Research Report
How are the principles of community engagement in architecture, within Public Interest Design, relevant to and applied in our South African informal context?

Andelle Kotze
U17037892

Supervisor
Dr C Combrinck

Department of Architecture
Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Information Technology
University of Pretoria
South Africa

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Declaration of Originality

I declare that this research report, *How are the principles of community engagement in architecture, within Public Interest Design, relevant to and applied in our South African informal context?* 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: ....

Date: 24/07/2023

Table of Contents

Abstract

Despite the radical political transformation promised in the democratic elections of 1994, the people of South Africa remain adversely affected by the socio-spatial legacies of a segregated urban landscape (Ballard 2021). Architects' efforts to tackle these challenges are often overlooked and marginalised within the broader field of architecture. Although globally, there is a greater awareness of the importance of social engagement and agency in design (Awan et al. 2011). There are various examples of how the principles of Public Interest Design are applied in international contexts, but are these principles relevant in our South African informal context? This study aims to prove that these principles are relevant if applied in our South African informal context and subsequently offers an example of how this can be accomplished. By using the work done by Collectif SAGA architects in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, as case studies, this report analyses their engagement with the project leaders, partners and surrounding community to determine how the aforementioned principles are successfully applied. Data collection was done through interviews with the Collectif SAGA team, as well as the project leaders and partners, and was analysed using a thematic analysis. The study found that through building a strong sense of trust with the project partners, by involving and engaging with various organisations, by stepping beyond the traditional role of the architect as artist and technician, and by building upon a solution to a problem the community has already taken ownership of, Collectif SAGA's involvement was successful in bolstering projects that greatly benefit the community. Collectif SAGA applied principles of engagement that is recognised as good Public Interest Design practices, thus indicating that these methods are relevant in our South African Informal context, and can be applied successfully.

Keywords: Public Interest Design, community engagement, Participatory Design, genuine participation, building trust, anchor institution, community upliftment, informal context.

Introduction

Despite the radical political transformation promised in the democratic elections of 1994, the people of South Africa remain adversely affected by the socio-spatial legacies of a segregated urban landscape (Ballard 2021). Architects' efforts to tackle these challenges are often overlooked and marginalised within the broader field of architecture. Although globally, there is a greater awareness of the importance of social engagement and agency in design (Awan et al. 2011).

Within the discourse of Public Interest Design, principles of design and engagement that place the user, client or affected community as the focus of its efforts so as to serve their best interest, has been viewed as good approaches to architectural practice if one seeks to engage in Public Interest Design. Examples of these principles are Participatory Design, Community Action Planning, Community Based Engagement, Co-Creation and Co-Design, just to name a few (Daniels et al. 2022; Hamdi 2010; Kim 2018). In some cases, Participatory Design and Public Interest Design are viewed as synonymous (Gökşin, 2018). There exist many examples of these principles being applied in international projects, but are these principles relevant to our South African informal context? Furthermore, how are these principles of engagement and practice implemented, successfully, in our South African informal context?

To answer this question, this study looks at two projects undertaken by the French architectural firm, Collectif SAGA, in Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape, as examples of Public Interest Design. These projects illustrate an approach where intense collaboration and a commitment to democratic design and building practices underpin complex processes of engagement and responsive design thinking that serve to challenge the aforementioned conditions.

The principles and practices employed by Collectif SAGA in their involvement in these projects are analysed to determine how they added to the success of the projects undertaken. An inquiry is also made into unique circumstances surrounding each project that significantly added to their success.

The findingings from this inquiry aim to serve as examples of principles of engagement and practices that can serve as a guideline for future Public Interest Design projects within our unique, informal South African context.
Questions such as, "What did the architects do differently, as compared to traditionally accepted architectural roles and responsibilities, that added to the success of these projects?" and, "What are the unique contextual characteristics of these projects that bolstered the architect's efforts and aided to their success?", were kept in mind during the data collection and analysis of the findings.

It appears, as evidenced by the findings of this report, that the architects' willingness to step beyond the traditional roles ascribed to an architect, is one of the main factors that contributed to the success of these projects. They stepped beyond the traditional roles of the architect as technician and artist, and acted as facilitators, cultivating collaboration and the forming of

partnerships, echoing Kim's notion of "*Architect-Facilitator*" as a model of Public Interest Design (Kim, 2018).

They spent time building relationships with the leaders of the project initiatives and the people directly involved with the projects (ie. the project partners), cultivating a sense of trust that allowed them to successfully design and build in an informal context. This was a major contributing factor to the successful engagement by Collectif SAGA, acting as the foundation that this engagement was built upon.

The Collectif SAGA team got involved with already existing initiatives within the community, bolstering the solutions to problems that the project partners had taken ownership of, as opposed to starting a brand new project from the ground up. This ensured that there is a sense of ownership from the community towards the projects prior to the architect's engagement, and this continues to be the case even after the architects have left.

The architects' involvement, alone, didn't ensure the success the projects saw, but rather the architects working as part of a system of organisations, charities and companies crucial to the project construction and day to day operation of the project initiatives, some of which act as anchor institutions for the two projects.

There also exists unique circumstantial characteristics, beyond the architects' influence, that also contributed to the success of the architects' effort and involvement. These are further expanded upon in the report.

All of the aforementioned practices of engagement and circumstantial characteristics contributed towards the success of the two projects by Collectif SAGA. This indicates that when Public Interest Design principles are successfully applied, it serves the community's best interest. Furthermore, it indicates that these principles are relevant to and can be applied in our South African informal context.

Theoretical Framework / Literature Review

Various themes were identified following a literature review. Sources that relate to community engagement were consulted, as a means to gain an understanding of the practices and principles of community engagement within Public Interest Design. These themes are discussed and form part of the theoretical framework of this research study.

Participatory Design:
The *Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design* (Simonsen and Robertson, 2021) was consulted as a means to gain an understanding of Participatory Design, its principles, ethics and methods of practice. The themes identified in this book acts as measures against which to compare Collectif SAGA's engagement. Each theme is expanded upon as it fits into the theoretical framework for this study.

Genuine Participation:
Genuine participation in design reflects *a commitment to ensuring that the voices of marginalised groups and communities are heard in decision-making processes that will affect them.* (Robertson and Simonsen 2011:6)

Users go from being informants to being legitimate and acknowledged participants in the design process. Users participate willingly, working both as themselves and with themselves, for the task or project at hand. This means that they are able to give a voice to their individual genuine interests, as well as those of the group and community that they represent; they are required to consider their own feelings, reflections and opinions about an issue and give voice to it; they also contribute to achieving shared and agreed-upon goals of the design task and design project at hand (Robertson and Simonsen 2011).

Principles of Participatory Design:
When considering methods of Participatory Design engagement, it is important to have a set of guiding principles that the methods and practices in question can be measured against. Kensing and Greenbaum (2013:33) make mention of this and offer six guiding principles of Participatory Design:

- Equalising power relations – finding ways to give voice to those who may be invisible or weaker in organisational power structures.
- Democratic Practices – putting into play the practices and role models for equality among those some call 'stakeholders'.
- Situation-based action – working directly with people in their workplace or homes to understand actions and technologies in actual settings, rather than through formal abstractions.
- Mutual learning – encouraging and enhancing the understanding of different actors by finding common ground and ways of working.
- Tools and techniques – that actually, in practical situations, help different actors express their needs and visions.
- Alternative visions about technology – whether it be in the workplace, home, public place or elsewhere – ideas can generate expressions of equality and democratic practices.

These principles act as lenses when considering the engagement practices employed by Collectif SAGA, and if they fall within acceptable practices of Public Interest Design.

Ethics of Participatory Design:
Participatory Design has at its core an ethical motivation to support and enhance how people can engage with others in shaping their world, over time. The ethical principles of Participatory Design are as follows (Robertson and Wagner 2013:82):
- Recognising that those who do a particular activity **know most about** how it gets done;
- Recognising the importance of **mutual learning** and the development of shared understandings between designers and other participants;
- Recognising the need to **involve multiple voices** and equalise their expression,
- Ensure active and **emancipatory participation**

- Recognising that design will always be **completed in use.**

When engaging with participants, the risks and responsibilities for all participants need to be addressed and communicated, participants' information and sensitive details need to be protected, and conflicts between perspectives and loyalties of the stakeholders need to be handled with sensitivity.

- When dealing with frail or vulnerable participants, there are guiding questions one should take into consideration, such as:
  How does one deal with sensitive topics in a test situation?
- How can users be made to feel confident and secure in the test situation and how can the risks of embarrassment or unpleasant surprises be avoided?
- What steps are necessary to protect the participants' privacy?
- When considering the users' frailty, how can their safety in test situations be ensured?

