

THE TOPOGRAPHIES OF AFFECT

Prisons Perceived as Soundscapes

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Based on a critical reading of three prison protocols from 1860 to 1930, this article examines the affective quality of prisons as social spaces. Guided by concepts such as affect and embodiment, it looks closer at the ways anger, rage, and frustration were bodily expressed. In a place where silence ruled, anger and frustration were channelled through the use of material devices and bodily practices (involving breaking material devices into pieces, making noise, catching glimpses of light, communication with other prisoners via piping systems, etc.), all at the cost of longer imprisonment and reduction in meagre food rations. The soundscape experienced by insiders stands in contrast to outsiders' views of prisons as large secluded fenced-in buildings enveloped in silence.

Keywords: soundscape, affect, social space, material structure, criminal reforms

In autumn 1915 Niels was held in custody. From two recordings in the reprimand protocol, it becomes obvious he had major problems conforming to the prison rules:

He has broken the peephole in the cell door to be able to look out into the corridor. He rings; calls nonstop and disturbs his surroundings. He has broken the peephole several times before. Niels received a warning two days ago from the chief constable, but in vain. It was decided that Niels would receive a reprimand of six days on bread and water. (Chapter 29 § 2 in the Regulations, p. 8)

Thirteen days later new recordings of his offences were made, and now Niels was reported for having

thrown a newspaper parcel and tobacco to convicts when they were out in the exercise yard. This

took place today in the morning at 9 o'clock. Three to four days ago he was also seen throwing food to bread-and-water prisoners. When Svendsen (the prison guard) talked to him today, he answered back "Shut up, and kiss my arse!" He repeated this several times in the presence of several convicts. Niels was presented with the information that was recorded about what had taken place, but he denied that it is correct and accused the prison guard of telling lies. It was decided that he would be punished with six days on bread and water combined with three days in a dark cell. (Chapter 29 § 2, pp. 8–9. Recited and signed)

Niels may have felt he had achieved something: he was recognised when he threw highly appreciated goods to other prisoners. His protests and attempts to overrule the strict regulations of everyday life in prison were acknowledged by other prisoners when

they overheard him scolding the prison guard, for which he was likely to gain a status among fellow prisoners. But it turned out to be costly behaviour, considering the prolonged sentence he had to endure. Why did he take the risk? I assume that the actions and the sounds described in the cases of Niels gave the prisoner confirmation – through a negative affirmation – of his or her presence; a recognition of being seen, of existence, to achieve a subjective effect of sensing-oneself-as-part-of-the-world.

Framing the Study

The focus of this article is how life inside prison walls was experienced by some of the prisoners who had to spend time locked up there.¹ I use information gained from a critical reading of three prison protocols to give a glimpse into a world unknown to most of us. Within a well-structured space for the control and confinement of the conduct of prisoners, the affect, in the form of the sense of sight, smell, and sounds, is given expressions in non-prescribed conduct; conduct that could result in prolonged sentences in solitary confinement, as documented in the prison protocols. Guided by concepts such as affect and embodiment, the article will look closer at the ways temper, despair, and loneliness were expressed bodily. Two approaches are engaged with. The first is Markus' assumption that a close connection exists between material history and the social relations it creates (Markus 1993: 11). The second dwells on the sensual and thereby involves the wider sociology of emotions (Paterson, Dodge & MacKian 2012). The affective quality of the prison topography is examined. By asking if "affect associated with embodied practices" (Thrift 2008: 189) can throw new light on prisons as social spaces, this paper explores whether and how prisons can be understood and read as topographies and architecture of affect. I raise the following questions: Can the concept of affect facilitate an understanding of the prison as a social space? In what ways were rage and associated feelings expressed and disciplined within the precisely structured prison walls?

The three Norwegian protocols that constitute the main historic sources in the study are the prison

priest's protocol, the reprimand protocol, and the inventory protocol. The study period and the sources cover a relatively long time-frame from the late 1860s to 1930. Both the final choice of case (Bergen prison) and the end date of the period under investigation have been made on the basis of the character of the material (see table 1 at the end of this article). As parts of such material may contain sensitive information, special permission was required from the Keeper of the Rolls (*Statsarkivaren*) to allow insight into more recent material. The final choice of historic sources for examination was motivated partly by the relevance of this period from a social history perspective (a period with major class divisions), feasibility (availability of copies of the material), but primarily by the character of the recordings in the three examined protocols. It is a small selection of prisoners' lives and offences that are portrayed here,



Ill. 1: The photo dated 1927–30 shows the prison guards standing in the main hall in the Bergen prison. Photographer was Atelier K. Knudsen. (Copyright: University of Bergen Library, UBB-KK-N-320/041)

since I have neither intended to document the extent and variety of offences nor the degree of seriousness they were ascribed, as this is not a study of criminality as such.

I have asked myself if and how much I would be able to “read” out of these historic sources. The sources can only give me as a critical reader some fragments of information, and imagination is necessary if I want to create a picture of the life inside prison walls. As the protocols are written by representatives of the prison authorities, they should only be read as second-hand registrations of the way the prisoners may have expressed their anger, frustrations, and so forth. The sources represent the dominant society’s approaches to punishment and potential redemption, both in their actions and writing. Each historic source has different actors behind it. These actors had different reasons for making the recordings in the way that they did. It is important to keep in mind that they also function as legitimating types of writing, justifying why prisoners were viewed the way they were and from that particular position.

