Refuge Housing
A housing complex for refugees after the resettlement program

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Explanatory document

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A Research Project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture Professional
The project was derived with the focus on the current and growing refugee crisis. The following document analyses, describes, and symbolises the different struggles and situations refugees encounter on an everyday basis in their home lands. This topic is strongly related to a combination of personal experiences, as well as the desire to assist future refugees to integrate into a new society through the means of architecture.

New Zealanders are fortunate enough to live in an amazing country filled with opportunities and beautiful landscapes. This chance has been provided to many refugees dating back to before the 1940s. To obtain a better understanding of the past, present and future, research through the use of books, interviews and drawings were implemented to answer the proposal of how architecture can cater to the well-being and physical needs of refugees affected by situations such as warfare, poverty and drug riven environments? How can the reuse and adaptability of an un-used site, such as an empty lot, integrate communities and provide temporary living and rehabilitation for them?

Integration is the most important process that refugees require once they are welcomed into a country. Location combined with architecture can assist in this process being beneficial for all.

The research implements literature from Courtyard Housing: Past, Present and Future by Brian Edwards, The Architecture of Self-help Communities by Michael Y Seelig, and Worldwide Displacement Hits All-time High as War and Persecution Increase by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Precedent studies include Tadao Ando’s Sunken Court, Alejandro Aravena and Guedes Cruz Arquitectos as the main sources of knowledge and inspiration.

Abstract
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of Project</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Outline</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims &amp; Objectives</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope &amp; Limitations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Knowledge</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of Research</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background &amp; Forced Displacement</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Urban Refugee</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture as a form of Refuge</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtyard Housing: Past, Present &amp; Future</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Architecture of Self Help Communities</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Design</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadao Ando – Sunken Courts</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precedent</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitra Seminar House</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elemental Arquitectos</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guedes Cruz Arquitectos</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee Intake Quota</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority Categories</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme &amp; Hospitality</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resettlement</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Beginnings</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Design</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program &amp; Organization</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee Testimonials</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Public Spaces</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi Public Spaces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Spaces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider Site Analysis</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrounding Context</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Strand</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Strategies</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material Pallet on Site Analysis</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height &amp; Contour Analysis</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Developments</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topography &amp; Contour Analysis</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Development</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Thankful for my friends who are always there to cheer me up and inspire my journey to keep moving forward, as well as everyone who influenced the process of this document.

Above all, thankful and humbled before God for his blessings upon my life.

“<i>I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.</i>“

Philippians 4:13
Introduction
Background of Project

The meaning of the word 'refugee' has been interpreted in different ways throughout time. The legal term 'refugee' has only been used since 1951 with the signing of the UN Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.\(^1\) This identified that a refugee is a person who has been forced out of their home land due to extreme circumstances. Furthermore, this document also defined the meaning of 'protection'. It defines a legal agreement of expectations to provide protection for refugees from other countries. However, the countries providing this 'protection' are not obliged to provide a decent, or even a humane, level of life. This agreement is intentionally vague to allow each country to interpret their understanding of protection.\(^2\) As a response, it is evident that refugee camps have been set up in many countries. These camps are a good temporary solution, but unfortunately people can dwell in them from years. The camps end up being unpleasant, with no basic facilities leading to famine and the spread of diseases. Perhaps the ideology behind it is to push the refugees back to where they came from. Unfortunately, there is a lack of professional aid to create simple spaces that will allow people to have access to basic needs, such as food, water, shelter, warmth, electricity and Wi-Fi to connect with family members.

This leads to the motivation of this project. It is driven by a personal experience that questions what New Zealand does post refugee resettlement. One must consider both the physical and emotional wellbeing of refugees in another country and what we consider to be protection.


\(^2\) ibid
The Year 2000

Memories of my 6-year-old self arriving in New Zealand.

My dad had left. Not knowing where or why, my dad suddenly left. Months went by and he didn’t come back. As the days went by our house began to look empty. By night the couches were there, and by the following morning they were gone. Not knowing why, I was asked to go through my toys and pick out my favourite ones. Not knowing why... I did.

We lived with my grandparents, uncles, aunties and cousins from my dad’s side. My granddad built one big house made out of concrete. This house was divided into multiple areas for our family to have their own spaces. To me, this big house was like a big labyrinth filled with spaces to explore. The house was based around a huge courtyard area which divided the house into 2 sections. The entrance was blocked by a big steel door. Long corridors with old yellow tiles led to the courtyard which was the heart of the home. It was like my own yellow brick road. Giant plum trees, a small grape vineyard, lemon trees and a garden filled with exotic flowers and vines creeping up the concrete walls was where I grew up. My cousins, brother and I thrived in that courtyard. That’s where our many adventures were held. The courtyard contains a lot of memories. Birthday parties, wedding celebrations, Christmas, New Years were all held here. It was our place of refuge when disasters happened such as earthquakes or getting away from political riots that would happen right in front of our home. Buses set on fire. Furniture on fire. Police beating up the people, washing them down with water cannons to stop them. Our courtyard was where we gathered to make sure we were all safe as a family.

A few weeks before my seventh birthday I remember sitting out in the markets I remember my mum giving away my toys in exchange for coins. I didn’t understand why they had to go. I asked my elder brother why this was happening. He didn’t know either. Days went by and all I saw was my mother shedding a few tears as she went through the last couple of items that remained in our space. Inside these big concrete walls remained the last few items. Wooden polished floors, yellow painted walls and large glass windows were the last images that I remember of our home. Many visitors came around and eventually everyone around us ended up in tears.

The month of June came. My 7th birthday party and cake was all I had to look forward to!

One day we visited my other nanas house on my mum’s side – Tina’s house. The whole family was there, except my dad who I had not seen for over 5 months. My uncles would tell me I had to
learn how to count in English, and how to speak in this other language I had never heard about! I thought that they were crazy. That night everyone gathered for my birthday. There was so much traditional Chilean food I didn’t know where to begin... But there was one thing missing, cake... As the night went by I started getting a lot of questions from family and friends. “Have you learnt any words in English?” or “How do you feel about a new home?” So many questions I couldn't answer. It was at this moment that my mother and nana took me aside to speak to me. “Paloma! We are going away for holiday to celebrate your birthday! To a beautiful island called New Zealand. Your dad is waiting for us there!” Suddenly it all started to make sense. The best part about this was that I finally found out where my dad was. In addition to this, they told me that some of my cousins and aunties were coming too! It turned out that their dads had also left to prepare my big birthday surprise! I was very happy...

Suddenly as the night went by, tears began to spread. Family and friends began to hug us and say goodbye. This began to confuse me once again. As the never ending tears continued to run down my mama’s face I remember she just hugged me as she waved goodbye. That night we stayed at my grandparents’ house. Little did I know that was my last night in Chile. The last thing I remember of that night was the voice of my granddad who sang for me an old, classic Spanish song as a birthday gift. We both cried to the point that I fell asleep.

Before I knew it, we were sitting on a plane ready to depart. This is where my journey begins. Our flight routing was Santiago, Chile, transit in Buenos Aires, Argentina and then Auckland, New Zealand as our final destination. Unfortunately, we were turned back to Buenos Aires 2 hours into our flight to Auckland. There were some technical problems that meant it was unsafe to continue the whole way. An overnight stay was required in Buenos Aires. The stress on my mama’s face was apparent. She is easily stressed and tears are always a result of this. This overnight stay was long. Falling asleep for all of us was a mission. Worrying about what was going to happen next was a daunting thought. It meant we might not meet with my dad so soon after all.

Arrival:

Landing was rocky and scary. It was quite windy the day we arrived into Auckland. It was early morning and the sun was still sleeping. A rollercoaster of emotions ran through my body as I quickly grabbed my bag and the few dolls I had left. Finally, it was
time to see my dad. Going through customs was frightening. We all remained close together to avoid getting lost in this wave of foreign languages. I remember an officer asking my mum questions about her bag as the beagle dog sniffed around. We didn’t understand one word and looked at him. Then I clicked... I had left a sandwich I was saving for later in the bag’s side pocket. He found the sandwich put it in a bin and let us keep going through customs. After an exhausting series of bag scanning and questions, we finally got to meet with my dad!

My dad’s face seemed different. He had a smile on his face and was happy to see us too, but he now seemed tired. With everyone happy to see each other, we left to go to our new home or, as I thought of it, our holiday house. The sun was now out, the birds were singing, the grass was greener than I had ever seen. Our holiday had really begun.

The driveway was long. The fences were tall with barbed wire enclosing a space there were a few small, white timber slat houses arranged into a row, all filled with bunk beds. The grass wasn’t so green anymore and all I could see were many different faces that didn’t look too happy to be there. This was the refugee camp. We stayed there that afternoon while our parents just signed some papers. I couldn’t wait to leave. Happily our stay there was short, we made our way to the house we would stay in. Our family, a total of 11 of us, stayed in one three-bedroom house. The house was surrounded by large trees that sheltered the whole house from sunlight. The house was made of timber and painted white on the exterior. As we walked inside a breeze shut the door behind us. The house was damp, cold and quiet. This silence was strange, it was something I wasn’t quite used to, no barking dogs, no loud trucks driving by and no neighbours blasting their music during cleaning time. There was something strange about this silence. The damp and cold feeling was an uncommon sensation. The window sills were mouldy; condensation ran down the glass like the tears that ran down my mother’s face on our way there. As we settled into our dark cold rooms, my brother and I got out the toys we had and put them on some wooden shelves. Not knowing what was to come, our family decided to rest for the night. Happy to finally be together we drifted off to sleep.

