

Memorialization of the Spaç Labor Camp

An Investigation Into Digital Methods

Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP)
Winner of the 2020 Presidents IQP Award

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9/19 - 12/19



Stakeholders and Goals

University

Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)

Main Goal

- Students complete a rigorous multidisciplinary research project

Most Important Deliverable

- Project report

Sponsor

Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB)

Main Goal

- Preservation, protection, and education of Albanian cultural heritage sites

Most Important Deliverable

- Digital reconstruction of Spaç Prison

Project Constraints

- 4 person team of undergraduate students
- 2 months planning + 2 months onsite
- Limited tools & resources through sponsor and university
- University requirements came first
- No funding

Project Stages

Preliminary Research
and Proposal

Testimony Collection
and Prototype Iteration

Prototype Testing

Recommendations
and Deliverables



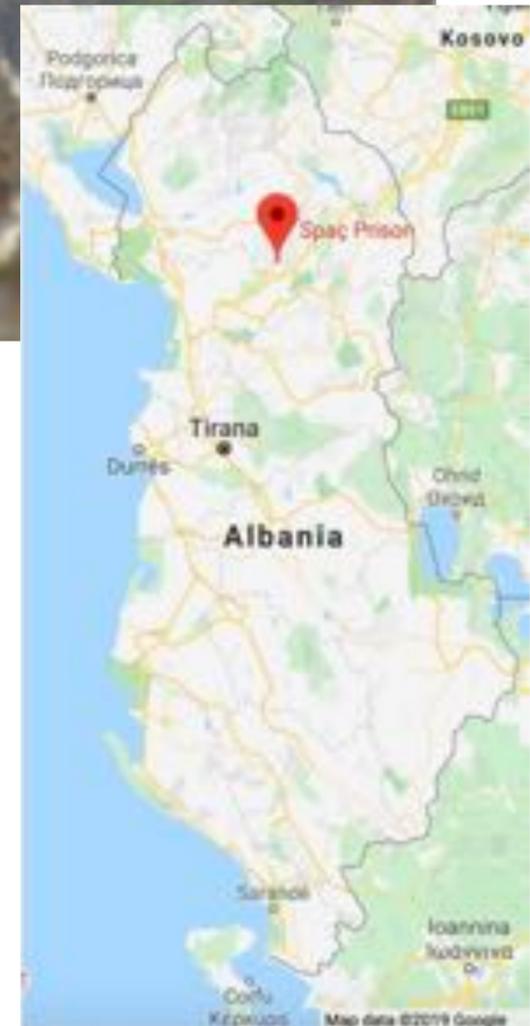
Spaç Overview



[1]



[1]



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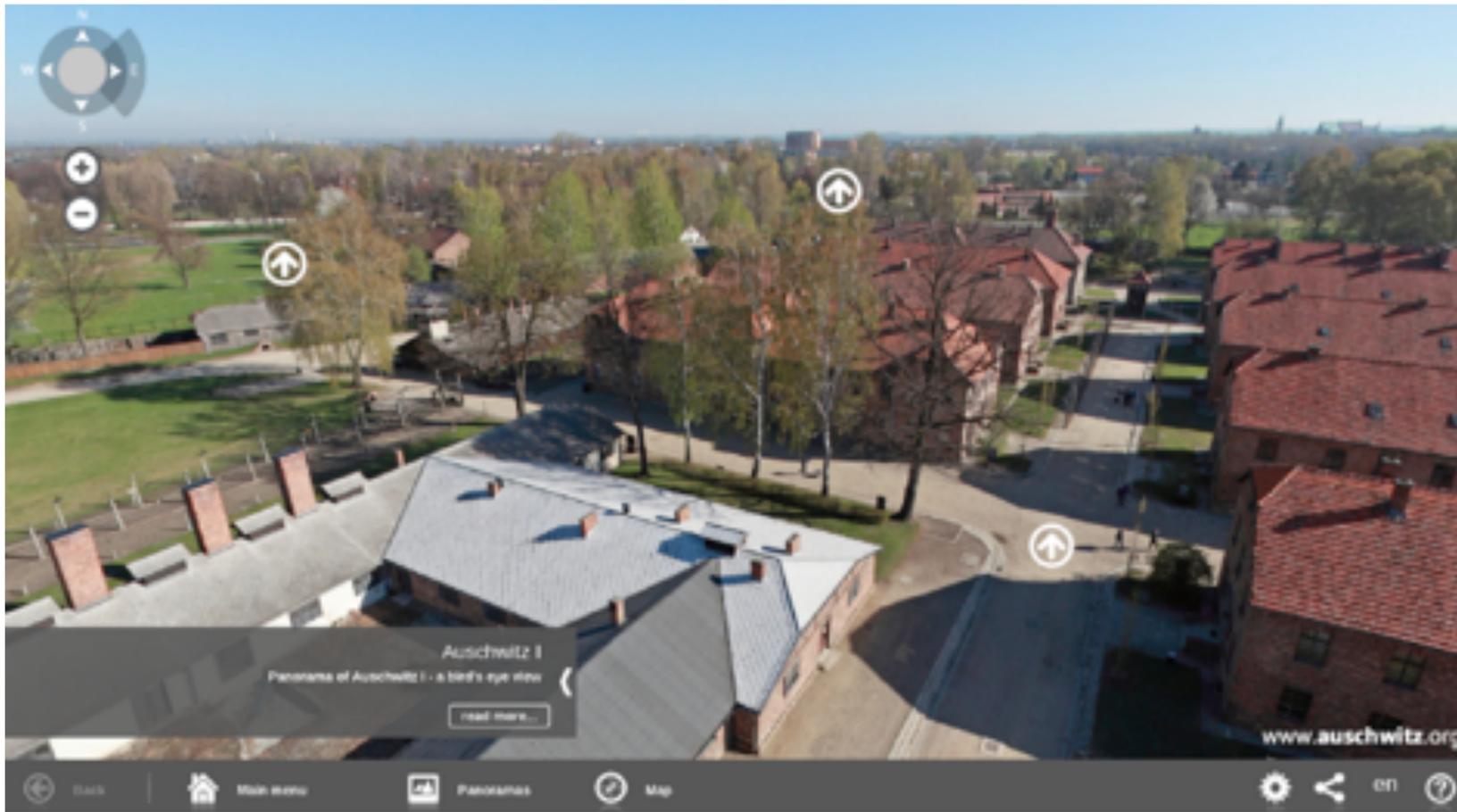
Spaç Prison: Then and Now