The *practical politics* of how to engage with participants involves a diversity of complex issues, most importantly the question of how *trust* can be established and the sharing of responsibilities ensured in very specific situations.

In the best case scenario, a Participatory Design project results in a well-functioning system or application, as an end result or product. What happens when this is not possible? According to Robertson and Wagner (2013), the experience of the process itself can be a sufficient outcome and reward of engaging in such a process.

> *A Participatory Design process can offer participants the experience of participation as a creative, joyful and reflective activity.* (Robertson and Wagner 2013:78)*.*

It is noteworthy that the outcome or goals of the process need to be agreed upon by all parties, prior to its inception.

Methods:
Participatory Design (PD) methods can be considered as *recipes* for how to engage in PD and include – in addition to tools and techniques – organising principles and general guidelines for the process (Bratteteig *et al.* 2013).

Although the authors make mention of specific, recognised Participatory Design methods, they are not included in the theoretical framework of this research study, as Collectif SAGA did not explicitly apply any of these methods in their engagement.
Rather, the principles and characteristics of PD methods form part of the theoretical framework, as they offer guides to which Collectif SAGA's engagement can be measured against.
(Bratteteig *et al.* 2013:131):
- **Having a say** - Users need to be informed and given the chance to inform and express their opinion, as well as the power to influence the decisions in design.
- **Addressing Power** - Power needs to be shared among all participants. This includes shared decision-making about problem setting, envisioning and sketching.

- **Levels of influence** - Participatory Design projects are often criticised for their limited scope and impact, confined to small, local initiatives that lack involvement from other systems. They tend to fizzle out once the project concludes. To create lasting effects, a Participatory Design project must be integrated into the organisation's long-term strategy or incorporated into a broader initiative addressing multiple societal levels: workplace, organisational, institutional, and societal.
- **Mutual learning** - Mutual learning implies that designers learn about the use context from the users, but also that the users learn about the technical possibilities from the designers, thus gaining mutual respect and understanding of different ways of reasoning.
- **Co-realisation** - Users often struggle to envision technical possibilities, which is why Participatory Design places a strong emphasis on various ways of visualising potential solutions, with prototyping being the primary technique.
- **Speaking their own language** - Users are encouraged to articulate their ideas and thoughts using their own unique expressions, rather than conforming to an abstract formal language (By the use of games, demonstrations, walkthroughs).
- **Intertwining analysis and design**
  Design and analysis are intertwined when design is carried out stepwise, when analysis and design are integrated into each step: Comprehending the situation, formulating a design suggestion, analysing and evaluating the outcomes, understanding the resultant situation, and using this understanding as a foundation for proposing a new design. Prototypes are used as techniques in both analysis and design.

Community Engagement Research:
To gain an understanding of community engagement principles, theories and practices, relevant to our South African context, the book *Community engagement research in South Africa : histories, methods, theories and practice'*(Van Eeden, Eloff and Dippenaar 2022) was consulted. It is to note that Collectif SAGA's involvement with the two projects is not to be considered *research,* but rather, *practice*. Even so, this book offers good community engagement principles that are relevant in both research and practice.

What is Community Engagement Research?
> *...community-based knowledge and expertise are considered essential for deriving and discovering solutions to society's most complex and intractable societal challenges.*
> (Furco 2022, p. xxiii).

Community Engagement Research is the vehicle through which this knowledge and expertise is discovered, shared, and partnered with.

Furthermore, community engagement can be understood as *...a cluster of activities that includes **service learning, problem-based teaching** and **research** that **addresses specific wants and needs**, the pursuit of **alternative forms of knowledge** and challenges to established authorities that control and direct research systems and the allocation of qualifications."*(Hall 2012: 7).
It is important to note that there is no *one-size-fits-all* is possible when engaging with the community.

The Underpinning Principles of Community Engagement Research:
These principles were not explicitly mentioned in the book, but rather identified as each was mentioned many times throughout the book in different ways.

- **Open and honest communication** - Frequent and honest communication between the research team members and the research participants is crucial (Finestone, 2022).
- **Cultural humility and sensitivity** - has an impact on the success of a community intervention programme, and should therefore be considered (Finestone, 2022).
- **Co-creation of knowledge** - The development of knowledge through the collaboration of academics and other stakeholders. One should focus on knowledge production - rather than knowledge translation – between universities and society (Greenhalgh et al., 2016: 393).
- **Multi-disciplinary teams** - Teams need to be diverse and varied in professions and disciples.
- **Acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge systems** - Reciprocal relationships with communities need to be created, which is only possible when local knowledge is valued; a platform should be created where indigenous contributions are expressed, captured and recognized in an intellectual way.
- **Reflect and re-adjust throughout** - To avoid misunderstandings and conflict, there should be a process of reflection and adjustment present throughout the engagement period.

Co-creation:
The golden rules of Co-creation are as follows:
As a method it requires a systems perspective at its most basic form (Greenhalgh et al., 2016: 412). Attention should be given to the individual experience throughout the process of co-creation. It is also important to focus on the tenants that frame the co-creation process, including those involved in governance, facilitation, coordination, conflict management and leadership arrangements. When the process of co-creation is adopted, there is a higher likelihood that outputs will be purposeful, acceptable and valuable (Greenhalgh et al., 2016: 418).

The Co-creation model proposed in this book comprises three spheres. The first sphere captures the partnership between community-based co-creation, engaged curricula-based co-creation and community relevant co-created research, in which the ultimate outcome holds the three together, because the main aim is to initiate and elicit sustainable social innovation. The second sphere are the golden principles of practice, which support and sustain the co-creation process.
The collaborative partnership of co-creation must be contextualised by the social context, the third sphere, this component ensures the relevance and applicability of co-creation.
This whole process takes place within the philosophy, values and methodology of co-creation.

International Collaboration:
A chapter is dedicated to *International collaboration in community intervention programmes* (Finestone, 2022).

The principles identified in this chapter forms part of the theoretical framework of this research study, as it is uniquely relevant to the circumstances characterising Collectif SAGA's engagement (they are a French architectural firm engaging in our South African informal context).

The following guiding principles were identified as good practice (Finestone 2022):
- The research team needs to be **flexible and adaptable.**
- **Cultural humility** has an impact on the success of the programme.
- **Frequent and honest communication** between the team members is crucial.
- **Define communication strategies** before study commences, and **refine and adjust** them as the study progresses.
- **The research database**, which includes project management of the intervention and actual research data, has to be regularly updated and available to all research collaborators.
- A **well-designed research plan** is important, as well as an organogram of **line functions** for each research team member, to maintain good working relationships.
- Principal investigators are to have **prior knowledge and experience** of the research landscape and context.
- **An on-site operational manager** or research coordinator is needed to ensure optimal success and to provide a **nexus for communication** to all the local and international partners.
- Making **community members** part of a research team enhances the possibility of success.

Anchor Institution Theory:
Anchor institutions are defined as large, permanent, non-profit organisations that have a large, fixed asset base utilised for the growth and development of the communities in which they are embedded (Cantor & Englot 2016, Dragicevic 2015).
Collaboration with organisations, programmes, schools and institutions helps anchor institutions to develop strategies that help the community to gain access to opportunities which the institution has to offer; this ensures that a measurable impact is attained (Birch et al. 2013, Dragicevic 2015). These institutions draw in funding from various sources, spend sizable amounts on the procurement of local goods and services, act as employers that train the local workforce and utilise their resources to the benefit of their local communities (Luter and Taylor Jr. 2013).

An example of an anchor institution is the Mamelodi Collaborative, an anchor institution strategy for the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi campus.
As an anchor institution, the Mamelodi campus focuses on building on its decade-long experience in community engagement. This includes the following (Ogude *et al.* 2022):
- Leveraging its facilities and infrastructure.
- Inter-faculty collaboration involving multi-scalar research and transdisciplinary community-based projects.

- The involvement of undergraduate students towards credit-bearing courses as well as participation on a voluntary basis.
- Postgraduate students conducting community-based research.

This study will consider anchor institutions in their functions and roles within their communities, as there are no anchor institutions involved with any of the two case studies. There are, however, various businesses and organisations that fulfil the functions of anchor institutions, leveraging their resources to help the project initiatives gain access to opportunities otherwise unavailable to them.

