

## ICEBOX: The Logistics of Detention

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The United States operates the largest immigrant detention system in the world.<sup>1</sup> Detention is the practice of jailing immigrants while they await the determination of their immigrant status or potential deportation. Detainees are held in nearly two hundred detention centres across the country, which are locally administered by private firms or county governments, and coordinated through service processing centres. In FY2016, over 359,000 people were detained, at a national daily average of 34,000 in order to meet immigration detention quotas.<sup>2</sup> The two governmental agencies that orchestrate the system are the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), under the direction of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Created in 2003 in the aftermath of terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, DHS merged twenty-two different departments and agencies into an integrated unit authorised to administer and enforce immigration law. DHS brought together investigative and enforcement elements of the state immigration apparatus, and proceeded to criminalise select communities within international migratory patterns. The merger established a new framework for intersectoral collaboration and consolidation, and as such, a growing integration of migration and logistics processes is manifest.

ICEBOX is a serial US architecture of Post-Westphalia, where state authority and non-state actors agree to handle and hold bodies for profit.<sup>3</sup> ICEBOX is a static, standard container with coded

content, filled with people. ICEBOX territories are comprised of hub-spoke points and lines, which invert orthodox centre-periphery territorial organisation, in search of remote, poor areas as sites for detention centre hubs. ICEBOX scales move from cellular stasis in isolation, through local police station holding jails, to hemispheric, transborder transportation routes and modes. ICEBOX architecture is geographic. ICEBOX systems are administered in a juridical field that traverses these scales in parallel, and consolidates their complex, interrelated functionality. ICEBOX 'concretises space and time through its material realities'; its architecture and its administration are mutually constitutive.<sup>4</sup> ICEBOX space is designed for the double subjection of select immigrants to the discipline of detention and to the logistics of supply chain management, in the interests of both state and capital. ICEBOX systems are best understood as a logistics of detention.

At the intersection of logistics and migration, images of human trafficking proliferate in tragic endings of bodies recovered from shipping containers, and sea episodes of drowned migrants encountered on shipping routes, among many others. I focus on US for-profit immigrant detention centres as nodes within global capital flows. US ICE detention centres process humans through transnational, encoded power systems, which couple tightly to the logics, infrastructure, and public-private strategies that comprise the international logistics industry. I consider the immigrant detention system through the lens of international logistics as a way to

demonstrate how its scale and its architecture – its spatial contours and manifestations – mirror those systems of international supply chain coordination, assembly, transport, and sale.

It should be clear at the outset that my objective is not to trivialise immigrant detention by making these parallels to the logistics industry as merely an intellectual exercise. Rather, through engaged scholarship I wish to illustrate the systematic dehumanising spatial practices of immigrant detention from the perspective of contemporary research in ‘transnational migration from below’.<sup>5</sup> These highly structured environments extend nation-state sovereignty claims of control from the territorial to individual detainee bodies. Cybernetics offers a helpful structure to think about transdisciplinary systems regulation and management, which are essential to the functioning of a logistics system.<sup>6</sup> Cybernetics is rooted in the Platonic consideration of governmental administration and its science, which are also essential to the politics of immigration detention.<sup>7</sup> Logistics’ military and industrial origins help to illuminate how logistics function today. From there, it is only a slight move to demonstrate that immigration detention follows many of these military and industrial histories in contemporary forms, functions, and administration. Human detention is both symptomatic and emblematic of a new phase of international labour processing, nation-state governance, and the neoliberal spatial manifestations that run throughout this edition’s theme.

I begin by reviewing the history of modern logistics comprised of conjoined military and commercial interests, which then serves as the background for the militarisation of the US southern border and the production of immigrant ‘illegality’ as an essential administrative mechanism. I explore the security/trade juxtaposition that seemed to pit a relatively new infatuation with borderless capital flows against heightened security regimes, and the post-9/11

institutional and corporate framework for immigrant detention.<sup>8</sup> I then look specifically at the ‘bodies in beds’ detention quota agreements ICE signs with private detention companies. After, I trace the production of spatial forms in the logistics of detention in the ICEBOX warehousing system. Finally, I visit Georgia, and its Atlanta capital, as a node and epicentre of the international logistics detention network.

