

*"To prove there is another way"*

A case study on ICT &  
rehabilitation in Storstrøm  
prison

Christos Georgoulakis  
Pavlos Chatzipolakis

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**Students:**

Chatzipolakis, Pavlos

Georgoulakis, Christos

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STUDENT REPORT

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# Abstract

This MSc thesis explores the application of the principles of Nordic Exceptionalism (normalization, openness, education, responsibility, security) in the Danish incarceration system. Specifically, ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with inmates, teachers, and guards were held in the closed Storstrøm prison in Falster, with the main focus on understanding how Information and Communication Technologies affect the inmates' reintegration into society. An Actor-Network approach was chosen to follow the human and non-human actors involved in this rehabilitation process. The starting point of our research was the collection of information about the use of an intranet platform made to accomplish the educational needs of the inmates, called SKnet. During our endeavor, we engage with matters of rehabilitation, political decisions, public opinion, and technological innovation in the context of the incarceration system. We present our findings on how the aforementioned principles of Nordic Exceptionalism are applied or overlooked in Storstrøm prison and what is the effect of ICT in this process.

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# 01. Introduction

## *1.1 Background*

The present master thesis has been composed during the period 03/2022-10/2022 and is engaged with the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the incarceration system of Denmark, and more specifically with the carceral conditions of Storstrøm prison in Falster, and the application of the principles of Nordic/Scandinavian Exceptionalism there. The term ICTs, of course, can be assigned to various elements due to its broad and somehow intuitive connotation that encompasses a variety of technologies. It can be mainly understood as a reference to a broad area of technological artifacts, services, software, hardware, and telecommunications and does not have a specific, rigid definition (Stone & Scharf as cited in Kerr & Wills, 2018).

In the context of the prison system, ICT has been employed, suggested, and studied intensively for the last decade with multiple examples. Among others, we find examples of email services, electronic kiosk systems, tablets, videoconferencing, virtual campus/learning, and educational content software (McDougall et Pearson, 2020; Jewkes & Reisdorf, 2016; Barreiro-Gen & Novo-Corti, 2015; Knight, 2015; Mokiwa H. O. & Ngubane-Mokiwa S. A., 2014; Champion & Edgar, 2013; Jewkes & Johnston, 2009). These examples will also be showcased and more elaborated upon in later chapters of this report. The free and open use of the internet, however, is restricted in the vast majority of the literature cases mentioned above, due to security concerns. Instead, the inmates can be found to have access to technologies that have limited or no access to the open world wide web. In the present case, the ICT element we are examining is an intranet educational platform, the SKnet, that is being used in all the closed prisons of Denmark and is accessed by the inmates from the computers inside those prisons, for around 4 hours per week. In different kinds of closed and semi-closed prisons, there is a different placement of the computers, and in open prisons, the inmates can have access to internet cafes inside the facilities or can bring into their cells their own personal computers with unlimited time of use but are expected to pay for themselves for the internet services provided. Moreover, we are engaging with the rehabilitative potential that the use of ICTs show when they are used in an interactive way with the inmates to cover various needs and important points of rehabilitation and reintegration into society after their sentence is due.

## 1.2 Relevance of ICT in rehabilitation

One important factor to consider when we talk about societal integration has to be the fluent use of technological means by the inmates, as well as the technological apparatus used inside the prison system. These elements are necessary to prepare them for their release, since the development of technology has been deemed quintessential for the current functions of our societies and their institutions (Smith, 2012). The exponential technological progress that we are encountering over the last decades is providing more and more ways to do things very differently than how we used to 15 or 20 years ago. With this level of digital permeation into society (Fig. 1), it would be very difficult to think of how someone could function socially and professionally today without using a smartphone, email, or internet access (Smith, 2012).

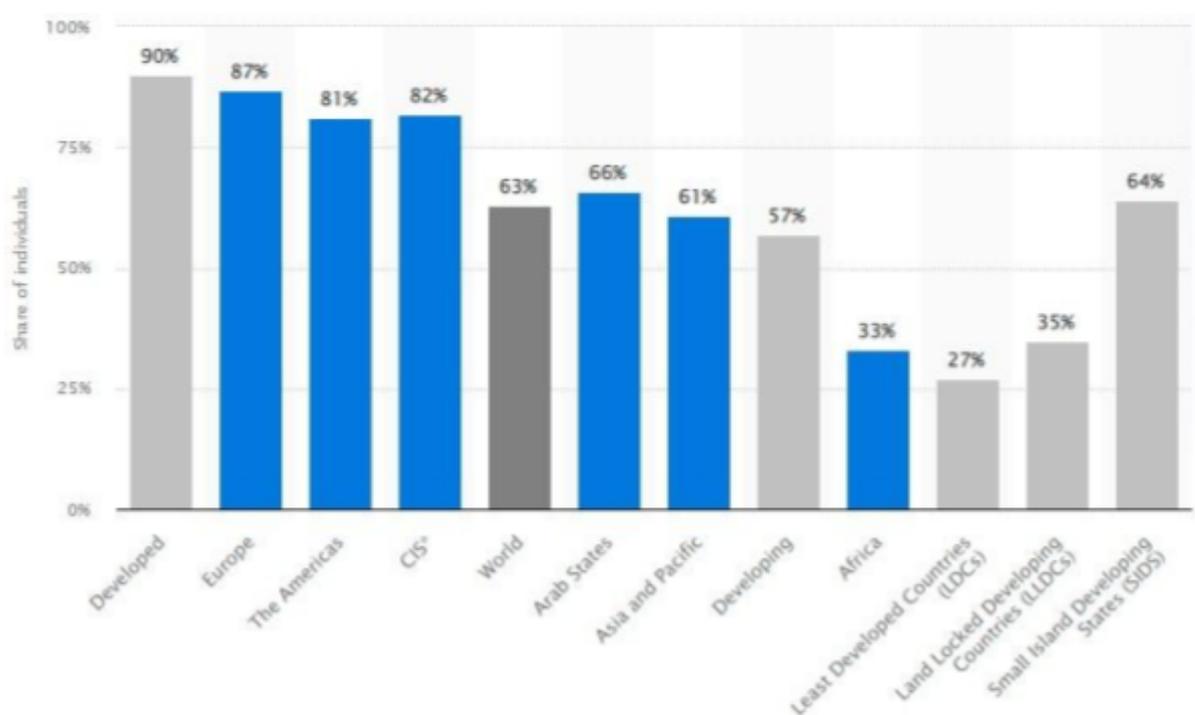


Figure 1: Percentage of individuals using the internet worldwide in 2021, by region.  
Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/333879/individuals-using-the-internet-worldwide-region/>

The exclusion of inmates from the use of technology can lead to a digital divide (Barreiro-Gen & Novo-Corti, 2015) between them and the rest of the members of a society, where the people that are deprived and incapable of using new technologies can fall behind to important aspects of everyday life, like searching for a job. When we specifically turn to Denmark, this importance strikes even sheerer as Denmark is also following a digitization strategy, for the last 20 years and ongoing (Agency for Digitisation, 2021), that has

progressively allowed technology and data flow to permeate the society on many layers, from public services usage and payment facilitation, to complete medical records storage and

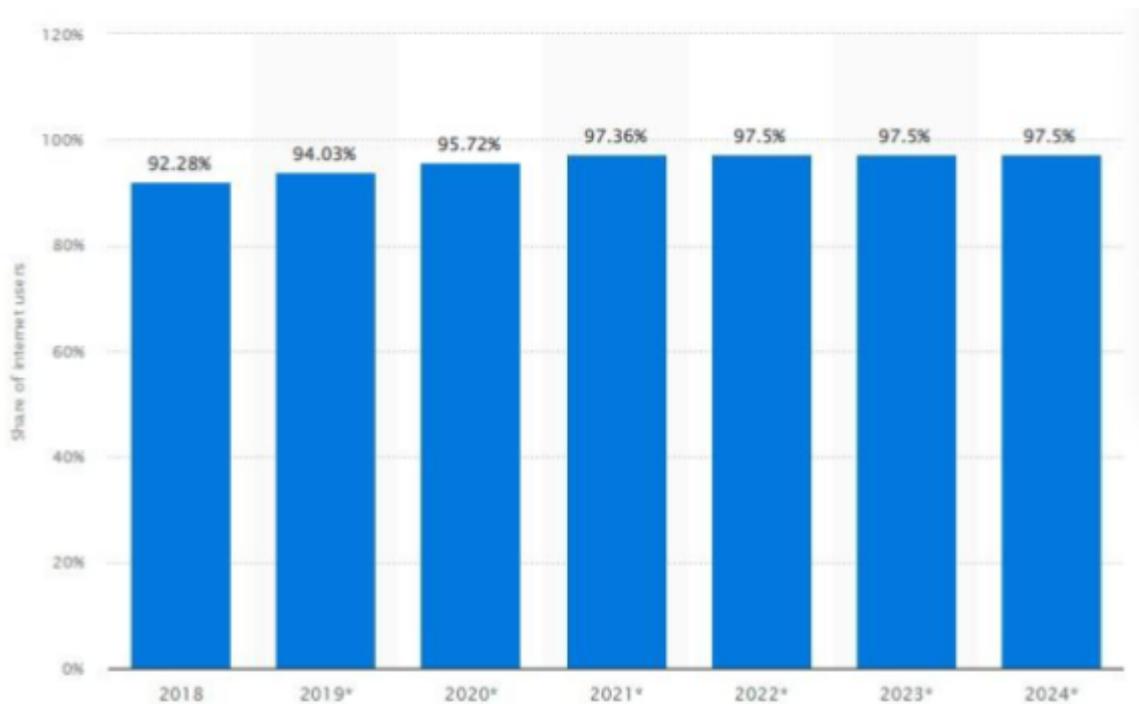


Figure 2: Forecast of the internet user penetration rate in Denmark from 2018 to 2024  
 Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/567478/predicted-internet-user-penetration-rate-in-denmark/>

disease prevention technologies (Fig. 2 & 3); therefore, the level of technological engagement and digitization of the people and the state itself is very high (Bruun et. al; 2020).

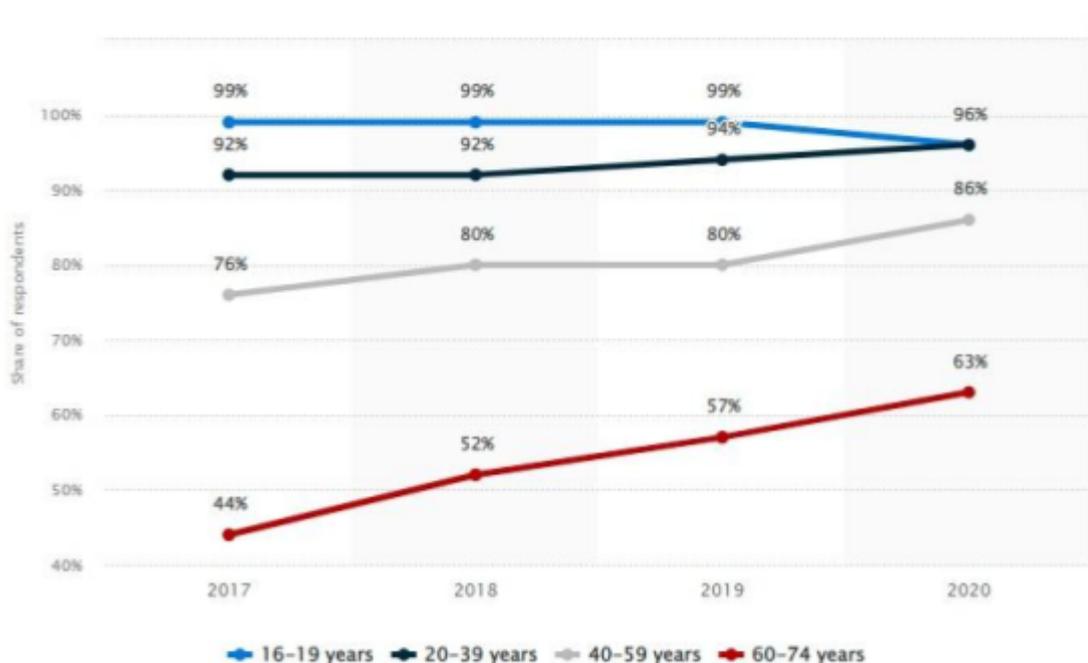


Figure 3: Share of social media users in Denmark in 2017, 2018 and 2020, by age group Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/560994/share-of-social-media-users-in-denmark-by-age-group/#professional>

Furthermore, ICT and internet solutions can help inmates in several matters. For example, the use of videoconference has been used in Australia to help inmates keep in touch with their families and loved ones (Kerr & Wills, 2018), an important factor that has also been shown to affect recidivism (Smith, 2012). In another case, we find prisons in the UK that have introduced the use of electronic kiosks by the inmates, where they perform tasks like filing a request, managing purchases, booking a family/legal appointment, etc. These processes would give them responsibilities and a sense of independence, preparing them this way to manage their everyday life out of prison (McDougall et Pearson, 2020). Such instances, this time associated with educational technologies, will be discussed in the following chapter, where implementations and suggestions of different solutions around Europe are being presented to more tangibly showcase what problems these ideas address, and to better understand the contribution of the digital platform that we examine in this case, SKnet.

For these reasons, we can argue that access to technology has come to the point that it can be perceived as an important human right. As mentioned by Smith (2012), the European and international prison rules state that the incarceration system should be assisting prisoners to have access to education, help them maintain family contacts, and in general adopt a humane policy towards inmates, with the purpose of rehabilitation and reintegration. Specifically on prisoners' education, that "*should be like the education provided for similar age groups in the outside world, and the range of opportunities for prisoners should be as wide as possible.*" (Council of Europe as cited in Champion & Edgar, 2013, p. 13).

### *1.3 The Nordic/Scandinavian model of incarceration*

This abovementioned concept is no stranger to Scandinavian countries, which have been following a model that promotes the ideas of humane prison conditions and treatment as well as maintaining low rates of imprisonment (Pratt, 2007). The imprisonment rates are being calculated per 100.000 individuals in a county's population and currently, in Denmark, the rate is 72 sentenced prisoners for every 100.000 individuals, considered among the lowest rates worldwide (WPB, 2022). More than low imprisonment rates, this Scandinavian model also recognizes that being incarcerated is by itself a punishment for the crime; therefore, prison conditions should be resembling life outside as much as possible (Pratt, 2007). This model also referred to as *Scandinavian* or *Nordic exceptionalism* (SE or NE), moreover

includes the ideas of small prisons, collegial relationships between prisoners and guards, and helpful education/job training allocation among the prisoners of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland (Reiter et al., 2017).

Specifically in Denmark, we can trace inside the constitution the idea of assisting disadvantaged populations to achieve the same societal quality of life as the rest of the community, as far back as the 1960s (Perrin, 1999). Later on, we can see similar ideas brought forward and certain principles arising, that the Danish prison system philosophy is set to follow as guidelines toward a more efficient rehabilitation approach (Rentzmann, 1996). These are the principles of *Normalization*, which means that the inmates retain their civil rights and the conditions of the institutions should resemble the norms of everyday life outside the prison as much as possible (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996); the principle of *Openness*, which means that the confining elements of imprisonment should be minimized as much as possible (in accordance, of course, to public security), since the character of the prison as a total institution, a limited space where everything takes place with similar routines, can lead to negative and aggressive behavior (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996); the notion of *Responsibility*, which refers to the idea that prisoners ought to perform everyday tasks like cooking, taking care of their personal hygiene and contacting the proper authority when they need to by themselves, something that aims to prepare them for their everyday life after they are released (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996); the measures of *Security*, which should provide adequate safety for the personnel, the society and the inmates from harmful behavior among each other (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996). Finally, the field of prison *Education*, which has been proven necessary to minimize reoffending incidents upon release (Vacca, 2004), needs to be aligned with the ideas above and also to be compatible with the specific population that is addressed in the institutions that we refer to in this case. This means that in a prison environment we possibly engage with a population that has had negative experiences with the educational system and the conventional educational methods, and this is why the prison reformatory system might need to adjust to this condition for the education to bear fruits (Rentzmann, 1996).

Of course, this does not mean that these Scandinavian exceptionalism ideas are infallible, nor that they are always followed (Damsa, 2021; Barker & Smith, 2021; Sørensen, 2019; Reiter et al., 2017; Barker, 2012). Despite, and also having in mind the substantial criticism of the SE model, we take into account the aforementioned principles as a reasonable humane treatment premise and view the incarcerated population as a potentially vulnerable

group that can be benefited from, and also affect the educational ICT resources that we examine in the present case, with the aim to be integrated as well as possible to their new everyday lives upon their release. On this basis, we want to examine how the principles mentioned above align with the use of educational ICT in Danish prisons, and more specifically with the use of SKnet, and which are the problems and opportunities that arise from that use from the perspective of the different stakeholders involved (inmates, teachers, prison personnel).

## 02. Problem Analysis

### *2.1 Existing prison ICTs in Europe*

The Nordic incarceration model has developed and been identified as a different, more lenient, and humane penal culture than the rest of the world in terms of both “*low rates of imprisonment and humane prison conditions*” (Pratt, 2008, p. 119). More humane prison conditions can be also traced in the idea that “*prisons tend to be small, characterized by collegial prisoner-guard relations, and committed to providing robust social services like education and job training to prisoners and staff*” (Reiter et al., 2017, p. 93). As a next step, by exploring the different carceral conditions around Europe, one can seek to demarcate the position of the current Danish prison technologies into this dialogue and show how distinctive the properties of Denmark’s approach are to the issue of rehabilitation of prisoners and ICT solutions. However, we find similar obstacles while looking into some of the technologies that have been implemented or have been suggested to be implemented in various prison institutions around Europe. Next, different technologies around European prisons are showcased, as well as what kinds of problems the ideas behind them try to address and solve. This way, we are trying to contextualize our case by comparing the existing policies in the different prison systems, and the reasoning behind them.

The situation of ICT usage around most European countries i.e. Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, UK (Hammerschick, 2010) as well as in Denmark, appears to be almost the same: Most prisons provide some e-learning or/and particular intranet solutions such as the VC (Virtual Campus) in the UK (Coates, 2016), different e-learning endeavors with intranet or even internet access to some extent in Germany (CPT, 2020) or the SKnet in Denmark, which are implemented to smoothen the

transition from prison life to the outside society through remote education and employment skills but are not currently applied to their full potential (Coates, 2016). The use of the internet is mainly limited in terms of meaningful information and restricted to a small number of inmates in specific institutions, most of the time under the supervision of prison personnel (Coates, 2016; Krikorian et al., 2019). In the case of Finland, there used to be a complete absence of internet access (Hammerschick, 2010) until the enactment of legislation that aimed to provide digital access to some services as the ones non imprisoned citizens benefited from, i.e. Skype and limited internet access (Puolakka, 2021). These cases resemble the situation of Denmark's ICT intranet platform, the SKnet, which is implemented for convicted populations in all Danish closed prisons but needs to always be used under supervision and is currently underperforming due to inadequate broadband capacity (Anders, Ulreich; app. 2, 3).

Another technological solution implemented in some European prisons is the use of tablets and i-pads. In Sweden, they have been distributed so that the defendant can have access to the material that the prosecution presents against them, which can sometimes be videos, audio files, or hundreds of pages of the investigation report (The Local SE, 2014). In Norway, i-pads are employed in order to facilitate communication between inmates and loved ones, doctors, lawyers, NGOs, etc. (Rasin, 2020), and in the UK certain facilities provide services via e-kiosks where an inmate can access their account balance, canteen shopping, menu ordering, visits booking, and applications for education (McDougall et Pearson, 2020). These kinds of services can reduce the costs of printed paper, encourage self-responsibility, speed up various procedures that the inmates take part in (McDougall et Pearson, 2020) or even avert riots (Kim Ekhaugen as cited in Rasin, 2020). This is particularly relevant in our case as, due to prison personnel insufficiency and the prison population rise, some inmates are not able to operate the SKnet and are compelled to print out hundreds of pages of study material, using their personal income.

