

# International Differences in Prison Architecture: What the United States Can Learn from Germany

Maximilian Grönegräs<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the differences between the architecture of prisons in Germany and the United States (US). While in Germany, prison design is employed to maximize the privacy of the inmates as well as their freedom of movement, in the US, the close surveillance of the prisoner is regarded as a necessary component of his strict punishment. Several American politicians, academics, activists and journalists regard the German approach towards incarceration as a model that could potentially contribute to an improvement of the prison system in the US. A major obstacle on the way towards betterment are, however, the owners of numerous private American prisons, who employ their inmates under inhumane working conditions that are comparable to slavery. Within the context of this debate, I have interviewed three architects, Edgar Muth, Michael Eschwe and Michael Wächter, who all have either been or currently still are involved in the structural design of German prisons. Their descriptions of generously equipped cells, common residential groups and modernly designed showers draw an image of a prison system the United States could have one day, if the country would be willing to learn some lessons from the German example.

## 1. Introduction

In the first century BCE, the Roman author Vitruvius formulated the earliest known definition of architecture and its obligations. He believed that architectural structures should be durable, useful and beautiful (Fransson, Giofrè & Johnsen, 2018, p. 21). Numerous scholars have since then argued that, in order to fully understand the functional principles of architecture, one has to move beyond these three simple points. They claim that "Architecture is never neutral. It is at all times, and places involved in exerting power." (Fransson, Giofrè & Johnsen, 2018, p. 24). An architectural work can thus have political qualifications, as it is not only based on the political ideologies that are dominant within a respective country and during a respective time but may also allow some individuals to take control over others (see for instance Atkinson, 2003; Dovey, 1999; Winner, 1986).

A place in which this second position on architecture, focussing on the power it holds, is of especial importance is the prison, an institution designed for the "deprivation of one of the most cherished features of human life, individual liberty" (Coyle, 2005, p. 1). At the beginning of the twentieth century, researchers were reflecting on how the design of this specific type of buildings could be approached as cost-efficiently as possible. Robert L. Davison argued that one should always carefully consider a prison's economic height, meaning that it is always cheaper to build one tall building, rather than several smaller ones (1931, p. 34). A famous prison design, based on financial reflections like these, was Jeremy Bentham's panopticon (1995). The surveillance mechanism created by the structure of this building was supposed to allow the cheap and efficient exertion of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1995; Kammler, Parr

<sup>1</sup> Maximilian Grönegräs received a bachelor's degree in Arts & Culture at Maastricht University in 2013. At the moment he is working as communications operative for the Bundesverband Flachglas e. V..

Contact: maxgroenegraes@outlook.de

& Schneider, 2014). Although the panopticon has never been built, the conservative and inhumane approach towards incarceration that it represents can be considered to still be very much reality in the United States. The harsh punishment of the offender is here widely regarded as the only way to keep the general society safe, which reminds of the utilitarian ideals Bentham believed in (see for instance Frank, 2018; Jenkins, n. d.; Surico, 2015). Several European countries, such as Germany, in contrast, focus on the rehabilitation, rather than on the punishment of the prisoner (see for instance Chammah, 2015d; Duran, 2018; Turner & Travis, 2015). Because of this large international difference, the Vera Institute of Justice, an American, independent, non-profit research and policy organization, has organized several visits to Germany, in order to learn about its national approach towards incarceration (Frank, 2018; Subramanian & Shames, 2013).

The multiple references inserted above demonstrate the extensive amount of research that has already been conducted concerning the political dimensions of architecture, as well as the use of structural design in order to establish power and control within the particular context of the prison. The American willingness to learn from the German prison system is, however, a rather recent phenomenon, that can be allocated to the twenty-first century. Because of its topicality, the sources available on comparisons between the German and the US prison system largely consist of journalistic articles and blog posts (see for example Chammah, 2015a; Duran, 2018; Turner & Travis, 2015). Limited academic work exists on this particular topic, a gap, to whose filling this paper is intended to contribute. I have therefore based my own academic work on the following research question: To what extent can German prison architecture serve as a model for the improvement of US prison architecture? During my research, I have additionally noticed that among the various experts, who had a chance to speak within this international debate, there has been almost no architect. As the architectural aspect of imprisonment, as well as the intended impact of materiality on the prisoner, are what interest me the most, I decided to interview three German architects. All of them have been or still are involved in the design of correctional facilities within Germany.

Following this introduction, this paper continues with a review of the most relevant academic voices commenting on the ideas that architecture possesses political attributes and that it can be the key to power and control. Subsequently, the differences and similarities between German and American prison architecture are closely examined. This comparison is pursued by a detailed evaluation and analysis of the statements the three interviewees provided me with. The discussion concludes with the lessons the United States might be able to learn from the German approach towards the architectural design of prisons.

## 2. Literature Review: Three Theories on Architecture

This section reviews different bodies of academic literature, which support three main theories. The first of these argues that technical objects of human creation, architectural constructions being among them, can hold certain political qualifications. The second theory is closely connected to its predecessor, postulating that architectural design can be used in order to impact and control human behaviour, making it possible, by way of example, to exclude a specific category of people from a certain area. Finally, the last thesis claims that both the political dimension of architecture, as well as its direct relation to disciplinary power play an especially important role within the prison. This theory is simultaneously to be seen as an explanation for the focus of this paper on this specific kind of societal institution.

The idea that human artefacts can be regarded as something political, serves as a theoretical footing of this literature review. Langdon Winner discusses it lengthily, defending the point that technology may indeed provide specific groups of people with power and authority. Substantiating his theory with an

example, Winner refers to the American public official Robert Moses, who from the 1920s to the 1970s oversaw the construction of circa 200 bridges on Long Island, New York. According to Winner, these bridges were “deliberately designed to achieve a particular social effect” (1986, p. 53), namely to restrict the access of racial minorities and low-income groups to Jones Beach, a public park. As these people could usually only afford to move around via public transport, the bridges were constructed so low, that busses would not fit underneath them. (Winner, 1986, pp. 53-54).

Bernward Joerges calls Winner’s accusations against Moses into question, by arguing that they are based on an insufficient amount of evidence, while the evidence existing cannot even be considered reliable. Robert Caro, who wrote the biography of Moses, refers to only one single source that is supposed to prove Moses’ racist intentions. He quotes a regional planner on Long Island named Lee E. Koppelman, who had measured the height of some of the bridges himself. In a rather simplistic manner, he justifies the fact that he did not examine all of the bridges: “I knew right then what I was going to find” (Joerges, 1999, p. 7). Joerges criticizes further, that during the time of the construction of Moses’ bridges there has been a regulation in the US, according to which trucks, busses and commercial vehicles were simply forbidden to drive on all parkways. Therefore, even if Moses indeed wanted to hinder busses from driving on the parkways to Jones Beach, he would not have needed to (Joerges, 1999, p. 11).

Steve Woolgar and Geoff Cooper share Joerges’ scepticism towards Winner’s hypothesis, however, only to a certain extent. Contradicting both Winner’s and Joerges’ argument, they provide a timetable which proves that a so-called Jones Beach Bus, which drove on the parkways on Long Island, actually existed. Winner’s theory of the politics of technological artefacts, Woolgar and Cooper claim, is, therefore, resting on a flat wrong example (Woolgar & Cooper, 1999, pp. 434-435). The two authors are, nevertheless, fascinated by the story of Moses’ bridges, which they designate as an urban legend. Among its unique characteristics are that it concerns a highly simplistic technological artefact, which it directly connects to a specific human intention (Woolgar & Cooper, 1999, p. 439).

