

Bridging capacities to advance resilience of human settlements.

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Aalto WiT Programme is a new transdisciplinary **professional diploma programme** organised by the World in Transition Research LAB (WiTLAB) at Aalto University.

The programme focuses on **advancing the resilience of human settlements in low- and middle-income countries**. It aims to promote a holistic understanding of forces of change affecting our societies by bridging the gap between theory and practice by combining scientific methodologies with practical experience.

Aalto WiT Programme applies new **theoretical and practice-based pedagogical methods in resilience and systems thinking**. The modules include problem-based and transformative learning approaches in real-life case studies.

The case studies are designed in collaboration with partner organisations and communities globally, each supported and informed by research projects that link to thematic areas of WiTLAB. **Aalto WiT Programme also provides the possibility for work-life experience with partnering organisations** in the field of development and global sustainability.

The WiT Programme is aimed at professionals and academics in the fields of **architecture, landscape architecture, design, engineering, management, finance, economy, sociology and anthropology**, who are passionate about building a better future. It equally offers possibilities for organisations that work in the humanitarian and development fields and wish to open up opportunities and engage professionals in their fields.

Image | Kristjana Adalgeirsdóttir



Programme description

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The rapid changes in our societal and environmental contexts highlight the importance of **collaboration between academia and practice-orientated organisations**. To address the societal challenges, such as uncontrolled urbanisation, forced migration, humanitarian crises, conflicts, and long-term poverty reduction, **Aalto WiT Programme is designed to facilitate consistent and sustainable collaboration between academia and industry alike**. It strives towards decolonised practices with engaged partners, based on mutual knowledge creation and sharing, aiming at societal impact and local development.

Aalto WiT Programme is informed by high-level strategies aimed at addressing global challenges. It connects to the larger framework of the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 11 "Sustainable cities and communities". It promotes holistic understanding of issues related and identified in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, and the New Way of Working. The programme also supports the new Africa strategies of the EU, Finnish Government and the Ministry of Education, as well as Aalto University's strategy for Lifewide-Learning.

Aalto WiT Programme provides a discursive and transformative learning platform for academics and professionals who wish to deepen their expertise on the pressing and wicked problems in low- and middle-income countries. The programme

prepares participants to work in challenging transdisciplinary and intercultural situations with vulnerable communities, employing **resilience and systems thinking, and the Training of Trainers (ToT) model**.

The WiT Programme applies **transformative and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approaches** in case studies, in collaboration with local universities, organisations, governments and local communities in low- and middle-income countries. PBL is a vehicle for the development of problem-solving skills. Combined with the ToT model, it provides content knowledge and capacities such as self-leadership, communication and teamwork, which are essential skills and dispositions supporting Lifewide-Learning.

The pedagogical methodologies include intensive workshops, real-life case studies (including field studies), design assignments, as well as theoretical and design research. The final deliverables consist of a personal portfolio that compiles the key learnings of each area of the programme.

In addition to the academic content, Aalto WiT Programme provides meaningful and relevant **work-life experiences** with the partnering organisations. This facilitates the **bridging of capacities** of those who wish to engage in **advancing resilience** of human settlements in low- and middle income countries.

Image | Helena Sandman



General principles

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Operating in the field of **societal development in the humanitarian context**, the general principles of Aalto WiT Programme can be articulated as follows:

- Combining theoretical knowledge with physical, embodied cognition of cultural and climatic realities of places and cultures other than one's own
- Cultivating sensitivity in cross-cultural encounters and respectful communication
- Fostering awareness of one's own cultural prejudices and willingness to surpass them
- Promoting decolonial practices and social inclusion of minorities / other vulnerable groups
- Connecting research, education and societal impact by engaging multidisciplinary professionals as co-learners and catalysts for building local capacity in disaster-prone areas and vulnerable communities
- Emphasising transferable skills and humanistic approaches, regardless of one's own disciplinary positions or cultural origins
- Embracing the undefined conditions of uncertainty and unpredictability, both in research for theoretical knowledge and as an aspect of practical fieldwork



Image | Saija Hollmén



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Expected outcomes

- Combine knowledge and practical experience in societal development in the humanitarian context
- Acquire strategic and practical knowledge about methods, tools and procedures in multi-stakeholder environments
- Utilise methods for planning, management and implementation of projects in partnership with stakeholders
- Gain capacities to enhance preparedness and resilience of societies amidst crises
- Communicate and collaborate with stakeholders in identifying and responding to the needs of vulnerable communities
- Develop personal competencies in transdisciplinary and intercultural collaboration

Practical information

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Application period	15.8 - 30.9.2023
Duration	5 months (Jan-May) Period III-V
Prerequisites	Master's degree, or bachelor's degree + 3 years of working experience
Credits	30 credits diploma

Language	English
Mode of study	On-site and hybrid
Tuition fees	9,200 € + 24 % VAT
Contact	Anahita Rashidfarokhi anahita.rashidfarokhi@aalto.fi
Websites	aalto.fi/en/wit-programme aalto.fi/en/witlab

Aalto WiTLAB

Aalto WiTLAB (World in Transition Research LAB) is an interdisciplinary cross-school research and education unit hosting collaborative initiatives across Aalto University, rooted in the sustainable development of the built environment in vulnerable communities and fragile environments globally.

Aalto WiTLAB serves as a **platform for researchers and projects focusing on resilient human settlements, humanitarian architecture, community engagement and grassroots action**. It furthers Aalto University's strategy on sustainability, transdisciplinary collaboration and Lifewide-Learning.

Aalto WiTLAB provides a flexible and horizontal network for units and individuals within and outside Aalto University, with a variety of interests and professional experience on related topics. The international experience of the members creates a vast global network of experts, institutes, programs and universities. **It is a forum of discussion and action for people within the academia, who are passionate to change the world for the better.**

Aalto WiTLAB coordinates and carries out basic and applied research, publication of topical literature and expert assignments on the above-mentioned themes. It also supports master's level and continuing education courses through real-life case studies in collaboration with partners outside academia.

Image | Anne Kinnunen