Maybe one of the most radical moves towards the ICT transformation of the prison system has been carried out in Belgium. The initiative was called *Prison Cloud* and it made available a series of intranet and online services such as access to whitelisted websites (Krikorian et al., 2019), video calls to loved ones instead of phone calls, and continuous learning possibilities by accessing information from their cell TVs (Knight, 2015). Moreover, the inmates could use the Prison Cloud services from their cells to watch movies (Knight & Van De Steene, 2017), listen to music, or, sometimes, even have access to pornographic

material (Insidetime, 2016). However, a security incident caused the prohibition of access to all whitelisted websites when a prisoner managed to send a message to a journalist via a job search web page (Krikorian et al., 2019). On a similar note, in 2018, an inmate managed to cause a security breach in the closed state prison of Nyborg, Denmark (Thomsen, 2018). This incurred the confiscation of all 300 Playstation consoles from the closed prisons of Denmark in July of 2018 (Thomsen, 2018) and the complete shutdown of all the SK-network services, earlier the same year, in April (Danish government, 2020). In January 2021, the reinstatement of the SK-network was approved by the Department of the Prison and Probation Service, the Ministry of Justice, and the Security and Intelligence Service of Denmark, *with a number of safety adjustments regarding the use of the SK network* (Danish Government, 2020, p. 71), and it was put back to use in March of the same year. However, authorities should be critical regarding decisions of collective punishment, despite the need to mitigate the trigger of security compromisation incidents (Jepsen F. as cited in The Local DK, 2018). These measures are deemed problematic exactly because they target a vast number of the population from single incidents. This ensues a lot of restrictions towards all the inmates that fall into a broad category, and in the case of technological resources that are constantly available to society and continuously progressing, the *digital illiteracy* of the inmates that follows these measures may be more harmful to society upon the prisoners' release than protective against potential security threats (Jewkes & Johnston, 2009).

## 2.2 *The Danish context & the SK network*

In Denmark, there are *open prisons*, which are physically open and are not confined by any secure perimeters such as high walls, turrets, etc. that could substantially deter escaping. Prisoners can leave the prison for work, education, or healthcare and may be allowed to spend the weekends outside the facility, with their families (Reiter et al., 2017). Respectively, there are *closed prisons* that have more or less a higher degree of physical restriction and also stricter rules about possessions, visits or calls, and leaves of absence, during which they shall be escorted by staff members (Reiter et al., 2017). There are also *semi-open units*, whose security level lies somewhere between the two mentioned above, and *remand prisons* where people are kept until their trial is held (Kriminalforsorgen, 2019). Prisoners are obliged to complete 37 hours per week on either work, education, therapy/rehabilitation sessions or a mix of the above (Riis, 2018).

In the case of *open prisons*, inmates can have access to the internet from a PC in their cell, from a computer in the prison school room, or from a computer in a common Internet-cafe space (Smith, 2012). The in-cell PC instances are more limited and only awarded individually as a means to work or for educational purposes, while the Internet-cafe computers are more accessible from a larger number of inmates for recreational purposes and permit access to a limited number of whitelisted websites (Smith, 2012). In *remand prisons*, there is not currently an option for digital education access. The prison school rooms though, are present in both open and closed prisons and are accessed by inmates who wish to receive high school or even a bachelor's education. However, due to inadequate internet speed, it is much more difficult to access resources such as videos, which are available for the bachelor level education, something that makes it harder for the inmates to follow. The intranet system that is used in both types of prisons is called SK network (or SKnet) and was first put into use in December 2010. The platform has the form of a web page with different options and is called Kriminalforsorgens UndervisningsPortal (the felons' management teaching portal), or KUP. The inmate needs to access the computer with their personal login credentials and has also access to various offline image or sound editing programs, as well as to Microsoft word, excel, and painting.

The options available to inmates from the SKnet platform are the following:

- Forside (Front/Home page, Fig. 4): This page shows information or updates related to the SKnet system and it also gives the option to the inmates to send feedback to the developers of the system and communicate this way their ideas or issues.

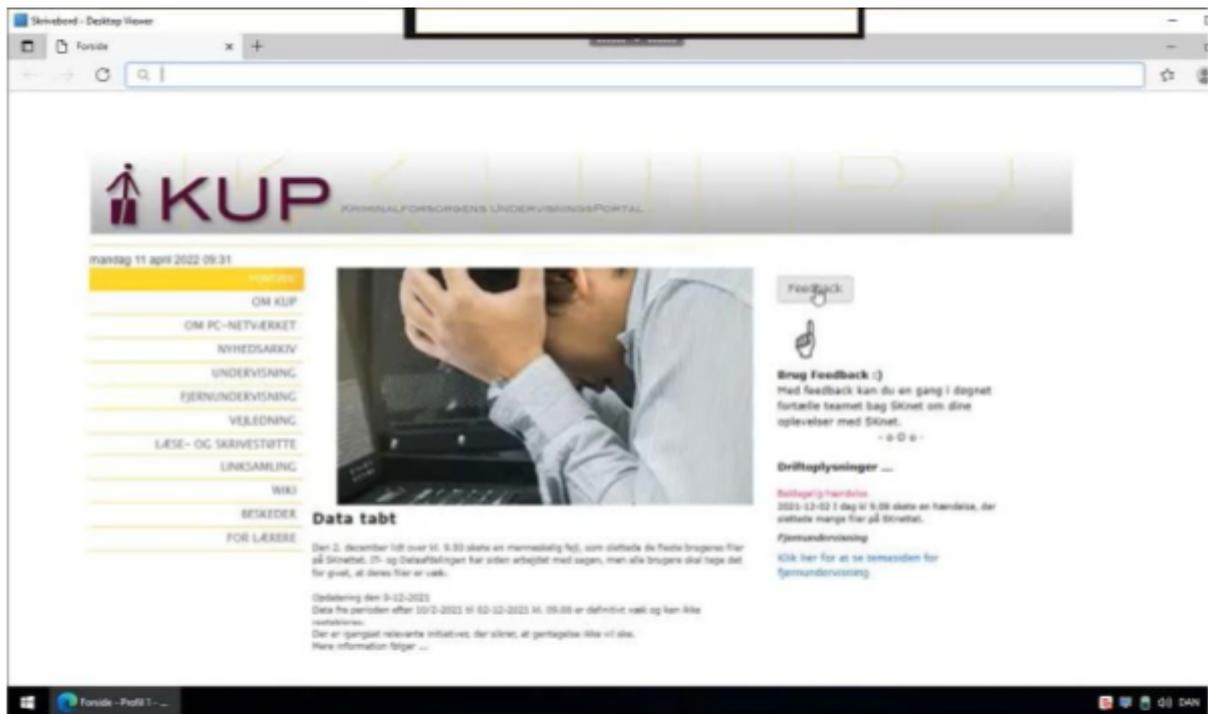


Figure 4: SKnet homepage

- Om KUP (About KUP, Fig. 5): Here, there is information about the KUP platform in terms of what the inmates can do via the system and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section that explains the main functions and issues.

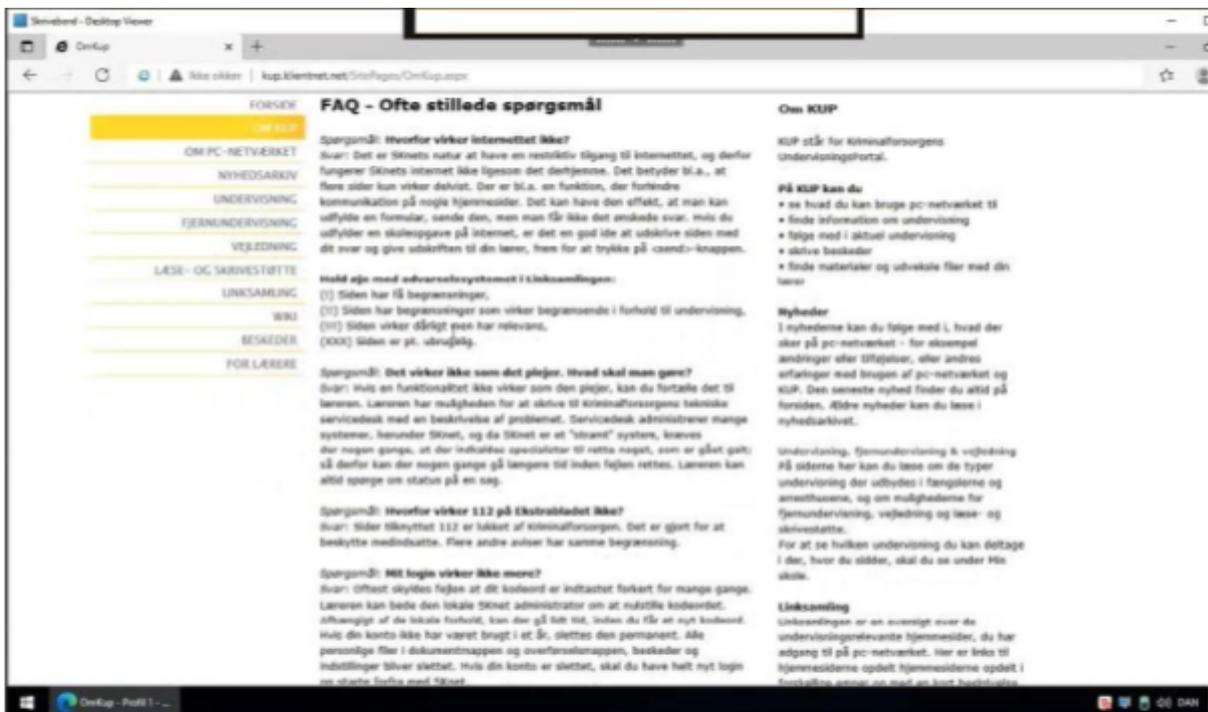


Figure 5: About Kriminalforsorgens Undervisning Portal

- Om PC-Netværket (About PC-network, Fig. 6): On this page, the inmates can see information about the computer and specifically how to log in to their profile with their personal information, how to save files or pages, and they are also informed that their activity is being surveilled for security reasons.



Figure 6: About the network

- Nyhedsarkiv (News archive): The news archive page contains information about previous news front pages, but it is currently not available due to technical issues that will be further discussed in the *Analysis*.
- Undervisning (Teaching, Fig. 7): This part gives general information about the different types of education that can be provided and briefly explains what can the various programs of the PC be used for. Different educational programs are available in different

facilities.

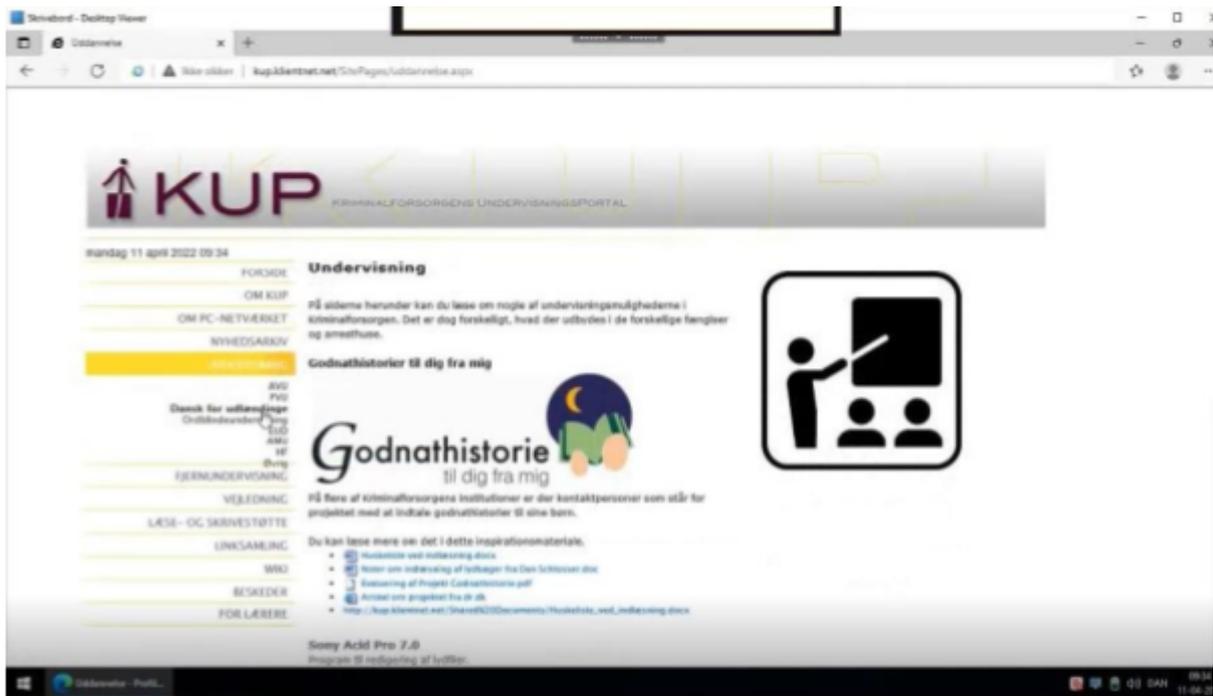


Figure 7: Teaching

- Fjernundervisning (Remote studying, Fig. 8, 9, 10): This is the core of the SKnet study program. The starting page shows the latest news, edits, and additions regarding remote education opportunities. Most importantly, there is a link where the inmate can see all the available educational programs, from illiterate level up to bachelor degree level of education. Upon selecting one of the available tuition programs, the inmate can see general information about that program, dates of live teaching sessions if they are provided and a detailed catalog of the topics alongside studying material like videos and text files. When an inmate wishes to attend a program, they send a relevant message to the SKnet staff in order to proceed with their approval.



Figure 8: Remote studying

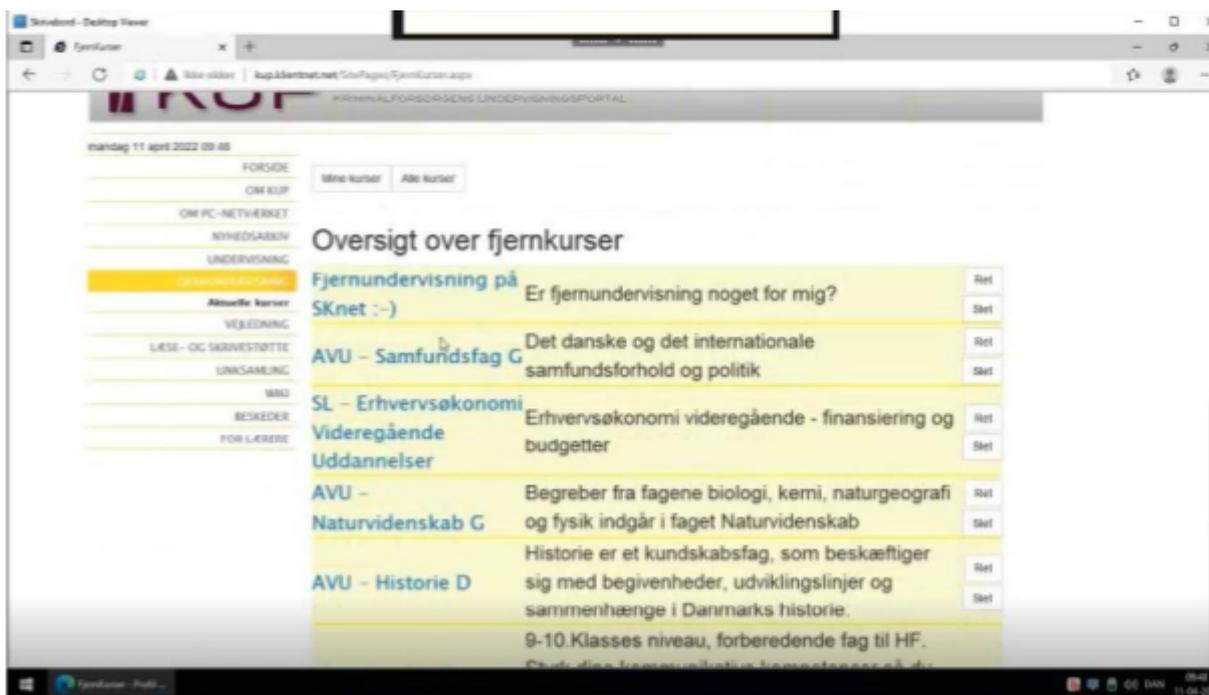


Figure 9: Remote studying

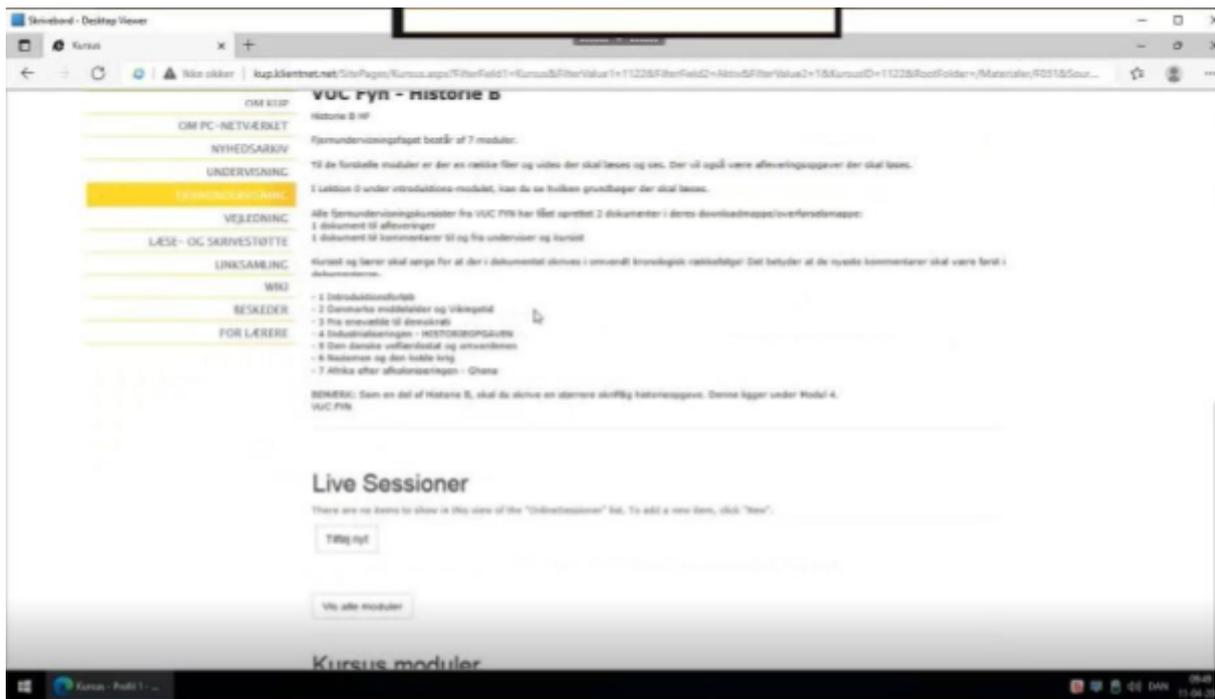


Figure 10: Remote studying

- Vejledning (Guidance, Fig. 11): Here the inmates can seek advice regarding what kind of skills could be appealing to them to develop and how different kinds of education would be interesting for them. The guidance is being provided by eVejledning, an online consulting service for people that are unsure about their working/educational options. The inmates can either look for guidance from the website or call the agency.

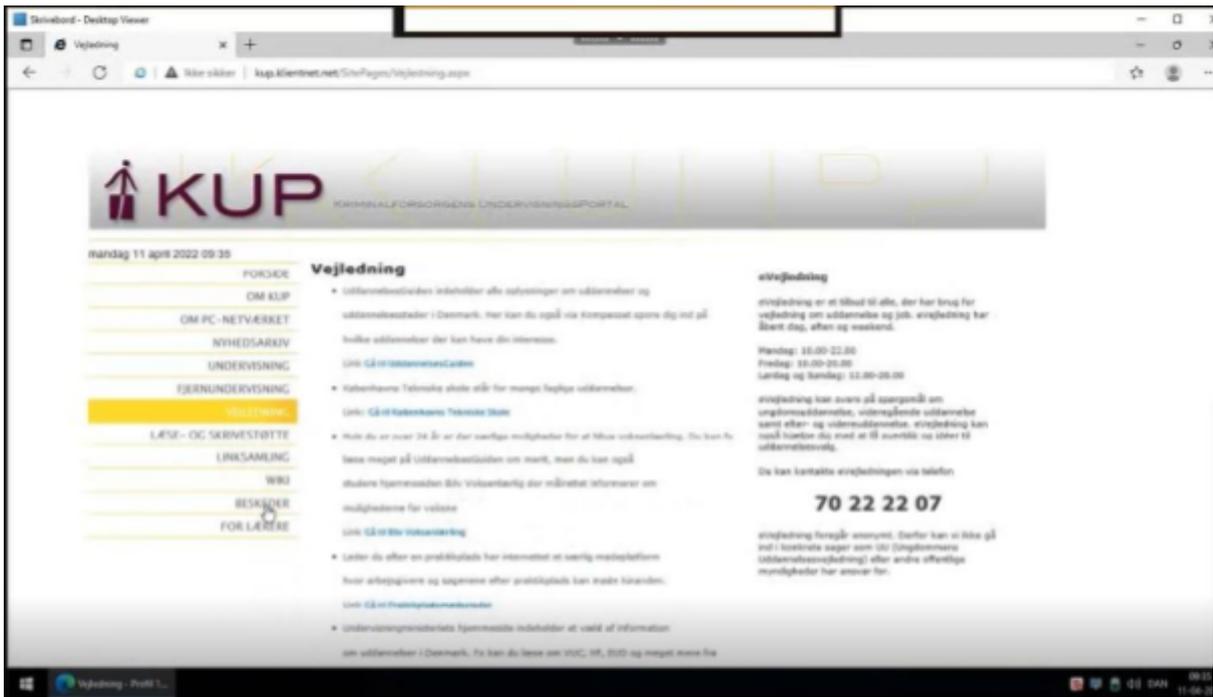


Figure 11: Guidance

- Læse - og skrivestøtte (Reading and writing support, Fig. 12): This is a page that gives alternatives to traditional learning for people that are illiterate or have dyslexia. It provides sound files for people with trouble reading and directs them accordingly to the proper educational options for each instance.

