

Fully funded ESRC PhD Studentship

## **The role of prison architecture and aesthetics in the relationship between prisons and host communities**

School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES), University of Birmingham, UK

**Supervisors:** Dr Dominique Moran, Senior Lecturer in Human and Carceral Geography (GEES) and (externally) Prof. Yvonne Jewkes (Department of Criminology, University of Leicester).

Applications are invited for the above studentship commencing 1st January 2014. This is an ESRC-funded grant-linked studentship which provides a stipend of £13,726 p.a. plus tuition fees at the UK/EU rate for up to three years (full-time only). Due to funding restrictions, this studentship is open to UK and EU applicants only.

### **About the main project and grant-linked studentship:**

The UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) have made an award for a research project entitled “‘Fear-suffused environments’ or potential to rehabilitate? Prison architecture, design and technology and the lived experience of carceral spaces”. The project investigators, Professor Yvonne Jewkes (University of Leicester, UK) and Dr Dominique Moran (University of Birmingham, UK), will be addressing two over-arching questions – how are penal aims and philosophies (that is, what prison is ‘for’) expressed in prison architecture and design, and how effective is prison architecture, design and technology (ADT) in conveying and delivering that penal purpose? The study seeks to meet its objectives by (a) studying the process of designing new prison buildings in order to understand what it is that architects are asked to deliver and how they achieve this, and (b) studying ADT’s impacts and effects on a range of end users, focusing on the experience of occupying and moving in and around prison spaces, in relation to prisoners’ quality of life and wellbeing, perceptions of penal legitimacy, compliance with the regime, prisoner-staff relations, staff work satisfaction and so on. The project will focus on two newly built UK prisons, and contrast these with two prisons in Norway and Denmark, where penal philosophies differ greatly from those in the UK.

### **The grant-linked studentship**

The main research project asks what impact the architecture, design, and spatial organization of prisons has on the experience of imprisonment, on the behaviour of those who occupy and move through carceral spaces, and on staff-prisoner and staff-management relationships. The PhD studentship extends the reach of this question to a new and different group – members of local communities which surround prisons. It is premised on a understanding that, despite the wealth of research on local responses to proposed prison building projects, the impact of prisons on local economic development, and the “NIMBY” response, the specific impact of prison architecture and aesthetics on those who live within the immediate vicinity of prisons is not known.

### **Context and Research Design**

The studentship will draw upon existing research within both criminology and carceral geography on prison siting and the relationships between prisons and local communities. Although this literature has

tended to focus on the traditional opposition of communities to location of prisons close by, (based on local residents' concerns that a prison may lower property values, increase levels of crime, endanger their safety through escapes, attract 'undesirable' elements and damage the reputation of the area), there is increasingly an alternative perspective, of the generation of 'profit through punishment'. In more recent work, demand for the building of prisons to stimulate local economic development and employment has been identified, especially on the part of small rural towns in the United States, with a shift towards policymakers actively locating prisons in 'lagging' communities. This recent work has drawn attention to the lack of structural economic change in persistently poor rural places, and prison facilities' inability to foster economy-wide change in terms of serving as an economic development initiative. However, in focusing on structural economic change associated with prison siting, it has been unable to tackle questions about the response of local communities to the aesthetic appearance of the prisons themselves, and the importance of prison architecture in the 'acceptance' of prison siting close to existing communities. There are grounds to suggest that the aesthetic appearance of prisons is of considerable, yet under-explored, importance for local residents.

The PhD studentship will build upon existing work by contributing to the growing international debate on prison siting using examples from the UK context, and it will complement the main project by investigating the architectural consequences of the transformations in UK prison architecture on the communities which surround prisons.

### **Career development**

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the main project, and of the supervisory team for the PhD project, along with postgraduate training in research methods and transferable and employable skills, this PhD studentship would enable the successful candidate to build an academic and professional CV which would enable them to pursue an academic research career in a range of disciplinary areas. There would be opportunities for joint publication with the supervisory team of main project co-I and PI, as well as opportunities to develop networking skills through participation in dissemination and impact activities, and to contribute to the main project website, [www.prisonspaces.com](http://www.prisonspaces.com), as appropriate. At Birmingham, the successful candidate would join a thriving Postgraduate Research community in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, and would be part of the Birmingham Community and Criminal Justice Group – the University's very wide-ranging criminology scholarship network.

### **Eligibility**

Applicants will have a good first degree in a relevant social science discipline. An MSc/MA postgraduate degree in a related field is also highly desirable. Applicants should have excellent oral and written presentation skills, and experience with qualitative research methods.

### **Application**

The closing date for applications is 30th September 2013. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview, to take place soon after the closing date for applications.

To apply, please contact Dr Dominique Moran ([d.moran@bham.ac.uk](mailto:d.moran@bham.ac.uk)).