### **Logistics, territory, and border behaviour**

Since World War II, logistics experts have conceptualised economy anew by spatialising cost-benefit analysis and applying systems analysis to distribution networks... Historically a military technology of war and colonialism abroad, today logistics lead rather than support the strategies of firms and security of nations across transnational space. These shifts have implications for the geopolitics of borders and security but also for social and political forms premised on the territory and ontology of national space. (Cowen, 2010)<sup>9</sup>

Manuel DeLanda traces the origins of modern logistics to the early nineteenth century, when French and US militaries develop the perfect interchangeability of component weaponry parts to standardise their transport and assembly over territories to sites of conflict.<sup>10</sup> The move transfers knowledge from ‘the worker’s body to the hardware of machines and the software of management practices’. From this, DeLanda derives his definition of ‘logistic rationality’, or the degradation of human skill in favour of capital control, out of which Taylorism is born.<sup>11</sup> Transportation technology, particularly the railroad, created the definitive spatial circumstances to separate production from consumption, and the necessary coordination of time, commodity movement, and value exchange were codified.<sup>12</sup> DeLanda’s archaeology of the military and mercantile origins of logistics (‘trade and raid!’)<sup>13</sup> are so entangled that he finds it difficult to determine a

causal linearity, and by the end of World War II, the military industrial collaboration is such that pure realms of either are no longer discretely discernible, and each becomes very interested in management science. The RAND Corporation, and other institutions, was able to determine 'critical path' efficiencies through game theory and computational modelling, which established a precedent for what DeLanda terms 'peacetime logistics'.<sup>14</sup> As Deborah Cowen clarifies in the citation above, since then, these strategies no longer simply support, but rather lead firm and security spatial decisions, continue to merge corporate and political interests, and reconfigure border statecraft scale and complexity. Cowen's work also explores military protection of international corporate supply chain routes, and the spatial diffusion of the figurative factory across supply-chain networks.<sup>15</sup> Stephen Graham's book on military urbanism further underscores new spatial configurations,<sup>16</sup> from the international to the metropolitan scale, produced by the militarisation of supply-chain logics and their associate zones of exception.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, then, the interpenetration of military tactics with urban and regional strategies, and the associate transnational supply-chain geographies that support them, continue to reproduce the collaborative, and mutually constitutive spatial systems.<sup>18</sup>

Along the US southern border, another expression of militarised logistics space is comprised of contemporary migratory patterns and the production of the 'illegality' of Mexican (and Central American) workers. As Liette Gilbert writes, 'the historical interplay between unlimited demands for Mexican labour and easy deportability (rendering Mexican labour distinctly disposable) in immigration law instituted the legal production of Mexican/migrant illegality'.<sup>19</sup> Similar to DeLanda's point on weapons development, migrant labour denigration and disposability, enshrined in a discourse of 'unskilled' labour, renders individuals in this

labour force interchangeable. The spatialisation of legality, and its management, are cybernetic governance concerns, which can, through strategy, be instrumentalised toward broader geopolitical and geoeconomic objectives.<sup>20</sup> Here, the border is an active agent; a 'trickster figure',<sup>21</sup> whose Janus-faced behaviour performs the contradictory impulses of continental, neoliberal forces, which are often not in synch.<sup>22</sup> But if not always coordinated, the production of illegality is capable of performing various functions within various frames. In Joseph Nevins's work, he proposes that the US acts as a 'gatekeeper state', and links the US-led neoliberal market restructuring of rural Mexico (and throughout Central America) to the influx of migrant workers to the US.<sup>23</sup> In this way, market forces both deterritorialise workers, simultaneously promise migrant work in the North as a palliative, and all-the-while police this itinerant workforce in the US with the threat of deportation based on the fabricated premise of 'illegality'.<sup>24</sup> As an administrative construct, illegality imposes 'legal nonexistence'<sup>25</sup> on the approximately twelve million people living in the US without legal immigration documents; people who are otherwise fully physically, socially and economically active in civil society, but lacking legal and political recognition.<sup>26</sup>

