

The Potential of Architecture to Address Homelessness in Northern Ontario

by

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“Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

Matthew 25: 40

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THESIS QUESTION:

Considering the physical, social and legal dimensions of architecture, what is it's potential to address the experience of homelessness in a northern Ontario city like Sudbury?

ABSTRACT:

KEY WORDS:

Community *Northern Ontario*
Homelessness *Social Infrastructure*
Housing *Stigma*

What is architecture's potential to address homelessness in northern Ontario? This question came from a personal experience: volunteering in a soup kitchen in downtown Sudbury throughout my studies at Laurentian University. This experience, over the last six years, has permeated through my architectural education. Homelessness is a complex phenomenon that architecture alone is unable to solve; nonetheless, architecture does have the potential to facilitate responses to homelessness in collaboration with other professions on interdisciplinary teams.

Attitudes against those living in extreme poverty, historically categorizing those 'undeserving' of assistance, can be seen today in the physical, social, and legal realms of the built environment. There is not one, but many, common experiences of homelessness. The current literature provides a definition of homelessness as the exclusion from the physical, social, or legal domains of 'home'. This definition portrays homelessness as a spectrum dependent on exclusion. Hostile architecture and the selective enforcement of municipal by-laws are contemporary examples of exclusion that penalize those experiencing homelessness. These examples can be mapped in Sudbury, Ontario, to demonstrate how specific architectural elements are spatially connected to areas of high contact between housed and homeless individuals. These contact zones, when designed improperly, can ignite prejudice and lead to conflict, ultimately reinforcing stigma. Meanwhile, the theory of intergroup contact postulates that contact between out-groups and in-groups also carries the potential to mitigate stigma and prejudice under prescribed conditions. The physical mediation of these conflict zones is tested in downtown Sudbury through two public

installations where the nuances of this process are observed, documented, and applied to the full building scale.

The process of designing a full-scale building proposal includes an in-depth site analysis to understand the local sociodemographics of homelessness and where a site could best be located. Upon site selection, programs are analysed using a needs assessment through the secondary analysis of transcribed interviews of individuals experiencing homelessness. The needs expressed by people with lived experience are cross-referenced with the existing services in Sudbury to propose new programs to fill the service gaps in the city. A process is then developed whereby a phased introduction of the project brings together relevant stakeholders, leverages their connections in project planning, creates an interface for meaningful community engagement, and develops the site in phases to avoid gentrification. The architecture is described as a mediator of the physical, social, and legal dimensions of both the site and individuals' experiences of homelessness. Visioning is explored by how it may be inhabited by both those who are housed and experiencing homelessness, including those who have exited homelessness and secured housing. Finally, a future is imagined whereby individuals can find sustainable exits from homelessness. The continued life of the building demonstrates how it has been designed to meet the needs of its residents and not any one particular circumstance. The contribution of this work is the development of a new mode of practicing architecture that is fundamentally interdisciplinary, allowing physical buildings to maximize their positive effect on the life in and around them.

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Introduction: *My Experience*



Fig. 01: Breakfast provided by Elgin St Mission.



Fig. 02: La Fromagerie: 80 Elgin St. A popular Cafe.

This project started for me with a transformation that took place after I began volunteering with the homeless six years ago (Figure 01). For me, homelessness went from an abstract phenomenon that I was vaguely aware of to a complex reality that many people live with which ties together sociology and architecture. As these experiences began to permeate my architectural education, I started to ask myself questions like: why do meals for people who are experiencing homelessness have to be served in a space separate from people who are housed? (Figure 02) What spaces do these people occupy when the shelters are closed? What are the ramifications of the experience of

homelessness on peoples' wellbeing? Over the past six years, these questions have developed into what is today my thesis. This work is dedicated to my friends who are experiencing homelessness and to those who have dedicated themselves to ending homelessness.

The primary function of this research is to uncover the dimensions of the homeless experience that can be addressed architecturally. I have had to come to terms with the reality that architecture is not the sole solution to homelessness—housing alone is not enough to end homelessness. Although the successful emergence of the Housing First Strategy has proven that giving a home is a key dimension to

addressing homelessness, there are additionally many social and legal dimensions to the problem that four walls and a roof simply cannot address. This thesis works to broaden the role of architecture beyond the physical domain. In three sections— epistemology, ontology and home—I address the social and legal dimensions of homelessness. The epistemology section describes a new architectural understanding of homelessness; the ontology section maps this understanding to its physical traces in the urban environment; and the home section demonstrates the potential of architecture to address this new understanding.

PART I:

EPISTEMOLOGY

Definition:

The study or theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge, especially with reference to its limits and validity.¹

In this section of my thesis, I will be examining the physical, social and legal dimensions of homelessness and architecture with the goal of drawing connections between architecture and addressing the homeless experience.

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Chapter 02:	<i>Defining Homelessness</i>	9
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¹Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "epistemology," accessed April 29, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epistemology>.



Fig. 03: 15th Century wood carving of beggar being whipped through the streets after the Poor Law of 1601.

Poverty is a phenomenon that has always accompanied society, typically with negative attitudes associated. Although not all who experience poverty are treated equally, for a long time sociologists have proposed the idea that society often categorizes those experiencing poverty between the “deserving poor” and “undeserving poor”. What classifies someone as undeserving? How can these attitudes of negativity, hostility, and exclusion be traced through history to today?

The earliest historical period where we can find several traces of negative attitudes towards poverty is the Renaissance in Europe. It is from this period of time, more than any time before it, that representations of society and everyday life have been immortalized through an explosion of art.² This art reveals traces of the physical, social, and legal manifestations of hostility towards certain demographics of the poor (Figure 03). Art historian Tom Nichols, in his book *The Art of Poverty: Irony and Ideal in Sixteenth-Century Beggar Imagery*, conducts a sociological analysis of European attitudes towards beggars through their representations in art.³ What Nichols identifies is a subdivision of the classical poor broken down into three categories which represent the cause of their poverty and society’s general reaction towards them.⁴ The first category of the poor

Nichols identifies is the “religious poor”, which represents individuals with visible disabilities, widows, and orphans, who were often displayed in an angelic and idealized form. The external and circumstantial nature of these groups evoked reactions of pity and service from the Christian Church and society at large.⁵ The second category of the poor Nichols identifies is the “working poor”. This group represents most of European society during the Renaissance period, including those with jobs, but without enough means to support themselves. Not often represented in this time period, as the majority of society fell into this category, the working poor received no significant response.⁶ The third category is the “non-working poor”. The non-working poor were most often represented as repulsive or inhuman. Society perceived this group of people as actively choosing to remain in poverty by not working, thus the common negative attitude.⁷

As visualized in Figure 04, societies attitudes towards the poor have hinged on two dependent variables: the visibility of one’s circumstance and the perception of agency that an individual has taken to change their circumstance. Negative attitudes towards non-working, poor individuals throughout history have manifested in hostility through ostracization, criminalization and punishment.

CLASIFICATIONS OF POVERTY:

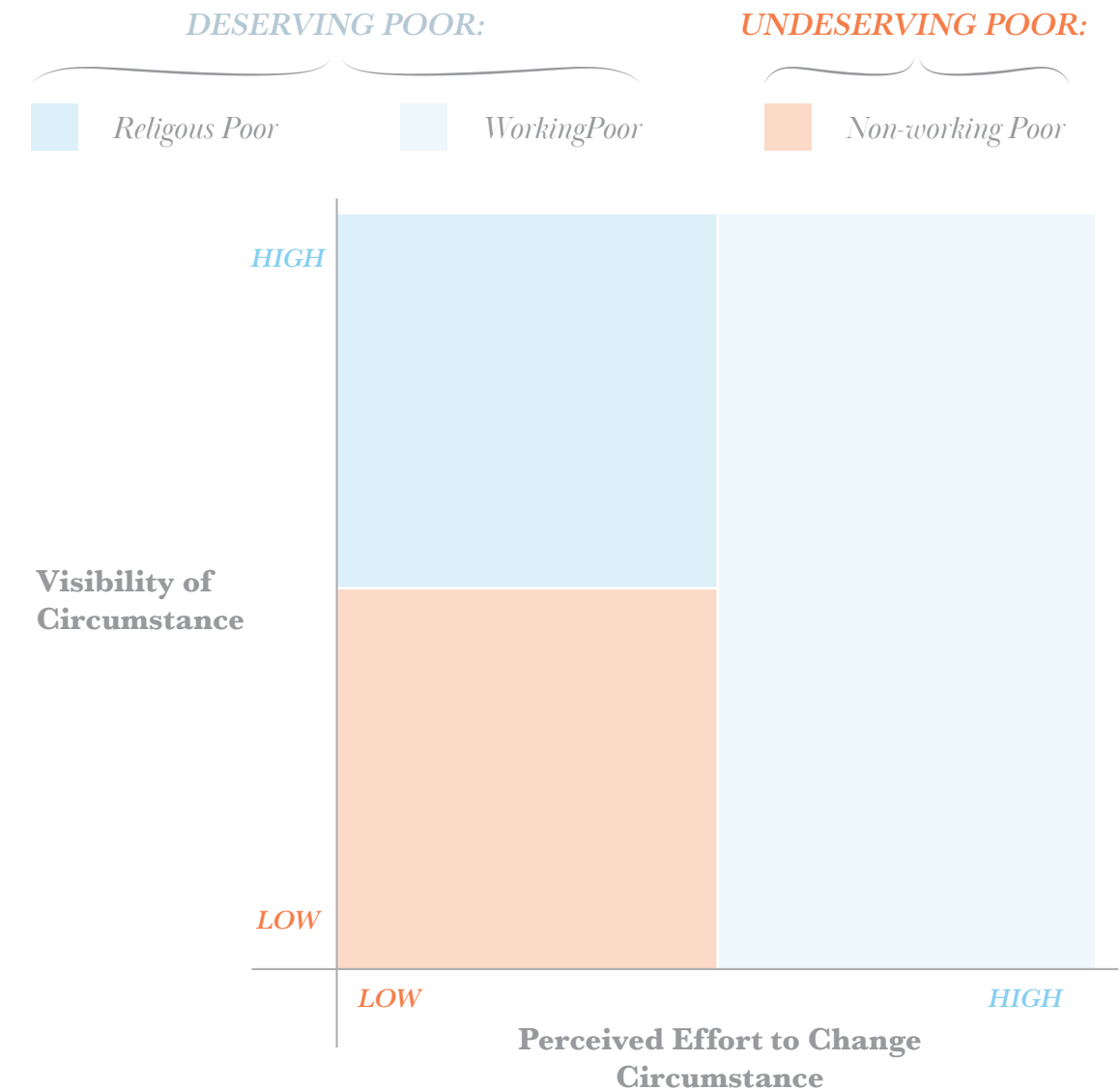


Fig. 04: Classification of Poverty Matrix, Showing how societal attitudes towards an individual correspond with their perception of their circumstance.

As social attitudes can be traced through art, legal attitudes can be traced through law. The criminalization of the non-working poor can be dated back to as far as 1349 with the Ordinance of Labourers in the United Kingdom.⁸ The nature of these laws were to punish the poor for not contributing to society by not working through forced labour, exile, or even capital punishment (Figure 5).

Bridging this knowledge to Canada, the concepts of poverty that existed in Indigenous cultures were whipped out through the process of colonization along with most other traditional ways of life.^{9,10} Because of colonization, Canadian society today borrows more from its European influences than its Indigenous roots. The continued effects of colonization has led to poverty and homelessness disproportionately affecting Indigenous peoples in Canada.¹¹

As negative attitudes towards the poor have been transmitted to Canada, there are many new traces of exclusion and hostility towards the “undeserving poor” visible in today’s society (Figure 6). The people experiencing homelessness today are most commonly classified as “undeserving poor”. Social exclusion today is executed in the urban environment through the targeted deployment of fences, spikes, railings and barriers, often referred to as “Hostile Architecture”. Legal exclusion today has become much more discrete yet equally prevalent. Neutral byways pertaining to urban space such as trespassing, loitering, congregation and even non-smoking areas have been documented to be selectively enforced to target the homeless.¹² This punitive response to homelessness is one of the ways architecture is negatively addressing homelessness. To change the way architecture addresses homelessness, I believe we must also address how we, as a society, address homelessness. Therefore, not only do I believe that architecture can address homelessness, I believe that it should participate in forging new opportunities for people’s attitudes towards the homeless to change.

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1. Nichols, Tom. *The Art of Poverty: Irony and Ideal in Sixteenth-Century Beggar Imagery*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007

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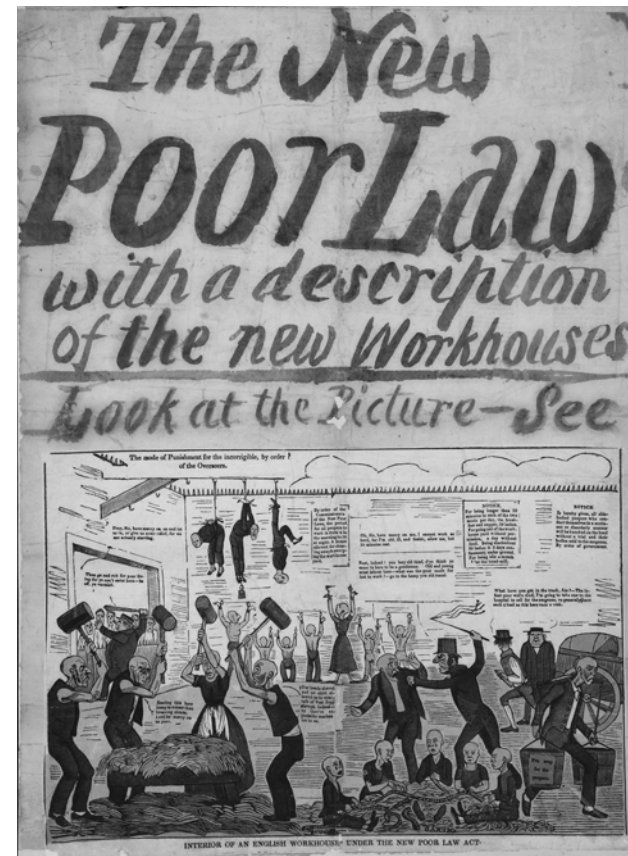


Fig.05: A poster made circa 1834 in response to the forced labor and corporal punishment of the poor law of 1834.



Fig. 06: One of many hostile signs located in downtown Sudbury to deter street people from loitering on private property.



Fig. 07: The top Google Image search result for “Homeless Person” 1/11/2019, demonstrating how the physical dimension of homelessness is often the first dimension thought of when discussing homelessness.

Homelessness is a word commonly used to describe those seen living on the street or begging in public spaces (Figure 07). What most people don’t realize, however, is that the experience of homelessness is much more pervasive and does not always manifest in the ways expected. As described in the previous chapter, those experiencing poverty, and are deemed to be “undeserving” by society, are treated with hostility and exclusion. For my definition of homelessness, I will focus on the state of exclusion; one does not have to be lacking a physical place to belong in order to be excluded socially or legally from society. Homelessness is not dependent on any one circumstance, it is dependent on exclusion. Homelessness is an experience that does not discriminate between the circumstances of one’s poverty, rather it is a product of them. There is not one common experience of homelessness that is shared between all people. Homelessness is the exclusion that accompanies poverty.

