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## **HOUSED by CHOICE, HOUSED by FORCE - Homes, Conflicts and Conflicting Interests**

January 21 – 22. 2016

Architecture\_MPS, University of Cyprus; Cyprus Institute

### **Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:**

**1. Paper / Proposal Title:** The Hotel Project: Rethinking Refugee Housing as an Apparatus for Opportunism & Agency

**2. Format:** Verbal & graphic presentation (may be accompanied by short written piece)

*Written paper / verbal presentation / screening / short film / other – please specify*

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**5. University or Company Affiliation:** University of Melbourne

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

There is an unanswered crisis befalling one of the most excluded demographics in Australia. Bridging-visa refugees are being pushed into communities due to overflows in

detention accommodation. Having been denied all rights to employment under the 2012 'no-advantage' legislation, they effectively become paralysed in the powerless, indefinite state of waiting for a visa without income.

A new housing typology, a 'hotel' for refugees, aims to break this crippling cycle through a reinvented type of transient lodging. Located in the centre of Melbourne's commercial activity, architecture stages opportunities for them to establish a financial foothold and regain productive independence outside of the formal economic structure. There is a twofold objective: firstly, it must perform as an apparatus for opportunism and agency; guests determine their own trade methods through highly customisable, operable and adaptive dwelling elements. Secondly, it must mediate the tenuous coexistence between urban citizens and refugees: treading the boundary between control and autonomy, luxury and survival, transience and establishment. The project is also incentivised as a financial trade-off: multi-storey carpark owners receive a stipend for each guest through an existing refugee homestay program.

Can architecture exist in this middle ground, that provides economic possibility while minimising public apprehension?

The first, more 'covert' aspect of the project is based on 4 key tactics from Ramirez-Lovering's *Opportunistic Urbanism*: Appropriation, Piggybacking, Itinerant Relationships and Open Systems. The other 'overt' aspect presented to the public eye, is based on my analysis of the Refugee Council of Australia's *Detailed Mythbuster*, refuting commonly-held aspects of anti-refugee sentiment.

This design proposal materialises a form of agency in asylum-seeker housing, where choice plays an economically productive and socially integrative role. It challenges the built environment's position as a passive entity, generates broader discussions about this global humanitarian crisis, and speculates on how an opportunistic approach to policy and urban infrastructure might make cities more accessible and amenable to such socio-economically excluded groups.

## **7. Author(s) Biography (200 words maximum for all authors):**

Amelyn is a Melbourne-based researcher-designer with a deep interest in civic agency and socially responsive infrastructures. Her speculative project on refugee housing was exhibited in Melbourne and in Madrid as part of Archiprix International 2015, while her thesis- a critique of laissez-faire privatisation and consumer behaviours- was awarded the 2015 Edward & Penelope Billson Prize and Ernest Fooks Memorial Award. She believes architecture is at once a physical practice, critical discourse and catalyst for social change. Amelyn hopes to further examine its potentials through ongoing research on informal urban occupation and regular contributions to architectural publication.