Architect’s vision, creative process and architecture for empowerment: learning from creative process of Indonesian architects

Tulus Widiarso1,2, Himasari Hanan3
1Lecturer, Graduate Program, Department of Architecture, Trisakti University, Jakarta, Indonesia,
2Student, Architecture Doctoral Program, Bandung Institute of Technology, Bandung, Indonesia
3Lecturer, Architecture Doctoral Program, Bandung Institute of Technology, Bandung, Indonesia

Corresponding email: twidiarso@gmail.com

Abstract. In the course of architect’s career, a vision of work is developed. The firm’s orientation where the architect works becomes one determining factor of the vision. The vision may change over time based on their professional experiences. At some point, some architects decide to focus only on a particular project, such as architecture for empowerment. This research was conducted by analysing theoretical and empirical studies of architect’s creative process. The study was done through a qualitative approach. The participating architects were chosen purposively. Exploration was conducted through deep retrospective interviews. This study aims at: (1) describing the relevance between the architect’s vision and his creative process; (2) describing the proportion of combination between problem solving process and the process of self-expression in the creative process in the architecture domain; (3) describing the proportion of combination between problem solving process and self-expression process in architectural creative process for empowerment. The main findings are: (1) every architect develops a personalized creative vision. The architect’s creative vision will vary the creative process, although it may not always be the dominating factor of the creative process; (2) in the creative work process, the architect may not always determine the problem solving domination or the self-expression domination as his identity; (3) in the case of architectural design for empowerment, the architect's creative process is dominated by problem solving, even it is possible for the loss of self-expression.

Keywords: architect’s vision, creative process, architecture for empowerment.

1. Introduction
Creativity is a complex cultural process involving the interrelation between domains (culture or a particular science), a field (control domain system) and a creative person which produces valuable and novelty creative work. [1]. Architect is a creative person in the field of architecture. The creative process undertaken by the creative person is usually a mix of problem-solving-oriented process [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] and a self-expression process [3] [5]. The attempts to uncover the joint proportions between the two processes in a person's creative process on a particular domain are significant
supports for the creative science. However, this has not been most researchers’ interests. In the context of stakeholders’ (clients, users and others) empowerment, it is essential to understand whether or not more problem-oriented processes are required.

In the context of today's business institutions, especially in the field of creative industry, the term vision and creativity are often used interchangeably. In the context of the architectural firm, the creative vision of the firm is identical with the creative vision of the architect’s principle [8].

In his research on some architectural firms in the United States, Coxe [9] categorized those firms based on their services’ characteristics. The architectural firm’s characteristics of services are very influential to the shape of the architects’ visions. However, Coxe [9] has not yet revealed the relevance between the architect’s vision and the blended proportion of problem-solving orientation and self-expression orientation.

This paper was analysed based on an empirical exploration study on architect practices, aiming at: (1) describing the relevance between the architect's vision and his creative process; (2) describing the proportion of combination between problem solving process and the process of self-expression in the creative process in the architecture domain; (3) describing the proportion of combination between problem solving process and self-expression process in architectural creative process for empowerment.

2. Methods

The study presented in this paper was analysed by using a qualitative approach. The participants were 10 architects who have received both national and international awards and hold essential role in Indonesian architecture. A retrospective interview regarding the creative vision and creative process of work were asked to the participants. The transcript of the interview was analysed by using the procedure as shown in Figure-1.

![Figure 1. The process of data management and analysis of interview results constructed from Corbin & Strauss [10]](image-url)
The themes that emerged from the interview transcript result were analysed and interpreted based on relevant creative science theories.

3. Result, Interpretation and Discussion

The interview results of the participating architects show that all architects describe the firm where they work as a "strong idea firm". In accordance with the Coxe [9] categorization, the "strong idea firm" is a service-oriented bureau, focusing on providing specific expertise or innovation and uniqueness. The fundamental value of architectural service-oriented bureau is being specific, unique, and innovative. In this study, the specific services in the bureau are services on the architecture and interior design. Other design aspects such as structure, mechanical-electrical, landscaping and others are distributed to third-party consultants. Based on the volume of workload, the bureaus are considered to be in a small and medium category. It is acknowledged by the fact that there is no firm whose participants are among the "top ten BCI-Asia". This is in line with the Coxe’s finding [9] that the "strong idea firm" generally grows as a small and medium-sized bureau. Nine out of ten participating architects, who are the Principal Architect of their firms, provide reasons that: by focusing solely on architectural and interior design, a unique and innovative works are more possibly created. One participating architect who is not the Principal Bureau suggests that he feels comfortable creating such a unique and innovative results.

