



**architecture**  
**OTHERWHERE**  
**durban**  
**2014**

XXV International Union of Architects (UIA)  
**World Congress** DURBAN 2014

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Sunday 3<sup>RD</sup> August – Thursday 7<sup>TH</sup> August 2014  
Other Thinking | Other Regions | Other Practice | Other Disciplines | Other Communities

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ARCHITECTURE OTHERWHERE – RESILIENCE, ECOLOGY, VALUES

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## IS ARCHITECTURE SCHOOL REDUNDANT?

A UIA 2014 DURBAN STUDENT DEBATE ON  
ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

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### INTRODUCTION

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#### **Background**

The 25th International Union of Architects World Congress of Architects, UIA 2014 Durban, will be held at the International Convention Centre in Durban from 3-7 August 2014. This is the first time that this Congress is being held in Southern Africa and we are expecting 6000 delegates from around the world.

The International Union of Architects (UIA) organizes a World Congress every three years, and there have been 24 previous UIA Congresses. The UIA is a non-governmental organization accredited by the United Nations, and it represents professional associations of architects in 124 countries, and approximately 1,3 million architects worldwide. The UIA secretariat, located in Paris, is responsible for the Union's management and general administration.

The selection of the Congress host city is made six years in advance. At the UIA 2008 Torino Congress, the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) won the bid to host this triennial World Congress with the support of the national Department of Public Works, barely nine years after SAIA's post-Democracy readmission to the UIA.

The Congress theme is ARCHITECTURE OTHERWHERE, and the intention is to acknowledge the built environment as a major force that can be harnessed towards a better life for all.

In support of this goal, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu has endorsed UIA2014 and generously agreed to become the patron of the Congress.

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### **UIA 2014 Durban**

UIA 2014 Durban is a unique and highly relevant opportunity for South Africa to showcase the development of its built environment in the twenty years since democracy.

Against the backdrop of a diverse and multi-layered city, UIA 2014 Durban invites practitioners, academics, designers, students, thought leaders, activists, artists and communities from all disciplines involved with city making to contribute to a unique debate on architecture, human settlements and the evolution of cities.

The event is intended to be a truly inclusive event bringing together different role players to explore how architects play a pivotal role in addressing social and environmental developments through the Congress sub-themes of Resilience, Ecology and Values.

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## **CONGRESS THEMES**

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### **Congress theme**

Other Thinking | Other Regions | Other Practice | Other Disciplines | Other Communities

UIA 2014 Durban will be unique. The hosting of the congress in South Africa is meaningful at this stage in the country's development when the realization that the spatial realities of the country and its cities need to be closely interrogated in light of values that are key in the post-Apartheid era. The congress will also have significant relevance globally at a time when "business as usual" is being questioned.

ARCHITECTURE OTHERWHERE will celebrate diversity by exploring other communities, other regions, other disciplines, and other ways of thinking about the practice and teaching of architecture.

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### **Sub-themes**

#### **Resilience**

The first UIA 2014 sub-theme is RESILIENCE, which is to be explored through several focus areas: EMERGENCE, POVERTY ALLEVIATION, SPATIAL and GEO-POLITICAL ECONOMIES. Resilience is defined as life strategies developed by communities as well as critical interventions that contribute to poverty alleviation. Concepts of resilience also emphasise the important role of government and government investment towards the re-configuring of the spatial economy to the benefit of all. While some of these subjects will delve into South African problems and solutions, their significance finds voice within all forms of architecture and development practice globally.

This sub-theme allows for inter-disciplinary debates on the roles of all space and place makers in spatial transformation, with an understanding that innovation exists at the interface of different disciplines. A specific focus area will be SUSTAINABLE HUMAN(E) SETTLEMENTS: social and technical considerations in the development of new visions for practice in the built environment.

## Ecology

ECOLOGY encompasses a number of focus areas, which include: TIME, EVOLUTION, SYSTEMS, PROCESSES and ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS. This sub-theme acknowledges the role of the architect in a bigger, interlinked, and systemic network – thus encouraging a long-term design perspective. The consideration of the 4th – temporal – dimension of TIME as part and parcel of the design and decision-making process is crucial to the future practice of architecture. Evolution is intrinsically linked to the concept of time as it considers processes of architectural production which acknowledge people and place – and aims to intervene in the built environment by understanding the built environment as an ecosystem requiring sensitivity to help maintain existing systems in relative states of balance.

This sub-theme will allow for a focus on SUSTAINABILITY, ENERGY-EFFICIENT DESIGN and GREEN BUILDING. It also allows for a focus area on sustainable architecture under conditions of change and concepts of Open Building.

