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MLC 2015 Keynote: Undocumented: The Architecture of Migrant Detention

Tings Chak¹

Abstract. *Since 2006, nearly 100,000 people have been jailed indefinitely in Canada, without charge or trial. This is the reality of immigration detention in Canada, a reality that is mostly invisible. Migrants are incarcerated because they are undocumented. Likewise, there is little trace to be found of these sites of detention: drawings and photos are classified; access is extremely limited. The detention centres, too, are undocumented. This presentation highlights the graphic novel, Undocumented: The Architecture of Migrant Detention, which details the banality and violence of sites and contrasts them with stories of daily resistance among immigration detainees. This work is grounded in grassroots organizing in solidarity with immigration detainees through No One Is Illegal – Toronto and the End Immigration Detention Network.*

I'd like to acknowledge that we're gathering here on unceded Coast Salish Territories. I'm saying this as an acknowledgement of the centuries of struggle led by Indigenous peoples and Nations here and across Turtle Island; and as a reminder of the struggle to defend and tend to lands that continues today.

As a migrant here, I think it's important to acknowledge that many migrants were once indigenous to other places, too, or have been displaced from homes far away, and many of us now have new lives here on stolen lands. It's an acknowledgement of our responsibilities and the importance of building solidarity with Indigenous land defence struggles here.

Who am I? You have the extensive bio, but I'm not an academic, if you didn't guess so already. I come here as several things: as someone who makes art, comes from an architectural background, and as a migrant justice organizer with No One is Illegal, Toronto (NOII-Toronto) and the End Immigration Detention Network (EIDN), which has been most actively working in solidarity with immigration detainees out of the Central East Correctional Center in Lindsay, Ontario. I'll speak more about that struggle, that campaign, and that work, which really inspired and fed my book, *Undocumented: The Architec-*

¹ Tings Chak is a Toronto-based migrant justice organizer and multidisciplinary artist trained in architecture. She holds a Master of Architecture from the University of Toronto, where she was awarded the Kuwabara-Jackman Thesis Gold Medal for her research on immigration detention centres. She is the author and illustrator of the graphic novel, *Undocumented: The Architecture of Migrant Detention* (www.undocumented.ca), which grew out of the collective organizing work of No One is Illegal - Toronto and the End Immigration Detention Network.

ture of Migrant Detention.

I also am here as an ally for all people who have been incarcerated, as someone who hasn't experienced incarceration. This includes the 500 or so people in immigration detention across Canada at any given moment, locked away in detention centres and maximum security prisons, and has totalled over 100,000 since 2006. These are men, women, and children; people who have never had a trial, or a charge, who are held indefinitely in immigration detention.

At the same time, we have to think about immigration detention as being part of the larger prison industrial complex. Let's not buy into these narratives of good immigrant versus bad criminal. Let's think about why people are jailed in the first place, and who gets targeted and criminalized by the police and by state violence, regardless of their immigration status. So let's not forget the 15,000 people in Federal penitentiaries, thousands in Provincial prisons, and thousands more in remand under state supervision across the country at this moment. Let us also remember that incarceration disproportionately affects Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people; poor, queer, and disabled people; sex working, drug using, and homeless people; and other marginalized communities.

We're talking about a large number of people who are put away in these spaces, locked away far from our cities, far from our urban environments. These spaces are, in a way, beyond our view and therefore beyond our criticism. Part of this project and my work tries to bring these spaces back into our view and into our political discussions. I do this through making images and, to a lesser extent, using text as a way for us to enter this world. For me, prioritizing images is about increasing accessibility, too, as a way to engage with the hearts and minds of a broader public beyond the written word.

I'm going to talk about three areas of immigration detention. One I mentioned already is around organizing and resistance. Second is looking at the architecture, the very spaces of immigration detention. Finally, I will be talking about paper, and how it informs the title, *Undocumented* that speaks to the question of who gets detained in these spaces, namely, people without papers, people who are put in jail because they were born somewhere else, or somewhere that is not desirable.

At the same time, when researching these spaces I realized that photos were very hard to find, and visiting them was even harder if not impossible. Nothing turned up even when I filed for access to information requests to get plans or drawings of these spaces. In a way, these spaces, too, are undocumented. As someone who draws, makes drawings, and designs things from time to time, if not buildings, then at least paper architecture, this became the particular launching point for my investigation, the idea of the power of paper and of representation as a potential political practice.

I'll go through a little bit of the context of immigration detention just to get us all on the same page. Then, since we're at an academic conference, something that can only be loosely called, "research methodologies," which I think is unconventional at best. My methodology was more of a cobbled-together research process, which I'd like to share with you because I think it may be interesting to a roomful of people who are interested in research. I

Chak: MLC 2015 Keynote: Undocumented

hope I'm not wrong. Then I'll go through images and writing from the book to bring in some of the voices of the people who are most directly affected but aren't or can't be here, people who aren't here today because they are in immigration detention, because they are barred by borders, or because they are forced underground by the immigration system.

Then finally, I will bring in another set of absent voices, that of the people who are complicit in and profit from building prisons, and who design, construct, and maintain these places. Also, people from my profession. I don't know if I'm in or out of the profession. I'm somewhere in between, I think. Let's get started.

Can we start?

Let's start.

I ask you, 'How do you sleep at night?'

You lean back and say, 'I sleep well. My conscience is quiet.'

I ask, 'How did they teach an architect in five years to plan airports, hospitals, public buildings, and private homes?'

You answer, 'They teach you how to think, to research, to plan. You put together a qualified team and go out to do the job.' You continue, 'In this profession a lot of the same elements appear again and again. These bore me, for the most part. The challenge is to balance the client's demands with the regulations and budgetary constraints.'

I ask, 'What do we see in the plans we're looking at right now?'

You answer, 'In the drawings I organize all of the functions the client wants to see so as to minimize the things we don't want to see. I always say, there is no ideal. Only the optimal. I do the best possible job within the constraints.'

I ask, 'What about the architect's role in shaping society?'

You get up and answer, 'Architects usually have big egos. They think they're walking three feet above the ground; but a good architect has to be part of an orchestra in which everyone has a part that they need to play. You have to be modest, and not to be too concerned with ideals or building a great monument to yourself. Look, they come to me because they know I can turn X to Y in the shortest time possible. That's the architect's job.'

Finally I mention the thorny connection between architecture, politics, and private capital.

You respond, 'An architect doesn't have to examine every policy of an elected government. The government has policies and this is manifest in the buildings that need to be built. That's where I come in. Architecture has always been connected to big money and political power, but you shouldn't think about that too much. Listen, if you choose to do art, do art. Leave politics to the politicians.'²

² Nir Evron, 2012. "Playing a Role: Warehousing African Immigrants in Israel," Accessed Jan. 25, 2016. www.youtube.com/watch?v=6obFM3914tI.

criminalization + Illegalization

1.5 MILLION
PEOPLE WITH **PRECARIOUS**
STATUS IN CANADA

.....
200,000
500,000^{TO}
UNDOCUMENTED PEOPLE
LIVING IN CANADA



Figure 1

This excerpt is from a film made by Israeli artist, Nir Evron, who is interviewing an unnamed but “well-known” architect who was responsible for the Nahal Raviv detention facility in the Negev Desert. It’s a four-thousand-capacity tent city to detain African migrants crossing the Egyptian border. It was opened in early 2013. I start with this because it’s a dialog that reveals some of the key tensions that I have been exploring in my own architectural research, art, and activism. It’s not a spoof in any sense. It’s not sarcastic or ironic. It’s kind of a truthful piece.

