

# BAYT TO HEIMAT

BAYT | Arabic, house  
HEIMAT | German, home



## ALMA

Place of Origin: Syria  
Religion: Sunni Muslim  
Age: 5  
Family: Father, Mother, brother, and grandmother.  
Language: Arabic

"They attack us, they destroy our house... we didn't have anything. We lost everything in Syria." - Salma, a Syrian Refugee<sup>1</sup>

Alma's mother cries often when she speaks of their home in Syria but Alma doesn't remember it. Maybe it was a blessing that she did not remember the blood and fire of ISIS destruction or the loved ones lost. Alma's family had no choice but to flee to a refugee camp in Yarmouk when she was two.

Life in the refugee camp was happy for Alma, she had friends and a pet goat. They stayed there for 3 years hoping that one day, they could go back home. That day never came. Alma cried when they left because her goat couldn't come on the journey. Little did she know that many more tears would come.

The journey began with a nerve-racking trek through ISIS territory and a close call with the rebels at the Turkish border. The raft ride across the Mediterranean hurt Alma's stomach, but once on land, relief did not come. She gripped her mother's hand until her fingers turned white, terrified of getting lost on the overcrowded, stifling hot Greek island. She barely remembers the long walk through Macedonia and Serbia. She only knew her feet hurt and bled, but she stayed strong for Jida whose arthritis made her sob in pain throughout the miles. There were many stops along the way at refugee camps, each one more crowded than the last. Waiting in line to enter the camps sometimes for 20 hours. Finally, when they reached Budapest via tractor ride, they began to feel some relief as they boarded the train.

Alma awakes groggily from the long train ride from Budapest to Munich. The train from Hungary to Germany had been the easiest stretch of their journey. Shuffling off the train she hears her mother tell her they are finally safe in Germany. Once again Alma sees tears in Jida's eyes, but for the first time, these tears had hope.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

## GERMANY: A PLACE OF REFUGE

1.7 million refugees applied for asylum in Germany between 2015 and 2019. Refugees adapted well and many children expressed a sense of belonging to their schools and homes. Alma's family travels to Germany to find asylum and eventually citizenship.<sup>5</sup>

In sharp contrast to Syria, Hamburg's climate includes high humidity and cold days. Rainfall averages 31" inches per year. Alma and her family will have to adjust to the colder climate.<sup>6</sup>

Hamburg is an industrial capital and houses the third largest port in Germany. Copper, steel, and shipbuilding are important industries. They receive and ship more than half of Germany's foreign trade.<sup>7</sup>

- Community: The shelter is within a community that houses roughly 200 refugees.
- Bus Station: 7 min walk
- Waldforscher Kindergarten: 5 min walk
- Grocery Store: 15 min walk, 5 min bus ride
- Mosque: 30 min bus ride, a local Mosque may be established.
- Employment Opportunities: 15-30 min bus ride

## DESIGN CONCEPT

Home, a place of **belonging**. Alma's temporary home was designed to support belonging through social, spiritual, emotional, and psychological attachments with the space. The blend of local materials with Syrian culture enables Alma to connect with her new surroundings in a comforting way. Integrated spaces for work, gathering, play, and rest enable Alma to feel safe and secure. Flexibility provides efficient use of space and gives spatial control to Alma and her family. Gathering spaces are designed for social interaction allowing Alma to identify with her community.

- Social Well-Being**
- Spiritual Well-Being**
- Emotional Well-Being**
- Psychological Well-Being**

### LOCAL MATERIALS<sup>14</sup>

- Copper**  
Used for light fixtures, wall hooks, and storage compartments. Scraps are donated from copper plants, one of Germany's largest natural resources.
- Wood**  
Used for primary floor and all cabinetry. Wood is found throughout Germany and is commonly used in construction.
- Sheep's Wool**  
Used for carpets, insulation, and blankets. Donated from local sheep farmers. Refugees can also keep sheep in their community.
- Cotton Canvas**  
Used for curtains, beds, floor cushions, and filling of furniture. Canvas is a local and easily accessible commodity. Canvas are donated by the partnering NGO.

