

design philosophy

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“Prison not only robs you of your freedom, it attempts to take away your identity...it is by definition a purely authoritarian state that tolerates no independence and individuality. As a freedom fighter and as a man, one must fight against the prison’s attempt to rob one of these qualities.”

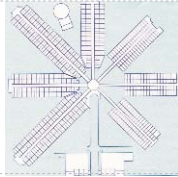
The prison as an environment:
President Nelson Mandela commented during his incarceration:

(V Stern, A Sin Against the Future: Imprisonment in the World, Penguin Books, London, 1998, pg.107)

Types of prisons

During the 1500's and 1600's, prisons evolved around the practises of banishment (the exile into the wilderness) and transportation (sending offenders to other countries or colonies). Around the 1550, England started what was then called workhouses (London's Famous Bridewell workhouse as an example.) These became very unsanitary and overcrowded places. In 1790 the Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia was converted from a jail to a prison this was known as America's first state prison.

In the late 1790's a group (Cesare Beccaria 1738-1794; John Howard 1726-1790; Jeremy Bentham 1748-1832) started the penitentiary movement, which lasted for a hundred years. The reformatory movement in 1870's followed this. (Enoch Wines 1806-1879; Zebulon Brockway 1827-1920) this movement only lasted twenty years and by the end America was searching for a new way of making prison systems more industrial and punitive. During the great depression of 1920's and 1930's the old penitentiaries and reformatories were converted and made bigger and were called big house prisons. These became the basis of various correctional centre designs through out the 20th century. During the 1940's was the rebirth of rehabilitation, but this also only lasted twenty years. Most prisons built since the 1980's are designed as warehousing or for custodial purposes, sometimes called the deserts model. (Which is a philosophy involving the multiple purposes of incapacitation, deterrence, and retribution). That which follows is just a brief visual history of prison architectural facilities.



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The 1790 penitentiary followed a hub and spokes pattern. This is also known as the radial design. The sub-type known as the Pennsylvania system placed the administration building in the center, and the Auburn (NY) system placed this building on the outer wall. The Pennsylvania system (pictured) was based on solitary and silent confinement, with the Auburn system based on congregate work and meals with silent confinement (but inmates developed hand signals).

The 1950 Panopticon, or roundhouse design, was a type of modern penitentiary advocated long ago by Jeremy Bentham. Only two were built in the world. The guard tower is a cylindrical structure going up the middle of the inside, hence the name, Panopticon, or all-seeing-eye.



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The 1870 reformatory is a large structure like a penitentiary, but notice how the cell doors open inward into a mass hallway (like a hotel). Penitentiaries, by contrast, either have cells with windows on the back of them, or the cells are centered inside the cellblock so inmates can look out their cell doors to see the outside of the cellblock windows. Reformatories became used for special populations, like juveniles and women. If extra floors are added to the top of a reformatory or penitentiary, the design is called the big house prison design. The original reformatories were designed for rehabilitation, and inmates earned early release, or parole, based on how many points they accumulated for good behaviour.

The 1890 courtyard design is also known as a Taggart Fortress, named after an ex-civil war entrepreneur, Colonel Taggart, who bought up a few Army forts, and converted them into prison camps. Convicts were often leased out as labourers or on road crews, or made to exercise, drill, or become industrious.



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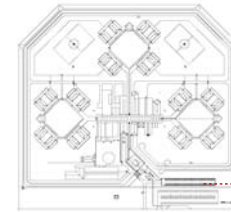
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The 1945 campus design tried to blend in with the environment by allowing trees, rolling hills, etc., and the grounds aren't usually surrounded by a wall, but concertina razor wire instead. The outer perimeter is patrolled by guards on foot, vehicle, and sometimes by a mini-train. The educational center is usually the largest building on campus.

The 1950 telephone pole design, which was advocated by the federal government, is based on a long hallway with living or work quarters as add-on module units attached to the sides. Many federal BOP prisons are based on this model. A few states, like New Mexico, have experienced some terrible riots in them.

The 1980 skyscraper design, like the one shown here, which is the Piedmont Correctional facility in North Carolina, was designed for little more than warehousing offenders, although some of the floors may contain classrooms and/or work rooms. Exercise yards are usually located on the roof. Most major cities (and the federal penitentiaries) have what are called Metro prisons of this type, and often local jails are of this architectural design, as are many private prisons operated by corporations who contract with the government.