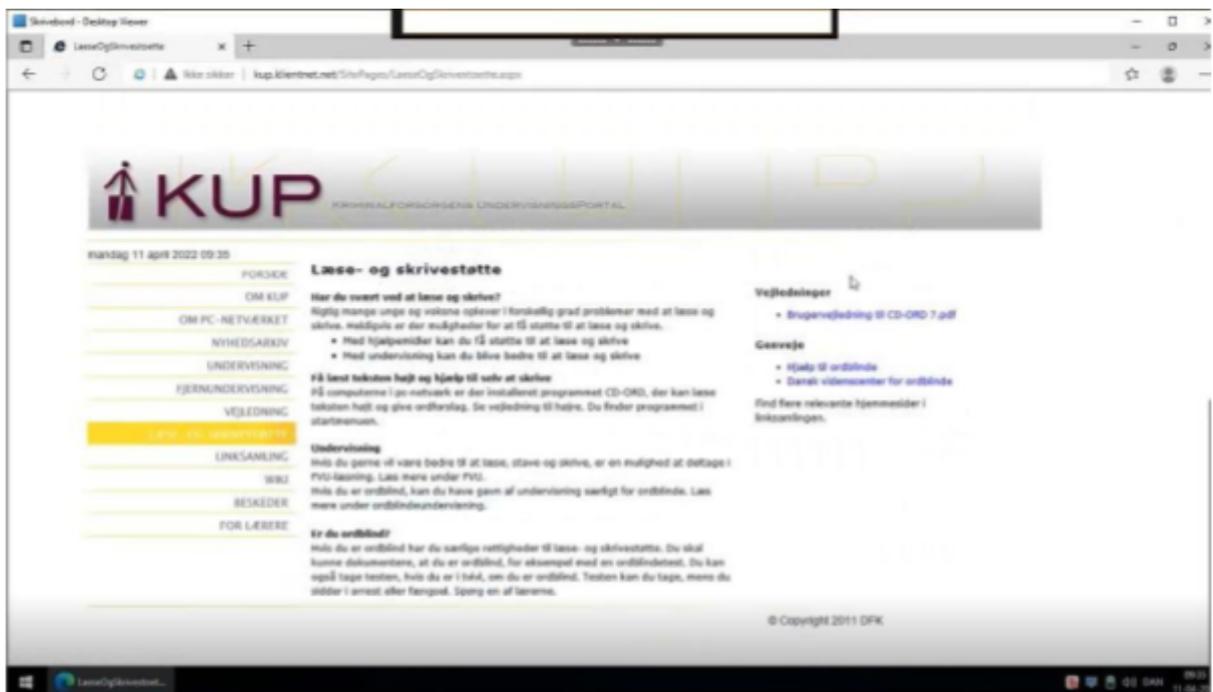


Figure 12: Page for illiterate inmates

- **Linksamling (Web links collection, Fig. 13):** Here is an accumulation of white listed websites to which the inmates have access. These are mostly related to dictionaries and vocabulary resources, access to sites that have to do with political decisions or the Danish law and there is also a link to Landsforeningen Krim, an NGO which provides free legal assistance to inmates in case they have experienced infringement of their rights or in case they seek legal advice.

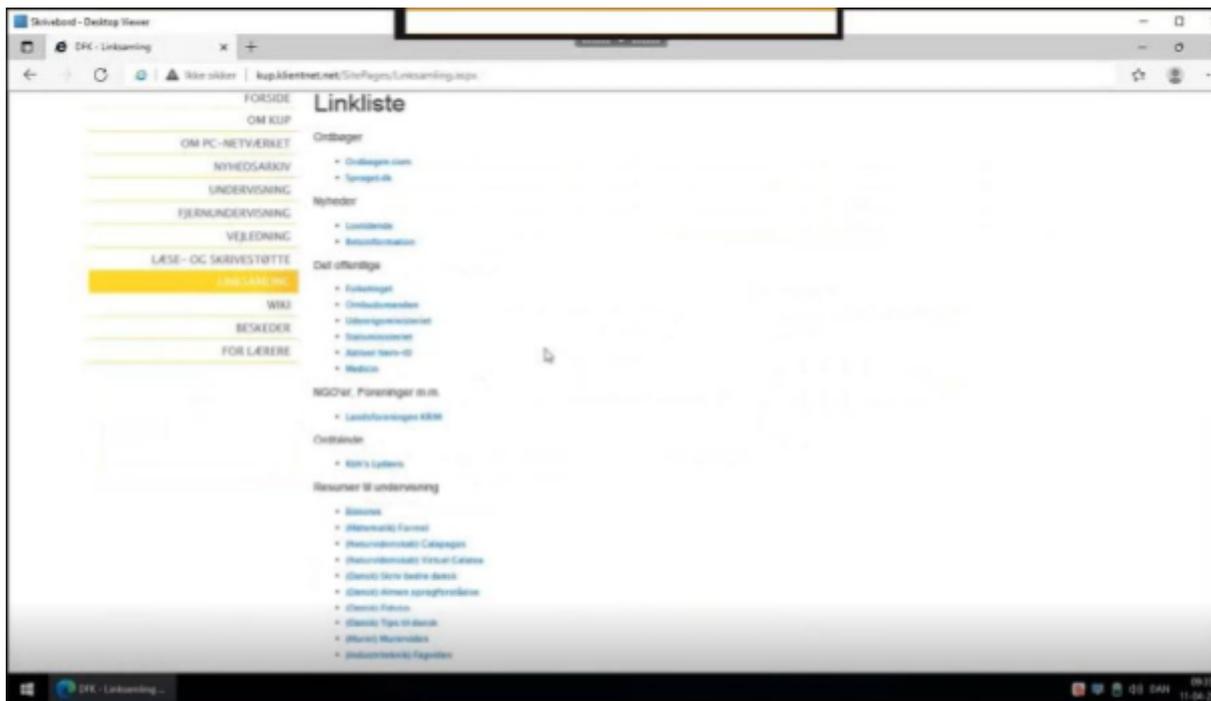


Figure 13: List of the accessible websites

- **Wiki (Fig. 14):** This link leads to a search page that allows the inmate to look for information about various topics from a database compiled and edited by the teachers. This database comprises material on different subjects in the forms of videos, sound files, or

text files. The teachers can add new or edit existing information in the database.

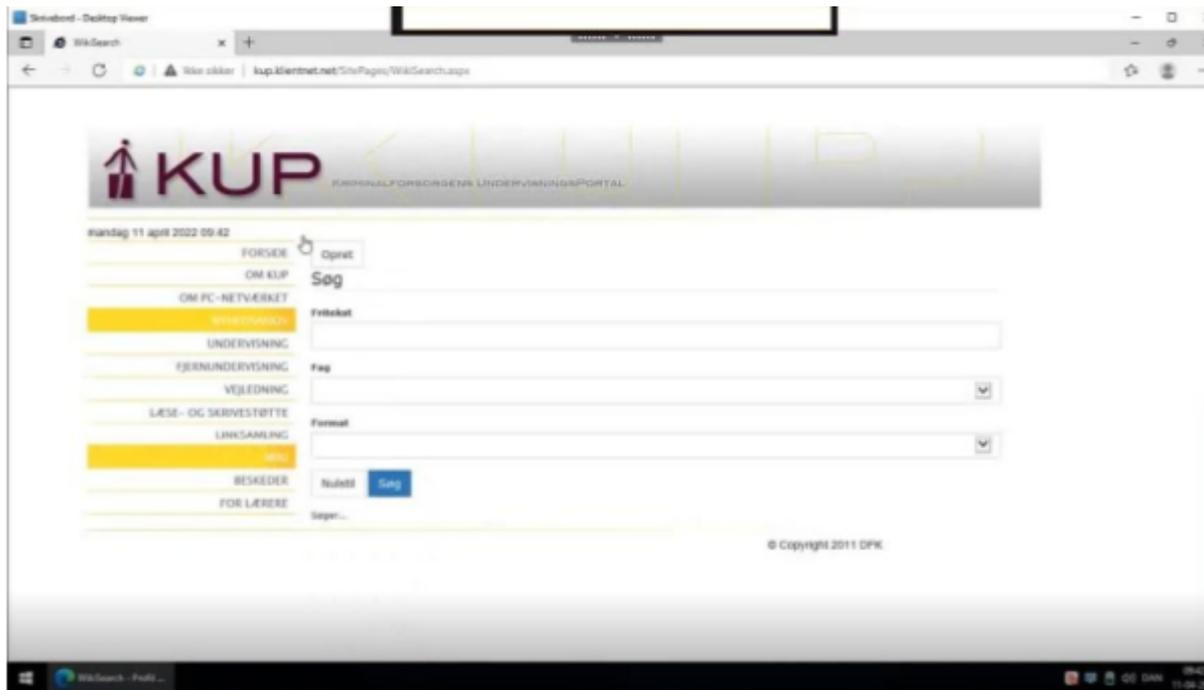


Figure 14: Wiki sources for studying material

- Beskeder (Messages): This function allows the inmates to communicate with the teachers in the form of written messages. It contains a field for the title, the message, the study field and gives the possibility of file attachment.
- For lærere (For the teachers, Fig. 15) / My school: This part can either have the option “For lærere” and be accessed only by teachers or “My school” and be accessed by the inmates. In the first instance, the page shows different manuals regarding how to upload or edit educational material and provides technical support information in case of a problem. The “My school” page contains updates and news written by the teachers for the students.

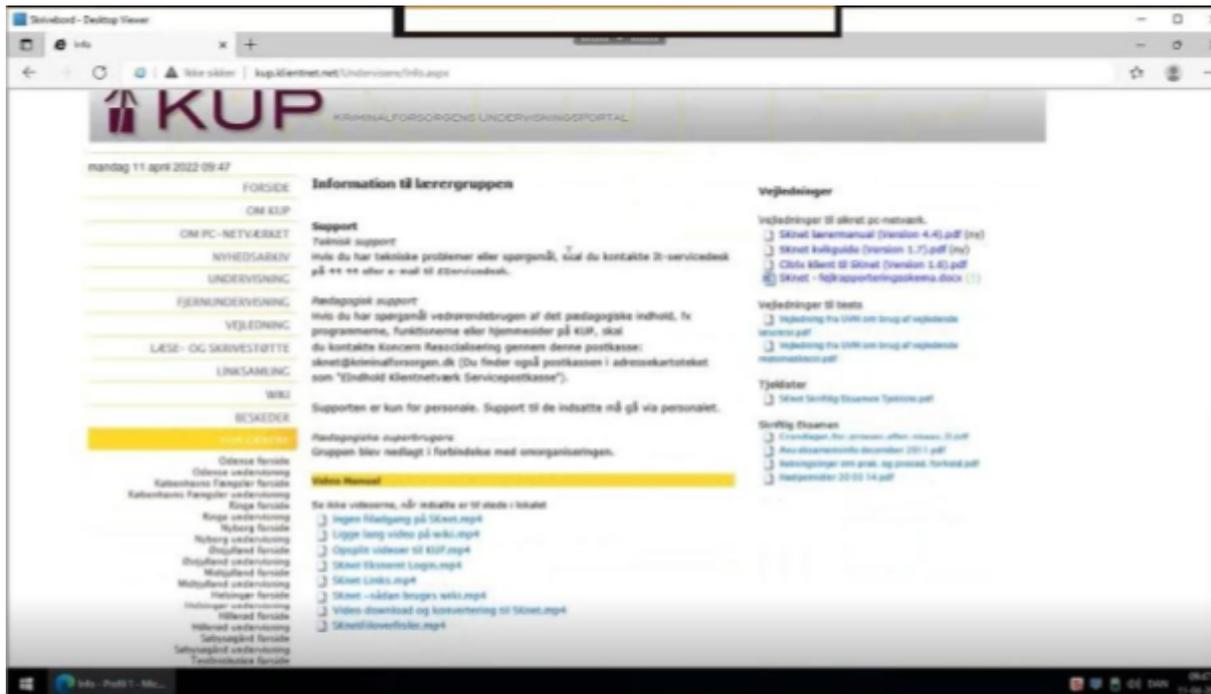


Figure 15: For teachers

The platform is created with the purpose of providing meaningful education to the inmates by broadening their choices and making available a wide number of educational fields to them while keeping in regard the security measures that need to be met. The purpose of the educational system in prison is to provide enough skills to the inmates to be able to use them outside the prison as well as to smoothen the transition from the in-jail conditions to the outer world upon their release. Furthermore, education in prison should resemble the educational conditions of the pedagogical system of Danish society as much as possible (Rentzmann, 1996), in accordance with the principle of *normalization*, in order to give the inmates opportunities as similar as possible to the students of standard Danish education. This way only the inmates can have a chance to counteract the negative effects of potential stigmatization due to their criminal records (Moore et al., 2017) and the fact that their employability potential could decrease as they get older (Peters et al., 2019) while serving their sentence. Furthermore, SKnet is an ICT solution that can help narrow down the digital divide (Barreiro-Gen & Novo-Corti, 2015) by providing digital access to various services that would be also available to people outside prison.

However, the various problems that have been manifesting during the actual use of the platform by the inmates, such as inadequate broadband capacity, insufficient prison personnel to escort the inmates during the use of the computers and the very limited

webpages access prevent the SK net platform from providing meaningful resources and achieving the aforementioned goals. The platform is therefore used scarcely as an educational tool, as it is mostly used in order to give an exam or because taking an education “*can look good in the papers*” (Ulreich, app.3). Furthermore, the Danish government appears to be taking a more punitive approach towards the incarceration system regulations and decision making discourses over the last years (Reiter et al., 2017; Damsa, 2021; Barker et Smith, 2021). This is reflected in policies such as the ones affecting the inmates who are non-citizens (around 27% of the prison population) who have much more limited access to educational resources, rehabilitative treatments, or work, aside from special circumstances (e.g. long sentences) (Damsa, 2021). The overall greater punitive overtone can be also identified by the fewer leaves of absence granted, greater use of solitary confinement, and the increased number of prisoners in closed prisons (Minke, 2021 as cited in Damsa, 2021). These conditions seem to increasingly underplay the role and importance of the normalization and openness principles which are considered cornerstones of the modern incarceration philosophy (Minke, 2021).

We attempted to explore the conditions of the Danish imprisonment system by interviewing and also having ad hoc, informal conversations with different stakeholders and experts of this field such as prison teachers, guards, one of the primary SK net developers, organizations meant to assist inmates with their reintegration process and, of course, the inmates themselves. We wanted to follow the ideas of an interdisciplinary approach as we believe that by taking into account the experiences of different fields’ experts, we can better identify the problems and the possible solutions that can be implemented. The location where we have conducted most of the interviews and fieldwork is the *Storstrøm prison*.

### *2.3 The setting: Storstrøm Prison*

The prison we have contacted for our qualitative material collection is the prison of Storstrøm. It is a closed state prison (Fig. 16) of high security with a capacity of 252 spaces. Right now, the prison holds around 252 inmates (App. 2), located in Falster. The inmates are accommodated among four standard security wings and one maximum security wing. The personnel building is located near the entrance, just after the parking space, and what follows up is a gateway building which when crossed there is access to the main prison units. Immediately after the gate, on the right, is the visitors’ area, and in the middle of the

establishment lie the workshop and the activities' buildings (Fig. 17), occupying a total floorspace of approximately 35.000 m<sup>2</sup> (C.F. Møller, 2018).



Figure 16: Storstrøm prison

Source: <https://www.kriminalforsorgen.dk/steder/storstroem-faengsel/>

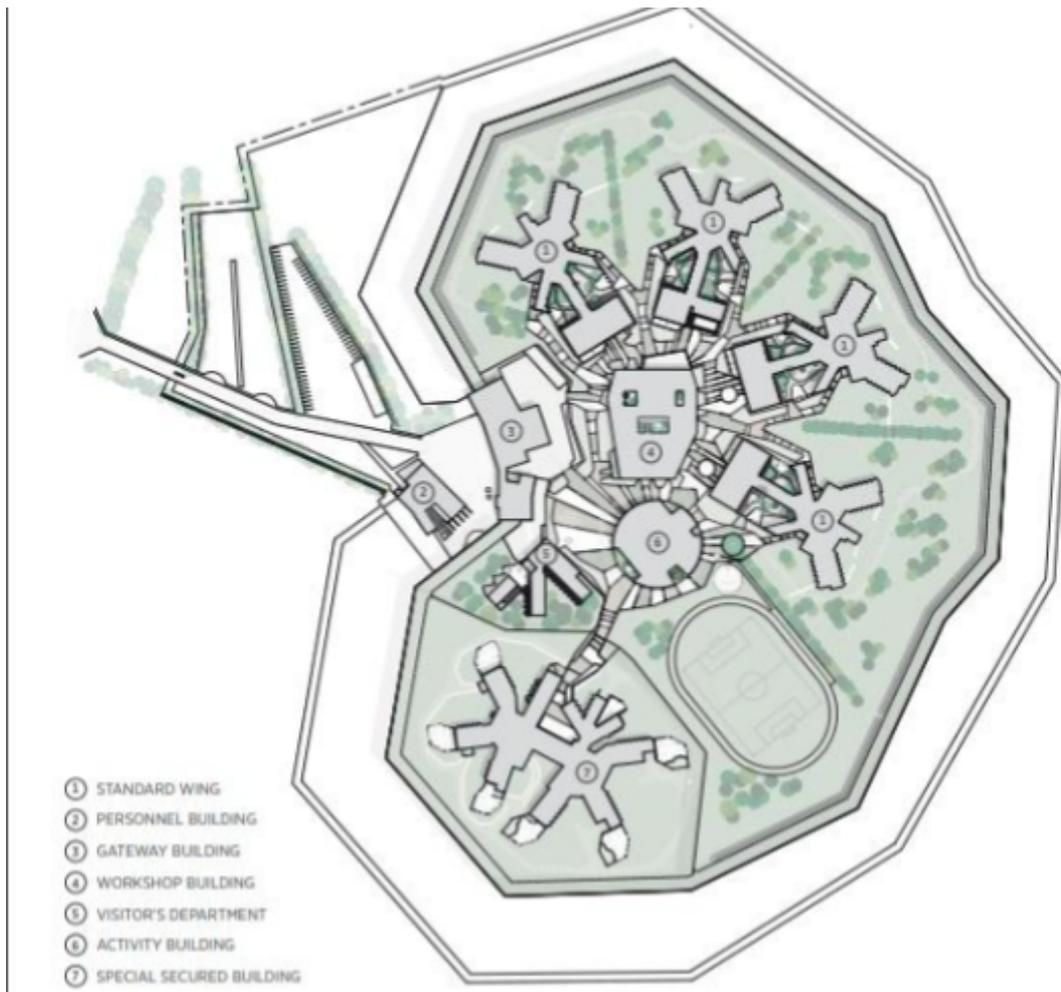


Figure 17: Storstrøm siteplan  
 Source: C.F. Møller, 2018

The intention of the prison's architecture is to resemble a small urban environment which would minimize the institutionalized atmosphere and would make the transition into and from prison easier for the inmates. It is designed with streets, squares, and centrally located community buildings from which views see toward a green landscape. The perimeter wall is formed with a series of recesses to minimize the feeling of confinement (C.F. Møller, 2018). The interior areas, which in some places also contain artwork, are decorated with colors that are meant to relax the inmates and minimize the atmosphere of institutionalization (Fig. 18, 19). The cells, 12,8 m<sup>2</sup> each, have neutral colors to allow the inhabitants to decorate them as they find fitting (Fig.20). The furniture is particularly designed in a way that the sharp corners are reduced to avoid harm and the room is designed in a way so that the prison staff can view most of the space from the door. Each residential unit has four to seven cells that can access the common rooms of the kitchen and living room. (C.F. Møller, 2018).



Figure 18: The common kitchen of a unit, shared by 7-12 inmates  
Source: <https://www.cfmoller.com/p/Storstrom-Prison-i2730.html>



Figure 19: An interior football court in Storstrøm prison  
Source: <https://www.cfmoller.com/p/Storstrom-Prison-i2730.html>



Figure 20: Cell in Storstrøm prison

Source: <https://www.cfmoller.com/p/Storstroem-Prison-i2730.html>

The architecture also provides a wide view in several directions from central guardroom spaces. These spaces can also be a common meeting place for inmates and staff, except for the maximum security wing where a wall separates inmates and staff. Outside, among the green landscape, there is also a soccer field and a running track (C.F. Møller, 2018).

