

Perspectives of Architects and Communities on Participatory Architecture for Vulnerable Social Groups in Latin America

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Aim

Following the end of World War II, the number of vulnerable social groups in Latin America have increased. According to this situation, participatory architectural practices have started to emerge. Especially since the 2000s, new generation of architects has been practicing alternative design approaches that emphasize the process instead of the result. The interest in such works is growing through architectural awards and exhibitions, but most are only presented on websites from the architect's viewpoint. A few newspapers and TV programs mention the community's perspective, even though their opinion is also needed in the case of such social projects. This research analyzes 35 cases of participatory architecture for vulnerable social groups in Latin America, comparing the architect's intention and the community's opinion to clarify the various approaches and future directions.

1.2. Research objects

Thirty-five (35) internationally recognized^[1] projects from Latin America^[2] built between 2000-2020 were selected as research objects based on the keywords 'participatory' and 'community', including variations such as 'communal' and 'collaborative'. An example of analysis is shown in figure 1.

2. Participatory Processes

2.1. Project Phases

Chapter 2 analyses the phases the architects and communities participate in according to the project descriptions^[3]. Four phases were found: [Negotiation], [Design], [Construction] and [Post-Occupancy] (figure 2). The community always participates in the [Negotiation] and [Post-Occupancy] phases, and the architects always take part in the [Design] and [Construction] phases. The [Negotiation] phase concerns the stage of settling the land, resources and fundin-

gs. The [Design] phase consists of the diagnostic within the community and the conception of the project. The [Construction] phase is associated with the management of the construction site and the construction itself. The [Post-Occupancy] phase involves the building use and its continuing management, maintenance or expansion.

2.2 Types of Participation

Two types of architect and two types of community phases were established. The types of architect participation are: *Type [A-all]* participates in all phases; *Type [A-part]* participates either from negotiation to construction phase or only in the design and the construction phases. The types of community participation are: *Type [C-all]* participates in all phases from negotiation to the post-occupancy phase; *Type [C-part]* participates in all stages except the construction or design stage. The combination of each type of architect and community generates four types of participation **T1**, **T2**, **T3**, and **T4**. Type **T4** involves partial community engagement, and it varies based on the priority given by the architect to community involvement in either the [Design] phase or the [Construction] phase.

3. Subjects by Architects and Communities

The content of Architects' Intentions and Communities' Opinions were analyzed through the KJ method (figure 3) and divided according to the mentioned subjects into two categories: [Society] and [Building]. [Society] includes subjects related to social transformation composed of <politics>, <economics>, <education>, and <culture>. [Building] includes subjects related to architecture and its surrounding environment, consisting of <space>, <construction>, <infrastructure>, and <sustainability>.

3.1. Architects' Intentions

This chapter analyses Architects' Intentions extracted from their official home pages^[3]. As seen from

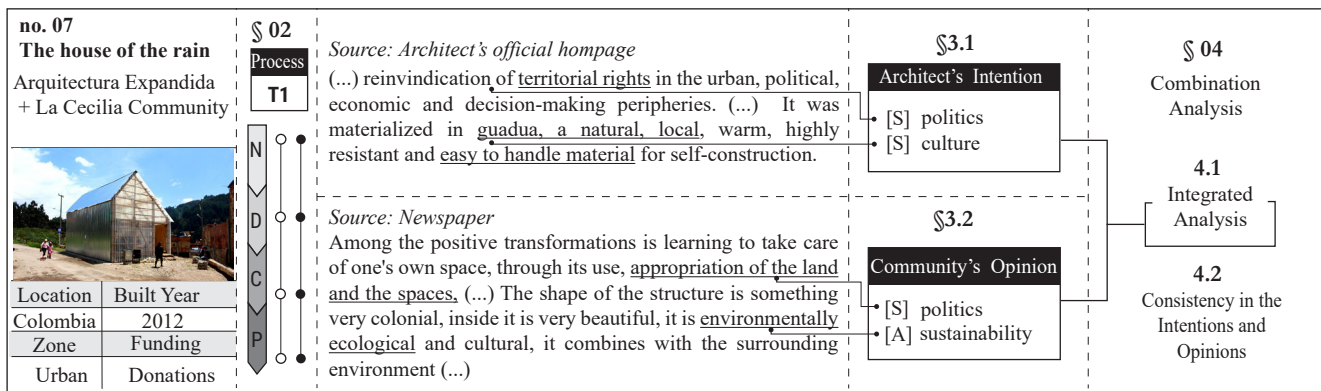


Fig. 1 Example of Analysis

the figure 3, [Society] slightly dominates the Intentions with an emphasis on <politics>, <education>, and <culture> standing for more than 85% of topics divided evenly between each other, while <economics> remains a minor subject. Notably, the subject of <politics> is totally dominated by community empowerment, while <education> is often discussed in relation to training and self-construction. Considering the [Building] category, it is dominated by <sustainability> followed up by <space> and <construction>, while <infrastructure> stands for the remaining 15% of the discussed topics. The largest subject <sustainability> is mostly discussed in relation to environmental issues that stand for almost half of the topics, while quality with focus on disaster resistance totally dominates <construction>. The topics within <space> are rather evenly distributed.

