

# SPOTLIGHT



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

Institute of Criminology

## PRISONS RESEARCH CENTRE

## NEWSLETTER

March 2018

Issue 3

### Note from the Director



Greetings to all. It has been another remarkably busy period since our last Newsletter, with the two-day Prisons Research Centre Conference 2017 serving as the

highlight of our year, thanks to an even more inspiring line up than last year, and an intense and honest exchange about our methods, values and practices, and their meaning and effects. We benefitted from the presence of both regular and new attendees, and from the ongoing discussions about what prisons research is for and how to do it well and with 'moral energy', despite the major constraints and difficulties faced. We are currently planning our next conference for October 2018.

We continue to carry out team-based 'MQPL+' exercises in three to four prisons each year. We have just completed the report of our research visit to HMP Warren Hill, which was (as we had been led to believe) inspirational. The staff were energised, mutually supportive, mature, engaged, and confident. The prison is exceptionally well led, by Sonia Walsh. It is also very small (227 prisoners) and relationships-based. Everyone knows what the prison is about (generating hope and facilitating progression, based on 'a clear belief that people can change') and understands their potential contribution to this goal. Wakefield prison also left us feeling inspired and encouraged. We are

actively seeking hope and inspiration out there in the field, at what is a very difficult and challenging time for prisons, and engaging in a dialogue with policy-makers about the current state of play. We include a brief report of our very interesting MQPL+ exercise in Norgerhaven prison (a prison in the Netherlands holding Norwegian prisoners) in this Newsletter.

I was honoured to be invited to speak at corrections conferences in Hong Kong in July 2017, and to be shown several facilities there, as well as at Queensland Corrections Conference in February 2018. As we are finding elsewhere, the urge for prison reform in many jurisdictions is very strong, and the will to engage with research has never been so evident. We have joined with EuroPris in organising an international conference in May 2018 on what good research is and how to build trust and cooperation between 'the field', policy-makers and scholars. See: <https://icpa.ca/crs2018/>.



PRC members continue to be extremely active in their various projects all over the world. We hope this edition of the Newsletter provides some news about what we are all up to, and how much we gain from collaborations with each other, and with others.

*Alison Liebling*



The Institute of Criminology,  
Cambridge

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Click [here](#) for our recent and forthcoming publications.

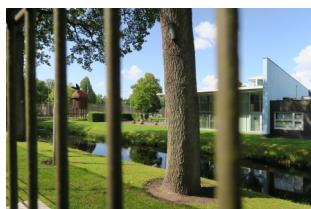
## Can transnational prisons be legitimate?

### The case of Norgerhaven prison

A study by **Alison Liebling** and **Bethany Schmidt**, with Dr Berit Johnsen, Tore Rokkan, Ansofie Vanhouche, Professor Miranda Boone, Mika Kox, and Professor Kristel Beyens

Much to our surprise, the controversial Norgerhaven project – a Norwegian prison located in the Netherlands and operated by Dutch prison staff and Norwegian prison management – has generated the most reflexive, ‘deliberative’ prison we have ever encountered. Many of the staff involved in the decision to ‘contract out’ penal services (a curious notion in itself, for a Nordic country) assumed that these two jurisdictions were basically alike in their penal values. Few, including its two Directors (one Norwegian and one Dutch), were prepared for the differences that arose once these values became translated into practices. This small study, funded by the Norwegian Correctional Service and being led by Berit Johnsen of KRUS with an international team of researchers, has taken us to the heart of liberal penal power, as staff explore, and try to collaborate over, what fairness, privacy, professionalism, punishment and discipline mean in day-to-day practices. What is ‘legitimate’, in a prison that is neither ‘Dutch’ nor ‘Norwegian’? What are the moral as well as

operational challenges faced? What do we learn from two penal narratives, in conflict? How do prisoners, staff, or our research team, morally evaluate this unusual project? The project is an outstanding example of international cooperation. The prison’s staff team have worked exceptionally hard to make a complex prison work well, and safely. The staff are experienced, and loyal. Paradoxically, the ‘deep structures of penal practice’ are being developed morally in a place of little obvious legitimacy. Our



fieldwork, based on ‘MQPL+’ methodology involving observation, interviews and surveys, captures a unique shift from ‘practical’ or tacit to ‘discursive’ consciousness, as staff challenged or defended many accepted practices, from the use of authority, seclusion and disciplinary proceedings to the operation of visits and the organisation of ‘spiritual care’. The team presented as a panel at the September 2017 European Society of Criminology Annual Conference in Cardiff, Wales and are now writing a methodological article which reflects on their experience working as an international team in a transnational context.

