that the contributors to this issue will help to develop a dialogue between social scientists and built environment scholars and professionals – a dialogue orientated towards understanding and improving young people’s interactions with built places.