[1]

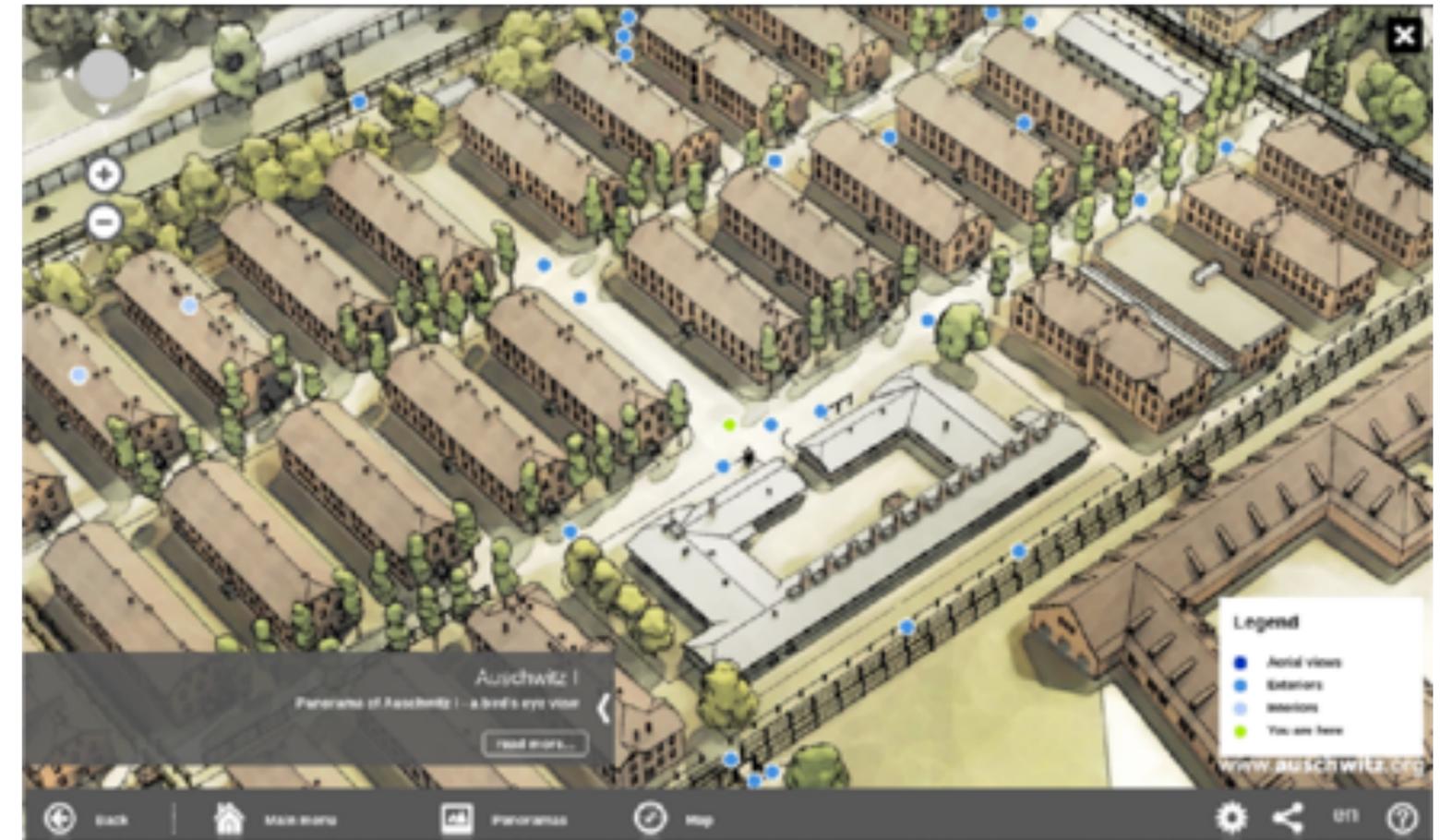


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Existing Work in Digital Reconstruction

