

exploring life

beyond bars

Abstract

Beyond Bars explores how spatial design can support the reintegration of former inmates by facilitating the transition from incarceration to independence. While traditional prison systems focus on punishment, research shows that environments designed with care and intention can reduce recidivism and improve mental well-being. This proposal presents a transitional housing facility at Valldaura Labs that uses design as a tool for rehabilitation, with “transition” as its central concept.

Transition is expressed through movement between levels rather than enclosed rooms. A large, curved staircase forms the core of the building with areas connected by small changes in elevation instead of walls. This layout encourages social interaction and visual connection, allowing residents to observe and engage with one another naturally - crucial for rebuilding social skills lost in prison environments.

The building is divided into three levels that reflect the progression from public to private:

- Level 0 (Public): a workshop, admin space and study area for job-seeking and community engagement.
- Level 1 (Community): A communal kitchen, dining area and lounges that promote shared responsibility and interaction.
- Level 2 (Private): Individual bedrooms designed for privacy, reflection and rest.

Each level subtly shifts in materiality, light and atmosphere, supporting the resident's emotional journey from institutional life toward autonomy. Beyond Bars aims to provide not just shelter but a spatial experience that restores dignity, encourages growth and prepares individuals to rejoin society and ultimately lower the rates of criminality in Catalonia and the rest of the world.

"Schools should make you learn; hospitals should make you better and prisons should help prisoners reform."

- Prof Will Alsop OBE.

Introduction	7
Background	8
Traditional prison design	11
Panopticon: why surveillance will not rehabilitate	13
Designing for rehabilitation	15
Promoting social interaction	16
Greenery and nature	16
Natural light	17
Art	17
Materials	18
Density	18
Case studies	19
England	19
The Netherlands	20
Sweden	21
Design examples	23
Anstalten	24
Halden	29
El Roser Social Centre	32
Coòpolis	33
Reintegration process - what happens after prison?	34
Aftercare - early release	35
Aftercare - fully served sentence	37
Activities promoting social integration	38
Conclusion - Phase 1	40
Development	45
Returning from prison	46

Transitional housing	47
Valldaura Labs	49
Spatial strategy	53
What does transitioning mean?	53
Ma	54
Materials	55
Staircase	56
Areas	57
Scalability	58
Conclusion- Phase 2	59
Final phase	63
Transition	65
Transition through materials	71
Light	73
Tranquility	75
Nature	77
Areas	80
Level 0	83
Level 1	91
Level 2	103
Conclusion	107
Physical model	111
Bibliography	119

Introduction

Incarceration is often used to store people as a punishment after they have engaged in criminal behaviour. An offender is put in a warehouse where they will stay until the sentence has been served. Unlike the research made on other institutional settings such as hospitals or schools, the research regarding what happens inside prisons does not matter much in regards to its effects. Additionally, research regarding tools that can be used to help previous criminals reintegrate into society after serving a sentence is seen as controversial and has caused big debate.¹

Numerous offenders fail to refrain from falling back into criminal patterns and behaviours after being released from prison. They are often challenged with a range of socio-economic, health-related and personal issues that makes reintegration difficult, which the sole act of incarceration is incapable of addressing. Support and rehabilitation of convicted criminals as a mean of preventing further criminal behaviour and preparing them for reintegration into society is well recognised by the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice as well as international human rights conventions.²

Due to its controversial nature, the application of conclusions made from research on how design can be used as a tool to help offenders reintegrate into society is limited. Switching from a mindset of seeing every minute spent in incarceration as a part of punishment to seeing incarceration and prisons as place to transform a previous offender into a contributing part of society can be tough. This study is not meant to make us evaluate whether or not a person is worthy of living

in a supportive environment or if their sentence is harsh enough. This report is meant to shift the focus from how to punish a person that has committed a felony to how we can use design to provide offenders with the tools to turn their life around and be released from prison as a better person.

By looking into the design of other institutional spaces, such as hospitals and healthcare centers, we can investigate and draw conclusions on how to design therapeutic and rehabilitative spaces. This study will mainly focus on how designing for rehabilitation can be implemented into the design of correctional institutions in order to support offenders on their way back to society. Giving offenders the tools to turn their life around will ultimately lead to lower rates of criminality in society. The reality is - people go to prison, and people get out of prison. Would it not be better if offenders came out as better people?



Figure 1. Inside Halden prison, Norway. Photo: Jiri Havran.



Figure 2. West Kimberley Regional Prison by TAG Architects

Background

In the western, and particularly the northern part of Europe, being incarcerated is not meant to punish people. Offenders are already being punished by being deprived of their freedom. Prisons are meant to improve those individuals committed to prison for them to be released in a better condition and to successfully reintegrate into society.³

Research on how design of buildings and interiors can be used to improve well-being of their occupants is well established within the Education and Health sectors. This information has been used and implemented by these sectors to design and build therapeutic and supportive environments that has been proven to have positive impacts on an individual's physical and mental well-being.

Factors that has been proven to contribute to recidivism (the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend) includes an individual's social environment and community, their life situation before incarceration, events during their time in prison and most importantly - the difficulty of reintegrating into society and normal life upon release.⁴

The United States has the highest prison population and also the highest rate of recidivism in the world. In 2008, 66% of people released from prison were rearrested within three years. The judicial system in the United States is designed to take criminals off the streets, but fails to address the issue of preventing these people from falling back into criminal behaviour upon release.⁵ Recidivism affects everyone: the victim

3. EuroPris (2019)

4. World Population Review (2024)

5. World Population Review (2024)

of the crime, the criminal offender and their family, the law enforcement and society overall. If an individual is released from prison only to reoffend, there will be new victims. Another important aspect of incarceration is the cost of keeping a person in prison, which is heavily reliant on taxpayers.⁶

In comparison, Nordic countries such as Finland, Norway and Denmark have some of the lowest incarceration rates in the world.⁷ Norway has a recidivism rate at less than 30%, which is less than half of what it is in the United States.⁸ The biggest difference in incarceration philosophy between the two extremes is the approach to punishment. The Nordic approach is based on the idea that punishment happens when an individual is deprived of their freedom, and that everything that happens after should promote a successful reintegration after being released from prison.⁹ In the United States the approach is focused

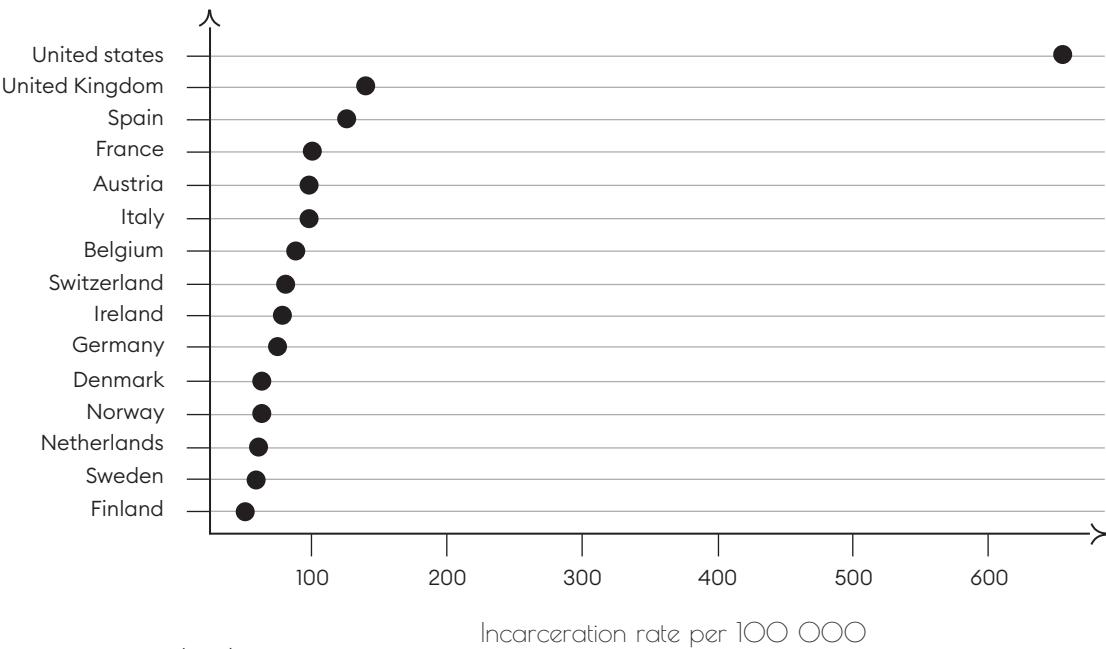
more on punishing the offender from the second they are sentenced until they are released from prison, with little to no rehabilitative support.¹⁰

Prisons have traditionally been designed with a focus on security instead of well-being. Research shows that prisons are often over-represented with individuals suffering from various mental and physical health issues.¹¹ At the same time, the traditional prison building is often characterised by inhumane design features and harsh materials.¹² The impact of this approach has resulted in continued mental and physical health issues for the occupants, but also high levels of recidivism for offenders upon their release. In order to put people in prison, transform them and finally reintegrate them into society, the prerequisites of these spaces needs to align with what research has proven to be true. Designing for rehabilitation is possible and can be used as a tool to improve reintegration for previous offenders.¹³



Figure 3. Traditional panoptical prison design. Photo: Romain Veillon

Incarceration rates in 15 countries



Source: Western, B. (2021).

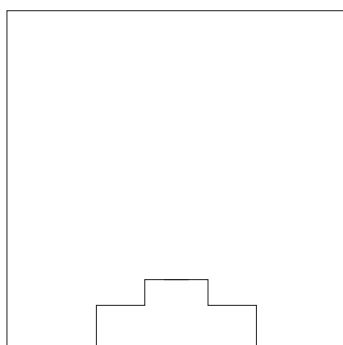
Traditional prison design

Correctional facilities has traditionally been designed with a focus on security, control and punishment at the expense of inmates' well-being and rehabilitation. Traditional prisons often feature harsh and restrictive environments, including barred windows, high walls and limited access to natural light and common areas. This approach tend to reinforce the feeling of isolation and institutionalisation and it is also said to promote recidivism rather than helping inmates prepare for reintegration into society.¹⁴

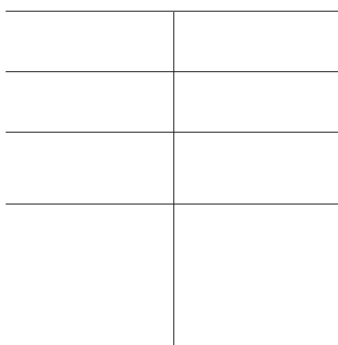
Traditional prisons often include one of the following design layouts: courtyard, telephone pole or radial. These layouts are good for moving inmates around safely but is proven to increase tension between prisoners. The cells in traditional prisons are also often designed to only have a view of the interior of the prison, meaning you are only exposed to views of other cells and inmates.¹⁵

At Storstrøm prison in Denmark, the design has a more humane approach than previous prisons which has resulted in lower recidivism rates. One of the most important design features at Storstrøm and other similar prisons is the layout of the prison areas. Designing the prison as a campus means the inmates start their day with a commute to move from the residential area to the kitchen area, for example. This is meant to mimic real life and at the same time provide an easy access to outdoor physical activity. Other design aspects include windows without bars with a view of the natural surroundings, the use of natural materials such as glass, cork and wood and to provide access to communal spaces and common kitchens. Housing is broken up into small communities which makes it easier for staff to monitor inmates through face to face contact which has been proven important for rehabilitation.¹⁶

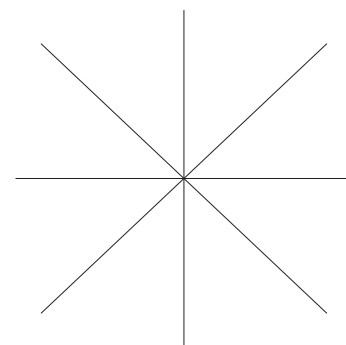
Traditional prison layouts:



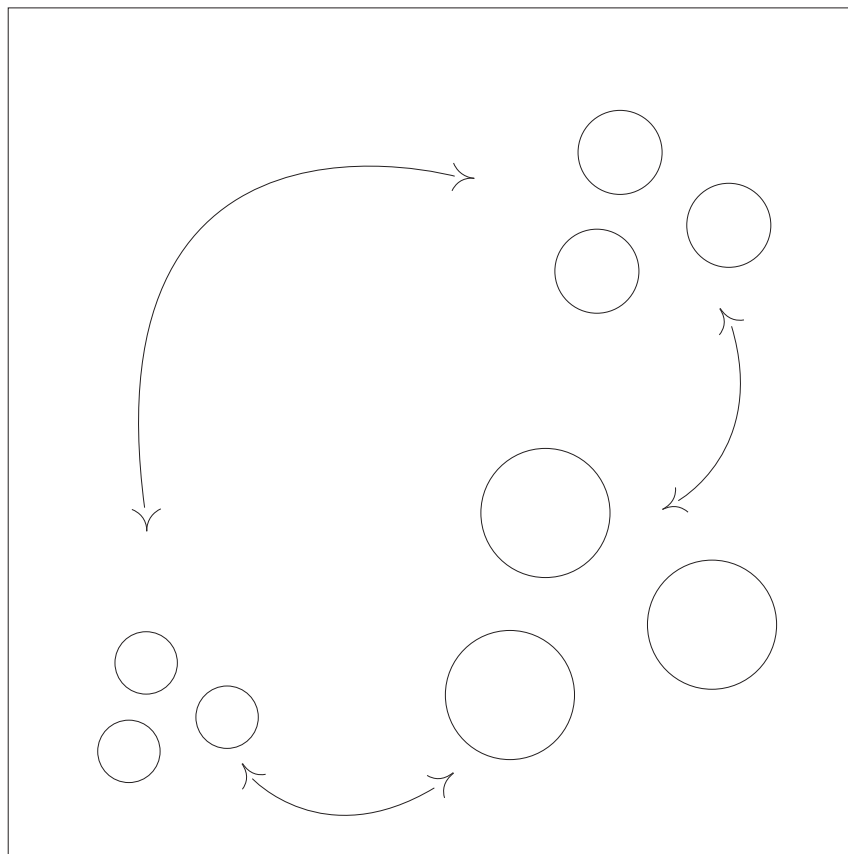
Courtyard layout:
typically an enclosed, open-air vspace with high walls designed mainly for surveillance.



Telephone pole layout:
a central corridor with cell blocks branching off perpendicularly to optimize surveillance and movement control.



Radial layout:
a central hub with radiating cell blocks that allows efficient control and surveillance from the middle point.



Campus style layout:

The inmates start their day with a commute, similar to how you would commute between your home and your work on a regular day as a free person.

Panopticon: why surveillance will not rehabilitate.

The panopticon prison layout is well-known model in the world of correctional design. It was originally conceptualised by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the late 18th century.¹⁷ The design is based on the panopticon theory, which suggests that people can be controlled when they believe they are under constant surveillance - even if no one is actually watching.¹⁸ The idea behind panopticon prison design is that if inmates feel like they are always being monitored, they will comply with rules and behave better.

