

“An Iron Fist in a Silk Glove”: Finding Pain in Exceptionally Designed Prisons

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ESRC funded study (£566,000) The rehabilitative prison: An oxymoron or an opportunity to radically reform imprisonment? With Dr Kate Gooch, University of Bath

ESRC funded study (£728,000) “Fear-suffused environments” or potential to rehabilitate? Prison architecture, design and technology and the lived experience of carceral spaces’. With Prof Dominique Moran, University of Birmingham

FSHI (£6.000) ‘Designing “healthy” prisons for women: incorporating trauma-informed care and practice into prison planning and design’. With Dr Serena Wright, RHUL, Dr Mel Jordan, University of Nottingham

Plus two periods of fieldwork in 2016 and 2017 undertaking research on the design, regime and culture of Norgerhaven, the prison in the Netherlands that was leased to Norway. With Prof Alison Liebling, Prof Kristel Beyens, Dr Berit Johnsen and MQPL+ team

Advised New Zealand Department of Corrections on Auckland maximum-security prison and Waikeria medium-security prison; Corrections Victoria on juvenile estate; FMSA Architecture on Dame Phyllis Frost women’s prison, Melbourne; Irish Prison Service on refurbishments to male and female estates and new Limerick women’s prison; ICRC; HMPPS Prison Estate Transformation Programme board; Bryden Wood Architects; Gleeds Architects; Capita Architects; Guymer Bailey Architects

Research questions in current project are framed around five themes:

1. Rehabilitative aims

What are the predominant aims, aspirations and penal philosophies underpinning 'rehabilitation' and how are they manifested (e.g. are they anthropocentric or authoritarian?; concerned only with personal transformation in attitudes and behaviour, or future-oriented and geared towards building social capital?)

2. Rehabilitative spaces

To what extent does the architecture, design and spatial layout of the prisons, and their location and local community links, enable a rehabilitative culture to flourish and to what degree do their physical properties inhibit rehabilitation?

3. Rehabilitative leaders and staff

To what extent can and do managers and staff become the intended 'rehabilitative leaders' and 'rehabilitative staff', and how do such expectations shape their roles and relationships with each other and with prisoners?

4. Rehabilitative living

To what degree must a rehabilitative culture come from prisoners themselves (including independently, without third party involvement) and how does the desire to create a rehabilitative culture from the top down shape, structure or impact both the lived experience of prisoners and the work culture for officers?

5. Rehabilitative journeys

What are the factors that contribute most to the capacity of prisoners for hope, future orientation and long-term rehabilitation? What can a 'Rehabilitation Prison' do to mitigate against, or at least prepare prisoners for the deficits they may encounter in social, judicial, moral and political aspects of rehabilitation as they progress through and out of the penal system?

He tried to recreate the hallucinogenic or exaggerated mental and emotional states of the insane with never ending inchoate corridors, a chapel with a dismal atmosphere and macabre twisting stairways, one of which, like an oubliette in a medieval keep, leads nowhere. The building's dramatic structures and subliminal imagery (there is a thinly veiled frog's head looking out from the building's facade) make the Lindemann Center very expressive, but also foreboding and dangerous. With a romanticized view of mental illness, Rudolph made the building 'insane' in the hope that it would sooth those who dwell in it by reflecting the insanity they feel within. Unfortunately, the outcome is not what the architect had hoped for (Koh, 2010: 148).



Erich Lindemann Mental Health Center Boston US (Architect Paul Rudolph)

Razor wire, gun towers, cage-like interiors, bolted-to-the-floor furniture and vandal-resistant surfaces overtly communicate to prisoners that 'you are a threat', 'you are animals' and 'you are potential vandals'...and they behave accordingly



The 'architecture of hope' (Jencks, 2010)

