

LEARNING CONNECTIONS



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FORWARD

The built environment shapes the world around us, yet it remains a subject largely not embedded into children's lives. Despite having a deep connection to their own neighbourhoods, young people's voices are often absent from discussions and decisions concerning urban design whilst creative subjects are increasingly marginalised from the school curriculum.

Schools and Departments of Architecture and associated faculties can play a unique and crucial role in this process and this research highlights the pivotal role that these institutions are having in this arena. They have the distinctive ability to equip future professionals with the skills, methods, and values needed to meaningfully engage with young people while also examining the impact of these experiences on young participants, university students, faculty, and the wider industry and community. Unlocking and enhancing the potential of these educational spaces to develop methods and best practices is crucial for shaping a better shared built environment. This approach can lead to more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient cities.

By **Victoria Thornton OBE, HonMA, HonFRIBA**

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

UK Schools of Architecture and Built Environment engage with children and young people.

Which institutions?

What forms does this engagement take?

What best practices can we learn from?

And what are the next steps to strengthen and expand these efforts?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are so many ways in which children and young people can be engaged with University activities - from outreach and teaching to participatory research and advisory roles. The benefits and impacts are reciprocal, with partnerships emerging that have long-term value for all involved. This important work offers the opportunity to centre the priorities and perspectives of children and youth, challenging the norms of academia in creative and fruitful ways. “

By Rosie Parnell, Professor of Architecture and Pedagogy, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University

I can confidently say that in the last few years the interest in my work with communities has exploded exponentially amongst architecture students in the UK and abroad. It is great to see that there is a new generation of young designers making their way through university that want to do impactful work. We must now work together to harness this energy and to develop our curricula so that these students are equipped with the skills needed to respond to the societal and environmental needs of the future. This will include teaching them how to open up architectural practice and how to meaningfully engage with communities and young people. “

By Jan Kattein, Director at Jan Kattein Architects

Learning Connections investigates how UK architecture and built environment universities are actively involving children and young people. Building upon our 2023 Report focusing on the growing importance of community engagement in the built environment sectors, TET's latest update categorised youth engagement into four pivotal types (live projects, programmes, workshops, and resources). This Update not only expands on previous findings but also broadens the scope by including more UK universities, offering a richer 'Table of Results'. It provides a broad overview of how these institutions, along with schools and departments, are integrating young people into their work. This report introduces new case studies that illuminate emerging questions, trends, and pathways, shaping this (expanding) area of participation in the built environment.

The key findings indicate that engagement activities are not only becoming more widespread but also growing with depth and variety. More universities are adopting multiple forms of engagement, highlighting a shift toward more sustained and meaningful involvement with young people. Among these, 'Programmes' remain the dominant approach, reflecting the importance of long term-engagements and outcomes, whereas 'Workshops' are the least utilised (from this research university sample), presenting an opportunity for further investment and innovation. A key takeaway from this research is the mutual benefit of this form of engagement. Learning Connections 2024 continues to raise interesting aspects but also additional questions for future exploration.

1. Young people engagement benefits:

a. Mutual benefits: universities gain the opportunity to enrich their curriculum, shaping a generation of built environment professionals who are more socially conscious and attuned to community needs. At the same time, young people are empowered to better understand and influence their surroundings, rather than simply being encouraged to pursue careers in architecture.

b. Encounter opportunities: to explore forms of engagement within young people's communities, which help increase their abilities and interaction with the built environment, rather than solely advancing their skills and career pathways.

2. Audience considerations:

- a. Youth voices: engage young people as real clients and active participants in the design process, not just passive recipients.
- b. Education system structure: embed engagement in curriculum. Students can encounter these forms of engagements during their education pathways which are, otherwise, less likely to be incorporated into their future practice.
- c. Connection between academic settings and skill development need to be explored further.

3. Value and impact:

- a. Impact universities and cities: universities can be affected in the way they are trying to create a broader spectrum of students, while city programmes (and/or local authority policies) in the way they are trying to embed young people in their political agenda.

4. Future directions:

1. How can we ensure universities engage in outreach activity? At the same time, what is the key to ensure an high level of children and young people participation in engaging activities?
2. How can universities embed youth engagement to broaden young people's perspectives?
3. Where should policy sit in those education contexts?
4. How can youth engagement benefits and inform internal universities funding decisions? How can built environments departments benefit from outreach funding?



(Fig 2)

1. INTRODUCTION

At present, community engagement is not a mandatory component of architectural education, leading to inconsistent and limited outreach efforts across institutions. While not exhaustive, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of existing engagement programmes within UK architecture and built environment schools. It presents a database of current and existing initiatives, and includes case studies to explore the values, challenges, and diverse approaches universities take in engaging with young people. The study explores which institutions offer outreach programmes (p.7 – Table of Results), identifies key stakeholders involved in their design and delivery, and examines how these initiatives have evolved over time (p.11). The report also showcases best practices (p.14), that can be shared across universities and the wider industry, while outlining future directions (p.20) to strengthen youth engagement in architectural education and practice. By providing this comprehensive overview, the research aims to inspire and inform future efforts to integrate young people's engagement more fully into architectural education and practice. Ultimately, leading to more inclusive and responsive built environments that better serve the needs of all community members.

1.1 Key research questions:

Which UK schools of architecture currently engage with children and young people?

The research investigates current, historical and planned engagements across the UK to better understand the context of youth engagement with architecture schools. Where possible, it also explores how deeply embedded engagement is within the architecture course.

Who is involved with the organisation, design, and delivery of such engagement initiatives?

