

JURY REPORT

The UIA Award

for



INNOVATION

in

Architectural Education

(3rd edition)

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I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 General Information

Organised on a triennial cycle basis, the Award was founded by Ashraf Salama under the auspices of the UIA Architectural Education Commission in 2019 to celebrate the multifaceted nature of innovation across the boundaries of cultures and geographies, and to promote inspiring pedagogical practices that contribute to the creation of sustainable environments.

The International Union of Architects (UIA) is pleased to announce that 32 entries from 22 countries across the five UIA regions were shortlisted out of over 70 registrations for the Third Edition of the UIA Award for Innovation in Architectural Education (2026), excluding 4 ineligible entries.

Welcoming submissions from colleges, schools, departments, and programmes of architecture around the world, the Award seeks to identify and celebrate outstanding approaches to architectural and urban design education that advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In doing so, it draws on the full breadth of pedagogical practice across the five UIA regions. Guided by the principles of the UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education (updated July 2023), the Award underscores the critical contribution that architecture education makes in responding to pressing societal and environmental challenges, and in revealing the opportunities that such challenges present.

This edition recognises the multitude of factors influencing the development of sustainable environments, which include focus areas ranging from climate action to health; from inclusivity and migration to community development; and from resource efficiency to heritage conservation, post-industrial contexts, and diverse people needs and abilities.

I.2 Evaluation Criteria

Architectural education in the 21st century demands creativity and innovation; research and investigation; collaboration and civic engagement; environmental awareness and technical competence. The Jury assessed entries on the basis of two key criteria:

- Excellence in Pedagogical Practice based on evidence of pedagogical innovation and enhanced learning outcomes.
- Excellence in Addressing Sustainable Development Goals based on evidence of innovation in content and teaching delivery, identifying challenges, and development of solutions.

In demonstrating excellence, entries were expected to consider evidencing and documenting how the pedagogical programme addresses and delivers across the following areas:

1. Innovative Pedagogy: by adopting and implementing pedagogical approaches that respond to current global debates in areas that may include health, heritage, digital tools, collaboration, transdisciplinarity, specific user groups, community and civic engagement, or a combination of one or more such areas.
2. Impactful Inquiry: by demonstrating students' inquisitiveness in ways that inspire a commitment to addressing social and environmental challenges.
3. Inclusive Learning: by discerning and effectively enhancing the diversity of student learning needs, thus offering multiple learning opportunities.
4. Research-Driven Design Education: by integrating findings from architectural research, scholarship, and professional practice in ways that add value to the learning environment.
5. Interdisciplinary Engagement: by engaging with and potentially contributing to the established body of knowledge through working effectively across disciplines.
6. Contextual Responsiveness: by articulating strategic and operational priorities of the context or region in which the school/programme operates.

I.3 Eligibility

- The Award addresses university level professional education in architecture which could be any recognised study programme for professional architectural education worldwide. This includes university level independent schools/programmes or schools/programmes within public or private universities.
- The school/programme must have been established for at least ten years.
- The school/programme must offer a professional degree in architecture, which is recognised by its local higher education authorities and/or local validation/accreditation body.
- UNESCO-UIA validation is not a requirement for entry.

I.4 Jury Members

Jury Chair

- **Jana Revedin** (Germany)

Jury Members

- **James B Brown** (Sweden)
- **Karine Dupre** (United States)
- **Lindy Osborne Burton** (Australia)
- **Jolanda Morkel** (South Africa)

Jury Alternate

- **Andrii Markovskiy** (Ukraine)

Award Manager and Curator (non-voting)

- **Ashraf M. Salama** (United Kingdom/Egypt)

Technical Committee (non-voting) members:

- **Selma Harrington** (Ireland), **Kevin Bingham** (South Africa), and **Kaname Yanagisawa** (Japan).



Jana Revedin



Karine Dupre



Jolanda Morkel



Selma Harrington



James B Brown



Lindy Osborne Burton



Ashraf M. Salama



Kevin Bingham

I.5 Profiles of Eligible Entries

Region	Countries represented	#
Region I (Western Europe)	Ireland ×2, Switzerland ×2, UK ×2, Spain, France (La Réunion)	8
Region II (Central & Eastern Europe, Western Asia)	Turkey ×2, Poland, Iran, UAE	5
Region III (The Americas)	USA ×2, Argentina, Peru	4
Region IV (Asia & Oceania)	China ×5, Singapore, Australia, Bangladesh	8
Region V (Africa)	Egypt ×2, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda	6
Cross-regional (Regions III & II)	USA & Palestinian Territories	1

II. RESULTS

The Jury awarded 5 entries for their excellence in pedagogy and addressing timely and pressing challenges and commended a further 4 entries for their distinctive qualities and merits. The awarded and commended entries are as follows:

II.1 Awarded Entries

- Region I: Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), Republic of Ireland — Building Change — Bachelor of Architecture (Hons) Curriculum Reform
- Region III: University of Lima, Peru — Inclusive by Design: International Online Workshop on Universal Design and Inclusive Architectural Education
- Region III: University of Buenos Aires (UBA), Argentina — (Inter)Urban Actions — Introduction to Design Knowledge II
- Region IV: South China University of Technology (SCUT), China — Proof of Design-Led Subtropical Sustainability: Dialogue, Build, Innovate
- Region V: University of Pretoria, South Africa — From Awareness to Co-Implementation: A Staged Pedagogy for Climate Justice, Spatial Justice, and Circular Material Practice

II.2 Commended Entries

- Region I: Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC), Spain — Arquitectes de Capçalera: City and Childhood International Workshops
- Region II: Silesian University of Technology, Poland — Project Laboratory: An Interdisciplinary and Circular Approach to Post-Mining Site Regeneration
- Region III: Virginia Tech, United States of America — Blind Design Workshop: Advancing Curricular Transformation with Collaborative and Inclusive Pedagogy
- Regions III and II: Arizona State University, United States of America; and An-Najah National University, Palestinian Territories — Building Futures Exchange

III. AWARDED ENTRIES

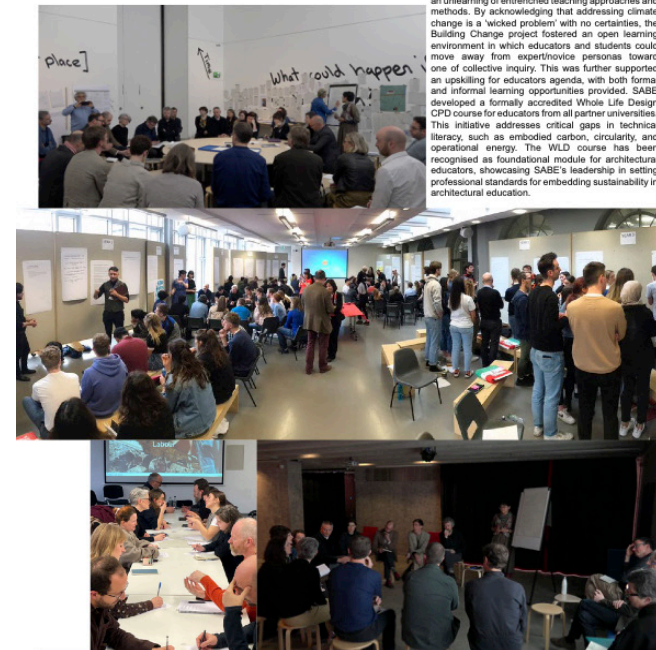
III.1 Region I: School of Architecture, Building and Environment, Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), Dublin, Republic of Ireland

Building Change — Bachelor of Architecture (Hons) Curriculum Reform

The jury awarded this entry for a nationally significant curriculum reform initiative that operates at a scale and policy reach that distinguishes it from most other entries in this cycle. Funded by the Irish Higher Education Authority and led by TU Dublin as national project lead, the Building Change project coordinated the transformation of architectural education across all six Irish schools of architecture, exemplifying a systemic, government-backed programme well beyond a single studio or institutional reform. Within TU Dublin, key innovations include a vertical studio model mixing year cohorts, an Architects in Residence programme, student-devised contracts for change, and a staff unlearning framework that treats climate change as a problem with no expert solution. The development of the Whole Life Design CPD course for educators, and the project team's direct contribution to revising Ireland's national Competency Standard for Architectural Education, extend the programme's impact across the entire Irish architecture profession. The Architects in Residence initiative makes the programme particularly distinctive by bringing practising professionals directly into the learning environment as "critical friends," bridging the gap between academia and real-world practice. Their ongoing engagement through workshops, reviews, and lectures enriches the curriculum with current industry knowledge and fosters a culture of continuous dialogue and reflection. The jury commends this entry for promoting integrated climate-responsive design and ethical practice, and for its attention to changing architectural curricula across an entire country through collaboration between schools, collaboration with the professional body, and serving as an exemplary leader for change.