The intention was to create correctional facilities that promote total control and constant surveillance over the inmates in order to improve security and the need for guards. A panopticon prison consists of a central guard tower surrounded by circular cell blocks. Guards have clear view of the cells through small windows in the tower. The inmates cannot see into the tower, leaving them feeling uncertain about whether they are being watched or not. This psychological game creates an atmosphere of perceived surveillance and psychological control that reduces the need for physical intervention by prison guards.¹⁹

This approach is proven to have significant flaws, particularly in terms of rehabilitation of inmates.²⁰ A prison environment built on fear, surveillance and total

control fails to address the psychological and social needs of prisoners as it creates an environment built on dehumanisation as inmates lose their sense of autonomy and dignity. This will ultimately hinder the possibilities of rehabilitation and personal growth. The feeling of constantly being watched can lead to psychological strain, paranoia and other mental health issues. The absence of privacy takes away the fundamental human need for personal space which is essential in order to promote personal reflection and emotional well-being.

The panopticon design also eliminates the opportunity for social interaction, which is particularly important in order to successfully reintegrate after serving a prison sentence. The layout reinforces the feeling of isolation and deprives inmates of the chance to develop social skills.

A punitive approach to prison design has statistically been proven to reinforce criminal behaviour and will not promote a successful reintegration upon being released from prison.²¹ By sentencing people to prison without giving them the tools and opportunities to transform their lives for the better there is little chance that former offenders will not return to the criminal lifestyle they had before prison.

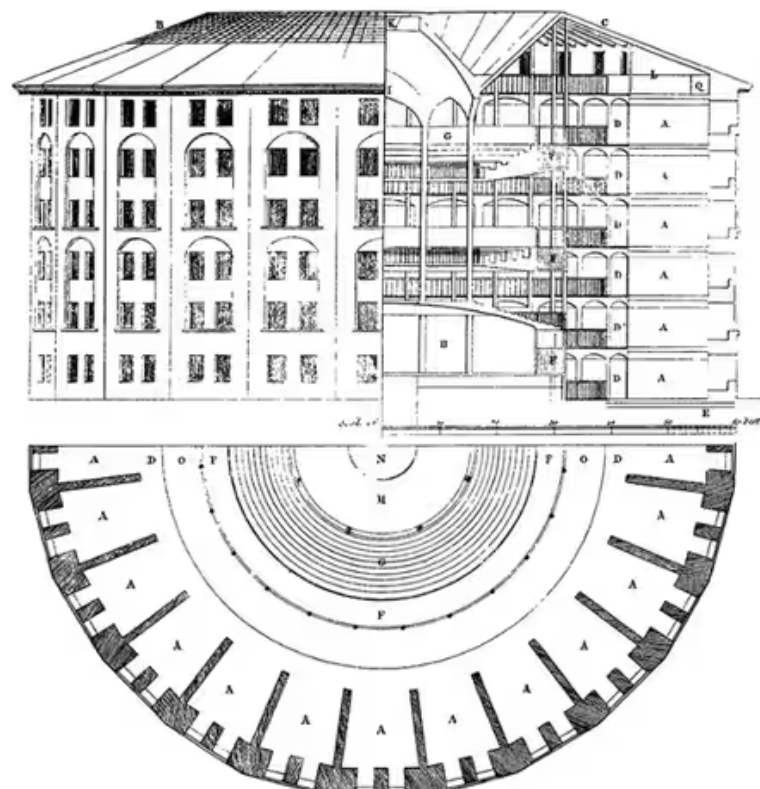


Figure 4. Jeremy Bentham's panopticon diagram
Photo: The Guardian

Designing for rehabilitation

Academic evidence has proven that in order to design rehabilitative environments and provide spatial support for offenders we need to design therapeutic spaces that feel safe, calm and are “low stress.”²²

There are a variety of factors that could be considered when designing such a space. The following factors has been proven to be some of the most effective elements to consider when designing a therapeutic and rehabilitative space:

Promoting social interaction

One of the key aspects of a successful prison is the interaction between the staff and inmates. Designing spaces that encourage social interaction improves the inmate's perception of their quality of life, but it also makes life inside prison less different from life outside which ultimately will make the transition easier.²³ As stated by the Norwegian government: "the smaller the difference between life inside and outside the prison, the easier the transition from prison to freedom."²⁴

Designing spaces that promote social interaction is important to support an inmate's opportunities to reintegrate into society after serving their sentence.²⁵ Interacting with other individuals, inmates or not, is one of the key factors contributing to an easier reintegration process upon being released from prison.²⁶



Figure 5. Outside areas that promote physical activity at Halden prison, Norway. Photo: Anna Wathne



Figure 6. Spaces for sport are available for the inmates at "Anstalten," Greenland. Photo: Adam Mørk

Greenery and nature

Research on the beneficial impact of greenery on well-being are well documented. The mere presence of plants in an indoor setting can lead to increased attentiveness and reaction times and can reduce blood pressure by 12%. Patients admitted to hospitals who are exposed to or have a view of nature benefit from reduced stress, reduced feelings of pain, faster recovery and lower levels of frustration. Landscaping can be used as a tool to make people visually connect with nature while being indoors.²⁷

The presence of windows in institutional spaces has a strong restorative effect. Being visually exposed to nature has an effect on health, satisfaction, aggressiveness, irritability, stress, mental function and problem solving. A panoramic view of nature is proven to have positive effects on fatigue, irritability and boredom, but it can also improve feelings of safety and comfort. When seeking to restore calmness after experiencing an emotionally difficult event, turning to nature is proven to have restorative effects - even if its only experienced visually.²⁸



Figure 7. Common area at "Anstalten," Greenland. Render: Friis & Moltke Srchitects.

Natural light

Being exposed to natural light contributes to your body's ability to maintain its circadian rhythm. The circadian rhythm is important for hormone regulation and has large effects on your overall health. Insufficient exposure to natural light can lead to vitamin D deficiency and depression.

Lighting that is designed to mimic daylight helps the body to maintain its natural rhythm. Variations in lighting levels indoors can have a positive impact on an individual's mood and cognitive abilities.²⁹



Figure 8. Art by local artists decorate the interior at "Anstalten," Greenland. Photo: Adam Mørk.

Art

Visual art can have a positive impact on a person's mood. A study on what hospitalised patients preferred showed that natural images, preferably with differences in texture, are favourable. Abstract art is generally unpopular and could be difficult to understand and should therefore be avoided.³⁰

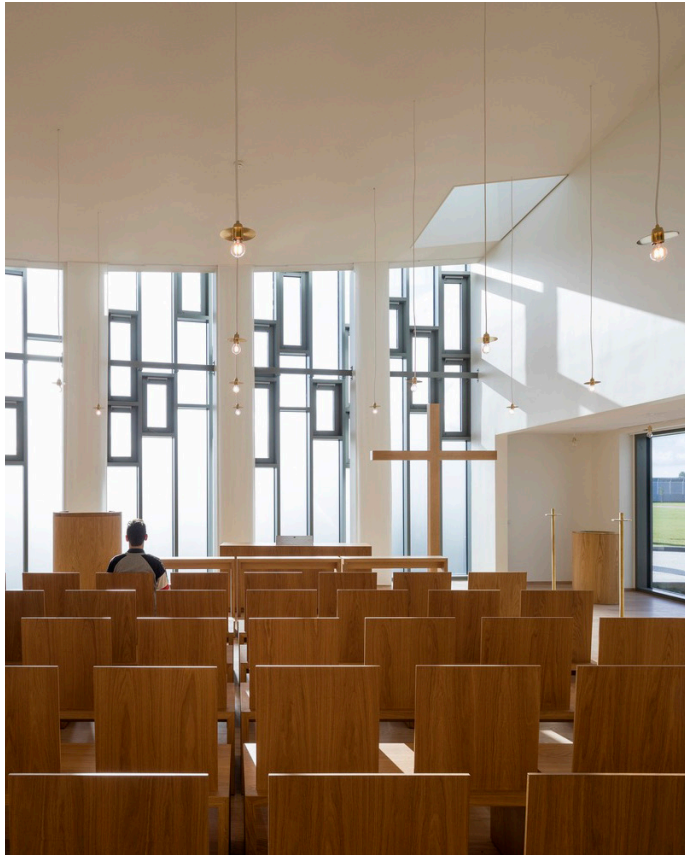


Figure 9. Wood and natural light in the chapel at Storstrøm prison.
Photo: Torben Eskerod

Materials

The use of natural materials, such as wood and textiles, in a space can be used to reduce stress levels. Different textures of furniture and carpets has an impact on a person's perception of a room. Softer textures are usually associated with a more welcoming environment.³¹



Figure 10. Corridor and kitchen area at Storstrøm prison.
Photo: Torben Eskerod

Density

The size of a room has been found to be less important than the social density of a room in terms of stress reduction. Spaces that have low social density is proven to lower stress levels and aggressive behaviour. Studies have shown that private rooms have a positive impact on the level of stress within prison environments.³²

Case studies

England

The Royal Institute of British Architects Research Trust and Innovate UK has collaborated with the Ministry of Justice in order to gather data that later could be transformed into a series of design principles meant to improve the design of correctional institutions. They concluded that there is a need for these institutions to be transformed into places that promote citizenship and provide the help and support needed when an individual is spending time in these types of institutions in order for them to turn their life around.

This study highlights how design and architecture can contribute to facilitating successful integration based on research from the field of environmental psychology. By using relatively small physical interventions inside the HMP Berwyn prison in North Wales they took on a more holistic approach to rehabilitation and transformed it into a brighter, more open and rehabilitative institution.³³



Figure 11. HMP Berwyn Prison. Photo: NQ

33. EuroPris (2019)

The Netherlands

Another similar case study was conducted by the Dutch Custodial Agency (DCA) and environmental psychologists in the Netherlands during 2008. The central research questions was:

“In what way can colour, sound, light and more suitable equipment/furniture contribute to a better living environment for prisoners as well as a better working climate for prison staff?”

The aim was to investigate the spatial needs for inmates and staff at different prisons by analysing staff rooms, exercise yards and visitation units. The main objective was also to observe whether changing the design of a prison into a less restrictive environment and increase the level of self-autonomy had a positive impact on inmates, both short and long term. The investigation explored how a prisoner’s behaviour could be influenced by light, colour, sound, equipment and furniture and resulted in a “Layout Toolkit” that offers guidelines on how to design and create a positive environment for both prisoners and staff. This toolkit involves incorporating the following areas into a correctional facility:

Layout Toolkit:

Exercise yards

Incorporating exercise yards into the design of correctional facilities is shown to improve the overall well-being of inmates and staff.

Visitation units

It is important to design visitation units that promote social interaction in a natural and organic way, without forcing it - both between inmates and visitors.

Prison officer posts

Focusing on designing supportive working environments for the staff is equally as important as the rest of the prison environment in order to create a rehabilitative space.

Recreation rooms

Recreational spaces are important in order for inmates to keep and build a relationship with their friends and family outside of prison and is important to take into consideration.³⁴

Sweden

The Swedish Prison and Probation Service (SPPS) carried out a similar study based on reviewing literature that examines topics such as prison architecture, forensic psychiatric care and the impact of physical environment on an individual's well-being.

The key findings concluded that normalised spaces and homely environments has a positive impact on a person's overall well-being, including both inmates and staff. In terms of layout of a space, research showed that open spaces and natural meeting points between staff and inmates are beneficial. Furthermore, it is mentioned that prisoners might be more sensitive to their physical surroundings than other groups due to a combination of their inability to control their physical surroundings and their previous experiences and habits.

This study concluded that environments that mimic life outside prison mitigate the feeling of being institutionalised and promote rehabilitation and reintegration into society upon release. In Scandinavia, the idea of normalising correctional facilities is adopted as a key principle when it comes to prison interior design and architecture. Previous studies based on psychological research emphasised the need for sensory deprivation in institutional design to avoid unnecessary stressors. However, these studies were few and they were not validated in practice. More recent studies showed that a more homely design has therapeutic value for institutionalised individuals.³⁵



Figure 12. Inside a Swedish prison. Photo: Getty Images.

Design examples

In order to get an understanding of how the previously mentioned conclusions regarding design and architecture in institutionalised environments can promote rehabilitation and integration an analysis of two prisons in Nordic countries has been made, as well as an analysis of the Spanish prison system and reintegration process.

Anstalten

“Anstalten” in Nuuk, Greenland is a mixed security prison that paves the way for better opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration for its occupants. Offenders in Greenland have previously served a so called “double sentence” when being sentenced to prison as they had to be sent to Denmark to serve time, meaning they would be far away from their home country and family as well as being deprived of their freedom.³⁶

The prison has been up for debate due to its beautiful design and controversial approach to punishment. Friis

& Moltke Architects together with Schmidt Hammer Lassen prioritised a human approach to their design, emphasising on open spaces, natural light, security and flexibility as well as integrating the surrounding landscape. They are aligned with the Prison Service’s goal to balance punishment, rehabilitation and promoting reintegration while recognising how the physical environment impacts human behaviour. Friis & Moltke Architects also wanted to prioritise designing a space based on respect and compassion for human life by creating good conditions for both physical and mental health, considering both inmates and staff.³⁷



Figure 13. Anstalten prison, Greenland.

Supporters of the idea of designing more humane prisons believe that the more a correctional institution mimics the rhythm and structure of everyday life outside prison, the greater the chances are of a successful reintegration into society and ultimately the risk of reoffending is lowered. “Anstalten” consists of a series of buildings whose orientation is adapted to the natural boundaries of the rough landscape.³⁸ It is designed to function as a small village with separate

areas for housing, working, education and sport, but it also includes areas with a library, a health center and a church. The rooms are designed to have a view of the surrounding landscape without prison bars covering the windows. This feature was important when designing the prison. “You can’t escape the prison because it’s surrounded by a big wall, but you can look at the view and escape in your mind – and that’s important,” says lead design architect Thomas Ruus Christensen.³⁹

36. Friis & Moltke Architects (n.d.)

37. Friis & Moltke Architects (n.d.)

38. Totaro, R. (2021)

39. Lazarus, S. (2018)



Figure 14. Interior at Anstalten prison, Greenland. Photo: Axel Mørk.

Design was also used in order to manage the security system inside the building. There are three different levels, making it possible for guards to control the flow of people in different areas and managing prisoners who run into each other. This reduces the risk of possible violence between inmates. This design philosophy implies that guards does not have to carry weapons which is important for staff to develop a better relationship with the inmates. This is an essential part of the concept of rehabilitation.⁴⁰



Figure 15. Anstalten prison, Greenland. Photo: Axel Mørk.