In the field of sociology, the European Observatory on Homelessness (ETHOS) has developed a definition of homelessness that is based on the principle of exclusion.¹³ However ETHOS suggests that one must be experiencing physical exclusion in order for their experience to be classified as homelessness. Kate Amore, Michael Baker and Philippa Howden-Chapman, in their article *The ETHOS Definition and Classification of Homelessness: An Analysis*, address the complexities of defining homelessness. They propose a modified version of the definition proposed by ETHOS that releases this dependency on physical exclusion so as to encompass those who experience severe social and legal exclusion as well.¹⁴ At the root of this definition is the three primary domains of home: the physical domain, the social domain and the legal domain. Amore, Baker and Howden-Chapman’s thesis is that exclusion from two or more of these domains constitutes living in a state of habitation that

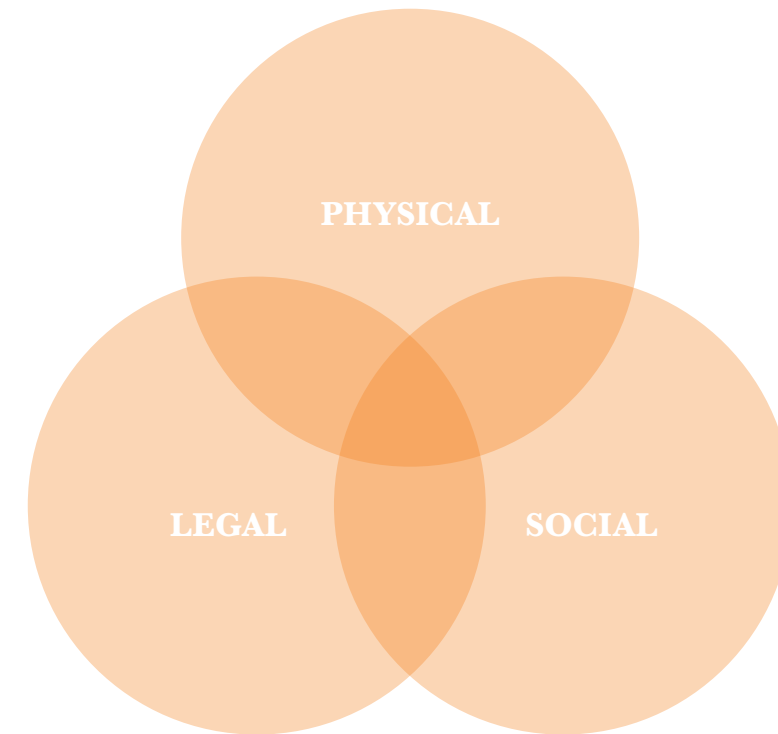


Fig. 08: The three domains of home Venn diagram and housing spectrum diagram.

is below the minimum adequacy standard. Therefore, if one is excluded from two or more of these domains, their experience can be classified as homelessness.¹⁵ In Figure 08, the visual representation of the ETHOS definition of homelessness only acknowledges those at the centre of the Venn diagram, whereas this modified version seeks to include those at any point of overlap. The three domains of home provide a spectrum through which one can begin to define housing that considers more than the absence of physical shelter.

It is also important to understand the regional portrait of homelessness in northern Ontario. This topic will be expanded upon in chapter seven, Site Analysis, however first, one must comprehend that a disproportionate percentage of individuals experiencing homelessness in Canada are also of Indigenous heritage.¹⁶ An Indigenous definition of homelessness, as laid out by Jesse Thistle in Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada, is not based on lack of material but rather is only understood through the breaking

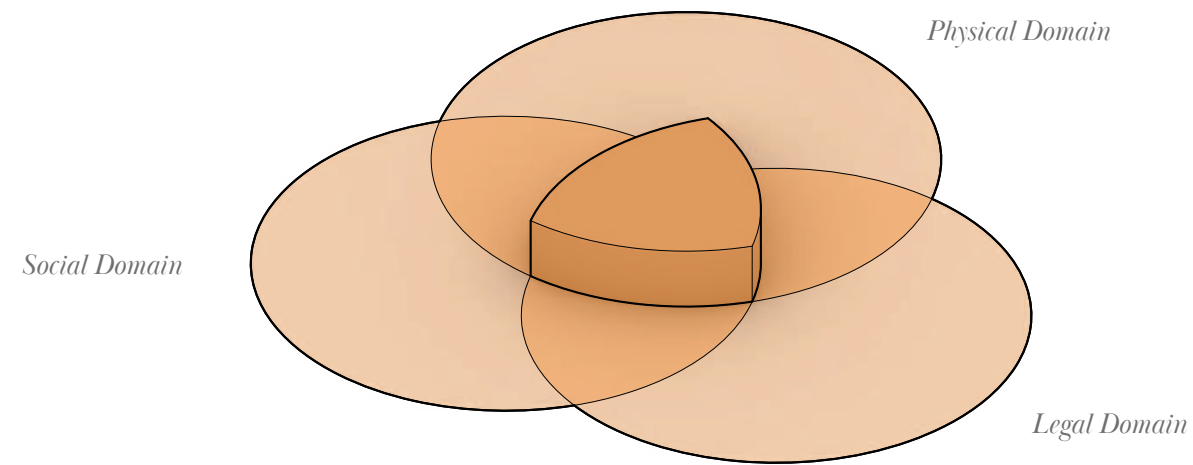


Fig .09: Diagram for architecture in the middle meeting the three dimensions of homelessness.

down of one's relations: physical, social, cultural and spiritual.¹⁷ An Indigenous lens on homelessness further reinforces and expands upon the importance of inclusion to the immaterial structures of life. Architecture can be considered not only for its physical presence, but also for its position in the social and legal systems of its place. Therefore the physical social and legal dimensions of architecture can address the physical social and legal dimensions of homelessness (Figure 09).

ENDNOTES:

¹³. Amore, Kate, Michael Baker, and Philippa Howden-Chapman. "The ETHOS definition and classification of homelessness: An analysis." *European Journal of Homelessness* 5, no. 2 (2011).

¹⁴. Ibid

¹⁵. Ibid

¹⁶. Kauppi, Carol, Bill O'Grady, Rebecca Schiff, and Fay Martin, eds. *Homelessness and Hidden Homelessness in Rural and Northern Ontario*. Guelph, ON: Rural Ontario Institute, 2017.

¹⁷. Thistle, J. (2017.) *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

Architecture, the built environment and the objects we make are often representative of the beliefs and values of the society they come from. In a field of study known as material culture, studying the artifacts of a specific time and place can give a portrait of the culture that created them.¹⁸ In Canada, many different spaces are built to help the homeless such as shelters, food banks and soup kitchens. These services spawn from a common social desire to eliminate homelessness, yet this desire and these developments often position the person who is experiencing homelessness as dependent on their circumstance and often reinforce the connotations of their homelessness. This negative attitude is revealed in the urban environment through artifacts of exclusionary hostile architecture. This exclusion comes often as a result of prejudice, which is transferred from the condition of homelessness to the individual who is experiencing it.¹⁹

Why is it that we as a society often have such negative reactions towards the group of the poor that we designate as “undeserving”? For an answer, we can look to the field of sociology and the work of Susan Fiske and George Allport who are leaders in the field of stereotypes and prejudice. The stereotype content model, which was developed by Fiske et al. 2002, proposes that all group stereotypes and interpersonal impressions form along two dimensions: warmth and competence (Figure 10).²⁰ Individuals experiencing homelessness where their circumstance is not immediately visible are often perceived as having low competence. Cultural stereotypes also associate these individuals as having a low level of warmth which is reinforced through storytelling and in

the media. This model can therefore explain why homelessness evokes emotional responses of disgust.²¹ Neuro-imaging analyses have confirmed these findings: images of individuals experiencing homelessness activated the areas of the brain that represent disgust reserved for inhuman objects. This sentiment was best put, although crassly, by social activist Peter Marin in the 1980s in his article “*Helping and Hating the Homeless*”:

“For many of us, the homeless are shit, and our policies toward them, our spontaneous sense of disgust and horror, our wish to be rid of them... all of this has hidden in it, close to its heart, our feelings about excrement.”²²

A methodology of treating homelessness that is based on the premise of elimination and exclusion is not only morally wrong, but also reinforces the state of homeless as a symptom of exclusion.

The emotions of disgust and the dehumanization of individuals experiencing homelessness that have been mapped in the brain can also be mapped in the urban environment through physical, social and legal means of exclusion (Figure 11). As a case study, I conducted a mapping exercise to identify and spatialize all of these physical manifestations of conflict in the downtown core of Sudbury,

STEREOTYPE CONTENT MODEL:

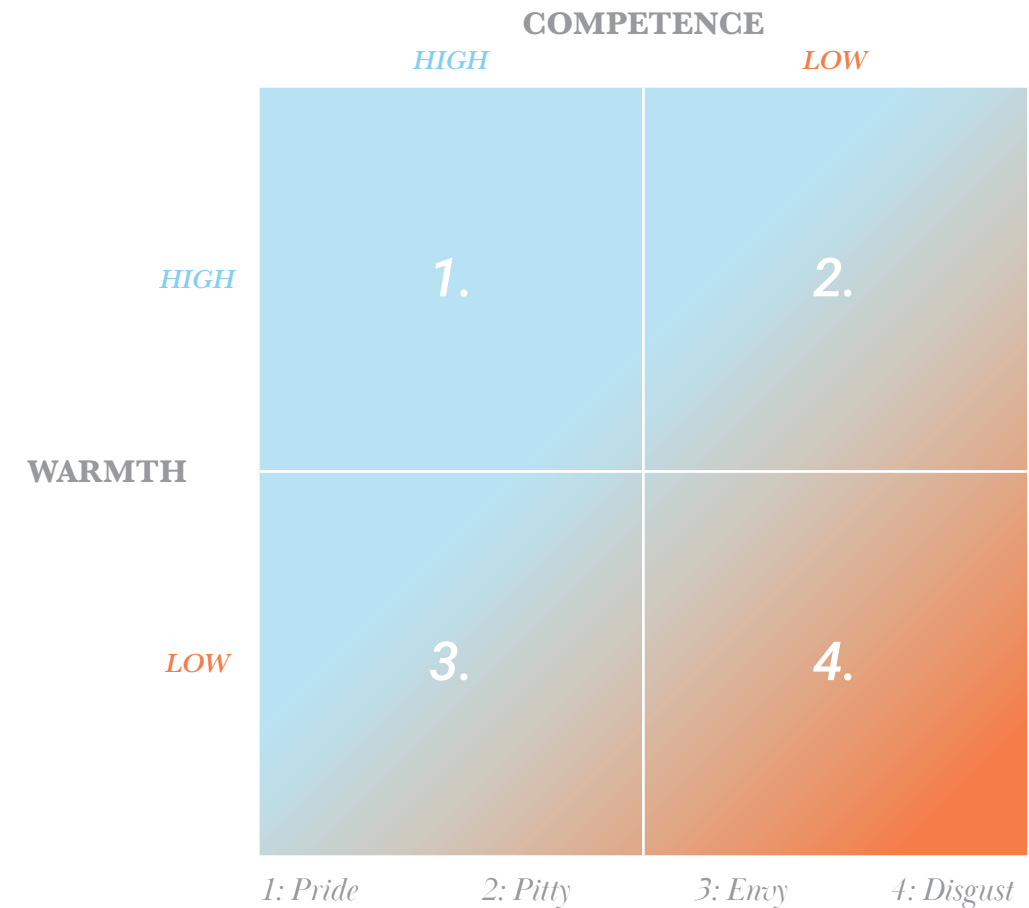


Fig. 10: Stereotype content model developed by Fiske et al. 2002. The homeless are often grouped in sector 4.

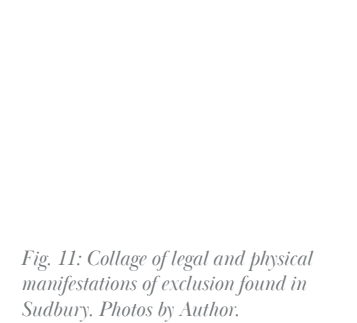
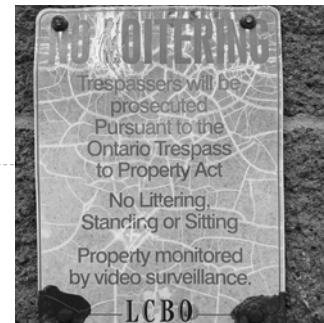


Fig. 11: Collage of legal and physical manifestations of exclusion found in Sudbury. Photos by Author.

Ontario. In Figure 12, the layer of orange circles represents the position of artifacts—signs, spikes and specific fences targeted towards keeping the homeless away from that space—within the city. This layer alone shows clusters where there appears to be the most conflict within the city. The next layer of the map is a series of blue buildings with blue paths connecting them. These figures represent the location of key service buildings within the downtown. Viewing both layers simultaneously, it becomes clear that the hostile artifacts are most dense around services and paths between services and are therefore specifically targeting this demographic. These findings demonstrate the efforts to control individuals on the street and ultimately the entire experience of homelessness. This mapping exercise reinforces the hypothesis that the areas of most contact between homeless and non-homeless individuals are also the areas of most conflict.

George Allport, in his seminal work *The Nature of Prejudice*, focuses on the transmission of prejudice and how it can be reversed. Allport makes the important observation that places of contact between ingroups and outgroups are where prejudice is most often transferred but also where it can be reversed.²³ Moments of interaction between people will either reinforce stereotypes about that group or change them. Referred to as intergroup contact, the conditions that lead to the reversal of stereotypes occur when contact is voluntary, under equal status, and or where collaboration can be facilitated.²⁴ On the other hand, further tests have been conducted of this theory and resolved that the key condition to positive contact is that it is voluntary.²⁵ Therefore, the architecture that draws homeless and non-homeless individuals together must allow for contact between the groups to be voluntary to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes. Architecture thus has the potential to address the social exclusion that accompanies homelessness.

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18. Glassie, Henry H. *Material Culture*. Bloomington (Ind.): Indiana University Press, 1999.
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20. Ibid
21. Fiske, Susan T., Amy JC Cuddy, Peter Glick, and Jun Xu. "A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition (2002)." In *Social cognition*, pp. 171-222. Routledge, 2018.
22. Harris L. T., Fiske S. T. (2006). Dehumanizing the lowest of the low: neuro-imaging responses to extreme outgroups. *Psychol. Sci.* 17 847–853. 10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01793.
23. Marin, Peter. "Helping and hating the homeless." *Harper's* 274, no. 1640 (1987): 39-49.
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25. Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(5), 751-783. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751>

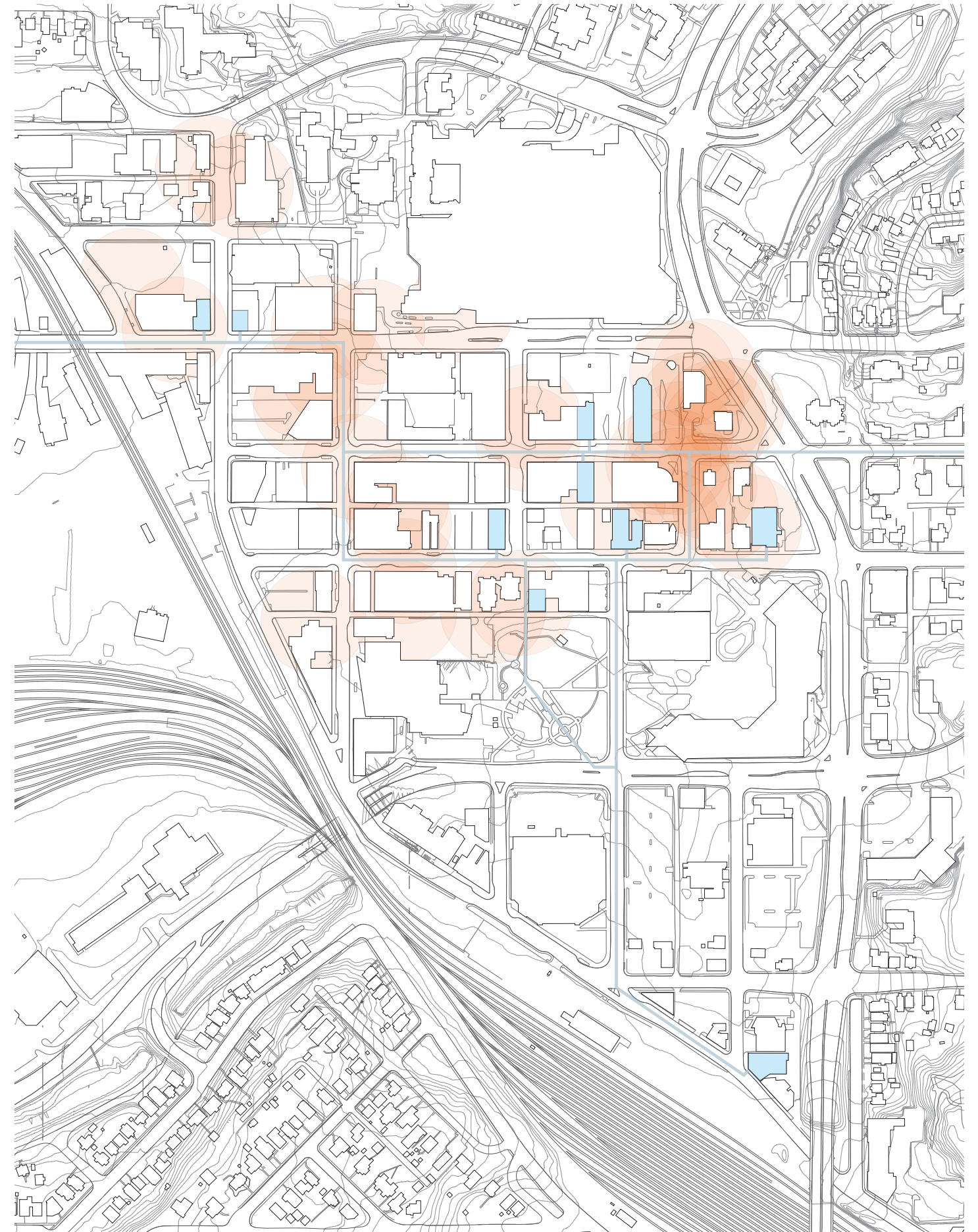


Fig. 12: Map of downtown Sudbury, each orange circle representing a 100m radius around a hostile artifact.