Role of the Architect:
In his article, *Understanding Public Interest Design, A Conceptual Taxonomy*, Joongsub Kim (in Karim 2018) introduces nine public interest design practice models, one of them being *Architect-Facilitator.* Within this model, *...architects do not play the role of project director (the role that is generally perceived by the profession to be a primary role of architects); rather, they serve as a cultivator or curator in the design process.* (Kim in Karim 2018). This is echoed by Straus and Doyle (1978) who posit the role of architect as facilitator being one that facilitates problem solving, rather than being a problem solver. There is a growing need for architects to act as facilitators, in addition to the roles of artists and technicians, because architects should be able to effectively manage increasingly complex design and development processes and diverse participating constituencies (Kim in Karim, 2018).

Further on in his article, he mentions five practical abilities architects need to have to be able to implement the nine models of Public Interest Design effectively. These abilities are (Kim in Karim, 2018):
- An ability to explain to others what currently exists, what is possible, and how they can contribute;
- an ability to manage complex information, processes, and people;
- an ability to build long-term working relationships;
- an ability to respond sensitively to human emotions and conflicts arising in the process; and
- an ability to perform professional tasks in key areas where technical competence is required as an architect.

None of these abilities are typically taught to students in architecture school (Kim in Karim 2018). Most of these abilities aren't considered as part of the traditional roles of the architect as technician and artist therefore, there exists a need for architects to step beyond their traditional roles in the pursuit of the application of these nine PID models in the broader field of architecture.

Ownership:
In his book, *The Placemaker's Guide to Building Community* (Hamdi 2010), Hamdi speaks about the topic of ownership throughout. He mentions, as part of five themes that carried through into his teaching and work, that participation is a crucial part of making design and planning efficient and effective. This participation cultivates ownership and, subsequently, a

sense of belonging and responsibility, both important to the health of place and community (Hamdi 2010: xvi).

Hamdi (2010) also states that ownership and dependency are two of the primary causes of problems and the discontinuity of programmes that hinder the achievement of lasting change. *Ownership comes from an ownership of process, of*
problem and of solution. (Hamdi 2010: 179). He speaks about the ill effects of assuming objectivity which give way to deciding on issues and interventions from the top down and from outside in. This can lead to interventions or *solutions* to problems not seen as problems by the community that are therefore, not a priority.
Which, in turn, can result in *mandated empowerment*; the poor receiving the responsibility to implement these *solutions* decided upon by others.

Another cause of dependency comes with aid; it perpetuates a structure of superiority and inferiority. This *…structures the poor out of decision-making by defining them as beneficiaries…* (Waddington and Mohan 2004).
Lastly, the wrong choice of technology can also cause dependency, in that it may result in causing more problems than solutions. Tied aid, unsuitable technologies, and a tendency to force-fit preconceived solutions without considering the actual problems, lead to a lack of genuine ownership (Hamdi 2010).

Hamdi (2010) offers an example of the dangers of lack of ownership: Sanitation facilities in India are built and maintained by local government affiliated agencies. These agencies typically lack accountability towards the communities they serve, and as a result, the inhabitants do not feel a sense of ownership or responsibility towards these sanitation facilities. The maintenance and repair of these facilities are ignored, thus they become unusable, resulting in people using open spaces close to the toilets for defecation. Subsequently, he offers another example of the benefits of involving community members in the design and building of a toilet block.:
> *A process of learning and teaching within slum communities facilitates knowledge, creates a wider information base and enables more communities to self-engage in community development projects affecting them.* (Hamdi 2010: 102).

This created a sense of ownership among the community for the facilities built, ensuring they are maintained and safe for use.

All of the above gives indication to the importance of a sense of ownership from the community for any project or intervention aimed at community upliftment.

Building Trust:
> *As community needs encompass broad concerns, such as social justice and resiliency, architects will do well to learn, build trust, and adopt solutions created in partnership with those communities.* (AIA, 2020).

In the American Institute of Architects' (2020) *Guides for Equitable Practice*, a chapter is dedicated to *Engaging Communit*y. In this chapter, it is explicitly mentioned that as an outsider,

the architect is responsible to build trust and understanding the community, forming part of any project's foundational work (AIA, 2020). It is also mentioned that trust is essential for authentic community engagement.

Furthermore, the chapter posits that ...*authentic engagement is built on an honest relationship with the community.* (AIA 2020: 8.7). Connecting with the community at the level of citizen, first, and as respectful guest, will allow the architect to lead from a position of well informed trust, yielding benefit for all involved.

In her article, *Establishing Trust With the People, the Community, and the Place* Park (2016) states that any public or community project requires an in-depth understanding of the local people, community, and place. Therefore, establishing a sense of trust with the community is needed to achieve a successful outcome (Park 2016). She also states that there is an inherent distrust between architects and communities as they possess an incomplete understanding of the specific responsibilities and roles undertaken by architects. This is plainly the result of the limited presence of architects in their day-to-day experiences.

Park (2016:3) analyses various examples of architects successfully building a sense of trust between them and the communities they are building in and for. In short, these practices that resulted in building trust are:
- Having a consistent presence within the community that only comes from spending time in and with the community, immersing oneself in their experiences.
- Being an advocate for the community's true, and not perceived, needs.
- Architects should truly seek to listen in order to avoid making assumptions during the design process.
- Most importantly, communities will trust architects when they see their desires and demands transferred into space.

Methodology

The research methodology chosen follows a pragmatic paradigm. The pragmatic paradigm arose out of the desire to focus efforts on solving practical problems in the real world through inquiry (Biesta and Burbules 2003). The goal of pragmatic research is to utilise human experience as the primary means for building knowledge and understanding the world, as opposed to relying on absolute truths (Hildebrand 2011). As this study is focussed on the architectural projects and the users and designers experience of its design process, building and subsequent use, a pragmatic approach appears to be the most suitable.

A case study research design was followed. This allows the researcher to see *a relationship between phenomena, context and people* as well as to *capture the context and lived reality of participants* (Lohman 2021). This is ideal considering the intention of the research enquiry, as individuals' lived experiences and practices were investigated. The context falls under our South African underprivileged, informal context. This falls within the chosen research methodology,

and supports a pragmatic approach. A qualitative data collection method was used in combination with a thematic analysis of the captured data.

Data collection was done using a qualitative method, in the form of semi-structured, informal interviews. Informal interviews were held by conversing, on site, with the research participants, without use of a structured, formal interview guide. This created 'low pressure' interactions and allowed participants to speak more freely and openly (Cohen and Crabtree 2006). A questionnaire was developed, informed by an inquiry into relevant literature. This questionnaire acted as an informal guide for the questions asked by the researcher (see Appendix A).

The architectural projects chosen for this case study are the Silindokuhle preschool in Joe Slovo, as well as the Lim'uphile Co-op in Walmer. These projects are located in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), and were designed and built by Collectif SAGA architects.
The choice was motivated by the belief that these projects serve as good examples of community engagement and community collaboration by the architect; the design and building process undertaken by the architects in the realisation of these projects display strategies and principles that can serve as examples for future practice in the pursuit of Public Interest Design in South Africa, especially in the relevance and application of community engagement principles in an informal context. This situates these projects within the nine models of PID proposed by Kim (in Karim 2018), displaying practices that are aligned with more than one, such as *Social Construction, Participatory Action Research and Practice, and Architect-Facilitator* (Kim in Karim 2018). Part of the assessment criteria of choosing projects to engage with in this study was informed by the architect's level and extent to which they engaged with the community and the project users in the design and building process. Collectif SAGA's engagement, as evidenced by an inquiry into their publications of these projects, gave evidence of the aforementioned criteria, applied in depth.

The target group of people that were interviewed consists of the project leaders for both projects (Patricia Piyani and Xolani Siwa), some volunteers and teachers working at the preschool (Siphosihle Gxanase, Boysile Damoyi, Nompendulo Mpayipheli), as well as the Collectif SAGA architectural team (Pierre Y. Guérin, Camille Sablé and Simon Galland). They were selected as they have extensive experience of the project functions and initiatives, and were able to provide informed answers to questions about the experience of working in and with these projects.

Data collection was done using a qualitative method in the form of semi-structured, informal interviews, guided by a questionnaire. The questions contained in the questionnaire was informed by an enquiry into relevant literature, namely a chapter in *The Routledge Companion to Architecture and Social Engagement (Karim 2018)* titled, *Understanding Public Interest Design - A Conceptual Taxonomy* by Joongsub Kim.
As Kim speaks of nine models of PID, each of the nine questions were developed to address the core function of the architect within these models.
The interviews were conducted at the respective project locations, as well as on an online platform, *Zoom^TM*. The interviews with the participants residing in Gqeberha were held on site, combined with an informal interview approach, so as to observe the participant in the project

setting (Cohen and Crabtree 2006). Due to geographical constraints, the interview with the Collectif SAGA team was held through a video conference, making it convenient for both parties (Archibald et al. 2019). Each interview was recorded using a cell phone and transcribed. Photos were also taken of the projects.