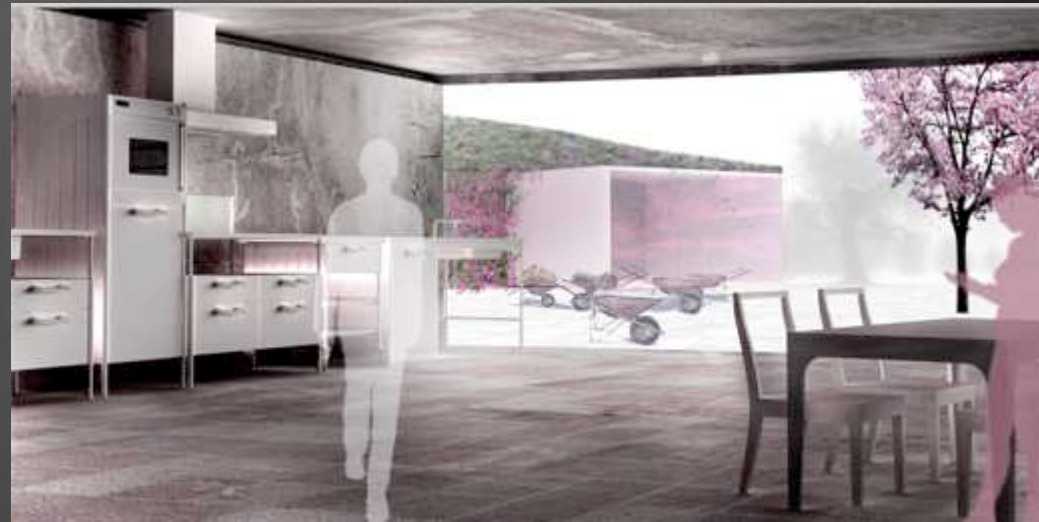
Maggie's Centre, Oldham



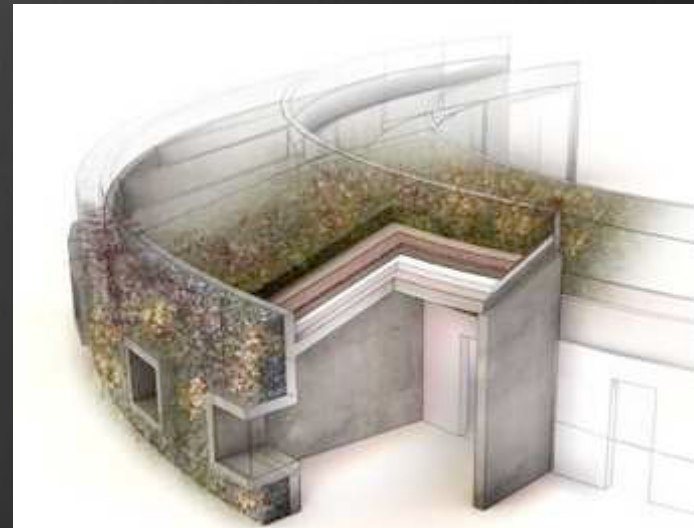
The brief for 'Maggie's' asks its architects to design buildings that hold qualities of safety and welcome in tension, alongside atmospheric affects that are surprising and thought provoking – imagine if that was the brief to prison architects...



Could prisons be designed to heal rather than harm?



Unsuccessful design, new women's prison, Iceland – OOIO Architects, Madrid

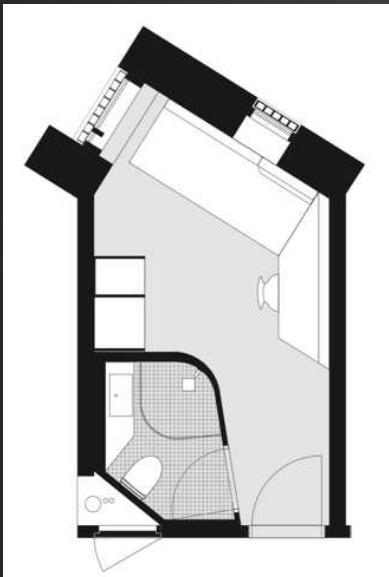


Storstrøm Prison, Falster, Denmark (opened Dec 2017)

A deliberately 'urban'
prison with subtle and
indirect natural
elements.

