

# **THE SOCIAL [Re]PRODUCTION OF ARCHITECTURE**

**POLITICS,  
VALUES AND  
ACTIONS IN  
CONTEMPORARY  
PRACTICE**

Doina Petrescu and Kim Trogal

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**Neil Brenner** is Professor of Urban Theory at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, MA. His most recent book is *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*

(Jovis, 2013). He directs the Urban Theory Lab at the Harvard GSD (urbantheorylab.net), a research team that uses the tools of critical urban theory, historical geopolitical economy and radical cartography to decipher emergent patterns of urbanization under twenty-first-century capitalism. He is currently completing several books, including *New Urban Spaces: Urban Theory and the Scale Question* (Oxford University Press), *Planetary Urbanization* (with Christian Schmid; Verso) and *Is the World Urban? Towards a Critique of Geospatial Ideology* (with Nikos Katsikis; Actar).

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**Katherine Gibson** is an economic geographer with an international reputation for innovative research on economic transformation, and over 30 years’ experience of working with communities to build resilient economies. As J.K. Gibson-Graham, the collective authorial presence she shares with the late Julie Graham (Professor of Geography, University of Massachusetts Amherst), her books include *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Blackwell, 1996) and *A Postcapitalist Politics* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006). Her most recent books are *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities*, co-authored with Jenny Cameron and Stephen Healy (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), *Making Other Worlds Possible: Performing Diverse Economies*, co-edited with Gerda Roelvink and Kevin St Martin (University of Minnesota Press, 2015) and *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene*, co-edited with Deborah Bird Rose and Ruth Fincher (Punctum Press, 2015).

**Nasser Golzari** and **Yara Sharif** are practising architects and academics. Both teach at Oxford Brookes University as well as the University of Westminster, London. Having lived and worked in conflict zones, they developed a special interest in the subject of cultural identity, politics and responsive architecture. They mainly look at design as a mean to facilitate and empower communities. Combining practice with research, they co-founded the Palestinian Regeneration

Team (PART), which aims to explore creative and responsive spatial practices that can heal the fractured landscape of Palestine. Their work has been published widely, Sharif has been granted the 2013 commendation award – RIBA's President Award for Research for Outstanding PhD Thesis. Their collaborative work with PART on the historic centre of Birzeit won the 2013 Aga Khan Award for Architecture, while the revitalization of the historic centre of Beit Iksa won the 2014 Holcim Award for Sustainable Construction.

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**Gabu Heindl** is an architect and urban researcher in Vienna. She is the director of GABU Heindl Architektur, a practice specializing in public interventions, cultural and social buildings, and urban research/planning. She is the curator of exhibitions, lectures and symposia on issues of politics in architecture and urban planning. Gabu currently teaches at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, having studied in Vienna, Tokyo and Princeton. She is the author of several publications in books and architectural journals (JAE, Umbau, GAM, dérive a.o.), editor of *Just Architecture* (ERA21, 2012), *Arbeit Zeit Raum. Bilder and Bauten der Arbeit im Postfordismus* (turia+kant, 2008) and co-editor of *position alltag – Architecture in the Context of Everyday life* (HDA Verlag, 2009). Since 2013, she has been Chairwoman of the Austrian Society for Architecture ([www.gabuheindl.at](http://www.gabuheindl.at)).

**Mathias Heyden** is the co-founder of the Berlin community project, K 77, where he is engaged as a political activist and cultural worker, inhabitant and builder, craftsman and designer. With his office ISPARA, he co-produced, among other works, the event and book, *Under Construction: Strategies of Participative Architecture and Spatial Appropriation*, the exhibition and pamphlets, 'An architektur 19–21: community design. involvement and architecture in the US

since 1963', and the visual research project, 'Where if not us? Participatory design and its radical approaches'. Parallel to lecturing in Europe and the USA, he was guest professor at Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Nürnberg, and is research assistant at the Technische Universität Berlin.

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**Phil Langley** is an architect and computational designer, based in London, and is also a PhD candidate at the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield. Phil has worked in practice for over ten years and specializes in the design of digital tools and hacks to modify and disrupt the existing, proprietary software platforms currently used in the industry. His research further explores other ways of engaging with digital technology for spatial design practice, with a particular focus on open source approaches to software and coding. He is also a founding member of OPENkhana, a collaborative group that works between architectural, computational and artistic practice.