#### *2.4 Research questions and problem statement*

We have chosen to approach this facility, as it has been characterized as one of the most humane prisons, as well as the most secure ones, which is expected to strongly apply the principle program (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996) to its premises. Furthermore, we have been informed by the learning and developing consultant of Kriminalforsorgen, Per Thrane, that it is one of the closed institutions with the highest participation in the SK net educational platform. Therefore, we wish to approach the inmates that have a high level of familiarity with the various aspects of the ICTs implementation, alongside the other stakeholders who we got in touch with (prison staff, teachers, education consultants).

At this point, we would like to unveil the socio-technical configuration that we examined in Storstrøm Prison, by correlating our case with the Techno-Anthropological

(T-A) triangle (Fig. 21). Following this theoretical model, we can explicate the realm of Techno-Anthropology that consists of the Experts, the Users, and the Artifacts and hence the relations that occur between them (Børsen, 2013). We focused on the triangle sides between Experts-Artifacts and Users-Artifacts. The connection between Experts-Artifacts implies a moral criticism of how technologies develop and the social responsibility that the developers should take into account, whereas the relation between Users-Artifacts indicates the functionality of a technological artifact, but also how intelligible it is to its users (Børsen, 2013). At the beginning of our research, we were exploring what kind of technologies the inmates are able to use that can help them interact with the world beyond the prison walls. Subsequently, after conducting fieldwork and interviewing inmates, teachers, and one of the developers of the SKnet, we collected data that led us to consider to what extent the ICTs serve their purpose in relation to the principles of Kriminalforsorgen and Nordic Exceptionalism, but also to the critical point of view of the teachers and the prisoners of Storstrøm.



Fig 21: The TAN triangle  
*Source: Børsen, 2013*

In our current project we try to explore the following research questions:

- Which are the major concerns identified in Storstrøm by the different actors?

- What are the methods that are being employed toward the inmates' rehabilitation/reintegration in Storstrøm?
- Are they aligned with the Kriminalforsorgen and Scandinavian exceptionalism principles?
- What is the current use of the SK network in Storstrøm prison?
- How can the SK network tackle the issues that currently exist in the prison rehabilitation/reintegration system of Denmark?
- How can the current technological solutions be improved?

From these research questions, we have formulated the problem statement that we will try to answer in the following way:

*To what extent are the technological artifacts in Storstrøm prison employed in accordance with the principles of Nordic exceptionalism and Kriminalforsorgens guidelines?*

To this question, we will try to answer it as thoroughly as possible in the present thesis. Nonetheless, due to the highly secure nature of the subject, access to qualitative material has been time consuming and limited. For this reason, we approach the issues that we have found from our interviews with greatly complementary material from the literature. This perspective, alongside the theoretical lens that we are next describing, will be our main compass during our analysis.

## 03. Methodology

### *3.1 Finding the setting*

One of the first steps of the research process has been for us to be able to identify what kind of technologies we are going to be engaged with. Also, we needed to see how we can apply the appropriate methodological tools in a physical setting that has the capacity to

provide relevant information. In the process of our research we have conducted fieldwork using semi-structured recorded interviews with different stakeholders, ad hoc conversations and observations in the setting and fieldnotes while we were in and out of the setting.

In order to understand how deeply the Nordic principles are imbued in the prison system, we needed to make contact with the people that reside there constantly and share common spaces and practices. We wanted to relate to the values, the difficulties, the everyday life dynamics; the culture that is developing among the prison's corridors. Ethnography seeks to understand the way of life from the perspective of the people that live it (Spradley, 1979) and "*rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people*" (Spradley, 1979, p. 3). Furthermore, ethnographic material is valuable as it reveals urgent research areas in the setting that is being held (Spradley, 1979). Therefore, paired with a PBL approach, the ethnographic methods show promising ground regarding understanding and resolving matters of social sustainability about a potentially vulnerable group such as inmates who might lack the skills to reintegrate to society upon their release. Exploratory ethnography can involve going into the field with a set of ideas and adjusting them, finding different ones or discarding them if necessary (Neyland, 2008). This has been our strategy regarding our fieldwork, since we had the time to go through several literature works in our dormant period, while waiting for the clearance to visit the facility physically. We therefore developed a mindset regarding which were the main issues that we wanted to investigate, from the literature review and from the relevant contacts outside the prison that we could get in touch with. This way we developed some research questions and a preliminary problem statement. They were formulated in accordance with the literature review and the contact with people related to our topic, but also with the restrictions that apply to our thesis (limit of time, demarcation of a topic of Techno-Anthropological relevance) and the need to address a practical problem and a solution to it (Neyland, 2008).

Primarily, we established contact with one of the main developers of the educational platform currently used in the prisons of Denmark and, thanks to his help, managed to identify the features of the SKnet and were informed regarding its usage in each facility. The choice of Storstrøm prison is particularly pertinent, since it is one of the facilities with the highest usage of the SKnet services, as also pointed out by the developer of the platform. Therefore, the knowledge that could be acquired from the various stakeholders of the facility was considered relevant and valuable for this endeavor. The access process comprised several contacts with different people and organizations via emails and phone calls. These were the

Kriminalforsorg director, the Storstrøm prison email address, Per Thrane (one of the developers of the SKnet platform), two teachers that staff the facility and one of the universities whose courses are provided in the SKnet for higher education.

Due to the elevated degree of security, the process has been quite cumbersome, and took overall around three months before we were granted the necessary clearance to physically access the facility. The necessity of meticulous security is self-evidently unquestionable and fundamental but, nonetheless, these challenges render it very difficult to conduct a research on an important matter of social sustainability i.e. the prison population rehabilitation and reintegration conditions. Regardless of various people's willingness to help us, there have been periods of uncertainty due to opaque formal processes that give the sense of stagnation, since occasionally we were not able to identify if there was any progress at all on our access request. This sense was enhanced when we tried to reach out to more people but in the best cases we were kindly redirected to Per Thrane for information and in the worst we did not receive any answer:

*“Thank you for your inquiry. It sounds like an exciting project...Due to the Covid pandemic a lot of events and travelling has been postponed for the spring and she is therefore unfortunately very occupied for the next couple of months. We hope that you have been able to get some useful information through Per Thrane...”*

*“...I'm sorry you haven't received an answer earlier on. However you have already had contact with my department, as Per Thrane is one of my employees. I therefore gather that you have any relevant information, my department can offer you.”*

Likewise, we attempted to contact the Copenhagen Business School, which offers courses for the inmates inside the SKnet platform, but the staff was not particularly aware of these courses and, despite their genuine effort, had trouble finding a person whom we could contact for an interview on the topic.

*“I have been trying to find some more information about who you can contact, though it has been a bit of a challenge as I have not had much to go on. Though, I can understand that you talked with one of my colleagues over the phone last week – and she informed me that you would try to find a bit more information. So please get back to us, if you find further information, and then I'll try to see if I can direct you to the right department and/or people :)”*

Later, during an interview with one of the inmates that has attempted to use the SKnet for higher education, we were informed that the professors of the available online SKnet courses are unaware that the students who do not appear in the class physically may be imprisoned. Similar hindering conditions have been mentioned during one of our visits, concerning the efforts of the prison teachers to create initiatives that could help the rehabilitation process of the inmates but are restrained by the complex security requirements. These cases are more thoroughly discussed in the *Analysis* part of this report.

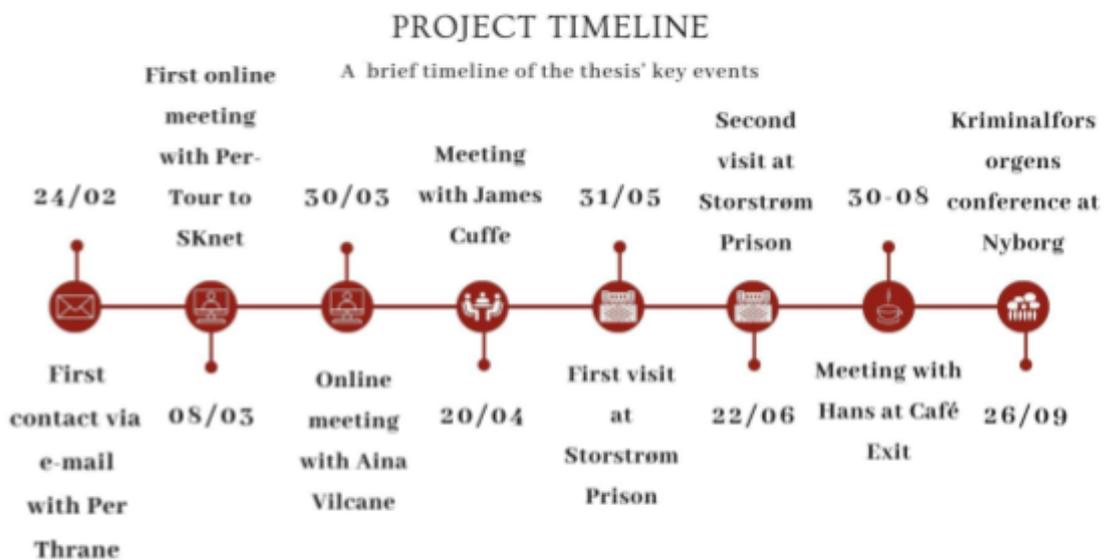


Figure 22: A brief timeline of the project

### 3.2 Fieldwork: Observations and fieldnotes

The guide to concretize what kind of observations we should make has been mainly the perspectives of Neyland (2008) and Spradley (1980) on the matter of ethnographic observations. We knew well that the moment that we enter the site, a lot of things would make an impression on us, something that would be blunted after multiple visits (Neyland, 2008), so we needed to observe and write down as much as we could in the first place. We would have to observe everything, nothing should be considered trivial or for granted, since we were not definite on what can be of use over the course of our qualitative material collection (Neyland, 2008). Spradley (1980) refers to the process of observing as a funnel, where the researcher starts from making broad, descriptive observations about everything that they experience around them, then narrowing down their focus to less events, that are more

directly related to the topic of investigation and finally making selective observations about various cultural ideas that have arisen, in an effort to further illustrate and expound their findings (Fig. 23). The way this idea has guided our research process was especially with the involvement of the SKnet. In this case, after our broad observations were noted and looked through, we proceeded to focus on the educational aspects of the prison system (focal observations) and then to zero in on the SKnet (selective observation). Of course other themes and ideas have also emerged but we find this particular one the most relevant to the “funnel” process of observations and field topics’ exploration as described by Spradley (1980).

**ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH**

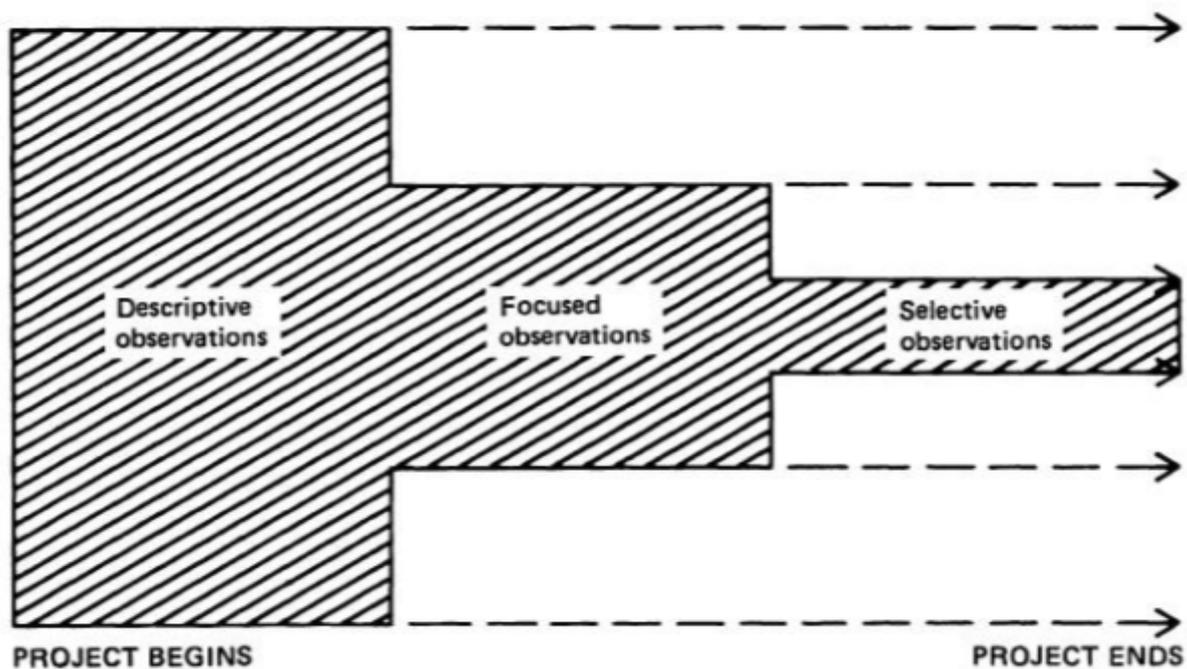


Fig. 23 Spradley’s observational “funnel” (1980)

Over the period 31/05/2022 to 26/09/2022 we have conducted two observation sessions in the Storstrøm prison and one tour inside the closed prison of Nyborg. The first visit on 31/05 lasted 5 hours, from 10:00am to 3:00pm and the second one, on 22/06 lasted 4 hours, from 10:30am to 2:30pm. The tour inside Nyborg prison was part of a conference held by Kriminalforsorgen on 26/09, where we were invited from Per Thrane to present our findings inside the prison of Storstrøm. At Nyborg, we were part of a large group of prison teachers and Kriminalforsorgen members from all around Denmark. One of the prison teachers there was our guide through the facility and was explaining the different areas and activities, over the course of around 1 hour. We kept notes of what we saw but the tour was in

Danish so we missed a significant amount of information due to our rudimentary knowledge of the language. In Storstrøm prison, we have been accompanied by one of the prison's teachers throughout our visits who has been meeting us at the facility and has been with us during the time we were inside. He has been our primary informant, of notable importance in this situation, as the Storstrøm prison is a closed prison facility of high security and is therefore a particularly difficult setting to gain access to and witness the cultural phenomena that occur there (Neyland, 2008). Upon our arrivals at the prison, we had to pass 2 barrier arms after we were granted security clearance through an intercom system, a check in space where we would leave our belongings that were not allowed to be brought inside (such as mobile phone) as well as our IDs, and a body scan room to positively ensure that we were not carrying anything illicit eventually (Fig. 24). We were allowed to bring with us our voice recording device, which has only the properties of recording and playing the audio files, a notebook and a pen. In the scanning room is where we were meeting our informant.



Fig. 24: Aerial view of Storstrøm prison  
*Source: Google maps*

From then on, we were being guided to the different areas of the facility while our informant was explaining to us the functionality of each location and also recounting events that had taken place there. Apart from the recording, which was on almost the whole time of our visits, we were also taking fieldnotes when we came across something we considered of importance (or it was pointed out as important by our participants) or when we were having

an idea and we wanted to keep in mind and elaborate upon. The latter was also an effort to come up with rudimentary ideas while we were already on the field (Neyland, 2008), where everything struck more intensely to our perception, and try to cross check these ideas with our in-site participants. By fieldnotes, we refer to the notes of observations, descriptions, ideas, questions, and draft conclusions that we kept on every occasion that we were in touch with some source of information regarding our scope of research: The interviews, the informal chats, the tour we took to the facility, even the literature review and the supervision meetings that sparked unrefined ideas for our research. Also, writing down what we considered as important observations would also be able to stimulate our research process and refresh our memories when we were comparing them with snippets from the recordings or previous fieldnotes (Neyland, 2008). We were also writing down everything that made an impression to us even if they seemed irrelevant to our initial purpose, since something might be proven useful later on during the observations or while we were processing our material.

The notes include impressions, feelings and reflections arisen during our tour to the various compartments of the facility but also during the interviews with the inmates or the informal conversations that we had with the staff. Especially the time we have spent with one of the prison's teachers has been very substantial to get a grasp on the overall vibe that the different groups of people communicate to each other. The particular informant has been several times identified by the inmates as a friendly and important relationship to them and has also been active regarding initiatives that would add new features to the teaching sessions, according to his experience with the inmates. These ideas will reoccur in more detail at the analysis part, though the gist is that the teacher has been the informant that Neyland (2008) describes as a person that "*knows every member of the group*" (p. 15), therefore is close to the cultural going-ons of the milieu under study, and, in addition with the inmates, can better identify the aspects of the setting that are more meaningful for research (Neyland, 2008; Spradley, 1979). Consequently, he has also been our link between us and the inmates, the gatekeeper (Neyland, 2008) who has helped us find people who would be interested to talk to us and also a person with inside knowledge of the setting who we can discuss with and reveal topics of urgent research.

### 3.3 Semi-structured interviews & ad-hoc conversations

The process of information and data collection through interaction with different stakeholders of the subject has followed several paths during our research process. The main corpus is composed of semi structured interviews with 6 of the inmates of Storstrøm prison, one teacher, a primary developer of the SKnet platform and a member of Café Exit. The material that stems from the semi-structured interviews (Spradley, 1979; Neyland, 2008) with these participants consists of the primary source of knowledge that we base our analysis upon. The participants are all anonymized for security and safety reasons, except for Per Thrane and Hans Andersen. We have used fictional names (Fig. 25) throughout the development of our *Analysis* to impart a more personal narrative and to make it more memorable for the reader regarding who said what.

Anders	Teacher
Anne	Teacher
Ulreich	Inmate
Bjorn	Inmate
Rasmus	Inmate
Aron	Inmate
Lasse	Inmate
Niels	Inmate
Hans	Café Exit

Fig. 25: Table of interviewees

We have also used capital letters to indicate louder voice, underlining of the phrases to indicate emphasis and exclamation marks to indicate surprise or tension in the interview parts we quote, to impart the emotions of the participants as closely as possible to the way they expressed them. Via these channels of information we tried to discover the main problems that concern our topic and made an attempt to provide solutions to the issues that have been highlighted. Apart from these participants, and before we were able to find ourselves in the facility, we also had a semi-structured, recorded online interview with Aina Vilcane, the Latvian representative of the European Prison Education Association, where we discussed the educational apparatus and possibilities in her project in Latvia. Even though the latter was not directly connected to our particular case, it was early on during our project, when we wanted to get a general idea of how education in a European prison can be in real life, from another experienced individual. Occasionally, most of the semi-structured nature of the interviews was loosening up and resembled more an open interview where we were more or less drifting away from the themes that we were following and talked about various topics such as the inmates' lives before prison and our own personal opinions (Neyland, 2008). These situations, however, might also give a positive sense of flowing conversation and familiarity between us and our participants. We transcribed the interviews by ear and then we started the coding process by

placing quotes of similar topics together (e.g. daily routines, education, leisure activities, family ties etc.) using Miro. Specifically, we created sticky notes with the quotes and placed them under the categories of similar topics. The same process we followed after the emergence of the themes. After all the quotes were accumulated in the coding process, we sorted out the ones that were showing up more regularly (at least 3/7 interviews when we talked about the lived experiences of Storstrøm prison and 3/9 when we talked about other topics) and we created the themes as they are presented and expounded in the *Analysis*.

During our visits in the facility, except for different inmates, we have also come across different prison guards and teachers. In these instances, we were engaging in more informal conversations (Spradley, 1980; Turner, 2010) some of which contained the themes mentioned above as well as personal experiences and treatment of the inmates. In total there were 2 teachers and 4 guards who we have discussed with. Moreover, there has been an unrecorded, introductory meeting with one of the primary developers of the SKnet and a video recorded Skype meeting with him where we gather all the valuable information about the platform. Another unrecorded, informal meeting has taken place with James Cuff, anthropologist and lecturer with the Department of Sociology & Criminology at UCC where we conversed regarding different challenges and ideas of how to overcome them, one of them being the attempt to find ex-inmates or organizations that help inmates and schedule interviews with them as we were waiting a response regarding our Storstrøm prison visits. This idea led us to find an organization, Café Exit (also mentioned by the inmates and the staff) that is helping inmates and recently released inmates to overcome problems that they face. On the 30th of August we also conducted a recorded interview with Hans Andersen, an employed member of the NGO and ex-inmate, who has talked to us generally about the open and closed prisons' culture as well as what are the inmates' issues and how Café Exit helps them with those issues.