A never ending silence absorbed the night and seemed to continue on for days, and months. There was no one to talk to other than ourselves. This silence started to drive us crazy, there was nothing to do other than play with the little that we had. We were too scared to go beyond the house boundaries. Would we get lost and not be able to find our way back? How were we
supposed to explain to anyone who we were or where we lived?
The boundaries of this house consisted of old, dark brown wooden fencing around the site. In addition to this the large trees not only blocked our sunlight but also blocked our view from all other houses and human interaction. Isolation was complete.

My dad and uncles would go to work while the children and mums stayed at home wondering what was beyond our walls. The time came for us children to go to school. It seemed like this was the worst holiday ever! The first couple of weeks at school weren't so good. We were bullied, my brother was always pushed around and all we wanted to do was to go home. We didn't need to speak English to know what those bullies said to us. It was clear we were not welcome. Coming home was both a relief and a worry. Our mums were stressed, missing home more than ever. They didn't leave the house unless it was to take us to school. Three families forced to live in one small home caused friction. This friction only led to unnecessary arguments and disagreements about anything and everything. When the adults would fight my brother, cousins and I would run into one of the rooms and lock ourselves in. We played Chilean music that reminded us of home. It added a much needed sense of noise to block out the fighting and get rid of this never ending silence that was breaking our families. Although this music brought tears to our eyes, it made us happy to reminisce on what we missed, even though it was only for a short while. Food shortages were common. At times we ate the same meal for days. No one complained, but it was always nice when our dads were able to gather a bit of extra money to buy some fresh vegetables.

The English barrier was truly difficult. Not being able to stand up for ourselves meant that we were stuck in a hole with no escape. We couldn't defend ourselves, ask for help, or even express our gratitude for the positive things that happened. In the eyes of my seven-year-old self, this holiday was turning into the worst experience of my life.

To this day silence has never been a part of our lives. To me silence brings back memories of an unpleasant holiday that caused tears, anger and dispute. As time passed and the language barrier was slowly broken, we were able to move away from this daunting place to somewhere we could call home. We moved to West Auckland where we were located close to other South American friends and families, where silence was not so evident. The discovery of Piha beach mesmerised me forever. The shape of the land, the natural heights, curves and all its edges is where I truly felt like I was home. The sounds of the waves crashing made me feel a connection between my past and present. The view beyond the waters made me feel that one day I could return to my homeland with the peace and safety that I felt on this beach.
In contrast to this trips to the city were one of my favourite things to do when we went out to explore Auckland. Tall buildings, busy streets, night lights and movement gave me hope that there was more to this new place we called home. The grandness of it all in my seven-year-old mind made me believe we were important and that there were never ending possibilities of things to do. It was so unlike the suburban life where each is to their own within the boundaries of their own home, like a prison.
Project Outline

This project aims to design a temporary housing solution which would allow refugees to transit from the main refugee resettlement programme in the Mangere centre to the refugee village providing a better integration system to the wider Auckland context. The program is based on a permanent structure which will be a temporary housing solution for the refugees as a transit space for one year allowing them to find their own way into New Zealand’s society.

Aims & Objectives

The aim and objectives of this project is to use architecture to provide housing for refugees after they have gone through the resettlement programme currently provided by the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC). The current programme does not introduce refugees to the wider urban context. Seclusion is inevitable and social integration is difficult to achieve, affecting the lives and overall development of the refugees. This proposal would provide integration into society allowing them to experience Auckland in a mixture of urban and suburban contexts, while also providing a sense of security, privacy and inclusion.

Research Question

How can architecture cater to the well-being and physical needs of refugees affected by situations such as warfare, poverty and drug ridden environments? How can the reuse and adaptability of an un-used site such as an empty lot, integrate communities to provide temporary living and rehabilitation for them?

Scope & Limitations

The project is about creating a sense of awareness of the problem we face on both a local and international scale. The overall refugee crisis extends far beyond the given proposal, which means there are topics that cannot be touched upon due to their complexity. The topic of refugees is highlighted in the media at the present time with ongoing situations occurring in locations such as the Middle East, Africa, and South America. The amount of media attention is creating a lot of awareness. There is plenty of research and other proposals relevant to the immediate response and aid work needed, but very limited responses to what happens after that and how refugees are then introduced to their new environment, bearing in mind the physical and emotional distress that they have encountered.

The focus of this proposal is based on New Zealand’s refugee intake and, rather than adjusting the existing programme, proposes the next steps of their initial introduction.
The final outcome of the project is based on a combination of literature reviews, interviews with refugees who have been through the current programme in the past as well as personal experiences. The limitation that comes with this is finding a way to detach personal experience at times and to define potential implications that may arise.

State of Knowledge

The most relevant knowledge that has influenced the design process and decision making were a combination of theory and precedent work. Not all aspects were directly related to architectural refuge responses but rather how to form spaces in which refugees would enjoy being in assisted in the recovery of their traumatizing journey. Courtyard Housing: Past, Present and Future\(^1\) is an inspirational book that describes an architectural typology that has been a part of many refugees’ lives. South America, the Middle East, Asia and many other countries use this way of design and, as a result, it would be useful for the environment proposed.

The Architecture of Self-help Communities\(^2\) is a text that has assisted in understanding the issue of squatter settlements. It is easy for underprivileged people that do not get professional assistance, to take matters into their own hands, therefore the illegal settlements quickly expand.

The International Architectural Foundation held a competition in Manila, Philippines. The winner of this competition was the New Zealand architect Ian Athfield. Studying his approach and solutions has given the design brief guidelines regarding how this refuge proposal can refrain from turning into a higher kind of squatter living.

Before designing, it was crucial to get a clear understanding of what the refugee crisis is and what the situations are. Reading into Worldwide Displacement Hits All-time High as War and Persecution Increase\(^3\) by UNHCR, really put the crisis we face now into perspective allowing the design to have a focus.

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\(^1\) Brian Edwards, Courtyard Housing: Past, Present and Future (Abingdon, Oxon.: Taylor & Francis, 2006).


\(^3\) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Worldwide Displacement Hits All-time High as War and Persecution Increase," accessed May 25, 2016.
Tadao Ando’s Sunken Courts design, places an important perspective on the importance of the connection of a building with the landscape. Courtyard design, use of material and relationship to landscape are elements that inspire the design process and the aim is to reflect similar qualities.

Alejandro Aravena is an inspirational Chilean Architect who has designed housing units and community centres across Chile. He also looks into how architecture can provide simple solutions to accommodate many people in a short space of time, with scant resources. He promotes the self-build adaptation to the housing proposals, but provides an excellent foundation to build upon.

Guedes Cruz Arquitectos have designed a social complex in Alcabideche, Portugal which focuses on design for the elderly as a support system. The complex caters to their needs in terrace-like housing, featuring modern garden spaces. Refugees are not necessarily old, but they do require similar assistance to ensure their safety is a priority during their temporary stay.

As mentioned, these sources of knowledge are not necessarily directly related to a refugee solution because this proposal is not aiming to design an emergency response but rather cater for the post resettlement stage in a refugee’s journey.

Methods

The project will aim to use a combination of many resources to develop a proposal that will reflect the research question effectively with a clear comprehension of the topic leading to an architectural solution.

Initially the project began by researching different readings regarding refugee crises and what the solutions were so far. This research led to a conceptual architectural response in drawing form that depicted aspects of the situation, such as private spaces and amenities, that were affected. Through the research, it was evident that the focus was mainly based on immediate relief. As thorough as this is, it was difficult to find examples of what was to happen to refugees post aid. Many refugees continue to live in refugee camps for years after resettlement because there is no focus on the future.

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The personal reminiscence was developed to express my personal experience from my 7-year-old perspective coming to New Zealand until now. This influenced the choices of literature and precedent reviews that expressed an architectural response which would benefit the physical and emotional wellbeing of a refugee. The personal introduction describes and illustrates the architecture I saw growing up and the play of emotions that it had on my life as an immigrant looking for shelter.

Furthermore, to get a better understanding of the experiences of others and their journeys to where they are now, other refugees were interviewed. This enabled a comparison of similarities and differences in experiences. This led on to the research of current refugee facilities in Auckland and the programme involved. The Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre was researched as a way of understanding how New Zealand deals with displacement. Programs, facilities, site and future assistance were all analysed and taken into consideration for the proposal of this research project. Referring back to the literature and precedent studies allows for further understanding of how the project could potentially look aesthetically as well as functionally. This analysis was done by creating a series of interpretative sketches to portray aspects that are relevant, or stand out from the overall design. This led to model making and massing of the forms which was an elaborate process that occurred throughout the whole research process, involving both physical and computer generated models. Most development drawings consisted of hand drawings, perspectives and sketches as they reflect the architectural intentions and emotions of space more accurately.

Results of Research

The research concluded by obtaining an in-depth understanding of the refugee crisis that is occurring at the present time. In addition to this the texts, interviews and analysis drawings related to the architectural intent has allowed the development of a foundation of knowledge that represents the people, their experiences and future integration strategies. This is important for the development of refugees in any country of asylum. The overall design has great potential as it is not limited to housing refugees but also has could be expanded for use as a temporary housing solution for many New Zealanders. The layout, orientation and circulation of the program are not common to the traditional New Zealand house but introduce a new architectural experience for all.
Literature
Background & Forced Displacement

Defining a date since when refugees have existed is not possible. Refugees have occurred for centuries and continue to be a complex topic with no end or valid solution. It is evident that wherever there is conflict there is a rise in refugees. From 2005 to 2014, UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, has recorded more than sixty million known displaced people globally. Out of this number more than fifty percent are children. Statically this indicates that “one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum.”