**Helge Mooshammer** is the director of the international research projects, Relational Architecture and Other Markets ([www.other-markets.org](http://www.other-markets.org)) at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning, Vienna University of Technology, Austria. He is currently a Research Fellow in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College, University of London. His research is concerned with changing forms of urban sociality arising from the processes of transnationalization, capital movements, informal economies, and newly emerging regimes of governance.

**Ruth Morrow** is the curatorial advisor to PS<sup>2</sup> and Professor of Architecture at Queen's University Belfast. Ruth has a long-standing interest in people and place and believes that fundamentally architectural practice is pedagogical: the focus of her next project.

**Peter Mörténbäck** is Professor of Visual Culture at the Vienna University of Technology, and visiting researcher at Goldsmiths College, University of London, where he has initiated the Networked Cultures project ([www.networkedcultures.org](http://www.networkedcultures.org)), a platform for global research on collaborative art and architecture practices. His current work explores the interaction of such practices with resource politics, global economies and urban transformation.

**Mörténbäck and Mooshammer** have published numerous articles on contemporary art, bottom-up urbanism and collaborative forms of spatial production, including in *Grey Room*, *Architectural Research Quarterly* and *Third Text*. Their recent books include *Visual Cultures as Opportunity* (2015), *Informal Market Worlds: The Architecture of Economic Pressure* (2015), *Space (Re)Solutions: Intervention and Research in Visual Culture* (2011), and *Networked Cultures: Parallel Architectures and the Politics of Space* (2008) ([www.thinkarchitecture.net](http://www.thinkarchitecture.net)).

**Peter Mutschler** is an artist, curator and director of PS<sup>2</sup>, Belfast. His curatorial focus is on projects which are artistically and socially relevant with the aim of re-connecting art with society. Besides the rotating programme in PS<sup>2</sup>, he works on two long-term projects with artists and communities in the small village of Ballykinler and at an interface site in North Belfast.

**Doina Petrescu** is Professor of Architecture and Design Activism at the University of Sheffield. She is co-founder, together with Constantin Petcou, of atelier d'architecture autogérée (aaa), a collective platform which conducts explorations, actions and research concerning participative architecture, resilience and cities co-produced transformation. Recent projects include Ecobox and Passage 56 in Paris and R-Urban, a participative strategy for local resilience in the Parisian Region. These projects have received international recognition and numerous awards across the years including the Zumtobel Award (2012), the Curry Stone Prize (2011), and the European Public Space Prize (2010). Her publications include *R-Urban Act: A Participative Strategy of Urban Resilience* (2015), *Trans-Local Act: Cultural Politics Within and Beyond* (2009), *Altering Practices: Feminist Politics and Poetics of Space* (2007), *Urban/ACT: A Handbook for Alternative Practice* (2007) and *Architecture and Participation* (2005).

**PS<sup>2</sup>** is a voluntary artist collective with studio space in the centre of Belfast. A project space is used for an experimental, fast-revolving series of art projects and cultural activities. Alongside the 'indoor' programme, PS<sup>2</sup> curates long-term 'outdoor' projects at 'critical' locations. The focus of these neighbourhood-centred projects is urban intervention and social interaction by artists, cultural practitioners, architects and multidisciplinary groups and theorists. On-going outdoor sites are in the village of Ballykinler and an interface area in North Belfast. The projects are initiated and organized by **Peter Mutschler**, PS<sup>2</sup> Director with **Ruth Morrow** ([www.pssquared.org](http://www.pssquared.org); [www.temporaryplaces.org](http://www.temporaryplaces.org); [www.villageworks.org.uk](http://www.villageworks.org.uk)).

**Gabriela Rendón** is an architect, urban planner and co-founder of Cohabitation Strategies, a not-for-profit co-operative for socio-spatial research, design and development based in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, and New York City, USA. Her research areas of interest and expertise include neighborhood decline and restructuring processes, as well as collective and non-speculative housing models providing affordable housing and equitable development. Rendón is an Assistant Professor of Urban Planning at The New School, in New York City. She has also taught postgraduate urban studies at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands, where she received a Masters in Urbanism and is currently following doctoral studies at the Chair of Spatial Planning and Strategy.



