

Connecting Urban and Prison Ethnographies:

Security and Confinement beyond the Limitations of Site

Global Prisons Research Network
&
Securcit

Roundtable Meeting
2-3 November 2017, University of Amsterdam



KONINKLIJKE NEDERLANDSE
AKADEMIE VAN WETENSCHAPPEN



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

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CALL

This two-day roundtable meeting intends to bring together urban and prison ethnographers to consider cross-cutting themes and issues at stake in both lines of research. Security and confinement seem to be inseparably tied up with one another through poverty and exclusion, its policing, ideas about justice and morality, and different forms of urban/prison governance. It has been argued that the urban margins and spaces of confinement have conflated to such an extent that we can speak of a carceral continuum (Wacquant). Research on the crossroads of these two spaces is increasing, as policies and techniques of confinement and surveillance, but also practices of subversion and informal organization reach out of prison into the urban, and from the urban well into prison (e.g. Fassin, Goffman, Moran, Skarbek). The ever-growing push for securitization arguably conditions the lives of those ‘trapped’ at the urban margins, subjected to profiling, and/or processed disproportionately through the criminal justice system. Much work on urban violence has emphasized these politics of surveillance and exclusion (e.g. Auyero, Bourgois, Goldstein, Rodgers). Relatedly, many prison ethnographies have underlined how prison deprives and dehumanizes inmates, thwarting and complicating the questions and processes of reentry, rehabilitation or reinsertion (e.g. Liebling, Maruna). Prison ethnographers have argued that analytical attention to the interfaces between governance, transition and survival may enable us to discern the unfolding history of the prison’s carceral grip as it concurrently mutates and persists in local contexts.

Though it is important to distinguish the particularities of the prison and the urban, in order to be able to understand what particular configurations of security and confinement mean in the daily lives of our research participants, and what limits we face as researchers in either space, we propose here an analytical transgression of these socio-spatial boundaries. More often than not an established and dominant narrative around crime and recidivism either pathologizes individuals or proposes lists of ‘criminogenic factors’, which are frequently institutionalized in the policy debate and prompt dubious ‘interventions’. Pushing back against this narrative – suggesting, for example, that policy is ambiguous and that violence can be productive – and moving beyond the limitations of site, we propose a comparative ethnographic discussion that includes different sites of securitization and confinement. We welcome papers and presentations that may consider any of the following themes:

- Radicalization (or mobilization), targeted securitization and deportation;
- New measures and technologies of incarceration and confinement;
- Prison-urban binaries: public/private, visible/invisible, social death/navigation, fixity/fluidity;
- Gangs, prison movements, informal organization and ‘criminal governance’;
- Politics and sites of ‘exception’;
- Policing, marginality and exclusion;
- Policy, transition and intransigence.

We encourage contributions from research conducted across the globe. The roundtable meeting will consist of five to seven roundtable panels and serve as the start of a publication project.

TIME TABLE

Day 1: Thursday 2 November

10.00-10.15 [C3.06] Registration and coffee

10.15-10.30 [C3.06] Introduction

10.30-12.30 [C3.06] Table 1: Rethinking the ‘carceral continuum’

12.30-13.30 Lunch

13.30-15.15 [C3.06] Table 2: Technology, securitization, and sites of ‘exception’

15.15-15.30 Coffee

15.30-17.00 [C3.06] Table 3: Policy, transition and intransigence

19.00 Conference dinner at Café Restaurant ‘De Jaren’

Day 2: Friday 3 November

10.00-12.00 [C1.05] Table 4: Rethinking prison-urban binaries, freedom and confinement

12.00-13.00 Lunch [at CEDLA Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation]

13.15-15.15 [A1.07] Table 5: Rethinking prisoner organization and governance

15.15-15.30 Coffee

15.30-16.30 [A1.07] Final discussion

16.30 Drinks at ‘CREA’

University of Amsterdam - Campus Map

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Situatie per maart 2017

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Amsterdam School of Economics 

CREA 

Faculteit der Maatschappij- en Gedragswetenschappen (FMG)      

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Organizing Committee

This conference is organized by the Global Prisons Research Network (GPRN) in collaboration with the Securcit research group.

Julienne Weegels & Rivke Jaffe (University of Amsterdam)

Tomas Max Martin & Andrew M. Jefferson (DIGNITY Danish Institute Against Torture)

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This conference is financially supported by the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences (KNAW) with a Conference Grant subsidy; the University of Amsterdam (GPIO) prof. Rivke Jaffe and prof. Dennis Rodgers; and the Danish Institute Against Torture DIGNITY.

TABLES

Table 1: Rethinking the ‘carceral continuum’

Discussant: Rivke Jaffe, University of Amsterdam (professor)

1. *Francesca Cerbini, University of Florence (lecturer)*
San Pedro prison and the city: rethinking the concept of marginality and exclusion
2. *Hollis Moore, University of Toronto (PhD candidate)*
Rethinking the Carceral Continuum: An ethnographic account of carceral/non-carceral binaries
3. *Manuela Ivone Cunha, University of Minho (senior research fellow)*
The prison-urban continuum in everyday life
4. *Steffen Jensen, DIGNITY/Aalborg University (professor) and Karen Waltoorp, Aarhus University (assistant professor)*
Awkward Entanglements: exploring the prison township circuit in Cape Town
5. *Mahuya Bandyopadhyay, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai (associate professor)*
Debunking the prison/street binary: Methodological lessons from Lorna Rhodes and prison ethnography

Table 2: Technology, securitization, and sites of ‘exception’

Discussant: Frédéric le Marcis, ENS de Lyon (professor)

6. *Gilberto Rosas, University of Illinois (associate professor)*
Necro-Subjection: On Making Dead to Let Live
7. *Ilan Amit, University of Amsterdam (PhD candidate)*
Using power, performing strength: The case of coercion for ‘voluntary’ return in an Israeli detention centre
8. *Carolina Sanchez Boe, Aalborg University (postdoc)*
Borders Without Fences and Confinement Without Walls: The Use and Experiences of Electronic Bracelets for Migration Control
9. *Ricardo Campello and Fábio Mallart, University of São Paulo (PhD candidates)*
On anklets and pills: Technologies of prison management in Brazil

Table 3: Policy, transition and intransigence

Discussant: Andrew Jefferson, DIGNITY (senior researcher)