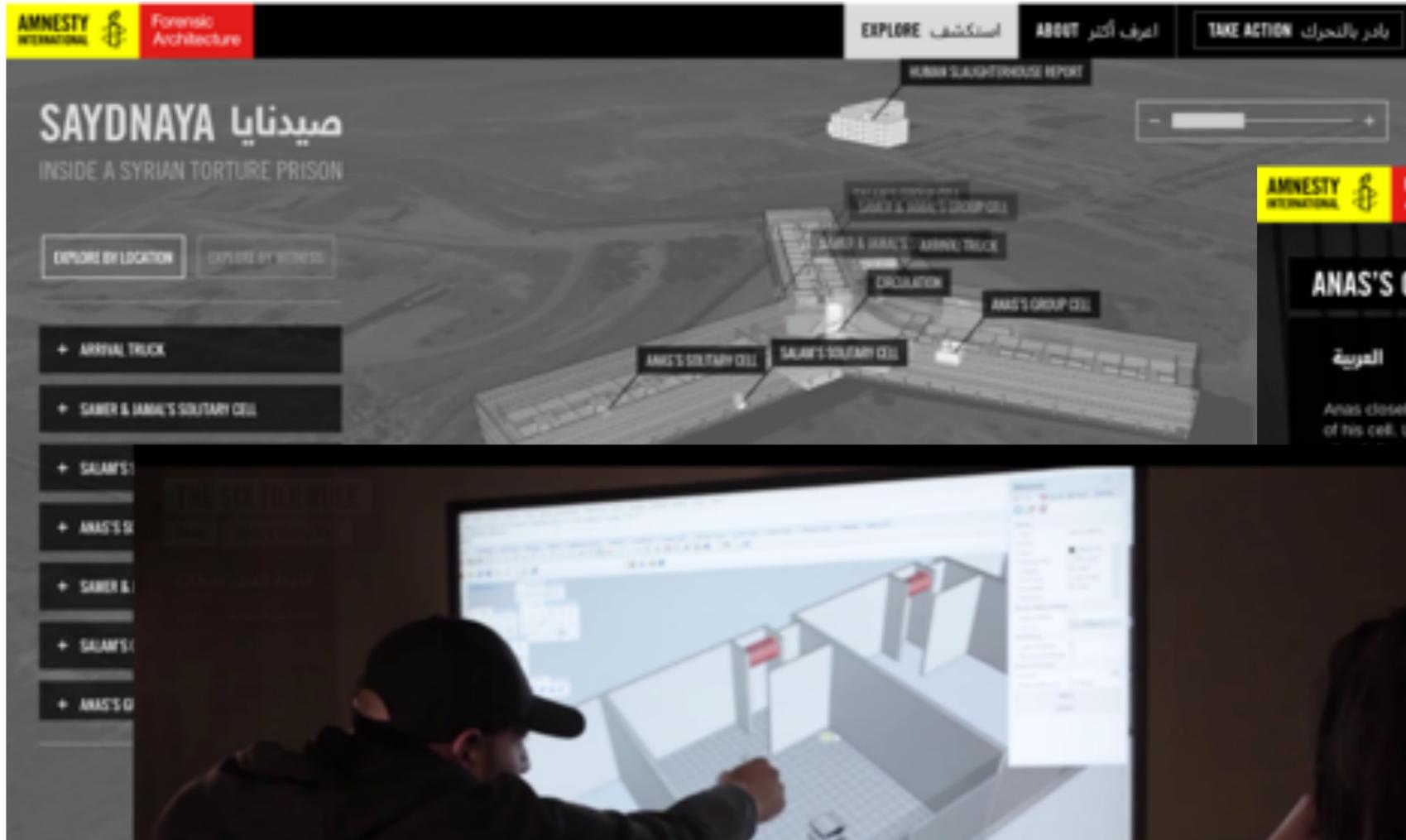


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