**Miguel Robles-Durán** is an urbanist, Assistant Professor of Urbanism at The New School/Parsons the New School for Design in New York City, and co-founder of the not-for-profit Cohabitation Strategies, a co-operative for socio-spatial research, design and development based in Rotterdam, The Netherlands and New York City, USA. His main research is centered on the strategic definition/coordination of trans-disciplinary urban projects, as well as on the development of tactical design strategies and civic engagement platforms that confront the contradictions of neoliberal urbanization, such as homelessness, housing crises, gentrification, the effects of financialization in the real-estate industry, inter-urban competition and urban social movements.

**Meike Schalk** is an architect based in Stockholm and in Berlin. She is Chair of the cross-disciplinary MSc programme, Sustainable Urban Planning and Design, at KTH School of Architecture and the Built Environment. Her research on architecture and urban questions combines critical inquiry into issues of sustainability and resilience, critical-creative participation in urban development processes, and practice-led research. Schalk is co-founder of the feminist architecture teaching and research group *FATALE* and an editor of *SITE* magazine. Since 2013, she has run the not-for-profit association Action Archive (Aktion Arkiv) together with Helena Mattsson and Sara Brolund de Carvalho.

**Tatjana Schneider** is a researcher, writer and educator based at the School of Architecture in Sheffield, UK. She is also co-founder of research centre 'Agency' and was a founder member of the workers cooperative G.L.A.S. (Glasgow Letters on Architecture and Space), which aimed to construct both a theoretical and practical critique of the capitalist production and use of the built environment. Her current work focuses on the changing role of architects and architecture in contemporary society, (architectural) pedagogy and spatial agency. She has an interest in employing and implementing theoretical, methodological and practical approaches that expand the scope of contemporary architectural debates and discourses by integrating political and economic frameworks that question normative ways of thinking, producing and consuming space. She is the co-author of *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (2011), *Flexible Housing* (2007), *A Right to Build* (2011), and co-editor of *Agency: Working with Uncertain Architectures* (2009) and the journal *glaspaper* (2001–2007).

**studioBASAR** was established in 2006 by **Alex Axinte** and **Cristi Borcan**, both as an architectural studio and as a team of urban observation and intervention. Preoccupied in the last few years with the dynamics of local urban culture and the disappearing importance of public spaces in transitional Bucharest, studioBASAR's projects range from public space interventions, art installations, urban research, educational workshops to competitions and different typologies of residential and public buildings. In 2010, studioBASAR published the book *Evicting the Ghost: Architectures of Survival*, which was awarded Best Book at the Bucharest Architectural Annual. In 2014, the project Public Bath was a finalist in the European Prize for Urban Public Space.

**Apolonija Šušteršič** is an architect and visual artist. Her work is interested in the critical analysis of space; usually focused on the processes and relationships between institutions, cultural politics, urban planning and architecture. Her broad-ranging interests start with a phenomenological study of space and continue their investigation into the social and political nature of our living environment. She usually undertakes extensive research into specific situations found on location, which she uses as a starting point of her projects. Apolonija has a PhD from the University of Lund, Malmö Art Academy, Sweden; and runs her own art/architecture studio practice in Lund, Sweden, and in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Recently she was appointed Professor in Visual Art at Oslo National Academy for the Arts, to build up the MA studies under title Art & Public Space.

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**Jeanne van Heeswijk** is a visual artist who facilitates the creation of dynamic and diversified public spaces in order to 'radicalize the local'. Van Heeswijk embeds herself as an active citizen in communities, often working there for years at a time. These long-term projects, which have occurred in many different countries, transcend the traditional boundaries of art in duration, space and media and questions art's autonomy by combining performative actions, meetings, discussions, seminars and other forms of organizing and pedagogy. Inspired by a particular current event, cultural context or intractable social problem, she dynamically involves community members in the planning and realization of a given project. As an 'urban curator', van Heeswijk's work often unravels invisible legislation, governmental codes and social institutions, in order to enable communities to take control over their own futures. Her work has also been featured in numerous books and publications worldwide, as well as in internationally renowned biennials such as those of Liverpool, Busan, Taipei, Shanghai, and Venice. She is currently Keith Haring Fellow in Art and Activism at Bard College and has received the 2012 Curry Stone Prize for Social Design Pioneers, and in 2011, the Leonore Annenberg Prize for Art and Social Change.