I negotiate some of these questions about the neutrality of architecture, or the supposed neutrality of the architect who is “just performing a role,” performing a function to fulfill the needs of immigration policies. In this logic, a detention centre is just a spatial byproduct of these policies.

Despite the breadth and scope of immigration detention, there are virtually no images and other visual material publicly available. These are spaces where undocumented people are expelled to because they don’t have the right status, because they’re poor, because they’re racialized, and because of the places where they were born. The buildings, too, are undocumented. So how do we talk about detention centres as part of our built environment, how we plan our cities, and how we design? How do we talk about immigration detention as an architectural problem? These are some of the central questions guiding this work.

Another question explores the architectural representation itself, and the tools used to make images. Can I interrogate these questions through my architectural training in drawing, making models, and crafting as a way to reveal hidden realities in the built environment? I began to critically explore architectural representation as a political practice.

Immigration detention 101: Though I am sure many of you here are very

³ “The Truth About Migrant Detention,” Accessed Jan. 25, 2016. www.truth-aboutdetention.com/report



Figure 2

familiar with the reality of immigration detention in Canada, I want to give a brief background for all of us.

I designed these infographics (Figures 1-6) as part of the End Immigration Detention Network’s June 2014 report based on access to information requests, specifically around the detention review process.³ A detention review is where a detainee appears in front of an appointed board member of the Immigration and Refugee Board, not a judge, who determines whether the detainee will be released. After the initial seven days of detention, detainees have a mandatory monthly detention review in person or via video conferencing.

These are some of the numbers of detention from 2006 to 2013, during which time about 100,000 people were detained. Canada has three designated immigration “holding centres,” which is a euphemistic term for a prison. “Holding” suggests that people are merely temporarily held there for processing purposes, not for punitive reasons. At the same time, about one third of detainees are

CANADA HAS 3 DESIGNATED IMMIGRATION “HOLDING” CENTRES, BUT 142 FACILITIES WERE USED TO DETAIN PEOPLE IN 2013.

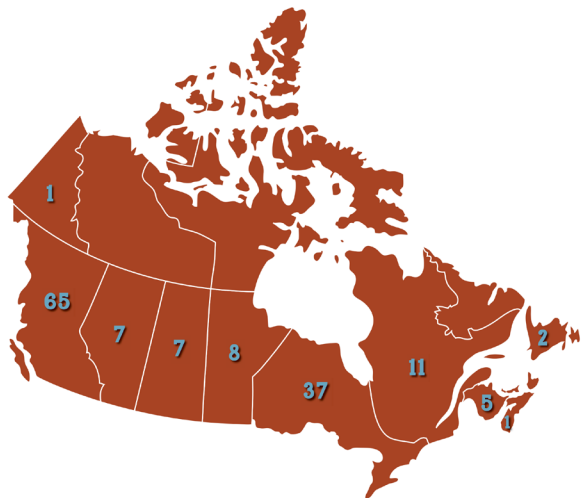


Figure 3

locked up in maximum security prisons. In 2013 alone, 142 facilities in total were used, the vast majority of which were maximum security provincial prisons. The federal government, namely the Canadian Border Services Agency, rents beds from the provincial government which profits by charging a 20 per cent premium. Immigration detainees, therefore, are being put in maximum security Provincial prisons across the country, but it's only for administrative purposes. According to the government, they're not being punished, they're just being "held."

As I mentioned, immigration law is administrative law. It's not part of criminal law. In terms of violating immigration law, it can be akin to violating a parking permit, which means that there is no charge and no trial. Pointing out this distinction, however, should not be mistaken as an endorsement of the criminal justice system. I want to emphasize that even the inadequate and flawed parameters of the criminal justice system are not available to immigration detainees, namely, a legal trial, a stated charge and length of detention, and the legal presumption of innocence.

Canada also detains children, hundreds of them a year. This number,

IMMIGRATION DETENTION IS AN ADMINISTRATIVE OFFENCE, LIKE VIOLATING A PARKING PERMIT IS.

however, which ranges from about 200 to 800, is much lower than the reality. The main reason being that, Canadian-born children are not counted in the statistics. According to the Canadian government, Canadian-born children, because of their citizenship at birth, are free to go, whether or not they're a newborn or they're 17 years old. They're "free to go" under the Canadian law. Parents, mostly women, are forced to make a decision between having their child or children detained with them or to give them up to Children's Aid, which is an impossible decision.

PEOPLE ARE DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGES. THERE IS NO TRIAL TO PROVE THEIR INNOCENCE.



Figure 4

Immigration Holding Centre, a woman named Glory, who is in her late 20s, around my age. She was detained upon her arrival in Canada at Toronto's Pearson International Airport just over two years ago. She fled from Cameroon and was pregnant with her son Alpha at the time. Alpha is now two years old. He has never spent a single day outside of a detention centre. As a Canadian-born citizen, he is considered free to go under the law.

THIS INCLUDES CHILDREN. THE NUMBER OF DETAINED MINORS HAS FLUCTUATED BETWEEN 196-807 PER YEAR.

(The real number, however, is higher since children are not tracked as detainees but as 'accompanying' their parents).

DETAINED PARENTS OFTEN TO CHOOSE:



BRING THEIR CHILD INTO DETENTION

VS.



GIVE THEM UP TO CHILDREN'S AID.

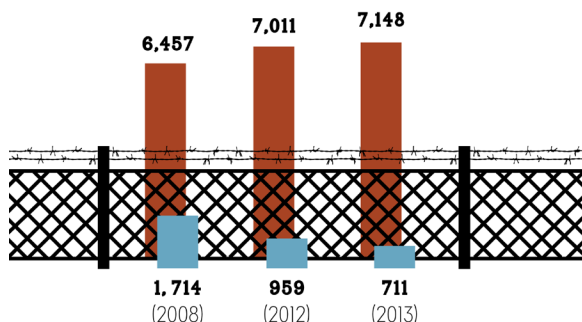
Figure 5

As we detailed in the report, every year around 10,000 people are detained, and though the numbers vary from year to year, the chances of people getting released have been consistently declining. This is happening systematically across the board, across regions, and across every single member presiding over detention reviews. Since 2008, it is clear that there has been some external factor or pressure leading to this trend of declining release rates. The national average for release rates for detention reviews is just 15 percent. The odds are highly stacked against the detainee, and this number drastically declines with every successive immigration detention review you attend.

