

Inside the “world’s most humane” prison. Life at Halden

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hNUtZRGlyk>
(up to 4:49 min only)



1. Before watching: Discuss the meaning of the following words or expressions from the video:
a think tank living quarters the prison’s ethos
2. Watch the video and answer the questions:

1. What was Markus Karlsen charged with?
2. How does Norway justify the expense involved in keeping this sort of prison?
3. How often do violent events occur?
4. What does the Banksy-style image remind prisoners of?
5. What crime was the second inmate convicted of?
6. What role do prison officers play at Halden?
7. How much does the Norwegian government spend per prisoner every year?
8. Does the prison’s psychologist think this expense is worth?
9. What’s the reoffending rate in Norway? And in UK?

key

A **think tank**: a group of experts brought together, usually by a government, to develop ideas on a particular subject and to make suggestions for action

Living quarters: The place where they live

The prison's ethos: the prison's principles, values

Gap-fill

1. Armed robbery
2. it's about being pragmatic
3. They are very rare
4. Breaking free
5. Drug dealing /drug trafficking
6. They are hired to motivate the inmates. They play the role of mentors, confidants
7. 76,000 pounds
8. 21% / 55%

Transcript

Tell us how you got here.

I was actually on vacation and we were sailing and we started partying and I woke up one week later and I was charged with **armed robbery** and some others, stuff. Markus Karlsen is one of four thousand prison inmates in Norway. That's about equivalent to the size of just the female jail population in England and Wales.

He's on a drug treatment course inside the country's model prison. This recovery program is expensive. 'Do you mind?' You just need to look around the living quarters to see that. 'Are you good on the guitar?' George McBride, from a UK think-tank, wants to know if it's worth it. Norway justifies the expense with the belief: it's not about being soft, but **about being pragmatic**. Behind me is what's regarded as the world's most humane maximum-security prison. Not a single coil of razor wire in sight and yet no prisoner has ever tried to escape. Violent incidents are **extremely rare** the prison's ethos is simple everyone inside or one day be outside and will become somebody else's neighbor.

In the maximum security exercise yard there's a 20 foot Banksy style image. It's a constant reminder, not of Breaking Bad, but **breaking free**.

Tor Smoby is on his third stretch at Halden to try to break the habit. The former school teacher is 39 and has lived with drugs since the age of 11. It's not easy to give up the life of a dealer which earned him two thousand pounds a day. Sometimes it works and sometimes you come out and have a bad day and use drugs again. Like me losing my family. My fiancée took my kids away and I started using drugs again and it was a short way so I came here again.

'How many children do you have?

I get four, four children, four children four different moms so..

And do they know that you're in here? Just the three of them; one of them not.

There are no angels at Halden. Most are hardened criminals but there's no violence.

'I don't know how to be in normal society, without any drugs, how to how to react, how to behave or otherwise'.

Prison officers are contracted to motivate the inmates, to play the role of mentor and confidant.

Prisons by no means drug-free, but there's no economy in illegal substances, so a research team has come over from the UK to learn how to fix the drug ravaged violent jails back home.

'I do drugs but not that much.

Right

Sometimes.

Any drugs or just particular?

Cocaine

okay yeah but you can't get that here.

Yeah, if you want okay yeah

Do you think so?

Yeah but you have to order it if you want it.

Gosh

No one is saying Halden's perfect the picture-postcard setting inside the walls is all part of the rehabilitation theme. You can climb the trees but you won't get far. The wall and cameras are everywhere. Spending in Halden runs to 76 thousand pounds per prisoner per year. That's twice the average in the UK.

When we talk in high-security level, you probably save some money for society. If that person don't leave the prison and steals a car commits a crime police investigations time and courts stuff like that it's impossible to tally up that amount I can't say how much it is but it is an amount and it's also saving for society

Reoffending rates in Norway are at 20 percent the UK's average is closer to 55 percent but Halden can afford one prisoner per cell and one officer per prisoner. It's a picture no prison in the UK could even imagine being able to pay for.

It's a society that has chosen to invest in resources in mental health care and helping people get back into society.

(Note: Not a literal transcript.)