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## 4 – OUT IN PRISON: TAKING THE CASE OF SPATIAL RIGHTS TO A PRISON COURT(YARD)

Gabu Heindl

*In the end everything in politics turns on the distribution of spaces. What are these places? How do they function? Why are they there? Who can occupy them? For me, political action always acts upon the social as the litigious distribution of places and roles. It is always a matter of knowing who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done to it.*  
(Rancière, 2003: 201)

### SPATIAL RIGHTS

We could go along with Robert Gutman (1992) and say that architecture's 'natural market' is monuments, to serve the elite and powerful. But we could also claim a right to (another) architecture for everybody; architecture, understood as a social practice towards a more just distribution of spaces. With regard to Lefebvre's concept of the 'right to the city', as a right of those who suffer from how existing cities are organized and regulated, the right to architecture I have in mind here is not so much a right to just any kind of architecture, but to one that is not part of a repressive regulatory order. As a right for everybody, it is first and foremost the claim of those who suffer from architecture being in service to capitalist spatial production. With regard to the qualities of the city, such as centrality, anonymity or openness to chance, we should put forward the question about the qualities of architecture, not as a minimum but as a maximum to be achieved, or about a minimum of repression that architecture could aim for. This more just distribution of spaces is based on concepts of social justice, as found in the work of Harvey and of spatial justice, as in the work of Soja or Fainstein. I regard justice neither as a 'foundational' nor as consensual, but as something to be disputed, an impulse for dissensus and as a strategic term to test decisions and contest injustices (for instance, to involve justice as a planning concern that responds to the current austerity politics). If dissensus or conflict is the basis for the production of democratic spaces, situa-



tions and subjectivities (Rancière, 1999), this also involves understanding one's own critical architectural practice to be without fixed foundations and thus as a matter of self-reflection and self-criticality.

The discipline of architecture is one agent in the production of social space (understood as being necessarily politicized): it is an active part of the process of the contested 'distribution of the sensible' (Rancière, 2004). This means that architecture can also become active for the sake of an increase in spatial justice. Yet, first of all, there is the general knowledge that not only architecture, but all art, is entangled with hegemonic powers, which, when it comes to architecture, are often quite visible. On the one hand, architecture is based on hegemonic power: after all, building activity is usually dependent on the accessibility (ownership) to the ground (site), on large budgets, on building rights, or when it comes to public buildings, on a public need. On the other hand, architecture also helps to 'build' hegemonic power by the creation of the everyday built environment to which people (must) get accustomed. The critique of the modernist understanding of architecture as a service to the engineering of society culminates with the understanding how every 'humanitarian' improvement seems to serve the continuation of the (sometimes inhuman) condition it works on.

As a practising architect, I will use one of my own projects to analyse the complexity and conflictual dimensions and dilemmas of spatial interventions and try to make a claim for action as a kind of exercise in 'minimal politics' (Marchart, 2010: 289–301). By minimal politics, I understand a kind of politics that, while neither 'minoritarian' nor 'reformist' in its intention, acknowledges the potentials inherent in whatever small and transitory moments of contestation of an unjust order. I work with a 'minimal politics' rather than the 'maximalist' and purist claims that politics has to be an all-changing event or heroic act. Or, at least, I claim to act critically, as critically as possible, within architecture.

## SPACE – MORE THAN A MINIMUM

The project is located in a prison, the kind of space, which, for Michel Foucault, was the paradigmatic space of disciplinary social power relations and acted as a model for other similarly structured public institutions, such as hospitals, schools or universities. Foucault's historic analysis of the prison showed it to be a model of disciplinary power and part of a larger 'carceral system' (1995: 293–308). The ongoing project, 'Million Dollar Blocks', by architect and university

teacher Laura Kurgan and her students aims to identify and make visible the contemporary carceral system in the USA. The project maps the role of prisons in wealth (re)distribution: the (non)investment of public money in the infrastructure of specific neighbourhoods and overlays it with the number of inmates in the same neighbourhoods and, consequently, the public money invested in their imprisonment (Kurgan, 2013: 187–205). These maps make obvious how the site of the prison is chosen for the 'policing' of people, in the expanded, Foucault-derived sense of Rancière: attributing a specific place to specific people, often with racist and class-related motivations.

I want to further conceptualize the prison as maybe the most extreme public architecture in terms of its extreme form of seclusion. Everything is walled in, hidden away and yet everybody has an image of what a prison is, what it looks like, about the minimum amount of private space attributed to prisoners. As a 'public space', it is the object and the subject of conflict at the same time. It is central to a field of very different questions, ranging from whether there is a need for more and/or different prison space, to how to achieve a world in which it would be possible to tear down all prisons and live in a prison-free society.

