

Proposal for the quadrennium programme of the UNESCO Chair in Urban Design and Conservation Studies Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design – 2025-2029

Chairholders

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1. Background

This proposal builds on the successful actions of the Chair over the past 20 years and highlights the interrelationships between the UNESCO mid-term strategy for 2022-2029 and relevant international mechanisms in the field of urban design and heritage conservation on one hand and the role of the UNESCO Chair in research and dissemination in Israel on the other.

Following the 7th October 2023 attack and subsequent conflict, the need to recognize the basic texts of the UNESCO constitution is crucial:

“That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed;

That ignorance of each other’s ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war;”

The UNESCO Chair sees its role in this critical period in pursuing UNESCO’s most basic objective to minimize the cultural misunderstandings and by that, build trust and bring people closer. The Chair understands the sensitive times and the immediate importance of regional cooperations. In the following years, the Chair will strive to revive the Mediterranean UNESCO Chairs network (MUNCH) aiming to expand regional collaborations, especially with neighboring countries, including the Palestinian territories, Egypt and Jordan.

Chair objectives

“The purpose of the Chair shall be to promote an integrated system of research, training, information and documentation in the fields of urban design and conservation studies.

It shall serve as a means of facilitating collaboration between high-level, internationally recognized researchers and teaching staff of the Academy and other institutions in Israel and elsewhere in Europe, and in other regions of the world.”¹

¹ From the 2004 agreement between UNESCO and Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem, concerning the establishment of a UNESCO Chair in Urban Design and Conservation Studies at Bezalel.

UNESCO

The main strand of the UNESCO Chair programme is in addressing the mid-term strategy, focusing on the activities of the Culture Sector at large and the World Heritage Centre in particular. As charge de mission to the Director of the World Heritage Centre, the UNESCO Chair anticipates assisting UNESCO in representing the sector in events and activities that cannot be staffed.

As part of the 2022-2029 medium-term strategy (41 C/4) reaffirms the abiding relevance of UNESCO's mandate to the achievement of sustainable development and international peace, three main areas of focus have been identified under the heading of Culture as an Enabler for Sustainable Development: Urban Heritage, Urban Sustainability and Resilience.

Within each of these fields there are a series of programmes that have been prioritised by the Chair including, inter alia, Impact Assessment, the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, the UN Habitat 2016 New Urban Agenda, Heritage and the Metropolis – *Heritopolis*, mobility, migrations and transformations. In addition, the Chair's activities in the fields of Modern Heritage in general and specifically the Modern Heritage of Africa (MoHoA) will support achieving outcomes under the strategic objectives of UNESCO's global priority Africa:

Outcome 5: "Enhance the protection and promotion of the diversity of heritage and cultural expressions".

Outcome 8: "Foster knowledge sharing and skills development in the digital age".

2. Chair activities

Vectors of research and action

The UNESCO Chair in the Bezael Academy currently focuses on six vectors of research and action, corresponding with the UNESCO Mid-Term Strategy of 2022-2029, the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 11, and the New Urban Agenda. Responding to the current demographic and spatial conditions in Israel, and addressing the urgent needs in the following fields:

1. Knowledge sharing and Capacity Building.
2. Sustainable Development.
3. Heritage and the Metropolis – *Heritopolis*.
4. Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation.
5. Densification and urban design.
6. Modern Heritage.