The choice of affect, that is the experience of emotion, as the guiding perspective in this analysis influenced the approach to the material. There is however “a great danger of reading one’s presentist assumptions into the past” (Peabody 2012: 6). To be able to construct a sense of historical context, I make use of the concept of historical empathy. Although the term empathy is primarily known from its use in, for example, the caring professions and in psychological studies (Foster 2001: 167), there are examples in some historiographical readings of references to the use of historical empathy. MacMullen (2003) concludes his critical review of some representatives of the French Annales circle by calling for a

certain way of reading the records [...] a way of searching out the emotions that determined behaviour; and entering into them, ourselves; and representing them in all their colours, so as more accurately to reveal the past, or re-feel it, and so to understand it. (2003: 135)

According to Davis, Yeager and Foster (2001), “empathy characterizes historical thinking that yields enriched understanding within context” (2001: 3) and describes the term as a means of “perspective taking” to clarify his view. Davies stresses the importance of “*not misunderstanding historical empathy as sympathy* or a kind of appreciative sentiment” (my italics) (2001: 3). The two perspectives have important implications for the method with which historic sources are interpreted. By putting the individual life stories of the prisoners in focus, the study has a certain resemblance to earlier works within micro-history, which appeared from the 1970s onwards.

Before I proceed in searching for individual experiences in the historical sources, a few clarifications are in order. I start by giving a brief outline of the conceptual framework that has guided this work. A sketch of the context of the prison buildings as part of criminal reforms introduces the main part of the article, which examines the historical sources. I first present some data available in the official annual prison protocols, followed by reflections on the prison priest’s report, the inventory protocols, and the reprimand protocols. The paper is summarised in a discussion of prisons as soundscape.

Space, Power, Affect

Prisons have been studied from a series of discipline-specific angles, including architectural history and criminology. Prisons can also be understood as social spaces. A fundamental change took place as a result of Foucault’s study (1977) of prisons as institutions of discipline and punishment. Among many others, he influenced Thomas Markus and his architectural history of the origin of modern institutional building (1993). Markus’ approach to the relationship between buildings and society is a major source of inspiration in my analyses. When he in the introduction to *Buildings and Power* draws up some of the underlying perspectives that have influenced his analysis, he states that “buildings are more than passive containers for relations. Like all practices they are formative, as much through the things that happen in them, their functional programme, as by their spatial relations and their form”

(1993: 11). Inspired by Lefebvre ([1974]1991) he uses this approach “to connect abstract scientific and social space with the concrete, material space” (cit. in Markus 1993: 12). In a recent study of buildings, the archaeologist Kevin D. Fisher (2009) has chosen what he calls “an integrative approach,” where he combines three methodological perspectives to enable him to locate social interaction. His starting point is the space syntax model based on Hillier and Hanson (1984), which he combines with a nonverbal communication of meaning approach based on Rapoport (1982), which in the final analyses he ends up integrating with a visibility analysis. While the space syntax model depends heavily on a highly formalised and structured set of data, which historic documents may rarely provide, I have found some of Rapoport’s concepts useful. Rapoport (1982: 87–101) isolates three elements of the built environment that encode and communicate messages. *Fixed-feature* elements are relatively permanent architectural components integral to a building’s structure, including walls and floors. *Semi-fixed-feature* elements are more easily changeable and include various furnishings and portable artefacts, while *non-fixed-feature* elements include the physical and verbal expressions of the building’s occupants and users, including their language, clothing, and accessories. According to Fisher both fixed-feature and semi-fixed-feature elements play essential and interrelated roles in the creation of contexts of interaction (Fisher 2009: 444). Based on the reading of the three protocols supplemented by the official annual reports, I will later use some of Rapoport’s concepts to describe the interaction that took place between the prisoner, the prison cell, and its sparse inventory (Rapoport 1982).

The second conceptual gateway in this study is the sensory dimension. Affect has received renewed interest in cultural scholarship, drawing fresh attention to phenomenologists and their attention to affect. To find a straightforward definition that clarifies the notions that affect represents is a challenge. Researchers have described the term as “somewhat vague and ambiguous,” for instance when it has been described as “felt bodily intensity that is different from emotion and language” (Davie-Kessler, Guffin

& McGrail 2013). Affect can be looked upon as a potential – and here is also where much of its power is buried: in the body’s capacity to affect and be affected. “With affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself – webbed in its relations – until ultimately such firm distinctions cease to matter.” Because of its slippery texture as a concept, “affect must always be articulated and contextualized” (Gregg & Seighworth 2010: 2, 3, 21). Among the more recent researchers, the geographer Nigel Thrift has turned affect into a key concept to better understand the spatial dimension, and it is primarily his work I will draw from. More recent interest in the affective aspects of everyday spaces and performance sometimes invites a specific focus on the sensual. The senses of proximity, of touch, taste, and smell, govern comprehensively the affective mechanisms. Other central senses are vision and sound (Corbin [1991]2005; Howes 1991; Feld [1996]2005). Inspired by Steven Feld’s reflections ([1996]2005) on the acoustic dimension of place, I have found a link that connects affect, embodiment, and buildings as social spaces, which will be elaborated on in the following discussion.

The Context: Building Prisons as Part of Criminal Reforms

As part of the Norwegian Criminal Act of 1842, large prison reforms were introduced. This included the building of a series of new prisons. Before the commission of 1839 started looking into the regulations on punishment, imprisonment had taken place in military fortresses or in so-called “slaveries,” which represented a form of social institution for the weakest in society. The commission suggested that the fortresses and slaveries should be replaced by new prisons built in accordance with new ideas about cell imprisonment. The Prison Act of 1857 laid down instructions that 56 new regional prisons should be built throughout the country (Kjus 2010). Although some of these prisons happened to be occasionally overcrowded, as we can read from the historical sources from the start of the twentieth century, this massive building initiative met the need for prisons in Norway for the next 70 years.