Recent Border Studies literature includes moves to theorise borders across sub- and inter-national containment, through the study of the ethnic, cultural, and regional transborder, transcultural, and transnational crossing research.<sup>27</sup> More directly related to immigrant detention is Liette Gilbert's research on 'rebordering'<sup>28</sup>: the jurisdictional collaboration and transfer of immigrant enforcement authority from national immigration security to state and local police powers.<sup>29</sup> These range from local laws prohibiting immigrant labour gathering in Hazleton, Pennsylvania,<sup>30</sup> to US ICE (a federal agency) agreements with certain local and police departments to collaborate on immigrant policing

detention.<sup>31</sup> [Fig. 1] As she writes,

Immigration-related municipal ordinances, resolutions, and declarations are some of the latest neoliberal strategies deployed in the governance of immigration, the delocalisation of border control, and the re-bordering of state power...These municipal ordinances and declarations re-border [...] the inclusion/exclusion of (unauthorised) migrants by expanding territorial and political rationality of immigration control to small towns.<sup>32</sup>

She further relates this to the decline of social rule in the face of waxing neoliberal control regimes,<sup>33</sup> and the merging of Foucauldian 'disciplinary societies' in particular sites (ICEBOX) with the Deleuzian 'control society', a matrix comprised of a more decentralised monitoring system.<sup>34</sup> This conceptual framework describes ICEBOX's hub-spoke spatial design. Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between their ever-deterritorialised 'nomad', and their 'migrant' who wishes to reterritorialise upon destination, with associate societal reception and/or rejection based on the perceived threat of each.<sup>35</sup> Migrant 'illegality' produces a condition of limbo, where the individual is denied a clear category, and thus, all the more vulnerable to societal and political manipulation and procedural whim. In my visits to the Stewart Detention Centre in South Georgia, I've spoken with a recently-arrived detained Honduran teenager fleeing from gang violence, and a Mexican man who has lived in the US for nearly twenty years, who runs a successful car business, and has children – US citizens – in secondary school. The spectrum of immigrant status is broad, not a binary, but the 'bodies in beds' quotas are not discerning. In her work on remittance landscapes, Sarah Lynn Lopez coins the condition as 'a new way of life – that is, *remitting is a way of life* – that manages separation, dispersion, fragmentation, and ambivalence on a daily basis'.<sup>36</sup> ICE agents collaborate with local police as veritable freight-forwarding agents, to

organise the movement of immigrants through societal paths and into detention centres.

Freight, on the other hand, can increasingly move through logistics networks without friction by negotiation, dismantling, or reinterpreting obstacles of national borders, labour laws, and trade agreements.<sup>37</sup> In these instances, borders can shift situationally and contextually, and reorganise territories and sovereignty jurisdictions. Multiple territories converge and part dynamically as well, in the complex interplay of technology, culture, commerce, distribution, their respective and constitutive politics. As Clare Lyster suggests, these mercurial, 'short-lived articulation(s) of territories' merge and interplay at an ever-changing pace, producing continual re-articulations of site.<sup>38</sup> These tensions and fractures of radical environmental control and neglect comprise the larger contradictions embedded throughout the immigrant detention system.

#### **Border – state / 'bodies in beds'**

The immigration detention system is an industrialisation of humans, while, increasingly, the logistics sector grants primacy, constituent rights, and transnational freedoms to animal and material freight. Migrants move from country of origin to the US as itinerant labour for construction, agriculture and food processing, and personal services, and as bodies to meet detention-centre quotas.<sup>39</sup> Migrants form patterns where chain migration is transformed into supply chain. As Universal Product Codes turn objects into binary information, and logistics geolocate and track this information, immigrant detainees are given an Alien Registration Number (or 'A number') for the same purpose.<sup>40</sup> Human becomes object; object becomes datum; and, datum can be tracked geographically through the ICE Detainee Locator System.<sup>41</sup> Contemporary international commodity flows move 'people, goods and information' through parallel, sometimes

indistinguishable channels, and ICEBOX is a data farm.<sup>42</sup> Increasingly, however, a key difference is that immigrants are misplaced or lost in the detention system, making it difficult for family members and immigration lawyers to follow detainee location, while product supply-chain management is far more precise with inanimate cargo.<sup>43</sup>