Building Capacity through Collaboration

From the outset the project adopted a structured approach to building knowledge capacity through the collaboration of a national network of educators, practitioners and community stakeholders. For our school the most impactful element of this approach was the creation of a framework for staff to engage in an unlearning of entrenched teaching approaches and methods. By acknowledging that addressing climate change is a 'wicked problem' with no certainties, the Building Change project fostered an open learning environment in which educators and students could move away from expertise personas toward one of collective inquiry. This was further supported by an upskilling for educators agenda, with both formal and informal learning opportunities provided. SAGE developed a formally accredited Whole Life Design CPD course for educators from all partner universities. This initiative addresses critical gaps in technical literacy, such as embodied carbon, circularity, and operational energy. The WLD course has been recognised as foundational module for architectural educators, showcasing SAGE's leadership in setting professional standards for embedding sustainability in architectural education.



Scaffolding Student Agency

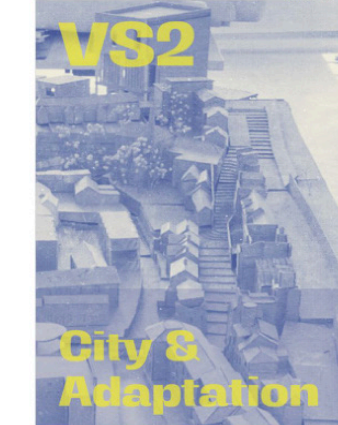
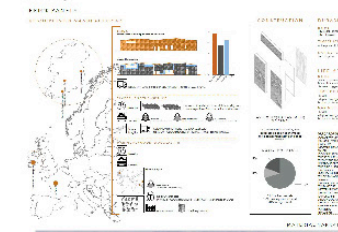


The scaffolded activation of the student voice to address hidden curriculum challenges and build agency was a key element of the project. The establishment of Student Curator roles and provision of both time and funding for student-led activities (podcasts, workshops, seminars, climate festivals and lecture series) provided our students with enhanced agency over their educational experience. Further by involving students directly as co-creators in the curriculum review process, devising 'contracts for change' and participating in national symposia the project empowered the next generation of architects to see themselves as active participants in pedagogical evolution.

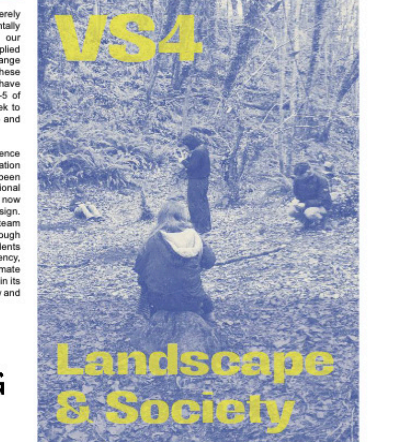
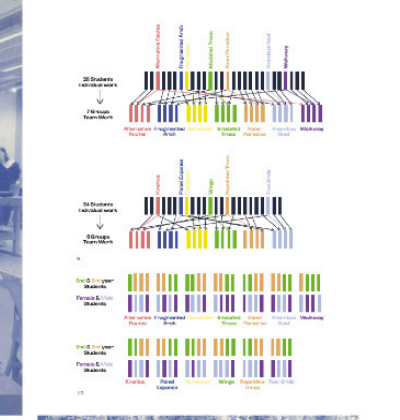
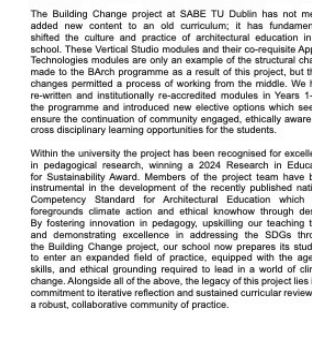
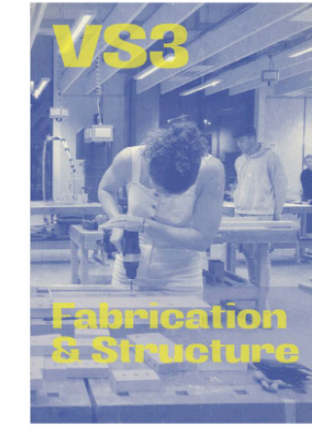


Co-Designed Curriculum Change

A major curriculum change instigated during the project was the transition from horizontal, year-based structures to a vertical studio model in Years 2 and 3 of the Bachelor of Architecture. By mixing student cohorts from various years, the approach dismantled hierarchical barriers, fostering a dynamic culture of peer-to-peer mentorship and collaborative problem-solving. This was supported by a programme restructuring that integrated Applied Technologies alongside studio modules, ensuring that technical proficiency is never divorced from creative intent. Whilst the themes are explicit - Low Carbon Architecture, City and Adaptation, Landscape and Society, Fabrication and Structure - the implementation of the projects is site specific and context dependent. By prioritising the repurposing of existing building stock and focusing on regenerative design, the programme now prepares graduates for the reality of a post-carbon economy.



Co-Designed Curriculum Change



III.2 Region III: Faculty of Architecture, University of Lima, Lima, Peru

Inclusive by Design: International Online Workshop on Universal Design and Inclusive Architectural Education

The jury awarded this entry unanimously for a focused and well-argued contribution to one of the most underdeveloped areas of architectural education: the direct engagement of people with impairments as co-participants in the design process, rather than as subjects of speculative accessibility projects. The two-week international online workshop brought together 170 students and faculty from seven universities across five UIA regions. Its defining feature was the direct participation of students with intellectual disabilities from CEU San Pablo, Spain, shifting design thinking from projection to dialogue and repositioning Universal Design as an epistemological driver rather than a compliance requirement. The workshop applies Universal Design not only to its design briefs but to its own pedagogical structure, using multiple modes of representation to accommodate diverse cognitive approaches within international teams working across all of the UIA regions. What stands out is how the project embeds inclusion as a lived, collaborative process rather than a design requirement, by directly involving diverse users, including students with intellectual disabilities, in shaping design decisions. Its international, co-creative model, supported by expert input and real-world contexts, demonstrates a powerful and transferable way to integrate multiple perspectives into architectural education. The jury commends this entry for promoting Universal Design as a source of inquiry and for advancing cross-cultural pedagogy.

Inclusive by Design

An International Online Workshop on Universal Design and Inclusive Architectural Education

A collaborative academic initiative bringing together architecture students from diverse cultural contexts to apply Universal Design principles in the creation of inclusive, person-centred urban solutions.

1. Redefining Architectural Education: Inclusion at the Core

Architectural education continues to face a structural gap: accessibility and inclusion are often addressed as regulatory compliance rather than as conceptual drivers of design thinking. This fragmentation limits architecture's ethical scope and weakens its transformative capacity.

Inclusive by Design was conceived as a response to this pedagogical challenge. Developed and led by the Faculty of Architecture of the Universidad de Lima (Peru), in collaboration with the UIA Work Programme Architecture for All (AIA), the initiative repositions Universal Design as a foundational framework for architectural education.

The workshop brought together 170 students and faculty from seven universities across five UIA regions:

- Universidad de Lima (Peru)
- Universidad San Pablo (Spain)
- Polytechnic University of the Philippines
- Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (Indonesia)
- Cairo University (Egypt)
- Universidad San Pablo CEU (Spain)

This transcontinental collaboration created a multicultural learning environment where geographic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity became a pedagogical asset rather than a barrier. The initiative operates within a strong institutional framework. The Faculty of Architecture of the Universidad de Lima was selected in 2019 by the UINIA Programme and UNESCO Chairs to establish the UNESCO Chair "City, Landscape and Heritage" aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2022, it became the first Peruvian university to receive RIBA International Accreditation (Part 1 and Part 2).

By situating inclusion at the conceptual origin of the design process and by fostering collaboration across Latin America, Southeast Asia, Europe, and North Africa, Inclusive by Design proposes a systemic shift in architectural pedagogy.

It is not an extracurricular activity, but a scalable educational model aimed at embedding accessibility and social responsibility permanently within architectural curricula worldwide.



2. Innovative Pedagogy: Experiential, Intercultural and Dialogical Learning



Structured as a two-week intensive online programme conducted in English across multiple time zones, Inclusive by Design established a transcontinental, collaborative learning ecosystem. The digital format was not a limitation but a strategic enabler of intercultural exchange, allowing participation from Latin America, Southeast Asia, Europe, and North Africa.