The significance assigned to the buildings in this

period of the nation's history can be read from the status of the architects who were involved in their making. The two major architects who made a series of model plans for regional prisons, Schirmer and von Hanno, were also involved in building a series of prominent public buildings both in brick and wood (railway stations, a series of churches, city halls, post offices, and bank buildings) (Schirmer & von Hanno 1859; Hamran 1962). Heinrich Ernst Schirmer (1814–1887), who was the oldest and most well recognised of the two, was trained at the Academy of Art in Dresden and Munich. He became an assistant to the royal castle architect H.D.F. Linstow in the Norwegian capital (at that time spelled Christiania) in 1838. In 1853, Schirmer started a partnership with Wilhelm von Hanno, who was a younger German architect trained at art school in Hamburg, and their partnership lasted until 1864. The international impact on the Norwegian prison system was influential. It had begun when Schirmer undertook a major trip to study the new prisons and hospitals in Belgium, Germany, and England, and started working out plans for the national prison, *Botsfengselet*, in 1851. The practice of taking study tours abroad continued in the twentieth century. Trips were for instance made by the Department of Justice to study prisons in England, Belgium, Germany, France, and Switzerland in 1901–1902, and in the analysed period it was quite common that the heads of various regional prisons were paid by the Department to make visits to prisons in Denmark and Sweden to learn more, as shown in the Norwegian Official Statistics, NOS (1901–1902: 5).

The close relationship that existed between architectural form and the punishment maxims of the period has been underlined by other researchers, among them Yvonne Jewkes (2013). She pointed to the fact that while the prisons in question – in this case British prisons – often had what she describes as a “cathedral-like exterior,” they were utterly minimalistic when it came to available space in each cell. They lived up to the penal philosophies of the time, resting on “principles of austerity, isolation, silence, remorse, and reform” (Jewkes 2013: 10). Although the Norwegian prison equivalents were smaller in size, they were

still architecturally impressive buildings that loomed over the general built-up areas, displaying an “incorporated symbolism that had a ‘see and beware’ function, warning the community at large to refrain from committing crimes lest they too should end up within the monstrous institution’s imposing walls” (Jewkes 2013: 10). The decision made in this period to choose cellular confinement has been described by Johnston as “a fundamental moment in the history of the prison” (Johnston 2013: 30). She maintains that it has formed almost all later thinking around architecture and space in prisons; it became the prototype and model that prison layout has been structured around until very recently.

Many of the regional prisons still standing today belong to Schirmer and von Hanno’s model. They were built on the principle of singular cells. The cell building was usually built in two stories with an open hall between the two stories. The entrance to the first floor was from a gallery. There was usually a lower building in front with a courtroom and a flat for the caretaker. The cell building was often built of brick, while the front building would either be built of wood or brick. Erecting buildings can be read as a way of signalling political or ideological power, which demonstrates law enforcement’s view of their role in society (Isaksen 2006).

At the start of the twentieth century, a new Prison Act (1904–1905) was introduced, which involved reorganising the prison system. The State took over ownership of the prisons and they were organised into three categories: national prisons, regional prisons, and assistant prisons (*hjelpéfengsler*). The change is visible in the protocols, as the reporting system became more uniform. Later, during the twentieth century, with reforms in the jurisdictional system (1958–1970), new principles of imprisonment were introduced. This led to changes in many of the existing prisons as well as to the ground being cleared for a group of new types of prison to be built.

Prison Routines: The Official Annual Prison Reports

To better understand prisons as social spaces, I have examined the historical sources in question by

searching for some basic facts about the types of offence the prisoners in Bergen prison had committed, the social profile of the offenders, and the daily routines in the prison. Information about the prisoners' age group, gender, and the types of offence committed by prisoners in Bergen prison is available both through the statistics in the official annual prison report and in the handwritten records in the prison priest's journal, both of which will be referred to.

The reorganisation of the prison systems in 1904/05 meant that regional prisons were mainly erected to house prisoners that had been sentenced to less than six months imprisonment (NOS 1904/05: 2, 3). In the 1901–1925 period, Bergen prison was the second largest among the regional prisons, with an average number of prisoners per day in prison varying between 34 (1904) and 94 (1924). The regional prison in the capital was by far the largest in Norway, where the highest number of inmates was reached in 1925 at an average of 324 prisoners per day.

The lack of available cells was a problem that rose regularly in several of the largest regional prisons, and in Bergen several means were used to ease the problem (establishing a new cell in the cellar; turning two cells originally built as debtors' cells as well as a former utility room into ordinary prison cells; using cells in two assistant prisons in neighbouring regions to supplement Bergen with extra cells). The recurring problem of overcrowding was finally solved when a new building was added to Bergen prison in 1920.

The official annual reports gave rather limited reports of the health and welfare situation. These reports mainly circulated around two themes: the statistics concerning how many people the doctor had diagnosed as mentally ill and the number of prisoners that had committed suicide. While a lot of the information given was related to the prisons concerned, this information was held on a general level. It is rather tempting to speculate why this was the case – was it primarily to protect the head of the respective prison, for instance because some prisons tended to figure in the statistics (too) often – or was it to protect the individual prisoners from being exposed? Kriminalasylet was opened in 1895 as a legal

psychiatric institution for dangerous patients, and was the main institution until 1923 when Reitgerdet hospital opened (<http://norsk-rettsmuseum.no/>).

