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I, Adam M Maraganore, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture.

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Designing for an Unoppressive Prison Architecture

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This thesis examines architecture's role in the unsuccessful prison institutions in the United States through its use of oppressive architectural elements. Architecture is proven to play a role in making peoples' lives better or worse, and the following examination pulls apart elements for a better design practice. By examining architecturally oppressive elements, spatial layouts and site specific information, new, more effective facilities can be built. Works of Michel Foucault, Michelle Alexander, Leslie Fairweather are instrumental in providing insight along with the works of practicing architects—Kyle May and Roger Paez or views from prisoners and witnesses of oppression itself from Reverend Kaia Stern. An examination of oppressive architectural elements in prisons, past and present, enlightens at what needs to change and why, creating a new facility in the neighborhood of Northside, in Cincinnati, Ohio which utilizes alternative solutions to the typical oppressive elements of American prisons.
I want to thank Aarati Kanekar for helping take the time to facilitate my project and offering guidance in times of ideological stagnation.

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Prison systems in the United States are becoming too large to manage and control. American jails are filled with people awaiting trials and roughly sixty-two percent are never convicted to imprisonment.\(^1\)

Three out of every four people are being held for nonviolent crimes. Crime rates continue to fall, yet the incarceration rate has increased four-hundred percent since 1976. Reverend Stern points out that prisons have become a last stop for those failed and abandoned by society.\(^2\)

There are currently about two to three million people in prison.\(^3\) Another seven million are on probation or on parole. The budget in the United States for prison systems is eighty-billion dollars. The cost of keeping a person in prison is $109,000 per year. As a prisoner is more likely to return to prison than leave for good, the general public often pays this amount repeatedly. Once a prisoner is released, they are branded with a felon record which makes it harder to find housing, jobs and get an education compared to an average citizen. While many people advocate for this type of punishment for people who have committed crimes, high incarceration rates only increase crime and continue to cost tax payers more money.

The problem of dealing with individuals who commit criminal offenses has a long history of debate resulting in various proposals. As Foucault stated, a general form was needed to render individuals docile.\(^1\)

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and useful for society.⁴ Prisons were desirable because they removed punishment from the equation.⁵ In reality, prisons only remove punishment and the trials determining the form of punishment from the public eye. The public has been stripped from the equation of punishment and prison facilities, but outrage has begun to creep out of the shadows in the form of justice advocates, employees of the criminal justice field and ex-convicts. Foucault asks whether punishment, corporeal or otherwise, is beneficial to any party.⁶ Oppression, architectural or otherwise, has proven to be ineffective, and many people argue that it is time the system evolves. Michelle Alexander notes that inmates do not become normal citizens post-release. Any person with a prison record is permanently “locked out of mainstream society.”⁷ Felons have trouble getting jobs and housing due to discrimination.⁸ They are further denied the right to vote, denied jury service selection and even denied foodstamps. Ninety percent of prisoners will one day reenter society, so it is beneficial to start designing facilities that can reintegrate people who are ready to help society.⁹

The following thesis examines the role of architects in the complex system of incarceration. This document will discuss the history of prisons architecturally, the oppressive nature of prisons, case studies of current prisons, an examination of the layout of public and private spaces within communities, site analysis and a facility proposal. The goal of this study is to revitalize discussion of an architect’s role in prison systems and items architects should discuss when undertaking prison projects. The final proposed project addresses the oppressive elements of current prison facilities and provide suggestions for ways to mitigate the oppressive nature found in prisons.

This thesis begins with an examination of historical typologies of prisons, their accompanying philosophies and the acceptance of architecture’s role in prison systems. This examination is supported by previous historians, such as Norman Johnston and Nikolaus Pevsner, and their takes on prison systems. In chapter three, a further examination of the oppressive architectural elements found in prisons is documented. Each oppressive element is backed up with objective research of adverse effects suffered by inmates physically and mentally. For each oppressive element found, a suggested architectural change is proposed. Chapter four examines a series of case studies examining various prison systems and their use of the aforementioned oppressive elements. This leads to an exploration of taking successful elements from the case studies, especially the Dementia Village, to better understand how they could be applied in a new application to provide an architectural solution. Chapter five involves an examination of villages, towns and neighborhoods and their spatial layouts and sequencing. This spatial sequencing is examined to better understand how a village or neighborhood could be inserted into a prison facility to help reduce the strains of separation from society. Chapter six considers the proposed neighborhood of Northside in

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⁵ Ibid., 9.
⁶ Ibid., 15.
Cincinnati as a location for a prison and includes context of what the neighborhood offers and why it is a preferred location. Chapter seven provides a proposal for a new, humane prison facility based on the observations from the entire breadth of research. This facility should be thought of as a new typology that avoids architecture oppression by granted freedom and control over their own lives and is separate from a conventional prison facility.
The history of prisons has undergone many phases of popular design strategies that were implemented repeatedly around the world. The first use of prisons has been traced to Classical Greece and Rome. These civilizations would use quarries as prisons where their forced laborers would live. The Mamertine Prison, built in 640 B.C.E., was built under the orders of Ancus Martius of Rome. It is one of the oldest prisons still in existence today. The prison was later enlarged into dungeons under Rome’s sewer system. To be imprisoned in the fourteenth century was a precursor to punishments ranging from banishment to execution. Impromptu prisons, often cages, were also used for political prisoners of high rank and to force payments of debt owed to the government or individuals.

The Mamertine Prison influenced the layouts used for Medieval prisons. Mamertine Prison had two rooms, one on top of the other. The upper room had dimensions of thirty feet by twenty-two feet which is relatively spacious compared to today’s prisons. Light streamed into the room through a hole in the ceiling which was sixteen feet in height. The lower room was accessible from the room above and was conical in shape. The size was smaller at twenty feet in diameter, and the room had no access to light.

In the Medieval ages, people were imprisoned at a greater rate than the Romans. According to Johnston, imprisonment occurred in “fortresses, castles, abutments of bridges, town gates, cellars and private dwellings.” This is the era where the Tower of London and the Bastille were used for holding prisoners of the state. The prisoners were given

an apartment and the freedom to wander around the enclosed area. Prisoners of less political importance were held in cages made from timber placed in the castle yard or in large halls of the castle. Spaces specifically constructed to imprison people were not made until the twelfth century. These were built like the Mamertine Prison with one lit room above a dark room that was accessed through a trapdoor. Both rooms had a toilet cubicle built into the wall and an airshaft. Eventually, castles became popular locations for prisons once gunpowder rendered them ineffective for defense.

As stated above, prisons were mainly used to hold important people of state or social status. Religion also played a part of the proliferation of prisons.1 When Constantine was in power of Rome, Assyrians and Hebrews were some of the ethnic groups imprisoned for their religious practices. This was a merciful act in lieu of death or corporal mutilation. The Christians believed that a person could only be purified through suffering, and they would repent if they were subjected to solitary confinement. They disregarded physical comfort as the body was of minimal importance compared to the soul. A misbehaving monk would be locked up in a special room in the monastery until he had repented his sin. If the sin was great enough, the monks would be sent to special houses that were “in less desirable places.”2 These houses were considered places for punishment.

During 500 to 600 C.E., prison design was beginning to be defined by monks. There were demands from the Cluniac order that a prison must have no door or window and that the only entrance could be from the ceiling by ladder. This would prevent any chance of the prisoner escaping. Prisoners were usually placed in irons and rarely provided access to light, heat or drink. However, it is still uncertain what the architecture looked like for these church prisons. As there were only two rooms in an abbey devoted to imprisonment, scholars assume that few prisoners were held inside the rooms at the same time. From the prisons that have survived from this era, the prison rooms were tomblike in design which reflected the Christian philosophy of solitude and suffering leading to purification of the soul. Monastic prisons were not limited to the pre-Industrial times, as Eastern European countries (like Austria and Russia) built monastic prisons with many cells that were used up to the twentieth century. Initially led by the Cluniacs in the eleventh century, the Cistercians used these monastic prisons through the thirteenth century.3

While not much is known about prisons in the middle ages, there was a rise of tower cells. In Italy, a small prison named Filarete had a smaller prison inside the palace. This small area was vaulted and consisted of torture chambers directly above it. The larger prison was square in plan and surrounded by two walls and a moat. Prisoners were put in the rooms based on their social class or the severity of their crime. In the four corners of the square were rooms for more sinister offenders such as murderers, traitors or crimes associated with the death penalty. Human waste was shoveled into the moat which prevented foul odors within the facility, and families were allowed to live with the prisoners.

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 9.
4. Ibid., 9.
after the first seven years of imprisonment.

In conjunction with feudalism’s demise, there was a growing sense of social disorder and unrest throughout Europe. Populations of beggars, prostitutes and criminals grew rampant. At the same time, a new humanitarian spirit was spreading across Europe. There was a move away from violent, corporal punishments for crime to imprisonment in workhouses in the sixteenth century. The people believed that a hard day’s work would make up for their sins, and institutions were built that matched this mentality. In 1557, London’s Bridewell workhouse was opened where prisoners were housed in an old royal palace. Bridewell was deemed so successful that in 1576 British Parliament passed an act that required every county to erect its own facility of likeness. In 1596, a house of corrections was established in Amsterdam, a design which would later spread through Holland, Germany and across Europe. These workhouses in Holland became models for both the British and the Pennsylvanian Quakers.

While the mentality behind prisons began to change, the architecture did not. These facilities were usually in a hollow square or rectangle. Very few workhouses from 1600-1700 had distinct architectural styles or forms. One influential prison of this period was San Michele in Rome in 1704. San Michele was established in a hospice and contained cellular confinement. ‘The architect, Carlo Fontana, designed the rectangular structure to hold thirty rooms along the building’s profile on three tiers.’ Each tier held a balcony and gallery to access the cells. Each cell had a mattress, latrine, outside window and a solid door with a small opening where a cloth could be placed to hide the outside. All rooms and cells faced the central hall which was used as a workroom, dining room and chapel. While San Michele is often credited as being the first prison with cells, earlier prison drawings in the book *Architectura universalis show multiple prisons with cells.*

The earliest shown is a prison at Kassel, dated from 1617. Prisons of this era rarely had water, sewers or fresh air. The prisoners were often chained together with no regard to potential issues of chaining men and women together. The French had better conditions, but their use of torture dungeons made the situation considerably worse.

One origin of prisons that is often overlooked is the imprisonment of captives on ships. In the sixteenth century, ships were a major mode of transportation to get from place to place. The French were known to imprison people as oarsmen to be the manual labor to allow the French to do other, less strenuous jobs. This continued until the eighteenth century when Britain began sending prisoners to colonies overseas instead. However, the British did moor ships off shore which held convicts. The prisoners suffered from very poor living conditions on board the ships. The horrible conditions made reformers call loudly for new, cleaner prisons that oppressed the inmates less.

In 1772, the government of Austrian Flanders built a house of correction in Ghent. This was architecturally revolutionary as it combined isolating the prisoners in cells at night with the separation of prisoners based on sex, age, degree of criminality and length of after the first seven years of imprisonment.

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7 Ibid., 12.
The rest of the offenses were due to property theft. Of the executions in 1818, four were for stealing horses, two for rape, four for sodomy, and one for larceny. While those were who were executed, fifty-eight in the same year were convicted of execution for stealing horses. As more prisoners were taken over by typhus fever, it was clear that prisons needed to be redesigned and the facilities should be a substitution for an overabundance of executions.

