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# Analysis of Sustainability Criteria in the Pritzker Architecture Prizes: A Qualitative Analysis (2019-2025)

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**Abstract**

Sustainability is a multifaceted concept that can be addressed with different evaluation criteria. This study analyzes the sustainability discourses of architects awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize, one of the world's most prestigious architecture awards, by examining the jury citations. The analysis was conducted using embedded theory, a qualitative research method, which involved converting codes extracted from the jury citations into concepts, which were then classified under social-cultural, environmental, and economic sustainability categories. The study's scope is 2019–2025, during which the jury members remained unchanged. The findings show that social-cultural sustainability (culture, quality of life, sense of place, community solidarity, social cohesion, etc.) was particularly prominent during the period in question, while environmental and economic dimensions were relatively less represented. This situation results from the jury members being composed primarily of architects and critics.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainability has come to the fore as a way for humanity to fulfill its responsibilities to itself and nature in preserving the balance of the ecosystem. Sustainable development, on the other hand, is a combination of concepts such as development, needs, and future generations [1]. Sustainability is an essential driving force today because it is a guiding principle in the decision-making process for a better and more sustainable future [2]. Achieving sustainability requires changing existing habits and, when necessary, introducing new habits that are adaptable or transformable.

The concept of sustainability has often been addressed in literature as an umbrella term with various subcategories. The popular three-circle diagram, frequently used in literature over the past 20 years as a tree column diagram, was first presented by Barbier (1987) [3]. According to him, sustainability should be addressed in social, environmental, and economic categories. This approach has been widely accepted in both academic and applied studies and has been integrated into the fields of study of different disciplines over time. The discipline of architecture plays a critical role in all three dimensions due to its high resource consumption and environmental impact. As one of the most vital actors in global climate change, the construction sector is a decisive factor in environmental sustainability, economic efficiency, and social quality of life.

The most prestigious award system guiding architectural production to date is the Pritzker Architecture Prize, established in 1979. Often referred to as the “Nobel Prize of architecture,” this award not only honors individual creativity and professional achievement but also has the power to shape architectural discourse and trends on a global scale. This raises an important question: To what extent does the Pritzker Architecture Prize reflect and promote sustainability? This study seeks to answer this question by analyzing the architects awarded the prize between 2019 and 2025 using a qualitative approach. The

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study will shed light on how the jury views the architects it has deemed worthy of the award in terms of sustainability.

The research examines sustainability from social-cultural, environmental, and economic perspectives. The analysis was conducted using the jury citations texts available on the official Pritzker website. The analysis was conducted using the jury citations texts available on the official Pritzker website. The research method was grounded theory, a qualitative analysis method in which jury citations were analyzed. The jury citations were coded using open coding, the codes were converted into concepts, and these concepts were matched with social-cultural, environmental, and economic sustainability categories. Throughout the process, the density and distribution of concepts were determined using a continuous comparison method. The scope of the study was defined as the period from 2019 to 2025. The Pritzker jury was renewed in 2019, and jury members have had no significant changes from that date until 2025.Therefore, the 2019–2025 period was selected to more clearly evaluate the impact of the fixed jury structure on the award discourse, as it ensures consistency in the analysis. Furthermore, this period is directly linked to current trends in architecture. The architects examined in the study are presented in Figure 1.

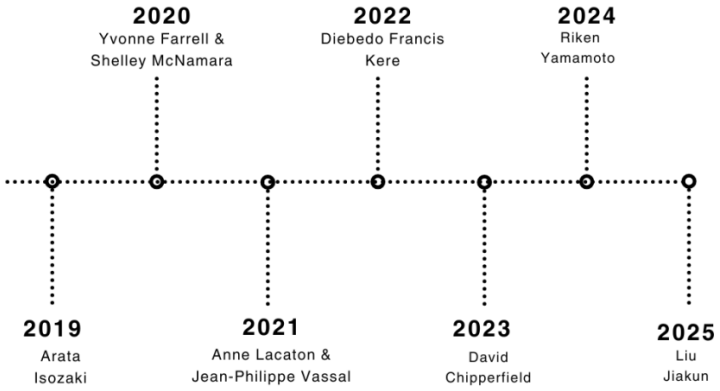


***Figure 1***. Architects who have been awarded the prize in the last seven years

## 2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SUSTAINABILITY IN ARCHITECTURE

Sustainability is an important issue that concerns many disciplines due to its wide range of applications in helping to resolve the inconsistency between human development and the productive resource capacity of the planet [4]. Global climate change, the current environmental crisis, and the rapid depletion of our energy resources, which are among the most pressing issues facing society today, call for a shift toward more environmentally friendly and energy-efficient design approaches in disciplines related to the construction sector [5].

A significant milestone in global progress toward sustainability was reached in 2015 when 193 countries signed the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [6]. These goals have directly contributed to increased priorities in the construction sector, such as energy efficiency, carbon emission reduction, and social inclusivity. With the UN's announcement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the concept of ‘sustainability’ has become increasingly focused on these goals, yet it remains an open-ended concept subject to numerous interpretations and context-specific understandings [7]. The concept of sustainable development has been expanded over the years to encompass other important development factors such as social progress and economic growth [8]. The World Commission on Environment and Development's report, entitled “Our Common Future,” states that “the environment does not exist as a separate sphere from human actions, ambitions, and needs” [9].

Although there are many subcategories of sustainability, most scientists agree on the three-pillar approach proposed by Barbier (1987) [3], which includes the widely accepted subcategories of social-cultural,

environmental, and economic sustainability. These three goals are also known as the pillars of sustainable development [2, 10, 11, 12]. They can be summarized as follows:

- Environmental/Ecological: Conservation of natural resources, maintenance of ecosystem balance, energy efficiency, reduction of emissions.
- Economic: Long-term cost-effective solutions, efficiency in resource use, contribution to local economic development.
- Social-cultural: Preservation of social welfare, cultural heritage, and quality of life, provision of equal opportunities.