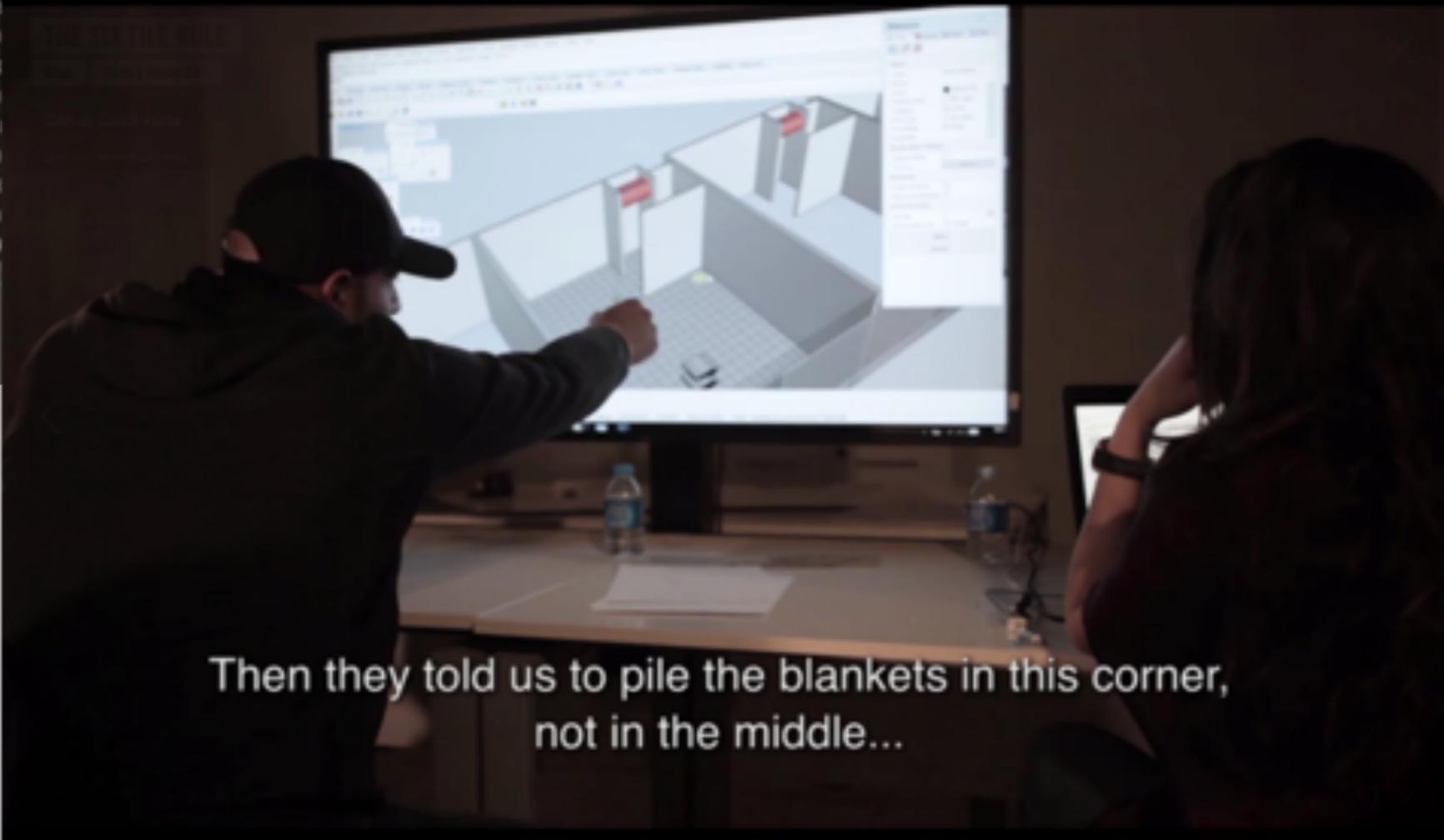
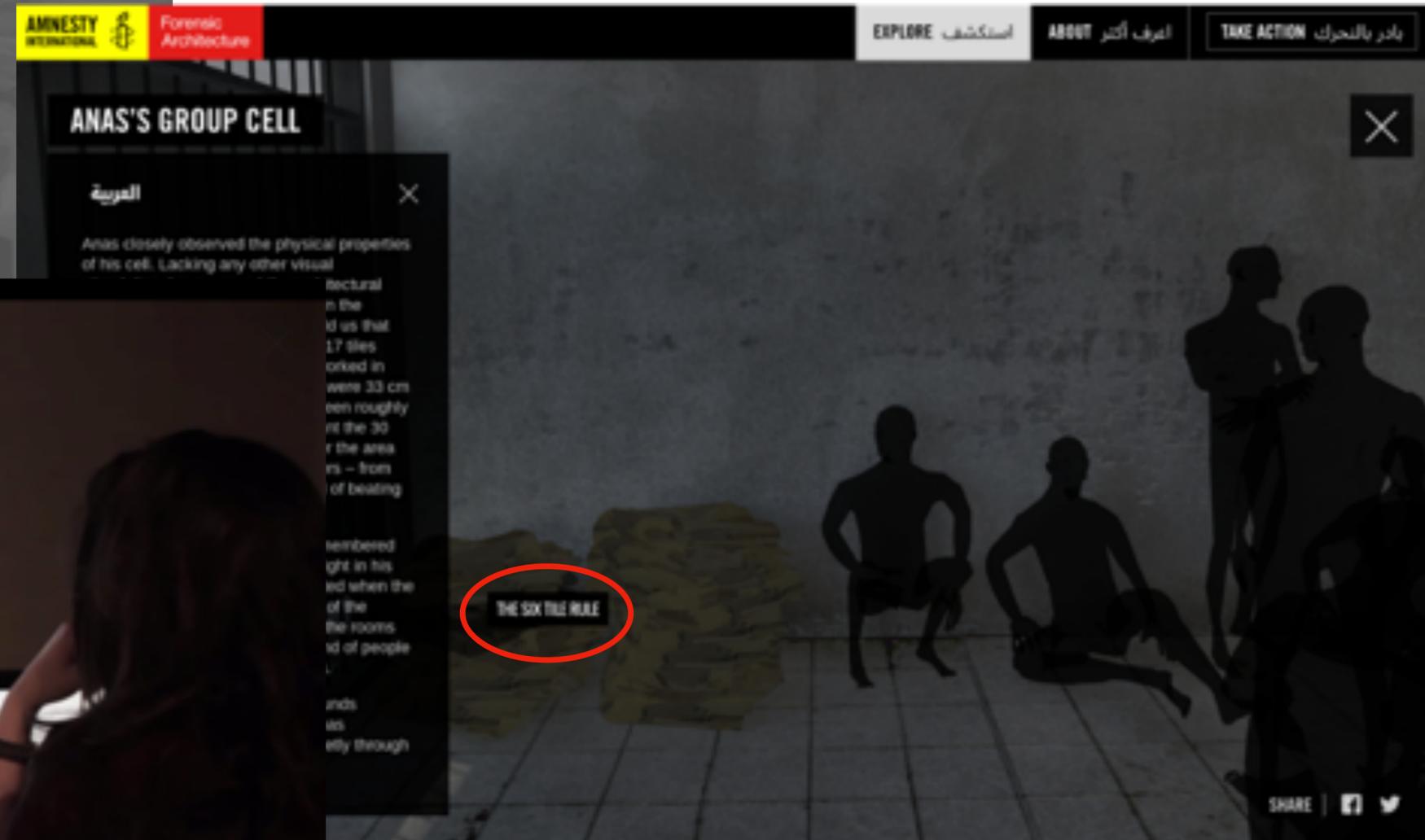