3.2. Communities' Opinion

This chapter analyses Communities' Opinions mainly extracted from newspapers and communities' official webpages^[4]. Similar to Intention, Opinions are dominated by [Society] standing for more than 70% of the discussion where nearly half of the topics are located under <politics> with emphasis on community

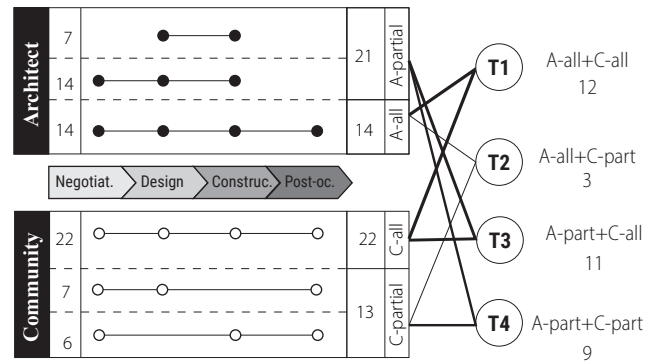


Fig. 2 Participatory process analysis and types of participation

empowerment, while <education> stands for almost 1/3 of the topics. Considering the [Building], communities tend to put less attention to this category where most of the topics are located under <space> and <sustainability> with a special attention to security of the environment.

3.3. Comparative Analysis between Intentions and Opinions

Overall, both Intentions and Opinions are dominated by discussions of social issues, especially related to <politics> and <education>. Issues related to [Build-