Data analysis was done using a thematic analysis approach. A thematic analysis *looks at patterns of meaning in a data set*, it *takes bodies of data and groups them according to similarities – in other words, themes* (Jansen 2020). This data analysis method was chosen as it allows for flexibility, enabling the researcher to change the research design and objectives as new themes are uncovered (Indeed Editorial Team 2022).

First, the interview transcripts were read, and re-read. This allowed the researcher to become familiar with the entire data corpus; early impressions were also written down (Maguire and Delahunt 2017). Some of these early impressions are:
- The need for a project champion. Both projects would not have seen the success they did if there wasn't someone to lead the project in terms of running, managing and maintaining it. It's highly unlikely for the community, if left by themselves, to take ownership of the project. There has to be a leader that takes ownership.
- Collectif SAGA became involved with already existing initiatives. They didn't initiate a new project within the community. The projects were already active, thus there was an existing sense of ownership and leadership.
- There seems to be a lack of sufficient income generation. Both projects have insufficient funds to pay the people who work there. Most of them are volunteers from the local community, working to benefit the community.
- Unsuccessful use of structures. Some of the structures built by the architects aren't used to the full potential of what they're intended for, as there exists issues with their habitability (leaks, untreated wood). The project doesn't have the knowledge and resources to fix these issues themselves, and they don't have sufficient funds available to have it fixed by someone else. More attention could have been given by the architect to the finishing off of some of the structures, this would have enabled the community to generate income with the use of these structures.

After this, the data was organised in a systematic way. Making use of *ATLAS.ti*[TM] online software, a process of open coding was used to code each interview. This means that there were no predetermined codes set but rather developed whilst working through the interviews (Maguire and Delahunt 2017). After the initial coding process, the existing codes were reviewed, modified, and new ones were added.

Following this, the codes were organised into broader themes, namely:
- building trust
- project champion
- architect's involvement
- success of structures
- future development plans

- financial independence and income generation
- government involvement (or lack thereof)
- NGO involvement
- community upliftment and infrastructural challenges.

These themes were reviewed, and altered where necessary. Each theme was reviewed and considered whether the data supported it. The themes were also reviewed to determine if each one worked in context of the entire data set. Through this process, sub-themes were identified, this will be further expanded upon in the literature.

The next step was the final refinement of the theme by identifying the essence of what each theme is about (Braun & Clarke 2006: 92). Here are the findings for each theme:

- Building Trust:
  The time spent on site, by the architect, before the initial commencement of the project is extremely important, as it builds trust through establishing strong relationships with the community. Building with the community is also conducive to building trust. As these projects are not approached in a formal way (i.e. registered with the municipality), trust is the only aspect that binds these projects together.
- Project Champion:
  A project champion is, in the context of this research study, a person who heads up each of the projects. A person who takes leadership and ownership is necessary, as it is highly unlikely that the community will take ownership of a newly established project. There needs to be leadership and ownership that takes charge.
- Architect's Involvement:
  The architect's involvement with the projects covers many different sub-themes, which will be further discussed in the results and discussion portions of this report. These sub-themes reflect the architect's actual involvement in the projects that encompasses many aspects, roles and functions. For instance, the architects were involved as designers, builders, project managers, fundraisers, facilitators, and researchers. All in all, the architects' involvement, reflected in the community's opinion and views, was largely positive.
- Success of Structures:
  This refers to the successful use of the structures, as intended beforehand by the community and architect. For the most part, the use of the buildings are successful and add value to the projects, but there are also some issues that impact the use of the buildings negatively.
- Future Development Plans:
  This refers to any plans for future development or expansion of the projects by the project stakeholders. It also includes any needs and issues that have an impact on the realisation of these plans.
- Financial Independence and Income Generation:
  This theme refers to the issues and hindrances facing each project in terms of reaching financial independence, to become self-sufficient. There exists some income generation for each project, but it is not enough to sustain the project as a whole. There are,

however, some opportunities that the architects sadly missed that would have helped the projects in this area.

- Government Involvement (or lack thereof):
  This theme largely consists of issues related to the government, or municipal involvement with the projects, or lack thereof. Many empty promises were made by government departments and the municipality with regard to service delivery, grants and funding, which were never delivered upon. One should take note that there has been positive involvement from these parties which have benefited the projects.
- NGO Involvement:
  Without the involvement of NGOs, grassroots organisations and charities, the architects' involvement wouldn't have been realised. Organisations like these have also contributed significantly to the success of each project.
- Community Upliftment:
  This refers to the positive impact of each project in aiding and uplifting the local community.
- Infrastructural Challenges:
  This covers issues with basic services and infrastructure that has hindered the projects in any way.

These themes were the result of the application of the aforementioned data capture and analysis, and will be further expanded upon in the results and discussion portion of this report.

Results

In this section, each theme identified through the data analysis process will be further expanded upon, highlighting key sub themes and significant points of interest that contribute to the research enquiry.

Building Trust:
When speaking of the community's high regard for the Collectif SAGA team, they mentioned that their project was built on trust. There was no contract between the parties, it was built on trust between them and the people involved in each project.
 Also, I think we chose… that every project is built on trust for the first one. (Collectif SAGA 2023).

When asked about how the Collectif SAGA team went about establishing a sense of trust between them and the project partners, they mentioned various ways they went about it: Before the commencement of the Lim'uphile project, they spent a significant amount of time on site. For about a month or two, Simon from the Collectif SAGA team went every few days to spend time on site, talking to the project champion, Mr Siwa. He was quite sceptical of the Collectif SAGA team and their involvement, mainly due to previous experiences of people taking advantage of the project, which wasn't further elaborated on. This time spent on site before the project's commencement was imperative; it allowed Mr Siwa to understand what their intentions for the

project were and resulted in a strong relationship being built between the parties.
...*it's like this first month or two of just being there … just being there and chatting really.*
(Collectif SAGA 2023).

Another way they went about building trust with the project partners and community was by building with the community, physically partaking in the project's construction. Being on site every day, building with the community as partners and sharing the *simple moment of life*, as the Collectif SAGA team states, allowed them to build strong relationships with the community and project partners, which in turn resulted in a mutual trust between the parties (Collectif SAGA 2023).

The Collectif SAGA team mentioned the involvement of another architect, prior to them. The community had partnered with a Kenyan architect who started the project with Ms Piyani. They became involved in the process to finish the design and then to build it. This relationship turned sour, as the aforementioned architect received money from the municipality for the project, which never made its way to the project. One can assume that he stole the money, as the Collectif SAGA team referred to him as a thief (Collectif SAGA 2023).

After finishing the initial project, which was started before the existing preschool was built, the community's perception of Ms Piyani turned sour. This was due to the money promised by the municipality never being given to the project to benefit the community, and resulted in the community taking over the initial project and forcing Ms Piyani out. The project was then utilised as a community hall and church for some time, but eventually it was abandoned and became derelict.

This serves as an example of what can happen if the trust between the project partners, the architects and the community is betrayed.

Project Champion:
The need for a project champion was a theme that stood out from the beginning of the data analysis process. There are two main areas of importance concerning the need for a project champion.

The first area concerns the management of the project and its programmes.
As highlighted from the interviews with both project champions, Ms Piyani and Mr Siwa Without their involvement, there wouldn't have been any initiatives or projects for Collectif SAGA to have become involved with.

Ms Piyani started the preschool in her private home, and Mr Siwai was the only person from his community willing to take ownership and lead the Lim'uphile Co-op project: *I am the founder of this project. So I had to look for people, because you know, if you go anywhere there has to be someone who's holding a flag.* (Xolani Siwa 2023).

Mr Siwa took the lead of the project in 2013. He went into the community to look for people to volunteer at the Co-op. He is trained in plant cultivation and crop farming, and he transferred those skills to the volunteers involved with the Co-op. He controls the physical access to Co-op and carries the vision for the project.