What these numbers also show us is the arbitrariness of detention review decisions. In addition to the slim 15 percent chance of release, this likelihood also fluctuates depending on what region you're in: In Western Canada it's 38 percent, but in Central Canada (which includes the Ontario region where most people are detained in Canada), it's 11 percent. This huge discrepancy is also apparent depending on the board member who presides over a case, ranging from around five to 30 percent. Therefore, where the detention review takes place and who makes the decision greatly affects your chances of detention and release. This proves that the detention review system is arbitrary, impartial, and fundamentally unjust.

One of the greatest injustices is that immigration detention is indefinite, without a maximum length of detention. Some of the people we have worked with have been detained for over 10 years without charge or without trial because Canada cannot deport them. Canada is one of the few "Western" nations that doesn't have a maximum length of detention. The United States and the European Union have maximum lengths of detention, ranging from three to six months. In saying this, however, I firmly believe that immigration detention should end, full stop, and that prisons should not be used to enforce im-

EVERY YEAR, THOUSANDS ARE DETAINED



BUT FEW PEOPLE ARE RELEASED.

(This is data for the Central Region)

Figure 6

and poverty, and against their will. Our work takes the form of fighting for access to essential services for all migrants. Some of you might have heard about the sanctuary city motion that passed in Toronto in 2013. Can I just get a raise of hands of who's heard of that? About half of the room. For those who haven't, it was a historic moment in Canada, which led to Toronto's municipal services becoming available to all its residents regardless of immigration status, and Hamilton, Ontario followed one year later.

Regardless of the media portrayal here, I want to stress that this victory came out of decades of organizing led by undocumented people, specifically by directly-affected people who spoke out publicly when they were denied services. Every time an undocumented child tries to access a school, a non-status woman fleeing intimate-partner violence seeks help at a shelter, or a precarious status person walks into a food bank means they are risking detention and deportation. The very act of accessing essential services becomes a challenge to borders. It is because undocumented people facing such denial spoke out over the past decade that communities mobilized to win this victory. It is not about the goodwill of the state in giving us privileges, but about organizing from the ground up and access being taken by the people most directly affected.

At the core of our work is the idea of the freedom to move, return, and stay. This means that people should be able to freely move in search of flourishing, dignified lives. People should have the freedom to return to places that

migration laws.

There are several fellow organizers from No One Is Illegal (NOII) Vancouver and Toronto here in the room supporting me. We're a grassroots organization made up of all volunteer migrants and allies who fight for justice and dignity for undocumented and precarious status migrants and refugees. This work takes on many forms, including resisting detentions and deportations. We fundamentally oppose the detention of people based on where they're born, or the deportation of people back to war

they have been displaced from, to lost homes. We should have the freedom to stay and resist that displacement, a belief grounded in solidarity with indigenous land defense struggles here in Turtle Island and across the global south, an essential element to our work and our politics.

In the past couple of years NOII-Toronto has been actively part of End Immigration Detention Network (EIDN), which is comprised of organizers in Guelph, Toronto, Ottawa, and Peterborough. EIDN came about in response to a historic action that was happening at the Central East Correctional Centre, a maximum security provincial prison in Lindsay, Ontario. On September 17, 2013, 191 immigration detainees in Lindsay went on a hunger strike. What began as a three-day protest of their prison conditions grew into a long-term and ongoing campaign to end immigration detention. This is the largest known strike led by migrants in detention, and I believe that it is our responsibility as people on the outside to mobilize in support of these struggles.

The campaign formed around four core demands created collectively between people in detention and us on the outside. Firstly, there should be an end to indefinite detention, specifically, Canada should have a 90-day maximum for detention as per international conventions, after which point, if the state can't deport them, it will have to release them. Following from that, people who have been held for more than 90 days should be immediately released. Thirdly, people should not be locked up in maximum security prisons on immigration holds. Finally, there should be an overhaul of the detention review process, and I've already outlined some of the major flaws of this system. People should have access to legal aid, access to their families, access to legal services in order to regularize their status and gain permanent status. They should be able to access ways to return to their communities, their families, and their lives.

I'd like to show you a video created for the "Truth About Detention Report" when detainees led a boycott of detention reviews to demonstrate what a sham this system is.⁴

I wanted to share some of the voices of the people we've been working with, who are absent from the academic spaces that we are in, and many of whom have been deported since that recording. One question that consistently comes up is the idea of criminality. Many if not most of the people we work with in immigration detention have criminal histories. There are many reasons why people are criminalized and that particular people are targeted more by the state: It's Indigenous people, it's black people, it's gender-nonconforming, queer, and trans people; people who are sex workers, who are drug users; people who are part of the already marginalized communities we organize in. It is important to recognize the parallels between who gets illegalized by the immigration system and who gets criminalized by the criminal system. It is very easy to play into the narrative of good immigrant versus the underserving "criminal." Therefore, we

⁴No One is Illegal, *The Harper Conservatives have Jailed Nearly 80,000 People without Charge: Listen to their Voices*. Accessed Jan. 25, 2016. www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBGdO2ENvO4.

must look at immigration detention as being part of the larger prison industrial complex, and part of the larger struggle to abolish prisons.

Let's return to architecture. What do I do with all of this? How do I make sense of it? How do I talk about the architecture of these places I want to abolish without proposing an alternative design for them? What does abolitionist architecture look like? It seems like an oxymoron. In the process of doing my graduate architecture degree, I began by mapping out where immigration detention is located, and where can architects intervene in this process and apparatus of managing migrant bodies, if at all. The network of spaces and infrastructure, border checkpoints, airports, and detention centres were the first to be identified.

That's where I started to locate architects, as people who are involved in and profit from the design and construction of these detention facilities - one of the most expensive parts of the system. Thinking about detention centres as an architectural space, as a border space (and I'm excited for Sandro Mezzadra's talk because I was reading his work while doing this research!). Detention centres are used to manage the flow of migrant bodies, to stall time, and to control the volume of migration. At the same time, the "flows" of undesired migrants are being controlled to serve this absolute borderless world for capital to move about freely in the world. These flows coexist and rely on one another.

For me, what I am most interested in is how does this reality translate into built form? How can we feel it, how can we understand it. Most of us spend most of our lives inside buildings, and these are embodied experiences. We might not cognitively understand what 30 square feet means, but our bodies know it and I wanted to explore how this embodiment can be a way to convey the reality of immigration detention and connect to the hearts, minds, and bodies of people.

There are several recurring problems I face when trying to raise immigration detention in different architectural settings, and framing it as an architectural issue. The first response often is, "This is not architecture." An immigration detention centre just simply isn't architecture. Like strip malls, supermarkets, and parking garages, immigration detention centres are viewed as "spatial products," as termed by Keller Easterling, a U.S.-based architect and urbanist whose work explores the politics of infrastructure. They're not "Architecture," or designed objects, and therefore, they are beneath the consideration of architects.