We are witnessing a paradigm change, an unchecked slide into an era in which the scale of global forced displacement as well as the response required is now clearly dwarfing anything seen before. UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres.

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3 UNHCR, "Worldwide Displacement Hits All-time High as War and Persecution Increase".
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
and without legal rights, which is why they seek refuge elsewhere. A high number of refugees tend to seek and receive help from the more developed countries around the world such as Germany, France, England, Australia and New Zealand to name a few. Generally, aid is provided through the use of refugee camps with tents or for the ‘luckier’ ones more equipped settlements. Informal settlements, such as camps, are not further developed in the hope that one day the refugees may return home.

Unfortunately, these ‘temporary’ living conditions have only basic amenities such as tent shelters, long drops, some medical assistance, and cooking areas. There is little sanitation, no private washing facilities or clean areas to prepare food. The people are multiplying day by day. As the camps increase in numbers, the facilities worsen. These refugee camps tend to be located in very secluded spaces, where land is vast and can accommodate the large numbers that enter an asylum country. This isolation separates refugees from the urban and social context, which prevents them from living a normal life with work and education. This separation is also in place to prevent disagreements and conflict between the locals and
refugees, especially over resources. Many refugees were once hard working professionals or tradesmen who now cannot work in their field because they do not have the legal documentation to prove their trade or experience. Furthermore, language can be a huge barrier if the move is to a country with a different tongue. This limits many aspects of life, such as validating their profession or day to day communication as well as affecting self-esteem, personality, emotions and state of mind. Being displaced is hard enough, yet some host countries do not always comply with the international refugee law which mandates the provision of basic human rights:

- Access to court
- Education
- Health Care
- Work – wage earning employment
- Housing
- Documentation (ID, passports etc.)

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.

The Urban Refugee

It is clear that in many host countries there is insufficient hospitality and that the use of a ‘refugee camp’ should only be an immediate response for assistance, rather than a permanent solution for shelter. The clear path towards proper assistance is to introduce refugees into an urban environment such as many are used to. “Most refugees now live in cities, not refugee camps.” Approximately 58% of refugees dwell in cities. This movement is an example of what should be happening in the 21st century to provide opportunities for refugees to succeed in their new environment and future. With this, there comes a handful of objections and barriers that can challenge a refugee in an urban context. Settling in an urban environment can be difficult for anyone, but this is especially difficult for a refugee. Many enter host countries illegally as their only means of survival. This creates pressure as they live in fear of being arrested and taken back to their countries. Furthermore, their status prevents them from obtaining basic services such as health care.
Refugees who are fortunate enough to be welcomed into a new country, like New Zealand, can receive the same benefits as an existing citizen. This assistance gives the right to live with dignity and opportunities, but this all depends on how assistance with the resettlement process. The concept of introducing refugees to an urban context has still not developed in New Zealand nor in many other countries, but would be beneficial. The city environment would introduce refugees to a familiar world and promote their integration into society. This is crucial for the emotional, mental and physical development of the new citizens who have already experienced a roller coaster of traumatic events. An alternative option, such as seclusion, can only lead to depression and other issues that will prevent refugees, or any migrant, from wanting to be a part of a new lifestyle.

Moving forward, the development of an ‘urban refuge’ idea would be beneficial in the New Zealand context. Models/programs that provide additional facilities like community centres would be an alternative typology that allows interaction to occur within the urban context. Encouraging nearby neighbours to contribute and assist in programmes such as literacy, computer, music and language classes would boost chances of integration and rehabilitation.
Architecture as a Form of Refuge

Courtyard Housing: Past, Present and Future

Courtyard housing is a style that dates back thousands of years with its many forms and arrangements.\textsuperscript{11} This style is evident around the world in countries such as Latin America, Middle East and Europe, despite climatic conditions being very different. The particular style varies depending on the cultural, climatic and social conditions, nevertheless they all reflect comparable factors.

The main concept of courtyard housing is to provide a sense of security, while at the same maximising the land area covered. Accessibility and circulation are foundations that drive the efficiency of the design. These foundations promote a high level of social interaction, while also allowing connections with the natural elements. The large open floor and sky space of a courtyard mean it can be used as a multi-purpose space with features such as vegetation throughout the different seasons, water features and activity areas. Controlled sunlight, rainfall and shelter from the wind contribute to the success of the design. The courtyard design is said to respond the following conditions in a unique matter.

- Social context
- Cultural context
- Environmental condition
- Climatic condition

These conditions define and have an important role in the typology of the courtyard design functionality.

“Courtyard housing is widely considered to be a responsive typology to low rise high density urban housing and is an appropriate form of housing within

\textsuperscript{11} Edwards, Courtyard Housing, 2.
contemporary mixed use sustainable urban developments.”

This indicates that an urban context is relevant and would have a high level of success in terms of use and occupancy in relation to urban Auckland.

An example of distinctive courtyard-style housing is evident in the 1980 submissions to the Aga Khan Awards for Architecture. Many of the projects consisted of courtyard designs. One which stood out the most was Serge Santelli’s “Residence Andalous” located in Souse, Tunisia. It reflects a combination of detailed traditional courtyard planning with modern characteristics such as water features, greenery and large solid materials. Architecturally the layout consists of no more than two levels surrounding a courtyard. The building now functions as a hotel in which Santelli “created an ordered series of symmetrical interior courtyards connected along a main longitudinal axis, from which secondary axes open.” These spectacular spaces create a sense of calm continuity and safety within its own grandness.

12 Ibid., 23.
13 Ibid., 22

15 Edwards, Courtyard Housing, 30.
This ‘alternative tradition’ of courtyard living allows multicultural dwellers to commune at different scales and levels of family need, unlike the New Zealand traditional housing example of the suburban villa that only caters for the immediate dweller. The only evident implication that derives from this kind of typology is the connection between the external public and the dwellers. Because the project aims to form a relationship between both, architecturally there would need to be a slightly different approach to the way the external and internal spaces coincide without fully amending the characteristics of the desired courtyard. Furthermore, this typology would be suitable for the refugee intake that New Zealand accepts. The idea is not to replicate their dwellings, rather to provide an essence of it within the urban context.
The Architecture of Self-help Communities

This book is an overview of the problems faced by communities regarding industrialisation, high birth rates, and lack of job opportunities, all of which lead to migration to cities. This influx of people is hard to manage, forcing them to create their own communities but without basic facilities, leading to pollution, spread of diseases, crime and so much more.\textsuperscript{16} This led to a competition, the ‘first international design competition for the Urban environment of developing cities.’ In 1972, the problem of the built environment was an issue addressed in the United Nations, leading to the approval of Habitat I in 1976. This proposed architectural solutions that would “stimulate innovation, serve as a means for the exchange of experience, and ensure the widest possible dissemination of new ideas and technologies in the field of human settlement.”\textsuperscript{17} The question at hand was - how could an architectural program benefit and enhance communities? As much as architectural solutions available, squatter communities arise because architects are not aware of the needs of refugees.

Furthermore, most governments do not give priorities to these informal settlements either. This combination of problems, increasing at the time, meant that the International Architectural Foundation created a competition to challenge architects around the world to provide proposals for developing cities such as Manila, Philippines.

Research done by the World Bank has shown that in the early 1970’s, 200-300 million people, especially from the developing world, tended to move to cities in search of a better lifestyle yet achieve similar or even slightly higher living conditions of what they had.\textsuperscript{18} This pressure affects:

- Limited natural resources
- Limited agricultural opportunities
- Low economic development in their surroundings
- Lack of funds/money – low wages

The opportunity to improve their living conditions, particularly their housing and community life, is a real challenge to all people interested in architecture, planning and urban development.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} Seelig, The Architecture of Self-help Communities, 2.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{19} Seelig, The Architecture of Self-help Communities, 4.
It is evident that the people who make up the squatter communities tend to be smart and developed individuals are poor due to the fact that there are no job opportunities and those that do have jobs are extremely underpaid. Research has shown that despite their low wages they are hard workers, willing to push harder to advance further.

The trend of squatter development has shown that the poorest settlements happen in locations such as hillsides, line canals, and crowded city alleys, making this a major issue in developing countries.

General guidelines were set to filter important aspects of a site intended for this purpose. In order to model the potential future lifestyle of the dwellers as well as site conditions allowed the following guidelines were to be followed:

‘High density – enough to accommodate displaced families, but lower than current number to prevent another squatter community.

Low rise – use as much land area as is available to use. High rise buildings would be too costly.

Low income – to match the low income group, therefore cater to their specific needs

Self- sufficient – Site must contain some level of self-sufficiency and contain an area of industrial/commercial buildings for local job opportunities.

Pedestrian orientated – personal vehicles are unlikely therefore must base transport on pedestrians.

