

ARTICLE

Participatory restorative justice design: creating space for restorative justice by centring the voices of those impacted by harm

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Abstract

The dominant justice system used in the United States can be mapped by the spaces in which it occurs – e.g. police stations, courthouses and prisons. Restorative justice calls for a new justice architecture that communicates the values of and goals for meaningful accountability, harm repair and the transformation of individuals, relationships and community. Designing restorative justice spaces and infrastructure is best done with the active engagement of those who have caused harm, those who have been harmed and their communities. Non-hierarchical collaborations between these parties and architects and designers ensures that the resulting space is physically safe, beautiful and structurally sound while also meeting individual and community needs. This design engagement may increase the likelihood that community members will access restorative justice practices and may also open their imaginations for expanding restorative justice into daily and community life. Through reflection on real world design projects and participatory design strategies used by the authors, this article explores the potential benefits of participatory design for the creation of spaces appropriate for a variety of restorative justice work, as well as argues that these design engagement processes have the potential to shift individual mindsets and transform communities in meaningful ways.

Keywords: participatory design, architecture, restorative justice design.

1 Introduction

The dominant justice system used in the United States can be mapped by the spaces in which it occurs – e.g. courthouses, probation and parole offices and jails and prisons. The design of these spaces is infused with messages, overwhelmingly punitive and adversarial, about the goals of justice and the participants in the

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justice process. Restorative justice calls for a new justice architecture that communicates the values of and goals for meaningful accountability, harm repair and the transformation of individuals, relationships and community. With few such spaces in existence, restorative justice often occurs in spaces designed for the dominant justice system, which keeps restorative justice work literally and symbolically situated within that system's grasp. Participants may thus miss an opportunity to experience the transformative power of healing environments in response to harm-doing and to imagine a community grounded in spaces for collaboration, dialogue, healing and relationship. Without rooms, buildings and community infrastructure for restorative justice work, the approach may never reach its full potential for individual, relational and community transformation.

Much like design in other contexts (De la Peña et al., 2017), there is reason to believe that the success of the design and construction of restorative justice spaces and community infrastructure relies on the active engagement of those who have caused harm ('responsible parties'¹), those who have been harmed ('harmed parties') and their communities. Although usually excluded from the design process, they are the primary users of restorative justice spaces and experts in their needs for repair, accountability and transformation, be it at the individual, interpersonal and community levels. Non-hierarchical collaborations between these parties and architects and designers increases the likelihood that the resulting space is physically safe, beautiful and structurally sound while also meeting community needs, increasing the likelihood that community members will access the space and restorative justice practices. The creativity of the design process may also inspire a 'radical imagination' (Van Buren & Torres-Campus, 2020) for new ways of being in relationship with each other and designing for just and equitable communities.

We authors are architects and a researcher affiliated with Designing Justice+Designing Spaces (DJDS), an architectural and real estate development firm that designs and constructs infrastructure, buildings and other spaces for restorative and social justice with and for communities of colour (DJDS, 2021). Through a variety of engagement activities, we have actively solicited the expertise of responsible and harmed parties and community members and have witnessed the forging of co-learning relationships to create healing spaces in which to experience restorative justice and build capacity for future projects. Lessons from this collaborative work further suggest that design engagement invites participants to critically examine and challenge dominant justice and architectural design approaches and open their imagination for ways to transform unhealthy and inequitable community infrastructure.

In this article, we reflect on the relationship among restorative justice theory and practice, the design of spaces in which restorative justice occurs, and the participatory design processes that we have used to engage community members, including responsible and harmed parties, in the design of rooms, buildings and infrastructure to support various types of restorative justice work. We contend

1 We borrow the language of 'responsible party' and 'harmed party' from Common Justice (www.commonjustice.org).

that these design processes can and do lead to the creation of spaces that embody restorative justice values appropriate for restorative justice practices in its many forms and deepen the restorative experience of spatial users while also opening design participants' imaginations for the possibilities of restorative justice in their daily and community lives. After a critical examination of an example of justice architecture in the United States, we offer a vision for restorative justice design (RJD) that grows out of our research. We then discuss the benefits of participatory design as we have observed them in practice and their consistency with restorative justice theory and present some of the design engagement tools we use to include people in the design of restorative justice rooms, buildings and infrastructures. We close with the argument that these design engagement processes have the potential to shift mindsets and transform individual, interpersonal and communities in meaningful ways.