INTRODUCTION:

The word architecture is often used to describe buildings, infrastructure and installations and physical objects, however these objects do not exist independent of their social and cultural context. Architecture is not only what we build, but where we build it, how we build it, why we build it and who we build it for. Considering these other qualities of architecture, my research methodology has transitioned into building through research creation. In this section, I ask: how might architecture address homelessness through where it is built, how it is built, why it is built and who it is built for.

The key projects that I developed this research creation process from include *Give Me Shelter*, a 2016 fourth-year architecture homeless studio at the University of Southern California (USC) in collaboration with MADWORKSHOP, and the 1980s *Homeless Vehicle Projects* of artist Krzysztof Wodiczko. The Give Me Shelter studio sought to gain insight into the experience of homelessness in Los Angeles, California through taking on small scale building projects of personalized mobile

shelters and encampments for the homeless residents of Skid Row.²⁶ Krzysztof Wodiczko's work, however, is much more positioned as activism. Wodiczko meticulously designed and built shopping carts that could meet the daily needs of someone who is homeless and then exhibited them to draw attention to the needs of the homeless.²⁷ With inspiration from these works, I position my own project as less of an exposition of the physical dimensions of homelessness and more of an exhibition of its legal and social dimensions.

Hostile architecture arises in urban spaces where contact between homeless and non-homeless individuals develops into conflict. My research creation begins by arising from these physical traces of conflict. I have designed two artifacts that engage their physical, social and legal context to defuse the conflict and create productive spaces of intergroup contact. The interventions are located at specific sites of conflict that I have identified within downtown Sudbury as having the most potential for people to engage with them, in hopes to shift both the perception of the space and the participants.

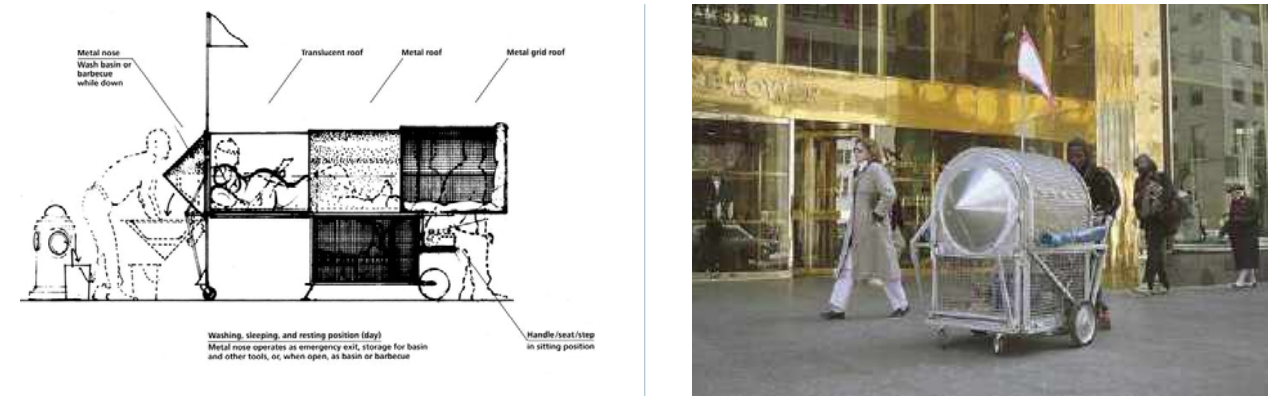


Fig. 13: Krzysztof Wodiczko's Homeless Vehicle Projects were objects designed and tuned to meet every need a person living on the street might have. They were empathetic vehicles that were given to individuals experiencing homelessness and they were also pieces of public art. The objects were also designed to draw attention to the phenomenon of homelessness in New York. The objects were not only physical but political objects, designed to provoke the public by demanding them to notice the individual who inhabited them. Homeless Vehicle Project, Krzysztof Wodiczko, 1988



Fig. 14: The project out of USC followed a methodology of three successive design build exercises progressing from small nomadic shelters, to a semi-permanent shelter, to a large scale modular housing typology. The students entered the world of individuals experiencing homelessness by taking on their way of thinking through constructing personalized and empathetic structures of shelter. Although this process was helpful for the students, all of the objects built only met the physical needs of the individual they were designed for, neglecting the social and legal domains of homelessness. Homeless Studio, USC/MADWORKSHOP, 2016

FREE COFFEE STALL:



Fig. 15: Facade of Canadian Federal building downtown Sudbury at intersection of Cedar St. and Lisgar St., 1996.



Fig. 16: Facade of Canadian Federal building downtown Sudbury at intersection of Cedar St. and Lisgar St., 2019.

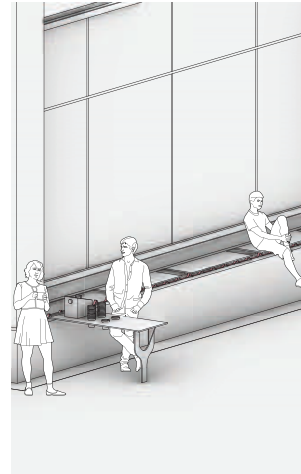


Fig. 17: Proposed intervention to facade.



Fig. 18: Completed installation, October 30, 2019.

The first research creation object was designed for the facade of the Government of Canada building located at the intersection of Cedar and Lisgar streets. Constructed in 1957, the Government of Canada building was designed to be more public, using the deep facade with recessed window sills that also function as benches.²⁸ Designated as a Canadian heritage building, its 1996 facade has been used for decades as a space for public socialization (Figure 15).²⁹ Since then, metal spikes have been installed along every public ledge of the building in an attempt to deter homeless individuals from laying and sleeping on them overnight (Figure 16). This sad story of the death of this public space inspired me to design an object to subvert the device of exclusion back to a physical space of inclusion and socialization.

The idea for this object started with the design of a series of benches to cover the spikes and return the ledge to a comfortable place to sit or lay down (Figure 19). The next step in this

process was to introduce a program that drew people of all backgrounds around a common need. After some deliberation, I decided that offering free coffee was my strategy to bring people to the site and invite them to sit down on the newly reclaimed ledge. The final object consisted of two four-foot long benches that rested on the spikes and one table, designed to serve coffee from Tim Hortons. The table extended out from the spikes with a collapsible leg, making the whole object temporary and portable (Figure 20).

I chose 12:00pm on a weekday as the ideal time to set up the installation because of the increased foot traffic that would be created by the lunch-hour crowd at the surrounding offices. When I arrived the day of the installation, the site was empty. As I set up the benches and table along with my coffee supply from Tim Hortons, the first person came and interacted with the installation. The individual was an elderly man in a wheelchair. I poured his coffee and we began a conversation about

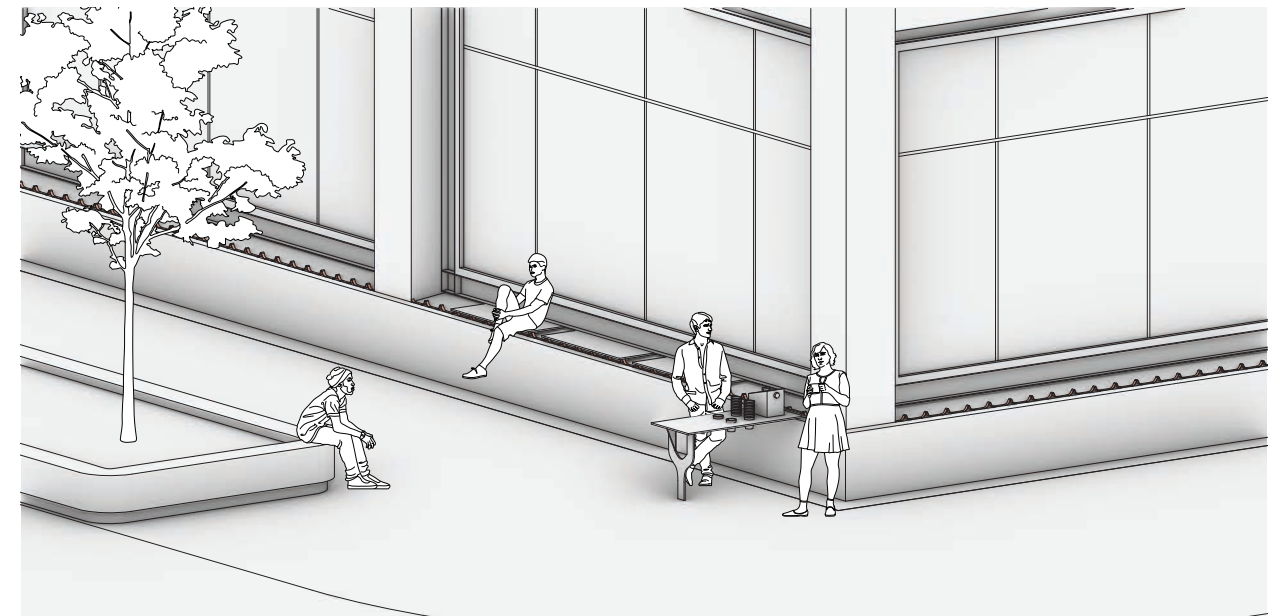


Fig. 19: Perspective of communal space created by Free Coffee Stall.

why I was giving out coffee. The man ended our conversation with, “I’ll head out now, I don’t want to scare people away from your project,” yet before he could finish his sentence, someone came up behind him and was waiting in line for a cup of coffee. Over the course of an hour, I served 48 cups of coffee to a diverse crowd of people ranging from teenagers to middle-class office workers, to people who identified as homeless, to seniors. Two strangers decided to split the last cup of coffee, one taking the last milk and the other the last sugar. After an hour of serving, I was forced to leave because I had run out of coffee. The strongest effect I believe my intervention had was its ability to welcome people to linger along its benches after receiving their coffee. People from all classes sat together, undeterred by their differences, united by one compassionate act.

Many people asked me questions. While the most common was, “Why are you doing this?” some asked, “Do you know where I can get a free meal around here?” or “How do I get to the YMCA from here?” The question about why I was doing this turned into conversations about why we exclude individuals experiencing homelessness in the city. I was able to have these conversations with people from diverse

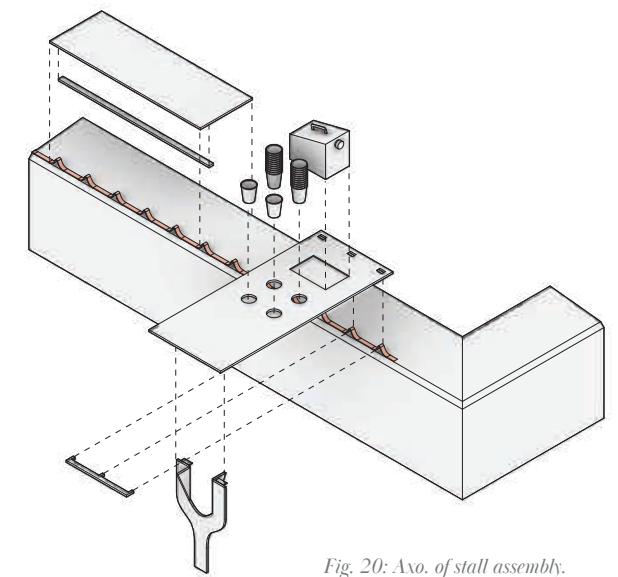


Fig. 20: Axo. of stall assembly.

backgrounds and with people living on the street who were all too familiar with the spikes as deterrents to them laying down.

The most powerful effect of my installation had to be that even when I stopped talking, the people around me continued conversations amongst themselves. My installation became an informal site of dialogue among people of diverse backgrounds on the topic of exclusion and inclusion of homeless individuals within the public realm of the city.

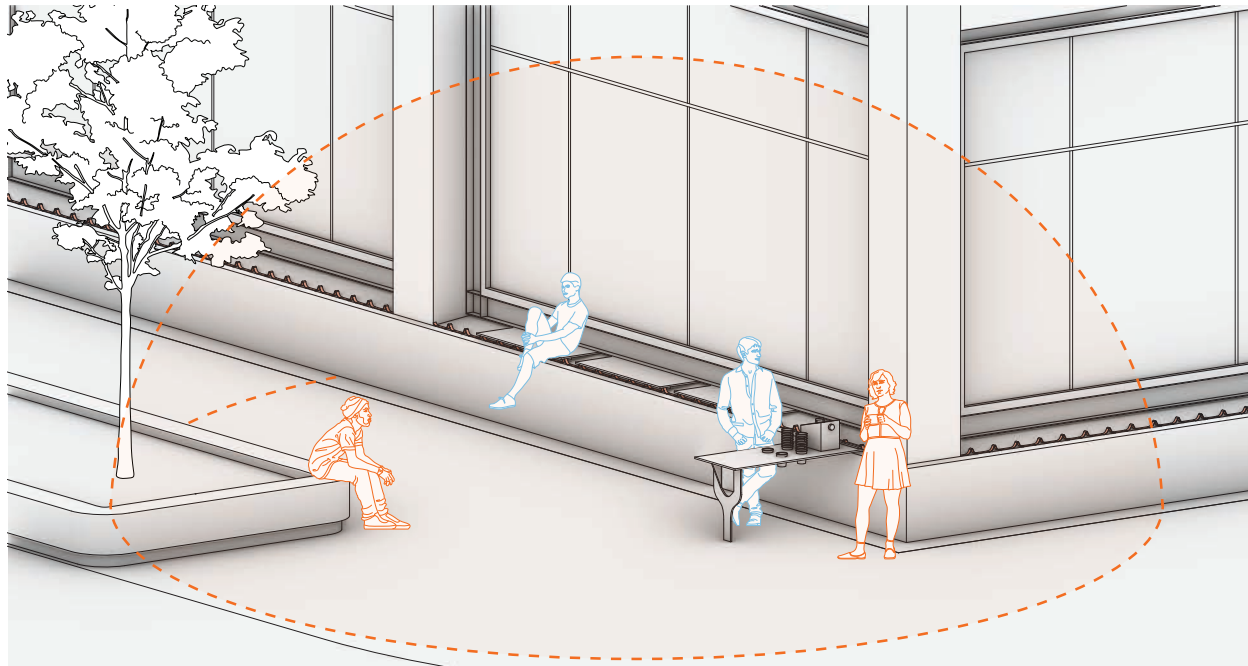


Fig. 21: Positive Contact zone created around Free Coffee Stall.