'The aim of the closed Storstrøm Prison is to create the world's most humane high-security prison, which contributes to the inmates' social rehabilitation through architecture...The overall architectural intent is to create a facility that echoes the structure and scale of a small provincial community. The result is architecture which stimulates the urge and ability to rejoin society after serving a prison sentence'

(C.F. Møller Architects)





HMP/YOI Aylesbury



HMP Berwyn



Puig de les Basses,
Catalonia

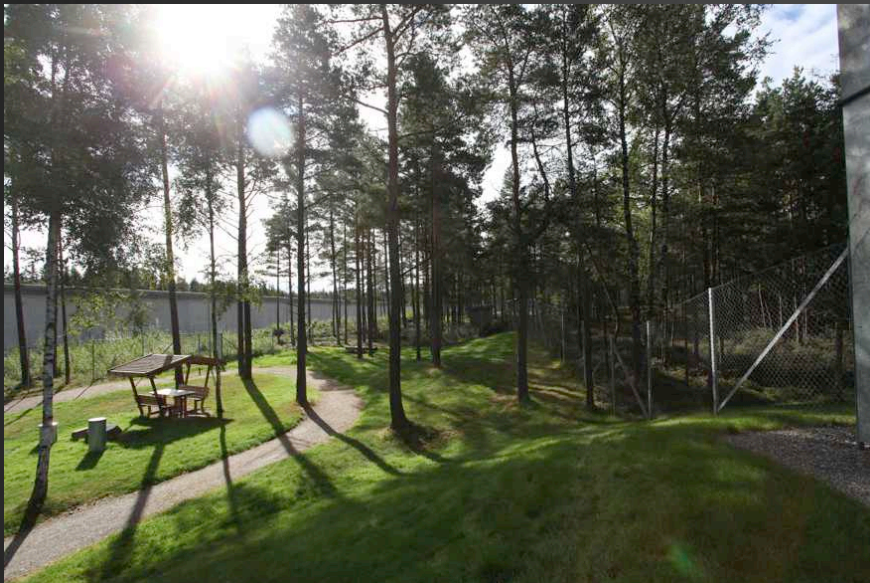


Halden prison,
Norway



Halden Prison, Norway

‘While references to imprisonment being like living in a submarine are common in the Anglophone prisons literature, being in Halden or Storstrøm is not like being submerged at all. These are light, bright, aesthetically stimulating environments and, if any prison might be described as ‘rehabilitative’ [they] surely fit the bill... A ‘normal’, aesthetically pleasing, design-led, and deinstitutionalized custodial environment that fosters feelings of safety and empowerment is undoubtedly desirable compared to one that is the opposite of all these things. *However, its ability to rehabilitate remains a moot point*’ (Jewkes & Gooch, 2019, ‘The “Rehabilitation Prison”’ in *The Routledge Companion to Rehabilitative Work in Criminal Justice*).



New chapter – Jewkes, Y. (2020) *“An Iron Fist in a Silk Glove”: The Pains of Halden Prison* in Crewe, B., Goldsmith, A. and Halsey, M. (eds) *Power and Authority in the Modern Prison: Revisiting the Society of Captives*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

‘The architecture of Halden Prison has been designed to minimise residents’ sense of incarceration, to ease psychological stress and to put them in harmony with the surrounding nature...Set in beautiful blueberry woods and peppered with majestic silver birch and pine trees, the two-storey accommodation blocks and wooden chalet-style buildings give the place an air of a trendy university campus rather than a jail’ (BBC News, 7th July 2019)



‘a model of minimalist chic...more Scandinavian boutique hotel than class A prison’ (*Guardian* 18th May 2012).



If you set up a twenty-foot fence around a man's body it would be naïve to say: 'But I didn't mean to affect his mind' (Caird, 1974: 98).

'I kind of stopped for a second just in front of the wall. And my impression of that [gasps] – it was really massive and scary...But in retrospect I understand that's the intention...That this is serious. And for people visiting or coming to see the building it's supposed to say, 'this is not a place you want to enter if you don't have to'. We say it's an iron fist in a silk glove''' (facilities manager, Halden).



'I thought [Halden] was like a hotel when saw it on the internet. That's just from the outside. I never knew I would miss my kids so much and you feel it. It is hard' (prisoner, Halden).

'I've heard we have a good time here in this prison. I thought it was like a hotel when I saw it on the internet before I came here. But that's just from the outside. I wouldn't choose this prison again. The best accommodation you can get, but it's the system. It kills you. It kills me. I'm sorry but it does' (prisoner, Halden).