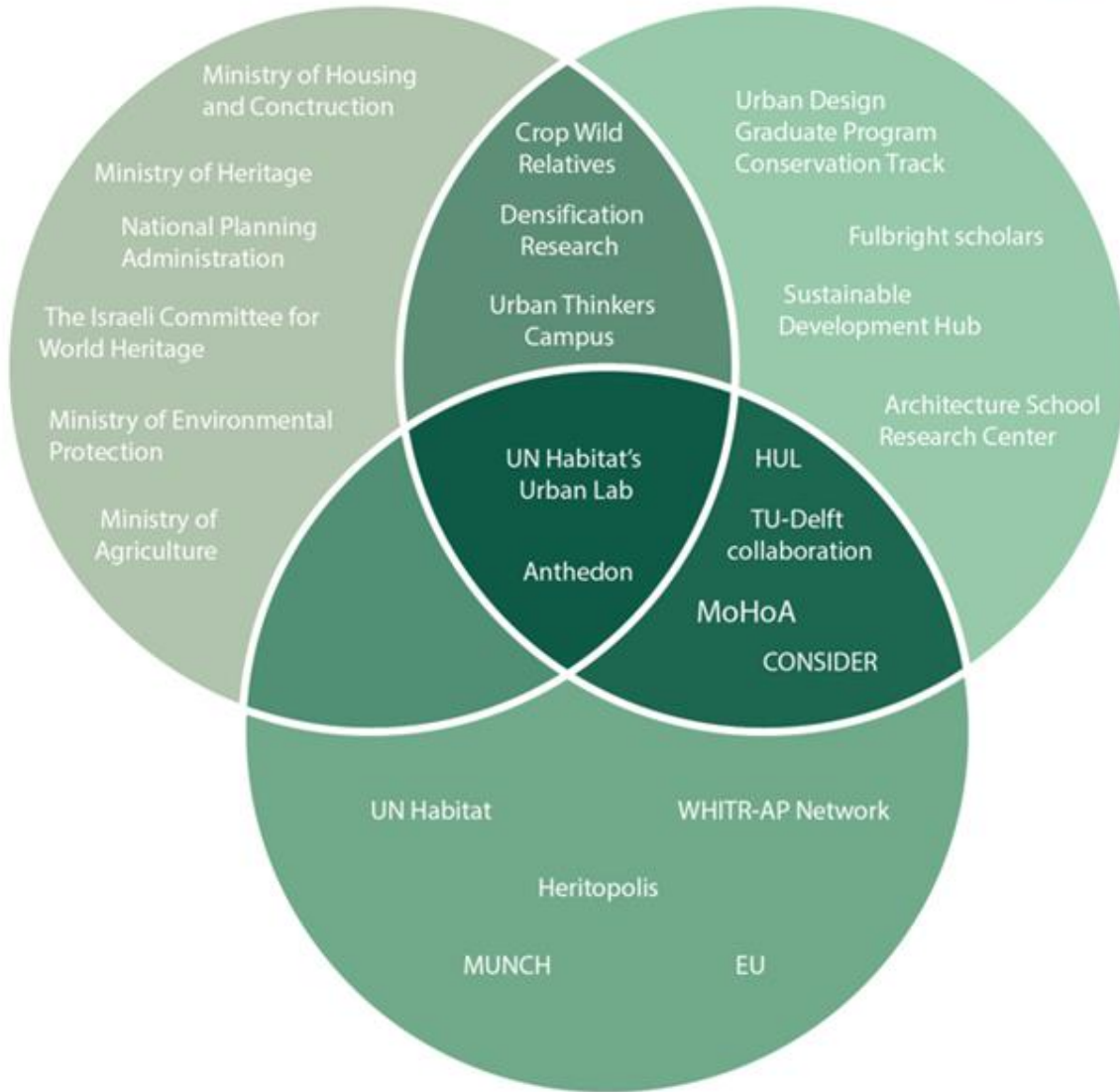
These vectors are implemented, at the national level by collaborating with governmental offices and national organisations, and internationally, leading initiatives as, *Heritopolis*, MoHoA, and as a member of the WHITR-AP network.

Current ongoing activities

The activities described below are ongoing and will continue to develop as part of this quadrennium programme:

National

Bezael Academy



International

2.1 Involvement within the Academy

Being the leading school for Arts and Design in Israel, the Bezael Academy seeks to incorporate inter-disciplinary research and activities at the national level. As part of the Research and Innovation Authority in the Academy, the UNESCO Chair has the opportunity to broaden its scope of participants and engage with students and lecturers from different departments into its research under the subjects of Urban Design and Conservation Studies.

The main activities of the Chair within Bezael Academy:

Bezael – Urban Design Graduate Programme

The UNESCO Chair is an essential part of the Urban Design Graduate Programme providing research topics for faculty and students and international connections and collaborations, as well as promoting the Sustainable Development Goals and delivering on its international commitments in education, culture, communication and information. The newly opened Conservation Track in the post professional Urban Design Graduate Programme applies in its research the Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation.

