



## **RESEARCH REPORT**

**City-making Architecture: The processes and practices contributing to the detachment between architecture and cities in South Africa.**

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## **City-making Architecture**

### **Note to External Examiners:**

The present report is part of the research project led by the supervisor of this module. The research report titled *City-making Architecture* is a reflection from within the profession to the practices and processes of architecture that contribute negatively to the city. It aims at answering what we are collectively promoting as good architecture. Where does the urbane fit in these values? A critical look at award systems, social media promotion and values in education strive to start a discussion that can include the urbane as main city-making argument.

The present report was submitted to the 2024 Congress of Architecture, Santiago de Chile, and will be presented during its October conference this year. A conference paper combining the work of students/co-authors Sameeya Moola and Shao-Fei Chiu is the main projected research output.

Should you have any query please contact the Supervisor, [Dario.schoulund@up.ac.za](mailto:Dario.schoulund@up.ac.za).

Regards.

**DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I declare that the mini-dissertation, *City-making Architecture: The processes and practices contributing to the detachment between architecture and the city in South Africa*, which has been submitted in fulfilment of part of the requirements for the module of DIT 801, at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for any degree at the University of Pretoria or any other tertiary institution.

I declare that I obtained the applicable research ethics approval in order to conduct the research that has been described in this dissertation.

I declare that I have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria’s ethic code for researchers and have followed the policy guidelines for responsible research.

Signature: .....

Date: ...28 June 2024.....

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## **City-making Architecture**

### **Abstract**

In the South African context, architecture exhibits two contrasting paradigms: one characterised by an emphasis on aesthetics, signature style and commercial-driven design, and the other marked by a commitment to meaningful city-making strategies. While architecture plays a pivotal role in shaping the identity of post-apartheid cities – providing safety, security, and the opportunities for civic engagement – concerns arise regarding whether the current architectural discourse effectively supports and promotes committed city-making architecture. This study investigates the processes, practices and education contributing to the detachment between architecture and the city in South African, where historical legacies of division continue to influence the urban environment.

The study is carried out through a content analysis of awarded architectural projects, interviews with key role players and surveys. Findings suggest that prevailing architectural practices and values emphasise individualistic, aesthetic, and privatised expressions that often detach from the urban fabric, contributing minimally to addressing urban deficiencies. Consequently, the study concludes that for South African cities to evolve into liveable and functional spaces that reconcile historical divisions, a fundamental shift is necessary in architectural education, promotion, and recognition, towards a value-driven architectural urbanism.

**Key words: city-making architecture, architectural awards, architectural education, post-apartheid identity**

## City-making Architecture

### 1 Introduction and background

In a post-apartheid South Africa, there is a crucial need for architects, urban designers, and city planners to advocate for an architecture that fosters inclusivity, safety, and identity formation. This report aims to define the characteristics of a *post-apartheid city* and the role of city-making or committed architecture. It addresses the pressing issue of current architecture in South Africa, highlighting its minimal and compartmentalised contribution towards city-making strategies.

The significance of promoting meaningful architecture is underscored by several overarching issues plaguing South African cities. Firstly, there is a pervasive lack of identity in cities built on principles and laws of division, resulting in an urban environment devoid of a familiar and relatable heritage. Secondly, safety concerns, particularly for pedestrians, are overpowered by infrastructure prioritising vehicular movement over pedestrian welfare. Moreover, South African cities grapple with a pervasive pandemic of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), with incidents often occurring in public spaces such as public transport nodes, dark alleyways, and secluded street interfaces. Finally, there is a pressing social aspect of urban life that remains unaddressed and underpromoted within current models, the benefit of the convenience, feasibility, and relevance of the city.

#### 1.1 Background

##### What is city-making architecture?

City-making architecture or city-making strategies encompass the role of architecture in constructing, altering, and maintaining the urban environment (Enia and Martella 2019:157). The authors elaborate on the architect's role in city-making, describing them as capable of revitalising a place through deliberate and meticulous interventions. Gehl (2010:32) states that the basic elements of city architecture are *movement space and experience space*, emphasizing that *human mobility and human sense* form the basis for designing cities.

The foundation of city-making architecture is that architects rediscover the human being as the primary protagonist of architecture, using human needs and experiences as the central criterion for their interventions. This approach shifts focus of design in the city from mere objects to the interplay between place and people, prioritising the creation of spaces that resonate with human activities and interactions.

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### **1.2 Research problem**

The study uncovers a seemingly prevalent issue in the current practices, process and education in South Africa, where architectural strategies often fall short in contributing meaningful city-making. It seeks to shed light on the disparity between the idealised image of good architecture held by students and professionals in the architectural discourse and what constitutes good architectural practice. This skewed image is shaped by what is taught, promoted, and awarded within the field, significantly influencing the type of architecture that is realised and its broader impact beyond mere objects. Ultimately, this image defines the trajectory of future city living experiences.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The overarching research question presented is: Why, how and through which processes is architecture limiting itself in contributing towards positive urban transformation?

Sub-questions:

- How can city-making architecture play a pivotal role in creating safer urban environments that will in return make cities in South Africa more viable, accessible, and liveable?
- How can city-making architectural strategies define a post-apartheid identity?

### **1.4 Research objectives**

The study aims to address the research question through an extensive analysis of architectural projects that have received national-level awards in South Africa and through understanding the aspects valued by students undertaking higher-education in architecture. This analysis will discern whether these practices and educational systems actively contribute to enhancing the city environment or if they are detached, prioritise aesthetic, and confined within the private realm. Furthermore, the study will identify key aspects of meaningful and committed architecture as a framework essential for elevating the quality of South African cities.

The research is conducted by examining the processes and practices within the architectural discourse that lead to a detachment from city-making strategies. It aims to understand the discrepancy between what is conventionally perceived as *good architecture* and what constitutes effective and relevant architectural practice. It contends that the most beneficial architecture for creating favourable urban conditions often shifts a focus on aesthetics or signature style in favour of small-scale, low-profile intervention that positively impact the urban environment.

### **1.5 Report structure**

This report follows the structure illustrated in Figure 1. An introduction and background set out the objectives of the report and introduces the research question. A narrated literature review outlines the research topic on a global and South African context, highlighting the relevance of the research. The literature further underscores ground conditions in South African cities as a framework. The research methodology defines the research approach, data collection and data analysis. The results of the findings are illustrated graphically and include photographic examples. This is followed by a discussion, linking the results to the literature findings and precedents, to interpret the results in a manner which is grounded in context.



**Figure 1: Report structure  
(Author 2024)**

### **2 Literature review**

The literature review is structured in four parts and intends to develop a narrated review of relevant sources in response to the research question. The literature review conveys the background to the research and provides rationale for the research in context. Part one reviews the global context relevant to the topic. Part two evaluates literature relevant to the local context in order to determine the importance of the study in a post-apartheid South Africa. Part three develops key theoretical concepts as a framework, through relevant sources in conjunction with the ground conditions of current South African cities. Part four summaries the current condition of cities in South Africa and introduces the architectural award systems as the key lens to evaluate the processes which potentially promotes a disconnect between architecture and the urban environment.

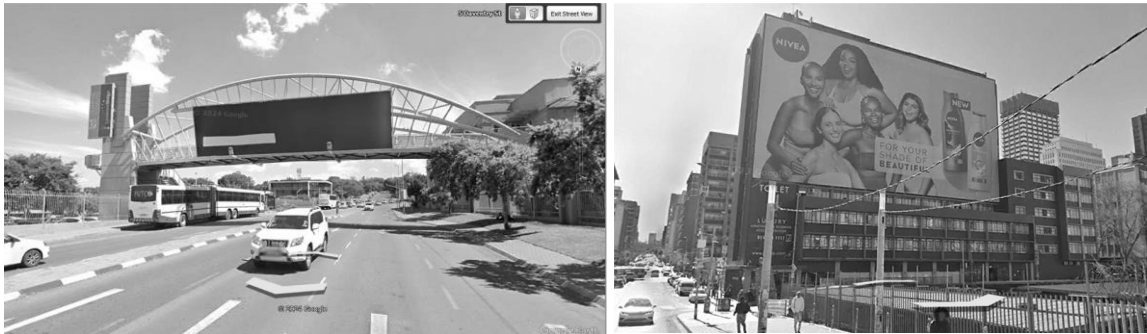
#### **2.1 Global context**

Current urban space production is experiencing a new era defined by globalization, the rise of a network society, socioeconomic polarization, cultural hybridization, and the sustainability crisis (Dear et al 2008). The splintering effect at urban scale takes the form of fragmenting gated precincts, shopping malls, pseudo-public spaces, large selective infrastructures and similar features that are becoming increasingly familiar (Guma et al 2023; Graham and Marvin 2001). In this new urban setting, which is arguably non-urban or sub-urban, architecture struggles to be a meaningful city-making strategy. This pattern of development does not favour compact cities, the mix of uses, life on streets and urbanity by extension. Architecture cannot define public space because the private/public boundary is ruled by control thresholds like parking lots, security checkpoints, walls and defensive devices (Caldeira 1999). The pattern itself limits the role and scope of architecture, instead it favours a mosaic pattern of development: a centreless urban form (Dear and Flutsy 1998), which expands in repetition and where architecture's role becomes circumstantial and functional, but not urban (Figure 2).



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be spatially compelling, and often praised and promoted as good examples of what the profession stands for.



**Figure 3: (left) The architectural language, as in the case of this interesting steel structure, becomes irrelevant. (right) Architecture becomes a support for advertisement, as in this office block in Johannesburg. (Google Earth 2024).**

Gehl (2010:57) argues that *there are good financial, technological and ideological explanations for why the modern cities look the way they do, and why planners and architects in general have become so confused and out of practice in working with the human scale.* There is arguably –and practically- no longer an urban idea to integrate with, just a pattern of development closely related to a business model and to displacement of economic activities (Adaku 2014). It is irrelevant whether a building isolates behind an advertisement banner which perhaps hides a mixture of Tuscan and Gothic styles incoherently mixed in an African city (Figure 3), or if a housing development contributes with blank six-metre-high walls to the street (Figure 4). None of this seems to be architecture's prerogative, because we have accepted contemporary urbanism as the inevitable setting for our projects.



**Figure 4: (left) Good architecture behind walls contribute little to street life, rendering streets as merely circulation conduits (Google Earth 2024). (right) Building a 6m-high wall or a two storey duplex: which one contributes to city-making? (Schoulund 2024)**

2.1.1 The urban ideal

In theory, the aspiring urban idea is well defined: smart, green, sustainable, walkable and compact, world-class and similar catch-phrases which are often used without much specificity. The problem is that this ideal is being pursued within decentralising and fragmenting patterns: the new private *cities* or *precincts* of controlled access. Urbanists have been on the search for an alternative to this urbanism inherited from modernist times, which is hardly urbanism at all (Pope 2021). Depicted in Figure 5 is proof of this search in that urban theory proliferates whenever the boundaries of our cities are in flux (Waterhouse 1999), and so does urban practice: constantly searching for the latest catchphrase and normative position, admittedly with a repair focus.

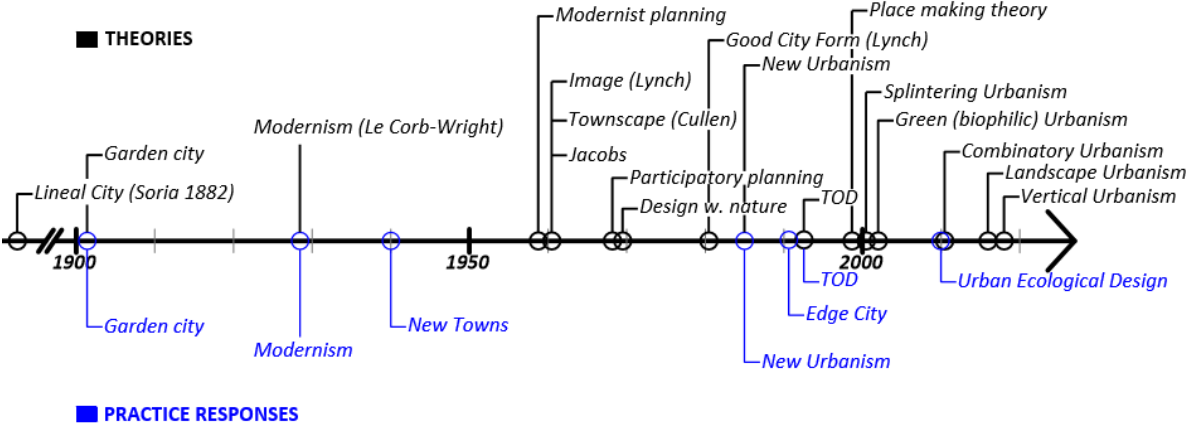


Figure 5: Timeline of main theories and practice responses, proliferating when the boundaries of cities are in flux (Schoulund 2024).

