

## Participation

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Vandana Shiva states: “The way we design the world determines how we relate to it in real life. When we design without understanding our limits, we trespass the limits of our planet. When design is carried out with an awareness of the interconnectedness of relationships, it strengthens these relationships.” The July 2026 issue of *A/Z* focuses on one of the foundational concepts in establishing this network of relations — participation. Rather than confining participation to the narrow framework of “participatory design” alone, the issue approaches it through a broader lens shaped by the modes of interaction among the diverse actors involved in design and planning practices. Spanning from the child’s autonomy in the play space to local communities’ negotiation with the state, from professional collaboration models to housing access, this breadth reveals the multi-layered place of the concept within the discipline of architecture and planning.

The eight articles featured in this issue underscore that participation is a significant phenomenon that can be addressed across different scales, periods, and geographies. For instance, “Cities as Playgrounds” positions the child as the subject of space and examines the potential of urban play areas designed with children to transform the city into a “playable city,” through the “Play Istanbul” initiative developed under the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality; while “Playing Children” documents the spatial autonomy of preschool children during play through an architectural-psychological method, revealing how the physical environment supports or constrains autonomy. Both articles demonstrate the child as an active participant in the use and organization of space.

“How Decisions are Made” analyzes the urban and architectural transformation of the Zayouna district in Baghdad through Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory, revealing how top-down and bottom-up dynamics operate in decision-making processes.

Another article, “Prize for Sheltering,” examines how the production of social housing is transformed into a public process and gains visibility through exhibition, emphasizing competitions as a representation of participatory practice. Both articles focus on the institutional and governance dimensions of participation, enabling us to understand the role of different actors and mechanisms in the processes of space production.

“Voicing the Local Interests” addresses the demands and expectations that local communities conveyed to the state through petitions in response to the route change of the Trabzon–Erzurum road, through the case of Gümüşhane. This article demonstrates that, although participation emerges as a contemporary concept, it has historically served as an instrument for communities to make their voices heard.

Two articles in the issue reveal that participation is not limited to involving users in the process; the production of accessible, buildable, and sustainable space is itself a form of participation. In this context, “Integrated Project Delivery in the AEC Sector” analyzes the integrated project delivery method, developed in response to low productivity and insufficient collaboration in the architecture-engineering-construction sector, through a systematic literature review. “Cost-Effective Construction Strategies for Affordable Housing in India” presents a comparative analysis of construction techniques in the production of affordable housing for low-income populations in India, demonstrating that housing access is a social participation issue as much as a technical one.

“Reconstitution of Memory” examines the formation and transformation process of a memory place through the case of the Alsancak Cigarette Factory. The article reveals that the factory, established in 1884 as part of İzmir’s industrial zone, held a significant place in collective memory beyond tobacco production as a place of belonging for its employees and their families; and that the meanings ascribed to the place through experiences, emotions, and testimonies collectively produced it as

a memory place. Discussing the impact of intervention in this transformation process and the new role of the memory place in urban identity, the article makes visible how the experiences and memories of individuals and communities constitute a form of participation in the conservation and re-production of heritage places.

As A/Z, in this issue, in keeping with the journal's culture of critical, interdisciplinary, and open debate, we aimed to make visible the multi-dimensional, multi-scalar, and methodologically diverse place of the concept of participation in architectural and planning research.

We wish you an enjoyable read.