Ms Piyani started the preschool at her private home some time before Collectif SAGA's involvement. She oversees and manages all the programmes currently running at the Silindokuhle Preschool, namely the vegetable garden, the soup kitchen and of course the preschool. When asked if she enjoys working at the preschool, one of the teachers (Ms Gxanase), responded with an immediate yes. When asked why she liked working there, she responded: *I have a nice Mamma here (gesturing to Ms Piyani). Very nice.* (Gxanase 2023).

The second area of importance concerning the need for a project champion has to do with the administrative and legal requirements for running each project.
An example of this is the registration of each project as an NPO and an Agricultural Co-Op.
And so I had to lead, I had to stood firm. Say: Guys, I think we need to register a Co-Op, so that we can run this thing like in a very formal way. (Siwa 2023).
Mr Siwa took the initiative to register the project as the *Lim'uphile agricultural Co-operative* and the *Lim'uphile Agricultural Organisation*. This allows him to apply for government grants and funding for the project.

Ms Piyani registered the Silindokuhle Preschool as an Non Profit Organisation (NPO), as well as the vegetable garden and the soup kitchen as a different NPO, named *Wahint Abafaz Whathint Imbokotho*, meaning, *When you strike a woman, you strike a rock.* (Patricia Piyani 2023). This allowed the preschool to get involved with a charity, *Love Story*, which ultimately resulted in Collectif SAGA hearing about and getting involved with the project Silindokuhle Preschool project.

Another example within this area of importance concerning the involvement of a project champion, is the issue of land ownership. is the owner of the land on which the Lim'uphile Co-op is situated. He was granted a loan by a NGO which allowed him to purchase the land. *Then she said to me: I can, I can give you a loan. But I can't give all of you. There has to be one someone that will sign. So that was me.* (Xolani Siwa 2023). To pay off the loan, he worked for the aforementioned NGO, training people in crop organic farming.

Ms Piyani is also the owner of the land on which the Silindokuhle Preschool is situated. This means that in both cases, they can't be evicted from the property and if needed, they can apply at the municipality for infrastructural and service delivery, such as electricity and sewerage drainage.

The involvement of a project champion significantly contributed to the success of each project. There was a sense of ownership and leadership well before the architects became involved. There currently still exists a strong sense of ownership and leadership, assuring the projects are running and maintained.

Architect's Involvement:
Within this theme falls many sub-themes namely, *Community Engagement by Architect, Architect as Designer, Architect as Builder, Architect as Facilitator, Architect as Researcher, and Skills Transfer by Architect*.

Architect as designer:
The Collectif SAGA team explained how they went about designing and building the project. For both the Silindokuhle preschool and the Lim'uphile Co-op projects, they were solely involved with the project at hand and focussed all of their available time on it. Arriving with a rough plan of what they want to build and what it will look like, they designed on site with the project partners. This process stretched into the construction phase of the project, as changes were made while building.

This highlights the importance of flexibility on their part when it comes to the design of the building, and working with the community. They also said that for a period of five months, they went about sourcing found and recycled materials from various companies and businesses around Gqeberha. They would then store these materials, sort them and draw them using digital CAD software. This allowed them to design with non-traditional and unusual building materials.

When asking Mr Siwa about the design process, it is evident that great care and effort was put in by the architect to consider the opinions, thoughts and ideas from him. *He never impose anything. He was like, asking me. Do you agree? Do you like this? Why? And he told me that, should I not like anything, I musn't keep quiet*. (Xolani Siwa 2023). There was also an extensive process of consultation, implementation, review and reiteration, with Mr Siwa's input playing a big part in the outcome.

Architect as Builder:
Building with the community, on site, stood out within this theme. The architects were physically involved with and oversaw the building process. They coordinated the materials, the machinery, the volunteers and the community members involved in the construction process. This process of building with the community seems to have been positively received by both project champions. When asked about the construction of the preschool, Ms Piyani stated: *Work with them as a team. We worked with them, shame. And then they are, joh, they're good guys. I still call them my kids, my kids.* (Patricia Piyani 2023).

Architect as Facilitator:
The Collectif SAGA's involvement stretches beyond the design and construction of the buildings, but also into areas such as fundraising, acquiring donors and financial partners. They made an effort to create a link between these companies and the project partners, ensuring ongoing collaboration even after the architects' involvement ended.
> *…if a firm wants to, wants to finance and to, to give bit of money for the project, we try to get them on site to meet with the original stakeholders, with the members of the*

community, and to share what, how they can help. (Collectif SAGA 2023).

The Collectif SAGA team also arranged with certain organisations to acquire volunteers to join the construction team. In one instance, a company in Walmer provided five volunteers, in exchange for the Collectif SAGA team to train them in building and construction.

Architect as Researcher:
Prior to the commencement of the design and construction of the projects in Gqeberha, the Collectif SAGA team spent a significant amount of time researching each project's context.
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…
(Collectif SAGA, 2023).
This helped them to gain a better understanding of what was needed in the community, which in turn helped them to make better informed decisions.

Skills Transfer by Architect:
Skills transfer between the architect and the project partners happened mainly during the construction phase of each project and involved building techniques, using certain power tools and building with found materials. When asked about the skills transfer by the architects, Mr Siwa spoke favourably of the Collectif SAGA team.

Although this collaboration seems to have been received positively by the project partners, some wish the Collectif SAGA team had taught them more skills. An example of this is skills transfer in the area of maintaining the buildings after the project handover. When asked about what was learnt through the collaborative construction process, Mr Siwa mentioned that he didn't learn as much as he wanted from the architects.

> Andelle: "Do you feel like you learned a lot through it?"
>
> Xolani: "Ja. I learned, ja. I must say, but not as much as I wanted."
>
> Andelle: "Not enough?"
>
> Xolani: "Not enough, ja."
>
> Andelle: "So do you think you need to learn a bit more to know how to maintain it?"
>
> Xolani: "Ja, ja, ja. Because… I think so."

When asked if she believed the project partners of the Silindokuhle Preschool would be able to build their own project, without the architects' involvement, with the skills they learnt from Collectif SAGA, Ms Piyani expressed an uncertainty towards that notion. She did, however, confidently agree that they would be able to help build.

Success of Structures:
The structures built by the Collectif SAGA team, for both projects, have been positively received, and from on site observations, they seem to have been maintained. In the case of the Lim'uphile Co-Op project, there are a few issues with the structures that hinder them from being used to the full potential of what they were intended for. For example, the greenhouse structure is intended to be used for training purposes, as well as a venue that can be rented out to the community.

There are a few structural issues hindering its use for this specific purpose: Issues with the waterproofing of the structure, untreated wood being affected by rot, and the installation of sealed windows. These renovations add up to an amount of R85000, according to Mr Siwa, and require knowledge and expertise they don't have. It is safe to say that this structure is not being used to its full intended potential.

Another structure at the Limúphile Co-op project is intended to be used as a soup kitchen, to distribute food to the local community. There also exist issues that hinders it from being used for this purpose, such as the roof leaking, the lack of a sealed ceiling causing dust and debris to get blown in by the wind, and a lack of adequate ventilation needed for a kitchen facility.

The programmes and activities at the Lim'uphile Co-op that actively benefit the community, mostly take place around the structures. If these structures are used to their full intended potential, it will greatly add to the impact this project has on the community.

The structures built by the architects for the Silindokuhle Preschool are being used to their full intended potential. There only exists a problem with the roof, as it is not sealed off where it meets the walls and dust gets blown into the classrooms. There are a few minor issues, such as broken stairs. Otherwise, the structures are very successful in housing the programmes taking place within them, that benefit the community.

Future Development Plans:
The future development plans for both projects mainly centre around agriculture and farming. For the Lim'uphile Co-op, Mr Siwa says they would like to clear and plough an undeveloped corner of the property, for agriculture. When asked what the needs are to realise this future development, he said that they will need machinery (once-off), soil, piping, and labour, as well as more water tanks to harvest rainwater for irrigation. The Lim'uphile Co-op would also like to finish off the aforementioned structures to make them habitable, to be able to generate income from their use.

For the Silindokuhle Preschool, Ms Piyani said that they would like to develop a shading structure to shelter their crops from the harsh sun and wind. In addition, they would like to develop two dwelling houses on the site. This is to ensure there will be constant surveillance, increasing the security.
To realise these future development plans, they will need materials, and labour.

> Patricia: "We want a greenhouse, but we don't have the money. We collect our…"
>
> Andelle: "So the problem is the funding."
>
> Patricia: "Mmmm."
>
> Andelle: "If you guys have the funding, do you think you'd be able to build it yourselves?"
>
> Patricia: "Yes."

There exists, in both instances, a lack of finances to realise these future development plans.