Regarding the main type of interviews, which we had with the inmates, we chose the type of semi-structured interviews because it allows the demarcation of the discussion around some central themes that have been recognized as important, without limiting the possibility for new important themes to arise during the interviews (Neyland, 2008). We know that the participants are the people with the most experience regarding the undergoing issues of the setting and we acknowledge that there might be aspects that we have missed during the constitution of our questions and themes. Therefore, we chose an approach that would be appropriate for answering our questions and also would give enough space to the participants

to elaborate on different topics if they felt the need to (Neyland, 2008). The themes of the questions that were addressed to the personnel and the inmates were similar. The main themes that were discussed with the staff and the inmates had to do with their everyday routines, the relationships between them, the level of education of the inmates, the use of digital resources and problems that may accompany them, general problems that are facing in their everyday routines, differences between different prisons (there were inmates and staff that have changed different facilities) and how is the choice of prison made. These questions were created in accordance with the problems and topics that we were identifying in the literature and the ideas that we developed during our meetings with Per, James, and Aina. The semi-structured interviews under these topics were conducted with 6 inmates and the timespan of the interviews ranges from 30 minutes to 1 hour. The topics were also covered by one of the prison's teachers during the first time of our visit in a similar interview. The interviews were recorded upon the inmates' permission and before we delve deeper into the discussion during the informal conversations we had with the staff. We were also taking extensive notes during the meetings that were not recorded by jotting single phrases or ideas and then refining them by memory after the conclusion of the meetings (Neyland, 2008; Spradley, 1979). Furthermore, we have applied methodological ideas that exist inside the theoretical lens of *Actor-Network Theory* which we are presenting in the next part.

## 04. Theoretical framework

### *4.1 Using the Actor-Network Lens*

In this chapter, we will explain why we decided to follow an Actor-Network approach to delve into our main problematization. We will unveil the main pillars of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) referring to the founding fathers such as John Law, Michel Callon, and Bruno Latour, but also based on an analysis of many publications of the work of Bruno Latour, written by Anders Blok and Torben Elgaard Jensen. Actor-Network Theory provides a set of tools that can be employed to guide us during our exploration, thus we perceive this theory also as a method. ANT emerged from Science and Technology Studies (STS) and argued about the perspective of dividing Nature and Society as two purified and detached entities (Latour & Porter, 1993, p. 73). Bruno Latour stated that cultural and natural phenomena constitute hybrid networks (Latour & Porter, 1993, p. 13). Furthermore, he mentioned that in

symmetrical anthropology “*all the collectives similarly constitute natures and cultures; only the scale of the mobilization varies*” (Latour & Porter, 1993, p. 105). ANT has also challenged the mainstream view of what is science as it disputes its objectivity. Latour criticized the conviction that science provides faultless, unprejudiced knowledge that explicates natural phenomena. Instead, he suggested an anti-epistemological approach that all scientific facts are orders that have been stabilized through a variety of processes that contain both natural objects and social relations (Blok & Jensen, 2011).

ANT analyses investigate the relations and dynamics that are created between heterogeneous actors that constitute a network. The researcher has to identify which actors are important for each specific case and focus on them because theoretically, the actors can be infinite (Latour, 1996). Moreover, this approach focuses on the relativity of materials and semiotics where the actors become paramount in a network as we relate them with other actors. (Blok & Jensen, 2011). In other words, ANT examines the relations between entities, but also between concepts. Furthermore, a salient difference between ANT and other STS studies is that in ANT the actors can be either human or non-human and can be both involved in the success or the failure of a network (Blok & Jensen, 2011). The inanimate entities are conceived as equally important to humans, as sometimes their impact can last more in time and thus their influence can be even more durable (Law, 1992). However, as previously mentioned, an actor-network is examined based on the relations that are developed and not in the materials as such. As Law (1992) asserts: “*Walls may resist the escape attempts of prisoners--but only while there are also prison guards*” (p. 387).

In every ANT case, there is an actor that has an interest that wants to be fulfilled. Other actors that are related to this network and have the same interest are perceived as allies and compose the program of action (Latour, 1990). However, other actors might juxtapose that interest and they constitute the anti-program (Latour, 1990). Each program, either perceived as a program or as an anti-program highlights a specific interest, or a different perspective (Feenberg 2017). The program of action needs to enroll and mobilize as many actors as possible in order to weaken the anti-program and achieve its goal. Using the ANT vocabulary, this process is called translation, and Callon (1984) displays four phases; the first is called problematization in which the actors with a significant role are identified and their position in the network is analyzed. During this phase, the main problem is shaped and the program of action sorts out which actors are mainly involved with the actor-network. Subsequently, there is the process of interessement in which the actors that have the same

interest as the main actor are locked and positioned in the actor-network. The third moment of translation is the enrollment when, after versatile negotiations, it becomes clear which actors are enrolled in the program of action. The last aspect of translation is called mobilization, and it concerns whether the spokesmen of the relevant entities involved in the process are actual representatives (Callon, 1984).

As it was mentioned in the Problem Analysis chapter, the principles of Kriminalforsorgen/Nordic Exceptionalism were made to reduce the percentage of recidivism (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998). However, through the qualitative material that we collected from the interviews with the Cafe Exit, inmates, and teachers of Storstrøm Prison, we have noticed that there is a controversy towards this perspective: The public opinion is perceived as hostile towards incarcerated population, while a part of the politicians, but also a part of the Probation Services of Denmark appear to follow a more punitive approach regarding prison policies by overemphasizing the principle of *Security* at the expense of the rest of the NE's principles. (Anders, Lasse, Niels, Hans, app. 2, 6, 7, 8). Hence, we realize that there are two contradictory programs, one aligned with the principles of Kriminalforsorgen/NE and the other with the aforementioned actors. The program of action that we followed is the one aligned with the principles of Kriminalforsorgen/NE, as our research was associated more with opinions from actors involved inside closed prisons of Denmark.

Through the interviews with inmates, teachers, guards, and other external stakeholders, we searched if the principles of Kriminalforsorgen/Nordic exceptionalism (normalization, openness, responsibility, education, security) can be translated as a common interest. Thus, these principles, even if they can be characterized as a non-human actor, they are equally important to humans on how they affect the network, and hence, they are perceived as the "enunciator", that is the main actor that wants to translate an interest (Latour, 1990). According to these principles, the literature search, and our empirical assumptions from the field, we explored if the message of these principles is actually applied in the field that we observed. Therefore, we mapped the important actors that are involved with the actor-network of Storstrøm Prison, to confirm our main problematization about the current use of the ICTs and as a first step, we identified that both the inmates and teachers of Storstrøm Prison were interested and positive to discuss this topic.

We decided to use the ANT approach as we think that rehabilitation in a prison system is a hybrid process of both social interactions and technological artifacts. We had already

been informed that the prisoners of Storstrøm Prison use the SKnet platform more regularly than other prisons in Denmark, so this intranet platform was our starting point for our exploration in order to designate our actor-network. We researched the current use of the SKnet in order to comprehend its effect on the rehabilitation process of the inmates and to investigate if it could potentially be enrolled in the program of action. Through our fieldwork, we managed to discern a few more actors that were involved in the rehabilitation system of Denmark. However, our research was not exclusively focused on the ICTs, but in general on the socio-technical configuration of Storstrøm Prison. Furthermore, we detected the actors collocating with the program of action and those opposing the principles of Kriminalforsorgen/Nordic exceptionalism. Our goal was to identify the interested actors for more constructive use of the ICTs in Storstrøm Prison, aligned with the principles of NE/Kriminalforsorgen and propose possible translations.

#### *4.2 A critical perspective on Actor-Network Theory*

Social Constructivism and Actor-Network Theory have both rejected the idea of technological determinism. A further step of the ANT approach was to consider human and non human actors as equally important in a network (Feenberg, 2017). However, even though ANT can overcome the shortcomings of social constructivism by introducing inanimate objects as conveyors of meanings and significant factors in a cultural setting, it holds its own drawbacks by stripping all the actors of their power or effect in the network with the notion of *agency* (Feenberg, 2017). Humans and non-humans act symmetrically but this notion of symmetry appears to overlook the intention of human action in comparison to the causal effect of the non-human ones (Feenberg, 2017). This means that human action involves what the human actors perceive as rational motives (Feenberg, 2017), while non-human ones affect the network with an action that has been made to function in a specific way and this function has its own effect and social implications in the setting. Feenberg's critical constructivism (2017) tries to reconcile the ideas of social constructivism in the sense that humans affect the development of artifacts as an answer to technological determinism, and the ideas of ANT that non-human actors can also create conditions that affect the social world, its components and its transformations. In our case, we perceive artifacts as actors that are shaped and shape the network and the cultural reality of the setting they are placed in, but also the human individuals as actors who are affected by the artifacts and who impart their intentionality

towards the different actors of the network, from their *situated knowledge* (Feenberg, 2017, p. 53) of the network. Specifically, we try to explore the relationships between the various non-human entities (e.g. the SKnet, the interior design, the studying dossiers of the inmates etc.) and the human actors (e.g. inmates, teachers, guards etc.) inside the network to answer to our research questions and problem statement (2.4). Having Feenberg's ideas in mind, we will try to overcome the shortcomings of ANT while still keeping it as our primary lens of understanding of the setting. Nonetheless, by valuing our informants' ideas as situated knowledge that holds insights regarding the empowerment of the program of action, we realized that we have developed a proclivity towards the reinforcement of the program of action in contrast to the interest of the anti-program.

### 4.3 *The Black Box of the SKnet*

The notion of a black box was first used to refer to a drawing made by cyberneticians, that was placed in a piece of machinery that was usually too complex to understand its whole operating system. Instead, they had to learn only its inputs and outputs because that information was the only needed to use the device (Latour, 1987). Furthermore, when a technological artifact functions and seems unproblematic then a superficial thought would be that there is no reason to search for the implicit knowledge of the whole process of its design. However, technologies sometimes are or become controversial at some point, and in those cases, an understanding of the "*science in the making*" is much more useful than "*ready-made science*" (Latour, 1987, p. 14-16). Researching science and technology in the making, means that a black box is never closed, as nothing stays so stable that there will never be a need for further research. On the other hand, an all-made science approach would support that facts and technologies can be well determined (Latour, 1987, p. 14).

As previously mentioned, our techno-anthropological research was based on ANT, and thus, we do not perceive the actor-network of Storstrøm Prison as something fixed or established. In addition, due to our focus on the ICTs, we decided to open the black box of the SKnet platform by investigating its internal complexities. The interview that we conducted with one of the developers of this technological system, but also the interviews with inmates and teachers that interact with the SKnet, provided us useful information on understanding the process of how and why it was designed like that. The meaning of

unboxing this black box of the SKnet was to interpret if and how this actor could be enrolled in the program of action of the principles of Nordic Exceptionalism/Kriminalforsorgen.

## 05. Analysis

### *5.1 Tour of the prison grounds*

The architectural design of Storstrøm Prison is aligned with the model of Nordic/Scandinavian Exceptionalism (NE/SE) and the principles of Kriminalforsorgen (The Prison and Probation Service of Denmark) as it is built in an innovative way that promotes the rehabilitation process of the inmates. C.F. Møller Architects have been awarded the 1st prize in the architectural competition, back in 2010. The main plan was to create a building that would not look like a casual prison, but a commodious place that would look more like a town-like structure. This concept supports the principles of normalization and openness that highlight the need to avoid the feeling of institutionalization. The architects also mention the importance of not limiting the daylight and the sky from the view of the prisoners (C.F. Møller, Retrieved October, 2022). Of course, we cannot forget the fact that Storstrøm Prison is a closed prison of maximum security, and thus some restrictions cannot be avoided. As we previously mentioned, our access has been delayed for almost three months.

On our first visit when we arrived, we passed through two security doors, and then we had to show our identity cards and get rid of any electronic devices such as our mobile phones. Subsequently, Anders, a teacher working in that prison was waiting to welcome us. The tour started by passing through many locked doors that could open by using a key and the fingerprint of our guide. It was pretty easy to lose our orientation inside the area as we passed through different buildings that were connected by spacious yards with planted trees and a lot of grass. In some areas, we have also seen sculptures and artwork. We passed through the workstations and we saw the first inmates that were doing some practical work at that time, under the surveillance of a guard. Everything was looking under control, and we never felt unsafe. Subsequently, our informant also showed us the basketball court and football pitch where the inmates can exercise and entertain themselves in their free time. All of those places looked clean and tidy. Afterward, we went to the church of the prison, and also to a music room. We have been told though, that especially the music room is not frequently used by the inmates, as they spend their free time mostly participating in sports or

just hanging out with each other (Anders, app. 2). During the tour we had already had some informal talks with Anders about life in prison, the behavior of the inmates, their habits and practices, and the relationships among them, but also with the teachers and the guards.

Our first interview was conducted with the teacher Anders in his office which was shared with another teacher of the facility, named Anne. We were offered coffee and started asking our questions on the ICTs of the prison and especially the SKnet platform, but also the everyday tasks of the prisoners and the teachers and the relationships among them. However, the discussion branched out to many different topics, about life in prison, from the lens of a teacher but also from an inmate. We observed that they could not have their mobile phones, but they had their computers and an intranet mobile phone for each of them. We have also noticed that there have been many dossiers and we assume that this was an outcome of the limited use of computers. We have been informed by both the teachers and the inmates that the reading materials that are necessary for the courses are usually printed, because of the lack of use of the SKnet platform (Anders, Lasse, app. 2, 6). We observed one of the inmates that we interviewed later that day, Rasmus, carrying a lot of paper and when we asked him about it, he told us that it was his reading material. Therefore, the inmates do their exercises on physical paper and if needed, they transfer them to SKnet when they have them ready (Anders, app. 2). Other inmates that we interviewed informed us that they use this platform only on their exams (Lasse, Niels; app. 6, 7). But more about that in a subsequent chapter.

For the first interview that we conducted with the inmates Ulreich and Bjorn on our first visit, we sat in a room near the area where other inmates were working. We would like to point out that none of the six inmates that we interviewed were wearing handcuffs and they were not followed by guards. All the interviews with the inmates were held in rooms where it was always only the inmate(s), the teacher who was also unarmed, and us. Nevertheless, we have never felt unsafe and all of the inmates were looking interested in our research and eager to speak about their life in prison. Moreover, we noticed that neither the prisoners nor the teachers were wearing uniforms. The only ones that we have seen wearing a uniform were the guards that wear either black suits if they work in the shops or the workstations, or blue suits if they work as security personnel in the wings (Anders, app. 2). In the beginning, we were not familiar with those uniforms and we were not sure if someone was an inmate or a guard. The black suits especially looked like workwear. Regarding the inmates, we have been told that they can ask their friends to buy new clothes and bring them during the next visit (Aron, app. 5). Although they have a limited number of clothes that they are allowed to have in their

cell, the freedom to wear civilian clothes is aligned with the principle of normalization, as a prison uniform is supposed to solve potential identification issues, but it has also a meaning of stigmatization (Fassin, 2017, p.89).

On our second visit to Storstrøm Prison, for the last interview with an inmate named Niels, we went to a residential unit in the wing of rehabilitation for drug users, alcohol abusers, or gamblers and we sat in the living room. There was a TV, a couch, and chairs, and we could also see the kitchen which was next to where we sat. We observed that the kitchen was fully equipped and there was also a collection of knives. However, we have been informed by the guards that everything was completely controlled and that no security incidents have ever taken place. That living room was the shared area for the inmates that were living in that unit. It is a place where the inmates can gather and cook together, play board games or watch TV. All of those common areas are highly important to the rehabilitation process, as they provide them the space to socialize. As one of the inmates mentioned: *“Personally I have very good relationships with everyone, the teachers, the inmates, we have a group of people that cook together, we play football and other sports, it’s nice”* (Aron, app. 5).

On our second visit, the time we were conducting the last interview was during working/education hours, so the whole unit was empty, except for our interviewee and the teacher. We asked if it is possible to see a cell from inside. There are four to seven cells in each residential unit (C.F. Møller, 2018). The teacher and the inmate accepted our request. The cell was indeed bright, and it resembled a dorm room and its large window was providing enough light and view to large green landscapes. The walls were painted white, but as is mentioned in the report of C.F. Møllers they decided to paint them in a neutral color so that the inmates can decorate them on their own (C.F. Møller, 2018).

Overall, the architectural design has exceeded our expectations about a prison that would reduce the feeling of institutionalization. Ulreich expressed his satisfaction with his accommodation in Storstrøm Prison. *“In this prison, we are lucky to have our own bathroom, and toilet and you can keep it clean, only use it for yourself, like the outside”* (Ulreich, app. 3). Thus, the Storstrøm Prison’s facilities seem to reinforce the program of action as a non-human actor as the principles of normalization and openness are achieved at this point. . However, despite the dynamic that the architectural design gives to the actor-network of Storstrøm Prison, it is not the only important actor that affects it.

*“The rehabilitation is 0% at the moment, but I also think it depends on the prison that you live in. For example, this prison is new, it looks like everything is modern, but if you look at the facts, this is one of the hardest prisons that you can be in Denmark. Everything is closed, there are walls, and the blocks [wings] are not united with each other, they are separate. The rehabilitation is zero.”* (Lasse, app. 6).

We have to certainly take into account that Storstrøm Prison is a maximum security prison and many restrictions have to be taken at any cost. However, it is also important to note that this inmate believes that even the fact that the facilities look innovative and modern, this is still not good enough for him to feel that the process of reintegrating back into society works at a good level. We will raise which other actors are crucial and their position affects this actor-network in the next chapters.

## *5.2 The impact of living in different units*

Storstrøm Prison contains five wings of which four are of standard security and one of maximum security. Each wing is separated in top and bottom sections, which also contain residential units. Each unit has four to seven cells. Overall, this prison can accommodate 250 inmates (C.F. Møller, 2018). The sections A, D, and the top C are made for general prisoners, whereas in the bottom C there are placed prisoners that, according to our informant, were gang members from two of the most dangerous gangs in Denmark, named Bandidos and Hell’s Angels (Anders, app. 2). In 1996, “Independent”, a British online newspaper, published an article about the rivalry between these two gangs and characterized this situation as biker wars. The two gangs were both armed and the situation at that time was horrifying (Independent Digital News and Media, 1996). Due to the aforementioned status that occurred during the ’90s, this separate section was created. However, the situation of gangs in Denmark is a complex topic that begs the need for further research before drawing the conclusion that this separation meets the needs and reflects the conditions of the current environment in Storstrøm prison. Nonetheless, as stated by our informant, the arrival of newly convicted gang members from these two gangs in that specific section might transform the newly admitted inmate into an even more tough criminal. The younger members of those gangs would be able to change their behavior more easily and have better chances for reintegration into society if they were not affected by the older members who are also the most hardened (Anders, app. 2).

The inmates that follow a specialized program for rehabilitation/detox live in wing B. Moreover, in the top B section, four of the units are connected and the inmates can socialize with each other (Anders, app. 2). This structure supports the improvement of their social life, and as a consequence, the rehabilitation process. Through our visit to that section, we realized that there is a difference in the relations between the guards and the inmates, as the inmate that we interviewed there was satisfied with the way that the guards were behaving. In addition, the same inmate claimed that he prefers to finish his sentence in the same prison and wing where he was already living, as he believes that it is a much safer place than in an open prison where chaos prevails and that the rehabilitation process is thus successful. Furthermore, he claimed that in open prisons it is easy to get in trouble even if someone wants to avoid it, as the drug distribution is out of control, and the prisoners are separated into the powerful ones and the weak ones, with the former taking advantage of the latter who are subjected to the will of the mighty (Niels, app. 7). As reported by our interviewee, this condition deteriorates because there is a lack of staff, but also because in open prisons, the inmates have much more freedom than in a closed prison (Niels, app. 7). We confirmed this belief after our informal conversation with the guards of the rehabilitation wing. They mentioned that many times the inmates invite them to eat together, and they keep so good relations that they know that if someone tries to hurt them, the rest of the inmates will warn them or protect them (Guards, app. 1). The same good relations seem to happen also between the inmates that receive education, and the teachers (Anders, app. 2). Hence, the processes in the rehabilitation section, and also the stance that the guards keep towards the inmates reinforce the program of action. These actors are interested and enrolled in the principles of Kriminalforsorgen and Nordic Exceptionalism and constitute an assemblage that requires a change in the function of the incarceration system.

Regarding the standard wings, we noticed that the relationships between the inmates and the guards are less intimate and more formal. As one of the prisoners claimed:

*“I've got a good relationship with the guards but more like formal. They're not doing anything to help me except for keeping me locked up...they don't make a difference in an already tough time...all and all they're here to lock up”* (Rasmus, app. 4).

This belief is confirmed by two other prisoners we came into contact with, as it was mentioned that while some of the guards are willing to help the prisoners, others are not interested in their rehabilitation progress and only perform their necessary duties (Aron,

Lasse; app. 5, 6). This stance of the guards towards the inmates is cultivated by the existing ones in the newcomers, who usually when they are hired are willing to make a change (Lasse, app. 6). We characterize those guards as a part of the anti-program and the reason that this problem occurs is mainly political. We will unveil more information about this in a later chapter.

Furthermore, incidents indicating a hierarchical system were reported from the inmates that were living in the standard units. As one of the prisoners of the standard wing mentioned:

*“Right now you have exploding gang activity in Denmark, especially inside prison and I’m on equal terms with the gang people. I’m in a section that has gang members. If I’m in a heated discussion with a gang member I’m in trouble, in my opinion, gang members should be in the maximum security section, if they wanna get out they should have the opportunity to go into separate sections”* (Rasmus, app. 4).