These three dimensions are often visualized in academic literature using a Venn diagram, which is usually symbolized by three overlapping circles, or a model of three independent columns that support each other (Figure 2) [7]. Giddings et al. (2002) [13] argue that these three dimensions can only meet sustainable development goals when considered together. To achieve full sustainability, all pillars must be balanced, but reaching the desired state is not easy because each pillar must achieve its goals without compromising the interests of the other pillars [1,14].

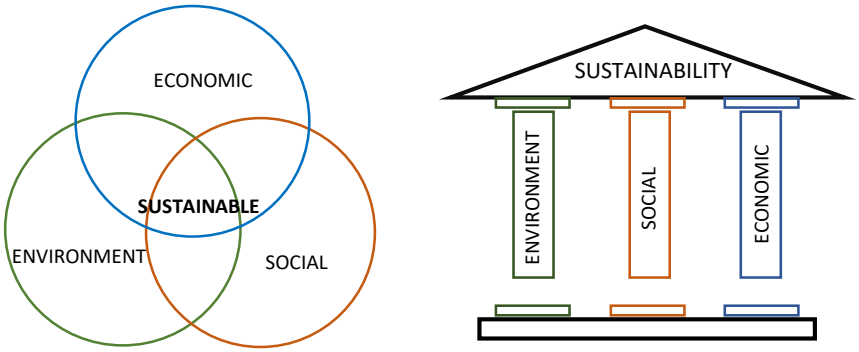


***Figure 2***. 3 pillars of sustainability [7]

Architecture is a discipline that has a direct impact on all three dimensions. Due to its high energy and material consumption, its decisive role in quality of life, and its power to shape cultural values, it occupies a central position in sustainability discussions [15]. Sustainable architecture has minimal impact on the environment while meeting users' needs [8]. Sustainable architecture is based on the principles of efficient resource use, ecosystem conservation, and waste management. For example, energy-efficient facade systems [16-17], high-performance insulation materials [18], energy-efficient HVAC systems [19], natural ventilation strategies [20], passive solar gain [21], the use of natural materials such as bamboo [22] or recycled materials [23-24] can provide significant energy savings throughout a building's life cycle.

In addition, sustainable architecture improves quality of life and demonstrates sensitivity to user needs, while also taking social and cultural aspects into consideration. For example, architecture that is conducive to human health [25], aims to improve the social and spiritual well-being of society [26], helps increase social participation [27-28], contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage [29], and promotes social equality [30-31] contributes to social and cultural sustainability.

However, unless the architecture is economically affordable, the social and environmental aspects cannot yield sufficiently efficient results. For instance, the production of cost-effective [32-33], poverty-struggling [34] and durability-focused [35] structures is also crucial for sustainable architecture. Thus, sustainable architecture can be defined as a multi-layered design approach that integrates environmentally conscious design principles, social responsibility, and cost-effective solutions.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted to reveal how sustainability is addressed in the Pritzker Architecture Awards, and grounded theory was used as the data analysis method. Grounded

theory is a method developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, which is widely used in the social sciences. The primary objective of this method is to develop new concepts, hypotheses, and theories based on the data rather than to test an existing theory [36]. The main reason for choosing this method is that it allows the study to progress in a data-driven manner and to derive new themes from the Pritzker jury evaluation texts without being bound by a pre-determined theoretical framework.

The qualitative data analysis process involves systematic classification, reduction, and interpretation of raw data. In this process, the researcher uses inductive and deductive reasoning methods together, constantly shifting between concrete data sets and abstract concepts. The analysis is conducted not so much by rigid rules as by analytical thinking appropriate to the context of the data [37-38]. In this study, the embedded theory process progressed through the following four basic stages:

- Collecting texts selected for evaluation,
- Assigning codes to text sections during the initial coding phase,
- Dividing these codes into concepts based on common/shared meanings,
- Converting the meaning of each concept into a category,
- Continuing the coding sequence until a new category emerges.

The dataset consists of official jury citations for the winners of the Pritzker Architecture Prize between 2019 and 2025 [39]. The reason for selecting this period with unchanged jury members is to more clearly evaluate the impact of a fixed jury structure on the award discourse, as it ensures consistency in the analysis. All jury citations were coded in detail, the codes were conceptualized, and these concepts were categorized according to the environmental, economic, and social-cultural dimensions of sustainability. Thus, an in-depth qualitative analysis was conducted on how the award winners approached sustainability and the common themes under which they were evaluated. The steps followed in the study are presented in Figure 3.

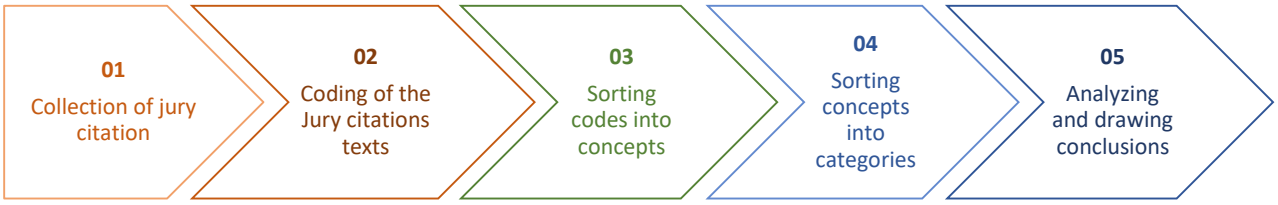


***Figure 3.*** *Data analysis steps*

### 3.1. Determination of Sustainability Criteria

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to determine the sustainability criteria to be used in this study. The following keywords were used in the search conducted in the Web of Science (WoS) database in March 2024: “sustainability,” “indicator,” “criteria,” “architecture,” “evaluation system,” and “sustainable design.” The following filters were applied to the search:

- Publication type: Research articles published in international peer-reviewed journals were selected.
- Subject area: Articles directly related to architecture were included, while areas unrelated to building sustainability were excluded.
- Language: Only articles published in English were included.