While the idea of architecture as key to control over human behaviour has already been clearly implied by the preceding authors, it is expressed even more explicitly by the following ones. Similar to Winner (1986), Kim Dovey recognizes the power which lies within objects of human creation. Rather than on technological artefacts, however, he specifically focusses on architectural design. He differentiates three primary syntactic relations, describing possibilities in which rooms can be arranged in relation to one another. The linear syntax allows movement through different rooms along just one single line, to leave the building one can therefore just take one single route. The looped syntax enables people to move through the rooms in a circle, leaving open multiple pathways that allow to switch positions in an unpredictable manner. Within the fan structure, access to all rooms is possible proceeding from one single point, that, therefore, offers an ideal centre of control over movement inside the whole building (Dovey, 1999, pp. 21-22).

Just like Dovey (1999), Rowland Atkinson uses the power that inheres within architecture as the underlying idea of his work and applies it to the management of public spaces in Britain. The idea that the access of certain groups of people to spaces needs to be controlled originates, Atkinson argues, in the broken windows theory that has been developed by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. They claim that ignoring the signs of smaller crimes within a neighbourhood, such as broken windows or graffiti, will lead to a local increase of both the quantity and severity of crime. A commonly accepted answer to this is zero-tolerance policing, “the strategy of coming down hard on minor offences” (Atkinson, 2003, p. 1837). The exclusion of people, who are guilty of even only these minor offences, from public spaces can be achieved via various measures. In spaces like shopping malls, non-consumption is already a form of

deviance. Persons without the money to buy something are architecturally excluded, by for example equipping benches with high armrests, so that the homeless won't be able to sleep on them. Another quite common strategy is the use of surveillance cameras, which enable a visual categorization of individuals and the places where they are believed to belong (Atkinson, 2003, pp. 1833-1834).

Katherine Beckett and Steve Herbert examine the use of broken windows policing in the United States, focussing especially on the common practice of trespassing. Based on recent innovations in urban social control in the country, the police have the right to give exclusion orders, which prohibit an individual to enter a specific part of a city for a certain period of time. The amount of power that is given to state authority is shocking, as officers "can still trespass anybody for anything" (Beckett & Herbert, 2008, p. 11) and even completely search somebody who has already been trespassed, without giving any other reason. Breaking an exclusion order is considered as a serious crime, which requires immediate and strict punishment. Unsurprisingly, this offense frequently serves as the sole basis for an arrest (Beckett & Herbert, 2008, p. 12).

A specific category of buildings in which the political dimensions of architecture, as well as power and control over human behaviour, achieved, among others, through architectural design, plays a fundamentally important role, is the prison (see for instance Davison, 1931; Wall, 2016; Wilkinson, 2018). One of the best-known prison designs is Bentham's panopticon. The utilitarian philosopher envisioned a circular-shaped building, subdivided into numerous cells, in whose centre a tower would be located. A guard standing in the tower would be able to look into the inward of every single cell, while the inmates locked in the cells were incapable of seeing inside the tower (Bentham, 1995). For Michel Foucault, the panopticon depicts an immensely powerful surveillance mechanism, as it gives the inmates the feeling of potentially being watched at any moment. The institution is, therefore, an ideal illustration of his claim that "visibility is a trap" (Foucault, 1995, p. 200). According to Foucault's theory of panopticism, surveillance has become an omnipresent as well as an ordinary component of everyday life in the Western society of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has become a form of disciplinary power, which is supposed to control human behaviour in a way that is as cheap and as effective as possible. The panopticon depicts an ideal embodiment of these aims, as its guards are arbitrarily interchangeable and, while monitoring the inmates, are simultaneously monitored by visitors (Catucci, 2018, p. 334; Kammler, Parr & Schneider, 2014, pp. 280-281).

While Foucault uses the prison as a metaphor for larger societal structures, Erving Goffman focusses on the life of the prison inmate. He conceptualizes prisons as so-called "total institutions" (Goffman, 1962, p. 4), whose main characteristic is the strict and absolute separation of the inmate from the outside world. They are ruled by totalitarian regimes, that take full control over all aspects of the inmates' individual life (Fransson, Giofré & Johnsen, 2018, p. 20). The relation between prisoners and staff, Goffman argues, is characterized by mutual, hostile prejudices, consisting of the staff perceiving inmates as bitter, secretive and untrustworthy, and inmates seeing the staff as condescending, highhanded and mean (Goffman, 1962, p. 7).

Elisabeth Fransson, Francesca Giofré and Berit Johnsen give voice to tones that are similar to the ones by Winner (2006), Woolgar and Cooper (1999) and Dovey (1999) by arguing that "Architecture is never neutral. It is at all times, and places involved in exerting power" (Fransson, Giofré & Johnsen, 2018, p. 24). The various chapters within the edited book by the three authors are devoted specifically to the architectural design of prisons, and how materiality impacts the way in which humans experience their time in captivity (Fransson, Giofré & Johnsen, 2018, pp. 20-21).

How far an architect's intentions while designing a prison and an inmate's perception of the final result can potentially diverge, is demonstrated within an opening report by John K., who served his sentence in the Norwegian Halden Prison for several years. The prison's architect had had the aim of creating a space where inmates would be able to lead a humane life, similar to the one in freedom. Nevertheless, K. did not really care for the high materialistic standards the prison offered, in the form of for example colours or furnishings, but instead missed a closer, humanitarian relationship to the staff (K., 2018, pp. 33-34).

In a subsequent chapter, Marie Fridhov and Linda Grønning conduct a comparison of four Norwegian prisons. Oslo Prison was built in 1851 and is characterized as panoptic by the two authors, as its design was based on the assumption that strict isolation of the inmate was necessary to give him the opportunity to regret his crimes. Ullersmo Prison exhibits rather industrial properties, prisoners were not allowed to socialize among each other, receive education or employment. Bergen Prison is exemplary for the progress of humanitarian values in Norway, because it was constructed in a way that respects the dignity of the inmates, as well as their rights to healthcare and education. Finally, the already mentioned Halden Prison has been criticized for offering too much luxury to its inmates, and therefore resembling a hotel, rather than a penal institution. The design of the facility is, however, defended by the idea that the punishment of the prisoner should not go beyond the deprivation of his liberty and, therefore, not impact his everyday life (Fridhov & Grønning, 2018).

In contrast to the claims by K., the findings by Franz James, which he presents in his chapter, demonstrate that material equipment of a prison cell can actually have a profound impact on the feelings and behaviour of the inmate. James interviewed three female inmates at a Scandinavian prison, Nina, Susan and Gunilla, who explained to him the ways in which they use the little furniture they have, in order to withstand their time in captivity. Nina has arranged her cell as cosily as possible, as it is important to her to feel at least a little at home. She reads a lot because it helps her to forget about the passing of time. This escape from reality is also taken up by Susan, who stresses the importance of having the possibility to look out of the window, even though the view might be blocked by bars (James, 2018).

Having illustrated the three fundamental theories my own research rests on, namely that architecture has political qualifications, that it can be the key to power of some humans over others, and that both of these characteristics of architectural design are of especial relevance within the prison, this paper is now turning to the approach section. It offers a detailed description of the methods I have made use of in order to gather information on the differences between German and American prison architecture.