## Sykes conference

In September 2017, the Institute hosted a two-day symposium to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Gresham Sykes’s *The Society of Captives*, organised by Professor Mark Halsey and Professor Andrew Goldsmith from Flinders University, Australia.

The symposium was attended by a small group of scholars from the US, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and the UK, including PRC members **Alison Liebling**, **Ben Crewe** and **Alice levins**, and involved a series of papers organised around the key themes within Sykes’s classic text, from the meaning of the term ‘pain’ in translations of Sykes’s work to the deprivation of sexual relations. The aim is to turn a selection of these papers into an edited collection, to be published in 2019.

In June this year, the University of Leicester and the University of Cambridge will co-host a larger conference, organised on similar lines. Bookings can be made at the following webpage:

<http://shop.le.ac.uk/product-catalogue/events-at-leicester/leicester-law-school/the-society-of-captives-today>.





## 'Unlocked' MSc teaching day

Earlier this month, the PRC hosted a teaching day for students undertaking a module titled 'Custodial Care in Practice' as part of an MSc in Leadership and Custodial Environments. The MSc is a bespoke national course which has been developed, and is managed, by Helen



Arnold, a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Suffolk and alumni/associate member of the PRC. The course is two years and part-

time, and has been specifically designed for graduates accepted onto a prison officer leadership programme called Unlocked Graduates. Students work full-time as prison officers alongside their studies. Unlocked is a charitable organisation which has received significant MoJ funding to attract graduates into the Prison Service and provide them with training and support and a funded place on the MSc. On the day students participated in lectures, short talks and workshops from Helen Arnold, **Alison Liebling**, **Bethany Schmidt**, **Deborah Kant** and **Julie Laursen**. For more information see: <http://unlockedgrads.org.uk/>.

## 100 Years On: An Art Trail By Women in Prison A Koestler Trust Project

This project will play a part in the *Vote 100* celebrations taking place throughout the year commemorating the centenary of the 1918 Representation of the People Act, which granted women the right to vote. Many suffragettes were famously imprisoned 100 years ago and this trail will shine a light on the challenges faced by women in prison



in 2018. The Institute's Radzinowicz Library is honoured to be part of this trail, with 'Dream Volcano' from HMP Send currently on display. More information can be found at: <https://www.koestlertrust.org.uk/>.

## COMPEN research update

In February 2018, the Prisons Research Centre hosted a two-day conference on 'Comparative Penology, Nordic Exceptionalism and the Prisoner Experience'. The conference sought to provide a showcase for the early and emerging findings from the Comparative Penology (COMPEN) project, led by **Dr Ben Crewe**, which is comparing policymaking and prisoner experiences in England & Wales and Norway. Attendees, speakers and discussants were invited primarily

from the UK and Nordic countries, with the aim of discussing a range of issues relating to the project. The project's aim, broadly stated, is to interrogate the 'Nordic exceptionalism thesis' – the idea that punishment practices in the Nordic countries are particularly liberal and humane – through a four-part research programme. The sub-studies that comprise the project involve an analysis of policymaking and the penal field; a longitudinal study of entry into custody, discharge from custody, and post-release experiences;

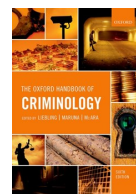
ethnographies of penal power and prisoner social relations among female

prisoners and imprisoned sex offenders; and the study of 'deep-end confinement'. Each sub-study is being undertaken comparatively, in England & Wales and Norway. Further details of the research programme, including a regular blog written by team members and guest contributors, visit: <https://www.compen.crim.cam.ac.uk/>.



## Recent events

- In May 2017 the University of Edinburgh hosted the launch of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Oxford Handbook of Criminology, edited by **Alison Liebling**, Shadd Maruna, and Lesley McAra.
- In July 2017, **Alison Liebling** and **Ben Crewe** presented papers at the newly formed high security and long-term prisons governors' away day.
- **Alison Liebling**, Helen Arnold and Serena Wright were keynote speakers at the second Prison Officer Summer Symposium in Oxford in August 2017, organised by The Butler Trust.
- The annual PRC conference was held in October 2017 on the theme of 'values, methods and quality in prisons research: developing deep structures of practice'. Our next conference is scheduled for October 18-19, 2018.
- In October 2017 **Alison Liebling** gave a keynote lecture at an international Conference on 'Prisons in Portugal and in Europe –History, Culture and Photography: Comparative Approaches'.