As a result of these criteria, a total of 113 articles were identified. Subsequently, a three-stage evaluation was conducted:

- Directly proposing sustainability criteria,
- Addressing all environmental, economic, and social/cultural dimensions together,

At the end of this process, 10 articles were selected for detailed review. The sustainability concepts highlighted in these articles were classified under environmental/ecologic, economic, and social-cultural dimensions and formed the analytical framework of the study. Summary information on the selected articles is presented in Table 1.

***Table 1.*** *Sustainability criteria obtained from the literature review*

| Reference | Social-Cultural Sustainability | Economic Sustainability | Environmental Sustainability |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kohler, 1999 [15] | • Protection of comfort & health<br>• Preservation of social & cultural values | • Long term resource productivity<br>• Low running costs | • Protection of resources<br>• Protection of the ecosystem |
| Sahely et al., 2005 [40] | • Accessibility and acceptability<br>• Healthy and safety | • Expenditure and revenue | • Resource use<br>• Residuals |
| Rosen et al., 2012 [41] | • Healthy<br>• Poverty<br>• Education<br>• Culture<br>• Social Harmony & Peace | • Productivity<br>• Competitiveness<br>• Technology<br>• Living Standards<br>Employment | • Natural resources<br>• Efficiency & Quality<br>• Emissions<br>• Environment (Air, Water, Land)<br>• Recycling |
| Akadiri et al., 2012 [42] | • Social progress which recognizes the needs of everyone<br>• Working with local communities and road users<br>• Partnership working | • Maintenance of high and stable levels of local economic growth & employment<br>• Improved project delivery<br>• Increased profitability & productivity | • Effective protection of the environment<br>• Avoiding pollution<br>• Protecting and enhancing<br>• Biodiversity<br>• Transport planning |
| Abdul-rahman et al., 2016 [43] | • Site and Equipment Considerations<br>• Health and Comfort considerations<br>• Job Opportunities<br>• Safety Issues<br>• Stakeholders' Relationship (Public Participation)<br>• Architectural Issues (Heritage, functionality and flexibility) | • Expenditure<br>• Revenue<br>• Investment in innovation, research and development<br>• Improvement of local economic environment | • Sustainable sites considerations<br>• Water efficiency considerations<br>• Energy and atmosphere considerations<br>• Materials and resources considerations<br>• Indoor environmental quality<br>• Innovation and design process considerations |
| Klarin, 2018 [14] | • Human rights<br>• Equality<br>• Cultural identity and diversity | • Maintain the natural, social & human capital required for income & living standards | • Maintaining the quality of the environment<br>• Conducting economic activities and quality of life |
| Dalampira & Nastis, 2020 [44] | • Good health and well-being<br>• Quality education<br>• Gender equality<br>• Reduce inequalities<br>• Sustainable cities and communities<br>• Peace, justice and strong institutions | • No poverty, zero hunger<br>• Decent work & economic growth<br>• Industry, innovation and infrastructure<br>• Responsible consumption and production | • Clean water and sanitation<br>• Affordable and clean energy<br>• Climate action<br>• Life below water<br>• Life on land |
| Wen et al., 2020 [45] | • Aesthetics, Space, Planning quality<br>• Safety<br>• Convenience and humanity<br>• Traffic accessibility<br>• Well-being & Social responsibility | • Life cycle costs<br>• Land use<br>• Commercial feasibility<br>• Value stability (Durability, Flexibility, Robustness) | • Environmental Impact<br>• Resource<br>• Biodiversity<br>• Recycle<br>• Toxicity |
| Lamdjad et al., 2022 [46] | • Access to high-quality public facilities and utilities<br>• Sharing the collective effort and integrating the neighborhood into the city<br>• Solidarity & social cohesion<br>• Culture, education and training<br>• Evaluation and value as a method of education<br>• Participation<br>• Involvement of residents and users | • Fighting poverty and social exclusion (work and housing)<br>• New ways of thinking and acting | • Energy management in project design and buildings<br>• Field consumption<br>• Biodiversity<br>• Sustainable water management<br>• Managing natural resources<br>• Quality of housing, population and private spaces<br>• Quality of public and green spaces<br>• Security, health risks & pollution reduction |
| Mas- | • Cultural Heritage | • Life-cycle cost and | • Land Use/Site Selection |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lopez et al., 2023 [47] | • Public Access<br>• Health and safety<br>• Stakeholder relations<br>• Intermodal Transportation<br>• Visual and Aesthetic Impact | investment<br>• Project Risk | • Water, Air and Noise Quality<br>• Ecology and Biodiversity<br>• Land Improvements<br>• Solid and liquid waste management<br>• Energy and pollutant emissions<br>• Erosion and sediment control<br>• Reuse and recycling materials |