### 3. Method

As has already become clear through the preceding literature review, one of the key methods I have made use of for this paper has been literature research. While employing this method, I had two major aims. The first of these has again already been illustrated by the review of academic literature I consider as relevant for establishing a theoretical basis of my own empirical research. The hypothesis that both the political qualifications of architecture, as well as its direct relation to surveilling and controlling a space are of unique relevance within the prison, is to be regarded as a justification for my interest in this facility. The second reason for choosing this approach has been the aim of learning about the differences and similarities between the German and American approach towards incarceration. As the academic research on this particular topic appears to be rather limited, the circa 15 sources I have consulted within this

domain are of a great variety. They not only include books and journal articles, but also journalistic articles, blog posts and audiovisual material. The blog posts have all been written by employees of the Vera Institute of Justice in 2018 in the context of one of its trips to Germany and can be found on its website. The media articles refer to these visits as well and have been published by the Canadian-American magazine *Vice* and the American newspaper *The New York Times* in a period from 2015 to 2018.

There are two major reasons for my decision to focus on the particular comparison of the prison systems in Germany and the United States, which is going to take up the first part of the subsequent analysis. Firstly, the Vera Institute of Justice has already led several visits to German prisons, joined by “people concerned about the United States criminal justice system” (Turner & Travis, 2015). Secondly, Germany is both my home country and the country I am currently living in, which furthered my curiosity in its national prison system and broadened my possibilities in conducting my own empirical examinations.

Expanding my knowledge about the meaning of prison architecture and its different peculiarities within the two countries caused the desire for collecting some data myself and integrating them into the overall debate. It is noticeable that while discussing whether the US can actually learn some lessons from Germany in terms of designing its prisons, architects have so far been consulted rather seldom. As I regard architecture as one of the most fascinating aspects within this subject area, I decided to interview three different German architects, who have been or still are responsible for undertaking structural changes within two different German prisons. Edgar Muth has been involved in the construction of the Justizvollzugsanstalt (JVA) Aachen, a project he came into contact with right after he had obtained his university degree. Michael Eschwe has been assigned to make renovations as well as constructional extensions within the JVA Heinsberg, a juvenile prison located in North Rhine-Westphalia, Western Germany. Michael Wächter is currently responsible for renovating the derelict shower blocks within the very same facility. All three interviews have been qualitative as well as semi-structured, meaning that they have been based on eleven to fourteen main questions, which during the conversations have been complemented by numerous sub-questions on my part. Among the advantages of this type of interview, in contrast to survey-based interviews, are that it provides “better access to interviewees’ views, interpretations of events, understandings, experiences and opinions” (Byrne, 2004, p. 209) and that it “allows interviewees to speak in their own voices and with their own language” (Byrne, 2004, p. 209). The interviews were conducted on the following dates: Muth on 23 May 2019, Eschwe on 21 May 2019, and Wächter on 13 May 2019. Hereafter, I simply provide names when referring to their interviews. Two of the interviews took place face to face, the third one was via the telephone. The interviews lasted around 30 minutes each. After having asked the respective interviewees for their permission, I recorded the conversations with my phone. All interviews were conducted in German and translated into English, in the remainder of the paper they are therefore presented in a paraphrased form and not directly quoted. I gave all three interviewees the opportunity to proofread their responses, two of them made few, minor changes to their original formulations.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 The German and the US Prison System in Direct Comparison

In order to give a clear illustration of the striking differences between the prison systems in Germany and the US, it is beneficial to start off with a few telling numbers and statistics. According to Walmsley’s twelfth edition of the *World Prison Population List*, the prison population in the US amounts to a total of 2,121,600

inmates, being part of an estimated national population of 323.9 million. This makes the US the most imprisoned nation in the world. Germany, in contrast, has an estimated national population of 82.93 million, of which 62,194 are prisoners (Walmsley, 2018). During one of his speeches, Santa Clara County District Attorney Jeff Rosen makes use of statistics, according to which from 1925 to 1975 the US incarceration rate has remained quite stable, meaning that for this whole period of time around 100 of 100,000 Americans have been imprisoned. From the mid-1970s until the present, however, the incarceration rate has dramatically increased up to around 700 prisoners per 100,000 citizens (Rosen, 2017). A report produced by the Vera Institute of Justice specifically compares the US with Germany and the Netherlands. In 2011 the US had an incarceration rate of 716 per 100,000, Germany had 79 per 100,000 in 2013, and the Netherlands had 82 per 100,000 in 2012 (Subramanian & Shames, 2013, p. 7).

While considering these unambiguous numbers, the question for their exact origin becomes inevitable. In the late 1960s, the United States suffered from deep economic stagnation. Bankruptcy and the expansion of modern ghettos led to a nationwide wave of violent crime, which in turn caused an increased fear among the American population of falling victim to felonies. Responding to the concerns of the people, politicians started to campaign with their toughness on crime. The approach of broken windows policing, mentioned as well by Atkinson (2003) and Beckett and Herbert (2008), gained exceptional popularity during this era. Additionally, increased imprisonment received an economic dimension, as the federal government began to pay certain sums to the states, depending on their respective incarceration rates. More prisoners, therefore, always meant more money (Surico, 2015). US prisons are, however, not only the key to public but also private profits. In 1985, Texas was the first state to privatize some of its prisons, opening up a promising market, that has since then been growing steadily. According to a statistic that has been updated in August 2018, the number of people housed in private prisons has increased by 47 percent since 2000. There is, however, significant variation between the different states. While New Mexico puts over 40 percent of its inmates into private institutions, in 23 states there do not exist any privatized prisons at all (Private Prisons in the United States, 2018). This does, nevertheless, not change the fact that the corporations which run private prisons in the US, such as GEO Group and Core Civic, try to pointedly attract large investors, including, for example, Boeing, Motorola, Microsoft and Dell. US prisons are able to offer these companies something which they are otherwise only able to find in Third World countries: an extremely cheap workforce. Imprisoned workers have the advantage that they "are full-time, and never arrive late or are absent because of family problems; moreover, if they don't like the pay of 25 cents an hour and refuse to work, they are locked up in isolation cells" (Peláez, 2019). Various authors argue that this abuse of prisoners originates in the US history of slavery and therefore is to be regarded as a continuation of an old tradition (see for instance Frank, 2018; Motes, 2018; Peláez, 2019). A loophole within the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the US Constitution makes it legally possible to factually enslave prisoners, as the amendment admittedly abolishes slavery, but nevertheless, allows the use of involuntary labour as a punishment for crime. A commonly drawn comparison therefore even equates modern US prisons with the concentration camps that were operated under the command of Nazi Germany (Frank, 2018; Peláez, 2019).

Given Germany's apparent success in keeping its incarceration rates at a minimum, the Vera Institute of Justice regards the European country as a role model in this area. Vera is an independent, non-profit, national research and policy organization in the United States, whose three main goals are the securing of equal justice, the ending of mass incarceration and the strengthening of families and communities. Its specific aims for the US prison system are to end the widespread use of solitary

confinement, protect prisoners from sexual assault, and expand educational possibilities (Ending Mass Incarceration, n. d.). Hoping that the acquirement of more knowledge about the German prison system might be useful for fulfilling these objectives, Vera has organized its first trip to the European country in 2013, two further ones have followed since (Frank, 2018; Duran, 2018). The diverse teams that joined these excursions consisted of American politicians, academics, activists from left and right, journalists and for one time even a convicted murderer (Rosen, 2017).