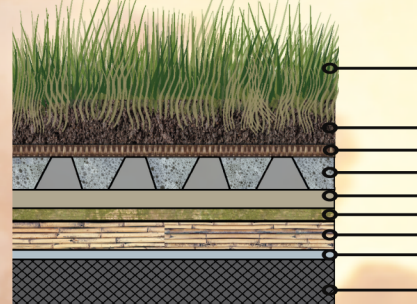


The kitchen includes running water, an electric stove top, and a radiator. Wall folding table for extra counter space and for the kids to work on school.

Recycled glass mosaic windows and kitchen counter reflect sun, a hint to Syria. Pieced wool rugs and blankets cover the floor, sewn by the refugee community. These offer warmth and color.

Mattresses fold into the wall allowing for five flexible beds. Canvas curtains create privacy and separate spaces, allowing for the separation of males and females.

Green roofs are widely used in Germany. They help with thermal insulation and are great for filtering and managing rainfall.<sup>15</sup>



Separating the bathroom allows members to "clean" before entering the home. The family room and carpets offer space for prayer and religious activities.

Recycled wool rugs allow the family to work on the floor, a regular occurrence in Syrian culture.

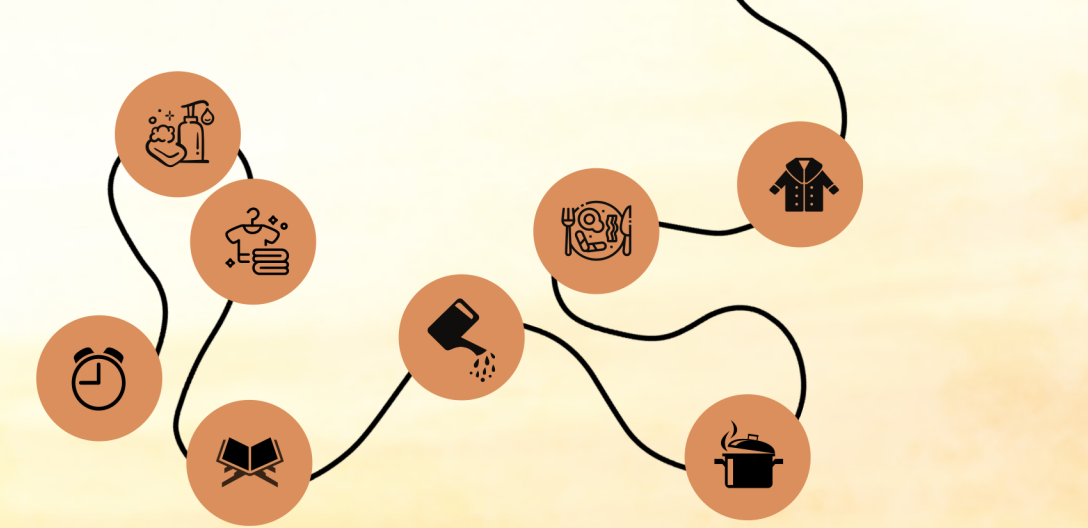
Flexible floor cushions allow the family to gather with each other or their new community.

Arab courtyard-inspired entry separates the bathroom from the home. This feature provides an element of comfort to a new home. The courtyard includes room for a garden, addressing food scarcity.

The rainwater collection tank will catch, filter and store this water in a tank for non-drinking uses. The rainwater collection system addresses the fear of water scarcity.

## JOURNEY MAP

The journey map illustrates the activities Alma experiences while getting ready for school, from waking up to helping her mom prepare breakfast.



## MENTAL HEALTH & WELL BEING

BEFORE MIGRATION	DURING MIGRATION	AFTER MIGRATION
Common Experience(s): Dangerous and life-threatening journeys, lack of food, water, and shelter.	Common Experience(s): War, economic decline, loss of friends/family, and persecution.	Common Experience(s): Unsuitable living conditions, lack of social community, and unable to acculturate.

