

25 Years Euregional Prize for Architecture

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nýtt fangelsi á Íslandi

Participant info

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Project info

The nation of Iceland has since 2008 experienced an increase in incarceration rate and sentences. 6 prisons currently house 121 prisoners. However, the Hegningarhúsið detention house in Reykjavík was constructed over a 100 years ago, whilst the women's prison Fangelsið Kópavogsbraut 17 at Kópavogur lack the facilities and space required for a modern correctional facility. The thesis creates a design for a new prison for roughly 60 inmates located close to Reykjavík, replacing Kópavogsbraut 17 and Hegningarhúsið.

Through analysis of the history and theory of punishment; studying both outdated and current designs of such facilities in Europe; conducting site visits to incarceration and psychiatric facilities, an insight was gained as to what methods of punishment and rehabilitation best suit their purposes, and how this translates into architecture. The thesis examined current political, legal and social situations in Iceland regarding the general opinion and fundamental purpose of incarceration, consulting both the criminal code, current punishment methods, statistics of crime and sentences, inmate populations, to obtain a realistic formulation of a room schedule, an interpretation reflecting the society. The thesis culminates in a design that fulfils its full purpose, a well-functioning innovative and modern prison in the broadest and most critical sense.

The result is a deconcentrated design learning from the forensic psychiatry at Düren: minimizing aggression of prisoners; giving constant access to nature and fresh air; a sense of privacy and belonging; whilst integrating the prison design in the beautiful landscape. The design draws inspiration from historic city designs (the Forbidden City, the Medieval City, the Modernist City, the Viking City), a prison city. Influenced by Nordic architecture of the 1950's, each building receives its own identity, creating diversity within the wall. Employing variations of concrete, one of few materials that can be produced in Iceland, there is variation yet harmony.

