

Hope Inherent

map of Prison Project

July 2008 :

Met Sarah Searson, hear about _Unit, we are interested although a little concerned about time-frame + budget (but both are quickly increased)

Laois ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?
(tricky, mixed experiences of past public art projects)

What about the hotel with the refugees?

What about the **prison?**

[complicated, we are told it is unlikely that we will be facilitated and that it takes a long long time to be cleared etc etc]

AND THEN WE ARE DELIGHTED

We can do our project

The head of prison education, Mark Kavanagh tells us

“It is much easier to say no to this” but he doesn’t. he says **yes**.

but we learn that it is a very delicate system and we get good advice from our friend Rosie Lynch: Be mindful to allow space for others’ projects to happen when we have finished

So,

What is Hope Inherent’s role in a high security prison?

[It is different to other projects, a difficult place not a neutral place]

Usually our approach is to:

Provide small solutions to complicated, intimidating problems

+ To offer that which is missing or difficult to access

Think Think Think Think Think Think Think

OK

Instead of us offering the solution , we will investigate prisoners solutions

To request counsel from prison inhabitants on surviving extreme living conditions

(The premise for this enquiry is that the freedom of those living outside of a detention centre is also somewhat curtailed in terms of the restrictions imposed upon people sharing limited amounts of space, food, energy)

To thereby examine prison as amenity – a model for citizens for living well in highly challenging circumstances

Our role will be to investigate innovation, invention at play within the prison and to document the findings in a book(let)

We think about the prison as a way to challenge our practice - taking ideas we had in an urban context and testing them in the intensified environment of the prison - the prison as a microcosm

we consider

‘MEANS IN WHICH USERS REAPPROPRIATE
THE SPACE ORGANISED BY TECHNOLOGIES
OF SOCIOCULTURAL PRODUCTION’

Michel De Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life

Working with the Education Unit at Portlaoise our plan of action is to ask the prisoners a series of questions in a variety of ways: a simple questionnaire; chatting; drawing...

where in the prison are you most comfortable?
what would your ideal view be?
what is the first thing you do every day?
what would be a good routine for prison life?
do you sleep well?
would you like more brightness or darkness?
what % of you would you say is in prison?

.....accumulating information...

as we go we are researching relevant theory

Foucault, M, (1975) *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison*

and meanwhile looking for audiences at the periphery of the prison for whom the book(let) we produce might have a direct relevance

ex-prisoners support groups prison visitation committees family support networks active local residents committees prison officers associations citizens information and training programmes

in the National Archive there are pre-1924 penal records, open documentation from a different time when often prisoners left prison in better health than when they arrived...visual information gathered here might work in parallel to prison stories from today?

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and so that's where we are now

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