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**RPL Cluster 8: The Refugee WORK and WORK-LEARNING**

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**Abstract**

*This paper presents a chapter of a larger project Refugee Pattern Language. In chapter 8, the challenges are to identify and formulate new design patterns that enhance employment opportunities and economic integration for refugees and forced migrants living in a new host community. These necessities are particularly important in our global cities with diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. This chapter layouts spatial qualities that tackles social and well-being of refugee and forced migrant populations. The solutions also comprise cultural diversity as well as financial and spatial constraints. This paper presents twelve patterns of RPL Cluster 8 in a concise format.*

**Keyword:** Pattern Language, Urban Morphology, refugees, employment, workplace

**Introduction**

Economic burden is one of the major concerns when receiving large numbers of refugees. The prosperity of refugees and migrants in a host country not only allow these populations to regain dignity and self-reliance but also narrow socio-economic gaps and contribute back to the growth of a host nation's economy. Moreover, transnational business can initiate intercultural dialogue and promote a better social cohesion between locals and refugee groups. In this paper, we look at refugee work and work-learning as pathways of becoming productive populations while also enriching cultural diversity.

Patterns of refugee workspace address skill improvement and economic opportunities enchantment by laying out spatial opportunities, needs, and attributes that support upward mobility and economic integration. They also emphasize spatial network, non-verbal communication, and cultural manifestation of businesses and foreign workers as well as opportunities in both formal and informal economy. These patterns are connected to other patterns in both A Pattern Language (APL) and Refugee Pattern Language (RPL).

**Background**

In the 1970s, Christopher Alexander and his colleagues first developed APL. The theory of Pattern and Pattern Language looks at elements and spatial characteristics that embrace qualities of places. In RPL, the same method and approaches are put into a context of human migration and resettlement. Refugee research and field investigation support the formation of these Refugee Work and Work-Learning patterns. They are partially new and partially derived from the original pattern language book. Connections to RPL provide more details on refugees themselves, arrival country, neighbourhoods, and communities as well as buildings, facilities, and housing for refugees.

## Methodology

The pattern and pattern language research method as a process starts with the recognition of a particular recurrent problem, in this case, problems in a domain of refugees' economic opportunities. A problem is then formulated into a research question which pursued by using analytical, empirical, and other techniques appropriate for the question. Subsequently, researchers formulate an answer or a partial answer that solves the problem based on evident of their research. This solution must be evaluated to assure that by solving a particular problem it also is a positive solution that improves the wholeness of the situation. For example, patterns in RPL look specifically at refugees' problems, yet a solution cannot be destructive for a host society but rather endorsed coinciding interest for both sides. Finally, a new pattern is connected to already existing patterns not limited to APL and RPL and potential new pattern problems that need to be explored. Following this process will generate individual patterns as well as a pattern language for a particular domain.

## RPL Cluster 8: The Refugee WORK and WORK-LEARNING

The chapter presents 12 patterns of refugee work and work-learning. They are organized into three subclusters. RPL 8.1-8.5 focus on soft elements and supporting system for refugee's employment. RPL 8.6-8.9 centre around everyday practices, economic opportunities, and entrepreneurship. RPL 8.10-8.11 look closely at spatial attributes of refugees' workplace. Lastly, RPL 8.12 concludes this cluster highlighting transnational economy by refugees and migrants.

**RPL 8.1 SCHOOLING AND BUILDING SKILLS** addresses a recurrent problem of interrupted education and skills improvement needed to gain employment. Because young adult refugees are older than school age, they are disqualified from accessing traditional educational services in a host country. In addition to language and cultural understandings of new working environment, refugees and immigrants need to be equipped with necessary skills essential for a labour demand making education for refugees a crucial step to join a labour market. In educational environment, there are three focused areas: learning needs, social needs, and emotional needs (Cerna, 2019; Dryden-Peterson & Reddick, 2017.)



**Figure 1.** L: refugees' education attainment (source: UNESCO 2016, UNHCR 2017), R: South Devon Refugee Support Network offer practical support (photo: <https://www.dartington.org/about/refugees/>)

Programmatically, a school should support language and cultural learning which promote refugees' compatibilities and learning capabilities. Socially, educational facilities should embrace social connections within classes and to a local community for both students as well as their parents and guardians. Spaces must feel safe and welcoming while promote sense of belonging to a larger community. In terms of emotional needs, learning space must encourage creativity and self-expression to support socioemotional needs.