2 From punitive to transformative architecture

Understanding the importance of the design process first requires an understanding of justice architecture and its relationship to justice theory and practice. Howard Zehr argues that dominant approaches to justice seek to identify the broken law, determine guilt and apply just deserts. The values that undergird these goals reflect the punitive and adversarial nature of the criminal legal system, in which punishment refers to the infliction of harm on the person found guilty of harming another, and the term 'adversarial' highlights the pitting of the responsible and harmed parties against each other, by way of their attorneys (Zehr, 2002, 2015). Courthouses in the United States afford us an accessible example of justice architecture and design for comparison with RJD. In the following description, we reflect on the stereotypical courthouse – e.g. located in a downtown core, monolithic and constructed from hard and impermeable materials. It is not representative of the design of all courthouses everywhere as design varies across design era, jurisdiction (e.g. local, state or federal), primary users (e.g. children or adults, people with mental health issues or with drug addiction), justice goals (e.g. drug, mental health and indigenous courts) and community culture. Indeed, some courthouses are more consistent with RJD than others for the way they respond to what people need based on their context (for example, Grant & Hook, 2021 and Law-Viljoen, 2006). The same is true for other types of justice architecture, such as correctional and detention facilities and offices of justice practitioners in parole, probation and other forms of community corrections. We invite the reader to take what they learn through our 'reading' of a stereotypical US courthouse design to reflect on the design of justice spaces in their communities and how they compare with RJD.

2.1 *The courthouse: an example of punitive and adversarial justice architecture*

The location and environmental context in which the courthouse exists, the courthouse building itself and the rooms within visually represent the punitive and adversarial nature of the system.

Courthouses are often centrally located within cities and towns, adjacent to other sites of governance, power and authority, such as governmental and economic institutions, and away from sites of private life, such as neighbourhoods, houses of worship and schools (Van Buren, 2009). This centralisation of the courthouse comes with consequences. Participating in the justice process may be inconvenient or financially inaccessible to some community members given costs associated with time off from work, transportation, parking and meals. As an institution that sits ‘over there,’ justice itself may seem alien, a perception that is exacerbated by the intricate legalities and confusing language and procedures of the system. The distance from private life also has the potential to send the message that justice is irrelevant for everyday life and distinct from non-criminal community issues of concerns such as racial, health and economic inequities. These consequences may disproportionately impact

black, Indigenous, Latinx and other communities of colour, who disproportionately experience such inequities and arrest, conviction and incarceration (Davis, 2019).

The courthouse building itself also communicates. For example, courthouses are often massive, monolithic structures made of concrete, stone or marble. Security procedures at entrances and throughout the building direct users to designated spaces and limit their ability to move freely. A web of hallways connects courtrooms with spaces dedicated to the workings of the court, with passage through these hallways dependent on who one is – e.g. the detained accused individual will travel one way through the courthouse, the harmed party will travel another and the judge yet another. There are few windows or transparent doors or surfaces (Flanders, 2006; Greene, 2006; Mulcahy, 2010). The impression one may get is that the courthouse is ‘just a set of rooms, corridors, and entrances’, void of the emotion and meaning that accompany the work inside (Tait & Kennedy, 1999: 1017). Perhaps most troubling, the massive scale, hard materiality, controlled points of entry and exit and lack of transparency may communicate that our current approach to justice is permanent, unchanging and deeply guarded.

The courtroom itself is another site of analysis. The judge often sits on a raised dais at the front of the room, literally overseeing the proceedings. The attorneys sit at adjacent tables facing the judge, an arrangement that suggests competition, with the accused person sitting passively at the defence table. The jury, when present, sits in a box to the side of the room, observing the competition for conviction or acquittal. The harmed party and their supporters sit in a gallery behind the attorneys, separated by a partition. Joining them are defendant supporters and other interested or vested community members. This arrangement makes visible that those most impacted by harm-doing are irrelevant for justice, other than the degree to which they serve as a witness. Symbolically and literally missing from the justice process are the harmed parties’ needs, the context in which harm-doing occurred, and the ways in which to attend to those needs and transform the context. Instead, the judge, attorneys and jury are situated as the

experts of justice (Gruzen, Daskalakis & Krasnow, 2006; Hryncewicz-Lamber & Lamber, 2012; Mulcahy, 2010; Tait & Emad, 2022; Van Buren, 2009).

Taken together, this type of architecture communicates the power possessed by the justice/legal system over the community and hides justice from their view (Greene, 2006) while also intending to be awe-inspiring (Flanders, 2006). Studies have found that courthouse architecture of this type negatively impacts survivors, or is perceived to do so. Toews' 2018 qualitative interview study found that survivors of violence experience courthouse architecture as cold and distant, offering little in the way of comfort or attention to their needs, and felt that they, their experiences and emotions were insignificant and unimportant. They also lacked privacy to get away from the intensity of court proceedings as well as defendants and their supporters. They noted that the architecture and design offered little in the way of working through revenge and anger. Newer research by DJDS and Toews (2022b) found that the design of a courthouse-based prosecutors' office, including waiting areas in the office space, contributed to feelings of anxiety, insignificance and a lack of safety and trust for the justice process and practitioners. Participants, who included violence survivors, prosecutors and homicide detectives, noted the design features that contributed to these feelings: bland and uninteresting design; a lack of windows, nature, privacy and beverages; intimidating signage; and uncomfortable and uninviting furniture. No research is known to exist about responsible parties' perspectives about the impact of courthouse design on them.