Similarly, architects have been trying to address the issue from a more pragmatic stance. These changes directly affect the geography and constitution of infrastructure, and in turn, end up affected by it; locked in a technological path-dependency (McArthur 2018). Therefore, any attempt to break away from an established pattern not only proves difficult but also practically unrealistic. As such, alternative ideas on urban space and development patterns are seen rather as resistance to the system (Graham and Marvin 2001:388). Against this background, this study seeks to find explanatory logics for this incipient architecture. It does

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so from within the profession and focusing in three areas: what we are praising/valuing, what we are promoting and what we are educating.

### **2.2 South African context**

To understand the significance of urban development and architecture within South Africa's cities, it is imperative to delve into the country's historical context, particularly apartheid and its consequences which continue to shape contemporary urban spaces. The legacy of forced removals and dispossession during apartheid left many scars on the urban fabric (Dauskardt 1993:13). Following the beginning of democracy in 1994, South African cities saw a new era freed from coercive legal constraints of the past (Christopher 1999:301). The dismantling of a governing system that orchestrated the apartheid city, characterised by laws promoting segregation, created hope for a post-apartheid urban reconstruction (Dauskardt 1993:9). Vital to this renewal is the densification aimed at transcending racial divisions of the past, facilitating inclusivity within the cities, and the optimal use of urban infrastructure (Cilliers et al. 2014; Dauskardt 1993).

The segregation caused by apartheid ruling systems placed the poorest of communities in South Africa at far distances from the city, causing spatial injustice by limiting access to the city and urban centres. This spatial arrangement is significant, as placement in the city offers affordable distances from employment and other urban amenities (Dauskardt 1993: 10). There is a growing need for investment into public space and equipping cities with infrastructure and amenities that in turn render urban places desirable. Penfold (2012:993) queries to what extent has South Africa succeeded in claiming a new, bare space that can provide a better future?

Architecture plays a critical role in shaping the identity of a post-apartheid city. It is through the built environment that surrounds us that we find safety and security, a sense of belonging and opportunities for engagement. However, this report raises concerns about whether or not the current state of our cities adequately supports these roles, and whether the current architectural discourse promotes architecture that contributes to meaningful city-making. The research places a heavy emphasis on a shift away from aesthetics, signature style and form, towards architecture that prioritises the human-scale and public interest. Vosloo (2010:41) argues that architecture should also play an active role in shaping national identity and not merely reflect the existing situation.

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### 2.1.2 Why are cities important?

According to Kim (in Landman 2018:56), the quality of cities including streets, squares and public buildings is critical for the well-being of developing communities who often do not have spacious homes and gardens. As urban densification is advocated for its various benefits, improvement of city quality and public spaces is crucial in facilitating this shift. Within South Africa's context, three key themes were identified as fundamental rationales for the significance of city-making architecture:

#### 2.1.2.1 Social significance

Lynch (1996:8) believes that a *vivid and integrated physical setting, capable of producing a sharp image*, serves a significant social role. Residents and users of South African cities are often required to either leave their homes or travel significant distances from their homes, often in villages, into the city to access various facilities. Therefore, it is important that the city evokes a sense of home, *where home is not only familiar but distinctive as well* (Lynch 1996:8). This approach fosters a comfortable everyday experience, encouraging users to stay and engage with the city. Lynch (1998:8) believes that present city environments lack the attributes of relatable surroundings: *the emotional satisfaction, the framework for communication or conceptual organization*.

#### 2.1.2.2 Creating identity

Author Christopher (2019:301) states that *the vast majority of South Africa's urban dwellers will continue to live within the framework established under apartheid for the foreseeable future*. Therefore, it is important that we promote architectural interventions that will *express local identity* (Vosloo 2021:40) within cities that carry the heavy scars of the past.

There is a need to examine questions of identity, define an African heritage and create a sense of belonging in the cities through architecture. Arendt (in Noble 2014:115) believes that this can be achieved through *action, with participation and conversation*. Both authors Vosloo (2010:41) and Penfold (2012:1006) highlight that the hasty transition of South Africa into a new political era failed to address crucial considerations such as cultural traditions and careful analysis of the existing circumstances. This in turn brought *fresh separations – old problems in a new guise* (Penfold 2012:1006).

It is through the creation of an identity in a city that a sense of belonging unfolds, empowering individuals with authorship and ownership over public spaces. This ensures maintenance and care for the city. Through this approach, a safer, more sustainable, and better-quality cityscape

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emerges. Noble (2014:117) believes that *architecture can contribute to the building of public identity through the framing of public space*. By adopting city-making architecture as a design approach, a utilitarian ethos is produced. Encouraging this shift redefines the city, transforming it into functional hubs that serves the needs of its inhabitants.

### **2.1.2.3 Safety**

When addressing the enhancement of cities in South Africa, it becomes crucial to prioritise safety and security within the urban environments. According to South African Police Service crime statistics for the period between April to June 2023, an average of 23.7 crimes were reported daily in the CBD's of Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and Pretoria (BusinessTech 2023). According to Landman (2018:5) *poverty, together with institutional incapacity and growing issues of inadequate service delivery faced by many local councils, is contributing to rising tensions on the ground*.

According to Penfold (2021:999) *high amounts of criminal activities has a profound effect on the use of public space*. In areas plagued by high crime rates, a sense of mistrust amongst residence and users of the city emerges. This mistrust dismantles attempts aimed at fostering better cities and enhancing public spaces. Penfold (2012:1000) argues that the consequences of unsafe environments encourage *a dystopian assortment of segregated private spaces with little sense of community*. This formation of the private-public within the city that are either access-controlled or fenced off, creates spaces that are ineffective, meaningless, and impractical for their intended users - the public. Consequently, the interface between streets and buildings is dominated by imposing brick walls that contribute little to the city's vitality and improvement. Noble (2014:119) contends *that a building may do its bit to construct a public identity, and to build fine architectural public space, but what good is this if the public are excluded*.

Within the broader South African context, GBV presents an alarming concern, both in the domestic settings and in the public realm. According to Penfold (2012:1004) there is a growing trend of women participating in the job market and seeking employment within the city. However, Moffett (in Penfold 2012:1004) believes that the consequence of the display in independence and departure from traditional domestic roles presents a threat to men's dominant role. Where in the past, under the apartheid regime, the roles of women were confined to domestic duties.

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Despite legal advancements granting women greater freedom in public spaces, objections from men often manifest in acts of sexual violence as a means to reassert control (Penfold 2012:1004). Consequently, Penfold argues that as women face risks in claiming their freedom, the pursuit of gender equality often results in restricted access to public spaces.

The prevailing atmosphere of fear and security discourages the use and promotion of public spaces, compelling individuals to retreat to private realms. Landman (2018:43) states that *addressing these fears and the need for safety and security has become a major driver of public space transformation in South African cities*. This underscores the importance of city-making architecture, which should aim to create inclusive and safe urban environments.

## **2.2 Ground conditions**

Cities in South Africa have undergone significant changes and evolution since 1994, often gravitating towards a globalised model. This shift has led to the neglect of traditional public in favour of privatised communal spaces (Landman 2018:4). Consequently, numerous issues have risen, manifesting in contemporary urban spheres. To construct a framework for critiquing urban design practises, the shortcomings evident in South African cities was examined, juxtaposed with approaches advocated by various authors. The following principles outline of good practice in city-making are drawn from Montgomery (1998) and substantiated by the insights of Gehl (2010) and Lynch (1996):

### **2.2.1 Diversity**

Diversity in urban design is a subject of contention, with Gehl (2010:9) enduring the compact nature of the medieval cities for its facilitation of short walking distance, squares and marketplaces. However, the contemporary trend towards a globalised city-making model often prioritises towering skyscrapers and vehicular traffic over pedestrian friendly environments, as seen in Figure 6 below. This shift, as noted by Montgomery (1998:103), contradicts the fundamental essence of urbanity: diversity. Montgomery argues that dense, concentrated cities foster convenience and vitality. Gehl (2010:98) further supports this notion, asserting that the presence of others indicates that a place is good and safe.

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Figure 6: Sandton city from street view (Google Earth 2024).

### 2.2.2 Mixed-Use

Mixed-use development is imperative for fostering activity and opportunity within urban environments. According to Gehl (2010:20) cities require two types of activities: necessary activities, such as school or work; and optional activities such as leisurely strolls along promenades or people-watching from cafés. Montgomery (1998:104) supports this sentiment, asserting that vibrant urban areas must serve more than one primary purpose. By providing activities that cater to different needs and interests, cities not only fulfil essential requirements but entice residents and visitors to linger. Figure 8 illustrates the consequences of opposing this form of development. The example shows an education facility creating a vibrant atmosphere in the city during operational hours (Figure 7). However, it also inadvertently creates a deserted and unsafe environment on the adjacent sidewalk after hours (Figure 8). Montgomery (1998:100) advocates for cities that encourage pubs, cafés, and restaurants to use, where appropriate, the pavement spaces outside their establishments. By adopting this method and the implementation of mixed-use development, the concept of *eyes on the street* is established, fostering a sense of security in the city through natural surveillance.



**Figure 7: Street entrance of education facility in Pretoria CBD (Author 2024).**



**Figure 8: Street entrance of educational facility in Pretoria CBD after operational hours (Author 2024).**

### ***2.2.3 Adaptability***

Adaptability is a crucial consideration in urban design and planning. Montgomery (1998:106) emphasises that life of streets and urban areas is longer than the life of individual buildings, while the life of buildings is longer than the life of their original function (Figure 9). This concept holds particular significance in the context of South Africa, where colonial-era architecture and planning still dictates many urban areas. Embracing adaptability and promoting adaptive reuse emerges as a viable strategy for reshaping cities. Gehl (2010:16) further underscores this point, suggesting that even minor renovations or changes in details can catalyse entirely new patterns of use, illustrating the potential for dynamic urban evolution.

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**Figure 9: (left and right) View of derelict buildings in Pretoria CBD (Author 2024).**

### **2.2.4 Human scale**

The concept of scale, according to Montgomery (1998:106), is a combination of the ratio of building height to street width, relative distance, permeability and the sense of grandeur or intimacy of space. Gehl (2010:17) emphasizes the crucial role of scale in fostering pedestrian activity and engagement within urban environments - emphasizing the needs to align city-making with human dimensions.

Designing cities should place the human scale as a foundation principle, as advocated by (Gehl 2010:33), by acknowledging the biological basis of human activities, behaviours, and interactions in urban settings. This approach cultivates spaces that are inviting, relatable, and instilled with warmth; contrasting with the often-alienating environments created by prioritising vehicular traffic in cities.

As a result of societal, economic, and technological developments, Gehl (2010:56) observes a shift toward stand-alone buildings on an unprecedented scale. This results in ground-level spaces that feel unwelcoming, unsafe, and impersonal. Figure 10 and 11 depicts the resulting intimidating urban environment created when little consideration is given to the human dimension in relation to building height and sidewalk width. To counteract this, Gehl (2010:59) suggests a focus on building cities at eye height with tall buildings rising above the beautiful lower stories, thereby enhancing the human experience within the urban environment.



Figure 10: Tshwane House, Pretoria CBD rear view from street (Author 2024).



Figure 11: Front view of Tshwane House, Pretoria CBD (Google Earth 2024).

### 2.2.5 Interface and edges

The interplay between buildings and streets, referred to as edge, hold significant importance in urban design, according to authors Gehl (2010) and Lynch (1996). Gehl (2010:75) the lower floors of buildings, constituting the city's edge, *has a decisive influence on life in city space*. Lynch (1996:31) further asserts that it is the activities unfolding along these edges that imprint lasting memories of places. When edges are well-crafted, they reinforce the vibrancy of urban existence.

The interface between street and building, not only defines a city's identity but also shapes spatial experiences. Gehl (2010:77) highlights that where ground floor conditions are monotonous and closed-off, devoid of interaction with the city, experiences tend to feel unsafe, elongated, and lacking vitality. This is particularly pertinent in the South African context, where safety concerns inform architectural design choices in urban areas.

Activating building edges and enhancing ground floor conditions can contribute to a safer environment through increased visibility and passive surveillance. Contrasting the experience of walking past a bricked-up ground floor interface with one featuring windows offering eyes on the street. Figure 12 demonstrates this phenomenon: the residence to the right is isolated

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from the street, while the adjacent residence features openings in its façade, contributing towards a safer and more welcoming environment. Gehl (2010:150) underscores the importance of providing a *wide spectrum of visual experience* in the street-building interface. The thoughtful design of city edges not only enrich urban experiences but also plays a crucial role in fostering safety and vitality within the cityscape.