Closely related to the questions about the health of the prisoners were questions about *the food the prisoners were served*. In the first years of the period studied, a sentence regularly occurred: “No experience this year indicates that bread-and-water punishment has a damaging effect on the prisoners' health, either” (NOS 1902/03: 30). However, soon afterwards this recurring phrase was followed by an alarming report delivered by doctor Paasche in Bergen prison concerning the health situation among the prisoners, where he highlights the damaging effect of the practice of leaving suspected offenders in custody before their actual sentence was given – a practice that is still common in Norway and one that is highly criticised internationally:

According to my long-standing experience (25 years) as a prison doctor, I am still of the opinion that bread and water not at all has the same destructive effect for the prisoners' physical and psychic condition as the often very long remand in custody, which especially during recent years has been so common, that it can be estimated to last for months and sometimes half a year, and in some special cases even longer. If a prisoner is not physically or mentally ill when he arrives, it is not strange if this long period of being kept in suspense of his future lot can have a detrimental effect in both respects so that when he is being transferred to the prison he is predisposed to special mental derangements. My experience points in this direction, anyhow, so any works that shorten the prisoner's remand in custody have to be considered as imperative. (NOS 1903/04: 22)

Ironically, the doctor's report had just noted that “both prisoners in custody and prisoners on ordinary food have received extra dietary board at religious feasts” (NOS 1903: 21). Perhaps it was meant to have a softening effect on the frank revelations the doctor had presented. Whether it was due to the intervention of the doctor or whether it was mere-



Ill. 2: Photo dated 1927–30 shows the carpenter workshop in Bergen prison. Photographer was Atelier K. Knudsen. (Copyright: University of Bergen Library, UBB-KK-N-320/043)

ly a side effect of the fact that the State had taken over management of the regional prison is uncertain. Changes did occur. In 1904 new regulations stated that if a prisoner was enduring a sentence on bread and water for longer than 10 days, it was to be stopped intermittently by the prisoner being put on an ordinary prison diet (NOS 1904/05: 4).

According to § 12 in the Prison Act all prisoners except military prisoners were committed to *partake in work*. The annual report had general references to work being done in the regional prisons, but the first reference to Bergen prison in particular occurs in 1903, when the net income from these activities was recorded. For the coming years a rather detailed report of the type of activities that the work involved was included. While the female prisoners were primarily occupied with knitting, sewing, and the mending of clothes, the male activities were far more extensive. Some prisoners spent part of the day involved with shoemaking, carpentry, and painting, while others were involved with upholstering, tailoring, and cleaning. One central task was related to the role the city of Bergen held as a major fishing port on the west coast, and involved providing the fishing business with rope and other fishing equipment. The manager of Bergen prison expressed his approval by stating that “this line of work has proven particularly suited, as there is no need for any education or training in the trade. Any normally handy person –

male or female, young or old – can quickly acquire what is needed for the task” (NOS 1904/05: 26; NOS 1906: 22). The way payment was arranged depended on the character of the sentence. However, as the manager of Bergen prison added, he had found daily pay to be “especially sensible and suitable as an incentive for hard work, perseverance, and vigilance,” and that it had “contributed towards irreproachable results under the circumstances” (NOS 1904/05: 26). The work turned out to be especially suitable as prison work, as it was required by a local trader, who himself provided the necessary equipment and material.

Education and spiritual guidance was included as a specific paragraph in the official annual reports, but it was far from the case that all regional prisons provided training and education to the prisoners. The reports were most detailed for the first years, when it was stated that the average time spent on education for each prisoner in the regional prisons was 2 hours 20 minutes in 1901/02. Concerning the situation in Bergen prison in particular, it was specified that “765 hours of education have been provided to 521 prisoners. The education has this year, as before, partly been given individually and partly in groups, in religion, reading, writing, and arithmetic” (NOS 1901/02: 31). What is classified as spiritual guidance turns out to be a religious service rendered on most Sundays and holy days. While this work had previously been provided by the parish priest, changes were made in 1901 concerning the appointment of a priest to attend the needs of Bergen prison. Special allocations had made it possible to instruct the hospital priest to attend to these needs (NOS 1901/02: 31). The years just before and during the First World War, no Sunday religious services were mentioned. Instead we learn that “the spiritual guidance was primarily rendered through visits by the priest to the prisoners” (NOS 1913: 16). In 1920 however, the Sunday religious service had been supplemented “by a couple of ladies who had provided singing and organ playing” (NOS 1920: 15).

With their emphasis on information about work, health, and so-called spiritual guidance, the annual reports show the importance of instilling

and strengthening such recognised virtues as duty (through work) and compliant and gentle attitudes (through religious services). The prime aims of the prisons were two-fold; to reform and discipline the prisoners as well as to protect society. Despite their best intentions, the actual effort the prison authorities put into education within the prison walls seems to be very limited, viewed in light of the relatively large book collection the prison contained (further described later) as well as from the need that existed to enable the prisoners to be better equipped to tackle the challenges of normal life that were waiting outside prison. The annual reports cannot give insight into whether the experience of prison life succeeded in changing people who might be full of rage. However, by examining the numbers of prisoners housed in the prisons on an annual basis, it would be possible to analyse a potential decrease in the numbers of inmates. This question is not included in this study.