3.1. Architect’s Vision, Creative Vision and Firm Orientation

Vision is very important strategic horizon to build short and long-term organizational goals and objectives [8]. Creativity in organizational context is simply defined as using imagination in designing and actualizing the organization's production. Institutionalizing creativity involves the modification of a future-oriented organizational culture as well as the organization's vision. It should be realized that a creative vision requires the articulation of vision and mission and its implementation through appropriate management strategies.

Coxe [9] distinguished the architect’s firm orientation into: (1) strong idea firm – the orientation is to give specific expertise or innovation and uniqueness; (2) strong service firm – the orientation is to provide a reliable service on complex projects; (3) strong delivery firm – the orientation is to provide efficient services on regular projects for product-oriented clients. The orientation of a "strong idea firm" leads to the creation of the architect's vision for a unique and innovative work. All participating architects indicate that they possess a clear vision of work. A number of 6 participants expresses their visions of the work clearly (explicitly), while the others do not express it directly. Nevertheless, it is elaborated during the interview. Despite of all the visions to achieve innovation and uniqueness, each architect expresses the value of his vision differently (Figure-2).

![Figure 2. The Vision-Values of the Participating Architects](image-url)
3.2. Creative Process and Architect’s Vision

Creative process is done by a creative person. He/she combines problem solving process oriented and self-expression process oriented [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]. Vision, which is the expression of architect’s value, is essential for every architect. It is found in the empirical practice of the participating architects. In this study, three participating architects shared the same visions, commerciality. However, it is essentially different from each other. First, the strength of commercial vision is built from the business domains; second, the power of commercial vision is built based on the effectiveness and efficiency of the design; and third, the power of a commercial vision is built based on their distinctive work. The implementation of the creative process vision as a form of self-expression is agreed by three participating architects. However, regarding to the creative process, they are very concerned about how the problem of architectural design should be well answered.

The main component of creative process is the process towards problem-solving and self-expression. Several researches have explored the complexity of the creative process. It can be described as [7] [11] [12] [13] [14]: both conscious and subconscious heuristic processes towards problem solving and self-expression process supported by strong internal and relevant external conditions.

None of the participating architects guarantee that creative process is always dominated by problem solving process or vice versa. Each project case has its own specific creative process. External conditions cannot be controlled by the architect’s internal strength. In many cases, external conditions precisely dominate the architect’s internal strength.

3.3. Creative Process and Architecture for Empowerment

The proportion between problem solving and self-expression cannot be considered as the characteristics of the architect’s creative performance. This depends on the external conditions of the project unless they choose to deal only with controllable external conditions projects. Or else, the architects deal only with projects with external conditions that are beyond their control capabilities. In architectural projects for empowerment, it is necessary to trace whether external factors are beyond the control of the architects or vice versa. Here is a theoretical insight to note.

The architecture of empowerment is built to respond to the needs of low-class society, respect the value of humanity, and take responsible act for their lives [15]. The society’s participation is emphasised for not only creating average achievement but also providing valuable contributions in social or political values. Additionally, this can open bigger chances in architecture [16]. The architecture for empowerment practice is architect’s platform of creativity and innovation elaboration. The agents of initiator for the society of empowerment are: government, private, non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Architect who takes the role in community empowerment is known as architect community [17]. The architect community serves as a supporter providing important information on architectural techniques and facilitating dialogue for various parties.

In actualizing the benefits of community participation, especially in the context of empowering underprivileged communities, many architects encounter various obstacles while trying to engage their clients during the design process. In regards to the community participation in today’s architectural design, there has been an essential implication for the role of architects and professional design teams. In the context of participatory design for empowerment, development does not limit only to build buildings. Further, the development process may inspire the society to be skilled and knowledgeable people. This may occur through various stages of participation in design and construction. Broadly speaking, the participatory design process for empowerment is shown on Figure 3 below [18].

The model chart on the left side is the participation of the community, the ways (means) of contributions in development, as well as the responsibility upon the completion of the program (end). The right side are architects as designers who are working on the process and product design aspects. In the production aspect, architects as design product providers need to provide designs that guarantee the efficient and effective development. In process aspect, design and design process should encourage the implementation of development that enhance community capacity (building capacity) and
community empowerment. The synergy between the community and the architects and other stakeholders (stakeholders) embody three empowerment components: efficient and effective development, development processes that provide community learning, and development processes and outcomes to empower the society.