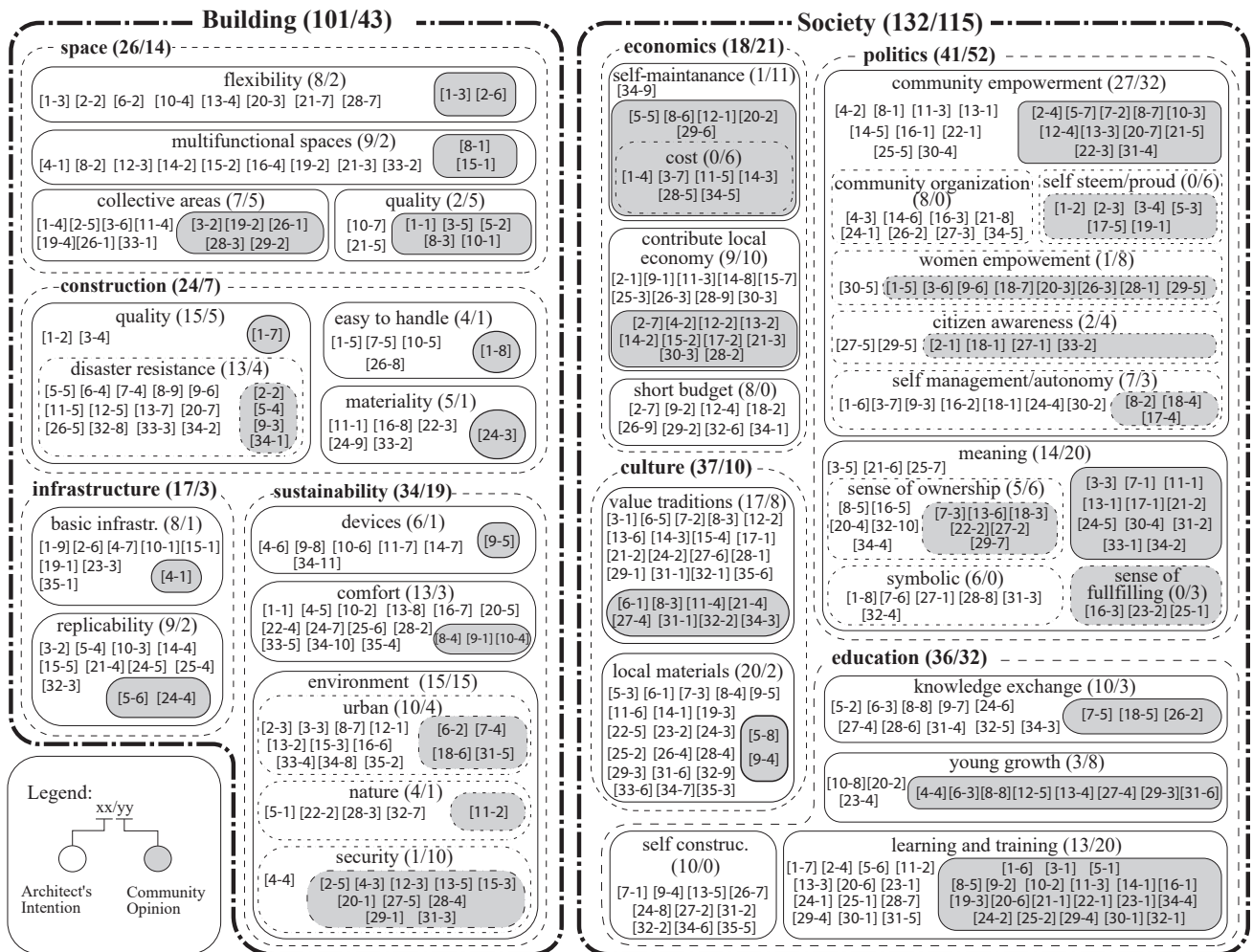


Fig. 3 Architects' Intention and Communities Opinion through the KJ method analysis

ing] are naturally discussed more by the architects, often through subjects of <construction> and <sustainability>. However, the most important topics for the communities are secure building environment and construction quality resilient to natural disasters.

4. Consistency between Intentions and Opinions

Based on the KJ analysis from the previous chapter, attention has been paid to whether similar subjects were discussed by both architects and community in the same project. Cases were divided into two categories: {consistent} composes cases that at least include one subject overlapping in both Intentions and Opinions, whereas {non-consistent} composes cases that Intentions and Opinions share nothing. Subjects of [Building] were further divided into two sides, focusing on <space> or <construction> as *con+spa*, while focusing on <infrastructure> or <sustainability> as *sus+inf*. Similarly, subjects of [Society] were divided into *eco+pol* and *cul+edu*. Six groups were further formed based on the similarity of consistency in cases: Inside [Building], B1 consists of cases with consistency on both sides, *con+spa* and *sus+inf*, B2 consists of cases with either one side of consistency; while in Bn, intentions and opinions are non-consistent. S1, S2 and Sn were defined similarly in [Society]. S1 and S2 groups are more significant than Sn group. On the other hand, in the [Building] category,

approximately half of the projects are in the Bn group, from which we can see that the community generally have different perspectives about the architecture itself. Furthermore, in S1, political-education-oriented Intentions are the overall largest mentioned, while in the B1 space-sustainability-oriented ones stand out.

4.2 Types of consistency

Eight consistency types were generated by combining six groups. The combinations between {consistent} groups are the most recurrent, together counting near half of the total number (15 out of 35). However, type **vi**. Bn + S1, composed of [Building]x {non-consistent} and [Society]x {consistent}, is the most appearing, which means a tendency of shared ideas in [Society] with separate perspectives between architects and community in [Building]. The type **viii**. [Bn] + [Sn] is also frequent, which may indicate distinct perspectives between architects and communities.

5. Relationship of Participation and Consistency

The analysis in figure 5 illustrates the relationship between types of participation and consistency. Firstly, consistency types were distributed from (i) with the largest amount of overlapping Intentions and Opinions, to (viii) with the least consistency between the two. Following, the types were organized into four categories: projects with consistency in both [B] and [S] are defined as **both B and S**. The ones only showing consistency in

