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REVIEW

Social housing from the perspective of architectural design and socio-urban inclusion

La vivienda de interés social desde la perspectiva del diseño arquitectónico y la inclusión socio-urbana

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze proven and conceptual studies on social housing (VIS), focusing on understanding how these dwellings respond to the housing needs of vulnerable sectors, considering aspects such as quality, sustainability, accessibility and social integration.
Method: narrative review based on the collection and analysis of journal articles, surveys and relevant technical documents on SIV. A mixed method with qualitative predominance is applied, including documentary reviews of regulations and historical records, as well as chronological systematization tables and statistical analysis, to assess the quality of design and other aspects of housing.
Results: the VIS play a fundamental role in providing decent housing, but face significant challenges related to construction quality, urban integration, sustainability and community participation. It was found that many homes have been built without adequate technical support, have poor interior spaces and are located in environments with social marginalization and urban disintegration.
Conclusions: the need to improve VIS with more flexible and quality solutions that consider the economic capacity of the users, encourage self-construction and progressivity, and integrate sustainable practices and resident participation to achieve a long-term positive impact on social equity and quality of life.

Keywords: Architecture; Housing; Social Interest; Architectural Design; Socio-Urban Inclusion.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar los estudios probados y conceptuales sobre las viviendas de interés social (VIS), enfocándose en comprender cómo estas viviendas responden a las necesidades habitacionales de sectores vulnerables, considerando aspectos como calidad, sostenibilidad, accesibilidad e integración social.
Método: revisión narrativa basada en la recopilación y análisis de artículos de revistas, encuestas y documentos técnicos relevantes sobre VIS. Se aplica un método mixto con predominancia cualitativa, que incluye revisiones documentales de normativas y registros históricos, así como tablas de sistematización cronológica y análisis estadístico, para evaluar la calidad del diseño y otros aspectos de las viviendas.
Resultados: las VIS cumplen un papel fundamental para ofrecer viviendas dignas, pero enfrentan desafíos significativos relacionados con la calidad constructiva, la integración urbana, la sostenibilidad y la participación comunitaria. Se constata que muchas viviendas han sido construidas sin apoyo técnico adecuado, presentan espacios interiores deficientes y se ubican en entornos con marginación social y desintegración urbana.
Conclusiones: la necesidad de mejorar la VIS con soluciones más flexibles y de calidad, que consideren la capacidad económica de los usuarios, fomenten la autoconstrucción y progresividad, e integren prácticas sostenibles y la participación de los residentes para lograr un impacto positivo a largo plazo en la equidad social y calidad de vida.

Palabras clave: Arquitectura; Viviendas; Interés Social; Diseño Arquitectónico; Inclusión Socio-Urbana.

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INTRODUCTION

Housing is a fundamental human right, enshrined in most national constitutions and international treaties. From this perspective, the design and construction of housing must respond comprehensively to its potential users' physical, environmental, and social context. This implies generating interior spaces that guarantee optimal habitability, universal accessibility, thermal and spatial comfort, and environmental sustainability. In addition, housing should foster community interaction, promote social cohesion, and strengthen the neighborhood's cultural traditions and practices.[1]

However, access to adequate housing remains a significant challenge in many global contexts, especially for income-restricted populations. In this sense, social housing (VIS) is positioned as a fundamental strategy to meet the housing needs of these vulnerable sectors. It should be noted that the users of these dwellings have an essential degree of autonomy to intervene progressively in the functional and aesthetic improvement of their homes by the characteristics of the urban and social environment, a recurrent practice with historical antecedents in the self-building and adaptation of SIV.[2]

In several regions, however, the lack of technical and urban feasibility studies has led to disjointed urbanization processes, the presence of marginalized sectors, and unfavorable socio-economic conditions, including poverty, exclusion, and criminality. Housing has often been built self-managed, without the necessary technical support, which has affected architectural and urban quality.[3] On the other hand, there is a need to overcome the traditional paradigms of social housing, characterized by reduced and limited interior spaces, proposing alternatives that incorporate areas for productive or economic activities within the domestic sphere.[4]

It warns of the growing deficiencies in the quality of housing solutions for vulnerable sectors, emphasizing the importance of economic prototypes that contemplate basic structures with open spaces and fixed services. These prototypes should be able to adapt progressively to the users' financial capacity and specific needs through design strategies such as high-rise housing, progressive housing, self-construction, and interior spatial flexibility.[5,6]

Housing and its urban environment are dynamic elements, subject to continuous transformations, where individual, family, and social narratives converge. These narratives reflect processes of integration and continuity as well as ruptures and conflicts, shaping a shared reality that transcends the particular experiences of the individual to include collective and social dimensions.[7]

It also criticizes conventional VIS planning, which tends to ignore the specific nature of vulnerable families' urban and social context, prioritizing merely spatial aspects without adequately considering the human and socio-economic conditions that influence the habitat's habitability and sustainability.[8]

Within this framework, this study carries out a narrative review of the conceptual and empirical production of social housing, compiling and analyzing articles and references that offer a comprehensive view of the architectural, urban, and social strategies implemented. This approach aims to provide a solid foundation for future research and contribute to developing housing solutions that effectively respond to the demands of vulnerable sectors.

