Adaptable Portable
Modular housing for urban poor, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Main author

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Summary by the jury

Taking on the challenge of how to house the urban poor, the project proposes a modular system of dwelling units for marginalized neighborhoods in the rapidly-growing city of Dhaka. The dwellings can easily adapt to the changing needs of their inhabitants and either grow or reduce according to the size of the family at a certain point in time. Moreover, the units can be dismantled when slum dwellers are evicted and reassembled in a new location. Made of bamboo and recycled materials, the dwelling’s modular components and panels are sufficiently light to be easily transported.

Appraisal by the jury

The jury applauds the author for her courage to take on one of the most difficult contemporary problems in city planning and urban design – the question of how to house the underprivileged masses in an age marked by growing discrepancies between rich and poor. Whereas many contemporary solutions exist, the submitted scheme incorporates the issues of impending eviction and eradication of informal settlements by offering a system that is both “adaptable” and “portable”.

Project data

- Context: Architecture, building and civil engineering
- Client: Low income population of Dhaka
- Background: Research project

Further authors

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Image 3: Low-income settlement areas (formal/informal) of Dhaka, existing problems, and objectives to be achieved.

Image 4: Exploring materials for a module.

Image 5: Plan and section of a module.

Image 6: Distribution of functions in a cluster, allowing daylight and air flow.

Image 7: Movable wall, door and window allow modules to join in different formats to accommodate larger families.

Image 8: Flexibility in cluster development and section of a typical module.

Image 9: Social sustainability was one of the prime concerns of the design process.

Image 10: Experimental construction of a module (1:1 scale), 90% of which is built from recycled materials.

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