The apparent policy contradiction – Hollifield’s ‘liberal paradox’ – of neoliberal trade aperture and the diminishing of nation-state powers, with an intensified, nationalistic border militarisation, underscores the tensions in state geopolitical and geoeconomic objectives.<sup>44</sup> Mathew Coleman’s research on US border statecraft suggests that rather than performing through coherent policy,<sup>45</sup> the larger continental neoliberal project is expressed in ‘collisions of mutually-opposed tactics’,<sup>46</sup> which are not easily streamlined. The security-trade consolidation was the foundational mandate for DHS, in the hopes that a governing oversight body could optimise efficiencies in each system; areas previously relegated to the Departments of Treasury and Justice. Within the heightened post-9/11 ‘paradox’, the immigrant detention system allows the state to simultaneously perform tough ‘law and order’ tactics, remaining mindful of domestic labour cycle needs. The choice is no longer Solomonic in terms of value creation, because immigrant bodies create wealth by simply filling the detention centre bed quotas, guaranteed by law, that ICE pays private companies to administer. ICEBOX performs Michel Foucault’s list of discipline techniques: ‘In the first instance, discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space’, and time is capitalised upon and through bodies in this organization.<sup>47</sup>

Michael Flynn’s work on the complex relationship between state authority and non-state actors helps to synthesise essential findings in the immigration detention literature.<sup>48</sup> He first refers to Hernández-León’s term ‘the migration industry’ as that broad

spectrum of actors, motivated by profit, that enables human trade across international borders.<sup>49</sup> He then refers to Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen’s addition of ‘control providers’ (such as private detention centre companies) and the ‘rescue industry’ (NGO human rights advocacy groups) to the migration industry concept.<sup>50</sup> Although not officially members of the state, this array of actors is authorised through state agreements. Flynn clarifies that the performance of state objectives, counter to much of the ‘camp’ literature on spaces of exception,<sup>51</sup> must be understood rather in terms of a specific objective, legislatively designed and enacted, of ‘depriving noncitizens of their liberty for reasons related to their immigration status’.<sup>52</sup> This grouping of state authority, non-state actors, and cooperation agreements administers the migration industry and designs ICEBOX territories and architectures. Jesse LeCavalier uses the term ‘logistification’ to connote ‘the inclusive process that includes the entire life of a product and works to flatten, smooth, and lubricate as it organises material in both space and time.’<sup>53</sup> The detention system is the logistification of an integrated, policed international system of human movement.

The business of immigrant detention is booming. Of the average thirty-four thousand daily immigrant detainees, there has been a steady increase in those held in corporate-run detention centres, from 49 percent in 2009, to 62 percent in 2015, to 71 percent, as of November 2017.<sup>54</sup> The two major for-profit companies that operate these detention facilities are CoreCivic (formerly the Corrections Corporation of America, or CCA) and the Geo Group. Each is also involved in the design and management of for-profit prisons for the older, larger US incarceration system, which is also the largest of its kind in the world. The detention centres were originally designed as prisons, and the criminalisation of immigration provides a ‘growth opportunity’ for these firms. In 2009, there

