

# City living

A cutting-edge competition seeking a new approach to student housing may produce the answer to urban dereliction and degradation in Athens

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A RUNDOWN area of Athens city centre could be reinvigorated by the presence of students through an international architectural competition currently under adjudication.

Organised by Oliaros, an Athens-based property development company, the UPTO35 competition invited architects from around the world to submit proposals for the construction of a residence to house 18 students in the downtown districts of Kerameikos and Metaxourgeio.

A key condition of the competition was that all the contestants had to be aged 34 or under on the day of submission.

The competition's organisers urged participants to take a completely new approach to the typology of student housing, long associated with hallmark 1960s shoebox constructions, often set apart from the urban fabric.

Rather, they sought a rethink of existing models of separate accommodation: the *domus commune*, where smaller units share certain common facilities, or the shelter idea, where there is an amalgamation of self-sufficient units.

The competition brief specified that the winning typology should have the capacity to acquire a viral character that would allow it to spread into the urban fabric of neighbouring third-party properties.

Ultimately, the developers hope this would create a "contemporary student housing hub" in the Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio area, which they say is currently in state of transience.

The winning UPTO35 will be built on a 200m<sup>2</sup> property located at 34 Marathonos St.

With a population density less than half the Athens average, a large percentage (30 percent) of vacant plots and derelict buildings, a beautiful network of pedestrian walkways, an engaging diversity of residents and land uses and ease of access, the area presents a unique opportunity for creative architectural interventions, the competition's organisers believe.

## Your vote counts

The competition, announced on June 29, closed 10 weeks later, receiving 242 entries from 41 countries.

To facilitate international competitors, organisers answered 577 online queries relating mainly to Greek building regulations.

The submissions were then poured over by a seven-member jury of internationally acclaimed architects - Bjarke Ingels, Andreas Kourkoulas, Marcel Meili, Iasson Tsakonas, Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, Yorgos Tzirtzilakis, and Elia Zenghelis - who announced the five finalists on September 14.

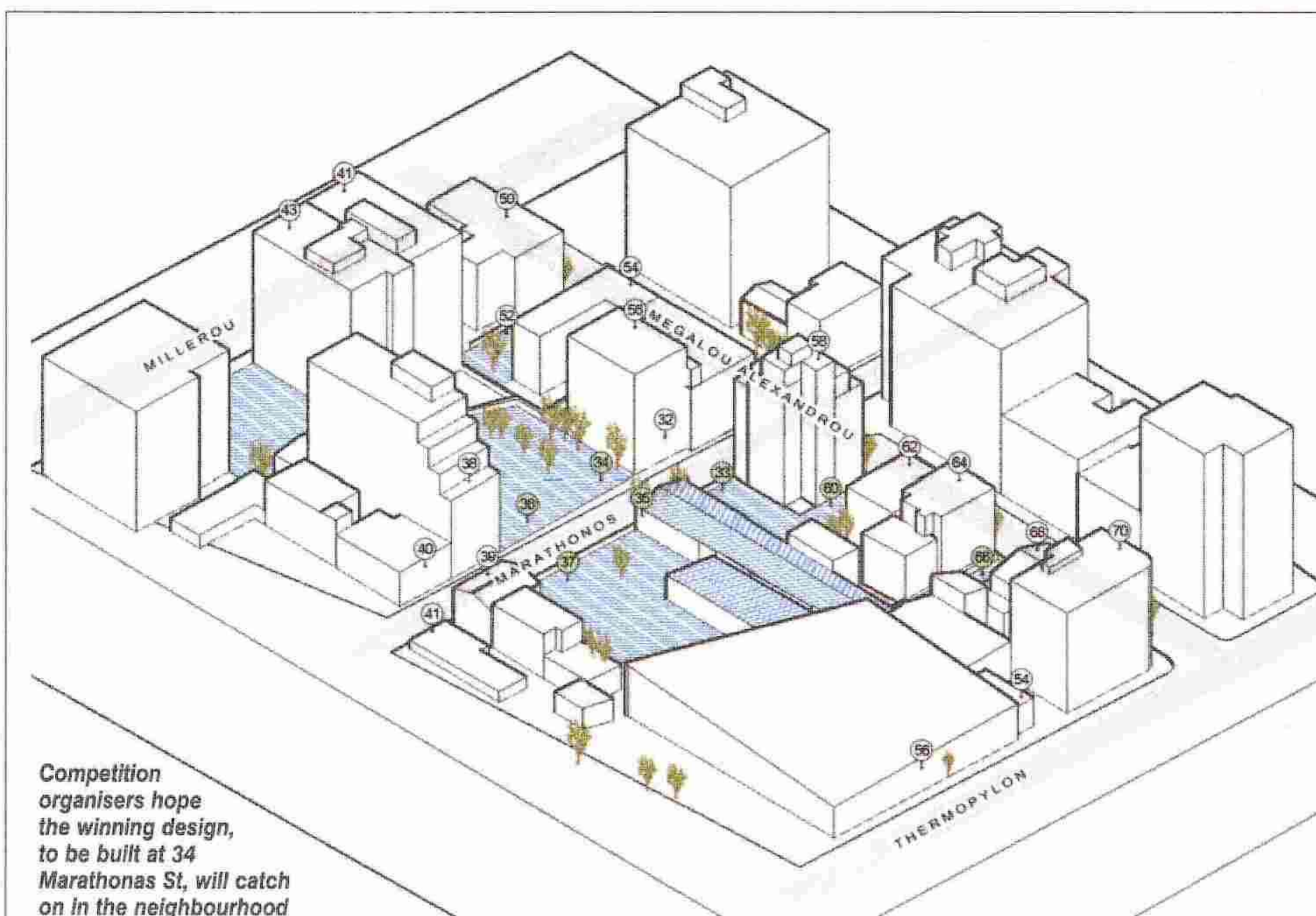
The top five have now been invited to submit design development plans, in which they will have to show how their ideas can be transformed into actual structures.

