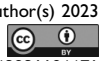
Normalisation by default and normalisation by design: a systematic review of empirical studies on the normalisation of prison life

Rijt, J.I.B. van de; Ginneken, E.F.J.C. van; Boone, M.M.

Original Manuscript

Incarceration

Incarceration
Volume 4: 1–19


DOI: 10.1177/26326663231196671
journals.sagepub.com/home/icn


Normalisation by default and normalisation by design: A systematic review of empirical studies on the normalisation of prison life

Jill van de Rijt, Esther F.J.C. van Ginneken and Miranda M. Boone

Abstract

Normalisation is an important principle when shaping life in prison. The conceptualisation and operationalisation of normalisation are not straightforward, which merits a systematic review of the literature. This article reports the results from such a review, drawing on 16 empirical studies from a range of countries. Four relevant domains of normalisation in prison were identified: design, facilities and services, atmosphere, and identity. Additionally, the origins and dominant norms underpinning normalisation were found to differ depending on the local context: 'normalisation by default' resulted from resource scarcity and the importation of pre-existent roles, hierarchies and goods, while 'normalisation by design' was an intentional effort to shape prison conditions in line with conventional norms. These different manifestations were associated with different limitations and possible benefits. The article also discusses how normalisation is related to resocialisation and responsibilisation, and offers underexplored areas that deserve attention in future research.

Keywords

Prison, normalisation, living conditions, resocialisation, responsibilisation

Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands

Corresponding author:
Jill van de Rijt, Institute for Criminal Law and Criminology, Leiden University, P.O. Box 9520, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands.
Email: j.i.b.van.de.rijt@law.leidenuniv.nl

Introduction

Normalisation is an important concept in determining life in prison. Normalisation is generally defined in international soft law as the ambition to shape life in prison according to life outside prison and is urged in both the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules and European Prison Rules as a guiding principle for prison policy (Council of Europe, 2006; United Nations, 2015). The principle of normalisation has strongly influenced Nordic prison policy and practice (Engbo, 2017), and is often linked to the 'penal exceptionalist' prison culture characterised by low imprisonment rates and humane prison conditions (Pratt, 2008; Smith and Ugelvik, 2017). For example, the prison island Bastøy in Norway and architecturally acclaimed Storstrøm in Denmark do not resemble 'traditional' prisons and are therefore considered more normalised environments (*cf.* Jewkes, 2022). Bastøy, referred to as a 'village prison' has no walls; prisoners are free to roam the island and spend their days working 'normal' jobs such as working in a bike repair shop and operating the ferry to the mainland. Storstrøm stands out because it is designed to resemble a college campus with views overlooking the large courtyards.

Although these examples may suggest that shaping normalised prison conditions is straightforward, research shows that the implications of the principle of normalisation for policy and practice are not unequivocal, and are oftentimes conflicting in nature. First, on the one hand, normalisation supposes prisoners retain all their basic human rights, which is reflected in the obligation for prison authorities to provide sufficient (health) care, work and allow for prisoners to maintain contact with their families (Engbo, 2017). On the other hand, normalisation requires consideration of individual differences and respective needs (Snacken, 2002). In this context, Snacken (2002) distinguishes between collective normalisation and individual normalisation. Collective normalisation supposes prisoners should have access to the same welfare services as citizens in a free society. Individual normalisation on the other hand alludes to the various social roles one fulfils in society such as father, son and partner, and urges that prisoners can continue to fulfil those roles while imprisoned. Second, studies have attributed special pains of imprisonment to open and less restrictive prisons, which are typically characterised as representing a more normalised prison environment (De Vos and Gilbert, 2017; Shammas, 2014). Furthermore, researchers have argued that prisons possess fundamentally oppressive and damaging characteristics, irrespective of their appearance, security level or culture (see: Crewe et al., 2023; Jewkes, 2022). Third, well-meant normalisation efforts can become 'abnormal normalisation' in practice (Smith and Ugelvik, 2017: 519). For example, the self-catering system in Danish prisons does not necessarily allow prisoners to eat and prepare the kind of food that resembles their eating habits in a free society (Minke and Smoyer, 2017). Indeed, practices that are considered normal may diverge from practices preferred by prisoners (Smith and Ugelvik, 2017), and a person's normal in a free society might not be their desired normal. It thus remains largely unclear what elements in prison should be normalised in order to achieve normalisation of prison life.

Another ambiguity arises when normalisation is tied to other related principles, mainly resocialisation. Arguably, normalised prison conditions ease the transition back into society because the contrast with a free society is smaller and the incarceration experience is less harmful (Crewe et al., 2023; De Vos and Gilbert, 2017; Mjåland et al., 2021). This link between normalisation and reintegration, however, deserves further scrutiny. In much of the literature, the concepts of normalisation, resocialisation and responsibilisation are not clearly demarcated. It is assumed that normalised prison conditions create circumstances that allow prisoners to either retain or (re)gain skills which are needed when rebuilding their life after release (Council of Europe, 2006; De Vos, 2021; United Nations, 2015). By linking normalisation to reintegration, behavioural norms become intertwined

with an intrinsic right of prisoners to humane prison conditions. A focus on resocialisation might sway the normalisation effort towards behaviour instead of prison conditions, resulting in efforts to normalise the individual as a form of responsibilisation (Van de Rijt et al., 2023; Van Ginneken, 2018). Here, normalisation transgresses into a form of discipline conform with Foucault's definition of the concept of normalisation (Foucault, 1977). From the above line of argumentation, it becomes clear that it is not possible to make a straightforward distinction between the rights-based principle of normalisation and disciplinary normalisation in the Foucauldian meaning of the word. We therefore treat these two forms of normalisation not as static opposites, but rather as a 'sliding scale' where both forms can appear as a result of the same effort (De Vos, 2021; Van de Rijt et al., 2023).

In other words, the normalisation of prison conditions is a delicate endeavour. What is considered normal depends on local living standards, cultural practices and individual preferences. An examination of the conceptualisation, operationalisation and application of normalisation in the prison literature will generate further insight into commonalities and differences regarding this important concept. This contribution will synthesise the current empirical literature on the normalisation of prison life, to answer the question: In what way is the concept of normalisation operationalised in the empirical literature, what are the notable findings, and how is normalisation demarcated from related concepts such as resocialisation and reponsabilisation? A systematic review of the literature reveals which studies have tackled normalisation in prison explicitly, how they have done this, and what we can learn from the findings. In doing so, the aim is not to reach an all-encompassing definition of the concept normalisation, but instead to expose the full range of aspects that may constitute the normalisation of prison life. We conclude the article with a discussion offering a critical reflection on the current state of the art and its limitations.