**Therefore, a school and a training centre provide space to acclimatize and equip new skills to these population. They offer classes, host workshops, and launch meeting not only to retrain these populations with the skills needed for employment but also provide social and emotional support for their integration. It is important to enhance personal interests and open more opportunities allowing them to continue their education. Spatially, these places can locate in a regular school or educational building with afterhours special classes, or a training room and language classes at a community centre or religious centre.**

Access to skill improvement facilities should also be provided in a workplace in addition to educational facilities. **RPL 8.2 LEARNING AT WORKPLACE** advocates for bringing training classes to a workplace which has high concentration of refugee employees such as health care, hospitalities, and manufacturer. Because many refugees immediately join low skill labour industries or entry level jobs upon their arrival. Working full time to sustain their income can prevent these people from attaining higher education or language proficiency necessarily for upward mobility. that can promote the work life success. Not to mention, time schedule and transportation difficulties often discourage them from pursuing higher education or credentials. **Therefore, industries and cooperates with a high number of employees with refugee backgrounds need to utilize their workplace and resources to provide language and training classes for these employees. Bringing classroom to a workplace enhance their educational opportunity and maximize human potentials. Many businesses are benefited from cheap labour of immigrants and refugees. Providing such benefits can attract new employees, ease recruitment, and improve retention rate.**

With many refugees and migrant worker seeking for jobs, **RPL 8.3 EMPLOYMENT CONNECTIONS** asserts the needs of job centres and agencies that connect these populations to potential employers. Lacking connections to job opportunities can impede refugees from landing a job they qualified for and cause skills mismatch. Long term unemployment and employment ban can significantly slow down economic integration making these population rely heavily on social services. **Therefore, employment agencies help bridge employment demand and supply. It provides employment resources, enable skills match and recruitment. This can be a central employment agency, a recruitment and job centre that specifically look for employees with certain characteristics, or chain of employment through word of mouth.**

Besides connecting labours to employers, supporting entrepreneurship is important for immigrants and refugees' socioeconomic integration. Because these populations are driven to rebuild their life, their entrepreneurial sparks to build something important and meaningful at their full potential. Entrepreneurship encourages refugees to learn a local language and build positive networking relationships with both locals and co-ethnics. It also enhances understandings of the local laws and regulations (Alrawadieh et al, 2019). In the US, 25 percent of all companies are founded by immigrants (Koch, 2018). By promoting immigrant's

entrepreneur, it helps create more jobs for rather than take jobs from a host economy (Urrutia, 2019). However, lacking resources and capital discourages these population to start their own business. One form of support is to provide **RPL 8.4 SHARED FACILITIES FOR ENTREPRENEUR** as a **business incubator that advance refugee entrepreneurship and mediate socio-cultural barriers. The space should accommodate collaboration, networking, and mentorship activities. Depending on business interest of each group, this may include co-working and meeting space, shared industrial kitchen, and workshops and makerspaces.**

To make work-life possible, transportation is important linkage connecting daily commute between housing and workplace. **RPL 8.5 BUSING TO WORK** articulates the transportation needs of refugees and migrants who often face mobility barriers. Living faraway, not owning a car, or work on nightshift with no buses operate, these barriers restrict them from working effectively and limit their job opportunities. As highlighted by Bose (2014) in his investigation of refugees' mobility in Vermont, limited mobilities discourage refugees from accessing destinations which includes the access a better life.

In the book *Working Cities*, Davis (2020) provides an example of the New York garment district which locates in close proxemic to sales centres and modelling agency, immigrant labours residents, material suppliers and machinery repair, and logistic services. Davis explains that physical proximity is important because it constitutes to an effective network of organization for both employees as well as for the operation of business itself. **Therefore, locations of a workplace and residential area should be connected with existing public transportation network including bike paths, bus, shuttle, rail, or train. Alternatively, public transportation network should be extended these locations. It is also essential that cost of the transportation must be affordable, information is available in multiple languages, and operating times and frequency of the public transportations extend beyond regular working hours to accommodate work schedule of those who most needed.**



**Figure 2. L:** Investment comparison (source: Mobilize food vending) **R:** Mapping food trucks in downtown Portland, OR (source: Food Cartology Rethinking Urban Spaces as People Places).

Variety of entrepreneurs and ethnic businesses should be encouraged in wide range of scale. Informal economy is another pathway for economic success for population with low capital. Food truck industry is a popular business among immigrant community to make a business from their traditional produces with



mobility to reach multiple destinations and serve larger customers. **RPL 8.6 FOOD TRUCK EVERYWHERE / PRODUCTIVE SIDEWALK** addresses challenges that may come from local codes on mobile food truck, parking, and **regulations** that disallow the opportunity **of mobile** business. Public venues **including sidewalks** can **assist** businesses as **they are places of** encounter that support both permanent and temporary structures of commerce (Davis, 2020). Food trucks can benefit from the flow of people, mediate private and public domains, and bring in different uses to many areas of a city. Therefore, a city must promote opportunities for transforming informal economy to increase their abilities make their living from their unique expertise and lifestyles. Increases opportunities for temporary place making with vibrant cultures, street vendors, and activities for pedestrians. This should be accomplished through legal framework, permit of temporary structure, vendors, and street furniture, as well as broaden extensive uses of sidewalk.