Financial Independence and Income Generation:
During both interviews, it was apparent that each project struggles with income generation. Ms Piyani mentioned that she is worried for the volunteers who work at the project, as they receive no income for their labour.

> Patricia: *"Yes. But I feel worried about that, because you see mos the old womans and old guys they need something but we don't have nothing for them. Just come and work every day."*
>
> Andelle: *"It would be nice if they could have that for a job or something."*
>
> Patricia: *"At least something. A stipend."*

The Silindokuhle project relies on donations of food, supplemented slightly by the vegetables they grow in their garden, to run the soup kitchen. Even though the schools receive tuition income for each student, it is too little to sustain the entire project. The teachers who work at the preschool are provided by an external NGO, Ubuntu, and receive a stipend from the organisation. The project relies heavily on donations, and is not able to function as a financially independent entity.

> *"...This is not, that's not a easy thing to run. This… Ja, when people like, outside people, they get to see that, "Yah, it's beautiful." But hey, it's not easy to run, I'm telling you. I'm telling you it's not. Most days there's no financial assistance."* (Siwa 2023).

The Lim'uphile Co-op struggles with income generation. The money made from selling their produce is put back into the project to buy new seedlings. There is very little cash flow within the project, thus the volunteers at the co-op work for free.

Mr Siwa mentioned that if the co-op receives financial assistance, they would be able to provide an incentive for more people to start working at the co-op. If people have an incentive, like financial gain, more people would want to be involved with the project.

> *To get more people to be involved there, you know? But one thing we cannot afford to do, we can't just take people and telling them lies, that you gonna get paid, work here. We can't, you see?* (Xolani Siwa, 2023).

There appears to be a missed opportunity for income generation in the greenhouse structure. Due to there being structural issues making it not habitable, it cannot be rented out as a venue which will generate much needed income for the project. Both projects are reliant upon external donations and grants to function, and are not functioning as financially independent entities.

<u>Government Involvement (or lack thereof):</u>
Within this theme falls various sub themes. These sub-themes will be discussed in relation to each project.

Empty Promises:
Mr Siwa stated that the Department of Agriculture told him that they will award the Lim'uphile Co-op a grant of R50 000. This grant was never received. Mr Siwa also expressed how challenging it is to apply for and receive financial grants from government departments and agencies. He explained how he went to inquire about receiving funding from an agency that stated there is a budget allocated for community projects. When he came to the office, he was told there was no budget available.

> *And it's not easy to access funding from, from the, from the government, from… It's not, it's not easy. They are telling lies. They are lying, too much. Because they, every time they will tell you there's a budget allocated for such projects, for community projects. But when you go to the office and find that, you find that they said there's no, there's no budget.* (Xolani Siwa 2023).

Government officials have come to the Lim'uphile Co-op, using it for a photo opportunity, and expressed a desire to award the Co-op a financial grant. This expressed desire has never been acted upon, as the project has never received any such financial assistance.

> *So they lie many, many times. Not once, many many times. So, what I'm trying to say is, the government, you cannot rely on them. Because they come many times they will come and take photos, they will promise. But, they will never, ever come. You see?* (Xolani Siwa 2023).

For the Silindokuhle Preschool to register, officially, as a preschool, they have to register with certain government agencies. This would allow the project to be able to apply for certain government grants. This process of registration was hindered, as a representative from the department of health has not come to inspect the preschool.

> Theo: *"Department of health? Do they have to register with the department at all?"*

>Patricia: *"No. It's because of social workers. Because the social workers, when you finish to do that NPO, the social worker is supposed to send someone from health to check pre school. But they didn't do nothing."*

Bad product and service delivery:
Mr Siwa had received seeds for maize crops from the local municipality. He however expressed that the quality of the seeds was very poor.

>Xolani: *"Ja we had mielies, but you see this? Again, if you lucky, then you get something from the, from the, from the municipality, you must know that it's not like a good thing. Because the seed that they gave us time…"*

>Andelle: *"Wasn't good?"*

>Xolani: *"Was not good. Every time. Every time if they give… you see?"*

Municipal Issues:
There were issues with regard to the installation of an electrical line for the Lim'uphile Co-op. The municipality was slow in replying to Mr Siwa's enquiries. Upon various enquiries, the municipality replied and notified that it would cost the Co-op around R18 000. This is too expensive for the Co-op to afford.

The Silindokuhle Preschool has an issue with access to electricity. Their box was stolen, and has yet to be replaced by the municipality. This is a curious situation, as there was never a formal application for electrical and water services installation, but one day someone came and installed these services for the preschool.

Both the Lim'uphile Co-op and the Silindokuhle preschool projects do not have formally council registered building plans for the structures erected by the Collectif SAGA team. Although this allowed them to build speedily, not having to go through the arduous process of formally submitting council approval documents, the Collectif SAGA team expressed that this is not an ideal situation.

...it's not ideal for that because then, uh, you can't apply properly to things. Yeah. For grants, for social development, for example, to get, uh, the, the grants you want, then you need proof plans. Um, but then again, um, they, they don't even own the plot. So we couldn't even submit plans anyway. (Collectif SAGA 2023)

The fact that neither of the projects' buildings are formally registered hinders the possibility of applying for social development grants.

NGO Involvement:
This theme stood out during the data analysis process, as well as during the interview stages. The data suggests that without the involvement of various NGO's, the projects would not have seen the success that they have.

An NGO in Keiskam offered to give Mr Siwa a loan to buy the plot of land the Co-op is situated on. This was in exchange for his services, working at the NGO to train people in farming. He now owns the property. This allowed the Collectif SAGA team to build an intervention with minimal risk of eviction or demolition. During the construction process of the Lim'uphile project, the Collective SAGA team approached another NGO called *Masifunde* to acquire volunteers to help build.

The Silindokuhle Preschool is involved with a charity organisation called, *Love Story*.
It was through this organisation that the Collectif SAGA team became involved with the project.

> Andelle: "*Then how did the SAGA Collectif people find out about you?*"

> Patricia: "*Oh there is another organisation who help us, Love Story. So, I meet with them. Love Story called SAGA team for helping me.*"

The teachers that work at the preschool were provided by an NGO called *Ubuntu*. This organisation is responsible for the stipend they receive. The involvement of NGOs and charity organisations was and remains vital to the projects' success.

Community Upliftment:
This theme discusses the benefits each project has for the local community.

The Silindokuhle preschool benefits the local community in providing a preschool service at an extremely inexpensive price. Patricia says that her preschool is the cheapest one in the community. The project also runs a soup kitchen that feeds both the surrounding community and the children at the preschool.

> *It help them because I'm the only one preschool who cheapest. Because I know they're families around. And also the community they used to come and dish here every time. Even their kids they didn't come with lunch, they eat at school. We cook for them every day.* (Patricia Piyani 2023).

The Lim'uphile Co-op benefits the community through the use of the greenhouse structure for community meetings at no cost (as the structure is not suitable enough to be rented out as a venue). Mr Siwa also stated that the produce yielded from the Co-op is sold to the community at reasonable prices. The produce that they can't sell is then given to people who are in need. The Lim'uphile Co-op also occasionally cooks soup for the community.

Infrastructural Challenges:
The infrastructural challenges faced by the Lim'uphile Co-op project includes drainage issues and access to electricity. When arriving at the Co-op for the interview with Mr Siwa, the manhole situated on the erf was overflowing with sewage. When asked what caused this, Mr Siwa said that it is due to people from the local community flushing foreign objects, such as fruit peels,

down the drain. This caused the drain to get clogged and to overflow. The overflowing sewerage flowed into some of the Co-op's crops, running the risk of polluting the soil.

Another infrastructural challenge facing the Co-op is access to electricity. The Co-op currently borrows an electrical outlet from a neighbouring spaza shop. The process of applying for electrical installation was fairly slow. The municipality was slow in replying to Mr Siwa's enquiries. Upon various enquiries, the municipality replied and notified that it would cost the Co-op around R18 000. This is too expensive for the Co-Op to afford. This is not unusual at all. Compared to other developments, this price is fairly inexpensive.

> *But 18 000, I know for you, it's a lot. I know, I understand, but it's actually not, not that high actually. It's actually quite reasonable.* (Kotze 2023).