The peoples' response was overwhelmingly positive. I received countless smiles, handshakes, and even a hug. I found that most people understood that individuals experiencing homelessness are victims of circumstance, mental illness, or other external factors. The two general attitudes expressed were: we want to be included and we want to be inclusive. Yet there was a "but" following these sentiments, tied to issues of liability, safety, and "bad apples". People wanted to change to be more inclusive, yet were stuck in their old mentality of exclusion. Despite these concerns, I believe the success of my installation has demonstrated that a future attitude of inclusivity is possible and is for the better (Figure 21).

"I dont want coffee, I just want to hear about what youre doing."

"We love what you have done, if only more of downtown could be like this!"

"Can I give you a hug?"

"Do you know where I can get a free meal around here?"

"We want to be inclusive."

"We want to be included."

"You take the sugar, i'll take the milk"



Fig. 22: Two people sharing the last milk and sugar.



Fig. 23: The stall's integration into the building facade.

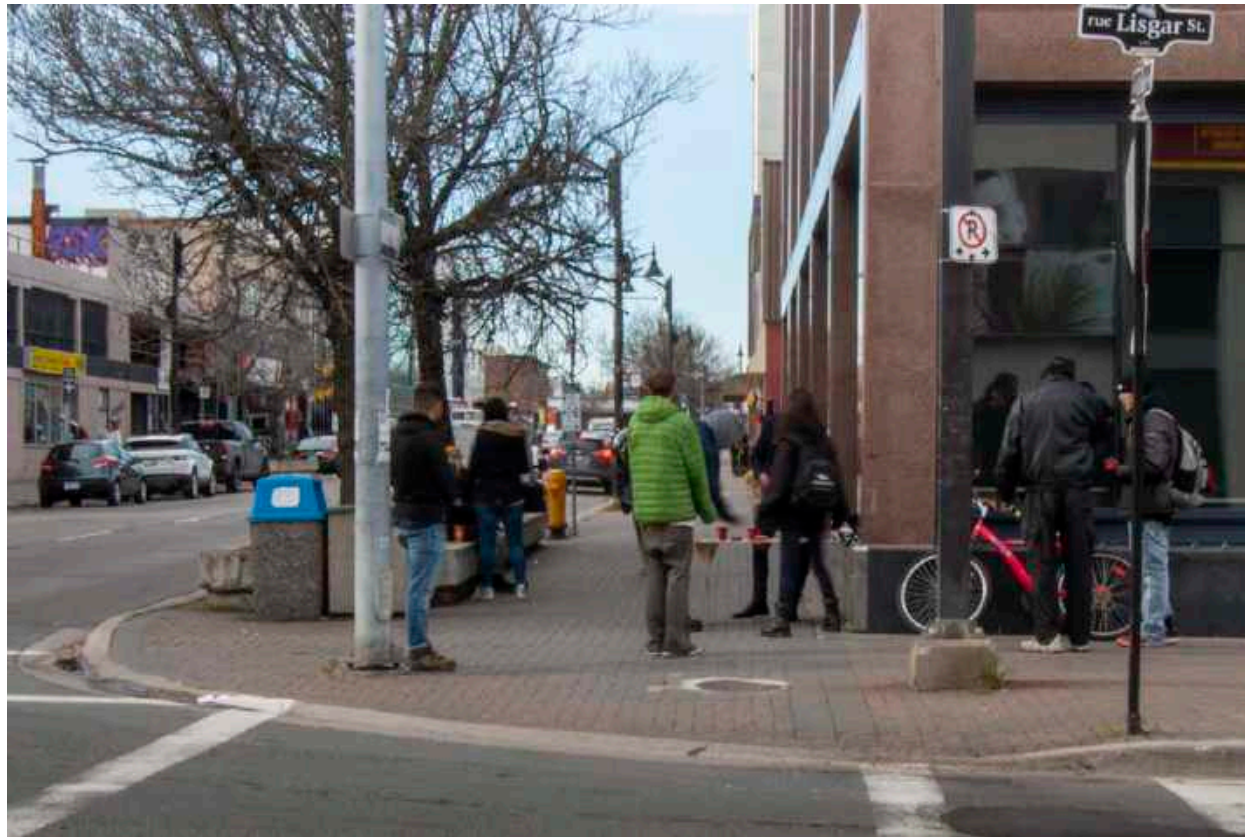


Fig. 24: The coffee stall integrating into the sidewalk.



Fig. 26: People of different age and class together.



Fig. 25: People with all of their belongings stopping for coffee.



Fig. 27: Someone enjoying their coffee.

FENCE BENCH:



Fig. 28: Social life of site pre-fence, 2006.



Fig. 29: Bylaws, dumpsters, fences and spikes used to keep people off of property, 2019.



Fig. 30: Proposed intervention to fence.



Fig. 31: Completed intervention November 18, 2019.

I acknowledge that the site I chose for Object 1, though historically interesting, did not represent the site with the most conflict in downtown Sudbury. To test my hypothesis at its extreme, my second installation was designed for the Tim Hortons and LCBO plaza, located at the intersection of Cedar and Paris streets. Owned by development company Dalron, this location has been the site of countless news stories of violence. The tension is palpable at Tim Hortons. The site is located at the intersection of a methadone clinic, mental health and addictions clinic and the public transit terminal. These three services account for an increased presence of people living on the street in the area. Additionally, this site is made up of a series of ledges that are often used by homeless individuals for smoking and socializing (Figure 28). The site is so heavily used by this population that in 2006, the property owner installed spikes on all of the ledges and fences along the property to curb this behaviour (Figure 29). The installation had little effect though. In 2017, Dalron took it a step further and designated the property as an Ontario Smoke-Free zone, meaning people smoking

on the property may not only be fined but also legally removed. The selective enforcement of these policies against individuals experiencing homelessness is an example of the physical and legal means of exclusion. Although the bylaws and fences eventually succeeded in keeping unwanted individuals off the property, the other side of the fence quickly became the new site of smoking and socialization. The fence is now used to lean against, lock up bikes, and to hang jackets and other belongings on. This informal transformation of the public side of the fence into an active social zone used primarily by individuals experiencing homelessness and living on the street is what inspired my second installation.

The idea for this second installation started with the notion of hanging something off the fence (Figure 30). The gesture that I believed would address the physical and legal dimensions of the site was to create a place to sit (Figure 31). I created a series of benches that hung off of the fence as an intervention to subvert the physical barrier as an object of exclusion and instead to use it as something that gives comfort to those that are excluded. It

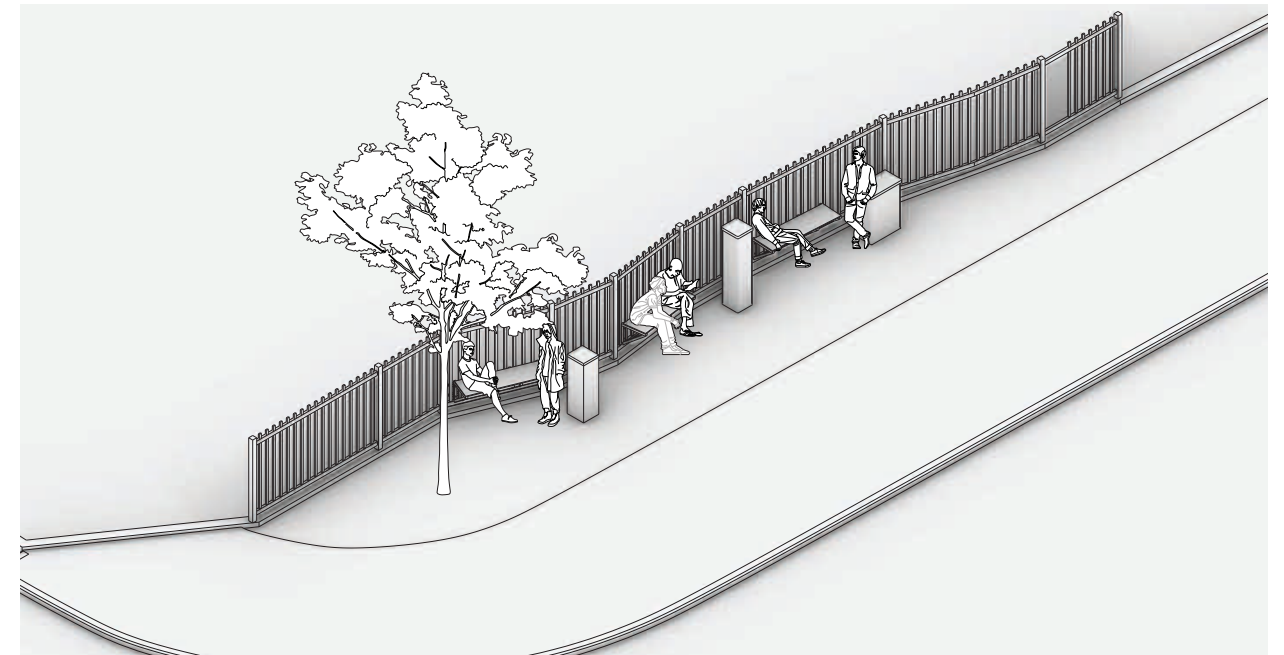


Fig. 32: Perspective of people inhabiting bench.

was my intention to create a bench long enough to seat the people who regularly frequent the site, while also inviting outsiders to come and socialize (Figure 32).

The final design was made up of three benches, varying in length, fastened to three sections of the fence. The bench was designed to rest along the bottom crossbar of the fence. Its vertical supports slot in between the fence pickets and lock into place with rotating pieces that span the pickets on either side of the support (Figure 33). The three benches were too heavy for me to carry to the site alone, so I created a dolly that was minimally designed to help me roll the benches into place efficiently.

As with my first installation, I chose to set it up at the time with most pedestrian activity: 12:00pm on a weekday. As I arrived the day of the installation, there was already a group of six people standing by the fence. As I entered the group, I was faced with confused and hostile looks. Yet as I unpacked the benches and people saw what I had done, their attitudes changed. The people were excited and even moved their things out of the way to allow me to set up. One person even yelled, "Now I have a

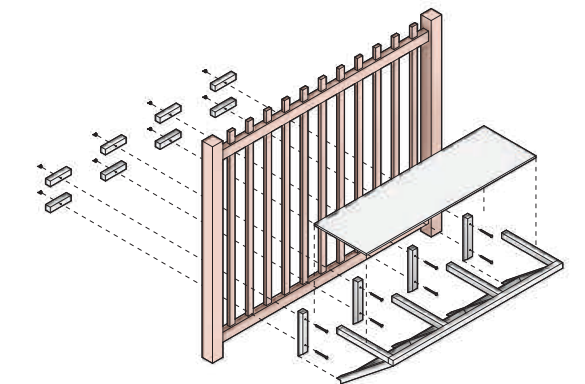


Fig. 33: Axo. of bench assembly.

place to sleep tonight!" Once all three benches were set up, I sat down and started talking with everyone. Slowly, a crowd of people started gathering around the benches. Over 25 people stopped by within an hour. Some people sat, some put their bags and jackets down on the benches, and others stood around.

The first thing people wanted to know was if these benches were going to be permanent and the second was questioning who made them and why. I explained that I planned on leaving them as long as security would let me and that I built them as a way of changing the attitude of exclusion within the city. People were quick to share their sentiments about how they were treated with hostility and how they

"Now I have a place to sleep tonight."

"This is so kind, thank you for acknowledging us."

"Can these be permanent?"

"Don't listen to the security guard, if he tries to take these away we'll fight him!"

"We should lock this up at night so that the city doesn't come and take it!"

"Respect is earned, you showed us respect, the delinquents who run that Tim Hortons never show us respect, so why should we show them any?"

were excluded from other places downtown. The reaction was overwhelmingly positive and everyone seemingly took ownership of the benches immediately. After about 20 minutes, a security guard of the property came over to the benches and asked what was going on. I expected him to be hostile and to demand the removal of the benches, but instead he was simply curious. I explained that I was using this installation to explore how we can shift from an approach of exclusion towards individuals experiencing homelessness to one of inclusion. He surprisingly agreed with me and liked my idea so much he said he would tell his boss about it as a way to improve their property. He unfortunately ended our conversation by confirming that I would have to remove the benches, as the fence was private property. I was able to keep the benches there for another hour, but eventually I was pressured to remove them. As I started to remove the benches, the people around me got upset and started brainstorming ways that might be acceptable for the benches to remain. One person suggested I build new benches that don't touch the fence. Another suggested I leave them just one bench to use. It was clear that this act of inclusion had garnered their respect.

I had three major takeaways from this second installation: that including someone is a sign of respect and showing someone respect can earn you respect back; that a simple object, like a bench, can be used for so many other things; and that social groups do not always mix, even when given the opportunity.

In one of my conversations while sitting on the bench with a man living on the street, I said that everyone deserves to be respected. He quickly responded by saying, "No, respect is earned." I found this sentiment to be common among this group. Because they were not being shown respect, they had no intention of showing respect. The issue with this approach to exclusion is the conflict it creates; there will always be someone who does not feel like they are being shown respect. Meanwhile, the simple act of giving someone a place to sit was enough for me to instantly gain the respect of this entire group of people.

I also found that although people sat on the bench, they also appropriated it for uses I could not have imagined. For example, two men, who were carrying a bag of power tools, stopped and placed their bag down on the bench, kneeled in front of it, and used it as a surface to clean their tools. Another two

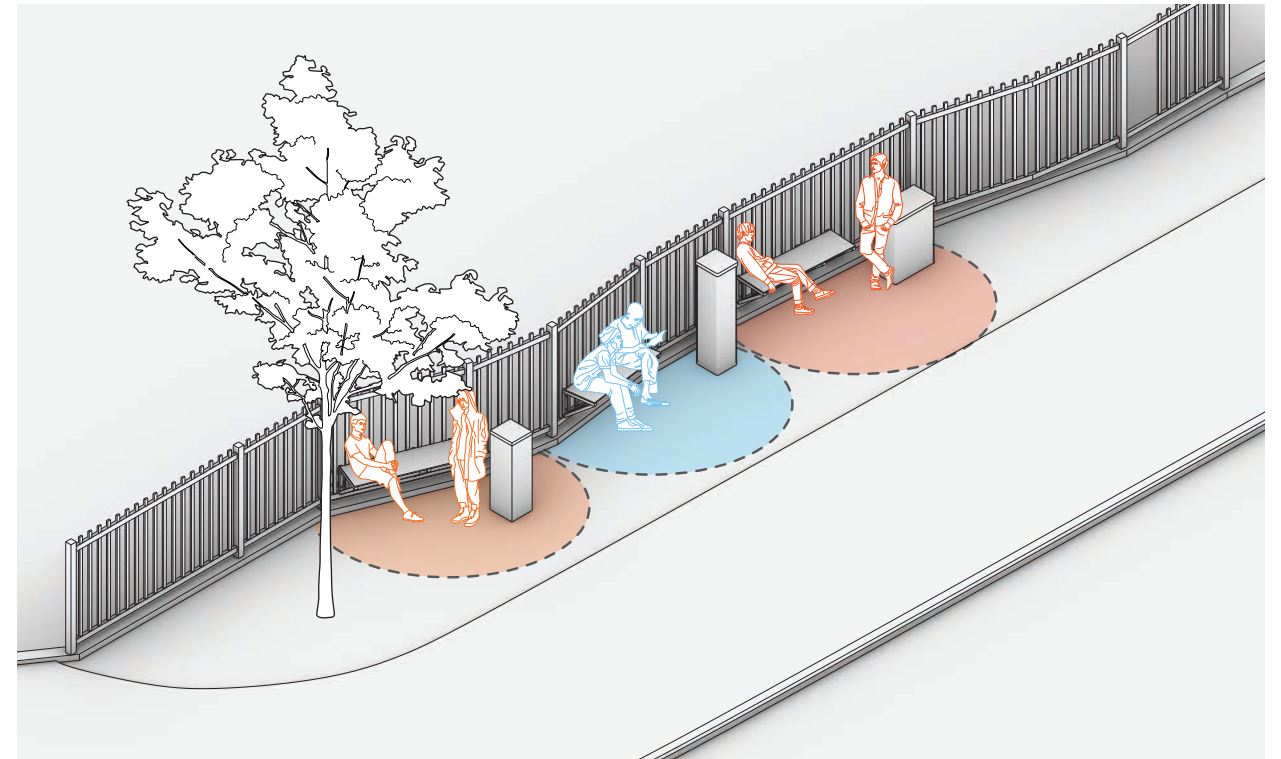


Fig. 34: Social distance between groups at benches.

men sat on the bench for the whole hour, colouring together. While these were both unexpected positive uses of the space, I also witnessed someone sell heroin and another group unpack and smoke a bong. The latter two uses are unfortunately synonymous with this group of people, yet these activities were likely to have still happened without the bench there. Nonetheless, I believe that the positive uses outweigh the negative and justify the necessity of the bench in this high-conflict area.