10. *Luisa Schneider, Oxford University (PhD candidate)*
‘Perpetrators?!’ The consequences of the Sexual Offenses Act for young men accused of sexually penetrating their girlfriends in Sierra Leone
11. *Kees Koonings, University of Amsterdam (professor)*
Violent governmentalities and the confinement effect of urban security policies: The case of Rio de Janeiro
12. *Silvia Gomes, CICS/University of Minho and ISMAI (postdoc)*
Conducting research on prison settings: Exploring ethical challenges

Table 4: Rethinking prison-urban binaries, freedom, and confinement

Discussant: Steffen Jensen, DIGNITY/Aalborg University (professor)

13. *Julie Laursen, Cambridge University (postdoc)*
The 'imprisonment queue' in Norway: Betwixt and between freedom and imprisonment
14. *Julienne Weegels, University of Amsterdam (PhD candidate)*
Life beyond prison: Delinquent entanglements and confined freedoms in Nicaragua
15. *Femke Kaulingfreks, Utrecht University (lecturer)*
Tracing informal trajectories of political engagement through spaces of confinement
16. *Frédéric Le Marcis, ENS de Lyon (professor)*
The Fiction of Escape: In & Out Prison in Ivory Coast
17. *Liv S. Gaborit, Roskilde University and DIGNITY (PhD candidate)*
Researching terror from the closest possible vantage point

Table 5: Rethinking prisoner organization and governance

Discussant: Mahuya Bandyopadhyay, Tata Institute of Social Sciences Mumbai (associate professor)

18. *Gavin Slade, University of Glasgow (lecturer)*
An Easy Cell: Restructuring 'Criminal Subculture' in the Former Soviet Union
19. *Giulia Traversari, University of Amsterdam (MSc)*
The dark side of the moon: Governance and Power Negotiation on Italy's Prison Island
20. *Sacha Darke, University of Westminster (lecturer)*
The Brazilian security crisis: Perspectives from inside prison
21. *Manon Veaudor, University of Versailles Saint-Quentin (PhD candidate)*
Prison-urban boundaries through confinement facility in France
22. *Tomas Max Martin and Andrew M. Jefferson, DIGNITY (researchers)*
Prisoners' contact with the outside world - dissecting 'situations of porosity' in Myanmar

ABSTRACTS

Table 1: Rethinking the ‘carceral continuum’

Francesca Cerbini, University of Florence.

San Pedro prison and the city: rethinking the concept of marginality and exclusion

Looking at a panoramic picture of La Paz city center, it is almost impossible to distinguish the facility of San Pedro from the rest of the city. Actually, it seem another “barrio” settled in one of the most important urban areas for business and tourism, rounded by historical churches, monuments, offices and shops. Looking inside, the prison of San Pedro itself seems like a little village. Prisoners have the option of building their own cell or renting or buying one; likewise, many other “basic services” have to be paid for. While the state’s principal concern is to demonstrate its actions against crime through mass incarceration, prisoners organize into self-governed collectives. San Pedro’s prisoners are “free” in a closed-off block .They circulate without restraint inside the jail, they are free from any kind of official surveillance, and they even bring their wives and children to live with them. Assisted by the police and the prisons authorities, the (wealthiest) prisoners make legal and illegal deals using their contact inside and outside and exploit the masses of incarcerated subjects who have to earn money to pay for prison life. The city all around is the engine of many business inside the facility: this is the way both the prisoners and the citizens “keep in touch”, exploiting and using each other. This kind of “mimetic” link between the city and the prison allows us to reconfigure many concepts: “inside” and “outside”, “legal” and “illegal”, “inclusion” and “exclusion”, rethinking about “marginality” and its variables and ambiguities.

BIOGRAPHY

Francesca Cerbini holds a Ph.D. in American History and Ethnology and Ethnoanthropology from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Department: “American History II”), co-tutored: La Sapienza University of Rome (Department: “Sciences of Signs, Spaces and Cultures ”). In 2011 she defended her doctoral dissertation. The subject of the doctoral research was an ethnography on body, person, power relations and health in San Pedro prison, La Paz-Bolivia” (Title: La casa de jabón. Etnografía de una cárcel boliviana”). June 2012- June 2015 she was a grant winner of “Young talent attraction” CAPES- CNPq programme (Brazilian government). Post-doctoral at State University of Ceará, Fortaleza, Brazil. Centre for Health Science, Department of Social Science and Health. Scientific Area: Cultural and Medical Anthropology. Current position: (July 2016-ongoing) Contract Professor at University of Florence-Italy, Scientific Area: Cultural Anthropology.

Hollis Moore, University of Toronto.

Rethinking the Carceral Continuum: An ethnographic account of carceral/non-carceral binaries

This paper – based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in and around a penal compound in Salvador, Bahia – offers a critical reflection on the notion of a “carceral continuum” (Wacquant). I develop this critique through a life history analysis. Isa, a middle-aged mother of two, is an ex-prisoner and former prison visitor. Her ambivalent entanglements with the prison have yielded an impressive house and a photography business. They also shape Isa’s interpretations of, and responses to, crime, including the “marginal” behavior of her teenage son and adult sisters. Isa’s story exposes limitations of approaches that depict the prison as a world apart as well as those which suggest the carceral is synonymous with the lifeworld of the urban poor.

I propose urban and prison ethnographers attend to “carceral forms,” – an object of inquiry that transcends emplacement in or out of the prison. A carceral form is a sedimented expression of carceral/non-carceral distinction which emerges out of routinized practice and configurations of actors/actants. This framework reveals carceral and non-carceral phenomena to be inflected with one another without collapsing the boundary between them. Carceral forms are not exclusively authored by state actors; they are revealed and made meaningful by those who have a stake in their reality. These interrelated and overlapping assemblages exist at different scales and levels of abstraction. Some correspond with emic categories (e.g. the prison visit), while others are heuristic conceits that bring otherwise submerged relations into view (e.g. carceral houses). This conceptualization helps to suspend assumptions about the location and nature of carceral boundaries, rendering carceral closure/sprawl/encompassment and non-carceral experiences/relations/spaces as processual possibilities to be investigated not methodological-theoretical starting points of research.

BIO

Hollis Moore is currently a PhD candidate in sociocultural anthropology at the University of Toronto and a Visiting Assistant Professor at Eastern Kentucky University's School of Justice Studies. Her dissertation, ‘Imprisonment and (Un)Relatedness in Northeast Brazil,’ focuses on the relationship between the prison and low-income, heavily penalized neighbourhoods and households in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

Manuela Ivone Cunha, CRIA/Universidade do Minho.