Systematic review

Databases and search strategy

To gain a thorough understanding of the concept of normalisation in the prison context, only empirical literature on normalisation specific to the context of the general prison regime within adult prisons was reviewed. The initial search included articles published from 1945 to March 2022 in the English or Dutch language. The scholarly literature was searched using the databases Web of Science, PsycInfo and Criminal Justice Abstracts. Google Scholar was consulted to extract undetected grey literature. The following search terms were used: Normali* AND (imprison* OR prison* OR jail OR detentie OR gevang* OR 'correctional institution*' OR 'correctional facilit*' OR penitentiar* OR incarc*). Studies on closed prisons, irrespective of their security level, and (half) open prisons were included, albeit with their respective (explicit) differences and context taken into consideration. Empirical studies conducted in the setting of juvenile detention, forensic psychiatry, immigrant detention or penal measures executed outside an institution were not included in the study. Studies were also excluded when normalisation (noun) or to normalise (verb) was aimed at a psychological and/or physical disorder, disability or disease such as HIV (i.e., the opposite of discrimination) or related to the statistical analysis in research (not related to the prison environment).

Search results

Figure 1 illustrates the search process. The initial search returned 440 studies, published in the English or Dutch language. After removing duplicates 341 studies remained. Screening of title

and abstract resulted in 51 remaining publications, which were reviewed in full. In total, 14 articles met the criteria for inclusion. Two additional relevant studies were found through Google Scholar and scanning of the reference lists of the included articles. The final selection consisted of 16 articles. All included articles were published in peer-reviewed journals, apart from one PhD thesis (De Vos, 2021) and an article in a Dutch-language journal for a mixed scholarly and professional audience (Farahi and Van de Rijt, 2017).

The selected articles varied in terms of country of research, research method, setting and the way normalisation is studied. Notably, all included studies were conducted after the year 2000. The majority of literature stems from countries from the Global North: United States (4) Denmark (3), Belgium (2), Finland (1), Spain (1), The Netherlands (1) and Norway (1). Studies from the Global South were conducted in the Philippines (3) and Hong Kong (1). With regard to the research method, the vast majority of the articles used qualitative methods (14), mainly (semistructured) interviews and observations; one article used quantitative research methods and one used mixed methods. Looking at the setting of the research, 10 of the articles were conducted in male prisons, two in prison (units) for women and four studies included both female and male prisons or prisoners. Normalisation was not often studied as the main objective, which was the case in only six of the 16 studies; instead, it was usually explored as an outcome of research.

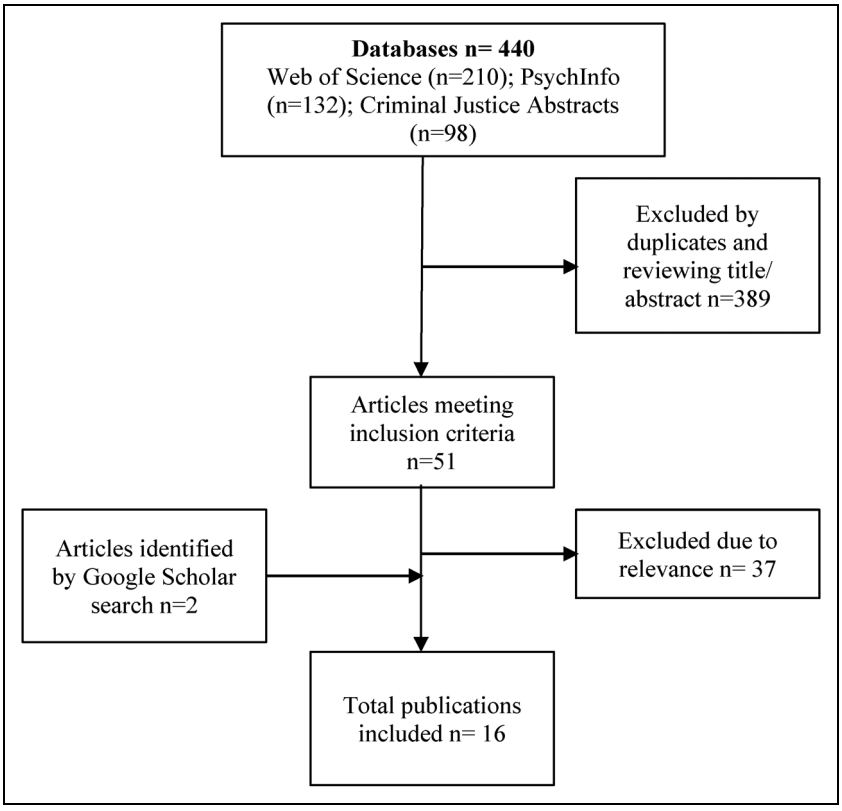


Figure 1. Flowchart of included articles systematic review.

Operationalisations of normalisation were therefore often implicitly described in the text. An overview of these results is given in Table 1.

Lastly, it should be noted that due to the variations in method, study sample and prominence of normalisation, the operationalisations synthesised in this study reflect the views of divergent (groups of) individuals such as policymakers, prison management, frontline staff, and incarcerated individuals. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that the voices of incarcerated individuals – men and women – were well represented in these studies.

Analysis

The selected articles were systematically analysed and openly coded without any fixed constructs or domains of prison life in mind. Codes were written in the margins of the texts. The elements were then inductively abstracted until coherent domains arose (see Table 1). In order to verify the four identified domains, the operationalisations were then deductively organised in a table alongside the corresponding references (see Table 2).

Findings

To begin with, a shared understanding across the articles was that normalisation is the extent to which life in prison resembles life outside prison. A detailed analysis of the articles revealed that empirical operationalisations of the concept of normalisation were related to different aspects of prison life. More specifically, four domains were identified, namely 'design', 'facilities and services', 'atmosphere', and 'identity'. We describe the identified categories in more detail in the paragraphs below, starting with the general prison environment and ending with the normalisation on the individual level. Another important finding is that normalisation has a considerably different translation given the socioeconomic and cultural context. Although this is in itself not a new notion with regard to the concept of normalisation, what this study reveals is that this does not only result in differences in prison practice but also in differences in how and why normalisation of life in prison is achieved: by design or by default. Normalisation by design is the effort to intentionally create normalised circumstances. Normalisation by default, on the other hand, constitutes normalised circumstances that arise out of necessity, often originating from a shortage of resources. The systematic literature has uncovered that empirical research explicitly dealing with the normalisation of imprisonment is scarce. Furthermore, critical reflections on the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the term are mostly missing. As a result, our findings on the operationalisation of normalisation are a starting point for debate and further research, rather than an exhaustive account.