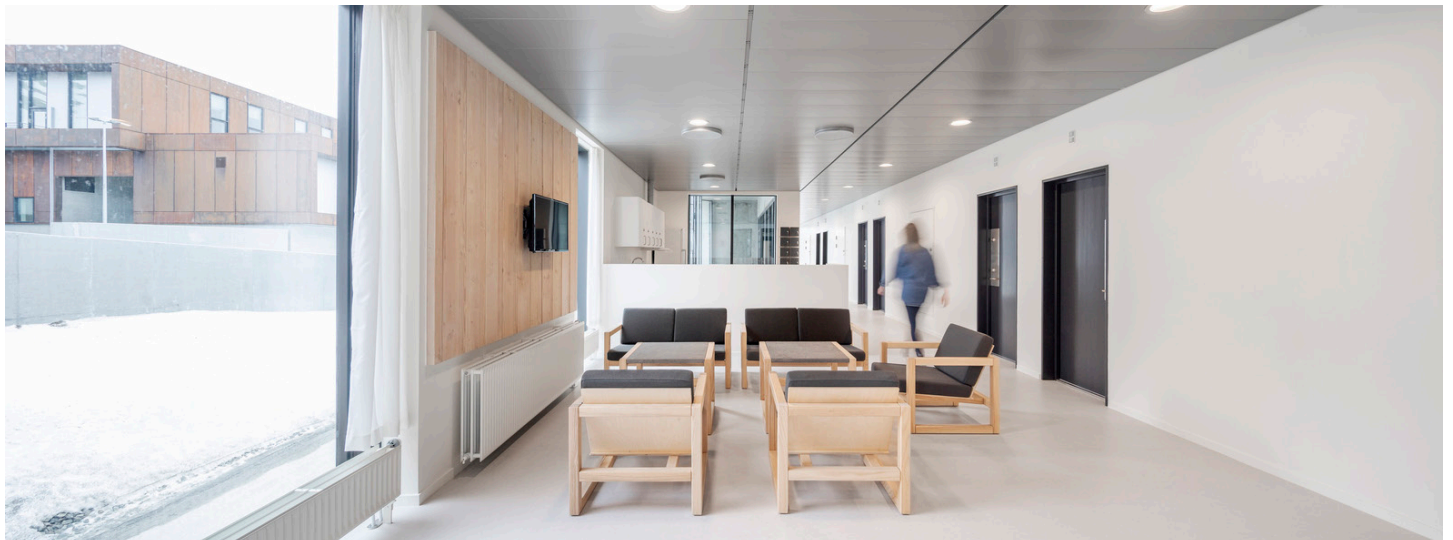


Figure 16. Interior at Anstalten prison, Greenland. Photo: Axel Mørk



Figure 17. Natural light and panoramic views are part of the interior design at Anstalten prison. Photo: Axel Mørk.



Figure 18. Anstalten prison is adapted to its surrounding landscape.

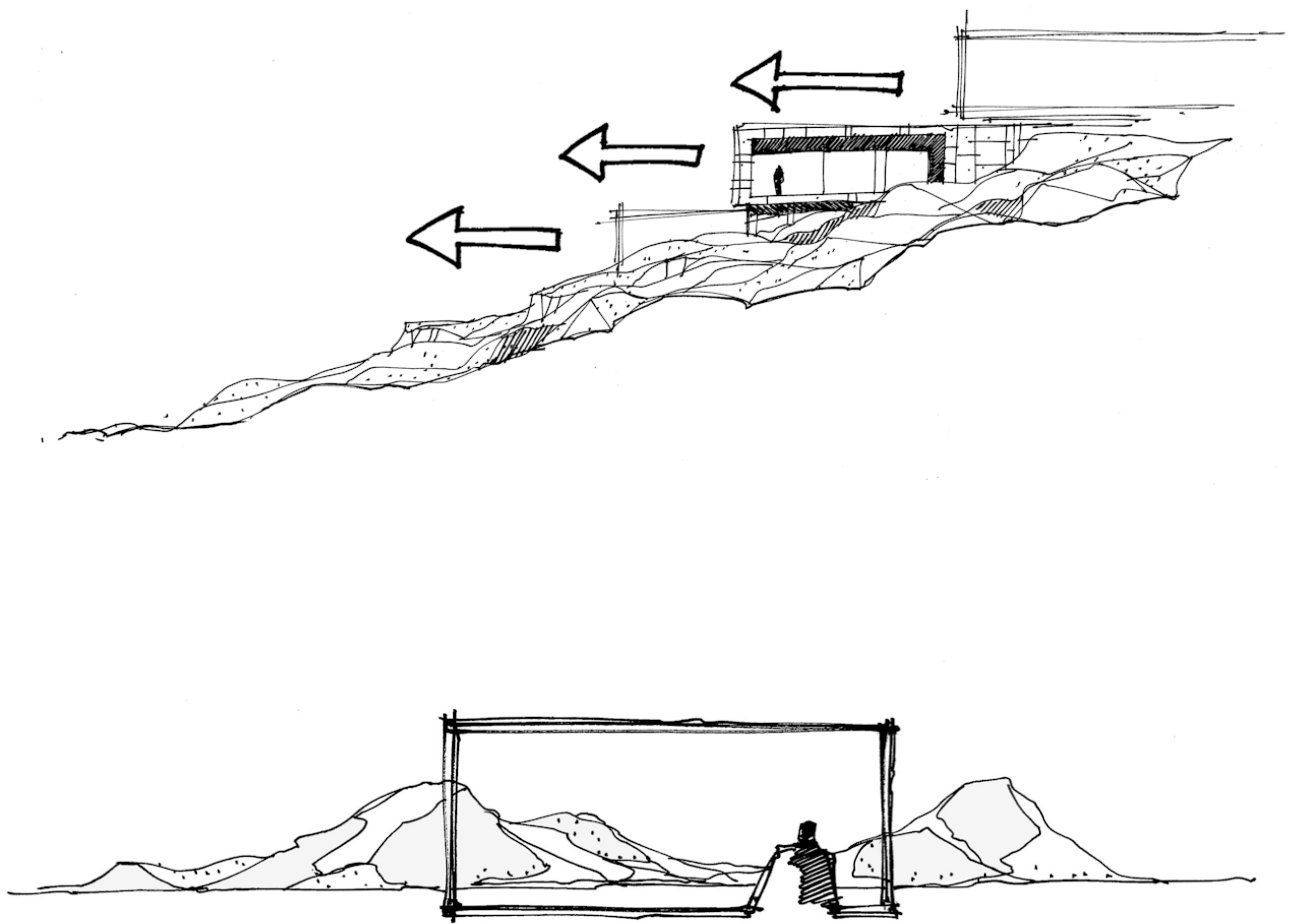


Figure 19. Drawings showing how the building is integrated into the surrounding landscape. By Friis & Moltke Architects

Halden prison

Another correctional institution that has adopted the humane approach to prison design is Halden Prison in Norway. Halden is a maximum security prison which opened in 2010 and hosts 250 offenders. Inmates are locked in their private cell 12 hours a day. Each cell consists of wooden furniture, a fridge, a shower and a TV. The design philosophy is based on respect between inmates and staff and on the idea that anybody can change their lives with the right kind of help.⁴¹



Figure 20. Cell at Halden prison, Norway.



Figure 21. Chapel at Halden prison, Norway.

"They're not supposed to be punished.
They're supposed to serve time. Their
punishment is being locked up. Their
punishment is not to be treated badly
while they're locked up." ⁴²

-Karin Dwyer-Loken, teacher at Halden prison.



Figure 22. Art at Halden prison. Photo: Erik Møller Architects & HLM Architects

Halden's design philosophy is similar to Storstrøm prison in Denmark. They have a similar campus style layout, promoting moving between different areas of the prison area. The guard rooms are intentionally designed too small so that the staff is forced to move out and spend time in the common areas. This has been proven to increase the level of security, but is also an important part of the rehabilitation of inmates.⁴³ The overall idea is to promote human behaviour and keep the connection to the outside world even when being locked away in a prison.

El Roser Social Centre

The El Roser Social Center is a public facility that serves as a hub for local residents, offering a variety of educational, social and cultural activities. This center is designed to promote social interaction and inclusivity and focuses on providing support for people living on the verge of exclusion from society. The space consists of a shelter for homeless people, a soup kitchen and a communal space.⁴⁴ The center hosts various activities such as workshops, exhibitions and celebrations, all aimed at bringing the community together. They often organise events focused on preserving and promoting local culture, art and heritage.

The center's educational programs are focused on improving the quality of life for the people in the community. They offer workshops that aims to improve different skills and personal development at the same time as it brings the community together and gives people a purpose of life.⁴⁵

The El Roser Social Center serves as an essential space for creating connections among residents in the local community. The programs promote social inclusivity and enhances the quality of life for the residents.

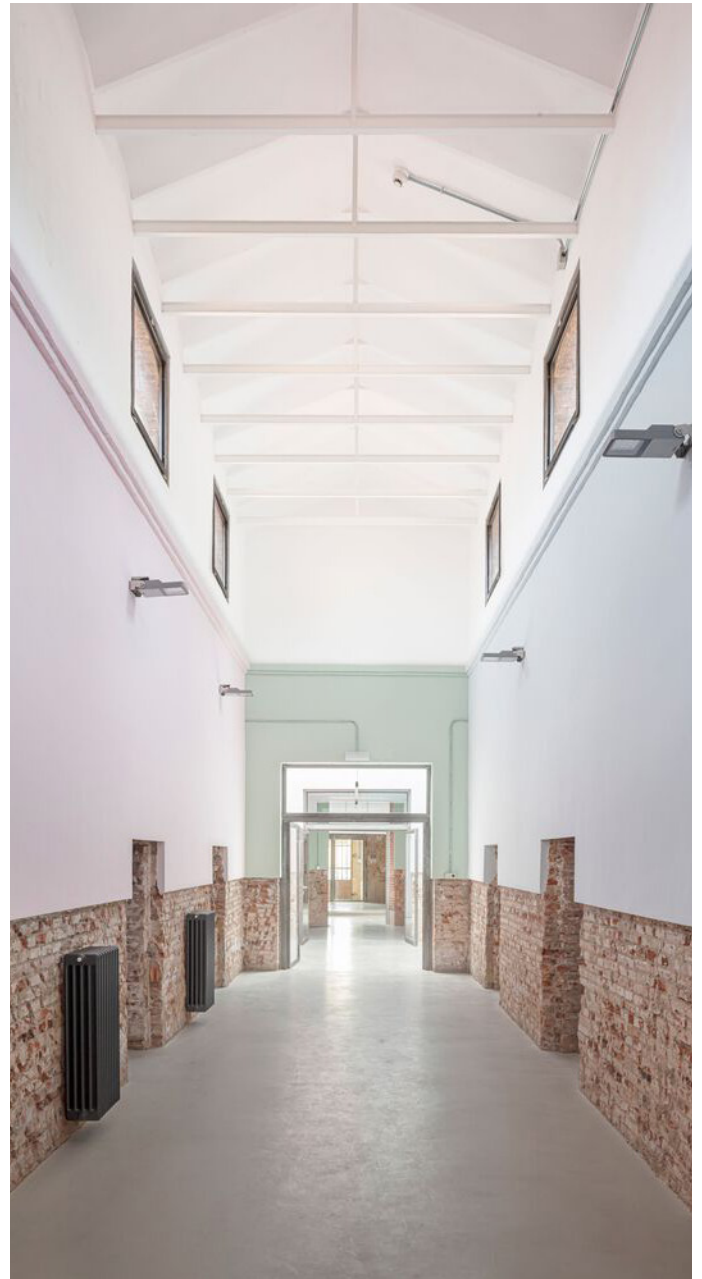


Figure 23. El Roser Social Centre. Photo: Adrià Goula

Coòpolis

Coòpolis is a community center dedicated to supporting the social community in Barcelona. This facility focuses on promoting the cooperative economy and serves as a hub for cooperative initiatives where they offer training, counselling services and incubation spaces for upcoming projects.⁴⁶

The idea of a cooperative community center emerged from the local communities urge to repurpose the

Can Batlló site and transform it into a space for social and economic innovation.⁴⁷ This initiative is part of a movement in Barcelona that aims to develop cooperative housing solutions and address urban challenges in the city through sustainable practices and collective action.⁴⁸ Additionally the center strives to empower both communities and individuals to participate and promote an inclusive urban environment.



Figure 24. Coòpolis interior.

⁴⁶. Green Events Barcelona (n.d.)

⁴⁷. LaCol (n.d)

⁴⁸. XES (2015)

Reintegration process

- what happens after prison?

In Europe and other parts of the world, serving time in prison often includes taking part in a rehabilitation program designed for different problems (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018) It often involves specific cognitive-behavioural programmes that are developed to increase self-control, learn social skills and prevent antisocial behaviour.⁴⁹

The philosophy behind prison rules includes that prisoners should not experience an abrupt change from prison life back to everyday life outside prison. In addition to visits from family, friends, volunteers and lawyers while being incarcerated, there are various ways to promote a successful transition from prison to society. In Spain, there are options that allow prisoners to spend time outside of prison while still serving their sentence. There is also a possibility to be moved to a semi-open establishment or engage in cultural, educational or leisure activities accompanied by prison staff or volunteers. Inmates could also be granted to leave after serving a part of their sentence, meaning they get to spend time in a community without supervision. This time is often spent on rebuilding relationships with their family and searching for a job.⁵⁰

Aftercare - early release

In Spain, there are two ways for a prisoner to be released early: conditional release or the open regime. In an open regime, inmates get the opportunity to live in an open part of a prison or in a section completely separated from prison. They have to spend the night in the facility but are free to spend their time as they wish during the days and weekends. When a prisoner is conditionally released they go straight back into society under supervision by the parole system.⁵¹

Each prisoner that has been granted early release is enrolled in an individual treatment program designed for their needs in order to support them with reintegrating into society. A common theme for these programs is finding a job but could also include vocational training and engaging in other educational programs. Another important aspect is the relationship between the inmates and their family, and the family is often interviewed in order to establish the level of commitment and support they are able to provide for the prisoner to help them adjust.⁵²

Upon release, the prisoner is supervised by a parole or prison officer with a background in social work or

education. They are meant to ensure that the prisoner follows the treatment program and provides support for their reintegration. If a prisoner is released into the open regime, supervision is more intense. It often includes drug testing, job checks and family contact. During a conditional release, the prisoner mainly have to engage in regular meetings with their supervisor.⁵³

Supervisors collaborate closely with community organisations and local social services to help prisoners with any issue they may face. The main objective is to find a job, which some public institutions can help support them with. These institutions often provide vocational training, prison work and job placement. Housing is usually not a problem as it is a requirement for prisoners to have that sorted before starting the reintegration process. However, there are nonprofit organisations available to help those who have no family or friends to support them. This support and system has been proved to have a positive effect on helping prisoners to reintegrate into society.⁵⁴

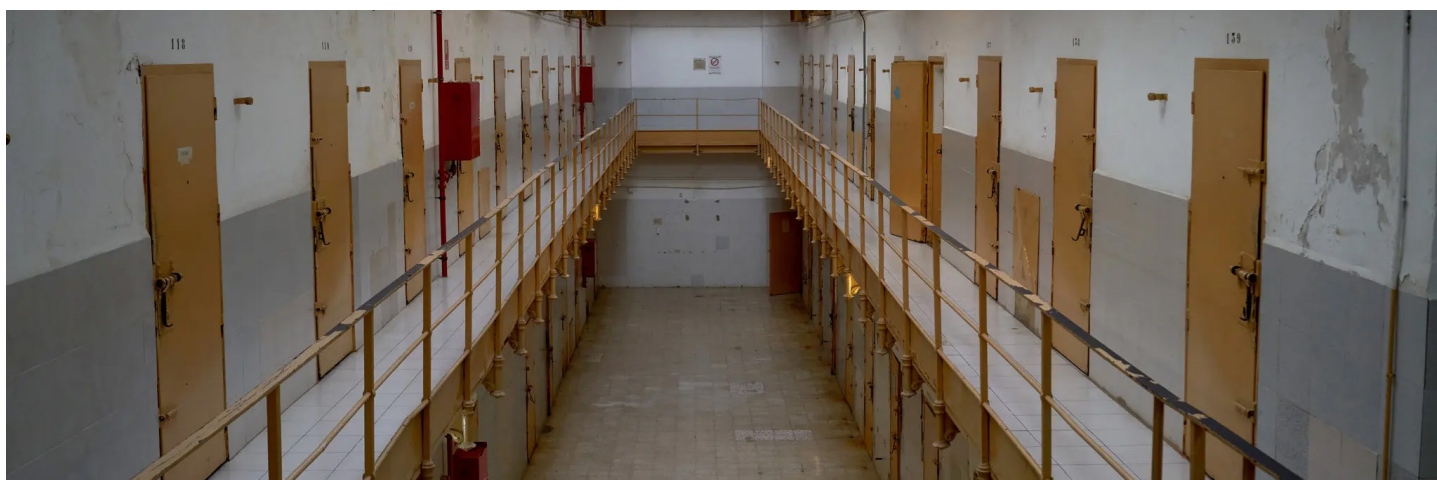


Figure 25. The Modelo, a historic prison in Barcelona. Photo: Samuel Aranda

51. Cid, J., Ibáñez, A. (2019)

52. Cid, J., Ibáñez, A. (2019)

53. Cid, J., Ibáñez, A. (2019)

54. Cid, J., Ibáñez, A. (2019)



Figure 26. El Roser Social Centre - a social integration center located in an old prison building in Catalonia. Photo: Adrià Goula

Aftercare – fully served sentence

The prison law requires that social services provide support for the released prisoner and their family. However, research has proven that there is no specified program for supporting prisoners who served their full sentence while reintegrating into society. The support mostly consist of providing information about resources and connecting prisoners with other organisations focused on reintegration. Prisoners may be offered a few days of accommodation upon release, but it is not guaranteed.