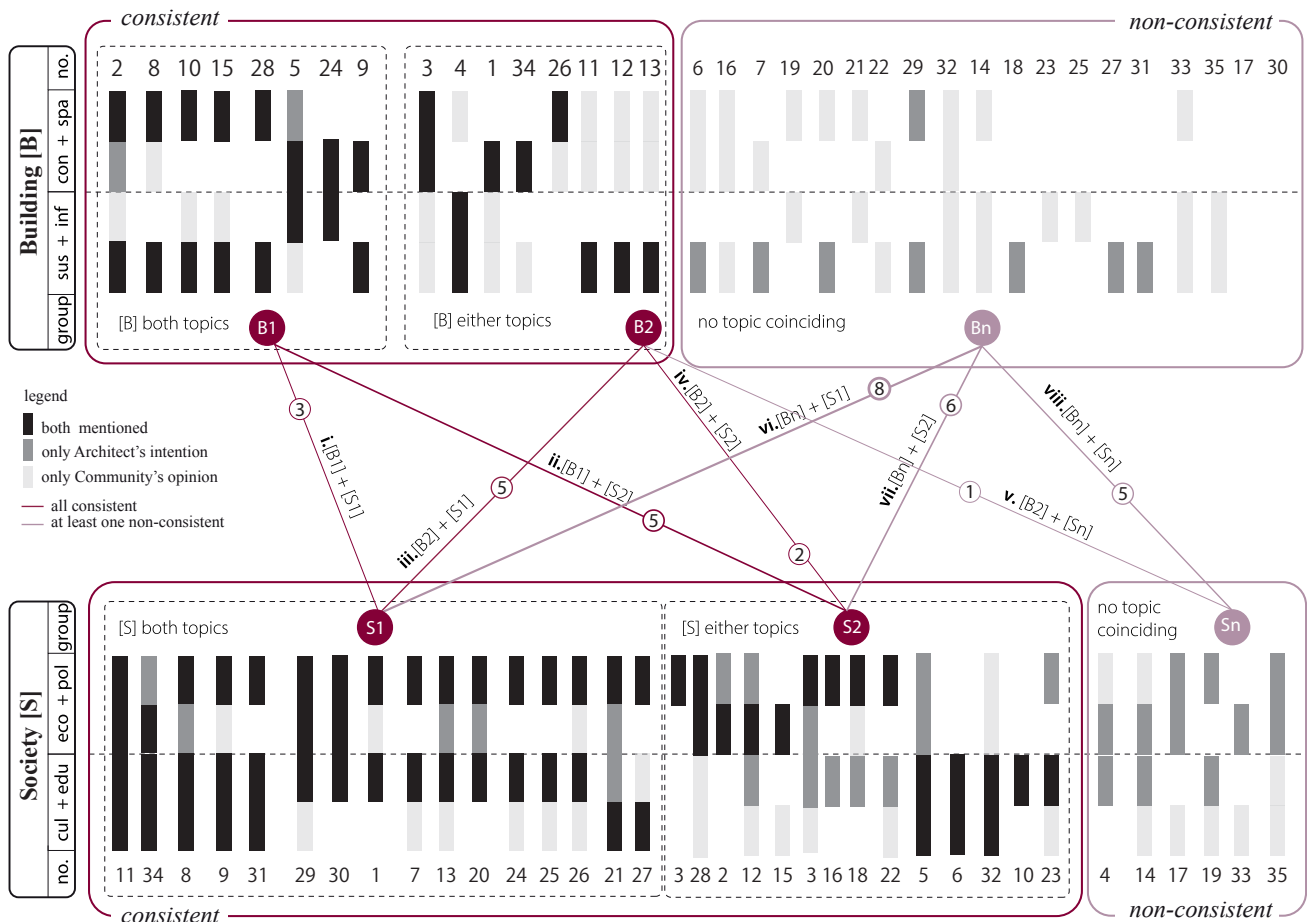


Fig. 4 Combination analysis and types of consistency

one group, are defined as **only B** or **only S**; and the projects without consistency placed under **without**. Further, the four types of participation were distributed from the **T1**, characterized by projects where both architects and community participate in all phases, to the **T4**, when both participate partially. As shown in figure 5, more than 85% of cases have some consistency. Considering the relationship between participation and consistency, the **Intention** and **Opinion** always coincide under full participation **T1**, while types including at least some sort of partial participation **T2** and **T3** each has one type of **without**. Notably, the most frequent types in **T3** are **only B** and **only S**, together concluding almost 65% of cases. The participation type **T4** is the most balanced while also including the most significant number of cases with **without** category. To summarize the results of figure 5, it is clear that when both architects and communities are working together from the beginning to the end of the project, they also tend to have a greater mutual understanding of both the purposes of the project and real impacts on the community life. In contrast, it tends to be less consistent when they do not participate in all phases.

6. Conclusion

This research investigated recognized participatory projects in contemporary Latin America by examining the participation of architects and communities in project

phases and the consistency between architects' intentions and communities' opinions. Several patterns were found according to different phases and consistency. The level of consistency between the two parties varies according to their participation in different phases of the project. However, the consistency alone should not be considered as an indicator of the project's quality, rather underlines the significance of both parties participating in all phases of a project as seen from the comprehensive analysis. In common projects, architects often do not participate in the negotiation phase. However, in participatory projects, their involvement in funding, resources, and land negotiation seems to help creating mutual trust between the community and the architects. The core of participatory architecture is not just about the building, but rather the overall process and its real impact on the community's development. Emphasis is placed on the importance of collaboration and communication between architects and communities throughout all the phases of the project.