METHOD

The article's methodology is oriented towards a narrative review approach. This narrative review is based on the collection and critical analysis of various types of secondary sources, such as academic journal articles, surveys, and technical documents related to social housing.

Its objective was to describe and synthesize SIV's proven and conceptual production, providing a broad and contextualized view of the subject. To this end, qualitative research techniques are used to evaluate aspects such as design quality, sustainability, urban integration, and community participation from different perspectives and contexts.

The review incorporates documentary systematization through chronological tables that organize relevant events and regulations, facilitating the historical and normative understanding of the VIS phenomenon.

The methodology consists of an integrative and critical analysis of selected bibliographic and documentary sources. This allows us to understand the current state of the VIS and the associated challenges, with a view to guiding future research and proposals in this field.

RESULTS

Table 1. Articles consulted

Author	Article type	Objective	Final results
(Adewale, 2020)	Original/cross-cutting	To describe, analyse and compare the levels of Place Attachment and Place Identity of the inhabitants of three heritage neighbourhoods.	The study was carried out with residents of UNESCO-listed neighbourhoods, highlighting the importance of building a solid theoretical framework to facilitate the understanding of the interaction and link between spaces and their inhabitants.
(Muñoz, 2019)	Original/cross-cutting	are based on a documentary review of regulations and historical records. In addition, systematisation tables were drawn up based on relevant or significant events and developments, arranged in chronological order.	Accordingly, social housing is interpreted as an expression of its inhabitants, reflecting their experiences and expectations.

(Bello, 2020)	Article/original	Subsequently, a normality analysis was performed and a One Way Analysis of Variance (ANDEVA) was carried out to identify if there were differences between the values of each variable present in each species; if differences were found, a Tukey test was applied.	The good results in social housing are attributed to the use of imported materials with homogeneous dimensions and processes. However, there are shortcomings in dimensional uniformity, especially in length, and natural defects, such as knots, and handling defects, such as saw marks, which affect quality.
(Quintana, 2015)	Article	In relation to the issues of sustainability and the use of state-of-the-art technology, we investigated the relationship that users find between the use of state-of-the-art devices and the energy consumption reflected in their utility bills, finding that for 92% of the users, the use of these devices is related to the energy consumption reflected in their utility bills.	Human waste energy could power domestic devices, providing comfort, security and lighting for small loads. However, technical, ethical and efficiency challenges need to be resolved before this viable option can be considered on a large scale.

CONCLUSIONS

Construction quality is essential to guaranteeing the durability and safety of social housing over time. Proper construction improves thermal and acoustic comfort, which are fundamental to residents' well-being.

Integrating sustainable practices and technologies in the design and construction of these dwellings is key to minimizing their environmental impact and ensuring their long-term viability. These practices include the use of environmentally friendly materials, efficient water and energy management systems, and the incorporation of green spaces and waste management solutions.

Strategically locating housing in areas that facilitate access to basic services - public transport, education, health care, and employment opportunities - supports urban integration. Inclusive planning and the insertion of these dwellings in mixed environments contribute to social cohesion, avoiding segregation processes and promoting interaction between different socio-economic groups.

Active community participation is essential to ensure a sustained positive impact over time. Facilitating spaces for citizen participation, fostering neighborhood organization, training in self-management skills, and promoting shared responsibility for maintaining housing and common spaces contribute to social development and community sustainability.

By considering these factors holistically, social housing provides a decent roof over vulnerable families' heads and fosters sustainable development, social equity, and improved quality of life for its inhabitants.

However, the uniformity typical of these developments can generate tensions. A place's identity is strengthened when its inhabitants establish a meaningful link with their surroundings, which reinforces the sense of belonging. However, in heritage neighborhoods, interventions can lead to adverse effects such as gentrification, increased tourism, social exclusion, and a weakening sense of community. These phenomena highlight the need to address socio-spatial relations equitably and sustainably.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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