

AZA2015 aims to challenge architectural fraternities

AZA2015, hosted by the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA), will tackle the much debated topic of our cities' future.

With leading industry minds coming together, the event promises to challenge visionary thinkers in the architectural and design fraternities. AZA2015 will be taking place at The Sheds in Johannesburg from 24 to 26 September.



Julia King

Julia King is an architectural designer focusing on sanitation and participatory processes in developing countries. She is currently working on the United Kingdom's Economic and Social Research Council funded project 'Super-diverse streets: Economies and spaces of urban migration'.

The project explores the intersections between city streets, social diversity and economic adaptations in the context of accelerated urban migration in the UK. The research is a comparative analysis of 'super-diverse' high streets that aims to explore how urban retail economies and spaces are shaped by and shape migrant practices.

Rule-based design

In addition, Steffen Lemmerzähl, co-founder of SLIK Architekten in Zürich, Switzerland, will grapple with rule-based architectural design. He has been using and programming computers for more than 20 years and combined both worlds as the Chair for Computer Aided Architectural Design at ETH Zürich from 2004 to 2010, where he covered algorithm-based design methods and advanced use of 3D/Visualisation techniques.

Lemmerzähl will head the AZA2015 Parametric Design Masterclass alongside Enrico Daffoncio, which is taking place from 26 to 28 September 2015. The masterclass is an intensive, two and a half day programme and aimed at the design and construction of innovative pavilion prototypes.

There has been a lot of focus on the need to create equitable, inclusive cities under the mantra of the 'right to the city'. "This is an architectural project; I don't see this as a problem of rights - all citizens have right, it is the actualisation of the rights into practice which is missing," says King.



Steffen Lemmerzähl

Lemmerzähl adds that some experts speak of a big 'void' in the art world and that he envisions that architects and designers face a similar change of direction. "Here in Switzerland some architects get inspired by pre-modern designs; others try to be as pragmatic as possible within the traditions of modernity. Not one of them can inspire a whole generation of architects any more. It is likely that whatever the future will bring for design won't originate from Europe or America for the first time in centuries."

Architect's role

"Architects should play a critical role in building cities capable of engaging with the complexities of what we can call the 'majority world'. This involves engaging within the reality of which everyday experiences are lived and created. As we see the erasure of social welfare and the simultaneous deployment of rapid, unchecked urbanisation, we need to understand and operate within emerging formations of city making," King says.

Lemmerzähl adds to this that architects' role right now is translating the mental state of society into spaces and argues that a shift needs to take place where industry should spend more time influencing the mental state of society through politics

and cultural debates.

"Right now, two different kinds of cities come to our attention. Firstly, shrinking cities where we need to find formulas on how to keep them liveable with hardly any budget available. In these cities architects can enable the residents to help themselves, mostly by sharing designs and ideas. On the other hand, booming cities are facing waves of gentrification that drive broad levels of the population out of town. Here architects should help to find ways to make affordable housing possible, even in the hippest districts," shares Lemmerzähl.

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