The second is that, if detention centres are architecture, then the solution is just better design, and the problem is how we can make them more humane, more optimal, more green. "Give it a green roof, make it LEED certified!" Often, people will talk about improving conditions, and talk about Scandinavia. Any time I bring up the topic of prisons, someone will mention that one Scandinavian model that looks and feels like a resort, and everyone gets to play with the sheep that are grazing in the yard, (Figure 7). Though I'm talking about it in a sarcastic way, what these "success" models do is distract us from the larger systemic and structural questions around who gets detained



C.F.Møller Architects, Danish State Prison in Falster, Denmark

Figure 7

and why, whether they should be detained, whether we need these buildings at all. The underlying assumption is that prisons are necessary, so all we can do is to make them a little bit better.

One of the architects who I've been influenced by is Eyal Weizman, an Israeli architect who looks at the architecture of occupation in Palestine, among other things, using architectural visual representations to critically analyze how architecture is employed as a tool of occupation, militarism, and other forms of state violence. In his book, *The Least of All Possible Evils*, he talks about the problem of trying to minimize violence and the inherent violence embedded in the logic of "moderating" violence. What it implies is that it's possible to arrive at an essential minimum, and in fact, that is our job. So, violence operates on this idea that it can be mediated, calculated, and managed. Following this logic, architecture becomes a tool of moderating violence, always innovating and making pretty drawings of new design "solutions" so that we don't question the logic behind their very existence.

When raising that existential question, the architect's response is, "What do you mean you don't want a building? If you don't want a building, then why are you talking to me?" Here is an image of the Toronto South Detention Centre, which opened last year, (Figure 8). It was designed by Zeidler Partnership Architects, which also brought you Ontario Place, and they're a very celebrated architecture firm. They designed this prefabricated state-of-the-art "super jail," a first in Canada. I'm going to read you a description from the website:

This is a maximum security 1,650-bed facility for adult male inmates. The complex accommodates a further 320 short-term inmates. The so-

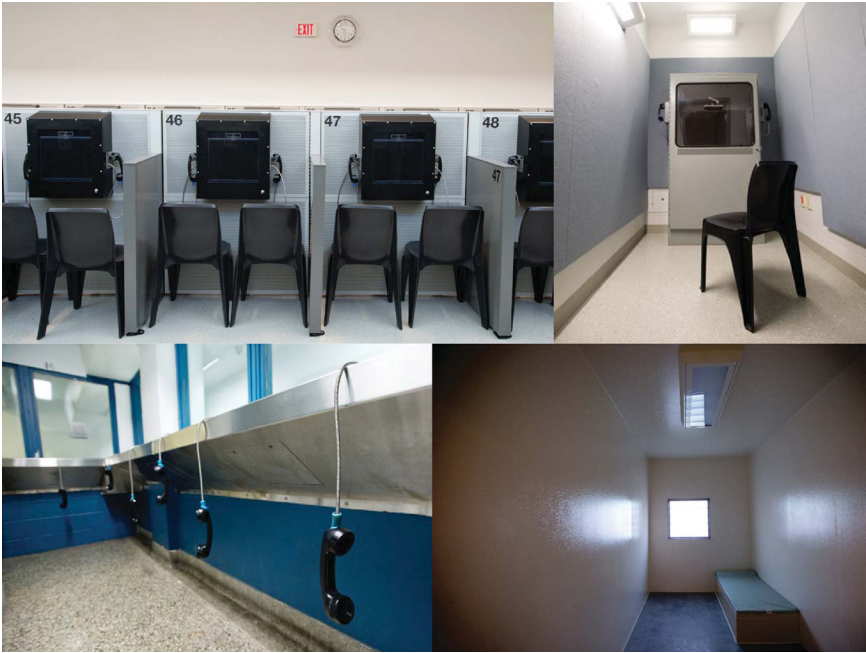


Figure 8

efficient construction through modular, precast construction. As the first LEED designed adult correctional facility in Ontario, it is responsible both to the public and the environment by raising the bar on sustainable strategies that result in long-term operational savings.

This quote speaks for itself, and speaks to the logic of minimizing harm. In fact, the prison is presented as an innovative solution and tool for social good, for improving the environment, and for improving the wellbeing of people held inside. In the top left you see the visitation rooms. Even if an inmate's loved ones visit the detention facility, the meeting is mediated by Skype-like technology. A detainee sees them through a computer screen. There is not even a glass pane between the two people. On the top right is an image of a doctor's visit facilitated by mics and screens, and the cell is shown in the bottom right. This "direct supervision" model is applauded because it requires less staffing, cuts operational costs, and prioritizes functions like that. I don't want to discount the fact that these models may be better in an everyday sense, in terms of real material conditions. However, the goal of my project is to move way beyond that conversation of reforming a "broken" system. In fact, what I hope to show is that this system is not broken; it's functioning exactly as planned.

Another common architectural response is, "If it's not a building, then it's not our problem." I'm sure many of you have seen this or have heard



Figure 9

about this. There have been over 1,200 migrant worker deaths in building the stadium for the 2022 Qatar World Cup. This is a long ways away and it might not even happen there, but already over 1,200 people have been killed in the process, and that is the total of recorded deaths only.

When Zaha Hadid, who is an Iraqi-British architect, was asked about the deaths, she said, “I have nothing to do with the workers. It is not my duty as an architect to look at it.” This response raises important questions of what is considered architecture. If it doesn’t relate to the construction process, or the transformation from paper-to-built architecture, then what, ultimately, is considered an architectural concern?

The final problem which I faced in exploring detention centres as architecture is the fact that these buildings are “undocumented.” Here are some of the few photos of the Toronto Immigration Holding Centre, a converted three-star hotel in Rexdale, a suburb of Toronto, (Figure 9). This facility has been completely gutted and redone on the inside, but because of its former use, still allows the Canadian government to claim that it puts immigrants in hotels.

In the end after going through all these problems, I arrived at a graphic novel. How did it come to be? How did I get the information needed to represent these spaces, to create images, and to make, what felt like, something out of nothing? The book is divided into three parts. The first is a survey of the sites and landscapes of detention. Driving next to some of these banal, everyday places you would likely never know that people are imprisoned there, so the first step was to visually situate these detention centres in our landscape, (Figure 10).