Figure 3. Model of Participatory Design Process for Community Empowerment [17]

Based on the Tovivich’s model, the main components of the development process of empowerment are design and participation. To create the development for empowerment, the architectural design has to align both the process and the result. On the other hand, empowerment participation has to be aligned between its means and its end.

Figure 3 shows clearly that the core of the architecture for empowerment is the interrelation between community participation and the architects’ contribution. Those are: (1) empowerment; (2) building capacity; and (3) efficiency & effectiveness. Architects need to answer all the three issues addressed by the process and the design result. Theoretically, in architectural design for empowerment, problem solving process dominates the creative process.

The two participating architects in this study involve themselves mostly in architectural design for empowerment. Among their works which receive award-winning appreciation are the works for empowerment. The first participating architect focused on providing problem solving facilities for the community in the creative design process for empowerment. The second one described his work in the design process for empowerment, fused himself in an empowered community, and totally performed problem solving oriented creative process.

4. Conclusion
Generally, the empirical exploration studies of the creative process of architects, especially in the context of community empowerment result in the following conclusions:
Every architect develops a personalized creative vision. The architect’s creative vision will vary the creative process, although it may not always be the dominating factor of their creative process;

In their creative process, architect may not always determine their problems solving orientation domination or self-expression orientation domination as their characteristics. Not all of the external conditions can be controlled by the architects; in fact, many project external conditions are predominantly control the architects;

In the case of architectural design for empowerment, the architect's creative process is dominated by problem solving even it is possible for the loss of self-expression.

5. Acknowledgments
The authors would like to thank to the participating architects, Bandung Institute of Technology as the institution where the authors carry out the research, as well as Trisakti University as the research funder.

6. References
[1] Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly, (2013). Creativity: The Psychology of Discovery and Invention, Harper Perennial Modern Classic Edition Published, New York, 278-323.
[2] Gardner, H. (1999). Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century. New York: Basic Books.
[3] Mumford, M. D. (2003). Where have we been, where are we going? Taking Stock in Creativity Research, Creativity Research Journal, 15(2-3), 107-120.
[4] Newell, A., dan Simon, H. A. (1972). Human Problem Solving, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, New York, 41-76.
[5] Runco, M. A., & Pritzker, S. R. (Eds.). (2011). Encyclopedia of creativity, two-volume set, second edition (2 ed.). Boston: Academic
[6] Torrance, E. P. (1974). Torrance tests of creative thinking. Scholastic Testing Service, Inc
[7] Wallach, M. A., & Kogan, N. (1965). Modes of thinking in young children: a study of the creativity-intelligence distinction. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
[8] Karaman A, Kok S B, Hasiloglu S B, Rivera M 2008. Vision, creativity, strategic innovation, and transformational leadership Problems and Perspectives in Management 6-2 pp 104-109
[9] Coxe, W. (1987). Success strategies for design professionals: super positioning for architecture & engineering firms. New York: McGraw-Hill.
[10] Corbin J and Strauss A, (2008). Basic of Qualitative Research, Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory, Sage Publication Inc, California.
[11] Dewey, John, (1934). Art as Experience, New York: the Berkley Publishing Group,
[12] Guilford, J. P. (I 956). The structure of intellect. Psychological Bulletin, 53, 267-293.
[13] Kolodner, J.L. and Wills, L.M. (1996). Powers of observation in creative design, Design Studies, 17, 385- 416.
[14] Amabile, T.M., Conti, R., Coon, H., Lazenby, J. and Herron, M. (1996). Assessing the Work Environment for Creativity. The Academy of Management Journal, 39, 1154-1184.
[15] Serageldin, I. (1997). The Architecture of empowerment: people, shelter and liveable cities, London ; Lanham, Md. Academy Editions : Distributed to the trade in the United States of America by National Book Network Inc
[16] Till, J. (2005). The negotiation of hope. in Blundell J, P., Petrescu, D. and Till, J. (Eds.) Architecture and participation. London: Spon Press.
[17] Valladares, A. (2012). The Community Architect Program: Implementing participation-in-design to improve housing conditions in Cuba, Elsevier Ltd.
[18] Tovivich, S. (2010). Architecture for The Urban Poor, The 'New Professionalism' of 'Community Architects' and the Implications for Architectural Education: Reflections on Practice from Thailand, PhD Thesis, the Faculty of Architecture, Silpakorn University, United Kingdom, 43-88.