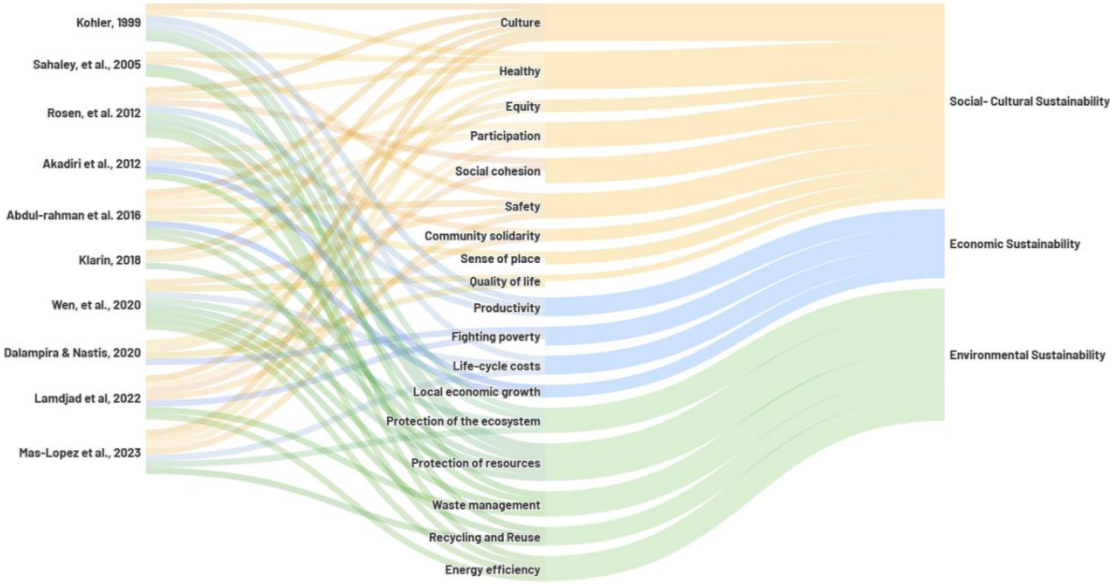


***Figure 4.*** *Sustainability category and concepts obtained from the literature review*

Based on the selected reference studies, concepts accepted as evaluation criteria under the categories of environmental, economic, and social-cultural sustainability were identified. These concepts were classified in accordance with the triple sustainability framework adopted in the study and are presented in detail in Figure 4. The concepts identified based on their frequency of occurrence in academic studies are listed below:

- Social -cultural sustainability: “Culture”, “Equity”, “Participation”, “Community solidarity”, “Social cohesion”, “Sense of place”, “Quality of life”, “Healthy”
- Environmental sustainability: “Protection of ecosystem”, “Protection of resources”, “Energy efficiency”, “Recycling and Reuse”
- Economic sustainability: “Productivity”, “Life-cycle costs”, “Fighting poverty”

The jury reports for the Pritzker Architecture Prize were examined considering these concepts. Codes obtained from the jury citations were assigned to the concepts, and comparative evaluations were made based on the sustainability category to which each concept belonged.

## 4. CASE STUDY: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS WITH GROUNDED THEORY OF 2019-2025 PRITZKER PRIZES

In this section, the jury citations of architects who won the Pritzker Architecture Prize between 2019 and 2025 were examined considering the sustainability criteria defined in Section 3. The analysis process was conducted using the embedded theory method, and the evaluation was carried out within the framework of three fundamental sustainability dimensions: environmental, economic, and social-cultural. The dataset consists of jury citation texts published on the official website of the Pritzker Architecture Prize [39]. Each text was coded in detail, and the codes were assigned to concepts, which were then categorized. The figures (Figures 5-11) prepared for all award-winning architects include, from left to right, the architect, code, concept, and category notes.

### 4.1. Arata Isozaki, 2019 Pritzker Prize

The codes obtained from Arata Isozaki's jury citations focus almost entirely on the category of social-cultural sustainability. The most prominent concept is “Culture.” The architect's jury texts highlight the following characteristics:

- Building bridges between Eastern and Western cultures,
- Reflecting cultural and historical knowledge in design,
- Understanding the spatial context and creating a sense of place,
- Encouraging professional participation by supporting young architects.

There are no clear references to environmental or economic sustainability. Isozaki's approach positions architecture as a tool for intercultural dialogue and social solidarity. The connection he established with “culture,” a social sustainability indicator, is evident in his projects for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (1986) and the Team Disney building in Florida (1991). The architect's mapping visual, which addresses code, concept, and category transformations, is presented in Figure 5.

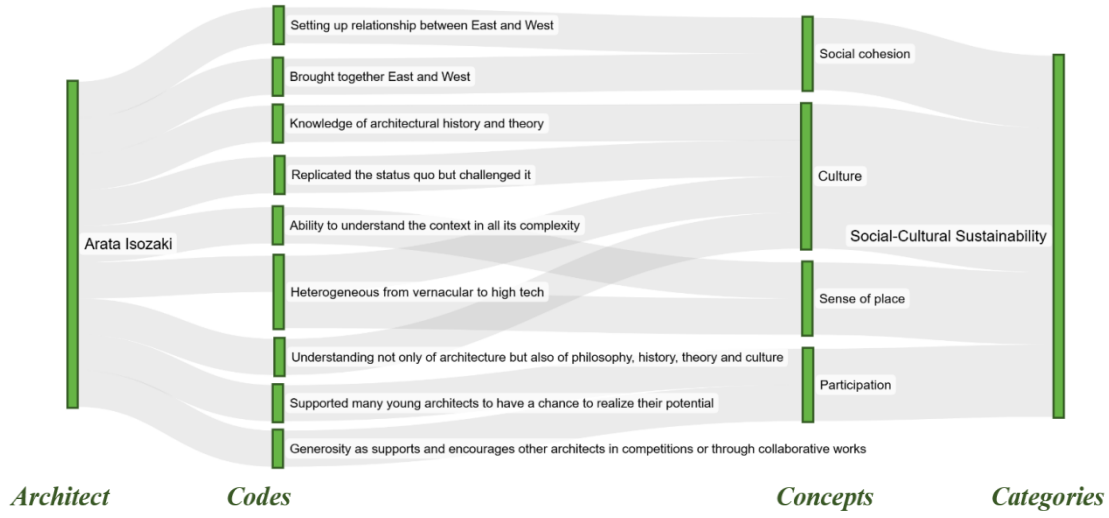


***Figure 5.*** *Mapping the Relationship Between Codes, Concepts and Sustainability Categories: 2019 Pritzker Winner Arata Isozaki*