## Values

VALUES is the third and final sub-theme. Here, focus areas include OTHER notions of ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE and EDUCATION. UIA 2014 will explore African practices, related to global practices, as a way to address highly specific developmental problems, question traditional in relation to novel values, establish new relationships to a living planet, and, most importantly, establish a sense of respect through diversity and humility. In addition UIA 2014 intends to organize collaborative interactive education platforms for communities and professionals.

These platforms are meant to re-assess professional values, develop methods and techniques for professional engagement, and interrogate the ethics associated with architectural and design practice. There will also be a particular focus on engaging with INFORMALITY AND URBAN POVERTY THROUGH DESIGN EDUCATION AND PRACTICE.

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# STUDENT PROGRAMME AT UIA 2014 DURBAN

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This year's National Student Congress will be an integral part of UIA 2014 Durban. The Congress has previously drawn audiences of up to 1000 students from around the country and rotates between the South African schools of architecture who host it yearly.

In 2014, the Student Congress becomes a part of the UIA 2014 Congress while maintaining its own identity and being managed by a Student Steering Committee that is constituted of students drawn from the two Durban architecture schools.

The student programme takes in the three sub-themes of the congress and expresses them in uniquely student-centred events running over the three days of the conference. The objective of the UIA 2014 Durban Student Programme is to provide a platform for students from around the world to come together and to share their stories, voice their opinions and learn from each OTHER in a less formal, but equally informative atmosphere, against the backdrop of a uniquely South African city. The student activities also provide opportunity for students to engage with academics and professionals from the built environment, both formally and informally, in the hopes of encouraging inspiring mentorships.

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## THE WORLD CUP OF ARCHITECTURE IS COMING TO DURBAN!

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This is an incredibly exciting time for architectural education and it is, in general, a special time for South Africa in terms of cities, space and design. This 20<sup>th</sup> year of democracy is also the year of Cape Town World Design Capital, a celebration of 20 years of Design Indaba and numerous other small and large events looking into spatial transformation in South Africa. Great synergies are being discovered between the various programmes – and great conversations are being initiated between South Africa's major cities.

This is a unique opportunity for architectural students from around the world to present their own perspectives on the failures and successes of current practice in architectural education and to contribute to charting a new course forward.

**We invite you...**

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## TO DEBATE ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION & CONTRIBUTE TO THE UIA 2014 STUDENT CHARTER ON ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

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### BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Student Debate is to continue the conversation on architectural education already begun by associated institutions globally. Those of particular interest to this conversation include amongst others, the following:

RIBA: *Architectural Education: Global Difference*, 16 September 2011  
The Architectural Review: *The Big Rethink Part 9: Rethinking Architectural Education*,  
28 September 2012, by Peter Buchanan  
3rd International Architectural Education Summit: *New Directions in  
Architecture Education*, Friday 13th September - Saturday 14th September 2013  
Architecture + Design Scotland: *The Big Debate - The Future of Architectural Education*,  
Friday 17 January 2014

The value and relevance of architectural education is becoming increasingly scrutinized in light of pressing socio-economic conditions which demand OTHER ways of engagement and transformation in the way we think about, and practice, architecture. As education shifts are reflecting a need to address economic inequality and social stigma, the very position of architects, their industry and their contribution to vulnerable societies are being weighed and measured. Architectural education would stubbornly resist change to its own detriment and at the risk of it becoming a redundant and inefficient past-time of those socially and financially positioned to take advantage of it. Globally the rules governing how one becomes skilled and work-ready, are changing and architectural education must change with it or risk irrelevance and ultimately, dissolution. The question we ask here, is what does that path look like and in what direction/s should it be going?

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## DEBATE TOPICS

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Students are to select only one topic to debate from the three listed below. Debaters will be chosen on the merit of their statements and assembled into teams of three accordingly. As such, debaters are challenged to work in isolation of their team mates until three days before the event. The Saturday before the debate, team mates will be introduced to each other at a full-day debate workshop in Durban where they will be given an opportunity to coordinate their arguments and formulate a 'game-plan' for the debate. The proceeding questions to each topic are suggestions of factors to considered by authors/debaters in composing the arguments.

### **A. Architecture in an Academic Environment**

Vocational and simultaneously broad with an impact that is as far reaching as it is specialised and necessarily contextual – defining the exact domain of architecture and subsequently architectural education is perplexing at best. From either a Generalist or Specialist perspective, students are to present a *brief* overview of their curriculum, school and studio dynamics/culture and to discuss the components of a valuable architectural education.