Ecological fit – waterways must be preserved and incorporated. Industries must not pollute air, land or water. ²⁰

List of requirements for proposal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Structure</th>
<th>Physical Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERSON 1 Person</td>
<td>Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY 5-10 persons</td>
<td>House Frontyard Backyard Sliding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEIGHBOURHOOD (Park, 100-150 families)</td>
<td>Nursery School/Nutrition Centre Basketball Court/Playground San-Bari Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY Barangay, 300-750 families</td>
<td>Barangay Centre/Community Centre Elementary School Health Clinic Chapel Shops and Stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZONE 1,500-2,500 persons</td>
<td>Zone Centre Tahanan Centre Police Outpost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-15,000 persons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW TOWN 15,000-20,000 families</td>
<td>Administration Bldg. Hospital Police Headquarters Market Commercial Area High School Industrial Area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Total Community Environment Diagram

The competition concluded with 456 entries from a total of 52 countries. First prize design was awarded to Ian Athfield, a New Zealand Architect. According to the judges, the community based workplace was the outstanding feature and it was a feasible design. "The designer expresses his philosophy throughout the scheme in the planning, housing and technology areas."21 His design proposes a series of buildings that act as work places for the people in the community housing. Athfield believes that by doing this, some job opportunities will be provided for the locals and they will have an opportunity to increase their lifestyle. This is the only solution to the squatter housing crisis. Aspects of the design include other features that fulfil the design requirements, such as self-sufficient garden rooftops and work places close to home. Everything seems to work, but the barrier created by the linear work buildings that surround the community seems to enclose the dwellers too much, rather than creating a welcoming feeling.

In the end, out of the many proposals that entered the competition, not even the winning one was built.

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Sustainable Design

The idea of sustainability can be interpreted in many ways. The idea of sustainability was generated from 17th century forestry in Saxony where a method was applied for management and also the use of forestry that would benefit the productivity, biological diversity, vitality and most importantly the ability to regenerate. This approach can, similarly, be applied in an architectural context such as cities and the urban environment.

“Architecture – the creation of lasting values and the attempt to improve the living conditions of humankind.” Practising architecture sustainability we are able to understand that durability and functionality are two different things and the development of this allows us to balance standards of thinking. Sustainable Design II depicts proposals for the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture, which inspires new, ethical and long term methodologies towards sustainability in architecture.

Progress is a word which varies in meaning, depending on how we define progress in our everyday lives. Society in general experiences a cycle of change and growth in knowledge and integration. This leads to a point at which sustainability must progress also and match the new level of technologies, experiences and challenges for our developing societies. These include:

- Provision of dignified housing for the growing population
- Upgrading informal settlements
- Create shared spaces – that facilitate communication and compassion.

Social Integration is a key element. Architecture plays a huge part in creating a sense of integrity that comes with dwelling. Listening and investigation are the primary elements that will define the integrity of living through an architectural representation.

When buildings address differences between users as a means of awakening curiosity and hence, promoting understanding,

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acceptance and even protectiveness, then this is an at least temporary guarantee of social security.\textsuperscript{25}

As designers it is fundamental to include the everyday needs of humankind. Security is one of these aspects to be considered as a must. Being able to provide social security and social wellbeing leads to a sustainable society.

“Our buildings are trying to become an alternative form of social inclusion, which will improve such factors as quality of life and economic competition in poor and deteriorated neighbourhoods in the country.”\textsuperscript{26} Giancarlo Mazzanti

This is a valid point that suggests that buildings should be modelled in such a way that the public spaces of the buildings connect with the building, but do not interfere with the purpose of it.

Another way to implement sustainability at the micro level is through consideration of materials. How they are made up and what their task is on a day to day basis can reflect what we can try to achieve with the building materials we have. Local materials can achieve a high level of sustainable, houses and gardens for the underprivileged are still achievable and can provide a level of sustainability.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 14.
Tadao Ando – Sunken Courts

Tadao Ando is an architect who reflects minimalism through his work in architecture. His distinctive, modern and ever developing pieces always define logic through their composition and use of materials. It can be difficult to understand how someone can dwell in the conditions of sunken courts, but Ando has shown this is possible through his respect for nature and enhancing the elements. The idea is that when a building is “buried in the earth, the unity of the built structure is emphasized and adaptation to nature is achieved.”

With sunken courts and adaptation to nature we are able to achieve conditions such as security and an intimate relation to the surroundings. Isolation is not the intended outcome, but rather enhances the relationship with nature as a harmonious unity. Light enters the building through the use of glazed facades and courtyard spaces with openings to the sky.

“Interior and exterior, earth and sky enter into an unaccustomed alliance.”

Ando’s material pallet generally consists of concrete, glass and steel which he surprisingly sees as being a creation provided by Mother Nature. These dominating materials allow light to show their essence of purity and grandness.

Figure 15. Tadao Ando Court

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
Precedents
Vitra Seminar House

Architect: Tadao Ando
Construction Year: 1987-1993
Location: Weil Am Rhein – Germany

The Vitra Seminar House was commissioned in 1986 which was Ando’s first work outside of his homeland in Japan.\(^{31}\) Contextually, his site is home to many cherry trees. The house composition is made up of 2 storeys, with the lower level being located underground. From an external perspective it seems the house is one storey. There is a circular sunken central courtyard which connects a series of 3 different sized cubes as seen on the floor plan (Fig. 17). The characteristics of this composition apply “technical and aesthetic principles”\(^{32}\) that derive from a classic modernist modus operandi and are represented in regular modulations.

Analysis through sketches have allowed a more thorough understanding of Ando’s intention of relationship to nature. The use of concrete can sometimes be seen as being a material that is rough and imposing, but the way that it is used in this composition reflects tranquility and a Zen environment.

Aspects that are important to consider are how these arrangements and use of materials could contribute to the aim of the refugee project. Refugees come from a variety of backgrounds, but every single person has been through a rough, emotional, life threatening situation which needs to be met with an architectural response. Ando’s work projects a sense of intimacy through the use of

\(^{31}\) Werner Blaser and Tadao Ando. *Vitra Seminar House*, Page 33
\(^{32}\) Ibid, 33.
materiality, while still considering the feelings of the user and its surrounding natural context.

**Floor Plan**

This interpretation sketch (Fig. 18) shows the circular sunken courtyard connecting a series of 3 different sized cubes arranged around it. The inner courtyard is also sunken, but at the same time still provides sufficient light and atmosphere to the lower levels to allow them to fulfil their functions during the day.

**Internal Spaces**

Inside the Vitra Seminar house light enters the building in specific areas which allows a harmonic flow, leading users from one part of the building to another. This affects the user’s emotional state as the contrast of the warmth from the light hits the cool yet smooth surface of concrete. Tranquillity is the reflection of this layout, making it ideal for the aim of the current project in relation to refugees and their emotional wellbeing.
Elemental Arquitectos

170 Incremental Housing Units & Community
Centre Location: Renca, Santiago, Chile
Construction Year: 2008
Architect: Alejandro Aravena
Site Area: 28773m²
Areas: initial house 28m²
Expanded house 68m²
Community Centre 370m²

This site was chosen to help families who lived in slums in the local area. There were bad soil conditions and the land was filled with illegal building waste after the site had been used for excavation to make bricks. In order for the site to be used the soil had to be replaced, costing nearly 4 times the initial site cost. This cost impacted on the design development of the project. Each passage of houses is comprised of 25 dwellings – this number was sufficient to be able to control and maintain the community spaces with ease. Architecturally the design was vertically articulated in order to minimise the building footprints. The housing units


themselves consist of 3 structural floors and high partition walls which could later be expanded horizontally by the owners, filling in the adjacent voids, as can be seen in the image above.

The main concept of this project was to assist in the housing crisis, making sure that the users were involved. Due to lack of funds, the architects could not design one big house. The solution was to produce half a module now, allowing the owners to move in earlier, and in time be able to expand and make

http://www.archdaily.com/786528/why-aravenas-open-source-project-is-a-huge-step-toward-better-cheaper-housing-for-everyone
the second half on their own when they could afford it.\textsuperscript{34} This means that the inhabitants would be more willing to look after the surrounding environment.

The housing units are rectangular in shape and connected, which means there is no space lost throughout the site. A low income and high density proposal such as this one requires a solution like this to avoid the small ‘unused’ spaces from potentially turning into slum, or squatter type, settlements. The half a module proposal allows the occupants to add their own personal touch to how they want the rest of the module/unit to look. This could, however, look chaotic as the rhythm and sense of continuity could be lost.

The floor plan is made up of a 2 storey 28m\textsuperscript{2} space. The first floor consists of a small dining area, kitchen and bathroom. The second floor consists of 2 bedrooms that can comfortably fit either one queen sized bed, or 2 single beds. These rooms also have a small closet for storage. The stairs would form a centralised part of the house if they choose to expand, forming a type of corridor.

There are aspects of this design that can be used in the current proposal, such as the simple architectural approach to the floor plan layout and the idea of repetition of housing. The self-build continuation of the design would not be applicable to the New Zealand context and regulations, but a non-structural “self-build” concept can be added for a sense of ownership and belonging for refugees.

GUEDES CRUZ ARQUITECTOS
Social Complex

Location: Alcabideche, Portugal
Construction year: 2012
Architects: Jose Guedes Cruz, Cesar Marques, Marco Martinez Marinho
Site Area: 9956.0 m²

This is a social housing complex which consists of high quality construction and landscape which aims to assist the elderly. Located in Alcabideche, this housing project aims to restore a Mediterranean life style, which involves elements such as streets and outdoor gardens, as a part of the house. The site consists of a modulation of 52 houses and an additional support building. Internally the environment is controlled by the white boxed roof and its ability to reflect light. Thermal efficiency is created by the an air cushion between the roof and the living area.

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36 "Social Complex in Alcabideche / Guedes Cruz Arquitectos."
Aspects that stand out from this project are the housing units and their arrangements within the surrounding context. They cater for the need of elderly people who may need assistance, a support building being included in the complex. Aesthetically the units stand out with their simple design through the use of materiality – concrete, glass panels and steel create a harmonious cool feel to the site while the greenery of the courtyard-like gardens connect the site to the earth. The modular design allows for multiple arrangements and can be developed at different heights, like terraced housing, which could be suitable for the refugee proposal.