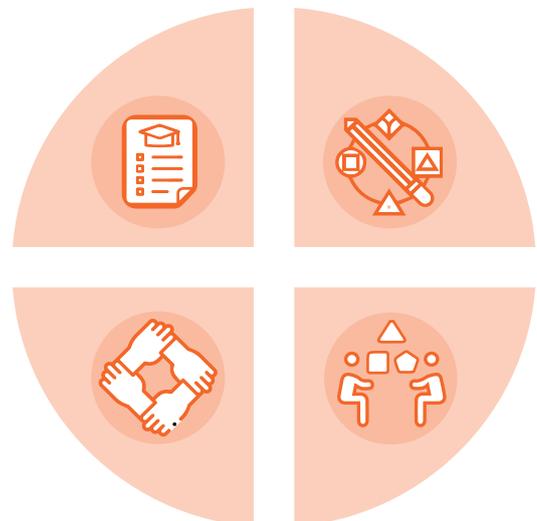
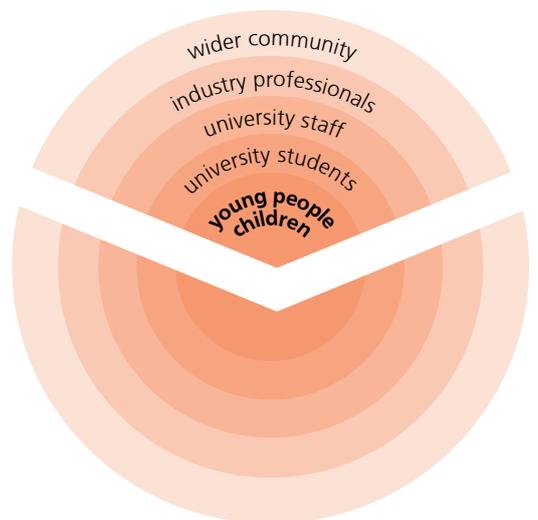
By identifying the key contributors and collaborators within engagements, the study illustrates the nature of their involvement, as well as the roles required to facilitate youth engagement and the impact that it may have on each group.

What form does engagement take?

Recognising that different forms of engagement provide different challenges and opportunities,

the research evaluates each approach of engagement to identify and develop 'best practices' that can be shared across universities and the wider industry.

Ultimately, this report aims to drive meaningful change, ensuring that youth engagement becomes an integral part of built environment education and practice.



Young people already know their local neighbourhoods very well and by demonstrating that this knowledge and their opinions are important, their own shared sense of agency local decisions can be nurtured. Planning students learn about local place alongside those young people and are able to reflect on the 'softer' skills that they are developing as part of that process. 🗨️

By Teresa Strachan, University of Newcastle

1.2 Why is youth engagement important?

The reasoning behind children and youth engagement has evolved over time, with participation recognised as a valuable learning tool. It is now known that such participation builds soft skills and other benefits such as increased self-confidence, leadership abilities and a strengthened sense of community. Participation has been described as an “intrinsic and life-changing inner process” (Sterling, 2010).

1.3 Why is youth engagement important for architectural education?

Across the UK there is a decline in the funding of creative subjects at the primary level, and the uptake of Art and Design as a secondary subject. This presents vulnerabilities for courses such as Architecture at higher education level³. Universities must, therefore, consider initiatives that promote and support the visual arts curriculum at various levels. Concurrently, there is contemporary debate around the range of skills that architectural education should be developing in future professionals, the scope of abilities that the profession should more overtly value, and the overall composition of the profession⁴. With the growing expectation for architects to embrace community engagement, particularly with marginalised or unheard voices, it is vital that architecture students are given the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in such practices. Schools of architecture play a key role in shaping the profession's composition and its relationship with the society it serves.

1.4 Why is youth engagement important for the architectural industry?

The Royal Institute of British Architects recognises

that “an inclusive and diverse profession that is representative of the society it serves is pivotal to meeting the challenges of the future” (Royal Institute of British Architects, 2023). In order to achieve this, addressing the barriers to entry for pre-university young people and progression for university students within the profession is fundamental. Equally, practices can be involved with engagements, offering professional guidance, facilitation expertise or technical advice, for example. While this involvement may not result in direct economic benefits for the practice, it can enhance its public profile and help secure future work. Such rewards may be intangible and not fully billable.

1.5 How might youth engagement with architecture schools occur?

Nearly all UK universities now offer some form of outreach and engagement for young people into higher education (Office for Students, 2018) in the form of practical skills and knowledge through open days, course selection guidance, interview preparation, and general skills such as critical thinking, resilience, and stress management. This study is focused solely on engagement involving children and young people with architecture/built environment courses.

With growing support for youth engagement in design, questions such as ‘Is children's participation really worthwhile?’ are heard less often, while questions like ‘What methods are proven to be effective?’ are becoming more common. The ‘effectiveness’ of engagement depends on a number of variables. Four main types of engagement have been identified within this study, varying in timescale, aims, output, delivery, level of participation, and people involved:

Programme

A long-term engagement, with the primary aims/outcomes centred on development for children and/or young people.

Live Project

A long-term engagement resulting in a realised output in the form of a structure, report, design proposal etc.

Workshop

A single or multi-day event with immediate visual or learned outcomes for children and/or young people.

Resource

Activities, guides or databases that can be utilised by children, young people, carers, teachers, architecture students or professionals relating to engagement.

NOTES: Due to the limitations of this study and to the nature of it (desktop research), further investigation into relevant outreach programmes was not feasible. Duration information has been inserted but they lack of specificity.

2. TABLE OF RESULTS & ANALYSIS

University	School/Department	Outreach Type	Outreach Name	Duration
Architectural Association	School of Architecture	Workshop 	AA x Open City's Accelerate Studios	2022 → ongoing
		Programme 	Summer School	ongoing
		Resource 	AA x Little Architect	2013
		Workshop 	RESOLVE Collective Unit Lead	-
Arts University Bournemouth	School of Design	Programme 	Saturday Art School	start in 2025
Bath Spa University	Bath Cultural Education Partnership (BCEP)	Workshop 	BSU x House of Imagination CIC	2018 → ongoing
Birmingham City University	School of Education UK Arts and Humanities Research Council.	Live Project 	The Aimhigher West Midlands Partnership	2009 → ongoing
	UK Arts and Humanities Research Council	Resource 	Minu Balkanski Foundation "Summer School in Architecture and Design" / CLIMANIA – The Climate Action Game	2022
Cambridge University	Department of Architecture	Workshop 	Widening Participation in Planning	2024 → ongoing
Centre For Alternative Technology	Graduate School of the Environment	Resource 	Webinar: Education and Climate Change	2020
Coventry University	Research Centre for Peace and Security	Resource 	Research Project: Imagining the Future	2020 → 2022
De Montford University Leicester	DMU Engagement	Programme 	DMU Local Community Engagement	2014 → ongoing
Edinburgh University	Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and National Schools Programme	Programme 	Access Creative Education in Schools [ACES]*	2015 → ongoing
	House School of Education and Sport	Live Project 	Children and Young People Thematic Hub	ongoing
Falmouth University	School of Architecture	Live Project 	MArch x Brickfield-BUILD project	2021
Kingston University	School of Art	Workshop 	Subject Insight Visits	
Leeds Beckett University	School of Education	Programme 	Access and Widening Participation	2020 → ongoing
Liverpool John Moores University	School of Education	Programme 	LJMU	
London Metropolitan University	School of Architecture	Live Project 	Studio 4: City as a School	
		Live Project 	Storytelling Igloo x Aberrant Architecture	
Loughborough University	School of Architecture	Live Project 	Outdoor Classroom with Butcher Bayley Architects	2019
	School of Design Architecture, Engineering	Live Project 	Bringing Design to the People	2024
Northumbria University	School of Design	Resource 	Designing With Children	
	School of Design	Live Project 	Kids Kabin	2023
	School of Social Sciences	Programme 	Childhood and Early Years Studies MA	ongoing
Northumbria University and Middle East Technical University	School of Design and Department of Architecture	Resource 	Learning from Children	2023
Queen's University Belfast	School of Natural and Built Environment	Workshop 	Widening Participation Programme - Pathway Opportunity Programme (Architecture & Planning)	2024 → ongoing