Discussion

Ownership:

For this report, the term *ownership* refers to the users of a project and the surrounding community's sense of responsibility towards the running, upkeep, maintenance and future development of the project (Glick 2019). From what was observed during the site visits and interviews, there appears to exist a strong sense of ownership for both the Silindokuhle preschool and the Lim'uphile Co-op. From observations made on site, both the projects' buildings seem to be in decent working order. These are no significant structural failures due to neglect and the sites are tidy and clean. Hamdi (2010) mentions the importance of ownership, together with a sense of belonging and responsibility, in the health of a place and community. It is through genuine participation that this is cultivated. This strong sense of ownership appears to be a major contributing factor towards the success of both these projects.

The Silindokuhle Preschool project offers a clear example of what a lack of ownership can result in. This refers to the first intervention done by Collectif SAGA, in partnership with the aforementioned Kenyan architect, which is completely abandoned, neglected and structurally dilapidated. The structure stands in stark contrast with the current SIlindokuhle preschool and speaks to the importance of a strong sense of ownership as well as legal tenure.

The first intervention by Collectif SAGA was built on land that isn't owned by Ms Piyani or anyone connected to the preschool. Due to conflict within the community, this building was seized by the community. The building was used, for a time, as a community hall, but since no one took ownership and responsibility for its upkeep and maintenance, it was abandoned. This echoes Hamdi's (2010) example of sanitation facilities in India, provided to poor communities by government agencies. These sanitation facilities were built and maintained by municipal agencies who generally had little accountability to the communities in which they built. Consequently, there was no sense of ownership among the inhabitants of the community towards these sanitation facilities; thus the facilities remain unkempt, dirty and unsanitary (Hamdi 2010: 100). This is yet another example of the importance of ownership in the maintenance of any structure.

Hamdi (2010) also speaks about the dangers of dependency. He uses the example of well-meaning organisations or NGOs thrusting a solution to a *problem*, not perceived as a problem by the community, onto a community. The community will then receive the responsibility to implement and maintain these solutions (Hamdi 2010). This speaks to the notion that providing a product doesn't induce ownership: *Ownership comes from ownership of process, of problem and of solution* (Hamdi 2010: 179).

This is not what happened with Collectif SAGA's involvement; their involvement actually proves how successful the inverse of the aforementioned approach is.

Instead of thrusting a solution onto the community, they became involved with already existing initiatives, where ownership had already been taken of the problem and solution. Ms Piyani saw a need for a preschool in her community, so she started one. Mr Siwa saw a need for an agricultural project, so he decided to take the lead. And instead of providing a solution to a problem, Collectif SAGA added onto and expanded the already existing solution.

Involvement of NGO and Grassroots organisations:
The involvement of NGOs and local charities played and still plays an integral role in the success of both the projects. Prior to Collectif SAGA's involvement, NGOs and charities were already involved with both the projects. It was through an NGO that Mr Siwa was able to get a loan to buy the erf that the Co-op operates on. It was through a NGO donating containers, water tanks and appliances that Ms Piyani was able to start a soup kitchen at the preschool. It was through a local charity organisation, *Love Story*, that Collectif SAGA was put in contact with Ms Piyani, which led to them eventually hearing about the Lim'uphile Co-op.

The teachers who work at the Silindokuhle Preschool are also provided by and receive payment from a local NGO, *Ubuntu*. The preschool also receives food donations to support their soup kitchen.

The NGOs and charities involved have resources at their disposal to leverage towards community upliftment, something which the projects do not have access to. This echoes the notion of an anchor institution and the potential such an institution has in uplifting a community. Anchor institutions are large, permanent, non-profit organisations with a large, fixed asset base that can be utilised for growth and development of the communities in which they are embedded (Van Eeden, Eloff and Dippenaar 2022).

Anchor institutions play an important role in the development of their surrounding communities (Taylor & Luter 2013). Even though the aforementioned NGOs and charities aren't institutions, per se, they have acted as such in their engagement with the two projects. These two projects offer examples of the potential and the importance of anchor institutions involved with community upliftment projects.

During Collectif SAGA's involvement, they went to various companies and NGOs in the Gqeberha to inquire about donating resources, funds and volunteers for the projects. This includes local businesses, such as the TAVCOR motor group and the *Masifunde* NGO. What stood out from this is that the Collectif SAGA team explicitly mentioned that they made sure

representatives from these organisations meet with the project champions, on site. This is to foster a relationship between the project and the organisation, ensuring collaboration after the Collectif SAGA team leaves. This serves as an example of the architects acting as facilitators (Kim in Karim, 2018) between parties, showing that they place value on the ongoing relationship between these organisations and NGOs, and the project partners.

There also exists an opportunity for future involvement of an anchor institution with the Lim'uphile Co-Op. Mr Siwa mentioned that a professor from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University's department of agriculture contacted him prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, wanting to partner with the Co-op. He mentioned that the professor is a specialist in aquaponic farming, and wanted to do a pilot project with the Co-Op. This partnership hasn't been realised as of yet, but it shows that there is interest from NMMU to engage with local communities.

From the data, it seems that the involvement of NGOs and local charities, acting as anchor institutions, has greatly benefited the projects, and it served the projects well for the architects to take time to foster these relationships.

DIfferent Roles of Architects:
The Collectif SAGA team's involvement with both projects stretches well beyond the traditional practices of an architect. They played the roles of designers, researchers, builders, and facilitators (Ballinger and Silva 2020).

As researchers, they spent a significant amount of time within the community surrounding the project. This gave them invaluable insight into the context and users they are designing for. It also aided in building relationships and a sense of trust between them and the project partners; this will be further elaborated later on in the discussion. As designers, they designed on site in close collaboration with the project partners, making great effort to ensure their opinions, and voices are heard and reflected in the design. As builders, they coordinated the building project and took part in the physical building of the projects, as well. This meant that they coordinated a team consisting of the project partners, community members, and volunteers, working closely on site with them during the building process. As facilitators, they facilitated fundraising, acquiring donors and financial partners for the partners. They mediated between the project partners and these businesses and organisations, creating a link between these companies and the project partners, ensuring ongoing collaboration even after the architect's involvement ends.

In his article, *Understanding Public Interest Design, A Conceptual Taxonomy*, Joongsub Kim (in Karim 2018) speaks about the nine models of PID, naming *Architect-Facilitator* as one:

> In this model, architects do not play the role of project director (the role that is generally perceived by the profession to be a primary role of architects); rather, they serve as a cultivator or curator in the design process. (Kim in Karim 2018).

Collectif SAGA's involvement with these projects reflects this model Kim (in Karim 2018) speaks of, albeit not precisely. Beyond just the design process, Collectif SAGA echoes the

aforementioned notion throughout their engagement with each project. They acted as cultivators, promoting collaboration between them and the project partners during the research and design process, as well as collaboration between the project partners and volunteers during the construction process. They located resources, in a literal sense as they collected and curated the found materials used for the building, and in a intangible sense as they employed specific community members' skills in building to aid in the construction process. They also formed partnerships with the aforementioned companies and organisations, and the project partners, ensuring an ongoing relationship even after the project handover.

Groat and Wang (2000, 2013) argue that there is a growing need for architects to step beyond the traditional roles of artists and technicians, to act as facilitators. Therefore, adapting their work to the shifting demographic, social, cultural, and political circumstances in order to better serve the demands of communities (Groat 2000, Groat and Wang 2013). This is echoed by Ballinger and Silva (2020), who state that the role of the architect requires a range of engagement with the public. Various roles need to be taken on, not just the role of designer, but also that of negotiator, arbitrator, motivator, organiser, delegator, and facilitator (Ballinger and Silva, 2020: 89). Collectif SAGA's approach to their involvement in these projects serves as an example of this notion.

Building Trust:
Building trust is a theme that stood out even before the data collection stage of the research. It was an aspect of the architect's involvement that appeared to be important from the initial desktop studies. The data collection and analysis has confirmed this aspect of the work .

In the American Institute of Architects' (2020) *Guides for Equitable Practice*, a chapter is dedicated to *Engaging Communit*y. This chapter posits *building trust* as an important aspect brought about by equitable and inclusive community engagement (AIA 2020: 8.2):
> *In most cases, the architect is an outsider and, therefore, is responsible for building trust*
> *and understanding the community as part of a project's foundational work.* (AIA, 2020).
This notion is echoed by Collectif SAGA's method of engagement.

The architects spent a significant amount of time on both sites before the commencement of each project. This time was invested during the beginning stages of the project, and yielded fruit during the later stages of the project (AIA 2020). They built with the community and thus were on site every day, sharing small, everyday moments together. Through this, even though they could be considered *outsiders*, they were able to build strong relationships with the project champions and stakeholders, inevitably creating a strong sense of trust. It is this sense of trust that the projects are built on, as there were no formal contracts signed. When approaching a project that has the level of informality as these two projects, a strong sense of trust is crucial.