Another inmate from the standard section complained that life in the normal units is much harder than the unit B. His opinion is that there are better opportunities and treatment for those who belong to the lowest groups of society, than for those who are more functional and are willing to improve themselves educationally and socially. In the standard units, the powerful gang members take advantage of the weak ones by forcing them to do their will, which is mostly illegal actions (Lasse, app. 6). In addition, many of the inmates that return to the standard wings after being in the rehabilitation section for some time seem to impair what they have achieved, because of that prevailing situation. Our main informant, who was working as a teacher, has also mentioned that drugs are all over the prison and that this is out of control, mostly because there is a lack of staff (Anders, app. 2).

Lastly, an acknowledgment of various actors, such as the inmates, the teachers, and also from Cafe Exit -an NGO that supports ex-inmates to get a viable life-, is that there is a lack of an education section that could support students that want to study on a higher level than a gymnasium but also to provide the facilities and tools needed for many fields of studies that are currently missing (Anders, Rasmus, Hans; app. 2, 4, 8). We have been informed that at some point there was an attempt to create an education section but it did not continue. The informant mentioned that the resources needed for providing higher education will be enormous (Anders, app. 2). However, in another prison at Funen there is a school section that accommodates sixteen inmates, and according to our informant from Cafe Exit

those students are interested in improving themselves and appreciate the opportunity that they have been given (Hans, app. 8). Furthermore, he highlighted the fact that the inmates are not placed wisely in every section because many times the sentence that they have to serve is different and hence there is a gap on what they request.

*“...there should be a specific section for people who want to educate themselves, they should be able to have a normal life there...People with long sentences are put together with young punks who don't. give a shit about the prison system”* (Hans, app. 8).

Thus, we can claim that at least the inmates that we contacted in Storstrøm Prison want to make a change in their lives and feel stagnated by being treated as people with no ambitions. An educational section is a missing facility that has been noted by many actors of the network that we explored.

### *5.3 Punishment as a state of stagnation*

The sense of stagnation and frustration have been common emotions within the prison walls of Storstrøm, mentioned primarily regarding the inmates' educational/professional possibility to move forward but also at certain times when the conversation came to family relationships and maintaining healthy bonds with their loved ones. The inmates' lives are severed from the educational possibilities and skills development fit for the society's needs as well as from the ties that they are trying to preserve with their families, both factors essential for reintegration to society and the reduction of recidivism (Kerr & Wills, 2018; Vacca, 2004). These ideas are prevalent in both the inmates' and the teachers' minds regarding the incarceration life and possibilities in the prison of Storstrøm and are in stark contrast with the principle of *normalization* and the conditions of the outside society.

During our first visit, after the tour at the prison's different places, and when we started conversing with Anders and Anne in their office, we were introduced to the idea of punishment in Denmark. While we had already been initiated to the idea that punishment is merely the deprivation of freedom already from the literature (Pratt, 2007), at that point of our interviews was when most of these ideas were explicated and elaborated upon for the first time:

*“...we limit their movement, we lock them up, they cant decide for themselves regarding what they want to do and when: And that's the punishment ...'We're gonna lock you here for 15 years, you're gonna stay in your cell from 8 at night till 7 in the morning and in*

*the working hours you have to do it like this, like this and like this': That's the punishment, everything else, that is not the intended punishment"* (Anders, app. 1)

*"They've taken my time...I only have a short time to live on this earth and when I have to spend 15-20y in prison...They've taken away the most important thing I have."* (Rasmus, app. 4)

Time is considered a valuable resource in life during our interviews, and in the principles of NE punishment is considered the time itself that someone serves for their crimes and nothing more (Pratt, 2007). Furthermore, the inmates are supposed to work, receive education or combine the both for 37 hours per week, with the idea to be able to develop competencies which can be used when they are released (Riis, 2018; Kriminalforsorgen, 2012; Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996).

*"...cause they take your time which is the most valuable to you, that's the punishment in Denmark, if they can convert this time to something constructive then it'd be a win-win situation"* (Rasmus, app. 4)

However, the education received is considered subpar, the work sometimes menial and the prospects of their free time trivial. These conditions are constant in the inmates' minds and daily routines and are an extra burden, an extra punishment as a state of stagnation, that should not have been there. A harsh punishment, according to Reiter et al. (2017), is not necessarily the brutal violence that the authors attribute to other incarceration systems such as the U.S. or the control culture of the U.K. prisons (Reiter et al., 2017), but also the *"pains of imprisonment"* (Barker, 2012, p. 6) such as *"frustrations with a system perceived to be illegitimate, severed ties with children, unremitting loneliness, the absence of respect and fairness and the salience of unmet expectations"* (Reiter et al., 2017, p. 95). These situations, which we are about to unfold, are sheerly in contrast with the ideas of SE and essentially scale down certain aspects of the prison life in Denmark to the level of punitivity of the prisons in the rest of the world (Reiter et al., 2017).

### **5.3.1 Educational and professional stagnation**

While talking about the educational prospects inside the closed prisons of Denmark, we have been introduced to courses inside the SKnet that go beyond the level of gymnasium, for example the online course on economics that Ulreich, one of the inmates, was trying to follow. Initially, we had the impression that inmates who wish to attend up to bachelor level

education could do it from inside the prison with the help of the online platform's courses. However, even before we meet with the inmates that are trying to receive education or some kind of skills that they hoped to use also outside the prison, we were introduced, by the teachers, to various problems that obstruct the realistic potential of someone receiving an education further than the 10th grade of folkeskole.

“[about BSc level education] *It's not gonna happen from HERE, from this prison, they're gonna do that when they are in a semi open prison or open, we had very few, we had one guy from Nigeria in Nyborg studying history at the university and WE made it possible that he could finish that but it took an enormous massive [effort]*” (Anders, app. 1)

In that case Anders and his colleagues in Nyborg had to share specific equipment and help the inmate of the closed prison there, by spending disproportionately long time and resources with him by their own good will, just because of the unremitting zeal that this inmate had displayed for studying his bachelor program. Admittedly, this cannot be the norm with everybody because there are not enough teachers and guards to supervise the inmates while they sit on the computers (Anders, Ulreich, Hans; app. 2, 3, 8), the existing ones do not have enough time for all the tasks that have to be done the whole day and the platform itself does not function at its 100% capacity due to various issues that will be thoroughly expounded in the next chapter.

Therefore, even though the courses are allegedly available to everybody inside the closed facilities, it is practically impossible to complete them either because the time to use the computers and the resources in there are massively limited in comparison to the needs of the course (Ulreich, app. 3) or even because of specific requirements in some courses, for example in natural sciences which require lab work that can only be done from outside the prison and is for that reason impossible to be completed (Anders, app. 5). Moreover, the Storstrøm prison holds inmates with long sentences who, if they wish to, can finish the education up to the 9th-10th grade within their sentence span, and by the time that happens they will not have an easy time advancing further in terms of education or professionally.

These conditions severely demotivate the inmates from trying to do any kind of course because they know that they are going to hit a wall and stay there until their request to go to an open prison is accepted (Ulreich, Aron; app. 3, 5). On the other hand, open prisons have their own issues as, because of the looser security, the hierarchy between inmates is more sensible (Hans, app. 8), the chance to start abusing substances higher (Niels, app. 7) and

the possibility of being framed for something and returning to a closed facility is more realistic (Rasmus, Aron; app. 4, 5). An extra dejecting factor is that inmates might not feel keen towards education because the benefits of it are not immediately shown and, in combination with all the previous circumstances, the lack of a rewarding behavior is very much felt, especially because the punishing behavior towards an unlawful action is immediate and more often.

[When asked if he feels like he got something in the prison that he can use when he is released] *“I hope so, but that is not our view. Now I am just telling myself that I just do this for myself... Also I told my teacher the other day: “Anders, I got 10 and 12 everywhere, I hope it’s good for me” and he told me a key-phrase, “You are doing something good for yourself”, that’s the view that I have...This is nice but it’s also hard because you think: “Why is it like this?, I want to make a change”. I don’t say to open the door outside for me, I have to prove that I deserve it, but why have they already closed every door for me? If you do something bad you are punished, that is the main rule here. If you do something good, why is there not any reward? If there were, the inmates would be more motivated.”* (Lasse, app. 6)

On another note, during our interview with Rasmus (App. 4), an inmate with experience as an electrician working on subway construction sites of Copenhagen, it was noted that such profession is not cultivated or maintained within the prison of Storstrøm, resulting in a status of idleness and demoralization for the inmate.

*“I am inside the education of electrician but the prison cannot offer me anything on that, there is nothing...Personally I don’t think that I gain anything now that I could use outside, because as I said before there is not a higher level that I can join in education...I will be worried, I will be in a gap.”* (Rasmus, app. 4)

Nonetheless, Rasmus is studying a social sciences subject even though it has nothing to do with his professional experience and prospects. When we met him at one of the workstations he was reading from a thick dossier full of printed study material while other inmates were having a cooking class. Then we proceeded to the next room to have a more quiet environment, as while they were cooking, the inmates were also listening to music. During the interview he told us that he was studying because he thinks that it can be a fruitful way to pass the time and he wants to take as much as possible from his time in prison.

*“I have to use my time otherwise so I chose to go to school, get some degrees of completing something...I cannot use it for what I need, but still you can never deny*

*knowledge and it's much better to get some knowledge than waste your time doing other stuff.” (Rasmus, app. 4)*

Another inmate with higher education also expressed his emotion of feeling suspended because he cannot follow some meaningful education right now:

*“I am going to start education in a hospital, doing practical work. But I cannot take permission in this prison to go out for studies...So mostly here the problem is the restrictions with the education. If I could, I would like to follow higher mathematics classes, but this is not possible. Now I am on a pause because of that.” (Aron, app. 5)*

Educational progress, in terms of practical skills and moral, critical and problem solving thinking, alongside with social and artistic behavior development, are considered very helpful factors towards prisoners' reintegration to society and reduction of recidivism (Vacca, 2004). To meet the needs of the society *“education for prisoners should be like the education provided for similar age groups in the outside world, and the range of opportunities for prisoners should be as wide as possible”*. (Council of Europe, 1990 as cited in Champion & Edgar, 2012). While education up to a certain level is received, it looks like the people that reach or have reached that level can, at best, hope to have an exceptional treatment by teachers or hope for the best when they are transferred to an open prison, otherwise it is quite possible for them to just return to their previous criminal acts upon their release, due to lack of sufficient skills.

*“A lot of the work here is “idiot labor”, you get 1500 plastic bags with different kinds of plastic that you have to sort, see-through or no see-through plastic blah blah, blah blah...menial work” (Anders, app. 2)*

*“We are losing the chance we have been given to help the inmates so...the certain amount of time [they are sentenced to] 3 months, 12 months, 3y, are just thrown out at the street again and no one has ever given them an education or show them how to start out at the society again and at the end of the day it's sad for the inmate, for the individual, but it is also very very sad and it is a problem for the society because it often means that the only way they can see the future is to continue being criminals because they know how to make money and all of their friends, their network.” (Hans, app. 8)*

### 5.3.2 Interpersonal stagnation

Except for professional issues, different interviewees have also expressed the difficulty that inmates have to keep a meaningful relationship with their family and get away from their previous criminal circle. Regarding visitation in Storstrøm prison, the inmates are entitled to 1,5 hours per week to receive visitors, there is a department where families can meet and the complex also includes a secure bedroom without surveillance for conjugal visits. This time however, is not enough for inmates to catch up with their families' lives and it has also been mentioned that the time it takes for their families to visit and go back is much more than the time they will spend altogether so it makes it even more difficult to visit.

On our second visit in Storstrøm, we met Aron, an inmate who has been at a closed prison, then an open prison and then to the closed prison of Storstrøm. He has expressed that it is not viable to provide 1,5 hours of visitation for family visits because in his case, his wife and daughter have to come a long way from Copenhagen for a relatively short amount of time so they are more reluctant to do it.

[Do you get enough time with your family?] *“Not in this prison. We have just one and a half hours per week. And I have a daughter as well, and they have to drive from Copenhagen for 2 hours back and forth just to see me for one and a half hours. So it is not worth it.”* (Aron, app. 5)

A similar problem was communicated also on our first visit, during our interview with Rasmus, who also has a wife and a son outside. He mentioned that it is so difficult in so many aspects to be a single parent while your spouse is in prison, in terms of financial obstacles and limited time together as well as feelings of alienation between the couple and between the inmate and their children.

[While talking about the possibilities that prison i-pads can have] *“Help them with homework, it's Such. A big. Issue. to only have one parent at home, and it's such a big issue when you are released from the prison, the exclusion. When I say to my son 'don't do this' and he says 'Who are you to say this?, mom doesn't say that'...When they do stuff like theater - I cannot see them”* (Aron, app. 5)

During our interview with Bjorn, another inmate who has a sentence of 16 years, he told us that he feels disconnected from the way technology progresses in society and most importantly, the way his daughter is using it in her everyday life: *“When I talk with my*

*daughter she says ‘Papa I’m on TikTok’ I say ‘What is TikTok’, I swear...they let you stay in the middle ages” (Bjorn, app. 2)*

Additionally, Bjorn and Ulreich have mentioned that it is extremely difficult to cut the links with the previous criminal circles that you have developed over the years, especially when you do not have the opportunity to find a new circle of friends due to recent laws that forbid people of lifetime sentences to create any new relationships with people outside the prison (Ulreich, Bjorn; app. 3), something which will more thoroughly be discussed in 5.5: *The enforcement of collective punishment.*

These particular problems have appeared before in the context of Danish prisons during the ethnographic work of Reiter et al. (2017), who have conducted interviews and fieldwork in two open and two closed prisons in Denmark. As in this case, in the work of Reiter et al. (2017), the inmates have expressed emotions of loneliness, expectations that cannot be met and severe disconnection with their loved ones, despite the accommodating visiting policies in the Danish prisons. These fall into the “*pains of imprisonment*” (Barker, 2012, p. 6; Reiter et al., 2017) that are more aligned with the incarceration experience of all the other prisoners around the world, than the humanitarian principles of Nordic/Scandinavian exceptionalism.

These issues are also connected with the limited ICT resources of the prison system. Different options could be explored through ICTs such as “*One hour every time when you are available, you can see your wife through the ipad, your kid, you can read a bedtime story to your kid, something like that*” (Anders, app. 4). ICTs can bridge the poor interaction between prisoners and their loved ones. (Champion & Edgar, 2012). Such ideas are going to be presented at the *Discussion* section of our thesis. For the next part, we will talk about one of the efforts to bring ICTs inside the prison, mainly for educational purposes, the *SK network*.

#### *5.4 An effort towards a secure rehabilitation: The SK network*

Already upon our very first contact with Kriminalforsorgen, we have been directed to Per Thrane on account of his position as a Pedagogical Consultant for Kriminalforsorgen and coordinator of the secured network for prisoners (SKnet). He has informed us regarding their efforts to create a digital solution to turn the jail time of the prisoners into educational progress and prepare them for the transition to open prison and, thereafter, society but “*pedagogy is under pressure from the forces of ICT and security thinking*” (Thrane P., email

correspondence, 2022). In other words, meaningful education inside the prison system is squeezed between the need for digitization and the demand for security. Moreover, there is, by law, the need to meet specific educational/digital skills points that the SKnet is aiming to help with (Thrane P., email correspondence, 2022; Danish government, 2020). These ideas have been the starting point for us to understand that we need to explore the various human and non-human actors as well as the complex relationships between them to reach the problems, their sources, and possible solutions. The SKnet is an actor that is re-deployed by Kriminalforsorgen in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and the Security and Intelligence Service to cover the educational needs of the inmates (Danish government, 2020). These actors (parts of Kriminalforsorgen, the Ministry of Justice and the Security and Intelligence Service) have not questioned the SKnet's design and work regarding the sufficiency of its educational content before it was put back to use, but only the security aspects were taken into consideration. Since its features have not expanded, but on the contrary, have been limited, we presume that its current features are taken for granted as enough to cover those needs. We, therefore, identify it as a *black box* (Latour, 1987) whose properties and position in the network we will try to explore and expound on in the following parts.

Before its shutdown in 2018, the SKnet had around 6000 logins, both from inmates and teachers. The platform is up and running again from 2021 in all closed prisons, and particularly in Storstrøm there has been a lot of engagement from the inmates but also a lot of significant obstacles. Of the 6 inmates we have interviewed, 4 of them have been using the SKnet (Ulreich, Bjorn, Aron, Lasse; app. 3, 5, 6) and 1 of them have been using it more regularly (Ulreich, app. 3). The platform has mainly been used by the inmates to take exams or prepare for them (Ulreich, Bjorn, Aron, Lasse; app. 3, 5, 6). The inmates are inclined to attend education and use the platform, motivated by different factors such as “*seeing possibilities, or just because they can sit at a computer or some of them also choose to go to school only because...they don't wanna go work at the smithy (carpenters' and metalsmiths' workstation)*” (Anders, app. 2). They want to use the platform and “*they complain if they're not allowed to use it and if they use it they complain cause...it's outdated*” (Anders, app. 2). One of the inmates has also voiced the fruitful potential of the platform if it could be used more as a mediator between the outside world and the prison grounds: “*The SKnet can do a lot but to my belief, I think the most important is the cooperation between the inside and the outside of prison*” (Rasmus, app. 4).

#### 5.4.1 Practical issues and sense of dependency

Currently, there are still great discrepancies between the prison and society in terms of the technology usage. One problem strongly underlined by a teacher and an inmate who has been regularly using the platform in hopes of participating in a BSc level course was the inadequate broadband capacity to render videos that are supposed to be supported from the platform.

*“...when I was signed up for that course on smart learning...there is a teacher posting videos of himself speaking and then you go online and check the video... I had to transfer it from a website to the computer and I needed to convert the file and... I swear to you: We did it 2-3 times with my teacher; the video was only 20 seconds and it took...3-4 hours just to start and we do not have the time to do that.”* (Ulreich, app. 3).

The teachers mainly access the SKnet to correct the homework of the students and to add articles that they can write themselves at the “Wiki” section of the page. These articles can be used as sources for studying material but, due to the limited time the inmates are allowed to be on the computers, it is more efficient for the teacher to print the information and hand them to the inmates so that they can access the information whenever they need to. The process followed is that most of the time the teachers have to search for information that is required for an inmate’s homework, return it to the student and ask him if it is useful, and then proceed to print a dossier of pages with the necessary information so that the student can refer to it (Anders, Anne; app. 2). Because of the increased security updates after the SKnet’s re-establishment, a lot of webpages which could be used as sources’ material for the students’ studies, such as news sites, are now inaccessible. This might partially be happening because of the advertisements (Anders, app. 4) that exist on the various pages which for security reasons are prohibited. At this point it is relevant to broach the following subject, despite not being directly connected with the SKnet: While having advertisements has not been mentioned by the inmates, the possibility to buy things online has. Some of our interviewees have expressed the wish to be able to purchase clothes online or physically (Bjorn, Aron, Niels; app. 3, 5, 6) while others have talked about how they are dependent on their friends and family for that (Aron, Lasse; app. 5, 6). An inmate, in particular, has communicated the discomfort of not being able to provide such elementary goods to himself and revealed that he also feels like a burden to his familiars when he has to constantly ask them for favors.

*“I know that I have very good friends but when you are so many years in prison you also don’t want anyone to do anything for you because you will always feel that they have forgotten you so it is difficult to ask every day “can you do this for me?” ...you feel like maybe that they don’t want to or that they feel pressure, so you don’t do it. In that case, it would help a lot if we had our own telephone that we could call the bank, or if I wanted to buy some new shoes or something, I could do it myself. I go to the school teachers because I know that they want to do it for us but when you are in this section you don’t feel comfortable bringing the guard.”* (Lasse, app. 6)

The dependency upon others over elementary services is a prominent theme in this part. Nonetheless, the sense of *self responsibility* (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996) has also emerged during our interviews multiple times in a positive way (Ulreich, Rasmus, Niels; app. 3, 4, 7) in the form of *“self discipline...when everybody is for themselves”* (Ulreich, app. 3). When one owns their personal space or items and is responsible for them, they can find the motivation to structure their everyday lives in a routine that requires a way of life and basic skills that can be used outside the prison (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996). The digitization of another set of elementary services as the ones mentioned above appears to be the next step in this process for two reasons: Firstly, it significantly promotes the principle of *responsibility* that we meet in Kriminalforsorgen’s program of principles (1998) and in Rentzmann’s analysis (1996), where inmates should be able to provide for themselves independently as well as finding the motivation to do it by taking their lives into their own hands. And secondly, because it, even slightly, covers the distance between the society’s highly digital lifestyle and the everyday life on the prison grounds, the so called *“digital divide”* (Järveläinen & Rantanen 2021; Kerr & Willis, 2018; Jewkes & Reisdorf, 2016; Champion & Edgar, 2012). Following the heavily researched topic of ICTs in the prison system (Järveläinen & Rantanen 2021; Kerr & Willis, 2018; Jewkes & Reisdorf, 2016; Coates, 2016; Smith, 2016; Smith, 2012; Champion & Edgar, 2012; Jewkes & Johnston 2009) this *“digital divide”* can be covered by exposing the inmates to digital stimuli that resemble the ones of the outside world and *normalize* (Perrin, 1999; Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996) the everyday life of the prison.