**Figure 12: Residential block in De Waterkant, Cape Town showing a SAIA awarded residence to the right isolated from the street in comparison to the adjacent residences featuring openings in its façade (Author 2024).**

### ***2.2.6 Steet conditions and pedestrian movement***

Ensuring vibrant streets that cater to diverse activities and pedestrian movement is imperative for fostering a thriving urban environment, as highlighted by Montgomery (1998:109). This necessitates creating safe street conditions, well-defined pathways, and an atmosphere of liveliness to encourage increased foot traffic within the city. However, Gehl (2010:91) observes a concerning decline in conditions for pedestrians and cyclist. This trend is evident in areas such as the Pretoria CBD (Figure 13) where roads and sidewalks are often dominated by vehicle traffic, particularly taxis, resulting in unsafe environments for pedestrian attempting to cross the road or navigate the sidewalks to get to their destination.

Gehl and Gemozoe (in Landman 2018:49) support this sentiment, asserting that when physical space is encroached upon by traffic, it paves the way for a cascade of negative consequences,

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including litter, noise pollution, and visual clutter. This ultimately leads to the degradation of the urban fabric. Sidewalk, essential for pedestrian movement, have been narrowed due to the prioritisation of elements such as signage, bollards, and streetlamps.

The quality of pedestrian routes needs to be enhanced by street patterns, the design of space, intricate details, and immersive experiences (Gehl 2010:129), ultimately creating environments that are not only functional but also enjoyable to transverse. Montgomery (1998:109) emphasizes the importance of infusing streets with a *sense of belonging, familiarity, and the respect for users* as guiding principles in the design process.



**Figure 13: View of a street intersection in Pretoria CBD showing the domination of vehicles and unsafe crossing for pedestrians (Google Earth 2024).**

## 2.3 Importance of ground conditions

### 2.3.1 Summary

The outlined principles serve as a framework absent in many South African cities. While various factors impact urban conditions, these guiding elements offer a pathway to enhance city life with minimal intervention. Architects, in crafting buildings, should embrace these principles as foundations for achieving city-making architecture. This approach, as highlighted by Gehl (2010:198), necessitates a seamless integration of life, space, and structure in cities.

Central to city-making architecture is a profound understanding of place, intricately linked to context, existing conditions, and community needs. Crime and fear have catalysed a retreat from the public realm, fostering a proliferation of shopping malls and gated developments. However, by holistically considering the city scape and prioritising elements conducive to user

## **City-making Architecture**

safety and enjoyment, we can refine urban spaces and infuse them with vitality. Based on the literature reviewed, a significant gap is evident: current architectural practices and precedents in the South African context exhibit a detachment from their urban surroundings. This disconnect leads to environments that are unsafe and fail to define a progressive post-apartheid city.

### **2.3.2 Award systems**

To address the research question regarding architecture's detachment from its urban dimension, the study will explore the types of architecture promoted and encouraged in South Africa, through the lens of current award systems. The aim is to assess to which extent these awards promote -purposely or not- an idealised form of architecture, using the identified elements lacking in our city as a benchmark.

The choice of award systems as a method is justified by their reflection of perceived good practices and values within the field. However, as noted by Simmons (2019), there is criticism that these systems often prioritise aesthetics over quality design, resulting in buildings that do not adequately serve users or contribute to their context. Therefore, there is a need for continuous reassessment of award criteria to ensure relevance to the current time and context, as discussed by Willis (2017).

Willis (2017) also questions the significance of architectural award systems and whether they truly matter in the broader context. Award-winning buildings become exemplars within the field, shaping perceptions of success and responsible practice. However, it is essential to examine whether these buildings, beyond their aesthetic appeal, positively influence both users and their surroundings.

#### **2.3.2.1 SAIA Awards**

The South African Institute of Architecture (SAIA) awards will serve as the focus of the study, as it showcases the best architectural works from each region in South Africa. An interview with a key member of SAIA provided information of the workings and process of the award system. Sgoutas, as cited in ArchSA (2018:2), believes the SAIA Awards tells the story of changing architectural concerns, a changing physical and social context, relations to the international community, and leading theories and thought processes. Sgoutas criticises the SAIA awards in 2008 for bestowing majority of awards to residential projects. He further contends that there is a notable absence of examples showcasing community architecture, housing for the poor, as well as significant government and administrative buildings. Sgoutas

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critiques the awards for their lack of representation across the entire spectrum of building activity in South Africa. Kotze (in ArchSA 2018:2) claims that a longer-term view over all the awards concurs with Sgoutas statement and believes that not much has changed in the preceding 10 years of awards.

The awards are conducted biennially in two stages. Stage one is the Regional Awards for architectural projects by the various regional institutions affiliated to SAIA (Van der Merwe 2024). The Regional Awards are for projects completed within a particular period, generally over the preceding two years (SAIA 2010). Stage two is the National Awards, providing a comprehensive overview of architectural excellence across the country. The projects that receive an *Award of Architecture* on regional level are eligible to receive further assessing by the national panel of assessors (SAIA 2010).

#### **2.3.2.2 SAIA Awards panel**

According to Van der Merwe (2024), the panel is paramount to the awards, as ultimately there is a reliance on the insight, experience and wisdom of the jurors on the panel. There are often lots of discussions and debates surrounding the merit of projects, however with little discrepancies. The national panel of assessors consists of the following: the president of SAIA, an academic in the architecture field, a prominent member of the profession, an eminent person and a representative of the sponsor (SAIA 2010).

#### **2.3.2.3 SAIA Awards criteria**

According to SAIA (n.d.), the overall consideration for adjudications is first to take into account sustainability in the context of South Africa (referring to site, social and cultural contributions), environment, finance and technology. These considerations are also relevant for the regional context, where entries should contribute to their immediate society, environment and the profession as a whole. Secondly, a shift in an approach towards consideration of the process of *making architecture* should be given prominence over product. Thirdly, the architecture needs to promote the discourse and values thereof. The overarching theme of municipality is adopted and enacted in a multilayer approach where the process is assessed based on the degree to which it is sustainable, humane, and inclusionary.

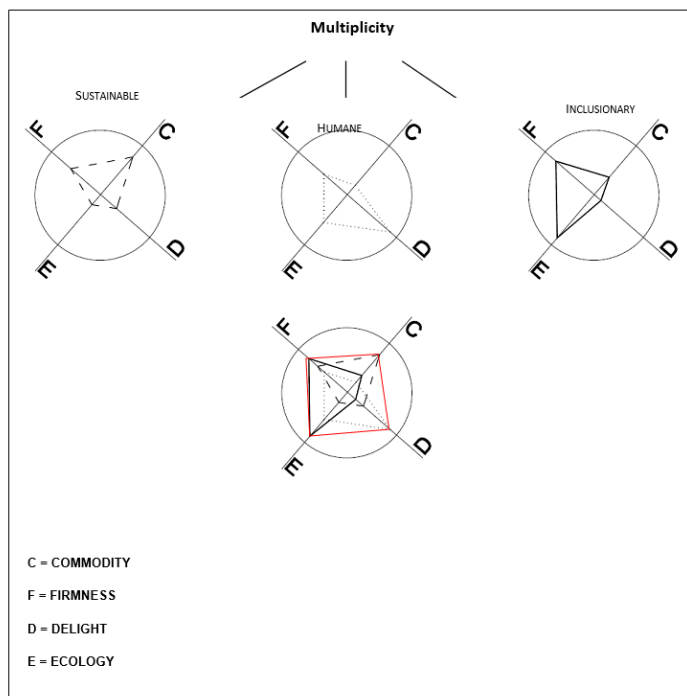
Four overarching criteria is adopted for consideration in the adjudication of projects. This entails the augmentation of the Vitruvius three principles and the addition of a fourth (Van der Merwe 2024). The criteria is as follows:

- Commodity - The planning and operational functions.

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- Firmness - The quality of the project, construction and technology used. As well as adherence to building regulations.
- Delight - Both physical and social aspects of the context, including sustainability approaches.
- Ecology - Considers financial sustainability, skills and resource availability and proximity.

These principles are graphically overlaid as indicated in Figure 14. The spokes of the graphics are graded in ascension from the centre along the radial spoke assigned. The larger and more regular the resultant shape is, the more meritorious the entry (SAIA n.d.). Depending on the project and scale, the spokes shift to what is more valuable in that project's context as a means to cater for the different kinds of scopes of architectural projects (Van der Merwe 2024).



**Figure 14: Diagram of overlaying of criteria principles for the SAIA awards (SAIA n.d.).**

The criteria, according to Van der Merwe (2024), is a representation of the changes in *society's values, morals and basics*. A judgment is made not just on the end-product but the contextual factors, constraints, opportunities, challenges and how they were overcome, and maximising full potential of the project. Emphasis is placed on regional identity, focusing on the fact that projects are South Africa, rooting in its urbanisms and taking into consideration sustainability. Van der Merwe (2024) further claims that buildings in the 1940s to 1970s did not concern

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themselves with the factors taken into account today. Where in the past the focus was on beautiful objects, the values today have shifted. Careful considerations are given to the ideals, concepts, values and technology promoted in the discourse. The buildings indicate current values and values of the future. The reason these awards exist, according to Van der Merwe (2024), is not to reward excellent architecture, but also promote architecture.

### **2.3.2.4 SAIA Award structure**

The SAIA Awards are divided into three tiers (SAIA n.d.):

- Awards of Excellence – projects with an average of 90+%
- Awards of Merit - projects with an average of 80+%
- Awards of Architecture (Commendations) - projects with an average of 70+%

### **2.3.2.5 SAIA Awards categories**

According to Van der Merwe (2024) one award is given to projects per category and categories can be subdivided. However, there is no limited to the number of projects that receive Commendations in each category. Additionally, according to SAIA (2010) *the national panel of assessors may recommend that no award be made or that one or more awards be made.*

The project categories applicable to the SAIA Awards are the following (PIA 2023):

1. Public Architecture
2. Educational Architecture
3. Residential Architecture (New Houses)
4. Residential Architecture (Additions and Alterations)
5. Residential Architecture (Multiple Housing)
6. Commercial Architecture or Brand Related Architecture
7. Commercial Architecture (Alterations and Additions)
8. Heritage
9. Interior Architecture
10. Urban Design (Built)
11. Small Project Architecture
12. Sustainable Architecture

### **2.3.2.6 SAIA Awards urban considerations**

In terms of urban considerations by the Regional and National Award systems, Van der Merwe (2024) states that context has to be accounted for and the relationship between building and context. A judgement is made regarding how the building enhances the context and contributes

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to the country's urbanity towards a people-centric city. The graphical overlay of the four principles shifts according to the locality of the project, the regional and immediate context. In essence, urban considerations are minimal and context dependant.

### 3 Research methodology

#### 3.1 Research Paradigm

The research follows a pragmatic paradigm which emphasises relevance, seeks to solve problems in the real world and improve human conditions. This paradigm advocates the use of mixed methods to understand human behaviour (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017:35). According to Kaushik and Walsh (2019:3) pragmatism is the belief that reality is not static—it changes at every turn of events.

#### 3.2 Research Approach

The research approach is a mixed method methodology, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research method. A mixed method does not only collect and analyse both kinds of data, qualitative and quantitative, it also involves the use of both approaches together to strengthen the study so that it is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research. This method was chosen as it extends beyond combining quantitative and qualitative data, it *includes techniques, methods, approaches, and concepts into a single study* (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie in Yin 2006:41). In the case of this report, the research conducted is qualitative in the selection and appraisal of data collected and is analysed quantitatively. It is important to consider the aspect of pragmatism that is a part of the researcher's Worldview, this influences the manner in which data is handled (Kaushik and Walsh 2019:6).

#### 3.3 Research Design

The research design of this report features case studies and surveys. This consists of in-depth reviews of 122 architectural projects that were granted national prizes through the SAIA Awards for architecture, as the primary focus. The surveys consisted of a voluntary questionnaire distributed across students in the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria.

##### 3.3.1 Case studies

A case study design approach was appropriate due to how rigorous and sharp the design is constructed, which ultimately determines the efficacy, reliability and validity of the outcome (Priya 2020). The case study is explanatory (Yin in Priya 2020), as the primary focus is to explain *how* architecture detaches itself from its urban dimension.

##### 3.3.2 Surveys

Surveys were used to compliment the data from secondary sources (case studies). According to Du Toit (in Silva 2017:66) surveys are typically associated with *basic research, theoretical aims, description, positivism and a quantitative approach with primary data*. Surveys were

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appropriate for the report due to its uniqueness of gathering information and unbiased representation of population interest (Owens 2002). The core logic of surveys is *generalisation, casual attribution and prediction* about groups of people (Du Toit in Silva 2017).