A reason for the lack of support is that resources are put into those who are still under supervision by the penitentiary system. An example is the job placement program which only accept prisoners who are still under supervision. When a prisoner has served their sentence, all their ties to the correctional institutions and their services are cut off.⁵⁵

Most people coming out of prison are eligible for some type of support from the Spanish government. This includes a monthly benefit of 426€ which they can receive for up to 18 months. However, this does not include immigrants without a legal residence. It could also take some time to manage, meaning it will not be available the first two critical months after being released which is the most important time period for preventing reoffending.⁵⁶



Figure 27. El Roser Social Centre is a shelter for homeless people, a soup kitchen and a community space. Photo: Adrià Goula

Activities promoting social integration

Curro Claret is a Spanish industrial designer that has been actively involved in projects that aims at assisting marginalised individuals in society. He has been collaborating with the Arrels Foundation and together they have developed various programs that supports homeless people to take part and reintegrate into society.⁵⁷

In 2010 and 2011, Claret initiated a project where former homeless people participated in designing and building stools with recycled materials. This project offered the individuals within the homeless community a sense of purpose and an opportunity to be involved in a creative process. This project was awarded with the first prize in the "Design against Poverty and Social Exclusion" competition by the Spanish Ministry of Culture in 2010.⁵⁸

In 2014, Claret together with the Arrels Foundation and

shoe brand Camper initiated a similar project targeting disadvantaged individuals in society. They were offered to be involved in the process of designing and creating lamps with recycled materials. This project was meant to support them in their reintegration process.⁵⁹

The Top Manta store in Barcelona is another social project that aims to support former street sellers, often linked to the informal "Top Manta" markets, and provide them with a legal and sustainable alternative to engaging in illegales street market sales. The store serves as a space for social and economic empowerment by offering a place to develop, create and sell sustainably produced products. This project focuses on the integration of immigrants in Barcelona and mainly targets migrants, primarily from West Africa.⁶⁰



Figure 28. The More than this collection, a part of a social integration project initiated by designer Curro Claret. Photo: Juan Lemus

Conclusion



Figure 29. Interior of Storstrøm prison, Denmark.

The current system of incarceration that is primarily focused on punishment does little to support offenders on their path to a successful integration to society when being released from prison. Research has proven that designing correctional facilities that are aligned with guidelines on how to design therapeutic spaces, similar to those in the education and healthcare sectors, can have a significant positive impact on the physical and mental well-being of prisoners. Traditional prisons are not designed to address the complex psychological issues that offenders face, which in turn leads to high rates of recidivism.

One of the main objectives of this research is to shift the mindset on design of correctional institutions from a purely punitive perspective to rehabilitation through thoughtful design. By designing for rehabilitation, correctional institutions can help prepare individuals for reintegration which will ultimately lead to reduced recidivism rates and benefit society as a whole. The goal is not only to punish, but to use spatial design as a tool to provide the necessary tools for offenders to come out as better individuals which in turn will contribute to a safer and more supportive society.

The biggest philosophical difference between the United States, the country with the highest incarceration rate in the world, and Nordic countries that has the lowest incarceration rate is the approach to punishment. The standard philosophy regarding punishment in Norway is that punishment happens when an individual is deprived of their freedom and that everything that happens after should promote a

successful reintegration. In the United States the focus of incarceration is mainly punishment, with little to no support when it comes to social reintegration.

Designing rehabilitative spaces has the potential to reduce recidivism rates significantly. By incorporating elements such as greenery, natural materials and natural light, the space can have a therapeutic effect which promotes a sense of comfort, calm and safety. Reducing the difference between life inside and outside prison is shown to have positive effects on a successful reintegration process.

Research and previously mentioned case studies demonstrates how open spaces, common meeting points and humane materials can improve both the inmates' and staff's overall well-being and at the same time promote social interaction which is an important aspect of a prisoners successful reintegration process. By incorporating these design principles, correctional institutions can offer a space that help inmates cope with their current situation as well as preparing them for a smoother transition into society after having served their sentence.

The examples from Greenland and Norway demonstrates how correctional facilities designed with respect for human dignity contributes to reducing recidivism and promote rehabilitation. The traditional prison design is proven to be ineffective on reducing recidivism rates. A more holistic and rehabilitative approach to design will ultimately benefit both the individual and society as a whole.

Furthermore, the importance of reintegration processes upon being released from prison needs to be mentioned. Support for rebuilding a relationship with your family, strengthening social skills and job searching is proven to be extremely important in order to successfully reintegrate into society and establish a stable life. Claret's project in collaboration with the Arrels Foundation is a good example of how activities related to design can help facilitate social reintegration by creating a sense of purpose for marginalised people. A humane and supportive approach to design in institutional settings not only promotes a sense of normality but also strengthens the ties to the outside world while being in prison, which has been proven to prevent reoffending.

In conclusion, the design of correctional facilities plays a crucial role in the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. By shifting the focus on how to punish people that commit crimes to how to prevent them from doing it again we can design spaces that promotes personal growth, lower crime rates and ultimately benefit society as a whole. If this approach manages to lower the amount of people sentenced to prison we will not need these prisons in the future - so why not design therapeutic spaces that can easily be transformed into something else?



Figure 30. Private cell at Storstrøm prison, Denmark.

Development

Returning from prison

It is evident that the need to design for rehabilitation within the prison system is necessary.⁶¹ It is crucial to support former inmates on their way back to society after serving a prison sentence in order to prevent them from falling back into criminal behaviour.⁶²

Transitioning from prison back into society is a complex process. Not only are former prisoners facing the challenges of finding employment and rebuilding relationships, but also the psychological adjustment of regaining independence.

The Spanish prison system currently offers limited transitional support for inmates who serve their full sentences. Inmates that are released without the adequate preparation or support face significant

challenges in adapting to their new life outside prison, increasing the likelihood of reoffending.⁶³

After serving time, former inmates are expected to reintegrate and contribute to society as independent individuals. However, years behind bars means the outside world might look different when being released from how it was when being incarcerated, leaving newly released prisoners ill-equipped to manage their daily lives on their own. Adjusting to the changes society might have gone through while rebuilding relationships and developing self-sufficiency are all complex challenges that require structured support. The need for learning to be independent combined with the necessity for social connection and interaction lay the foundation for this transitional housing project.



Figure 31. Valldaura Labs. Photo: José Hevia

61. Beijersbergen, M.D. (2018)

62. U.S. Department of Justice (2016)

63. Cid, J., Ibáñez, A. (2019)

Transitional housing

Transitional housing provides a structured and supportive environment for former inmates upon being released from prison as they adjust and explore their new life. The Spanish prison system is currently designed to offer support only for inmates released early on good behaviour, but it gives little to no support for inmates who serve their full sentence before being released. This project will be an answer to the need to support inmates who serve their sentence as a transitional housing - a place to learn how to be independent after years without having to take care of yourself.

A transitional housing serves as a bridge for former inmates coming out of prison. Current support systems for former inmates include housing facilities that are in close proximity to the actual prison where inmates have to spend the night but are free to spend the rest of their time as they wish.⁶⁴ They also offer enrolment in individual treatment programs and will keep contact between the inmate and the prison system for a long period of time after being released. The treatment programs often include support while searching for a job, counselling sessions and therapy sessions involving the inmates family.⁶⁵

Research shows that immediate support following release is crucial in order to prevent reoffending. Expanding the accessibility of transitional housing options to include inmates who has served their full sentence would fill a significant gap in the Spanish prison system. Transitional housing aims to support former inmates while regaining independence and establishing stability through both social support and vocational training.⁶⁶

The proposed transitional housing facility will be located at Valldaura Labs and is meant to encourage personal growth, social interaction and independence by providing a structured and stable environment. The design extends beyond providing shelter - it is designed to address psychological, social and practical challenges involved in the process of reintegration. A carefully designed environment can promote emotional stability, support social interaction and trust, and empower individuals to take back control of their lives.

⁶⁴. Cid, J., Ibáñez, A. (2019)

⁶⁵. Cid, J., Ibáñez, A. (2019)

⁶⁶. Gibbs, D. et al. (2023)



Figure 32. Valldaura Labs. Photo: José Hevia

Valldaura Labs

Valldaura Labs is a self-sufficient building located in the Collserola natural park in the outskirts of Barcelona. The building is a restored 19th-century farmhouse surrounded by agricultural land and forest. Today, Valldaura Labs is a research and educational center where they explore innovative and sustainable solutions through a combination of modern and traditional techniques and technology. The center is self-sufficient, meaning the people living there are involved in maintaining the building as a community through growing food and managing resources that provides them with electricity, water and heating.⁶⁷

In order to provide a smooth transition from a concealed prison environment to a busy society, the chosen location is crucial. As previously mentioned, connecting to nature in terms of materials, light and

panoramic views as well as being outside in actual nature are all contributing factors to creating a rehabilitative space.⁶⁸ Not being too far from society is another important aspect, as the aim is for people to feel closer to society and not more alienated.

Choosing Valldaura Labs as a location for this project means providing former inmates with the opportunity to learn to be independent by and independent house. Valldaura Labs is structured around the principle of self-sufficient living, meaning it has a life of its own. Former inmates transitioning back to society needs to learn how to nurture and take care of their own life. They need to learn how to take care of themselves, make their own decisions about their lives and contribute to a community, which is at the core of the concept of Valldaura Labs.⁶⁹



Figure 33. Valldaura Labs. Photo: José Hevia



Figure 34. Valldaura Labs. Photo: José Hevia

The natural and peaceful environment surrounding Valldaura provides an ideal location for personal growth and reflection. Former inmates in the process of reintegrating back to society could often face psychological and social challenges, and Valldaura offers them a grounding and calming atmosphere that supports mental well-being.

A possible issue with choosing Valldaura as a location for a transitional housing project could be the location itself. Even though it is relatively close to Barcelona city centre, it can create a degree of isolation and distance from urban services. Access to essential services such as legal support, healthcare and employment opportunities may require significant travel and could hinder the reintegration process. On the other hand, research has proven that the key factor that needs to be considered in order to support rehabilitation is a connection to nature,⁷⁰ which is very accessible at the site.

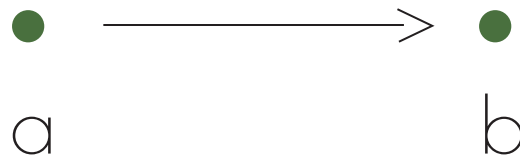
While the remote location may present logistical challenges in accessing urban services, the benefits of a nature-based reintegration model outweigh these potential issues. The self-sufficient concept of Valldaura

Labs reinforces the principles of independence, preparing residents to successfully transition back into broader society.

Currently, Valldaura labs offers research and training programs that emphasises craftsmanship, ecological constitution and agricultural work,⁷¹ meaning the current building is designed for these activities. By integrating these activities into a transitional housing Valldaura will provide the former inmates with the opportunity to engage in meaningful work, build confidence and acquire valuable skills that will make them more attractive at the work market.

The former inmates will have to learn how to collaborate to keep the building alive and make it their home. The Valldaura building will provide them a space to build a community similar to the social dynamics that they will encounter when fully transitioning back to broader society. This location will help them to rebuild social skills and trust in both themselves and their environment. Valldaura Labs is the perfect location for inmates to heal, grow and successfully reintegrate into society and will let them explore their new lives beyond bars.

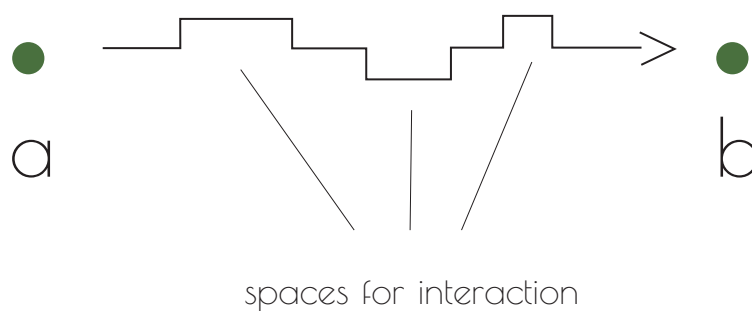
"Valldaura Labs provides the opportunity to learn how to be independent by an independent house."



Spatial strategy

What does transition mean?

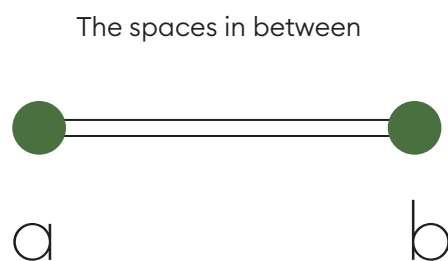
The idea of transitioning sparked the question of what it actually means to transition. The word itself points to the action of moving from point A to point B. But what happens in between these points?



Ma

The concept of “Ma,” refers to the spaces between elements - thresholds, corridors and open areas. These transitional spaces creates areas that could encourage natural social interaction while still preserving privacy and personal reflection. Carefully designed in-between spaces promotes a balance between social connection and solitude supporting both emotional and psychological well-being.⁷⁴

As previously mentioned, social interaction is a key feature that is important for former prisoners to learn, making the in-between spaces perfect for these interactions. Following the philosophy of Ma, these spaces creates harmony and balance between filled and empty spaces. Open spaces supports freedom and gives an opportunity to promote social interaction without forcing it. By designing these spaces based on the principles of rehabilitative design we can create spaces that gives visual and mental breaks in between rooms which transmits a sense of calm.



