Anthropology of Confinement Network Meeting
13th and 14th of November 2017 |
Aalborg University, Copenhagen Campus, A.C. Meyers Vænge 15, Copenhagen Sydhavn Station

Workshop programme

Monday 13 November 2017

09:00 – 12:00	**Session I**	- Chair Steffen Jensen	**Room 2.1.021 – Building A**

- **Introduction** Carolina Sanchez Boe (SERR – Aalborg University) and Ines Hasselberg (CRIA/UMinho)

- **Kathryn Cassidy** Senior Lecturer in Human Geography, Northumbria University
  Confinement and Everyday Carceralities in the UK's Asylum System

- **Christian Suhr,** Filmmaker and Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University
  Free choice and respectful coercion: Experiences of being treated for jinn possession and psychosis in Danish psychiatry

- **Andrew M. Jefferson**, senior researcher, Dignity Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark
  'Legacies of Detention / Histories of the present in Myanmar'

- Discussion – Confinement at a conceptual level

12:00 – 13:00	**Lunch at Aalborg University's Cantine**

13.00-14.00	**Public lecture by Manuela I. da Cunha University of Minho (Portugal) Auditoriet - Building A**

- **Austere times, unstable punishment: a grounded reflection on imprisonment, punitivity and inequality**
  How do the limits and scope of different policies dealing with marginality and social vulnerability lead to steep variations of incarceration tendencies in a Southern European context? What does longitudinal ethnographic inquiry conducted in a Portuguese carceral site say about policy-making processes impacting the criminal justice system? And how can we probe the complex interplay of institutional, cultural, and structural aspects involved in the production of punitivity?

14:30 – 16:30	**Session II – Chair Ueli Hostettler**	**Room 2.1.021 – Building A**

- **Julienne Weegels,** Ph.D. candidate, University of Amsterdam
  "So you see that we can be different". Prison moralities, change and 'doing' freedom in Nicaragua's prison system

- **Catarina Frois,** Professora Auxiliar Convidada, Escola de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, IUL, Portugal.
  Female Imprisonment. An ethnography of everyday life in confinement.
  System

18.30 **Optional Dinner (in the Vesterbro neighbourhood, within walking distance of Hotel Wakeup)**

Tuesday 14 November 2017

| 09:00 – 12:00 | Session III – Chair Ines Hasselberg | Room 2.1.021 – Building A |

- **Ana Ballesteros Pena,** University of Barcelona, Spain
  Exploring women's subjectivities under responsibilization strategies in the contemporary penal policy: the case of Spain

- **Liv Gaborit, PhD fellow, Roskilde University & DIGNITY**
  Researching terror from the closest possible vantage point"

- **Ueli Hostettler**, with Irene Marti, Prison Research Group, Institute for Penal Law and Criminology, University of Bern, Switzerland
  Reflections on the establishment of trust between researcher and prisoners

- Discussion – Confinement at a conceptual level

| 12:00 – 13:00 | Lunch at Aalborg University's Cantine |

| 13.00-16.00 | Session IV – Chair Carolina Sanchez Boe | Room 2.1.021 – Building A |

- **Daniel Martins Pinheiro Maciel,** Doctorate student, UNL, Portugal
  The Ebb and Flow of Institutional Intensity: Imprisonment as an experience that is performatively made aware by the behavior of inmates and prison staff

- **Carmen Osuna,** UNED, Spain
  Inside and outside the walls: Reflections on Confinement through an Ethnographic Fieldwork in a Prison's School

- **Tomas Max Martin,** Dignity Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark
  The fieldworker as accomplice – complicity and bureaucratic power in Ugandan Prisons and Kafka's Penal Colony.

- Discussion – Confinement at a conceptual level

| 16.30 – 17.00 **Future outcomes of this collaboration and the Anthropology of Confinement Network** |

Workshop Abstracts

Ana Ballesteros Pena. University of Barcelona, Spain
Exploring women's subjectivities under responsibilization strategies in the contemporary penal policy: the case of Spain

Taking further the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, it has emerged an extensive literature that explores *technologies of the self* as the actions and strategies carried out in order to shape the individual and collective capacities of action in ways that are consistent with the objectives pursued by governments in the neoliberal era. These mechanisms of self-government, implemented upon a wide variety of actors, configure what is known as *responsibilization* processes. Scholarship in this field has focused mainly on the manner in which these mechanisms function and impact individuals, while little has been explored about the positions and experiences of those under these processes. Moreover, the sociology of punishment has shown that people use different strategies to negotiate life in confinement and resist institutional power. Building upon previous research providing categories of subjectivities shaped by criminal justice systems (Dawn and Hirai, 2007; Crewe, 2009...), and on research on acts of resistance inside penal institutions (Bosworth, 1999; Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001...), especially those analyses of female responses to penal power in prisons, the aim of this paper is to describe how women prisoners react to practices of responsabilization undertaken in the Spanish penitentiary system.

Andrew M. Jefferson, Dignity Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark
'Legacies of Detention / Histories of the present in Myanmar'
Prisons and detention practices play a fundamental role in modern states in general, and authoritarian and post-authoritarian states, in particular. This project explores the historical and contemporary role of detention in Myanmar and its significance for the reconfiguration of state and society.