Domains of normalisation

Design ($n = 5$). The analysis of the articles showed the importance of design in the normalisation of prison conditions. Normalised prisons are typically small-scaled institutions (Reiter et al., 2018; Villman, 2023) with modular living units where categories of prisoners (men/women, adult/juvenile, remand/convicted) are housed separately (Cid, 2005). Small-scaled prisons create an environment more closely associated with home (Farahi and Van de Rijt, 2017), allow for more familiarity amongst staff and prisoners resulting in more normalised ways of interaction and offer possibilities for encouraging the autonomy of prisoners (De Vos, 2021). Generally, low-

Table 1. Summary of included articles.

	Author (year)	Location	Method/study sample	(Implicit/explicit) operationalisation
1	Blakely and Bumphus (2004)	United States	**Qualitative** Descriptive analysis of statistical data obtained from the Criminal Justices Institute's (CJI's) Corrections Yearbook of 1998 **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as main **objective Explicit operationalisation** *Facilities and services.* Increased emphasis on rehabilitation
2	Cid (2005)	Spain	**Qualitative** Official reports and data of the years 1996–2003 such as Defensor del Pueblo (Spanish Ombudsman) (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002). Informe anual. Madrid: Cortes Generales and reports from the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drugs Addiction (EMCDDA) (2001) and CPT reports. **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as main **objective** **Implicit operationalisation** *Design* (1) Infrastructure: are modular, based on the cellular principle, and provide for the full range of services stipulated by legislation (workshops, sports and cultural facilities, sick bays and others) (2) Accommodation: place where sentence is served (close to home or not), separation of prisoners (categories such as men/women, adult/juvenile, remand/convicted) and sleeping accommodation (single cell) *Facilities and services* (3) Health care: access to outside treatment programs for drug addicts (4) Work: availability of work in prison (5) Communication with the outside world: whether prisoners can exert their right to contact via mail and telephone and receive visits (6) Ill-treatment: subjection to external controls (inspection bodies) to mistreatment in prison, number of prisoners in a closed regime (7) Legal protection of the prisoner: access to complaints procedures and legal aid in case of ill-treatment
3	De Vos (2021)	Belgium and Norway	**Qualitative** a combination of a document analysis, participant observation (several months) and semi-structured interviews (25) and informal coversations	Normalisation studied as main **objective** **Implicit operationalisation** Normalisation of prison life is creating circumstances in prison that resemble the conditions in free society. 'Normalization as a process, the start of the process (formulating policy aims, carefully and deliberately selecting "focus areas", and identifying intended results)" (p. 312), 'it is about *not limiting* their rights, conditions and autonomy more than strictly necessary' (p. 323).
4	Farahi and Van de Rijt (2017)	The Netherlands	**Qualitative** Observations and 37 semi-structured interviews	Normalisation studied as main **objective** **Implicit operationalisation** *Facilities and services* Possibilities for extra (digital) visits with family and friends. Prisoners can cook their own meals.
5	Gray (2006)	Hong Kong	**Qualitative** Semi-structured interviews (life history) with 24 women in custody **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as **outcome** **Implicit operationalisation** *Identity* 'disciplinary normalization'; interventions to normalise the behaviour of imprisoned women through gender-biased activities (i.e., activities traditionally assigned to women) such as cleaning, cooking, tailoring, etc. Here, the crimes of women in

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

	Author (year)	Location	Method/study sample	(Implicit/explicit) operationalisation
				prison are viewed as 'pathological deviation from culturally constituted norms of "proper womanhood."' (p. 95).
6	Minke (2014)	Denmark	**Qualitative** 13 month ethnographic fieldwork, 68 in-depth interviews **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as **outcome** **Explicit operationalisation** *Facilities and services* Prisoners cooking their own food. Prisoners are able to have family visits in private rooms. *Identity* Prisoners are allowed to wear their own clothes instead of a prison uniform
7	Minke (2014)	Denmark	**Qualitative** Interviews with 12 incarcerated women, three staff and participant observation (67 h) **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as **outcome** **Implicit operationalisation** *Atmosphere* Presence of dogs: normalisation is when an element within prison (in this case the presence of a dog) makes prison feel like a 'safe place', when something is a reflection of what a prisoner has at home.
8	Narag and Jones (2017)	Philippines	**Qualitative** Narrative and observational data, resulting in interviews with about 100 inmates, prison staff and volunteers **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as **outcome** **Implicit operationalisation** *Atmosphere/identity* The creation of a 'community atmosphere' and 'informally negotiated' living conditions where prisoners retain their 'pre-prison identities and self-worth.
9	Narag et. al. (2018)	Philippines	**Qualitative** Interviews with prison officers (15), inmate leaders (20) and volunteers (13) and focus group discussion **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as **outcome** **Implicit operationalisation** *Atmosphere* Prisoners develop gangs (brotherhood or 'pangkat') resulting in an informal classification scheme and social control (p. 345). *Facilities and services* inmates can bring in their 'pre-prison conditions' such as 'resources (food, clothes, money) and applicant (electric fan, TV, refrigerator)' (p. 345).
10	Reiter et al. (2018)	Denmark	**Qualitative** Interviews with 76 prisoners, 47 prison staff and 14 experts **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as **outcome** **Implicit operationalisation** *Design* ('small'). Absence of restrictions such as 'constraints on prisoners' behaviour, freedom of movement, and freedom of association [and more mundane restrictions on] prisoners' participation in community activities, connections with friends and families, freedom of movement in prison and freedom to associate with others' (p. 98). *Facilities and services.* Staff-prisoner relationship ('collegial') and inclusion of social services ('education and job training to prisoners and staff').
11	Sloan (2012)	United States	**Qualitative** Questions asked to 31 men in prison **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as **outcome** **Implicit operationalisation** *Identity* Underlying element of differentiation, whereby prisoners who attempt to normalise themselves and their spaces through cleanliness are also seeking to differentiate themselves from those who they perceive as negative in terms of prisoner identity or illegitimate behaviours […] through processes of