Rise of the Prison Architect

By the late 1700s, architects began to theorize on what they could do to make a more effective prison. In the sixteenth century, a Spanish writer said, “The jail has to be formed out of rough stones in order to appear fearsome, but in such a manner that the prisoners are not deprived of the light of the sky.” This theorizing of materiality was also touched on by Francesco Milizia in his book *Principj di architettura civile* in 1785. He believed form should follow the function and therefore a prison should be designed to be melancholy. Institutions for serious offenders should be heavier with “high and thick walls with savage-like appendages which throw forth the most horrible shadows.” There should be “uninviting and cavern-like entrances,” writings that inspire fear and everything to inspire “darkness, threatening, ruins and terror.” Milizia believed that these factors would make people fear the institutions and reduce crime. This is a tactic still used by architects today.

12 Ibid., 14.
13 Ibid., 16.
Around this time, debtor’s prisons rose to prominence.14 Lasting until the 1860s, these facilities were privately owned and known to be corrupt. These prisons often popped up in various building types and spaces, and uniformity between prison design was almost nonexistent. As these prisons took up in any available building, security was very lax compared to today’s standards. The prisoners inside the debtor’s prisons were allowed to pay for upgrades and privileges inside which led to extortionist practices. For a large fee, prisoners could live outside the prison walls in the surrounding debtor’s district, a small section of the neighborhood. While the prisoners were not bound by walls, they were not allowed to leave the district at large. This gave the offenders more freedom and less oppression while still being bound to a remote area against their will.

In the 1780s, the workhouses had begun to deteriorate, and the public saw their state from the drawings of John Howard, published in State of Prisons in 1777. The government was not funding the institutions, so the buildings were in disrepair, unsanitary and overcrowded. Britain outlined a set of prison construction guidelines.15 A major issue of the workhouses was that prisoners were negatively affecting each other and creating a group mentality. However, individual cells were too expensive to maintain. The solution to this problem was increased surveillance. The desire for increased surveillance led to three different layouts for prisons: rectangular, circular and radial. Furthermore, cast iron had been invented, so it was used for bars, doors, floors and walls. Another important invention was centralized heating, ventilation and plumbing, and these were used extensively.

Another new, paramount idea was solitary confinement. The Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons was the first to promote solitary confinement in 1787.16 Their pamphlet advocated for a “house of repentance” where solitude would help to soothe the troubled minds of criminals.17 This group of people felt that solitary confinement would be more humane than the public displays of punishment that occurred such as the gallows, pillory, stocks, whipping posts and wheelbarrows. The concept of solitary confinement created a major change in how prisons were designed. Hollow squares, rectangular and H-shaped plans were based on their predecessors and had improved upon security and health.18 However, their arrangement made it more difficult to watch the prisoners. In response to this issue of surveillance, Jeremy Bentham came up with a solution in the design of the panopticon.19 The panopticon was a proposed circular building to be made of cast iron and glass. Cells had bars on their fronts and were to be heated and cooled in the winter and summer. The cooling would be done with a primitive air conditioning setup that forced air over ice blocks and then sent the air into cells. The guards monitored the prisoners from a central tower both visually and audibly as sound tubes from each cell also went to the guards. Bentham was a distinguished architect who had been inspired by a circular layout

15 Johnston, The Human Cage, 17.
17 Ibid.
18 Johnston, The Human Cage, 18.
19 Ibid., 19.
London architect William Blackburn is considered to be the father of the radial prison plan.22 He had constructed eighteen prisons and jails from 1785-1790. These allowed him to iteratively design prisons with fan-shaped arrays, Greek crosses, central halls with two wings, and a multi-angled building. The governor’s house was always placed in the center of the prison. Blackburn’s Suffolk County Jail at Ipswich was the first cruciform jail in Britain, and it was the first prison that permitted visual inspection of all corridors from one, central point. Most prisons with a central building were disconnected from the cell blocks forcing the guards to step outside to look into the adjacent buildings.43 Furthermore, Blackburn placed a wall in the center of the radial wings which allowed each block be divided in half. With fifteen wings, this created thirty different divisions of prisoners in one facility which allowed much greater flexibility to group prisoners together by gender, age or severity of crime.24

This era of prison design had the best architects of the day designing prisons. Furthermore, public competitions for prison layouts became commonplace from 1780-1840. In 1826, a British government publication stated that a radiating plan was the “established preference to those of any other.”25 In general, the architecture in radial prisons was similar. Cells were usually small with a small window secured by iron bars.26 Cells did not have toilets or water, and the doors were usually wooden with small openings for the guards to look inside. The walls were made of stone, and cells were barrel vaulted. Furnaces that

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20 Ibid., 20.
21 Ibid., 21.
22 Ibid., 23.
23 Ibid., 24.
24 Ibid., 25.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 26.
provided heat were occasionally in the lower levels or in corridors. Each prisoner had an infirmary and a workshop they would report to. In the center of the facility was a building that usually was the governor's quarters with a chapel above. Architects believed that prisons should not be ornate in style. While the debate on ornamentation for prisons continues to this day, appearance continues to erroneously be thought of as playing an active role in deterring crime. In 1826, an Encyclopedia article stated:

_The style of architecture of a prison is a matter of no slight importance. It offers an effectual method of exciting the imagination to a most desirable point of abhorrence. Persons, in general, refer their horror of a prison to an instinctive feeling rather than to any accurate knowledge of the privations or infirmities therein endured. And whoever remarks the forcible operation of such antipathies in the vulgar, will not neglect any means however minute, of directing them to a good purpose. The exterior of a prison should, therefore, be formed in the heavy and somber style, which most forcibly impresses the spectator with gloom and horror. Massive cornices, the absence of windows or other ornaments, small low doors and the whole structure comparatively low, seem to include nearly all the points necessary to produce the desired effect. Our own Newgate perhaps embodies these as perfectly as can be desired._

In the nineteenth century, architects struggled to find a style for prisons due to the influence of the Romantic Movement. Some architects experimented with motifs such as the Kilmainham Prison in Dublin [27] which had a pair of coiled serpents above the doorway or Newgate Prison with festooned chains above the main gate.[28] A Greek Revival style with Gothic detailing became the most popular choice.[29] However, the Gothic detailing only fueled criticism of prisons being overly ornate.

In 1793, an anonymous person wrote:

_This temple of the goddess Laverna is situated at the northern extremity of the town, where it rises in all the glare of ostentatious majesty. A stranger, on being informed it is the common jail, must be immediately prejudiced by a very indifferent opinion of the honesty or reputed wealth of a place which required a building for the reception of villany and insolency that covers more than twice the ground occupied by the prison of Newgate and on fair calculation will hold half the inhabitants of Liverpool...a distant view indicates a magnificent castle. The pile is enormous; the materials of which it is composed would build a village._

In America, the nineteenth century became an era of prisons with monumental facades which drew tourists from across the world to catch a glimpse.[30] These designs were to evoke fear in citizens of the grand facility which looked down upon people. John Haviland designed the New Jersey State Penitentiary in the style of Egyptian Revival in 1833. He adopted the Egyptian detailing from Palladio who was inspired by Vitruvius. Haviland thought that the metaphor of his architectural style would help prison facilities by deterring future inmates. While the idea
of Egyptian Revival prisons caught on and spread across the world in new prison implementations, the style did not help keep inmates out of prison. It was quickly apparent that Haviland’s belief that a twenty-four-hour reform program did not actually succeed in reforming inmates, and his facility was eventually named “the Tombs.”

Dostoevsky commented on the design, saying “I am convinced that the celebrated cellular system . . . deprives a criminal of his energy, enervates his soul . . . and at last exhibits a dried up mummy as a model of repentance and amendment.”

Much earlier in 1692, the American William Penn wrote his revolutionary penal code to change prison systems forever. This was due to the calls for reform demanded by his fellow Quakers. During the first year of the ensuing prison revolution, Walnut Street Jail was built. The architecture was “average” and prisoners lived in congregate cells with a small house built in the prison yard for solitary confinement. Quakers believed that prisoners should be in total isolation during both day and night, as solitude was a punishment which instilled reflection and remorse. They believed that solitude also protected the naïve prisoners from being influenced by the more dangerous ones while simultaneously preventing a group mentality that may inspire prison breaks or attacks on guards. The Quakers gave prisoners religious instruction and work to be completed in their cell paired with visits by individuals working to help inspire reform.

In 1821, overcrowding of Walnut Street Jail provoked the design and construction of Eastern State Penitentiary, also designed by John Haviland. The British immigrant selected the popular layout in England for his design: a radial plan. Originally, the central building of the layout was to be an area for laundry, a bakery and a chapel above. However, Haviland made modifications and used the central building for surveillance. When the prison opened, this modification revolutionized the design of prisons. Seven wings radiated from the central hub, and the guards in the middle could observe all wings at once. The cells were twelve feet long by eight feet wide by ten feet in height. The cells had hot water heating for their water tap and a toilet, and the first floor cells had their own recreation yards built outside the cells. Prisoners were expected to work, take meals and read the bible during their days spent within the cells, and the only ways prisoners could leave their cells were if they were in dire medical condition.

Johnston calls Eastern State one of the first “successful” large scale prisons, and this was in part due to Haviland’s effort. He gave careful attention to details such as floor paving stones being joined at points inaccessible to prisoners or ensuring that the entire array of cells was visible from the central watch tower. Haviland also ensured that the prisoners could not communicate within their cells. The building had some of the best standards for ventilation, heating and plumbing that were not rivaled for over seventy-five years. Eastern State Penitentiary was built in the British Gothic style, making the building appear gloomy and heavy. The architecture was simple without any ornamentation or elaborate styles like other Gothic prisons. As soon as the prison opened, Eastern State was both famous and controversial.


32 Ibid., 30.
33 Johnston, The Human Cage, 29.
This no longer allowed prisoners any access to natural light or access to the outside world. The cells were a small seven-and-a-half-feet long, three-feet-eight-inches wide, and seven feet high. They opened onto balconies facing nine feet of open space before the wall. The wings were heated with stove pipes in the corridors and ventilated by ducts. These ducts allowed prisoners to communicate with one another as well. Solitary confinement was abandoned after three years because the mental and physical health of the prisoners had declined. This inspired Warden Elam Lynds to create the Auburn System which consisted of work in silence during the daytime in workshops with solitary confinement in the cells during the night. This system was shortly deemed better, as the inmates had a higher level of productivity than in-cell labor and the prison cost less to both build and maintain than radial prison layouts. America was, as a society, less willing to let prisoners sit with nothing to do in their cells. As a whole, Americans believed that prisoners should be hard at work like an average citizen. In 1825, the prisoners from the Auburn prison began to construct the Sing Sing prison on the Hudson River. Sing Sing prison had a similar floor plan, and its cell doors were made of iron with a grille above. The doors were held shut with gang locks. Similar to Auburn, there were no toilets in the cells, and the cells were damp, dark and poorly ventilated. The Auburn System was replicated all over the United States into the 1900s. Due to the advances in technology, steel became a staple for prison design, as it was used for bars, doors, balconies and window sashes. Technological advances also allowed heating and cooling to improve. However, privacy disappeared
visited Fresnes, and he would use the visit as inspiration when designing a similar prison for the Federal Penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania in 1932. Hopkins modified the style from Gothic to Northern Italian Gothic, and the institution partially was missing an enclosing wall. The prison was built of red brick which showed both on the exterior and inside the prison. While the prisoners were subjected to maximum security inside the cells, Hopkins designed common rooms which allowed for more lax security for prisoners outside their cells. Like all telephone-pole layouts, the facilities were connected via a corridor. The Federal Bureau of Prisons praised the prison for designing a facility with the knowledge that seventy-five percent or prisoners do not need maximum security. With the recognized success of the Lewisburg prison, Hopkins’ later prisons continued to challenge architectural norms by appearing more like college dormitories in the 1930s.