What becomes clear here, is that when it comes to spatial production, the larger context and the temporal dimension of the process are not to be ignored. One of these neglected issues is the question of when and where the public conception of a prison begins. Prison buildings are part of the jurisdictional system and penal law.<sup>1</sup> Whenever it is public money being invested, the process of finding a plan/a planner has to relate to the respective regulations (in our case, European) on the award of contracts, which often means a process using an anonymous design competition. As with school construction, the brief for a new prison is usually written by the respective ministry together with the specific prison direction. In this brief, the spatial programme is described, such as the minimum spatial requirement of the prison cells. There is an interesting analogy to this cell size: it corresponds roughly to the size of the Frankfurter kitchen as defined by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky in 1926 (Noever, 1996). As is well known, Schütte-Lihotzky used scientific motion studies to investigate the possibilities of an extreme reduction of the movements necessary to cook in the optimized Frankfurt kitchen, of around 7 square metres

<sup>1</sup> In Austria, prisons are run by the Justice Ministry and the prison buildings are owned and maintained by the state-owned company, Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft (BIG).

in size. However, these motion diagrams turn into cynical tools, when, as a thought experiment, they are mapped onto the layout of a prison cell. The space that in the one case is deliberately reduced to a minimum to avoid unnecessary movement, would be the only place for private movement in the other case, in the prison's restricted environment. Prisoners' spatial rights are to be defined in a way quite different from the needs of cooks. Imprisonment per se does not have its essence in the reduction of space to an absolute minimum – rather, this reduction is due to the quest for efficient management of imprisonment, of attributing as little space as necessary, with 'minimum costs' for the public (supposedly).

The prison space thus brings to the foreground the very basic need of a certain amount of space for everybody, such as the question of the minimum of private space, in which the dignity of the inmates is preserved. The production of space also contributes to creating levels of privacy; what about the privacy rights for prisoners? Isn't it a perfidious irony, that finally even in kindergarten design, privacy for small children became an issue when recently a 'safety' regulation was dropped? This regulation ordered that the doors to the children's toilets had to be so low, that grown-ups could look over them in case the children needed help. While in today's kindergartens, the restoration of children's 'toilet privacy' is seen to be a worthwhile aim (winning out over security aspects motivating permanent observability), in a prison, guards can still peek into the prisoner's private cell at any time through the door viewer.

## A CASE STUDY AND ITS VOICELESS SUBJECTS

My case study takes us to a specific prison, to a spatial intervention called 'Out in Prison' (2010–2011) in the courtyard of the Austrian, provincial short-term prison in Krems. With this case study I hope to be able to present some of the many dilemmas one faces when acting under such conditions. This is where my point of view as an architect is most directly and intensely intermingled with questions of political theory, mentioned above. I was not asked to design the actual prison extension to the existing prison, a task I would have declined. As an architect also working in the field of site-specific art, I was invited to enter a 'Kunst am Bau' (art in architecture)<sup>2</sup> competition, which

<sup>2</sup> The 'Kunst am Bau' programme is a commitment by the state to dedicate roughly 1 per cent of the construction costs of a public building to the commission of an art project – comparable to the Percent-for-Art policy.

often accompanies public construction in Austria. The invitation was to propose an independent art project in the existing prison. As the prison was built in the 1930s, it is protected as a heritage building, which allows no changes to its protected structure. The fact that the prison is located in the centre of a small town and that the site cannot be enlarged, mean that with the construction of an extension automatically comes a further shrinkage of the outdoor space. On my first visit, the lack of outdoor space was evident at once: a small courtyard with an asphalt floor and little direct sunlight was used as the men's only yard (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).<sup>3</sup> As with other projects, I asked if we could talk to the users of the space, who, in this case, were the inmates rather than only to the personnel working in the prison. However, due to security and anonymity reasons, we were only allowed to speak to some of the guards, who were instructed to answer our questions. The fact that this was a prison for short-term imprisonment (up to a maximum of 18 months) was also mentioned as the reason why we should not consider the inmates to be relevant users. Thus, our questions about the space were answered by the prison guards, in some way acting as representatives for the prisoners or, on a more paternalistic note, by guards representing the state, 'taking care' of things and people.



**Figure 4.1** The prison yard, before the *Out in Prison* project

<sup>3</sup> The size of this specific prison yard is 190 m<sup>2</sup>, roughly 10 by 20 metres, see Figure 4.2.