Each participating university proposed a real public space within its local context. International teams, composed of students from four different countries, were required to collectively:

- Select one site among several proposals
- Justify its relevance within its socio-cultural context
- Identify a specific user group
- Map physical, cognitive, sensory, and social barriers
- Develop a design proposal grounded in one of the seven Principles of Universal Design

This process required negotiation across cultures, collaborative authorship, and shared responsibility. Students had to articulate arguments, defend decisions, and reconcile diverse design approaches, cultivating professional adaptability and intercultural competence.

A defining innovation of the workshop was the direct participation of students with intellectual disabilities from the CEU San Pablo programme (Spain). Their involvement transformed the pedagogical dynamic. Design decisions were no longer speculative assumptions about users; they became dialogical processes informed by lived experience. The presence of diverse cognitive perspectives disrupted conventional academic hierarchies and fostered reciprocal learning.

The programme opened with a master class by Architect Ron Wixman (Canada), member of the UIA Architecture for All Work Programme, situating Universal Design within a global professional framework. Daily reviews by international accessibility experts, along with parallel theoretical sessions organised in each country, reinforced the integration of research, ethics, and practice.

Innovation, in this context, lies not only in format but in epistemology: inclusion becomes a generator of knowledge and creativity.

3. Impact, Measurable Outcomes and Contribution to the SDGs

Inclusive by Design produced twenty research-based architectural proposals addressing diverse urban contexts and user groups. Seven teams were selected to present in a final plenary session before all participants and international UIA experts, reinforcing academic rigour and professional standards.

Impact assessment was conducted through structured post-workshop surveys administered to both students and faculty. When asked whether they would recommend the experience to others and whether they would participate again, 100% responded affirmatively. This unanimity reflects not only satisfaction but perceived academic value.

Qualitative and analytical outcomes demonstrated:

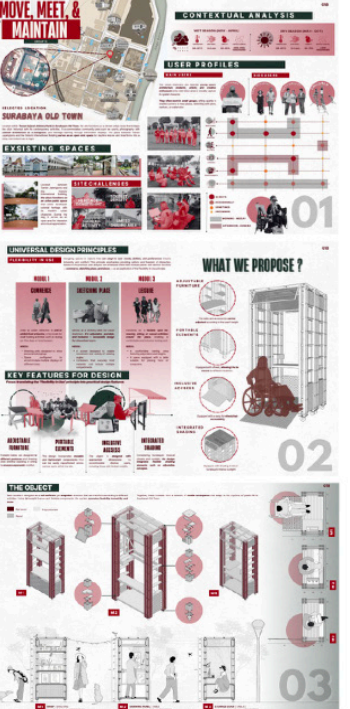
- Enhanced capacity to identify and map multi-layered barriers
- Strengthened intercultural communication and teamwork skills
- Greater ethical awareness in decision-making processes
- Integration of social sustainability into design proposals
- Expanded understanding of accessibility as relational and contextual

The workshop directly contributes to the following Sustainable Development Goals:

- SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities**
By addressing spatial barriers and promoting equitable participation in public space.
- SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities**
By rethinking public environments as inclusive civic infrastructures.
- SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being**
By recognising accessibility as fundamental to physical, cognitive, and social well-being.

Sustainability is approached holistically; not limited to environmental performance, but grounded in dignity, participation, and long-term social resilience.

The measurable impact of Inclusive by Design lies in its ability to translate ethical principles into spatial strategies through rigorous research and collaborative practice.



4. Scalability, Replicability and Long-Term Educational Transformation

Inclusive by Design was conceived as an annual initiative with a long-term vision. Future editions will progressively integrate additional schools of architecture worldwide, expanding its global network and strengthening collective awareness that architecture must be accessible to all.

The workshop's structure is inherently scalable: Online transcontinental format, International team collaboration, Expert mentorship from UIA AIA members, Research-driven methodology, Direct engagement with diverse user groups.

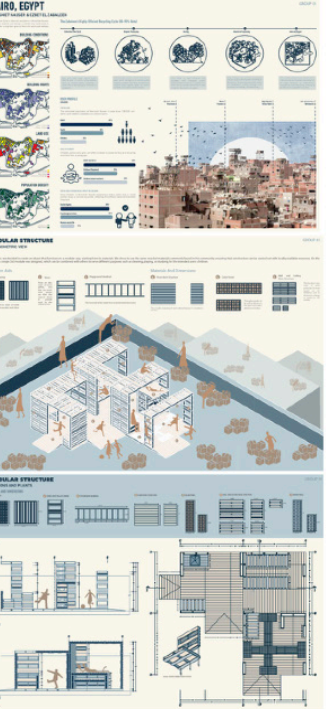
This framework can be replicated in other academic contexts without losing conceptual integrity. Its adaptability allows integration into studios, electives, seminars, or cross-institutional collaborations.

Importantly, the workshop models inclusive learning while teaching inclusive design. Multiple modes of representation, diagrams, analytical mapping, narrative articulation, digital modelling, enable diverse cognitive approaches within teams. In doing so, the pedagogical structure itself reflects Universal Design principles.

Through sustained implementation, Inclusive by Design contributes to embedding Universal Design as an ethical, creative, and methodological foundation in architectural curricula. It strengthens global academic collaboration and positions architecture education as an active contributor to social equity.

Inclusive by Design is not simply a workshop; it represents a systemic shift in how architectural education can respond to contemporary societal and environmental challenges. By transforming accessibility into a catalyst for creativity, intercultural collaboration, and ethical responsibility, it prepares future architects to design equitable, resilient, and inclusive environments for all.

Beyond its immediate academic outcomes, the initiative fosters a transnational community of educators, students, and accessibility experts committed to advancing inclusive practice within their respective institutions. Participants return to their schools equipped not only with design strategies, but with a renewed ethical framework that influences studios, curricula, and research agendas. In this way, the workshop generates a multiplier effect that extends far beyond its two-week duration.



The workshop results have been selected to be presented by the UIA Architecture for All (AIA) Work Programme at the UIA World Congress of Architecture 2026, Barcelona.

III.3 Region III: Architecture Programme, FADU, University of Buenos Aires (UBA), Buenos Aires, Argentina

(inter)acciones urbanas [Urban (Inter)Actions] – Cátedra Najmias, Taller de Proyectos – Introduction to Design Knowledge II

The jury awarded this entry for a structurally original and operationally convincing pedagogical model that converts a compulsory first-year foundational course, serving 400 to 600 students per term at one of Latin America's largest public universities, into a city-scale design laboratory. Since 2023, more than 2,000 students have executed over 300 real public-space interventions across Buenos Aires, reaching an estimated 150,000 users. The programme's defining contribution is its insistence that a project is complete only when real effects are observed and documented, not when it is represented. SDG outcomes arise from method rather than from retrospective mapping, evidenced by specific, user-counted interventions addressing disability access, pedestrian safety, and age-inclusive public space. The jury identified the municipal adoption of a student street prototype, with permanent infrastructure installed within two weeks of the student intervention, as the most compelling cross-sectoral impact outcome in this cycle. This programme is particularly well suited to first-year students, as it uses a novel, embodied, hands-on approach that builds agency from the outset through real-world action rather than abstract learning. The model also achieves significant impact at scale, engaging large cohorts of students over time in meaningful, community-based interventions. The jury commends this entry for promoting a shift from image-making to project reasoning under real constraints, and for taking responsibility for consequences.

(inter)acciones urbanas

2023
2024
2025

2,000+ STUDENTS

300+ PUBLIC SPACE INTERVENTIONS

150,000+ ESTIMATED USERS from short manual tallies + installation time (conservative)

SDG CONTRIBUTIONS

- 3 active use + social interaction (on site)
- 4 early-stage agency + judgment (foundation)
- 10 accessibility gaps + prototype + test
- 11 multi-scale city making (open space + mobility + waterfront)
- 17 stakeholder dialogue + uptake signals

OUTCOME

from studio to the city

A foundation course that builds early architectural judgment, responsibility, and agency through real public-space work. Students frame real situations, work under constraints, and iterate decisions toward useful, accountable outcomes.

ON-SITE OUTCOME

Active use + social interaction.

HOW

- City as learning medium (real sites + stakeholders)
- Constraints first (safety, feasibility, maintenance, trade-offs)
- Prototype → test on site → iterate (documented feedback)

CHALLENGE

Train judgment under real constraints – accountability in public space.

RATIONALE

aspiring to inspire

For students (early-stage mindset):

First project after high school agency comes before representational mastery. Shift from image-making to project reasoning under constraints, taking responsibility for consequences.

