

RESEARCH REPORT

Facilitating Social Change in Gqeberha

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Abstract

A key debate in architecture revolves around two opposing ideas: On the one hand, architecture is seen as a project of *a-political formalism* made for the sake of aesthetics. On the other side architecture is expected to engage with the social, political and economic impacts architecture can have. The aim of this dissertation is to advocate for the importance of Public Interest Design (PID), which follows the second idea, by illustrating a change in the architectural role that Collectif Saga underwent during their process-driven approach and how that resulted in socio-economic change for the communities their projects are situated in. It is argued that there is an indirect link between the role of the architect and the socio-economic impact of the project. The resulting research question this dissertation aims to answer asks: How did Collectif Saga, a French Architecture firm's role, facilitate social change in the Silindokuhle Preschool and Silindokuhle community hall in Joe Slovo, Gqeberha and the Lim'uhphile Co-op in Walmer Park, Gqeberha? This research follows a qualitative research method that is situated within the constructivist research paradigm and uses a qualitative research methodology. The data collection was done by doing desktop research of secondary data, site visits and semi structured interviews. The findings and discussion are structured around four key roles that the architect takes on during the process of participation with the community. They take on the role of interpreter, mediator, enabler and facilitator. The findings show that, while this change in the role of the architect is quite complex, it improves the community's capability for socio-economic change. Additionally, a big factor in the longevity of the project seems to be ownership from the community. It can be concluded that, if architects choose to engage with PID in the manner of questioning their own role, architecture can be a powerful instrument of social change.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that the mini-dissertation, *Facilitating Social Change in Gqeberha*, which has been submitted in fulfilment of part of the requirements for the module of DIT 801, at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for any degree at the University of Pretoria or any other tertiary institution.

I declare that I obtained the applicable research ethics approval in order to conduct the research that has been described in this dissertation.

I declare that I have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's ethical code for researchers and have followed the policy guidelines for responsible research.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Sandman', written in a cursive style.

Date:

24/07/2023

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1 Introduction

Public Interest Design (PID) is also known as architecture as an instrument of social change (Bell 2010:87, Ferdous & Bell 2020:1).

Today's debates in architecture focus on two opposing ideas: On the one hand architecture is seen as a project of *a-political formalism* made for the sake of aesthetics. On the other hand there is architecture that seeks to engage with the social, political and economic impacts architecture can have. It is important to question the powerlessness of our profession in the world's most urgent current crises. It is not enough to try and hide these crises, such as the "exclusionary politics and economics of urban development" with aesthetics. Rather, we need to aim for social, political and economic change. This is done by rethinking the role of architects and redefining who the client is. PID emphasises this change in the role of the architect (Ballinger & D. Silva 2020:87, Ferdous & Bell 2020:1) and argues for design that serves 100% of the public (Ferdous & Bell 2020:1).

This dissertation will be evaluating the work of the architectural firm Collectif Saga through the lens of PID. Collectif Saga is situated in Nantes, France. Since establishing their firm they have completed four projects in Gqeberha, South Africa. Three were built and one project was a pavilion that served as part of the process to engage with the community. Two of the projects were undertaken in Joe Slovo, a township in Gqeberha. These were the Silindokuhle community hall and the Silindokuhle Preschool. The pavilion was part of the process leading up to the Silindokuhle community hall. The other project was done in Walmer Park, the Lim'uhphile Co-op.

According to Ballinger & D. Silva (2020:85) PID projects can be tested and evaluated based on two things: their process-driven approach and their result that is focused on the public. The aim of this dissertation is to advocate for the importance of PID by illustrating the change in role that Collectif Saga underwent during their process-driven approach and how that resulted in socio-economic change for the communities the projects are situated in. The argument is that there is an indirect link between the role of the architect and the socio-economic impact of the project.

The literature review will organise topics relevant to the study by the role of the architect analysed. It will be followed by a background on the evaluated firm's work and the projects that are used as case studies in the research. The method section explains what process was followed in detail. This qualitative research method is situated within the constructivist research paradigm and uses a qualitative research methodology (Groat and Wang 2013:78–79, Kivunja and Kuyini 2017:33). The method section will be followed by a findings and discussions section, ending with a conclusion including suggestions for further research.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Public Interest Design

Public Interest Design (PID), also known as humanitarian architecture, pro bono architecture, participatory architecture, community architecture, or architecture as an instrument of social change, has its ethical foundation in the belief that architects have a responsibility to the general public and wider social interests (Bell, 2010:87, Ferdous & Bell, 2020:1) where architects' primary role is to be mediators, curators and facilitators (Ballinger and D. Silva, 2020:87, Cruz and Forman, 2020:xxxiii). Power redistribution when participating with the community plays a big role in PID. It is important that in this field of architecture, architects have partnerships with the communities, where power and responsibilities for making decisions are shared (Arnstein 1969:221). The emphasis in PID is on working *with* the community rather than *for* the community and acknowledging the importance of social production of space (Lefebvre 1991). Following this approach creates spatial justice (Anderson 2014). PID projects can be tested and evaluated based on two things: by their process-driven approach and by their result which should be focused on the public (Ballinger and D. Silva 2020:85).