Materials

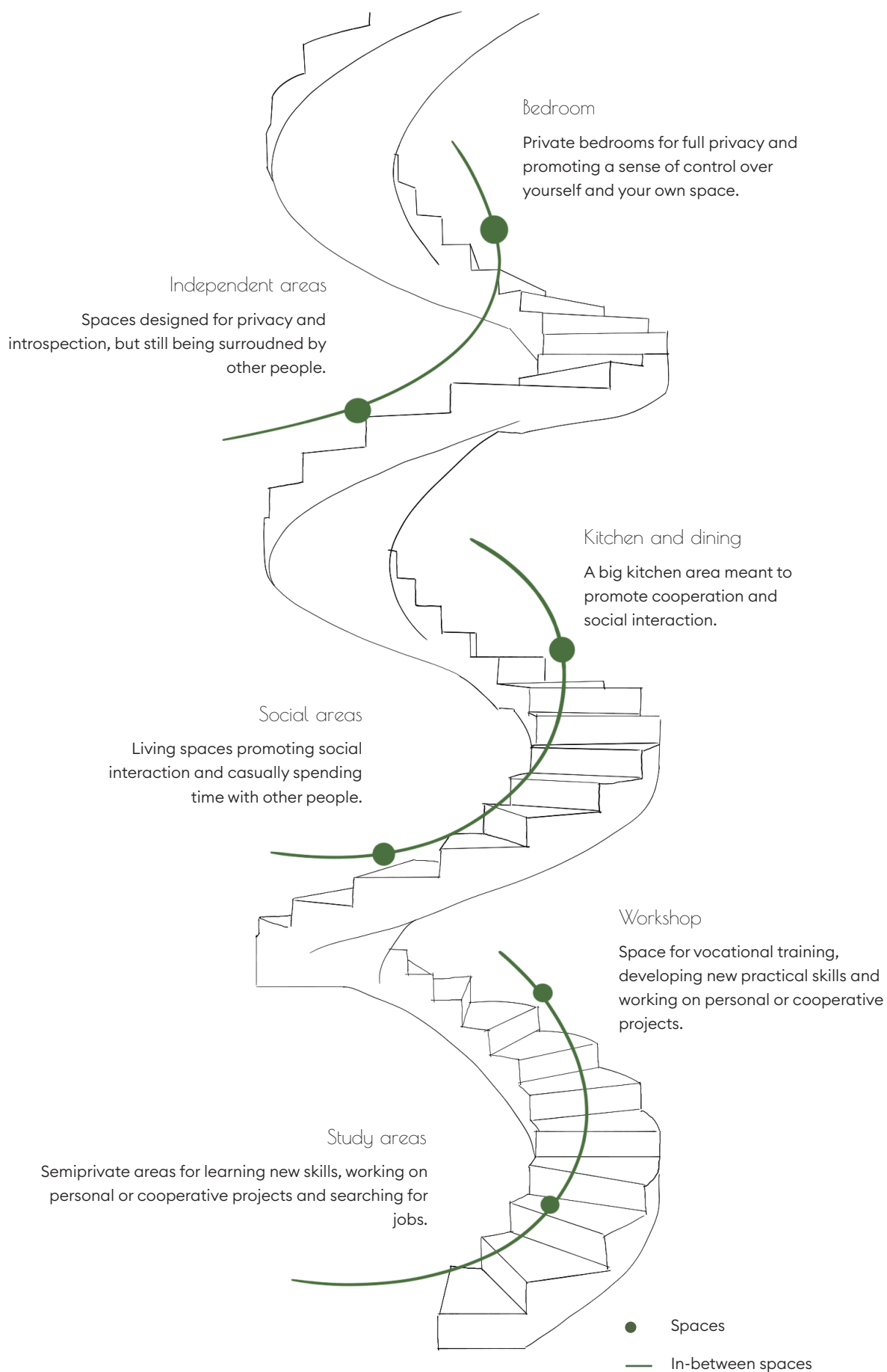
The materials are meant to reinforce the sense of transition and calm. Natural wood and stone (all in line with the existing architectural language at Valldaura Labs) creates warmth and a connection to the surrounding landscape. Soft, diffused lighting reduces the institutional harshness and promotes a sense of calmness. By creating a balance between open and closed surfaces and areas, a sense of privacy will be maintained as well as allowing for transparency and connection to be made.

The redesign of the building will incorporate the same materials as is currently used on site, and soft textiles and warm finishes will create a homelike and welcoming atmosphere that reinforces emotional comfort.

The goal is to create an atmosphere that feels safe and grounded - where residents feel they have control over themselves and their personal space but are invited to engage with others when they feel ready to do so.

Staircase

Another central element will be the staircase. The staircase will not only represent transitioning between the physical levels of the space but between the different phases of life. Moving upward can be a metaphor for growing, personal development and progress, while ascending and descending represents the residents' journey through life, gradually rebuilding yourself through the ups and downs of life. The staircase also gives an opportunity to create spaces in between levels where interaction between two people can happen organically.



Scalability

Valldaura Labs will be the first location where this transitional housing project will be focused, but the concept is designed to be scalable. By grounding the project on international research and principles on rehabilitative design and implementing these factors, such as the use of natural materials, promoting social interaction and creating a connection to nature, the project has potential to create a new model for supporting former inmates on their way back to society as well as reducing the risk of recidivism.

Conclusion



Figure 35. Valldaura Labs. Photo: José Hevia

The proposed transitional housing project at Valldaura Labs addresses a significant gap in the Spanish prison system and provides a structured support for former inmates. The project aims to facilitate reintegration by supporting independence, social interaction and personal growth as well as offering a space to learn how to take care of yourself and develop new personal and vocational skills. Valldaura Labs is a self-sufficient building, meaning the residents will have to cooperate and work together in order to keep the building alive. The natural surroundings and sustainable framework creates an ideal atmosphere for rehabilitation that promotes emotional stability at the same time as practical skill development.

The design strategy is inspired by Japanese principles of balance and order, meant to enhance psychological and emotional well-being. The stairs symbolises the

progress and transition happening both in the space and inside the residents' minds.

The goal is to create a calming, rehabilitative and supporting environment that will ease the transition from incarceration back to society. The concept of Ma encourages natural and social interaction as well as personal reflection and overall well-being. Using natural materials such as wood, stone and bricks will reinforce a sense of calm and stability.

Integrating areas for vocational training, social support and privacy based on principles of rehabilitative design, this project strives to create a scalable model for transitional housing projects worldwide.

Ultimately, the design reflects the process of reintegration itself. Starting with personal comfort and safety, as the residents will be given their own personal

bedroom, and gradually incorporating opportunities for interaction through common living spaces and workspaces meant for skill improvement. The space will allow residents to navigate their own social boundaries at their own pace.

Through this approach, the design will become more than a shelter and a house - it will become a tool for rebuilding trust, support self-discovery and prepare residents to step back into society. This project does not only support former inmates in rebuilding their lives but also reduces the risk of recidivism, which ultimately contributes to a more effective reintegration process as well as a safer society for everyone.

Final phase

As the project develops and more rational decisions has to be made, three keywords was established to explain the design and execution of this project:

Transition - Tranquility - Nature

Transition

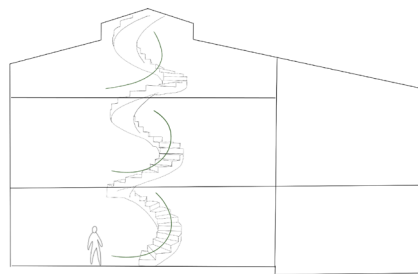
Transition is implemented in this project through the spatial strategy of the space. Not only is the core element of the space a large, curved staircase that takes you to the upper levels of the building, but the different areas are divided by steps instead of walls. Transitioning between different areas of the building means moving up and down between levels instead of opening and closing doors, allowing habitants to not only have a view of the majority of the areas from any corner of the space but also feel encouraged to interact with each other. By allowing people to see each other while engaging in different activities, the inhabitants will feel encouraged to participate and engage with their peers. Social interaction is important to encourage

when coming out of prison, as the hierarchy in a prison environment is different from the outside world.

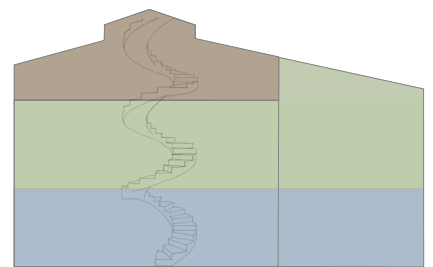
As mentioned previously, the staircase is a symbol of the transition that the habitants experience not only between the different levels of the space and the levels of privacy created throughout the building, but also the transition that happens within the mind of the ex-prisoners - coming from imprisonment and isolation and transitioning back into society. The goal of this project is to help people reintegrate back into society and to ease this transition as much as possible, hence the keyword "transition" is the main focus of the concept and design.