Street, squares, plaza, parks, and parking lots are public spaces that serve various groups of population. **RPL 8.7 PUBLIC SPACE TURNED MARKETPLACE** articulates the potentials of these public open spaces to become a gathering space and place of commerce. Marketplace is a traditional form of commercial space that connects producers to customers, support local business and entrepreneurs. However, regulations and local codes may disallow the formation of this temporal activities thus prevent people from forming their economic opportunities. One example of successful stories is “Thai Park” at “Preußenpark” in the West Berlin district Wilmersdorf, Germany. The park was a weekend gathering spot for Thai community. Other park visitors then asked to buy some authentic Thai food from picnickers. This eventually sparked the business which developed the place into informal Asian street food fest. The success and survival of the park is partly due to the very understanding nature of the district authorities. The park has become the culinary heritage of Berlin attracting people across the city. **Therefore, a city together with a community need to find a common ground and legal framework for the utilization of public spaces. This should include operational frameworks of management, surveillance, and sanitization. Implement community-driven ideas and projects for economically disadvantaged populations. Additionally, structures in public spaces should be employed “lighter, quicker, cheaper” (Project for Public Spaces, n.d.) as it eases logistic of place making.**

Moving from informal economy and temporary structures to a permanent building, **RPL 8.8 CREATING COMMERCIAL AFFORDABILITY** addresses challenges to start a small business and its operation. As economy grows, commercial spaces in a prime location generally have expensive rent, low vacancy rate, or available space is getting larger making it difficult for small businesses to strive (Kallick, 2015). Establishing a business in a new or remote location far from an urban centre, a commercial district, or residential neighbourhood need time to develop its infrastructure and urban fabric. Additionally, leaving buildings or shops unoccupied encourages illegitimate behaviours resulting in unsafe street life. **Therefore, developers and city planning must create spatial and financial opportunities for small businesses utilizing existing building, infrastructure, and urban fabric. Give opportunities for small businesses to locate in a vacant structure from shops, strip mall, or a big box store where they can benefit from well-established urban fabric. Repurpose obsolete buildings with commercial affordability so shops and stores that can diversify economic activities along a street. For big box store, subdivide the space into small and affordable rental spaces that are suitable for small business. Ultimately, provide access to financial support system**

especially for communities with low social capital. These strategies give opportunities for start-ups and small businesses to revive underused buildings in a prime location.

**RPL 8.9 WORK + SHOPS AS CULTURAL SHOWCASE** makes an inside out connection to public domain. Being unknown raises concerns over safety and security of a business to neighbourhood and nearby area. Visible backstage gives a transparency to different practices, standard of hygiene and work quality of produces, and safety of public. Visible industry exposes customers “to the realities of production through direct observation or media techniques” (Davis, 2020, p.222). It not only pressures producers to ensure safety, hygiene, and environmental justice; but also encourages two ways learning between producers and consumers of food, clothing, art, and crafts. **Therefore, making shops and storefronts as part of a stage demonstrating a business as cultural productions. Create a window overlooking working life to attracts customers, engages passer-by, and enlivens a street life with triangulations. Inside a shop, a store, or a restaurant, bring the production lines out as a showcase demonstrating unique practices and expertise.**

For refugees and migrant workers, work environment that support social needs and ease communication can improve their productivities and promote organizational commitment (Carr et al, 2019). **RPL 8.10 SOCIALABLE WORKPLACE** urges that lack of engagement and socialization in workplace due to language barriers and cultural differences can reduce their effectiveness and sense of belonging in a workplace. Building organizational community among refugee and non-refugee employees create a meaningful connection through both formal and informal activities (Budman et al., 2019). **Therefore, workplace need to provide social spaces and programs allowing employees to connect, enhancing informal communication, and reducing work stress, which can improve job satisfactions. Collaborative spaces, decompress rooms, and break rooms allow people to help train their co-ethnic group and socialize. Create socialize activities such as potluck events, sports leagues, or music groups can promote social activities as well (Kohll, 2018).**

Some refugee and migrant workers enter labour forces without acquiring language proficiency, which deter work communication, reduce accuracy, and decrease their work efficiency. To mediate the communication problems, **RPL 8.11 SIGN LANGUAGE AND COLOR CODE WORKPLACE** suggests the uses of symbols, color-codes, sign boards, and non-verbal communications in a workplace. An interview from Refugees as Employees: Good Retention, Strong Recruitment states: *“Red means not going as good, green means good. We started it because of non-English speakers, but it works well for everyone”* (Kallick & Roldan, 2018, p.31).