Figure 23. Guede Cruz Arquitectos exterior courtyard
Programme
Refugee Intake Quota

New Zealand takes in around 500-800 refugees yearly. The quota is made up of people who are in great need of resettlement due to their circumstances in their country of origin. The system is set up in a way that allows approximately 130 refugees to come into New Zealand at one time. This happens 6 times a year with the intake number varying each time. Resettlement is arranged by regions within the country. The main regions are Auckland, Waikato, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu, Wellington, Nelson and Canterbury. Auckland has the highest intake of refugees with an average of 300 people from the statistics of 2006-2014. For the current years of 2015-2016, Auckland has had its lowest intake with only 131 refugees permitted into the country so far. The following list indicates the countries with the highest numbers of intake from July 2013- May 2014 as an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Country of Asylum</th>
<th>Average Numbers of Refugees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghan</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutanese</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>Thailand/ Malaysia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuadorian</td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congolese</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopian</td>
<td>Palau</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>Jordan/Lebanon</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38 Immigration New Zealand, "Refugee Resettlement Fact Sheet," accessed April 20, 2016,
39 Immigration New Zealand, "New Zealand Refugee Quota Programme."
From the countries that they have received asylum, the refugees are placed into categories in order to define how they can assist depending on needs, the categories defining the urgency of assistance required. Then people of each nationality are resettled in similar regions.

**Priority Categories**

**Medical/ Disabled**

Many refugees, being around 75 have medical, physical or social disabilities which cannot be treated in the country they are in. A move to New Zealand would mean these conditions could be treated which would improve their health and may even save their lives.

**Family Reunion**

Many refugee families are separated during their tough journey, in which case some are lucky enough to be resettled while other family members are not. This category allows immediate family members to live together once again.

**Women at risk**

Approximately 75% of women who are resettled are in the “women at risk” category. Unfortunately, gender inequality is all too common which leaves woman exposed and in danger of situations such as rape, sexual exploitation, and other physical and mental abuse. Many are outcasts and receive no help or support from their families or communities due to cultural or religious traditions.

**Priority Protection**

Many of the families and individuals who are resettled require urgent legal and/or physical protection. Situations such as imprisonment and other life threatening situations are of high priority.

**Emergency Resettlement**

This category covers assistance for refugees with top priority. It can be for refugees with a combination of situations that fall into multiple categories, hence the urgency for refuge.

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Programme & Hospitality upon Arrival

The New Zealand programme is based on an orientation service, which means that refugees are first introduced into a reception living environment before allowing them to move into the host community/region. This resettlement introduction allows the refugees to get well informed on their opportunities and rights within the country. It allows the refugees to feel safe and be looked after during this stage in their journey. Many host countries, such as Australia, Canada, Germany, Sweden, and the United States have an established resettlement program. However, only Belgium, Ireland, Portugal and New Zealand have adopted the system of the orientation service.

Resettlement

In New Zealand the Red Cross is the leading organization that provides a resettlement programme for refugees. Upon arrival refugees are granted permanent residence straight away and are then settled into the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. The programme lasts for 6 weeks, during which time they are encouraged to learn basic English skills, taught local customs and way of living as well as undergoing basic medical checks to treat any health issues. Through this programme the Red Cross aim to achieve:

- “Settlement Support – practical support with day to day settling into the community
- Settlement planning with families- long term thinking and planning
- Orientation information sessions- tools needed to navigate life in a new community
- Community integration – linking former refugee families to their wider communities”

Refugees are then resettled into larger communities once the 6 week programme is over. Host regions such as Nelson, Wellington, Auckland, Hamilton, Christchurch and Palmerton North receive refugees throughout each intake. In addition to this, social workers work alongside each family to

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42 New Zealand Red Cross, "Pathways to Settlement," accessed June 8, 2016,
ensure they are well informed and assisted for the first 12 months as this can be one of the hardest times coming from a background of traumatic events.\(^4\) Government assistance is also available to the families and individuals to increase their chances of employment and to provide housing for them.

**New Beginnings**

Overall, it is crucial to understand that refugees have come to countries of asylum due to traumatic and life threatening situations which have affected their emotional and physical states in their country of origin. Leaving their homeland may not have been the easiest choice. Some probably loved their country, but due to the difficult situation had to leave it all behind. A new home is always hard to adjust to, especially if the culture and language are completely different. It is easy to assume what a refugee needs, but it is important to listen and support them during this time. Establishing a sense of security and safety is the top priority and architecture can achieve this in many ways, shapes and forms.

\(^4\) New Zealand Red Cross, “Pathways to Settlement.”
Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre

The facility was developed into a Resettlement Centre around the 1980’s. Prior to this event, it was used to accommodate 800 Polish refugees in 1944, 734 of which were orphaned children. They were later granted permanent residence in New Zealand. It is evident that the site has been catering to humanitarian needs for a long period of time and continues to do so. This humanitarian response carried on for years, lending a hand to many refugees. From the 1970’s there was a rise in refugee intakes from all around the world including Chilean refugees due to the Allende Government dictatorship, Middle Eastern refugees fleeing from war, Afghan refugees due to the Taliban wars and many more.


Figure 25. Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre Playground

Ibid.

Ibid.
Existing Design

Architecturally the initial design was orientated on a grid system, creating very simple spaces that focus on function over aesthetics. The spaces are efficient in some ways, but do not meet standards of welcoming facilities in present times. It is easy to assume refugees should be grateful for where they are now, but, needless to say, architecture has a huge part to play in providing a sense of security for people. Current facilities include:

- Therapy Area – Medical clinic and prayer room
- Accommodation – Bunk bed arrangement
- Community Facilities – Shared kitchen, dining, TV lounge and recreation
- Education – Early Childhood Centre, classes
- Staff office/ Administration
- Refugee service area
Site

The Centre is based in Mangere, South Auckland. The surrounding context offers few amenities. The south-east end is occupied by single state housing, while a dominating view of a shipping yard occupies the north. The Centre is hidden down a long driveway that leads to the barbed wire entrance. The wider surrounding context has some facilities within walking distance such as:

- Mangere Family Doctors
- Otahuhu College
- Mangere East Library
- Industrial factories
- Other community shops – takeaways, etc

Slightly further away there is:

- Kings College
- Middlemore Hospital

Beyond these, there is not much else that can be done in the industrialised area within walking distance. There is no access to the beaches which surround New Zealand.
Development

The Centre is currently being redeveloped and construction is nearly completed. The aim for this expansion is to provide better facilities by improving efficiency, as the design is purpose built in to prepare refugees for the New Zealand lifestyle and a new community. It was designed by Crosson Architects, who have applied their knowledge and understanding of the site to create the new amenities. Their intentions were to provide “a welcome and a harbour for those buffeted by circumstance.”

Aesthetically the design portrays styles and New Zealand customs, such as Maori patterns, which add a sense of tradition while at the same time aim incorporating “elements from the home countries of inhabitants”.

The north facing entrance was designed to allow formal and traditional introductions to take place, while also providing multiple spaces for public and private gatherings. The entrance has symbolic architectural aspects, such as the roof canopy shaped like a sail which is meant to reflect the journeys the refugees undertook. This is held up by four ‘pou’ with representations of Maori engravings.

![Figure 29. Mangere Refugee Centre under development](image)

The accommodation areas have been distributed in a way that allows a home-like environment within the site as design intent. Some architectural elements used were bricks, decks and

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48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.
shutters to add to personalise the buildings. A series of courtyard spaces act as outdoor connections and social spaces.\textsuperscript{50}

The ideology behind the red brick is to create a connection to New Zealand’s common material palette, as well as give a sense of warmth and security. Steel is another structural material used on both the roof and wall cladding, adding to a sense of security.\textsuperscript{51}

Landscaping is an important design factor throughout the site as it has been designed to introduce refugees to native New Zealand vegetation, as well as international greenery from other refugee countries to relate and pay respect to their homelands. Green walls feature in parts of the site as well as ‘workable gardens’ that can be used by the residents. Sporting and recreation areas also promote and encourage interaction.

Overall the new development aims to bring the refugees closer together during the 6 week programme, while still allowing them to have a bit of personal space, unlike the initial design.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid
Programme & Organization

There are five different organisations on site leading the programme for the refugees. They are responsible for all the activities, education and medical guidance.

Immigration New Zealand is the main organisation leading the programme at the Resettlement Centre, governing all aspects.

New Zealand Red Cross provides the social services that help refugees with day to day assistance such as finding housing, furniture and other needs. They aim to make sure people are well equipped before their departure from the Mangere Resettlement Centre.

“Our programmes support and empower new Kiwis as they rebuild their lives here.”

AUT University provides education from Early Childhood to Adult levels. It is important that education is available and accessible to all ages. Their aim is to introduce a “new physical and cultural learning environment” which allows the students of all ages to learn English, literacy, numeracy and many more skills. In addition to this they aim to teach about the new environment the refugees will be introduced to, how to handle school expectations and the social issues that are involved when adapting to a new cultural experience.

NZ Refuge Health Services provide medical clinic services to allow the refugees to leave the Resettlement Centre healthy. All refugees undergo basic health checks to detect any issues that can be treated either on site or referred to a specialist.