2.2 Role of the Architect

As stated above, the role of architects in PID can be seen as a range of competencies. (Ballinger and D. Silva, 2020:87, Cruz and Forman, 2020:xxxiii). In this dissertation, based on the following literature, the range of competencies of architects in PID will include interpreter, mediator, enabler, and facilitator. Aravena (2016) explains that one of the roles of the architect in PID is *interpreting and fulfilling human desire*. In this role the architect interprets the existing context and conditions and translates it into spatial design. Mediation is also commonly referred to as a role that the architects take on in PID (Ballinger and D. Silva, 2020:87, Cruz and Forman, 2020:xxxiii, Hamdi, 2010). In this role the architect is tasked to mediate between different interests, values, cultural norms and practices (Hamdi, 2010) and to act as the catalyst between human needs and spatial outcomes. Enabling communities through participation is another competency and is key in PID (Bratteteig et al. 2013:117-144, Abendroth & Bell 2015:106) In this role, the architect encourages the community to appropriate the design that affects them. The last role is that of the facilitator. By embodying this role the architect is not directly a problem solver, as architecture is often understood outside of PID, but is instead the facilitator of problem solving (Ballinger & D. Silva 2020:87, Kim 2018:89, Pasel & Skambas 2020:70, Straus and Doyle 1978).

2.2.1 Architect as Interpreter

In PID it is essential to keep in mind the present power dynamics when analysing the current environment (Arnstein 1969:221). Additionally, when interacting with people from different socio-economic backgrounds, intercultural communication is essential (Corbett & Fikkert 2012:51). According to Dalla Costa (2020:100) there are seven theories that shed light on the difficulties of designing outside of one's culture:

- 1. Impact of decision-making and power structures: Architects themselves are members of cultural groups, enculturated within a social value system.*
- 2. Spatial behaviour is culturally specific: The use of space is influenced by our cultural backgrounds.*
- 3. Behaviour settings as a key socio-spatial component in architecture: Human needs and environmental attributes are complex and, if aligned well, lead to increasing complementary functionality.*
- 4. Architectural meaning: There are ideological, social, and behavioural meanings that need to be understood, including high-level meanings like worldview, middle-level meanings such as identity, and low-level meanings like use.*
- 5. Cultural properties of buildings and places: Places are highly symbolic and culturally specific with cosmological, spiritual, and historical references that become identity markers for groups, societies, and nations.*
- 6. Dynamics of architectural traditions: Exogenous design and decision-making either undermine or reinforce cultural systems.*
- 7. Cultural constructs of well-being and social design: There are culturally specific understandings of what it means to be doing 'well'.*

When translating the environment into architectural projects, being culturally sensitive is a prime consideration. Architects can design inclusively and respect, as well as strengthen, the cultural fabric of the communities they work in by accepting the theoretical viewpoints provided by Dalla Costa (2020:100), while keeping in mind the power dynamics and intercultural dialogue involved. As this dissertation focuses around the work of Collectif Saga, a French architecture company working in Gqeberha, South Africa, emphasis should be put on *avoiding imposing questionable eurocentric norms and instead on meaningful engagement with the community* (Zorn 2021:190).

2.2.2. Architect as Mediator

In this role mediating trust between stakeholders is vital as this is the foundation of participation which leads to co-production and co-creation.

Trust

Trust can be understood by analysing the connections between individuals according to Weber and Carter (2003). Trust is established and based on repeated interactions and the fulfilment of expectations. This allows individuals to act with confidence, relying on the integrity and character of the other person. Thus, trust emerges from these interactions and plays a role in shaping the relationship between individuals (Weber & Carter 2003:5). This type of trust, often called relational or interactional trust, develops through ongoing interactions, previous experiences of exchange, risk-taking and the fulfilment of expectations, which ultimately leads to reciprocal arrangements (Seligman 1997; Weber & Carter 2003). Repeated interactions enhance the willingness to depend on others and to *expand the resources brought into the exchange* (Rousseau et al. 1998:399).

Participation

According to Yang (2005) there is a connection between trust and participation as trust between stakeholders influences participation. Participation according to Zorn (2021:45) *adds a significant level of complexity to the planning process*. Often, it is perceived as a

costly and time-consuming hurdle rather than a beneficial factor for progress and development.

The importance of participation can be understood when looking at an argument of de Carlo (1971). He argues that architecture needs to be transformed from an authoritarian act into a process through participation. As it is often perceived as a costly and time consuming process it is important to understand the benefits of participation. Firstly participation is vital to the success of the project as it helps keep the project afloat after the architects have left. Secondly it also creates a sense of civic responsibility that leads to increased ownership (Vanleene & Verschuere 2018:199). Thirdly, participation ensures that voices of marginalised groups and communities are heard and that they have a say in the decisions that affect their lives (Bratteteig et al. 2013:117-144).

When participating with communities it is important for architects to acknowledge the following: Power distribution plays a significant role in participation, as confirmed by Swyngedouw (2005) who argues that *participation is invariably mediated by power*. The other point that is made is that architects should acknowledge that the people served by the design are no longer just clients but rather *experts* in understanding their own ways of living and working (Brandsen, Trommel & Verschuere 2014, Durose 2011, Gilchrist & Taylor 2016, Sanders 2013). This clarifies the important role that the community has within the co-creation of knowledge and co-production processes.

2.2.3 Architect as Enabler

From de Carlo's (1971) statement above it can be argued that the architect enables participation. The result of this participation is co-production and co-creation (Benjamin & Brudney 2018:49). This section argues that co-production and co-creation enable an appropriately built project, knowledge exchange and a sense of ownership.

Co-production and Co-Creation

Co-production and co-creation take place when customers actively contribute to the development and delivery of the services they receive (Benjamin & Brudney 2018:49). Co-production and co-creation lead to community development which has a direct impact on their socio-economic growth (Osborne et al 2018:19; United Nations 1955:6).

Enabling Knowledge Exchange

To enable knowledge exchange Cruz and Forman (2020:xxxiii) argue that when working with the community it is important to reject the idea of *applied research*. In this idea of *applied research* the institution or architects is seen as the provider of resources and expertise. The community on the other hand is seen merely as an object of data collection. Instead, they argue for a cooperative and horizontal approach to engagement in which the institution and the community interact as partners, sharing resources and expertise while actively engaging in collaborative research, learning, and problem-solving.

