CONFINEMENT, CROSSINGS AND CONDITIONS FOR PRISONERS IN THE UK AND NORWAY – COMPARATIVE RESEARCH ON PENAL EXCEPTIONALISM

Dr Anna Schliehe & Dr Julie Laursen
## Presentation Overview

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INTRODUCTION

- Contrasts in punishment and the stated differences between so-called ‘Anglophone excess’ and ‘Nordic exceptionalism’

- Offering a qualitative and in-depth insight into penal similarities and differences between the UK and Norway

- Reflect in-depth on the crucial phase of setting up and starting a comparative research project across institutional borders
The proposed research programme

Four inter-related sub-studies

'Inclusionary' jurisdiction

- Entry/Exit/Post-release
- Female offenders and sex offenders
- 'Deep-end custody'
- Penal policymaking & the penal field

'Exclusionary' jurisdiction
The Entry/Exit sub-study is the furthest developed in terms of research design and fieldwork.

This sub-study is divided into three phases:
- Entry
- Exit
- Post-release

We are interested in the experiences of:
- Mainstream male prisoners
- Female prisoners
- Sex offenders
England and Wales Entry/Exit Study

Overall sample size:
- 40 mainstream male
- 20 sex offenders male
- 20 women

Total Interview Estimate:
- ~200

Phase 1 – Entry
<3 week after admission
- 30 interviews:
  - 20 mainstream
  - 10 sex offenders
- Ethnography of entry and interviews
- Male local prison (urban)

Phase 2 – Exit
<1 month before release
- Ethnography of exit
- Interviews with longitudinal sample
- Follow-up in-depth interviews

Phase 3 – Exit
>3 month post release
- Follow-up in-depth interviews

Chelmsford
- 30 interviews:
  - 20 mainstream
  - 10 sex offenders
- Ethnography of entry and interviews
- Male local prison (provincial)

Peterborough
- 20 interviews:
  - women
- Ethnography of entry and interviews
- Female local prison

Springhill
- Ethnography of exit
- Interviews with supplement sample to reach 80 interviews in total for exit
- Open prison (male)
- Follow-up in-depth interviews with as many as possible

Highpoint
- Ethnography of exit
- Interviews with supplement sample to reach 80 interviews in total for exit
- Cat-C (male)
- Follow-up in-depth interviews with as many as possible
In the field of comparative penology, the Nordic countries generally stand out as ‘exceptional’ in terms of their low imprisonment rates, small prisons, good material conditions and humane treatment of prisoners (Pratt & Eriksson 2013).

Pratt (2008a, 2008b) argues that the social democratic model of the welfare state helped facilitate such inclusionary penal policies.

The Norwegian penal system could be termed penal-welfarism (Garland 1985).
With an incarceration rate of 74 per 100,000 of the national population, Norway clearly stands out from England and Wales with an incarceration rate of 147.

- Actual number of prisoners:
  - E&W: 85,897
  - Norway: 3,874

- Number of Prisons:
  - E&W: 123 (currently running over-capacity)
  - Norway: 54

(World Prison Brief NOV 2016: http://www.prisonstudies.org/country/)
Field Sites for England & Wales
Field Sites for Norway
SENSITISING CONCEPTS

**Depth**: distance & polarity from outside world e.g. security, control, permeability

**Weight**: oppressiveness, burden and use of authority, interpersonal treatment

**Tightness**: invasiveness, grip, impact on personal identity & self-regulation

**Breadth**: reach beyond the prison e.g. stigma, ‘disabilities’

- Shame/Guilt
- Penal Consciousness

→ Translating concepts into fieldwork tools
OF CROSSINGS AND CONDITIONS – METHODS OF COMPARATIVE PENOLOGY

- How to do comparative planning
- Working across translations
- Crossings of boundaries – first examples from the field
HOW TO DO ‘COMPARATIVE’ PLANNING

Example of Entry/Exit Phase 1 Interview Schedule Pages 1-2

Intervjuguide fase 1 innsettelsen

**Introduksjon**
- Introduksjon av forskningsprosjekt og forklaring og gjennomgang av samtykkeerklæringen
- Anonymitet og samtykkeerklæring
- Før forskerkode: ______ / ______ / ______ / ______

**Generelle spørsmål**
- Kan du begynne med å fortelle meg litt om hva du er allt mest stolt av i ditt liv? (innenfor eller utenfor fengsel)
- Kan du fortelle meg noe positivt om deg selv, som de fleste andre ikke vet om?
- Hvilke ting i livet gir deg håp og pågangsmod?