The prison-urban continuum in everyday life

Drawing on extensive fieldwork in a carceral setting in Portugal over two decades, and exploring the methodological implications and theoretical potential of the ‘ethnographic revisit’, I propose a grounded approach of the systemic transformations that took place within that time span both inside and outside prison. A comparison between two historical moments that defined two contrasting social and moral configurations both behind and beyond bars will highlight the specific conditions (not only macro-level conditions, but also micro and meso-level ones) in which prison’s and destitute urban communities’ everyday lives become interwoven. Whether considering biographical trajectories or social scenes, the life of imprisoned or imprisonable populations unfolds in a continuum between places ~ even when confined behind bars. Under the same conditions, temporalities in intra-mural and extra-mural worlds are also synchronized

BIO

Manuela Ivone Cunha (PhD in Anthropology, Habilitation in Sociology) is a Portuguese senior research fellow at CRIA, Universidade do Minho (Portugal) Distinguished with a social sciences award for her ethnographic research on prisons, drug markets, and the penal management of inequality, she has also focused on informal economies and on intersections between criminal law, inequality and cultural difference. She was vice-president of the European Association of Social Anthropologists and is currently the editor-in-chief of the journal *Etnográfica*. Publications in English include “The ethnography of prisons and penal confinement”, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 43 (1), 2014; “Addressing policy-oriented audiences. Relevance and persuasiveness”, in D. Fassin (ed.) *If Truth Be Told. The politics of public ethnography*, Duke University Press, 2017; “The Changing Scale of Imprisonment and the Transformation of Care: The Erosion of the ‘Welfare Society’ by the ‘Penal State’ in Contemporary Portugal”, in M. Schlecker & F. Fleischer (eds). *Ethnographies of Social Support*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2013; “Closed Circuits: Kinship, Neighborhood and Imprisonment in Urban Portugal”, *Ethnography*, 9 (3), 2008.

Steffen Jensen, DIGNITY/Aalborg University, and Karen Waltorp, Aarhus University.

Awkward Entanglements: exploring the prison township circuit in Cape Town

In this paper, we explore how townships and prison are linked in South Africa among criminalised populations. While the two worlds are often described – also by residents – to belong to radically different moral worlds, the paper shows how they are entangled in often awkward and difficult, yet necessary ways. We show this by paying acute attention to kinship structures and how they are disavowed, allowed and sometimes denied as residents find their way to prison and out again. The empirical basis of the article is long-term fieldwork in and engagement with Cape Town's townships and their residents many of who have experiences with prison as (former) inmates as family to inmates or through constant circulation of prison stories.

Mahuya Bandyopadhyay, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

Debunking the prison/street binary:

Methodological lessons from Lorna Rhodes and prison ethnography

The inclusion of the name of a prison scholar in the title of this paper is deliberate and intends to signal, and destabilise the hierarchy of subjects of research within sociology and social anthropology. Prison ethnographers take their cues from other ethnographers and then engage with questions of difference between their practices and the ethnographic practices in small communities, and also in large, diffuse urban settings. As prison ethnographers then we speak of quasi-ethnography; of the pitfalls of trying to do ethnographic research in a coercive organization; and of the many deviations and limitations of using the ethnographic method to study prison life. Ethnography is the archetype; prison ethnography one of its mimeographed forms. This underscores the relationship between prison ethnography and ethnography, creating well-defined boundaries and hierarchies. This paper marks an attempt to disrupt these boundaries, as I traverse a crisscrossing maze of the methodological insights in anthropological research on prisons; and my engagement with the 'urban' in diverse field sites such as a working class slum neighbourhood close to the city of Kolkata, the precarious world of private security guards in Mumbai and Christiania, a squatter settlement in Copenhagen, where I focus on the negotiations of citizenship, freedom the right to property and the right to the city.

Prison ethnographers more often than not find themselves at a loss; they are trapped in their niches; speaking with other prison ethnographers, criminologists, human rights activists, carceral geographers and prison historians. Yet they are deeply aware of the synergies revealed by the ethnographic raw material on prison lives; synergies that address the trajectories of pain, sorrow and loss as individuals traverse the sites of the prison and the urban neighbourhood and those that establish continuities and converges in practices of governance between apparently divergent institutions. The interface between the street and the prison is not new. Research on this interface, however, is relatively new; especially when we begin to see and evaluate this research from the vantage point of the prison. The celebrated Chicago school of urban studies, for instance,

indicated and dealt with the connections between marginal urban citizens and the institutions designed to police, and control these citizens, and when they failed, to confine them. However, these were studies of the urban, with the neighbourhood, the street and marginal groups as their vantage points. Consequently, the interface between research in these two sites continues to be circumscribed by hierarchies within disciplines. In this paper, I narrate the convergences between the prison and the street; keeping prison ethnography as a methodological centre. The domain of the prison/street interface thus has tremendous potential to narrate the following: i) the pervasive carceral logics of contemporary society; ii) the centrality of the prison and issues of prison governance in the age-old anthropological questions of the relations between state, society and individuals; and finally, the significant lessons that prison ethnography can offer for ethnography, generally. The paper thus explores these methodological lessons, their usefulness in revealing the convergences between prison and the street and their analytical potential.

BIO

Mahuya Bandyopadhyay is Associate Professor, School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Her doctoral work was published as *Everyday Life in a Prison: Surveillance, Confinement, Resistance*. She has also published in national and international journals writing on prisons in India and the methodological challenges of doing prison research. She has subsequently co-edited a book titled, *Towards a New Sociology in India*. She is interested in visual anthropology and has made a documentary film, 'Being Male and Being Koti'. Her current interests revolve around unravelling connections between the prison and non-prison environments, through research in the areas of organisational sociology and prison studies, urban governance and the making of new urban spaces, sociology of crime and violence, and the ethnographic method.

Table 2: Technology, securitization, and sites of ‘exception’

Gilberto Rosas, University of Illinois.

Necro-Subjection: On Making Dead to Let Live

Forced removals and refugee survivals interrupt established social hegemonies about Mexican immigration to the United States. New immigrants increasingly seek asylum from the privatized sovereigns of drug war and their linkages with the Mexican government rather pursuing the promises of better wages or the American dream. An administrative judge adjudicates asylum proceedings. She or he can order that the respondents be detained, deported, or granted new life through asylum.