Pasel and Skambas (2020:70) argue that architecture is *more than a space making device* and becomes a *multilayered communication medium*. They also argue that design-build projects are not just about participation during the design phase but also sharing and learning during the construction process through collaborative work. This enables the *help*

for *self-help* concept. By acquiring new skills and knowledge it improves the citizens' socio-economic position (Vanleene & Verschuere, 2018:199).

According to Barber (1984:234, 272) there is a connection between knowledge exchange and a sense of ownership:

Give people some significant power and they will quickly appreciate the need for knowledge, but foist knowledge upon them without giving them responsibility and they will display only indifference. ...people are apathetic because they are powerless, not powerless because they are apathetic.

Enabling Sense of Ownership

Through the process of co-creation and co-production, trust is built and leads to an increased sense of ownership. De Carlo (1971:16) argues that through participation a sense of ownership is created. According to Lachapelle (2008:4) there is a direct relationship between trust and ownership. They argue that by gauging the quality of trust in the community development effort the potential for ownership can be established (Seligman 1997, Weber & Carter 2003). According to Lachapelle (2008:2) there are three characteristics of ownership: A sense of ownership in the process, a sense of ownership in the outcome and a sense of ownership distribution. A sense of ownership in the process asks questions such as: *Who has a voice in the community development process and more importantly, whose voice is heard?* A sense of ownership in the outcomes asks questions such as: *Who has decision-making authority over the outcome?* A sense of ownership distribution asks questions such as: *Who are impacted by a choice, as well as how those consequences are distributed, acknowledged, and owned?*

2.2.4 Architect as facilitator

The architect as facilitator was first described by Straus and Doyle (1978) as a new role that architects could take on. They suggest that this role requires a change from problem solver to a facilitator of problem solving. In this role the architect has the power to facilitate more than just a built project. According to Ballinger and D. Silva (2020) the difference between a conventional architecture project and a PID project is that in both cases there is a building as an outcome but in the case of PID there is more than just a building. They argue that the outcome of PID includes *an empowered community that can demand and retain the freedom to build; to mobilise intellectual, social, and economic capital; and to develop capacities to design, build, and maintain their environments* (Ballinger & D. Silva 2020:88).

Placemaking

According to Melnyk (2020:179) the connection that individuals have to the place and their sense of community with one another is placemaking. This fosters the development of a place's distinct identity as well as an understanding and awareness of ownership. According to Kim (2018) there is also a connection between placemaking and knowledge exchange as he argues that communities possess valuable local knowledge and lived experience that could help in the development of designs that are both meaningful and responsive. From this the argument can be made that by enabling ownership and knowledge exchange, placemaking is facilitated.

Empowerment

Empowerment according to Zimmermann (2000:44) occurs when individuals, groups or communities gain *mastery over their lives*. Zimmermann (2000:44) also states that: *Participants experienced empowered outcomes when they were provided with appropriate tools that increased their understanding and enjoyment, and were given specific tasks for the activity that enabled them to share responsibilities*. A connection can be made between the *appropriate tools* and the knowledge exchange that happens during participation. From this it can be argued that by enabling knowledge exchange the architect facilitates empowerment.

3 Case study — Collectif Saga

Collectif Saga is a group of five young architects including Pierre Y. Guérin, Camille Sablé, Simon Galland, Sylvain Guitard and Marion Chapey who want to practise architecture by helping communities in need. Their aim is to share their architectural knowledge with the communities they are working in. They want to create while participating with communities. Their objectives lead to them developing interactive processes in the construction environment (Architizer 2021, Collectif Saga 2020). They are a French firm based in Nantes, France working in both France and Gqeberha, South Africa. The firm was established after Simon Galland participated in a student exchange in South Africa at the Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha. There he met a Kenyan architect working in South Africa who invited him to join in on a project working in Joe Slovo. At this point Collectif Saga was established. Since their inception the company has been working in Qquberha, South Africa (Collectif Saga 2020, 2023). They undertook projects both in Joe Slovo and Walmer Park, townships located in Gqeberha.

3.1 Silindokuhle Community Hall



Figure 1: Neglected Silindokuhle Community Hall (Author, 2023)



Figure 2: Neglected Silindokuhle Community Hall (Author, 2023)



Figure 3: Piyani in front of the Silindokuhle Community Hall (Author, 2023)

The project was built in 2015 in Joe Slovo with the help of local community members. The project was done for the Silindokuhle Preschool started by Patricia Piyani in 2010 (Collectif Saga 2020). The aim of the project was to *do more with less* and *knowledge sharing*. The first aim was achieved by using the same budget that would normally be used for a government subsidised house (commonly referred to as RDP housing in reference to the

now defunct Reconstruction and Development Programme in South Africa). This was to show that by using different and recycled materials one could erect a building four times the size of a normal subsidy house using the same budget (Architizer 2021). Their second aim was to develop *simple and reproducible processes* using the material available to the community and sharing their building knowledge by participating with the community (Architizer 2021). From the site visit done for this dissertation it was clear that the project has been neglected. From the interviews conducted for this dissertation it was also clear that it is no longer under the ownership of Ms Piyani (Collectif Saga 2023, Piyani 2023).