The telephone-pole plan was implemented for high or medium security prisons in the United States and a few other countries post World-War II. In the 1950s, older prisons were modified into telephone-pole systems. In many cases, the renovation was given little effort and the prisons were poorly retrofitted. In other cases, the prison was scaled to be too large. In a Texas maximum security prison, prison staff need to use bicycles to get from one end of the prison to the other. A prison in Soledad, California has a corridor which is one-thousand-and-one-hundred feet long. While architects have abused the telephone-pole plan, it does have benefits. The corridor can be due to barred doors and peepholes in the rear walls of the cells. If toilets were in cells, they were in full view of anyone looking into the cell or walking past. While prisons of the Auburn Style were designed in the Gothic Style, they often blended in with the Victorian style used for other public buildings. The only thing that differed for prisons was the thick stone or concrete wall enclosing the facility.

Design in the Twentieth Century

Once construction of prisons slowed at the end of the nineteenth century, there were thirty years of relative inactivity. During this period, the telephone-pole plan was designed. This system had a series of cellblocks in parallel connected by a bisecting corridor. In between the cell blocks were service facilities and shops for both prisoners and prison staff. This system never became as popular as the radial or Auburn styles, but it was important because it showed a shift in prison policy once more. Prisons were starting to add more services to the institutions such as vocational training and educational or professional services. Due to this, prisoners were allowed to move around and created a dynamic environment. The telephone plan was adapted from hospitals in the eighteenth century, and a similar prototype prison was built in France as early as 1839. This design allowed for prisons to grow to hold more prisoners than ever before. The Seine Department prison, built in 1898 in Fresnes-les-Ringis, France, had six cell blocks holding two-thousand cells in its entirety. Alfred Hopkins

Ibid., 42.

Ibid., 43.

Ibid., 44.

Ibid., 45.

Ibid., 46.

Ibid., 47.
zoned for different blocks of cells which makes it easy to control where prisoners wander. It also allows guards to maintain the separation of different types of offenders—either sex or severity. Some prisons have taken this separation to the extreme when combining low, medium and high-security prisoners. The Louisiana Penitentiary in Angola put a wired mesh fence around its maximum security block surrounded with watch towers. Another solution that became popular in the 1930s and 1940s was a hollow-square prison whose outline was made up of four different cell-blocks instead of the typical wall. These were popular because they were much cheaper than a traditional prison, but these never were implemented after World-War II.

Post World-War II, the confidence and optimism towards the American prison systems faded. New studies were showing that prisons were ineffective at rehabilitation, and the new techniques being tried were not working. Some experts proposed focusing on the inmates’ experiences and their interactions with other inmates. A new proposed system was the cottage or village layout. This proposed that prisoners would live in a series of cottages or dormitories which would combined to become a small village. These prisons were fenceless, and prisoners were allowed to have their own rooms. These were first experimented with on women inmates, but later adopted for both sexes. Two examples were the New Jersey Reformatory at Annandale built in 1929 and the Illinois Women’s Prison at Dwight in 1930. While seeming with potential, these prisons ultimately did not succeed. In the past thirty years, the prison system has moved towards “direct supervision or ‘new generation’ designs.” This idea transitioned the prisoner from having limited interaction with the guards to reaping the benefits of an increase of staff-inmate scenarios. This will continued to be discussed in the next chapter's observations of architectural oppression.


48 Ibid., 49.
49 Ibid., 50.
“Prison is a shameful environment. It is shameful to be present and it is shameful to walk away.” These are the words of a reverend who spends her time visiting prisoners and providing them faith and hope. Prisons in the United States are ugly environments due to their broken policies and dehumanizing power dynamics. They are also ugly due to the various oppressive architectural elements that mentally and physically take their toll on prisoners. Since the earliest prisons of Europe, the goal of the prison was to convey fear and dominance over both members of society and the incarcerated which has manifested in the buildings’ design. It has been scientifically proven that “architectural design is one of several variables” with regard to how prisoners act. While the current architectural institutions are harmful for the majority of prisoners (discussed in the following pages), it should be noted that a small percentage of the population performs best under this system. Some prisoners perform better when under oppressive elements. However, this is a very small percentage, and research shows that a new, less oppressive system is needed. Reverend Kaia Stern states that prison denies the incarcerated of their humanity, and that they “ability to feel, to love, care, and be concerned.” The prison is a place to oppress the incarcerated by wiping them of their individuality, and some of this is achieved through the following elements of architectural oppression.

When designing a prison, the architect is told that, “violence and assaults

3 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 32.
4 Stern, Voices from American prisons, 1.
A direct layout breaks the oppressive elements associated with indirect layouts. Direct layouts have large central areas in the middle of only one or two stories of cells. The goal is for a large gathering and socializing space within a scaled down number of cells. Officers and inmates are encouraged to socialize and roam together. This leads to better staff-inmate relationships which create positive relationships between both parties. Officers begin to know the prisoners personally, and the prisoners see officers as humans rather than institutionalized beings that are always watching them. These positive relationships actually create more secure facilities than indirect layouts by allowing officers to use their formed relationships with prisoners to better understand which situations will lead to violence or trouble and to intervene before trouble occurs. As a result, violent incidents are reduced in direct layouts compared to indirect. Other benefits include the reduction of rape, diminished vandalism and graffiti, and the ease of directing and overseeing prisoners. In general, staff in this system need more training to understand how to create lasting relationships with prisoners, and this comes with increased costs and training time. However, this could be solved in the overall design of direct systems which are less expensive than indirect systems to construct. This is due to the lesser expense of everyday materials rather than the traditional “prison-proof” materials and fixtures such as lights, steel or concrete. As vandalism is nearly eliminated, the cost for repairs is negated.

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5 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 35.
6 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 36.
Facility Location

Despite the challenge of rural locations, prisons are often located to isolate prisoners from society which has been a common practice since the seventeenth century. Situating prisons outside of cities is to protect the people outside of the prisons but neglects the people inside of them. Isolated prisons strongly discourage visitation and access for families and friends. Studies show that an important factor for a prisoner to be successfully reintegrated into society is having steady social and emotional support from family and friends. Prisons that are isolated from society sever this connection for most prisoners. Isolated prisons are also oppressive to prison staff. Hiring staff for isolated prisons can be difficult because the job is seen as undesirable due to the distance from amenities commonly found in cities. When located in rural locations, prison staff often lose access to housing options, schools for children, shops, and leisure activities. This forces the staff to either live away from their families or commute long distances. Isolated prisons also are used to hide the oppressive nature of prisons inflicted upon the incarcerated. In response to critics who suggest that prisons need to look oppressive on the exterior, Coll states, “If no one can see prisons, who is all that rhetoric of control—expressed by bareness of concrete walls, the barbed wire of fences and the control towers—intended for?”

The better practice is to locate prisons close to towns and cities which provide resources outside of the facility, a more involved community and the prisoners' personal connections and ties. Fairweather states, “being within a self-contained unit as part of a larger outside community with its own facilities” such as hospitals or places of worship “provide[s] psychological reassurance.” Being located within a community allows for community involvement and assistance with prisoners. Community arranged events, such as sports, helps create a supportive environment for prisoners. Fairweather recommends that the perimeter around the prison should be a space where the community and prisoners can meet for such activities, labelling it as a “support space.” Furthermore, the prison should be near a variety of transportation options to allow access for families, friends and prison staff to get to the prison. These options should include both public and private transportation options.

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9 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 34.
10 Paez, Critical prison design, 102.
11 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 34.
Visitor Relations

While isolated prisons make it difficult for visitor access, even local prisons have been shown to create oppressive environments for visitors.\textsuperscript{12} Some facilities force visitors to wait while exposed to the elements for long periods of time before granting access. This is a degrading policy, and it causes frustration and anger which may be picked up by the prisoners. This frustration and anger is often redirected at the prison staff which can cause problems inside the prison facility.

Emotions run high for visitors and prisoners alike, as both parties experience a range of emotions from excitement, nervousness, frustration, shame and happiness. It is important that spaces for visitors have a relaxed atmosphere to try to calm the nerves and prevent a chaotic outbreak.\textsuperscript{13} These visiting spaces should be brightly decorated and lit to appear attractive for both parties and have simple but comfortable furniture. Visiting booths should be as unoppressive as possible giving visitors and prisoners the privacy they require. There should be play areas for children where families can play together. There should be a sheltered waiting space for entering the visitation room that should have bathrooms and a visitor center, the latter of which should allow prisoners to obtain advice from social and welfare workers about related inquiries. Fairweather suggests that these spaces should depart from typical oppressive elements to create a relaxed, cheerful ambiance.

\textsuperscript{12} Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 34.

\textsuperscript{13} Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 36.
Fairweather suggests that spaces dominated by industrial materials are unattractive to both inmates and staff. To create better designs, focus should be placed on creating a pleasant environment for both inmates and guards. Instead of a concrete recreational yard, Fairweather suggests a set of terraced yards with grass combined with other landscaping. This would be a simple change that could improve the satisfaction and happiness of the inmates and guards. Studies have shown that color plays a role in affecting behavior. Research shows that inmates respond positively to bright colors and murals around prison facilities. The goal is to make the facility more attractive, brighter, more cheerful and personalized. These factors can help boost inmate morale and decrease the tension experienced between inmates and staff members. Furthermore, color enhances the light in spaces which provides increased sensory stimulation for those experiencing it. This in turns provides directional information to the brain which optically changes the perceived proportions of the room. Color can also play an important role for giving cues about public or private spaces or help organize the spaces within the facility. Furthermore, saturated colors are thought of as inviting and reassuring. Fairweather suggests using materials such as Corian and Velstone in living quarters, as these materials are both attractive to look at and indestructible.

In addition to the physical layout, the materials used in a prison are often oppressive in nature. Interiors of prisons are often intentionally designed to have miserable conditions with unattractive colors (usually limited to whites and greys), dim lighting and use of harsh materials. Using these elements in design gives the appearance to the inmates that society has given up on them. Fairweather states on the use of institutional materials, “institutional brutality [in prisons] only brutalizes society as a whole.” When the prisoners feel that society views them as individuals without a chance to reform, the security of the prison begins to fall apart, and the relationships between the guards and prisoners become severed. Many prisoners have flat, barren concrete yards which are unattractive to be within. These cases of architectural oppression and ugliness are shown to lead to alienation of prisoners and increased cases of aggression.

Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 41.
Ibid., 43.
Ibid., 41.
Entry and Reception

Another aspect that contributes to oppression is the size of the prison facilities. The contemporary prison facility has grown increasingly in size over the last century. Prison capacities have exceeded a thousand captives, and some are nearing two-thousand cells. Facilities of this size no longer are places which facilitate reformation; they become places of custody and control. Inmates feel alienated from involvement in institutions of too large a scale, as they feel they are not receiving the attention they need to have the proper resources when reinserted into society. The larger the institution becomes, the more inmates and staff feel overwhelmed and intimidated by the size and scale of the facility. Furthermore, reception and prisoner intake is one of the most stressful times for inmates. First-time intakes are uncertain about what they are going to encounter, and their fears and anxieties make the process very stressful. This is exacerbated by prison exteriors which often send different messages varying from an oppressive institutional building to a welcoming community center.