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

	Author (year)	Location	Method/study sample	(Implicit/explicit) operationalisation
				differentiation and normalisation, men can control how they are perceived relative to others.
12	Smith and Smith (2019)	United States	**Qualitative** Survey (open questions) of 31 male inmates **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as **outcome** **Implicit operationalisation** *Atmosphere* Presence of dog (program): 'the recognition that prison structure and culture is not in accordance with mainstream (non-incarcerated) society'.
13	Tartaro (2006)	United States	**Quantitative** Surveys of 150 jails **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as main **objective** **Explicit operationalisation** *Design* (1) Type of furnishings and fixtures (2) Rubber bumpers, carpeting, panels, or other equipment are used to reduce noise and echoes in the living areas (3) Access to television in the living areas during most times of the day (4) Approx. percentage of furniture in the direct-supervision living areas bolted to the floor (5) Inmates are able to turn lights on and off in their cells or dormitories (6) Degree of privacy: (a) Inmates can enter and leave their cells during most times of the day, and (b) Percentage of inmates housed alone
14	Trinidad (2020)	Philippines	**Qualitative** Participant observations and interviews (5) with four inmates and one spouse of an inmate **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as **outcome** **Implicit operationalisation** *Identity* giving prisoners a 'sense of autonomy, personal dignity, and continuance from and connection to the outside world'.
15	Vandebosch (2005)	Belgium	**Mixed methods** Both quantitative survey in two prisons ($n = 178$) and qualitative in-depth interviews with 17 prisoners and 5 ex-prisoners **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as **outcome** **Implicit operationalisation** *Facilities and services* Stay connected to the outside world. Availability of mass media in prison, similar to the media someone has outside prison. Mass media is defined as 'watching television, reading books, newspapers or magazines, and listening to the radio or recorded music'.
16	Villman (2023)	Finland	**Qualitative** Interviews with 45 prisoners **Peer-reviewed**	Normalisation studied as main **objective** **Implicit operationalisation** *Design* The normalization of prison conditions, mainly the security level (small 'campus-style' facilities). No separate perimeter and no immediate supervision, level of freedom of movement, *facilities and services* ability to work or study (in or outside the prison), access to mobile phones, the possibility for overnight visits with family and prison leave.

Table 2. Overview of domains and main findings.

Domain	Main findings	References
Design	• Normalised prison are small-scaled and of modular design. • Open prisons with a lower security level seem to approach normalisation better than closed prisons. • A degree of freedom of movement attests to normalisation, both within the prison perimeter as well as between prison and the outside world. • Normalisation of the living spaces and the accommodation of prisoners occur when furniture is not bolted to the floor and soft materials are used.	Cid, 2005; De Vos, 2021; Reiter et al., 2018; Tartaro, 2006; Villman, 2023
Facilities and services	• Health care, work contact with the outside world and facilities for own food preparation by prisoners normalise the prison environment. • Available facilities should also include access to mass media. • Normalisation is characterised by an absence of restrictions on access to facilities and services. • Digitalization is an underexposed topic with regard to normalisation of facilities and services.	Blakely and Bumphus, 2004; Cid, 2005; Farahi and Van de Rijt, 2017; Minke, 2014; Narag et al., 2017; Reiter et al., 2018;Vandebosch, 2005; Villman, 2023
Atmosphere	• In the Philippines, the formation of prison gangs, although created by default, reflects community life outside prison and leads to informal control • Religion and religious activities provide norms for social conduct and stimulate a 'normal' daily routine in prison. • The presence of dogs contributes to a normalised prison environment, where prisoners are reminded of home and/ or a homely atmosphere is created.	Minke, 2014; Narag and Jones, 2017; Narag et al., 2017; Smith and Smith, 2019; Trinidad, 2020
Identity	• Normalisation can pertain to one's identity when prisoners are able to keep their pre-prison social status and occupational skills	Gray, 2006; Farahi and Van de Rijt, 2017; Minke, 2014; Narag and Jones, 2017; Narag et al., 2017; Sloan, 2012; Trinidad, 2020

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Domain	Main findings	References
	• Religious activities provide prisoners with a sense of purpose and autonomy • Cleanliness (personal hygiene and cleaning personal space) serves as a way to normalise prisoners' situation, and set oneself apart from other prisoners or even allowing prisoners to relinquish (part of) their prisoners' identity • Prison can oppose gender-specific behavioural norms on prisoners as a form of control; referred to as disciplinary normalisation.	

security open prisons are said to offer possibilities for more normalised circumstances, for example by allowing prisoners a higher degree of freedom of movement (Villman, 2023) and freedom to have contact with other prisoners (Reiter et al., 2018). The security level does not only relate to architectural design but also to the degree of (direct or indirect) supervision from prison staff (Reiter et al., 2018). Open prisons depend more on dynamic security, where interaction between staff and prisoners partly serves as a form of (informal) control, in the absence of the more static forms of security and control that dominate in high(er) security prisons (De Vos, 2021). Conversely, as will be discussed later, prisons with a higher security level in some cases offer opportunities for more normalised circumstances, for example in the contact between staff and prisoners (Reiter et al., 2018). In these prisons, the building is designed to regulate security, allowing staff to engage in more informal interaction. The degree to which prisoners enjoy freedom of movement also transcends the prison perimeter, for example opportunities for prisoners to have jobs, study or go on leave outside prison (Reiter et al., 2018). Therefore, the prison environment should not only resemble life in the community, but should also physically be placed within the community and prisoners should be housed in their own region (Cid, 2005). Although allowing prisoners to go outside the prison walls does not normalise life *in* prison, it normalises the life one has in prison and connects life inside the prison to life in society.

Normalisation also pertains to the accommodation and living spaces of prisoners. Certain design and furnishing choices can enhance normalisation, such as furniture made of natural instead of 'vandal-resistant' materials that are not bolted to the floor, noise-reduction measures, and access to television (Tartaro, 2006). Vandal-resistant materials represent an institutional environment whereas natural materials reflect the furniture people own at home. Also, subtler aspects of the living spaces, such as the level of control prisoners have over switching the lights in their cell and the degree of privacy, are considered part of a normalised environment (Tartaro, 2006).

Facilities and services ($n = 8$). Normalisation is operationalised as prisoners having access to the same facilities and services that are available to citizens in a free society, including healthcare, work in prison and contact with family and friends (Farahi and Van de Rijt, 2017). Health care is not limited to physical care but also concerns healthcare for mental illness and treatment for addiction (Cid, 2005). Work in prison should be sufficiently available and generate enough earnings to 'satisfy economic needs' (Cid, 2005: 153). Regarding contact with the outside world, it is important

that prisoners are provided with enough possibilities to maintain contact with family and friends through email, phone calls and visits (Farahi and Van de Rijt, 2017). The possibility to have private visits and overnight visits from family enhance normalisation because they contribute to the maintenance of family life while imprisoned (Minke, 2014; Villman, 2023). Furthermore, allowing prisoners to prepare their own meals, which reflects the daily activities of life in a free society, contributes to a normalised prison environment (Farahi and Van de Rijt, 2017; Minke, 2014). These facilities and services are related to normalisation in the context of retaining all human rights while imprisoned (Villman, 2023), and also are considered to contribute favourably to the rehabilitation of prisoners (Blakely and Bumphus, 2004). Mass media (television, books, newspapers, etc.) and digital media can also enhance normalisation (Reiter et al., 2018; Vandebosch, 2005; Villman, 2023). It is noted, however, that access to digital devices (e.g., mobile phones and internet) is largely lacking and does not reflect the conditions of a free society (Reiter et al., 2018; Villman, 2023).