**Figure 3.** Implement sign boards, colour code, and non-verbal communication at a workplace. (photos: <https://sullivanlehdesigns.com/clients/andonix/andon-cord/>, <https://www.assemblymag.com/articles/94443-signal-tower-data-collection-increases-productivity>, <https://www.americanexpress.com/en-us/business/trends-and-insights/articles/why-made-in-the-usa-is-making-a-comeback/> )

**Therefore, employing universal language and visual cues such as coding colours, flashing light, alarming sounds can accommodate communication needs in a workplace with diverse workforce. It eases communication and improve their work accuracy and efficiency.**

RPL 8.10 and RPL 8.11 are particularly important for business with larger number of employees with refugee backgrounds such as factory workers, hospitalities, and healthcare. Because they have a tendency of hiring pools of refugees of the same ethnic groups from chain recruitment (Kallick & Roldan, 2018).

Lastly, it is important to highlight the transnational economy that flourish through refugee and immigrants' businesses. **RPL 8.12 BRIDGING TWO COUNTRIES** stresses the opportunities for bilateral trades emerged from these population. Unlike the traditional assumption that fully integrated immigrations are less likely to engage with their country of origin, Alejandro Portes (2007) suggests that the more integrated an immigrant is, the more transnational he or she is likely to be. International Business scholars have addressed the emerging trends of transnational organizations and diaspora in the 21 centuries that support migrants' economic, politic, and social activities in both a home country and a host country (Bernard et al, 2019). These people understand needs of their own people in multidimension of culture, produce, finance, and transportation and thus operate businesses which promote a transaction across a border. They can lower business expenses in a country of origin while create market and increase demand in a host country's market. **Therefore, a host country and a home country should reconsider the migration policies in which to promote public-private partnerships across borders. They should support transportation and communication technologies that encouraging global transaction. Immigrant and refugee populations can create international transaction of goods and remittance via transnational business, agencies, and organization which can benefit economy, democracy, and human rights across the world.**

## **Conclusions**

This paper addresses recurring work-related problems of refugees and migrant workers employment. Twelve patterns are proposed with some programmatic and spatial solutions for refugees work and work-learning. The authors acknowledge that there are legal framework and business limitations beyond spatial solutions proposed here. The patterns start with the integration of refugees to a labour force through providing education and training, making connection of labour supply to employers and their logistical needs. Then, the paper discusses opportunities for informal economy and entrepreneur in various forms of urban spaces. Furthermore, we explore functions and attributes of a workplace regarding social needs and language barrier mitigation which contribute to a success of employing refugees. The article is concluded with a pattern of transnational economy that bridges a home country and a host country many immigrants and refugees have established the network. These patterns argue for a productive spaces and network specifically but not limited to people with refugee backgrounds. Using refugees and migrant workers as drivers allow us to investigate socio-economic conditions from the perspective of people with limited resources and less opportune. In turns, these patterns contribute to the economic prosperity of a city as a whole.

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## APPENDIX 1

### PART I: REFUGEES ARRIVAL AND AMENDMENT

#### Cluster 1: THE REFUGEE FAMILY

#### Cluster 2: LEAVING PLACE – ESCAPE JOURNEY

#### Cluster 3: WELCOME COUNTRY - ARRIVAL PLACE

#### Cluster 4: ARRIVAL CITY – Urban Life and Infrastructure

#### Cluster 5: REFUGEES IN NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

#### 8.1 SCHOOLING AND BUILDING SKILLS

#### 8.2 LEARNING AT WORKPLACE

#### 8.3 EMPLOYMENT CONNECTIONS/AGENCIES

#### 8.4 SHARED FACILITIES FOR ETHNIC ENTREPRENEUR

#### 8.5 BUSING TO WORK

#### 8.6 FOOD TRUCK EVERYWHERE / PRODUCTIVE SIDEWALK

#### 8.7 PUBLIC SPACE TURNED MARKETPLACE



*Cluster 6: BUILDINGS, FACILITIES, NEIGHBORHOOD  
SUPPORT*

*Cluster 7: HOUSING, LIVING, AND LIVE WORK*

***Cluster 8: WORK AND WORK LEARNING***

*Cluster 9: ANTI-PATTERNS*

***8.8 CREATING COMMERCIAL AFFORDABILITY***

***8.9 WORK + SHOPS AS CULTURAL SHOWCASE***

***8.10 SOCIALABLE WORKPLACE***

***8.11 SIGN LANGUAGE AND COLOR CODE WORKPLACE***

***8.12 BRIDGING TWO COUNTRIES***