3.2 Silindokuhle Preschool



Figure 4: Mural wall at the Silindokuhle Preschool (Author, 2023)

Figure 5: Built wall using alternative building materials (Author, 2023)

Figure 6: Mural with the name (Author, 2023)

This project was built in 2017 in Joe Slovo township. The project was built with the community over the course of four months making use of recycled materials. The aim of the preschool is to give the students a proper learning environment. The preschool is owned by Ms Piyani, the previous owner of the community hall (Architizer 2021, Collectif Saga 2020). The project is still currently used as a preschool and under the ownership of Ms Piyani.

3.3 Lim'uhphile Co-op

The project was built in 2019 in Walmer Park around an existing Non-Profit Organisation under the ownership of Mr Xolani Siwa. Their aim with the project was to obtain the owner's legal right to the land and then to start a mixed used programme around the already existing garden. The building was done in the same way as previous projects using recycled building materials and using local and international volunteers. The project is currently still being used for its intended purpose and is still under the ownership of Mr Siwa (Architizer 2021, Siwa 2023).



Figure 7: Green house used as community hall (Author, 2023)

4 Methodology

4.1 Paradigm and Method

This research follows a qualitative research method that is situated within the constructivist research paradigm and uses a qualitative research methodology (Groat and Wang 2013:78–79; Kivunja and Kuyini 2017:33). This research project was done using a naturalist methodology through interviews with the architects and the users of the building, site visits and observations, and the use of secondary desktop research. The subjectivist epistemology of the research supports a relativist ontology and a balanced axiology (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017:33). This study focuses on the projects done by Collectif Saga in Gqeberha, namely the Lim'uhphile Co-op, the Silindokuhle Preschool and the Silindokuhle community hall. The focus is on how the role of Collectif Saga facilitated social change in these projects.

The target group of the data collection was composed of the architects of the projects (Collectif Saga) and the owners of the projects. Ms Patricia Piyani is the owner of the Silindokuhle Preschool and the previous owner of the Silindokuhle community hall and Mr Xolani Siwa as the owner of the Lim'uhphile Co-op. These interviewees were selected following a desktop analysis of the projects.

4.2 Data Collection

Data collection was done through semi structured interviews with the target group. The interview format changed according to the person being interviewed, as well as the language or location limitation faced during the data collection period. *Understanding Public Interest Design: A Conceptual Taxonomy* by Joongsub Kim (in Karim 2018) was used as a starting point to generate the questions used in the interviews. The process was done in a group under the guidance of the supervisor. The text was analysed using the analysis software *Atlas.ti™*. The taxonomy consists of nine categories, including *Design as Political Activism*, *Open-source Design*, *Advocacy Design*, *Social Construction*, *Collective Capability*, *Participatory Action Research and Practice*, *Grassroots Design Practice*, *Pro Bono Design Services* and *Architect-Facilitator*. Each of these headings were used as a code. Under each of the nine codes, quotes were then extracted and placed on a *Miro™* board, a collaborative online whiteboard. Questions derived from this included:

1. *How has this project promoted social change or raised awareness about values and beliefs?*
2. *How were interactive digital platforms used to collaborate on the design of this project?*
3. *How has this project supported a cause, served a constituency and promoted an agenda through its process of design and implementation?*
4. *How has this project advanced the development of social capital throughout the process of design and implementation?*
5. *How have lay-designers been encouraged and capacitated to participate in the co-design process of this project?*
6. *How have local experts and architect-experts been encouraged to work together as equal partners in this project?*

7. *How have architects and grassroots organisations collaborated in the development, design or implementation of this project?*
8. *How has pro-bono practice been advanced as a viable or sustainable approach to public architecture in this project?*
9. *How has the architect served as facilitator to curate or cultivate collaborative design and development processes in this project?*

Although these are thorough questions it was clear that to a respondent whose mother tongue is not English, these would be hard to understand. From this realisation it was clear that the questions needed to be adjusted. Before adjusting the questions, further desktop research on the projects was done to ask more context specific questions. A research team member conducted interviews a week before the planned site visit, with recordings that were made available for analysis. These interviews were analysed by making notes on *Miro™*, to get a deeper understanding of how to ask questions and which ones to prioritise. These layers of information then led to more appropriate sub-questions for interviewing Ms Piyani and Mr Siwa.

The Sub-Questions generated:

1. *How has this project promoted social change or raised awareness about values and beliefs?*
 - *What are your beliefs and your family's beliefs?*
 - *Does the project respect your values & the things you believe in?*
 - *What is your culture?*
 - *How does the project keep you safe?*
 - *Why is this project important to you?*
 - *How does it make you feel to work here?*
 - *How was it like before the building?*
 - *How is it now?*
2. *How were interactive digital platforms used to collaborate on the design of this project?*
 - *Were you here when they built the building?*
 - *What do you remember?*
 - *Were you a part of the building process?*
 - *Do you remember how the builders and the designers worked with you to build the project?*
 - *Do you know of other people that helped build it? Can I maybe speak to them?*
3. *How has this project supported a cause, served a constituency and promoted an agenda through its process of design and implementation?*
 - *How does the building help you /your family?*
 - *How does the building now keep you safe? Do you feel safe here?*

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- *Have you made good friends here?*
 - *Why is this a good place to work?*
4. *How has this project advanced the development of social capital throughout the process of design and implementation?*
- *How long have you been here? How do you make enough money here?*
 - *Do you know the people here?*
 - *NGO?*
 - *What do you do after work?*
 - *Are you here every day?*
5. *How have lay-designers been encouraged and capacitated to participate in the co-design process of this project?*
- *Who painted or built this?*
 - *Were you a part of the building process?*
 - *Do you think you could've helped build the project?*
 - *What would you have done?*
 - *Building/craft process?*
6. *How have local experts and architect-experts been encouraged to work together as equal partners in this project?*
- *Who are the people incharge here?*
 - *What relationship do you have with the people in charge?*
 - *Do you know the leader?*
 - *How do they help keep the place running?*
 - *Why are they important?*
7. *How have architects and grassroots organisations collaborated in the development, design or implementation of this project?*
- *Which companies help you with the project?*
 - *What do they help with?*
 - *Do you like it when they come to help?*
8. *How has pro-bono practice been advanced as a viable or sustainable approach to public architecture in this project?*
- *How did the mentioned NGO's start and where are they now?*
9. *How has the architect served as facilitator to curate or cultivate collaborative design and development processes in this project?*
- *Were you here?*
 - *Is there something you would change?*

