



LUCY VETE

NZIA Student Design Awards Winner, 2017

Shifting Grounds: Conceptions of the Homeland and the Journey to Emergence

Postgraduate Creative
Design Research
Project

Shifting Grounds explores the convergence of the past and present, and of the physical and social worlds in a journey through the emergent possibilities of Tonga and its people. As a “home”, “homeland”, and “imaginary homeland”, Tonga exists as a malleable construction of ideas, stories, traditions, and history. This thesis draws from these numerous “conceptions” and presents a projective imagining of how architecture can be used to stimulate progression and movement in the everyday social realm.

The project imagines a trajectory of composed social spaces along the north-eastern axis of Tupoulahi Road, within the heart of Nuku’alofa. Binding across the “homeland” from one body of water to another, the project responds to the expansive conception of Tonga; integrating expressions of cosmological stories and domains as a way to reimagine social space and create an architecture of emergence. The act of journeying becomes an inherent and necessary process for the formation of the scheme, taking precedent from the dynamic history of exchange between islands in and outside Tonga’s archipelago. This active and constantly shifting network of islands mirrors the emergence and dissipation of its people. As contemporary way-finders, Tongan communities have grown and developed “oceans” away in new lands and surroundings. Central to the core of this thesis research is the exploration of a contemporary Tongan condition that actively seeks to encompass these communities of the growing diaspora. Here, architecture functions as a catalyst for the translation of these ideas and stories into spatial and material expressions. As a reimagining and portrayal of social space, the project speculates on the nature of identity and perception on Tongan ground and asks, How can the various conceptions of Tonga help to inform an architecture for and about Tongans?