Halden

'Before I came to Halden...I thought 'wow – probably the best prison in the whole world'. But it was not what I expected – it was horrible. You go into 'A' block, which is harder. It's where the murderers and rapists are. You spend one night in bare 'A' cells...*I felt like I was raped by the system when I first arrived.* After the first night, I was moved to A3 and was in the cell for around 21 hours a day. When you have 'luft' it is in a very small area. It is very strict'.

'A' Unit -
'frustrating', 'boring', 'suffocating'

'B' and 'C' Units –
'so, not that good warm, like you have on the beach, but when you are in a room that is too crowded or on the subway or the bus, where it's a bit too warm, you understand?'





'I usually feel safe when officers are all around. But there are certain times when there are no officers around and I don't like to be anywhere where there are no officers'.

'I don't feel safe...I'm not scared to be stabbed, but I'd be afraid to be in a fight because some people here are crazy'.

'I saw a guy on the news who killed his stepfather. It was horrible to see him in the flesh'.

'Almost every new officer, woman or man, starts very good, they treat us like human beings. But after a while, let's say three to six months, you see a difference. Maybe something happens, maybe somebody has an inmate spit in their face or threaten them or something...and after a while 80% of those who started good...you will see a difference'.

'They don't care, they're not dedicated enough. I don't get the feeling that most of those who work here get up in the morning and, on their way to work, think "today maybe I'm going to make a change for a convicted person"...They don't ask "What can I do? What is my role in this?" I don't get the feeling that that is what is driving them, because it's all about routines, it's all about locking doors and taking inmates from here and there. There are exceptions, but they are very few'.

'Soft power' and staff inexperience

'The system is hard and quite confusing. There is a disconnect between the quality of the "glorious environment" and the consuming set of circumstances and complex bureaucracy. *You get ten different answers from ten different officers*'.

'It feels like they change the rules every day, nothing is written in stone. So, for me to adapt and to navigate myself through it, it's like you need to work every day and then you just get like uh, the feeling of demotivation and general small-town depression, because they make everything so difficult'.

'There is a constant reminder [that you are in prison] when you have to start dealing with the bureaucracy of the health department, getting access to doctors, dentists, physiotherapists. The fact that they read your letters...things like that are a constant reminder'.

'They don't give a shit in this prison. Halden is very bad. I don't like this prison at all...I applied to go away from here three times'.

'For some reason a lot of the staff here are very young, maybe 20, 21, straight from high school, college. That influences you a great deal. I miss the guards with more experience, both life experience and experience of working in prison'.



[Before transferring here] I heard about how it looked, up in this forest and...I really like nature, so I thought to myself "why not?", because I haven't touched grass in two years...[But] it's a little bit disappointing because I can't walk in the woods; I just have to look at it. That's more painful, actually, because, you know, I miss the smell and the touch and how it affects me, it makes me calm...So, yeah, it's more like they put a meal in front of you, but say you can't touch it...



'I do know that [on the outside] it's called Hotel Halden...But it's not a hotel, not by a long shot. Because it's a prison...No matter how much comfort we might experience inside these walls, it's a prison. It's never like the outside, it's a prison. You never escape that feeling. So, people calling it Hotel Halden? They don't know what they're talking about' (prisoner).

Can prison rehabilitate?

‘At first glance, the rehabilitation of those in custody might appear to be a desirable but unachievable goal. Reoffending rates for those released from prison remain stubbornly high, with evidence suggesting that a custodial sentence might, in and of itself, have a criminogenic effect, and for those who succeed in desisting from crime, it is not clear how and to what extent this is a product of their experiences in prison’. (Jewkes & Gooch, 2019).

‘Rehabilitation of criminals is a “fantasy”... "I think the reality of prison is that it is designed by nice, white middle-class people and it works for nice, middle-class people...For any one of us in this room to go to prison would be a disaster, but what we have created is a group of people, a section of our community, who go to prisons and it is not a personal disaster – in fact it becomes a place of refuge for them”’
(Governor of HMP Winchester quoted in the *Telegraph*, 15 Sept 2019).

‘Rehabilitation is a social contract between individual and State, which implies willingness from the community (as well as the ex-prisoner) to achieve successful reintegration. It rests on the questionable assumption that rehabilitation can overcome the numerous harms done by imprisonment and from wider, life-long forms of social exclusion. Any opportunities offered to individuals in prison may count for little when they return to the community with the added stigma of a criminal record to further diminish their life chances’.
(Jewkes & Gooch, 2019; see also McNeill, 2012, 2014).