AlRefaie and Dowrick share that refugees are up to 10 times more likely to develop PTSD.<sup>8</sup> Giacco et al. noted that within five years of resettlement, refugees have higher rates of anxiety and depression. The illustrations reveal the pressures caused before, during, and after migration that lead to the deterioration of mental health and overall well-being (based on figure 1 from Giacco et al. 2018).<sup>9</sup> Alma and her family have experienced many of these pressures and are at risk for PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

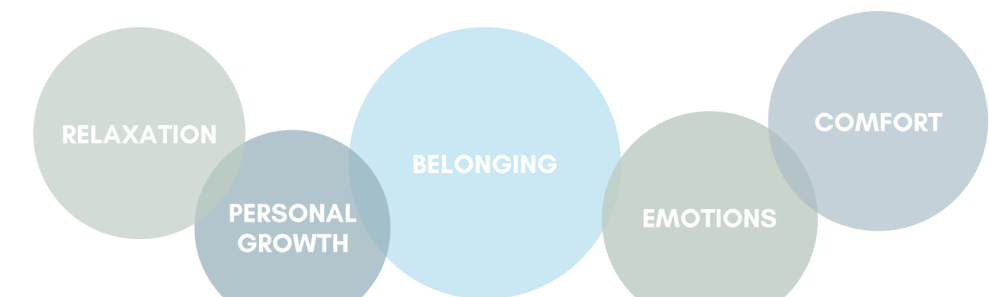
**AFTER MIGRATION SOLUTIONS**  
Experience: Safe living conditions with access to water, shelter and food. A safe space where social and familial activity can occur. Access to language and German integration resources.

## PLACE ATTACHMENT THEORY

Albers et al. share that place attachment theory describes people's multidimensional bond with the places they call home. This bond causes emotional, psychological, and social attachments to a location.<sup>10</sup>

- Emotional** - A home is where one has a positive emotional connection. There is an emphasis on bringing honor to the family and respecting elders.
- Psychological** - A home is where one can experience positive growth, relationships, and self-acceptance.
- Social** - A home is where one feels connected to the community.

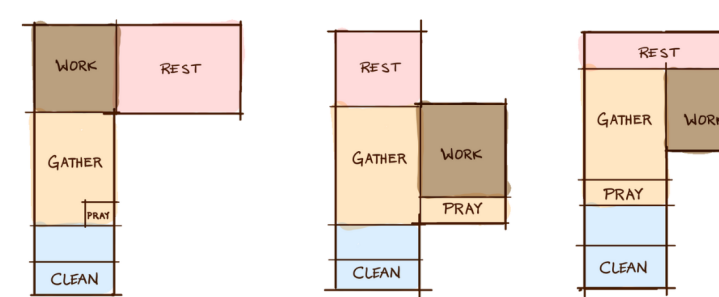
A study by Scannel and Gifford noted that people felt a positive bond with a place when they experienced one or more of the following: Relaxation, comfort, belonging, emotional connection, and growth.<sup>11</sup>