had been a multi-year decline in the undocumented immigrant population. After aggressive private detention lobbying, intensified out of concern for the future of their business, Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia was swayed, and put language into the DHS 2010 Appropriations Act to maintain funding levels for the detention companies for 'not less than 33,400 beds', which was then increased to 34,000 beds in 2013. This became known as the 'immigrant detention quota', or the 'bed mandate'.<sup>55</sup> The total budget for immigration detention in 2016 was \$6.1 billion, and ICE requested \$6.23 billion for 2017. This is paid for by US taxpayers, which includes a large portion of undocumented workers in the country who paid \$11.2 billion in taxes under forged social security numbers.<sup>56</sup> These companies – non-state actors – sign US Marshal Service Intergovernmental Agreements with the US Congress and ICE, in concert with state and local police agents, to provide a guaranteed quota of detainees to fill detention facilities' occupancy. The average daily cost per bed is \$127, which means that a significant portion of that ICE budget goes directly to CoreCivic and the Geo Group.<sup>57</sup>

The 'bodies in beds' quotas comprise an industry who's profit motive has little to do with any actual legal 'due process', but rather encourages any form of detention to occupy the warehousing spaces for the bodies, which can then be charged to the US taxpayer.<sup>58</sup> Detainees perform most of the labour required for centre maintenance, including cooking, cleaning, laundry, haircutting, for \$1/day or less, although this is legally unconstitutional.<sup>59</sup> In preparation for a recent class action case in California for detained immigrants, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) determined that the 207 detainees who eventually *won* their cases and were able to remain in the US, cost taxpayers \$10,370,493 for what was later ruled as their unnecessary detention.<sup>60</sup> In 1988, CCA founder Thomas Beasley described the commodity of immigrant detention business in the classic, abstracted widget rhetoric:

'You just sell it like you were selling cars, or real estate, or hamburgers'.<sup>61</sup> Here then, just as the migrant labour is devalued and made both interchangeable and disposable, the bodies that house this labour are also abstracted to an interchangeable product for processing, tracking, and warehousing.

### ICEBOX

The titular 'ICEBOX' phrase has various origins. The 'box' suffix is added to ICE and simply plays on the agency's initials. This echoes, of course, a shorthand term for cargo containers.<sup>62</sup> It also signifies the climate of the detention centres, which are notoriously cold, as for-profit companies seek to cut detention costs and not pay for humane facility climates. The Spanish term for ICEBOX is '*hieleras*', which traditionally refers to the refrigerator connotation, but also serves as the common signifier for the detention facilities among Mexican and Central American communities.<sup>63</sup>

The ICEBOX typology is familiar. Often hidden behind vegetation or recessed from road entrances, detention centres are clad in institutional, monotone facades, with a series of corporate and national flags at the entrance, and organised in a modular composition. The architecture, as illustrated in accompanying photos, is quite similar to the warehouse/processing facility typologies seen internationally. [Fig. 2] ICE finances detention centre architecture, but its design, construction, and operation are left to the private companies. ICE's 'performance-based national detention standards' were modelled on standards for civil incarceration,<sup>64</sup> which were originally written by CCA for the detention lobby, American Corrections' Association, as the industry 'Standards of Accreditation'.<sup>65</sup> ICE and the companies consistently reject requests for architectural plans, in defiance of US Freedom of Information laws.<sup>66</sup> ICEBOX is a black box, and its exact spatial contours are a mystery. Distant sites are stripped, vegetation is removed, surrounded with double-gated barbed-wire fences, and cellblocks

are connected with linear corridors, periodically interrupted with locking jail doors. The environment is furnished in cold, cheap metal, and the insidious fluorescent light tubes run on day and night, making it difficult for detainees to sleep.

Sarah Lynn Lopez describes detention centre architecture as ‘rural warehouse-prison vernacular’, which precisely and succinctly describes its rudimentary formal and programmatic fusion.<sup>67</sup> The security-trade hybridity of detention centre design embodies the fused functions of ICE in the post-9/11 border regime. Nevertheless, ICEBOX is more the latter than the former. While detainees are indeed ‘warehoused’, unlike warehouses, there are only two entrances to the facility: one for staff, visitors, and ICE agents, and the other for detainees arriving for delivery. Warehouse open access accentuates its need for product turnover and processing, while ICEBOX offers no pretence or clarity – in law or design – of turnover (release). There is a barren outdoor space to satisfy the legal sunlight access requirement for detainees, television, limited libraries, visitation rooms separated by glass, and a kitchen. Detainees move through their days in waiting, and cases of mental health suffering and suicide have been amply documented.<sup>68</sup> ICEBOX began as a prison, and it closely adheres in form and programme to this origin.