University	School/Department	Outreach Type	Outreach Name	Duration
Ravensbourne University London	School of Design	Resource 	Repurposing Architectural Elements	2022 → ongoing
	School of Design	Resource 	Teacher CPD - Architecture & Spatial Design	ongoing
	School Outreach Team	Workshop 	Utopia	2025
Robert Gordon University	Widening Accessing Team and Gray's School of Art	Programme 	Access Creative Education in Schools [ACES]*	
Royal College of Art	School of Architecture and RCA Community Engagement	Programme 	Community & Public Engagement Strategy - Widening Participation Programme for Architecture	2023 → ongoing
The Glasgow School of Art	Academic Support Unit, School of Fine Art and the School of Design	Programme 	Widening Participation (WP)	
The London School of Architecture	School of Architecture	Programme 	Part 0: outreach	2021 → ongoing
	School of Architecture	Programme 	[un]Building x National Saturday Club	2023 → 2024
The University of Westminster	Westminster Children's University	Programme 	Children's University Workshop x Archimake	
University College London	Bartlett School of Architecture	Programme 	DESIGN Unlimited: Bartlett Outreach Programme x Matt+Fiona	2020 → 2023
	Bartlett School of Architecture	Resource 	Enhancing Children and Young People's Arts and Cultural Engagement (ENACT)	2024
	The Bartlett - Outreach Team	Workshop 	Architecture Taster Day	2024 → ongoing
	The Bartlett - Outreach Team		School Visits	2024 → ongoing
University for the Creative Arts	Institute of Epidemiology & Health Care	Programme 	Kent and Medway Progression Federation	2024 → ongoing
University of Cardiff	Welsh School of Architecture	Resource 	Resources for Primary/Secondary/Further	
		Workshop 	Shape My Street Competition	2019 → ongoing
		Resource 	Community Engagement in local development plans	2023
University of Dundee		Programme 	Access Creative Education in Schools [ACES]*	ongoing
University of Kent	School of Architecture and Design	Live Project 	DROP IT!	
		Workshop 	Summer School	
University of Lincoln		Workshop 		
University of Manchester	School of Architecture	Live Project 	Praxis Atelier: P.L.A.Y	
University of Maastricht	School of Technology	Resource 	Cities for Children: Supporting Capabilities of Children and Caregivers through Participatory Urban Planning Research	2022
University of Newcastle	School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape	Live Project 	YES Planning: Planning the future	2015 → 2024
		Resource 	Engaging Children and Young People in Planning: A Handbook for Transformative Practice	2024
University of Plymouth	School of Architecture	Live Project 	Outdoor Classroom and Firepit	2018
		Resource 	Children's University: Design Dream House	
University of Portsmouth	School of Architecture	Live Project 	Forest Flare	2023
		Workshop 	The Sound Garden	2017
		Live Project 	ViaLibera! Palermo	2024

University	School/Department	Outreach Type	Outreach Name	Duration
University of Reading	School of Arts and Design	Workshop 	Summer/Autumn School	
		Programme 	Reading Scholars	? → 2025
University of Sheffield	School of Architecture	Resource 	A Handbook for Live Projects	2013
		Live Project 	Urban Room: Live Works	2014 → ongoing
University of the Arts London [CSM]	School of Architecture, School of Design	Workshop 	UAL Insights: Summer/Spring/Autumn and Winter School	ongoing
		Workshop 	Short Courses 14-18	ongoing
University of Ulster	School Outreach Academy	Resource 	School Outreach Academy	ongoing
University of West England	School of Architecture and University of the West of England	Live Project 	Hands On Bristol	? → ongoing
		Programme 	Shape My City	2015

This desk research was conducted over two weeks in 2023 and another two weeks in 2025, utilising university websites and online publications, as well as digital communication with various university staff, students, and professionals working in the field of youth engagement in architecture. While limited, this method offers a comprehensive reflection of engagement projects in UK architecture schools, encouraging further discussion and deeper research opportunities.

2.1 Sharing Connections

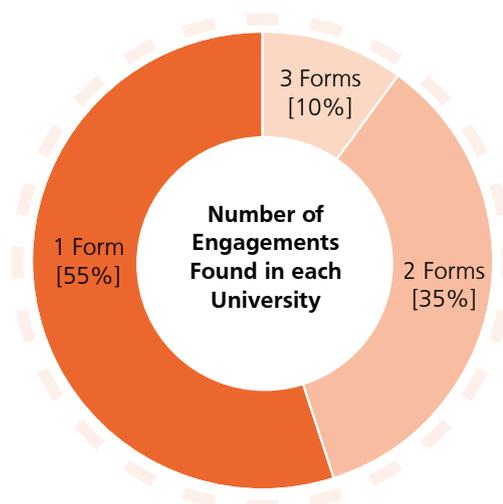
Off the numbers found within the limits of this research, 41 universities shared some form of engagement between young people and architecture courses online, bringing to question the value of broadcasting engagements online. How might these websites be accessed by young people to find engagement opportunities, or for architecture students to develop their own understanding of outreach within their institution? Engagement might also be utilised by universities to advertise their courses and connection to the wider community.

During the search for this information, other useful online databases were found which can support further study related to this topic. ‘Designing With Children’ aims to inspire design practitioners and bring together in dialogue anyone interested in exploring how children’s cultures, capacities and imagination may have an impact upon the design profession, design process and ultimately the built environment (Designing with Children, 2016). Though this online database is not limited to engagement with universities, it can provide easily accessible examples for various

forms of participation with children and young people to be used by architecture students, tutors setting briefs, or in practice.

