

**Short version: Description of PhD project part of work package 3 (WP3):
Exploring 'healthy prisons' (Professor Thomas Ugelvik (PM) and Professor Yvonne
Jewkes, and PhD researcher)**

In the international research literature, prisons are often described as institutions of punishment, pain, loneliness, and despair (Sykes 1958, Drake 2012). Based on the broad theoretical concept of 'healthy prisons', WP3 asks whether prisons also, sometimes and in some ways, can be healthy institutions, and how prison life best can be organised to promote health. Methodologically, project 3 is based on in-depth ethnographic study of a prison institution that should, presumably, offer prisoners a best-case environment. Bastøy prison is a medium-sized low-security men's prison situated on an island in the Oslo fjord. It resembles a small village community in many respects, with a farm, a chapel, a school, and several small housing units where prisoners live together. Prisoners make their own food and run their housing unit as an independent household.

We hypothesise that Bastøy prison in some respects is likely to constitute a 'healthy prison', understood in a broad sense as prison institutions that allow prisoners to feel like people and not just prisoners, and that provide them with the opportunity to grow, change, and heal (Jewkes 2018). As a first step, the healthcare service delivery and general conditions at Bastøy will be studied through six months of deep immersion fieldwork. The findings from the in-depth study of Bastøy prison will be contrasted by more focussed short-term case studies of more ordinary prison settings as a second step.

The following five institutions have been chosen to represent a variety of different kinds of prison settings and different sub-groups of prisoners:

- Leira prison
- Halden prison
- Ullersmo prison
- Agder prison
- Ravneberget prison

They will be studied through a combination of qualitative interviews with prisoners and officers and shorter fieldwork periods of two weeks each. This comparative ethnographic design will allow us to study how different aspects of prison life can impact prisoners' physical health, mental wellbeing, and capacity and motivation to change and develop.



As a third step, WP3 will analyse the qualitative data collected, looking specifically at four different aspects of healthy prisons – (1) architecture and materiality; (2) size and scale; (3) opportunities and agency; and (3) relationships – across all the six different institutions studied.

(1) Architecture and materiality are important parts of the prison experience. A number of so-called static security measures are frequently seen as necessary, such as concrete walls, barbed wire, CCTV cameras, heavy metal doors with dual locks, metal detectors, etc. These measures serve to symbolically construct the prison as a specific kind of institution. The material world of the prison often also symbolically positions prisoners as morally deficient and dangerous. This is not always the case, however. Studies (Jewkes and Moran 2017, Jewkes 2018) show examples of recently built prisons around the world that have been built according to a different logic, where the health and wellbeing of both prisoners and officers have been taken into account.

(2) Studies also show that the experience of prison life is connected to the size and scale of the institution (Liebling, assisted by Arnold 2004, Johnsen and Granheim 2011, Johnsen, Granheim and Helgesen 2011). Prisoners in smaller institution report a higher degree of satisfaction and experienced wellbeing and safety, but we do not know exactly how and why smaller size seems to contribute to making prisons more healthy institutions. Prisoners frequently report the forced socialisation with a large number of strangers as one of the principal pains of imprisonment, however (Sykes 1958, Crewe 2015). (3) Prisons are very different when it comes to the opportunities they give and the restrictions they impose on prisoners. To what extent are prisoners allowed to modify their everyday environment? Are they provided with meaningful everyday activities that can give them a sense of accomplishment? When prisoners are given a say in decision-making processes, studies show an increased sense of legitimacy, agency and ontological security (Crewe 2011, Tankebe and Liebling 2013). We hypothesise that more legitimate prison settings also will be experienced as less stressful and more conducive to both physical and mental health and well-being.

(4) Finally, studies show that relationships are an important part of the general prison experience (Crewe 2011, Smith 2014, Ugelvik 2014). Relationships between prisoners, between prisoners and officers/other staff, and between prisoners and their friends, families, and loved ones outside all impact prison life in different ways. Prisons can be better or worse at creating and facilitating healthy relationships. Visitation facilities are important, including the geographical location and remoteness of the prison and the available transport links and ease of access for visitors.

The goal of WP3 is to identify the conditions and aspects that can be said to increase the likelihood of 'healthy prisons'.

An international comparative element is included in WP3: Professor Jewkes will contribute similar data from her on-going research on 'healthy prisons' in England and Wales. Comparison across the two jurisdictions will be the focus of at least one of the articles.

WP3 outputs: 1 PhD thesis (monograph or article-based) and at least 2 articles in leading international criminology journals; at least one focusing on international comparison.