In a novel twist, and again sticking to the student principle, those who attend the *in situ* exhibition at the Marathonos St site, which runs until October 7, will have a say in deciding the winner.

The public can vote for one of the five finalists via text message and the project that attracts the most SMSs will be deemed to have obtained the public vote.

The public vote, along with the votes of the seven jurists, will determine the overall winner, who will receive a 10,000 euro prize as well as a 30,000 euros' commission.

✓ On the web: [www.upto35.com](http://www.upto35.com)



Competition organisers hope the winning design, to be built at 34 Marathonos St, will catch on in the neighbourhood

## The top five

### A coordinate housing system



### Masamichi Kawakami, Yutaka Onari and Tsuyoshi Shinozaki (101 Design, Japan)

THE MAIN idea behind this Japanese entry seeks to expand the urban environment into the building and have the interior environment "infiltrate" the city.

The means to achieve this will be two types of design - the "around the corner" and "eels' nest" types that involve rooms running from front to rear, with winding walls.

In both, each room segment, which can sleep two students, will be divided by corners and curves, rather than partitions.

In the "around the corner" type, people have to peek around a corner to find out what is going on at the other end of the room. The corners will be assumed as common space. The type offers students some privacy, though every space is open or connected to the public zone.

In the "eels' nest" type, each end will be considered a private bedroom for a student, who will inhabit a long wall instead of a wide room. Each of the walls in the private rooms has a window, through which, by mutual agreement, the students on both sides of the wall can communicate.