During these trips, the American visitors have recognized two major characteristics of the German prison system. Firstly, it is based on the inviolability of human dignity (Duran, 2018). Similar to the cruelty shown towards prisoners in the US, the decidedly more humane conditions within German prisons can be explained by looking back in history. Article 1 of the German Constitution, written after the ending of the Second World War, clearly states that "Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority." (Rosen, 2017). The constitution is representative for a new generation of Germans, who have confronted their own past and made an effort to ensure that something as horrible as the Holocaust would never happen again (Frank, 2018). The most fundamental rights, which German prisoners have, are individual expression, self-regulation of daily lives and privacy. The first of these rights includes that the inmates are allowed to wear their own clothes and decorate their cells. They may, furthermore, organize their daily lives themselves, by for example cooking their own meals, during which they even use dangerous objects like knives (Chammah, 2015a; Chammah, 2015f; Rosen, 2017; Subramanian & Shames, 2013). The privacy of the inmates is respected by providing them with keys, which they can use to lock their cells. Guards obviously still have the keys, but nevertheless, knock before they enter. Additionally, the surveillance of the prisoners is reduced by using security cameras as sparingly as possible, making German prisons in no way comparable to the panopticon anymore (Bentham, 1995; Chammah, 2015a).

The second major property of the German approach towards incarceration is the importance ascribed to the successful resocialization of the prison inmate. The German Prison Act declares that "the sole aim of incarceration is to enable prisoners to lead a life of social responsibility free of crime upon release, requiring that prison life be as similar as possible to life in the community" (Subramanian & Shames, 2013, p. 7). In order to reach this goal, a healthy relationship between prisoners and guards, contrary to the relationship of distrust described by Goffman (1962), is regarded as indispensable. Staff members have to complete extensive training, including self-defence and the basics of how to effectively communicate with a prisoner as well as criminal law and educational theory. Communication is regarded as key to making long-term contact between prisoners and staff less dangerous (Chammah, 2015c). In addition to that, inmates are offered various therapeutic and educational possibilities, making sure that they have good chances for re-entering the labour market after their release (Chammah, 2015b; Chammah, 2015e).

## 4.2 Interview with Edgar Muth

Edgar Muth was 28 when he finished his architectural studies at the University of Aachen and began his first employment at the architect's office Wachenfeld und Endert. The office had previously already built the JVA Wuppertal and was afterwards assigned with the construction of the new JVA Aachen. Muth, therefore, became involved in this comparably big project at a quite early point of his career. Concerning this particular interview, it needs to be explicitly mentioned that the architectural work described was conducted around 30 years ago. Muth assumes that he contributed to the construction of the prison from



1985 to 1988, and is, therefore, talking about memories that have become increasingly vague over time. Furthermore, various architectural changes were subsequently undertaken in the JVA Aachen, which is why this interview does not represent the current state of the facility. Similar to the JVA Heinsberg, the prison nevertheless already possessed certain characteristics at the time of its construction, which resemble the German, humane approach towards imprisonment.

It was definitely a gigantic project for somebody, who just freshly came from university, which I firstly had to come to terms with. Afterwards, I also never had anything to do with the construction of prisons again, because it is too specialized for my taste (Muth).

Although Muth wasn't a fully qualified architect at that time, he nevertheless gained deep insights into the detailed planning of the new building.

Then I received the assignment to finish the shell construction tender for this project. Within this tender, every single service was described separately: from every pillar to every brick and the concrete within the walls and the ceiling. Even a breach in a wall is described as a separate item. Later, the contractors then made offers on the basis of this report (Muth).

Muth and his colleagues were strictly limited in their work by the exact standards the building contractor provided them with. This also the major reason why Muth does not regard prison design as a particularly interesting specification of architectural work.

For one thing, all measurements are surely predefined to the centimetre. The structures, the window screens and the locks also all had special building styles and requirements. The artistic freedom of the architect is here obviously far smaller than with other projects. The choice of materials was of course predefined by the Hochbauamt, which supervised the project.

Architecture is highly interesting, even after the 35 years that I am now in this job. There are lots of interesting kinds of buildings one can develop and prisons are definitely not among them. Surely, these have very complex requirements and a lot of specialties, but an office building, a hospital, or also a residential house have to achieve different things and are, in case of doubt, at least just as complex (Muth).

One of the most important aspects of Muth's work was to limit the possibilities of the prisoners to commit vandalism. This was reflected in the choice of material, as well as the placement of constructional components.

The materials that were essentially used for the façade were red brick and zinc plate. These were of course materials, which were used constantly at that time, as they were seen as fancy and hip back then. Behind it, there was obviously concrete. In the inside of the building, walls were built with bricks, plasterboard wasn't used at all. It was, therefore, a classic solid construction.

Even the bathroom with a sink, which was a novelty during that time, was made out of indestructible materials. To my knowledge, the sink and the toilet were made of stainless steel and not of porcelain, but I can't tell that exactly anymore. At a lot of locations, one constructed especially securely, because surely every inmate is overcome by frustration at some point and just wants to destroy everything. Naturally, there were also special security measures at a prison window. A popular trick was to take a bedsheet or a towel and a stick and to then screw these materials into the window screen. This can set free enormous powers, such a window screen, of course, has to be able to withstand that (Muth).

Although the JVA Aachen which Muth had seen no longer represents the state of the art of German prison architecture, it still illustrates the national development towards a form of incarceration that is based on the recognition of human dignity. Especially the privacy of the prisoners, as well as their successful reintegration into society seem to have been in the foreground.

A reform at that time was that one had a separate bathroom within the cell. Not with a shower, admittedly, but still with a sink and a toilet. Up until then, these just hung at the wall in older prisons, this was given up then. There were mostly solitary cells within the JVA, but some shared cells as well. In these it is kind of unpleasant if one inmate is sitting on the toilet and the other is trying to eat his sandwich. The innovation was therefore made because of hygienic as well as privacy reasons. The topic of resocialization had been intensely discussed in the 1970s, in which lots of rules were turned upside down. All of that resulted from the considerations of the 68s and found a certain approval within the judicial system. The deprivation of liberty was still demanded, of course, but under humane conditions. In the end, one wants to release people, who then don't make themselves conspicuous again and become a valuable member of society (Muth).

Next to this new focus on the inmates' privacy, Muth describes the fundamental importance of daylight as well as a direct relation to the outside world, which already played a central role 30 years ago.

There was daylight in every cell. There even was a regulation in the Landesbauordnung, according to which an eighth of the basal area of a room has to be the window area. That applied to the prison cell as well, as it is a restroom. The window is certainly a necessity for the maintenance of the health of the prisoner, the bars in front of it hinder him from escaping. Humans need light, in fact, daylight as well. Previously, windows in prisons had been positioned quite high, so that the inmate admittedly had daylight, but could not look outside. That didn't exist in the JVA Aachen anymore, the windows were located at a normal height (Muth).

#### 4.3 Interview with Michael Eschwe

From 2007 to 2012 the German architect Michael Eschwe has been responsible for both renovations, as well as constructional extensions within the JVA Heinsberg. This prison is one of five juvenile detention centres within the German federal state North Rhine-Westphalia, housing inmates who are between 14

and 24 years old (Justizvollzugsanstalt Heinsberg, n. d.). The building contractor of the facility is the Bau- und Liegenschaftsbetrieb NRW, which assigned the project to Eschwe via a tendering procedure. During our conversation, the architect recalled the rough sequence of his tasks.