Between Empathy and Antipathy: The Prison Priest's Report

Sources of particular value in this study are the reports written by the prison priest based on his visits to the prisoners in their cell. These reports were only available for Bergen prison. In addition to the information he had about their background and family situation, he often added his own reflections on their situation and their chances, including motivations, of changing their situation. His reflections are coloured by his profession and vocation, but all the same I can sense a genuine concern for the individual lives he was facing. Aside from the guards the prisoners faced daily, the priest and the prison doctor were the only other people the prisoners were allowed to communicate with. For this reason these reports play a central part in this study. On the other hand, the priest was an authoritative figure who held a position in the power hierarchy of the prison. In this capacity he had the power to exclude certain prisoners from his company. There are quite a few prisoners that might never receive a visit from the priest – or, more correctly put, there are quite a number of cases where no recordings of such visits

have been made. Is this a result of the priest's use (or abuse) of power? In this way he could show his contempt, disgust, or dislike. His behaviour could also be interpreted as a sign that he did not see any hope of change in the individual's conduct.

The protocol administered by the prison priest for the 1909–1930 period was at the best of times a rather frugal report that gave some of the background data of the offenders (their name, age, homestead, working situation, the date of their sentencing, and the final length of the sentence, supplemented with a column headed “Remarks”). After 1920 the recordings changed in their character, and apart from a short interim between 1922 and 1923, they pass on minimum information. There is reason to think this change was partly due to the prison priest's own notion of what needed to be known about the individual prisoners' background, motivations, and actions, and at least three different priests were employed by the prison in the 1909–1930 period. It is in the 1909–1920 and 1922–1923 periods that the priest made active use of the Remark column, and it is these entries that provide the source material in this section. The text in the Remark column was primarily written in a “matter-of-fact” style where the priest described the offence committed and added what he considered necessary background information. From the handwriting as well as the date it is possible to see that some of the remarks were added after personal talks that the priest had had with the prisoner during atonement. Despite his general official style, I can from time to time hear a level of affect in his approach. It appears through the adjectives he chose when he described unacceptable behaviour or when he saw no reason to hide his sympathy or pity for fellow human beings that happened to have ended up on the wrong side of the law.

The most frequent offence which was documented in the priests' protocols was theft. Such offences were relatively often accompanied by drunkenness and the varied length of sentences mirrored whether the person that had committed them was well-known by the police or not. Among the men, more than three-quarters of the offences were committed with the purpose of gain, whether they were referred

to as theft, burglary, fraud, embezzlement, forgery, or something else. Another criminal offence among women that typifies the period in question was prostitution. The offence was in several cases described as “keeping a bad house.” 6 of the total 82 recorded criminal acts performed by women were described as “indecent behaviour.” There were also 7 cases recorded of “disorderly conduct in public spaces” and neglect of children. Minor offences involving misdemeanour and omissions show up rather regularly in the recordings. One omission that seemed to be most frequent among migrant male workers was failure to turn up to military training.

There were a vast number of offences where drinking played a role – not necessarily being the major cause, but influencing a situation that the offender may have tackled in another and perhaps better way. Sometimes drunkenness in itself was enough to commit a person to spend time in prison under the so-called Vagabond Act (*løsgjengerloven*). This included both men and women, and confirms what we already know about the period. It substantiates the arguments the labour movement and other ideological movements propagated about the destructive effect of alcohol for society in general – and in particular for the working class. Theft, burglary, assault, and fighting were among the reappearances in the list of offences recorded. Among men the offences that involved use of general violence, such as assault, fighting, or resistance of the police, did not amount to more than 4.1% of the recorded cases. The explanation for this relatively low degree of offence is probably due to the type of institution the regional prison was. The offenders of serious crimes served their sentences at national prisons. There are 97 recorded cases that involved the use of general violence out of the total of 928 registered (and suspected) offences, in which I include violence in the sense of losing control, starting fights, and hitting people.

I have found two common denominators in many of these offences. One is the search for a temporary feeling of freedom through drinking, which led to uncontrolled actions, and the other is a feeling of despair a person can experience when finding oneself in a blind alley looking for a way out.

The Inventory Protocols: The Relationship between Fixed and Semi-Fixed Structures in the Prison

The inventory protocol I have examined covered the period 1915–1929, and it is the situation for the year 1915 that has been chosen for further description here. The protocol started with a list of 132 assured objects recorded in alphabetical order. Only a few objects were held in numbers greater than 100, and these were sheets (120), pillowcases (130), and woollen bedspreads (179). Among the objects that were held in numbers of 20 or more, we find pieces of furniture such as tables (55), bookshelves (25), wash stands (40), spittoons (49), and latrine lids (20), as well as more portable artefacts such as protocols (58), washbasins (30), soap holders (40), water buckets (22), dustpans (32), water jugs (45), table knives (34), food bowls (33), cups (41), plates (42), and spoons (57). In addition to the 132 listed objects, a series of tools were added, many obviously used in prison work. These objects all belong to the classificatory concept of semi-fixed-feature elements (Rapoport 1982), that is furniture and portable artefacts.

Where the water buckets are concerned, they managed to obtain a special position in 1923 through the correspondence that took place between the Head of the Justice and Police Department and the Regional Prison Manager. The letter, which was addressed to the regional prison manager, dealt with the occasionally reoccurring problem that a bucket handle was often used to dig through the wall, etc. For this particular reason the manager was asked to ensure that the handles on the buckets were changed from wood or platted pipes to rope handles (tar rope approximately half an inch thick).