Sustainable Development Hub

Bezael's Sustainable Development Hub leads the efforts for the integration of sustainability at the Academy through the development of an academic infrastructure for teaching and research of sustainable development. Under the framework of the UNESCO Chair, the Hub aspires for educating students to design our future in the light of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The activities of the Hub give centrality and importance to sustainable development at Bezael through individual and group research studies, academic publications, conferences and seminars. It also spearheads collaborations with academic, civilian and business entities, on a municipal, national, regional and global level.

School of Architecture Research Centre on Spatial Studies

The opening of the School of Architecture Research Centre on Spatial Studies at Bezael provides the opportunities for the UNESCO Chair to encourage both students and professors from the under-graduate and post-graduate levels to join and initiate research studies in the fields of Urban Design and Conservation.

Advanced Research

Under the Fulbright Israel Scholarship Programme, creating opportunities for expanded research by post-doctoral scholars.

2.2 Involvement on the national level

The Chair at Bezael will continue its cooperation with governmental offices and national organisations, on the following projects:

Crop Wild Relatives – Culture and Cultivation

Collaborative research with the National Agriculture Research Center and Israel Nature and Parks Authority to promote the conservation of species classified as wild ancestors of domesticated plants in Israel and linking sites of natural and cultural significance.

World Heritage National Focal Point

UNESCO Chair member, Adi Sela Weiner, has been appointed by the Israel World Heritage Committee as focal point for the World Heritage periodic reporting.

Urban Thinkers' Campus - UTC

Participating in UN-Habitat's Urban Thinkers Campus programme, the Chair will support the event, entitled *Liveable Neighbourhoods in the Urban Metropolis*. In collaboration with the Ministry of Construction and Housing and Liebling House in Tel Aviv, the discussions will serve as an open space for critical exchange between stakeholders and partners aiming to promote sustainable urbanization in the urban conservation of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Densification Research

Collaborating with the Ministry of Housing and Construction of Israel, the UNESCO Chair is researching the Israeli urban and rural spaces, understanding their spatial and demographic attributes addressing the challenges of densities and in comparison with Rwanda, Korea and the Netherlands

2.3 Involvement on the international level

The Chair's activities on the international level, using the global networks of UNESCO UNITWIN and WHITR-AP, with partners in Africa for the Modern Heritage of Africa.

WHITR-AP on going establishment of the network

The Chair at Bezael takes an active role in the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region.

The Chair will be participating in the network's Urban Heritage Conservation in Higher Education Institutions International Network for Education, Research and Action (UHC-HEI Network) as part of the academic steering committee.

Adi Sela Weiner, serves as the focal point for this initiative and the Chair will be participating in the network's conference in 2025: "*Reshaping Urban Heritage Conservation in Higher Education: What, How, for Whom?*"

<http://www.whitr-ap.org/>

MoHoA

Partners with the World Heritage Centre and the Africa World Heritage Fund in supporting the Modern Heritage of Africa – MoHoA with the Swahilipot Hub, Mombasa, the University of Cape Town, and University College London.

UNESCO Chair TU-Delft and Heriland

Ongoing partnership with the UNESCO Chair on Heritage and Values at TU-Delft, including advanced research and as one of the outcomes of the EU Horizon project - the Heriland College of Heritage Planning – www.heriland.eu

UN Habitat UNI – metrohub - Heritopolis

The UNESCO Chair was instrumental in establishing the UN-Habitat UNI consortium on Heritage and the Metropolis – *Heritopolis*, now embracing over 20

universities and metropolises including two-thirds with World Heritage sites. Serving as a member of the Executive Board, the Chair will continue promoting research linking heritage and metropolitan issues towards sustainable urban development - <https://heritopolis.org/> .

Anthedon

Rethinking the region of Gaza Strip as a transboundary metropolis for cooperation and peace engaging the shared responsibilities of cultural and natural heritage. Under the auspices of UN-Habitat's consortium on Heritage and the Metropolis, *Heritopolis* engages experts from around the world with individual Israeli and Palestinian partners. This initiative calls for a shared Vision of Hope for this region of conflict.