- *Who is in charge and who calls the shots. Who decided on that?*

The interviews were conducted on 12 & 13 April 2023 respectively. Both interviews were done in person and included a site visit. The Silindokuhle Preschool and Silindokuhle community hall are located in Joe Slovo township in Gqeberha, where we had our interview with Piyani. The Lim'uhphile Co-op is also located in Gqeberha in a different township called Walmer Park, where we had our interview with Siwa. Semi structured interviews were conducted using the sub questions generated. The interviews were recorded using a smartphone.

For the interview with Collectif Saga a *Google Meets™* meeting was organised as they are situated in Nantes, France. My research colleague and Nini Adamia, a South African citizen studying in Nantes, France, joined the meeting. Only three of the five members of the company could be present for the interview. The intention was to use the original questions generated from the conceptual taxonomy (Kim in Karim 2018) in a more structured way, but due to the language barrier we reverted back to semi structured interviews.

4.3 Data Analysis

The main tools used for data analysis were *Atlas.Ti™*, *Miro™* and *Describe™*. *Atlas.Ti™* is an intuitive qualitative research tool that allows you to group, code and organise data. *Miro™* is a free online platform that makes it easy to collaborate with people and store and organise information. Recordings were used to capture the data during the interviews, after which a mixed method approach was used to transcribe the interviews using the free app *Describe™* and manual transcription. As the software cannot navigate the variety of accents in the English spoken by the interviewees, a manual check and corrections of the transcriptions were needed. The analysis of the data follows an inductive research methodology and a qualitative thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun 2013).

Step 1: Following this inductive data analysis and using *Atlas.ti™*, codes were generated as the transcriptions were analysed. When a new theme was uncovered a new code would be generated. This method was used for all the interviews. The following codes emerged from the transcriptions of the interviews.

- *Social change*
- *Ownership*
- *Knowledge Exchange*
- *Appropriation*
- *Stakeholders*
- *Participation*
- *Trust*
- *Placemaking*
- *Safety*
- *Conflict*
- *Volunteers*
- *Criticism*
- *Tenure*

- *Role of the Architect*
- *Euro Centric Design*

Step 2: These codes and their associated quotes were then extracted from *Atlas.ti™* and imported into *Miro™*. Connections were made between the different themes by using a mindmap. Some of the codes became irrelevant when constructing the mindmap because of the lack of data on the topic or its irrelevance to the argument.

Step 3: From the literature review it was clear that the role of the architect plays a significant role in PID (Ballinger and Da Silva 2020:87, Cruz and Forman 2020:xxxiii). Thus a layer of the role of the architect was added. The themes were subdivided between *Interpreter*, *Mediator*, *Enabler* and *Facilitator*.

Step 4: The theory of PID was added as an additional layer to the mindmap, introducing new themes and creating new connections between the themes. From this process the research question emerged. How did the role of Collectif Saga, a French Architecture firm, facilitate social change in the Silindokuhle Preschool and Silindokuhle community hall in Joe Slovo, Gqeberha and the Lim'uhphile Co-op in Walmer Park, Gqeberha?

The process of the mind map also indicated a clear hierarchy in themes which aids in refining the argument.

5 Findings and Discussion

The role of the architect plays a vital role in Public Interest Design (PID) (Arnstein 1969: 221, Cruz and Forman 2020: xxxiii , Vanleene & Verschuere 2018:199) The findings are arranged into the following categories: *Architect as Interpreter*, *Mediator*, *Enabler* and *Facilitator* .

5.1 Architect as Interpreter

In this role, architects interpret the context, translating the existing context into architectural spatial outcome (Aravena 2016). Being a French company, Collectif Saga had to understand the context in which they would be working in Gqeberha, South Africa. When asked about this process they responded:

...but it's not like the same culture, the same climate, the same environment in general. So in all of the projects we did in PE (Gqeberha), we took the time before we actually built to research in a very informal way. So we took maybe a month to just walk around and talk to people, just about like, what's going on here and how is life here and what's, what's nice, what's not very simple discussions, but I think that helps with making decisions in the design and also just to like to get a better understanding of uh, what's needed there (Collectif Saga 2023).

When people from other countries work in the South African context it is important not to *impose questionable euro-centric norms*' when interacting with the community (Zorn 2021:190). Collectif Saga was conscious of this during the process as they said: *we kind of realised we were trying to kind of push something and we realised it wouldn't work (Collectif Saga 2023).*

Collectif Saga also strived to understand the context better by staying in the community. While working on the Silindokuhle Preschool the Collectif Saga team stayed in the community of Joe Slovo (Piyani 2023) which assisted them to immerse themselves in the context, leading to better intercultural communication. By not leaving at the end of the workday, it makes the participants feel that they are equal (Corbett & Fikkert 2012:51).

As mentioned above according to Dalla Costa (2020:100), there are seven theories that shed light on the difficulties of designing outside of one's culture. Although this is relevant in the role of interpreter it is also applicable throughout the other competencies. Thus some of these theories will be touched upon throughout the discussion.

