

AAG 2017 Paper Submission to ‘Global Carceral Geographies’

Anna Schliehe
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Institute of Criminology
Sidgwick Avenue
Cambridge
CB3 9DA

Tel: (0044) (0)1223767369
Email: aks79@cam.ac.uk

Title:

Dialogues across carceral space: comparative research and the case of penal exceptionalism

Abstract:

As part of a larger research projectⁱ this paper aims to interrogate methodological, empirical and conceptual frameworks for working across different carceral spaces. Based on research in the UK and Norway, the goals of this project are to expose the dynamics of the penal state and nature of penalty in countries that are considered ‘exclusionary’ and ‘inclusionary’ – systematically exploring the relative mildness and severity of punishment practices (Pratt and Eriksson 2013; Ugelvik and Dullum 2011). Conceptually this paper draws upon a framework that captures different aspects of the prison experience, formed around the concepts of the ‘depth’, ‘weight’, ‘tightness’ and ‘breadth’ of confinement (Crewe 2015: Crewe, Liebling, Hulley 2014: Crewe 2011). At the same time, the research explores the roles of shame, guilt and stigma in shaping prisoners’ attitudes and adaptations to imprisonment (Ahmed et al 2001; Goffman 1991). While such concepts have been widely applied to theories of offending and reintegration, they have remained almost entirely absent from sociological and geographical accounts of imprisonment. Through the broader concept of ‘penal consciousness’ (Sexton 2015; Schinkel 2016), the project explores the interaction between the punitive intentions of the state and prisoners’ subjective understanding of the purposes of their punishment: a matter which has been largely unexplored within the literature. Reflecting on these conceptual frameworks that have not yet been explored in a carceral-geographic context, this paper will also offer first impressions of working empirically across different countries and penal systems. Connecting these conceptualisations to prisoners’ personal accounts allows insights into the affective and embodied experiences within and beyond immediate prison spaces and the particular challenges of comparative research.

ⁱ With: Ben Crewe; Kristian Mjåland, Julie Laursen, Alice Ievins, Eliza Preece.

References:

Crewe, B. (2015) Inside the belly of the beast: understanding and conceptualising the experience of imprisonment. In: Tubex, H. and Eriksson, A. (Eds) *The International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 4(1), 50-65.

Crewe, B., Liebling, A. and Hulley, S. (2014) Heavy-light, absent-present: Re-thinking the 'weight' of imprisonment. *British Journal of Sociology* 65 (3), 387-410.

Crewe, B. (2011) Depth, weight, tightness: Revisiting the pains of imprisonment. *Punishment and Society*, 13(5), 509-529.

Goffman, E. (1991 [1961]) *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. London, Penguin Books.

Pratt, J. and Eriksson, A. (2013) *Contrasts in Punishment*. London, Routledge.

Schinkel, M. (2014) Punishment as moral communication: The experiences of long-term prisoners. *Punishment & Society* 16(5), 578–597.

Sexton, L. (2015) Penal subjectivities: Developing a theoretical framework for penal consciousness. *Punishment & Society* 17(1), 114-136.

Ugelvik, T. and Dullum, J. (eds) (2011) *Penal Exceptionalism? Nordic prison policy and practice*. London, Routledge.