I think it took five years in total. First the tendering procedure, then the planning and placing, only then we could start constructing. The construction works themselves already took two and a half or three years I think because we rebuilt the existing buildings as well. Additionally, new buildings were raised, and because there were more prisoners then, they also needed a bigger kitchen, bigger halls for doing sports and studying and a bigger infirmary (Eschwe).

As a facility of this kind is required to meet specific security standards, the creative possibilities of Eschwe were highly limited. His description of a regular cell within the JVA Heinsberg reminds of the observations made by the American participants of the trips to Germany, that have been organized by Vera (Chammah, 2015a).

Actually, everything had already been planned through beforehand. The only thing we were allowed to newly design ourselves was the façade. Within the cells, every single measurement is explicitly predefined and otherwise there hasn't been much clearance either. The cell is not allowed to be bigger than prescribed, there has to be a toilet somewhere, that is not directly visible, there is a well, through which all the installation cables are running, a bed and a desk have to be in place (Eschwe).

In order to counteract the apparent urge of some of the prisoners to destroy everything they can, Eschwe was forced to take various constructional measures. These are reflected within the design of the different kinds of cells, as well as the materials that were used for their construction.

Very hard materials are built in. The walls are made of concrete or they are brick-built and there is no plaster, which the inmates could scrape off. The fugues are sealed with particularly solid grout, which can't be destroyed. There are, nevertheless, some things which can't be prevented, the prisoners are for example still capable of destroying the windows by slamming them shut. This is just how it is, they just destroy stuff.

Within investigative custody, there are special cells. When new inmates arrive, they may be overwhelmed by the situation, simply because they are locked up. They may even want to take their lives then. For cases like these, there is an especially secured holding cell. It is divided into two floors and has a window upstairs, so that one can have a look at what the inmate is doing at any time. It is not allowed to constantly monitor inmates by using video cameras, therefore there have to be such visible cells (Eschwe).

Descriptions like these may cause doubts about the practical implementation of the theoretical values the German prison is supposed to be based on, such as the inviolability of the dignity of every inmate and the priority of his or her resocialization (Subramanian & Shames, 2013, p. 7). Uncomfortable questions arise: how is an individual supposed to lead a life in captivity, that is intended to be as close as possible to a life

in freedom, when it is locked up in such a specially secured cell, in which it becomes the target of a surveillance mechanism with panoptic traits? Special facilities like these have to be put, however, into a certain relation. Harsh disciplinary measures, such as solitary confinement, are used as sparingly as possible in Germany. The training of German prison staff even includes an extensive clarification on the potential risks of employing extreme methods like these (Subramanian & Shames, 2013, p. 13). Eschwe's words on the residential groups most prisoners in the JVA Heinsberg are allowed to live in are additionally reassuring.

The worst for the prisoners is with certainty that they aren't free, but captive. But it's warm within the prison, the inmates get three meals every day, are allowed to do sports and even educate themselves. Besides, they are allowed to hang up posters and pictures in their cells.

The prisoners are living in residential groups. Such a wing has common showers, a common kitchen, and a common recreation room with a TV and a football table. All of that is only possible, however, as long as the prisoners stick to the rules. The kitchen is kind of a highlight because when the prisoners earn money, they can even order themselves food. Then they can cook on their own, in case they want to eat something else than the regular diet. The kitchens are equipped normally and even include knives. Inmates can even lock their cells if they, for example, don't want their next-door neighbour to come in. The guard has a key, of course, to still be able to open up from the outside, but the prisoner is allowed to have at least some privacy for himself.

The education opportunities of the prisoners include a garden centre, a metalworking shop and a cabinetmaker's shop. Furthermore, one can do carcass work, electrical engineering, art, or tailoring. One can also occupy oneself with car mechanics, the prisoners have a car, at which they can practice screwing (Eschwe).

The extraordinary variety of educational possibilities that is offered to the prisoners is presumably connected to their young age. Still having their whole life ahead of them makes their successful resocialization and reintegration into the German labour market an even more pressing issue.

#### 4.4 Interview with Michael Wächter

Four and a half years ago Michael Wächter started his project in the very same prison in which Eschwe has been working: the JVA Heinsberg. In contrast to Eschwe, however, his attention is directed towards a very specific area of the facility.

It is about six detention houses. The reason for the renovation was the fact that the existing showers in the detention houses were utterly mildewed, therefore a very serious health risk had developed. We had therefore planned an entirely new concept for the ventilation, using very unconventional means (Wächter).

The showers are a particularly interesting component of the prison, as they usually constitute a space that is entirely free of surveillance. Respecting the inmates' privacy gets especially important when it comes

to personal hygiene. The architectural design of the facilities, therefore, had to be adapted to potential conflicts erupting among the prisoners in the absence of the staff.

The showers are after all an area within the JVA, where most commonly no supervision is taking place and where one inmate could perhaps confront another. Physical violence is commonplace, sexual assaults are easily possible as well. Some prisoners, of whose conflict among each other the staff knows already, are consciously not let into the shower area together (Wächter).

Similar to Eschwe and Muth, Wächter had to deal with various attempts of the prisoners to destroy their physical environment. Within the newly renovated showers, however, they demonstrated an extraordinary richness of ideas in order to achieve this goal.

Within the first of the renovated shower blocks, it occurred for a while that the prisoners sliced the bottoms of their shampoo bottles. Thereby a funnel was formed, which they put on the showerhead, in order to be able to direct the water jet. In this way, the inmates then flooded the opposing ventilation system. The showerheads, therefore, had to be replaced. They were additionally not allowed to be usable as hooks so that the inmates wouldn't be able to hang themselves on them (Wächter).

Having made direct experiences with the vandalism practiced by the inmates, Wächter decided to make a little test for himself. He bought cheap plastic buckets and installed them in the showers as holders for shampoo bottles.

That was simply an experiment, in order to find out, whether the prisoners would recognize something that is actually to their own advantage. I, therefore, hung up these quite cheap and simple buckets, in which they can store their shampoo bottles so that they don't have to put them on the floor, where they fall over all the time. Regular bottle holders could not be installed. That would only have generated edges, which could cause additional injuries within a physical conflict. The buckets look quite funny, of course, there is even a smiling face in the front. Nevertheless, they were destroyed in a minimum of time. I think this is a pity because I think that even within the walls of the prison one could maybe still feel comfortable in his environment (Wächter).

Wächter's frustration is quite understandable. After all, he is clearly attempting to implement some of the values of the German approach towards incarceration, as he tries to provide the prisoners within the JVA Heinsberg with as much comfort as he is allowed to. Similar to the report by John K. (2018), the reaction of the prisoners demonstrates that sometimes the ideas of a prison architect do not function just as planned. Wächter has his own explanation for the inmates' destructive behaviour.

That's frustration. The inmates know that we have built something, of which we think that they won't be able to destroy it. This is why they try out again and again whether that isn't

possible after all. Thereby the most absurd ideas come up, I was surprised there myself (Wächter).

Judging on the basis of Muth's, Eschwe's and Wächter's statements, it seems that a prison architect has to find a fair compromise between security and livability. Although Wächter was limited in his creative freedom by strict standards as well, he has nevertheless managed to visibly improve the inmate's surroundings, by for example using aesthetically pleasing materials.