### **3.4 Study area**

The architectural projects studied are located across all nine regions in South Africa. The study area for surveys was the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

### **3.5 Data collection**

#### **3.5.1 Criteria**

A criteria was developed in order to examine awarded architectural projects in South Africa (Figure 15). This criteria was developed based on aspects of public spaces, urban spaces and architecture, and through a literature review of several sources. The goal of this criteria is to unveil the urban dimension of architecture – how it contributes to the city.

The criteria is structured under four main categories. Under each category is a list of 8-11 items which require binary inputs. The criteria consist of the following categories:

##### **3.5.1.1 Urban practices**

Urban practices as a category refers to the contextual environment within which a building is situated. According to Gehl (2010:98), in today's time, the urban realm is defined by *collections of random, spectacular stand-alone buildings between parking lots and large roads*.

The first urban practice principle that will be examined is the publicness of the projects and environments, this principle categorises projects into public, private or private-public. Publicness, according to Carr et al. (in Landman 2018:2), refers to spaces and activities that are *publicly accessible*. The activities taking place within these spaces are often overlapping functionally (Madanipour in Landman 2018:2). It is believed that public spaces form the foundation of well-functioning and healthy cities by allowing a diversity of uses and users (Landman 2018:37). Private spaces are described as space and/or buildings that is owned and maintained by an individual or institution (Allies n.d.). Private-public spaces refer to the privatisation of public spaces. According to Mandipour (in Landman 2018:94), access to these spaces have been limited, narrowing the range of social groups allowed to use these spaces, making it only accessible to selected and small groups of people.

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Project locality is considered under urban practices. This refers to the type of urban setting these projects are located within. This entails office and industrial parks, mixed-use precincts, residential estates or complexes, individual plots or stands, and apartments or units. These categories are defined in conjunction with the project categories of the SAIA Awards.

### **3.5.1.2 Architecture**

The next criteria under which projects are examined is architectural practices. This entails determining the context of the project under urban, suburban, rural, or natural settings. This determines how many projects have potentials to contribute to the larger urban dimension, be it in a rural setting. However, those in natural settings, isolated from an immediate context, have little to no potentials for contribution.

Examined additionally is the primary use of the project or building, which includes residential, commercial, educational, industrial, religious institutions and museums etc. The category of mixed-use is also included for spaces and buildings which are not limited to a primary use, but rather varies in uses. Mixed-use can include shops, restaurants and cafés, offices and studios, and dwellings (Montgomery 1998:104). The author further claims that successful places, despite economic, technologic, and cultural changes, do so due to their built form being of mixed nature and highly adaptable. This category can contribute largely to city-making architecture. Thus, additionally under building use, the sub-categories of holistic functions and adaptive reuse are included for architecture that goes beyond a mono-functional nature.

Lastly under architecture, the scale of buildings is considered. This categorises projects as either having a small or a large scale. Scale refers to the proportion of the size of the building in relation to its surroundings and the human dimension. With small scaled being the most desirable of the two options. Working with a small scale, according to Gehl (2010:195), is *key to ensuring better conditions for the human dimension*. According to the author, the consideration of scale is important in creating enticing environment for users that encourages staying.

### **3.5.1.3 Image**

Imagery refers to the characteristics and features that make a building or structural element notable or identifiable (Eicher 2021). These characteristics include a combination of elements such as form, aesthetics, building materials and technology. According to Lynch (in Montgomery 1998), imageability of the urban environment is determined by the extent to which components of that environment makes a strong impression on the individual. Imagery as a

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criteria is considered in relation to the general context in which the projects sit, whether the image is memorable or blended into its context. A consideration is given to the implementation of vernacular, novel, commodified and global architecture. Imagery also considers the architects' signature style and whether this has been implemented in the project.

### **3.5.1.4 City-making**

Elements that will form the criteria for city-making include architectural language, interface and uses. In combination, these elements relate to the contribution projects make towards the greater urban dimension in providing eyes on the street, active interfaces, and programmes beyond mono-functionality.

Architectural language refers to the contribution of the building, specifically the façade, to the city. Gehl (2010:81) states that *transparent, welcoming and active façades give city space a fine human scale just where it means most: up close and at eye level*. By opposing the tendency towards covering facades with advertisement and large billboards, an opportunity is presented for architecture to directly contribute by considering material choice and placement of openings, in conjunction with programmatic choices.

Interface as criteria considers whether projects have an interface present, and whether these interfaces are active, articulated, accessible and welcoming to the street. The role of the interface between building and street, where private and public meet, allows for dominant barriers to become seams in which two areas are sewn together (Lynch 1996:56). According to Gehl (2010:75,82), this zone is vital to the quality and vitality of surrounding urban area as it defines space, allows for exchange, and has the potential to become a staying zone when well considered. Alexander (in Gehl 2010:88) summarises the importance of the interface or edge by stating that if it fails, the space never becomes lively.

Under the city-making category, uses determines the potential for projects to provide further than their primary functions as a contribution to the greater context. In this section, time in relation to use is considered in determining the potential to activate its surroundings beyond typical operational hours.

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Urban Practices	Architecture	Image	City-making
type	physical	Building image	Architecture language
private/public/privatised-public	Geo location	memorable/blended in	transparent/ secluded
Masterplan development	Context (urban/semi/rural/natural)	novel	advertising/billboard
Office / Industrial park	Use	commodified	interactive/eyes on street
Mixed-use precinct	Size	signature	Interface
Estate/complex	Immediate context	vernacular	Interface
Individual plot/stand	Grounded/floating	global/contextual	active/closed
Unit/apartment	Building conditions (good regular)	technological	building as interface
	Function	beyond building	accessible/welcoming
	Mixed-use building		articulated
	Adaptive reuse		Uses
	Scale		leisure/work/consume
			day/evening use

Figure 15: Sample of criteria list (Author 2024).

### 3.5.2 Case studies

The sample size for which research was conducted consisted of 122 projects over a period of ten years. The SAIA awards are held biennially, which amounts to a five-year award cycle. In order to achieve a large sample group, projects awarded in all categories were selected, this includes Awards of Excellence, Awards of Merit and Commendations.

Data collection was conducted through a content analysis of projects in South Africa that have received awards between 2013-2022. The content of these projects was acquired through desktop studies to understand the architectural language, design intentions, use, location and contributions to context. This information was plotted into the criteria list, using a binary method, for each project using MS Excel.

Additionally, data was collected by conducting interviews with key role players in the South African architectural awards systems. Interviews were held in person and recorded with consent of the interviewee. Interview questions were based on the architectural award systems in South Africa and the working thereof. Questions were approved by the research supervisor prior to the interview (Appendix A).

### 3.5.3 Surveys

The surveys consisted of an A4 printed questionnaire (Appendix B) distributed across 350 students, from the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year (undergraduate), 4<sup>th</sup> year (Honours) and 5<sup>th</sup> year (Masters). The questionnaires were anonymous and voluntary and consisted of four questions:

1. What are the characteristics of good architecture in your opinion?

## **City-making Architecture**

2. Whose work of architecture do you consider relevant?
3. In which type of architectural project or typology would you like to work?
4. Which additional/parallel studies do you consider beneficial to your formation as architect?

The expected return rate was at least 60%. The actual return rate was 73%, described as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> year: 63 surveys (69% of 91 students), 2<sup>nd</sup> year: 62 surveys, 3<sup>rd</sup> year 57 surveys (53% of 106), 4<sup>th</sup> year: 47 surveys (95% of 49) and 5<sup>th</sup> year: 27 surveys (84% of 32). The questions were answered with anything from two to five concepts.

## **3.6 Data analysis**

### **3.6.1 Case studies**

Data was analysed quantitatively using MS Excel. Binary inputs were quantified into graphical representation, first per year of awarded projects and thereafter as a collective whole. Data analysis was conducted for each main category of the criteria. This method of analysis was adopted to establish patterns and trends of the award systems to understand the type of architecture being promoted on a national level.

### **3.6.2 Surveys**

The answers of the surveys were deductively coded in MS Excel using a proportional scale across all five years of studies. Key concepts and hits were compiled and represented in time-based color-coded charts. The study focused on the evolution of concepts along the formation of students and how the concepts relevant to this work (analytical framework) are present (directly or indirectly), or whether they develop over time or not.

## **3.7 Ethics considerations**

This study falls under the Ethical clearance EBIT/236/2020 of the University of Pretoria (Appendix C). Additionally, interviewees were given a consent form to be signed before interviews can take place (Appendix D). The photographs taken of examples were captured from public spaces at all times, which is permitted by law. In all instances, vehicle registrations and people's facial features were blurred.

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### 4 Results

#### 4.1 Case studies

The results shown below for case studies are grouped into the four overarching categories for consideration of these project's contribution towards meaningful architecture. The results are depicted in graphical form, either as trends over the five-year award cycle or as a collective whole. Images of examples of points highlighted are shown using SAIA awarded projects.

##### 4.1.1 Urban Practices

Of the 122 projects, 61% are contained within the private realm. Public projects account for only 21% of all projects awarded. While 18% of projects are of private-public nature – public but access-controlled or fenced off.

Analysing the trends of publicness over the five-year award cycle (Figure 16) reveals that there has been a general increase in the number of private-public projects awarded. Overall, there is a notable preference for private projects over public ones. In the later years of the cycle, there is a discernible rise in the awarding of private-public projects compared to earlier years.

This trend is exemplified by the 2021-2022 awarded Westbury Transformation and Development Centre located in Johannesburg (Figure 18), where the intended public space, featuring seating and lighting, has been enclosed by fencing. In contrast, in the earlier years of the award cycle, projects such as the 2013-2014 awarded Helenvale Multipurpose Community Centre in Port Elizabeth (Figure 17) include open public spaces with seating, children's play areas, and shade – all accessible for public use.

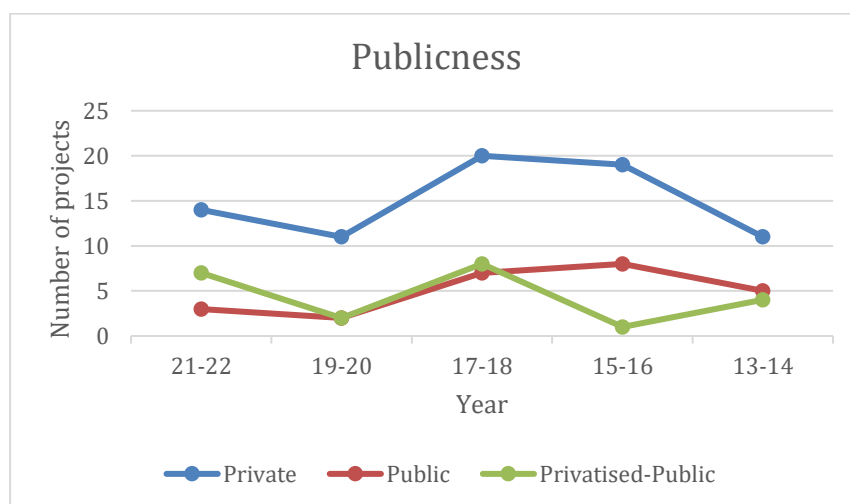


Figure 16: Trends of the level of Publicness of awarded projects over the five-year cycle (Author 2024).