Personal transition



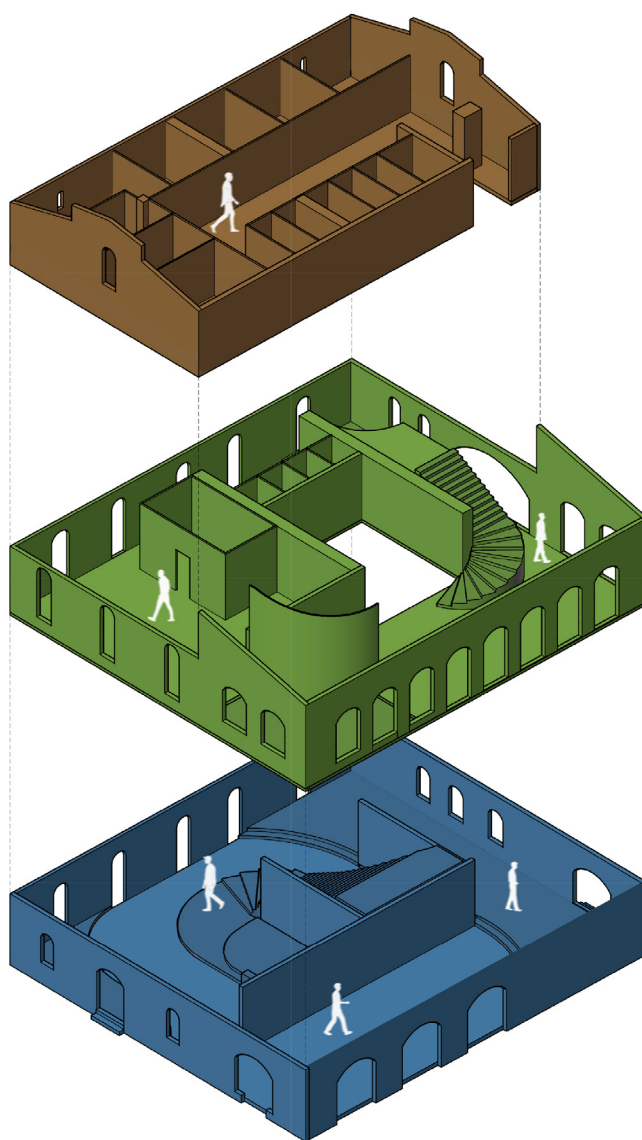
Transitioning between floors

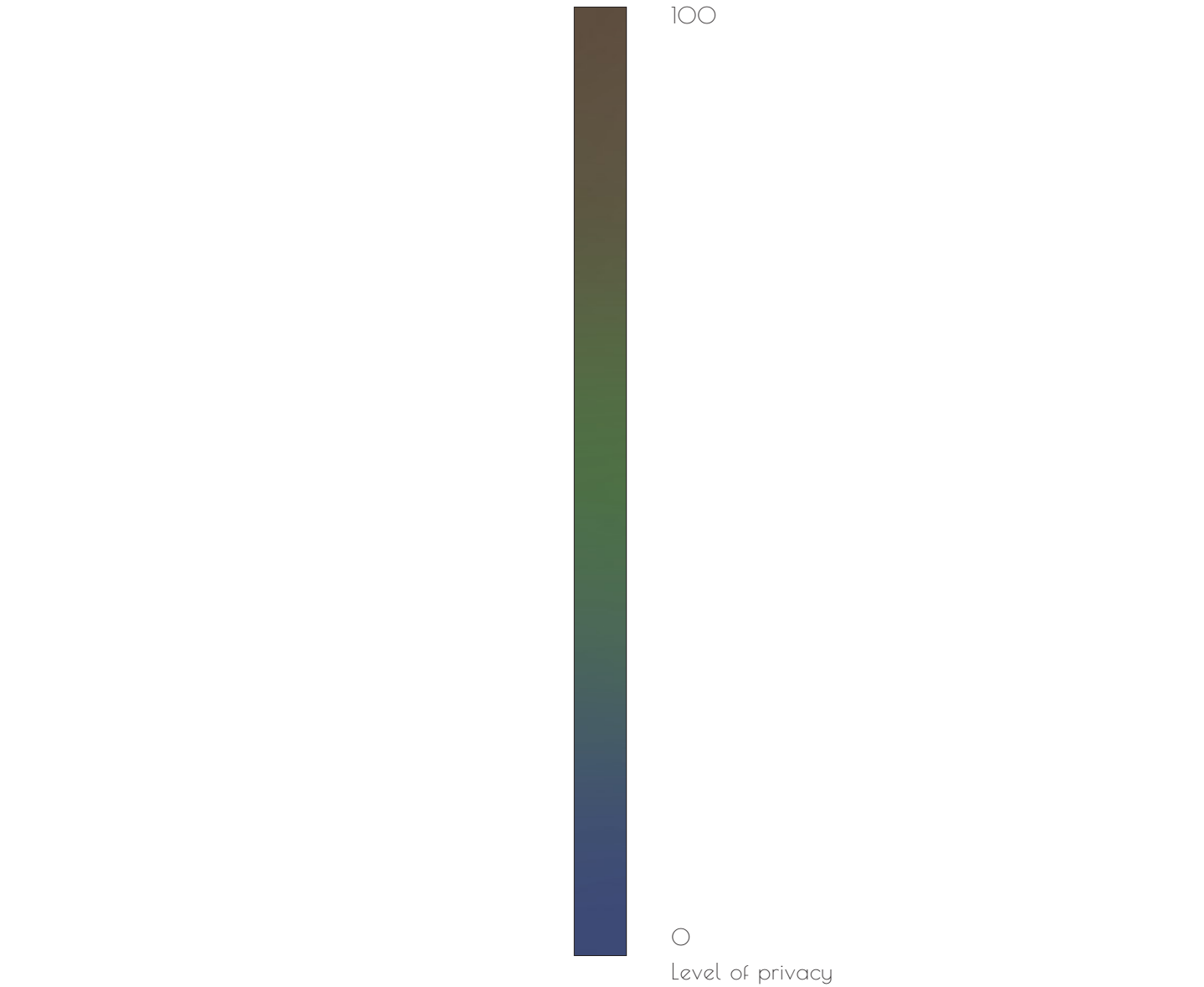


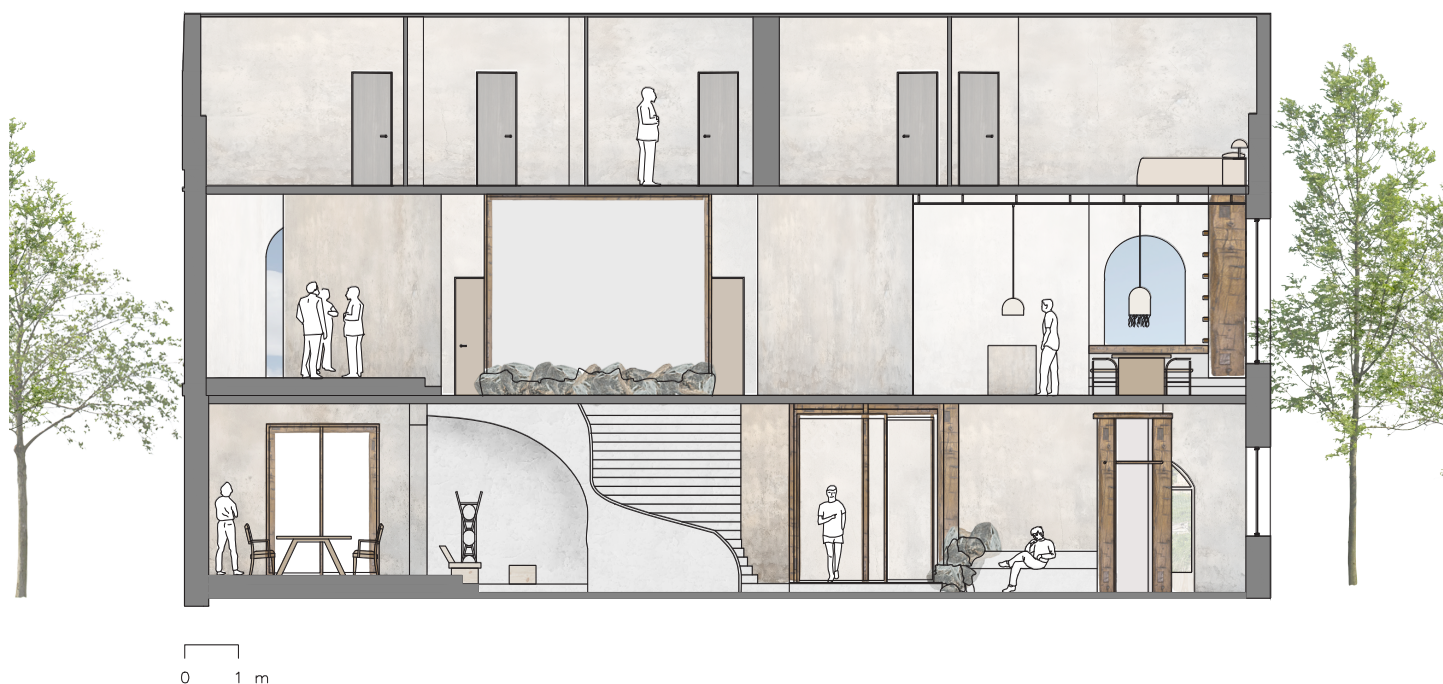
Transitioning between levels of privacy





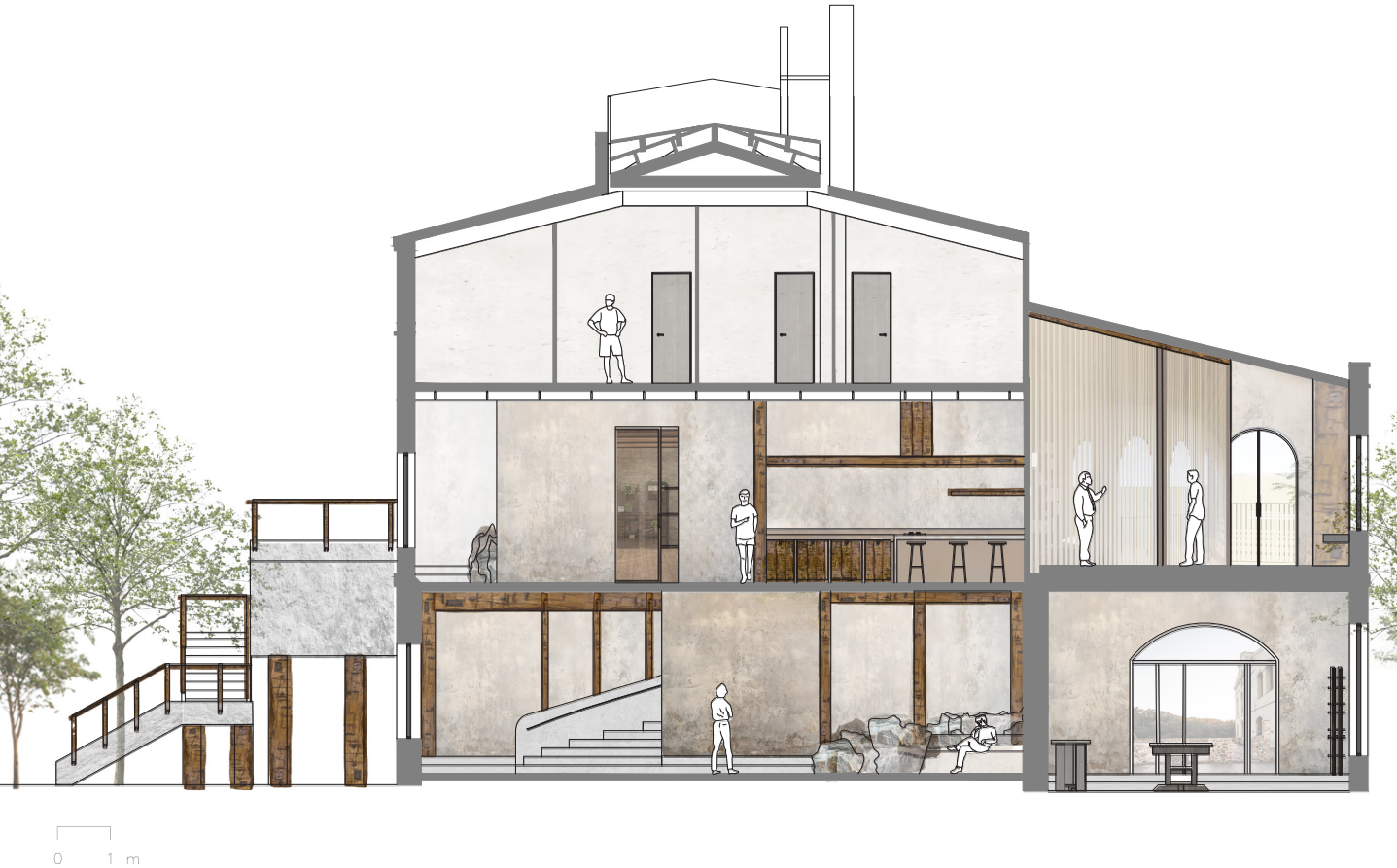






Transition through materials

The transition through the level of privacy is also represented in terms of materials. Rough textured materials on the ground floor gives a colder impression. The further up in the building you move, the warmer and softer textures and palettes you will explore. Introducing more wood and textiles gradually transmits a warm and welcoming atmosphere to the people living there.



Light

Lighting is another important aspect of the design. The natural lighting is evident throughout the spaces. Artificial light sources are designed to follow the rhythm of the curves and lines in the different areas and can be found under the step of each elevated level, enhancing and giving importance to the keyword transition in a symbolic way.

Creating shadow where privacy and intimacy is needed is equally important as bringing light to the space. As the areas are divided with the help of level changes instead of walls, creating shadows in different areas promote a sense of intimacy.



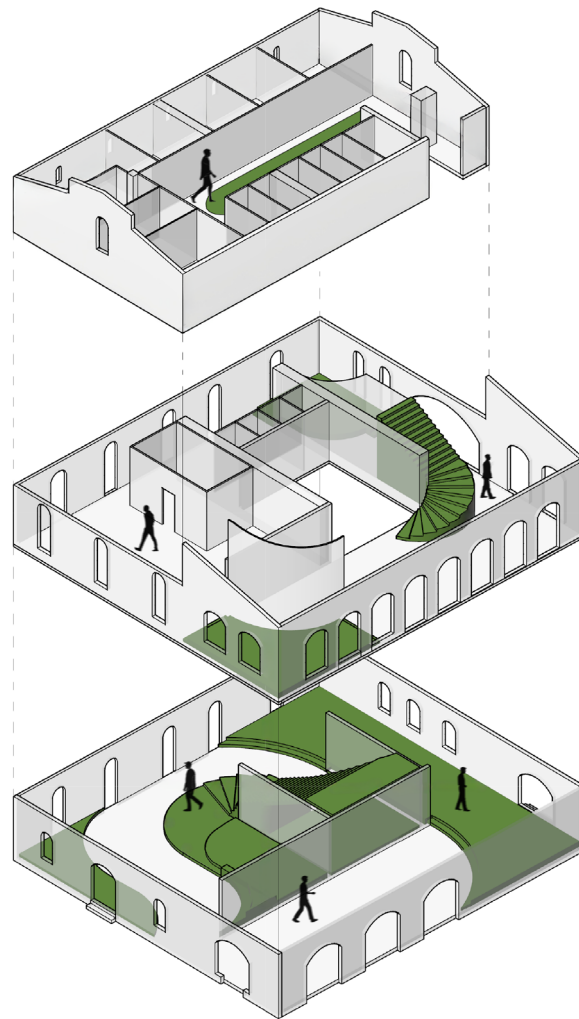


View from the entrance.

Tranquility

Tranquility is noticeable in the material and furniture selection, lighting design and shape of the space. The materials chosen for this project are natural and has a strong connection to the surrounding landscape of Valldaura. Natural wood and stone is visible throughout the space and together with softer natural details and textures such as linen and rattan it creates

a warm, welcoming and calming environment. To avoid creating a stressful atmosphere, rounded shapes and forms have been implemented when possible. Elements such as the stair and different areas of the space have rounded corners and shapes to both enhance the transition between these areas and to transmit a calming atmosphere.



Another way of emphasizing the importance of creating a calming environment is to enhance the view of the natural landscape. During the research phase it was established that one important aspect of designing for rehabilitation is to have a panoramic view of the landscape. This is also proven to have a calming and therapeutic effect on a person's mind. For that reason, the space is designed to allow the inhabitants to have a view of the landscape from every corner of the

space. The windows are designed to reach the floor of each space, promoting the sense of being connected to nature without blocking the view of the landscape in any way. By creating different areas for interaction between people combined with a panoramic view of the beautiful surroundings of Valldaura Labs, the space will have a rehabilitative and calming effect on everyone who uses the space.

Nature

The natural characteristics of the space is shown in every aspect of the design. Natural and local materials combined with natural shapes and forms have a calming effect on the human brain. Enhancing the connection to the natural surrounding environment by bringing nature inside in terms of both materials and promoting panoramic views will further promote the sense of being connected to nature while being inside.



Exposed wood beams and wooden details combined with natural textiles help bring a natural and warm atmosphere to the space.



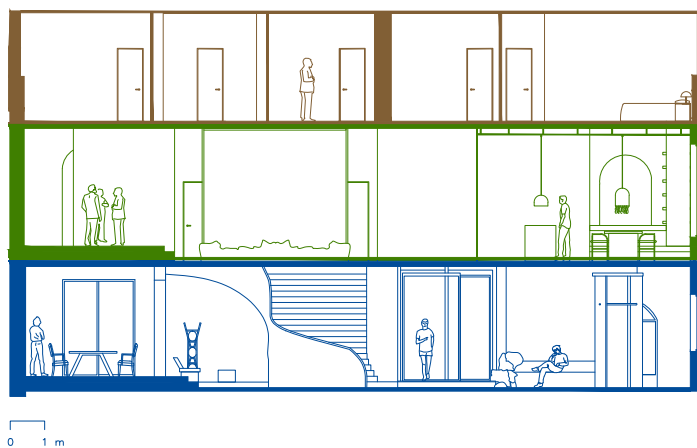
Natural shapes and large windows transmits a sense of calm and provides a panoramic view of the landscape from every corner of the space.

Areas

The building is divided into three different levels. These levels have different characteristics in terms of use and material selection. Taking inspiration of the concept of "Ma," the different areas are centered around the central staircase and the users are meant to transition between the areas on the outer part of the space. The space is designed to create a path around the building where entering a new area means going up or down a few steps, enhancing the importance of transition between spaces. "Ma" refers to the spaces between elements, hence focusing on these transitional spaces is essential for this project.



Section A.A



Section B.B

100

Floor 2

- private bedrooms
- bathrooms
- storage

Floor 1

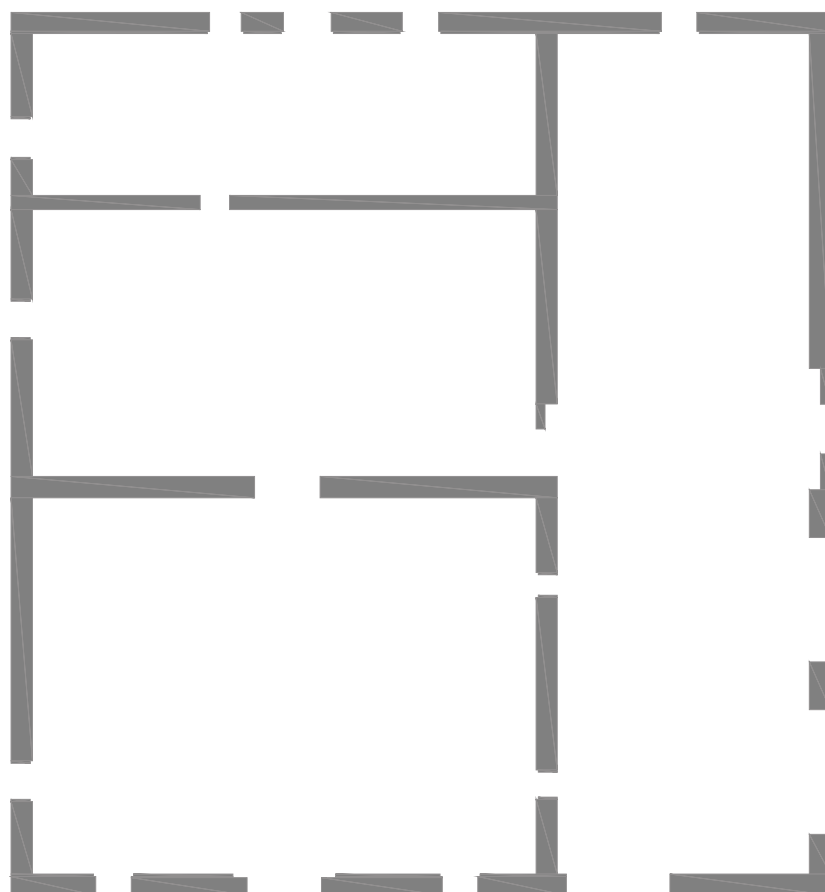
- semi private living areas
- reading nook
- kitchen
- dining
- storage
- bathrooms