It is this strong sense of trust that provided a foundation for authentic engagement between the architects and project partners (AIA 2020). This sense of trust stretches beyond just the people directly involved with the project, but also to the surrounding community.

The Silindokuhle preschool project offers an example of what happens when this trust is betrayed and eroded. Due to the conflict as a result of the aforementioned theft of the money awarded to the project, the community lost trust in Ms Piyani and forced the preschool out of the initial building. This led to the eventual abandonment and dilapidation of the initial building built by the Collectif SAGA team.

The *International Routledge Handbook of Participatory Design* (Simonsen and Robertson 2021) doesn't explicitly mention *building trust* as an important aspect of engagement. However, in Collectif SAGA's implementation of Participatory Design principles mentioned in the book, a sense of trust was built between them and the project partners. It is important to note that these principles are supported by a foundation of *genuine participation*, *that ensures the voices that are marginalised in communities are heard in making decisions that will ultimately affect them* (Robertson and Simonsen 2011:6).

For instance, one of the aforementioned principles is *equalising power relations* – finding ways to give voice to those who may be invisible or within weaker organisational power structures (Kensing and Greenbaum 2013:33). During the research and design process, the Collectif SAGA team made sure the project champions' voices were heard when making design decisions. Mr Siwa expressed that the design process was very extensive, with a lot of time spent to hear about his ideas, opinions and impressions on the design. He also mentioned that he thinks this is a practice more architects should adopt (Siwa 2023).
Mr Siwa felt as if his voice was heard in the design process, almost exhaustively so. This went a long way to establish a sense of trust between him and the Collectif SAGA team.

Another underpinning principle for good participatory design is *situation based action – working directly with people in their workplace or homes to understand actions and technologies in actual settings, rather than through formal abstractions* (Kensing and Greenbaum 2013:33). This principle echoes the way the Collectif SAGA team went about engaging with the project champions and partners. They consulted them on site, held workshops on site, had design discussions on site, and built with them on site. Rather than having their clients come to an office they went to their clients and worked with them in their community. This also went a long way to establish a sense of trust between the architects and the project partners.

Approaching engagement in this way generates a valuable sense of trust and also gives the architects first hand experience and insight into the project that ultimately aids the architects in making decisions that will benefit the community. It also echoes one of the approaches of building trust between the community and architects, posited by Sun H Park (2016), in her article *Establishing Trust With the People, the Community, and the Place.* This approach to building trust boils down to spending time with and being around members of the community, as members of the community themselves.

This sense of trust was established through building personal relationships between the project partners and the architects. As mentioned by the Collectif SAGA, these relationships were built through spending time together, sharing moments of fellowship. There, however, exists a gap in

the literature that the research findings support. Even though there exists an awareness of authentic engagement and genuine participation in the literature (AIA 2020, Hamdi 2010), Collectif SAGA's engagement is exemplary of delving even deeper into these notions, going beyond engagement in a professional manner and environment to real, interpersonal relationships and connections. Engaging with the community to this level of interpersonal connection is not made mention of in the literature consulted.

Conclusion

The contribution of this research report to the field of Public Interest Design (PID) architecture in South Africa lies in the examples of engagement practices and principles employed by the architects. Beyond the involvement of the Collectif SAGA team, it also gives insight into certain circumstantial characteristics unique to these two projects, and how these characteristics ultimately aided in the success of the efforts of the Collectif SAGA team and the project initiatives themselves.

Collectif SAGA's approach to design and making architecture, although not without fault, is an example of how to engage successfully with an architectural project, its intended users and partners within an underprivileged community, situated in an informal context.

These projects illustrate that engaging within such unique circumstances requires an approach that transcends the traditional role of architect as artist and technician. It requires flexibility as well as a commitment to fully immerse oneself in the context and the community surrounding the project.

The architects displayed flexibility in taking on the roles of researcher, designer, builder, and facilitator. Working with the community in all these instances by providing opportunities for *genuine participation*. An example of this being their in depth consultation with the project partners during the iterative design process, making sure their voices are heard and reflected in the decision making process that will ultimately affect them .

The Collectif SAGA team stepped beyond the traditional roles of an architect and became facilitators, cultivating collaboration between the project partners and the architectural team, and forming partnerships between companies and organisations and the project partners, ensuring ongoing collaboration after the architects' departure, which is beneficial to the projects' future development.

These two projects also prove something significant and unique to engaging in a context of informality. The Collectif SAGA team cultivated an intangible resource that, according to them, formed the foundation of the projects. They built a sense of trust between them and the project partners, and ultimately the surrounding community, only brought about through time spent in and with the community .

This sense of trust provided a foundation for authentic engagement between the architects and project partners . What is quite significant to note, is that Collectif SAGA's engagement sets a remarkable example of delving deeper into the concept of genuine and authentic engagement, to a level of interpersonal relationship building. This is where the most significant contribution of this research study is found, as this level of in-depth interpersonal engagement is not spoken of in the literature consulted. Architects seeking to engage in a project situated in the category of PID ought to take this level of engagement into consideration when dealing with an informal context.

Due to there being no formal contracts or agreements signed, as is typical of projects in an informal context, this sense of trust was vital to ensure a good, strong relationship between the architects and the project partners as it aided them in the later stages of the project . As evidenced by the initial Silindokuhle preschool building being seized and ultimately abandoned by the community, a sense of trust from the surrounding community, not only the people immediately involved with the project, was also important. Collectif SAGA were very successful in establishing this.

Beyond the architect's involvement, these projects also prove that architecture, in isolation, is not sufficient to meet the needs required for a successful project within the aforementioned context. A system of support and engagement is required, that includes various stakeholders, partners, organisations and NGOs to be involved. The involvement of anchor institutions greatly benefitted and continues to benefit the projects, as these institutions have an important role to play in terms of the development of the communities surrounding them. Even though these aforementioned organisations are not typical examples of anchor institutions, they in essence, function as anchor institutions for the projects. It served the project well for the architects to make an effort to establish a connection between the project partners and these anchor organisations or *institutions*.

The research and analysis of this report into these two projects, reinforces the notion that a strong sense of ownership is vital to the success of a community engagement project. In these two instances, there already existed a strong sense of ownership prior to the architects' involvement with the projects.
Instead of the architects taking on the responsibility of fostering a sense of ownership within the community, by starting an initiative from the ground up, they bolstered already existing initiatives and projects by providing a physical answer to the needs of these initiatives.

These themes identified through the research and analysis of Collectif SAGA's involvement and engagement with these two projects, echoes certain principles of good participatory design and community engagement, such as *Equalising power relations* and S*ituation-based action*' It gives tangible examples of how these principles can be applied in the aforementioned context, common to many PID projects in South Africa.

It is the combination of the engagement practices and unique project circumstances and characteristics that contributed to the success of these two projects. These engagement

practices echo the principles of good participatory engagement, community engagement action research and authentic engagement and participation, and in certain instances it goes beyond and applies these principles in more depth. Their engagement practices offer tangible, successful examples of how the principles of participatory design and community engagement action research can be applied in a South African informal context, catering for an underprivileged community.

There were circumstances outside the direct influence of the architects that added to the success of the projects. Architects can use these as guiding examples when considering getting involved with PID projects. For instance, one might consider the benefits of getting involved with an already established initiative within the community to bolster the already existing efforts to solve problems identified by the community.

Collectif SAGA's involvement with these projects illustrates the importance of architecture not functioning in isolation of other organisations, businesses or stakeholders involved with the project initiatives, but to rather engage with them and where possible, strengthen the connections they have with the project initiatives.

This research inquiry is relevant to the discourse of Public Interest Design, as it offers examples of community engagement principles, in practice, and the application of Participatory Design practices in an informal, under privileged, context. This speaks to the relevance of Public Interest Design in South Africa, and the further global south. Public Interest Design and its principles of engagement, as evidenced by the report, can be successfully applied in the aforementioned context, so as to aid in community upliftment through architectural interventions. By shifting the focus from product to process (in this case, community engagement processes), PID widens the scope of architectural projects that architects can get involved in (which includes frameworks of engagement and decision making, as well as infrastructure and policies). There is a growing debate on whether architects have lost their relevance, serving political and economic issues, but not social issues. This research report offers an example of the inverse. Architecture, within Public Interest Design, is relevant and can successfully aid uplifting communities and addressing social issues.

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Appendix A

Herewith follows the questions contained in the questionnaire, which guided the interviews.

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?"