Experts have come to a common consensus that a facility should not be too large. Suggested numbers are one to six hundred inmates per facility with institutions on the larger size splitting into a series of semi-autonomous units. The suggested target size of these units should be one hundred to one hundred and twenty-five inmates, as this is the size where prison staff can recognize and develop personal relationships with the inmates while still balancing cost-effectiveness. The entry sequence of the facility (appearance of the entrance, contact with staff and interior space design) should be reassuring and positive. Open glass and spacious interiors convey a positive message. The exterior of the prison should not seem overly lenient or lavish, as confidence from the public will be forsaken. However, prisons need to break away from the “fortress-style exterior” to something more positive. Oppressive prison designs lead to hostile environments and lack of public trust, so these designs should be avoided at all costs. The design should express security and safety for the community but also welcoming to outsiders. Buildings that eliminate symbols of incarceration in favor of humane atmospheres have the best results. Humane designs also help reduce stress and trauma experienced by inmates when reentering society. A more humane building also encourages accountability and feelings of ownership within the facility. A “softer image” results in less graffiti and vandalism in prisons.

20 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 37.
21 Ibid., 46.
Prisoner Interaction

Solitary confinement is a common tool used to reform prisoners. It is estimated that eighty-thousand prisoners are in solitary confinement in various United States prison systems each day. In some facilities, prisoners may spend up to twenty-three hours in solitary confinement. This is one factor as to why the amounts of prisoners with mental health issues, and why inmate suicides have increased. Due to these issues, it is common to hear screaming in cells or inmates hanging on doors for hours at a time. Prisoners in solitary confinement are often stripped of their rights, and not granted necessities such as medication or prescription drugs. Some prisons still use four-pointing on beds (tying down each limb to the four corners of the bed) which was originally used in the medieval times as a torture device. These all lead to paranoia, self-mutilation, psychosis and suicide attempts. Two-hundred years ago, Francis Gray studied four-thousand people in “silent prisons” and found that solitary confinement was causing mental illness, excess stress and trauma. Today, two-thirds of all suicides in prison facilities take place in isolated cells. Solitary confinement should be considered a failed “architecture of control” and only hinders rehabilitation from occurring. Research continues to show the folly of solitary confinement, and it is time for architects to refuse to design these oppressive cages.

27 Binelli, “Inside America’s Toughest Federal Prison”.
28 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 45.
29 Ibid.
30 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 45.
31 Binelli, “Inside America’s Toughest Federal Prison”.
32 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 46.
Density

Overcrowding has a highly negative correlation with prisons that increase in size.\(^{33}\) The popular television show *Orange is the New Black* addresses overcrowding, and, as one character states, “overcrowding is dangerous.”\(^{34}\)

In the show’s overcrowded prison, the characters are depicted fighting for the limited resources with one character pointing out that stress is increased for all parties including guards and prisoners when facilities are overcrowded. Some of the characters complain of the additional noise created in overcrowded scenarios, and the prison becomes more violent (often due to gang activity). While a fictional show, these issues affect inmates across the country in overcrowded facilities. Studies have shown that overcrowding inhibits privacy for individuals, reduces the ability to preserve normal human behaviors (i.e. sexual) and often leads to increased stress and aggression.\(^{35}\) Prisoners often feel that they have a lack of personal control in overcrowded conditions. In facilities with exposed toilets, overcrowding leads to almost impossible conditions to use the bathroom in private. There is a proven correlation between increased density and greater anger which ultimately leads to increased feelings of oppression.\(^{36}\)

Private areas in prison facilities are very important for prisoners to escape the stresses of overcrowded areas. Privacy has been shown to be beneficial for peoples’ emotions, as it provides greater opportunity for self-evaluation, allows an escape from constant communication, establishes psychological distance from other inmates, gives personal autonomy and control over their lives, and provides the inmates a sense of individuality.\(^{37}\) Providing inmates opportunities to feel in control of themselves and to feel like individuals helps to pacify the stress and aggression built up in overcrowded scenarios.

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Living Conditions

Cell conditions are a major oppressive element in prisons. Financially, the minimum area is the least expensive, a factor facilities often take advantage of when designing cells.\(^4\) Dorms are often the easiest way to maximize space, and double bunking doubles the square-footage allotted per prisoner. In facilities that do not have enough room for the prisoners, two beds are placed in cells meant for only one person. Dormitories often deprive people of privacy and foster an environment privy to bullying, intimidation, extortion, blackmail and riots. Double occupant cells or cubicles usually provide less space per occupant than single units, but the benefits of a good roommate can be more beneficial.\(^5\) However, double occupancy cells also result in higher violence and more cases of sexual assault, contraband and medical emergencies than encountered in single occupant cells. Studies show that the more people in a room, the less happy the occupants become. While providing inmates with less space in cells does not seem to change prisoners’ happiness levels, less space provided in dorms does correlate with decreased happiness. Sharing similar spaces increases the amount of unwanted or unpredictable interactions that take place which leads to anger and stress. Prisoners living in dormitories are more likely to perceive the presence of officers than single- or double-occupancy rooms which leads to paranoia and increased stress.

When designing rooms or blocks for inmates to sleep in, it is important to remember that different people have different wants and needs.\(^4\) In order from most positive to least, Fairweather recommends designing for single cells, double cells, dorms with cubicles, dorms in bays holding ten to twenty people, and lastly open room dorms. Some people prefer companionship while others prefer to live alone. A designed variety helps address the needs of both people. Studies show that the more a cubicle resembles a private room (i.e. having desks or higher dividing partitions) the more positively it is received.\(^6\) Fairweather recommends looking at the “safe cell” which is used in English prisons and helps reduce the numbers of suicide attempts due to its more humane nature. These cells are more calming and orderly which helps the experience be more supportive.\(^7\) Furniture and sanitary fittings are made from contemporary materials such as Corian and Velstone which help the room feel nicer and more comfortable while providing the indestructibility of steel and concrete.

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38 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 38.
39 Ibid., 39.
40 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 41.
41 Ibid., 39.
42 Ibid., 41.
Thermal Comfort

Thermal comfort (including temperature, humidity and air movement) is a common complaint by both prisoners and staff. Aggressive behavior and irritability increase with thermal discomfort, especially in hot conditions. New prisons have difficulty achieving thermal comfort for their inhabitants most likely due to their large sizes. In August of 2016, a group of Texas inmates, at the Wallace Pack Unit, sued the Texas prison system because of intense temperatures experienced during the summer. The extreme heat killed older and sick convicts, and the National Weather Service recorded an average peak heat index of 104 degrees Fahrenheit resulting in a lawsuit for cruel and unusual punishment outlawed by the Eighth Amendment. As cells within the Wallace Pack are poorly ventilated, the steel and concrete materials created an oven-like environment in the extreme heat. Prisoners were forced to sleep without clothes on the floor during nights when sleeping in bunks was unbearably hot. Since 1998, twenty inmates have died from heatstroke or hyperthermia in the Texas Criminal Justice system; ten died in the summer of 2011. In a similar Louisiana lawsuit, Judge Edith Jones stated, “housing these prisoners in very hot cells without sufficient access to heat relief measures, while knowing that each suffers from conditions that render him extremely vulnerable to serious heat related injury, violates the Eighth Amendment.” As of 2017, Arkansas is the only southern state to provide cooling to prisoners. Prison guards also complain about the miserable temperatures inside the facilities. They claim that prisoners become violent due to the heat, as temperatures reach 120 degrees inside. Thermal comfort has many factors: level of activity or exertion, quality of clothing and the level of control over thermal conditions. The easiest way to provide thermal comfort is to allow individuals control over their comfort levels. Designing smaller spaces that are easier to vary in temperature would most help lower heating and cooling costs and provide greater thermal feedback. Passive heating and cooling would help assist in providing thermal comfort while lowering energy costs. Lisa Heschong believes that thermal comfort is an underrated design element. Being aware of places of good thermal comfort allow for spaces to share together and help improve socialization amongst parties. The places that provide coolness in the summer or warmth in the winter are the areas where people gather.

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43 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 42.
45 Burnett, “Texas Prisoners Sue Over ‘Cruel’ Conditions, Citing Extreme Heat.”
Sensory Conditions

The neglect of prisoners’ senses is a major oppressive issue that affects the vast majority of prisons across the United States. Boredom caused by lack of variety and sensory deprivation also contributes to vandalism. Paul Modrowski wrote about his experiences as a prisoner dealing with noise inside the prison at Joliet, Illinois:

> As I sit here at a steel table near my bars, I endure the noise created by 300 prisoners in this cell house. I usually wear my headphones, or I put earplugs into my ears. The noise can severely agitate or disturb me. It is a continuous barrage of noise, which except for a few hours in the early morning hours, is never ending. Various radios and televisions can be heard, but mostly it is numerous prisoners yelling, talking loudly to be heard over long distances, banging or rattling of bars, chess board numbers being bellowed out, or the occasional inmate talking to himself at his cell bars. Typically, I tell people that the five story big house at Stateville is like the monkey house at any large zoo, but there are a number of insane, or mentally ill people here, and possibly an 18th century insane asylum is a more accurate description.

Noise is a common problem in prisons. Due to the use of hard materials and exposed mechanical systems making noise, prisons (particularly large spaces) become an acoustical nightmare. As it is hard to hear, conversations are often shouted which only increases the noise levels. Prisoners in most facilities complain about noise levels, and most

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48 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 42.
50 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 42.
51 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 43.
There are many ways to design for better noise levels in prison facilities. An easy way for any prison to mitigate noise is by providing headphones at TV sets or radios. More soft and absorbent materials should be used inside prisons to help absorb the sound. Suggested materials include carpeting and acoustical tiles. Sounds during the daytime should be no more than seventy decibels, and the nighttime levels should not exceed forty-five decibels. Noise levels can also be lowered by isolating or dispersing major noise makers around the facility. As metal to metal contact is a major noise maker, limiting using metal near other metal should be a priority. This includes metal on the building, equipment or furnishings.

Air should be properly ventilated and intake air should be fresh to remove odors from the facility. Natural light should also be a priority within prisons. Special consideration should be given to window heights, as it should be decided upon whether or not the general public should be allowed to look in at the prisoners. The prisoners should not be displayed to the public similarly to animals at a zoo. Furthermore, artificial light should meet the same quality standards as any other building outside the facility would have.

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51. Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 42.
Prisoners feel most frustrated that they lack the freedom to move around the facility as they wish and that they lack the control of their immediate environment. Simple tasks, such as regulating the temperature or turning the lights on or off, are out of control from both inmates and staff which frustrates both parties. Many prisons lack easy access to personal and group activities. Another aspect of frustration is keeping inmates waiting for long times. This lack of control over their own lives leads to aggression and violence. Fairweather suggests that safe prison designs should allow inmates twenty-four hour access to their own rooms and cells. This includes the ability to lock their own doors with staff override for safety purposes. Another priority is highly visible areas with no hidden bends or features like staircases that obstruct views. Finally, staff should be present with inmates to increase staff-prisoner relations.

When these conditions were met, fewer weapons were found and gang activity, tension and assault all decreased. Scarce resources lead to higher tensions and conflict, so adequate resources (i.e. phones or televisions) should be throughout the facility.

The elements of architectural oppression discussed in this chapter have all created extra stress, violence, vandalism and unhappiness for both guards and inmates. None of these reactions are beneficial or desired, and both parties have expressed the need for improvements. By following and improving upon the guidelines provided on the right-handed pages above, prison facilities can finally be designed with fewer oppressive elements and transcend past designs-induced punishment towards rehabilitation. The results gathered are optimistic in nature, and show that design without oppression leads to increased happiness, safety and productivity for inmates and staff alike. Architects have the ability to influence the course of prison design, and it is time they start searching for more humane alternatives.

Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 45.
The following case studies examine various types of prisons or projects that could be adapted to prisons. These explore the entire spectrum of prisons starting with the most extreme and oppressive to the most humane prisons being built currently, and each case study provides a closer examination of the oppressive elements found in the previous chapter.
Oppressive

One of the most oppressive prison facilities in the United States is the federal high security prison near Florence, Colorado, known as ADX. The entrance to ADX is welcoming in nature, framed by the picturesque Rocky Mountains. Prisoners may be hopeful before entering, if they happened to miss the double-thick chained-link fence topped with barbed wire and escorted by large guard towers. Inside the facility, inmates spend twenty-three hours in solitary confinement each day, and the hallways echo with screams of inmates or banging on the doors. The cells inside the facility are twelve feet long by seven feet wide. The thick cell walls are made of concrete, and double sliding, metal doors secure the entrance of each cell. The doors have solid exteriors so prisoners cannot see outside their cells or any other person. Many of the cells have one three-foot tall by four-inch wide window which shows the sky above. Prisoners are given a sink-toilet combo and automated showers. Their beds are concrete slabs topped with thin mattresses. Built-in radios are provided in each cell, and many have television sets. To entertain themselves, prisoners are given access to books, periodicals and arts-and-crafts materials. Each prisoner is given a maximum of ten hours to exercise per week which is the only time allowed outside of the cells. These periods alternate between solo trips to the indoor gym and group visits to the outdoor recreation yard. The gym is a windowless cell that has a single chin-up bar inside. During outdoor recreation yard trips, prisoners are placed inside individual cages that don’t even attempt to humanize the experience. Prisoners often go days without hearing

another voice or having face-to-face interaction with another inmate or guard. Meals are placed into the cells via slots in the doors to minimize guard to prisoner contact. As every space is protected behind thick walls or bullet-proof glass, sound does not travel throughout the facility. Due to these designed oppressive features, it is no surprise that about one-third of the prisoners at ADX are considered mentally ill. Robert Hood, the Warden of ADX from 2002-2005, described the facility as a “very stark environment. When it’s 23 hours a day in a room with a slit of a window where you can’t even see the Rocky Mountains—let’s be candid here. It’s not designed for rehabilitation. Period. End of story.” Hood later claims that ADX is “a clean version of hell.”

More Humane

As a child growing up in Kenilworth, Illinois (a suburb of Chicago), Harry Weese’s father instilled in him the Protestant virtues “of honesty, cleanliness, and good manners.” Unknown to his father at the time, Weese would go on to live by these Protestant values throughout his life while working as a well-known modernist architect. He would later become famous for designing the Washington D.C. Metro stations, a multitude of office buildings and the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in downtown Chicago. In his many designs, Weese’s Protestant values are perhaps most apparent in his design at the MCC.

The MCC was designed from 1971-1975 by Harry Weese & Associates. The facility was established to meet the new humanitarian standards of prison conditions recommended in the 1960s which included more humane cells. The MCC was planned to hold inmates serving short sentences, most of whom were waiting to be tried or required protective custody. Typical detention facilities of the time were large, overcrowded and located in rural areas, but the MCC defied these conventions as it was located in downtown Chicago and was meant to hold a mere 550 people. The facility remains today “a twenty-seven-story triangular tower at the northwest corner of” Clark and Van Buren streets, which lies inside Chicago’s Loop district. The triangular plan allowed

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4. Ibid., 178.
increased violence, vandalism and stress for both inmates and guards, all of which Weese addressed in his MCC design.

The rooms for the inmates are unique in their design and depart from conventional jail or prison design. The first distinction is the word used inside the facility to describe the spaces: room. The word “room” conveys a positive connotation over the conventional term “cell.” Each of these rooms at the MCC had a window which tapered on the interior to form a small panel of glass seven and a half feet high by five inches wide. These dimensions were the maximum size allotted for windows in prisons before having to install bars or alarms on the windows as mandated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. These windows allowed daylight to enter the rooms unfiltered which provided the inmates an unconventional pathway to the outside world. Being able to look through the windows was an important emotional connection for the prisoners, as studies show that being able to see the outside world helps decrease the amount of stress and depression experienced by inmates. This was an important factor for Weese, as he tried to make the rooms feel as comfortable as possible.

The glass was bronze-tinted to match the “warm tone of the concrete” on the exterior and to simultaneously prevent people from the outside to look into the rooms. This was valued by the prisoners as they were allowed the precious connection to the outside world while also being given privacy from the curious stares of outsiders (like caged animals at a zoo).

The prison cell interiors of the MCC are extremely important,  

8 Johnston, The Human Cage, 52.  
10 Fairweather, Prisons Architecture, 32.
as they add to the discussion of an architect’s role in prison design. Harry Weese believed that people inside the jail deserved a cell that did not imply that they were guilty of the charges they faced in their upcoming trials in court. Weese found this imperative in a society that believed that all people in court are innocent until proven guilty. With this mindset, Weese used in-built furniture, hotels and sailboats as inspiration. The rooms were seven feet by ten feet, and each were given “a single platform bed with drawers for storage underneath, a desk, shelves, and a chair.” Besides the chair, all of the furnishings were built-in, made of hardwood, and placed around the room’s perimeter. This allowed the furniture to be attached to the walls of the room to prevent vandalism. The bed was placed next to the window which was opposite the room’s door. A toilet was placed under the folding counter (located on the diagonal plumbing wall) to utilize the room’s small footprint. Weese put carpeting in the rooms to help with acoustics which is something many prisons today do not address with their bare concrete walls and floors. The butcher-block furniture was chosen for its residential appearance, ease for cleaning and difficulty of being damaged. Weese found the normal color schemes found in prisons of gray and white to be drab, and he proposed a scheme of red, white and blue: the colors found in the American flag. While the Bureau of Prisons allowed the architects to use any materials, they demanded that those materials be tamperproof. This resulted in the rugs being glued to the floor and the acoustical tiles being glued to hard surfaces.

The small footprint of the rooms was a personal concern of Weese. He contemplated how he could make a small room comfortable for the prisoners. He built mock-ups of the rooms in his office to better understand how the rooms would affect the people living inside them. The children of the architects of the firm came into the office and slept in the beds inside the mock-up prison rooms. The children enjoyed being inside the space, and other people have described the rooms as “intimate,” “cozy,” and “pleasant.” This must have made Weese proud, as he previously stated that the project was to be thought of as a hotel rather than a prison. Weese’s firm felt that the rooms were indeed nicer than hotel rooms due to the built-in furniture. This attention to livability by Weese departed the ordinary drab and oppressive norm of prison interiors.

The materials inside the rooms of the MCC departed from the typical cold and repulsive materials commonly used in prisons across the nation. The American Institute of Architects gave the MCC a National Honor Award for achieving an “architectural attempt to overcome the traditional barred jailhouse image.” The carpet flooring, wooden furniture and color scheme remove the monotony and intimidating nature of white walls and concrete floors found inside a typical prison cell. Studies on prison interiors have shown that cells should be painted a light color to make the areas brighter and appear more attractive and cheerful. Colorful walls make rooms feel more personalized and help

15 Mars, “The MCC: Chicago’s Jailhouse”.
17 Ibid.
18 Mars, “The MCC: Chicago’s Jailhouse”.
20 Mars, “The MCC: Chicago’s Jailhouse”.
22 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 41.
the prisoners feel more appreciated which is proven to decrease violence. Having upscale furniture increases satisfaction which further decreases violence and vandalism. Noise is a major issue in prisons, as excessive noise leads to increased cases of aggression and physiological problems associated with high levels of stress. It is therefore advised to use sound-absorbing materials such as carpet or acoustic tiles—something many prisons tend to ignore. These are all design decisions that Weese addressed, and his designs created a new precedent from which future prisons should take note.

Harry Weese’s interior design of jail cells was a revolutionary departure from the normal, oppressive nature of cell design—a nature which is still being felt in prisons today. The current state of the MCC today, with its drab, grey color scheme, frosted windows to dull sunlight and block views, and steel double-bunks in each cell, differs little from the architecturally oppressive nature of these Texas prisons. Weese recognized the inmates were people with rights who had made mistakes, and his designs reflected this mentality. While the cells have been gutted and replaced with concrete floors and metal bunks, the MCC’s original design is beginning to be recognized as a valued precedent for inmate housing across the nation.

At the bare minimum, prison facilities should strive to be at least as good as Las Colinas Detention and Reentry Facility in San Diego, California. Las Colinas is an evidence-based designed facility, as many of their design decisions were decided upon by the research touched on earlier. It is the first facility in the United States that uses environmental and behavioral psychology to create a more pleasant experience for staff and offenders. Particular attention was spent on lighting, color, materials, textures, air quality and acoustics. Access to nature was an important factor as well, as studies show nature helps improve mental and physical well-being. Two of the most humane prisons in the world, Bastoy in Norway and Leoben in Austria, were used as case studies for Las Colinas. Bastoy and Leoben prisons resemble communities or villages which makes them more livable than enclosed facilities. The architects of these facilities all attempted to design around the greatest punishment being the loss of one’s freedom, and the focus of the facilities are on reintegration into society rather than punishment.

The plan of Las Colinas was inspired by educational campuses rather than typical prison facilities. The end result was a decentralized layout with programs spread across the campus. The facility is split into zones (administration, communal, programmatic and housing) gathered around a village green designed for recreation. A series of pathways spread out and connect the many buildings—a symbol for free movement within the facility. Similar to a college campus, there are a variety of programmatic elements that allow for educational, vocational,

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23 Fairweather, Prison Architecture, 44.  
24 Ibid, 43.  
25 Ibid, 42.  
personal and spiritual growth. This means a series of religious, academic and recreational spaces were placed across the campus. The hope is that offenders will establish normal day-to-day routines which can be transferred to life outside the facility. One important aspect is that the inmates are treated as autonomous and responsible human beings resulting in autonomous and responsible inmates. While the offenders are constrained to the controlled environment, the overall concept is a positive step in the direction for less oppressive facilities. This controlled environment is designed to be a balance between safety and security with an emphasis on independence. Furthermore, the better an inmate’s behavior, the greater access and freedom is granted within the facility.

As research suggests, the facility is designed with clear sightlines to make supervision easy. The design team focused on:

- a light color palette, soft and varied materials (including wood and glass), better acoustics, and ample natural light—all of which have been shown to have a positive impact on the emotional states most prevalent among inmates and staff, like anger, stress, anxiety, sadness, and depression.

Large scale photographic murals depicting natural settings were created to improve the mood and focus of the incarcerated. In the outdoor areas, public art and extensive landscaping help enliven the campus. This includes a liberal planting of trees and plenty of plants to create a pleasant looking outdoor space. Many places for meditation were


Also designed into the campus. All of these factors promote healing and rehabilitation in lieu of punishment. The facility is already seeing reduced incidents of violence.

Other areas that are less oppressive include the entry, border wall, cafeteria and sleeping dorm. The entry takes the appearance of a new school building or corporate building. The wide paving surrounded by landscaping guides the new offender towards the open glass box which is painted a light color. These architectural aspects give a feeling of openness and friendliness, helping to reduce the stress felt before entering the facility. The wall along the property border, while not pleasant in appearance and slightly hostile in nature, is devoid of the typical chain-link fence or barbed wire. The wall also prevents prying eyes from besmirding the inmates on the grounds. The cafeteria makes ample use of nicer materials (such as wood or carpeting) and light materials. Even the lighting fixtures feel typical of a college cafeteria, and the large windows allow for light to stream in and people to look outside at the landscaping. Atypical of prisons, this cafeteria would be a pleasant setting for any person—incarcerated or not. The dormitory pods are pleasant at first glance, but they could improve. Storage space is almost nonexistent, and the partition walls are a little too short to ensure privacy from the rest of the room. If the floor was concrete and walls were painted white, the dorms would feel on par with an average prison dorm. Some nicer materials could also freshen the spaces, and, perhaps most important, the rooms need a way to represent the individuality of the people inside. Something as simple as a sign or painted door can transform a prison cell into a room owned by the occupant.