It is an extremely high-end ceramic product, one could even say the Rolls Royce among the ceramics. This material is used as well, among others, for the design of hotel rooms. I have taken advice beforehand and have described my precise expectations to the provider. Our choice of colour was even a bit experimental, as we used very dark tiles for the floor and a wall and light tiles for the opposing wall. That looked so fancy, that some of the staff members of the JVA told me that their bathrooms at home wouldn't look as beautiful. I think it was a special moment for the prisoners as well when they were allowed to move from the old, mildewed showers into the new ones (Wächter).

An aspect of particular importance to Wächter was the preservation of natural light. This area also belonged to one of the few ones within which the architect was able to prove his professional qualities.

In order to be able to install the ventilation system, I initially had windows bricked up. Nevertheless, this alteration obviously entailed a severe reduction of daylight. Especially within a darkly tiled room, it is uncomfortable when there is synthetic lighting only. The missing view outside is occasionally causing a strange feeling. In order to compensate that, I invented an artificial window. It's a large pane made of milk glass, bordered by a stainless steel frame, behind which there are numerous daylight LEDs. One gets the impression of standing in front of a window pointing to the outside (Wächter).

Wächter additionally showed himself impressed by the sheer size of the overall facility of the JVA Heinsberg. When he walked towards the gardening shop, he explained, and forgot the walls in the far background for a moment, he almost got the feeling of not being in a prison. The terrain is that spacious, that a hunter has to visit regularly and shoot some of the rabbits living there, in order to keep their population under control (Wächter).

#### 4.5 Common Themes of All Interviews

Moving closer to the end of this analysis, it is reasonable to address some of the main themes that arose during all three interviews. Among these are the respect for the privacy of the prisoners, the importance of their societal reintegration, the necessary safety measures to guarantee the wellbeing of both prisoners and staff, and the design constraints which limited the creative components of the architects' work.

The privacy of prison inmates was a central topic during the American visits to German prisons, as it is directly related to the inviolability of human dignity. The fact that guards knock before they enter a cell is exemplary for a healthy relationship between German prison staff and inmates, that is based on mutual trust and respect. The possibility of the prisoner to lock his own cell from other inmates is a useful

extension of these values. A fair and balanced compromise between liveability and security is found by still providing the guards with master keys (Chammah, 2015a; Frank, 2018). According to Eschwe, both of these measures are successfully practiced within the JVA Heinsberg (Eschwe). Personal hygiene is usually a component of daily life, during which one especially prefers to remain unsupervised. Just like the cells, the showers of the JVA Heinsberg are therefore a surveillance-free space, in which prisoners are allowed to behave independently and individually (Wächter). The privacy of the inmate already played a central role during the construction of the JVA Aachen as well, as bathrooms within shared cells were for the first time spatially separated from the bed, hindering unwanted intimacy between the two residents (Muth).

The resocialization of the prisoner is what first and foremost provides the prison with its meaning, as it is hard to justify an institution which releases offenders back into society, whose criminality might even have increased during their time in captivity (O'Neil, 2016). The JVA Heinsberg works towards the goal of societal reintegration, by providing prisoners with as much control over their daily lives as possible. They are allowed to wear their own clothes and earn their own money, with which they can buy their own groceries for individual cooking. Living in residential groups additionally provides them with frequent contact with other prisoners and hinders their physical and psychological isolation (Eschwe). It was the spaciousness of the whole compound which especially caught Wächter's attention during his visits to the JVA Heinsberg. Not only the gardening centre, but numerous sports facilities as well invite the prisoner to spend time outside (Wächter). A similar design technique has been used for the Norwegian Halden Prison, in which buildings with different functions are intentionally separated from each other, so that prisoners have to go outside in order to get to places (Fridhov & Grøning, 2018; K., 2018; Vox, 2019). According to the memory of Muth, residential areas did not exist yet within the newly constructed JVA Aachen, shared cells seemed to have been the farthest one wanted to go during that time (Muth).

A persisting challenge of the prison architect appears to consist of finding a balance between providing the prisoner with a humane environment, while still maintaining his safety as well as the safety of the staff. The especially secured holding cells, constructed by Eschwe for the JVA Heinsberg and allowing a panoptic surveillance of the inmate, are to be regarded as the last option within a worst-case scenario (Eschwe). In contrast to the majority of their American colleagues, German prison guards are trained to be fully aware of the potential consequences of making use of radical, disciplinary methods, such as solitary confinement (Subramanian & Shames, 2013, p. 13). The specific design changes that were undertaken by Wächter within the showers of the JVA Heinsberg are partly the result of the already limited supervision in this area. As guards are not constantly watching every single movement of the inmates, the architecture is supposed to take over control the staff usually has and limit the behavioural possibilities of the prisoners. The exchanged showerheads, for example, are to be seen primarily as a measure for protecting the prisoners as well as the inventory from their own destructiveness. After all, offering the inmates humane living conditions still does not seem to suffice to eliminate their frustration about being held captive (Wächter). Considerations like these were also made in the context of the construction of the JVA Aachen. Design and material choices were deliberately made in order to limit the possibilities of the prisoners to hurt themselves or others (Muth).

Lastly, all three architects were unable to outlive their professional creativity while working on the specific facility of the prison. The only individual piece of work produced by Eschwe is the prison façade. Both Eschwe and Muth were highly restricted when it came to the equipment of the cells. Every single detail had already been decided beforehand by the building contractors. Muth became so frustrated by

these restrictions early in his career, that he decided to never take on an architectural project related to prisons again (Eschwe; Muth). Wächter's project seems to have been an exception in this respect. His architectural skills were in great demand, as he has been responsible for finding individual solutions to various problems, including insufficient ventilation, destructible interior equipment and the lack of daylight (Wächter). Nevertheless, the overall impression arises that, ironically, architects have relatively limited influence on the way in which German prisons are designed. The most important decisions in this respect appear to be largely made by politicians or other experts in this field. This may also serve as an explanation for the remarkable absence of architectural voices within the broader debate on prison reform in Germany and the United States. This does, however, diminish the relevance of the content of the interviews.

## 5. Conclusion

As part of my academic work I have conducted extensive literature research on two major topics: the role of architecture within prisons, based on the political qualities of design and its direct relation to power, and the differences between the German and the American prison system. Based on the knowledge I had acquired throughout this process, I conducted interviews with three German prison architects, analysed their answers and integrated them into the overall debate on the improvement of American prison architecture.

Before coming to the final conclusion, it is necessary to mention the two major limits of my research. First, the comparison between German and American prisons has not been symmetrical. The focus has clearly been on the German approach towards incarceration and, more specifically, prison design. The three interviews should primarily be seen as an examination of the practical implementation of the theoretical values the German prison system is supposed to be based on. In the further course of this conclusion, it is then going to be discussed to what extent these values could be employed in order to improve prisons in the United States.

The second limitation of my research is that it almost exclusively represents the views of politicians, researchers, architects and activists. Prisoners themselves, in contrast, have received nearly no chance to utter their opinion in this paper, the only exception being John K., the former inmate of Halden Prison (2018). The destructive behaviour shown by some inmates, which Eschwe, Wächter and Muth were all confronted with during their work, speaks to a certain extent for itself, (Eschwe; Muth; Wächter). It demonstrates that sometimes even providing prisoners with living conditions that are as humane as possible does not suffice in order to eliminate their anger. That is, however, just a personal interpretation of the inmates' behaviour.

