

# A broader view of sustainable architecture

The AfriSam-SAIA awards programme for Sustainable Architecture was launched at the Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) Convention in Cape Town in October 2009.

One of the functions of the SAIA – the South African Institute of Architects – is to recognise and promote excellence in architecture and to create public awareness and debate on architectural issues. The awards programme is in support of these goals.

AfriSam, a leading producer of building materials in southern Africa, has committed itself to protecting the environment through conscientious and responsible manufacturing processes and a responsible attitude towards the impact of its business operations on people and the environment. As the sponsor of this award, AfriSam is proud to be associated with the SAIA in recognising outstanding achievement in sustainable architecture.

It is of particular interest to note that the Call for Entries, as posted on the SAIA website, states that the tone of the adjudication will be set by an aspirational scale which is drawn from the conception of living systems design processes developed by Bill Reed. Reed is an internationally recognised proponent and practitioner in sustainability and regeneration. He is a principal in the Integrative Design Collaborative and Regeneration and is considered one of the most experienced and visionary professionals in the field.

The scale defines a Trajectory of Environmentally Responsible Design extending from 'Limiting the Damage', to 'Neutral', to 'Regenerative'. It looks well beyond the current conception of 'green design' towards a more comprehensive, whole systems perspective of ecologically considerate design.

Limiting the Damage, which is defined as still degenerative, encompasses what is termed 'high performance design' and 'green design'.

High performance design is described as design that realises high efficiency and reduced

impact in the building structure, operations and site activities, but that, by focusing on technical efficiency, may exclude larger natural system benefits.

Green design, according to the scale, is considered a general term implying a direction of improvement in design towards a whole and healthy integration of human activities with natural systems.

Sustainable design is benchmarked at the Neutral level – referring to green design with an emphasis on reaching a point of being able to sustain the health of the planet's organisms and systems over time. Sustainability is seen as the inflection point from degenerating to regenerating health.

Moving up the scale, at the Regenerative level, we see 'restorative design', 'regenerative design', and ultimately 'whole system integration process'.

Restorative design considers using the activities of design and building to restore the capability of local natural systems to a healthy state of self-organisation.

Regenerative design goes further: starting with place based, context specific design and engaging key stakeholders and processes of the place (people, earth systems and the consciousness that energizes and connects them) to build the capability of the people – through the design process – to develop continuous and healthy relationships within their environment. It indicates a continuous learning process of integrated co-evolution.

Regenerative design moves towards whole system integration in a process that seeks to optimise the relationships among key systems and entities in the service of desired objectives. It looks beyond the constraints of a site to the larger whole.

Against this background the detailed appraisal of submissions for the awards programme will consider, more specifically, four criteria as key elements of sustainable design: paradigm shifting; people upliftment; planet rejuvenation; and place-making performance. Entries for the awards are invited from members of the SAIA



A diagrammatic representation of Bill Reed's Trajectory of Environmentally Responsible Design, as adapted by Eco Design Architects.

and should be submitted to the Institute's offices in Randburg, Johannesburg, by 12h00 on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2010. Work may be submitted by the author, or nominated by any SAIA member with the author's or other responsible person's permission.

Architectural projects, research or works of social importance that fall within the description of sustainable architecture and were completed and occupied between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2008, are eligible for entry for the 2009-2010 awards programme.

The panel of adjudicators, convened by the president of the SAIA, will meet in the first week of March

[www.saia.org.za](http://www.saia.org.za)  
[www.afrisam.co.za](http://www.afrisam.co.za)  
[www.integrativedesign.net](http://www.integrativedesign.net)  
[www.ecodesignarchitects.co.za](http://www.ecodesignarchitects.co.za)

2010 to select the projects it chooses to inspect from the submitted entries. For projects in remote areas or outside South Africa, additional video material is requested as part of the submission, in case *in loco* inspection is not possible.

The judging panel includes Al Stratford, president of the SAIA; architects Daniel Irurah, Gerrit Jordaan, and Andy Horn (referred by the GBCSA); Mike McDonald from AfriSam, and Dr Mongane Wally Serote.

The adjudication process will run from March through June and the awards will be announced in September 2010, during the SAIA's biennial convention.