Though this project was well-received by the people who gathered around it, I found that the people who stopped at the benches were all from the same social group—people connected by living on the street. People from other backgrounds looked on from afar and were clearly talking about the benches, but no outsider came to sit on the benches. This observation brought me to my last finding: that although I had designed the benches to be long

enough to accompany different social groups, the one group that had gathered around the bench conveyed a sense of dominance that extended beyond themselves to deter outsiders from the other benches (Figure 33). Although a bench is something that is socially accessible to everybody, it is still a socially constructed space, and without a common program such as coffee to draw people together, the odds of bringing two different groups together are much less likely. I learned that when creating inclusive public spaces, you must provide adequate and enticing opportunities for social groups to coexist (Figure 34).



Fig. 35: People inhabiting the benches.



Fig. 37: Someone taking ownership and adjusting the bench on their own.



Fig. 36: Talking with the group about how they feel about their exclusion.



Fig. 38: The group with their belongings in their hands before the benches were installed.



Fig. 39: The temporary installment method I designed to hang the bench.



Fig. 40: Two people wanted me to take their picture on the bench.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the findings from these two research creation projects have demonstrated the potential of creating inclusion through interventions that serve individuals experiencing homelessness. Shared inclusive spaces create opportunities for dialogue and build understanding between social groups. Simple acts of inclusion show respect that, in turn, garners respect. The overwhelmingly positive response from these installations has inspired me to share my findings to raise the public's awareness about these topics. I hope to have my findings published in the local news so as to create a larger dialogue about homelessness, conflict and exclusion within the city of Sudbury.

ENDNOTES:

26. Borges, Sofia, R. Scott Mitchell, and Eric Garcetti. *Give Me Shelter: Architecture Takes on the Homeless Crisis*. Novato, CA: Oro Editions, 2018.

27. Wodiczko, Krzysztof. *Critical Vehicles: Writings, Projects, Interviews*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.

28. "Government of Canada Building." *HistoricPlaces.ca* - [HistoricPlaces.ca](https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=11081). Parks Canada. Accessed November 16, 2019. <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=11081>.

29. *Ibid*

PART II:

ONTOLOGY

Definition:

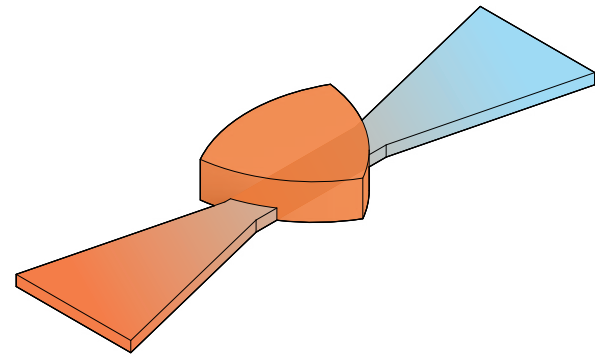
Theories concerned with the nature and relations of being or the kind of things that have existence.³⁶

In this section of I will be studying and then proposing new services for the homeless that represent my epistemology from part one.

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Chapter 06:	<i>Site Analysis</i>	41
Chapter 07:	<i>Program Development</i>	47
Chapter 08:	<i>Praxis</i>	53

³⁶ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "ontology," accessed April 29, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ontology>.

Chapter 05: Hypothesis



ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTION:

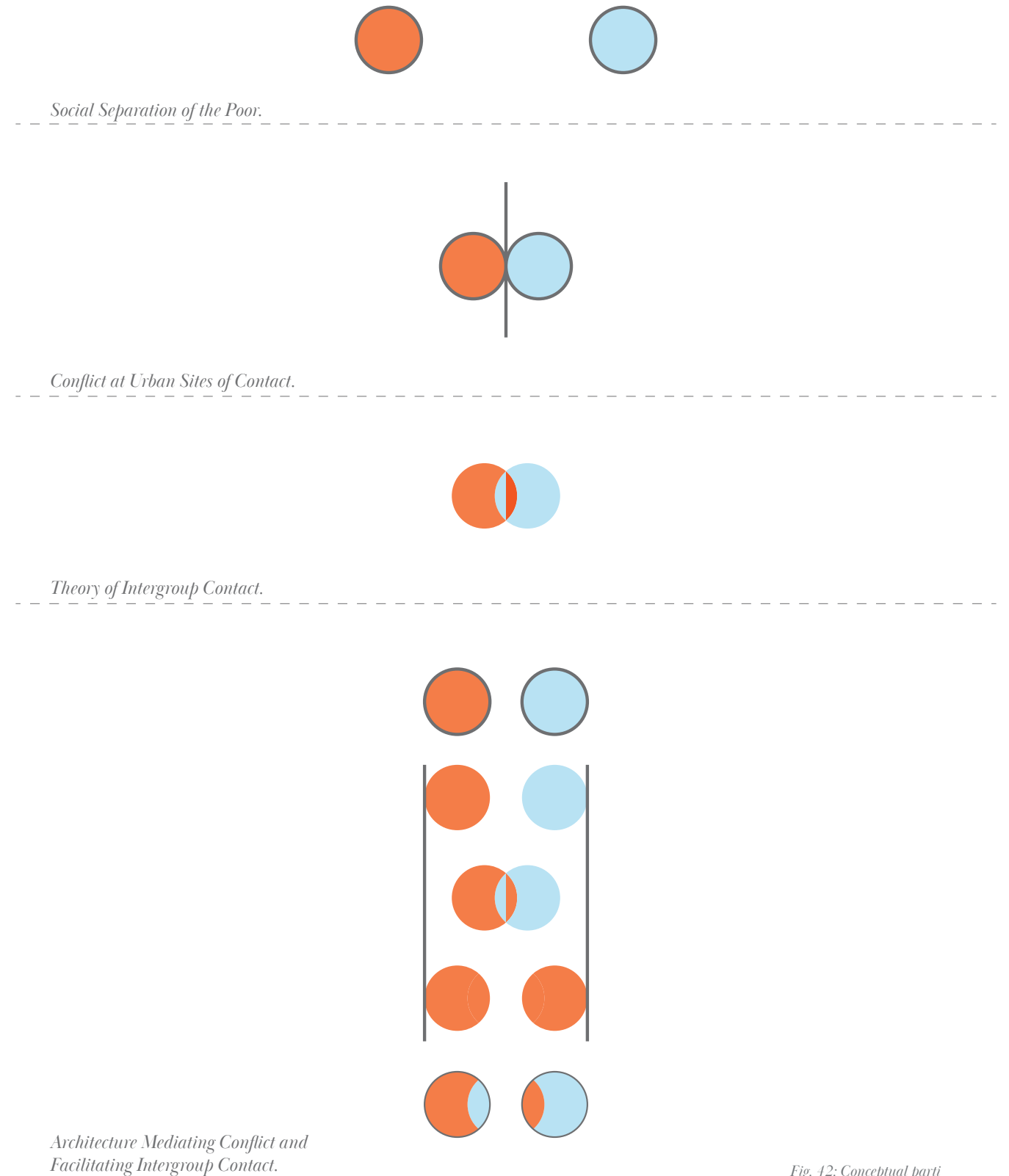
The hypothesis of this thesis is built upon the premise of architecture serving two roles in addressing homelessness in northern Ontario. The first role is the possibility of architecture to not only address the physical dimensions of homelessness, but also the social and legal (Figure 41). The second role is the possibility of architecture to function as a mediator between the individual experiencing homelessness and the social and cultural connotations that are associated with their circumstance (Figure 42). To mediate, architecture must work to facilitate positive intergroup contact in the urban environment. It is in this dual action that architecture has the potential to meet the individual needs of someone experiencing homelessness and address the underlying cultural and societal attitudes that accompany it.

At the root of this theory is the idea of separating the individual from their circumstance and approaching them with an attitude of inclusion. There are several key theories that can be studied to understand how architecture can act to include individuals in the social and legal domains of home. One such theory is the idea of social infrastructure and the right to the city. Eric Klinenberg, in his book *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*, defines social infrastructure as “the physical places and organizations that shape

the way people interact.”³⁰ Klinenberg’s thesis is that building social infrastructures, defined as places where all kinds of people can gather, is the best way to repair the fractured societies of today. To demonstrate his theory, Klinenberg spent a year traveling and studying libraries across America that function as prime spaces of social infrastructure. What makes libraries successful examples of social infrastructure is their accessibility as a civic space, lacking any commercial pressures to access the space. In addition, their extensive programming not only attracts people across different backgrounds but also brings them together.³¹ The uniqueness of programs in libraries is that they are designed with a principal commitment to openness and inclusion, which fosters social cohesion between individuals who would not typically interact. Klinenberg found that places with more social infrastructure were not only generally more pleasant places to live, but that these communities were more connected and more resilient.

Libraries are often key resources accessed by individuals experiencing homelessness for shelter, access to technology, and inclusive programming. However, the theory of social infrastructure is broader than just the civic library. If one were to consider the architecture of social service buildings located in urban areas, such as the Samaritan Centre in Sudbury, Ontario, as social infrastructure, they

Fig. 41: Conceptual parti of my proposals.



Architecture Mediating Conflict and Facilitating Intergroup Contact.

Fig. 42: Conceptual parti intergroup contact.

could act to connect those that are homeless back into the social domain of cities.

The right to the city is a theory that was first developed by Henri Lefebvre in his 1968 book, *Le droit à la ville*. The theory has since been taken up by numerous social movements and activists as a call for equality and access to public city space.³² The right to the city was developed as a response to the rapid commodification and commercialization of public space as well as to cities that threatened to annihilate urban life in a capitalist society.³³ Key theorists such as David Harvey have written extensively about how capitalist markets are eliminating public space through commodification and the exclusion of those who do not contribute to the market such as individuals experiencing homelessness.³⁴ The legal exclusion of this group of people, can in Harvey's eyes be seen as a symptom of capitalism and the commercialization of public space. The right to the city therefore postulates that the provision of inclusive public space is an act of resistance to the commercial and legal exclusion of individuals experiencing homelessness in cities. Creating housing and social services that protect public space while foregoing the tradition of posting anti-loitering and trespassing bylaws is a way by which architecture can legally include individuals experiencing homelessness.

Finally, Allport's theory of intergroup contact postulates that the conditions optimal for contact to reduce prejudice include: equal status between the groups in the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and the support of authorities or law.³⁵ The theory of social infrastructure contributes to the destigmatization of social interaction by meeting the conditions of equal status, common goals, and intergroup cooperation. The theory of the right to the city reinforces the importance of equal status and the support of authorities or law in public spaces. Therefore, it is clear that architecture treating homelessness can be measured in its potential to reduce prejudice by its provision of interactions under Allport's three optimal conditions (Figure 43).

ENDNOTES:

30. Klinenberg, Eric. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. New York: Crown, 2018.

31. Ibid

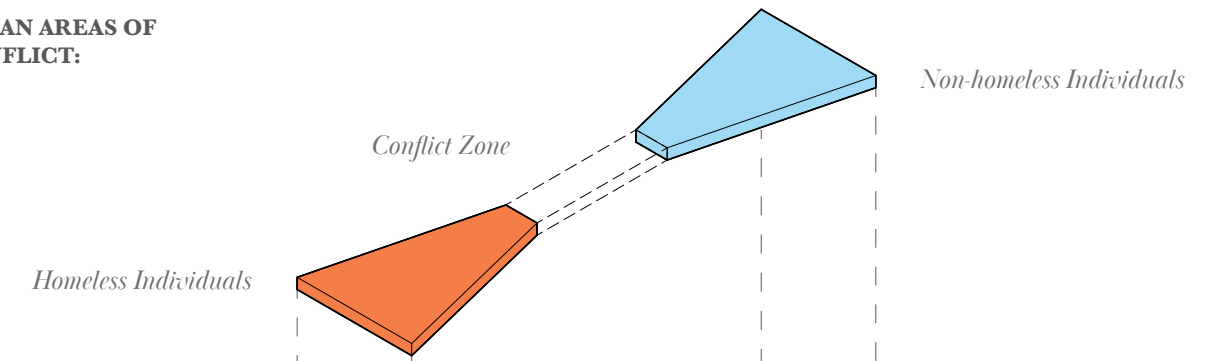
32. Harvey, David. "Right to the City." *New Left Review*, no. 53 (Sept-Oct 2008): 23-42.

33. Lefebvre, Henri. *Le Droit à La Ville*. Paris, Anthropos, 1968.

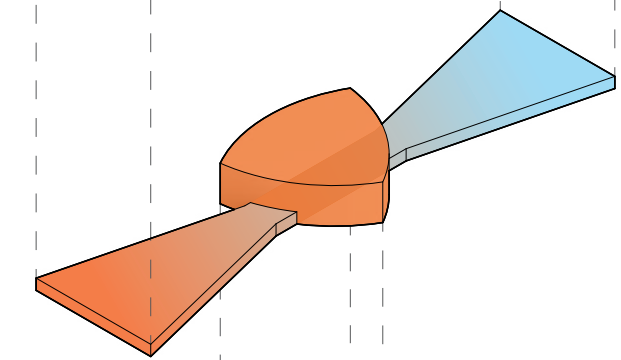
34. Harvey, David. "Right to the City." *New Left Review*, no. 53 (Sept-Oct 2008): 23-42.

35. Allport G.W. *The Nature of Prejudice*. 1954.

URBAN AREAS OF CONFLICT:



ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTION:



THREE DOMAINS OF HOME:

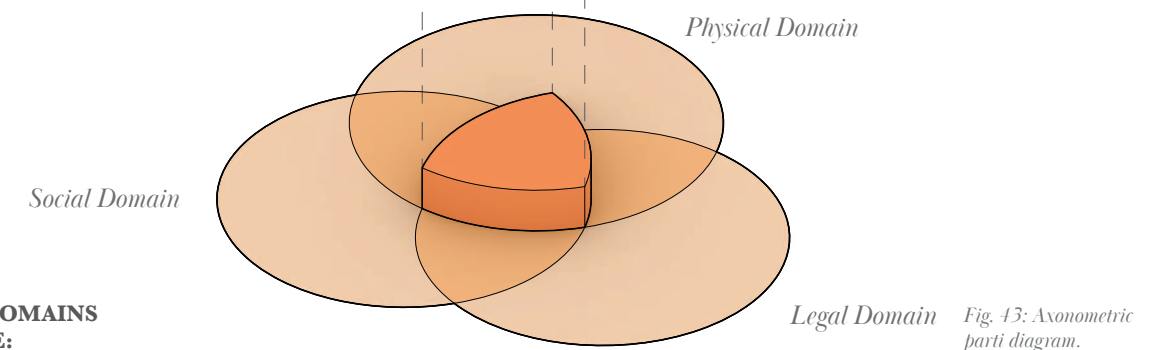


Fig. 43: Axonometric parti diagram.

