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“This is an impressive and ground-breaking book on normalisation in prison. With great insight, De Vos compares prisons in Belgium and Norway and her critical and nuanced analyses raise several questions of what ‘normal’ in the prison context means. I am especially thrilled over how the discussion emphasises the prisoners’ understanding and experience which raises a fundamental debate about the ‘law in book and law in action’ on this topic.” -Berit Johnsen, Research Professor, University College of Norwegian Correctional Service “The normalization principle is an old and important concept in Penology about which amazingly little is written. With this interdisciplinary and comparative study, Helene De Vos makes an important start with filling this gap and creates a strong theoretical framework for further research. The empirical work the author has done is amazing and shines light on the many paradoxes and complexities which the normalization principle evokes in the reality of prison life”. -Miranda Boone, Professor of Criminology and Comparative Penology, Leiden University, the Netherlands This book explores how prison life is normalized in different countries, with a critical and detailed look at ‘Scandinavian exceptionalism’ — the idea that Scandinavian prisons have exceptionally humane conditions — and compares these prisons to ones in Belgium. It provides a more nuanced, systematic and contextualized comparison of normalization in two countries. Through analyzing policy and legislative documents, participant observation and interviews, it seeks to understand how normalization is implemented differently in prison legislation, policies and practices and compares the two societies for context. It also considers the material prison environment, security, the social environment and the use of time in prison. It provides insights into how normalization can be successfully and holistically implemented in both policy and practice, to contribute to a more ‘pure’ form of liberty deprivation as punishment without too many unintended effects. Helene De Vos is an affiliated senior researcher at KU Leuven, Belgium, and the executive director of RESCALED. She is particularly interested in comparative prison research and the relationship between prison policies, legislation and practice. .