RASNZ – Refugee as Survivors is an organisation dealing with any potential mental health issues from traumatic events. The team is extensive and includes psychologists, nurses, body therapists and other staff. In addition to this they assist youth to get involved in sports and other activities which aim to include them in society.

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Response

The first impression of returning to the Refugee Centre was quite an experience, not having been back for over 15 years. Flashbacks of my childhood returned leaving me with a wave of mixed emotions. The response was from personal experience, but now with an added architectural mindset. The original design response:

- There are no welcoming open spaces for gatherings
- No private spaces for families/ individuals
- Everything is shared amongst the inhabitants
- No architectural intent
- Still no connection to the wider context
- New expansion focuses on administration with little attention to accommodation
- New development does not provide an adequate architectural solution for the site, but rather the same idea in new materials

Figure 32. Perspective of existing Mangere Refugee Centre
Refugee Testimonials

In order to get a full understanding of the programme, camps and post settlement experience, a few questions were asked of some refugees. These refugees were from a mixture of intakes, both the past and present.

Interviewees have remained anonymous for personal reasons and questions were kept brief. They were informed of what the interviews were about preinterview and the project was explained post interview.

Interview One
Year of Arrival: 2000

What was your first impression of New Zealand upon arrival?

“New Zealand seemed like a very nice place. I arrived in early morning hours so it was very cold. Different to my home. People seem nice, but quiet. No one selling things outside of airport was surprising. The land is very green with much space.”

What was your first impression of the MRRC?

“Arrival was a scary feeling. Different culture, different language. Then I did not speak English. Hello, goodbye, and how to say my name was all I knew. So you can imagine how difficult it was for me. The Centre looked like army house. Fence is very big and driveway very long. I was alone and my family still in my home country so I had to share room with other people who didn’t speak my language either.”

What did you enjoy the most and what was the worst experience upon arrival?

“I enjoyed not many things. It was hard to enjoy when my family is so far away. I feel lucky to come but I cannot be happy when my family is not safe. The people who helped us were very nice, and speak slowly. The food was good, but we had to share many things. I didn’t have much time to be alone. I’m not sure if that was a good thing but it is always good to have some alone time to pray or rest.”
How did you find the housing arrangements after the programme?

“After 6 weeks I was put in a small house in South Auckland. Most of us live in similar area. It was quiet, too quiet. At least at the centre there was always people talking, children laughing but suddenly I was alone. Being so far from family I become very upset. I did not want to work, eat or sleep. It was not good for health to be so alone in a time like this.”

What did you feel during this time and what would you have changed if you had to live through that again?

“Very sad, like depression. I would not put refugees in a place where is so quiet. Many of us come from loud areas. Busy with people walking, selling and talking. I like New Zealand because it is a beautiful and peaceful place, but it is hard to get used to straight away.”

Did you find it easy to integrate into the community after the MRRC? If not, why?

“No, it was very hard. Too far away from things to do. Neighbours say hello in the morning if they see you outside, but otherwise everyone in suburb is also quiet and I speak poor English so I found it hard to ask for help or make friends easily.”
Interview Two
Year of Arrival: 2002

What was your first impression of New Zealand upon arrival?

“A completely different experience as it was my first time leaving my home country Afghanistan. I was crying and didn’t want to leave, but had no choice. Not knowing anyone in New Zealand was difficult and didn’t know where we staying.”

What was your first impression of the MRRC?

“It didn’t seem like home because there was a lot of different nationalities. First few weeks I wanted to leave but didn’t know where to go.”

What did you enjoy the most and what was the worst experience upon arrival?

“The only thing I enjoyed was the plane ride being able to travel for the first time.”

How did you find the housing arrangements after the programme?

“From what I remember we had to share our unit with another family who were from Nigeria. Very lovely family and always took care of me and let me play with their son.”

What did you feel during this time and what would you have changed if you had to live through that again?

“Personally I would have changed the housing arrangements to be able to give one unit per family as it was hard to share for a long period of time.”

Did you find it easy to integrate into the community after the MRRC? If not, why?

“To be honest, I didn’t find it easy to integrate. I have never spent much time with so many cultures before, so it was hard to communicate.”
Interview Three
Year of Arrival: 2002

What was your first impression of New Zealand upon arrival?

“I came by myself first, while my family was in Pakistan. It was hard leaving my family behind, but I wanted to create a better future for them for when they arrived after me. I didn’t know the language so it was hard to communicate. The country is beautiful and big spaces. A lot of international people here.”

What was your first impression of the MRRC?

“I liked this centre because I stayed in a unit with three other men. We used to study together and get to know our new environment. First time I came here I thought it was a little bit like camp but it was not for a very long stay.”

What did you enjoy the most and what was the worst experience upon arrival?

“Best experience was making new friends, and worst experience was that it was not easy to find a job.”

How did you find the housing arrangements after the programme?

“The house was very cold, and no insulation so I got sick many times. I did not like where we were as it was too far from the city and we had no car to travel.”

What did you feel during this time and what would you have changed if you had to live through that again?

“I would have like to live closer to the city or in the city so I can visit more places and have more opportunity. The city has many trains and I can know more of all of Auckland from there.”

Did you find it easy to integrate into the community after the MRRC? If not, why?

“It was too hard to integrate. In Papatoetoe where we lived neighbours were not nice and racists. I did not want my family to live in a place like this after coming from Pakistan so we moved to Howick once I found a good job after a long time of searching.”
Brief

The design aims to achieve a quality of life for refugees who have been displaced by force. Overall the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre offers a poor programme which provides an inadequate introduction before the new life in New Zealand. Unfortunately, it is evident that post the 6-week orientation programme, the refugees do not feel comfortable enough to call New Zealand home. Many are allocated to a secluded home surrounded by silence which affects the refugee’s emotional state through depression due to lack of integration. It is hard to accommodate the increasing numbers of refugees to new homes in an environment where they can feel like they have been integrated. The period of living alone and having personal space after the resettlement programme is the hardest as integration into society is not so welcoming when you are on your own.

The aim of this project is to provide permanent housing that is available for temporary living for up to one year for those refugees who cannot be provided with a home immediately after the 6 week programme at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre.

The site requires a location that promotes integration through access to public transportation, local schools, public spaces/amenities and restaurants, but principally a place where Kiwis like to go in Auckland. The site should provide a sense of security, while at the same time being on the outskirts of Auckland’s busy CBD. A mixture of communal and residential amenities would allow the inhabitants to get a taste of what New Zealand life is like. Semi private spaces would be where the dwellers reside and can have privacy throughout the day with separation from the outside world. Public amenities such as recreation centre, shops and train station.

Communal gardens are an asset as they allow for the inhabitants to work together and have things to do. Working alongside the organisations from the Resettlement Programme will allow the relationships between the social workers, teachers and other staff to grow, creating confidence and trust for the refugees.
Program

The program is based on a permanent structure which will be a temporary housing solution for the refugees in transit from the main refugee resettlement centre to their homes whilst providing a better integration system to the wider Auckland context.

It should also follow similar ideals to those of the Auckland Unitary plan, “Work, live, play,” within the site.

Main Parameters

- Work opportunities within the proposed environment
- Aim to accommodate: 500 people
- Maximum Period: 1 year stay

General Public Amenities

- Health Centre (MRRC organisation spaces)
- Gym/Recreation
- Playground
- Courtyards
- Train Station
- Local Shops

Semi Public Amenities

- MRRC organisation spaces
- Administration/ reception (New Zealand Immigration Service)
- Red Cross
- Refugee as Survivors
- Early Childhood Centre
- Classrooms- AUT
- Meeting hall
- Shared community gardens
- Housing units: with some shared
- Kitchen facilities

Private Amenities

- Large families housing 5-8 people
- Small families housing 4 people
- Singles housing up to 3 people
Site

The site that was chosen is the old Kiwi Rail link off Quay Street/Tamaki Drive which is no longer being used to its full potential. It currently has only one track operating from Britomart to the Eastern Suburbs as well as the occasional scenic route and freight trains.

The train can connect this site to the rest of Auckland, promoting movement and encouraging integration into the wider community. This new permanent structure provides spectacular views of Judges Bay as well as New Zealand’s natural views of the Hauraki Gulf.
Wider Site Analysis

This site offers many things to do within a walking distance or a short bus/train ride away. Accessibility is important to make sure that refugees get the chance to integrate with the wider society, allowing them to seek for jobs and reach the other opportunities which the city has to offer.
Surrounding Context

1. Britomart Train Station
   20min walk 1.7k
2. Countdown
   12min walk 1.0k
3. Auckland University
   23min walk 1.8k
4. AUT
   26m walk 1.9k
5. Auckland Hospital
   37min walk 2.6k
6. Museum
   30min walk 2.2k
7. ACG Parnell College
   36m walk 2.7k
8. Parnell baths
   8min walk 550m

Figure 35. Surrounding Context
Figure 36. Proposed Site
The Strand

This bridge connects Parnell to the busy street of Quay Street and Tamaki Drive. The bridge has a high level of foot traffic throughout the day as people jog/run/walk/cycle regularly through this area.

Fig. 37 depicts the busy and commercial views towards Quay Street. The container port dominates the view from this level and the beauty of the water is not visible at this point. In close proximity to the site there is a series of fast food shops, a car wash, and a petrol station, but nothing else until past Vector Arena.