Drawing on ethnographic research, including reflexive accountings of my experiences giving expert testimony in “removal” or deportation proceedings in immigration court, as well as readings of contemporary related ethnographies, this essay theorizes the contradictory, deep entanglements of death and life politics occurring at the level of the subject in such proceedings and beyond. It will underline how people must be made dead to let live, reverberating with prominent positions in the debates on biopolitics, when claiming political asylum at a moment of extreme anti-immigrant anxiety, when only some 2% of Mexican asylum cases succeed. Their lives and homelands must be represented as so full of despair, so painful, and so hopeless, so mired in relations of precarity and dispossession, their governments so full of graft and corruption. These representations affirm imperial racisms and liberal presumptions of racial, cultural, or civilizational superiority in acts of activist scholarship, while pointing to the contemporary modalities of subjection in sites beyond.

BIO

Dr Gilberto Rosas is Associate Professor with the University of Illinois in Latino/a Studies and LAS Global Studies. His book *Barrio Libre: Criminalizing States and Delinquent Refusals at the New Frontier* was published with Duke University Press in 2012. Other publications include “The Borders of In-Security”, *American Anthropologist*, 116:1 (2014), “Cholos, Chántaros, and the 'Criminal' Abandonments of the New Frontier”, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 17:6 (2010), p. 695-713, “Policing Life and Thickening Delinquency at the New Frontier”, *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, 16:1 (2010), p. 24-40.

Ilan Amit, University of Amsterdam.

Using power, performing strength: The case of coercion for ‘voluntary’ return in an Israeli detention centre.

The highly securitised ‘Holot’ detention centre holds 3,500 African asylum seekers at a remote desert location in south Israel. The centre’s operation is Israel’s most substantial act in an ongoing effort to coerce asylum seekers to ‘voluntary’ return to Africa. The Coercion for ‘voluntary’ return unit at a detention centre for African asylum seekers in Israel is an ideal site for the study of the deportation continuum in focus on the ongoing securitisation of immigration enforcement. The Israeli deportation regime cooperates closely with the state’s security forces, such as the military and border police, where a diffusion of securitisation practices into civil space takes place. As the state has a limited capability to practice military powers in regard of asylum seekers, it is left with the capacity to perform securitisation, diffusing security practices into various state mechanisms operationalising asylum seekers. Israel’s immigration enforcement implementation interface relies on the state’s security apparatus, and the experience gathered from half a century of direct military rule of the Palestinian population. Such experience includes detention, deportation, biometric documentation, surveillance, and bureaucratic control, the same means applied by the state to African asylum seekers in Israel. This paper’s contribution is in demonstrating the forms in which immigration enforcement serves as the appropriator of the securitisation of migration related state agencies and civil space.

Keywords: Detention, deportation, securitisation, Israel, asylum seekers, state performativity.

Carolina Sanchez Boe, Aalborg University.

**Borders Without Fences and Confinement Without Walls:
The Use and Experiences of Electronic Bracelets for Migration Control**

The electronic bracelet, developed 40 years ago for the criminal justice system, is often promoted as a cost-effective alternative to immigration detention, by the very same corporations that were central in the expansion of the ‘criminal industrial complex’ and the ‘immigration industrial complex’. Migrants can now be monitored at a distance in their homes, at their jobs or as they move around in public space. At the same time, they are traceable at all times and can quickly be arrested if they disrespect a curfew or if their immigration case amounts to a deportation.

First, the paper will map some of the larger, complex network of transnational private and public actors who advocate for or against the use of electronic monitoring of migrants, with a focus on the political and economic logics which have contributed to the spread of this new technology of confinement and its application to the wrists of increasing numbers of migrants.

Second, based on ethnographic fieldwork among so-called ‘criminal deportees’ in New York who have experienced electronic tagging, the paper will analyze the ways in which these new technologies of confinement are experienced and embodied, when border control is ensured in the most intimate spheres, in homes and on bodies.

BIO

Carolina S. Boe is a post-doctoral researcher at SERR, Aalborg University, and teaches sociology at Université Paris V and at Columbia University Global Center in Paris. Her research centres on the anthropology of confinement, prisons and migration control, deportation, the law and legal practice, and ‘prison radicalization’; and she has carried out research for numerous non-profit organizations, including American Friends’ Service Committee, Amnesty International, Cimade, Observatoire International des Prisons and Cette France-là, a group of Paris-based academics, journalists and activists, that has published extensively on migration policies in France.

Ricardo Campello and Fábio Mallart, University of São Paulo.

On anklets and pills: technologies of prison management in Brazil

The collapse of Brazilian prison system elicits the enforcement of new penal measures and new techniques of individuals' contention. Electronic devices and psychotropic substances are mobilized by penitentiary authorities in the management of prison crisis. This study investigates the empirical and analytical crosses between two different technologies of control over criminals, whose correlations have been observed from ethnographic research carried out in prison units in São Paulo city, the largest urban conglomerate in Brazil. On the one hand, electronic anklets that allows the uninterrupted geo-referenced tracking of convicts' flows, for beyond the physical limits imposed by the walls. On the other hand, psychiatric medications that soften the effects triggered by incarceration itself, regulating inmates' neurochemical fluxes. Two distinct mechanisms, coupled with the carceral machine, which operate as techniques of control over bodies, conducts and circulations, as well as means of governing the Brazilian prison overpopulation. Two lines of force that goes through our interlocutors' bodies and constitute components of a vast governmental repertoire of punishment administration. This paper analyses the use of these heterogeneous technologies in the penitentiary context, investigating the connections between their dynamics and social implications related to the development of new practices of punishment and new techniques of conducts' conduction.

Keywords: Control technologies, flows management, prison, electronic monitoring, medicalization.

BIO

Ricardo Campello is PhD student in the Sociology Department of University of São Paulo (USP), where he develops a doctorate research on the electronic monitoring of convicts in Brazil. Campello holds a Master degree in Social Sciences by Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP). Fábio Mallart is PhD student in the Sociology Department of University of São Paulo (USP), where he develops a doctorate research on the interfaces between punishment and medicalization practices in São Paulo. Mallart holds a Master degree in Social Anthropology by USP. Both researchers are supported by FAPESP (Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo) scholarship and integrate the Thematic Project: The govern of conflict in the production of the contemporary city: the case of São Paulo, coordinated by Professor Vera Telles.

Table 3: Policy, transition and intransigence

Luisa Schneider, Oxford University

'Perpetrators?!'