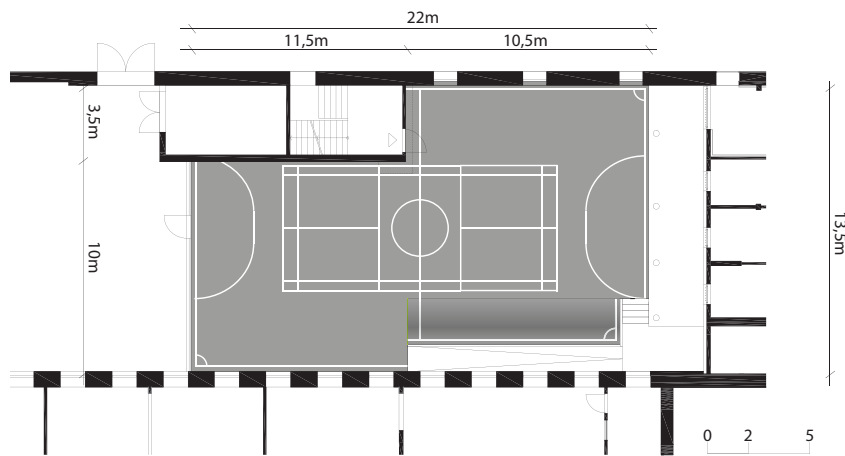


Figure 4.2 Dimensioned plan of the courtyard

When I asked where the inmates practise sports or play football, the guards told us that there is a general lack of interest in football; the prisoners would rather play with their PlayStations. After repeatedly asking, I found out that football was not allowed because people could get hurt too easily on the asphalt floor and the rough walls surrounding the courtyard; a situation difficult to handle within the safety procedures of a prison. The fact that nobody was playing because playing was forbidden was used as 'evidence' that there wasn't any interest in the first place. This occurrence became the basis for my proposal. What this instance further illustrates is the problem with context-sensitivity in architecture, especially when the respective context (let alone the larger context) is difficult to understand due to intimidating conditions or inaccessible information. Context-specific work can be awfully beside the point one wants to make. Does that mean one should ignore the context?

### THE DILEMMAS OF 'CRITICAL' ACTION WITHIN A SPACE OF UNJUST PRECONDITIONS

To propose any art in architecture project 'freely' within this site was of course not free at all, as there were so many options that posed dilemmas where the stakes were very high (i.e. people's daily living conditions). To start with, the project could be a proposition connected to dignity, as mentioned above, a quasi-Rancièrian argument: to give autonomous art to those who are not expected to have any wish for it or understanding of it (Rancière, 1991). Why not bring

to the prison an abstract painting, or something from within my own reference system as an artist/architect? Yet, wouldn't that lead us right into an aestheticist and elitist projection?

Shouldn't we rather look at needs in situ? Of which, of course, there is an endless number, if the place is compared to minimum standards of housing as defined in architecture, even when measured using the standards of low-cost housing or housing for the existential minimum.<sup>4</sup> Needless to say, it would be difficult to establish the needs of the prisoners. Would that not be a projection in the above sense, par excellence? As we know, choosing and assigning needs for somebody else, taking an elitist outside perspective is paternalistic (no matter if you decide that 'these people' require more high art or more simple entertainment). Of course, we could ask them, organise workshops and try to create good lines of communication, yet, at the same time, we would not have the means to turn the outcome of such a process into anything close to reality. That means that any 'participatory' approach would risk ending up a mockery, presenting inmates with all-too-meagre outcomes of a discussion project they were invited (or made) to engage in.

A 'simpler' approach, one of well-intended beautification of the existing spatial situation would, however, almost necessarily act as a mere cover-up of the spatial injustice of their everyday conditions. Helping to make the space more appealing would run into the well-known dilemma, in that it helps to justify its power regime. Just improving the everyday conditions only helps the system to work better.<sup>5</sup> Yet, wouldn't any intervention in the prison, which does not worsen the situation, logically do exactly that? How to escape pacification by design? And then, of course, most radically: Should artists or architects not refuse entirely to work in this context?

This might be the place to insert a short paragraph about a recent other construction, one *not* by my office, namely a 'Schubhaftzentrum',<sup>6</sup> a new prison-like building type to hold in custody illegalized immigrants selected for immediate deportation out of the

<sup>4</sup> Giancarlo de Carlo commented on how humanist modernists enthusiastically worked on the 'Housing for the Existenzminimum', creatively supporting capital's suppression of the workforce (de Carlo, 2005 [1970]).