Rope handles should always be used on the water buckets and can also without any inconvenience be used on latrine buckets, when they are made long enough to reach outside the rim of the bucket. According to a statement from the manager of Kristiania regional prison it has proven most practical not to put a knot on the outside of the “ear” of the bucket, but to splice the rope in a loop

in both ends. It is most convenient if the “ears” are not situated on the rim of the bucket, but at the side in the same way they are found on tin cans with a flat handle. It is presupposed that the rope handles can be manufactured in the prison’s workshop. It is anticipated that they will cost approximately 30 øre a piece. A report is requested as soon as the change has been implemented. A copy of this circular letter should be addressed to the caretaker of the prison. Signed Kristiania of May 5, 1923. Fr. Woxer. (Circulære Justis- og Politidepartementet May 5, 1923)

The 357 book titles that were included in the prison library list in 1915 should also be added to the list of semi-fixed-feature elements. The five most common books were *The New Testament* (50), *The Hymn Book* (41), *Pontoppidan’s Statements* (41), *Seip’s Song Book* (30), and *The Bible* (10), that is the books used in connection with the religious service rendered on most Sundays and holy days. However, for prisoners who were able to read and were interested, there was a series of books to choose from. Some of the books belonged to the genre we would call classic literature, and included titles by well-known Norwegian writers such as Jonas Lie and Alexander Kielland as well as foreign writers such as Charles Dickens and Leo Tolstoy. If we judge from their titles, some books were of a more trivial broadsheet type, with titles such as *The Flatter’s Net*, *At the Brink of the Abyss*, *The Bride Raid*, *The Soldiers’ Stories*, etc. In addition, there was a series of books meant to serve a religious spiritual function, with titles such as *Christian Struggle* and *Everyday Christianity*, among many others. Then there was a series of books that were meant to instil general knowledge building within topics such as history, nature, science, etc. (*Hagerup’s History of Nature*, *The Book of Nature*, *Christopher Columbus*, *Stanley’s Journey*, *Øverland’s History of Norway*, *A Journey around the World*, *From the Nile to the Himalayas*, etc.). Apart from the books used in connection with religious services, most of the others included in the library list only had one available copy. There could be several reasons behind such a decision: the general lack of interest among the inmates in read-

ing or a lack of necessary reading ability could have played a role. Another explanation could be budgetary restrictions.

If we look for the classificatory concept of *non-fixed-feature* elements (Rapoport 1982), which should primarily refer to clothing and accessories, we find references to six types of garments for male prisoners (jackets, vests, trousers, shirts, underwear, and hats), four types for female prisoners (jackets, skirts, slips, aprons), and three types of garments for both types of prisoners (undershirts, stockings, shoes).

The inventory protocol can also be used to provide some knowledge regarding fixed-feature elements (Rapoport 1982), which refers to the more architectural components of the prison building. The list of objects that belonged to the Court Room has been divided into a series of minor sections: the part used by the city assembly, the office for the lawyer, the hall for the county assembly (*Midt- og Nordhordaland*), the office for the judge, the waiting room, the staircases and hallways, the room used by the female supervisor, and the attic.

The description of the inventory protocols mainly serves to illustrate the difference between the official and the private area of the prison: most of the



Ill. 3: This is hardly the way an average prisoner who served a sentence in Bergen prison around 1927–30 experienced the cell. The prisoner more than likely had to prove trustworthy to get his or her hands on all the books that we see stacked along the wall. All the same it illustrates the rather Spartan furnishing of the cell. Photographer was Atelier K. Knudsen. (Copyright: University of Bergen Library, UBB-KK-N-320/042)

recorded artefacts were placed in the official area. As will be demonstrated in the next section, the reason for this is obvious: portable artefacts could be used to promote undesirable actions.

Controlling Affect during Imprisonment: The Reprimand Protocols

The official annual reports only contained short, matter-of-fact descriptions of the yearly numbers of violations of prison rules. We learn that a new tightened punishment was introduced on January 1, 1905, which involved “a hard bed for the night” (*hårdt natteleie*) (NOS 1904/05: 22). Escapes that were actually carried out as well as attempted escapes were recorded, alongside severe punishment such as being put into irons. In the annual reports, three cases of successful escape and at least nine cases of attempted escape from Bergen prison in the 1901–1925 period were recorded. The number of reprimands recorded was 19, and 1916 was a remarkable year, in which a total of 6 reprimands were given. Only one case of severe punishment was recorded, and this also took place in 1916.

To achieve more information on the actual offences that were committed by the prisoners while they were in prison, far more detailed information could be gathered from reading the reprimand protocols. The two reprimand protocols studied cover the 1868–1976 period, but only the recordings covering the 1868–1930 period have been analysed. They are both from Bergen prison. The way the offences were recorded changed somewhat during the studied period. While they follow the protocol template, the first years are short and primarily state the offence and the punishment received. After 1902, they tend to be more stamped by both the writing style of the period and the person in charge of the recordings. For the 1871–1887 period there were a total of 91 offences of various sorts recorded.

I have purposefully selected examples of actions that can be described as motivated by affect to be able to gain more insight into the forces that were in motion, and which resulted in both prolonged imprisonment and made it more taxing for the prisoners involved.