The view to the tracks (Fig. 38) is not very attractive and consists of unused tracks, stone and greenery that encloses the site in some areas. This bridge would be a visual connection for the passers-by to the proposed building and refugee dwellers.
Site Strategies

Aerial Perspective of Site – Auckland CBD
Aerial Perspective of Site – Auckland CBD
Material Palette – Photographic & Sketch Site Analysis

Figure 41. Existing Material Palette Grass
Figure 42. Existing Material Palette Concrete
Figure 43. Existing Material Palette Steel
Figure 44. Existing Material Palette Metal
Figure 45.
Figure 46. Existing Material Palette Fence
Concrete

Figure 47. Existing Material Palette Timber
Concrete

Figure 48. Existing Material Palette
Concrete
Height & Contour Analysis – Section AA

Figure 51. Existing Site - Contour Analysis

Figure 52. Existing Site - Height Analysis

Figure 53. Existing Site – Immediate Context Analysis
Site Strategies

At this point in the design process, diagrams were made to see where the programmed spaces would be most beneficial on site. Site conditions to be taken into consideration were: sunlight, busy road, the Strand Bridge on the west, the one functioning train track that runs along the site from east-west and the 38m high cliff edge on the south.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Public Areas</th>
<th>Semi Public Spaces</th>
<th>Private Spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Centre (MRRC organisation spaces)</td>
<td>MRRC organisation spaces</td>
<td>Large families housing 5-8 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym/ Recreation</td>
<td>Administration/ reception (New Zealand Immigration Service)</td>
<td>Small families housing 4 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground</td>
<td>Red Cross</td>
<td>Singles housing up to 3 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtyards</td>
<td>Refugee as Survivors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train Station</td>
<td>Early Childhood Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Shops</td>
<td>Classrooms- AUT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery Space</td>
<td>Meeting hall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared community gardens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing units: with some shared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Site Strategies

At this point in the design process, diagrams were made to see where the programmed spaces were most beneficial on site. The program being: Public, Semi Public and Private were arranged into multiple forms according to the linear shape of the site and its conditions, such as height.

Figure 54. Proposed Site Strategies
The second development consisted of rearranging the spaces to define where the main entrance would be best located. The enclosures within this need to be of quality, breaking the sense of linear grid-like patterns that develop naturally on the site, due to its rectilinear nature.

The aim is to use most of the site, while having connection spaces in the form of courtyards. Between the site as a form of integration, with each other as well as the general public facilities, without compromising private space.

Figure 55. Conceptual layout diagram Strategy
This approach consists of the main entrance being directly accessible from the private spaces. The idea seems very open and means many can access the housing area, while also having the semi-private and general public spaces surrounding the private as a form of enclosure and security.

With further analysis of this concept, it was evident that the set up contains more negative aspects than good ones, such as too much public access to private spaces may overwhelm the inhabitants. This would be hard to control without creating barriers along approaches to solve this.

Figure 56. Conceptual layout diagram Strategy
Site Development

at the further development stage, it was very difficult to move away from the linear grid-like pattern that originated from the site constraints. The journey of a refugee is not an easy one, so architecturally the building should reflect aspects of this journey and embrace it.

There was an issue working around the tracks. To solve the train track ‘issue,’ a concrete and glass wall was initially conceptualized as a solution, providing noise and safety. This acoustic wall created a rather secluded and controlled space, but it did not emphasise the beauty of the old tracks on the site.

In order to explore solutions for these two issues, modelling of the topography was decided on as being the best way to develop meaningful forms derived from the land.

Figure 57. Site Development layout
**Topography & Contour Analysis**

This process was carried out by creating a CNC model of the topography and analysing the lines and patterns generated by it. The horizontal lines demonstrate the linear pattern that draws you through the site while the pinpointed zigzags connect the main contour lines in an abstract form of exploration.

This analysis, alongside shadow studies, allowed the design to be informed regarding the existing landscape.

Figure 58. Topography & Contour Analysis
Conceptual Development

From the topography analysis, a series of conceptual hand drawn sketches were developed to start obtaining potential shapes and forms for the design.

This development consists of a series of angled shapes which are an abstract form representing the different highs, lows and un-easy journey undertaken by refugees.

The bridges represent how a refugee comes from one land into another. This symbolic representation will also act as an architectural response to resolve the issue of the train tracks by layering programs above them.

Linking both the northern and southern ends of the site means that the refugees have traversed the existing train tracks. It will both be an experience for the inhabitants crossing the bridge, as well as for those riding the train, an initial glimpse of future friends.

Figure 59. Conceptual Development Masterplan Sketch
Development Master Planning

The master plan of the site was laid out with functions in mind. The large angled shapes would house the public spaces, while the circular forms above represent the housing. Having the housing units above the public facilities means that people are encouraged to come down and participate in the community at their own leisure.

The noise issue could be a problem if excessive, but because the accommodation is only a transit solution, the movement and noise can be an encouragement for them to move on to their own home after the one year process.
Development Master Planning

Upon reviewing the previous development, the flow from the east to west throughout the design seemed unconnected to the landscape. To rectify this, direct lines were projected from the contour topography analysis to define the forms for the buildings.

This connection to the land signifies meaningful architectural intent to use the landscape as a tool for the integration of refugees into New Zealand.

In this proposal the housing units are located on the southern end of the site off the cliff edge. This would give the dwellers a spectacular view of the port, harbour, Rangitoto Island and the city. Views like this can be very therapeutic, which is what traumatised people need. They will receive northern sun throughout the day for warmth and natural light. Southerly winds will be blocked by the cliff on which the housing is located.
Development Cross Section

This cross section gives a conceptual feel of what the site would look like with the private housing on the cliff overlooking the public spaces and the view of the water to the north.

This drawing brought up a few ideas on the private spaces regarding the sunken courtyards by Tadao Ando. Working into the cliff promotes opportunities which would allow the sunken courtyard to work in this environment.
This proposal introduces a development with a lot of potential. Amazing views, in close proximity to amenities and within walking distance of the CBD, which means it would be high in demand.

Refugees have been through a rough time and living in uncomfortable camps for too long. As a country we should provide them with quality living that will assist in their recovery even if it is only temporary.
Train Station

The train station is placed at the start of the site from the east – west. This allows train users to get off at a point where public amenities are in close proximity and foot traffic through the site is promoted.

The design of the roof canopy is inspired by the zigzag connections derived from the site analysis. Being able to showcase the idea behind the site layout through materials is a representational way of bringing the station to life. As users continue on their journey to Britomart, the bridges crossing above them also symbolise the refugee’s journey.
Main Entrance

The main entrance is an important space, welcoming both the inhabitants and the public simultaneously. Because the program includes a train station, it indicates that it will be busy throughout the travelling hours of the day, 7-9am and 3-6pm, which means that sufficient waiting space should be available. A train station is the best way to promote movement and integration on site using the existing facilities. A clear distinction between private and public spaces will be evident beyond the main entrance, but will be known to the inhabitants. The refugees are encouraged to integrate to the wider community; by making one grand entrance, they must go through the public spaces before being able to reach housing and private amenities. The main administration facilities and offices will be within the public spaces to promote foot traffic around the site.

The entrance canopy consists of overlapping triangular shapes that represent each courtyard living space. The overlapping symbolises that by coming together they can form one big shelter for those who come together.
**Walkways & Thoroughfares**

Throughout the site there will be many long thoroughfares that are guided by a pathway. This pathway aims to create a feeling of enclosure at the beginning which then opens up into courtyard spaces. The pathway is not straight the whole way, but rather follows the forms of the angled buildings which are informed by the landscape to represent the obstacles on the refugee’s journey.
A combination of high and low spaces throughout the site would bring the area alive. The train station would consist of a similar material palette to that which exists on the site initially, such as steel, stones and greenery in keeping with its history.

The bridges will be continuous throughout to really enhance the feeling of connectivity from one part of the site to another.

Figure 71. Conceptual Walkways & Thoroughfares Sketch
Communal Gardens

The communal gardens are in both the private and public spaces. The produce of the public garden can be sold throughout the day to those passing by, while the private produce is for household use.

These communal gardens are to incentivise refugees to produce their own fruits and vegetables to reduce cost, while also being a therapeutic activity for all ages. Being able to reap and consume what they have sown, will give them a great sense of achievement and encouragement.

The private gardens are dispersed throughout the site and enclosed within the courtyard spaces.
Health, Fitness & Recreation

Health and fitness amenities are in close proximities to one another. They both work hand in hand by focusing on the wellbeing of the refugees. The layout consists of a small gym, recreation area, reception, changing rooms, showers, toilets, sauna, medical rooms, doctor’s offices and storage.

The form of the building is a continuation from the master planning, flowing from one part of the site to another. The orientation of the offices means that plenty of controlled sunlight can enter. The gym terrace is part green and part impermeable to allow for a natural environment to occur on the second floor.

The interior layout of the fitness and health areas are all open plan, with the exception of the bathrooms and medical room and offices. The recreation and fitness areas are open to the general public to welcome the wider community to be a part of the proposal.

This part of the building is split into 3 levelled mezzanine areas with 3 small atriums to always keep a visual connection throughout the facility.
Retail

Retail is only a small part of the building, but it has a big significance to the activities that refugees will take part in. It will continue the theme of health. On the ground floor, refugees will be able to sell their vegetable produce as well as arts, crafts and products they have created in their classes. This process is rather important as it adds value to the hard work they have put into their products.

This part of the retail space will be a courtyard orientated north and functions like a market space. Being located close to the train station means that train users can stop by and have a look while they wait for their next train.
**Education & Offices**

The educational programme is run by AUT as they provide services at MRRC. The location of the site is in close proximity to the university, which means that more activities can be actioned throughout the day. The office spaces are for all organisations that take part in the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre.