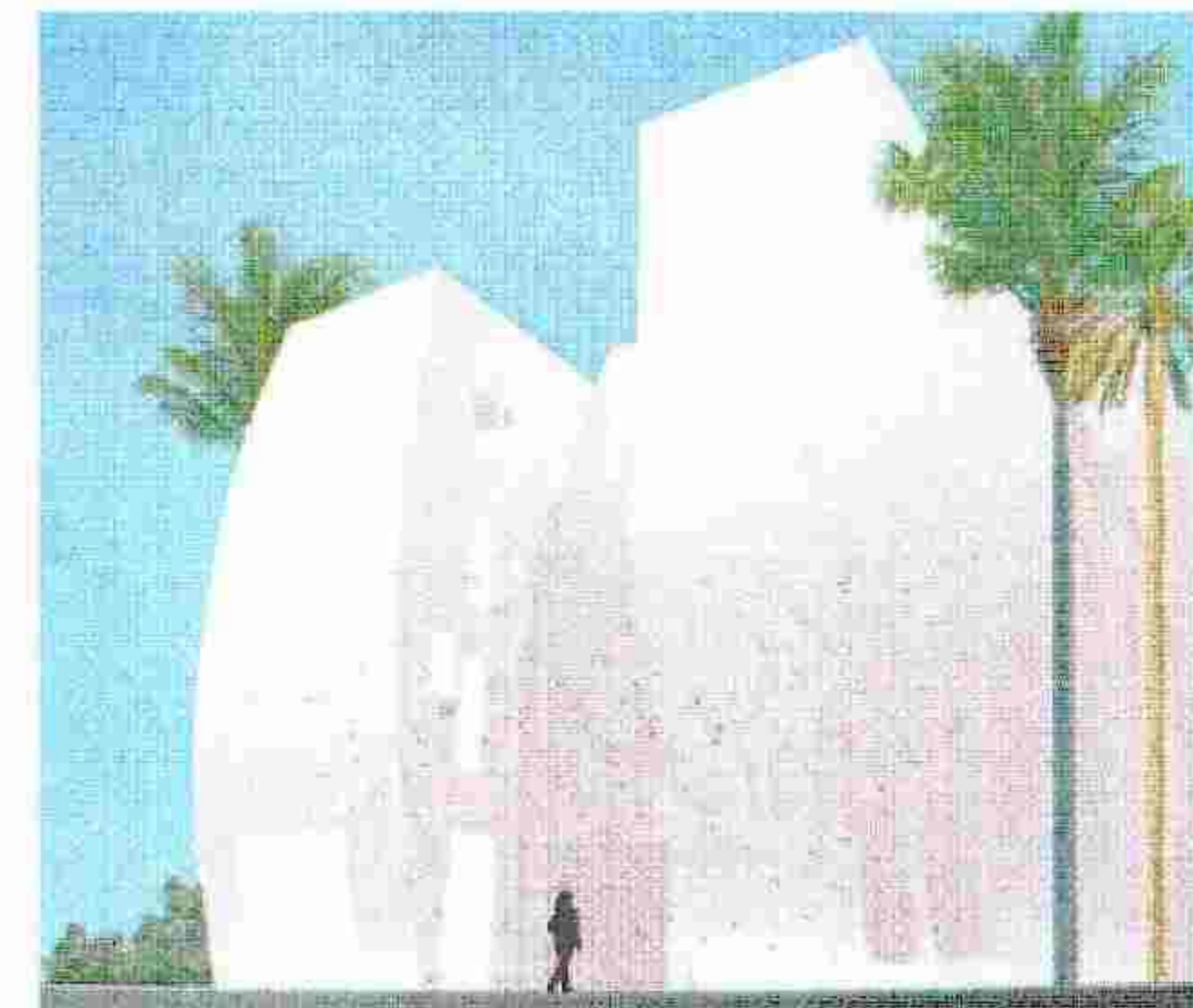
In both types, the winding walls create a collecting space as well as a narrow space, which supplements the structure's directionality bias while making corners that vary the space.

### The jury's view

'A poetic proposal for a very fluid configuration of individual

and collective spaces ...that is, however, at this stage, more of a promise to be developed than an elaborated proposal'

### City encounters



### Marieke Kums and Dirk Peters (The Netherlands)

KERAMEIKOS-METAXOURGEIO is an example of an urban area that has "decomposed and made way for more informal forms of urbanity". This reality, this Dutch duo believes, represents the "ultimate resource for experiments in living".

Rejecting strong edges or massive housing blocks, this design proposal is based on the in-between spaces. It seeks to create an urban park - a carefully designed collective space - as the basis for daily life. Freely distributed within this park or garden will be the buildings, some of which will be clustered to form small living groups and communities.

Others will remain free standing, enjoying an unimpeded view of the gardens.

This mix of self-sufficient and collective housing units will form an "endless spectrum of various life forms" corresponding to the different stages of student life.

The natural lighting and ventilation of the entire space will be increased and improved by "folding back" the upper and lower parts of the building structures.

"The resulting typology is unique," Kums and Peters say. "A forest of tall, elegantly curved buildings approaching each

Student residences like no other

other and bouncing back to connect once more, forming passages, meeting places, views, fresh breezes and light wells."