2.2 Multiple Connections

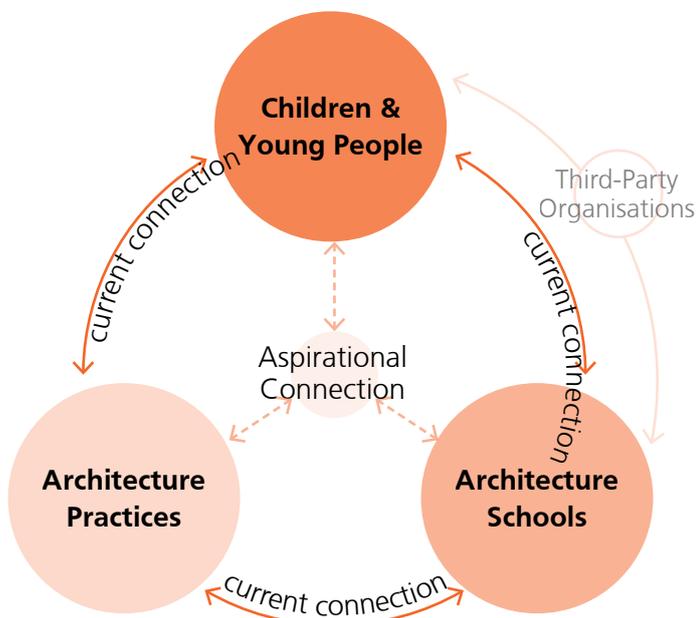
Out of the 41 universities, 62 forms of engagement have (programmes, resources, workshops, and live projects) were identified. Majority of the universities found offered at least 1 form of engagement [51%], while many offered 2 forms of engagement [41%] and four university offered 3 forms of engagement [8%]. The benefit of offering multiple engagements from one university ensures that a wider variety of people/outcomes can be reached. However, there is also potential for one single engagement to provide effective, meaningful engagement with resources pooled by various identities for a shared project. As Douglas Smith, Head of Birmingham University reflected on Live Project philosophy: “to do a little, thoroughly, rather than a lot, superficially” (Smith, 1961).



2.4 People Making Connections

Another challenge was identifying exactly which people or groups were involved in the organisation, design and delivery of engagements. The distinction between university outreach teams and architecture-specific staff was not readily available in online information. There is value in these groups working together for engagement delivery. Outreach teams are more likely to have expertise in organisation, relationships with school networks, and access to resources such as time and funding, while architecture staff provide knowledge on content, required tools/materials, and can offer insight into outcomes necessary to pursue knowledge or further study in architecture. Architecture student involvement was most evident in Live Projects, which provided them with the greatest agency and decision-making power. Students also participate in Programmes and Workshops, though on an optional and voluntary basis. Regardless of the form of engagement (whether Programme, Live Project, Workshop or Resource), the impact on architecture students was greatest when their contribution could be integrated with their studies.

One group missing from nearly all engagements researched was architectural practices. Despite the opportunities for professionals, students, and young participants in co-design and participation, youth engagement by architectural practices appears to be distinctly separate from university-led or university-initiated engagement. While awareness of the need for outreach is growing in the architectural industry (largely driven by the increasing emphasis on Social Value) practices must



By introducing students to the landscape of higher education they can make decisions affecting their future career path and place of study with more confidence, clarity and the benefit of their experience. “

By Sirraaj Mitha, Director of Accelerate and Desing Tutor at LSA

also recognise their crucial role in the education system (RIBA, 2023). By collaborating with universities and pre-university youth together, practices have the capacity to engage multiple generations simultaneously.

Lastly, a growing number of third-party organisations focused on architectural education collaborate with universities, facilitating their architectural outreach projects. Many of these offer regional support, though the majority are Greater London. While third-party organisations cannot be solely relied upon, they can be valuable for knowledge sharing and training opportunities. A good example of third-party organisation is Open City Accelerate. Involved with five London based universities (UCL, UAL, Kingston, Ravensbourne and the AA) as well as Birmingham City University, the course now (2024/25) recruits 120 students across 4 classes in London, and will recruit another 30 students in Birmingham. The London based course has 25 leading professional practices on board who offer their expertise as mentors to the students. With an “Accelerate Alumni community” of over 500 members, this programme has helped young people explore and expand their career potential in the built environment sector.

Some other third-party organisations found include:

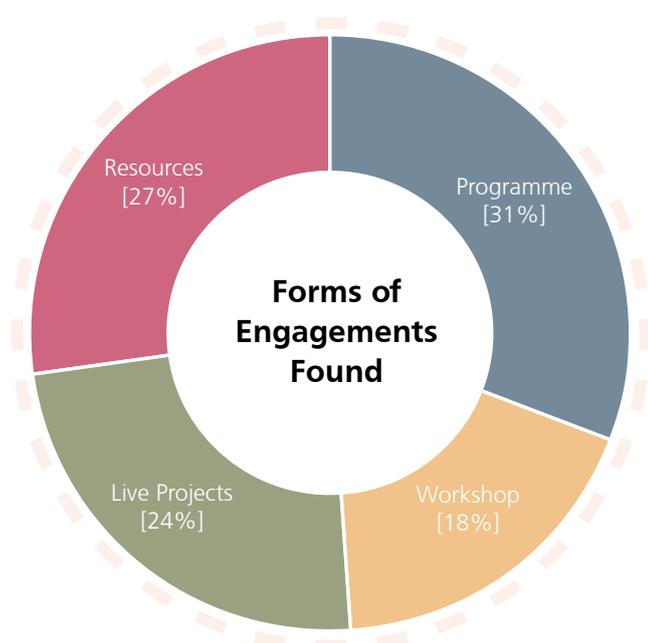
- **MATT+FIONA:** worked with University College London’s Bartlett School of Architecture and of the Built Environment to deliver ‘Design Unlimited’ (2020 to 2023);
- **Urban Learners:** partnered with London School of Economics (LSE) to deliver ‘Configuring Light/Staging the Social’ in 2015/16;
- **Class of Your Own:** active relationships with Manchester School of Architecture, University of Salford and Heriot-Watt University;
- **Archimake:** partnered with University of

Westminster and Children's University;

— **Design West:** partnered with university of West England to deliver 'Shape My City', and collaborates with University of Plymouth and Exeter City Council.