Similar to warehouses, however, detention centres process and separate detainees by gender and age, with some facilities designated as mixed for men, women, and children, and others designated as only for men or women and children.<sup>69</sup> From there, they are processed by security-level distinctions. Detainees wear colour-coded prison uniforms representing their criminal histories. Level 1 detainees, with no criminal record, wear blue uniforms, Level 2 orange, and Level 3, the highest-security detainees, wear red.<sup>70</sup> To clarify, all criminal detention is served in other prison facilities, such that detainees in detention centres are

simply awaiting immigrant status or deportation decisions. Detainees are then grouped by these criteria, with lowest-security blue housed in a single, large room with approximately sixty beds, to smaller rooms with two beds, to isolation rooms for heightened security detainees, and as punitive measure for any perceived misbehaviour by any detainee. [Fig. 3a, 3b] Yet codes can be transgressed out of whim or need, and detainees can be assigned to isolation beds if the appropriate bedroom type is already full.<sup>71</sup> Spatial capacity-logistical concerns trump detainee well-being concerns. The sorting, then, is not unsimilar to the kinds of processing by product brand and type that occurs in logistics distribution centres.

There are now cases where hotel chains rent rooms to ICE for ancillary detention use,<sup>72</sup> and with an increase in immigrant policing, this may continue into a kaleidoscope of spatial forms and architectures as nodes in the detention network.<sup>73</sup> Similar to drayage yards that sell off-site storage for container and freight transshipment at nearby sites for cheaper than port storage, one can imagine this kind of private competition for holding centres as future pretenders to the ICE budget.

The private detention companies further subcontract food and health care services to other subsidiaries, and human rights organisations have registered multiple complaints about rancid food quality and poor medical care, due to profit-margin motivation limiting sufficient investment for these services.<sup>74</sup> While several civil rights groups have conducted extensive detainee interviews and filed complaints about ICEBOX conditions, ICE inspections of the facilities are infrequent and none have ever failed inspection. The outsourcing of the detention centres, with secondary outsourcing to health, food, and transportation services sets a precedent for the extended privatization and commercialization of the network and its infrastructure.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Fig. 1: ICE agents collaborate with local police in metro Atlanta to detain an immigrant at his work place. Photo: Mundo Hispánico Atlanta. Used with permission.

Fig. 2: Modular detention centre forms. Photo: Periódico La Visión Atlanta. Used with permission.



Fig. 3a



Fig. 3b

Fig. 3a, 3b: ICEBOX types. Two-bed cell and sixty-bed cell. Photo: Periódico La Visión Atlanta. Used with permission.

The detention facilities are essentially unincorporated and extra-territorial, similar to free-trade zones of exception for cargo processing.<sup>75</sup> Detention centres are predominantly located in poor, remote areas where low-cost land is easily acquired, and detention centre companies can often negotiate tax incentives in these poor areas based on the promise of job generation. These are also common strategies for logistics warehousing for inland ports and transshipment centres.<sup>76</sup> The remote locations complicate detainee access to legal services, because even pro-bono services are rarely willing to travel such distances to defend cases that have a high probability for deportation, regardless of the individual circumstances.<sup>77</sup> Detention centre programmes can include rudimentary court facilities where cases are adjudicated, and this further complicates detainees' access to lawyers in distant cities. With an increase in metropolitan and county police forces collaborating with ICE in immigrant detention, there are holding and processing centres located nearer to cities, but these generally function in a 'hub-spoke' hierarchy, with the principal detention hub located at the periphery.