It should be noted that Las Colinas has normal cell rooms as also designed into the campus.
well which provides a variety, but it still falls back on the typical prison cell design (materials and dimensions). While the Las Colinas Detention Facility has pushed prison design in the United States, continued improvement would be beneficial. However, these efforts have given architects within the United States an important precedent to study, emulate and improve upon.

Prison design is on the cusp of a radical change. A small island off the coast of Norway is redefining how a prison should be designed. This island, Bastøy, is home to murderers, rapists and other convicted felons, yet it has no walls or cells to keep prisoners in and employs very few guards. To better understand the significance of this prison, examination of early prisons—namely their designs and motives—is in order. The early foundations of prison design have become the guideline for prisons in western societies. As a result, architects “rely uncritically on outdated thinking for the design of modern prisons.”

As Dlugash has argued, modern prisons have changed very little from their Victorian predecessors. Prisons were initially designed as a form of punishment to supplement those already in place. Foucault states, “the general form of an apparatus intended to render individuals docile and useful” is what led to the first prison. Prison “is based first of all on the simple form of deprivation of liberty.” Prison is therefore an egalitarian form of punishment. Depending on the gravity of one’s crime, the offender loses an equal amount of liberty. There are negative aspects from this approach. For example, prisoners that are subjected to a life of imprisonment lose out on opportunities to foster skill sets that are useful for real-world applications. This results in a negative effect on

Most Humane

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4 Foucault. Discipline and Punish. 231
5 Ibid., 232
society, if those prisoners were to leave on parole.

Conventional prison “takes possession of man as a whole, of all the physical and moral faculties that are in him and of the time in which he is himself.”8 As Lucas further states, those running the prisons “may regulate for man the time of waking and sleeping, of activity and rest, the number and duration of meals, the quality and ration of food, the nature and product of labour, the time of prayer, the use of speech and even . . . that of thought.”9 Prisons eventually moved away “from the mere judicial deprivation of liberty” and have taken a reformation stance.10 These reformative prison systems decided it was their duty to save the prisoners’ souls. As noted in Chapter 2, one principle of these reformers’ was isolation: “the isolation of the convict from the external world” and “from one another.” The reasoning for isolation is two-fold: to avoid negative consequences of prisoners meeting (such as planning rebellions or creating relationships that lead to organized crime when released) and to have the inmates reflect on their sins.11 Americans embraced the idea of isolation wholeheartedly.12 Their goal was to have “the prison . . . be the microcosm of a perfect society.”13

While the American prison system was modeled off of ideal societies, Bastoy Prison is modeled off of actual societies. Bastoy Prison is located on a one-square-mile island off the coast of Norway with pleasant views of the ocean.14 What makes it even more unique when compared to western prisons is the allocation of different programmatic spaces allowed on the island. Prisoners have access to a beach, fishing areas, a sauna, tennis courts and horse and cow pastures. The dinner menu holds options “like ‘fish balls with white sauce, with shrimps’ and ‘everything from chicken con carne to salmon.’”15 This differs greatly from the conventional prison system which cannot afford these glamorous meals. Prisoners in Bastoy stay on the island in spacious cabins in contrast to the conventional cell which is uncomfortably small. A further comparison of the two living spaces will be imperative for future development of the study. The material and lighting qualities of living in a small room for the majority of one’s time provides a vastly different experience than a room similar in size to a small cabin. It is logical that the living situation of Bastoy plays a large part of why prisoners feel more comfortable on the island, but further research is required before that assumption can be verified.

The prison’s governor, Arne Kvernvik Nilsen, states “The aim of Bastoy is not to punish or seek revenge . . . the only punishment is to take away the prisoner’s right to be a free member of society.”17 This correlates with Foucault’s definition of prison as a “deprivation of liberty,” if those prisoners were to leave on parole. Conventional prison “takes possession of man as a whole, of all the physical and moral faculties that are in him and of the time in which he is himself.”8 As Lucas further states, those running the prisons “may regulate for man the time of waking and sleeping, of activity and rest, the number and duration of meals, the quality and ration of food, the nature and product of labour, the time of prayer, the use of speech and even . . . that of thought.”9 Prisons eventually moved away “from the mere judicial deprivation of liberty” and have taken a reformation stance.10 These reformative prison systems decided it was their duty to save the prisoners’ souls. As noted in Chapter 2, one principle of these reformers’ was isolation: “the isolation of the convict from the external world” and “from one another.” The reasoning for isolation is two-fold: to avoid negative consequences of prisoners meeting (such as planning rebellions or creating relationships that lead to organized crime when released) and to have the inmates reflect on their sins.11 Americans embraced the idea of isolation wholeheartedly.12 Their goal was to have “the prison . . . be the microcosm of a perfect society.”13

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in strict contrast is how much control over themselves each prisoner truly has. Prisoners hold almost no control over their own activities in conventional prisons. This differs from Bastoy where the inmates have complete control over everything except their liberty of reentering society. They are given jobs on the island where, as in the free world, they must make their own decisions of how to best complete their tasks. They cook their own food; they clean their own houses. If they wished to sit down until they died, they would be allowed to do so.

These ideas contrast greatly with conventional prisons. For comparison, Millbank Prison, which opened in the early 19th Century, was opened with the goal of isolation and powerlessness for the prisoner in mind. As seen on the floor plan, the prison is divided into six pentagons that hold the prisoners. In the center of the complex lies a hexagon which is mainly for those not incarcerated, such as the governor’s quarters. The outside of each pentagon is lined with small, individual cells. Each is facing a wall instead of another row of cells, so the prisoner inside is unable to see or communicate with other prisoners. Each prison block opened into courtyards in the middle. The courtyards were divided to decrease interaction amongst prisoners. Although Millbank Prison was in London, they probably adopted the American model of thinking which entails the following: “Work and meals [were] in common, but under the rule of absolute silence, the convicts being allowed to speak only to the warders. With their permission and in a low voice.”19 This rule ensured silence, a great tool for enforcing the effects of isolation. In the center of the five courtyards is a tower to better observe and enforce the rules upon the prisoners. The courtyards

16 Foucault. Discipline and Punish. 232
17 Sutter. “Welcome to the World’s.”
18 Ibid.
19 Foucault. Discipline and Punish. 238
are situated in the void left from the arrangement of cells, and the cells become a buffer to the outside world. These walls also help mitigate sound from the outside world, further creating the desirable feeling of isolation. Millbank Prison was designed with oppression in mind—to rob prisoners of their liberty and sense of individual being. Ignoring the moral implications of whether this is just or not, this model of oppression results in both positive and negative consequences. While isolation forces the individual to reflect upon his or her wrongdoings, it does not guarantee abstinence from repeat offenses. This can be accredited to, in part, the reflection and repentance to become a better person all occurring in isolation rather than as a whole. What happens when these prisoners return to society is an important question to ask. Furthermore, whether or not modeling prisons off of a more realistic model of society in order to reduce repeat crime is an equally important question to examine.

Bastoy Prison answers some of these questions. As can be seen from the plan of the island, there are no walls separating the prisoners from the ocean. The island is, in essence, an open floor plan which allows flexibility for building anything that is needed at the time. The lack of walls, towers or any sort of physical containment allows the prisoners the greatest amount of freedom possible while still restricting their liberty. The question that this brings up is why do prisoners not escape, if no man-made barriers contain them? A major factor is the one and a half miles of ocean that lies between the prison island and the mainland. There have been various escape attempts, although they have been caught due to this factor. Bastoy Prison took advantage of natural features to play a role in the design. It becomes a minimalist design, using whatever features already handy to contain the prisoners. There are other factors that play a role, such as the looming threat of being sent back to a prison that restricts their freedom. However, natural features can play an important role for future prisons. An exploration of what natural features (mountains, volcanoes, etc. etc.) can play the largest part for containment of prison systems would be well worth the time.

This comparison of the plans, of one system which comes from the era of design which strived to maximize solitary confinement and oppression and one that emphasizes almost complete freedom, exposes how prisons are changing. They are changing in response to the irrefutable evidence that locking away convicts in solitary confinement is not the best form of punishment. This conclusion stems from repeat offenses which have become a measure for the success of prisons. Although repeat offense statistics do not measure which forms of punishment are best, these statistics convey that the success of prisons should be measured on whether or not they make society better. It is important to revisit Foucault’s reasoning behind the conception of prison as a solution to make offenders “docile and useful.”

Not all American prisons utilize solitary confinement, but many continue to do so—especially for dangerous offenders. A comparison of numbers is interesting. The 2011 three-year re-offense rate for state prisons in the US is 43%. Older reports put the number well above 50%. A 2010 report in Norway listed Bastoy at 16%. Part of this large gap is the societal difference which should be factored into the results, as Norway’s...
entire prison system has a 20% repeat offense rate. However, there is still enough of a gap to show that Bastoy’s idea of extending, not restricting, prisoner freedom through architecture results in a better societal return. Even so, this data is not conclusive and it is clear that prisons need to be further examined and reformed. Even Foucault, writing forty years ago, recognized a need for prison reform: “We are aware of all the inconveniences of prison . . . yet one cannot ‘see’ how to replace it. It is the detestable solution, which one seems unable to do without.”

There finally seems to be a new design concept that may lead toward a long-term solution, and it needs to be better understood to be replicated across the world to reap the benefits for a better society.


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**Health Care as Precedent**

As noted in chapter one, health care designs have been replicated for prison facilities for hundreds of years. A contemporary example of a health care facility that can be seen as a potential prison precedent is Dementia Village, outside of Amsterdam. The facility is a nursing home for elderly people with Alzheimer’s Disease which makes it difficult for the residents to live alone or even with other people. The facility holds one-hundred and fifty-two residents providing a small enough setting to give personal attention to residents (something uncommon among many nursing homes and most prisons). The goal of the village is to replicate normal, everyday life inside the controlled and safe confines of the facility. Due to its extravagant variety of simulated programs (including a town square, theater, gardens, and post office), the village has been deemed a benevolent version of *The Truman Show*. Caretakers roam the streets in normal clothes, posing as residents rather than staff, and a single entrance that is constantly monitored helps keep the residents safe.

The entrance itself is low key and not attention-getting from the outside. It seems like an ordinary facility or corporate building making it less of a destination for outsiders. The entry’s interior has a pleasant looking reception desk, and the room transforms into a bright space with pleasant materials. The wood office and white paint help the space feel very open and receptive, and a person would feel immediately at home due to this. Furthermore, friends and relatives are encouraged to visit often, and having a pleasant entrance sequence helps relatives feel more at ease with leaving their loved ones behind. There are no long hallways or corridors in Dementia Village. Residents are split into
houses that hold six or seven people. One or two caretakers are in charge of each house which allows each resident to get the attention they need while also allowing the staff to get to know each resident and their individual traits. The houses are stylized and furnished properly from the 1950s to 2000s to make the residents feel at home. The exteriors of the houses even resemble the Dutch vernacular found in cities across the Netherlands. Even the outdoor spaces are modelled off of typical Dutch public spaces. Within the facility, no money is traded. However, residents can get jobs in various shops throughout the village such as cashiers in the grocery store or post-office clerks. These jobs help the residents feel like they are still taking part in the outside society.