Norgerhaven prison



"This isn't about having salad. It's about being trusted and respected. Treated as people" (Prisoner)

"We are punished by being sent here but this is normal and that's good for everyone" (Prisoner)



"5 chickens are worth more than 3 psychologists" (Prison Officer)

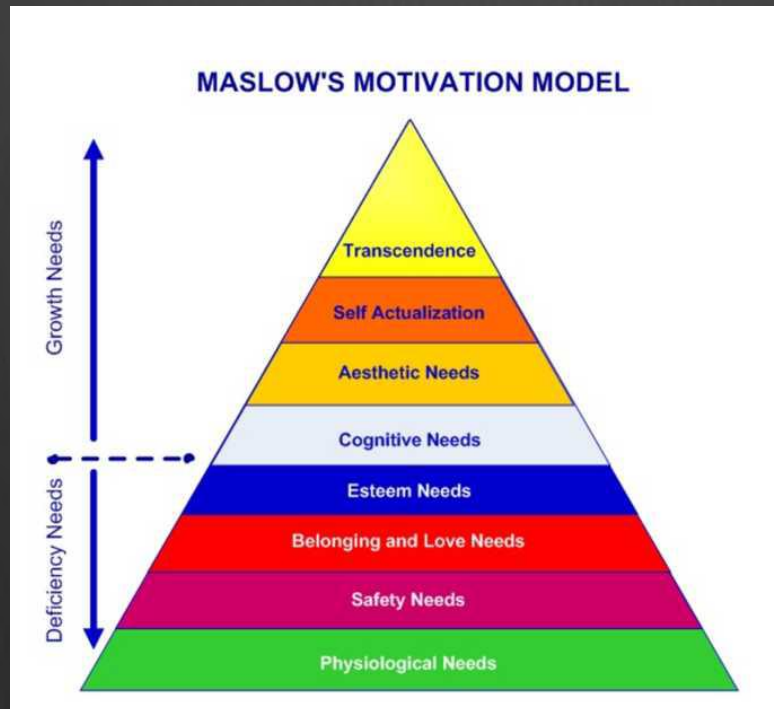


*'My parents like that I've grown myself again. This is rehabilitation. No drugs courses. No behaviour courses. Just looking at the trees. I'm better because of the trees'
(Prisoner at Norgerhaven, Aug 2017)*



Our research found common basic environmental elements near universally desired by people in prison – not as mere preferences but as matters of ontological security. They include:

A need for **privacy**; for **socialization**; for **warmth** when it is cold and for effective **ventilation** when it is hot; for some **freedom of movement** outside as well as inside; for regular, high-quality **family visits** (plus Skype); for meaningful and appropriately paid **work/education/activities** (including essential transferable skills, e.g. use of digital technologies); the ability to undertake a **pastime or hobby** beyond those traditionally permitted within custodial settings; facilities to **cook** one's own food (and perhaps for one's family) at least occasionally; and to experience some **interaction with nature** ('to feel the grass under my feet', 'to not just be able to see a tree, but touch it'); and, crucially, to have a high degree of **choice, autonomy and control** over all these fundamental actions.

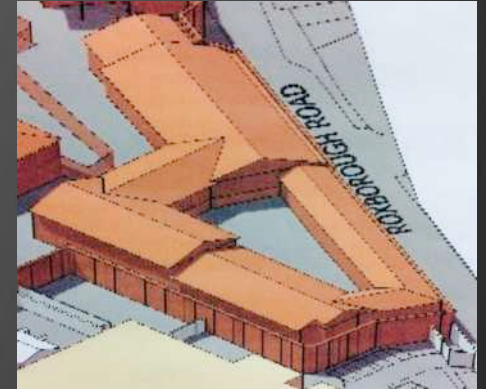
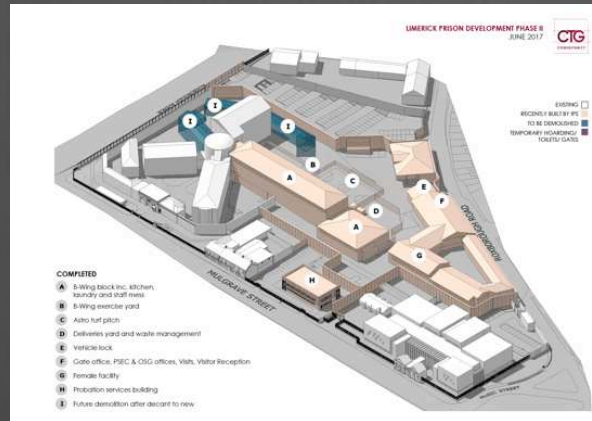


