

Nowadays, the matter of urban poverty has been raised, as it is considered a phenomenon more and more severe in the metropolis of the developed world. Urban poverty is the result of the global economical recession combined with the huge percentage of unemployment, which keep on rising, and obligate many citizens to live homelessly, poorly and without any hope for the future. Thus, apart from the 90% of urban growth, which is occurring in the developed world, we can register that the 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the world's population are slum dwellers. Those "ghetto" or "restricted areas" deteriorate the quality of life in the civil environment. Reappraisal of housing is starting to become a one way road and requires a new perspective, which will give an answer to this particular problem.

Greece could not escape global recession. Especially the last few years Greek citizens faced many difficulties, which put an end to the development, creating an intolerable climate. Over- taxing, salary reduction, industries and businesses bankrupts, has left thousands of people unemployed. We could observe the establishment of a new "poor" class or better more a new "people in need" class. These are the people who after losing their jobs could not fulfill their household needs. For instance, the bank seized their homes because their company went bankrupt. It is remarkable that, the above refers to well- educated people, who in the past could make ends meet and lived a quality life. Despite this, they became homeless and helpless due to the recent economical conjuncture. Considering all the above, this is our target group, the ones that seek an unpredictable residence and maybe one that is temporary until they could find a proper job and a proper house.

Another fact that influences our perspective and the configuration of the architectural concept that consist our design solution is the inability of construction in the Greece of today. The only logical and attainable solution to this problem involves the usage of existing building stock. The industrial building heritage of the country is the most suitable for this case scenario, as many Greek cities register a wealth of large- scale buildings.

The solution mentioned, refers to factories, warehouses, raisin depots, mining and other industry buildings, most of which are abandoned and crumbling and in any case unexploited. Furthermore, most of these buildings were built in an earlier period and they are still in interaction with the urban fabric as they are spread all over the city. This parameter may function as an obstacle to the creation of some kind of ghetto containing houses for people in need. With this dotted pattern of houses, we could prevent the establishment of other slums, villas miseria, favelas, etc. On the contrary, the group of

people living in such prospective housing developments will be in an everyday contact with the existing neighborhood of each city.

It is our decision to focus on the case of warehouses in the city of Xanthe. Xanthe is well known from the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a prime producer of tobacco, the elaboration and the trading of which became the main employment of the citizens. During the interwar period, tobacco's trading left the hands of Xanthe's merchants and went into the hands of the big tobacco companies. That was the time when the decline of Xanthe came about. Warehouses date back to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are divided into two categories based on their size. The big high-rise buildings constitute the warehouses of the big tobacco companies and the small single-storey ones belong to small family businesses. Nevertheless, typically there are not many differences concerning the internal layout of the premises. Processing and packaging of tobacco took place on the ground floor and above, whilst in the basement they preserved the tobacco in conditions of relative humidity and controlled lighting and ventilation. A huge amount of Xanthe's warehouses, are still give roof to public services. Others are used as museums and cultural centers. However, there are plenty that have no usage at all, because they are practically ruins without a roof or floor. Just stands like corpses, as if they were remains of the graphic city streets.

The very existence of those buildings –which we acknowledge as a background-accompanied by our belief that a ghetto must not be created, has aided us to form our concept.

We strongly believe that the concept of the “parasite” is more suitable for the condition of the warehouses and we “translate” that concept as follows: we could say that we create “emergency homes”, which are erected on the existing shell of the buildings. These houses are parasites on the city buildings because they do not have any other option. Warehouses, that are mostly constructed with stone walls could play the role of the main body of the construction and provide the connectors in which the parasite could grab onto. Although warehouses are part of our example, this specific house solution that we propose could be found on any old building in the city fabric, with public or private use, even on open spaces between buildings or on a courtyard wall.

We were fascinated by the concept of parasites and we studied and developed that concept keeping in mind the following parameters: convenience, economy, ergonomics, scalability and quick establishment in any micro-environment. Moreover, we acknowledge that the target group of people our installation refers to have recently become destitute. What they wish for is a quality life and a motivation to fight for a second chance for themselves and their families.

Our house for change is all about an installation, which settles on stone walls and shapes according to the existing empty space and form of the shell. To be more accurate, parasites consist of a grid, which is able to be “transformed” into a house. It creates a cocoon that protects the person who parasites. The wall vacuums are filled with human life and get transformed according to the need of each parasite user.

Our solution ensures a living room space, a sleeping space, a cooking area, WC and a storage area. The “parasite” could house 1-4 people, giving them the chance to build their emergency house all alone, as they wish. The above is possible because the grid can be created from metal rods of 9cm, which is a very affordable material. Thanks to the “smart junction”, the way that junctions of the metal rods are joined, we provide the capability to the rods to be joined in any possible way and direction, this way ensuring a variety in height and length, making the space flexible in any case of parasiting. Such junctions are very easy to construct but they can also be easily reversed. Thus, each user could add or lessen the square meters of the house due to the arrival of another family member or just because he needs more storage area at that time.

The floors are wooden and are pegged onto the structure of the parasite. The wood could easily be found in the ruins of the building, such as the collapsed floors and roofs of the warehouses or purchased in any other way.

Concerning the filling of the construction, as we investigate the example of Greek cities, where the winter is severe with low temperatures, while we keep in mind that there is no possibility of heating due to economical reasons, we judge that insulation is indispensable. Therefore, it is essential to use a material/ fabric, which could be able to fit perfectly on the metal rods of the shell and meanwhile take any possible form and be disconnected easily (perhaps to create a window or an opening). This is why we chose a suitable fabric that could fit perfectly on each metal rod with the aid of patches. Naturally, in the case of another city, where the temperature is higher during the year, an ordinary fabric or even more some wooden planks could function as the filling of the parasite.

To sum up, all those interested, have to do is to get the metal rods and get started on constructing their “home”, all alone or with the support of their neighbors. Our proposal is a low budget solution, which is based on the individual care of the person in need. We strongly believe that if a person builds his own house, the task alone will make him more of an optimist because he can be reminded that he has the ability to create a home by himself and therefore he is a strong and useful member of the society. This is a very valuable sentiment for someone who has just lost everything, his job, his business, his house, and feels vulnerable, disappointed and marginalized.

Finally, due to the recession and the crisis of morals that our society is experiencing universally, we are obligated to value what is given to us all, and to also take advantage of what belongs to us whilst we create something of our own and constantly try to develop it through time. A quality of life and second chances are for each and every one of us, for the haves and the have-nots. Material goods should not be the driving force of our lives. Human values such as love, respectfulness, solidarity and creativity should be replaced back in our everyday life so as to enrich the environment that surrounds us with beauty.