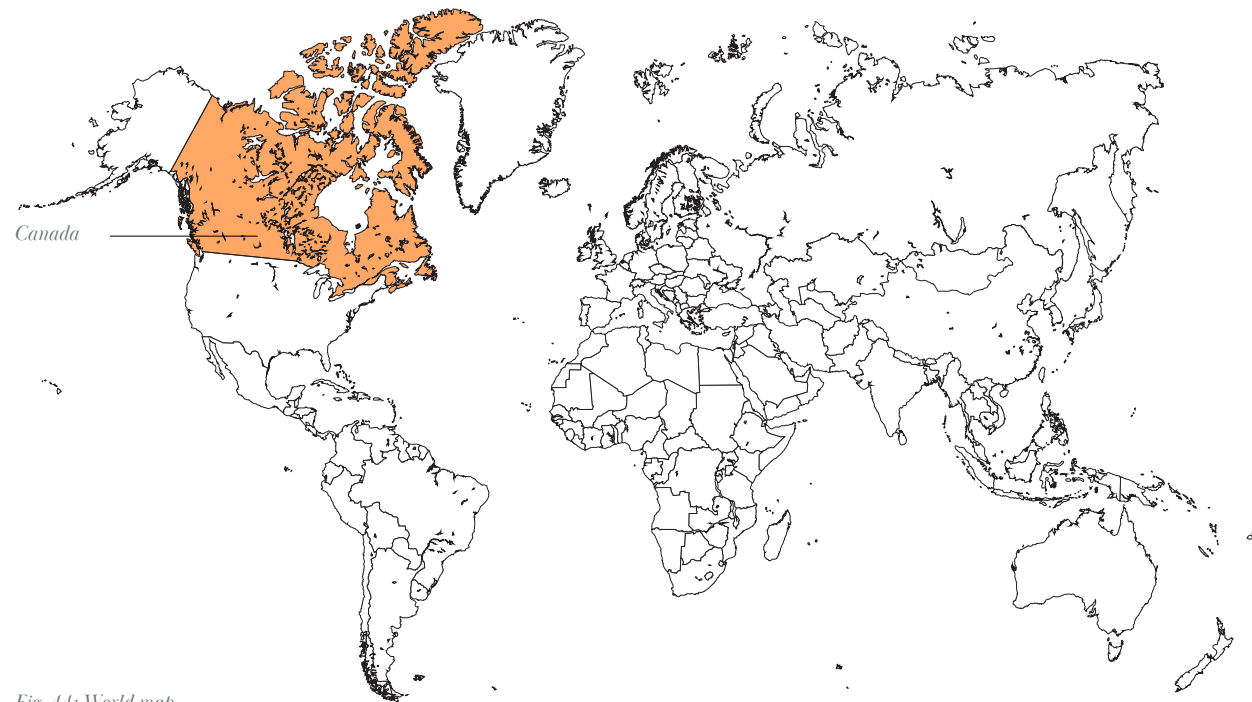


Fig. 44: World map.

Homelessness is a universal phenomenon, yet its manifestations are incredibly local. Modes of homelessness vary between country, province and even city. Often primarily thought of as an urban phenomenon, a recent Canadian social survey found that compared with urban dwellers, a higher percentage of northern and rural residents had experienced homelessness at some point.³⁷ Understanding the nuances of northern homelessness, specifically as it manifests in Sudbury, is key to unlocking the potential dimensions architecture is able to serve in this area.

Sudbury is located in a region of the province of Ontario known as the “near north”. As shown in Figure 44, the city of Sudbury is

situated approximately in the middle of the province, yet located above all of the densest populated areas of the province. Other large northern cities in Ontario include North Bay, Timmins, Sault Ste Marie, and Thunder Bay, yet among them Sudbury has the largest and densest population. As the regional capital of northeastern Ontario, Sudbury is the main destination for people migrating to the area.

The demographics of Sudbury display that there is a significant number of homeless individuals who migrate to the city either en route to somewhere else or to stay and access the services provided there.³⁸ In their 2014 study, *Migratory and Transient Homelessness in Northern Ontario: Pathways to Homelessness in Sudbury and Its Related Impacts*, Carol Kauppi et al. identify

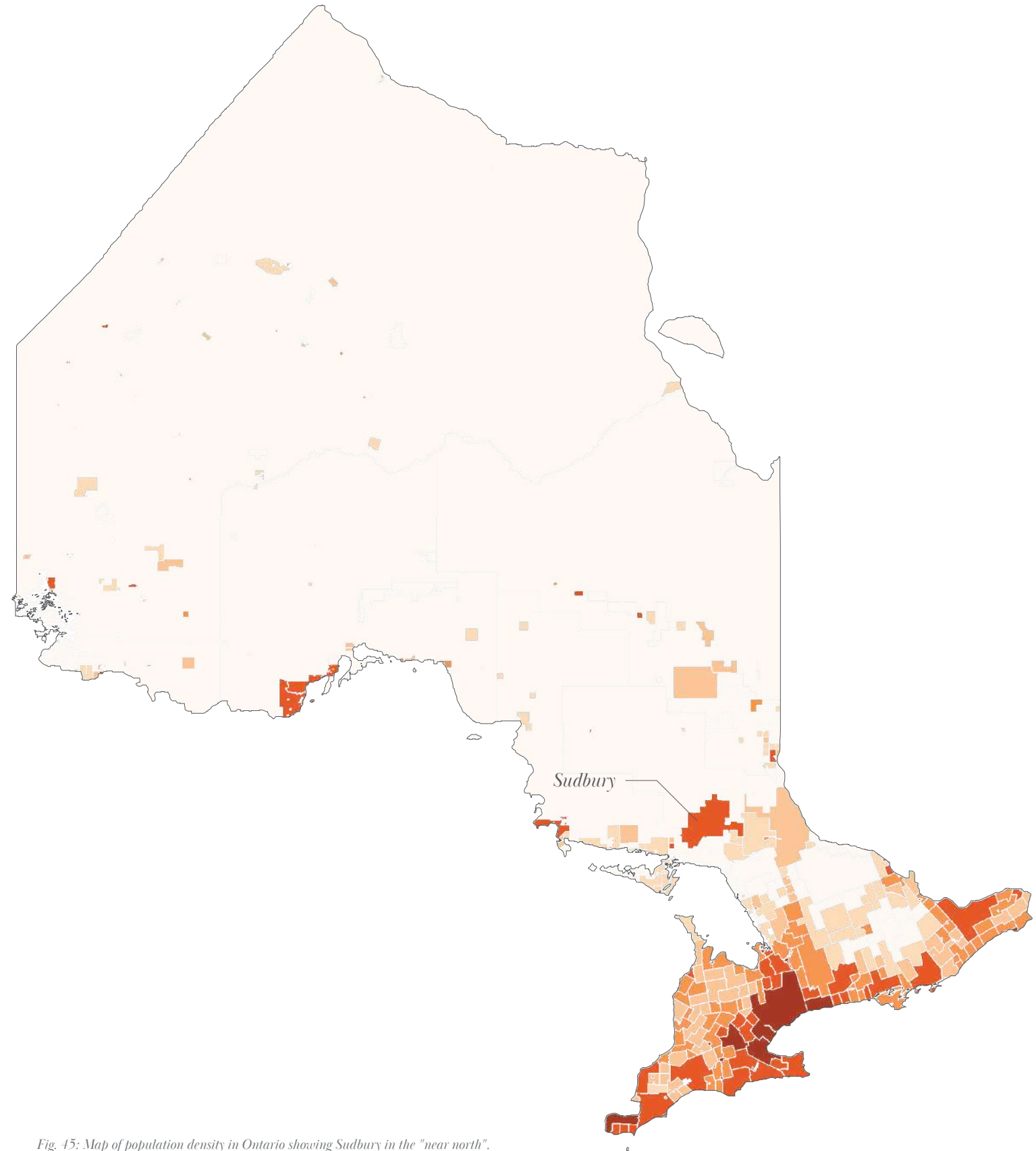


Fig. 45: Map of population density in Ontario showing Sudbury in the “near north”.

Sudbury as a hub for homelessness activity in northern Ontario.³⁹ Kauppi et al found that over a quarter of the total homeless population in Sudbury was migratory or transient.⁴⁰ Using data from Kauppi et al. (2014) I created a map to chart the regions of Ontario that homeless individuals migrated from by proportion (Figure 47).⁴¹ This diagram shows that not only do individuals migrate from other northern cities to Sudbury, but also that the second largest percentage of individuals were coming from southern Ontario. Sudbury can therefore be understood as a hub for homelessness in northern Ontario, as well as having significant ties to the homeless communities in other parts of the province.

Interestingly, the individuals experiencing homeless in Sudbury share different characteristics than those in urban areas. Kauppi et al. (2014) found that the majority of homeless migrant and transient individuals are single men without children. Furthermore, they are most often in a state of absolute homelessness, having left behind all connection and support.⁴² Figure 46 identifies three subgroups of migratory and transient homeless individuals: those who have recently migrated, those who have stayed for an extended period of time upon migrating and those in the intermediate between these extremes. Of these subgroups, the recently migrated and those who have stayed make up the largest percentage.⁴³ In the remaining population of non-migratory individuals, the demographic most recently identified as the growing proportion in northern Ontario, are those who experience hidden homelessness. Hidden homelessness categorizes a variety of different experiences that share the attribute of the loss of security over the physical domain. Whereas absolute homelessness can be easy

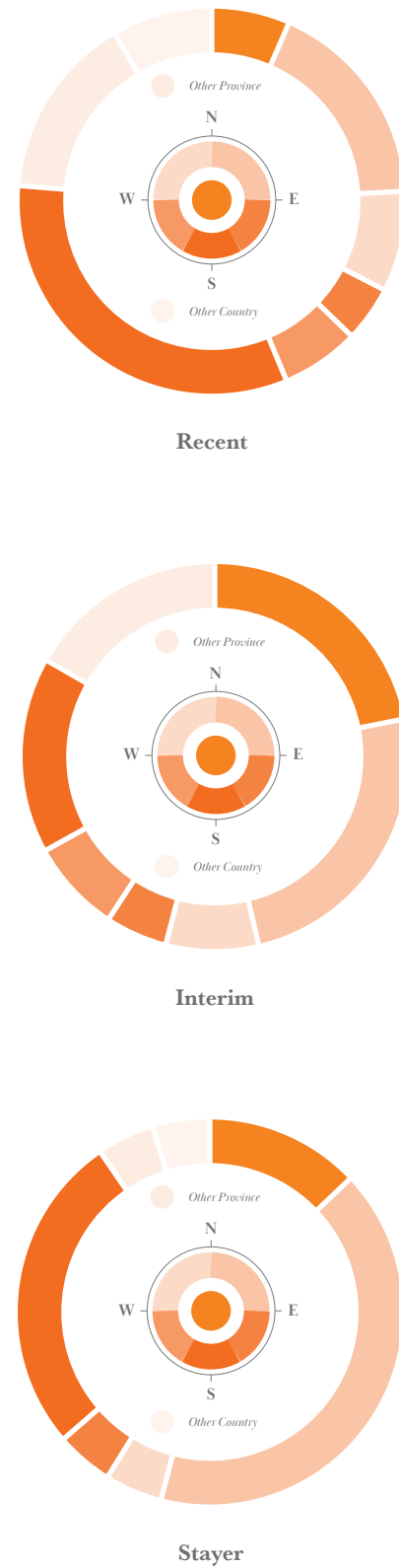


Fig. 46: Proportion of different migratory groups by region.

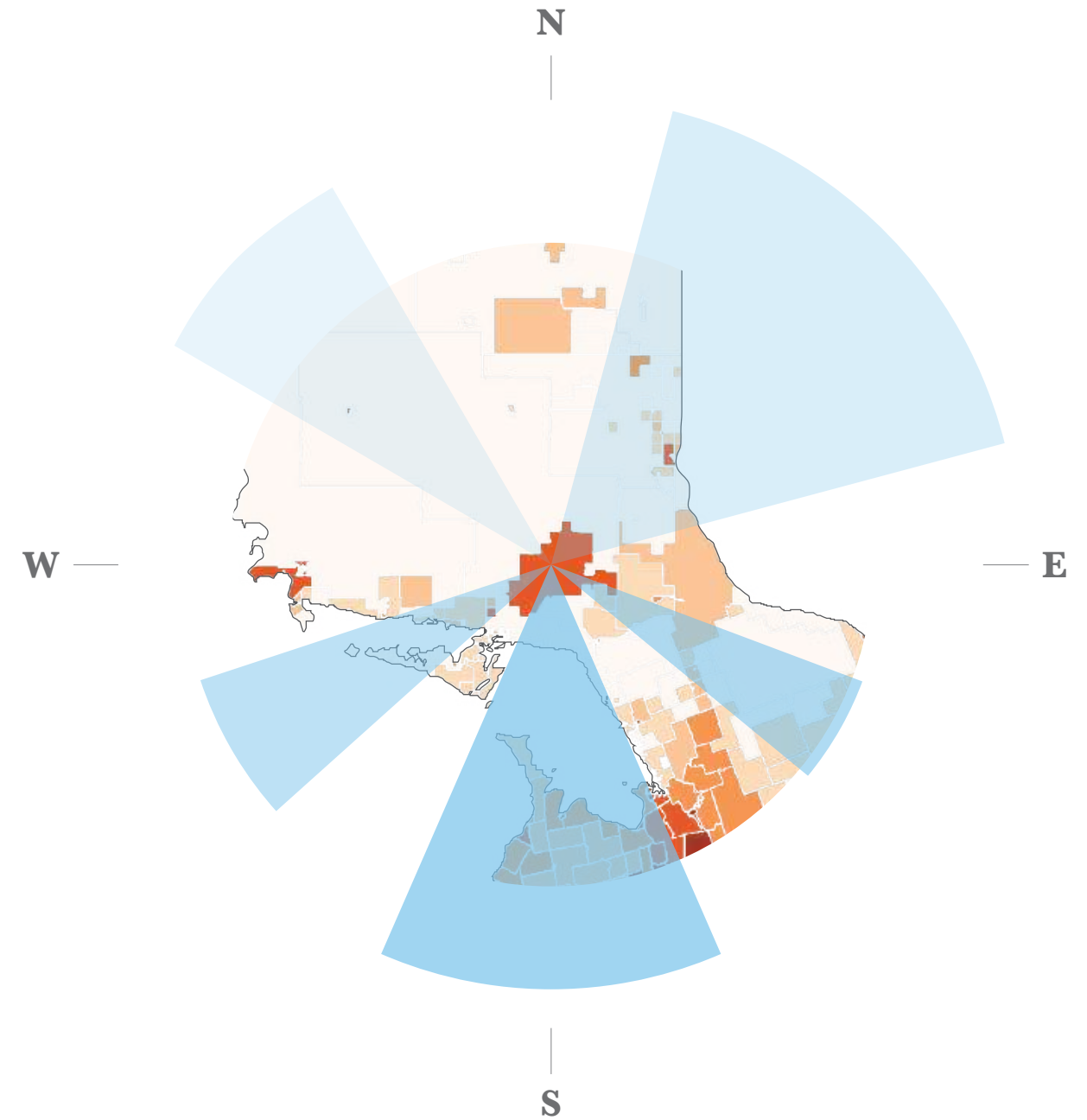


Fig. 47: Migration of homeless individuals to Sudbury by region.