Built environment professionals must engage with schools, colleges, and universities to ensure that the education system nurtures creativity, encourages collaboration, and provides opportunities for hands-on learning. ““

By Shawn Adams, Founding Director, POoR Collective



2.5 Diverse Connections

The Table of Results above presents the UK education systems identified in this research, highlighting their respective forms of engagement. An analysis of these results reveals the following key findings:

Programmes [31%] are recognised as a long-term form of engagement, typically lasting from a minimum of two months to over a year. These initiatives appear to be the most effective and meaningful form of engagement. For instance, Robert Gordon University's experience with the ACES project over several years has demonstrated that sustained and ongoing engagement with young people, schools, and partners is crucial for impact. While this approach requires significant resources and investment, it raises important questions about access to architecture.

Resources [27%] have increased in prevalence compared to the previous year, likely due to their cost and time efficient nature. Most online resources provided by universities are developed by internal researchers or faculty members. However, their impact appears limited. Web platforms like Children's University (Hyde, 2013) provide an accessible database of online resources from higher education institutions, but greater marketing and awareness efforts are needed to ensure these valuable resources reach their intended audience.

Live projects [24%] are typically established on an annual basis, often shaped by local community needs and the willingness of tutors to facilitate relationships and initiatives. At the undergraduate level, these projects are often confined to small groups, units, or studios where community engagement is embedded within the course brief. While this offers valuable experience for those directly involved, it overlooks the broader benefits of participatory engagement for all future architects. Live projects have the potential to connect with a diverse range of stakeholders, including consultants, real clients, and industry professionals. Therefore, understanding power dynamics and levels of participation is crucial. Architecture students should be encouraged to critically reflect on their positionality when working with children and young people, ensuring they recognise the diversity within this group rather than treating them as a homogeneous entity.

Workshops [18%] were the least common form of engagement compared to previous reports. These range from one-off events to week-long summer schools, providing immediate, visible impact and tangible outcomes. Results from workshops may include individual artworks (e.g. models or drawings), collaborative group projects (e.g. small structures), or portfolio content. While workshops may have shorter-term benefits compared to longer programmes, their lower resource requirements make it possible to run multiple events throughout the year. This research found that architecture workshops and programmes are largely initiated by university staff, with support from architectural tutors and students. While this enables university outreach teams to refine their engagement practices, it limits opportunities for students to develop deeper learning experiences and a greater sense of agency.



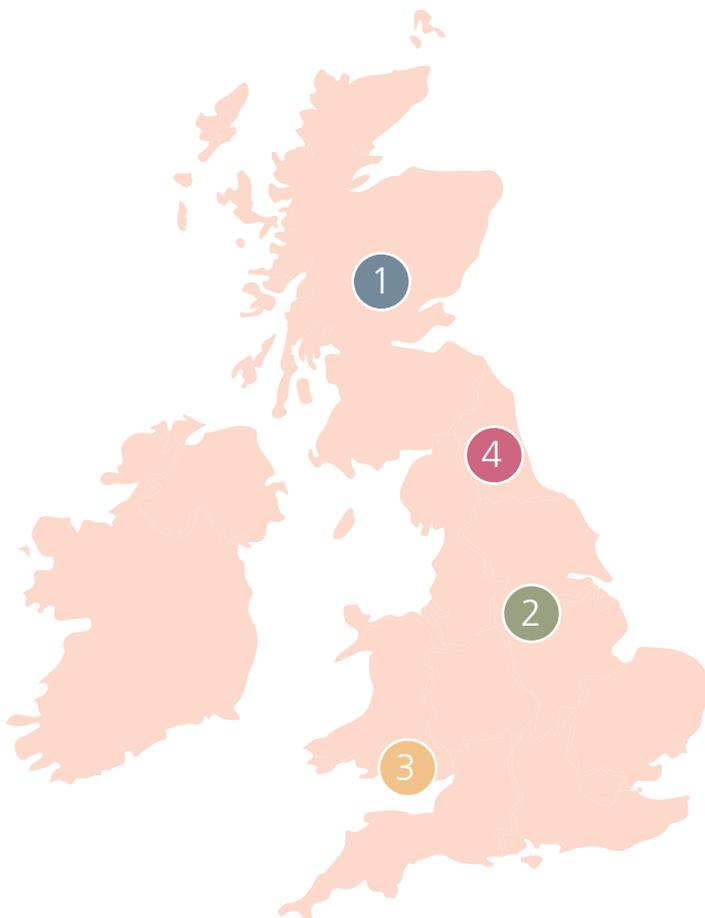
(Fig 3)

3. CASE STUDIES

In order to understand deeper the types of engagement offered by UK architecture schools, this research examines four case studies. These case studies represent a range of engagement types, locations, time frames, outputs, delivery methods, levels of participation, and stakeholders involved. Unlike previous reports, all identified forms of engagement are represented within at least one

case study. While this research primarily focuses on identifying which schools of architecture engage with children and young people, who is involved, and what form that engagement takes, it does not extend to evaluating impact or effectiveness. Each case study highlights key values and challenges, though a more detailed review would be required to assess long-term outcomes.

Mapping 4 case studies:



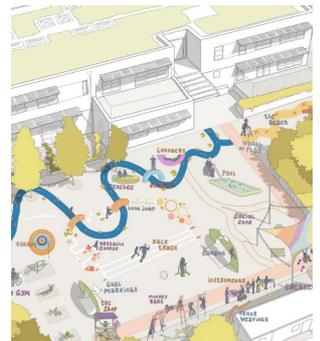
1

PROGRAMME
University of Dundee,
Edinburgh University,
Glasgow School of Art,
Robert Gordon University



2

LIVE PROJECT
Sheffield School of
Architecture



3

WORKSHOP
Cardiff University



4

RESOURCE
University of Newcastle

ENGAGING
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PLANNING
A Handbook for Transformative Practice
TERESA STRACHAN



Programme

ACCESS TO CREATIVE EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND (ACES)

University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art & Robert Gordon University

The Access to Creative Education in Scotland (ACES) programme is a national Widening Participation initiative funded by the Scottish Funding Council. It is designed to support eligible students in state secondary schools (S4 to S6, typically ages 15-18) who are interested in pursuing higher education in visual creative subjects such as art, design, or architecture. The programme aims to demystify the application process and provide insights into creative disciplines through a variety of events and activities.

The programme is delivered collaboratively by several higher education institutions across Scotland: University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art, Robert Gordon University. These institutions collaborate to deliver ACES initiatives, which include workshops and master-classes, portfolio guidance, campus visits, application advice.