#### 5.4.2 Problems of datedness

An additional reason, except for security, that the platform does not support features that were available prior to its shutdown, is also its outdated nature. The SKnet has been put

to use for the first time back in 2004 and “*it still hasn't been properly updated*” (Anders, app. 1). One of the reasons that the news websites are inaccessible is because the latest updates on various sites are not compatible with the SKnet system (Anders, app. 4). Surely it can be argued that the general ideas of updating digital services on the outside world would be the ease of access, the comfort of the user or the possibility for the website to generate profit, while in the case of the SKnet the predominant reason to change something is security. Due to the outdated system, it is significantly difficult to add not only studying resources but also digital services that citizens of Denmark are accustomed to using in their everyday lives, tools such as e-boks and nemID or mitID which themselves undergo transformations and updates from time to time. This specific example of nemID has also been briefly mentioned, as something that would be a good idea to be added, by Per Thrane during our first meeting.

An issue of a different nature has also been brought up during our interviews, as a result of poor maintenance of the platform: When an inmate wants to print something, like a text of information, while using the SKnet, he only has the option to print on one of the two sides of the paper that will come out of the printer. In one instance, an inmate was experimenting with the options in order to manage to print both sides of the paper. While “*randomly hitting buttons*” (Anders, app. 2), he found himself by accident in a part of the SKnet that he was not supposed to have access to. According to our informant's description, Anders, the inmate was not someone with an educational/professional background in computer science or anything relevant (Anders, app.2).

Even though the particular event was not as close to a security breach as others that will be presented in the subsequent theme of *collective punishment*, it highlights the importance of keeping the SKnet up to date in terms of providing meaningful tools to the inmates that are going to use again after their release, and in terms of *security* (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998) that would keep the platform functional and impregnable.

#### 5.4.3 Limited level of education

During our interviews, we came across inmates of different educational levels and expertise. All of them had either already passed the 9th-10th grade of folkeskole, one of them had the expertise and professional experience as an electrician and one of them was trying to receive higher level education in finance & economics. We visited Ulreich, the inmate who was enrolled in that higher level of education, in one of the common areas and he was very eager and precise when he was pointing out the limited opportunities that he had for his

current educational possibilities. One of the issues was the problem of slow internet which took 3-4 hours to download and convert the video material of the course, as mentioned in 5.3.1, something that made it impossible for the inmate to follow the course on equal footing with the students outside the prison. Furthermore, he noted that the limited time that he had on the computers was not enough for him to transfer his handwritten homework to a Word file and also use Excel to complete the rest of the assignments of the course.

*“When I have the opportunity to use my SKnet account, it is on Mondays and Wednesdays, 2 hours every day so you have to have priorities: That means if you have a course and you have to complete it...you need to do your homework in the hand because you don’t have the computer in the cell so when...I am on the SKnet I have to prioritize to transfer my homework to the computer which will take me at least 1 hour...then I have to calculate variables in the excel, the book of the course was advising to use the excel, so I couldn’t do my homework...so I also have to stress about that.”* (Ulreich, app. 3).

Moreover, the inmates do not have access to the websites of the courses where professors can upload the reading material and the professors are not aware of all these limitations because they do not know that the particular student is an inmate. So they are evaluated in the same terms as the rest of the students, despite the vast differences in resources.

*“If the jail says they can offer education on the SK platform, then I think they should allow the student-inmates to actually use the website [the course’s website]. They [the professors] expect us to take the course at the same level as the people outside...They judge you the same and they do not know that the submitted papers are from inmates...First week we also had a peer to peer evaluation and an introduction of ourselves but I could not do it. So you are not only restricted yourself but you make a bad impression on the other students and teachers.”* (Ulreich, app. 3).

On three more separate instances inmates said that they find the computer time that they have either very limited or inadequate in terms of quality features and educational possibilities beyond the 10th grade. They stated they were reluctant to spend time on the computers either because they were *“higher educated than the average here”* (Rasmus, Aron; app. 4, 5) or even because they find the features irrelevant to their needs.

*“[I would like] some internet. Like news or something that you can buy...I would go inside FootLocker, JD Sport, look at clothes, because when I want to have a break and I*

*cannot go outside and smoke, [because] something is going on in the jail. I would look up some clothes, I would call my friends outside and they'd buy them for me. I'd be happy, you know?...But now you can't, you can only paint! PICASSO on the computer! [laughing]"* (Bjorn, app. 3)

While the SKnet itself is an actant that is supposed to empower Kriminalforsorgen's and NE's application of principles, it gives the impression of an inadequate tool that does not make a huge difference in the inmates' lives. However, additional information can clarify that, despite its shortcomings, the platform is one of the many steps needed to be taken towards the direction of meaningful rehabilitation through contact with digital resources (Kerr & Willis, 2018). From April of 2018 to January of 2021, inmates inside closed prisons had absolutely no access to ICTs, computers, websites, remote access to educational resources such as studying material or possibilities of higher level of education. This led to deficiencies in terms of educational prospects for prison population (CPT, 2020) so the Danish government (2020) decided to respond by reinstating the SKnet platform as a resource for education, but with many more layers of security measures than before. Specifically, *"these are primarily Danish websites with a focus on education"* (Danish government, 2020). I.e. the removal of any website (including news sites) except for dictionaries, some public web pages from which not all are functional, an NGO page that provides free legal advice to inmates, some danish glossary sites, a math site, a site about construction work and 2 sites on specific natural sciences' subjects. Furthermore, the obligatory presence of either a guard or a teacher is now a prerequisite while the inmates are using the SKnet, as the CCTV surveillance was not deemed enough for adequate supervision. This parameter, coupled with the understaffing (Anders, Hans; app. 2, 8) that plagues the prisons of Denmark and the rising prison population (WPB, 2022), renders it almost impossible for the inmates to have enough time on the platform.

In view of the various actors that disallow the prisoners to access digital resources in a way that is similar to the society's use of technologies, it is plausible to conclude that the inmates are severely falling behind in terms of competencies that have to be used in the outside world. Digital resources for working, payments, entertainment and communication are very closely intertwined with the everyday lives of almost everyone in contemporary society (Oxford Internet Institute as cited in Champion & Edgar, 2012), especially when we are examining the extremely digitized society of Denmark. In this context, the complete removal of digital resources from a portion of a population can significantly raise the *digital*

*illiteracy* (Jewkes & Johnston, 2009) of this population and broaden the *digital divide* between them and the rest of the society. To think of ICT participation as a luxury inside the prison system would be an underestimation of the profound and permeative effect that technology has in society (Oxford Internet Institute as cited in Champion & Edgar, 2012) and its revocation from a population that is expected to be a part of the society sooner or later, overlooks the significance of the issues this revocation ensues (Järveläinen & Rantanen 2021; Kerr & Willis, 2018; Jewkes & Reisdorf, 2016; Champion & Edgar, 2012; Smith, 2012).

Therefore, the issue in discussion is the way that various forces affect the platform and its educational prospects. We will try to explore ways to enroll this potentially important actor of the prison network into the program of action, something that will be addressed more in the *Discussion* part. The potential of further digitization and availability of the SKnet is being cramped by the influence of different actors that we are about to present subsequently, related to political discourses, legislation and public opinion.

### *5.5 The enforcement of collective punishment*

One theme of particular interest, which has been recurring as we were narrowing down our scope to the prison system of Denmark, was the fact that the whole prison population is deeply affected by the unlawful actions of a few other inmates. Specifically, the legislative measures enacted in various instances within the last 4 years appear to apply mass restrictions to all the inmates that fall into a specific category after the criminal actions of one, in the name of security and out of fear of escalation.

One extremely impactful incident came to our attention already from our first meeting with Per Thrane. This was the removal of all of the 300 Playstation consoles from all the closed prisons of Denmark (Thomsen, 2018) but also the complete shutdown of the SK network for all the facilities in 2018 (Danish government, 2020), after an inmate managed to circulate an illicit video with extremist content among 4 of the Playstation consoles inside the closed prison of Nyborg. As mentioned earlier in the report, the SK network was restored in closed prisons as a result of the European Committee's evaluation of the prison system (Danish government, 2020) but admittedly the restrictions that accompany the current version pose significant challenges regarding meeting the meaningful and practical goals of education (Champion & Edgar, 2012) as it is normally offered to the rest of the society. The insufficient

computer time due to understaffing (Anders, Hans; app. 2, 8), the limited studying sources of the platform, and the inability to use certain features that are already on the platform, such as the ones mentioned in the previous chapter (5.4), are some of the outcomes hindering the creation of conditions as close to society as possible. Hence, the particular security breach and the massive revocation of the ICT systems that followed proved to be pivotal points regarding the rehabilitative aspects of the prison system. Even after the re-launch of the SKnet system, the constraining new measures are greatly limiting the possibilities of the users. One of the teachers, and our main informant, Anders, has pointed out how inmates are justifiably bereft of certain choices that surround their everyday lives but has also highlighted the importance of being able to have options as similar to the world outside the prison walls as possible.

*“They’ve got to work around 37h...they can do part-time school, part-time some kind of shop in here and they still have to work, they’re obligated to do it but apart from that, it should be as close to real life as possible because their punishment is that they can’t decide for themselves...Outside these hours they should be able to go to the library, to the church, speak to their children...we have to make as close to society as possible because if not, we’re creating monsters” - (Anders, app. 2).*

Later during our interview, while talking regarding possible improvements on the issue of PC access, Anders also emphasized the idea of targeted punishment for individual offenses as a feasible solution, which contrasts with the current practices so far and appears to be a reasonable alternative course of action.

*“We’ve raised the question for years, it should be something they would be able to do as close to real life as possible. Everything they do on the PCs... is registered, if they access something that it’s not allowed BANG they’re caught...we should be able to catch them, get their account locked, get some sort of punishment...You get a lot of more people wanting to go to school because they can see possibilities...something that it makes sense to them, and they can see maybe it’s allowed to them to go on a computer...cause sometimes that’s the motivation also...some of them only choose to go to school because they...don’t wanna go work at the smithy or whatever so they choose the school because it’s easier, so you get the people who make the choices for the wrong reasons anyway but it should be possible for them to make a mistake and then punish them if they do” - (Anders, app. 2).*

On a similar note, and according to Hans, an interviewee employed at Café Exit, in one of the prisons on the island of Fyn some inmates have managed to circumvent the security system of the computers and communicate with the outside.

*“Back to this Funen prison we have an incident, like half a year ago, unfortunately, a couple of them, they broke down the wall and they were communicating with the world outside and the prison found out and all of a sudden the computers were taken from everybody and that’s the way the danish system works...if one makes a mistake, then everybody is punished, they cannot think individually and that really is a shame” - (Hans, app. 8).*

Another relevant remark had come from one of the inmates while he was recounting his life just before he was imprisoned and his current state inside the prison:

*“You think I’m alive? I’m dead...I’m dead! I’m telling you, I’m dead...this is my grave, it’s just a little bit bigger and it’s not at Brøndby...my plan is just to eat, sleep and train, I cannot make plans...[I cannot request something] because of that Peter Madsen...he killed a journalist...the submarine killer...he got lifetime too but because he started dating girls, under 18, they made new rules. All that got lifetime they cannot speak with anyone in 10 years...you cannot meet anyone outside...because one idiot did that! They fuck it up for me, and my kids, and my dreams.” (Bjorn, app. 3).*

The inmate refers to the hideous crime that took place in 2017 when the engineer Peter Madsen killed and sexually abused Kim Wall, a Swedish journalist who had visited his homemade submarine to interview him. He was eventually sentenced to life for premeditated murder, aggravated sexual assault, and desecrating a corpse but the last straw was the fact that he started exchanging correspondence with a 17-year-old girl who wanted to be in a relationship with him. In response to this, the Danish parliament passed in 2021 a six-point bill which, among others, prohibits inmates convicted to life to browse social media and have contact with individuals who they had not known before getting imprisoned. The idea has been to stop the *“disgusting examples in recent years of prisoners who have committed abominable crimes contacting young people in order to gain their sympathy and attention”* (Justice Minister Nick Haekkerup, 2021). While it is a self-evidently valid point to try and minimize the negative effect that dangerous but charismatic criminal minds might have on other people, it is also precluding other types of inmates from participating in common practices of society such as online information searching and social mingling.

The issue, in this case, is not only that the overall idea of *normalization* in the prison system regarding ICTs is undermined, but also that inmates' already slim potential to form new relationships, outside their former criminal life, disappears completely. In the cases where someone has been convicted for gang criminal activity, there are extra distinctive measures that someone might be subjected to, such as the frequent use of pre-trial isolation, discriminatory behavior from guards, and even, more distant behavior from other inmates:

*“They look at you differently, the guards, if you are a gang member, every time something bad happens the first people they target are the gang relations people, they say to you ‘what the fuck are you doing’? They see it as we control some part of the jail. They say indirectly that you control it.”* (Ulreich, app. 3).

*“Are you a gang member in Denmark?! You are FUCKED!...You can see the rapists and the child molesters, they have their own jails with pools...they have it good, they can do what they want”* (Bjorn, app. 3).

Another inmate has voiced that he would be uncomfortable speaking freely towards a gang member inside the prison due to the fact that he would feel unsafe if he was involved in a heated argument with them.

*“Right now you have exploding gang activity in Denmark, especially inside prison, I'm on equal terms with the gang people, I'm in a section that has gang members if I'm in a heated discussion with a gang member I'm in trouble...I had issues with gang members, that's how it is, I didn't have enough help, I don't talk to the guards about my problems...I believe when you have joined a gang and committed your life to crime, killing, extorting and doing all sorts of different crimes you are the worst”* (Rasmus, app. 4).

This experience is close to what Reiter et al. (2017, p. 103) call “*punishing limits*”. I.e. the limits that are set to members of a general group of people and feel somehow like an extra punishment on top of their sentence, because they are or were members of that particular group. In the research of the abovementioned authors' in the Danish prison system, the case highlighted involves a member of a motorbike gang who had been prohibited from meeting his companions from the gang even for the next 5 years following his release, which felt like an extension of his sentence for 5 more years since these were the friends that he was closer to. In our case, quite the contrary idea but the same experience is met: The inmates had stressed that by not being able to form new relations, they are trapped into the circle of their

former life which included mainly gang members and contributed to their initial path to criminality.

*“They have made the rule that says that every person who’s got lifetime they cannot contact any new people or make any new contacts on the outside for 10 years...[for people to visit you] you need to have known them before you got sentenced”* (Ulreich, app. 3).

*“I just know gang members! And we only knew gang members, you know...so now if I want to call a friend on the phone, he needs to be a gang member...So I say I wanna be a better man, I don’t wanna be a gang member anymore...If I want to speak with someone maybe like you, maybe you go to school...you are a good man...I cannot make a relationship with you...So I need to talk with the gang members again so I will fall down and sell coke.”* (Bjorn, app. 3.)

The particular matter and culture of gang members in Denmark is a long and complicated topic with complex parameters (Petersen & Ladefoged, 2018; Pedersen, 2014) that deserves more thorough research on its own. However, the idea that we wish to showcase with these examples is the eagerness for collective punishing measures as an unquestionably obvious choice in the name of security in various instances. Security is a fundamental parameter, all the more when we refer to correctional facilities but *“caution should be taken with measures that can constitute collective punishment, despite the need to increase security against potential radicalization”* (Frederik Jepsen, as cited in The Local DK, 2018). Frederik Jepsen, a board member of the lawyers’ association Landsforeningen Krim, that provides free advice to inmates, stated also that individual assessment is an important requirement in the process of granting privileges to inmates or withdrawing them from them.

In his analysis of Nordic/Scandinavian Exceptionalism, Pratt (2007) has acknowledged that the exceptionally humane conditions that are represented in the Nordic penal system are susceptible to degradation but this happens when social solidarity fades, trust in the government declines, security is compromised or/and sociocultural homogeneity erodes. Subsequent social scholars and penal system researchers however consistently argued that macro-level phenomena such as mass incarceration, zero tolerance, in our case collective punishment, and in Pratt’s discourse the factors’ that degrade NE, should be examined at the micro-level of the cultural context they take place in (Reiter et al., 2017). In our case, we perceive the micro-level as the culture of the prison life in Storstrøm and the actors that are almost everyday present in this setting such as the inmates, the guards, the teachers, the cell

equipment, the computers, the SKnet platform, the architecture of the facility, the dossiers that the inmates read from and every other feature that we identify, examine and incorporate in our *Analysis*. Bearing that in mind, we have met on multiple occasions that people who have been experiencing the prison system from the inside have condemned collective punishment as a problematic method to excessively maintain security at the great expense of normalization. These kinds of instances are happening in alignment with a general punitive approach that has been seen during the last years in Denmark (Smith, 2012) and in alignment with a reluctance to consider privileges for the prison population out of fear in the case of failure. This perspective also appeared during the collection of our qualitative material and was articulated as a fear of being held responsible. This is what we will present and try to explain in the very next part that follows.

### *5.6 Public opinion and politics*

The success or the failure of the actor-network that we explored and discussed is not dependent only on actors that are directly involved with Storstrøm Prison, but also on other external actors, such as the NGO Cafe Exit which represents the inmates' rights and strives for better opportunities for them. We place the Cafe Exit on the side of the program of action as it is aligned with the principles of Kriminalforsorgen/Nordic Exceptionalism. On the other hand, actors such as politicians, the government of Denmark, but also hiring managers, and the public's beliefs seem to increase the power of the anti-program. Hence, the anti-program seems to consist of dissimilar actors, but the main controversy with the program is that they all underestimate the importance of prisoner rehabilitation, and it could be argued that all of them perceive incarceration more as a punishment than a reformation of the inmates.

In particular, as reported by the danish edition of "The Local" which is a European news website, the prime minister of Denmark announced in 2022, that harder punishments and longer sentences will be introduced for violent crimes. Furthermore, she laid blame on the increasing numbers of immigrants and gang members for the rise of crimes in Denmark. The stance of the liberal party of Denmark does not only support similar ideas about the incarceration system, but they also criticized that the Prime Minister made these announcements at a specific time just to grow impressions because of the upcoming elections (The Local, 2022). This direction of the politicians is confirmed by the teacher that we interviewed in Storstrøm Prison who mentioned that:

*“If you go out in public, when you are a politician and you say ‘I wanna try to do the best I can to make them better people’, that’s not what people wanna hear, they wanna hear: ‘We’re gonna punish the hell out of them’ even though it is a financial catastrophe because it costs millions a year to have an inmate in prison so for everyone who doesn’t come back we save a million bucks”* (Anders, app. 2).

The results of these new measures regarding prison sentences have unknown consequences and the impact that they will have on the rehabilitation of the inmates is dubious. Linda Kjær Minke, a sociologist and professor at the Department of Law at the University of Southern Denmark argued that according to many studies, longer sentences do not have any preventive effects (Kirkebæk-Johansson, 2022). Moreover, as it was cited before, our informant mentioned that the resources needed for every inmate are high (Anders, app. 2), and thus, if the politicians aim to keep inmates for a longer time imprisoned then they will have to spend even more money, for a potentially wrong reason. In addition, such use of prison funding would be contradictory in relation to the requested problems and deficiencies that exist according to the prison staff and the inmates that we interviewed. For instance, the lack of sufficient personnel, such as guards and teachers is an issue that was noted by two of the inmates that we interviewed, and also Hans from the Cafe Exit (Rasmus, Lasse, Hans; app 4,6,8). As a consequence, the time that the inmates can pass in the visiting section with their beloved ones is limited (Rasmus, app. 4), but also the prison staff gets exhausted and less motivated to support the inmates sufficiently on their needs and take their rehabilitation process seriously (Lasse, app. 6). The inmate, Lasse complained about the demotivation of many guards in supporting the inmates, especially those who have a long working experience in Storstrøm Prison, whereas the rookies usually have more incentive to contribute as much as they can (Lasse, app. 6).

*“I feel that many of the guards that come here are good persons, but I also want to be honest, I feel that people that have been working here for many years, they don’t really care anymore, they don’t want to make a change, they just want to take their salary. But usually, the new guards want to make a change. But then you have the two stars of the guards that command them, what to do or not, like ‘you will not speak with them, close the door and that’s it”*” (Lasse, app. 6).