Ground floor

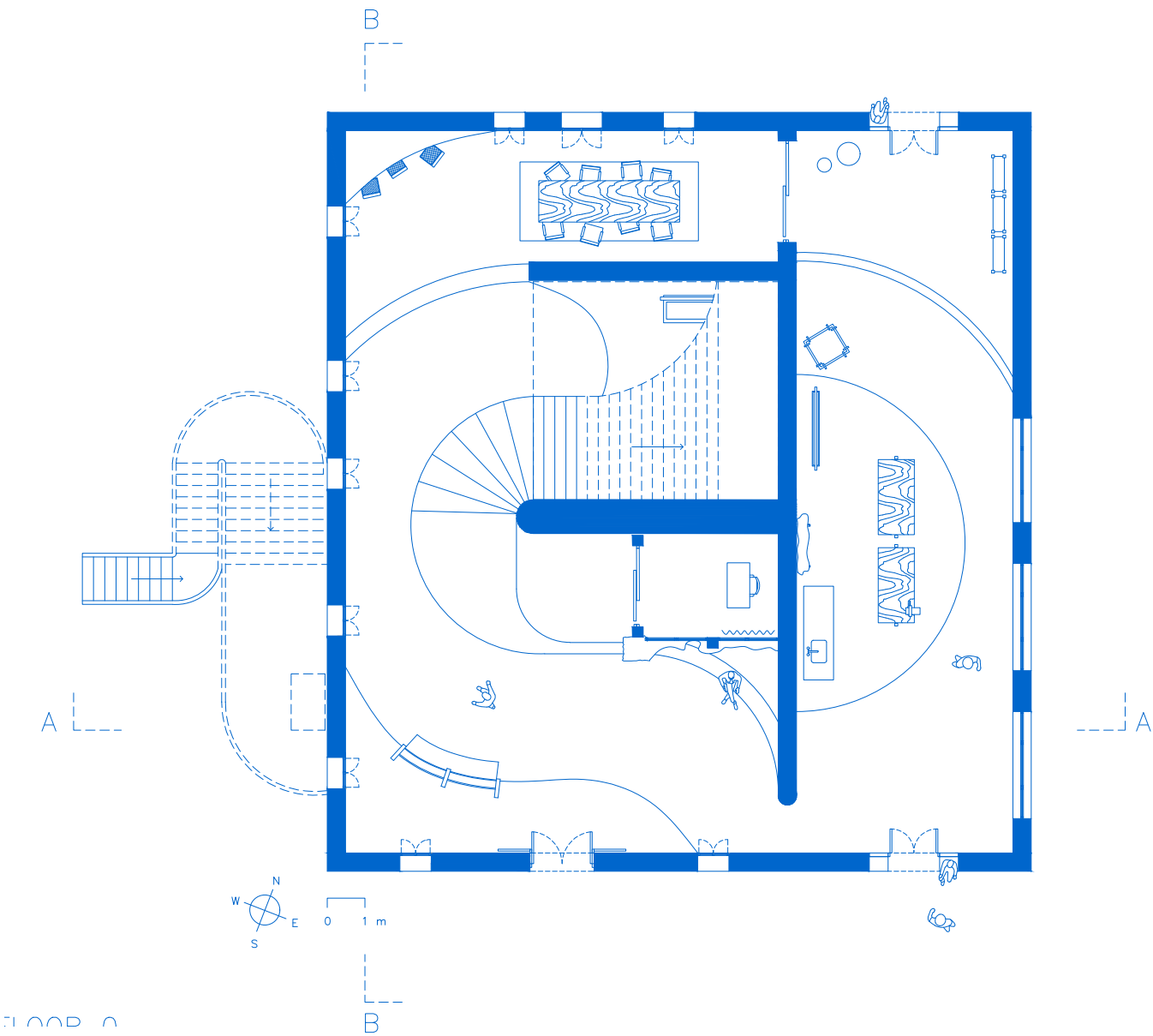
- entrance
- administration office
- meeting room
- workshop
- common lounge



Level O



original floor plan
Ground floor



new floor plan
Ground floor

The ground floor is the most public space as it is easy accessible for anyone who visits the facility. This level includes a room for administrative tasks and possible interviews and meetings. It is surrounded by informal seating areas in case people visiting the building, such as therapists, mentors or correctional officers

are waiting to be welcomed by the inhabitants. Close to the entrance door is an area for coats. As soon as you enter the building you are part of the stair and the transition begins. To continue your journey further into the space you will need to take a step down from the elevated step that you enter the building onto.



Entering the space onto an elevated step.

The ground level also includes a workshop where the inhabitants can work on personal projects and develop their craftsmanship skills. This space serves many purposes, as it not only gives the person an opportunity to increase their attractiveness on the job market but it gives them a purpose in life. As mentioned previously, a few designers and organisations in Barcelona have engaged in organising creative workshops for people who are considered to be outside of society in order to promote a feeling of purpose and community. Consequently, the workshop is an important area of this project in many ways and should be accessible for the public as well in order for workshops and lectures to be held in this space.

Instead of creating a difference in levels in this area to divide the space, the material change in the floor follows the concept of the continuous curvy shape that transitions through all the levels of the building.





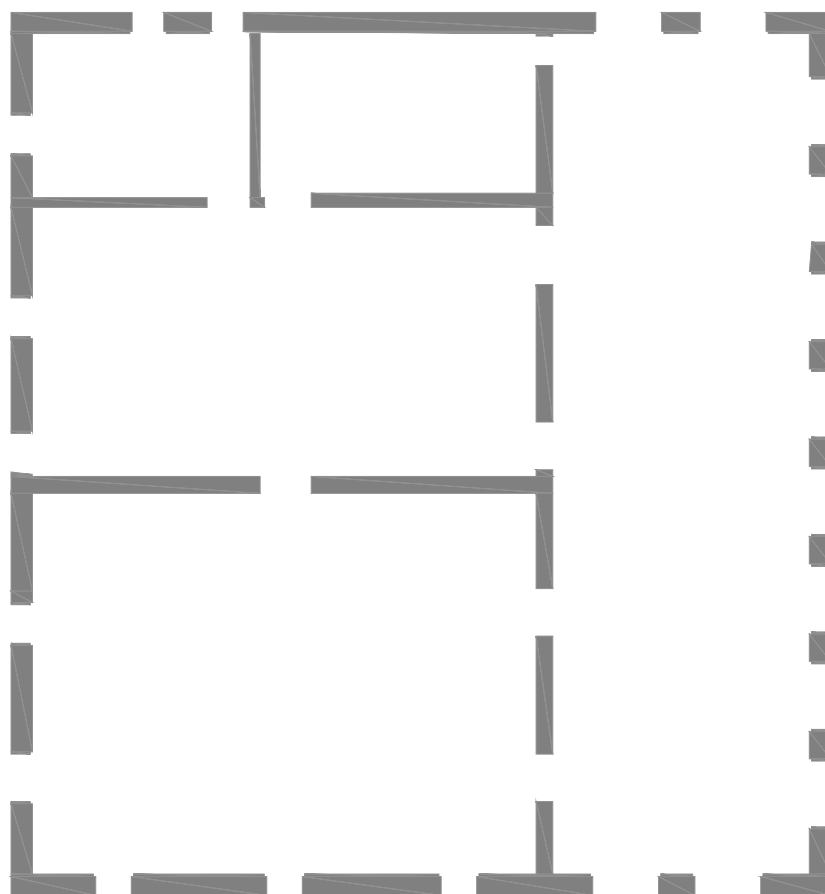
Further back you big room meant for meetings, studying and lectures that does not require physical activity. Other than working on craftsmanship skills it is important for the inhabitants to have a space where they can study, read and apply for jobs. An important part of reintegrating back into society after spending time in prison is to find a job in order to regain your independence and to feel included in society. This area includes a big communal table as well as three more separate chairs. These chairs are meant to help inhabitants focus, as they will have their back turned away from the rest of the space to cancel out possible visual noise.

The material selection for this level is raw and natural. The original flooring is natural stone tiles, enhancing the idea of this level being a more public space. Natural stones are decorating the space and the wooden beams are rough and texturised. Although this space is decorated with warmer lighting details and softer shape, it has the "coldest" atmosphere of the three levels to further establish the feeling of it being the most public of levels.



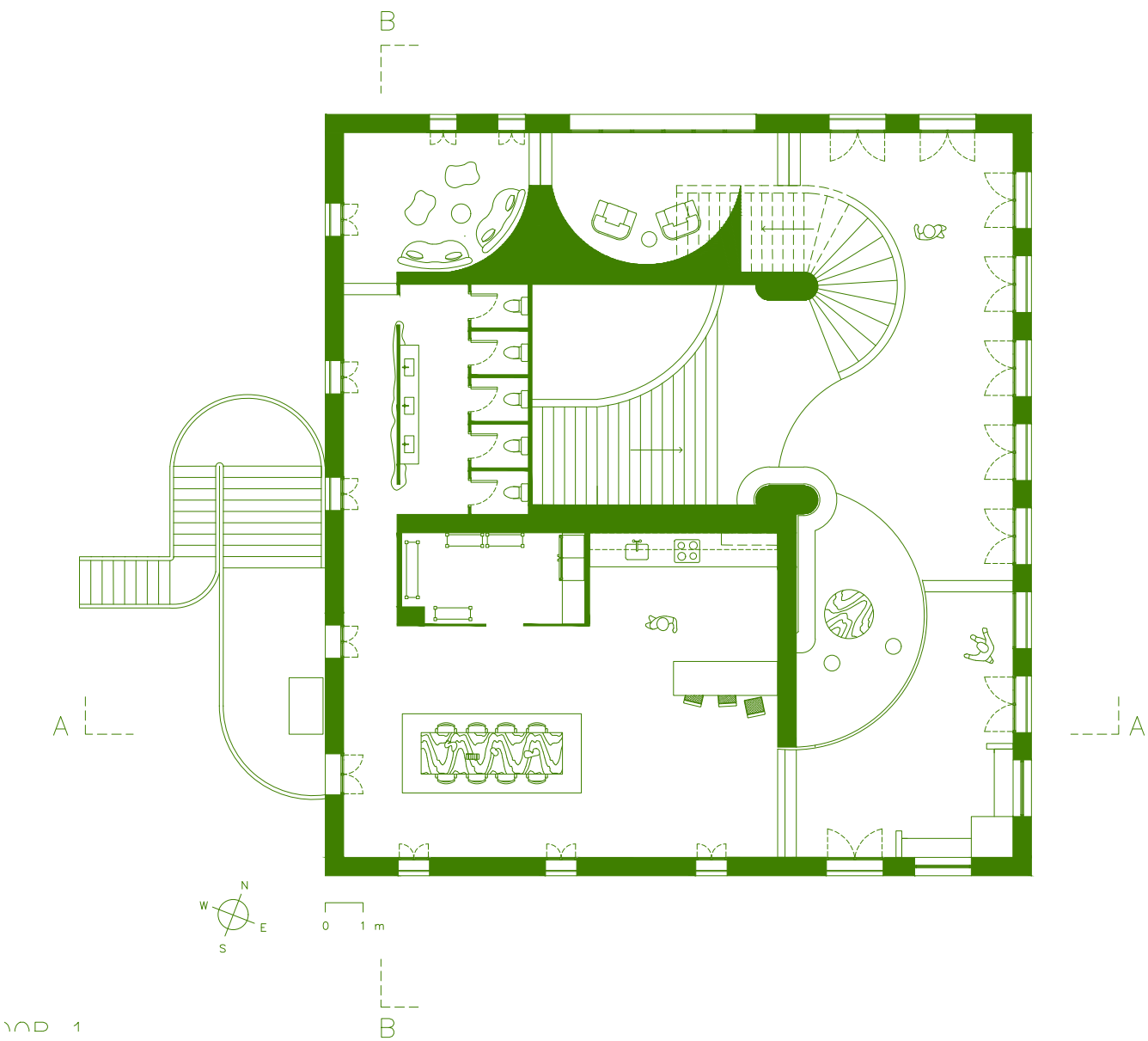
Room for meetings, lectures and studying.

Level 1



original floor plan

First floor



new floor plan
First floor

This level is the middle ground between public and intimacy. This is the community space - the space where the inhabitants can socialise and use as a communal living space. When arriving to this floor, you will immediately be introduced to the view of the surrounding landscape - a key aspect of the concept of designing for rehabilitation.

This level includes a variety of different areas that promote social interaction. An informal meeting room for casual hangouts, smaller living room areas with informal armchairs meant for casual talk between the inhabitants, and finally a big communal kitchen and dining area. The kitchen is designed as a domestic kitchen in order to enhance the feeling of home.



This floor includes semi private living areas promoting social interaction and casually hanging out with each other.





Valldaura Labs is a self-sufficient building, meaning the users are able to grow their own food and manage their own electricity and water supply. To enhance the symbolic importance of "learning how to be independent by an independent building," a staircase connecting the outside garden with the kitchen area was designed. This is meant to ease the act of bringing the vegetables from the garden to the kitchen area, where they can be stored and prepared in the storage room connected to the kitchen and dining area.

This level also includes toilets and sinks, designed as public restrooms in order to promote a sense of responsibility for leaving the toilet area neat and tidy for the rest of the habitants.

The material selection and color palette of this level is warmer and softer than the ground level. As this level is meant to feel more like a home than a public space, the floor has been changed for a natural wood tile flooring, but keeping the areas that are divided with steps in the same type of cement that the main staircase is made of to highlight the keyword "transition." More wood and textile is found on this floor, creating an overall domestic atmosphere.





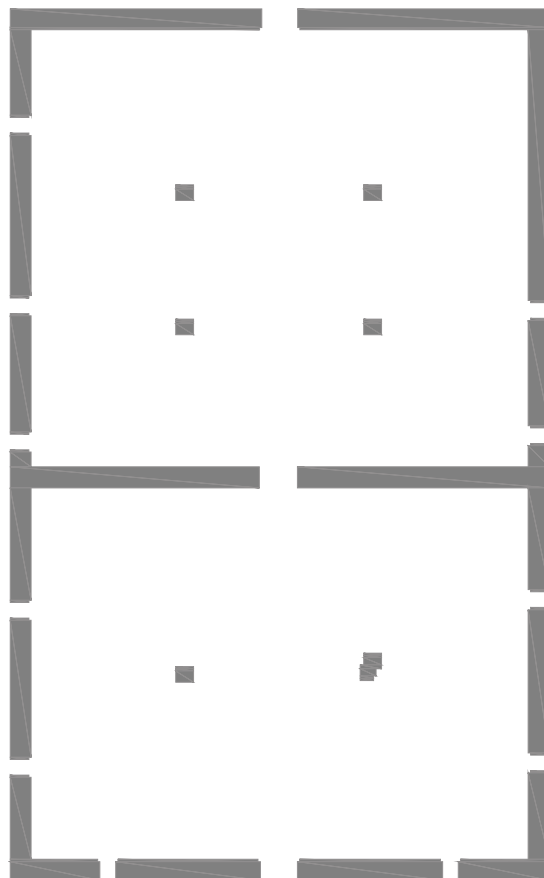


Social interaction

Learning how to interact with other people in a natural way is another important aspect of transitioning from prison to society. Different areas that are meant to promote social interaction naturally are found throughout the space, such as reading nooks and casual seats. Not only does the open spaces invite people to go up and interact with each other, but the strategic placement of seating areas around the spaces promote sitting down and having a conversation.