[3]

Reconstruction Inspiration



[2]



Then they told us to pile the blankets in this corner, not in the middle...

[2]

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Project Proposal

- Literature Review
- Proposed methodology
- Drafts of interview materials

On Site Interview

Zenel Drangu

“Because they hated us, [...] they never untied my feet and hands. I could not attend to my basic needs and I could not eat. So another person was required to feed me like a toddler.”

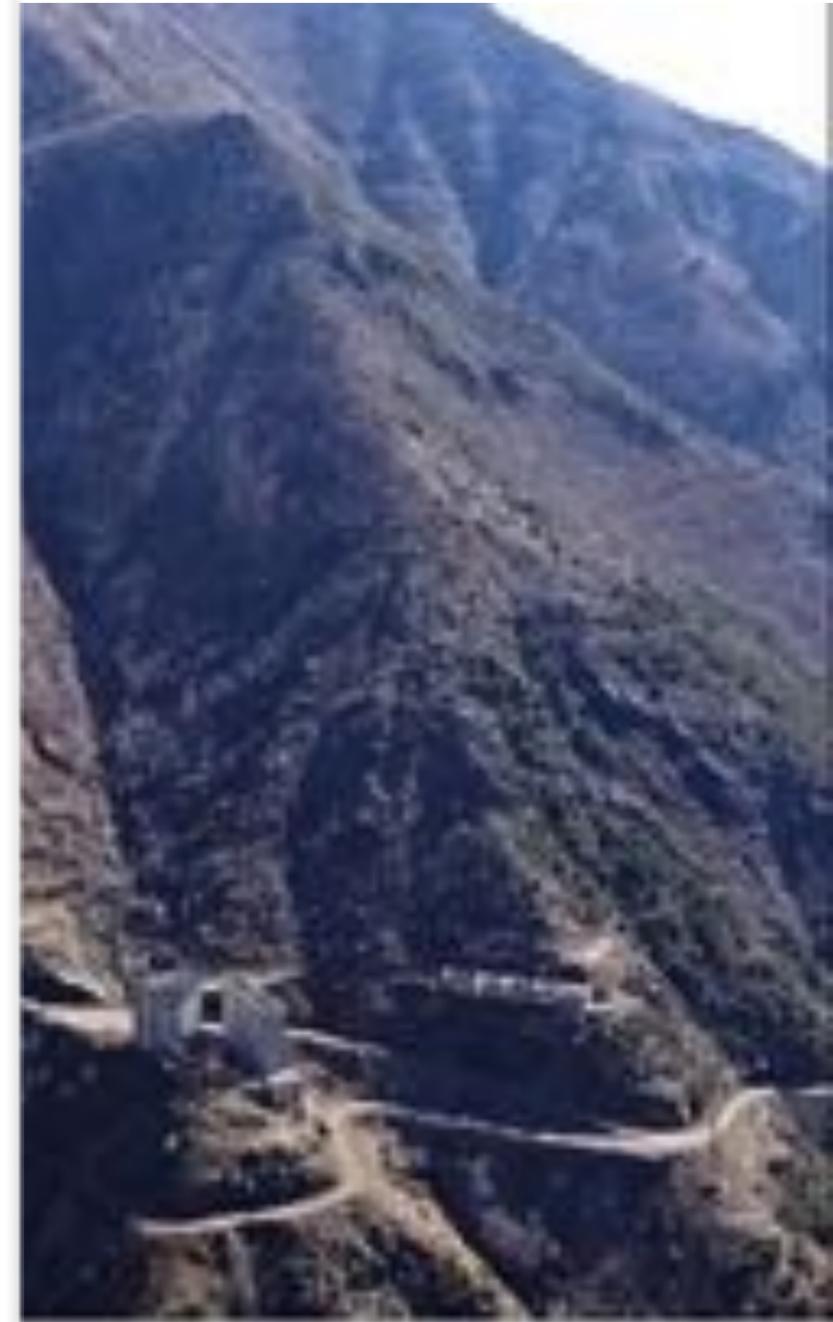
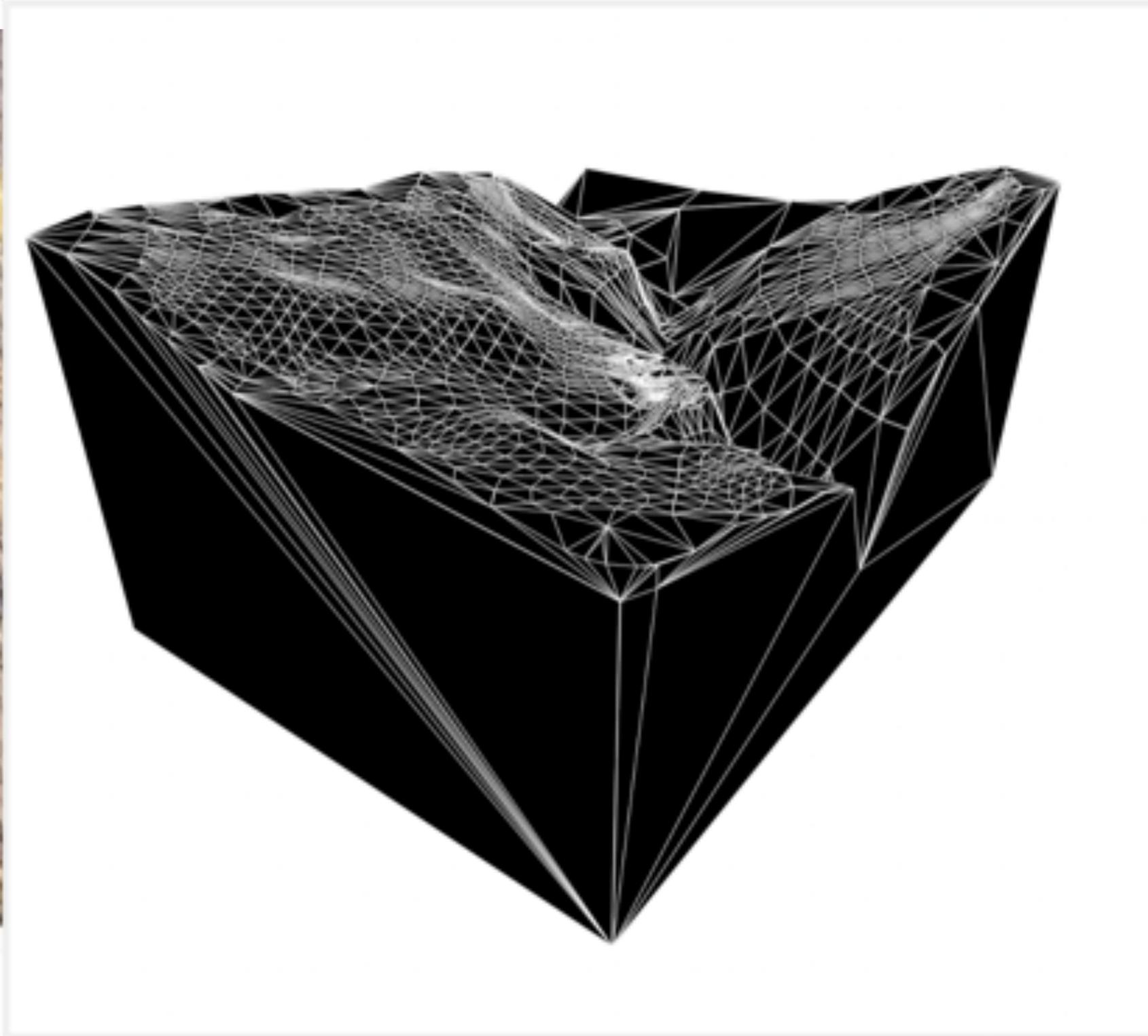
- Zenel on Isolation Cells

