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Transition: An Immigrant Integration Center

Abstract

"…it has become more important than ever to find ways to better integrate refugees into countries of first asylum, particularly by ensuring they have access to livelihoods and economic opportunities." (Jacobson & Fratzke., 2016)

The humanitarian community has come to realize that the predominant "care and maintenance" approach to refugee situations is ineffective and insufficient. (Jacobson, 2016). It is typified by the provision of relief in the form of basic needs facilitated through a large camp setting and the "maintenance" of refugees until safe return to the country of origin is possible. This solution emerged from the premise that refugee situations are temporary in nature yet research has indicated that refugee situations are not quickly resolved, often becoming protracted; stretching over years and even decades, frequently without a clear durable solution. It has thus become important to find ways to better integrate refugees into host nations, particularly through the access of livelihood and economic opportunities. As world leaders and governments endeavor to formulate viable solutions to this most pressing issue, millions of refugees globally remain desperate and desolate as they are left to navigate the unfamiliar environments in which they find themselves.

Research has indicated that the majority stakeholders' of Johannesburg city's informal trade sector are local citizens. However an exploration of informal markets around the city led to the discovery of the substantial occupation of specifically market-taxi rank facilities by refugee/immigrant traders.

This urban settlement pattern is indicative of the entrepreneurial nature of refugee traders and their non-dependence on government aid. Patronized by immigrants and citizens alike the question posed considers the efficacy of these urban market facilities in socially, culturally and ritualistically integrating the users thereof.

By permitting refugees to occupy the stalls within these facilities for trade purposes, how has the economic activity with primarily local residents impacted on the dialogue of integration of displaced asylum seekers and refugees into the host community through reception, protection and healing? Further have the essentials of shelter and safety been considered in the event of a recurring xenophobic rooted attack on these physiologically and psychologically vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers?

Through this dissertation an analysis of the disparities of developing an informal municipal market and evolving a marketplace to facilitate refugee integration is explored.
The center is host to various offerings, that draw on the strength of the cosmopolitan user base, including social aid facilities, a temporary accommodation, manufacture and trade component conjoined through an open marketplace, a cullinary school and non-denominational church providing the platform for architecture to act as cultural, social and ritualistic catalyst.

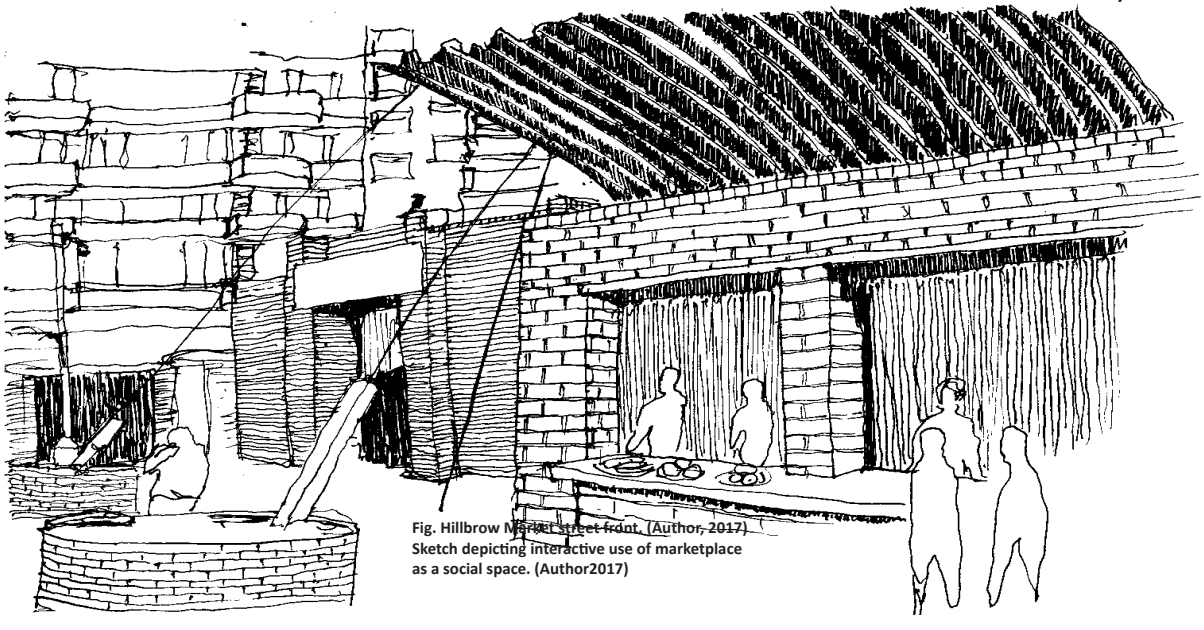


Fig. Hillbrow Market street front. (Author, 2017)
Sketch depicting interactive use of marketplace as a social space. (Author2017)



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