By participating in ACES, young people gain valuable exposure to creative education pathways, receive tailored support to strengthen their applications, and are encouraged to pursue their aspirations in the creative industries. This collaborative effort among Scotland's leading art and design institutions aims to make creative education more accessible and inclusive for



Key Informations

Target Age Group: 15 - 18 years old

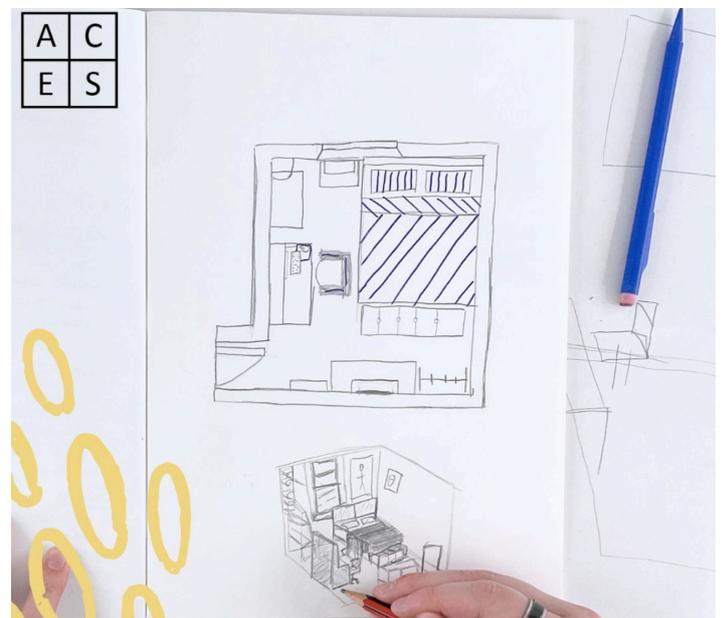
Groups Involved: University of Dundee / University of Edinburgh / Glasgow School of Art / Robert Gordon University

Eligibility: make creative education more accessible and inclusive for students from diverse backgrounds.

Time length: long term

Pupil confidence and resilience has taken a real hit in recent years. Pupils struggle to step outside of their comfort zone, particularly around travelling to new places. [The Programme Coordinator] often tries to meet pupils in schools first, to help pupils put a face to a name and to feel more confident about coming to campus. “

By **Programmer Coordinator at University of Dundee**



(Fig 4)

Live Project

LIVE PROJECTS

School of Architecture and Landscape, University of Sheffield (SSoA)

Live Projects are a pioneering educational initiative and a curriculum-based engaged learning modules introduced by the School of Architecture and Landscape at the University of Sheffield (SSoA) since 1999. Master's Architecture students work in Live Project groups with a range of clients including local community groups, not-for-profit organisations, charities, health organisations, and authorities, in Sheffield, UK and international contexts. Students collaborate with school teachers and support staff to run creative engagement and co-design activities with the children and young people. These activities are tailored to the aims of the Live Project brief and to the children's age, ability and interests. They can include paper-based design workshops, 1:1 build, or playful activities such as storytelling and performance. They can be focused on developing ideas for their existing buildings, for future projects, or to connect them more closely with their place and community. SSoA has collated an easily accessible online database of all Live Projects¹⁷. Since 2014, Live Projects have been integrated with Live Works, an extra-curricular project office that employs students and graduates on projects with external partners, often as a continuation of Live Projects.

'Co-creating our playgrounds', Sheffield, UK (2024) was run over 6 weeks (September to November 2024) with the students of Seven Hills School, in Sheffield. Architecture students worked with the children to re-imagine their playground through a collaborative process that placed the children, many with special educational needs (SEN), at the centre of design. The project transformed an empty space into a playground that invites joy, activity, and choice. Through a series of workshops, children had the opportunity to learn about architectural principles and express their unique perspective on play, which would ultimately shape their playful, interactive, and co-produced playground design. The project involved both design and 1:1 build activities. Students had to think creatively, transitioning from 2D drawings to 3D models while learning about design and different meanings of play.

Key Informations

Target Age Group: 4 - 22 years old
[primary, secondary, college level, age unspecified]

Groups Involved: Children and young people / School and College Staff / Architecture students / Staff Mentors / External Consultants

Eligibility: Work with schools and colleges that are serving vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Time length: Live Projects run 6 weeks every year; Live Works works on projects for not-for-profit organisations

Students worked extremely closely with Seven Hills students to co-produce a brief and design ideas around the young people's needs and wishes. They successfully interpreted the Seven Hills students' vision of play and joy. [The project was] led by Seven Hills young people and created a space that brought to life their ideas and dreams in an accessible and exciting way. “

By Harry Gordon, Teacher, Seven Hills School



(Fig 5)

Workshop

MY CITY, MY BODY, MY SELFIE

Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University

The workshop, founded by AHRC's Being Human Festival and led by the Welsh School of Architecture, invited teenagers who identify as female of Cardiff Youth Services to create self-portraits and overwrite urban spaces of their choice while using analogue collage techniques. The girls aged 11-14 used self-representation as a medium to celebrate, critique or reflect on their experience of public and online spaces, but also on their relationship with the Cardiff landmarks. Beginning with a tour of the Art of the Selfie exhibition at Amgueddfa Cymru, followed by discussions on women's self-representation in art at the Welsh School of Architecture, the workshop enabled girls to combine urban photography and self-portraits. This creative process was supported by a multidisciplinary team of architects, youth workers, and engagement specialists. The project successfully encouraged creative and critical engagement with identity and citizenship, provided insights into youth experiences of public spaces for policymakers, strengthened collaboration between academic and youth service providers.

Engaging 21 teenage girls from Cardiff, particularly from neighbourhoods with limited access to cultural activities, the initiative was complemented by contributions from academic, civic, and cultural partners. Funded by the AHRC, the project laid the groundwork for further research, conference presentations, publications and funding applications on civic engagement. Its success highlights the potential of creative methodologies to foster self-awareness, inclusivity, and public discourse on the role of the built environment in identity making.

Cardiff University and Welsh School of Architecture are developing a tradition of civic engagement projects that benefit both academic research and children communities. The commitment is manifested in frequent "ad hoc" live-projects, such as the Cardiff Kids Christmas Lights and Shape my Street workshops and Competitions. "My City, My Body, My Selfie" workshop builds on this collective knowledge and expertise but also explores gender representation and inclusivity issues in the built environment.