The 1990 modular design is also known as a pod prison, direct supervision jail, or new generation design, and like the TV show OZ, consists of living quarters with tall ceilings, mezzanine balconies, sharp architectural angles, Plexiglas panels, and hi-tech. environmental control equipment.

The 2002 New Generation Prisons

Prisons are operated on a basis of care, custody and control, of which control is the most important. The correctional enterprise is ultimately evaluated on how well all its activities, its treatment as well as security programs, come together and eventually allow for the replacement of correctional control with self-control. There is no simple way to do this. Laws, political appointments, judicial decisions, and demographics all affect corrections. It has no power to restrict the flood of people that enter its doors every day. Yet it must do something, anything, to treat, rehabilitate, and re-integrate its clientele.

In the past, prisons in South Africa were built as 'cattle housing' institutions. There were no facilities to alleviate boredom or programmes to help re-integrate the offender back into the society on his/her release. The militaristic and racist culture of prison officials, embedded not only in the law of apartheid, but also in the religion and politics of such officials, added to the harshness of the prison regime. The desperate environment, in which prisoners were housed, was often described in many books and articles written in particular by political prisoners.

"Prisons, even the most reformed ones produce damage and disease, in varied forms of intensity, they produce damaged and ill people"

(V. Ruggiro, *The Disrespect of Prisons*, Prison Reform Trust, London. 1991)

This suggests, that harm is evadable in the prison environment and that it is too extreme for any prisoner to deal with. Prisons are congested; life in prison is spartan and sterile and is becoming more so as all the time. Somewhere along the line the goal of rehabilitation was lost and this resulted in human warehouses. The idea around rehabilitation was the concern with a constructive impact on people, and a retreat from the concern meant that the impact was now left to chance. Such institutions are not the answers for dealing with criminals, but alternative forms of punishment are seldom seen as a priority by many governments.

Prisons are environments which contain people who have been removed from society. They are 24-hour-a-day, year-in-year-out environments in which people are sequestered with no contact with the outside world. A prison encompasses all the aspects of human life in one zone.

Stressful environments

The nature of a prison is self contained and precise and so the relationship between the individual and the environment, as a consumer of the environment, becomes the most important concern, for there are no external factors that influence the internal environment.

People are inextricably linked to their surroundings, but a person and his/her environment can be interdependently defined. The individual and his/her environment do lead independent existences, but in another sense they are linked. A library in a prison would evoke different connotations in a prisoner's mind than the segregation cells.

Dewey and Bentley (1949) coined the term "transaction" to describe the closeness or the relationship between a person and his environment. A given physical or social setting is a different psychological environment for everyone who operates in it; different people feel and act differently if they move from one setting to another. "Desirable" and "undesirable" features of the environment are "desirable" and "undesirable" for different people. One person's meat is another's poison. (Toch, H. Living in Prison. Washington, DC: American Psychologist Association. (Original work published 1977)

When designing a prison environment it is of great importance to create "transactional" spaces in which the prisoners can interact, related and feel comfortable in.

"Stressful environments are environments where the transactional junctures are of critical personal importance." (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984.)

The interrelation of a person and their environment marks the difference between psychological survival and non-survival, between growth and discomfort or maladaptation. Often we worry about the person who manages and overlook the people who suffer.

Stress stimuli are uninviting situations like hurricanes, thunderstorms, concentration camps, surgery, unemployment, isolation and waiting rooms; these stimuli have been seen to produce different impacts on people. Stress responses are "defensive" reactions to the stimuli or situation, such as emergency body changes ranging from perspiration and blood-pressure level to change in hormones found in the urine. The trouble is we do not know what the reaction is inspired by or what goes on in the persons mind at the time of the reaction.

In exploring the connotations of stress we begin to understand that the particular relationship between the person and their environment can endanger his or her well-being. That is why it is so important to prevent stress through ecological intervention. This is done by giving the user (of the environment) choice: to move his or her desk to a space, which is more private or safe. To give someone the option of choice permits him or her to shape their own environments in a way, which matters to them.