The results of these facility changes are inspiring. The residents have been reported to need fewer medications, eat better, live longer, and appear more joyful than other care centers. Average nursing-home residents in the Netherlands spend about a minute and a half outside per day. On the other hand, Dementia Village has an extensive set of landscaped courtyards with different natural settings that ensure enjoyment for all. According to Dr. Paul Newhouse, director of Vanderbilt University’s Center for Cognitive Medicine, places like Dementia Village that encourage “environmental approaches to reducing both cognitive and behavioral problems associated with dementia are really the key to improving quality of life for these patients without excess medication.”

Another interesting study is that isolation of patients actually complicates the symptoms of dementia, so socialization is an important element to ensuring proper patient health.

While Dementia Village is not designed for prisoners, it has many similarities. Both residents are not allowed to leave the facility without permission from staff. Both groups are isolated from society yet yearn to continue to be a part of it. In a way, both sets of residents are being held against their will. The main differences between the two typologies is how society views each group. As the studies from Chapter 3 have shown oppressive prison architecture creates stress, violence and an unpleasant place to inhabit, the emphasis of designing prison facilities should ideally shift away from punishment and move towards rehabilitation making oppressive architecture obsolete.
Prisons have many of the elements that a town has: barber shops, recreation areas or gyms, offices, and (while considered unpleasant cells) homes. How can a prison facility be better designed to replicate a village similar to Dementia Village rather than being simply a series of oppressive buildings? An examination of village layouts helps to understand the strengths and weaknesses of villages and towns. It also brings light to the complex relationships of public and private space. Architectural Professor Lance Lavine, of the University of Minnesota, argues that public and private space can be divided up into many categories: public, private, private-public, public-private, private-private-public, etc.¹ These differentiations shall be used when discussing the variations of public and private spaces in the following village or town layouts. This discussion of the following layouts provides examples to provide a better precedent for prison facilities.

Two villages in Cameroon provide a good comparison study on the complexities of villages (while seemingly simple in diagram) and their public and private space layouts. The first diagram illustrates the perimeter village with a centralized tract of open space. In this village, the shelters create a boundary for the village with the doors facing inwards. The boundary provides protection from the outside world, and the walls help provide a thick barrier which minimizes the area needed for a wall. A single entry provides a choke point which is easily defensible while also providing a single focal point for village activity entering or leaving the village. This can be a disadvantage, as there is no escape route should the entrance become dysfunctional.

The huts at the perimeter provide the villagers with private space, and the central space becomes purely public—all attention is focused in towards the center. If there is a desire for the living space to become more private, the axis is moved from the entrance and further away from the center of the complex. The small hut which is the farthest on the right has an entrance skewed off axis and is tucked away behind the larger hut to its right. This conveys the hut as one of the most private in the village. The huts in the center of the village become public-private, as they serve as the focal points of the village huts while simultaneously providing the people or things inside a relief from this intense focus.

The second Cameroon village has no clearly defined perimeter wall or central space. This layout relies upon more subtle differentiations to imply public and private spaces. The diagram of the depicted village shows how subtle architectural details differentiate private and public spaces in a seemingly homogenous village. The more public a hut is, the closer to perpendicular the entrance is to the pathway. An entrance turned away from the pathway designates a private home, as it is inaccessible from the public pathway. The more difficult it is to reach a hut, the more private it becomes. While the huts in the center of the first village are more public in nature, the middle huts in the second village are more private in nature. While the huts do not define a strict border or perimeter, they help define the space within. The smaller spaces and condensed mass of huts also provides an intimacy and privacy that the first village lacks.

The following diagram depicts a Northeastern American Indian village. This village layout is similar to the layout of the first Cameroon village. Here again, a large space in the middle becomes public while a ring of huts encloses the space as an acting border for protection. There is one main entrance that controls the flow in and out of the complex. What makes this layout interesting is how a second ring is added over time to provide more huts to the village. This creates an interesting dynamic of varying public and private spaces depending on where one goes. All of the huts face towards the center, but the inner ring blocks the view of the central space from the outer huts. This creates a power dynamic, with the inner huts controlling the private-public space. Similar to European cities with a series of concentric walls, the inner ring becomes the more private as less people have reason to be inside of it. For medieval European cities, this central ring held the most important and wealthiest residents of the town—most protected from outsiders.

Villages and city layouts in Middle Eastern cities are very complex, and their layouts have spurred discussions about the catalyst for their layout. The accompanying section diagrams the complexity of public and private spaces in Arab cultures. The two-story houses are setback at street level which projects the second floor slightly above the street. While two-story American houses typically have the most private spaces on the second floor, this second floor projection in Middle Eastern cities allows the second floor to become private-public. While the second floor could have been public-private, Muslim women are hidden from the public eye. The windows above are often screened by blinds, but women can peek out from behind and watch the public mill
English city layout with public and private spaces ranging from public to private. The Roman town layout is organized around the street. The grid of streets parcel the town into blocks, and two major arteries dissect the town for quick travel. In the middle of the town lies the largest of the public spaces. The North-South street terminates at this large public space. Having the street visually ending at the temple creates a visual hierarchy of spaces. Whether truly the center or not, the street emphasizes the importance of the public area as the central focal point of the town. Roman towns, including Rome and many other cities, are organized around visual nodes which give reference points to other areas within the city.

This was especially pertinent in times with low literacy rates, as visual cues to reference points in the city became instrumental in establishing an identity for gathering and reference. Streets became an important organization tool for many European cities over the years. Various streets can inform what types of buildings are found where. A typical English city, for example, has shops lined along the larger arterial streets and residences or buildings of varying privacy off side streets. The side streets lead from the arterial streets to public squares with larger buildings (most likely for public use) surrounding them. Like the Roman town, some streets terminate with an important religious building at the end. This allows the churches at the end to impose themselves upon those in the public spaces and pull them into their enclosure. Similarly, the people from the terminus buildings can spill out into the public spaces. Covent Garden provides a common example of buildings through the streets below. While it is true that the projection also serves as a shading device in a hot climate, it provides a wrinkle in a traditional layout of public and private spaces.

The city of Oaxaca, Mexico, has interesting relationships of public and private spaces on many different scales. On the city scale, streets are the most public spaces. Residents walk on sidewalks (or occasionally the streets themselves) and bike or drive on the streets. The streets become the arteries of the city. City squares are often public-private, as churches often unofficially claim the squares. The churches themselves become subdivided into areas which gradually become more and more private (some churches in Oaxaca are known to bar entry to those with white skin). In the diagram, the other side of the street is lined with typical Oaxacan buildings divided into various layouts of public and private spaces. In the center lies the courtyard which varies from public-private to private-public depending on the functions housed inside. For example, a building may house privately owned shops such as a coffee shop on one side and a bookstore on the other. This would result in a public-private layout, as the public engages in the public courtyard and the surrounding privately owned spaces. A private residence would have its courtyard function as a private-public space, as it would often be one of the first spaces the public would interact in and gather within. Most spaces, whether private or semi-private, stem from the courtyard in these buildings. This differs from a typical American building which often designates private levels by a narrow corridor or changes in level. This Oaxaca courtyard building typology provides interesting opportunities for spaces which must deal with a variety of spaces ranging from public to private.

of religious worship and their relationships with public spaces. Private spaces line the perimeter of the square with the church and garden wall mirroring on the opposite side. These elements help contain the space, providing an area to gather in intimacy from the city at large and provide a sense of security similar to the first Cameroonian village. A sheltered arcade stretches alongside the buildings which provides a way to navigate the space protected from rain. The church creeps forward into the public square attempting to pull people into its confines. The steps of the church could be used for making announcements to those in the square or as a meeting place. This same tactic is used with large scale public buildings such as government buildings (like the United States Capital building on the Washington Mall), monuments (like the Lincoln Monument on the opposite end of the Mall) and museums (the Altes Museum in Berlin). These buildings assert their importance by taking over the public space through their assertive architectural disposition.

In Delft, Netherlands, the street becomes a tree-lined canal transformed from a place of transportation to a place of recreation. No longer is this street strictly for getting from point “a” to “b” within the city but a place to stroll slowly and enjoy conversation with friends. The trees, water and lines of houses help give a unique identification to the public space. This is an important element for a prison facility, as it brings enjoyment and a sense of ownership to the public space. The image of Delft invokes a romantic response and a desire to want to own a house there. This drive to own spaces needs to be instilled in newly designed prisons.

Camillo Sitte examined the plans of twenty-nine different public spaces. These each provide a different solution with regards to shape and sizes of these spaces and building-space relationships. Many of the spaces, like Covent Garden, have a church as the focal building. Different churches project further out into the spaces making their presence known while others blend in with the surrounding facades. These sketches show how the churches respond to the other buildings while simultaneously trying to project their presence into the space. For example, in sketch “AA” (on the Sitte diagrams), notice how the darker building of note matches stylistically by not conjoining with any of the surrounding buildings. It is by subtraction of mass that the building stands apart from the surrounding masses. This subtraction creates its own minor square in front of the building which encourages people to gather close to its doors. On the other hand, figures “L,” “M” and “R” all creep out into the public space in varying degrees similar to the church in Covent Garden. Sitte’s plans help illuminate different ways buildings and public spaces interact with each other.

Equally as important as public space organization strategies at large scales is an examination of how spaces are organized sequentially. Something commonly overlooked is that all spaces are claimed to be owned by individuals or groups whether tangibly or not. Within individual spaces, the perceived owners of the area play an important role in how people feel and act within the space. This can lead to a power dynamic between the perceived owners of the space and the other users. Where there are public spaces, homes become essential. Homes are spaces or territories that provide personal space protected from
the natural elements and the scrutiny of others. It is also good to plan for social units, or places “of living for a handful of people in a close, intimate relationship.” These are areas where people can convene while still being shrouded from public view. Designing with these factors in mind can help reduce conflicts of ownership while providing spaces appropriate for both public and private functions.

As concluded from the analysis of spatial layouts above, popular ways to organize spaces include streets, buildings as focal points and large open spaces. An arcade around the public space allows users to enjoy the area in any weather. Hierarchies of spaces help provide a tool for organization, and visual nodes provide universal landmarks that transcend literacy or language barriers. Streets become the arteries of the spaces, and they become critical to facilitating how people are to use the spaces they lead to. These case studies help show how the buildings themselves become the boundaries for the spaces, and if used properly no fences are even needed to close a space. Public spaces can even help distinguish various types of public and private spaces in the buildings enclosing it. Finally, the use of landscaping can transform a street as a place of transportation to a place for living. These observations are important in organizing layouts for new prison facilities, as they help organize new spaces off of successful spatial organizations and provide insight into how to properly scale public and private spaces when designing a modern prison facility. This chapter can be used to help design the layout of spaces which affect prisoners’ privacy positively, promote spaces for social interaction (both isolated from and conjoined with the community), and assist in laying out facility programs in a more familiar way. These design decisions by architects can prove instrumental to creating better lives for inmates and giving them the resources they need to become better citizens post-release.

What is the best way to ease the transition of inmates back into society? One route to better integrate prisoners into society post-release is through education. Education is shown to reduce recidivism by forty-three percent. This is most likely due to two-thirds of incoming prisoners holding a ninth-grade education or lower. It is not uncommon for prison education systems to have large waiting lists. Released inmates have stated that starting their lives over post-prison is an overwhelming process. A degree can be instrumental by helping offset a tarnished criminal record. Education provides opportunities to further hone skillsets and provides opportunities to train for jobs post-prison. Training opportunities help inmates in a similar way to education, though it limits inmates to the specific skillset and its market demand. Furthermore, Warden Chippendale, of a Maryland prison, believes that by keeping prisoners focused on relations outside of prisons is beneficial for the inmates, as statistics show that the first month out of prison is most important to staying out of prison.