## City-making Architecture



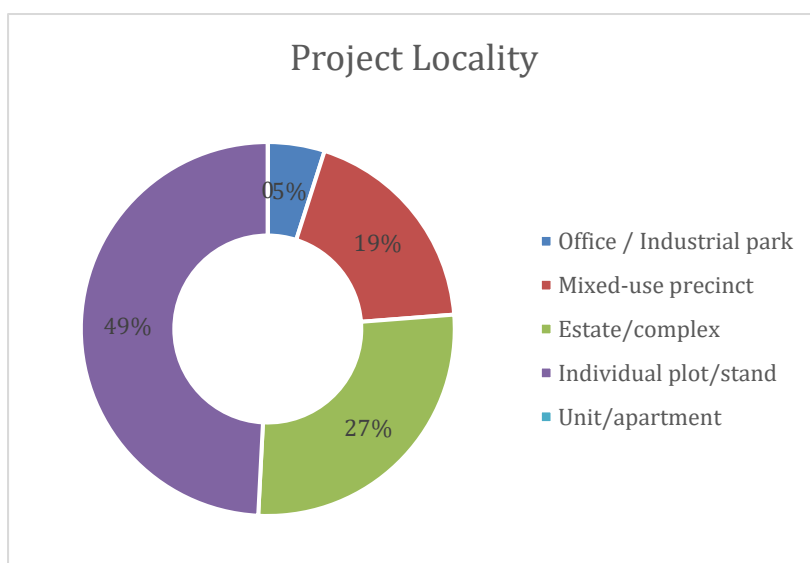
**Figure 17: Public seating and children's play area at the Helenvale Multipurpose Community Centre in Port Elizabeth (The Matrix n.d.).**



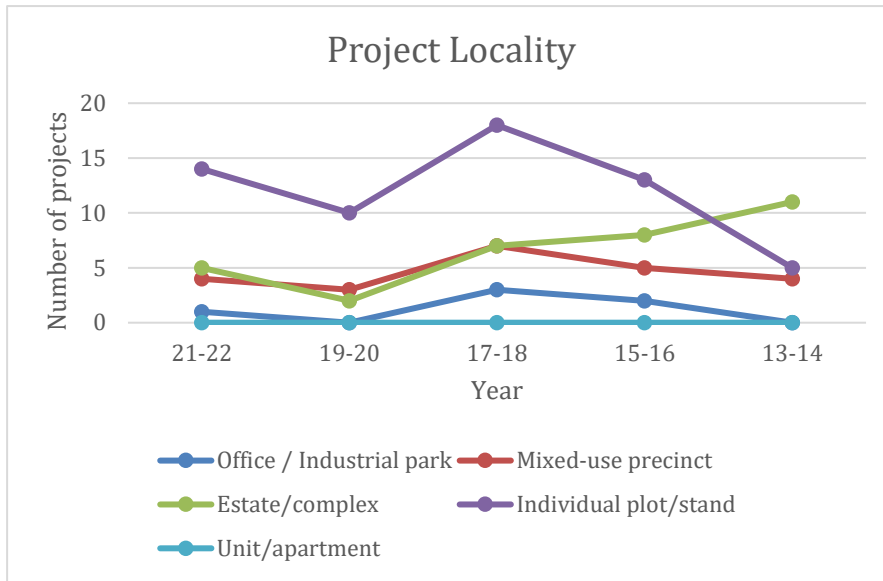
**Figure 18: Fenced public space at the Westbury Transformation & Development Centre in Johannesburg (Takgalang Consulting n.d.).**

Figure 19 depicts the type of environments in which the projects are located. Nearly half (49%) of awarded projects are in individualistic, stand-alone environments, with majority not situated in urban areas. Additionally, 27% of awarded projects are located in estates or complex environments that are access-controlled and/or fenced off. Similarly, 5% of projects are in office or industrial park complexes that are also access-controlled and/or fenced off. While only 19% of the projects are within urban mixed-use precinct environments.

Figure 20 plots the trends of the urban environment of projects. Since the 2013-2014 period, awards for projects on individual plots or stands have consistently been at a higher rate than other types of urban environments, with estates and complexes following closely behind. There was an increase in mixed-use precinct projects between 2013-2014 and 2017-2018, but this trend declined after the 2017-2018 period.



**Figure 19: Percentages of Project Locality (Author 2024)**



**Figure 20: Trends of Project Locality over the five-year award cycle (Author 2024).**

#### 4.1.2 Architecture

In terms of the architectural practices present in the projects, Figure 21 illustrates the context of the awarded projects. 44% of projects are located in suburban areas, 29% in urban settings and 20% in natural environments. Over the five-year cycle, projects in suburban contexts have sat significantly higher than those in other contexts, with a substantial increase in the 2021-2022 period, where a total of 16 suburban projects were awarded (Figure 22). Urban context projects increased between the 2013-2014 and 2017-2018 periods but have been declining since, with only six urban projects awarded in the latest awards. Projects in rural areas have sat at an extremely low number, with two of the five award periods having no rural projects awarded.

Figures 23 and 24 highlight these trends with contrasting examples. The Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre (Figure 23), located in a suburban area, demonstrates an approach that lacks public integration having to respond to the surrounding high boundary walls and limited pedestrian activity in the area. In contrast, the Wits Art Museum (Figure 24), situated in an urban setting, provides an interactive response that enhances street-level engagement and surveillance. These examples of SAIA awarded projects underscores the importance of considering the project’s context in the award criteria, relative to the project type,

## City-making Architecture

advocating for a greater focus on more urban projects to promote contributions towards the urban dimension.

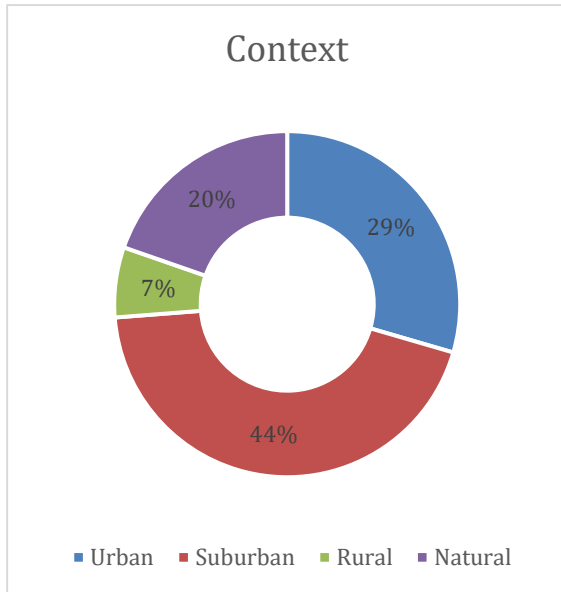


Figure 21: Percentage of project Contexts (Author 2024).

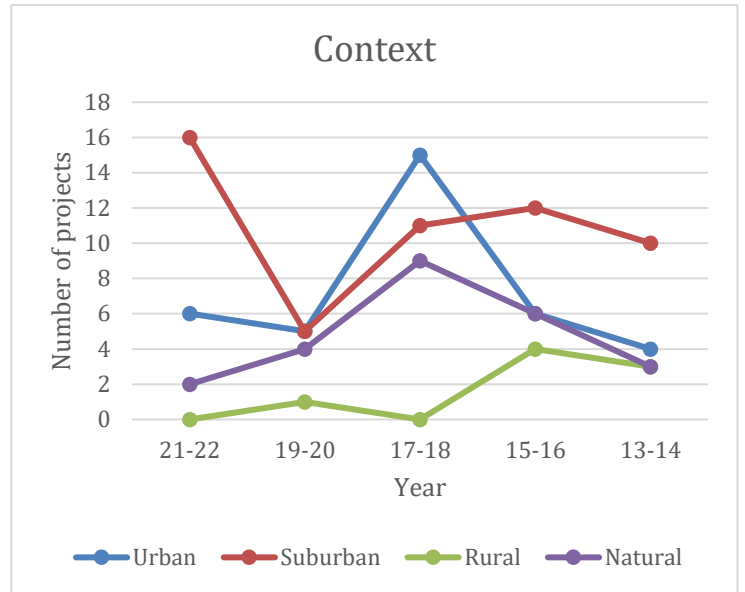


Figure 22: Trends of Context over the five-year award cycle (Author 2024).



Figure 23: Street view of Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre and context (Google Earth 2024).



Figure 24: Street view of Wits Art Museum (Google Earth 2024).

Figure 25 shows that 39% of the 122 projects awarded are residential, making this the most common usage category awarded. Educational projects accounts for 13%, while mixed-use projects cover only 11%. The remaining categories each contribute minimally to the overall usage distribution.

Over the five-year cycle, the trends consistently shows that residential projects receive the majority of awards in each award period (Figure 26). As residential projects show an increase

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in numbers, there has been a corresponding decrease in awards for educational, mixed-use, and healthcare projects, among others.

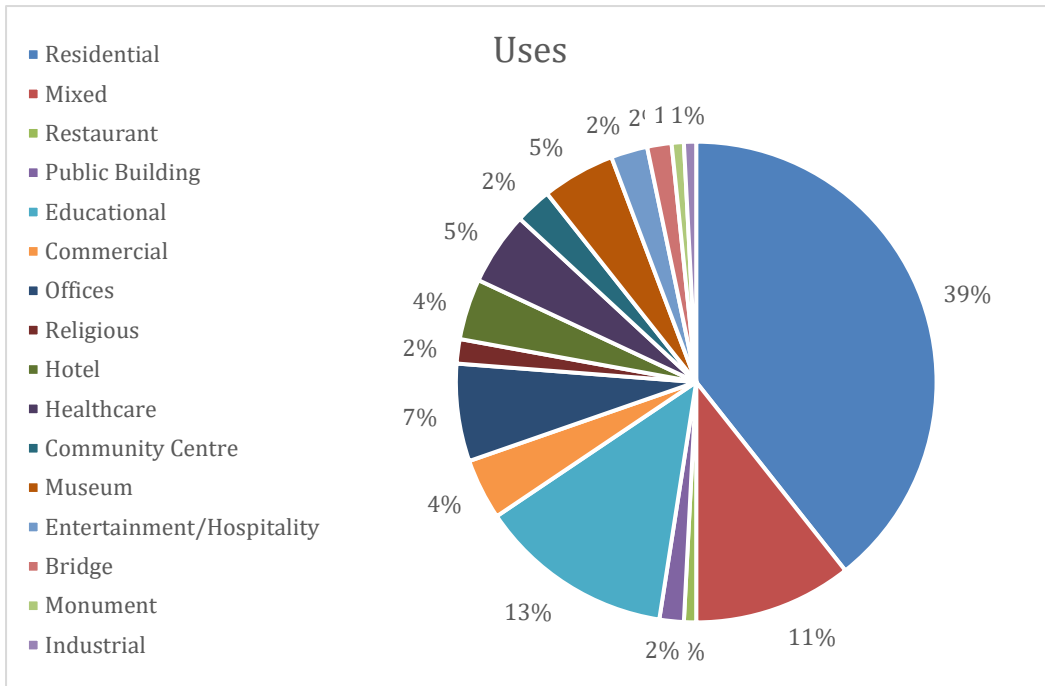


Figure 25: Percentage of project Uses (Author 2024).

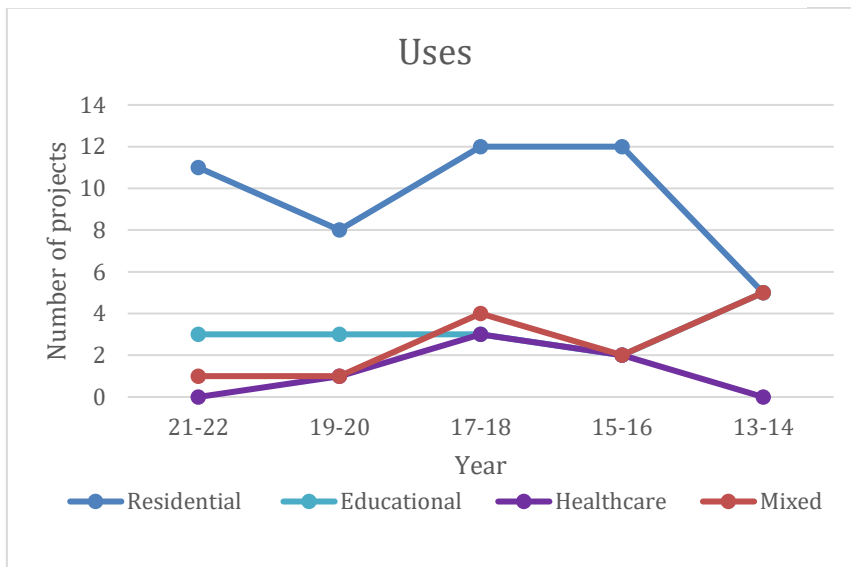
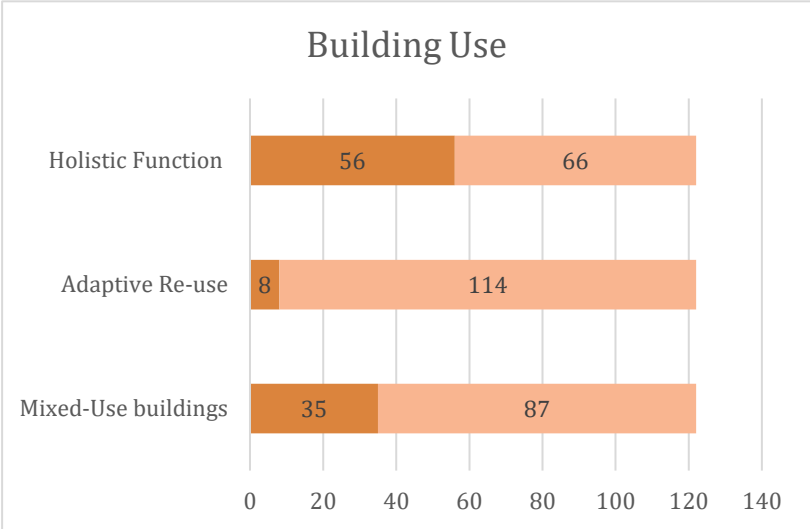


Figure 26: Trends of Uses over the five-year award period (Author 2024).