Two things seem noteworthy when it comes to the normalisation of facilities and services in prison. First, the absence of restrictions on facilities and services is an important stipulation for the normalisation of the prison environment (Reiter et al., 2018; Villman, 2023). This concerns restrictions on the types of facilities and services and the extent to which prisoners have access to them. Second, normalisation can also be enhanced by allowing prisoners to bring their own private goods into prison, including appliances (e.g., electric fan, TV, refrigerator) and personal possessions such as food, clothes, and money (Narag et al., 2017).

Atmosphere ($n = 5$). Normalisation does not solely concern physical and material aspects of prison life, as is the case in the two domains described above, but also pertains to more intangible aspects of the prison environment. One of these aspects is the atmosphere in prison, which is related to (social) contacts in prison, such as contact with peers, staff or even animals. Researchers have found that the presence of dogs promotes normalisation by creating a more homely and cosy atmosphere and a 'safe space' for prisoners within the prison walls (Minke and Smoyer, 2017; Smith and Smith, 2019). For prisoners who own or owned dogs at home, the dogs in prison were a reminder of a positive aspect of their life at home. This form of normalisation is subjective and related to (prior) experiences and feelings. In prisons in the Philippines, normalisation was related to a communal atmosphere created through the formation of gangs (brotherhood or 'pangkat') reflecting community life in a free society (Narag and Jones, 2017; Narag et al., 2017). The informal social control and the prisoner classification scheme that have formed as a consequence of the formation of these gangs imitate 'Filipino cultural practices of communitarian living and community spirit' (Narag et al., 2017: 355). As will be discussed later, the manifestation of normalisation of prison life discussed in these studies originated from necessity, as a result of a lack of resources, shortage of staff and inmate overcrowding, rather than intention.

Identity ($n = 7$) On an individual level, normalisation can pertain to a person's identity by respecting their dignity and autonomy. Farahi and Van de Rijt (2017) operationalise normalisation according to the definition of individual normalisation provided by Snacken (2002), where the variety of social roles the prisoner has in a free society, such as father/mother, brother/sister are recognised and respected. One way to achieve this is by allowing prisoners to wear their own clothes instead of a standard prison uniform (Minke, 2014). In the Philippines, a prisoner's identity is transferred from the community into the prison community by deploying the occupational skills prisoners bring into prison for the benefit of the prison community (Narag and Jones, 2017; Narag et al., 2017). Furthermore, their pre-prison identity is not just transferred into prison; prisoners are in some cases even able to continue part of their (occupational) life outside prison. The authors argue

that prison authorities 'inspire inmates to keep their pre-prison identities' and mention successful but anecdotal cases where a prisoner built a political career from prison or recorded an album (Narag and Jones, 2017: 15). Normalisation of identity can also mean allowing prisoners to reshape certain aspects of their identity, which might benefit their life after prison. For example, the participation of prisoners in religious activities in the Philippines reportedly helps prisoners shape a new identity and find a sense of purpose (Trinidad, 2020). Importantly, such instances of normalisation are voluntary, but facilitated by the prison service.

The normalisation of identity can also arise in an attempt to distinguish oneself from the (abnormal) prison environment and the associated prisoner identity. Although prison is said to inherently limit autonomy (Reiter et al., 2018), this limitation can ignite distinct practices to (re-)claim control over one's life while in prison. Sloan (2012) describes this complex interaction between normalisation and identity by arguing that prisoners use cleanliness to assert control over their lives and their identity. Cleaning fulfils this function through manipulation of the self and personal space (i.e., tidying one's cell), which is used to set oneself apart from the perceived 'dirty' prison environment and 'inferior' prisoner identity (Sloan, 2012). Normalisation in this sense should not be understood in reference to norms outside prison, where cleanliness and cleaning may not be a defining part of a person's (male) identity or a typical masculine habit. In prison, however, cleaning practices may help maintain a (masculine) identity, where 'available mechanisms through which to perform one's gender are heavily restricted' (Sloan, 2012: 409). In other words, normalisation of identity means fulfilling a non-prisoner identity within the restricted institutional context. In contrast, Gray (2006) argues that normalisation is utilised by prisons in Hong Kong to shape the behaviour of imprisoned women along societal gender norms through the provision of specific education, vocational training, and activities (e.g., knitting and household chores). From a review of the studies, it thus appears that opportunities for identity normalisation are partly dictated by the prison, but also partly shaped (and even circumvented) by prisoners.

The influence of place: Normalisation as a universal concept? This systematic review exposed differences in the operationalisation of normalisation of prison life in the Global North and the Global South. There are important contextual differences between the Global North and Global South in the origins of normalisation in prison (intended vs. not intended), as well as the substantive manifestation (e.g., related to privacy, material standards, etc.). These differences are the result of the context of the prison setting, in this case, the country and the habits and customs of the population.

One of the areas where countries from the Global South seem to hold differing views from countries in the Global North is the level of privacy when 'implementing' normalisation in the prison environment. In the Global North, the use of single cells is promoted as an element to promote normalised circumstances in prison (Cid, 2005; Tartaro, 2006). In the Global South such as the Philippines, more importance is given to communion and communitarian living, as this reflects life in a free society (Narag and Jones, 2017; Narag et al., 2017; Sloan, 2012; Trinidad, 2020). The particularity of the context by which normalisation is defined is shown in one of the articles describing the attempted importation and application of Western inmate classification schemes in the Philippines (Narag et al., 2017). Western-inspired inmate classification schemes were implemented for purposes of housing assignment and protocols for supervision and control in prison. However, cultural and organisational factors such as a lack of trust from staff in the new classification scheme and insufficiently qualified staff resulted in the failure to implement the classification scheme. Norms may thus not 'travel' very well, and the place is important to the meaning of normalisation.