The list of offences committed inside the prison is long, and includes offences such as: assault of a prison guard; assault of another prisoner in the yard; general disturbance by shouting through the heating pipe system; writing on walls, doors, and mouldings; shouting through windows; breaking windows; breaking furniture; tearing up clothes; tearing up slippers; breaking the spittoon in the detention room; making conversation with other prisoners; a series of attempts to escape. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, the punishments the prisoner received were between 4 and 12 beatings with a cane, or between 1 and 6 continuous 24-hour periods in a dark cell, sometimes combined with additional days in an ordinary cell given only bread and water. The prison guards found an outlet for their anger by being in charge of the execution of the punishment, which represented the permitted forms of violence.

I will exemplify some of the offences committed with extracts from the reprimand protocols. Trying to escape was of course among the most serious offences a prisoner could commit. A prisoner, who had carried out several offences while in prison in 1871, received eight beatings with a rope “for having tied together a rope from the leftovers of the hemp he had used for work and then hanging it out of the window in his cell.” Judging from the length and the type of punishment a prisoner could receive from shouting through doors and windows – namely two days in a dark cell in 1888 – this type of carrying on in a prison environment was considered a rather serious behavioural offence. The reprimand was meant to hold a preventive character to hinder disorder of any type. In 1882, a prisoner received six beatings with a cane for “starting a fight in his cell and seizing a prison officer by the chest, as well as damage done to coffee cups.” An offence obviously considered rather serious in 1887 was “writing and making drawings on the eating regulation,” for which the punishment was two days “following the chief constable’s order.” Sometimes a warning was considered punishment enough. This happened in 1909: a rather similar offence occurred four times, that is, “for breaking the window in the cell and for having talked with

another prisoner through the window in the cell.” The character of the offences gives an insight into how elements in the spartan cell were used as an outlet of affect – through creating sounds by shouting, screaming, howling, as well as talking.

We seldom come across reprimands given to female convicts, but this occurred in 1909. At a quarter past eleven a female prisoner

had tried to get in contact with a man outside on the street by talking and making noise. [...] She admitted that she had heard a man outside the prison who wanted to get in contact with a woman inside, and she had participated in this conversation by answering him. She was reprimanded. (Chapter 29 § 2)

Affect and the Prison Perceived as Soundscape

Can affect facilitate an understanding of prison as a social space? In what ways were rage and frustration expressed and disciplined within the structured prison walls? These research questions were raised in the introduction, and they will now be turned to by looking closer at the specific character of the prison building. The larger prisons – among them the new extension to Bergen prison in 1919 – were constructed after the model plans, where the cells were situated around a wide main hall. The size of the hall and its height largely influenced the sounds, as did the thick walls, particularly when built in brick, which gave a rich resonance. I find it useful to discuss how the interiors of prisons could be experienced by the prisoners as a soundscape – a space where a series of nuances and degrees of sounds can best be understood in contrast to an overarching mandatory silence.

The ethnomusicologist Stephen Feld ([1996]2005) has reflected on the acoustic dimensions of place:

the experience of place potentially can always be grounded in an acoustic dimension. [...] Acoustic time is always spatialised; sounds are sensed as connecting points up and down, in and out, echo and reverb, source and diffuse. And acoustic space is likewise temporalized; sounds are heard

moving, locating, placing points in time. [...] The placing of auditory space is the dispersion of sonic height, depth, and directionality. Space-time inevitably sounds in and as figure and ground, as comingness and goingness. It's presence is forward, backward, side to side, heard in trajectories of ascent, decent, arch, level, or undulation. (Feld [1996]2005: 185)

The historic material referred to – and particularly the reprimand protocols – is suited to analysing how the design of the prisons was used to control affect during imprisonment. This is where sound plays a key role. A threatening silence and an urgent subjective need to hear among some prisoners promoted the embodied affect in the shape of vandalism, howling, and yelling to ensure a subjective effect of sensing-oneself-as-part-of-the-world. The most severe ways that rage and associated feelings emerged in the prison can be read in the reprimand protocols. The demand for silence could be experienced as unbearable. Breaking the silence was one way that affect displayed itself as embodied practice among prisoners. In a place where total silence ruled, anger and frustration were channelled through the use of material devices and bodily practices (breaking material devices into pieces, making noise, catching glimpses of light, communication with other prisoners via piping systems, etc.), all at the cost of longer imprisonment and a reduction in already meagre food rations.

Relatively speaking, very few prisoners ended up being listed in the reprimand protocols. Other prisoners chose other ways of tackling the situation, by suppressing their emotions, sometimes so deep inside that it became unbearable to live with – resulting in either suicide or madness, as the reading of the official annual reports illustrated. In the 1920s the problem with suicides in prison was highlighted in several circulars from the Department of Justice, a period that happens to coincide with the opening of the first national psychiatric hospital for dangerous, mentally ill men – Reitgjerdet (1923–1987).

Two of the journals analysed here have in various ways showed the consequences of acts committed in

affect, where affect is understood as “a set of embodied practices that produce visible conduct as an outer lining” (Thrift 2008: 175). From the recordings by the prison priest I have learned how people drifted along with a situation that occurred, sometimes carried away by a sense of despair, lack of control or influence, or led by temptation or lust. It is easy to imagine the bundle of different sentiments that might have taken hold of the individual and thereby started a chain reaction that finally culminated in imprisonment. The priest very seldom revealed much about how the individuals handled the imprisonment, however, in a few cases he added a short comment, such as a situation where a prisoner broke down crying for hours and was begging for forgiveness, and another case where a prisoner hid behind a stern mask and showed no signs of regret.