The consequences of the Sexual Offenses Act for young men accused of sexually penetrating their girlfriends in Sierra Leone

In 2012 Sierra Leone ratified the Sexual Offenses Act, which raised the age of consent to 18 and criminalised all forms of sexual relationships with minors. This act is understood to be an important step to counter sexual violence. However, its rigidity, homogenization of dissimilar acts and actors and third-party reporting, rendered some young people's previously legal sexual relationships unlawful and prosecutable along contradictory moral frameworks. This paper focusses on two men, Foday¹, aged 19 accused of sexually penetrating and impregnating his long-term girlfriend and Larry, aged 14 accused of sexually penetrating his classmate. Both respondents were in relationships with the alleged victims prior to the ratification of the act, continue to be so and were not reported by them. The paper depicts how they move in and out of prison and how these spaces are radically re-configured as freedom and confinement become blurred. Through describing how they negotiate their actions, attitudes and experiences in their terms, the everyday realities of a suddenly criminalised existence whose trajectories become uncontrollable and the exigencies of restricted movement, marginality, in- and exclusion from family, society and social networks, but also of belonging and (in)visibility in the city and in prison are highlighted and connected to broader societal reflections. The paper depicts how these men position themselves towards a law that they supported and that now criminalises them and how notions of space, place, belonging, choice, sexuality and relationships are radically disrupted and re-configured under these drastic new conditions.

BIO

I am a sociocultural anthropologist, working on (sexual) relationships, gender, and sexual- and gender-based violence. I have been conducting ethnographic research in Freetown, Sierra Leone, since 2012. As a DPhil student in anthropology at the University of Oxford, my current work focuses on the ways (sexual) relationships are lived and on the multi-layered personal experiences, attitudes and trajectories of those perpetrating, witnessing and suffering gender-based and Intimate Partner Violence. I have recently completed 12 months of fieldwork in various settings across Freetown including, inter alia, workplaces, homes, the prison, markets, attaya bases, beauty salons, clubs. I furthermore analyse existing laws and services. My work therefore explores the execution, endurance, mediation, and regulation as well as the socio-cultural, legal, and political ramifications of acts of gender-based violence and Intimate Partner Violence in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

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¹ The names have been changed.

Kees Koonings, University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University.

Violent governmentalities and the confinement effect of urban security policies: The case of Rio de Janeiro

This paper looks at how public security policies in non-prison urban margins produce certain confinement effects through a combination of governmentality, security technology, and class and racially embedded exclusion. At the same time, this creates conditions for perverse state/crime interfaces beyond confrontation, a condition also to be found in Latin American penitentiary systems. This idea takes Wacquant's notion of the penal state as point of departure but moves beyond his neoliberal reductionism to look more closely at the national and particularly local levels. I will draw on the example of Rio de Janeiro to substantiate my exploration. Over the past decade, the governance of the public security crisis in the city's margins (mainly the favelas) has produced a dialectic of violent confrontation and repression, ambivalent if not failed 'pacification', and criminal entanglement, in a context of strong 'punitive populism' and sharp socio-spatial divides. This has produced forms of spatial, political, and cultural confinement that stereotype favelas and ignore the history of unequal integration of Rio de Janeiro and its margins.

BIO

Dr Kees Koonings is professor of Brazilian Studies at the University of Amsterdam/CEDLA and associate professor in anthropology with the University of Utrecht. He has been teaching on subjects related to Latin American studies (especially social movements, citizenship, political change and modernity) and development studies (especially development theory, poverty and social exclusion). Among other publications, he has co-edited with Dirk Kruijt the books *Armed Actors: Organised Violence and State Failure in Latin America*, and *Political Armies: The Military and Nation Building in the Age of Democracy* (both published with Zed Books, London).

Conducting research on prison settings: exploring ethical challenges

This paper analyses the ethical challenges associated to scientific research in prisons. Conducting research in and about the prison environment and prisoners constitutes a fundamental mean of access to privileged information about crime, criminal behavior and criminal justice. However, it also raises substantially different acute ethical questions relating to issues such as confidentiality, privacy and security for all involved individuals.

Based on a quasi-ethnographic study conducted by a female researcher in three prisons, this article discusses the challenges of conducting research in the prison context. Given the specificity of the context in which the investigation is based on, this communication attributes particular relevance to how the data collection techniques; the kind of access allowed to documents, spaces, and differently positioned individuals; the approach and familiarization strategies used; the theme of study; and characteristics of researcher interact with each other in the shadow of penal monitoring in a dynamic process, permeated by challenges, opportunities and constraints. Finally, understanding how these factors intersect is crucial to capture the specificity of the researches conducted in the prison context and to critical comprehend the ethical challenges emerging from it.

BIO

Silvia Gomes holds a PhD in Sociology (2013). She is currently a Postdoctoral Grantee in Sociology (SFRH/BPD/102758/2014) at the Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences (CICS.Nova UMinho), University of Minho, Portugal; at the College of Criminology & Criminal Justice, Florida State University, USA; and the Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, Holland, with a project entitled “Reentry, Recidivism and Desistance: a longitudinal study with ex- and re- prisoners”. She is also an Assistant Professor in the Criminology Course at the University Institute of Maia (ISMAI).

Author of several books, book chapters and papers in scientific journals, her main areas of research are focused on media and crime, crime and ethnicity, intersectionality approach, prison studies, reentry, recidivism and criminal desistance.

She is co-coordinating the Thematic Section on Sociology of Law and Justice of the Portuguese Sociological Association, and is a member of the Working Group on Immigration, Crime and Citizenship and on Gender, Crime and Justice, both of the European Society of Criminology.

Table 4: Rethinking prison-urban binaries, freedom, and confinement

Julie Laursen, Cambridge University.

The ‘imprisonment queue’ in Norway: Betwixt and between freedom and imprisonment

Based on ethnographic data from a large comparative research project across Norway and England & Wales this article explores the implications of the ‘imprisonment queue’ [Sonigskø] in Norway. The ‘imprisonment queue’ is caused by a lack of capacity in Norwegian prisons hence sentenced Norwegians must wait in the community before they are summoned to serve their sentence. Although a common experience for sentenced Norwegians to wait for as long as years before they can serve their prison sentence, this peculiar phenomenon has not received any academic attention. Drawing upon anthropological theory of rituals developed by Van Gennep (1909) and Turner (1967) the analysis shows that these not-yet prisoners, but certainly not free citizens, live in a sort of liminal position, betwixt and between freedom and imprisonment. The analysis will also draw lines between the ‘urban’ and the prison by showing how imprisonment carries consequences not only beyond the sentence, but also before the sentence is served. Hence, I will draw upon and expand earlier research of the ‘breadth’ of imprisonment (the informal consequences of imprisonment, stigma, ‘disabilities’, etc., see Crewe 2011) by arguing that breadth does not only reach beyond the sentence, but has consequences and is felt before any time is served. The paper will argue that while the ‘imprisonment queue’ provides certain benefits such as being able to prepare or negotiate the terms of one’s imprisonment, it also entails insecurity and an existential limbo for the prisoners waiting to serve their sentence.