2.2 Restorative justice design (RJD)

In contrast, restorative justice prioritises the person who was harmed and their needs for repair, identifies who is responsible for repair and discerns the best process to facilitate meaningful accountability (Zehr, 2002). Guided by such values of respect and transformation, the responsible and harmed parties and community actively engage in the justice process as experts of their own needs and obligations and co-creators of the justice response so that the responsible party takes steps towards repairing the harm they caused. Restorative justice also focuses on the root causes of harm-doing, such as trauma exposure and racial, economic and other forms of social injustice (Davis, 2019; Toews, 2006; Yoder, 2020), making restorative justice a powerful force for ending criminal and social harm-doing and the use of harmful justice practices, such as incarceration.

RJD aims to visually represent restorative values and support individual and social healing and accountability. RJD draws on a rich collection of theoretical and empirical knowledge about environments that heal, including biophilic, supportive and trauma-informed design approaches. *Biophilic design* 'emphasizes the necessity of maintaining, enhancing, and restoring the beneficial experience of nature in the built environment' (Kellert, Heerwagen & Mador, 2011: vii) and seeks to create environments abundant with nature and natural shapes, patterns and representations, which has been shown by extensive research to improve physical, emotional mental, and social health and reduce depression and trauma symptomology (Kellert, 2018). *Supportive design* is a design theory aimed at stress reduction and enhanced well-being, originally with a concern for patients in medical contexts, that understands such outcomes occurring through user control

of the environment, social supports, positive distractions and physical comfort (Bosch & Lorusso, 2019; Ulrich et al., 2008). Research in medical care facilities has shown that supportive design reduces stress and pain, expedites healing and improves patient engagement with their care (Bosch & Lorusso, 2019; Watts, Khan & Pheasant, 2016), this latter outcome being particularly relevant for encouraging participation in restorative justice processes. *Trauma-informed design* theorises that the environment can be designed in a way that responds to the physiological impacts of trauma and supports body-brain regulation (TIDS, 2021). Such design translates trauma healing needs into environmental characteristics. Examples of such needs include body-brain regulation, safety (both emotional and physical), acknowledgement of survivors' experiences, reconnection to oneself and others, empowerment, collaboration, trust and transparency, and cultural relevance (Herman, 1997; Menakem, 2017; SAMHSA, 2014; Yoder, 2020). As an emerging approach, no known outcomes research is available that is specifically related to impacts of existing trauma-informed design.

Empirical design research grounded in restorative justice finds similar design preferences and outcomes as biophilic and supportive design, although the outcomes were anticipated or theorised by respondents, and sheds light on trauma-informed design characteristics. One qualitative interview study inquired about design preferences for a respite space for survivors while they attend court proceedings. Participants, who included violence survivors, organisational representatives and allied professionals, expressed a desire for space with the following elements: space to be in fellowship with loved ones over food; abundant nature; paths; comfy and worn textures and furnishings; spaces for children; cultural and spiritual artefacts; access to resources; and welcoming and inviting surroundings (Toews, 2020).

Two additional studies used a quantitative online survey as well as design workshops, conducted on Zoom owing to COVID, to solicit design preferences for a generic 'difficult and emotional conversation' and, more specifically, the offices of restorative justice programme (DJDS & Toews, 2022a) as well as those of prosecutors and homicide detectives (DJDS & Toews, 2022b). Participants across both studies included harmed parties, responsible parties, restorative justice practitioners, victim advocates, prosecutors and homicide detectives. From these studies emerge a preliminary typology for an RJD that converges around six categories: furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E); windows and doors; finishes and materials; sensory elements; objects of comfort and other spatial characteristics (DJDS & Toews, 2022b). The details of this emerging typology are beyond the purpose of this article, although key characteristics include

- *Privacy*, to facilitate emotional and physical safety, relaxation and reflection;
- *A domestic scale* that is simultaneously cosy and spacious;
- *Comfortable and diverse seating*, such as soft chairs that seat just one person and couches that can accommodate groups;
- *Home-like surroundings*, with art on the walls, throw rugs and music or nature sounds;
- *Hospitality* through food, beverages and access to a kitchen.

These studies inquired about the perceived impact of spaces with these design characteristics. Respondents redesigning the prosecutor's office expected that survivors would feel safe and calm, respected, confident and cared for in the space. They also anticipated that this would lead to them more actively engaging in the justice process because they could better focus, speak to their experiences and trust prosecutors and homicide detectives (DJDS & Toews, 2022b). Those providing design feedback for the restorative justice programme also expected feelings of safety, care, connection and calm in the spaces they designed in addition to a 'healing energy' that would address trauma. Their responses mapped onto the trauma healing needs introduced earlier (DJDS & Toews, 2022a). These findings offer important insight into how design can positively impact responsible and harmed parties and their experiences with justice.

