

living and working in an arrival city

housing for refugees in Portland and Germany

The term 'arrival city' comes from the title of a book by the Canadian journalist Doug Saunders, concerning parts of cities that play a strong role in the ability of immigrants to assimilate into cultures that are new to them.

The United Nations estimates that there are about 65 million refugees and 250 million migrants in the world today. Political turmoil, war, climate displacement and the simple search for a better life cause people to move to different countries, sometimes thousands of miles from where they started. In this studio we will look at this phenomenon from the point of view of daily life in the 'arrival city'—how can newcomers, particularly refugees, be supported by the places in which they live and may work, in their efforts to make a new life in a new place?

The studio will involve the design of prototypical housing, some of it combined with workplaces, and common facilities for refugees at two stages: right after they arrive in the new place, and after a year or two, when have begun to assimilate in the new place.

There will be two possible sites: one in Portland, and one in a city (probably Essen) in Germany, the country that has made the strongest commitment in Europe to welcoming refugees from Syria and other countries. The instructor will choose and document the site this December, during a trip to Germany to work on the question of refugee housing.

The program will include four components:

- housing for refugees who have just arrived—temporary dwellings that people may stay in for between six months and a year
- housing for refugees who have made a decision to stay, and for others who may be longer-term residents of the city
- workplaces on the same site, or connected to the dwellings, providing a means for people to start and operate their own small businesses
- common facilities that aid in the process of arrival and assimilation.

The number of housing units will likely be about 30 in total, but this may change somewhat when sites are chosen.

The studio will emphasize several issues: the use and transformation of housing/site typologies, based on historic and modern precedents, that are appropriate to the program and site; the particular circumstances of refugees, their vulnerabilities, their economic needs, their aspirations, their relationships both to their home country and their new country; and the material/construction development of dwellings—including the deliberate development of architectural space, light, materials and details—that can support people's lives in humane ways.

The studio will be conducted in an intense and professional way, including weekly pinups and clearly defined goals, incorporating design and research. A variety of scales and modes of representation will be engaged on a continual basis.