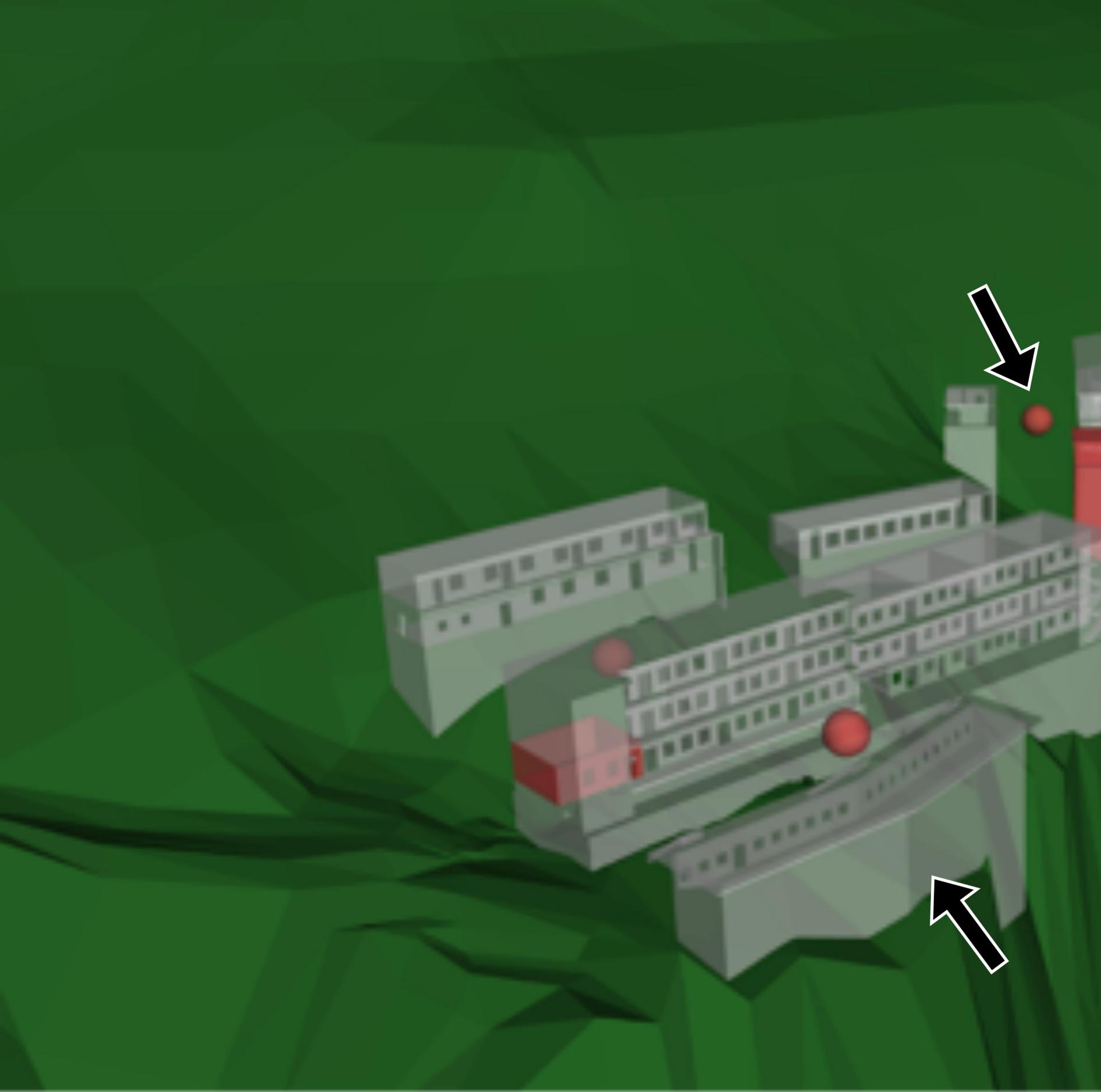
Findings:

- Spaç is more than buildings
- Spaç provided an anchor for Drangu’s testimony



Prototype Iteration





Family Meeting Room

The interesting moment is for our families when they were coming to visit us. There were no cars at the time for families, for individual persons, but they needed to come to here, to Reps, actually. And from that point to here they had to walk because no one would drive them up to here because they were considered the families of enemies of the people so they were convicted as well.

They would regularly bring us food and thank God they did because that was the food that kept us alive. The food from the prison was very, very little so that was the food that kept us alive.

Police would dig into what you brought here. A lot of the time, if you brought bread, the officer would tear it apart just to make sure that there was nothing inside the bread that could be used to escape. The same thing would happen with sweets.

Sometimes you would come across a very dishonest person who would, for instance, combine sugar and rice just. There have been cases where they combined pasta and rice, but in this situation you could still get the pasta back and the rice back. But with rice and sugar how can you know? So this is just out of evil, basically.



Situated Testimony

Fabian Kati

“So the gate, first gate was here. Second gate was here. We landed here. The van came from here, the road was like this, and entered here. First gate were opened and then stopped here. We could come out of here.”

-Fabian Kati

Findings:

- The model triggered Kati's memories of Spaç



User Survey

Purpose

- Measure engagement using the UESz
- Gather preliminary feedback

Findings

- The prototype is engaging
- Respondents quickly related to the model and began sharing personal stories

Shortcomings

- Small sample
- Unclear priorities for success criteria
- English language only

Recommendations

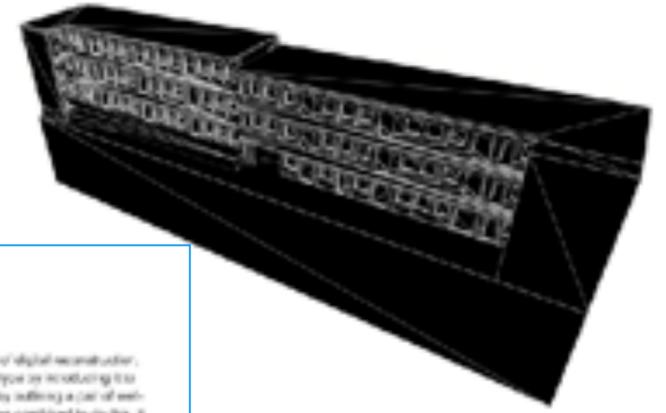
- Albanian language toggle
- Professional terrain modeling and texturing
- Continue modeling and reconstruction of lost buildings