Restorative justice architecture and design is distributed and embedded within community infrastructure as well, going beyond the building or room. Research shows that harm-doing codified as crime and justice system involvement grows out of social inequities related to, for instance, racism and economic and educational disparities (Burke Harris, 2018; Davis, 2019). These harmful inequities are represented spatially in, for example, under-resourced schools, food deserts, vacant lots and correctional facilities (Joye, 2007; Justice Mapping Center, 2021). RJD subsequently requires the availability, access and use of spaces that facilitate equity, inclusion and well-being for all, with a process that begins with addressing the root causes at systemic and neighbourhood levels.

It is evident that restorative justice manifests itself differently in architectural form than the dominant justice system. The different values, goals and practices require spaces that look and feel different from other everyday spaces. Pointer (2020) found that stepping out of the everyday world and into a restorative justice space shifted how participants saw themselves, others and the experience of justice, which in turn influenced how they interacted with each other. One walks in and knows that something different is going on or going to happen.

It is important to note that designing for physical, emotional and social health in the context of RJD is just one pathway to consider justice architecture. The field of justice design and architecture continues to grow, thus supporting multiple pathways to RJD and additional research on the impacts of design on justice participation and outcomes (for example, Costanza-Chock, 2020; Duncanson & Henderson, 202; Fitz, Krasny & Wien, 2019; Tate & Emad, 2022). Research methodologies also continue to evolve, diversify and come online as more design practitioners turn their attention to new design typologies, further deepening the understanding of the characteristics and impact of RJD.

3 Why concern for design engagement?

RJD creates a radically different type of ecosystem of spaces and places that focus on outcomes of healing, harm repair and community justice. The practice by which restorative justice spaces are designed and built must also reflect restorative goals, values and processes. We cannot design for restorative justice using the same

processes used to establish the dominant justice infrastructure because it will replicate existing spaces, further calcifying the perception of their permanence. Most critical to the design process is meaningful engagement of the primary users of the space – e.g. responsible and harmed parties and community members. Such engagement is particularly important for positioning intended users as experts of their environmental needs in order to ensure that spaces, and the restorative justice practices housed within them, are used.

3.1 User expertise

Since the 1960s the inclusion of community engagement approaches in the design process has gone through many transitions and titles as the practice has evolved (Wilson, 2018). However, in-depth, creative community engagement is still not the norm within the architecture and design fields (De la Peña et al., 2017). Much like the justice system that positions justice professionals as lone experts, society and other building industries elevate the architect as both the technical expert in designing and building physically safe, beautiful and structurally sound buildings *and* the expert in what users need and want in their spaces. This view is true as it pertains to the technical and structural aspects of spaces; however, architects do not intrinsically possess the awareness of all constituents' needs. Architects typically work with the client to identify the aesthetic values and uses of the space, engaging them through interviews, presentations and feedback to show how client ideas are being incorporated into the design. In the justice context, the client typically means judges or other municipal leaders who are the arbiters of the justice system and control the financial means to operate it. The implication is that the work of design is intimately tied to power, where those with authority, money and privilege impose justice design on the community.

This architect-client relationship and way of approaching design typically excludes community members who will most directly participate in and be impacted by what happens in the space (and who pay for it with their tax dollars). The result is that traditional models of architecture as well as urban development are often out of alignment with, or ignorant of, the values and lived experiences of the communities impacted by the project. While community members may provide public comment on decisions already made, their opinion is not typically considered 'expertise' worthy of consideration in ways that impact the design or construction of the project. Just as in the justice system, this exclusion from the design process can be experienced as victimising and is especially problematic for black and brown communities who are disproportionately impacted by criminal justice policies, practices and architecture.

Design engagement, similar in practice to design thinking (Brown, 2019), which is consistent with restorative justice practices of inclusion, reduces the hierarchy between the architect and the intended users of the project. In its place is a process of interdependence and co-learning where the architect shares their technical and structural knowledge with the community and community members share their lived experiences and environmental needs and preferences with the architect. The collaboration is dynamic and sustained throughout all phases of a project, from concept development, site selection and acquisition to

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pre-development and construction to occupancy and post-occupancy evaluation. The result is a final project that is safe – meaning a sense of safety and comfort is perceived by all those who use it – and structurally sound and that comprehensively addresses community perspectives, needs and preferences. Community participants also realise their own expertise while engaged as in this process, enabling them to apply this wisdom in future infrastructure or design projects.

3.2 Accessed and engaged spaces

Engaging those most impacted by harm-doing will lead to ecosystems and spaces that reflect their lived experiences and what they say they need in order to have a transformative and restorative experience. This will, in turn, encourage use of the space and engagement with restorative services. For example, if the location of a restorative justice space is undesirable or inaccessible to prospective users, they will not go there. Or, if the design of space elicits feelings of confinement, for instance, community members may resist participating in services offered within that space. Without community access and use, the point of having a restorative justice space is moot.