5.2 Architect as Mediator

The architect serves as mediator when acting as the catalyst that enables the transition between spatial outcomes and community needs (Ballinger and Da Silva, 2020:87, Cruz and Forman, 2020:xxxiii, Hamdi, 2010). In this role, Collectif Saga mediated between different stakeholders and translated both *bottom-up and top-down knowledge* (Cruz & Forman, 2020: xxxiii). In the section below the relationship between trust, stakeholders and participation will be discussed.

Trust

According to Collectif Saga, the first and most important step in a community project is to build trust in the community. They create this trust by showing up and keeping in contact with the community members until they feel that the community trusts them. They call trust an *informal contract* (Collectif Saga 2023). This trust enables them to work with the community. Their role as mediators is also to identify stakeholders. From the interviews it is unclear how the relationships between the stakeholders were formed (Collectif Saga 2023; Piyani 2023; Siwa 2023) although secondary data indicates that the stakeholders involved in the process identified funding opportunities, volunteers, and project owners (Collectif Saga 2020).

Stakeholders

In all three projects, the owner was the main stakeholder. For the Silindukhule Preschool and Community Hall in Joe Slovo, Ms Piyani was identified and for the Lim'uhphile Co-op in Walmer Park, Mr. Siwa was identified. When Collectif Saga was asked how they feel their project facilitated social change, they said that *mainly the people who command the project who are making the social impact*. They only help by translating needs into spatial outcomes. Although in each of these projects, they did not develop the programme but rather, from site observation, found established initiatives that could benefit from their help. It could be argued that by assisting in a building they increased the capabilities of the stakeholder to facilitate social change.

Participation

Creating trust between the stakeholders leads to participation (Yang 2005). According to Bratteteig et al (2013:117-144) the essential characteristics of participatory design are: Having a say, addressing power, levels of influence, mutual learning, co-realisation, speaking their own language, and intertwining analysis and design. In the Lim'uhphile Co-op

there is evidence of the main stakeholder *having a say* as Siwa (2023) explained that before Collectif Saga would make final decisions they would sit down and consult him on the best course of action *they were not forcing or imposing anything*. Siwa also added that this created a strong relationship between them, which leads to trust. This also connects to the second characteristic of *addressing power* and the first theory of Dalla Costa (2020:100) by treating the main stakeholders as equals and valuing their input. In this instance they were indirectly addressing the power relationship between them and the influence that their own cultural biases might have.

Another key characteristic of participation is the *levels of influence* that the project has (Bratteteig et al 2013:117-144). According to Bratteteig et al (2013:177-144) for a project to be successful after the architect leaves it needs to be grounded in an organisation on various levels of society. By mediating between external stakeholders such as funding opportunities, volunteers, non profit organisations and the owners of the project Collectif Saga increased the lifespan of the projects.

Conflict

From the data collected during the interviews it was clear that the role of mediator in a project comes with challenges. In the Silindokuhle community hall project there was conflict that arose because of a specific stakeholder. According to Fisher (2015:37) new types of moral conundrums occur in a cross-cultural PID project. Conflicts may emerge from individual actions as well as misconceptions brought on by cultural presumptions, variations in social norms, and differences in religious views. When dealing with these conflicts it is important to notice that different cultures value different things. He also argues that no matter the culture, fairness and caring are always valued. The conflict that occurred was due to one of the stakeholders in the Silindokuhle Community Hall. Simon Galland, one of the members of Collectif Saga, was introduced to this stakeholder while doing a semester abroad at Nelson Mandela University. The stakeholder was the one who introduced Collectif Saga to Piyani and the project. According to Collectif Saga, he was a *thief* as the government gave the project a hundred thousand rand and they claim that this money was stolen. Piyani also supports this claim as it was her name that was linked to the money but she never received any of it (Collectif Saga 2023; Piyani 2023). This indicates the impact that that misplaced trust can have on a project. It could be argued that cultural differences can be the reason why the conflict between the stakeholder and Collectif Saga was interpreted in a certain way. However, if measured against fairness, it could be argued that the stakeholder did not act fairly.

When architects act as mediators between stakeholders they can build trust, increase participation while managing conflict to improve the project outcome.

5.3 Architect as Enabler

The Architect acts as an enabler when the community is encouraged and enabled to appropriate the design (Bratteteig et al. 2013:117-144, Abendroth & Bell 2015:106) In this role, the architect enables the community or the main stakeholder through participation. De Carlo (1971:16) argues that participation is necessary to change architecture from an authoritarian act into a process. A key aspect of participation leads to co-creation and co-production (Bratteteig et al.2013:117-144). In the section below the relationship between

participation, a sense of ownership, knowledge exchange and the built project will be discussed.

Sense of ownership

De Carlo (1971:16) argues that through participation a sense of ownership is created. What the research shows is that the projects done by Collectif Saga in Gqeberha were successful because of the strong sense of ownership that the projects already had before Collectif Saga contacted the main stakeholders. This can be seen when comparing the current state of the Silindokuhle Preschool to the current state of the Silindokuhle community hall. The Silindokuhle Preschool is well maintained, whereas the Silindokuhle community hall is in a state of severe disrepair. According to Piyani (2023) the reason for the difference between the two is ownership. She was in charge of the community hall before and then, due to conflict and the lack of tenure in the community, she gave up the community hall. After that it was taken over by a local church (Piyani 2023). The lack of ownership after it was taken over led to it being neglected. From the data it is unclear why the church did not take ownership of and maintain the project.

