Architecture as a response to social issues

By Jamie Matroos   16 May 2016

Social impact architect Alfredo Brillembourg was inspired by great designers who worked to provide solutions to social concerns. "All of them were doing architecture because they had these social and utopian beliefs about changing the world," says Brillembourg.

The co-founder of Urban-Think Tank(U-TT), Brillembourg uses his own skills in projects that tackle a major concern around the world: the lack of adequate housing and the proliferation of informal settlements.

Alfredo Brillembourg: Architecture as a response to social issues from Design Indaba

In South Africa, U-TT's Empower Shack is an innovative, urban design solution to the housing crisis left behind by the Apartheid regime. When the legislated system of racial segregation was abolished in 1994, the new democratic government was tasked with providing millions of people of colour with the infrastructure, housing, and sanitation denied them by the previous regime.

With his project, Brillembourg hopes to provide a hybrid form of informal and formal housing. The initiative builds interdisciplinary and participatory housing prototypes in the BT-Section of Khayelitsha, Cape Town.

"If we don't attend the housing crisis now it will be a catastrophe," says Brillembourg. "Things will get denser, criminality will increase, there will be people banging on the doors of the city centre."