Level 2



original floor plan

Second floor



new floor plan
Second floor

This last level is the level of full intimacy and privacy. This area includes 8 private bedrooms, toilets and showers.

Each individual has their own private bedroom, which is important to learn how to take care of after spending time in prison. The materials on this level are meant to give a warm and calming atmosphere, meaning more soft textiles and less contrast in both texture and color palette. The wooden furniture will be more refined and clean and the soft curtains will help create a quiet and relaxing space.

Laying in bed will give the user a view of the blue sky during the day and the clear starry sky at night. This symbolises the final goal of this project - being fully free and a part of the outside world.



Bedrooms are designed to transmit a sense of tranquility and calm while offering a space that can easily be personalised.

Conclusion

This project aims to support former inmates in their transition back to society by creating a spatial experience that is both purposeful and emotionally considerate. By focusing on three keywords - transition, tranquility and natural - the design is used as a tool to create more than just a physical space, it becomes part of the important rehabilitation process while reintegrating back to society.

Each level of the building represents a gradual journey from public to private, from structure to freedom, by allowing the users to move not only through space but through stages of reintegration. The spatial strategy encourages social interaction, self-reflection and independence. The careful use of natural materials

and shapes promotes a sense of calm and connection to the natural surroundings. By designing with intention and empathy, this project offers a safe and supportive environment that reflects the dignity and potential of each individual.

Beyond Bars aims to support the reintegration of former prisoners upon their release from prison. By giving them a space to practice independence, social interaction and craftsmanship skills, the ultimate goal is to prepare them for the outside world while preventing them from falling back into criminal behaviour - and ultimately lower the crime rates in Spain and the rest of the world.



reintegration is not just possible
- it is necessary



Physical model











Beyond Bars

– exploring the new you.

Bibliography

Adams, W.L. (2010, July 12). Sentenced to serving the good life in Norway. Time. <https://time.com/archive/6597250/sentenced-to-serving-the-good-life-in-norway/>

Ajuntament de Reus (n.d.) Centre Social El Roser. Ajuntament de Reus. <https://www.reus.cat/serveis/centre-social-el-roser>

ArchDaily. (2022). Centro social El Roser / Josep Ferrando Architecture + Gallego Arquitectura. <https://www.archdaily.cl/cl/984079/centro-social-el-roser-josep-ferrando-plus-gallego-arquitectura>

Beijersbergen, M.D. (2018). Normative Design's Role in Reducing Recidivism Rates. HMC Architects. <https://hmcarchitects.com/news/normative-designs-role-in-reducing-recidivism-rates-2018-09-05/>

Biggers, A.M. (2024, March 25). The US Has the Highest Recidivism Rates In the World—Here's Why. Success. <https://www.success.com/recidivism-rates/#:~:text=More%20than%201.2%20million%20people,incarceration%20rate%20in%20the%20world.>

Cid, J., Ibàñez, A. (2019). Prisoner resettlement in Spain – Good practices for early-released prisoners and prisoners lost in transition that fully serve their sentence. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. https://ddd.uab.cat/pub/caplli/2019/203432/prireseur_a2019p313.pdf

Dawson, P. (2019). Prison design. London: The Building Centre. https://www.buildingcentre.co.uk/media/_file/pdf/prison-design-by-peter-dawson.pdf

DesignBoom. (2012, February 16). Curro claret designs a collection to fight poverty. DesignBoom. <https://www.designboom.com/readers/curro-claret-designs-a-collection-to-fight-poverty/>

Durrant, A. (2014, June 13). Salvaged materials form chairs in Curro Claret's More Than This collection. Dezeen. <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/06/13/more-than-this-chairs-curro-claret-barcelona/>

EuroPris. (2019). Designing for rehabilitation. European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services. https://www.europris.org/wp-content/uploads/ep_library/Designing-for-Rehabilitation-report-2.pdf

FRIIS & MOLTKE Architects. (n.d.). New prison in Nuuk designed to interact with the beautifully rugged Greenlandic landscape. FRIIS & MOLTKE Architects. <https://friis-moltke.com/architecture/civic/new-prison-in-nuuk-greenland/>

Gibbs, D., Stockings, E., Larney, S., Bromberg, D.J., Shakeshaft, A. and Farnbach, S. (2023) 'The impact of supported accommodation on health and criminal justice outcomes of people released from prison: a systematic literature review', *Harm Reduction Journal*, 20, 91. doi: 10.1186/s12954-023-00832-8. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-023-00832-8>

Greenevents Barcelona. (n.d.). Coopolis: Innovation in the Social Economy in Barcelona. <https://www.greeneventsbarcelona.com>

Jourdan-Ethvignot, M. (n.d.). UNODC's support to foster prisoners' rehabilitation and social reintegration into society. *EuroPris*. https://www.europris.org/wp-content/uploads/ep_library/141119-UNODCs-work-in-prison-rehabilitation.pdf

Kofman, J. (2015, May 31). In Norway, A Prison Built On Second Chances. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/05/31/410532066/in-norway-a-prison-built-on-second-chances>

LaCol (n.d.) Can Batlló: A Cooperative Transformation. LaCol. <http://www.lacol.coop>

Lazarus, S. (2018, March 16). Humane prison to bring Greenland's most dangerous criminals home. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/16/europe/humane-prison-greenland/index.html>

Metalarte (n.d.) Shoelaces. Available at: https://alc.home.pl/web2/images/do_pobrania/Metalarte%20Shoelaces_Eng.pdf (Accessed: 3 February 2025).

O'Reilly, J. (n.d.). Beyond the Panopticon. The Building Centre. https://www.buildingcentre.co.uk/media/_file/pdf/beyond-the-panopticon-by-john-o-reilly.pdf

Pintos, P. (2021, August 24). Anstalten Correctional Facility / SHL + Friis & Moltke. *ArchDaily*. <https://www.archdaily.com/967291/anstalten-correctional-facility-shl-plus-friis-and-moltke>

The Building Centre. (2018, March 28). Storstrøm – 'the world's most humane prison.' [Video]. The Building Centre. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byl-3nCdoS0&t=3s>

Top Manta. (n.d.). Sobre nós. Top Manta. <https://topmanta.store/en/pages/sobre-nosotros>

Totaro, R. (2021, August 30). A prison “open” to the landscape in Greenland. Domus. <https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/gallery/2021/08/26/in-greenland-a-corten-village-for-a-new-correctional-facility.html>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2018). Handbook on the management of violent extremist prisoners and the prevention of radicalization to violence in prisons. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/18-02303_ebook.pdf (Accessed: 3 February 2025).

University College London. (n.d.). The Panopticon | Bentham Project. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bentham-project/about-jeremy-bentham/panopticon>.

U.S. Department of Justice (2016) 'Prison Reform: Reducing Recidivism by Strengthening the Federal Bureau of Prisons', Office of Justice Programs. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/archives/prison-reform>

Valldaura Labs. (2025). Valldaura Labs. <https://valldaura.net>.

Vox. (2019, April 12). How Norway designed a more humane prison. [Video]. Vox. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v13wrVEQ2M>

W., J. (n.d.). The Japanese concept of Ma. Art Design Asia. <https://artdesignasia.com/the-japanese-concept-of-ma/>

Wei, R. (2023). The heart of Japanese design: Tatami's role in traditional architecture. Tatami Shop. https://www.tatamishop.com/blog/tatami-lifestyle-1/the-heart-of-japanese-design-tatamis-role-in-traditional-architecture-29?srsId=AfmBOop_aCVSwvTNtNDAEBtyeVinJzPY0am6RkGXdgcGkOn8Bzyt2bs8

Western, B. (2021). Inside the Box: Safety, Health, and Isolation in Prison. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 35(4), 97-122. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27074127>

World Population Review. (2024). Recidivism rates by state 2024. World Population Review. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/recidivism-rates-by-state>

XES. (2015). 14 Measures to Boost the Social and Solidarity Economy. <http://www.xes.cat>.

Images

Figure 1: Havran, J. (n.d.) Halden Prison. [Image]. Available from <https://doga.no/en/activities/design-and-architecture-in-norway/architecture/halden-prison/>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 2: Mercurio, F. (n.d.) West Kimberley Regional Prison . [Image]. <https://architizer.com/blog/inspiration/stories/prison-design-humane-correctional-facilities>. [Accessed 27 March 2025]

Figure 3: Veillon, R. (2020, 18 April) The Architecture of Surveillance: The Panopticon Prison. [Image]. Available from https://www.archdaily.com/937611/the-architecture-of-surveillance-the-panopticon-prison/5e961942b35765caec000c0d-the-architecture-of-surveillance-the-panopticon-prison-photo?next_project=no. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 4: Bentham, J., A. (n.d.) Jeremy Bentham's panopticon diagram . [Illustration]. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jul/23/panopticon-digital-surveillance-jeremy-bentham>. [Accessed 27 March 2025]

Figure 5: Wathne, A. (n.d.) The landscape design is based on the natural features of the terrain. [Image]. Available from <https://doga.no/en/activities/design-and-architecture-in-norway/architecture/halden-prison/>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 6: Mørk, A. (2019) Spaces for sport are available for the inmates at "Anstalten," Greenland. [Image]. Available from <https://www.archdaily.com/967291/anstalten-correctional-facility-shl-plus-friis-and-moltke>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 7: Friis & Moltke Architects (n.d.) Common area at "Anstalten," Greenland. [Render]. Available from <https://friis-moltke.com/architecture/civic/new-prison-in-nuuk-greenland/>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 8: Mørk, A. (n.d.) Art by local artists decorate the interior at "Anstalten," Greenland. [Image]. Available from <https://www.dezeen.com/2021/07/27/anstalten-prison-nuuk-greeland-schmidt-hammer-lassen-friis-moltke/>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 9: Eskerod, T. (2017.) Wood and natural light in the chapel at Storstrøm prison. [Image]. <https://www.archdaily.cl/cl/889066/prision-de-storstrom-cf-moller>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 10: Eskerod, T. (2017.) Corridor and kitchen area at Storstrøm prison. [Image]. <https://www.archdaily.cl/cl/889066/prison-de-storstrom-cf-moller>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 11: NQ. (2024.) HMP Berwyn Prison. [Image]. <https://www.denbighshirefreepress.co.uk/news/24581316.wrexham-number-hmp-berwyn-prisoners-freed-early-revealed/>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 12: Getty Images. (2024.) Inside a Swedish prison. [Image]. <https://www.mic.com/articles/109138/sweden-has-done-for-its-prisoners-what-the-u-s-won-t>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 13: Friis & Moltke Architects (n.d.). "Anstalten," Greenland. [Render]. Available from <https://friis-moltke.com/architecture/civic/new-prison-in-nuuk-greenland/>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 14: Mørk, A. (2019). Interior at "Anstalten," Greenland. [Image]. Available from <https://www.archdaily.com/967291/anstalten-correctional-facility-shl-plus-friis-and-moltke>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 15: Mørk, A. (2019). "Anstalten," Greenland. [Image]. Available from <https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/gallery/2021/08/26/in-greenland-a-corten-village-for-a-new-correctional-facility.html>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 16: Mørk, A. (2019). "Anstalten," Greenland. [Image]. Available from <https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/gallery/2021/08/26/in-greenland-a-corten-village-for-a-new-correctional-facility.html>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 17: Mørk, A. (2019). "Anstalten," Greenland. [Image]. Available from <https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/gallery/2021/08/26/in-greenland-a-corten-village-for-a-new-correctional-facility.html>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 18: Mørk, A. (2019). "Anstalten," Greenland. [Image]. Available from <https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/gallery/2021/08/26/in-greenland-a-corten-village-for-a-new-correctional-facility.html>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 19: Friis & Moltke Architects (n.d.). "Anstalten," Greenland. [Illustration]. Available from <https://friis-moltke.com/architecture/civic/new-prison-in-nuuk-greenland/>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 20: Getty Images. (2015). Halden prison, Norway. [Image]. Available from <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/05/31/410532066/in-norway-a-prison-built-on-second-chances>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 21: Getty Images. (2015). Halden prison, Norway. [Image]. Available from <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/05/31/410532066/in-norway-a-prison-built-on-second-chances>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 22: Erik Møller Architects & HLM Architects. (2014). Halden prison, Norway. [Image]. Available from <https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2013/designandviolence/halden-prison-erik-moller-architects-hlm-architects/>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 23: Goula, A. (2022). El Roser Social Centre. [Image]. Available from <https://www.archdaily.com/984088/el-roser-social-center-josep-ferrando-plus-gallego-arquitectura>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 24: Lacol (n.d.). Coòpolis interior. [Image]. <https://www.lacol.coop/projectes/coopolis-bcn-fase-0/>. [Accessed 27 March 2025]

Figure 25: Aranda, S. (2017). The modelo. [Image]. Available from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/12/world/europe/catalonia-modelo-political-prisoners.html>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 26: Goula, A. (2022). El Roser Social Centre. [Image]. Available from <https://www.archdaily.com/984088/el-roser-social-center-josep-ferrando-plus-gallego-arquitectura>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 27: Goula, A. (2022). El Roser Social Centre. [Image]. Available from <https://www.archdaily.com/984088/el-roser-social-center-josep-ferrando-plus-gallego-arquitectura>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 28: Lemus, J. (2014). More Than This collection. [Image]. Available from <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/06/13/more-than-this-chairs-curro-claret-barcelona/>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 29: Eskerod, T. (2017). Interior of Storstrøm prison, Denmark.. [Image]. Available from <https://www.archdaily.cl/cl/889066/prison-de-storstrom-cf-moller>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 30: Eskerod, T. (2017). Interior of Storstrøm prison, Denmark.. [Image]. Available from <https://www.archdaily.cl/cl/889066/prison-de-storstrom-cf-moller>. [Accessed 3 February 2025]

Figure 31: Hevia, J. (2018) Valldaura Labs. [Image]. <https://www.archdaily.com/916045/valldaura-labs-rehabilitation-guallart-architects>. [Accessed 27 March 2025]

Figure 32: Hevia, J. (2018) Valldaura Labs. [Image]. <https://www.archdaily.com/916045/valldaura-labs-rehabilitation-guallart-architects>. [Accessed 27 March 2025]

Figure 33: Hevia, J. (2018) Valldaura Labs. [Image]. <https://www.archdaily.com/916045/valldaura-labs-rehabilitation-guallart-architects>. [Accessed 27 March 2025]

Figure 34: Hevia, J. (2018) Valldaura Labs. [Image]. <https://www.archdaily.com/916045/valldaura-labs-rehabilitation-guallart-architects>. [Accessed 27 March 2025]

Figure 35: Hevia, J. (2018) Valldaura Labs. [Image]. <https://www.archdaily.com/916045/valldaura-labs-rehabilitation-guallart-architects>. [Accessed 27 March 2025]