In many countries in the Global North efforts to normalise the prison environment are created intentionally due to prevailing penal philosophies about a humane prison climate and the reintegration of prisoners (Cid, 2005; Reiter et al., 2018; Vandebosch, 2005; Villman, 2023). Conversely, in the Philippines (and possibly other countries in the Global South, we return to this in the Discussion), normalisation of prison life is generated by default, which may be due in part to extremely limited funds and resources (Narag and Jones, 2017; Narag et al., 2017). As a consequence, prisoners share responsibility for administrative tasks and maintaining safety and order, and they can import their own goods (electrical appliances but also food, clothes and money) into prison. Prison culture is shaped by the importation of hierarchies and gangs. These elements promote the normalisation of prison life in the sense that they reflect life in the Philippine community. Here, normalisation is not emulated but rather emerges by default and, as a result, is accompanied by inequality and corruption. At the same time, the subsequent shared governance system in the Philippines also creates beneficial circumstances for both prisoners and staff. Staff is helped by the system of informal control that the gangs (*Pankat*) provide. Prisoners, in turn, feel empowered and treated as humans because they are respected for their (pre-prison) skills and knowledge (Narag and Jones, 2017: 15–16).

Inherent limitations of normalisation. In the previous paragraph, it was pointed out how resource limitations may shape opportunities for normalisation, but the analysis also revealed other ways in which the institutional environment shapes and oftentimes limits normalisation. Security concerns, in particular, can interfere with normalisation efforts. In some cases, normalisation can be explicitly regarded as undesirable in prisons. Alcohol use, for example, is legal in free society but is prohibited in prison (the same is true for the possession of other contraband items, such as mobile phones and medication that is not prescribed). Staff can also impose restrictions on participation in activities or freedom of movement in response to other behaviour not considered unlawful in a free society, such as verbal aggression or disobedience (Reiter et al., 2018). Paradoxically, more restrictive environments can sometimes offer greater opportunities for informal interactions between staff and prisoners. Limitations in movement may be offset (partially) by more informal and in-person contact with staff, as is discussed by Reiter et al. (2018) using the example of a teacher's experience in a high-security facility who had more contact with the incarcerated student. This suggests that normalisation may be realised in different domains of the prison experience, and that limits to normalisation in one domain (e.g., freedom of movement) may be compensated to some extent by greater normalisation in another domain (e.g., participation in activities, and respectful and friendly interactions with custodial and non-custodial staff).

Other limits to normalisation are tied to the deprivation of autonomy and liberty imposed by imprisonment. In the context of Danish prisons it is noted that, although many elements of life in prison have to a great extent been normalised such as the ability to cook one's own meal and respectful staff-prisoner relationships, prisoners still experience limited autonomy (Reiter et al., 2018). The restrictions that are listed mainly concern digital (communication) devices and restrictions to freedoms such as eating fast food and deciding your own daily schedule. With developments in technology that have significantly impacted life in the community in the last decades, life in prison has further diverged from life in the community. Arguably, prisoners experience frustrations because they are denied access to mobile phones, Internet and a variety of TV channels because of institutional rules and regulations that are not necessarily perceived as legitimate (Reither et al., 2018: 104).

Normalisation and related concepts of resocialisation and responsibilisation

A utilitarian justification of normalisation is that it enhances prospects of successful reintegration after release, because the differences between life in prison and life in the community are minimal and, as a result, people would be expected to encounter fewer adjustment problems on release. Theoretically, the concepts of normalisation and resocialisation may be different; empirically, however, they are more difficult to distinguish. Each concept has a different ideological and temporal emphasis; while normalisation is associated primarily with humane prison conditions and is therefore present-oriented (i.e., time in prison), resocialisation refers to life after prison and is thus future-oriented. However, the practical implementation of normalised conditions also requires decisions on what is 'normal' (and often imparts some judgement on what is desirable or conventional). This is illustrated by the study by Cid (2005), who explicitly considers rehabilitation opportunities separately from normalisation efforts. The operationalisation of both concepts, however, shows considerable overlap, such as the availability of treatment programs for drug addiction and opportunities for temporary leave. The extent to which normalisation of the prison environment contributes to resocialisation is only researched in one article. Villman (2023) found that personal circumstances prior to imprisonment and attitudes towards life outside (or after) prison are related to the experience of normalisation in prison. That is, prisoners with a relatively conventional life before prison saw the normalised circumstances as 'unproblematic'. For example, prisoners appreciated access to mobile phones as it allowed them to stay in contact with family while in prison and valued the ability to go grocery shopping (Villman, 2023: 88). However, prisoners with a less stable life before prison and who aspired to a conventional life after prison considered the normalised circumstances insufficient to prepare them for life after release. Finally, some prisoners rejected the imposed conditions associated with the normalised prison environment, and described them as 'hypocritical' or 'patronizing' (Villman, 2023: 92–94), because they allowed some activities but prohibited others (such as the use of alcohol during prison leave).

The last example shows how the normalisation of prison life can develop into forms of (experienced) responsibilisation, even more so when (participation in) 'normalised' practices or activities (e.g., cooking or working) are obligatory or conditional on good behaviour. While the literature suggests that normalised circumstances encourage good behaviour of prisoners (Narag and Jones, 2017; Narag et al., 2017; Tartaro, 2006; Trinidad, 2020; Villman, 2023), it is problematic from a human rights perspective if normalised prison circumstances are conditional on good behaviour, and effectively become a reward that can be earned (e.g., more time out of the cell, more visits or a place in the 'honour block'). In practice, however, these lines are often blurred, also due to security concerns (discussed previously), which are often tied to risk assessment and prior behaviour. This means that a normalised environment can simultaneously have a normalising function if it is a privilege to be gained or lost depending on whether behaviour is considered desirable and conventional.