- Administration/ reception (New Zealand Immigration Service) Red Cross
- Refugee as Survivors
- Early Childhood Centre
- Classrooms- AUT

By facilitating them with space on the site, they can guide and keep teaching refugees. Continuous assistance after the MRRC is crucial for emotional and physical development.

The architectural response to this part of the building consists of the childhood education centre being at the heart of the space while the classrooms and offices surround this space. The proportion of children is likely to be high and the facility needs to feel the most secure and visually related to the adult orientated spaces.
Housing Units

The housing layouts are determined mainly by the type of enclosure generated by the forms. These forms and enclosure strategies are essential for the development of relationships between the inhabitants. Within the private housing area the aim is to still provide communal spaces for the inhabitants, promoting interaction on the private level as well as communal. The internal housing studies and drawings are derived from the precedents of Alejandro Aravena bringing forward the simple, repetition approach of his housing design.
Using repetition of unit forms as a template, the Process can be replicated for 1-3 housing typologies which can be multiplied throughout the site maximising the use of land area as well as opportunities for good communal spaces with:

- Courtyards
- Communal Gardens – Sustainable food sources

Figure 87. Conceptual Floor Plan Layouts
Courtyards as Enclosures

The approaches to courtyard enclosures allow distinctions between the private and communal spaces. Allowing up to 4 families or households to share a communal space means that there will be enough hands to run and maintain the resources, thus reducing potential conflicts. Many refugees come from countries where resources were limited, which is why no more than 4 families/households should share these intimate spaces.
Courtyards

Public courtyards will have a minimal sense of enclosure. The arrangement of these enclosures is to allow many to be welcomed in and transition through the space from the walkways and thoroughfares. Connectivity to the land and sky is the main concept for these courtyards giving a sense of ease in this labyrinth like journey through the site.

On the other hand, the private courtyards have a more intimate feeling. The level of enclosure allows the inhabitant to feel safe and have a sense of privacy.
Overall Perspective

Figure 92. Overall Perspective Sketch – View to the Harbour
Overall Design Arrangement – South to North Perspective

Figure 93. Overall Perspective Sketch – View to North Shore
Overall Design Arrangement

Figure 94. Overall Perspective Sketch – View to Auckland CBD
Conclusion

The overall aim of this research project was to see how architecture can integrate refugees into New Zealand through adaptability of the train track site. Exploring this conceptual idea consisted of research to get a clear understanding on the current situation with the refugee crisis, as well as what, and how, New Zealand does as a country to offer assistance. The programme that is in place at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, has developed enough to briefly introduce refugees to the basic system, but is not sufficient to make them feel at home. Studying this programme has provided an in-depth understanding of what is expected and the options provided to the refugees. Acknowledgements are made to the MRRC as they try to take care of the refugees for the 6-week resettlement period as best as they can with the tools they have. This research proposal meets the needs post MRRC, by providing permanent housing as a transit experience which is in close proximity to the CBD for refugees who are not housed post the 6-weeks period.

With the increasing number of refugees the housing numbers need to increase to cater for all. Non-refugees are also struggling to find housing due to the current housing crisis. The program is open to all, though refugees, understandably, have priority.

The train track site located by Quay Street – Tamaki Drive provided an excellent canvas to work on for the development of the project. The proximity to the city centre and train station on site allows residents to move around with ease as they please. The site arrangement clearly indicates the general public and private spaces, while still harmoniously bridging the relationship to each other as a whole piece. The outcome has created a miniature city, representing the multicultural inhabitants as well as welcoming passersby, such as train users.

The series of courtyards embodies what refugees relate to safety and security, the greenery is the land that welcomed them and the skies to the endless possibilities and opportunities now available to them. We can never erase someone’s past and traumatic experiences, but being able to embrace the journey architecturally will be the positive outcome they longed for. This is what the forms of the buildings symbolise. Furthermore, the combination of heights and views, the noise and character allows the once refugees, now kiwis, to mentally, emotionally and physically prepare themselves for integration into their new society one view and one step at a time.

The literature and precedents have influenced many of the design decisions. Simple aspects of the work studied have related to personal architectural memories of what I saw growing up and what I feel and know about the new generation of refugee
Bibliography


List of Figures

1. **Refugee Camp Site**

2. **Girl at Refugee Camp**

3. **Refugees at Asylum**

4. **Refugee Camp from above**

5. **Tents at Refugee Camp**
   Ibid.

6. **Interior Courtyard**

7. **Interior courtyard with water feature**
   Ibid.

8. **Exterior courtyard housing**
   Ibid.

9. **Suburban layout**

10. **Interconnected layout**

11. **Ian Athfield proposed design**

12. **Community environment diagram**
    Ibid.

13. **Ian Athfield floor plan**
    Ibid.

14. **Sustainable courtyard**
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15. **Tadao Ando court**

16. **Tadao Ando analysis sketch**

17. **Tadao Ando floor plan analysis sketch**

18. **Tadao Ando interior analysis sketch**
19. **Elemental Arquitectos buildings**
   

20. **Elemental Arquitectos interpretation sketch**

21. **Guedes Cruz Arquitectos exterior courtyard**
   

22. **Guedes Cruz Arquitectos interpretation analysis sketch**

23. **Guedes Cruz Arquitectos exterior courtyard**
   
   "Social Complex in Alcabideche / Guedes Cruz Arquitectos."

24. **Child refugees**
   

25. **Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre Playground**

26. **Existing Design Accommodation Analysis Sketch**

27. **Mangere Refugee Centre site plan wider context**

28. **Mangere Refugee Centre site plan**

29. **Mangere Refugee Centre under development**
   

30. **Mangere Refugee Centre outdoor development space**

   Ibid.

31. **Mangere Refugee Centre new developed plan**

   Ibid.

32. **Perspective of existing Mangere Refugee Centre**

33. **Proposed Site, Map of New Zealand**

34. **Proposed Wider Site Analysis**

35. **Surrounding Context**

36. **Proposed Site**

37. **Existing Site Photo – The Strand**

38. **Existing Site Photo – The Strand**

39. **Aerial Perspective of Site – Auckland CBD**

40. **Aerial Perspective of Site – Auckland CBD**

41. **Existing Material Palette - Grass**

42. **Existing Material Palette- Concrete**

43. **Existing Material Palette – Steel**

44. **Existing Material Palette – Metal**

45. **Existing Material Palette– Rusted Bolt**

46. **Existing Material Palette- Fence**

47. **Existing Material Palette- Timber**

48. **Existing Material Palette- Concrete**

49. **Existing Material Palette- Concrete**

50. **Existing Material Palette- Concrete**

51. **Existing Material Palette- Concrete**

52. **Existing Site - Contour Analysis**

53. **Existing Site – Height Analysis**

54. **Existing Site – Immediate Context Analysis**

55. **Proposed Site Strategies**

56. **Conceptual Layout Diagram Strategy**

57. **Site Development Layout**
58. Topography & Contour Analysis
59. Conceptual Development Masterplan Sketch
60. Conceptual Development of Masterplan Sketch
61. Conceptual Development of Masterplan Sketch
62. Conceptual Development Cross-Section Sketch
63. Conceptual Development Cross-Section Sketch
64. Conceptual Proposed Entrance Location
65. Conceptual Proposed Main Entrance Conceptual Sketch
66. Conceptual Proposed Main Entrance Conceptual Sketch
67. Conceptual Walkways & Thoroughfares Sketch
68. Conceptual Walkways & Thoroughfares Sketch
69. Conceptual Proposed Train Station Sketch
70. Conceptual Proposed Train Station Sketch
71. Conceptual Proposed Train Station Façade Sketch
72. Conceptual Proposed Communal Garden Sketch
73. Proposed Locations of Communal Garden Sketch
74. Conceptual Proposed Communal Garden Sketch
75. Section Sketch of Levels and Connections
76. Proposed Health, Fitness & Recreation Layout Sketch
77. Proposed Health, Fitness & Recreation Atrium Sketch
78. Proposed Retail Location Sketch
79. Proposed Retail Location Sketch
80. Proposed Education & Offices Layout Sketch
81. Proposed Education & Offices Façade Sketch
82. Proposed Education & Offices Location Sketch
83. Conceptual Proposed Housing Units
84. Conceptual Proposed Form Housing Model
85. Conceptual Proposed Form Housing Model
86. Conceptual Proposed Form Housing Model
87. Conceptual Floor Plan Layouts
88. Conceptual Courtyard as Enclosures
89. Conceptual Courtyard as Enclosures
90. Conceptual Courtyard Sketch
91. Conceptual Courtyard Sketch
92. Overall Perspective Sketch – View to the Harbour
93. Overall Perspective Sketch – View to North Shore
94. Overall Perspective Sketch – View to Auckland CBD
Appendix B

Refuge Housing

Final Design
Long Section A-A
Continued
Train View
Courtyard Housing View
Public Gym Interior View
Children Centre Interior View
Connection Bridges – Private to Public Spaces
Declaration

Name of candidate: Paloma Iloa Martinez

This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project entitled: REFUGE HOUSING

is submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of ARCHITECTURE.

Principal Supervisor: MIKE AUSTIN

Associate Supervisor/s: 

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

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- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 

Candidate Signature: ........................................ Date: 30/07/16

Student number: 1399083
Full name of author: Paloma Lobo Martinez

Full title of thesis/dissertation/research project ('the work'):

REFUGE HOUSING

Practice Pathway: Architecture

Degree: Master

Year of presentation: 2016

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