Research shows that “offenders who worked for private companies while imprisoned obtained employment more quickly” than those who did not.” These people were employed longer in post-prison jobs “and had lower recidivism rates than those who worked in traditional

2 Stern, Voices from American prisons, 19.
correctional industries.” Through these private company jobs, offenders “acquire the skills they need to secure gainful employment upon release.”

The Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP) allows for prisoners to work for private employers. Under this program, offenders earn prevailing wages. The goal of the program is to “generate products and services that enable prisoners to make a contribution to society, offset the cost of incarceration, support family members, and compensate crime victims.” It also attempts to “reduce prison idleness, increase inmate job skills, and improve the prospects for prisoners’ successful transition to the community upon release.” While PIECP findings are not conclusive, they do show a positive trend. Approximately fifty-five percent of PIECP workers were employed by the end of the first quarter post-release compared to forty percent of the counterparts. About forty-nine percent were employed continuously for over a year compared to just over forty percent of people supervised by corrections staff or thirty-eight and a half percent for non-workers. A steady paying job is important, as two-thirds of incoming offenders made less than two-thousand dollars a year before incarceration. These accounts provide additional insights into where future prison systems should be located.

When looking for a good prison facility site, it is important to reference the information explained in Chapter 3. The following descriptions discuss a proposal I believe provides the best prison facility architects should design, starting with site. As discussed at length, site is extremely important for prison facilities. A site should not be chosen without analysis or thought, as a good site can provide a wealth of resources for the facility and its residents. When examining Cincinnati, Ohio, the neighborhood of Northside stands out as an ideal location for a prison facility. This neighborhood is of close proximity to the downtown district of Cincinnati (bus rides take under thirty minutes) which is useful for job prospects. A proposed transit hub in the neighborhood will make travel across the city easier and faster, and it will potentially bring new businesses to the neighborhood as well. If prisoners were granted freedom to leave the facility for a certain amount of hours each day, inmates could work at various businesses. Northside is also surrounded by old industrial buildings which provides for an opportunity to take part in working class jobs. Just up the road is Cincinnati State University which is a reputable school for those incarcerated interesting in working towards getting a degree. The university could also hold classes in their classrooms specifically geared towards inmates trying to get degrees. Furthermore, Cincinnati State has many resources to take advantage of from computer labs and libraries to assistance in obtaining jobs post-graduation. Northside’s close proximity to the city makes it easy for staff to find homes near the facility. The multiple bus routes and nearby intersection of interstate highways makes it especially navigable for visitors travelling from near or far. The neighborhood is very walkable with most of the businesses being loaded on a single street (Hamilton Avenue at Northside). One of the many parks of Northside.
Eighty-five percent of residents in Northside state they like the sense of community the neighborhood provides. And over two-thirds of residents feel they are close to a wide variety of restaurants.

The goals of the neighborhood provide opportunities for inmates to both contribute to the community and network with local residents. One such goal is to enhance the architecturally historic pedestrian streetscape and green character of the neighborhood. The board of Northside suggests fixing up houses in the area to make the neighborhood more attractive. There is potential to partner with a prison to help offenders continue to build skills while simultaneously interacting with home owners in the neighborhood. This program could be enriched with a partnership with Building Value. This community-run company is a building material reuse store which recycles materials and fixtures from demoed buildings for resale to the community at low prices. Offenders could work with the company to fabricate new fixtures or gather materials for repairs of buildings around the community. There is even potential for an enrichment of the pedestrian streetscape via design interventions that could be fabricated at the factory.

Suddenly a potential site is born by claiming a vacant and partially used lot (currently for storage by Building Value). It is the perfect size for a small, controlled facility for inmates just down the highway from downtown Cincinnati. The site has enough room to accommodate

11 2014 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, report (Cincinnati, OH: Cincinnati City Council, 2014), 60-64.
a factory for Building Value which will help improve the character of Northside and build new relationships that can help offenders post-release. By carefully analyzing the city and then neighborhood for potential sites that would benefit both the community and prisoners, many possibilities arise for new variations on the prison typology that can be productive for all involved parties whether direct or indirect.
Prisons must respond to two separate and contradictory demands: internment and reinsertion. For the issue of internment, the building is used as a disciplinary instrument. The building defines the physical limits and restricts the offenders within its boundaries via fences and walls. At the same time, these facilities are expected to promote freedom. The people within need to think of the facility as a living space, similar to a halfway house. Architects have typically designed facilities that focus too much on internment, and the oppressive elements keep the people within from understanding the facility as a living space. While a halfway-house-like design is important for this project, the following facility proposal is considered separate from this typology.

The first step for creating a non-oppressive prison facility is by defining a new, non-offensive vocabulary. Language has been recognized as a tool to oppress the people within prisons and to look down upon the facility as a whole. Kaia Stern notes that the people inside the facility do not like being called “inmates,” the prison officers do not like the word “guards,” and a small room with no usable bathroom holding naked people inside cannot be called a “cell” or “safety room.” People who leave prisons carry a tarnished record which prevents them from getting jobs and results in them being shunned from society as a whole. Thus, a new vocabulary is needed to benefit all parties involved. The new vocabulary starts with the phrase “prison facility.” The prison facility should not be a place of confinement or imprisonment but a place for rehabilitation and reentry. The following proposed project should not

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be thought of as a prison, but as an entirely separate entity. It will be called a “community integration center.” This is a label carefully chosen to remove implicit bias. The members of the facility should be called “residents,” and the staff or guards should be named “integration staff.” Even locations of the facility should be renamed to remove charged words such as “cells” or “detention.” The end goal is that society will be more open to receiving residents from a community integration center rather than inmates from a prison.

Looking at Dementia Village, a replicated society within a facility is an attractive idea. Initially, this concept was explored on a linear site. The proposed site’s shape fit well with a main street that served as the circulation spine. The new question becomes: while beneficial to Alzheimer’s patients, is the same idea of a replicated society good for people who will be reentering society or will it become a factor of nostalgia and prove ultimately ineffective? A potentially more effective and more interesting idea is making the facility an actual functioning part of society. This would allow the residents to continue to be a part of society while on a probationary period. This facility is recommended for low-level offenders as a new option in lieu of going to prison or for behaviors finishing up their last couple of years of their sentences at current prison facilities. The proposed solution uses Building Value as its central base for the residents detailed above. The residents of the facility are thus allowed to travel freely throughout the neighborhood during a set amount of time (perhaps eight in the morning to six at night) before respecting their curfew. They can attend religious functions, relax in the community parks, or obtain jobs within the community. If residents

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### Vocabulary of Facility

**Facility Name:** Community Integration Center  
**People Inside:** Residents  
**Staff:** Integration Staff  
**Living Area:** Communities  
**Industrial/Mechanical Machinery Room:** Workshop  
**Gathering Buildings:** Communes
disregard the curfew, cause trouble with other residents or consume alcohol or drugs, they would be sent to a typical prison for the remainder of their sentence as punishment. Furthermore, as it is a new facility, it is extremely unlikely that people in worse living conditions (extreme poverty or homelessness) would motivate people to commit crimes to try to be sent here.

The idea of the Northside Community Integration Center is to respond to the aforementioned oppressive elements of prisons to create a facility that will benefit the residents, reduce violence and stress, and create an environment that feels safe. These designed elements can be categorized in the following ways: direct-supervision, improved visitor relations, attractive building materials, entry and reception, socialization, density variation, living conditions, thermal comfort and pleasant sensory conditions.

The facility is made up of smaller groupings to create a whole. This subdivision allows for smaller groups of residents to form relationships and make it easier for the integration staff to befriend the residents in their group. Each community supports anywhere from twelve to twenty residents. Five communities make up the entire facility. These subdivisions help to enforce direct-supervision of residents. On top of the residences, each community has a commune. Here the residents can gather with their staff, cook and eat meals, socialize with one another and come or go as they please. The interiors feel spacious and airy with large windows to let light into the commune. The materials used throughout the facility are higher quality and akin to nicer apartments or commercial buildings.
Each community has an outdoor space that is landscaped in various ways. These natural areas are right outside the doors of the residents which provide for easy access to nature to promote peacefulness. With varied colors and smells, these gardens tease the senses of the residents. Each community garden leads into a larger recreation space. This provides the residents areas to play sports or take part in intercommunity activities. Each recreational space then leads into the largest courtyard which holds the gardens, factory and visitation offices. The gardens allow the residents to grow food, but they also allow them to put their hands in the earth to help relieve stress and refresh their tactile senses.

Off of each recreational courtyard lies the axial endpoints of the facility. These buildings hold showers and laundry on the bottom floor with small libraries with reading desks and a computer on the upper floor. While the bottom floor is functional, the upper level provides an escape from life where residents can hide in a nook and immerse themselves in books. Outside the glass and metal building lies the axial streets which cross the length of the site. These connect the reception area with the deepest communities, and the factory connects axially with the grouping across the large courtyard space. The streets are paved with stone to replicate older streets in Northside. This not only provides visual beauty but also a textural walking path which plays with the feet.

The residential buildings of Northside are referenced with the individual residences within the facility. Painted brick, in a stripped down contemporary style, plays with the existing character of Northside’s residences. Inside the painted buildings are double- and single-occupancy...
residences. The doubles are on the ground floor with the singles located directly above. These units each hold a bed, desk, toilet, sink and ample storage space. Each unit has at least two windows to provide daylight to the rooms. These rooms serve as solitary escapes from the facility at large. While each unit has locks, integration staff ultimately have the power to unlock any residential room. With walls consisting of reclaimed wood and painting spaces, the rooms have a pleasant ambience and are more homely. The goal is to have the residents think of their rooms as a second home rather than a cell. Each room is fitting with thermostats to provide thermal comfort, but each is locked to certain settings to ensure that the practice remains economically viable.

The entry to the facility is similar in appearance to Building Value next door. While the facility is technically open to the public, a modest façade helps imply that the residents are given a peaceful home away from the prying eyes of the people of Northside. It is important that the residents have a sense of ownership. However, the glassed entry office and large opening to the public street still gives the incoming residents and general public a welcoming embrace. The visitation office opens visually with windows to look out towards Northside. This symbolizes the mixing of the residents outside the facility with the residents inside. Also inside the residential room is a play area for children which can be a fun experience for mothers or fathers separated from their kids. These interchanges are encouraged, as time with loved ones serves as an extra motivation to reclaim their freedom and start anew.
Ultimately, the goal of this community integration center is to serve as a new prison facility for low level offenders which does a better job at providing opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into the communities outside the facility’s walls. In the movie *The Shawshank Redemption*, Brooks Hatlen struggles with reintegration, and the viewer sympathizes with his struggles. He has been separated by society for so long that he is surprised to see cars whipping by. In today’s world, many inmates have never held a smartphone, and some may never have used a computer. While these are extreme cases of technological isolation, it is important for prisoners to be able to keep up with the demands of society, or they will never be able to survive outside their facilities.

Furthermore, the current system is statistically proven to be broken, and new proposals should be laid on the table. Architects have been shown to be able to lead discussions of facility design to make more humane conditions, and architects should continue to demand new and more inventive systems. As new facilities similar to the community integration center are implemented, they can be studied and provide useful feedback on whether it improves outcomes for prisoners and for society. With better outcomes, hopefully more of these types of centers will be constructed across the United States in the near future. Architects have the opportunity and should drive the discussion of new, innovative and humane facilities to fix a broken prison system.

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3 *Shawshank Redemption*, dir. Frank Darabont, by Stephen King, perf. Tim Robbins, Morgan Freeman, and Bob Gunton (United States: Columbia Pictures, 1994), DVD.
102. Moline Street houses in Northside

103. Aerial view of a community
104. Facility section east-west

105. Facility section north-south