Discussion

Beyond the definition offered in international soft law, normalisation has not been clearly and consistently operationalised for empirical study. In our systematic literature search, we were therefore unable to depart from a clearly demarcated operationalisation of the concept of normalisation and limit our analysis to outcomes of normalisation. The literature search revealed the wide-ranging scope of normalisation, including many different aspects of prison life. The lack of a clear

operationalisation precluded a deductive analysis of normalisation, but our inductive analysis is intended to yield a helpful starting point for further research. Through a discussion of dimensions of operationalisation in conjunction with substantive findings, we aimed to contribute to a greater awareness of the concept of normalisation of life in prison and provide more depth to the discussion on the subject. Moreover, we aimed to provide more clarity on the relationship between normalisation, resocialisation and responsibilisation. In most research thus far, these concepts are considered separately and separatable (*cf.* De Vos, 2021), but in practice, their application and meaning overlap, resulting in a blurry line between the rights-based principle of normalisation and the normalisation of behaviour (i.e., disciplinary normalisation).[1]

This review has exposed variations of normalisation between the Global North and the Global South, most notably how the normalisation of prison life can also emerge from weak institutional governance, as was described in the context of Philippine prisons. We refer to this as normalisation by default, as opposed to normalisation by design. Similar practices have been found in prison systems across South America, for example in Brazil and Uruguay (Boersma, 2016; Darke, 2022; Darke and Karam, 2016) and in prisons in African countries such as Ethiopia (O'Donnell, 2023). Birkbeck's (2011) comparative analysis of penal institutions in North and South America offers some further insight into the origins of the normalisation of prison conditions in the Global South. Normalisation by default is a product of what he describes as 'internment', or 'the absence of projects for doing something with or to inmates while in confinement' (Birbeck, 2011: 321). He does not find the availability of resources a satisfactory explanation for the difference between the Global North and Global South in terms of prison life and disciplinary control; rather, he argues that it should be understood in light of a different point of focus on penal social control. Venezuela, for example, offers many more gradual release opportunities from an earlier stage in a prison sentence, compared to the United States. Penal control and intervention are thus focussed on the release process rather than on behaviour inside the prison walls. It is important to note that a strict division between the Global North and Global South is too simplistic, as practices of communal prison life are also present in collective cultures in Eastern parts of Europe (Idrissi, 2020; Piacentini and Slade, 2015) and even among prison (sub-)cultures in Western European counties, for example the IRA in Ireland (O'Donnell, 2023).[2] In these contexts, it has been similarly observed that prison authorities intervene very little in the lives of prisoners, resulting in greater autonomy and extra-legal or shared governance.

The distinction between 'normalisation by default' and 'normalisation by design' thus reflects societal norms, cultural practices and the locus of penal power, but each has different benefits and pitfalls. A crucial difference between the two is the level of control exercised by the authorities. Greater official governance and staff presence can work in favour of prisoners lower in the prisoner hierarchy or with fewer financial means, because they may be better protected from exploitation and undue inequality in access to resources.[3] Additionally, it may offer more opportunities for reinvention (Crewe and Ievins, 2020), rather than reproduction of a community lifestyle that was likely associated with one's offending behaviour. Shared governance, on the other hand, can also contribute to the empowerment and autonomy of prisoners in positive ways, including the utilisation of skills and knowledge, and the development of leadership skills (Narag et al., 2017). Less formal control also often extends to family visits, which have the character of 'open days' (Birbeck, 2011: 314) due to the mingling of prisoners and community members, and help to break down the isolating experience of imprisonment. It is worthwhile to continue the debate on whether the benefits of both manifestations of normalisation can be implemented in systems seeking to

normalise without the disadvantages. It is important to keep in mind, however, that norms and ideas about what is 'beneficial' (and for whom) are context-dependent.

A limitation of this systematic review is that it resulted in a fairly small number of included publications, mainly because only studies were included that use the term normalisation explicitly. This does not mean, however, that normalisation of the prison environment has not been the subject of empirical research. Instead, the concept of normalisation has been studied through the use of related terms or concepts, such as the social or living climate in prison (see, e.g. Liebling, 2004; Van Ginneken et al., 2018), through architectural design (for an overview of studies on 'ethical architecture' see Engstrom and Van Ginneken, 2022) or differences in prisoner experience in open and closed prisons (Crewe et al., 2023; Mjåland et al., 2021; Shammas, 2014). This is also true for the four domains identified in this article; design, facilities and services, atmosphere and identity. We therefore cannot rule out the existence of additional studies on a similar or related topic.

In reflection on the findings, we identified areas that merit further examination. First, the empirical studies that were included in the review were based on a variety of samples. Further research could devote attention specifically to the question 'whose norms are the basis of normalisation efforts?' Second, the articles provided relevant but limited information on what the various domains mean for shaping the prison environment. In addition, they did not account for the different needs of specific groups of prisoners such as the elderly (Dawes, 2009; Ginn, 2012; Snacken, 2002). Furthermore, the articles did not address how prior health issues – which are generally more severe for the prison population compared to the general population – should influence standards of normality (Van Zyl Smit and Snacken, 2009). A third influential domain only marginally touched upon is the relationship between staff and prisoners. Staff-prisoner relationships are an important component of the social climate in prison (Boone et al., 2016; Liebling, 2004; Van Ginneken et al., 2018). Finally, digitalisation deserves more attention in relation to normalisation of prison life. If not addressed, the gap between the use of digital technologies in prison and free society will grow wider in time.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The ideas voiced in this article are the authors' and do not reflect the position of the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency.

Funding

No funding was received for this research.

ORCID iDs

Jill van de Rijt https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9058-1149
Esther F.J.C. van Ginneken https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1442-1012

Notes

1. For this reason, we also decided not to make a linguistic distinction between the 'normality principle' and 'normalisation'.
2. These studies were not included in the systematic literature review, because they did not refer explicitly to normalisation. This limitation may also be the result of the selection bias due to the language selection in the inclusion criteria (i.e. English and Dutch).

3. Note that this is also a problem in countries in the Global North, for example in England and Wales, where the prison system is considered to be in crisis and lacks legitimacy and adequate resources (see, e.g. Gooch and Treadwell, 2020).

References

Birbeck C (2011) Imprisonment and internment: comparing penal institutions north and south. *Punishment & Society* 13(3): 307–332.

Blakely CR and Bumphus VW (2004) Private and public sector prisons. A comparison of select characteristics. *Federal Probation* 68(1): 27–31.

Boersma Y (2016) Deze gevangenis lijkt zo veel mogelijk op de buitenwereld (en dat werkt). https://decorrespondent.nl/3857/deze-gevangenis-lijkt-zo-veel-mogelijk-op-de-buitenwereld-en-dat-werkt/377052397722-66f9df24.

Boone M, Althoff M and Koenraadt F (2016) *Het leefklimaat in justitiële inrichtingen*. Den Haag: Boom juridisch.

Cid J (2005) The penitentiary system in Spain. The use of imprisonment, living conditions and rehabilitation. *Punishment and Society* 7(2): 147–166.

Council of Europe (2006) *Recommendation Rec (2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the European Prison Rules* (11 January 2006), https://rm.coe.int/europeanprison-rules-978-92-871-5982-3/16806ab9ae

Crewe B and Ievins A (2020) The prison as a reinventive institution. *Theoretical Criminology* 24(4): 568–589.