Finally, it is time to return to the original research question, which asked for the extent to which German prison architecture may serve as a model for the improvement of prison architecture in the United States. Having conducted academic research in this area, I now feel confident to conclude that there are three major lessons the United States can take away from Germany.

Firstly, the surveillance of prisoners should be reduced as much as possible within the borders of necessary security measures, rendering US prisons clearly distinguishable from panoptical institutions like Bentham had imagined them (1995). This can be realized architecturally by making regular prison cells a private space that is hidden from view. Allowing a prisoner to have physical privacy is indispensable for still treating him like a human being, even within captivity. Giving him the additional possibility to lock his cell from other inmates is a meaningful sign of trust, which fosters a positive relationship between



prisoners and staff, that is substantially different from the hostile prejudices described by Goffman (1962, p. 7).

Secondly, architecture is the key to providing prisoners with an everyday life, that is as similar as possible to the one they formerly had in freedom. One useful technique here is to provide prisoners with multiple opportunities to spend time outside. These may include sports-related activities, work, or simply the necessity to walk from one building to another. Furthermore, sufficient provision of daylight inside the buildings is vital for the health of the inmates, as well as their ability to keep track of the passing of time. It is additionally important to offer the prisoners as much comfort as possible. Wächter, for example, attempted to achieve this goal by installing clothes hooks and benches within the new showers of the JVA Heinsberg (Wächter). Again, providing the inmates with even these seemingly small possibilities is intrinsically linked to respecting the inviolability of their human dignity.

Thirdly, after having actually implemented these changes, Americans should not allow themselves to be made insecure by apparent setbacks. The fact that inmates sometimes attempt to destroy the fittings or furniture does not constitute a reason for not offering it to them. Living in a well-equipped and aesthetically designed environment does not change the fact that the prisoner is not allowed to leave it, which can lead to sadness, frustration and even aggression. Reacting to this kind of behaviour with a return to harsh disciplinary measures, such as solitary confinement, may only worsen the condition of the prisoner and decrease the likeliness of his successful resocialization.

The suggestions above can additionally be linked back to the three major theories on architecture, that have been stated at the beginning of this paper. According to the first of these, architecture can hold certain political qualifications. The interviews have proven this thesis to be true, showing that in Germany it is politicians and other officials who make primary decisions on prison architecture and not the architects themselves. A major difficulty which American politicians will have to deal with is the pervasive private ownership of US prisons, which turns incarceration into a capitalist industry (Peláez, 2019; *Private Prisons in the United States*, 2018). As long as financial profits are the dominant motive behind imprisonment in the country, the practical implementation of necessary architectural changes remains unrealistic. Further research could, therefore, be directed towards the political steps that need to be taken, in order to make societal reintegration and a reduction of the incarceration rate the primary goals of American prisons.

The second theory argues that architecture can be the key to decisive power of some individuals over others. As it is demonstrated by the urban legend of Moses' bridges, structural design can be used to gain control over human behaviour, a mechanism which Eschwe, Wächter and Muth all employed, in order to hinder vandalising acts of inmates (Eschwe; Muth; Wächter; Winner, 1986). They have, however, not abused this power by controlling every single aspect of the prisoners' daily lives or putting them in a condition of constant surveillance. Such abuse can be observed in prisons in the US, where not the human dignity of the prisoner stands in the foreground, but the amount of money entrepreneurs are able to make with him.

The third theory states that the political characteristics of architecture, as well as its relation to power, are of particular importance within the specific context of the prison. The Russian philosopher Fyodor Dostoyevsky has fittingly argued that "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons" (Dostoyevsky, 1862 as cited in Pahomov, 2013, p. 38). This still very much applies to Germany and the United States. A close look at their different approaches towards prison design has revealed the German emphasis on reducing the surveillance of the prisoners and increasing his chances of becoming a valuable member of society again (Chammah, 2015a). The American judicial system, in

contrast, is still very much dominated by the use of broken windows policing, stressing the need of politicians and police officers to be tough on crime and its causes (Atkinson, 2003, p. 1839).

## Reference List

- Atkinson, R. (2003). Domestication by Cappuccino or a Revenge on Urban Space? Control and Empowerment in the Management of Public Spaces. *Urban Studies*, 40(9), 1829-2843. doi: 10.1080/0042098032000106627
- Beckett, K. & Herbert, S. (2008). Dealing with disorder: Social control in the post-industrial city. *Theoretical Criminology*, 12(5), 5-30. doi: 10.1177/1362480607085792
- Bentham, J. (1995). *The Panopticon Writings*. London: Verso.
- Byrne, B. (2004). Qualitative Interviewing. In C. Seale (Ed.). (2012). *Researching Society and Culture* (3rd edition) (pp. 206-226). London: Sage.
- Catucci, S. (2018). The Prison Beyond Its Theory Between Michel Foucault's Militancy and Thought. In Fransson, F. Giofrè & B. Johnsen (Eds.), *Prison, Architecture and Humans* (pp. 269-286). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Chammah, M. (2015a, July 10). German Prisons Are Kinder, Gentler, and Safer Than the Ones in America. *Vice*. Retrieved from [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617)
- Chammah, M. (2015b, June 16). What Can America Learn from Germany's Prison System? *Vice*. Retrieved from [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617)
- Chammah, M. (2015c, June 22). The Stiff Competition to Work in German Prisons. *Vice*. Retrieved from [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617)
- Chammah, M. (2015d, June 18). Can German Prisons Teach America How to Handle Its Most Violent Criminals? *Vice*. Retrieved from [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617)
- Chammah, M. (2015e, June 19). How Germany Treats Young Criminals. *Vice*. Retrieved from [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617)
- Chammah, M. (2015f, September 25). Prison Without Punishment. *Vice*. Retrieved from [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/exqbn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617)
- Coyle, A. (2005). *Understanding Prisons: Key Issues in Policy and Practice*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Davison, R. L. (1931). Prison Architecture. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 175, 33-39. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1018578>
- Dostoyevsky, F. (1915). *The house of the dead: A novel in two parts by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, from the Russian by Constance Garnett*. London: Heinemann.
- Dovey, K. (1999). *Framing Places. Mediating power in built form*. London: Routledge.
- Duran, J. W. (2018, August 23). What German Prisons Do Differently [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.vera.org/blog/dispatches-from-germany/what-german-prisons-do-differently>
- Ending Mass Incarceration. (n.d.). In *Vera Institute of Justice*. Retrieved June 6, 2019, from <https://www.vera.org/ending-mass-incarceration>
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