## Future events

- **Alison Liebling**, **Ben Crewe**, **Bethany Schmidt**, **Julie Laursen**, **Amy Ludlow**, and **Ruth Armstrong** will present papers at the ICPA's 'What is good prison research?' conference in Prague, Czech Republic May 9-10, 2018.
- **Alison Liebling** and **Ben Crewe** will present on 'deep imprisonment' for the LSE Mannheim Centre seminar series May 16, 2018. More information can be found at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/social-policy/research/Research-clusters/Mannheim/mannheim-seminar-series>.
- In July, **Ben Crewe** will deliver a keynote talk entitled 'The prison as a re-inventive institution' at the annual British Society of Criminology conference in Birmingham.
- Many PRC members will be attending and presenting at the European Society of Criminology's annual conference to be held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina later this year.

## Meet our visiting scholar: Dr Moshe Bensimon Senior Lecturer in Criminology Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Moshe is currently the head of the social-rehabilitative MA programme in the Department of Criminology. He is a music therapist and lecturers in the Music Therapy Programme at Bar-Ilan. Some of his fields of interest include: crime, violence and victimology, as well as music therapy with terror victims and post-traumatic growth among terror victims; and combat stress reaction.

The field of psychology of music is well studied with reference in the literature to a range of various populations, but only a few studies have related to the prison population.

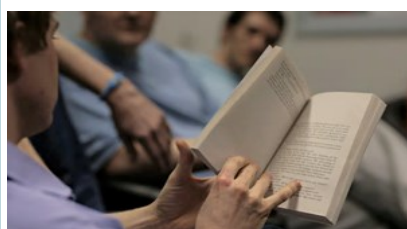
Recently, effort has been made to understand the contribution of calming music to prisoner wellbeing. A study conducted by Moshe and colleagues (Bensimon, Einat, and Gilboa 2015) investigated the impact of relaxing music on prisoners' levels of state anxiety and state anger. The findings showed that in comparison to a control group, prisoners' levels of anxiety and anger in the experimental group decreased following three weeks of daily exposure to relaxing music. This study is the first to examine this topic and it opens innovative and applicable directions in the field of imprisonment.

Moshe, together with his colleagues, are presently running a music therapy project in a high security prison in Israel. This mixed methods research examines the impact of African group drumming prisoners. Qualitative findings already point at very positive influence on their wellbeing and behavioural state. For more details on Moshe, his research, and publications visit: <http://criminology.biu.ac.il/en/bensimonm>.



## New research: An Evaluation of Shared Reading Groups in Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPEs) in Prisons

**Alison Liebling, Katherine Auty, Judith Gardom, and Elinor Lieber** have been awarded funding by NHS England and HMPPS to undertake an 18-month evaluation of Shared Reading groups in Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPEs). Shared Reading groups, run by The Reader Organisation, are offered weekly in all PIPEs. The Reader Organisation has developed a distinctive model which differs from other reading groups in that literature is read aloud in the group session, rather than in advance. A wide range of participants are therefore able to share the literature, whether or not they are confident readers.

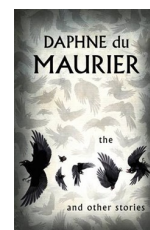


Short stories, sections of novels, and poetry are chosen for their potential to open up the breadth and complexity of human experience,

and made accessible to participants by a trained leader, who elicits the discussion of individual and shared responses.

The starting point for the evaluation is a theory of change proposed by The Reader Organisation that models how the reading aloud of literature in a supportive environment enables the articulation and integration of profound thought and feeling, and therefore leads to changes that include increased well-being.

The research team are currently conducting fieldwork in HMPs Send and Wayland. Pieces recently read in the groups have included the poem *Annabel Lee* by Edgar Allan Poe, the novel *Wonder* by RJ Palacio, and the novella *The Birds* by Daphne du Maurier.



## Learning Together update

Learning Together (LT) is an action research initiative led by **Amy Ludlow** and **Ruth Armstrong**, which brings together people in criminal justice and higher education institutions to study with each other in inclusive



and transformative learning communities. The LT team has recently grown to welcome **Victoria Pereyra Iraola**, who is collaborating with Amy and Ruth on a new stage in the evaluation of LT - following up students who took part over the last three years to understand what, if any, impact their involvement in LT has had on their life since. Beyond Cambridge, the team continues to nurture the broader **Learning Together Network**, which now

encompasses almost 30 further higher education institutions and 30 further criminal justice organisations. The annual Learning Together Network conference will be held in Hull in June 2018, and the first Learning Together alumni event will be held in Cambridge in September 2018. You can read more about the LT team's work via their blog ([learningtogethcambridge.wordpress.com](http://learningtogethcambridge.wordpress.com)) and twitter feed (@JustisTogether).