**The jury's view**

*'An urban strategy that develops on the constraints of the local building code and reformulates the urban quality of Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio into a porous urban fabric of tiny 'towers': a strategy that is simultaneously flexible and adaptable'*

**Party wall**



**Florian Idenburg, Ioannis Kandyliaris and Ilias Papageorgiou (Solid Objectives - Idenburg LIU, USA)**

WORKING from the realisation that no other "phase in life offers such a plethora of experiences as being a student", this entry seeks to create a typology that responds to the student condition.

The basic idea is to rethink the existing building pattern in Kerameikos and Metaxourgeio, a "potpourri of building types looking onto narrow streets, most of them closed and disconnected" and where current building regulations produce walled backyards that are "dirty, unused and out of sight".

A new approach to these rear yards is a key component of the concept. Changing the alignment of the building, this architectural trio suggest shifting it to run along the party wall.

Common yards would still feature, but with direct access to the street they would be a communal zone that would act as a "buffer between the public and intimate realms of life".

Crucially, a facade consisting of sliding glass doors would face onto the common yard, which would be bridged by numerous balconies.

By providing "perfect daylight, intimacy and views", these new spaces would serve as an extension to the spaciousness of the rooms.

This would ultimately create a "new type of porous urbanity" that would revive city blocks from within by creating a new internal network of passages that could proliferate into surrounding properties.

**The jury's view**

*'A very simple idea of slicing the traditional building block into two parallel slabs: a void and a solid, an inhabited wall and a vertical garden. The simplicity of this idea offers a host of possibilities on the urban scale as well as on the building's individual scale'*

**Urban airgap**



**Makoto Tanijiri, Ryo Otsuka, Yuko Fukuma, Sachio Inagami and Keisuke Katayama (Suppose Design Office, Japan)**

CREATING an "airgap" is at the core of this design entry, submitted by five partners from this Hiroshima-based company.

The group note that the existing building designs in Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio do not allow for a window opening into the adjacent property.

Thus they seek to create as many openings - airgaps - on each site. This is achieved by building to central core towers, containing a stairwell, to which the residential units are cantilevered from the cores and which form a sandwich that encloses the main social communal zone.

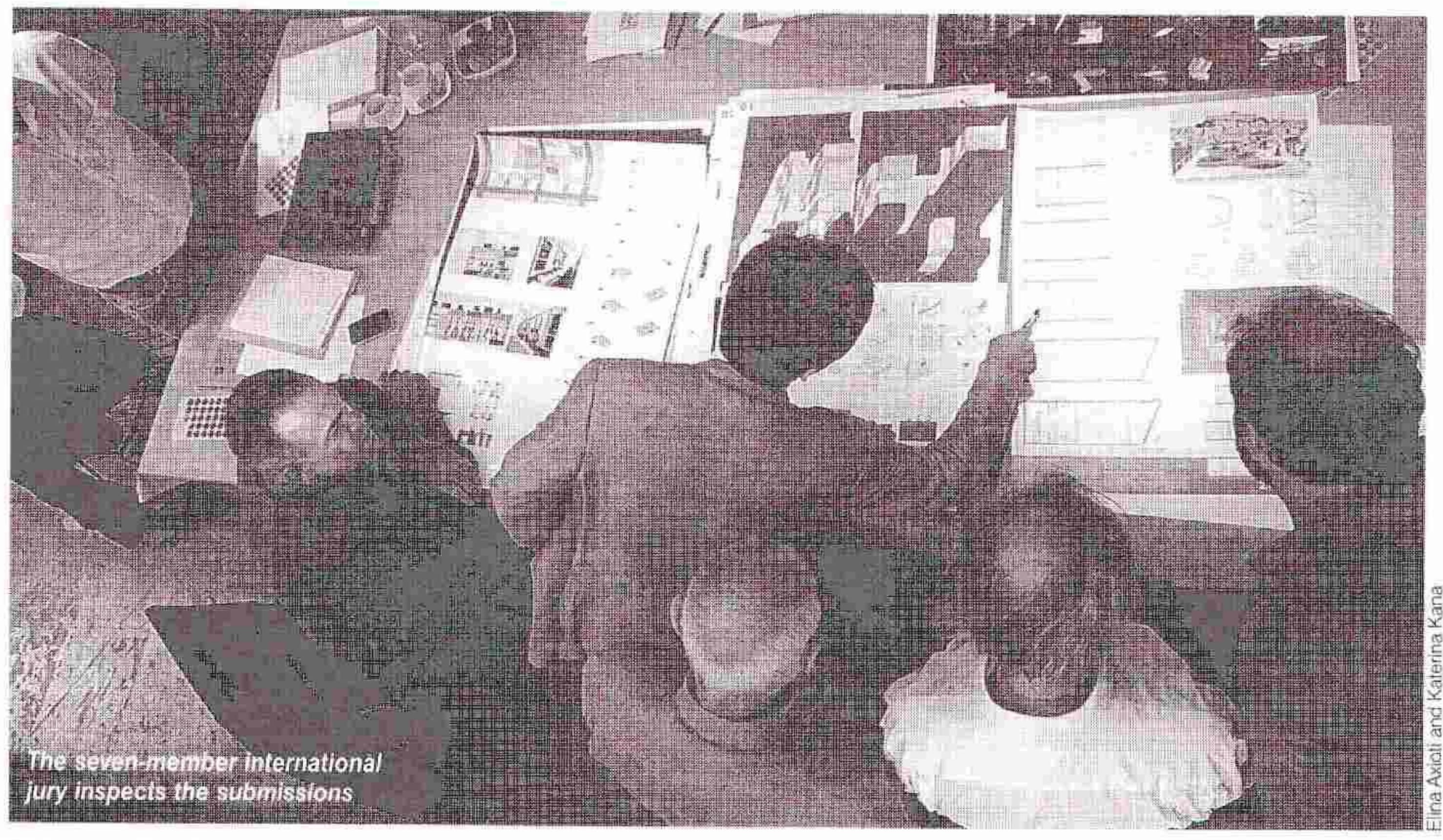
They aim at a typology that would improve security, create a gap and ultimately improve the living environment.

