

The Village

The Spatiality of Biopolitics in Building Europe's New "Femern Belt Region"

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The Village: The Spatiality of Biopolitics in Building Europe's New "Femern Belt Region"

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In Denmark, a 1.2 million m² construction site, enclosed by a fence, is dedicated to building an 18 km immersed tunnel linking Denmark and Germany in a new Femern Belt Region. Behind the fence lies a world of men, mud, and machinery—a bastard hybrid of part construction site and part residence, primarily housing Polish blue-collar workers.

The Danish state, overseeing the project, has hired FLC to build the tunnel and construct "The Village," Europe's largest on-site residential complex for workers, comprising 42 units with a total of 1,344 rooms measuring 8.6 m² each.

Guidelines for the conditions in The Village have been set by the Danish authorities and unions. These guidelines align with their utopian vision of creating the best housing conditions for workers on construction sites in Denmark, following grim examples of living conditions in and around Copenhagen during the metro construction.

Our study delves into the paradoxical outcomes of this utopian vision. While lauded by those in power, The Village is described by workers as akin to living in a prison camp. The study uncovers how the workers feel monitored and trapped in their own situation due to the spatial organization of The Village, which includes strict security measures, visitor restrictions, scheduled mealtimes limited to three per day, and living behind enclosures with checkpoints and surveillance cameras.

In addition to these physical installations, the workers are bound to The Village through clauses in their contracts prohibiting them from settling outside The Village. The study exposes how these utopian visions are based on stigmatizing and patronizing views and representations of foreign workers. It reveals how the utopian efforts of the authorities and unions to create the perfect model creates prison camp-like structures blurring the boundary between everyday life and work.