



HDK-VALAND – HÖGSKOLAN FÖR KONST OCH DESIGN

“Sketch and Talk” – Drawing Lines Between Humans, the Interior, and Stuff

**Design Methodologies for Well-Being in Prisons, Forensic
Psychiatric Hospitals, and Special Residential Youth Homes**

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Abstract

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With increasing global and local incarceration, the demand for prison beds is rapidly growing. The Swedish government’s plans for implementing youth prisons and amending laws regarding young people’s sentences risk increasing the already high numbers of mental health problems. Although security is an inherent element of institutions for care and incarceration (ICI), the present focus on reinforcing security is similarly jeopardizing the health of inmates, patients, and youths in prisons, forensic psychiatric hospitals, and youth homes. Moreover, the rapid production of beds will likely lead to issues with staff security and work environment.

The field of research for design in correctional institutions and behavioral health is limited. Although there is an increased interest in evidence-based design, EBD cannot be said to extend to all design aspects for vulnerable people in ICIs. However, this dissertation critically discusses the dichotomies, meanings, and connecting lines between incarcerated humans, the interior, and stuff, and it looks primarily at the design of institutions in Scandinavia. Moreover, ICIs are understood in this dissertation as an existential and ethical dichotomy with well-being on the one hand and the losses that incarceration brings on the other. The tension between punishment and (re)habilitation manifests through materiality, design, and high-security measures. However, the question for design is not whether it is possible to hinder the pain and losses that come with incarceration but how design can mitigate these losses, alleviate pain, foster well-being, and assist staff through a safe and supportive work environment.

Part of this doctoral project has been conducted within a multidisciplinary research project aimed at creating knowledge about youths’ experience of the physical environment in Sweden’s youth homes (SiS). Two of this dissertation’s five papers were written as part of this research project (IV, V). The other three papers discuss the early method development of Sketch and Talk (II), the narrative of patients’ experience of the physical environment in forensic care (I), and the design of prison cells through the narratives of three women (V).

The theoretical underpinning of this dissertation is inspired by phenomenology and ethnography. It therefore advocates for a design research methodology that brings the researcher closer to the phenomenon and into the node of peoples’ experiences. Hence, one of this dissertation’s contributions is the Sketch and Talk method, which uses sketching and talking when meeting a participant in their cell or room as a way of creating a space for mutual observation and understanding of the interior. Moreover, as ethical awareness is paramount in research with vulnerable groups, the method has been valuable through its transparency and open approach.

Design for ICIs can be seen as a “wicked problem” and is as much an ethical and ideological matter as a design-related problem. This dissertation identifies a “wickedness” in how design processes primarily take their point of departure in previous products and seek to improve them. Therefore, when penal ideology is saturating the previous product (ICI) the ideology has pertained to the new ICI as *carceral design heritage*. Identifying carceral design is in itself a first step in designing for well-being. This presents a wide-open opportunity to reform and rethink – an opportunity we must take, particularly in light of planned investments and expansion.

This dissertation suggests that future research can contribute with more knowledge on how an interior can promote well-being through design for autonomy, dwelling, and movement and as a result can open up new horizons of change and hope.