Outputs: prototype + on-site test + documented iteration log

For community and institutions:

Urban frictions become visible through public interventions – from prototyped fixes to critical signals that activate discussion and community demand.

Outputs: visible interventions + documented feedback

(inter)acciones urbanas

ACCESSIBLE BUS STOP PROTOTYPE



RESULTS
Seat + armrests
Wheelchair bay
Stop into large print + braille
Leaning perch (ischial support)
Rope assist

SDG10 + SDG11
Used most
Used as intended
Verified
Needs stronger build
Unused

Challenge Non-accessible stop at rehabilitation hub (unsafe transfers)
Solution Higher seat + armrests + leaning rail + wheelchair bay. Enables safer sit-to-stand and supported transfers.
Evidence Built prototype. 5h on-site test; manual tally, n=217 direct users; photo log + observation notes

AGE-INCLUSIVE PARK STATIONS



RESULTS
Physical exercise stations
Cognitive game zones
Seating + social clusters

SDG3 + SDG11
Used most
Used as intended
Used frequently

Challenge Non-accessible park for older adults
Solution Games, rest and exercise stations adapted for older adults
Evidence Built prototype. 7h on-site test; manual tally, n=73 direct users; photo log + observation notes

STREET SPACE NEGOTIATION



RESULTS
Vehicle lane (marked)
Integrated seats
Planters barrier line
Protected play zone

SDG10 + SDG11
No conflicts (observed)
Used most
Used as intended
High engagement

Challenge Informal street with no pedestrian/vehicle boundary and no safe children's play space
Solution Planters and markings define a vehicle lane and a protected walk/play zone with play elements
Evidence Built prototype. 8h on-site test; manual tally, n=69 direct users; photo log + observation notes

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING FOR BLIND USERS



RESULTS
High-visibility color zones
Traffic-calming cones/bollards
Tactile + visual signage

SDG3 + SDG10
Used as intended
Vehicles slowed (observed)
Used frequently

Challenge Unsafe crossing for blind pedestrians near a dedicated institute, mid-block on a busy street
Solution High-visibility markings and traffic calming reinforce a tactile + visual guided crossing
Evidence Built prototype. 4h on-site test; manual tally, n=23 direct users; photo log + observation notes

(inter)acciones urbanas

A staged learning sequence: observation → reframing → planning → on-site intervention (prototype or critical activation) → iteration

LEARNING OUTCOME	PEDAGOGICAL MOVE	STUDENT ARTEFACTS
produce a documented site log photos + mapping + short surveys / counts	OBSERVATION • context reading • evidence capture • stakeholder listening	 City-river disconnection mapped barriers + access gaps
reframe a real issue into a design brief stakeholder input + criteria + 3 options	CONCEPTION • problem framing • options + criteria • future envisioning	 Reconnecting city to river street extensions + new fabric
deliver a feasible execution plan budget + logistics + roles + sequence	PLANNING • feasibility + logistics • budget + materials • execution sequence	 Execution sequence transport + assembly storyboard
adapt a 1:1 prototype through real-world testing on-site test log + iteration notes	ACTION • on-site intervention (prototype or critical activation) • community engagement • real-world testing	 On-site intervention in use critical activation
verify impact and communicate results impact check + reflection + final narrative	CONCLUSION • verification • impact check • reflection + communication	 Iteration after trial changes applied

(inter)acciones urbanas

CITY AS CLASSROOM

Students learn by producing evidence in real sites: observation → mapping → prototyping → verification



SITE OBSERVATION – informal market street
Pedestrians, vendors, and vehicles share the same section: conflict points and unsafe crossings mapped on-site.

COMMUNITY AS PROJECT

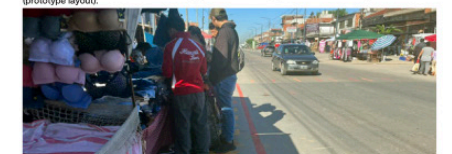
Stakeholders are not "context"; they are design inputs (intercepts, short interviews, feedback loops).



CO-DESIGN PROPOSAL – crossing + shared edge
Stakeholder inputs translated into a clear pedestrian crossing and a defined vendor/flow zone (prototype layout).

SMALL ACTS, BIG IMPACTS

Low-cost prototypes reduce risk and accelerate iteration under real constraints (safety, feasibility, maintenance).



ON-SITE PROTOTYPE – low-cost spatial cues
Painted markings guide movement and reduce friction in real conditions (tested during live use).

IMPACT IN REAL LIFE

A project is "done" only when effects are observed and documented (use, behavior, adoption).



AFTER / MUNICIPAL UPTAKE (2 weeks later) – permanent organization
Following the prototype, the municipality implemented permanent delineators and markings, consolidating safer flows along the bridge edge.

III.4 Region IV: Sustainability Studio, School of Architecture, South China University of Technology (SCUT), Guangzhou, China

Proof of Design-Led Subtropical Sustainability: Dialogue, Build, Innovate

The jury awarded this entry for a technically rigorous and institutionally embedded approach to sustainability pedagogy, grounded in the humid subtropical conditions of the Pearl River Delta. The Dialogue-Build-Innovate framework structures learning as a continuous cycle: global co-creation identifies climate and social challenges; construction validates sustainable concepts through physical making; and an innovation pathway translates design research into documented technology outcomes. The programme's defining contribution is its insistence that sustainability be demonstrated through realised physical outcomes and measured performance data. Sixteen permanent bamboo community installations, multiple Solar Decathlon completions including the 2021 Middle East championship, published research, and registered patents confirm a programme where pedagogical claims are substantiated by verifiable evidence. A network of over 30 partner universities across Asia, Europe, and Oceania extends the programme's reach well beyond a single institutional context. It moves beyond theoretical sustainability teaching and requires students to validate ideas through dialogue, construction, and measurable performance. It also offers a coherent and transferable pedagogical model that integrates global collaboration, digital technology, and real-world climate-responsive design. The jury commends this entry for developing a multiscale model based on proof.

Proof of Design-Led Subtropical Sustainability: Dialogue, Build, Innovate in Architectural

Overview

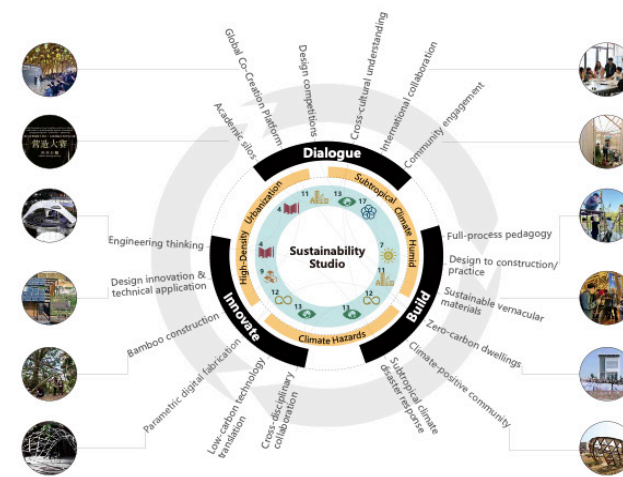
While the global climate crisis accelerates, architectural education remains confined to theoretical speculation. This disconnect demands urgent attention in the Global South—particularly the Pearl River Delta, Southeast Asia, and South America—where humid subtropical and tropical climates intersect with ultra-high-density urbanization. At the School of Architecture, South China University of Technology (SCUT) in Guangzhou, the program positions design-led sustainability practice as the most effective tool to address these challenges, aligned with the UNESD and the UNESCO-UIS Charter for Architectural Education.

The pedagogical objective is clear: design-led sustainability cannot merely be taught; it must be proven—through cross-cultural dialogue, physical building, and technical innovation, manifesting as realized prototypes, measurable performance data, and transferable knowledge.

Dialogue
through
Global Co-Creation Platform

BUILD
for
Climate-Positive Communities

INNOVATE
via
Design-to-Tech Talent Pathway



BUILD for Climate-Positive Communities

Material

Bamboo, an abundant vernacular material in subtropical regions, serves as a key anchor of the teaching practice. Linked with the Design-Construction Competition, students experience the full process of material research, prototyping, joint detailing, and on-site construction, completing 16 individual structures. After the competition, these structures become long-term, interactive public installations open to the community.

Energy

The pedagogy is organized around the Solar Decathlon international competition. Within interdisciplinary teams, students develop a comprehensive understanding of full-process energy management while building objectives in multi-disciplinary collaboration, technology integration, and integrated design thinking—also cultivating leadership as architects. In the 2021 Solar Decathlon Middle East held in Dubai, the student team introduced the concept of the New Rural and Green Courtyard and won the overall championship!

