

Diploma thesis – opponent's review

Title of diploma thesis: architectural solutions and strategy for combating homelessness in prague homeLESS MORE

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Opponent: Rozálie Kašparová, MSc.

Verbal evaluation

This diploma project tackles a sensitive, urgent, and underrepresented topic: architectural strategies for supporting people experiencing homelessness in Prague. The author deserves recognition for selecting such a socially relevant theme — one that remains largely absent from both political discourse and architectural practice. Projects like this can help raise awareness and empathy in society.

The work is grounded in solid research, particularly evident in the analytical part of the diploma seminar. It highlights Prague's severe housing crisis, the absence of a city-wide "Housing First" strategy, and the alarming number of people sleeping rough — in public spaces without access to shelter. It also critically reflects on how architecture has often been used as a tool of exclusion — through hostile design — and attempts to shift that logic toward inclusion.

I appreciate the project's strategic and systemic ambition — aiming not only to propose a design but to **create a toolkit** that could be used by a variety of stakeholders, including municipalities and NGOs. This **focus on crafting a brief — rather than delivering a single fixed design — is particularly valuable**. In fact, I could imagine the project leaning even more into this strategic dimension. The prototype in Pragovka explores the temporary use of vacant buildings. However, I believe this solution might work better outdoors, in public space, where dignified, transitional micro-settlements can emerge under the open sky rather than being hidden beneath a concrete roof.

The programming is thoughtful and well-researched, addressing essential needs such as hygiene, safety, community, healthcare, work, and even space for pets. The modular system of units is clearly explained, and the interior design is functional, humane, and well thought through. However, the sanitary unit needs rethinking: the shower is too small to use comfortably, and the toilets lack a sink — a particularly problematic omission for women.

In contrast, the urban design aspect is less convincing. The layout lacks a clear spatial hierarchy and does not adequately address the quality or function of the public and semi-public spaces between units. The central gathering space, which could play a vital role in fostering safety and community, currently lacks the necessary features to do so. The symmetrical layout, in my view, hinders spatial legibility. Kitchen units are awkwardly placed in the middle of a potential semi-public courtyard, limiting its usability.

More attention needs to be given not only to how people feel inside the units, but also to how they experience the spaces between them. A clear diagram illustrating the hierarchy and relationships between public, semi-public, semi-private, and private zones would greatly strengthen the strategic toolkit.

In conclusion, this is a brave and socially meaningful diploma project, which clearly aims to make a difference. While the urban design execution needs refinement, the strategic thinking and the ambition to use architecture for good are very much appreciated.

Formal and graphic aspects of the project, and completeness

The project features a clear and approachable graphic style, particularly in diagrams and interior visuals. However, the visualizations of the overall settlement reveal gaps in the urban design concept and would benefit from reconsideration. More detailed diagrams illustrating the urban strategy and spatial relationships would strengthen the proposal. Overall, the graphic identity adds warmth and helps bring visibility to the topic..

Inquiries for the Defense

- Who do you envision as the main user or client of your strategy — who should be responsible for its implementation?
- Would you consider implementing your design outside in free public space? How would you adapt your urban layout to better support community, comfort, safety, and orientation in shared spaces?
- How would you address gender-based safety and privacy needs within the settlement?
- How could the sanitary unit be redesigned to offer greater comfort, dignity, and safety for its users?

Final summary and grade proposal

In conclusion, this is a brave and socially meaningful diploma project that clearly aims to make a difference. While the urban design execution would benefit from greater spatial clarity, hierarchy, and usability, the strategic thinking and the ambition to use architecture for good are very much appreciated. I value that this work demonstrates how architecture students can meaningfully engage with both social and design challenges.

Suggested grade: C

V Praze dne 2. 6. 2025

Rozálie Kašparová