For example, the Syracuse Peacemaking Center, the first centre for Native American peace-making practice in a non-native community and designed by DJDS, is a place where individuals involved in quality of life crimes (such as burglary, destruction of property, drug dealing and assaults) are diverted out of court and into peace-making circles. Community members gave input into the design of the centre through a variety of processes – e.g. a ‘Peacemaking Palette’ in which they shared stories about peace through images, colours, textures and objects, role plays and drawing. The result is a centre that is situated on neutral neighbourhood territory and that offers a home-like setting with a kitchen and lounge with soft seating (Figure 1).

Figure 1 *Community members participate in a restorative justice circle at the Syracuse Peacemaking Center, featuring a living room atmosphere, kitchen and office space. Source and copyright: David Revette.*



The programme provider, the Center for Court Innovation, has indicated that community use of the Center and the associated impacts are exceeding expectations, often in ways they did not anticipate. For example, not only do community people feel comfortable engaging in circles at the Center, but also a local school diverts the most challenging cases to peace making, supported by the Center's proximity to it. Community members also use the Center for non-justice purposes, such as engagement parties and baby showers, with youth using it as a place to hang out. Overall, its design and location support social cohesion and the expansion of restorative justice as a practice (personal communication with Syracuse Peacemaking Center Staff, 2021).

4 Tools of design engagement

DJDS has developed a number of engagement tools, games, exercises and programmes that are easily accessible to non-designers and that help build connections among seemingly disparate constituents in the community. The following introduction to key tools is not an exhaustive list, as new methodologies and activities are constantly being developed, and will continue to do so, as our collective understanding of what it takes to build a new justice infrastructure evolves and grows. Further, the tools can be applied to any context – e.g. the design of a neighbourhood trauma centre, of a meditation room in a school or a circle space in a prison.

4.1 Tool of scale

The tool of scale is geared towards understanding how the user relates to a design element and how that element then relates to other elements – e.g. how a window

impacts the user, how that window impacts the room it is in, the room to the building and the building to the neighbourhood and so on. There are three initial scales of infrastructure: the ecosystem, the building and the room. Justice values and priorities are communicated at each scale. The courthouse example of justice architecture discussed earlier used scale as the reference point through the courthouse location (ecosystem), the materiality of and spaces within the courthouse (building) and the design of the courtroom (room). Restorative justice infrastructure is also realised at each scale, thus requiring design engagement that also occurs at each. Each scale is discussed in more detail in what follows, along with a DJDS case study exemplifying it.

Ecosystem. Ecosystem refers to the broad environmental context in which justice practices are located – e.g. a neighbourhood or city – and the built and natural infrastructure that is available, desirable, (in)accessible, unwanted and absent within that context. The dominant justice ecosystem, for example, is one where probation, parole and reporting offices are scattered around cities, police stations are neighbourhood based, and courthouses and custodial facilities are centralised.

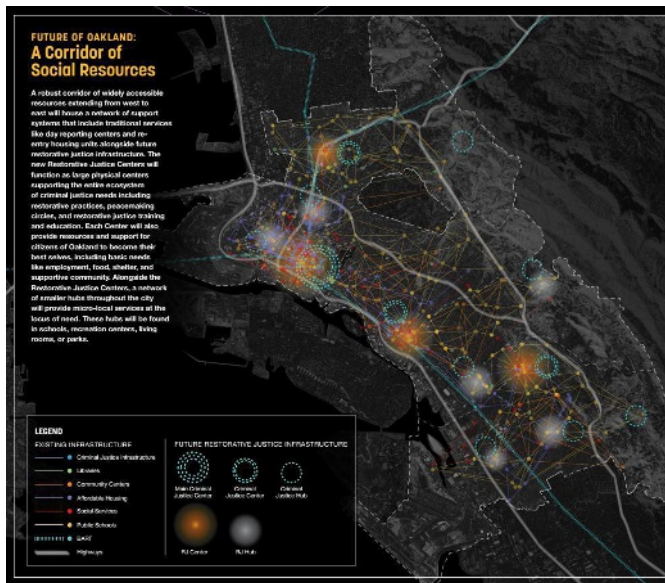
This scale is often part of urban design or planning, fields that are critical because restorative justice cannot reach its full potential in terms of impact without a vision for city- or county-wide plan that facilitates just and equitable communities. Indeed, racial, economic and social injustice has historically played out spatially and continues to do so today. Just a few examples include the historical displacement of Indigenous, Asian American and African American people from their land; redlining practices that left black neighbourhoods without the financial resources to build their communities; urban renewal that displaced black and brown communities, destroyed the cultural fabric of their lives and, through highway construction, cut communities in half to support white flight to suburbia. There is a direct correlation between the disinvestment in communities of colour and the overspending on police, probation and parole in the same neighbourhoods, while the people who experience the justice system are then uprooted from their communities of care and sent to jail or prisons far from home (Rothstein, 2017). Center for Spatial Research (2021) and Justice Mapping Center (2021) used criminal justice data to graphically show city blocks where one million dollars is spent each year to incarcerate its community members. Their powerful maps also showed that the infrastructure and community resources needed to support returning citizens were absent and justice spaces, such as parole offices, were difficult to get to. These blocks were often environmentally unhealthy, surrounded by brown fields and vacant lots and void of green space and nature.