Notes:

- [1] Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Quito Pan-American Architecture Award (BAQ), Ibero American Panorama Award (BIAU), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Architecture in Development (A-D), Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize (MCHAP), Young Architects in Latin America (Yalala biennale Venice), World Habitat Awards (UnH).
- [2] Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Haiti, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela
- [3] 35 Architect's official homepages. Lectures given by architects on youtube and description provided by architects in architectural platforms such as Archdaily were also used as supplementary sources.
- [4] Supplementary sources such as TV programs or documentaries and direct online interviews with representatives from each community were also used.

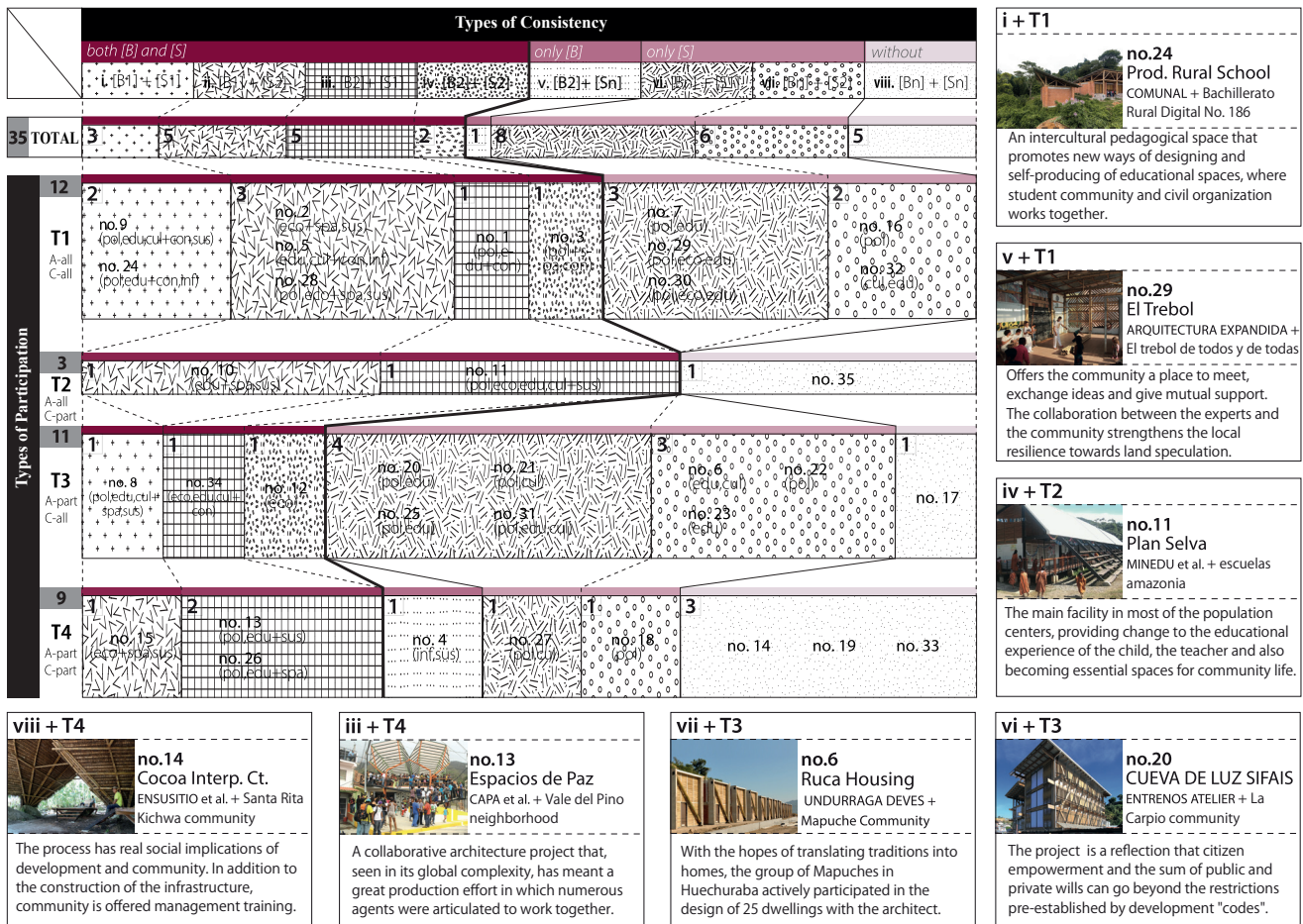


Fig. 5 Types of Participation and Types of Consistency