

A GROUP OF HOUSES. THE SHARED COURTYARD

At the level of the local architecture, a group of houses or sharing the yard among inhabitants/owners are commonly encountered situations. There are different types of shared yards, starting with the gradual occupation of a property with several houses owned by the same family (*the old home* is gradually surrounded by the houses of the children and later grandchildren, especially in the rural areas or at the outskirts of towns), *duplex houses* (those with a shared yard designed and built in the urban areas for a certain social segment), *the interwar villa*, with a few floors and many apartments (usually with a separate access from the exterior for each apartment, service stairs and common sanitary and kitchen areas in the attic or in the semi-basement), *tenement houses of the 20th century* (houses with few apartments on relatively small sites, through which the initial investment was capitalized in substantial profit). The abuses of the communist period over private property made more families live in under-dimensioned spaces (within the same house), causing intimacy problems. Nevertheless, all these situations eventually led, through sales, acquisitions or inheritance, to a large number of shared yards. Nowadays, the people who share the yards have no blood ties and often remain strangers to one another.

The theme of the competition is proposing an **assumed living-together exercise**, where the hazard is controlled and the shared yard becomes the privileged place, binding together the **7 houses**. The plot, which covers a surface of approx. 2000 square meters, is located in the central area of the city of Iași, on 31-31A Păcurari Street, and it is the place where 7 families have the chance to build their lives together. The importance of the project and, at the same time, its` difficulty, resides in imagining and managing **a complex system of interactions and transitions** (outside, in the courtyard, as well as inside the houses) between the private spaces of each family, the shared areas of this micro-community and the potential public spaces (which are opened to the street).

DESIGN BRIEF:

Beginning with the site and understanding its particular situation, the purpose of the exercise is to plan **a group of houses for seven families sharing the same courtyard, while having consideration towards the private space of each unit of the ensemble**. These would be designed as to offer a quality of living as close as possible to the individual living, but using the relatively modest mechanisms of the houses which are closely associated, yet private from one another, but also the advantages of living together. The houses would have a low height regime, allowing possible partial overlaps of the houses, but with individual access from the exterior to each house. The pursuit of the project is the way in which several houses can be designed together on the site chosen (streets, neighbors, yards), but also within the contemporary world (people, needs, concerns etc.).

Each house will be designed starting from a standard configuration that allows the use of three bedrooms and assuring a certain flexibility. Thus, through the exploitation scenario, certain parts could temporarily have another use or they could be added over the standard structure, as complementary spaces (workshop, bureau, shop etc.). **Apart from the spaces owned by each family, it is desirable to include a few spaces which will be jointly used by the seven families, enriching the experience of living and saving, at the same time, space from the yard, space that is meant to be used for working, relaxing activities or even for some activities which generate revenue (working hub, party space, vegetable gardens etc.).** Determining the more or less private use of the yard, as well as the yard's opening towards the neighborhood will be established after each team of students drafts its living scenario (or each workshop, depending on the case).

The exercise encourages the rational use of architectural, material and economic resources, in the sense described by the encounter between the problem of building relatively cheap houses and sustainability related issues. **The yard will encourage pedestrian accessibility and movement, rather than vehicle circulation, providing, at the same time, one parking spot for each house, inside the yard.**

The height regime and other urban indicators will be established following the analysis, as a coherent and reasonable intention of inhabiting and using the place and integrating it within the neighborhood. The building system and the materiality will be determined according to the objectives of the study, to the living scenario chosen by the students and to the principles of durable architecture.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT/EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 1. The integration into the neighborhood** | Understanding and assimilating the pre-existing temporal and spatial factors (architectural and natural) and their influence over the architectural decisions; dynamic approach of the given data; anticipating the future evolution;
- 2. Ensemble typology** | Identifying and documenting possible typologies of habitation; having the capacity of critically rephrasing the architecture brief; understanding the way in which more houses can be put together, the nature and the quality of the shared spaces;
- 3. The quality of living inside and outside the house** | Defining, understanding and transposing the needs of possible inhabitants into the project; the relationships established between what is private and what is common or public; the evolution of the house over time, the adaptability and the possible change in order to enable different types of living, uses that may vary, expectations and diverse needs;
- 4. Structure and materiality** | Elaborating a constructive system and a materiality adequate to the objectives of the study, to the typology of living proposed and to the principles of durable architecture; a modest use of architectural means and economic and material resources; acknowledging and reproducing explicitly the spatial qualities and the atmosphere;

5. **Representation** | Learning and applying techniques and methods of representing the project coherent with the approach and the architectural concept; quality and clarity of the argumentative speech for the presentation of the project;
6. **Designing process** | The capacity of reflexive-critical self-evaluation of the creational process; understanding the designing process as a simultaneous evolution of the problem (available data) and of the solution (answers); constructive collaboration between colleagues and the involvement in common activities in the workshop.

DRAFTING

The study will be developed in pairs (teams of two students). The projects will be rendered on three A1 portrait (594x840mm); under the guidance of the layout available on the competition website.

Mandatory parts:

- Site plan - scale 1:1000;
- Overall ground floor plan, indicating the common areas and their proposed usage; overall first floor plan (with neighbors, vegetation etc., according to the limits indicated in the layout) - scale 1:200;
- Cross section with neighbors, vegetation etc. - scale 1:200;
- Elevation at Păcurari Street with neighbors - scale 1:200;
- All the floor plans (all the stories) for one house and its courtyard, indicating the proposed furnishing for various places/rooms and a specific usage of the courtyard; scale 1:100;
- 2 elevations and 2 sections through a house - scale 1:100;
- An overview image illustrating the atmosphere, the way the houses stand together and the life of the community (40x30cm);
- Argumentative text in English (max. 1000 characters, without considering the spaces);

Optional parts:

Other parts deemed necessary for a complete and suggestive rendering of the proposal (photographic studies over model, drawings, collages, explanatory diagrams etc.);