Key Informations

Target Age Group: 11 - 15 years old
[secondary school level, age unspecified]

Groups Involved: Cardiff Youth Services / Cardiff University / Architecture for Kids CIC / University of Newcastle / Amgueddfa Cymru

Eligibility: none

Time length: 3h

The workshop highlights the non-discursive dialogical advantage of selfiescapes and the power of creative methods on self and world-making. Where we may find resistance when establishing open dialogues with new communities, creative methods like collage-making can unleash silent forms of disclosure, critique and intuition, and bring unfamiliar communities together. “

By Dimitra Ntzani, Senior Lecturer at Cardiff University; Antonio Capelao, Architecture for Kids CIC, University College London; Stella Mygdali, School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape, University of Newcastle



(Fig 6)

Resource

ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PLANNING

Teresa Strachan, University of Newcastle

The book, authored by Teresa Strachan (Senior Lecturer in Planning at Newcastle University's School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape), promotes planners' agency with children and young people, being an often-overlooked aspect of the place-making process. It also offers an insight for non-planners into the policy and practice context within which planners work, the engagement barriers that they encounter and the opportunities for partnership working across professions.

The book is divided into three sections. The first part sets the scene for Youth Engagement in Planning. This involves exploring definitions, common myths and assumptions around young people and planning and creating a systematic analysis of English planning policy around community engagement and its absence of any substantive reference to young people. The second part, proposes case study projects and activities. It provides practical methods for engagement with young people to support and build dialogue with children and young people around the places where they live, play and go to school. The involvement of planning students was central to various youth engagement projects, either as part of taught modules on community engagement led by Teresa Strachan or through the voluntary extracurricular initiative "YES Planning" (a student volunteer offer delivering session to young people outside of the university formal curriculum). These projects provided students with practical experience in working with young people, using their planning knowledge to develop activities around local planning issues. The aim of the projects was to enhance young people's understanding of planning as a democratic process, amplify their voices in decision-making, develop skills for collaborating in their learning and to promote the value of planning as a career.

Key Informations

Target Age Group: The book is targeted at students of planning, planning professionals as well as other professionals that work with young people. The activities contained within the book were targeted between the ages of 8 and 24.

Groups Involved: primary and secondary schools / youth clubs / youth councils.

Eligibility: All young people were eligible to take part in the activities, but it was the contact which the project lead established with the youth group's gatekeeper that enabled the project to go ahead.

Time length: Some projects were one-off visits, involving one or two sessions with young people. Others were longer term visits delivering projects across the school over a period of some months.

Universities have been and can continue to be a valuable force for raising a wider community awareness of and involvement in planning and placemaking. Young people already know their local neighbourhoods very well and by demonstrating that this knowledge and their opinions are important, their own shared sense of agency local decisions can be nurtured. [...] The book provides a basis for any future student or academic work to have a head-start in understanding the mechanisms, the ethics and the value of working with young people on planning matters. ““

By Teresa Strachan, University of Newcastle



(Fig 7)

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The following outlines key findings from this research as well as introducing areas for further study.

4.1 Evaluating outreach connections

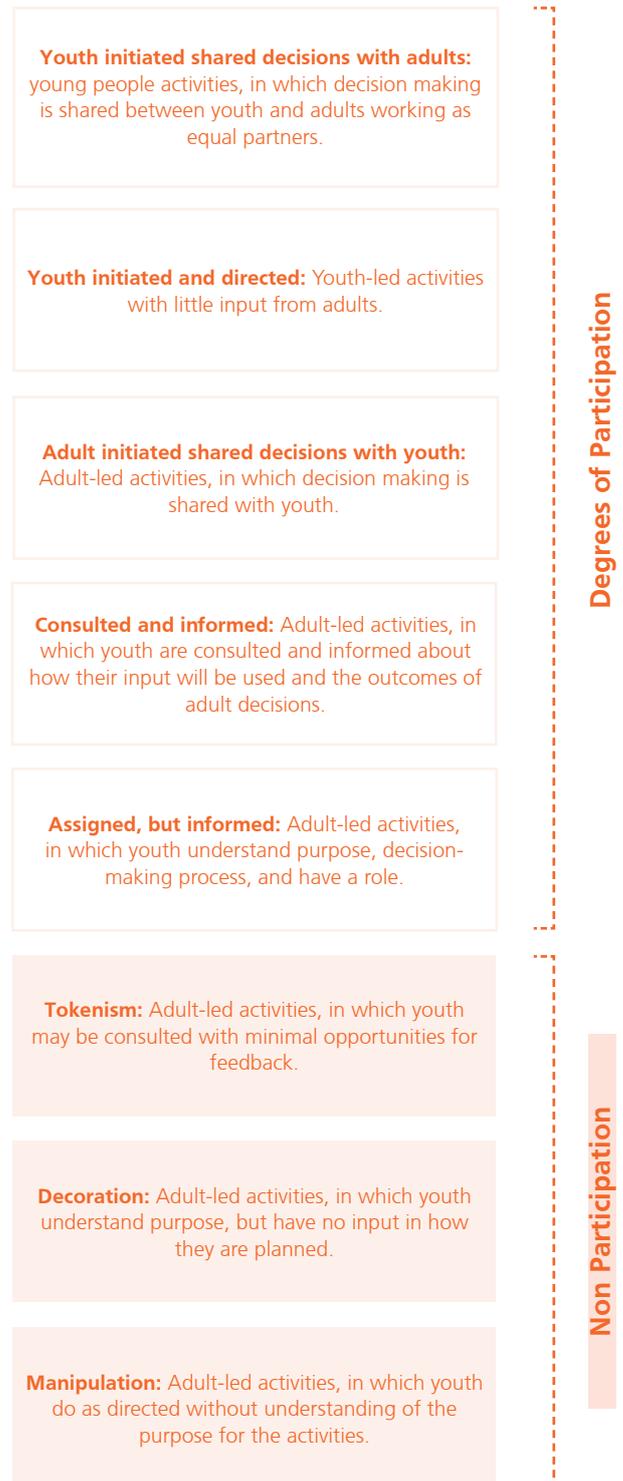
The aim of this dataset is to show the outreach activities delivered by UK schools of architecture and built environment. A review of impact and effectiveness could be done using universities' own monitoring tools such as feedback surveys. Or, more accurately, by utilising independent monitoring tools such as The Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT). The main objective of this national non-profit-making collective is to provide a monitoring and evaluation tool for the efficacy of university outreach work. Further investigation could be taken to explore the current relationship, and potential future opportunities specifically between architecture schools and this service.

Exploring the power dynamics of engagement in each of the group of interest in this study (children and young people, architecture students, architecture staff, wider university staff, industry professionals and, where relevant, the wider community) is important to expand greater research. The 'level' of engagement should always be explicit, especially when speaking of young participants and architecture students, who are in the process of learning about engagement which they will carry on to become the next generation of citizen and architects.