### 4.2. Yvonne Farrell & Shelley McNamara, 2020 Pritzker Prize

Farrell and McNamara's statements focus largely on the social-cultural sustainability dimension. The most prominent concepts are “Quality of life,” “Sense of place,” and “Culture.” The following are the prominent features of the architects' jury texts:

- Producing architecture for society and improving quality of life
- Emphasizing social solidarity and equality, particularly developing a strong discourse in conjunction with female architect identities
- Respect for cultural context and sense of place
- Values of participation and collaboration

In addition, from an environmental sustainability perspective, the concepts of energy efficiency and ecosystem conservation have been addressed. However, these emphases are limited compared to the social dimension. Economic sustainability has been overlooked. Therefore, while Farrell & McNamara's discourse prioritizes social-cultural sustainability, it presents a vision of sustainability that integrates the environmental dimension. Social-cultural sustainability can be seen in the North King Street Housing (2000) building in Dublin, which references Dublin's streets through its “culture” and contributes to urban life through its inner courtyard, thereby enhancing “quality of life.” The relationship they have established with environmental sustainability is best exemplified by the open circulation and natural ventilation design at the University Campus UTEC Lima (2015), which captures canyon winds, and a

powerful passive climate strategy that reduces the cooling load. The mapping visual addressing architects' code, concept, and category transformations is presented in Figure 6.

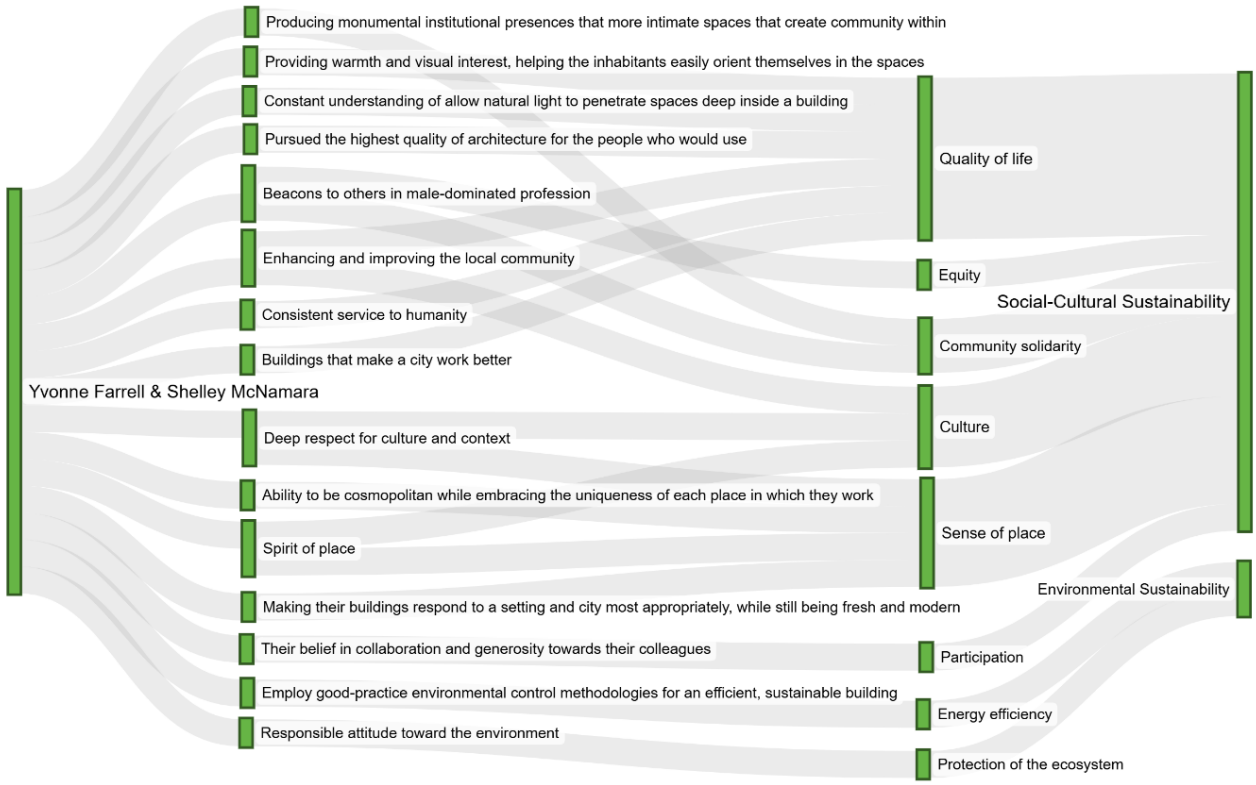


***Figure 6.*** *Mapping the Relationship Between Codes, Concepts and Sustainability Categories: 2020 Pritzker winner Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara*

### 4.3. Anne Lacaton & Jean-Philippe Vassal, 2021 Pritzker Prize

Lacaton and Vassal have been the names that have demonstrated the most balanced approach between the three dimensions. The most prominent concepts were, in order, “Quality of life,” “Protection of the ecosystem,” and “Culture.” The balance established by architects in relation to the three dimensions of sustainability can be summarized as follows:

- Social-cultural sustainability: Through housing projects, the concepts of democratic spirit, improving quality of life, and social justice have come to the fore.
- Environmental sustainability: Strong emphasis has been placed on ecological responsibility, transforming existing structures, reusing resources, and recycling.
- Economic sustainability: Cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and the balanced use of economic resources are notable themes.