**Baggrund**
- Kanske du kan begynne med å fortelle meg litt om hvem du er og din bakgrunn – hvor du kommer fra, familien din, sårne ting?
  - Hvordan var oppveksten din?
    - Hvor vokste du opp?
  - Hvordan så livet ditt ut før du kom i fengsel, hva slags liv levde du?
    - Hvilke personer stod deg nærmest og betydelst mest for deg?
    - Hva gjorde du før å tjene penger, var du i arbeid?
    - Hvor og hvordan bodde du før du kom inn?
    - Hvem var det du tilbrakte mest tid med?
    - Brukte du narkotika og/eller drakk du alkohol?
- Hvor mye kontakt hadde du hatt med rettssystemet før du ble fengslet denne gangen?
- Kan du fortelle meg litt om dine opplevelser med pågripelsen og varetæksfengslingen i forbindelse med denne fengslingen dommen?
  - Hvordan foregikk arrestasjonen/pågripelsen, skjedde det i offentlighet, uniformert politi, vold, maktbruk, trauma etc.?
  - Hvordan opplevde du rettsakken og det å være i retten?
  - Fikk du skade og opplevelse i mediene?

**Preliminaries**
- Introduction to research project/ explain information sheet
- Confidentiality/consent form
- Add research code to documents ______ / ______ / ______ / ______ / ______

**General questions [appreciative start]**
- Can you begin by telling me about the thing in your life that you are most proud of? (probe – inside prison, outside prison)
- Can you tell me something positive about yourself that most people don’t know about?
- What gives you hope and energy in life?

**Background**
- Can you spend a few minutes telling me about yourself and your background – where you’re from, your family, and so on?
  - How was your childhood?
    - Where did you grow up?
  - What kind of life were you leading before you came in?
    - What were the most important relationships for you?
    - What were you doing in terms of work or money?
    - Where did you live before you came in?
    - Who were you spending time with?
    - Did you use any illegal drugs/alcohol?
- How much contact have you had with the criminal justice system before coming into this prison?
- Can you tell me what the experience of arrest and being held by the police was like for this offence?
  - Arrest (public, uniformed police, violence, trauma...)?
  - How was your experience of the trial/being to court?
  - Media attention
### Examples of Survey Questions Entry/Exit Study Part 2 and 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>FOR EACH QUESTION BELOW, PLEASE PUT A CIRCLE AROUND THE RESPONSE THAT BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU FEEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am treated with respect by staff in this prison</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In this prison, you have to walk on eggshells</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Staff in this prison do their best to help me</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel cared about most of the time in this prison</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1. Wishing that time would go faster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. How often do you experience this problem?</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. When you experience this problem, how easy is it to deal with?</td>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>Quite easy</td>
<td>In-between</td>
<td>Quite difficult</td>
<td>Very difficult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. Wishing you had more privacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. How often do you experience this problem?</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
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<td>b. When you experience this problem, how easy is it to deal with?</td>
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'How much privacy do you feel you have here?'

‘Hvor mye privatliv føler du at du har her?’

‘How does trust work in here’?

‘tillit’/ ‘at stole på’ / ‘stoler du på nogen’
BERGEN FENGSEL
OUTLOOK ON COMPARATIVE PRISON RESEARCH

- This study aims to provide a comparative analysis of prisoners’ experiences and the penal field in England & Wales and Norway

- Exploring the challenges and possibilities of conducting comparative research using our own particular experiences of boundary crossing over country borders and research methods

- Capturing different aspects of the prison experience, formed around the concepts of the ‘depth’, ‘weight’, ‘tightness’ and ‘breadth’ of confinement

- Dialogue on the thesis of penal exceptionalism and the special role that Nordic countries have played in prison research
THANK YOU!

Contact us under: http://www.prc.crim.cam.ac.uk/directory/research-themes/comparative-penology