Society

The pedagogy emphasizes thorough understanding of design problems and practical solutions for sustainable urban communities. For example, students proposed using vertical building gaps in urban villages as vertical "light conduits," employing accessible materials (plywood) to redirect sunlight to ground level, while fostering community collaboration through a "vertical air purification model." This project won the 2024 International VELUX Award Regional Championship!

Resilience

High-density cities call for speculative thinking to address urban development needs and disaster response. Linked with the **Designing Resilience Global (DRG)** program, the pedagogy developed a development vision for Singapore's "Long Island" based on a nature-based reclamation and landgrowth model. The project deployed modular infrastructure hubs combined with sedimentation and bio-remediation (planting) to grow land progressively, establishing a climate-responsive community that balances ecological resilience with resident well-being. Our students won the **Urban Design Excellence Award** in 2023.

DIALOGUE through Global Co-Creation Platform

Design-Construction Competition

An annual on-site design and construction competition focused on bamboo, bringing together lower-grade architecture students from ASEAN (Indonesia, Thailand, Indonesia, etc.) for cross-regional workshops and building practice. The innovative application of bamboo, used as an international academic platform dedicated to promoting Asian youth exchange and cross-cultural innovation.

Designing Resilience Global

An annual global joint design studio themed on Urban Regeneration and Sustainable Design. Through an on-site-based model, the program convenes students from over 30 universities across multiple continents, addressing climate hazards and sustainability issues in joint regional Asia through competitions, lectures, and workshops, proposing resilient solutions for climate risks and rapid urbanization.

Subtropical Sustainable Design

A biennial international competition addressing the Zero Carbon agenda for subtropical architecture. The competition emphasizes climate sustainability and technical guidance, with technical innovation and constructability as key evaluation criteria. Through open competitions, symposia, design development, and construction activities, the initiative advances community regeneration through realized building projects.

INNOVATE via Design-to-Tech Talent Pathway

Green material

To address the performance enhancement of vernacular and sustainable materials in design, students conduct research and observation on green building materials in material and construction processes. Students investigate the hygrothermal properties of bamboo and composite materials to propose their overall performance in building, while establishing a life-cycle carbon emission assessment framework with historical context and morphology supporting industry practice in digitization and intelligent manufacturing. Students analyze parameters, modeling and performance simulation to support refined design, and develop digital fabrication and equipment systems (e.g. CNC) for a student and technology system covering material testing, structural design, location assessment, and intelligent manufacturing.

Zero-carbon

Since 2015, a "Zero-Carbon Building" teaching and research training system has been established through the Solar Decathlon international competition initiated by the U.S. Department of Energy in collaboration with international universities and industry partners. The program has completed multiple zero-carbon housing projects, winning the Silver Award at the 2019 Solar Decathlon China (SDC), the Grand Championship at the 2021 Solar Decathlon China, and the Overall Championship at the 2022 Solar Decathlon Middle East (SDE). Through this process, the program has cultivated numerous professional architects and research practitioners focused on zero-carbon building, with research covering the full lifecycle from design theory, prefabricated construction to operation and maintenance management, teaching outcomes and research innovation, and further disseminated through the publication of scientific papers, product patents, and monographs related to the design projects.

Nature-based Solutions

Leveraging the Designing Resilience Global platform, the program integrates teaching and research on nature-based solutions (NBS) and ecosystem services, conducting a "Risk Identification-Scenario Simulation" strategy and design methodology around the complex climate risks of subtropical regions. Students combine interdisciplinary tools such as hydrodynamic models and spatial analysis to optimize the layout of blue-green infrastructure (BGI), advancing resilience design capabilities from state-level toward dynamic models. Students propose verifiable adaptation strategies and conduct scientific validation in response to storm surges, flooding, and sea-level rise.

III.5 Region V: Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

From Awareness to Co-Implementation: A Staged Pedagogy for Climate Justice, Spatial Justice, and Circular Material Practice

The jury awarded this entry for a theoretically grounded and institutionally sustained model of full-curriculum transformation. The five-stage developmental trajectory — awareness, philanthropy, activism, solidarity, and collaboration — functions as a deliberate curriculum architecture, progressively expanding students' ethical, methodological, and professional capacities across both the BArchHons and MArch programmes. Three thematic lines — climate justice, co-design for spatial justice, and design for material circularity — are woven throughout the curriculum rather than assigned to individual years, producing cumulative learning and long-term community partnerships. The programme operates within the specific conditions of the post-apartheid South African city, where spatial injustice, climate vulnerability, and constrained resources are not design parameters but sites of ethical and professional accountability. The jury noted this programme's rare achievement of whole-programme transformation, sustained over multiple years, within a university directly confronting its own historical admissions legacy. This entry offers a coherent, whole-school pedagogical model that systematically develops students from awareness to co-implementation through real-world, justice-oriented engagement. Its integration of climate justice, spatial justice, and circular material practice, combined with participatory co-design and research-led studios, positions architectural education as a public, accountable, and impactful endeavour that is both scalable and transferable to other contexts. The jury commends this entry for developing an overarching pedagogical vision with strong guiding principles, addressing an entire five-year programme.

FROM AWARENESS TO CO-IMPLEMENTATION
A Staged Pedagogy for Climate Justice, Spatial Justice, and Circular Material Practice in Architectural Education

Architects as Change Agents

VISION & MISSION

- Co-Design for Spatial Justice
- Design for Material Circularity
- Climate Justice & Climate Emergency

YEAR 1 My place in the world

YEAR 2 Learning from this world and place

YEAR 3 A collective vision for this world

YEAR 4 Finding my role as practitioner in the real world

YEAR 5 My professional responsibility towards others in this world

Our vision is to provide a learning environment that fosters critical and independent thinking, encourages ecosystemic accountability, and inspires responsive and responsible problem solving that contributes to the betterment of society and its environment.

Our mission is to offer a rounded education, not just training, in order to produce technically competent graduates with the attributes and skills necessary to flourish in the rapidly changing world of the 21st century: an agile mindset, a holistic perspective, a capacity for critical reflection and complex problem solving, and the ability to envision different possible futures outside of the constraints of current practice, as well as empathy, personal adaptability and emotional intelligence.

Supported By: VUKU TRUSTS, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA, ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA, SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS

Curriculum Alignment:

- UNDERGRADUATE** Bachelor of Science Architecture Year 1-3: Foundational Competencies
- POSTGRADUATE** Bachelor of Architecture Honours Year 4: Matrix of elective studios
- POSTGRADUATE** Master of Architecture (Professional) Year 5: Research-led design

Aligning architectural education with pressing socio-spatial and environmental challenges in the contemporary African city.



CLIMATE JUSTICE AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Climate Adaptation Studio explores architectural responses to the interrelated risks of climate vulnerability and urban resilience, steering an educationally responsible, contextually responsive, and action-oriented design education. The studio challenges students to map climate risk, identify use and fact dissonance, and evaluate adaptation capacity within dense urban environments. The integrative process generates climate narratives that ground design decisions in evidence, ethical consideration, and community realities.

Pedagogically, the studio promotes collaborative inquiry, interdisciplinary engagement, and research-driven design, consistent with the Charter's call for innovation in teaching and learning. Students develop spatial propositions that enhance adaptive capacity, restore, or benefit (such as resource security, or walkability), and negotiate practical implementation challenges with stakeholders.

The studio's outcomes resonate strongly with the UN 2030 SDGs, particularly SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By linking risk diagnosis, climate justice principles, and implementable design strategies, the Climate Adaptation Studio bridges academic inquiry and real-world impact, preparing graduates for future practice that contribute meaningfully to resilient, equitable, and sustainable urban futures.

FLOODING SCENARIOS

- Potential Flooding - 100mm Rise
- Potential Flooding - 200mm Rise
- Potential Flooding - 300mm Rise

TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT

- LOCAL KNOWLEDGE:** SMALL FORMER STRUCTURES, COMBINED HOUSES, TYRE WALLS
- PERMANENCY:** CONCRETE, BRICK, PERMANENCY
- FLEXIBILITY:** PERFORATED BRICK, TOWER CONSTRUCTION, TOWER PERMANENCY

DESIGN FOR DISASSEMBLY AND MATERIAL CIRCULARITY

The Co-Design and Live-Build Studio prioritises design for material circularity as a central pedagogical and ethical response to the environmental and social impacts of the construction sector. Through participatory engagement with community and institutional stakeholders, students investigate how material (recycled, waste stream, and local) building systems shape spatial practice. Circularity is introduced not only as a technical strategy, but as a socio-spatial commitment to reduce, reuse, enable, repair, and extend material value within vulnerable urban contexts.