Lacaton & Vassal's discourse brings together the three pillars of sustainability, offering a holistic approach that balances social justice and environmental responsibility. The transformation of the Paris block, Tour Bois le Prêtre, and three blocks in the Grand Parc neighborhood of Bordeaux best reflects the three pillars of sustainability. Removing the existing shell and increasing the space with bioclimatic balconies combines resource conservation and life cycle efficiency while providing freedom of use, supporting the real lives of residents. They have ensured social-cultural sustainability by showing sensitivity to building users in projects such as the Latapie House in Bordeaux and the Center for Human Sciences in Saint-Denis, which improve the quality of life where people feel good about themselves. The mapping visual in Figure 7 addresses the architects' transformations of code, concept, and category.


***Figure 7.*** *Mapping the Relationship Between Codes, Concepts and Sustainability Categories: 2021 Pritzker winner Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal*

### 4.4. Diebedo Francis Kere, 2022 Pritzker Prize

Francis Kere's statements, which stand out with many concepts, strongly combine all three dimensions of sustainability. The most prominent concepts are “Culture”, “Community solidarity”, and “Quality of life”, “Protection of resources”, “Energy efficiency”, and “Productivity”. The relationship he establishes with these three dimensions is as follows:

- Social-cultural sustainability: Concepts such as community participation, local identity, preservation of culture and traditions, equality, and social justice are central.
- Environmental sustainability: Energy efficiency, use of local resources, and climate solutions (double roofs, natural ventilation, etc.) are notable concepts.
- Economic sustainability: Low-cost solutions, support for local labor and skills, and reuse themes have come to the fore.

Kere has developed a unique model that integrates the three dimensions, particularly through poverty alleviation and community-based architecture. Gando Primary School and other educational structures in Burkina Faso involve the reinterpretation of local materials using modern methods, producing low-cost, climate-friendly solutions that are both economically and environmentally sustainable. These projects reinforce social solidarity through community participation, demonstrating the three pillars of Kere's approach to sustainability. The architect's mapping visual, which addresses code, concept, and category transformations, is presented in Figure 8.


***Figure 8.*** *Mapping the Relationship Between Codes, Concepts and Sustainability Categories: 2022 Pritzker winner Diebedo Francis Kere*

### 4.5. David Chipperfield, 2023 Pritzker Prize

Chipperfield's sustainability discourse has mostly focused on the social-cultural and, to a lesser extent, the environmental dimension. The most prominent concepts have centered on “Sense of place”, “Culture”, and “Equity”. The three dimensions of sustainability are as follows:

- Social-cultural sustainability: Community benefit, equality, participation, sense of place, and, in particular, the creation of public spaces through museum structures are emphasized.
- Environmental sustainability: The concepts of ecosystem protection, natural resource sustainability, and climate change awareness are highlighted.
- Economic sustainability: Although limited, this dimension has been addressed through the durability of structures and the efficient use of resources.

His architecture is mostly defined by its emphasis on public access and social inclusivity in contrast to elitist approaches. Chipperfield's discourse offers a partially balanced vision that integrates environmental and economic dimensions while focusing particularly on social-cultural sustainability. In the restoration of Berlin's Neues Museum (2009), it establishes a dialogue between the new and the old while leaving traces visible, reducing environmental impact through durability and reuse, thereby combining material/energy savings with cultural continuity. The James-Simon-Galerie in Berlin (2018) increases urban/social benefits by creating public thresholds and connections on an island scale, contributing to social-cultural sustainability. A visual mapping of the architect's transformations of code, concept, and category is presented in Figure 9.


***Figure 9.*** *Mapping the Relationship Between Codes, Concepts and Sustainability Categories: 2023 Pritzker winner David Chipperfield*

### 4.6. Riken Yamamoto, 2024 Pritzker Prize

Riken Yamamoto's statements are strongly shaped around the axis of social-cultural sustainability. The most prominent concepts are, in order, "Social Cohesion", "Participation", "Culture", and "Quality of Life". The architect's jury statements highlight the following characteristics:

- Encouraging community life by going beyond individual spaces,
- Strengthening social bonds by blurring the boundaries between public and private,
- Emphasizing a sense of place and cultural context by drawing on different cultures,
- Supporting the quality of life and equality of all segments of society, from children to the elderly,
- Developing an approach based on community values with modest, structurally honest, and environmentally compatible designs.

Environmental or economic sustainability dimensions do not directly feature in Yamamoto's discourse. Instead, an approach has been adopted that conceives architecture as a tool for strengthening social bonds, preserving cultural continuity, and improving quality of life. Saitama Prefectural University (1999) designed public spaces integrated into the community's daily life, while Future University in Hakodate (2000) created collaborative spaces. At the Hiroshima Nishi Fire Station (2000), transparent facades and public spaces have strengthened public bonds by creating trust and visibility between service providers and citizens, contributing to social and cultural sustainability. The architect's mapping visual, which addresses code, concept, and category transformations, is presented in Figure 10.

