

Reinvention predicted in the field of architecture

By  Kevin Bingham

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In many professional fields, the explosion of multimedia options have given the public an array of resources and 'wisdom' on architecture, medicine, IT and graphics, to name a few. One can now self-diagnose on the internet and purchase medicines over the counter, and also create one's own web page and business cards through downloadable programmes and apps.



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Architecture and design have seen a multitude of property and interiors magazines, and TV shows on these subjects, with most designers nowadays being presented at the initial client briefing with an array of magazine clippings or saved images of the client's desired outcome. While each publication will have its own view on good architecture, it is reference to SAIA linked awards that offer the public a more accurate review on excellence, as peer reviewed by other architects and eminent persons in the associated fields. Two good examples of these are the recent [Corobrik-SAIA Awards](#) and the [AfriSam-SAIA Awards](#).

Some may feel that architecture as a profession has been under threat for a number of years. This is largely due to the lack of marketing on the part of architects themselves, and therefore the lack of understanding by the public of the value of the eight years of study and internship required, enabling one to register as a professional architect.

Practice

Indications are that 2017 will bring with it a tightening economy. In architecture, the many practices that currently have an abundance of work will, amongst smaller projects, be looking ahead to the end of 2017 for their next big project. Those that are seeing a drying up of office work will need to rely on the goodwill of other SAIA members for communal support, through out-sourced work.

Education

Architecture education is facing challenges within its current university locales. Academics are witnessing an increasing demand upon them from the university administrators to make them more viable and are being required to increase student intakes, and to limit staff to student ratios. The on-going #feesmustfall campaign will not assist this progression, but is seeing a reliance on alternative modes of information sharing, mostly online. A mix of face-to-face learning with internet-

linked teaching, known as 'blended learning', is becoming popular internationally, and will certainly result in reducing the high costs of maintaining the university machines.

Sustainability

While this has long been a buzzword, it is beyond doubt that our natural resources are becoming increasingly stretched, and that elements that are architect influenced, including water supply, waste management and energy generation, are key factors in creating buildings that will aim for the reuse of resources and hence greater sustainability. Excellent examples of this care in design are being completed every year, some scoring exceptionally high in South Africa's [Green Star SA rating system](#).

It is rewarding to see that some buildings being commissioned by the South African government are being designed to meet the highest sustainability ratings, and I have no doubt that this will become a standard for all government buildings into the future.

Reinvention and rework

Linked to sustainability is the reinvention of old buildings, and their reuse. This again is not a new concept, but the local injection of new life into deteriorating precincts of South African cities has borne fruit. The Maboneng Precinct in Johannesburg is one example of rebirth, with some of the former residents and industries of the area being incorporated into the new framework. This and current work in others centres will become growth points in 2017.

Quality through regulation

There is an increase in regulation of the architectural profession by the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP). The stated aim for this is to improve the quality of architecture in our environment. All persons performing architectural work must be registered with the council.

Architecture principals are responsible for the outputs from their practices and sign confirming their responsibilities for the project, when submitting drawings to the various local authorities. For years, developers have been seeking ways to make developments more economical. One method of achieving this is by employing architects or technologists to carry out a limited service, say up until plan submission stage. The author of the drawings, however, still remains liable for the work, and in signing this responsibility, would be foolish not to inspect the work in progress on site. I foresee a greater tightening of regulations in 2017.

Specialisation

While most architecture graduates start their careers as generalists, it can be envisaged that there will be a further move to specialisations in services offered. The responsibility of being the principal agent on large projects and taking on the global assurances for the work of other consultants, and the functioning of their delicate equipment, is often an unfair reality. This will ensure that some architects will engage in their own individual specialities of either design, detailing, or site supervision, with some elements of the procurement process, and the related responsibilities, being managed by 'experts' in those skills.

ABOUT KEVIN BINGHAM

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