In the 1990s, to address these distances between detention facilities, CCA acquired Transcor America, LLC, a bus company for detention and prison transportation services to all levels of US government.<sup>78</sup> The buses are able to transport spaces of detention across territories, as they themselves provide the same norms of spatial exception and legal suspension of the facilities. It is also a way of further coding detainee bodies with these laws and norms, as their environments change through mode and distance. The bus service is transnational, providing ICE the deportation service (when possible) for detainees by land, and dropping them off on the Mexican side of the border and ending what is often one cycle in a series of immigration, work, arrest, detention, and deportation processes. Transcor buses also take deportees to planes, which then go to more distant foreign countries

once there is a critical capacity of a particular national group to make the trip worthwhile. Here again, transportation costs and logistics are the determining factors of detainee return, more than detainee resettlement concerns. If the railroad codified the nineteenth-century separation of production and market, the Transcor bus fleet operates with DeLanda's 'logistical rationality', separating and transshipping detainees across jurisdictions and territories. Detention in motion, in standardised, monitored environments, Transcor transforms the transportation system into hybrid security/commercial corridors that demarcate merging territories by connecting the 'hub spoke' organisation of the detention centre hierarchies. The return marks the completion of the migrant industry product cycle across borders, through policed routes that systematically open and shut.

A study of logistics is inevitably one of international, nested scales, and the state of Georgia in the US serves as an illustrative example of immigrant detention and logistics within a sub-state jurisdiction. Atlanta, the state's capital and primary metropolis, is an urban epicentre of the international neoliberal security apparatus. A recent *New York Times* article observes,

few places in the United States have simultaneously beckoned undocumented immigrants and penalised them for coming like metropolitan Atlanta, a boomtown of construction and service jobs where conservative politics and new national policies have turned every waking day into a gamble.<sup>79</sup>

To heighten the mutual constitution of the two systems, Atlanta is among the finalists for Amazon's HQ2 project, and the company has already begun construction of an 78,968 square-metre shipping facility in its metro area. This construction will largely rely on workers from the same immigrant communities that are vulnerable to ICE immigrant detention. Before the 1980s, Atlanta's demographic

was characterised largely by African-American and white populations, as was most of the US South. Sun-Belt opportunities attracted immigrants from Latin America and Asia,<sup>80</sup> which has in turn helped boost the region's economic competitiveness in transportation, construction, hospitality, and poultry processing.<sup>81</sup>

There are many encounters, intersections, and interfaces between the state logistics and immigrant detention sectors. The poultry industry is one of the state's largest exports, shipping chicken parts principally to China. The Savannah port is internationally recognised for its innovation and patent-generation in refrigeration containerisation to help boost poultry exports. Here, there is another parallel to the titular ICEBOX proposition. A large percentage of the workers in the state poultry industry are migrants from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, many of whom do not have legal immigration papers. As the industry's needs cyclically ebb and flow, the coordination of ICE raids on known immigrant communities essentially follows low periods of poultry production, and transfers bodies from one agro-logistics sector to its counterpart in the immigrant detention sector. Poultry companies contract employment recruiters in Mexico and other Central American countries, so the processes are vertically integrated, intersectoral, and transnational, again, echoing LeCavalier's term 'logistification' for ICEBOX throughout the entire 'product' life cycle.

Georgia is home to three private detention facilities, including the Stewart Detention Centre, which is the second largest in the country. The state also serves as the southeast regional hub for logistics, as it is heavily invested in the logistics and transportation sector. The Savannah port has the third highest container throughput in the country, and its harbour channel, located on the Savannah River, will be deepened by 1.5m for nearly 60km downriver and out to the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>82</sup> The \$1 billion project makes clear that the state will not tolerate

ecological 'friction' to interrupt its trade objectives. The hinterland impacts will extend last-mile warehousing and logistics facilities from their previous port radius of 20km inland, to nearly 60km-radius distance inland, expanding further westward into the state. In terms of spatial needs, the state industrial real estate market is booming, with a total inventory of 4,686,387m<sup>2</sup>, 50,443,850m<sup>2</sup> under construction, and one of the lowest vacancy rates among the country's port regions.<sup>83</sup> Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson Airport is the world's busiest passenger airport, while also providing essential international airfreight services.