Students develop proposals grounded in co-designed material audits, disassembly principles, and innovative construction systems, translating these into spatial interventions and prototyping. Live-build exploration, regulatory practice, and construction, constitute a critical component of learning, requiring students to confront feasibility, resource availability, and long-term maintenance. Digital and analogue tools are comparatively tested to support iterative decision-making around material choices and construction logic.

This approach reflects the UNESCO-IUA Charter's emphasis on sustainability, contextual responsiveness, inclusive learning, and public interest design. The studio advances the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). By embedding circular material thinking within participatory practice, the studio prepares graduates to deliver low-impact, equitable, and socially accountable architectural solutions.

2025 STUDIO

"Working in Melusi was about showing up with care and building trust. The COPC Clinic showed us that architecture means nothing without people at its centre. It changed the way we see our role, not just as designers, but as listeners, collaborators, and being part of a bigger story. Being there reminded us that the most meaningful work happens when you connect and create something with others, not for them."

IV. COMMENDED ENTRIES

The Jury further identified the following entries to be commended for their distinctive qualities and merits.

IV.1 Region I: International Workshops Programme, Barcelona School of Architecture (ETSAB), Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC), Barcelona, Spain

Arquitectes de Capçalera: City and Childhood International Workshops

The jury commended this entry for its child-centred approach to inclusive participatory practice, running since 2010 and documented here across 2023 and 2025 workshop editions delivered in Oaxaca, Mexico. The programme's defining contribution is the treatment of children as primary design stakeholders. Children's drawings of their fears, including kidnapping and darkness in public space, were used directly as design evidence, making safety a core requirement rather than an afterthought. The 2023 edition transformed 930 square metres of neglected public space in front of a primary school for approximately 900 euros in local currency, using donated and reclaimed materials. Post-occupancy documentation confirmed the community continued to use, maintain, and care for the space months after students departed. The jury recognised this programme's exceptional depth of contextual responsiveness and its honest, proportionate account of what architectural education can achieve with civic intent and minimal resources. The jury commends this entry for promoting collective responsibility, collective situated inquiry, and built outcomes.

CITY AND CHILDHOOD

2023 edition 1

Children are rarely recognised as active agents in the city. Instead, they are treated as passive subjects for whom adults make decisions. Yet children are a collective that must be listened to and they hold, at least, the same rights as adults, including the right to the city. Even without the

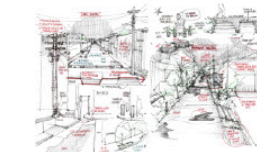
original state

A dirty, underused access space to the school, it had become a car parking area, with vehicles also passing through at excessive speed. At the back, the green wall is the primary school with which we collaborated.



co-diagnosis

Through public space ethnographic observation, translating those observations into drawings, a workshop with children at their primary school issues such as litter, street neglect, accessibility, safety and the lack of a playable space were identified by both the architecture students and the children. Even without the vocabulary to speak about violence in urban space, gender or social inequality, children are fully aware that these realities exist and they sometimes experience them directly.



On the left, when asked "What scares you in the streets?" a 7-year-old student replied, "Being kidnapped." On the right, an 8-year-old draws her fear of darkness in public space. As architects, these drawings are unsettling. They pushed us to treat safety as a core design requirement in the transformation of the street.



co-design

Co-design sessions to agree on the strategies and activities to be carried out over the following days. In this phase, the implementation plan is set out and students are organised into task-based working groups according to what needs to be built: painting, street furniture, planting and maintenance, and other on-site works.



CITY AND CHILDHOOD

2023 edition 2

vocabulary to speak about violence in urban space, gender perspectives or social inequalities, they are fully aware that these realities exist and they sometimes experience them directly. City and Childhood program addresses these issues through mixing international schools of

co-construction

Public space improvements included cleaning and planting trees donated by neighbours. Tasks that did not require heavy tools were carried out by the children, supported by the architecture students, mainly painting and painting. The school community and local residents also joined in as volunteers.



appropriation

The previously unused space became a central place in the neighbourhood, hosting activities such as an open-air film screening and celebrations. Months after the workshops, the community continued to carry out maintenance and small improvements, showing a strong sense of belonging and shared responsibility.



CITY AND CHILDHOOD

2025 edition 3

architecture, local communities, and childhood educational centers, all of them involved in co-diagnosis, co-design, and co-construction of a public space. The workshops shift a neglected area into an active neighbourhood space, with a minimal budget and making the most of reused

original state

We found a public urban space in front of a primary school in a semi-abandoned condition: litter, broken play elements and an overall atmosphere that did not invite children to play.



co-diagnosis

A co-diagnosis was carried out by students from four schools of architecture (three Latin American and one European). Alongside ethnographic observation of the site, the team ran a workshop with the kindergarten teachers and a series of sessions with the children to define what kind of public space they wanted. Through active observation and shared discussion, key needs were identified: better cleanliness and maintenance, more shade, and street furniture that supports social life and everyday meeting.



co-design

A co-design workshop was facilitated by the architecture students, building on the needs identified during co-diagnosis. Alongside repairing the existing play equipment, the group decided to introduce brick-vault arched benches as new street furniture, provide a large shaded area and repair and repaint the existing elements.



CITY AND CHILDHOOD

2025 edition 4

materials. These processes build collective confidence and practical capacity for action through a direct exercise of the right to the city. They lead to the improvement of an urban space and to hands-on learning for architecture students, both in terms of construction and social skills.

co-construction

Multiple activities allowed architecture students to practise hands-on construction skills on site. Children took part in safe, low-risk tasks, while the architecture students handled the more technical work under supervision. Given the minimal budget available, the intervention relied largely on donated and reclaimed materials.



appropriation

The space shifted from being an almost unused area to a recognised meeting place in the neighbourhood. The most important outcome was the change in perception: children began to experience it as a safe, enjoyable place to be.



IV.2 Region II: Faculty of Architecture, MArch in Architecture and Urbanism, Silesian University of Technology, Gliwice, Poland

Project Laboratory: An Interdisciplinary and Circular Approach to Post-Mining Site Regeneration

The jury commended this entry for a rigorous and deeply contextualised approach to post-industrial design education in one of Europe's most pressing territorial transformation contexts: Upper Silesia's decommissioned coal-mining region, navigating the social, environmental, and economic pressures of the European Just Transition. The programme's defining structural innovation is the mandatory Urban and Business Lab, which integrates architecture and economics students into unified project teams to negotiate spatial quality and socio-economic viability simultaneously. Three distinct student roles — Analyst, Mediator, and Visionary — provide multiple legitimate pathways to professional competence. Real clients, including municipal governments and the Mining Property Restructuring Company, ground the work in genuine accountability. Student proposals have been integrated into the Regional Observatory of Transformation Processes policy framework, a concrete demonstration of impact well beyond the studio. The jury commends this entry for facilitating students in becoming agents of change.

Project Laboratory: An Interdisciplinary and Circular Approach to Post-Mining Site Regeneration

Pedagogical Innovation: Research by Design in the Project Laboratory Model

The Pedagogical Innovation: The Urban & Business Lab Model
The Project Laboratory represents a holistic pedagogical approach to post-industrial regeneration, designed as a research-by-design model. This innovative process is designed to equip the next generation of architects with the technical, economic, and collaborative competencies required to navigate the complex reality of post-mining landscapes.

A multidisciplinary synthesis between Design and Economics
The core innovation is the mandatory integration of architecture and economics into a single project team. This synthesis breaks traditional disciplinary silos, creating a unique synthesis between spatial design and socio-economic viability. Within the Urban & Business Lab, students transition from purely formal spatial design to understanding the broader economic and social implications of their work, moving from a purely architectural perspective to a holistic, interdisciplinary one.

Immersion, Fieldwork and "Real" Stakeholder Engagement
The process is anchored in immersion. Students undertake intensive field visits to decommissioned mining sites, integrating direct technical infrastructure, historical industrial sites, and the human scale of decommissioned infrastructure. The Urban & Business Lab involves direct engagement with real stakeholders, including municipal governments, and industrial users, ensuring that the design process is grounded in the real-world challenges of post-industrial regeneration.

Advanced Research by Design Methodology
The studio is structured around intensive research by design, where students use a project charter to define their research objectives. The Urban & Business Lab involves a series of integrated research activities, including fieldwork, data analysis, and the use of advanced digital tools, including parametric modeling and simulation to predict complex urban and economic systems. This high-level research approach allows students to generate a high-quality, data-driven design proposal that is both spatially and economically viable.