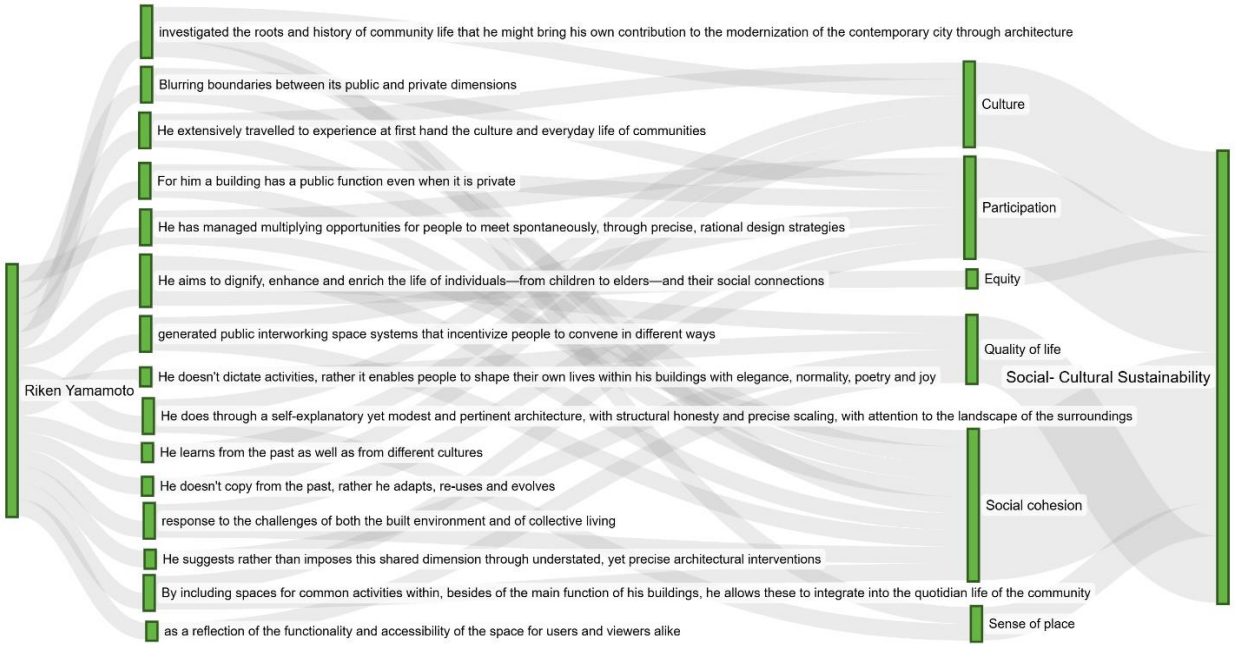


***Figure 10.*** *Mapping the Relationship Between Codes, Concepts and Sustainability Categories: 2024 Pritzker winner Riken Yamamoto*

### 4.7. Liu Jiakun, 2025 Pritzker Prize

The statements of Liu Jiakun, winner of the 2025 Pritzker Architecture Prize, show a strong focus on social-cultural sustainability. The most prominent concepts are “Culture”, “Quality of life”, “Social cohesion”, and “Community solidarity”. The architect's prominent features in the jury texts are as follows:

- Social-cultural sustainability: He uses architecture as a tool to strengthen daily life and community ties by focusing on social life and identity. By prioritizing cultural continuity and a sense of place, he blends traditional values with modern solutions to preserve cultural heritage and collective memory.
- Environmental sustainability: He emphasizes the relationship between nature and structure, focusing on resource conservation, ecosystem harmony, and energy efficiency.
- Economic sustainability: He also takes economic concerns into account through appropriate technology, productivity, and life cycle costs.

In conclusion, while social-cultural sustainability is prominently featured in Liu Jiakun's discourse, the environmental dimension is also strongly supported. The economic dimension plays a complementary role. Thus, Liu's architecture presents a multi-layered understanding of sustainability based on collective identity, cultural continuity, and ecological harmony. Social-cultural sustainability has been achieved by designing public spaces and community life in unconventional ways through projects such as West Village in Chengdu. Museums such as the Suzhou Imperial Kiln Brick Museum and the Shuijingfang Museum in Chengdu have contributed to social cohesion by emphasizing Chinese culture and history while also creating unique public spaces. Projects such as the Songyang Culture Neighborhood and Tianbao Cave Area Renovation emphasize social-cultural and environmental sustainability by combining cultural continuity and harmony with the ecosystem using local materials/craftsmanship and appropriate technology. The mapping visual that addresses the architect's code, concept, and category transformations is presented in Figure 11.


***Figure 11.*** *Mapping the Relationship Between Codes, Concepts and Sustainability Categories: 2025 Pritzker winner Liu Jiakun*

## 5. DISCUSSION

When comparing the statements of Pritzker Architecture Prize winners between 2019 and 2025, it is clear that the concept of sustainability is primarily emphasized in its social dimension. The jury's statements show that architects are rewarded not only for technical or environmental solutions, but also for themes such as social benefit, cultural identity, and social harmony.

### 5.1. Social-Cultural Sustainability

Since 2019, almost every winner has emphasized concepts such as culture, belonging, community solidarity, equality, and quality of life in their approach. This general trend shows that since 2019, the Pritzker jury has considered social responsibility and social impact in architecture to be the most important aspect of sustainability.

- Isozaki (2019) interpreted architecture as a cultural and philosophical whole by building bridges between East and West, highlighting themes of social harmony and cultural heritage.
- Farrell & McNamara (2020) defined architecture as a service that improves the quality of human life, emphasizing social inclusivity and equality.
- Lacaton & Vassal (2021) developed a strong social discourse, particularly in housing projects, through user welfare, social justice, and spatial equality.
- Kéré (2022) shaped architecture through the direct participation of communities, focusing on social sustainability with projects that strengthen education and community solidarity, especially in poor areas.
- Chipperfield (2023) supported social inclusivity, equality, and cultural diversity through public spaces and museums.
- Yamamoto (2024) has emphasized strengthening social bonds between individuals, participation, and reimagining community life by transcending the boundaries between public and private spaces.

- Liu Jiakun (2025) has demonstrated that architecture is a social tool that keeps both individual and collective identity and memory alive.