Next, I went down to the building scale. I was exploring detention centres

Migration, Mobility & Displacement, Winter, 2016



TORONTO WEST DETENTION CENTRE
DETAINEES : 73 2011
FACILITY TYPE : PROVINCIAL PRISON
DETENTION TIMEFRAME : LONG - TERM
SECURITY : SECURE



TORONTO IMMIGRATION HOLDING CENTRE
DETAINEES : 125 2011
FACILITY TYPE : MIGRANT DETENTION CENTRE
DETENTION TIMEFRAME : LONG - TERM
SECURITY : SECURE
SEGREGATION : MALES, FEMALES, MINORS



REXDALE, ON

POPULATION : 94 469 2006
ESTABLISHED : 1998
LOCATION : NORTHWEST CORNER OF TORONTO
SIGNIFICANCE : FORMER CITY OF ETOBICOKE

Figure 10

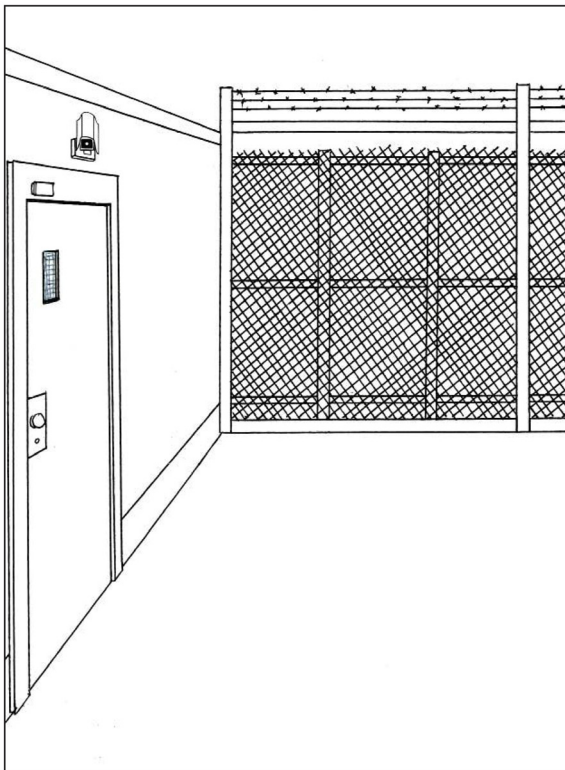
across scales, from the macroscale of the landscape down to the design of the prison cell components themselves. This operation of zooming in acted as a rhetorical function to emphasize the fact that at every step and at every scale decisions are being made, things are being designed, spaces are being maintained, conditions are being produced, and people are profiting from the smallest to the largest of scales.

The second part of the book is the architectural tour, which is what we began this presentation with, narrated by the conversation between the architect and the artist, (Figure 11). This walk-through space was intended to bring in the viewer and reader to imagine the experience of that space, which is hidden from public view. That space is not a real space, but a reconstruction based on the research that I did, informed by conversations with people who have been inside those spaces, by prison design standards, and by unconventional research practices. The result was a generic or genericized detention centre.

The final chapter, which to me is the most important, focuses on the stories of people in immigration detention, many of whom were part of that historic hunger strike I mentioned (and some who stayed on the hunger strike for 63

days). My goal was to not focus on the processes of victimization or to tell more victim narratives of migrants, but to talk about how people are fighting back from everyday ways to organizing mass acts of civil disobedience. Throughout the book, I was very wary of revictimizing the people detained, so I emphasized the spaces themselves rather than stories of tragedy and state violence.

In my research, I also looked at historical precedents, which people here in British Columbia know well, of the internment camps used to detain people of Japanese descent during the Second World War. This included spaces that were repur-



Can we start?

Figure 11

posed - anything from horse stables, to military bases, to cabins – and used as work camps and for the forced resettlement of people of Japanese descent. My architectural exploration also extended to the idea of the minimum - whether it's the minimum amount of material, cost, time, etc. - a logic that pervades design obsessions around temporary, deployable, inflatable, and collapsable types of architecture. This catalogue of “minimum designs” includes: The ad-hoc detention facility erected for G-20 protestors in Toronto; temporary infrastructure that creates diverse terrains for military training purposes; and instant and reusable hotels for mega-events. I highlighted these examples as part of the longer modernist legacy of minimalism and universalism in design.

All facts and figures that I cited were quoted from official sources, where available, including numbers obtained through access to information requests (some filed by EIDN). Stories and direct quotes from people in immigration detention were excerpted from already publicly available material, mostly audio interviews done by EIDN members with the people striking.⁵

I talked to people who were able to access some of these spaces, such as lawyers, and together we tried to roughly sketch out some of these spaces (I also realized that a lot of lawyers have no spatial sense whatsoever: “I think the cell was 30 feet by 30 feet.”) I'm pretty sure that's not accurate or possible, but we worked with it, for example, by approximating spaces by envisioning how many beds could fit in an area. That was one of the ways that I was able to begin to spatialize and reconstruct a detention centre.

I looked at building codes and design standards, thinking of prisons as part of a long lineage of institutional buildings, built to the minimum, from schools, to hospitals, to geriatric wards, etc. It's all part of a similar system of state controlled and state surveilled spaces. Building code is created around the idea of the “minimum habitable space:” it has a number, it's measured, it's quantified.

I drew a lot from US-designed prisons and detention centres because of how far advanced they are in this area. I used the design standards issued by the Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE), or the US counterpart to the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), which provided a highly detailed account of specific program elements in a detention centre and how to secure or riot-proof a space. I also examined recommendations from international bodies, such as the Red Cross or UNHCR, which are organizations that promote the idea of minimum prison conditions. These best practices outline and quantify what is considered liveable, sanitary, and humane.

After amassing all this data, I created maps and other visual aids to begin to make sense of all this information. This map is an abstraction or experiment that divides up Canada's provinces and territories based on its land mass, overlaid with different aspects of the border system like airports, CBSA offices, prisons, and police headquarters, and the types of borders that exist - their density and locations (we all like maps, and we want to pretend like we understand them), (Figure 12).

⁵ I encourage you to listen to some these recordings at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdin71dWiTE

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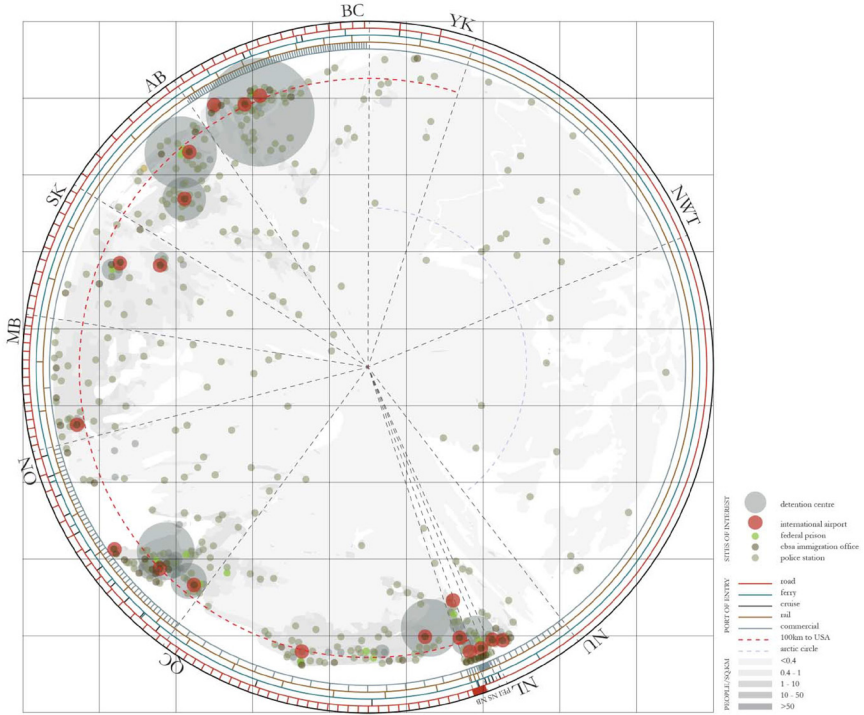


