

## **Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?**

**1. Paper / Proposal Title:**

Housing Narratives

**2. Format:**

*Written paper / verbal presentation*

**3. Author(s) Name:**

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**4. University or Company Affiliation:**

Pratt Institute School of Architecture

**5. Abstract (300 words):**

Students in an architecture studio were asked to think critically about urban housing around three premises: (1) Zoning laws in New York City have been revised in 2016 for the first time since 1968. The massive amount of housing getting built in NYC today has the potential to change the urban scape. Also, the 20/80 rules of inclusive housing (20% of units in a project go to lower income residents) works only if there is no "poor door" for the lower priced units. Much of what is changing in NYC zoning (allowances of taller ground floors, leeway in façade articulation, removal of in-building parking requirements in areas of the city served by public transportation) supports a vision of better street scapes for the effective promotion of public urban life. (2) Micro units (as small as 23 square meters) are now newly permitted and built in New York City. These super small residences respond to the new, large (and rising) urban demographic of people living alone. However, this just makes more urgent the requirement for a new typology of semi-private spaces within housing projects. Projects that minimize private

space displace some program to spaces that are halfway between the public and domestic realms (storage, communal kitchens, community meeting rooms, art and dance studios). (3) The cultural and social diversity of New York City inspires an "architecture narrative" approach to housing. What if, the studio asks, the first requirement for housing design were to make it for specific inhabitants? There is a disconnect between the particular/personal of domestic architecture and the generalizations we make about housing needs. The paper examines how studio work can be used to build "housing narratives," stories of specific urban lives, that have the potential to insert architecture into social, political and cultural discourses.

**6. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):** Maria Sieira was born in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, where she still teaches architecture in the summer program Compostela Architecture. She moved to the United States at age 14 and currently lives in New York City. She teaches in the graduate architecture program at Pratt Institute, where she has been coordinating the housing program for the past ten years.

Ms. Sieira studied both architecture and theater as an undergraduate at Yale University, a pursuit that led to an interest in architecture narratives. Along with studio, she coordinates the history/theory sequence in the graduate architecture program. She also teaches a seminar on film and architecture (architects making space with moving images), with which she further explores this theme of architecture narratives. She has a Master of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania and is a registered architect in New York State.