<sup>5</sup> This of course is a widespread but rarely self-reflected-on, position of architects, who see themselves as providing a service for the tasks of society, providing a service to the state, which, when run by elected politicians, is to be made responsible for the ideologies behind the tasks. Architects like to see themselves as 'only' taking on the responsibility of doing their best for a good environment, and of humanizing, calming, and reducing harshness in the case of economic or political pressures.

<sup>6</sup> In English, these are called 'Immigration Removal Centres' or 'Immigration Detention Centres'.

country. This project was greatly debated in architecture circles. It was not the Ministry of Justice, but the Ministry for Internal Affairs that organized an architectural competition for this 'Schubhaftzentrum' in the Styrian village of Vordernberg, requesting the design of a type of pre-deportation short-term prison. While this new building programme is being discussed in architectural circles for its achievements in architectural design (in narrow architectural terms) and with regard to its technical challenges (such as the fire escape routes if the prison-like building were to catch fire), it is hardly discussed with regard to the repressive modes of imprisonment used against people who are, and this has to be emphasized, not necessarily guilty of any crime (they are only guilty of not having a EU passport or entitlement of residence). This example is relevant, as one can see more and more prison space built and used outside of penal law, especially in migration politics (or rather, migration policing). The specific function of the 'Schubhaftzentrum' is to use imprisonment and punishment measures against asylum seekers.

The young group of architects, who won the competition, used specific well-meaning arguments in the public marketing campaign for their design, such as how they could increase a homely feeling of the space and reduce the prison-like elements, such as fenced windows, and install break-protected glass instead. Planners and sympathetic critics would call it 'social' architecture, and discuss it using the term the 'ethics' of architecture. Yet in this specific case, such humanism indirectly helps to imprison asylum seekers. With every press release and every award for the architecture office's 'human' design, they have contributed to reducing public resistance against the institution of the incarceration of migrants. Their counter-argument to such a critique would be that it would be much more of a problematic space without their engagement. While, in my view, and also in the view of activist groups supporting the 2012/13 Viennese refugee protests, every critical citizen and architect should radically oppose any such institution, hence should not work for it, but should critique it. On the other hand: can we really ignore the issue of improving a spatial situation for those who are already subject to such injustice? After all, it is the time of people's lives which is at stake. In this case, any such improvement has to be critically measured against its function within the routines and institutions of the EU's violent repressive measures against illegalized migration.

## THE 'WRONG' SOLUTION

Since it makes a difference, even if it is a small one, I return to *Out in Prison*: the art project in the prison mentioned above (a 'conventional' one, basing its use of force on penal law).<sup>7</sup> Confronted with all the dilemmas discussed above, I chose an approach with a double-face, a self-contradictory approach. Rather than only commenting on the spatial injustice by use of the intervention (which could be self-satisfying, but easily sarcastic or cynical), and rather than only 'improving' part of the spatial situation, I decided to combine the two: help *improve*, but also *expose*, or in other words: to describe the injustice by a critique turned into an aesthetic 'move', while at the same time increasing the usability and spatial quality of the courtyard by architectural means. In the end, I proposed to create the football field, which the prison administration had declared was both unnecessary and impossible to implement within the given spatial situation. The goal was to make the impossible happen, even though or precisely because there was indeed not enough space for it.

Within this paradoxical set-up, what *Out in Prison* tried to describe was not a right, but a 'wrong' solution, not a solution but rather a 'non-solution' (using the odd term from Siegfried Kracauer's theory of historical experience). The non-solution is a solution that remains risky and highly debatable, and in this sense, rather than the modest renouncing of a solution, there really is one, but a solution that is at the same time not a solution, or one that remains visibly haunted and affected by its utter incompleteness or, what's more, an openness to being contested and disputed (see also Robnik, 2013).

Wittgenstein once asked if, when we measure the table with a ruler, do we not also measure the ruler?<sup>8</sup> In our case, the object as well as the ruler were measured. The courtyard was tested for its capacity to fit a football field, which turned out to be an impossibility. Not even the dimensions of the tiniest football field, which would be a 'Bambini' football field, would fit into the space, which is supposed to be *the* only outdoor space for up to fifteen people at the same time, in total for around one hundred prisoners during their imprisonment. The intervention measured the courtyard as much as

<sup>7</sup> I want to clarify what I mean by the difference between a prison and an Immigration Detention Centre: Even though prisons are also filled with victims of racist or class injustice to a large extent, they are not exclusively designed for that purpose; in prison, we could, for example, also find the president of the Bayern Munich football club sentenced for tax evasion.