Crewe B, Ievins A, Larmour S, et al. (2023) Nordic penal exceptionalism: A comparative, empirical analysis. *The British Journal of Criminology* 63(2): 424–443.

Darke S (2022) Radical alternatives to punitive detention. In: Sozzo M (eds) *Prisons, Inmates and Governance in Latin America.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 329–363.

Darke S and Karam ML (2016) Latin American prisons. In: Jewkes Y, Crewe B and Bennett J (eds) *Handbook on Prisons*. New York: Routledge, pp. 460–474.

Dawes J (2009) Ageing prisoners: issues for social work. *Australian Social Work* 62(2): 258–271.

De Vos H (2021) The normalisation principle. PhD Thesis, University of Leuven, Belgium.

De Vos H and Gilbert E (2017) Freedom, so close but yet so far: The impact of the ongoing confrontation with freedom on the perceived severity of punishment. *European Journal of Probation* 9(2): 132–148.

Engbo HJ (2017) Normalisation in nordic prisons—from a prison governor's perspective. In: Smith PS and Ugelvik T (eds) *Scandinavian Penal History, Culture and Prison Practice: Embraced by the Welfare State?* London: Palgrave Macmillen, pp. 327–352.

Engstrom KV and Van Ginneken EFJC (2022) Ethical prison architecture: A systematic literature review of prison design features related to wellbeing. *Space and Culture* 25(3): 479–503.

Farahi C and Van de Rijt J (2017) Normalisatie en zelfredzaamheid binnen het gevangeniswezen. *Proces* 95(2): 75–85.

Foucault M (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* London: Penguin Books.

Ginn S (2012) Elderly prisoners. *BMJ* 345: e6263.

Gooch K and Treadwell J (2020) Prisoner society in an era of psychoactive substances, organised crime, new drug markets and austerity. *The British Journal of Criminology* 60(5): 1260–1281.

Gray P (2006) Women's experiences of incarceration in Hong Kong: doing time, doing choice, doing class-gender-culture. *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 34: 89–104.

Idrissi AJ (2020) Prison space, social control and relationships in a post-Soviet women's prison. PhD Thesis, University of Plymouth, UK.

Jewkes Y (2022) "An iron fist in a silk glove" the pains of Halden prison. In: Crewe B, Goldsmith A and Halsey M (eds) *Power and Pain in the Modern Prison: The Society of Captives Revisited.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 112–132.

Liebling A (2004) *Prisons and Their Moral Performance: A Study of Values, Quality, and Prison Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Minke LK (2014) Cooking in prison–from crook to cook. *International Journal of Prisoner Health* 10(4): 228–238.

Minke LK and Smoyer AB (2017) Prison food in Denmark: Normal responsibility or ethnocentric imaginations? In: Smith PS and Ugelvik T (eds) *Scandinavian Penal History, Culture and Prison Practice: Embraced by the Welfare State?* London: Palgrave Macmillen, pp. 353–376.

Mjåland K, Laursen J, Schliehe A, et al. (2021) Contrasts in freedom: comparing the experiences of imprisonment in open and closed prisons in England and Wales and Norway, *European Journal of Criminology*: 1–22. Epub ahead of print 31 December 2021. https://doi.org/10.1177/14773708211065905.

Narag RE, Galehan J and Jones C (2017) Challenges to inmate classification in a developing country setting: implications for context-based inmate classification schemes. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 42(4): 341–358.

Narag RE and Jones CR (2017) Understanding prison management in the Philippines: a case for shared governance. *The Prison Journal* 97(1): 3–26.

O'Donnell I (2023) *Prison Life: Pain, Resistance, and Purpose*. New York: NYU Press.

Piacentini L and Slade G (2015) Architecture and attachment: carceral collectivism and the problem of prison reform in Russia and Georgia. *Theoretical Criminology* 19(2): 179–197.

Pratt J (2008) Scandinavian exceptionalism in an era of penal excess. Part I: the nature and origins of Scandinavian exceptionalism. *British Journal of Criminology* 48: 119–137.

Reiter K, Sexton L and Sumner J (2018) Theoretical and empirical limits of Scandinavian exceptionalism: isolation and normalization in Danish prisons. *Punishment & Society* 20(1): 92–112.

Shammas VL (2014) The pains of freedom: assessing the ambiguity of Scandinavian penal exceptionalism on Norway's prison island. *Punishment & Society* 16(1): 104–123.

Sloan J (2012) You can see your face in my floor': examining the function of cleanliness in an adult male prison. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 51(4): 400–410.

Smith HP and Smith H (2019) A qualitative assessment of a dog program for youth offenders in an adult prison. *Public Health Nursing* 36(4): 507–513.

Smith PS and Ugelvik T (2017) Punishment and welfare in Scandinavia. In: Smith PS and Ugelvik T (eds) *Scandinavian Penal History, Culture and Prison Practice: Embraced by the Welfare State?* London: Palgrave Macmillen, pp. 511–529.

Snacken S (2002) Normalisation' dans les prisons: Concept et defis. L'exemple de l'Avant-project de loi pénitentiaire belge. In: Kaminski D and De Schutter O (eds) *L'institution du Droit Pénitentiaire. Enjeux de la Reconnaissance de Droits des Détenus*. Paris: L.G.D.J., 133–152.

Tartaro C (2006) Watered down: partial implementation of the new generation jail philosophy. *The Prison Journal* 86(3): 284–300.

Trinidad JE (2020) Religion and the creation of normal appearance: Findings from a Philippine prison. *Social Sciences and Missions* 33(1–2): 105–127.

United Nations (2015) *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules).* New York: United Nations.

Vandebosch H (2005) The perceived role of mass media use during incarceration in the light of prisoners' re-entry into society. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture* 12(2): 96–115.

Van de Rijt J, Van Ginneken E and Boone M (2023) Lost in translation: The principle of normalisation in prison policy in Norway and the Netherlands. *Punishment & Society* 25(3): 766–783.

Van Ginneken EFJC (2018) Zelfredzaamheid in detentie: Kritische kanttekeningen bij het systeem van promoveren en degraderen. *Proces, Tijdschrift Voor Strafrechtspleging* 97(2): 113–129.

Van Ginneken EFJC, Palmen H, Bosma AQ, et al. (2018) The life in custody study: the quality of prison life in Dutch prison regimes. *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice* 4(4): 253–268.

Van Zyl Smit D and Snacken S (2009) *Principles of European Prison Law and Policy: Penology and Human Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Villman E (2023) Narratives of normality: Finnish prisoners envisioning their future. *Punishment and Society* 25(1): 80–98.