In their design, common areas - located at the base, central level and top of a building - will link to smaller living units on either above or below floors, while landscaped areas will be formed atop the residential units.

The project will also be built at an angle that will introduce the prevailing northern wind into each airgap.

**The jury's view**

*'A horizontal stratification between public and private spaces divides the site into four communal/private alternating zones ... An interesting and seductive concept in which private cells of varying sizes and heights spiral out of the quarter landings, creating a 'cloud' of boxes around of the stair-cores'*



*The seven-member international jury inspects the submissions*

**18 steps**

**Architects Joao Prates Ruivo and Raquel Maria Oliveira (Greece)**



ELIMINATION of the traditional floor division lies at the heart of the 18 steps plan, which seems to provide each resident with his or her own floor which nonetheless remains part of the collective realm.

With their model, the Portuguese-born architects Joao Ruivo and Raquel Oliveira (photo) have created a residence ideally suited to the collective needs of the individualised cyberspace generation.

In this design, the 18 living units are organised along 18 levels of public space ascending from the ground to the roof, passing through collective, semi-collective and semi-private zones.

"If you slice open a building, you'll find the common area used for circulation and private rooms," Athens-based Joao Ruivo told the *Athens News*. "What I wanted to do was to melt these things and for the common, circulation part to be everywhere."

As he enthusiastically explained, each resident would have his own room, a monastic cell-like minimal space for sleeping and studying.

By opening a partition - the exact nature of which Ruivo and his co-designer, Raquel Oliveira, need to work out - the private domain can be easily expanded into the collective gallery that lies at the heart of the building. Thus participation in the communal experience becomes an individual choice, says Ruivo.

In order to achieve this collective centre, Ruivo, 30, moved all the services, such as toilets and showers, to the exterior wall of the building.

"I really wanted to get away from the hotel typology, where the bathroom is immediately inside the door to each room," he said.

Shared cooking facilities would be located in the central trajectory, which Ruivo described as "something between a gallery, a corridor and a stairwell".

The central common area would not just consist of steps, he said. "Plenty of recesses, plateaux, gardens and even a mini-amphitheatre would allow for encounters between the residents," he said, adding that "as a student residence, it's a place where people want to meet people".

Ruivo is confident that his design strikes the right balance: "You can't force people into collective living, so this approach does allow some privacy."

Was he surprised to make the top five?  
 "Yes, I really was. This was a big competition and I knew that some big architect firms would be participating. So I was really thrilled when I received the jury's call."

**The jury's view**

*'A strong conceptual idea, very specifically linked to the way student life is organised and how students interact'*



Elina Axili and Katerina Kana