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Further expanding on building usage, Figure 27 illustrates that of the 122 projects awarded, 56 have a holistic function, while 66 are mono-functional. Only 35 of the projects are buildings of a mixed-use function, compared to 87 projects that serve a single purpose. Additionally, only 8 of the awarded projects involve adaptive reuse, while 114 of the projects are newly built or renovated without an adaptive approach.



**Figure 27: Graph depicting additional Building Uses (Author 2024).**

**4.1.3 Imagery**

As seen in Figure 28, 79% of projects have a memorable image in relation to their context (Figure 30), while only 21% of projects are blended into their context (Figure 31). Figure 29 demonstrates that 83% of projects conform to a contextual style of architecture and 17% of projects display a Global architectural style.

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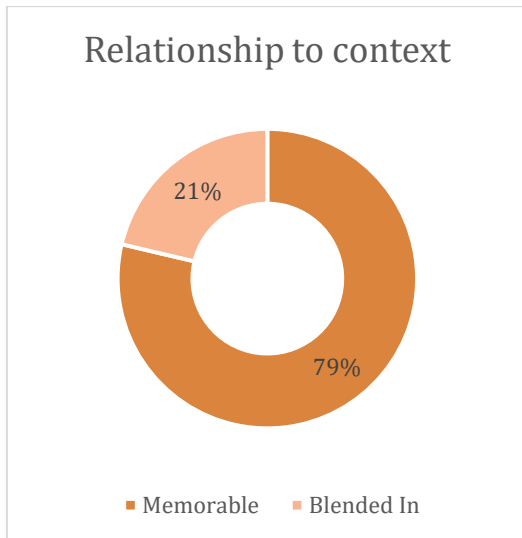


Figure 28: Percentage of projects Relationship to context (Author 2024).

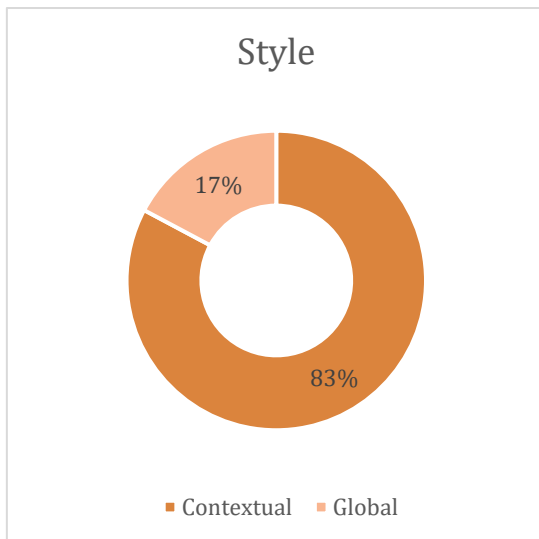


Figure 29: Percentage of project Styles (Author 2024).



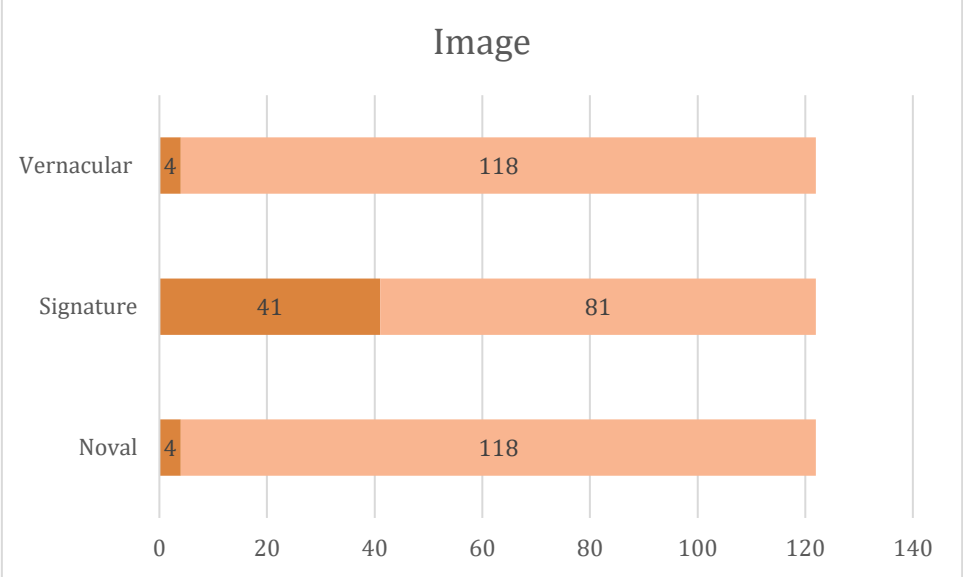
Figure 30: Discovery Place Sandton, Johannesburg by Boogertman + Partners showing stark contrasts with surroundings (Airgro n.d.).



Figure 31: The Onyx in Johannesburg by Gass Architects blending into surroundings (Gass 2020).

**City-making Architecture**

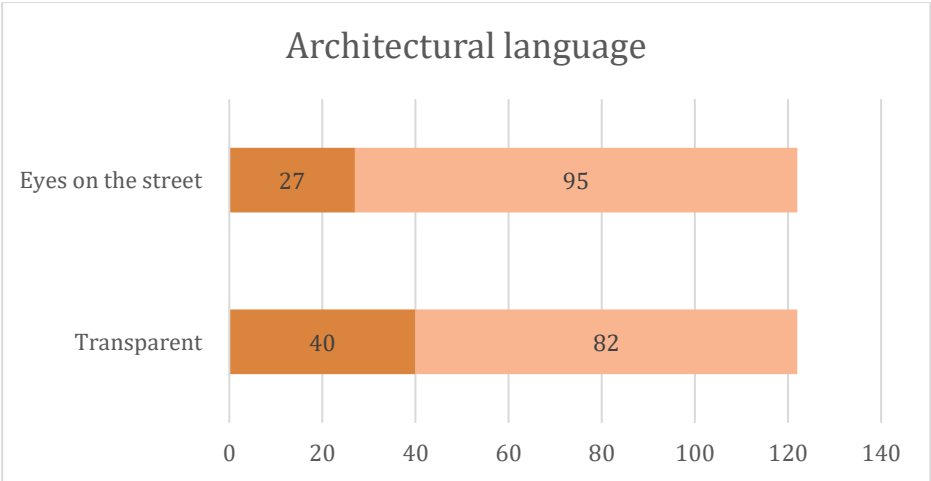
Further expanding on imagery of the projects studied, only 4 out 122 projects confirm to a vernacular style authentic to South Africa. 41 projects belong to a signature style based on the project architects' style. While majority of projects, 118 out 122, do not confirm to a novel type of architectural image (Figure 32).



**Figure 32: Graphs of Image results (Author 2024).**

**4.1.4 City-making**

In terms of architectural language characteristics that contributes towards the urban dimension (Figure 33), 40 out of the 122 projects have a transparent interface between building and street, however only 27 of the total projects make provision for offering eyes on the street (Figure 34).



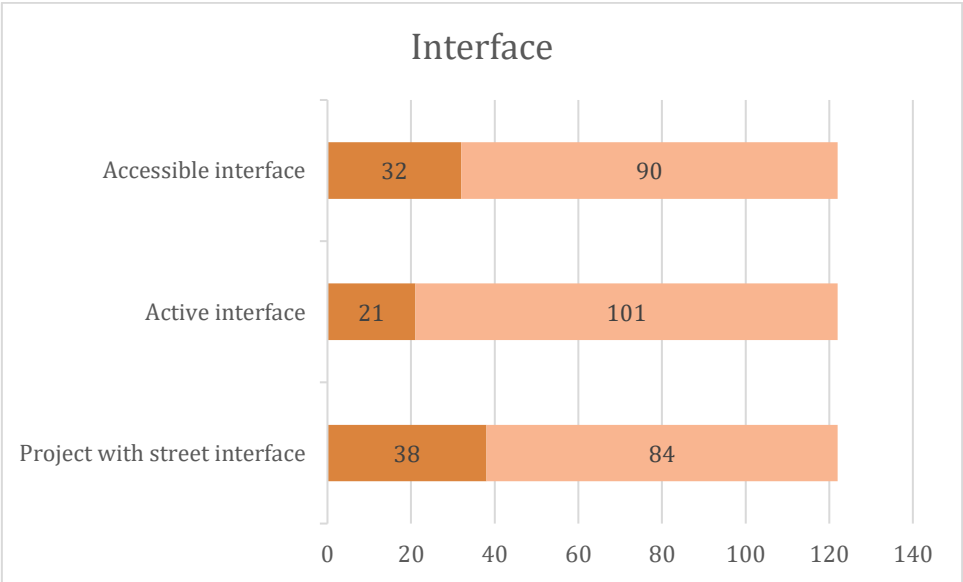
**Figure 33: Graphs of projects Architectural Language (Author 2024).**

**City-making Architecture**



**Figure 34: Foghound Coffee Shop, Midrand with seating facing the street (Author 2024).**

As seen in Figure 35, out of the 122 project , 38 projects include an interface with the street in its urban environment, while majority of projects, 84 projects, exclude any form of interface with the street. However, only 21 projects have an interface that is active and offers contribution to its context while 101 projects have inactive interfaces (Figure 36). 32 projects have interfaces that are accessible to the public, and 90 project have inaccessible interfaces.



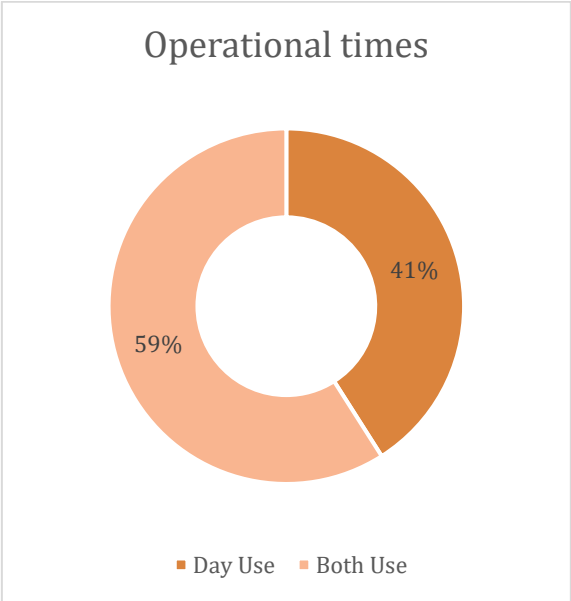
**Figure 35: Graph of projects Interface (Author 2024).**

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**Figure 36: Origins Centre Rock Art Gallery, Johannesburg by Mashabane Rose Associates containing a secluded and inactive relationship with the street (Sherrat 2017).**

While 59% of projects are used at both night and daytime (Figure 37), majority are residential projects that are located either on individual plots or within estates, making the potential of contributing to the urban dimension limited. Only 41% of project offer just daytime usage, and none of the projects awarded are of night-time usage.



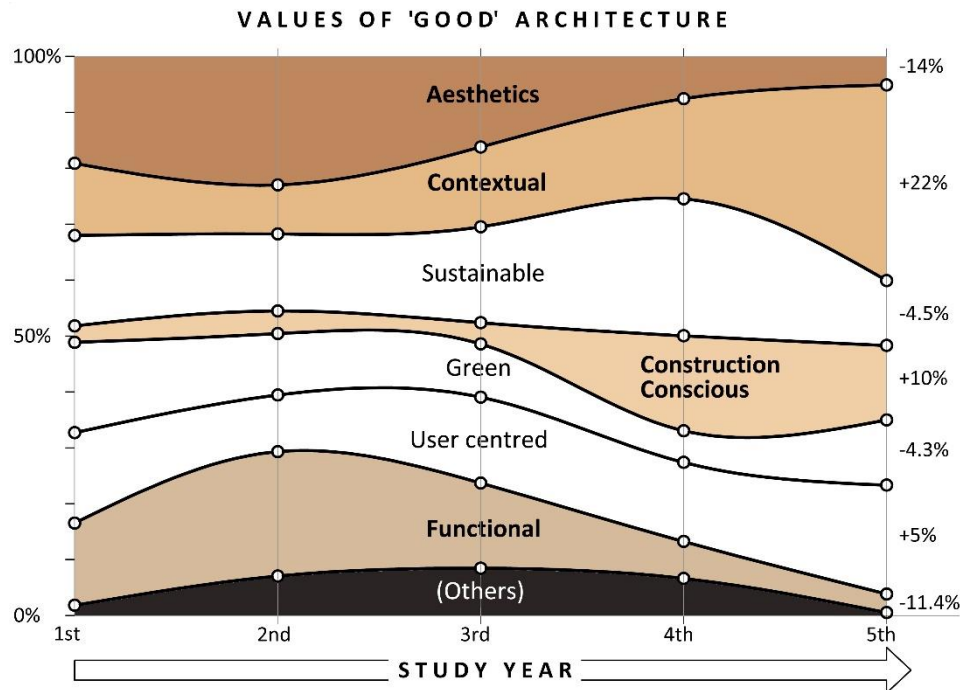
**Figure 37: Percentage of projects Operational times (Author 2024).**

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### 4.2 Surveys

#### 4.2.1 Values of good architecture

The first question focused on the values that constitute good architecture. Some concepts increased or decreased along the career and others appear at certain years of study. Figure 38 summarizes the key concepts for this question.