This correlation between maintenance and the ultimate success of the project can also be seen at the Lim'uhphile Co-op. It can be argued that because of the ownership taken by Siwa the Lim'uhphile Co-op is a success. Siwa (2023) already assumed ownership over the project before he worked with Collectif Saga. He also expressed the importance of ownership in projects like these. He argues it gives outside funders reassurance when they want to donate or invest. He also argues that by being the sole owner he takes responsibility for the project. From the interview it is clear that Siwa takes sole ownership of the project but that it benefits the larger community.

This is the same with the Silindokuhle preschool as Piyani (2023) says that she is the one taking responsibility while the community benefits. There was already a strong sense of ownership before the interaction with Collectif Saga. Through participation, Collectif Saga strengthened the sense of ownership. Lachapelle (2008:2) argues that there are three ways of enabling ownership through participation: A sense of ownership in the process, a sense of ownership in the outcome and a sense of ownership distribution. Collectif Saga enabled ownership in the process by identifying Piyani and Siwa as main stakeholders, and examining which voices should be heard. They also enabled ownership in the outcome by including Piyani and Siwa in all decisions (Piyani 2023; Siwa 2023). Lachapelle (2008) describes it as giving them a say. The last can't be directly influenced by the architect but rather what the stakeholders do with that sense of ownership. From the interaction, it is clear that Siwa and Piyani use their power for public good as everything they do is *for the benefit of the community* (Siwa 2023).

Knowledge exchange

Collectively striving for horizontal and inclusive dialogue seems to raise the relevance of mutual learning and genuinely trying to understand different perspectives (Zorn 2021:12). Pasel and Skambas (2020:70) agree with this and argue that architecture is more than a space making device and that it can instead become a multilayered communication tool for knowledge exchange. It is clear from the data that it was the architects' intention to facilitate knowledge exchange within their work. Collectif Saga (2020) states that they tried to use

simple processes that would enable the community to reproduce these processes by themselves with the knowledge and tools that they have gained. They also state that they had a lot to learn from the community (Architizer 2021). Although Collectif Saga's intention for knowledge exchange was clear from the data, the site visit and secondary desktop research, the depth of the knowledge exchange that happened during their participation with the community can't be clearly analysed. The interviews offer evidence of community participation during the building process (Collectif Saga 2023). Siwa and Piyani were part of the building process and were consulted during the design phase, often having the final say in decisions (Piyani 2023; Siwa 2023). Some evidence of knowledge exchange was found as Piyani was able to clearly communicate the processes that were followed during the building process.

According to Bratteteig et al. (2013:117-144) *mutual learning* is a key aspect of participatory design. They argue that it creates respect between participants. From the data it can be argued that there was mutual respect. Collectif Saga has respect for the work that Siwa and Piyani are doing as they claim that they are the ones making the social change in the communities (Collectif Saga 2023). The respect Siwa has for Collectif Saga was evident when speaking about their involvement in the project. Siwa (2023) states that Simon Galland, one of the members of Collectif Saga, *was always there*. When he spoke about it he was almost in disbelief and he kept repeating it. Piyani's respect was clear from the beginning as she calls Collectif Saga her children (Piyani 2023).

Built project

These smaller projects can represent a tangible step toward a greater goal (Ferry & Palleroni 2020:304). The projects by Collectif Saga were analysed through the lens of design-build projects. According to Pasel & Skambas (2020:70) the idea of *help for self-help* encourages locals to take independent action by igniting their potential and providing them with impulses to act. These projects involve not just designing but also learning about construction methods and procedures through collaboration. Finding solutions to problems on-site and mastering work processes are crucial components. The data shows that in both the Silindokuhle Preschool and the Lim'uhphile Co-op, Siwa and Piyani learned about new construction techniques with recycled and found material (Piyani 2023; Siwa 2023). Piyani and Siwa were able to explain the methods and materials used during the construction process in great detail, thereby demonstrating a form of knowledge transfer.

When looking at the aspect of igniting their potential, Collectif Saga definitely expanded their knowledge on new ways of building using recycled material and building at a lower cost, but when asked about what they would want to improve or change, both Piyani and Siwa reverted back to traditional or known ways of building. Piyani proposed a new addition to the school that would act as a guard house but also a dwelling for the guard looking after the school grounds. She proposed a mud structure with a corrugated iron roof (Piyani 2023). She explained that the mud structure is what she has known her whole life. This indicates that although knowledge had been exchanged, she was not using it in her building vocabulary. Siwa indicated a desire to improve on the one building on site. He said that he received a quote for someone to come and work on it. He also stated that he does not have money for this upgrade. It is not clear why he can't do it himself, as he stated that he would be able to build what Collectif Saga did by himself (Siwa 2023).

Dalla Costa's (2020:100) second and fourth theory on designing outside of one culture sheds some light on Piyani's reversion to old methods. Dalla Costa (2020:100) argues that *spatial behaviour is culturally specific* and that there is *meaning* in architecture. She argues that there are different levels of meaning to architecture. The *middle-level meaning* refers to identity. As a mud structure with a corrugated iron roof is what Piyani has known her whole life it can be argued to be deeply connected to her identity and thus be a reason that she would rather use that method of construction.

5.4 Architect as Facilitator

Placemaking

Placemaking helps develop a unique identity for places, generating an appreciation and understanding of ownership through people's connections to the place and a sense of community with one another (Melnik 2020:179). Piyani (2023) tells the story of the stones packed at the back of the school. She explains that the stones were collected by the children and they helped her write *Welcome Home* (Figure 8). She explains that this place is their home. Central to the tenet of placemaking is the transformation that occurs when the community members participating in the process, or host community, are actively involved in that process (Silberberg et al. 2013). In the case of the Lim'uhphile Co-op and Silindokuhle Preschool, this transformation embodied the socio-economic changes in the community.