An RJD process at this scale must include the inclusion of these past histories and current realities in order to create ecosystems that support justice in its many forms – e.g. grocery stores, medical and mental health services, businesses that offer employment at liveable wages, schools, public transportation and green spaces/parks that can support environmentally healthy air quality. It will include features considered desirable to the community, such as bodegas, community gardens, schools, houses of worship, cultural centres and trauma and community dialogue spaces (LACATI, 2021). Restorative justice spaces will be strategically

positioned to facilitate ease of use, be they near a public transportation line or in neighbourhoods considered neutral and emotionally and physically safe to community members.

Mapping an ecosystem, a design engagement process discussed later, reveals a community's strengths and gaps in terms of their infrastructure and ability to environmentally support justice. For example, the Restorative Justice City project, undertaken with DJDS and The Institute for the Future, engaged a wide range of stakeholders to imagine what the city of Oakland would look like if restorative justice was the primary way of addressing harm in the community. The group used an analogue mapping tool and imagined a constellation of major and minor restorative justice hubs connected to existing schools and community centres with transport to the Oakland hills as a space of refuge (Figure 2). The ecosystem mapping process inspired a group of non-profits to buy a building and create a version of their imagined restorative justice hubs in the form of Restore Oakland, the country's first centre for restorative justice and restorative economics.

Figure 2 *An Oakland Restorative Justice Map resulting from community engagement efforts. Courtesy of DJDS.*



Building. The building scale refers to the built space within the ecosystem in which restorative justice practices will be housed or facilitated. A building is a collection of spaces, such as the façade, entries and exits, passageways, rooms, individual purpose spaces and zones within spaces. It is concerned with operations as well as lighting, circulation and procession, colour, scent, ventilation and access to nature. Designing at this scale requires an understanding of what constituents currently

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have and use as well as what they want or need within and outside the building to facilitate restorative justice. The Restore Oakland building is an example of this scale (Figure 3).

Figure 3 *The sun filled offices of the Ella Baker Center at Restore Oakland.*
Source and copyright: Emily Hagopian.



During the design engagement process, prospective Restore Oakland users engaged in asset mapping, collage, virtual reality using Google glasses, and model making to identify the building location as well as where the planned uses should be located inside the building envelope (all the exterior surfaces of the building) in relation to each other and the look and feel they desired throughout the building. They were clear, for instance, that there needed to be art throughout and that the restorative justice space needed to be located on the quieter side of the building, near the bathrooms and kitchen. The Google glasses helped them to visualise the space and were later used for fundraising for the project.

Room. The room scale is about the design of specific spaces within a building such as FF&E, flooring, windows and doors, nature, sounds and scents, objects of comfort and privacy features. A restorative justice room will have design features that promote restorative justice values, goals and diverse reparative, relational, dialogic and transformative practices. Design at this scale also applies the design theories (e.g. biophilic, supportive, trauma-informed) and evidence-based design characteristics discussed earlier.

The peace-making room at Restore Oakland uses a variety of design strategies to support people and all their senses and emotions as they engage in the difficult conversations happening there (Figure 4).

Figure 4 *Restorative justice space in the Restore Oakland building, with natural light, calming color and light fixtures, flexible furniture and walls, and artworks. Source and copyright: Emily Hagopian.*



Design participants used model making and collage to identify the qualities and features they wanted in the room. Features included breaking up the space with low walls to create small rooms adjacent to the circle space where participants could cool off and greet visitors. They desired cool colours like blue in the space and an abundance of natural daylight. One model included a large ‘expression wall’, a mark-able and erasable surface where people could draw and express themselves, thereby celebrating self-expression and allowing users to customise and influence the environment. DJDS architects facilitated and guided these processes, and, using their technical and design expertise, translated and expanded participants’ ideas into digital architecture models that participants could see on their phones. Many of their design ideas were incorporated into the final design, including artwork that reflect cultural values of the communities using the space and light fixtures shaped like clouds that float over the restorative justice circle space.

4.2 Approaches and tools of engagement

DJDS has used a variety of diverse design engagement methods to support the design of various project scales. These methods are typically facilitated in-person in, for instance, group workshops. The COVID pandemic has created exciting opportunities for virtual applications of these strategies; one such example is discussed in what follows. While not ideal, DJDS has discovered that this digital approach enables a broader outreach for community members to participate in the engagement process.

