

## **'The pains of entry': A comparative analysis of prisoners' experiences of entering custody in England & Wales and Norway**

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### **Abstract**

Studying the 'pains of imprisonment' has been a key concern of prison sociology ever since Sykes' (1958) classic study. However, rarely have the pains of *entering* prison been studied, and even more rarely through a comparative framework. The lack of interest in the processes of entering prisons is surprising given the significance of this status transition in the works of Goffman (1963) and others. We seek to fill this gap in the literature by exploring and comparing the experiences of entering custody in England & Wales and Norway. A benefit of this research design is that it enables a study of how different penal contexts shape 'the pains of entry'. The paper draws on data produced through a large research project, and consists of qualitative interviews with prisoners (N=162) and observation from five different prisons. A key finding is that we find a more *individualised* process of entry in Norway and a more *mechanised* form of entry in England & Wales. In conclusion, we propose that the comparative study of 'the pains of entry' highlight important differences between 'inclusionary' and 'exclusionary' penal regimes that have not yet been accounted for in the debate on the 'exceptional' character of Nordic imprisonment.