BIO

Julie Laursen holds a masters degree in Anthropology and a PhD in Sociology/Criminology from Aarhus and Aalborg University, Denmark. She joined the Prison Research Centre, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge in June 2016. She works as a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the ERC-funded research project ‘Penal policymaking and the prisoner experience: a comparative analysis’ led by Ben Crewe. She conducts fieldwork and interviews in Norwegian and English prisons while studying penal policymaking and the penal field, the experiences of mainstream, female prisoners, imprisoned sex offenders, and prisoners in the most secure parts of each jurisdiction’s prison system.

Life beyond prison: Delinquent entanglements and confined freedoms in Nicaragua

What does it mean for former prisoners to be ‘on the radar’ with the institutions? To the backdrop of an ever-(d)evolving socio-political context, this paper explores the (sudden) difference in drive from visibility to invisibility that Nicaraguan former prisoners experience as they leave prison and become part of society again. It explores the continued practices of spatial confinement in the urban, post-prison environment and discusses the ideal of social reinsertion in the light of both discriminatory realities and former prisoner’s own segregatory practices. In the chapter that this paper is based on, I juxtapose five former prisoner trajectories, one of which leads tragically – inevitably – back to prison. It is the story of this return-prisoner that I focus on here. The intimacy and confusion of post-release experiences allows for a close examination of the overarching binaries and categorizations often deployed in prison scholarship, calling these into question as tools to think with. (Former) prisoners namely confront multiple transversal issues both in- and outside prison (such as power, poverty, policy, stigma, censorship, and freedom). Here, I attempt to think with the notion of ‘parallel realities’ and ‘delinquent entanglements’ to think through, connect, and differentiate between the multiplicity of layers (post-)prison life takes on.

BIO

Julienne Weegels is anthropologist by training and holds a masters in Latin American Studies. She is currently finishing her PhD thesis manuscript with the Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research (AISSR) and Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation (CEDLA), both part of the University of Amsterdam. Her thesis explores how young, male prisoners experience their time in Nicaragua’s prison system. Building on 31 months of ethnographic field research conducted between 2009 and 2016 at two prison sites (a regional penitentiary and a city police jail), it seeks to understand how prison life is organized and disorganized, both by prisoners and authorities, and what emerges in the cracks of these (dis)organizations. Specifically, it explores the emergence and functioning of co-governance arrangements, the multiple violences and collusions that these produce (and are produced by), as well as the public penal ideological discourse of re-education and its reification in prisoner performances of ‘change’. Julienne is co-organizer of the Global Prisons Research Network (GPRN) and the Latin American Prison Research Network.

Femke Kaulingfreks, Utrecht University.

Tracing informal trajectories of political engagement through spaces of confinement

Certain neighborhoods in Western Europe and the US can become “ethnoracial prisons”, where perceived deviant or at-risk groups are separated and enclosed in a space characterized by intensified surveillance and punitive measures (Wacquant 2009). Crime control and punishment emphasize ethnic, racial and class differences, while those who are subjected to criminalization experience an increasingly limited access to mechanisms of political representation (Cacho 2012). In response, such spaces of confinement can provide a sense of community to those who are not properly represented within state institutions. They can also become the sites of ‘unruly politics’ (Kaulingfreks 2015) and ‘everyday resistance’ (Scott 1985) against injustice, punishment and a lack of recognition in relation to authorities. In his study of Latino youth gangs in the Bay Area, Victor Rios writes: “the ‘irrational’ acts of defiance that the boys in this study deployed may have, at the very least, provided them a sense of dignity and empowerment, and, at best, these acts could become seeds that sprouted into a more critical political and intellectual analysis of the system that criminalized them” (2011, 117). In my recent research I further explored this hypothesis, and investigated whether criminalization can indeed, paradoxically enough, become a vehicle to develop political consciousness. During my recent ethnographic fieldwork in the United States I interviewed community activists in the San Francisco Bay Area who formerly have been incarcerated at a young age, and asked them what role their experience with the prison system has played in their politicization and development towards community activism. The narratives of my respondents illustrate how alternative communities of belonging, practices of solidarity and political subjectivity can emerge in physical and symbolic spaces of confinement. For the paper to be presented at this roundtable I aim to develop a more general theoretical perspective on the dynamics between confinement and political contestation. In the paper I will trace the general characteristics of informal trajectories of political engagement as they emerge in spaces of confinement; starting in unruly forms on the streets, moving through the prison space and eventually returning as community activism to the streets.

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BIO

Femke Kaulingfreks (1981) received her masters degree in Political Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam and completed her PhD at the University for Humanistic Studies in Utrecht in 2013. She specializes in combining political-theoretical analysis with ethnographic fieldwork. Her dissertation consisted of an interdisciplinary research into the political meaning of public disturbances and collective expressions of dissent of adolescents with a migrant background from deprived neighborhoods in France and the Netherlands. A

monograph based on her dissertation, entitled “Uncivil Engagement and Unruly Politics” is published by Palgrave MacMillan. This study sheds light on an important global challenge: recurrent events of urban violence in which ethnic minority youth express their frustrations about police brutality, urban segregation and their perceived position as second-class citizens.

In 2014 Femke carried out an ethnographic case study in Dutch multicultural neighborhood De Schilderswijk, on the lack of trust of young residents in authorities, particularly the police. This neighborhood is known for tensions between migrant youth and the police and became the stage of fierce riots in 2015, after an unarmed man of color suffocated due to a violent arrest in which police officers applied a choke hold. In 2015 she was a visiting scholar at the Center for Research on Social Change, University of California, Berkeley, where she carried out an ethnographic case study with young, formerly incarcerated community activists in the San Francisco Bay Area. After Femke returned to the Netherlands she worked for two years as a postdoc at the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. As of September 2017 she is Assistant Professor at the Department of Youth Studies of the University of Utrecht.

Frédéric Le Marcis, ENS de Lyon.

