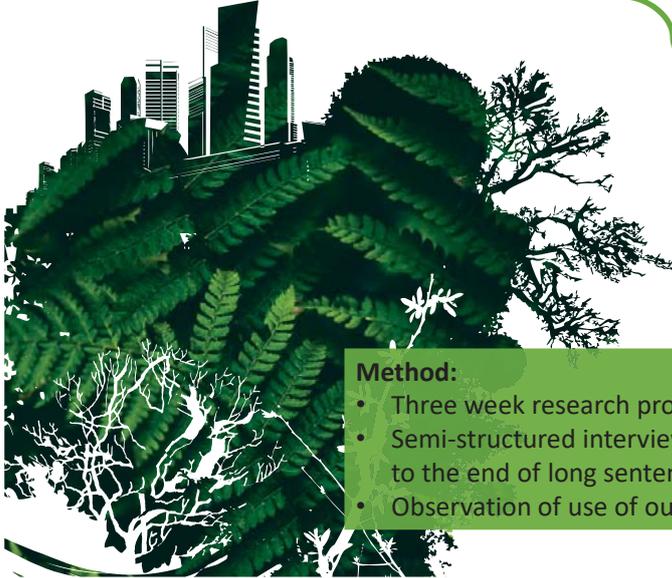


A Window to the World: Exploring the Impact of Access to the Natural World in Carceral Spaces

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Inconsiderate Design in Prisons:

tamper-proofing tells prisoners they are vandals, cage-like designs tell prisoners they are animals
Lack of access to nature, ventilation, sunlight, calm & quiet spaces, non-'grey' spaces can hinder rehabilitation and add to institutionalisation



How Exposure to Nature Can Help:

- **Attention Restoration Theory:** alleviation of fatigue through escapism and exposure to sensorially interesting spaces
- **Stress Reduction Theory:** mitigate stressful effects of prison
- **Biophilia:** innate human connection to nature
- **Normalisation:** can aid retention of skills, support coping and make reintegration easier

Method:

- Three week research project at Cat D open prison HMP Springhill
- Semi-structured interviews with 13 men, most of whom are coming to the end of long sentences
- Observation of use of outside spaces



Preliminary Results – what is important?

- **Views** – unrestricted by bars views allow for enjoyment of the natural world reducing stress
- **Weather** – experiences including rain, are valuable when 'bang up' can be most of the day
- **Animals** – being able to observe and interact with wild or domestic animals provided comfort, joy and escapism
- **Sounds** – tranquillity, birdsong and water provided an escape from the incessant, deafening noise of the wings
- **Work** – peaceful, physical work in gardens was rewarding and restorative

Positive attitudes to Springhill:

All interviewees had reacted positively to being transferred to Springhill and were hugely appreciative of the access to nature on offer. It made them feel closer to the 'real world'

However

Access to outside spaces remains very limited in most prisons. Even at HMP Springhill there are many restricted areas where residents are not allowed to go or are only allowed to visit at certain times such as Lee Pond, the Buddha Grove and the Woodland walk



Jewkes (2018) wonders how prisons would be positively impacted if they were designed with **hope** – such as that seen in the design of Maggie's Cancer Treatment Centre's (left)

Green Spaces are central to Maggie's Centres where their contribution to therapeutic spaces is recognised. Prisons may benefit from a similar approach that would foster an environment of healing and rehabilitation.