The stresses involved in being an inmate in prison are:

- Deprivation of liberty
- The absence of goods and services
- The loss of sexual/intimate companionship
- A decrease in autonomy
- Lessening of security

All of the above translates into self-doubts and reduced feelings of self-esteem. Most prisons are described as being congested, monotonous and lacking physical privacy. If one had to look at improving the person-environment interrelationship, could you alleviate these problems among inmates?

Possible solutions

Prisons are designed to discourage criminal misbehaviour; society has no regret for putting criminals in confined places with stultifying routines, away from their families and the ones they love. The milieu of prison is that of non-comfort and non-desirability however prisons should be humane and not psychologically harmful. They should be secure so as to keep the inmates dependently inside. This results in the location being isolated, quarantined insulation and the architecture being fortress-like. With stress as a built-in feature of prisons and the fact that we want prisons to be a “sane” environment for prisoners, how do you design a prison which combines all these concepts?

In order to maximise the congruence of people and environments we must use new options and use the old options in new ways. We need to look at new ways of defining environments. Prison should not only be a place where people are kept away from society and punished but should also be a place of therapy and rehabilitation. Prison spaces should be “unpredictable”. Unpredictable in a sense that space should be seen as having dual functions. Classrooms must also be seen as social mixers, a workshop as a source of loving supervision, a living space as a haven of privacy and areas of punishment as areas of therapy. (Toch, H. Living in Prison. Washington, DC: American Psychologist Association. (Original work published 1977))

Before we can realign environments we need to understand what transactional possibilities or the human attributes of our environments are. We need to understand how people, who operate and live in certain environments, perceive it and adjust accordingly.

The 9 concerns in the prison environments and an attempt to accommodate the concerns.

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The following extracts are from Tochs' book Living in Prison.

privacy

A concern about social and physical over stimulation; a preference for isolation, peace and quite, absence of environmental irritants such as noise and crowding.

Inmate known as Au R Q: "well as far as – see, you got a different type of situation in every prison. Now, maybe one would have the type of peace and quite that I'm looking for, they might not have the work program that I'm looking for."

In the design of the facility the consumer of the environment will have a choice of space in which he or she want to move in.

safety

A concern about one's physical safety; a preference for social and physical setting that provide protection and that minimize the chance of being attacked.

Inmate known as Att R P: "sure, there's always tension. You can be walk down the corridor and see electricity in the hall from the tension. It's only a figure of speech, but you know what I mean."

The design of the facility will aim towards achieving maximum safety and security through maximizing visual contact at all times and increase views in all directions.

structure

A concern about the environment stability and predictability; a preference for consistency, clear-cut rules, orderly and scheduled events and impingements.

Inmate known as Att R P: "They're all brand new guards. It's not their fault, they just don't know nothing. You ask one of them a question, he knows less than me. To me this ain't no prison, it's a kindergarten."

support

A concern about reliable, tangible assistance from persons and settings, and about services that facilitate self-advancement and self-improvement.

emotional feedback

A concern about being loved, appreciated, and cared for; a desire for intimate relationships that provide emotional sustenance and empathy.

Inmate known as GH R U: "They calm me down at night; we get letters here at night... If I don't get a letter that night, I'm unbearable to live with all the next day."

social stimulation

A concern with congeniality, a preference for settings that provide an opportunity for social interaction, companionship, and gregariousness.

Inmate known as Att R H: "Like, when you do it in groups, they push you more, you get more out of it than when you do it by yourself. When you exercise by yourself, you're only going to do so much, and that's it. But, like, when you go in a group, they say, "let's do more than that." And then, let's do another one." But when you do it by yourself you only do ten and then stop. But you sometimes get in spirit when it's more than one, you enjoy it more."

education activity freedom

A concern about circumscription of one's autonomy; a need for minimal restriction and maximum opportunity to govern one's own conduct.

Inmate Cox S 13: "You feel like an adolescent, and it blows your mind. It is a bad feeling."

Skills development, academic training – something, which will give a future context to their place in society – something that will break the 'circle of crime.

A concern about under stimulation; a need for maximizing the opportunity to be occupied and to fill time; a need for distraction.