Fig. 48: Panorama of Elgin St. Downtown Sudbury identifying my projects site.

to spot on the street, someone experiencing hidden homelessness may show no visible traces of their circumstance and may not even identify as being homeless. Kauppi et al. (2017) found that people living with hidden homelessness are often invisible to the social service system or even intentionally avoiding it because they do not define themselves as homeless, they do not want to be identified as homeless by others, and/or they do not believe that the social services available will meet their needs.⁴⁴

In Sudbury, there are also still many people living in absolute homelessness, especially downtown. With the patterns of urban sprawl that exist in many parts of the city and the high concentration of those living with homelessness in the downtown core, the city is faced with a general population who avoids the downtown for fear of their safety, which in turn makes the downtown core feel even more unsafe, with fewer eyes on the street. Ultimately, I believe the architecture that is designed to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness must also take into consideration its role in mediating the perceptions associated with homelessness as they will be associated with those who access it. Architecture should not hide the circumstances that lead to people accessing social services, but it should address

the individual first. Instead of calling a building a soup kitchen, for example, the location could simply be called a restaurant. Instead of calling an overnight shelter a homeless shelter, it could simply be called a hotel. These services could then meet the needs of individuals without requiring them to identify as anything other than simply human.

With these goals in mind, I have chosen the southern end of Elgin Street in downtown Sudbury as the site for the final design exercise of this thesis. Figure 48 shows a panoramic view of downtown, highlighting the importance of Elgin Street. Located at the northern end of the street are the city's most recent efforts towards urban renewal: the McEwen School of Architecture and the future Place Des Arts Performance and Exhibition Centre/ The centre of the Elgin Street corridor is known as the arts district of downtown, home to many small shops, galleries and popular restaurants. At the southern end of Elgin Street is the Sudbury Hockey Arena, followed by the derelict Ledo Hotel and empty parking lots. It is this southern tip that I believe holds the greatest potential to transform downtown Sudbury and offer the best services to those experiencing homelessness in the city.

ENDNOTES:

37. Kauppi, Carol, Bill O'Grady, Rebecca Schiff, and Fay Martin, eds. *Homelessness and Hidden Homelessness in Rural and Northern Ontario*. Guelph, ON: Rural Ontario Institute, 2017.
38. Kauppi, Carol and Pallard, Henri, *Migratory and Transient Homelessness in Northern Ontario, Canada Pathways to Homelessness in Sudbury and Its Related Impacts* (April 30, 2015). *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 67-98, 2015.
39. Ibid
40. Kauppi et al. *Homelessness and Hidden Homelessness in Rural and Northern Ontario*. 2017.
41. Ibid
42. Kauppi, et al. *Migratory and Transient Homelessness in Northern Ontario*, 2015.
43. Ibid
44. Kauppi et al. *Homelessness and Hidden Homelessness in Rural and Northern Ontario*. 2017.



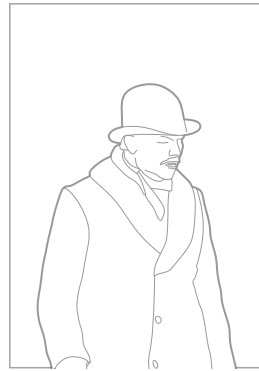
SITE OF PROPOSAL

Chapter 07: Program



*“Stability. I need it. I’ve always wanted stability and security. **Stability and secure environment...** it is so hard to move around a lot”*

Fig. 49: A collection of Stories gathered from interviews of individuals experiencing homelessness conducted by Laurentian’s The Poverty, Homelessness and Migration (PHM) study.



*“I felt **useless, worthless**, that there was nothing I could do to **better myself** at that time, even now, I kind of feel the same way where there’s **nothing I could do** cause everywhere I turn all I see is doors getting slammed in my face because of my circumstance.”*



*“Not being able to have a place to call your own, your own little **sanctuary**, somewhere you can go and relax when things get hard, people take a lot of things for granted but the one thing nobody should take for granted is a home, its something that everybody needs. Nobody should live on the streets. I’ve been doing it for a very long time now and uh its hard, it wears a person down, it destroys the person’s **mental stability**.”*



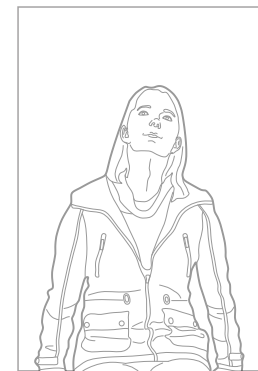
*“We should have a house where people have there own rooms with a **kitchen** to do their own cooking, or **laundry** room and more **counseling** for people to come and talk to someone about their situation. Its hard walking around downtown there with your bags and all you got, no place to go, you really don’t have **no place to go**.”*

Homelessness is a universal phenomenon, yet it is characteristically different in every city. As mentioned in the previous, homelessness differs greatly from cities in northern Ontario like Sudbury and cities in southern urban centers like Toronto. In each city, the programs and buildings that are designed to treat homelessness should reflect this difference. Designing an architectural program to address homelessness is as important as designing the building and spaces. My proposal for the historic Ledo Hotel and adjacent parking lot is to expand the Elgin corridor through the introduction of commercial services mixed with social and civic services and housing.

As I have studied different precedents of architecture in addressing homelessness around the world, I have found one common thread. The commonality was best stated to me in an interview between myself and Jeff Malin, the director of business development for the Skid Row Housing Trust out of Los Angeles. He said,

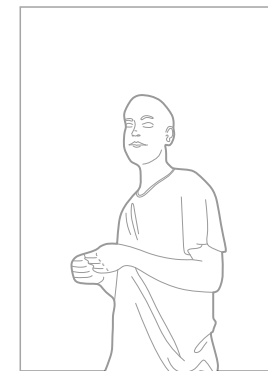
“Good support makes good supportive housing.”⁴⁵

For architecture to successfully address homelessness, it must also successfully facilitate programs addressing homelessness. People who have lived the experience of homelessness can best articulate the services they are in need of, so I turned to the existing work of Laurentian’s The Poverty, Homelessness and Migration (PHM) study.⁴⁶ With help from study’s research assistants, I developed a comprehensive secondary analysis of their previously transcribed interviews conducted with individuals experiencing homelessness to extract their stories about how services have affected them. Together, we looked for patterns where there were key services missing or failures in the current services. These new needs became the inspiration for the programs of my project. Figure 48 displays some key quotes from this process where individuals are sharing the personal needs of their circumstance. The



*“Looking at the Out of the Cold shelter, why don’t we have an Out of the Heat shelter? ... I think Sudbury as a whole, **doesn’t look at our population with any kind of respect**. So without that respect, our **population kind of gets thrown in the back right?**”*

*“**Helping people** is what keeps me strong and feeling like **I mean something** to somebody. Any day that I just go to the Mission to help myself I could reach out to someone else and end up saving their life, you know.”*



*“Putting up spots in different areas of where we feel **comfortable** acknowledging it [Homelessness] opposed to being in front of people that are probably **judgmental** and materialistic and all that kind of shit. And just have like **information** there.”*

*“I don’t like eating by myself, thats why I come down here [Samaritan Centre] too. Its the **social connection**, right? And so its gives other people a chance to get to know who’s in the **community**.”*

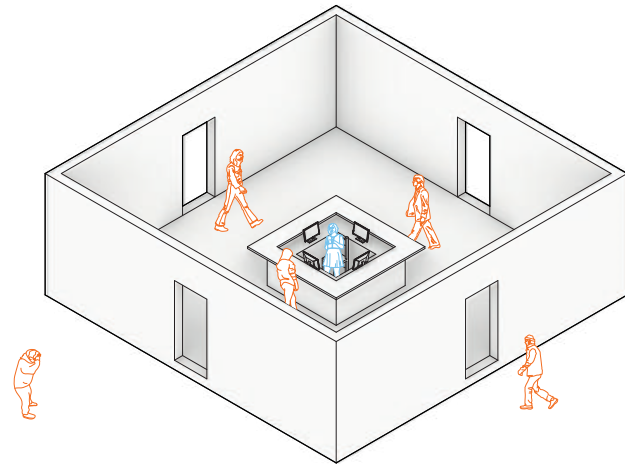


Fig. 50: Resource Centre Program.

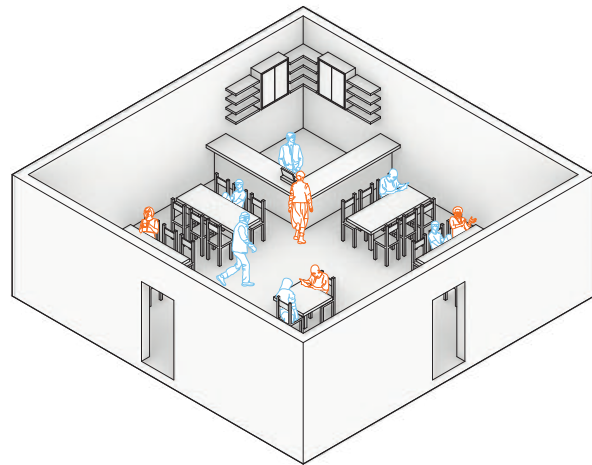


Fig. 51: Restaurant/Cafe Program.

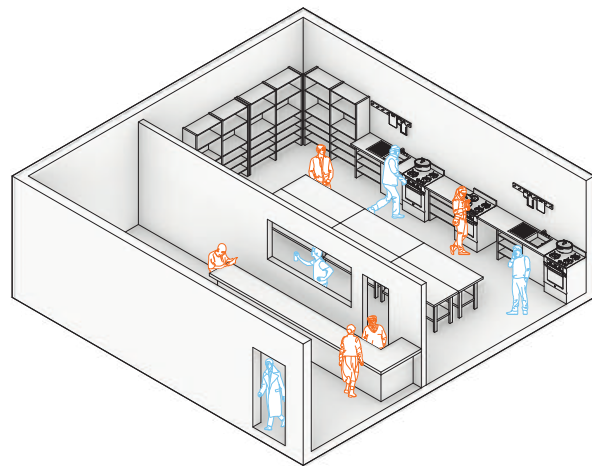


Fig. 52: Kitchen/Bakery Program.

result of this process was nine new or updated services that we identified as lacking in the community.

The first pattern I identified from our analysis was individuals being unable to find what services are available to them in the city. Multiple people suggested a resource centre to solve this, where service providers could make others aware of what they offer and coordinate care (Figure 50).

The next pattern I identified was of people choosing to avoid services in fear of the stigma associated with homelessness. The concept of cross-programming social and commercial services within the same place, such as a cafe that offers free meals to the homeless, could reduce this fear (Figure 51). By bringing more non-homeless individuals into the space and allowing those who experience hidden homelessness to remain anonymous, all individuals would be able to comfortably access the services they need.

Tied to these programs, the next pattern I identified was homeless people feeling judged by the non-homeless staff and volunteers that run most services. I believe that operating the mixed social and commercial spaces in a way that accommodates jobs for homeless individuals, for example training them in the kitching or serving, would narrow the tension between staff and patrons (Figure 52). This strategy ties directly into the next pattern of people, who feel helpless over their situation and feel better when given an opportunity to improve their situation or circumstance or help someone else.

The next major pattern I found was the failure of the open room, cot-based, overnight shelter system. The failure of this system is the anxiety, especially felt by women and minorities who have experienced trauma, of sleeping with no separation from the other occupants of the shelter. Additionally, the lack of privacy is a common concern. Often, the result of these factors was that once people entered the shelter system, they felt they no longer were allotted

the stability they needed to recover. Although a private room in an overnight shelter system would be able to serve less people than a cot system, the service provided would be a much better experience and would provide privacy and possibly even stability for those who need it most (Figure 53). Additionally, between the hours that meals are provided and the opening of the overnight shelter, there is no place where individuals experiencing homelessness are accepted. Instead, they are often forced out onto the street. A communal, indoor gathering place would be able to meet this need. Ideally this space would also be able to offer free showers and bathrooms to homeless individuals (Figure 54). Tied to this extra space needed is the requirement for a place to leave one's belongings during the day, such as public lockers (Figure 55). As the participants said in the interviews we conducted, humans need more than just a place to be, they need things to do.

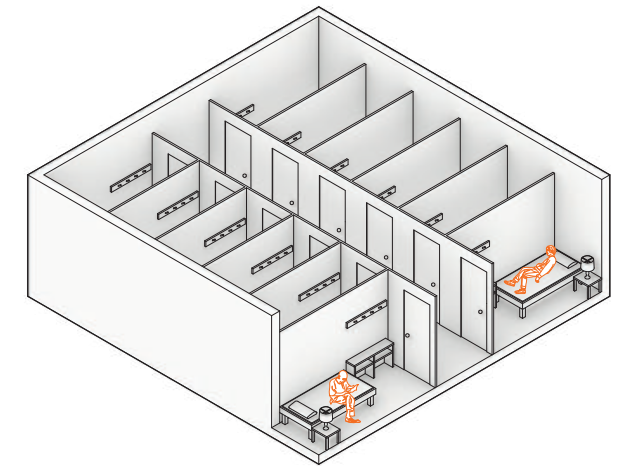


Fig. 53: Private Overnight Shelter Program.

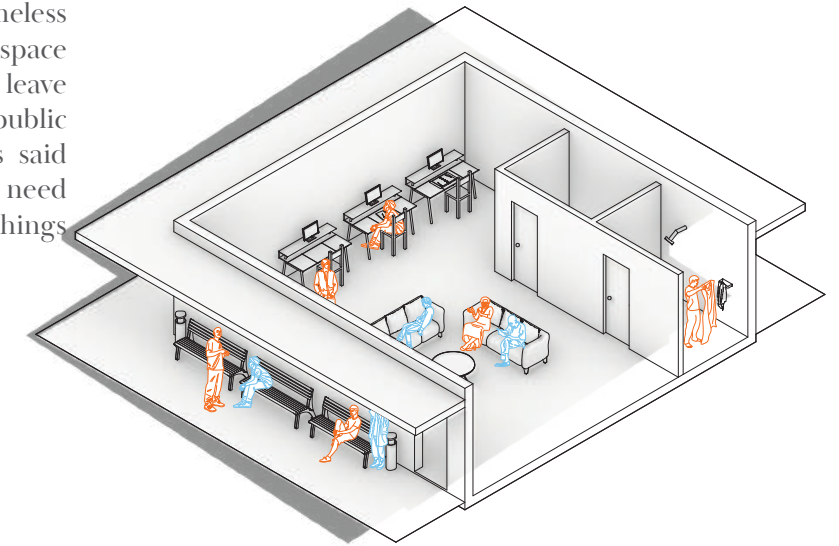


Fig. 54: Communal Gathering Place Program.

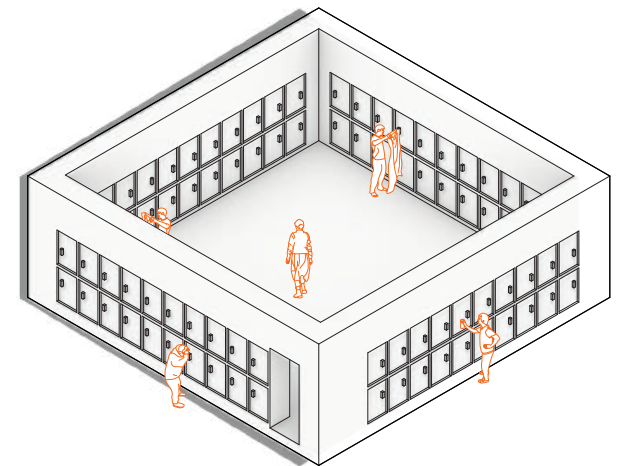


Fig. 55: Public Storage Program.

