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How is hearing heard in 2nd year architectural design education?

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Architects are often accused of "not being interested in acoustics because it is invisible". Surely, architectural design, particularly at preliminary stage, has always been driven visually: architects usually develop a project by vision, not by hearing. On the other hand, designing architects have to deal creatively with more or less invisible parameters: socio-cultural demands, climatic aspects as wind or temperature, or even daylight which can be considered to be visible but certainly is everything but constant. If an architect's design ability is about observation and awareness, and to give an example, if light is considered to be much more than just being bright or dark, how then could we implement early awareness that sound is much more than noise or silence, and that sound planning is much more than just using anti-noise-panels? We asked 2ndyear architecture students at Waterford Institute of Technology to (re-)think the architecture of schools and to question the sound qualities and their own sound recollection of such an environment.

The paper will outline the teaching approach and present some student's responses to the given aims and brief. Finally, the lessons learnt by teaching staff will be summarized.