3. Towards 2029

“UNESCO's founding vision was born in response to a world war marked by racist and anti-Semitic violence. Seventy years later and many liberation struggles later, UNESCO's mandate is more relevant than ever. Cultural diversity is under attack and new forms of intolerance, rejection of scientific facts and threats to freedom of expression challenge peace and human rights. In response, UNESCO's duty remains to reaffirm the humanist missions of education, science and culture.”²

Quoting UNESCO's Vision, the UNESCO Chair in Bezael Academy sees its responsibility representing the global agenda to promote actions for peace. The ongoing armed conflict in the region highlights the importance for actions based on tolerance and respect for the diversity of cultures, people and heritage in order to obtain the human rights that all the inhabitants of the area deserve. The UNESCO Chair will continue its activities of research and national and international collaborations in the fields of urban design and conservation studies while addressing the challenges of the coming years and will act to fulfil UNESCO's vision in its field of actions.

3.1 Action Plan

In addition to the ongoing and developing projects and actions listed in section 2, the UNESCO Chair will expand its activities considering the vectors of action described and with sensitivity to the current regional situation.

In the coming years, the Chair will emphasize capacity building especially for emerging professionals in the graduate programme and the promotion of postdoctoral scholars, especially under the Fulbright scholarship scheme.

The Chair will be expanding its research in the fields of conservation studies showcasing the urban heritage of Tel Aviv in its centennial celebration of the Geddes garden city plan. This will include the application of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape and the UN-Habitat My Neighbourhood principles.

² UNESCO Vision, <https://www.unesco.org/en/brief>

In addition, the Chair will continue to apply for relevant scholarships and grants within the EU community and beyond.

Proposed Projects:

Based on Article 4 of the Chair Agreement, faculty members, Adi Sela Wiener and Dr Elad Persov have joined the UNESCO Chair activities. Currently, beyond the continuation of existing activities, the following projects will be developed over the next quadrennium with national and international partners:

a. **MUNCH – reactivating the network**

The current political instability strengthens the need for firm connections, thus re-initiating the Mediterranean UNESCO Chairs network will be an important project for the Chair in the coming years. As stated in the opening of this document, the need to reach out for regional cooperation is a crucial tool for progressing towards achieving UNESCO's objectives.

b. **Localising SDGs**

The UNESCO Chair will broaden the academic discussion on localising SDGs at the Graduate Programme in Urban Design using the Historic Urban Landscape Recommendations as well as the UN Habitat 'MY Neighbourhood' Toolkit principles as a basis for the discussion.

c. **World Heritage National Tentative List**

Assisting the Israel World Heritage Committee in preparing an updated proposal for the Tentative List of World Heritage properties.

d. **Founding a National Academic Centre for Conservation Studies in Bezael**

The Chair will be taking an active role in the formation of the Centre and developing the curriculum that has been approved by the Israeli Ministry of Heritage.

e. **Urban Lab**

Partnering with UN-Habitat, Bezael will initiate the collaboration with the UN-Habitat Urban Lab project. Alongside the Ministry of Housing and Construction integrating heritage into the Urban Lab project, the Chair will lay the foundations for shared initiatives between UN-Habitat, Bezael Academy and the municipal and governmental authorities.

f. **Heritopolis**

The UNESCO Chair is an initiator of the Heritage and the Metropolis UNI consortium of UN-Habitat – www.heritopolis.org and will participate in the consortium activities, including conferences and webinars. It is proposed to develop the relevance of the HUL Recommendation at the metropolitan scale in adopting the New Urban Agenda on spatial sustainability

Within the framework of *Heritopolis*, a peace initiative has been started – Anthedon | Visions of Hope - described on section 2.

g. **Modern Heritage of Africa – MoHoA**

Faculty are involved in the documentation of Modern Heritage in Nigeria and the preparation for its Tentative Listing. This is part of the collaboration with the institutions of MoHoA and specifically University of Cape Town, Swahilipot Mombasa and Ife University.

4. Budget

The financial contribution to the UNESCO Chair from the Bezael Academy includes a component part of the salary of the UNESCO Chairholder and support for research assistants on a project-by-project basis within a proposed annual sum of \$25,000.

The Israeli Ministry of Education will contribute \$80,000 over the next two years for assisting the Israel World Heritage Committee in preparing an updated proposal for the Tentative List of World Heritage properties.

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