### 5.2. Environmental Sustainability

Environmental criteria, while not as prominent as social criteria in all award citations, have been particularly prominent in some winners.

- Farrell & McNamara (2020) focused on energy efficiency and ecosystem conservation.
- Lacaton & Vassal (2021) strongly addressed environmental sustainability through resource conservation, recycling, and the reuse of existing structures.
- Kéré (2022) has become one of the symbolic names of environmental sustainability through the efficient use of scarce resources and natural climate control techniques.
- Chipperfield (2023) has emphasized the environmental dimension through a design approach based on restoration and the preservation of existing fabric.
- Liu Jiakun (2025) has highlighted ecosystem sensitivity by blending the harmony between nature and architecture with traditional wisdom and contemporary material knowledge.

In contrast, names such as Isozaki (2019) and Yamamoto (2024) have addressed environmental sustainability in a more indirect and limited way, through the concepts of context sensitivity and spatial integrity.

### 5.3. Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability, although less directly emphasized than social-cultural and environmental dimensions, has become apparent in some of the winners. In general, the economic dimension has been addressed indirectly in Pritzker's discourse, with a focus on long-term resilience and resource efficiency.

- Lacaton & Vassal (2021) have made strong contributions to economic sustainability through low-cost and cost-effective design strategies.
- Kéré (2022) has drawn attention to economic sustainability through the efficient use of scarce resources, high-impact production with low technology, and the strengthening of a locally based economy.
- Chipperfield (2023) and Liu Jiakun (2025) have highlighted longevity, low operating costs, and efficient use of resources as key components of economic sustainability in their structures.

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution of sustainability concepts derived from the jury citations texts of the Pritzker Architecture Prize winners between 2019 and 2025. As a result of the coding process, the concepts were grouped under three fundamental pillars of sustainability: social-cultural, economic, and environmental. The number in each cell indicates how many times the relevant concept was repeated in the jury texts for that year. Thus, the table provides a comparative overview of which pillar of sustainability was dominant in which years and among which architects.

According to Table 2, it was determined that social-cultural sustainability was dominant, with the concepts of “Culture” and “Quality of life” being the two most prominent. These are followed by “Sense of place”, “Community solidarity”, and “Social cohesion”. This indicates that socio-cultural sustainability is decisive in the award discourse. In contrast, the frequencies of economic and environmental indicators such as ‘productivity’ or “energy efficiency” are lower. Therefore, the Pritzker Prize's approach to sustainability during this period can be interpreted as a social-cultural sustainability vision centered on cultural continuity and social welfare.

***Table 2.*** *Comparative Synthesis of 2019–2025 Pritzker Prize Laureates*

| **Years** | | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** | **2025** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Winners** | | Arata ISOZAKI | Yvonne FARRELL & Shelley MCNAMARA | Anne LACATON & Jean-Philippe VASSAL | Diébédo Francis KÉRÉ | David CHIPPERFIELD | Riken Yamamoto | Liu Jiakun |
| **Social-Cultural Sustainability** | Culture | **4** | 3 | 3 | **10** | **10** | 5 | **9** |
| | Equity | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| | Participation | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 4 |
| | Community solidarity | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| | Social cohesion | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | **9** | 8 |
| | Sense of place | 2 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 4 |
| | Quality of life | 0 | **6** | **9** | 6 | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| | Healthy | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Economic Sustainability** | Productivity | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Life-cycle costs | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Fighting poverty | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Environmental Sustainability** | Protection of ecosystem | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| | Protection of resources | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| | Energy efficiency | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Recycling and Reuse | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the jury statements of architects who were awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize between 2019 and 2025 were evaluated based on the three main dimensions of sustainability. The findings show that the award strongly emphasizes social -cultural sustainability, while the environmental and economic dimensions are relatively neglected. Several structural reasons underline this imbalance:

- The Pritzker jury consists mainly of architects and architecture critics. This leads to evaluations focusing on the cultural and artistic values of architecture itself. The absence of engineers, energy experts, or sustainability scientists involved in environmental work on the jury naturally results in environmental and technical criteria being secondary. Thus, the award interprets sustainability through “architectural identity” and “social role,” while technical issues such as carbon footprint or life cycle analysis remain in the background.

- Architectural practice has long been defined through cultural identity, social representation, and aesthetic values. The jury's emphasis on social-cultural sustainability is a contemporary reflection of this historical tradition. Concepts such as culture, identity, the sense of place, and community participation are directly related to architects' creative identities and also serve as elements that support architecture's claim to “produce public value”.
- The fact that environmental criteria are not explicitly emphasized in the jury's statements does not mean that this dimension is not considered important. However, the award assumes environmental performance as a “technical necessity” in the background and focuses more on rewarding architects' social vision and cultural contribution. This approach prioritizes concepts such as social solidarity and identity rather than highlighting architecture's role in addressing environmental crises.
- The analysis shows that economic sustainability is the least represented dimension. This indicates that Pritzker focuses not on profit, cost, or efficiency, but on cultural value and social impact. However, this preference limits architecture's holistic contribution to sustainability discussions.

As a result, the Pritzker Architecture Prize has enriched architectural discourse during the 2019–2025 period, particularly in terms of its social and cultural aspects, linking architecture to concepts such as social solidarity, identity, participation, and quality of life. However, sustainability can only be meaningful through a holistic approach that balances environmental, economic, and social-cultural pillars. Architecture awards are not only a means of honoring individual achievements; they are also a powerful tool for encouraging future directions in the profession and shaping new generations around certain values. Therefore, the Pritzker's adoption of a more balanced framework in the field of sustainability would be an inspiring step that would guide both the global architecture agenda and future design approaches.

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