4.2 Bridging policy, practice, and participation

This study highlights how engagement across UK architecture and built environment schools is sporadic and varied. This is largely due to the fact that engagement with any community members, not least young people, is currently not a specific requirement from policy and industry guidelines. With greater reinforcement by organisations (such as the Architects Registration Board, the Royal Institute for British Architects and more broadly, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government), children and youth engagement practice can potentially become instilled within architecture education. There are already glimpses of progress in this direction. For instance, the Engagement Overlay to the RIBA Plan of work, mentions the role of young people in co-design and collective creative processes. However, there still remains a gap in documented best practices and tangible examples of effective engagement.

This issue is particularly relevant given the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government goal to build 1.5 million new homes in England. This raises an important question: how can young people be meaningfully involved in shaping these developments, bringing their insights, skills, and diverse perspectives to the process?



(Fig 8)

4.3 Future development

Learning Connections recognises universities as vital sites for local community connections where young people can influence adult perspectives and drive intergenerational knowledge exchange. The research serves as a foundation for deeper discussions on engagement in UK Departments of Architecture and Built Environment highlighting the value of long-term, meaningful local engagement and the vital roles of outreach teams and faculty in developing these activities.

Areas of future development:

1. How can we ensure universities engage in outreach activity? At the same time, what is the key to ensure a high level of children and young people participation in engaging activities?
2. How can universities embed youth engagement to broaden young people's perspectives?
3. Where should policy sit in those education contexts?
4. How can youth engagement benefits and informs internal universities funding decisions? How can built environments departments benefit from outreach funding?

Starting Points:

1. Strengthening university outreach and engagement: to ensure universities actively engage in outreach activities and achieve meaningful participation from children and young people, institutions must develop structured opportunities for HE staff, academics and students. Strategies include:
 - a) Embedding young outreach within architectural education.
 - b) Identifying opportunities for HE staff and academics to integrate engagement into their teaching, research and practices.
 - c) Development programmes through university outreach teams to create workshops and initiatives for schools and young groups.
 - d) Positioning children and young people as key stakeholders in design projects.
 - e) Including young people in decision-making processes of a project.

f) Strengthening collaboration forms of engagement with the university's community engagement department.

2. Embedding engagement in architectural education to broaden perspectives: universities can expand young people's perspective by embedding engagement within architectural education. Exposure to these practices at an early stage helps students recognise the value of youth involvement in design and decision-making, as well as the likelihood of incorporating them into their future professional work. To achieve this:
 - a) Integrate engagement activities into curriculum;
 - b) Provide faculty with the tools and resources to facilitate engagement in both teaching and research;
 - c) Encourage partnership between students, young people, and communities to exchange knowledge and perspectives;
 - d) Create opportunities for young people to actively participate in design processes;
 - e) Provide young people with practical, hands-on experiences, and bridge the gap between education and industries, by actively involve architectural practices, alongside third-party organisations, in facilitating outreach partnership initiatives.
3. Policy in educational contexts: policies should encourage universities to embed youth engagement in their educational frameworks. Policy should establish guidelines for this integration as part of university accreditation, curriculum development, and funding decisions. This could be done by:
 - a) Use this report as a practical and influential tool for institutions across the UK built environment sector.
 - b) Policy frameworks at national and institutional level, supported by funding bodies;
 - c) Incentive collaboration between policymakers, universities, and architectural practices;
4. Funding and institutional support: Funding has emerged as a key factor in this research.

It plays a crucial role in supporting youth engagement activities. External funding bodies, such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), have played a key role in supporting projects focusing on children and young people, recognising their long-term societal impact (see above - Workshop case study). A future component:

Developing internal funding structure dedicated to support young engagement programmes. Compared to other institutions, universities possess stable policies and strong organisational frameworks, positioning them as potential drivers of lasting change.

Lastly, for future developments, we encourage readers of this report to consider developing further research of this type of engagement by and with Thornton Education Trust (TET).

Working with young people is a core part of the Royal College of Art's community engagement strategy. We believe it's essential to create an inclusive and collaborative programme that not only inspires but also equips the next generation with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to shape the built environment. ““

By Hannah Lambert, Royal College of Arts, Community Engagement Manager



(Fig 9)

Embedding outreach programmes within architectural education is essential – it shapes empathetic, socially engaged designers who understand that meaningful architecture begins by truly listening to and collaborating with young people and local communities. I've found this direct engagement vital, informing key decisions and lessons learned across academia and professional practice. This isn't simply 'good practice' – it's how architecture remains relevant and responsive in the future. ““

By Dhruv Gulabchande, Narrative Practice

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9. Creative Bricks workshop in partnership with Imperial College and West London Zone, by Thomas Angus RCA, Community Engagement.
10. Playing and Pretend Model, City Commission. Photo credit: TomArran

TET Inspire Future Generation Awards (IFGA)

The cover page of the Report presents a 2024 IFGAwards winner: the London School of Architecture's (LSA) Part 0 campaign.

TET brings together a community of practice to recognise and celebrate excellent projects and programmes. If you want to know more about our 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, Awards Programme, visit our dedicated web-page: <https://www.thorntoneducationtrust.org/introduction>.

All TET's publications can be found here: <https://www.thorntoneducationtrust.org/publications-and-research>

ABOUT US

Thornton Education Trust (TET) is a charity created to advance education in architecture and urban design for children and young people.

TET believes that youth engagement should be recognised as a valuable part of creating better neighbourhoods and social impact. TET's aim is to build capacity in the field of engaging children and young people in the built environment through creating a community of practice via research, an awards programme and online TET Dialogues.

TET seeks to close the gap between architecture and education: to embed architecture in young people's education, and to embed young people in architecture.

About TET Goals:

- » Highlight the importance and increasing relevance of youth engagement in the built environment;
- » Embed youth-led design approaches and engagements in architecture and urban education;
- » Encourage schools to include architecture and urban design in their teaching;
- » Identify actors and fundings involved in children and young people engagements process;
- » Identify the audience of this engagement;
- » Encouraging joined-up thinking and sharing of resources;
- » Explore the value, skills, opportunities and knowledge to children and young people;
- » Inform policy
- » Show the mutual impacts and benefits of those engagements, to both youth and universities, or teachers, or practices, or developers, or local authorities;
- » Inspire the creation of a future generation of place-makers.



(Fig 9)

LEARNING CONNECTIONS ©

Thornton Education Trust
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Visit: <https://www.thorntoneducationtrust.org/>
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