Project Deliverables

- Project Report
- Prototype digital reconstruction
- Interview recordings and transcriptions
- 3D modelling & photography

CREATING A PROTOTYPE DIGITAL RECONSTRUCTION

Having selected sites, photographs, and descriptions of the physical location, the team began building the content of the digital reconstruction. We worked closely with CHW to make a prototype digital reconstruction. Our team met daily with their architectural and heritage staff. We quickly reviewed our progress, and spent a lot of time discussing our most pressing design goals. After our meetings, we would continue working on the model, presenting our progress and discussing our reasoning as we went along. The process of creating a prototype digital



ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR PROTOTYPE



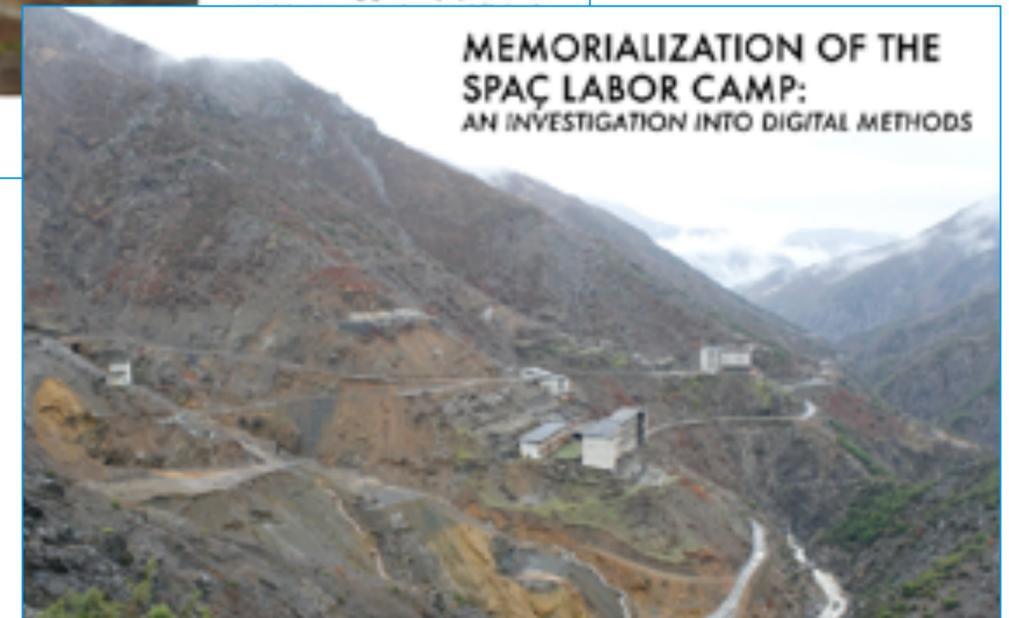
To test whether the benefits of digital reconstruction, we had to evaluate the prototype or reconstructing it to users. This is a difficult task by itself, as it requires a set of well-researched study tools that we combined to do this. It will have taken us a number of surveys which means we both the usability of software and the impact of a presentation of history. This section concludes with a brief explanation of how we approached researching the results of our survey.

Tools for Evaluating a Digital Reconstruction

To assess the effectiveness of a prototype digital reconstruction, we have used two measuring tools, the **User Engagement Scale (UES)** and the **Framework (F)** (O'Brien & Toms, 2008). The UES is a survey-based measurement system that O'Brien and Toms developed in 2008 to measure user engagement in digital reconstructions (O'Brien & Toms, 2008). The UES uses a self-reporting questionnaire that asks users to rate statements associated with various factors of engagement on a 5-point scale (O'Brien, 2011) (O'Brien & Toms, 2008). Lower values indicate disagreement with a statement, and higher values indicate agreement. Averaging these four ratings from a random sample of users indicates the overall level of engagement with the experience in the

Figure 1: A site photo of Spac. Courtesy of CHW.

MEMORIALIZATION OF THE SPAÇ LABOR CAMP: AN INVESTIGATION INTO DIGITAL METHODS



By Michael Conrath, Lee Gross, Elizabeth Knudsen, and Zita Rajcsoni



Space Prison

Digital Reconstruction (Prototype)

- Arrival
- Living in Space
- Under constant pressure

The (forced) work room

Making music in the music gallery

Remnants of the judicial



References

[1] Courtesy of CHwB

[2] Amnesty International, & Forensic Architecture. (2016). Saydnaya, Inside a Syrian Torture Prison. Retrieved on September 21, 2019 from <https://saydnaya.amnesty.org/en/about.html>.

[3] Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau. (n.d.). Auschwitz-Birkenau- Virtual tour. Retrieved on October 01, 2019 from www.panorama.auschwitz.org.

[4] Google Street View (2019). Retrieved March 4, 2021