The Fiction of Escape: In & Out Prison in Ivory Coast

The prison is a place and as such it can be the site of an ethnography (Goffman 1962, Drake et al. 2015) where to describe hierarchies, relations of power, economies and values, symbolic productions and identities, and more generally the working of the state (Rhodes 2014). But this place is situated within an archipelago that extends from prison to ghettos, which Loïc Wacquant has named for the US context the carceral continuum. Following this path, and thus avoiding the limits of the monograph, but interrogating the notion of continuum from the vantage point of Ivory Coast, I propose to discuss what could be the meaning of Prison Escape in such a setting. In order to do so, I will first pay attention to both the history of the Prison on the African continent and its current function and experience. Second I will reconsider the signification and scale of the notion of carceral continuum in a country like Côte d’Ivoire where the total prison population is roughly around 11000 people for a total of 21.01 million inhabitants (i.e. a rate of incarceration of 52 per 100 000, see Walmsey 2016). Then I will describe two events that happened at the MACA, the main Ivorian prison situated in Abidjan: one mutiny and the killing of Yacou le Chinois, former head of the informal prison government of the prison. They both testify of the fictional nature of escape and show how imaginaries of escape are indeed confronted to the reality of stuckness.

Researching terror from the closest possible vantage point

Prison ethnographers around the world face the inherent dilemma of how to immerse themselves, become participants and understand the perspectives of prisoners and prison staff, without being able to fully immerse themselves. Ethnographers always bring with them the freedom to walk away, a freedom not allowed to those whom the study is with and about.

While this is true to all ethnography, the prison, with its gates and the power at stake between those governed and those governing force us as researchers to reflect upon the vantage point from which we do research (Skidmore 2004; Taussig 1991). Therefore, this paper asks: What is the closest possible vantage point to study phenomena such as terror and suffering inflicted by torture and imprisonment? How is the vantage point connected to access to the spaces where suffering takes place? And what can we learn about prison from outside the prison walls?

The paper draws on 8 months of fieldwork in Myanmar with former prisoners in the urban context of Yangon, without access to prisons, conducted to study experiences of imprisonment. Some experiences were lived through together with prisoners – like Vipassana meditation also practiced by many inside the prison, while other experiences could only be approached through narratives of past experiences.

BIO

Liv S. Gaborit is a PhD student at Roskilde University, Department of Social Sciences and Business and *DIGNITY* (Danish Institute Against Torture), department of Preventing Torture in Places of Detention. She holds a Master of Science in Psychology from Copenhagen University and has studied Global Refugee Studies at Aalborg University. She specialises in prison research from a social psychological perspective, connecting societal structures to individual experiences. Her work is focused on prisons in the global south, with involvement in the Philippines, Sierra Leone and the MENA region. Currently, she is working on her PhD on experiences of imprisonment in Myanmar.

Table 5: Rethinking prisoner organization and governance

Gavin Slade, University of Glasgow.

An Easy Cell: Restructuring ‘Criminal Subculture’ in the Former Soviet Union

Across the former Soviet Union, targeted reforms securitize the issue of ‘criminal subculture’ within penal colonies. The term ‘subculture’ is commonly used in the region but has taken on many meanings from territorial gangs in Lithuania, to organized extortion in Moldova, to drug trafficking and Islamic radicalization in Kyrgyzstan. In all these countries, a western-style cell system is touted as a panacea to the flow of pernicious norms that develop in the collective environment of penal colonies inherited from the Soviet Union. Physical separation in an individualising punitive environment is regarded as a solution to both questions of internal penal order and organized crime and violence outside prison. This paper aims to critique the central place that cell confinement has taken in the discourse on penal reform and anti-organized crime around the region. Examples in the region have demonstrated that cell confinement does not work in stopping the formation of violent groups and the information flow this requires. Moreover, culturally, cell confinement is resisted by prisoners and is viewed as a form of punishment that exacerbates pain and renders individuals dependent on prison regimes. Finally, an emphasis on expensive architectural restructuring comes at a high opportunity cost. The focus on cells distracts from the urgent need to develop trust inside prisons and positive staff-prisoner relations. As in Soviet times, operational policing work utilizes the recruitment and employment of informants to keep order in prison. There is an emphasis on static rather than dynamic security – guards with guns on perimeter fences outnumber supervisors within the prison walls. These Soviet legacies ensure that however space is structured it is suffused with oppositional norms that produce antagonism, contention and violence. ‘Subculture’ in this case is one way to mediate this antagonism and control violence. These claims will be demonstrated in this paper with reference to uniquely accessed interview data with prison staff and prisoners in Moldova, Lithuania and Kyrgyzstan.

BIO

Gavin Slade is a lecturer in legacies of communism at the University of Glasgow. He works on questions of criminal justice reform in the former Soviet Union. His current project involves a comparative case study of how penal reform produces violence and contention in Georgia, Moldova, Lithuania and Kyrgyzstan. His first book was published with Oxford University Press in 2013 entitled ‘Reorganizing Crime: Mafia and Anti-Mafia in Post-Soviet Georgia.’

Giulia Traversari, University of Amsterdam.

The dark side of the moon: Governance and Power Negotiation on Italy's Prison Island

In the political and public Italian debate concerned with the design of alternative, rehabilitative-wise methods of detention, Prison Island stands out as a pioneer project, portrayed in national newspapers and TV reports as a successful model for inmates' re-entry. There, hosted in a National Park, around twenty inmates accorded the Article 21 of the Italian Penitentiary Order (also known as 'external labour') perform maintenance work in a context of lower security measure, monitored by only two correctional officers (COs). Sporadic visitors, such as tourists and technicians penetrate the 'porosity' of the prison wall and occasionally share the life on the island with the prison community, especially in summer. My two-months immersion in the field aims at presenting 'the other side of the moon', narrating what happens in winter when the island falls into solitude and external monitoring over the prison society decreases. In order to provide a bottom-up analysis of how people affected by institutional policies experience them, I spent two months immersed in the field, participating in the subjective interplay of actors, conducting in-depth interviews, observing and working with inmates. I argue that the winter isolation fosters the translation of policies in the negotiation and re-negotiation of informal rules among in loco actors; COs, inmates, and visitors. I, therefore, present a study of power as observable in social relationships based on inequality, supporting not only the epistemological contribution of the ethnography but also the methodological validity of making the researcher visible in the text through the analysis of my emotions, reflexivity, and positionality.

Key words: Open Prison, Translation, Power Relationships, Negotiation, 'Hidden Transcript'.

BIO

Giulia Traversari is a recently graduated MSc student at the University of Amsterdam. She previously completed her Bachelor's degree in Anthropology, Religions and Oriental Civilizations at the University of Bologna. During this time, Giulia took part in an Erasmus programme at the University of Amsterdam which led her to return to The Netherlands to complete her Masters in Cultural and Social Anthropology. Her area of interest began when looking at the dynamics of those whose lives exist at the margins of the state, resulting in a Bachelor's dissertation on a Mexican insurrectionist civil army, the 'autodefensas'. The focus of the topic recently evolved, moving towards the field of prison studies. Attracted by the unusual condition of 'open prison', experimented on Italy's Prison Island, Giulia spent two-months living with the community of inmates and officers. This was an in-depth experience that resulted in her Master's dissertation about power relations and governmentality. This body of work has left her with a platform from which to further investigate the subject, aiming to move towards her first steps as a researcher in the field of prison.

