

## The 'imprisonment queue' in Norway: Exploring the pains of waiting to do time

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### Abstract

Based on ethnographic data from a large comparative research project across Norway and England & Wales this article explores the implications of the 'imprisonment queue' [Soningskø] in Norway. Although a common experience for sentenced Norwegians to wait for months/years before they can serve their prison sentence, this peculiar phenomenon has not received any academic attention. Following Sykes (1958), we argue that this phenomenon could be coined as a peculiar Nordic 'pain of imprisonment'. Drawing upon anthropological theory of rituals developed by Van Gennep (1909) and Turner (1967) the analysis shows that these not-yet prisoners, but certainly not free citizens, live in a sort of liminal position, betwixt and between freedom and imprisonment. Furthermore, we draw upon and expand earlier research of the 'breadth' of imprisonment (the informal consequences of imprisonment, stigma, 'disabilities', etc., see Crewe 2011) by arguing that breadth does not only reach beyond the sentence, but has consequences and is felt *before* any time is served. The paper will argue that while the 'imprisonment queue' provides certain benefits such as being able to prepare or negotiate the terms of one's imprisonment, it also entails insecurity and an existential limbo for the prisoners waiting to serve their sentence.