4.2.1 Designers on deck

Designers on Deck (DoD) is a ‘train the trainers’ approach through which DJDS engages and compensates community leaders and interested system-impacted individuals to establish decision-making procedures, engage the community,

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design the site and explore the architecture programming, including the size and types of rooms. The DoD process centres the voices and lived experiences of systems-impacted people and other community members and models co-learning. The DoDs share with the architects and designers their expertise in their own experience and showcase their knowledge of their communities. Designers work with the DoDs to train community members to understand specific design elements and make decisions on which elements to incorporate and train the DoDs themselves on the real estate process concurrent with the project's development, so they can comfortably participate in decisions around site selection, financing, partnerships and construction. The DoD approach is a particularly helpful strategy when working in communities one is not familiar with and is critical for building capacity within local communities to participate as civic advocates in future justice- and development-related initiatives.

4.2.2 *Tools for the ecosystem scale and planning*

Start Stop Continue. This simple exercise uses a poster board and Post-Its with a question at the top, such as 'what do you want to stop, start or continue in your community?' (Figure 5). These three categories give participants an opportunity to provide feedback on aspects of their communities that they like and dislike and to share things they wish their communities had and/or that they would like to see improved. This tool is one of the first steps in gauging the 'temperature' of communities that may be impacted by a project.

Figure 5 *Members of the Atlanta City Detention Center Task Force discuss programs to start, stop, or continue in their Atlanta Community. Courtesy of DJDS.*



Ecosystem Mapping. Using cards with the words 'who', 'what', 'where', 'why' and 'how' written on them, participants explore the ecosystem surrounding a project, considering how it can be designed for the benefit of the community (Figure 6). Such a process reveals strengths and gaps in community infrastructure and

identifies which spaces are accessed and used and which are inaccessible or avoided. This exercise can provide in-depth information on aspects of the community, and of community members' reference points, that may be hard to obtain otherwise.

Figure 6 *Partners in an Unbuilding Jails Coalition use an ecosystem mapping tool to define the partnership and program goals. Source and copyright: Natalie Wang.*



Asset Mapping (Your Neighbourhood, Your Street). Looking at a map of their neighbourhood, participants think about what places are missing or what they would like to see more of on their streets, after which they place land-use game pieces, which show land uses allowed by the planning code, in various locations on the map. This tool helps neighbours understand how planning codes work and think critically about their environment, while informing the development team about resources that may be needed for the success of a project.

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4.2.3 Tools for the building scale

Seat at the Table. This is a creative engagement tool that gives participants a seat at the table during the design process. Participants gather and arrange coloured 3-dimensional blocks that represent the programmes and architectural spaces they would like to see in the project (Image 7). This exercise also helps individuals understand spatial requirements, constraints and project size in three dimensions.

Figure 7 *A young community member shows his own vision for how to use the space in the Atlanta City Detention Center for a Center for Equity. Courtesy of DJDS.*



Space and Finance Planning Game. In this design exercise, participants arrange the different spaces and activities they would like to see included in a project through the use of coloured game pieces that represent various sizes and types of uses for the space (Figure 8). This helps individuals understand the spatial requirements for different types of spaces and activities, helping them to make informed decisions and to prioritise the most desirable uses based on space requirements and how those spaces and activities can be situated within a building or on a site. This exercise can also include a financial component where participants roll dice and get poker chips representing various revenue streams that they use to pay for the uses they want.

Figure 8 *A community member places architectural programming bubbles which represent square footages on a floor plan of the project. Courtesy of DJDS.*



Visioning Cards. This exercise allows participants to create a vision for the look and feel of their project with the use of emotive imagery cards. These cards can be pre-made, or the participants can create their own as part of the exercise (Figure 9). Vision Cards can be used in conjunction with Vision Boards, which provide a framework within which participants can create their vision. Participants are asked to select Vision Cards that represent the words on the Vision Boards, such as 'safety', 'gather', 'play', 'rest' or 'love', which are tailored to their community's needs or the focus of their project.

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Figure 9 Staff from potential project partner, Sister Hearts, use visioning cards to share ideas for what their campus might feel like. Source and copyright: Garrett Jacobs.

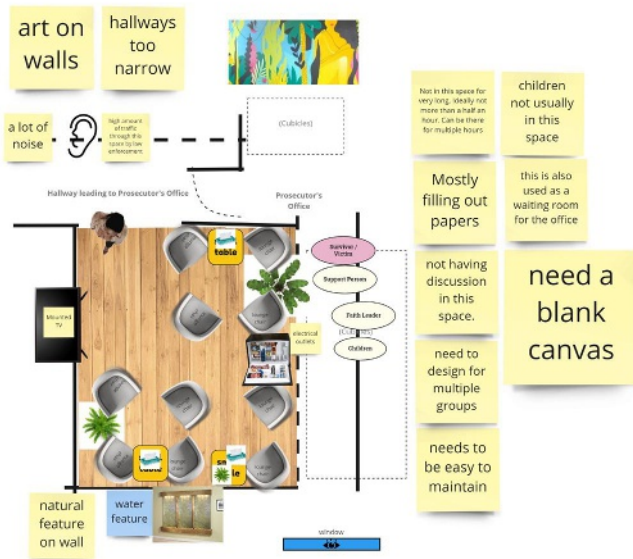


4.2.4 Tools for the room scale

Spatial layout planning. Design work invites participants to give form to their visions for how spaces *could* be designed to meet their needs. Using a variety of supplies like images of furniture, plantings, cabinetry and other elements like plants, water features or even pieces of art, participants design a room or series of rooms by moving these pieces around a floor plan or three-dimensional view of a floor plan.