Building A Better Future For Women In Prison?

- ⊗ All four jurisdictions of the UK & ROI are currently commissioning, planning, designing and building new prisons for women
- ⊗ Architects tend to be self-referential and are heavily influenced by their previous work
- ⊗ Lack of end user engagement in the design process ensures that lessons are never learned about where the design is supportive and where it is not
- ⊗ Without continuous public scrutiny, 'the environment goes to hell' (Spivack, 1984: 26)
- ⊗ Empathetic engagement is found in design of residential homes for the elderly (Buse et al, 2016) but is more unusual in prison design
- ⊗ An overwhelmingly male profession (Jewkes, 2018).



Female Prison Courtyard View



Female Prison Courtyard View



Female Prison Association Space



Female Prison Open Visits



Typical Female Room

Design criteria underpinning Limerick design brief:

- Could this design be described as 'imaginative', 'progressive', 'world-leading'? Would it sit alongside other recently designed and constructed prisons elsewhere in the world as an example of international best practice?
- Does the design incorporate 'agile' spaces that can be changed according to future operational needs?
- Could this design be described as a 'healthy prison'; does it meet international human rights standards of safety (whereby prisoners, even the most vulnerable, are held safely), and respect (whereby prisoners are treated with respect for their human dignity)?
- Does the design enable prisoners to engage in activity that is likely to benefit them and help prepare them for resettlement?
- Is the use of colour, texture, shapes, differing levels etc imaginative and varied?
- Is the proposed prison (positively) stimulating to all the senses?
- Are there elements of the design that surprise (positively)? Are there *many* elements of the design that mitigate against it looking like a 'typical' prison?
- Is there an element of progression/regression (for good/poor behaviour - the 'responsible prisoner') hardwired into the design?
- Would you be confident that, if a relative of yours was imprisoned here, they would not only be safe and treated decently, but that they could thrive and flourish?

Take home points

- ⦿ Importance of seeking the views of end users (prisoners, prison officers, non-uniformed staff and managers)
- ⦿ Undertaking post-occupancy evaluations and learning from past mistakes
- ⦿ Short-term investment for long-time gains
- ⦿ Learning from and implementing academic research and evidence (e.g. about size of prisons, staff-prisoner relationships, dynamic and situational security etc.)
- ⦿ Involving women in the design of facilities for women

Selected publications

- ❁ Jewkes, Y. (2020) “An Iron Fist in a Silk Glove”: The Pains of Halden Prison’ in Crewe, B., et al (eds) *Power and Authority in the Modern Prison: Revisiting the Society of Captives*, Clarendon Press
- ❁ Jewkes, Y. and Gooch, K. (2019) ‘The “Rehabilitation Prison”’, in H. Graham et al *The Routledge Companion to Rehabilitative Work in Criminal Justice*, London: Routledge
- ❁ Jewkes, Y., Jordan, M., Wright, S. and Bendelow, G. (2019) ‘Designing “Healthy” Prisons for Women: Incorporating Trauma-Informed Care and Practice (TICP) into Prison Planning and Design, *Int.Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. Available OnlineFirst.
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- ❁ Jewkes, Y. (2018) ‘Just design: healthy prisons and the architecture of hope’, *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 51(3): 319-338
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- ❁ Jewkes, Y. and Reisdorf, B. (2016) ‘A Brave New World: the problems and opportunities presented by new media technologies in prisons’ *Criminology & Criminal Justice* 16(5): 534–551
- ❁ Jewkes, Y. and Moran, D. (2015) ‘The paradox of the “green” prison: sustaining the environment or sustaining the penal complex?’ *Theoretical Criminology* 19(4): 451-469