In Agema’s model, prisoners have to meet educational objectives in order to reach the next “level.” In the case of civilian ought to be the objective of this conditioning, as well as which agenda he ought to be subconvent to. The question of what happens if the objectives are not met also remains unresolved, which suggests that this simply means that the prisoner then is stuck in a phase indeterminately.

Within this model, punishment is ambiguous: all inmates that are considered to be suitable for this model start in the first phase. Agema does not provide any clarity on the exact profile of prisoners, but merely states the following: “The aim of the four-phase approach is to design a model for detention that provides a specific group of detainees with the knowledge that is necessary to function within our social system. This approach is not fit for all types of convicts, which is why it cannot be replaced by measures only.”

The inmate is thus literally reflected by his surroundings: when displaying bad behavior, he descends further into the depths of darkness in a smaller cell. But if he meets his educational objectives, his environment will become brighter, work becomes lighter, his worldview expands, and his cell becomes more spacious. Everything then depends on the educational objectives and the prisoner’s capacities to meet them, but this is precisely what remains unaddressed by Agema. It is clear that there are educational objectives, as well as the fact that the willingness to be conditioned is a guarantee for more personal privileges. But what remains uncomfortably unanswered is the question of what type of civilian ought to be the objective of this conditioning, as well as which agenda he ought to be subconvent to. The question of what happens if the objectives are not met also remains unresolved, which suggests that this simply means that the prisoner then is stuck in a phase indeterminately.

Agema’s proposal for a phased prison represents a social model, which has already been under construction for a considerable amount of time. Those who do not meet the norm or those who question it, will be faced with an invisible power, which naturally pushes the citizen toward the scum towns. As such, Agema’s work needs to be considered as a case study within the debate about the repressive society and the society of control, versus the possibility of a democratic society, in which common interest and political emancipation occupy the center stage. (All images and text from Jonas Staal, Closed Architecture, Eindhoven: Ono, 2011).