Spatial layout planning is one tool that has been successfully facilitated on a videoconferencing platform with the use of Miro, a digital whiteboard. The Miro board includes an empty outline of a floor plan as well as a catalogue of images representing different design features they may want – e.g. nature, floor coverings, windows and different types of chairs and tables (Figure 10). Participants design the space with the assistance of an architect who moves the representative images into and around the layout according to participants' preferences. The architect may also search for and retrieve desired characteristics on the internet that are not in the existing image catalogue.

Figure 10 Community members designed a courthouse waiting area for violence survivors using a digital whiteboard. Courtesy of DJDS.



Model Making. Many of the tools mentioned previously are two-dimensional exercises; however, three-dimensional representations of space are often very helpful ways for people to visualise designs. Full-size and scaled models are a great way to explore design at the scale of a room (Figures 11 and 12). Smaller scale models can easily be constructed with simple materials so many people can take an active role in shaping their environment, or larger full-scale models can be made so that people can experience the space in the size and dimensions that would exist in the real world. Supplies can include 4' x 8' cardboard sheets, various papers, fabrics and any materials one can find to quickly 'mock up' the space that folks are envisioning.

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Figure 11 *Community members build full-scale mock-ups out of cardboard, to help design the School On Wheels. Courtesy of DJDS.*



Figure 12 *Currently incarcerated community members build paper models of restorative justice spaces. Courtesy of DJDS.*



DJDS customises these tools for each community, ensuring they are appropriate for the project and culturally and linguistically relevant. The participants can even be involved in designing the tools themselves to ensure they are relevant for their particular community. DJDS also attends existing community events to build on what they learn in other design forums so as not to layer on additional and potentially taxing work.

5 Shifting mindsets and transforming community

These design engagement efforts lead to the design of ecosystems, buildings, rooms and other spaces that are radically different from whatever is the norm for dominant criminal justice and community spaces. Walking into restorative justice spaces at any scale can influence users' willingness to engage in restorative justice practices and their behaviour and relationships with others while in it (Pointer, 2020), which they may carry with them out into the world (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2009). The design engagement process may have a similar influence on participants. The DJDS experience with engaging responsible and harmed parties and community members suggests that RJD engagement inspires self-reflection about, for instance, one's needs in other areas of life, expectations of others and the power of collaboration to creatively find ways to meet personal and social needs and obligations. It may further shift how participants think about justice now that they have seen the criminal justice system in architectural form and explored ways to build a justice system based on different values and goals. They may begin to consider restorative justice at home and work and with other communities in which they are involved. Participants may newly notice healthy and unhealthy, equitable and inequitable designs in their communities and realise that we do not need to build what we usually build or do justice the way we always do. No longer satisfied with, or resigned to accept, design or justice 'as usual', participants may call for new ways of being in relationship at the community and structural level and use their new design knowledge to work to build the infrastructure to support it. They may call, for instance, for trauma and peace-making centres to address harm-doing, not detention and correctional facilities, centring place and space as an active part of transforming the justice system.

Design engagement has the potential to open the imagination and invite participants to be creative and dream about what the world could look and be like if ecosystems, buildings, rooms and other spaces were designed for justice and equity and to inspire participants to advocate and act for criminal justice and social transformation (Van Buren & Torres-Campus, 2020). Such transformation will occur over multiple generations as there are deep mindset shifts that need to take place, but critical to starting this shift is engaging with and prioritising the expertise of those most impacted by the system, be they responsible or harmed parties or communities, especially communities of colour. Their ability to analyse and design spaces and places repositions them from passive recipients to active change agents, just as in restorative justice practice. These impacted individuals will be among the first to design away punishment and inequity and design for healing, justice and equity. They will establish the reference point for justice and architectural transformation and anchor restorative and healing mindsets for the next generation.

RJD design supports a justice experience built on respect, participation, accountability and transformation for those who have caused harm, those who have been harmed and their communities. Actively including these individuals in the design process is a restorative experience itself and ensures that the room, building and ecosystem encourages restorative justice approaches. Perhaps most

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powerful, however, is the transformative possibilities of participation in the design process. Creativity abounds in the imagination and, when unleashed, can change the world.

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