Figure 8: Welcome Home (Author, 2023)



Empowerment

From the literature it is clear that there is a correlation between empowerment and the knowledge exchange that happens during participation (Zimmermann 2000:44). The *appropriate tools* were given to Siwa and Piyani to gain mastery over their lives. Although

literature argues that knowledge exchange leads to empowerment, an argument can be made that the built project can also be seen as an *appropriate tool* for socio economic change. Collectif Saga believes that the social change comes from the owners of the projects themselves and that they provided them with the built architectural form as a tool to empower the community to achieve social change.

Socio-economic change

Vanleene and Verschuere (2020:199) argue that co-production enhances the social cohesion of the community. It also entails increasing the socio-economic standing of the residents through the gaining of knowledge and skills, as well as improving residents' living conditions. From the research, the following socio-economic impacts from the partnership with Collectif Saga were found at the Lim'uhphile Co-op and Silindokuhle Preschool, the improvement of personal livelihoods of the main stakeholder, and the benefits to the larger community.

Personal livelihoods

Both of the main stakeholders use these projects as their main form of income. They use the money they make to sustain their households. They also feed their families with the produce of the gardens (Piyani 2023, Siwa 2023)

Benefits to the larger community

The benefits of these projects include job creation, a soup kitchen, food parcels for struggling families, schooling for children, safety, and community space. At the Silindokuhle Preschool, the project facilitates job creation as Piyani gets volunteers from the community to help with the children and the gardening. Piyani (2023) says that the volunteers don't get paid but receive food parcels from the garden when the crops are ready. Although they aren't paid in monetary terms, it is still a form of job creation that helps the volunteers' families. At the Lim'uhphile Co-op, Siwa includes people from the community to help him and pays them with the money he makes from selling his produce. He also aims to teach people gardening skills so that they have value to add to the community. This shows how in both projects job creation happens .

Another benefit to both communities is the soup kitchen that is facilitated by the projects (Piyani 2023; Siwa 2023). Piyani (2023) states that they serve food to the community three times a week. She states that she has been doing this even before the school was built. It is therefore unclear whether the collaboration with Collectif Saga had a significant influence. Siwa (2023) also serves food to the community from the structure that was built with Collectif Saga showing a more direct impact that the built project had on the socio-economic change of the community.

Food parcels form part of the donations that come from the projects. In both projects struggling families in the community receive food parcels with produce from the gardens (Piyani 2023; Siwa 2023). Siwa (2023) states that there are twenty five families that receive food parcels from the garden. Piyani (2023) did not specify the amount but stated that it is something the project facilitates.

Both projects facilitate specific social change in their communities. At the Silindokuhle Preschool, Piyani (2023) claims that the school creates a sense of safety within the community. She says that the school creates a safe space for the children to be as there is a long history of drug abuse among adults in the community of Joe Slovo. She also explains that the school helps the community in other ways. She explains that there are five students that can't afford school fees that still attend the school. It is also a safe space for children to stay during the holiday when their parents work.

From the data it is clear that the Lim'uhphile Co-op does more than was intended. Siwa (2023) explains that it becomes a place for struggling families to store their belongings when something happens to their dwelling. He also stated that a part of the co-op is used as a community centre (Figure 7), where community members have meetings with people from outside of the community. He also states that they intend on hosting weddings at the venue. This indicates that the co-op is becoming a centre for the community of Walmer park.

From the data it is evident that these projects facilitate socio-economic change. Collectif Saga does not believe that they made the social change but that it was the owners of the projects that influenced the socio-economic change. They believe that their role is only bringing architectural form to the project, which helps the project grow. By doing this they facilitate socio-economic change. From the data and research it can be argued that through placemaking they empowered the main stakeholders to expand on the socio-economic change in their communities.

6 Conclusion

To conclude, it was shown how the change in the role of the architect influences the socio-economic impact of the project in different stages of the process. From the findings it is clear that this change in the role of the architect is quite complex. The findings for the case study of Collectif Saga and their role in their project are important to the wider discourse of PID.

Certain themes in the different roles the architect takes on in PID are highlighted. In the role of *interpreter* the complexities of working outside one's own culture and in the process not imposing personal biases onto the community are highlighted. In the role of the *mediator* the importance of trust and the impact conflict can have on the project is shown. Trust is the basis of Collectif Saga's work and shows the importance of trust in participation when working with communities. The impact conflicts can have on the process of participation are also presented. In the role of *enabler* the findings demonstrate the importance of sense of ownership and the built project as a tool for empowerment. From the findings it is clear that the success of a PID project is directly impacted by the ownership taken in the project. In the role of *facilitator* the findings show the impact that the change in the role of the architect can have on the personal livelihoods of the owners of the project but also the larger community.

Collectif Saga's work in Gqeberha challenges the traditional role of the architect. Their projects show how the roles an architect embodies in the course of a project are linked to the socio-economic impact of the project. If architects choose to engage with PID in this way, Architecture can be a powerful instrument of social change.

While it is argued that for architects to facilitate socio-economic change they have to take on other roles than just the one of *facilitator*, further research is needed to support this claim. Further research should also be done on the complexities of knowledge exchange, specifically the relationship between culture, identity, new ways of doing and the social meaning of specific materials, as this might be the key to why the transferred knowledge did not lead to processes being reproduced. More in depth research is needed on the impact of the change in ownership on a project as from the research it seems there is a connection between the failure of the Silindokuhle community hall and the lack of ownership from the local church.

We, as architects, need to reconsider what our impacts are on our surroundings, and if we dare to engage with architecture that challenges our role. We have a chance to contribute to communities if we use PID with the vision of a more inclusive and equal social, economical and political society.

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