Figure 12

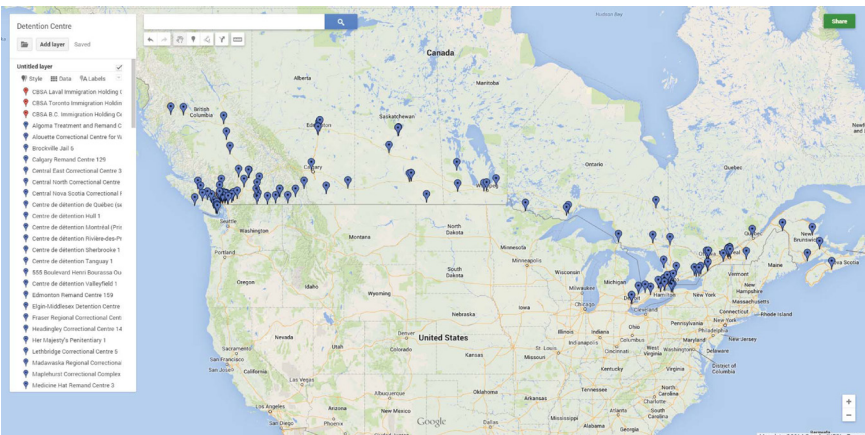


Figure 13

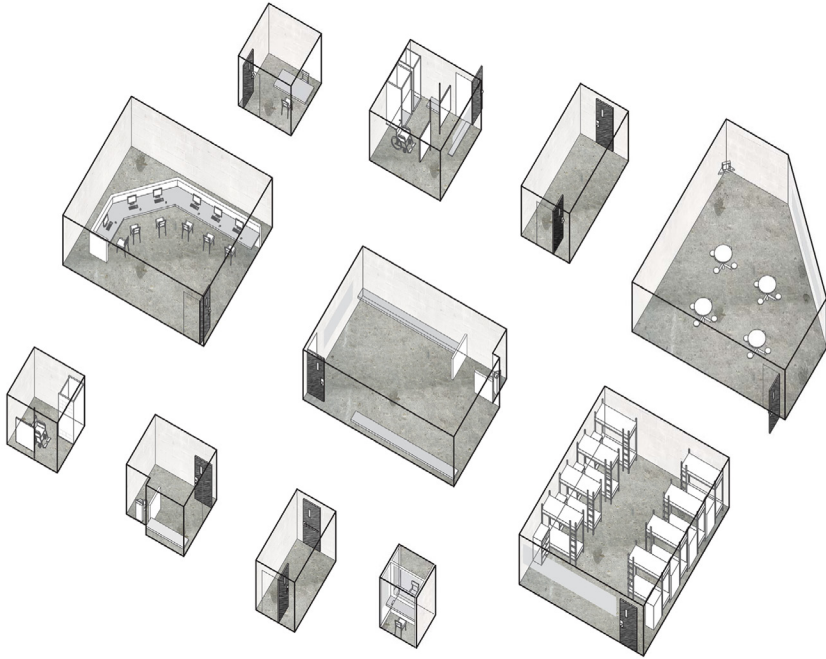


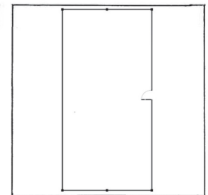
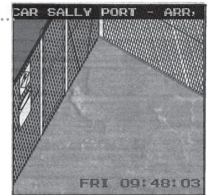
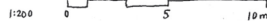
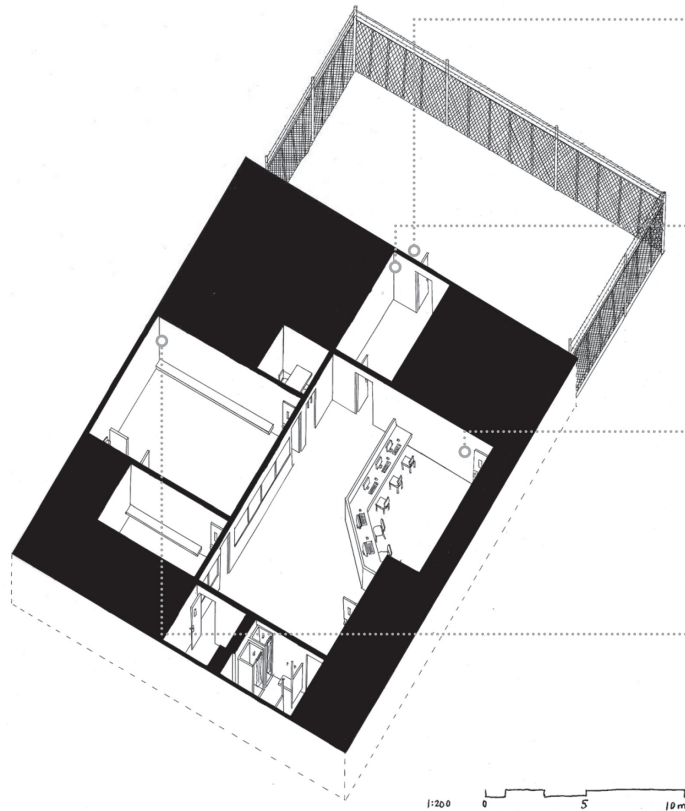
Figure 14

I also located on Google Maps all of the facilities used to detain migrants obtained from access-to-information requests, (Figure 13). However, even with the address and the name of the facility it is very hard to pinpoint it exactly, which demonstrates how hidden these places are. I found myself spending countless hours panning across vast areas of Canada trying to locate a single building. Fortunately, a lot of them look like landed UFOs from above, so they can be easier to spot.

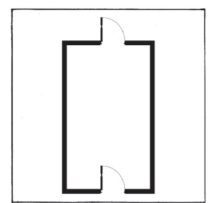
I also used Google Maps for other things (the one helpful thing about mass surveillance). Once the facilities were located, I stitched together street views as another way to visualize these inaccessible places, accompanied with basic statistics about the centres (year, number of detainees, security level, etc) and information about the towns that they were in, where prisons often form the basis of the local economies, (Figure 10). This is the literal underside that doesn't get talked about very much.