- Frank, A. (2018, September 14). Can we Learn from Our Past? [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.vera.org/blog/dispatches-from-germany/can-we-learn-from-our-past>
- Fransson, E., Giofrè, F., & Johnsen, B. (2018). Prison Architecture as a Field of Study: A Multidisciplinary Contribution. In Fransson, F. Giofrè & B. Johnsen (Eds.), *Prison, Architecture and Humans* (pp. 19-27). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Fridhov, M. & Grønning, L. (2018). Penal Ideology and Prison Architecture. In Fransson, F. Giofrè & B. Johnsen (Eds.), *Prison, Architecture and Humans* (pp. 269-286). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Goffman, E. (1962). *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. New York: Anchor Books.
- James, F. (2018). "It's important to not lose myself" Beds, Carceral Design and Women's Everyday Life within Prison Cells. In Fransson, F. Giofrè & B. Johnsen (Eds.), *Prison, Architecture and Humans* (pp. 151-176). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Jenkins, R. (n. d.). *Comparative Prison Systems: America Vs. Germany*. Retrieved from: <https://www.laprogressive.com/german-prisons/>
- Joerges, B. (1999). Do Politics Have Artefacts? *Social Studies of Science*, 29(3), 411-431. Retrieved from <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/33570>
- Justizvollzugsamt Heinsberg. (n.d.). In *Justiz-Online*. Retrieved June 7, 2019, from <http://www.jva-heinsberg.nrw.de/>
- Kammler, C., Parr, R., & Schneider U. J. (2014). *Foucault Handbuch*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler Verlag GmbH.
- K., J. (2018). Humanity Rather than Materialism – A Short Essay About the Prison Environment. In E. Fransson, F. Giofrè & B. Johnsen (Eds.), *Prison, Architecture and Humans* (pp. 29-35). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Motes, K. (2018, October 14). Reimagining American Prisons Isn't a Pipedream [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.vera.org/blog/reimagining-american-prisons-isnt-a-pipedream-after-the-holocaust-germany-reimagined-theirs>
- O'Neil, C. (2016). *Weapons of Math Destruction*. New York: Crown.
- Pahomov, L. (2013). Building a Collective Understanding of Prisons. *The English Journal*, 102(4), 38-44. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23365348>
- Peláez, V. (2019). *The Prison Industry in the United States: Big Business or a New Form of Slavery?* Retrieved from <https://www.globalresearch.ca/the-prison-industry-in-the-united-states-big-business-or-a-new-form-of-slavery/8289>
- Private Prisons in the United States. (2019, August 2). In *The Sentencing Project*. Retrieved June 6, 2019, from <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/private-prisons-united-states/>
- Rosen, J. (2017, January 30). *Low Crime, Clean Prisons, Lessons for America* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtV5ev6813I>
- Subramanian, R. & Shames, A. (2013). *Sentencing and Prison Practices in Germany and the Netherlands*. Retrieved from <https://www.vera.org/publications/sentencing-and-prison-practices-in-germany-and-the-netherlands-implications-for-the-united-states>
- Surico, J. (2015, October 2). How America Became the Most Imprisoned Nation in the World. *Vice*. Retrieved from [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/exqbgn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/exqbgn/german-prisons-are-kinder-gentler-and-safer-than-the-ones-in-america-617)

- Turner, N. & Travis J. (2015, August 6). What We Learned From German Prisons. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/07/opinion/what-we-learned-from-german-prisons.html>
- Vox (2019, April 12). *How Norway designed a more humane prison* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v13wrVEQ2M>
- Wall, I. (2016). *Architecture and prisons: why design matters*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/sep/28/architecture-and-prisons-why-design-matters>
- Walmsley, R. (2018). *World Prison Population List*. London: Institute for Criminal Policy Research.
- Wilkinson, T. (2018). *Typology: Prison*. Retrieved from <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/typology/typology-prison/10031354.article>
- Winner, L. (1986). Do Artefacts have Politics? In: Teich, A. (Ed.), (2006). *Technology and the Future* (pp. 50-66). St. Martin's Press.
- Woolgar, S. & Cooper, G. (1999). Do Artefacts Have Ambivalence? Moses' Bridges, Winner's Bridges and other Urban Legends in S&TS. *Social Studies of Science*, 29(3), 433-449.

## Appendix

### Interview Questions Edgar Muth

1. How did you get to the project of the expansion of the JVA Aachen?
2. Had you ever before constructed or renovated within correctional facilities? Which expectations did you accordingly have for the project?
3. What kind of activities belonged to your area of responsibility during the project?
4. How long did the project take in total?
5. Which steps did the planning and the execution of the project include?
6. Which architectural guidelines did you receive from the JVA and which individual liberties did you have concerning the design?
7. Did specific problems come up in the course of the project, which needed to be solved?
8. What kind of arrangements have to be made in order to counteract a potentially destructive behaviour of the inmates?
9. What kind of materials were primarily used for the new building? In which areas outside of the JVA are these materials commonly used?
10. How much importance was ascribed to daylight within the new buildings of the JVA Aachen?
11. Are any architectural changes known to you, that have been undertaken since the original construction of the JVA Aachen?
12. Have you since the construction of the JVA Aachen had the possibility to gain further experiences on the field of prison architecture?
13. A European, or more specifically German approach towards the architecture of prisons is based on the assumption that the punishment of an inmate should not go beyond the deprivation of liberty. Everyday life within prison should therefore be as similar as possible to the one in freedom. Did you have the feeling during your visits to the JVA Aachen that this approach is implemented there, primarily architecturally, of course?
14. Do you hold German prison architecture as inherently more humane than the American one? Please reason your statement.

## Interview Questions Michael Eschwe

1. How did you get to the project of the expansion of the JVA Heinsberg?
2. Had you ever before constructed or renovated within correctional facilities? Which expectations did you accordingly have for the project?
3. How long did the project take in total?
4. Which steps did the planning and the execution of the project include?
5. Which architectural guidelines did you receive from the JVA and which individual liberties did you have concerning the design?
6. Did specific problems come up in the course of the project, which needed to be solved?
7. Did arrangements have to be made in order to counteract a potentially destructive behaviour of the inmates?
8. What kind of materials were primarily used for the new buildings? In which areas outside of the JVA are these materials commonly used?
9. How much importance was ascribed to daylight within the new buildings of the JVA Heinsberg?
10. A European, or more specifically German approach towards the architecture of prisons is based on the assumption that the punishment of an inmate should not go beyond the deprivation of liberty. Everyday life within prison should therefore be as similar as possible to the one in freedom. Did you have the feeling during your visits to the JVA Heinsberg that this approach is implemented there, primarily architecturally, of course?
11. Do you hold German prison architecture as inherently more humane than the American one? Please reason your statement.

## Interview Questions Michael Wächter

1. How did you get to the project of the renovation of the mildewed shower blocks of the JVA Heinsberg?
2. Which expectations did you have for the project, as you had never constructed or renovated in correctional facilities before?
3. How long did the renovation of the mildewed shower blocks of the JVA Heinsberg take?
4. Which steps did the planning and the execution of the project include?
5. Which architectural guidelines for the renovation of the shower blocks did you receive from the JVA?
6. Where do you think does the criminal energy and the urge to destroy of the prisoners come from, which you were confronted with regularly during your work in the JVA Heinsberg?
7. Why did you, despite your knowledge about the urge of the prisoners to destroy and the other corresponding security measures, provide them with loose plastic buckets as holders for their shampoo bottles?
8. What kind of materials were primarily used for the new shower? In which areas outside of the JVA are these materials commonly used?
9. Why was the walled up window replaced with an LED-window?
10. What kind of meaning do you think does daylight have within a correctional facility?
11. A European, or more specifically German approach towards the architecture of prisons is based on the assumption that the punishment of an inmate should not go beyond the deprivation of liberty. Everyday life within prison should therefore be as similar as possible to the one in freedom. Did you have the feeling during your visits to the JVA Heinsberg that this approach is implemented there, primarily architecturally, of course?
12. Do you hold German prison architecture as inherently more humane than the American one? Please reason your statement.
13. In what way do you think is the humane, German prison architecture reflected in the construction of the new shower blocks of the JVA Heinsberg?