Another actor that stands in the way of improving future opportunities of the inmates is the external organizations that are biased on accepting to hire employees that do not have a

clear criminal record (app. 7, 8). Niels, an inmate who was nearly finishing his sentence shared with us his disappointment about his future career, as he wanted to join an educational program that would let him work in the future as a caregiver for the elderly, but he was rejected because of his criminal record (Niels, app. 7). However, an effort is being held by some NGOs, such as Cafe Exit, they try to communicate with politicians, companies and other stakeholders and explain to them that the stigmatization of the prisoners leads them to stagnation (Hans, app. 8). The NGO Hi-5 also helps ex-inmates to connect with the job market (Hans, app. 8).

*“...we are doing the workshops with these prisoners, we invite people, companies to come and talk to the inmates and nowadays because there is a lack of workers here in DK so even criminals can get a job so we try to motivate the industry to give the inmates the chance...it is correct what you said: The criminal record is a bitch, because most employers will say ‘Why on earth should we hire them, there are 20 others who ask for the same job and they have a clean sheet’ so that’s also part of our work, to convince them to give them a chance”* (Hans, app. 8).

In conclusion, a huge part of the fruitless management of the inmates’ rehabilitation seems to happen because the politicians do not participate actively in this process, and therefore they have a bad overview of the needs of the inmates in Storstrøm Prison and the requirements for achieving the principles of Kriminalforsorgen/Nordic Exceptionalism. In addition, public opinion has a huge influence on political decisions, and according to Hans, society stigmatizes prisoners and is not willing to offer them a second chance (Hans, app. 8). Thus, we place the politicians, the top management of Kriminalforsorgen, but also the public opinion on the side of the anti-program on the actor-network of Storstrøm Prison.

## 06. Discussion & Conclusion

### *6.1 Aims and ideas for discussion*

In the previous chapter, we showcased what we consider our most prominent findings and tried to describe as thoroughly as possible the challenges that the different actors of our network are facing, as well as why we consider these challenges important. We highlighted

what we believed to be the most noticeable and important issues of the network according to the various actants, the influence that the program of action and the anti-program hold in the network and we tried to show the reasons that these issues occur, as well as their effects. In this part, we will talk about what we think are candidate solutions that could be used as *translations* to counter the anti-program and strengthen the program of action in alignment with the principles of Kriminalforsorgen and Scandinavian/Nordic Exceptionalism (SE/NE), and we will present our personal, maybe more situated, views on the issues that have been displayed so far.

Firstly, we would like to highlight the fact that the first interest that we had before we built our main problematization was the use of ICTs and other digital technologies in general in Storstrøm Prison. However, eventually, we focused more on the SKnet platform as it is a technological artifact involved in the actor-network of Storstrøm Prison, and that could potentially provide a new translation and reinforce the program of action, as it could provide useful tools for education. In reality, apart from the SKnet, we have not observed any other digital technologies that the inmates can interact with. Therefore, we believe that life in prison does not follow the digital transformations that happen in Danish society and thus, the inmates are led to digital illiteracy. The lack of access to digital technologies is incompatible with the principles of *normalization*, but also we have already mentioned the boundaries that the inmates have to overcome for following higher education.

We presented these limitations at Nyborg, where we took part in a conference held outside the closed prison of Nyborg, with Kriminalforsorgens members such as teachers, guards, pedagogical consultants, and administration members. There, different actors have made presentations regarding ideas on the educational system of prison and have given updates regarding new Kriminalforsorgens policies or events. The following ideas, which could be used as *translations* to enhance the program of action, were the content of our presentation alongside with our findings regarding the SKnet, even though they were more briefly developed for the sake of time.

## *6.2 Candidate solutions: Translations to empower the Program of Action*

One of the major problems related to the SKnet and its educational limitations, has been the insufficient time the inmates have on the computers due to understaffing (Anders, Hans; app. 2, 8). Indeed, inmates can have 4 hours per week, allocated as 2 hours in 2 days, (Ulreich, app. 3), and there always should be either a guard or a teacher in the room to see exactly what the inmate is doing on the computer, in addition to the CCTV surveillance from the camera in the room (Anders, Ulreich; app. 2, 3). There are some software programs (e.g. TeamViewer), though, that can allow a remote view of a computer with the same precision as that of a person who is standing in front of it. By installing such a tool, guards or teachers can surveil the inmates from their offices via the abovementioned program as complementary to the CCTV. Furthermore, the activity of the inmate on the computer can always be recorded. The way this could work would be to allow selected inmates to have an extra 2 hours of session on the computer, one more day per week in addition to their existing 4 hours. The inmates could be monitored this way 2 out of the 3 days they use the computer, remotely, without knowing when is that time. By not knowing when they were monitored, they would be dejected from committing an unlawful action while they are also given extra time for their studies - or they could receive this extra time on the computers as a reward for good behavior, an act of trust which has shown to be disproportionate in comparison to the eagerness to punish foul behavior (Lasse, app. 6).

Primarily, this idea describes a step towards the direction of providing more time to inmates and not a definitive formula, so the numbers of hours and days might vary from situation to situation. And secondly, at first glance, this description might resemble the idea of Foucault's Panopticon and the notion of being controlled by a total institution by not knowing when a superior authority is zeroing in on a person, who has little freedom over their personal actions (Foucault, 1975, p. 201). The goal in our case, though, is not to instill fright into inmates' lives and channel intentionally their behavior to specific directions out of fear of punishment. The prison is already monitored everywhere except for the cells and the visitation bedrooms and the inmates know that. The extensive surveillance is already part of the Storstrøm prison and this kind of remote computer surveillance would not actually add any extra security layer. It would just employ technology in a way that could make more efficient use of the inmates' time, even with the current number of workforce in the facility.

The inmates that we talked with, have shown great frustration with the fact that they do not have enough time and tools to develop a competent skill set, partake in recreational activities or spend enough time with their loved ones. So, the goal in our case is to create dynamics of trust between staff and inmates, in the sense that the rewarding behavior would be appreciated by the inmates and would help the creation of bonds of trust (guard, app. 1; Kriminalforsorgen, 1998), without undermining the security that is necessary for a prison system to function. This way, the SKnet could take a step towards being a more important actor in the program of action, that enacts the idea of meaningful education (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996). Furthermore, it would counteract the practice of collective punishment which leads to a defensive and unmotivated attitude and enhance the sense of being appreciated through reward.

Alongside the obstacles regarding the educational prospects of the inmates, we have also identified and described difficulties regarding their interpersonal relationships and needs. It has been mentioned in multiple instances that inmates with families have a hard time keeping up with the everyday lives of their children (Anders, Bjorn, Rasmus; app. 2, 3, 4), face problems with time and expenses when it comes to visitation (Rasmus, Aron; app. 4, 5) and therefore find it difficult to create or maintain bonds with their loved ones. Toward the end of our interview with Rasmus, we had a collective chat with him and Anders, one of the facility's teachers, regarding our thesis, their views on the prison issues, and potential solutions. Anders then referred to the production and deployment of 800 ipads from the correction services of Norway for the prisons of the country, as a response to the covid-19 pandemic that disallowed visitation possibilities due to the lockdown (App. 4; Alcorn, 2021). Anders mentioned that inmates can get in touch with their family more frequently and easily this way, when they could talk to them or read their kids a bedtime story before they go to sleep, while Rasmus said that it could be a good way to help their kids with their homework (App.4).

This idea can both be a key that unlocks the potential of technology to assist a vulnerable group to get in touch with what is considered one of the most important things for them, their families, or allow dangerous people to get a way into their unlawful practices again with their criminal circle. Moreover, we understand that to prevent the latter there might be the necessity for surveillance of one's personal moments with their family, a somehow intrusive implication to what is supposed to strengthen the humanitarian ideas of rehabilitation. To provide a realistic and constructive solution to these issues we believe that

each case needs to be examined for its own merit, so that the privileges are selectively bestowed to the inmates that are making honest progress and withdrawn from the ones who try to abuse them. Otherwise, excessive punitivity might be forced upon populations that are willing to be reformed, for the sake of security but at the expense of meaningful rehabilitation.

A similar deployment, this time of e-kiosks, has been seen inside the UK prisons where inmates could access and manage their income, order meals, email pre-approved contacts, apply for prison jobs, file requests, and see their learning portfolios (Knight, 2015). This kind of technology use can give the inmates confidence to themselves on carrying out basic tasks using technology and also give them the sense of holding *responsibility* for their own lives (McDougall & Pearson, 2020), something important for their everyday lives upon release (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996). In addition to these features, and what is relevant to our case, an e-kiosk can include secure sites where inmates can look into commodities such as clothes or perfumes for themselves and be able to purchase them online, since the purchase of such personal items was something that has been mentioned during the interviews in various instances (Bjorn, Aron, Lasse; app. 3, 5, 6). Except for the fact that these would be a step towards *normalizing* (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998; Rentzmann, 1996) the prison and resembling some of the outside society's uses of technology, it could greatly reduce the sense of dependency on others, something that was making the inmates feel as an extra burden to their loved ones when they needed to ask them to buy things for them (Lasse, app. 6). Moreover, it could be used as a platform for booking phone time. What was also mentioned during one of the interviews (Lasse, app. 6) was that every unit includes a phone booth where inmates are allowed to speak with pre-approved contacts when they are not working or studying. However, **when** an inmate can use the phone, it is a matter of agreement among them and it was insinuated that stronger inmates might be dictating when this happens for others by always deciding the earliest and more convenient hours to use the phone for themselves, also taking longer time than others in the booth. This could be countered if there was a more impersonal way of booking the time via an e-kiosk, as well as the connection of the phone with the kiosk so it would hang up if the time was up. Nonetheless, this problem was only mentioned once (Lasse, app. 6) during our interviews and we wish to advocate for it with a grain of salt, because it was neither explored thoroughly nor emerged from a significant number of interviews which could have provided different perspectives.

Another potential improvement to the rehabilitation process would be to make a more precise system for the division of the inmates into different sections. Through our communication with the inmates we noticed that some of them that wanted to improve themselves educationally, or at least that were showing good conduct, they were feeling that it is unfair to be treated as the rest of the inmates that do not show any inclination to change their way of thinking and acting (Rasmus, Aron, Lasse; app. 4, 5, 6). Furthermore, according to Hans from the Cafe Exit (Hans, app. 8), but also through informal talks that we had with teachers from Nyborg Prison, it would be appreciated by the inmates to have the possibility to join an educational section that would provide better facilities and equipment that can help them complete their studies and continue to higher education. Hence, the inmates who are honestly interested in following further education would overcome the stagnation that they feel when they are blended with inmates that are indifferent to their interpersonal and professional development (Hans, app. 8).

It appears that one of the most difficult tasks is for the prison system to be able to balance the principle of *security* with all the other ideas of NE. A potential turn towards a more digitized prison system and more resources for the inmates to access could not only consist of a more normalized environment but it could also provide data from the way the users interact with the devices in the prison environment (Knight, 2015). More freedom of access can unravel information regarding preferred activities, preferred times for family contact while Knight (2015) mentions that this kind of data could even help in tracing bullying/bullied behavior. This way, not only security is not undermined but on the contrary, it can be greatly strengthened by a deeper understanding of the users' digital activity (Knight, 2015; Jewkes & Johnston, 2009). One important factor causing the reluctance to implement such ICT solutions inside the prisons stems from the belief that the more humane the treatment of prisoners is, the less dissuading the ideas of committing criminal acts become (Jewkes & Johnston, 2009). In combination with the increasingly punitive discourses that find rise during the last years in Denmark (Barker & Smith, 2021; Damsa, 2021) and the fact that a security breach is an unsettling incident of immediate impact, while the successful rehabilitation is a fragile process that bears fruits over time, all these circumstances make it even more difficult for decisions to be favorable towards inmates. However, it can be argued that releasing a population that has fallen short of the digital, professional and interpersonal competencies of the outside society is much more perilous than the potential of a security

compromisation event from an individual inmate inside a guarded and confined environment (Jewkes & Johnston, 2009) such as a closed prison.

Yet, one could debate that the ideas of this project were premised significantly on opinions collected from prisoners so, of course they are going to complain and try to mischievously manipulate anyone they can, to receive as many privileges as they can, because “*when you hear these things from inmates you think ‘Yeah, they’re bitching all the time’- of course they are bitching...but sadly enough most of what they say is true and that is a big problem*” (Hans, app. 8). As in the cases of unlawful actions that led to *collective punishment* measures (section 5.5), we reckon that there will always be some cases where prisoners are prone to manipulate or cross lines when given rights, even though such treatment from their behalf has not fallen into our attention during the interviews in the present project. Even if this happens, it would be a better fit if single cases are separated from the whole and accountability is held individually. Moreover, the qualitative material collection process included interviewing inmates, but also prison teachers, a pedagogical consultant of Kriminalforsorgen, an NGO employee and informal conversations with guards of the Storstrøm prison. Despite the different positions they hold in the prison system network, most of them have experienced the everyday life of prison profoundly and their opinions have met several times regarding the inefficiency of the rehabilitation process, as presented in the *Analysis* part.

The opinion that “*that is a big problem*” (Hans, app. 8), and by “*problem*” meaning the inadequate rehabilitative features of the prison system, is substantiated also by figures that show the rise in the prison population rate (72 prisoners per 100.000 people) which is the

highest of the last 22 years in Denmark (Fig. 26), alongside the 2006 rates (WPB DK, 2022).

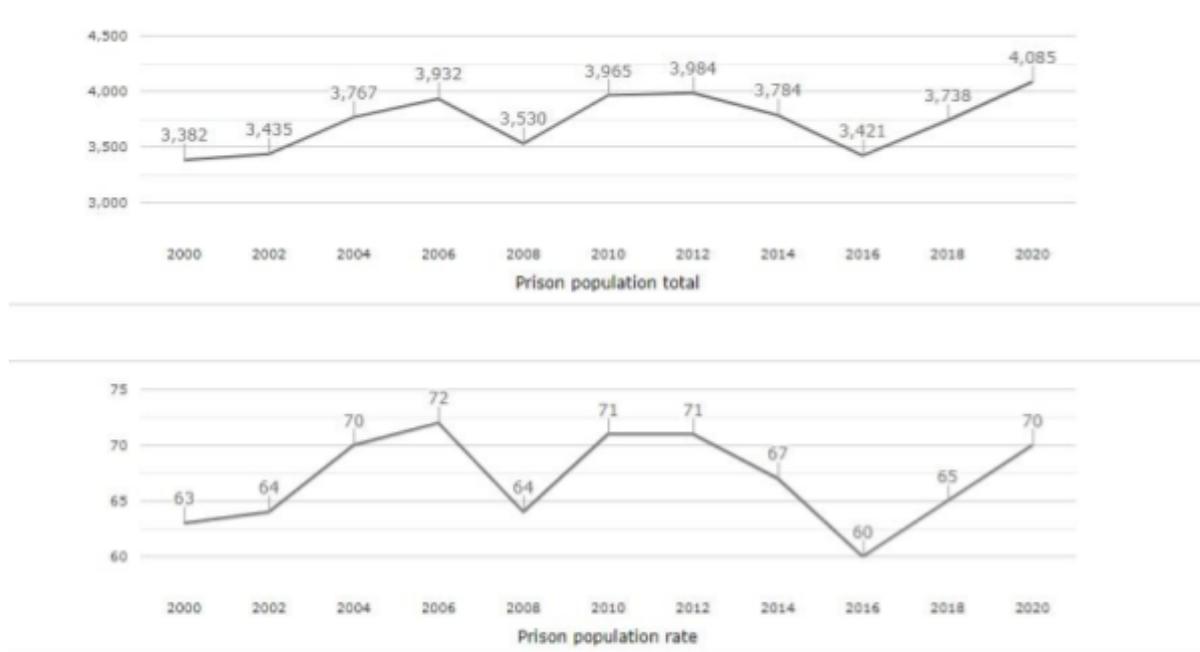


Figure 26: Prison population total and rate in Denmark until 2020.

Source: <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/denmark>

Recidivism (both sexes) has risen at 29% of reoffending within 2 years after release (Statistics Denmark, 2020) and the prisons' occupancy is currently at 99.6% (WPB DK, 2022). Despite these numbers, Denmark has some of the lowest prison population rates in the world as well as recidivism rates (WPB, 2022). On top of that, the humane prison treatment principles of SE/NE have been developed in the Scandinavian countries (Pratt, 2007) and have been imbued at least up to some degree into the ideas of Kriminalforsorgen (Kriminalforsorgen, 1998). Even though other countries suffer from higher numbers of prison population rates, or recidivism (WPB, 2022) and might be in more urgent need of prison system reformation, Denmark appears to be one of the most appropriate environments to make such a purposeful transformation towards prison rehabilitation, exactly because the program of action (NE and Kriminalforsorgens principles) is already there.

Nonetheless, and despite the comparatively low numbers, the overall prison population rises and around 1 out of 3 released inmates reoffend within the next two years. This population will at some point be expected to function adequately well socially and professionally, in an environment that is increasingly competitive and continuously digitized. If they do not have the skills to live up to these challenges it is possible that they turn to their previous social circles and illegal activities, just because that's all they had and have, and just

because they will need to generate some kind of income. The fact that inmates also receive a bill upon their release with all the litigation expenses of the trials that they were found guilty of, which have to pay off throughout their lives (Hans, app. 8), exacerbates the situation even more.

Last but not least, we urge the people who have the authority to make decisions about the prison system, to get more direct contact with the inmates and the prison personnel. Frequent visits to the prison facilities would provide them with more awareness about the issues that emerge and the deficiencies of the rehabilitation process. In addition, a close liaison between the prison environment and the top management of Kriminalforsorgen would lead to more effective political decisions that would be more aligned with the principles of Nordic Exceptionalism/Kriminalforsorgen and less affected by the biases nourished by the society of Denmark. Café Exit is an actor that attempts to enroll a part of the anti-program by inviting politicians to meetings or even representatives from companies to speak with inmates and reduce the gap between them and “...*prove that there is another way...but it's a long way because everybody [in the society] hates criminals*” (Hans, app. 8).

### *6.3 Reflections*

During the composition of this report, and throughout our overall research process, we have tried to facilitate a program of constructive communication between different actors of the prison system. We have also tried to take into account technology, not only as the idea of ICT tools but also non-human actors that constitute the reality of the prison system such as the architecture, rooms, books, personal items, etc., and attempted to identify the effect they have in our network via qualitative methods. We went through stressful times on our path to get clearance in the secured prison system of a closed Danish prison, but during this journey we have come across a lot of different people who wholeheartedly spoke about their everyday experiences and ideas and most of them have been extremely eager to share their opinions with us. Despite the limited time we could spend in the prisons due to its remote location, due to the fact that we had to be assigned someone to accompany at all times in an environment that is already understaffed and the fact that we could not take pictures to recall things that we might have missed or forgotten, we believe that we have adequately given voice to the different opinions inside the network we studied and provided a decent premise with our

findings for further work on the topic of humane treatment and education inside the Danish closed prison system.

## *6.4 Conclusion*

For this project, we have attempted to look inside the closed prison of Storstrøm and understand the extent of the enactment of Kriminalforsorgens/NE's principles throughout the various actors that constitute the network of the facility (*2.4 Research questions and problem statement*). We have paid particular attention to the SKnet, while also trying to single out other actors and situations that are related to the principles of Kriminalforsorgen/NE. From our findings, we have attempted to identify the underlying problems that cause the effects of the anti-program and to provide relevant solutions that would enroll other actors towards the enhancement of the program of action.

It is, at all times, fundamental to have *Security* in mind while we proceed with these ideas, as the safety of prison personnel and society are self-evidently of great importance. Additionally to this, we believe that the rest of Nordic/Scandinavian Exceptionalism and Kriminalforsorgen principles (Normalization, Openness, Responsibility, Education) should be taken more into consideration in the decision-making process of the prison system and that more individual assessment processes are due, to achieve a purposeful rehabilitation. The recent restoration of the SKnet is an important step towards substantial rehabilitation and societal reintegration. Despite the deficiencies that exist in Storstrøm Prison regarding the use of ICTs by the inmates, we do not overlook the fact that the SKnet is a technological artifact that could be enrolled as a powerful actor of the program of action if the necessary attention is given.

In conclusion, we believe that the program of action may have not completely succeeded in its interest in following the principles of Kriminalforsorgen/Nordic Exceptionalism, but it is still in progress and that means that it has neither failed. Some actors such as the Café Exit, are actively trying to enroll new actors and strengthen the dynamics of the program. Other actors, such as the teachers of Storstrøm Prison, are also interested to contribute to this change by stepping on their possibility to send representatives to conferences that the top management of Kriminalforsorgen inspects and express their concerns and ideas about the prison environment. Notwithstanding, extra time is necessary

for following the route of each actor more thoroughly, however, we believe that we described the actor-network of Storstrøm Prison at a good level, by referring to actors that are directly (inmates, teachers, guards, SKnet), and indirectly (Cafe Exit, developers of the SKnet, top management of Kriminalforsorgen) connected to the success or the failure of this actor-network.

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