At the scale of buildings is where we begin to look at the concrete elements of each detention centre, including visitation areas, counsel areas, bathrooms, cells, and so on. All designed to the minimum standards that I found. At each scale, I carefully considered the type of representation that I found to be best suited to describe that information. In this drawing, I use a particular drawing convention called or axonometry, specifically, isometric drawings that are often used by architects and engineers, (Figure 14). They

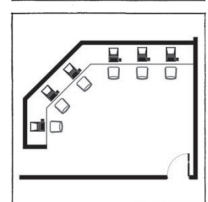
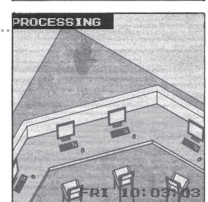
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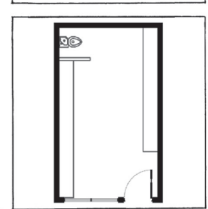
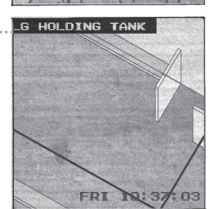
MINIMUM SIZE: 7.3 X 8.5 M = 62.1 M²
 WALLS: GALVANIZED STEEL SECURITY FENCE W/ BARBED WIRE STRAND
 FLOORS: ASPHALT CONCRETE
 CEILING: DETENTION CEILING
 DOORS: HOLLOW METAL VISION PANEL
 GLAZING: N/A
 PLUMBING: N/A
 HVAC: N/A
 LIGHTING: SURFACE MOUNTED FLUORESCENT
 SECURITY: ELECTRONIC ACCESS FOR GATE, VIDEO SURVEILLANCE
 COMMUNICATIONS: INTERCOM AT SECURITY GATE
 NOTE: ENCLOSED, NEXT TO INTAKE - RELEASE AREA



MINIMUM SIZE: 3.7 X 6.1 M = 22.6 M²
 WALLS: REINFORCED CONCRETE BLOCK
 FLOORS: SEALED CONCRETE
 CEILING: EXTERIOR GRADE GYPSUM
 DOORS: HOLLOW METAL
 GLAZING: N/A
 PLUMBING: FLOOR DRAIN
 HVAC: TYPICAL W/EXHAUST
 LIGHTING: SURFACE MOUNTED FLUORESCENT
 SECURITY: ELECTRONIC ACCESS CONTROL, VIDEO SURVEILLANCE
 COMMUNICATIONS: INTERCOM AT PASSAGE DOOR



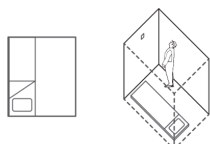
MINIMUM SIZE: 7.3 X 6.0 M = 43.6 M²
 WALLS: REINFORCED MASONRY
 FLOORS: SEALED CONCRETE
 CEILING: GYPSUM BOARD
 DOORS: N/A
 GLAZING: N/A
 PLUMBING: N/A
 HVAC: TYPICAL W/EXHAUST
 LIGHTING: RECESSED FLUORESCENT
 SECURITY: VIDEO SURVEILLANCE
 COMMUNICATIONS: VOICE/DATA FOR PROCESSING



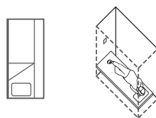
MINIMUM SIZE: 7.3 X 8.5 M = 62.1 M²
 WALLS: REINFORCED CONCRETE BLOCK
 FLOORS: SEALED CONCRETE
 CEILING: DETENTION CEILING
 DOORS: HOLLOW METAL
 GLAZING: BULLET RESISTANT
 PLUMBING: DETENTION TOILET/SINK COMBO UNIT
 HVAC: TYPICAL W/EXHAUST
 LIGHTING: RECESSED FLUORESCENT
 SECURITY: ELECTRONIC ACCESS FOR DOORS, VIDEO SURVEILLANCE
 COMMUNICATIONS: N/A
 NOTE: TEMPORARY CONFINEMENT UP TO 10 HRS

Figure 15

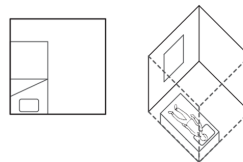
Migration, Mobility & Displacement, Winter, 2016



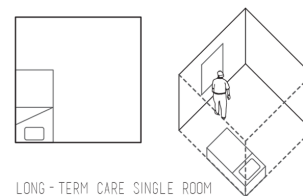
PRISON MULT. OCCUPANCY
 $A = 37M^2/PERSON$
 $V = 73M^3/PERSON$
 NATURAL LIGHT = $0.015M^2/PERSON$
 OR NO OPENING LARGER THAN $0.13M$



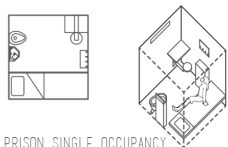
PRISON DORMITORY
 $A = 20M^2/PERSON$
 $V = 35M^3/PERSON$
 NATURAL LIGHT = $0.015M^2/PERSON$
 OR NO OPENING LARGER THAN $0.13M$



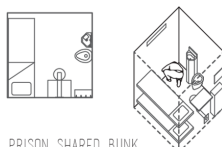
LONG-TERM CARE MULT. OCCUPANCY
 $A = 93M^2/PERSON$
 $V = 181M^3/PERSON$
 NATURAL LIGHT = $0.09M^2/PERSON$



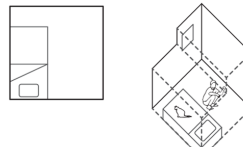
LONG-TERM CARE SINGLE ROOM
 $A = 112M^2/PERSON$
 $V = 218M^3/PERSON$
 NATURAL LIGHT = $11M^2/PERSON$



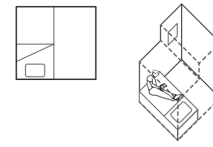
PRISON SINGLE OCCUPANCY
 $A = 46M^2/PERSON$
 $V = 90M^3/PERSON$
 NATURAL LIGHT = $0.015M^2/PERSON$
 OR NO OPENING LARGER THAN $0.13M$



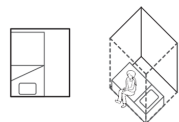
PRISON SHARED BUNK
 $A = 25M^2/PERSON$
 $V = 49M^3/PERSON$
 NATURAL LIGHT = $0.015M^2/PERSON$
 OR NO OPENING LARGER THAN $0.13M$



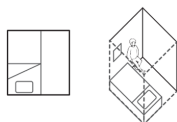
RESIDENTIAL SINGLE ROOM
 $A = 60M^2/PERSON$
 $V = 87 - 117M^3/PERSON$
 NATURAL LIGHT = $0.3M^2/PERSON$
 OR EGRESS WINDOW $0.762M$ WIDE



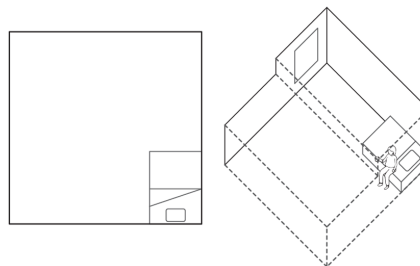
RESIDENTIAL MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY
 $A = 40M^2/PERSON$
 $F = 58 - 78M^3/PERSON$
 NATURAL LIGHT = $0.2M^2/PERSON$
 OR EGRESS WINDOW $0.762M$ WIDE