Global Reach and Impact Scaling the Model
The methodology transcends the studio into a change agent. The research methodology is being used to inform regional development and policy-making, creating a direct feedback loop between academic research and regional policy. The Urban & Business Lab is being used as a primary engine for socio-economic and architectural research, providing a valuable framework for post-industrial regeneration and urban development. The Urban & Business Lab is being used as a primary engine for socio-economic and architectural research, providing a valuable framework for post-industrial regeneration and urban development.



Project Laboratory: An Interdisciplinary and Circular Approach to Post-Mining Site Regeneration

Project sample 1: GREEN CRAFT MINE - Pokój Coal Mine site, Ruda Śląska, Poland

TECHNOLOGY CENTRE: AN EXHIBITION GALLERY, COURSE, SOCIAL HUB, ROOMS FOR EVENTS, COOPERATION WITH LOCAL TECHNOLOGICAL CENTRE, LABORATORIES, EXHIBITION, THEMED CHILDREN PLATFORM.

SPORTS CENTRE: FITNESS, CYCLES, SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE, DANCE, GYMNASIUM, ARTS, MARIAGE, YOGA.

URBAN LAB: CRAFTS CENTER, CRAFT STUDIO, WORKSHOPS, BICYCLE SERVICE, REPAIRS, LABORATORIES, SCIENCE, ART, HANDICRAFTS, PERFORMANCE.

MULTIFUNCTIONAL WAREHOUSE: COMMUNITY CENTER, MARKET, ART HANDICRAFTS, PERFORMANCE.

INDUSTRIAL PUBLIC SPACE: OPENING, STAGE, COCKTAIL, WAREHOUSE, STREET, MARKET, CAFE, RESTAURANT, PUB, MUSIC CLUB, BAR, STREET.

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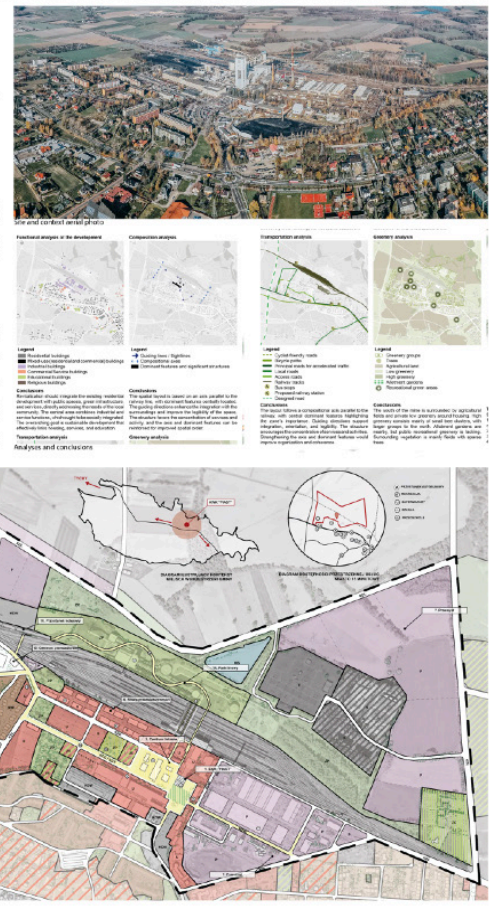
Project Laboratory: An Interdisciplinary and Circular Approach to Post-Mining Site Regeneration

Project sample 2: PIAST MINE in Bieruń Place of Innovation, Adaptation, Society and Technology

The Technical Challenge: The former KWK Piast decommissioned site represents a strategic challenge in urban regeneration, the integration of a massive, multi-dimensional urban site. The site's dominant feature, the PIAST shaft, stands as a symbol of industrial heritage, a challenge to a multifaceted approach to urban regeneration.

Pedagogical Innovation: A Sustainable Research by Design Methodology
The Urban & Business Lab involves a series of integrated research activities, including fieldwork, data analysis, and the use of advanced digital tools, including parametric modeling and simulation to predict complex urban and economic systems. This high-level research approach allows students to generate a high-quality, data-driven design proposal that is both spatially and economically viable.

Global Reach and Impact Scaling the Model
The methodology transcends the studio into a change agent. The research methodology is being used to inform regional development and policy-making, creating a direct feedback loop between academic research and regional policy. The Urban & Business Lab is being used as a primary engine for socio-economic and architectural research, providing a valuable framework for post-industrial regeneration and urban development.



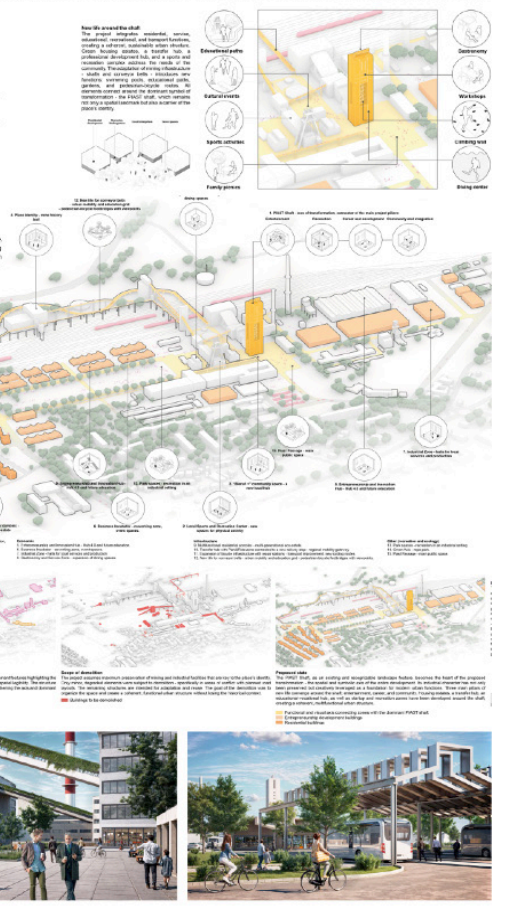
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IV.3 Region III: School of Architecture, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, United States of America

Blind Design Workshop: Advancing Curricular Transformation with Collaborative and Inclusive Pedagogy

The jury commended this entry for a sustained, strengths-focused pedagogical initiative that positions vision-impaired participants as co-designers, critics, and knowledge-holders whose expertise is treated as indispensable to the profession. The annual five-day workshop, running since 2022 in partnership with the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, inverts the visual hierarchy of architectural education by placing tactile, acoustic, and haptic experience at the centre of design inquiry. All participation costs are externally funded, making access unconditional. The programme has generated documented curricular ripple effects across design studios, thesis projects, and school-wide research, including an AI-powered spatial navigation system tested publicly with white-cane and smartphone navigation. The jury recognised this programme as one of the most directly aligned with the principles of active, inclusive pedagogy in this assessment cycle.

BLIND DESIGN WORKSHOP

Research-based education

...you have prepared Virginia Tech students with the skills they need to succeed. Your work to create the Blind Design Workshop has been particularly impactful as it allows individuals with vision impairments to explore careers in design fields and enables your students to better understand the importance of creating accessible and multi-sensory spaces. I commend you for helping your students gain new perspectives and tools that will be beneficial to them in their future endeavors.

– Mark R. Warner, U.S. Senator (VA)

The Blind Design Workshop (BDW) at the Virginia Tech School of Architecture (SoA) challenges traditional architectural pedagogy with a research-driven approach to design education that redefines how we understand and experience the built environment. Organized in collaboration with / supported by the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), the five-day workshop brings together 15+ vision-impaired participants from across the state of Virginia to engage in drawing, model-making, 3D printing, AI-rendering, and sensory-based exploration of architecture. The BDW team, which prepares the workshop's learning program, is led by Dr. Andrew Gipe-Lazarou and 20+ students of architecture and design, with the support of dozens of collaborating faculty practitioners, and community partners (SDG 4, 8, 10, 16)

BDW participants engage in a design project which challenges them to reimagine the accessibility of familiar spaces by prototyping innovative public park. Their work is supported by a variety of multi-sensory learning activities, including interactions with models and tactile diagrams, group discussions, and guided physical model-making exercises (middle), and instruction in emerging design technologies, including 3D printing and artificial intelligence (AI) (right) (SDG 9, 16)

Additional learning activities include expert-led acoustic and tactile tours of spaces on campus (left) and interaction with professional mentors with disability (middle). The workshop culminates in a final presentation, followed by group discussion / critique of individual design proposals led by visiting practitioners (right) (SDG 4, 9, 10)

Implementation of 7 key SDGs:

- 4 Quality Education
- 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth
- 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- 10 Reduced Inequalities
- 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities
- 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- 17 Partnerships for Development

INCLUSIVE LEARNING

Expert-led inquiry

DBVI oversees orientation and mobility training for the BDW's student organizers, training includes **tactile teaching methods and digital aids, disability etiquette, Q+A with vision-impaired mentors, and mobility exercises with a white cane** in and around the School of Architecture (above) (SDG 4, 16)

Vision-impaired performance artist, Devian (DJ) Robinson leads an **immersive dance workshop** in which blindfolded students are challenged to **fasten a deeper understanding of body awareness through the elimination of sight**. Activities include reading their receiving a tactile diagram (left + top, right), together with exercises in echo-location, sound-source identification, and interpretive dance. Upon the conclusion of the workshop, students discuss the experience (bottom, right) (SDG 4, 10, 17)

After an in-class demonstration of mobility devices, Scott (P)nett, founder of the LQD Bios, led an experienced wheelchair user, leads an interactive "roll-about" across campus (top) which **challenges students to use ADA-compliant doors, ramps, and elevators, and non-compliant infrastructure** (bottom) (SDG 4, 9)

As architects, we so often stress the importance of inclusive space-making; we talk about how no two people are alike, and yet we still tend to operate with a very narrow idea of what that actually means. By centering its curricula on the lived experience of individuals with disability, by involving accessibility experts across a range of disciplinary domains, and by refocusing a learning environment which historically prioritizes sight to a greater diversity of perspectives, the Blind Design Workshop is meaningfully contributing to broader, systemic change—helping aspiring architects understand accessible design as a domain, not only of code compliance, but of purpose and creativity.

– Chris Downey, Architect / Founder of "Architecture for the Blind"

RESPONSIVE DESIGN

Community engagement + design-build

I have had the pleasure of working with Dr. Gipe-Lazarou to implement the Blind Design Workshop as a collaboration between the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) and the School of Architecture at Virginia Tech. This workshop provided DBVI students with an opportunity to explore a field generally considered off limits for blind students. DBVI students, parents, and staff have nothing but positive feedback from the Workshops. One mother stated that her son "has never enjoyed anything as much as he did this. He usually feels like an outsider."

– Kathy Malone, Deputy Commissioner of Services (DBVI)

The BDW team supported the creation of / continues to support the VTC's own inclusive design research trajectories: since 2023, the "AI+Accessibility" program has engaged faculty and students in **co-design with community partners to innovate and deploy more innovative accessible building technologies**. The team has deployed organized interviews, hosted focus group sessions, and organized live testing of in-progress technology (above, left). Notably, the team has also innovated a hands-on model-making workshop, modeled on the BDW, to solicit feedback on the use of AI and the accessibility of the built environment and offer professional development credits during international meetings of the National Federation of the Blind (shown above), Secondary Centers for Access (VSA) International Network, and the American Institute of Architects (SDG 9, 16)

In the 2024-25 academic year, the BDW + AI+Accessibility teams (including 15+ students from architecture, computer science, and marketing) supported the co-design of a **navigation system based on live QR-codes and AI-powered spatial descriptions** integrated into floor tiles, handrails (right) and public seating. The work was showcased in an immersive exhibition (middle, left), supported by on-site mobility training by DBVI (left), which gave attendees the opportunity to interact with five re-designed spaces while using a white cane and smartphone app (blindfolded, these included a residential threshold, hospital hallway, retail outlet, sidewalk-crosswalk, and museum (middle, right) selected based on focus group feedback (SDG 4, 9, 11, 17)

Working with the Bluebellie Lodge for the Blind, a nature resort for vision-impaired vacationers in the woodlands of southern Virginia, the BDW team supported the co-design of **building elements to improve the safety, accessibility, and sensory engagement of a newly-planned memory garden space**. 20+ students, alongside with expert or vision-impaired leadership of the Lodge, presenting physical models, tactile drawings, and 11 details (top row), before finalizing a build plan (understand by the students in the summer of 2024), which included trellis walls, Braille handrail additions, and 3D-printed QR-code plaques to convey information about the Lodge (SDG 4, 8, 11, 16)



INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY

Architecture beyond accessibility

As a hard-of-hearing person, I found myself relating to the perspectives [of individuals with vision-impairment] and comparing them to the challenges I experience as a student with a disability. For me, interacting with the blind community wasn't a graniose realization that other senses indeed matter. It, instead, was an opportunity to reflect more broadly on how we can eliminate barriers for people with disabilities entering the profession of architecture, and how valuable the experiential knowledge of people with disabilities is to our understanding of design. There are reasons why disabled architects are statistically invisible in our field. Work needs to start happening now so that the blind community is given a fair chance to succeed. It's only the beginning!

– Matthew Schrage, Architect / Former Student (BDW Student Leader, 22+23)

Student organizers of the 2024 BDW innovated an inclusive workflow, instructing vision-impaired participants in the manual creation of clay tiles, then the 3D scanning and 3D printing of each tile at a smaller scale to be used in the assembly of physical models (top row, left to right). These models were then rendered realistically using AI image generation and presented with a description which was accessible audio via QR code (bottom row). **This workflow inverts the big-to-small scale thinking which conventionally characterizes architectural design and positions the tactile (rather than visual) experience of space at the center of the design process** (SDG 4, 10)

Among the cumulative impacts of the BDW method is a second-year studio project challenging students to design a nature observatory for the blind in dialogue with community partners (SDG 4, 9, 10). Their work evidence: **increased attentiveness to accessible design regulations** (ADA-compliant floor detail, bottom right), **clearer ideas about materiality and part** resulting from the need to maintain the non-visual comprehensibility of drawings shared with vision-impaired partners (top + left), and **more innovative suggestions for multi-sensory details**, like volumetrically-expressive handrails and musical stairs that reinforce proper cane usage (top left) (see the rivets as you ascend)

V. CLOSING STATEMENT

The jury is encouraged by the breadth and ambition of the entries received for this third edition. Across the shortlisted entries, the jury observed a consistent willingness to bridge longstanding divides — between architecture and allied disciplines, between academic institutions and the communities they serve, between conceptual thinking and physical making, and between the campus and its broader urban, regional context, and digital, online learning. The entries offer a compelling spectrum of how architectural education is evolving to confront the complex realities of sustainable development, moving well beyond narrow environmental or technical framings to encompass social justice, civic engagement, heritage, health, and inclusion. Unlike the previous two editions, the jury notes the active participation from Region V-Africa.

The jury notes that the awarded and commended entries span a wide range of pedagogical scales, from individual workshops and studio courses to comprehensive whole-programme transformations. This diversity is a strength of the award, but it also presents challenges for comparative assessment. The jury therefore recommends that future editions of the Award consider introducing two distinct submission categories: one recognising innovation at the level of an individual course or studio, and another recognising systemic innovation across a full programme or curriculum. Such a distinction would allow future juries to evaluate entries more equitably and to give appropriate recognition to the different kinds of ambition and impact that each scale of intervention represents.

The jury further observes that among the six evaluation criteria, Inclusive Learning was the least consistently addressed across submissions in this cycle. While several entries demonstrated exceptional commitment to inclusivity, the criterion as a whole appeared to be either narrowly interpreted or insufficiently evidenced in many entries. The jury encourages future applicants to engage more deeply with the diversity of student learning needs and to document how their programmes create multiple pathways to learning. The jury also suggests that the Award organisers consider providing additional guidance on this criterion to ensure it is fully understood and meaningfully addressed in future submissions. The jury recommends that the Award organisers consider drawing future jury members from the pool of awarded and commended entries, inviting lead academics from recognised programmes to contribute their first-hand expertise to the evaluation of subsequent editions.

The sharing of pedagogical best practices and approaches to situated learning across regions and cultures remains one of the Award's most valuable contributions to the global discourse on architectural education. The jury encourages schools and programmes worldwide to participate in forthcoming editions, not only to seek recognition but to contribute to a growing body of knowledge about what works, what is transferable, and what demands continued experimentation. The exchange of experiences, narratives, and reflections, including candid accounts of what requires further improvement, strengthens the collective capacity of architectural education to respond to the pressing challenges of our time.

This third edition of the Award (2026) is aligned with the UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education (updated July 2023). It reaffirms the central role of architectural education in confronting the societal and environmental challenges facing the built environment, and in articulating the opportunities those challenges create. The breadth of focus areas represented in the entries, from climate action to health, from inclusivity and migration to community development, and from resource efficiency to heritage conservation, confirms that the next generation of architects is being prepared to work across these interconnected domains with creativity, rigour, and ethical commitment.

End of Report
20th March 2026