The Brazilian security crisis: Perspectives from inside prison

In January 2017 the legitimacy of the Brazilian prison system came under scrutiny following a series of violent encounters between rival criminal organisations in the north of the country. At least 125 inmates died at the three prisons most affected. Mutilated bodies were put on display for media consumption. Recordings of the killings were circulated via WhatsApp. Liberal commentary on the massacres and the government's reaction to them focuses on four major issues: the self-defeating, counter-productive war on drugs; the poor state of the prison system; the absence of guards on prison wings; and the failure of the country's securitisation agenda to manage prison gangs. None of these areas of critique provides a fully satisfactory account of the causes or consequences of the massacres. Brazil's inside-outside criminal gangs are involved in a lot more than illicit drugs markets and neither the country's impoverished prisoners nor overstretched prison managers could get by without them. The staff-inmate power dynamics that emerge in Brazil's abandoned prison spaces are complex and in constant flux. Finally, the country's prison gangs do not always have a sufficiently defined hierarchy for the government to target even if it were to go after their leaders. In this paper I aim to demonstrate that the massacres, or at least prison gang orchestration of the massacres, were the result of a short rather than long-term crisis, moreover a crisis in prison governance as opposed to drug prohibition policies, gangs or prison conditions. This interpretation is grounded in the perspectives of prisoners and prison workers. The majority of prisoners are only involved at the edges of the drugs trade and are more concerned with surviving than profiting from their incarceration. Frontline prison staff likewise have more interest in getting on with their jobs than fighting with prison inmates, who it should be added, do not necessarily blame them for the punitive excesses of the Brazilian penal state.

Manon Veaudor, University of Versailles Saint-Quentin.

Prison-urban boundaries through confinement facility in France

Based on an ethnographical fieldwork in French prisons, this presentation aims to discuss the control connexions between urban margins and carceral confinement. While French and Anglo-Saxon researches on prison have long been focusing on relationships between prisoners from (or identified to) the same localities, the incidences of the mass incarceration turned to urban margins (Wacquant 2001, Gottschalk 2006) on carceral surveillance have been left out. Indeed, several contributions about how prison systems work report that coming from a common locality play a role among young (Le Caisne 2008) and adult prisoners' relationships (Crewe 2009). Others also question the reproduction of "street gangs" in English prisons (Phillips 2012). As fruitful as they are, those works give too short shrift to the prison control issues. How does the prison authority manage those supposed or real relationships, and how do they even participate to their local definition? My approach aims to question how guards' perceptions about some urban areas, and people who live in there, redefine their everyday surveillance practices.

In that purpose, I will focus on a recent reform in the French system prison: the creation of local boards of "prison intelligence", officially supported by the French Correctional Administration after the Paris attacks in 2016. This presentation will deal with the local incidences (e.g. inside prisons) this innovation had on the practices and the conception of carceral surveillance. One of these local prison intelligency unit has notably been focusing on groups and "gangs" delinquency (stigmatised as "clans de quartier" in French) from the inner cities nearby the prison, with important results, including the relegation of the prevention goal about religious radicalization. Thus, this preoccupation about urban margins and urban delinquency has effects on the ways to conceive and to apply the local prison control, targeting some prisoners groups, and can resist to a "top-down perspective" about a renewed prison control.

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BIO

Manon Veaudor is a Phd Student in political sciences at the University of Versailles Saint-Quentin (UVSQ) and at the Centre de Recherche sur le Droit et les Institutions Pénales (CESDIP). Her research is based on an ethnographical study in two maisons d'arrêt, focus on the forms of surveillance and control in prison. She specifically intends to describe how prison authorities redefine the boundaries between carceral confinement and urban areas.

Prisoners' contact with the outside world – dissecting 'situations of porosity' in Myanmar.

There exist two dominant discourses pertaining to prisoners' contact with the outside world, one that is rights-based normative and intrinsic, another that is corrections-centred, managerial and instrumental. International human rights law defines prisoners' contact with the outside world as key to the protection of prisoners' rights. Contact with the outside world facilitates prisoners' opportunity to maintain family and social networks, ensures their legal representation and enables external oversight of prison life as a safeguard against abuse. Criminological research and prison management discourse also stress the importance of this contact, most notably family visits, as instrumental for prisoner well-being, prison order and rehabilitation.

These discourses differ yet also share a joint understanding of the prisoner-society interface as governable and – for better or worse – as an expression of state power. Both subscribe to the idea of the prison as a container that more or less legitimately holds people in, and discussions about prisoners contact thus end up revolving around regulating the state's power to open or close the container. Both discourses subtly reproduce an image of the prison as fixed rather than fluid and separate rather than entangled with society. They fail to acknowledge both how the inside and outside of prison flow together (both spatially and temporally) AND how the contact prisoners actually crave and seek to produce is not simply what patriarchal state power chooses to afford them (as right or incentive). It is something else – something real, something that counters the crushing feeling of being deprived or stuck.

In this paper, we will explore how the notion of prisoners' contact with the outside world stands as a master idiom of the tempering of total institutional control, which reproduces the idea of the prison as able and entitled to manage the permeability of its walls according to its own logic. On the basis of ethnographic research from Myanmar, we will try to wriggle the understanding of the prisoner-society interface out from under the dominating carceral rationalities of the prison itself. In line with critical research on prison-street exchanges, confinement continuums and carceral circuitry, we hope to uncover the empirical manifestations of the actual social practices that constitute Myanmar prisoners' aspirations and actions to produce a tenuous connectivity to life beyond prison. We propose to think through 'situations of porosity', rather than merely contact, to capture the multiple and ambiguous practices that may transgress the carceral condition – albeit fleetingly as when a missionary brushes by with soap and bibles, a daughter comes within shouting distance for ten minutes in the chaotic visiting hall, or when the taste of a dried fish from a mother's food parcel explodes in the mouth.

This conference is organized by the Global Prisons Research Network (GPRN) in collaboration with the Securcit research group.

More about the prisons research network can be found on www.gprn.org

Or e-mail us at globalprisonsnetwork@gmail.com

Thank you!



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