

## BETA 2018 competition - Jury report

### Category 6 - ARCHITECTURE ESSAYS

#### Jury members:

Catherine Slessor (president), Ethel Baraona Pohl, Tamar Shafrir

For this category, out of the 8 entries, 4 stood out:

- Nominee: *What if they were I Reconsidering (social) housing in Bucharest*, Andra Raisa Parpală;
- Mention: *Collective Housing: Crossovers from Now and Then*, Paul Vladimir Văleanu
- Mention: *Building's diaries*, Geșiana Cristina Dumitrașcu
- Award: *Housing, for whom?*, Robert Blaga

The jury evaluated a total of 8 entries (see evaluation criteria [here](#)). In quantitative terms, this might be seen as a disappointing response by potential entrants, however the specific nature of the proposed essay topic - on aspects of collective housing - doubtless conspired to limit entries. In previous years, the subject matter has been less proscribed, allowing entrants freer reign to extemporise on topics of their choice, thus attracting more submissions.

Yet despite this reduction in entries, the issue of collective housing is still of critical social, political and architectural relevance, especially in both the local context of Timișoara and national context of Romania. Overall, the theme proved an apposite means of provoking some extremely insightful responses, which were both stimulating and pleasurable to read. Several of the entries were based on intensely personal recollections of growing up and living in collective housing blocks, which brought the built environment vividly to life at all scales, from the public external realm to the private internal world of the individual flats, coloured by interactions with family and neighbours. Others were more abstract in approach, exploring concepts of territoriality, inequality, race, gender and class, and how these are impacted upon by local and global forces. Such investigations have a clear relevance to current discourse around housing, urbanism and the 'right to the city'.

Most of the entries were cogently argued and well researched, though on occasion some arguments were not followed through and hampered by a tendency to generalise. Tone and use of language were generally assured, which must be noted as especially impressive from authors not writing in their native tongue. However, some submissions were more accessible than

others, which were at times clouded by overly academic jargon and a degree of textual opacity. Conversely, a minority were apt to employ overly simplistic language that had more the feel of a diary entry than an essay.

The best submissions were coherently written, underpinned by a clearly focused narrative and backed up with research and interviews. They also had a strong propositional element, which went beyond simply restating existing histories and theories, arguing that housing is always a political issue, despite the apparent neutrality and objectiveness of discourse.

*Edited by*  
CATHERINE SLESSOR  
JURY CHAIR