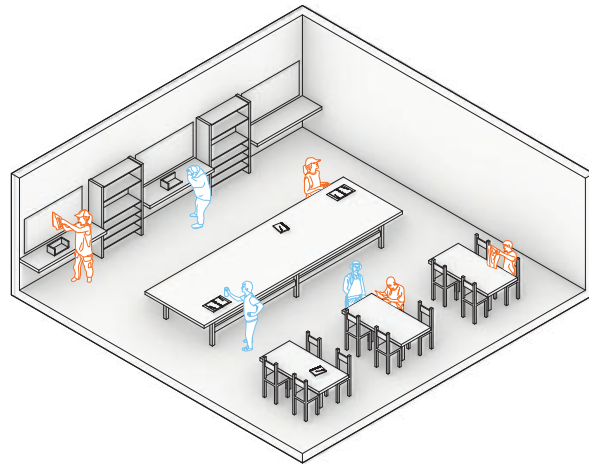


Fig. 56: Maker Space Program.

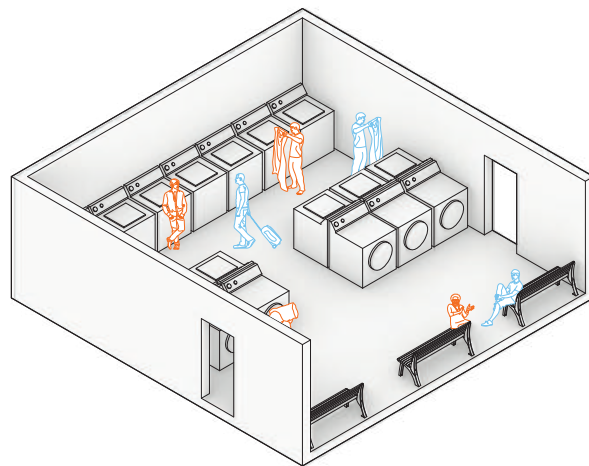


Fig. 57: Communal Laundromat Program.

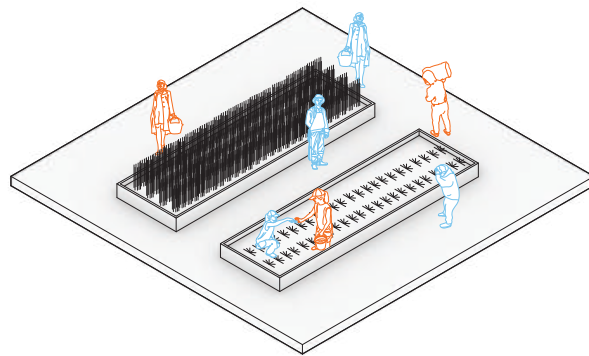


Fig. 58: Community Garden Program.

During my bench installation, people stopped by to use the bench for a variety of activities: two people used it as a surface to clean their bag of tools, and two others had a colouring book and sat and coloured on the bench. A maker space would offer creative expression as well as a launch pad for people to feel enabled to better their circumstances (Figure 56).

Another simple program needed for this community is a laundromat. This service would need to be offered at low or no cost to individuals experiencing homelessness, but could also be open commercially to the rest of downtown Sudbury residents. Currently there are no publicly accessible laundromats in the downtown area. This public laundromat has the potential to informally become a shared social space of contact (Figure 57).

Finally, the last program, a community garden, is a catalyst for collaboration on intergroup contact (Figure 58). A community garden is an activity that could benefit individuals experiencing homelessness—to cultivate their own food—that could ultimately be served in a cafe or restaurant. This program can also act as a heart, connecting all of these other proposed programs through the shared act of cultivation.

It is important to distinguish that the programs of this whole building are not dependent on the circumstance of homelessness but rather dependent on shared human needs that surpass circumstance. Our shared needs and desires can be what connects individuals from different backgrounds and experiences in a position of equality and inclusivity.

ENDNOTES:

⁴⁵ Jeff Malin (Director of business development at Skid Row Housing Trust, Los Angeles, California) in discussion with the author, January 2020.

⁴⁶ Kauppi, Carol. "Interviews Conducted by the Poverty, Homelessness and Migration Study." Sudbury, n.d.

Praxis is a word that describes the process by which a theory, lesson or skill is enacted, embodied or realized.⁴⁷ In many ways, an architectural thesis in itself is an exercise in praxis, enacting, embodying or realizing theories through built or unbuilt forms. This chapter of my thesis is dedicated to the process by which a building is realized in a community with minimal impact and maximum uptake. As I begin to map programs to a site, a building begins to form, yet how that building forms will influence the context it is situated in and the sensitive populations it is being designed for.

In order to successfully address homelessness in downtown Sudbury, this project, which I will refer to as “Home: Sudbury”, will eventually become an urban block. This block will house: a resource centre and emergency shelter, active commercial storefronts with social imperatives, integrated civic services such as a computer library and maker space, planning, coordination and event spaces for local social service providers, an active community vegetable garden, and flexible supportive housing. In the beginning, however, the project must begin with much smaller interventions that can more rapidly meet the immediate needs of the community and create an interface between the community and designers. With these new measures in place, the final design of the building can better be tailored to the community it is in and the community can claim a sense of ownership over it. The design of each phase utilizes three principle themes derived from my definition of homelessness to provide a home for those who come to Sudbury without one: physical mediation, social mediation and legal mediation.

In preparation for this design exercise, I interviewed key figures in the city of Sudbury about their experiences with projects of this nature. I found that previous attempts at similar projects in Sudbury had been made and both succeeded and failed in different respects. The earliest urban renewal project in Sudbury was the demolition of a residential neighbourhood within the downtown area to construct a shopping mall that today is the Rainbow Centre (Figure 59). This demolition by the city displaced hundreds of people who temporarily became homeless and waited years for the completion of the new housing they were promised.⁴⁸ Following this demolition and reconstruction, the second most prominent urban renewal project in Sudbury to date has been the construction of the School of Architecture (Figure 60). Carol Kaupi has described in interviews that through her research, the site that the school was built on used to be the primary gathering place for homeless individuals in the city. She said that the construction of the school displaced that population, shifting their congregation to where it is today: the transit terminal and Tim Hortons Plaza, also known as the biggest conflict zone in the city.⁴⁹

The most recent project for the homeless by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in Sudbury is a combined shelter, medical clinic and recovering alcoholics home (Figure 61). This ambitious project has yet to complete construction and has already failed the population it was meant to serve in many ways. First, once funding from the city was allocated for the construction of this project, other services, such as the Salvation Army, lost its operation funding and immediately



Fig. 59: The Rainbow Centre in downtown Sudbury, Ontario.



Fig. 60: The McEwen School of Architecture in downtown Sudbury, Ontario.



Fig. 61: Rendering of the future 200 Larch Street CMHA shelter in downtown Sudbury Ontario.

had to close.⁵⁰ This left the city without any operational shelters for eight months during the construction of the new project until it was operational. The rushed construction timeline also surpassed the funding schedule, causing the CMHA to run out of money while waiting for the approval of their provincial funding. Furthermore, this created the need for the city to bail out the CMHA with taxpayers money in order to be able to complete construction.⁵¹ Although these circumstances do not necessarily affect the positive outcomes of this project, once complete, all involved will have lessons to recall on the importance of planning, coordination and timing for multi-programmed social projects.

Though overall the Rainbow Centre, school of architecture and new CMHA home are very different projects, their shared failure is in the rushed nature of their planning and execution. These failed steps objectify the context of the buildings as expendable towards their overall goal of progress. I believe Home: Sudbury must emerge organically from the existing urban fabric without jeopardizing its surroundings in the process.

My project delivery plan is made up of four phases along a flexible timeline (Figure 62). Phase one of the project begins with the most immediate need of the local community. This phase will bring all of the relevant players to the same table: a small scale intervention

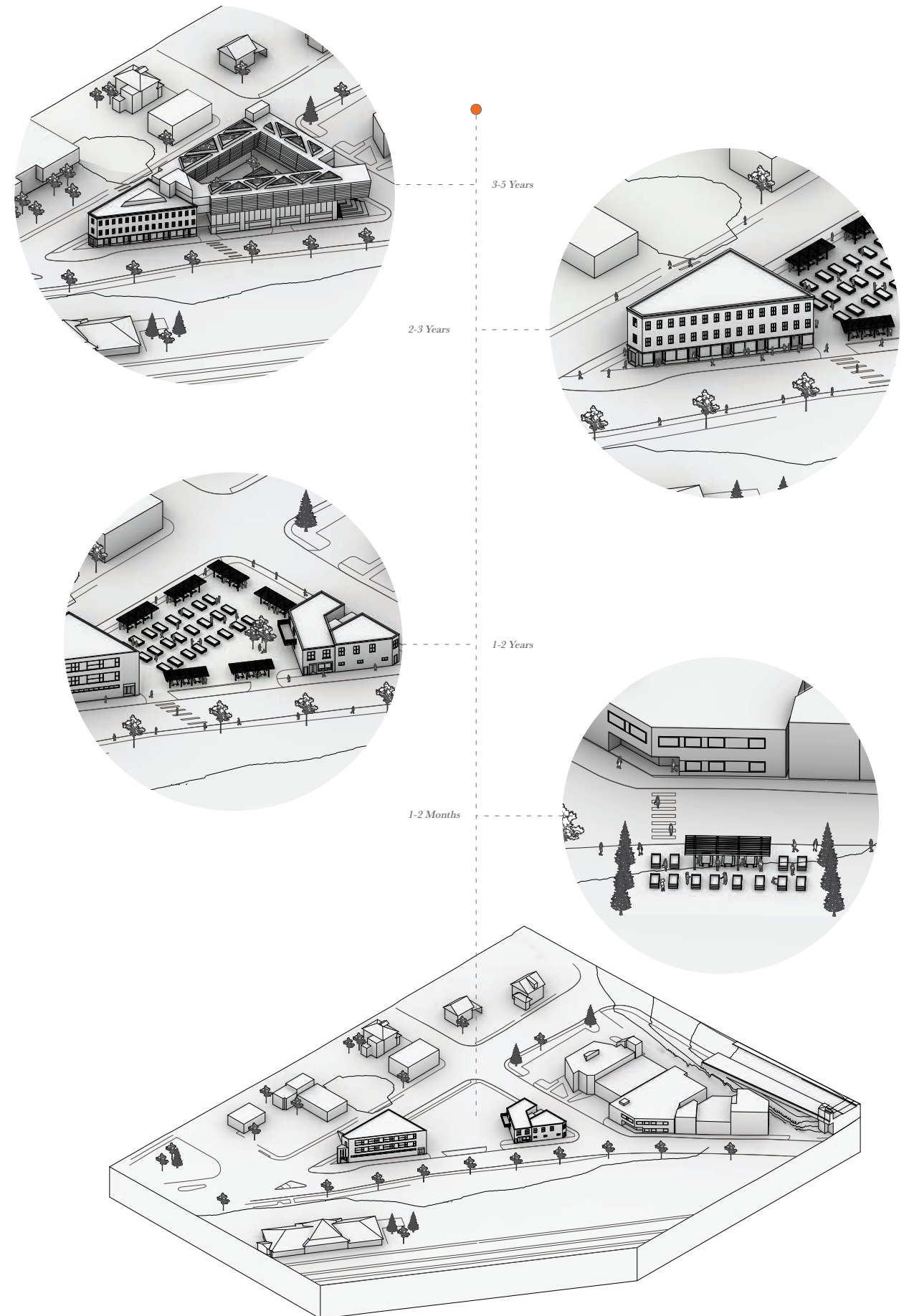


Fig. 62: The four phases that will slowly integrate my project into the community.

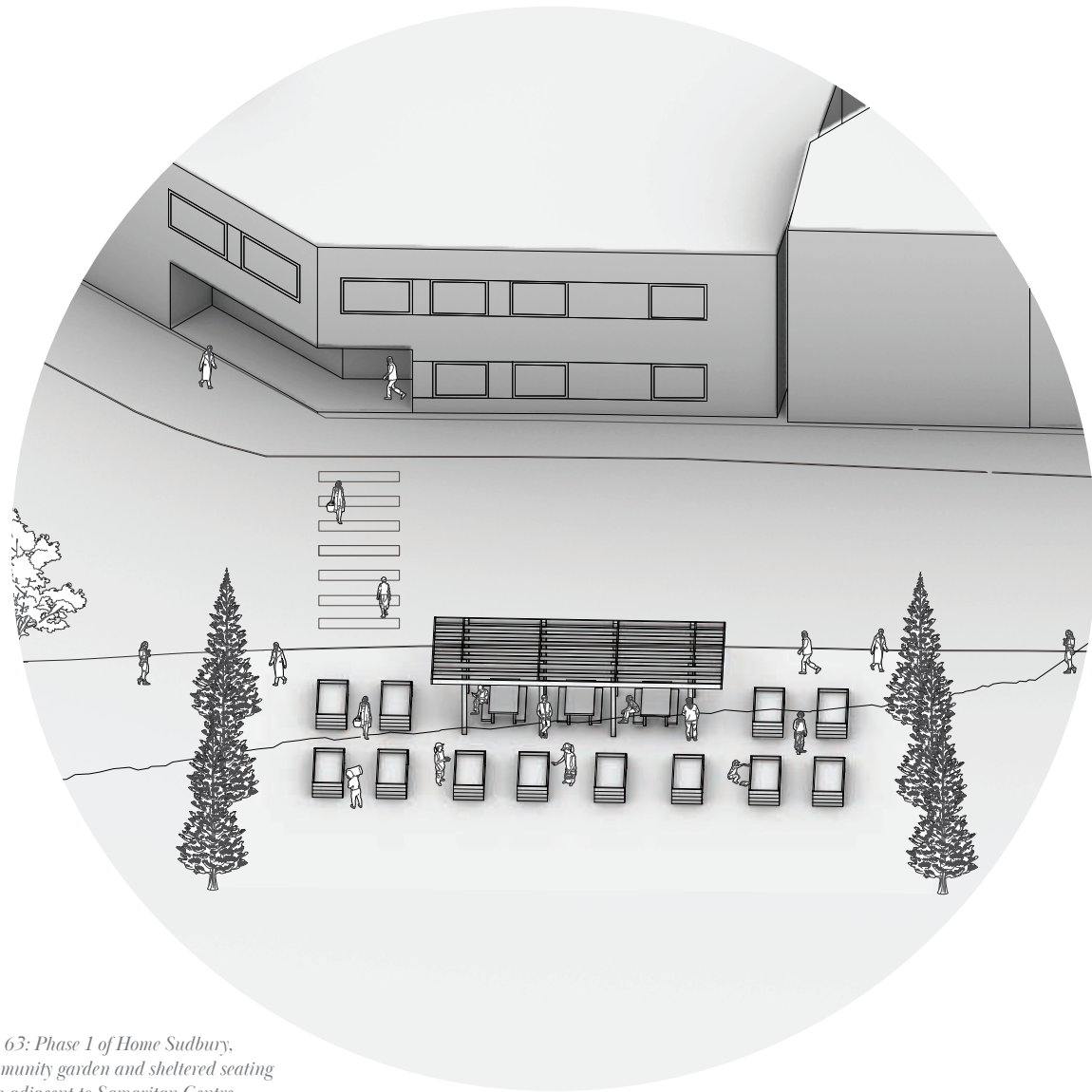


Fig. 63: Phase 1 of Home Sudbury, community garden and sheltered seating area adjacent to Samaritan Centre.

at the Samaritan Centre. In 2017, I completed an independent study interviewing patrons and staff at the Samaritan Centre to see how the building could be improved to meet their needs. The patrons of the centre expressed a need for a dignified and sheltered place to smoke and socialize outside and the staff expressed an interest in creating a community garden for the patrons to participate in and to provide fresh produce for the kitchen. Together we developed an idea for a community garden located across the street on land that would be donated by CP Rail (Figure 63). The garden

could provide fresh produce for the kitchen and a sheltered smoking area for the patrons. I went through the process of getting city planning approval, the land donation agreement, and even funding from the downtown BIA. Unfortunately, the project was put on hold when the city shifted funding from the downtown to infrastructure repairs. I do, however, see this organic community initiative as a great place to start again with Home: Sudbury by bringing everyone into the same room and restarting the collaboration between the city, nonprofits and downtown businesses.