<sup>8</sup> English translation by the author (original cited in Leitner, 2000).

the sports field, which defines the space as too small for football, but not too small for a prison courtyard. What are the criteria used by the decision-makers (including the architects) that determine the yard's size? The balancing, the calculation is done by expert opinion, as there is no norm or regulation for a minimum of so many square metres of outdoor space per person.

I needed to 'wrinkle' the standardized Bambini football field into the prison courtyard to expose rather than cover up the choices, which led to this explicit example of uneven spatial distribution (Figures 4.3–4.5). The drawing of the field on the wall and on the folded landscape can be read as a mapping of the missing space, as an inscription of the (missing) conflict between the value of the built volume versus the value of free space, an everyday struggle in planning generally, so conspicuous in this prison.<sup>9</sup> *Out in Prison* does not change the underlying value system (the ruler), but since the spatial non-relation is drawn on the wall, it is staged as a *wrong* and we can make use of the inscription, to point out that there is a wrong relation, that the ruler is as wrong as the space. As a public art-in-architecture project, the image of the courtyard can be made public, even though prison space is usually quite secretive. It can be used as a picture for the situation (also by the political right-wing, of course, for example, to display the nonsensical use of public money), or it could even be used by the prisoners, who live or have lived with it, for instance, to address the authorities in a dispute over the withholding of space that they must suffer. But, more humbly put, what has been built as art in architecture can also simply be used as a place to sit, play, hang out, lie in the sun (Figure 4.6), or play inventive football or other sports.

## REACTIONS AND FAILURES

The repeated concern of the prison administration during the design process was that the football field would not be used, but rather would be vandalized immediately. In fact, a distanced 'let's see' position from the prison administration was the best I could get, and this was, at any rate, more valuable than resentful arguments against the project, often articulated in economic terms. One counter-argument was about spending too much public money for a football field for prisoners who would not value it, but would destroy it – or more

<sup>9</sup> This struggle is less obvious when planning public buildings such as schools, social housing, old peoples homes, for which the project brief dedicates just enough free space for that not to become a matter of conflict.



**Figure 4.3** The 'wrinkled' field overlaps with different rest areas facilitating different uses of space  
**Figure 4.4** The 'wrinkled' mini-football pitch in the men's recreation yard of Krem's prison  
**Figure 4.5** Outside in the prison courtyard. Source: Photo: Renaten Hoellwart.  
**Figure 4.6** An area for sitting in the space where the sun sometimes reaches  
 Source: Photo: Renaten Hoellwart.

resentfully, who were not really worth the investment. While people would have liked to see us use the cheapest lawn material, we used the best quality, with good endurance features and a pleasant feel. Some weeks after the courtyard was in use, I visited the site to see how it was working. Before I could even enter it, I was told that it looked vandalized and ugly: full of cigarette butts. When we entered the courtyard, I could see the floor was covered with cigarette butts, but I could also see that in my planning, I had forgotten a most crucial thing in this, the only outdoor space: not a single ashtray had been provided. Yet, the desire of some of the prison staff to prove their argument of vandalism was stronger than an acknowledgement that we had all forgotten the ashtray, or further, to blame the architect for that omission, which, in any other construction situation, would have been a foreseeable reaction. The butts and ashtray 'problem', however, could easily be solved. To date, every time when visiting the prison on a not-too-rainy day I have seen prisoners using the lawn in multiple

ways, doing some sports on the field, which since the installation of the lawn is no longer forbidden.

While this may seem like a 'positive' outcome, another incident showed how the critical aspect of the project can easily be seen in quite the opposite way than the one intended. A journalist enthusiastically published the image of the folded lawn in the context of a story about the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, labelling it a way of 'overcoming' the wall in the prison. Yet, *Out in Prison* does not intend to miraculously effect or plainly make-believe that the wall in the prison yard is no longer an obstacle; it does not pretend that we have managed to do away with the wall. Surely this would be an ideologically ridiculous and pretentious claim. Instead of such a compromised humanism or delusions of grandeur, architecture should opt for and work to expand rooms of play for conflict oriented towards more – even if minimally more – democratic spatial production.

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