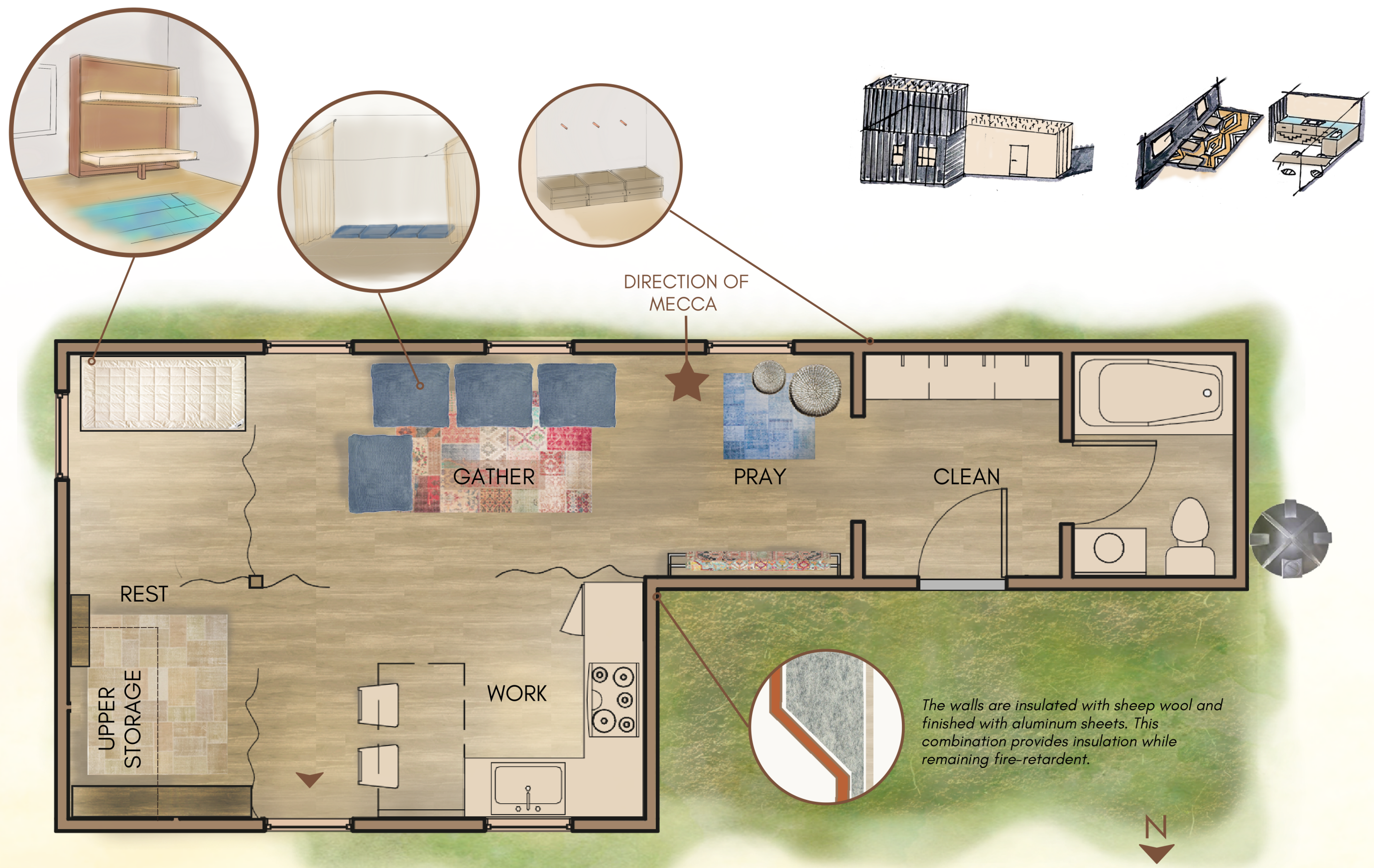
Refugees have found housing and employment thanks to the community investment of Hamburger Hafen und Logistik AG (HHLA). HHLA, in partnership with the authorities, has donated shipping containers to be turned in temporary housing and offers employment programs for refugees.<sup>12</sup>

## SYRIAN CULTURE<sup>13</sup>

- In Syrian culture family, including extended, is greatly valued. There is an emphasis on bringing honor to the family and respecting elders.
- The majority of Syrians are Muslim and their religion is important to their daily life. However, there is freedom when it comes to religious practice and devotion.
- Social constructs in Syria are not highly organized. Syrians' lifestyle is people-focused, as they visit friends and family every day. Alma and her family will likely find the social culture in Germany to be reserved and private.



**Floor plan exploration** was based on the following:  
Shell: (1) 40'x8'x8.5' & (2) 20'x8'x8.5' shipping containers donated by HHLA. Essentials: A bathroom, kitchen, running water, and electricity are provided in partnership with a local NGO.



The walls are insulated with sheep wool and finished with aluminum sheets. This combination provides insulation while remaining fire-retardant.

## RESOURCES

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