The acts described in the reprimand protocols can – at least to a certain degree – be interpreted as symptoms of how some male prisoners handled anger, rage, and frustration during imprisonment. Affect took hold of the individual and pushed aside any personal restraint that might otherwise have arisen when the consequences of these acts were taken into consideration. A need to feel alive, to be seen, to be considered a subject rather than an object, to be taken into consideration, forced the actions ahead – regardless of the costs. Another, and perhaps often, supplementary motivation for these acts could be to protest and to show contempt for the authorities that fronted the legal system.

In view of each other, all three protocols give insight into how the prisoners were treated by a society that was interested in suppressing emotions such as anger and instilling submissive behaviour in their criminals. The introduction of single cells was the strongest instrument at hand, alongside a strictly divided exercise yard, which prohibited any exchange of communication between prisoners. However, society ended up enforcing these emotions through architectural structures as well as through the types of punishment used. Despite firm reactions to attempts at breaking the rules, the reprimand protocol exemplifies that society only succeeded in this respect to a certain degree.

The idea behind isolation and imprisonment in a single cell was to encourage repentance and reformation. Plenty of time on one’s own was meant to give the prisoner the necessary time to reflect on the misdeed committed. Experiencing isolation in a cell is experiencing a space filled with silence – only broken by the prisoner’s own breathing, occasional movements, and the daily prison routines such as trips to the yard, etc. From a subjective perspective, the prison was primarily experienced as a *soundscape*, where a deadly silence was broken from time to time by the sound of the steps from the prison guards moving to and fro in the prison corridors, the rustling of their large bunch of keys when they were passing close by, the key turning in the lock when the food slot in the cell door was opened – and less frequently the silence was violated by uncontrolled outbursts and eruptions from prisoners that could not handle the silence. The soundscape experienced from the inside stands in contrast to the way the outsider perceived the prison – as a large, secluded, fenced-in building situated on the margins of the town or village, enveloped in silence.

A Time-Space Reminder

What I have presented to the readers here is a close reading of a few selected primary sources. It falls into the category of micro-history and “history from below,” a meticulous deciphering of recordings of painful individual stories as they were viewed top-down by powerful people who assessed the situation of marginal groups in society. By using historical empathy as a gateway, I have tried to live up to the request for “searching out the emotions that determined behaviour, and entering into them” (MacMullen 2003: 135). By trying to put myself in the prisoners’ shoes, I have imagined what it must have felt like to be locked up for days and months and how anger and frustration found their outlets. What I met with was a topography of enforced silence with occasional eruptions of sounds, creating a soundscape peculiar to architecture and purpose of a prison.

As with all historical studies, this study is time and place specific. Some of the minor offences re-

corded in the protocols would hardly bring more than a stiff fine today. The fact that both physical layout as well as welfare benefits during imprisonment have changed dramatically in some Norwegian prisons has from time to time been highlighted by foreign journalists (Adams 2010). When the new

Halden prison opened in 2010, it was applauded – as well as criticised – for its high standard. Imprisonment today raises new and other discussions than the ones accentuated here. Generalisations and comparisons can and must not be made independently of historical and cultural context.

Relevance criteria				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to throw light on life inside the prison • Produced within the 1865–1930 period • Ability to transmit information about the material structure 				
Prison	Type of material	Period	Degree of relevance	Accessibility
Skedsmo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial statements - Diverse correspondence 	1904–1957 1898–1922/1922–1957	Small	Medium
Hønefoss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minutes from, for instance, boarding committees (copy books, journals, and registers) - Correspondence - Prisoner folders - Reprimand protocols - Financial statements - Diverse documents - The most relevant sources of the document series are the journals, supplemented with a study of selected cases in the copy books (and reprimand protocols) 	Some cover the 1866–1954 period	High	Medium
Bergen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive material available, incl. the sources beneath: - The prison priest's account of visits to the inmates - Protocol with registration of night arrests (incl. items in possession at the time of the arrest) - The reprimand protocols - The inventory protocols (detailed overview of the various artefacts in different halls and regions of the prison, incl. book collection) 	1909–1929 1899–1901 1868–1930 1903–04/1915–1929	High	High
Arguments for final selection				
A combination of relevance, ability to give insight into material structure as well as to life inside the prison and easy accessibility.				
References to the sources referred to in the article				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prison priest's protocol, Bergen prison: Bergen kretsfengsel – II Fangebehandling 1849–1930 (1981) SAB/A-65002 – F. Kirkebøker for fængselspresten 1849–1908/1928–1930 (1938). They are located in the Prison Priest's Archive. • The reprimand protocols, Bergen prison: Bergen kretsfengsel – II Fangebehandling 1849–1930 (1981) SAB/A-65002 Refselsesprotokoll II.L.1 1868–1930 (1963) / II. L.2. 1908–1930 (1976). • The inventory protocols, Bergen prison: Bergen kretsfengsel – IV Bygninger og materiell – SAB/A-65004. IV.A. Inventarbok 1915–1929. 				

Table 1: Selecting final cases for the micro-study, including source references.

Note

1 The article is part of a larger contemporary study of old prisons as cultural institutions, which aims to interpret prison buildings of the past as heritage in the present. When old redundant prisons are turned into cultural or recreational institutions of various forms, their context and meaning fundamentally change. The historical study presented here has been motivated by an urge to know more about the individual prisoners' life-stories that today tend to stay hidden behind whitewashed art galleries' walls or restaurant interiors. The partial study on old prisons is included in a larger strategic research project, Cultural Heritage: Negotiations, Politics and Practice, initiated by the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research and funded by The Norwegian Research Council. Parts of this study have been published elsewhere (Swensen 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016 in press).

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