Inmate known as GH R V: "I'm on the go all day long. I don't stop for one minute. I don't stop to relax for a minute. I could never relax. In fact, when it's time to sleep I don't relax and I can never go to sleep."

The post-apartheid era has brought about many changes in legislation, but the implementation process has been very slow and painful. It was only in 2001 that many of the changes envisioned in the 1980's, started to transpire.

Looking at three youth centres in the Western Cape one can gain a better understanding of the educational opportunities of youth offenders in correctional institutions.

The Drakenstein Youth Centre

The youth centre holds 521 youth offenders and is the only centre which has a maximum-security facility in the Western Cape. Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) framework is the curriculum, which is followed.

The facility has very few physical resources, the classrooms are small and the textbooks are shared among pupils, as there is a shortage. There is a lack of attendance, a lack of study space. The dominant languages spoken are English and Xhosa but Afrikaans is the medium of instruction.

The older prisoners lose their identification documents so the biggest problem is the inability of the prison in controlling the adult prisoners from living in the juvenile section. For there is no proof that they are too old to live in this section.

It must be noted that the quality of the lessons planning and the interaction between students and staff is of high quality.

The Hawaqua Youth Centre

This facility is completely dedicated to juvenile offenders. It now holds 390 inmates. The school has eight teachers and has enrolled 120 pupils.

The facility is divided into school cell, so the classes sleep in the same cell according to the ABET level. Majority of the inmates speak Xhosa and Afrikaans, and even so the medium of instruction is in English.

The facility works extensively with NGO's in the area. The initial plans for reform schools were to demolish the old reform schools and schools of industries, sell the properties and buy new land and facilities with that money. At the time that was not feasible so the present facilities were retained. They will be upgraded as the money becomes available. This process has begun and facilities are starting to change names and formally begin the process of retraining. The staff needs to be trained in psychology and social work, which emphasises the individual treatment and development of the youths in care.

The Eureka Youth Centre

This centre is the first of the reformed schools in the Western Cape to officially make a switch to a youth care and special education centre for boys. This is a centre only for boys under the age of 18. The boys are able to have much longer days of activities, spend more time with their family and have individual tailored development programmes which take into account their learning disabilities and previous educational history.

In conclusion looking at the various facilities we realise the vast limitations of correctional institutions for realising the goals “as promoting a child’s re-integration as assuming a constructive role in society,” as stated by the Correctional Service. Even with all the programmes, opportunities and the dedicated staff, the environment was one that cuts a youth inmate off from his community and makes him more knowledgeable in the world of crime.

When studying adolescent offenders, they have very different problems and concerns. For most adolescents, the imprisonment process is a very stressful experience, no matter where they are imprisoned. A juvenile inmate sees being institutionalised as being put in an environment where you are told when to wake up and when to go to bed, a place where you are escorted to all activities, made to eat institutional food and besupervised 24 hours a day by brutal staff, a place where religion is forced upon you and where you are to be rehabilitated and reformed.

The worst of all is that you are removed from your family. They feel they have to “make it through” and have huge confrontations with peer pressures, ‘Only the strong shall survive!’ Most juveniles choose to run away, withdraw in to their own world or ‘Hang it up’ (commit suicide). *“I was scared, because when I was at (another institution), everyone was telling me (present institution) was suppose to be a bad place. Everybody was getting pushed around, jumped on all the time, fighting all the time and all of this. Always being locked up, and they said (present institution) was underground.”* Quote from Juvenile inmate at the maximum-security training school for boys in Ohio. (Johnson, R and Toch, H. The Pains of Imprisonment. London: Sage publications, 1982.)

There is a growing tendency to imprison youth offenders. The media presents us with horrifying statistics on the number of aggressive offenders among youths; however large number have only committed minor crimes. Many of the children come from deprived backgrounds and commit the crimes in order to survive. If children are placed in an institution, which does not deal with the rehabilitation of these youths, they will re-enter the same community and continue committing crime.

In the words of one child:

“I know i will steal a car again when i get out of prison, where else can i earn so much money in a short time? What else is there for me to do?”

(Dissel, A. Children serving goal sentence. A profile on children sentenced to prison. Research paper written for the centre for the study of violence and reconciliation. August 1999)