*[Images and short films are welcome to give an idea of how the course works in OTHER places in the world]*

How are the subjects taught at your school relevant and irrelevant and how do the supporting systems encourage flexibility of both content and teaching methods?

Substantiate your 'wish list' of the OTHER components of architectural education you feel could benefit the study of architecture.

### **B. Architecture as Practice**

Do we as architectural students substantiate our work on the basis of largely socialist ideals fulfilling a social agenda while later being driven by largely capitalist ideals and the developers bottom line in the 'reality' of practice – thus operating in practice in a different manner to what we have been taught in our studios? From either a Theoretical or Practical perspective discuss the disparities between architectural education and practice.

How does architectural education fall short of preparing students for the reality of practice, thus being unable to fulfill a graduate's expectations and what might be perceived as 'lofty ideals'?

Substantiate with precedents the place of the architect in society and how these disparities threaten or auger that position.

Issues: Theoretical vs. practical; virtual vs. real and developmental vs. community-based approaches to education and practice.

### **C. Architecture as a Catalyst for Socio-Economic Development**

Before studying architecture one may assume the product of an architectural education is an architect. However, through the work of organizations, practices and individuals around the world this notion is being proved inaccurate and limited. Discuss the changing role of architecture and architectural education and the potential architecture has to transform society across all socio-economic groups.

How are architects uniquely placed/educated to add value to society and how far beyond the design of buildings does architecture extend and how far should it?

Substantiate what you think the 'products' of architectural education are and the extent to which architectural education prepares one to operate professionally outside of the confines of architectural design.

### Benefits of participation

- The opportunity to voice your opinions founded on established precedents and/or theories on the shortfalls of current practices in architectural education and what may feasibly be done to improve them.
- Association with a recognized global event with a track record of 75 years
- Inclusion in the official UIA 2014 Congress programme
- Exposure through the UIA 2014 Communications and Marketing campaign to the networks of UIA 2014, its partners and stakeholders and to local and international media
- Being published in the *UIA 2014 Durban Students' Charter on Architectural Education*

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## APPLICATION

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### Call for architectural student participation – a student debate

The intention of the student debate is to:

- Involve architectural students from around the world in UIA 2014 Durban
- Enrich the UIA 2014 student programme content
- Offer students an opportunity to voice their opinions on architectural education as we know it and to suggest an innovative way forward that may challenge the institution in the name of positive and revolutionary progress
- Create international student-led dialogue on architecture, practice and education

### Submission guidelines and format

Students are to submit a 250 word statement describing their stance on one topic only per entrant. The statement should ideally be based on a sound theoretical framework for the argument that is put forward.

Statements will be adjudicated and final debate teams announced. It is suggested that the submitting students consider the following criteria as they are preparing for the debates: theoretical/academic backing for arguments, specific case studies as precedents (schools/courses/academic programmes), examples from practice which may “test” the relevance of current approaches to education.

### Eligibility and process

- The call is restricted to postgraduate architectural students registered for either full-time, part time or distance study at a tertiary institution and to students who have completed their undergraduate degrees and are currently completing their working year-out.
- Entries must be submitted in English – the debate will be conducted in English only.
- The UIA 2014 Durban Organising Committee will not be offering travel, accommodation or registration expenses to participating students. Students must access information on registration on the UIA 2014 Durban website.

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## THE UIA 2014 STUDENT CHARTER ON ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

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### The UIA2014 Student Charter on Architectural Education

The fourth and final session of the debate will include the drawing up of the UIA 2014's (Student) Charter on Architectural Education. The Charter will be drawn up in response to the debate, the research presented and the views expressed by students, academics and practitioners throughout the event.

### Products of the UIA 2014 Student Debate

Debaters' statement documents will be published together with the UIA2014 Student Charter of Architectural Education, as a comprehensive expression of the direction architectural education is and should be taking, as defined by the students of the UIA 2014 Durban Congress.

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## STATEMENT SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Friday 30<sup>th</sup> MAY 2014

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- Statements must be completed and submitted in electronic format to: samrouche@uia2014durban.org
- Emails must use the subject: UIA SSC--Student Debate Statement\_TITLE OF SUBMISSION
- You will receive a confirmation email once the submission is received

### Key Dates

**Friday 30th May** - Deadline for submission of statements

**Tuesday 24th June** - Final debaters announced

**Saturday 2nd August** - Debate teams workshop at the Architecture Department, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

**Wednesday 6th August** - The Student Debate at the ICC, Durban

Congress updates will regularly appear on the UIA2014 Durban homepage at <http://www.uia2014durban.org>