**Figure 38: Values that constitute good architecture. Those that changed significantly are highlighted in colours (Author 2024).**

While some values remain fairly constant (sustainability and functionality), others changed notably. Aesthetics appear as a concept that gradually loses prominence towards the end of the career, supplanted by contextual considerations (must fit in the context, must activate space etc). In addition, the preoccupation for building techniques raises as a key value/concern in the late years.

How does these concepts relate to the analytical framework of enquiry? While it is positive to see the evolution of preoccupations of students, some critical concepts were not considered in the least. Figure 39 shows the key values that are missing in this definition of good architecture.

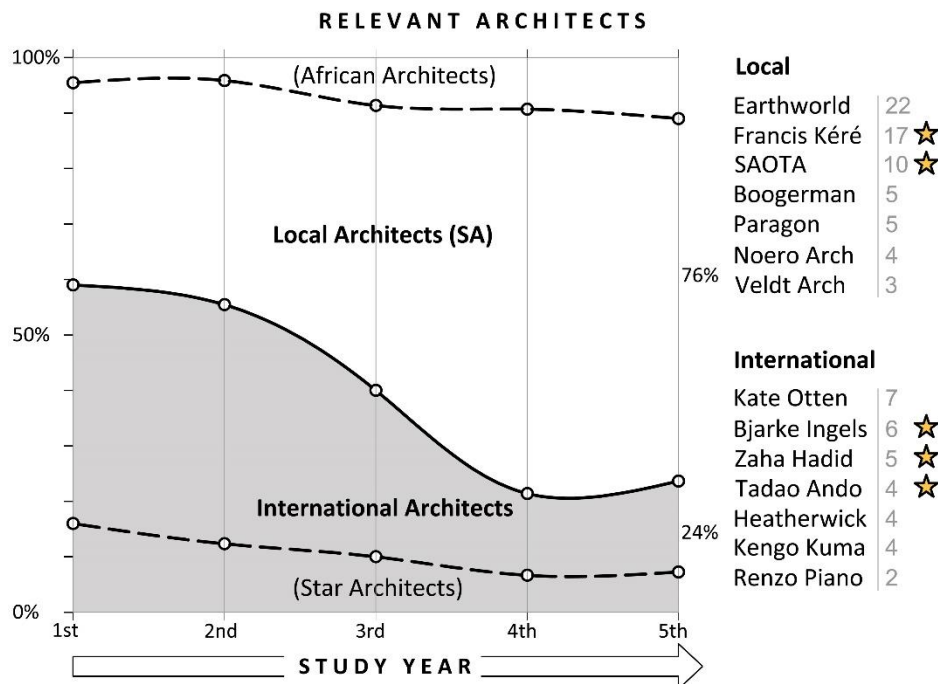
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architecture	projection	city-making	urban practices
Context (urban/semi/rural)	Prescence street	Single or mix of uses	City/estate/precinct
Constructively sound	Behind barriers	Transparent/ blank	Private/public
Grain (bigger/same/smaller)	Novel	Advertising/billboard	Masterplan development
Contextual	Commodified	Interactive/eyes on street	Office/industrial/retail park
Grounded/floating	Signature	Active interphase	Mixed-use precinct
Flexible	Vernacular	No interphase	Single/conglomerate erven
Integrated	Contextual	Building as interphase	Density high/m/low
Articulated/varied	Technological	Accessible/welcoming	Mixed-use building
Adaptive reuse		Defining public space	

**Figure 39: Relevant concepts (green) and missing considerations (orange) for good architecture (Author 2024).**

### 4.2.2 Prominent architects

The second question focused on the work of architects worldwide. Students could select a few architects/architectural firms whose work was relevant or where they would like to work. The results were compiled in Figure 40 below:



**Figure 40: A trend toward local architects, but still an emphasis on star architects (Author 2024).**

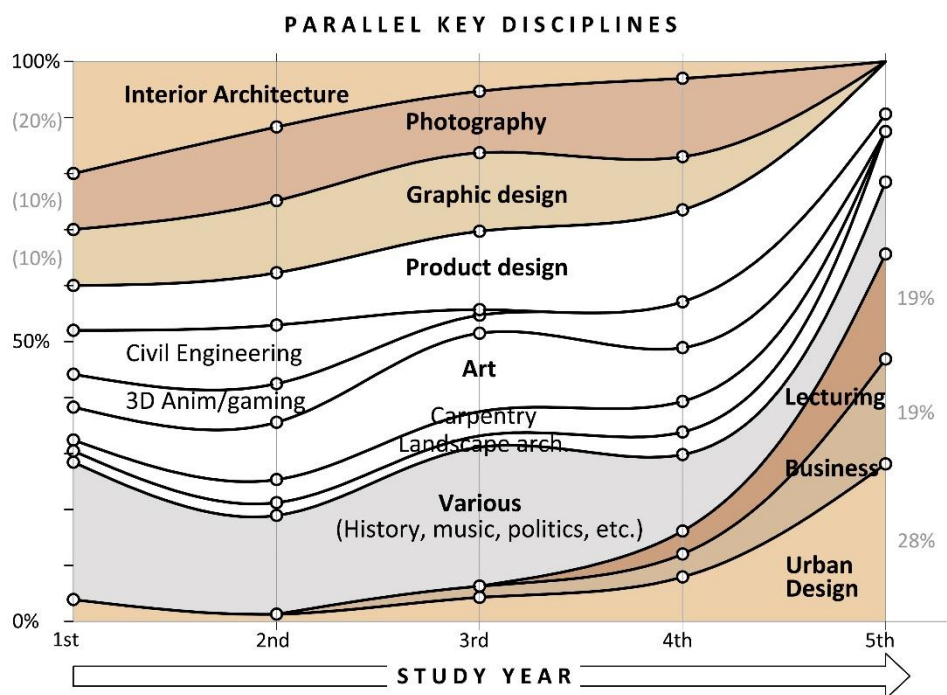
Along the study period, students gradually turn to local architects as preference. However, in both categories (local and international) there is a prominence of star-architects as repeated choices. Noticeably, very few urban designers were selected in isolated cases (one hit) in spite of a good number of respectable firms operating locally. However, the top firm (Earthworld

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Architects) reflects the values of good architecture of the previous point: contextual, constructive innovative and user centre.

### 4.2.3 Typologies and disciplines

The third and fourth question were combined. The third question enquires about a *dream project* or an area of architecture in which the student would like to be involved in. The fourth question asks about disciplines (complimentary, parallel, and additional) or fields that may be relevant for the students' formation as an architect. The results are presented in Figure 41.



**Figure 41: Key disciplines considered by students. Note that the most prominent ones in first year completely vanish by the end of the career and new ones take over the preoccupation (Author 2024).**

Key disciplines that appeared relevant in first year gradually decrease to be supplanted for more urgent considerations: business/management, lecturing/research and urban design.

The third question's answers revealed some trends that correlate to the fourth questions answers. During the early years of education, the most common typology students would like to design is detached residential units/cabins with no urban context (predominantly in nature). This is followed by museums, high-rise towers (of no particular use), and *vacation* homes. This trend changes towards the later stages of students' careers and the concern for public spaces

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appear as urban design raises in disciplines preference. Typologies like mixed-use precincts, schools and religious buildings are the preferred choices in this area.

### 5 Discussion

The following section discusses the results in conjunction with examples of city-making practices found around cities in South Africa in line with the framework outlined in the literature review. These projects have not necessarily been recognised by a national award system, however, they present features and details making them worthy of acknowledgement for their contribution towards the larger urban dimension.

#### 5.1 Case studies

##### 5.1.1 *Urban practices*

The findings indicate that the majority of projects awarded by SAIA are private, providing little to no contribution to their urban environment. A significant portion of projects are private-public – enclosed and access controlled. As revealed in the literature, these boundaries restricts the types of groups that can utilise these public buildings and spaces. The privatisation of public space has a profound impact on the city by creating meaningless and impractical space. The literature suggests that this trend of privatising public space undermines efforts to foster better urban environments, as exclusion of the public deems these spaces ineffective. Yet, the results reveal architectural merit systems in South Africa are promoting this trend.

Furthermore, the award system favours individualistic and stand-alone projects, as well as projects located in estates or complexes that are access controlled and fenced off. The results expose that these projects are preferred over mixed-use precinct environments. The promotion of individual and stand-alone projects fosters a disconnect between architecture and the urban realm, encouraging design thinking that neglects context beyond site boundaries. Similarly, the promotion of architecture within estates and complexes, which focus inwards and create privatised micro-cities, essentially encourages a disconnection from the urban dimension.

An example of good urban practice, depicting the benefits thereof, is the Western Cape Government building (Figure 42) located in the City of Cape Town. The project introduces a series of pedestrian forecourts, thresholds, and centralised entrances for public activities in and around the site. The most notable feature of the refurbishment is the pedestrian- exclusive walkway through the ground floor, which is fully accessible to the public 24/7, devoid of access-control or harsh boundaries.

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**Figure 42: Interior view of the public walkway inside the Western Cape Government building (Author 2024).**

### **5.1.2 Architecture**

The results disclose that the majority of awarded projects are situated in suburban context, this accounts primarily for residential projects that are located further removed from the city in either estates or on individual plots. A significant number of projects are located in an urban context, offering a strong potential to contribute meaningfully to its urban dimension.

Residential usage dominates the awarded projects, with educational projects at a significantly distant second and mixed-use projects following third. While many awarded projects extend their functionality beyond their primary use, the majority remain mono-functional rather than mixed-use. The literature underscores the importance of mixed-use development in urban environments. It suggests that contributing to the broader urban realm requires more than a single primary purpose. Mixed-use development enhances safety in the city by providing eyes on the street, making a significant contribution to city-making. However, the results indicate that mixed-use projects comprise only a small portion of awarded projects.

Figure 43 exhibits an instance of mixed-use architecture located in the town of Stellenbosch in the Western Cape. The town centre is merged with the university campus and therefore pedestrian considerations takes preference over vehicular movement. This creates pedestrianised walkways between buildings and a mixed-use approach, placing restaurants

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and cafés on the ground floor and student accommodation above. The result of the mixed-use approach is a constant surveillance of the pedestrian walkways, as seen in Figure 44.



**Figure 43: Mixed-use development block in Stellenbosch (Author 2024).**



**Figure 44: Mixed-use development block along pedestrian walkway offering surveillance in Stellenbosch (Author 2024).**

The number of adaptive reuse projects awarded are of an extremely low number out of the total amount of projects awarded. The literature underscores the importance of adaptive reuse, especially in defining a post-apartheid city in South Africa. Even the smallest of changes in details or minor renovations has the potential to catalyse an entire urban environment (Gehl 2010). However, the transformation of derelict buildings does not appear to be promoted enough by the architectural award systems.

Figures 45 and 46 illustrates the benefits of adaptive reuse approaches in design. Located in Pretoria CBD, Figure 45 presents The Sheds, a derelict warehouse building that transforms into market and event spaces, bring vibrancy and life into the city. Figure 46 shows the transformation of underutilised spaces between two buildings into a bar, offering surveillance towards the street.

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**Figure 45: Market @The Sheds hosted at The Sheds, Pretoria CBD (Author 2024).**



**Figure 46: Outside seating of a bar located between two buildings in Pretoria CBD (Author 2024).**

### 5.1.3 Image

The majority of projects that have received awards feature memorable imagery, characterised by strong contrasts relative to their surroundings. While only a small number of awarded projects blend seamlessly into their context. Additionally, the award system has seldom promoted architectural imagery that represents authentic South Africa architecture, with most projects not conforming to a vernacular style.

A significant portion of the awarded projects are of a signature style, leading to a repetition of similar style buildings that conform to individual architects' stylistic approach. This results in a monotonous architectural landscape across South Africa.

### 5.1.4 City-making

Considering city-making architecture and its promotion by the SAIA awards, the architectural language of these projects tends towards a secluded style. This creates an environment detached from the urban context, resulting in architecture that offers little opportunity for providing eyes on the street, and in turn, creating safer environments. This is reflected in the results, where a significantly small number of projects incorporate passive surveillance.

