



Penal Exceptionalism?: Nordic Prison Policy and Practice

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In the growing field of comparative criminal justice, the Nordic countries are regularly used as exceptions to the global move towards growing rates of imprisonment and tougher, less welfare-oriented crime-control policies.

Why are the Nordic penal institutions viewed as so ‘different’ from a non-Nordic vantage point? Are Nordic prisons and penal policies in fact positive exceptions to the general rule? If they are, what exactly are the exceptional qualities, and why are the Nordic societies lucky enough to have them? Are there important overlooked examples of Nordic ‘bad practice’ in the penal area? Could there be a specifically Nordic way of doing prison research, contributing to the gap between internal and external perspectives?

In considering – among others – the above questions, this book explores and discusses the Nordic jurisdictions as contexts for the specific penal policies and practices that may or may not be described as exceptional.

Written by leading prison scholars from the Nordic countries as well as selected researchers from the English-speaking world ‘looking in’, this book will be particularly useful for students of criminology and practitioners across the Nordic countries, but also of relevance in a wider geographical context.

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Editorial Review

Review

'Are Nordic countries a penal paradise, characterized by low confinement rates and humane prisons, or the vectors of more subtle and penetrating forms of punishment than meet the eye? Will they jump on the punitive bandwagon or offer a viable pathway to penal moderation for other nations to take? This collection brings together insider and outsider perspectives from diverse disciplines to tackle these issues. The result is a lively contribution to comparative criminology that will help displace the United States from its meridian position in international debates on the penal state.' – *Loïc Wacquant, author of Prisons of Poverty and Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*

'This excellent and deeply thought provoking collection of essays (responding to John Pratt's work on Scandinavian penal exceptionalism) is both critically important and importantly critical. It is critically important because so many penal scholars and reformers are looking to the Nordic countries in order to find clues about how to foster and develop more moderate and progressive penal policies and practices. Given the academic and political significance of these inter-related projects, it is all the more vital that this collection subjects claims of Nordic exceptionalism and Nordic penal moderation to such searching, balanced and nuanced critical scrutiny. The result is an intriguing and challenging book that challenges and enriches analyses of Nordic penality, and which, if it is read as widely as it deserves to be, will also challenge and enrich the project of comparative penology itself.' – *Fergus McNeill, Professor of Criminology and Social Work, University of Glasgow*

About the Author

Thomas Ugolvik is a post-doctoral research fellow at the Department of Criminology and Sociology of Law at the University of Oslo, Norway. His Ph.D. is an ethnography of prisoner-subjectivation processes in and through the everyday life and power struggles of the institution. His research interests also include crime and the media, gender issues, and cultural criminology. He has published on violence against prison officers, power/resistance relationships in prison, and masculinity theory.

Jane Dullum is a post-doctoral research fellow at the Department of Criminology and Sociology of Law at the University of Oslo, Norway. In her Ph.D. she analysed the development of the psychiatric institutions in Norway, with a special focus on the decarceration of the mentally ill. She has done research on economic crime, restorative justice, topics regarding the rule of law, prisons and prison education, and miscarriages of justice.

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