The clusters of logistics infrastructure with road and rail connectivity make use of Georgia's diffuse urbanisation patterns, and converts low-cost, fallow agricultural land into an extensive matrix of large-scale warehouse and distribution centres, as is the case for detention centres. Georgia's logistics sector moves \$900 billion in cargo each year, and the state prioritises this sector for future economic growth. With the newest detention centre having recently opened in 2017, it is clear that Georgia state politics view the political climate and economic potential of logistics and detention centre growth as parallel strategies that can take advantage of circulatory connectivity, cheap land in peripheral areas, and extensive poverty, giving more leverage to private companies when offering to construct detention facilities in low-income, high-unemployment rural counties. Georgia courts and supports these sectors.

## Conclusion

The parallels between the processes, architectures, territories, and spatial expression of logistics and US immigration detention are shockingly similar; more so when human bodies are periodically treated with less precision and respect than the inanimate freight that moves through trade flows. US immigrant detention is comprised of radical environments of human control and neglect, rife

with potential fractures and fissures. In her work on undocumented immigrant workers in Atlanta, Mary E. Odem uses the term ‘subaltern immigrants’, providing an essential insight into the agency and savvy of those communities in negotiating the contemporary complexities of immigrant policing.<sup>84</sup> Odem cites Partha Chatterjee’s work on the distinction between ‘political society’ and ‘civil society’, noting that the former ‘is a site of negotiation and contestation opened by the activities of governmental agencies aimed at population groups’.<sup>85</sup> The state’s shape-shifting in immigrant policing practices to negotiate contradictory geopolitical and geo-economic mandates also provides a measure through which undocumented communities are quite aware that the US is economically dependent on their labour. The current US administration is intensifying immigrant persecution, and one hopes that this too will generate new forms of contestation and adaptive response from unauthorised communities.

ICEBOX architecture is austere. It speaks a minimalism inspired by profit maximization for corporate shareholders. CoreCivic proclaims that it was born out of a need to bring competition to a prison industry rife with government waste and neglect, which is of course the core mantra for business privatisation.<sup>86</sup> Cost-saving efficiencies move detainees into ICEBOX systems, and a lax governmental regulatory feedback mechanism is uninterested in enforcing even minimal environmental or safety codes. Detainees are neither citizens nor voters. From many different countries of origin, they are profoundly cosmopolitan in circumstance, but they are not a constituency of basic rights. ICEBOX is insistently ‘service-driven’, with no clarity or ponderance of who is being served.

Jacqueline Stevens introduces her edited volume *Citizenship in Question* by describing the ever-growing, international migratory condition of ‘disparity between the rituals of administration and the facts of habituation’, and using the term

‘ascriptive’ – arbitrary placement – as descriptor for birthplace and citizenship status.<sup>87</sup> The volume begins with a narrative of the mistaken detention of US citizen Johann ‘Ace’ Francis in the metro Atlanta area, and his subsequent detention, deportation, and eventual repatriation, after ten years, where he then worked at the Atlanta Hartsfield Jackson Airport. The book goes on to document legislated human illegality and detention all over the world, from the US to Canada to the European Union, the Ivory Coast to New Guinea, Taiwan to China – everywhere.<sup>88</sup> It begins with an individual story to recognise each unique experience in this byzantine labyrinth, and scales up from there.

The migratory condition of perennial detention and/or deportation threat renders an itinerant labour force all the more vulnerable to the needs and caprices of capital and state demands. ICEBOX processes this condition and further extracts value through ‘bodies in beds’ contracts and quotas. The recent ascension of nativist political ideology and discourse to the highest levels of government has helped to boost detention company stock shareholder value, which in turn secures political campaign donations and support from these companies. The politics is performed differently, perhaps more egregiously, across parties and national contexts, but ICEBOX thrives across successive administrations.

Dissolve ICEBOX.

## Notes

1. Global Detention Project. <https://globaldetentionproject.org>, accessed 22 March 2018.
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## Biography

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