EMERGENCY SHELTER
 $A = 35M^2/PERSON$
 $V = 34M^3/PERSON$



EMERGENCY CAMP
 $A = 35M^2/PERSON$
 $V = 0.17M^3/PERSON$



RESIDENTIAL SINGLE ROOM DWELLING
 $A = 26M^2/PERSON$
 $V = 37.5 - 50.7M^3/PERSON$
 NATURAL LIGHT = $2.3M^2/PERSON$

Figure 16

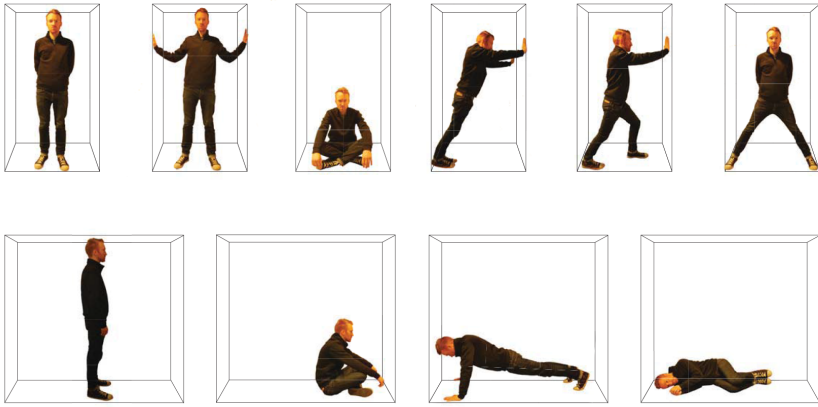


Figure 17

are considered measured drawings, which means they don't have perspective (or a vanishing point), and are proportionally accurate. It's a very top-down and supposedly neutral position to look from. It removes the viewer and the architect from the space that is drawn, raising interesting questions and parallels to the perspective of surveillance, which I began to illustrate here.

Next are the plans, detailing the kinds of floor treatments, florescent lighting, and very banal details and decisions that are made by real people, (Figure 15). This is one example of the counsel visitation room: The walls are made of reinforced concrete block, the floor is sealed concrete, and so on, not dissimilar to space that we are currently in. These materials are very common, and that is important. Once named, we may begin to recall how it feels to be in and amongst these materials, their textures, sounds, smells, and taste (well, I don't usually lick concrete blocks). These are concrete, real things in the material world that we can all relate to in some embodied way.

Here is a visualization comparing the different building codes that I mentioned, (Figure 16). At the bottom right, for instance, is the Toronto building code for single-room dwellings, the minimum size for rooming houses. At the top left is a multiple occupancy prison dorm, similar to a detention centre dorm, put side by side for a sense of the scale. There are also hospital cubicles, daycares, and shelters illustrated with people to scale for spatial comparison. From there, I made physical models to scale, including cutouts of people based on normative human dimensions, which is what we typically design to, the needs of white non-disabled cis-males.

I also staged some of the spaces in a one-to-one scale and got generous volunteers to perform in it, demonstrating the physical constraint, (Figure 17) What does it feel like? What can you do in that space? What can you do to start pushing those limitations, inside spaces that are so small and so confined? What are the everyday defiances, types of activities, acts of survival, and strat-

egies of inhabitation as resistance against the very architecture, designed to keep the incarcerated individual down? To address some of these questions, I'm going to end with the last excerpt from the book, which highlights some such stories of resistance in immigration detention.

This was the first thing she said when she was released: Take me to the sea or the next biggest thing. Inside they never let you see the horizon. Instead it is a sequence of fragments. You can never wholly grasp it. Inside you lose your spatial bearings and markings. You lose your identity and subject-hood. There are billions of dollars made in the incarceration of human bodies. There are a lot of hands involved in this industry, but there aren't many faces. In these authorless spaces we had the casualties of poverty and displacement. We even tried to hide the spaces themselves. It is a tyranny without a tyrant where nobody rules and we are equally powerless.

Status is a fickle thing. It can be taken away from you and at any moment it can be lost. It determines your identity, your rights, your access, your freedom. For your name is more than a series of Romanized letters phonetically transcribed that, when uttered, can never capture its weight. It can never come close to the language your given name was given in. Your place of birth has nothing to do with the treachery of borders violently imposed onto our bodies, between our families, and throughout the places we call home. You are not a minor, a senior, or a dependent, but you are an elder, a lover, and a child. Each morning a school bus drives up to the immigration detention centre. Behind barbed wire and security gates children board the bus. It becomes a ritual that spells trauma.

There is an immigration detainee on hunger strike for over 60 days in protest of indefinite detention. Held for 28 months in a maximum security prison without charge or trial he said, "I missed three of my son's birthdays. I missed three anniversaries with my wife. I cannot see myself being detained indefinitely and thinking about them. That will drive me crazy. So I have to keep it out of mind and out of sight. How inhumane is that? I'm a father and I'm a husband. Should I even be allowed to feel like this?" He was put in segregation.

According to Corrections Canada, solitary confinement is euphemistically called, "administrative segregation." It's used to ensure "the safety of all inmates, staff, and visitors" rather than for punitive reasons. In the control of bodies, architecture manages risks so that it never has to confront the aggregated power of inmates. Prisoners held in prolonged segregation talk about the feeling of merging with the walls. Isolated for up to 23 hours each day people find ways to communicate with other detainees through the walls, through toilet pipes, emptied of water.

In 2013 California saw its largest hunger strike of 30,000 inmates in solitary. This mass action was organized over years of such stolen conversations. Accordingly, the modern cell is based on the idea of the modern

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individual. The minimum social unit to which everything is scaled from the automobile to the micro-condominium, the secure housing unit, to the hospital cubicle. Our bodies are standardized and our needs are quantified.

The minimum habitable space for an incarcerated individual is measured; two square metres of floor area, and 3.5 cubic metres of air space. In this volume the contents of your life are caged, but not every human action can be programmed or predicted. Our bodies always find ways to carve space, to refocus our attention from the geometry to the lived experience, from the container to the contained.

In lieu of papers, supports, security, and freedom objects can build space and that carve out space can become a refuge, a home for the self. While jailed among immigrant women at Vanier, a political activist, shared her stories of every day defiances in the form of taped-up photos, hoarded food, and toilet paper curtains, even if they are torn down or flushed down the toilet during random monthly searches.

Just as architecture sets limits to the body, and what's possible, the body imposes limits to architecture's ambitions. In "Violence of Architecture," Bernard Tschumi describes a kitchen as a space of cooking and eating. Yet, it can also be a space for sleeping and making love. This, he calls, "programmatic violence."

On September 17, 2013, 191 immigration detainees in Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay, Ontario took the largest known collective action among immigration detainees in Canada. They refused to go to their cells, they refused to eat their food, they refused to attend their detention reviews to demand an end to indefinite detention. Some have been held there for nearly a decade in maximum security without charge or trial. One of the detainees who was on a hunger strike for over 60 days says, "Whatever it takes, we will do it."

A man faces deportation back to a country he has not known since childhood. The language of which he has forgotten. His family and immigration consultant fight so that the man can hold his daughter just one last time. They deny him, and deport him.

A prisoner in a desperate moment beckons the walls to hear her, so that she can tell her story about her birthplace and family, the things she doesn't want to be forgotten.

In these spaces where those without status or identity are caged, the struggles against the disappearance of one's self. There are so many undocumented lives amongst us and in this world that can never be captured in numbers, barred by material or immaterial borders, or be confined to anonymous spaces.

So, I write this today only to say that I will not forget your departure.

Thank you.