Figure 47 demonstrates a thoughtful prioritization of transparent and interactive relationship between building and street. Located at De Waterkant, Cape Town, a European-inspired

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approach has been adopted for the streetscape. Where rows of parked vehicles would typically be found, cafés, barbers, and restaurants have taken over the parking spaces to offer seating and shade, and surveillance for pedestrians. Similarly, as shown in Figure 48, a restaurant located in Cape Town's CBD not only provides sidewalk facing seating but has also installed a built-up seating area occupying a parking space. This approach enhances street surveillance and emphasizes pedestrian priority over vehicular traffic.



**Figure 47: View of street interface of small businesses in De Waterkant, Cape Town (Author 2024).**



**Figure 48: Outside seating located on a parking space at Butter restaurant in Cape Town CBD (Google Earth 2024).**

Regarding the interface between building and street, the percentage of projects that include this architectural characteristic is low. Most awarded projects do not provide an interface with the street. Of the projects that do provide an interface, an even smaller portion have an interface that is active and accessible to the public, thus contributing to urban life. The literature highlights the importance of the interface, with numerous authors stating that it provides vibrancy and place-making in the city. The results reveal that the award system lacks the promotion of street-to-building interface inclusion. This lack of interaction at the ground level creates experiences of insecurity and lack of vitality in the city. In the context of South Africa, where safety is a major concern, promoting interfaces should be a vital characteristic when awarding projects.

Figure 49 showcases a building serving as an interface. The ground floor features transparency and openings with seating, allowing café visitors to keep an eye on the street. The façade is carefully articulated to avoid disrupting pedestrian flow on the sidewalk, creating a pedestrian friendly and safe environment. Figure 50 exemplifies a public space acting as an

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interface between street and building. The green public space is open and accessible, providing shade and a seating area for community use. By incorporating low seating walls instead of traditional fence, the design fosters a sense of ownership and acceptance from the public, fostering initiative to maintain a clean and safe area.



**Figure 49: (left) Window café in Cape Town CBD (Author 2024).**



**Figure 50: (right) Public space in Stellenbosch (Author 2024).**

Furthermore, in terms of creating safer cities and promoting responsive architecture, visibility and passive surveillance play crucial roles to the overall city condition. The use and timing of building operations are also valuable role players in city-making. While the majority of awarded projects are suitable for both day and night use, most are within closed-off residential areas, reducing the possibility of providing effective surveillance. The results reveal that none of the awarded projects are intended for night-time usage, indicating that the promotion of a 24/7 operational city falls short as a criteria in the SAIA award system.

## 5.2 Surveys

### 5.2.1 Values

The surveys reveal that the values of the educational programme of the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria reflects attributes such as aesthetics, function, sustainability and contextual awareness towards the earlier stages of students' careers. This shifts towards a significant emphasis on construction processes, context and user-centric design towards the latter years of students' careers. Density, adaptive reuse and contribution to public space, emphasised as important principles in the literature, are missing as aspects valued by students. This means that towards the end of students' careers, architecture that

## **City-making Architecture**

contributes towards city-making is not a tool for equipping young architects entering the working world.

### **5.2.2 Architects**

Regarding architects relevant to the students, there is a predominant emphasis international architects in the earlier study years, substituted by preference of local architects in the latter years. This reflects a positive shift in value towards architecture of relevance, rooted in context. However, there is a concern regarding an urban design frame of reference for student. The results reflect instruction favouring architects in the profession, excluding urban designers in the profession.

### **5.2.3 Typologies and disciplines**

It is positive to see how concerns shift to include city-related issues occurring at the end of students' careers, but this is also a sign of the lack of instruction in this field at early education stages. Although in South Africa urban design is offered at post-graduate level (in two institutions only and not at the University of Pretoria), the reality is that few students can afford to continue with studies, and finding a job is the priority for many. Students working towards becoming architects will certainly benefit if urban concepts are introduced during the early years of study, not just the later years.

## **6 Conclusion**

### **6.1 Research results summarised**

#### ***6.1.1 What is praised***

The findings reveal significant shortcomings in the current practices of South African architectural award systems, which is defined by a common thread of privatisation, individualism, control, and inaccessibility, resulting in contributions that fail to meaningfully enhance the greater urban context. Overall, the award system tends to promote imagery that is not contextually appropriate for its immediate surroundings. There is insufficient emphasis on vernacular architectural styles, which would better reflect the local context and cultural identity. The focus on signature styles is a visibly dominating factor, and this tendency contributes to a monotonous built environment. Additionally, projects lack an active, articulated and welcoming interfaces with the street, failing to contribute to the safety and vitality of cities.

Current trends of the award system reveal preference of high-end residential architecture that is disconnected from its urban environment. There is a tendency of preference towards private and private-public projects. Projects are concentrated within suburban and natural contexts, and emphasis is placed on individualism. These trends are a noticeable shift from earlier award periods which reflect public projects, urban contexts and a mix of uses.

Observations of practices uncovered in the cities of South Africa reveal a number of projects that conform to the principles of effective city-making. These precedents do not attract attention aesthetically or in terms of signature style. They do not show resemblance to what is typically awarded. However, their small considerations contribute meaningfully towards their urban environment.

#### ***6.1.2 What is taught***

The overall values instilled in students reflect aspects of function, contextual awareness, user-centre and sustainability principles. During early stages of studies, students value aesthetics, international and star-architects, residential and luxury architecture, and natural contexts. However, there is a positive shift towards the end of students' careers where preference is given to urban design, mixed-use, local architects and construction conscious design.

## **City-making Architecture**

### **6.1.3 Correlations between what is taught and what is praised**

Both the education and award system lack aspects of density, adaptive reuse, mixed-use, urban contexts, vernacular architecture, and active and inclusive interfaces. It can be concluded that the aspects valued within the earlier educational years of students correlate closely to the aspects valued of current award system. This includes aesthetics, residential architecture, private projects, signature style, luxury architecture and lack of urban context preference and awareness. This correlation possibly reflects that what is being valued on the national award systems could potentially influence the architectural values of students during their earlier years of architectural education.

Although the latter years of studies reveal a positive preference towards urban considerations and awareness, it is not reflected in current architectural practice in the form of built projects. There seems to be a disconnect between the values instilled when students near the end of their education versus what is built. This reflects the overall dominating influence of values that current practices and process have, detached from urban contribution, not just on architecture schools but also on the type of architecture being built.

## **6.2 Reflection**

While South African architectural award systems and educational systems sets out to promote good architecture, good architecture should consider both its immediate and broader context. Awarded projects fail to create a reimagined urban environment that embraces principles that foster a harmonious coexistence between life, space and architecture. They lack a deep connection to place and fail to address societal concerns, defining a *just city*, or rejuvenating current urban conditions. Likewise, earlier stages of education in architecture reflect similar patterns.

The research question sets out to answer *why, how and through which processes is architecture limiting itself in contributing towards positive urban transformation*. It can be concluded that the award system for South African architecture needs to encourage the production of urban-committed architecture as a significant promotor, and that the architectural educational systems lacks an integrated approach between architecture and urban concepts throughout the syllabus that could benefit the formation of well-rounded architects. Award systems on a national level are highly influential to architectural professions and students. The message that these governing organisations send out can strongly influence the type of architecture produced. By awarding meaningless architecture (beyond objects), the consequence can be an endless cycle of producing projects detached from their urban

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environment. Currently, the SAIA awards are not promoting the type of architecture needed in South African cities to foster safer environments, create identity, define a post-apartheid city and inevitably contribute towards positive city-making architecture. Similarly, this is reflective of current students' value system within the architectural discourse.

### **6.3 Architecture as a form of urbanism**

While it is common to seek comprehensive solutions through urban theories or practice models, this work places emphasis on architecture, on the small site-based contribution that the architect makes through urban-conscious everyday work. Architecture as urbanism forces the architect to think beyond the site, aesthetics and awards. This, and not disappointing grand plans, creates the urbanism that can integrate architecture to the city, gradually, incrementally and collectively.

The contribution of this work therefore centres around rethinking architecture for its urban capacity; for what it does first to its surroundings. These qualities do not necessarily manifest in high-profile aesthetics, or striking design features, nor are they related to budget or materiality. City-making architecture simply works for the greater urban idea, and in the process becomes urbanism itself. From within the profession, this architecture must be praised, promoted and taught, because it is also a truly sustainable framework for beautiful design.

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## **8 Appendices**

### Appendix A

#### Interview Questions

1. How do the regional and national awards work in South Africa?
  
2. How is the criteria for awards defined? How was it originally established? By whom?
  
3. Is the criteria evolving/changing? If so, through which mechanisms is this accomplished?
  
4. Are award systems, in your opinion, a strong strategy to form professional values? Would you say that it is the same as competitions?
  
5. Are urban considerations a general theme across the criteria or applicable only to specific projects (for example in an urban design category)?

# City-making Architecture

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire

*INTERVIEW REPORT 2024*

#### Anonymous survey questions



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**Research conducted by:**  
**Schoulund, D. Moola, S., and Chiu, S.**

#### Dear Participant

Thank you. This questionnaire is **voluntary and anonymous**. You may choose not to participate or stop participating at any given time for any reason, in addition:

- No Personal data will be captured.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal.
- Please contact me should you have any questions or comments regarding the study or for a copy of potential publications (Dario.schoulund@up.ac.za).

**1) What are the features of 'good' architecture, in your opinion?** (Anything from 2 to 5 concepts)

.....

**2) Whose work of architecture do you considered relevant?** (Local or international firms/individuals – e.g. a place where you would like to work)

.....



**3) Is there a building typology in particular that you would like to design?**  
(Something of a dream-project for you)

---

**4) Considering further post-graduate studies, which avenue would you eventually like to explore** (e.g. Engineering, Town Planning, MBA, more architecture and so on)

Thank you!



**Faculty of Engineering,  
Built Environment and  
Information Technology**

Fakulteit Ingenieurswese, Bou-omgewing en  
Inligtingtegnologie / Lefapha la Boetšenero,  
Tšhologo ya Kago le Theknoloji ya Tshedimošo

Reference number: EBIT/238/2020

Mr DH Schoulund  
Department: Town and Regional Planning  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria  
0083

Dear Mr DH Schoulund

**FACULTY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY**

Your recent application to the EBIT Research Ethics Committee refers.

Conditional approval is granted.

This means that the research project entitled "The role of infrastructure on the spatial design of urban transformation" is approved under the strict conditions indicated below. If these conditions are not met, approval is withdrawn automatically.

**Conditions for approval**

- conditional approval subject to confirmation that it is not necessary to obtain ethical clearance from a research institution in Argentina in order to collect data in Argentina, or, if it is indeed necessary, that a clearance letter from an Argentinian institution be submitted to the EBIT REC in due course.
- Page 1 (letter of introduction) of Survey 2 asks for the name of the participant, therefore there is a direct link between the name of the participant and the data (rest of the questionnaire). An indirect link should be established. (ie the name of the participant and the actual data should be separately kept with only indirect link between them).
- Observation of minors are not permitted without the consent of the minors as well as the guardians/parents.
- Photos of with minors should not be taken and if taken should be destroyed.

This approval does not imply that the researcher, student or lecturer is relieved of any accountability in terms of the Code of Ethics for Scholarly Activities of the University of Pretoria, or the Policy and Procedures for Responsible Research of the University of Pretoria. These documents are available on the website of the EBIT Ethics Committee.

If action is taken beyond the approved application, approval is withdrawn automatically.

According to the regulations, any relevant problem arising from the study or research methodology as well as any amendments or changes, must be brought to the attention of the EBIT Research Ethics Office.

The Committee must be notified on completion of the project.

The Committee wishes you every success with the research project.

**Prof K.-Y. Chan**


Chair: Faculty Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity  
FACULTY OF ENGINEERING, BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## City-making Architecture

### Appendix C

Signed consent form by interviewee.

*City-making Architecture and shared professional values*



**UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA**

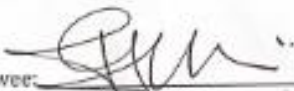
**Consent form Interview - 2024**

**Research conducted by:  
Ms Sameeya Moola**

**Dear Participant**

Thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to assist in this research study, it is greatly appreciated. This study is an enquiry in the relationship between architecture and city-making strategies. We will be looking at awards systems, education and the role of social media in constructing shared professional values. All information will be recorded and treated as strictly confidential.

- The results of the study will be used for **academic purposes** and may be published in an academic journal, **in which case a proof will be sent to you for approval, removal or changes prior to submission.** Only with your written permission, your name and rank may be quoted or referenced.
- You are free to stop the study at any time, in which case the data collected up to that point will be deleted.
- The results generated by your participation can be excluded from the study on your request.
- Please contact my supervisor, should you have any questions or comments regarding the study (Mr Dario Schoulund: [dario.schoulund@up.ac.za](mailto:dario.schoulund@up.ac.za)).

Interviewee:  Date: 2024-07-14  
David van der Merwe

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