Carmen Osuna, UNED, Spain
Inside and outside the walls: Reflections on Confinement through an Ethnographic Fieldwork in a Prison's School

In this paper I want to present ethnographic fieldwork developed in the school of a women's prison during the years 2015/2016. My focus was to analyze processes of dropping out and returning to the school education system in the penitentiary context. During my research I realized that in order to understand these motivations, I had to go deeper into the logic of the functioning of both institutions, especially how the prison engages and organizes the school. My fieldwork is ongoing as I continue to accompany one of the women in her life outside the prison and her so-called "reinsertion process." My purpose is to present my research and to enrich it with contributions from the joint reflection, and to contribute to the analysis of how confinement is constructed and also perpetuated outside the walls.

Catarina Frois, IUL, Portugal.
Female Imprisonment. An ethnography of everyday life in confinement.
Female Imprisonment results from an ethnographic study carried out in a small prison facility located in the south of Portugal, exploring how incarcerated women talk about their lives, crimes, and expectations. Crucially, this work examines how these women consider prison: rather than being primarily a place of confinement designed to inflict punishment, but as a place of transformation, self-reconstruction, and even somewhere they can gain an awareness of the significance of their gender as part of their identity.
From interviews held in this institution, where inmates present their life histories marked by poverty, violence and abuse (whether as victims, as agents, or both), I observed that the traditional idea of "doing time", in the sense of a strenuous, repressive, or restrictive experience, is paradoxically transformed into "having time" - an experience of expanded self-awareness, identity reconstruction, or even of deliverance. Ultimately, this study questions and defies customary accounts of the impact of prisons on those subjected to incarceration.

Christian Suhr, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University
Free choice and respectful coercion: Experiences of being treated for jinn possession and psychosis in Danish psychiatry

In this presentation I discuss the experiences of a Palestinian refugee, living in Aarhus, Denmark, who was sentenced to long-term and intensive psychiatric treatment after a severe case of jinn possession which caused him to smash up the interior of a mosque, crash several cars, and insult a number of people. In particular I analyse the dynamics of a particular kind of psychoeducation that applies what in Danish psychiatry is conceptualised as "respectful coercion" in order to facilitate a situation in which patients may freely choose to comply and submit to the psychotropic treatments they have been sentenced to take. I analyse these dynamics with tools from ritual theory, studies on the effects of placebo, as well as theories on religious conversion and ethical self-cultivation.

Tomas Max Martin, Dignity Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark
The fieldworker as accomplice – complicity and bureaucratic power in Ugandan Prisons and Kafka's Penal Colony.

Based on fieldwork experiences from Ugandan prisons and on an exploration of the unsettling positions and dispositions of the proto-anthropologist character, The Traveller, in Franz Kafka's short-story 'The Penal Colony', this paper argues that managing with complicity is an ever-present challenge of ethnographic fieldwork within the heart of the state apparatus.

The effort to 'immerse' oneself and thereby to acquire a particular 'sensibility' towards the 'meanings that the people under study attrib ute to their social and political reality' (Schatz 2009: 5) is valorised in ethnography. It entails a commitment to take seriously what one is told and to try to be on the same wavelength as the people in the field (Olivier de Sardan 2008a:20). Yet, when 'studying up' (Nader 1972) and engaging with wielders of state power, identification with the people studied and defence of their interests is not self-evident (Pels 1999:112). This quest to understand and to stay close is challenged by the presence of humiliation, exploitation and physical violence, which immediately call for distancing. Although, a prison researcher might not sympathise with violence, s/he can easily end up considering to what extent s/he is being put to the service of grander reproductions of power and knowledge that ultimately enlarges prison pain. As put by veteran prison scholar and activist Angela Davis, a prison researcher is potentially always facing the complex challenge to work to "create more humane habitable environments for people in prison without bolstering the permanence of the prison system" (Davis in Jones 2006:82).

Caution, neutrality and sobriety may be the most immediate fall-back positions that the researcher could reach for, on the fly, to deal with such challenges in the field. Yet, Kafka's uncanny presentation of the Traveller unveils the dark sides of these tactics. The Traveller is an acclaimed researcher who visits a penal colony and finds himself observing an execution, He is called into action in the colony's charged politics, but he refrains from engaging and claims a feeble-cum-elevated position of non-interference 'for the purpose of his traveling', as he puts it, 'was merely to observe and not to alter other people's judicial systems in any way'. Yet, he cannot avoid responsibility. The field casts the Traveller to acknowledge and to adjudicate and to play his part as an external and even 'innocent' authority of scientific respectability. His idea of not being able to help and therefore not being able to do harm is an illusion. He is inherently enrolled in the tussle between old and new orders and his basic alignment with violence is unmasked in the final sentences of the story, where the Traveller picks up a heavy knotted rope to scare off a soldier and a condemned man, who try to flee the colony with him.

The paper discusses the researcher's inherent participation in bureaucratic power, which Kafka's story so powerfully suggests. Through a critical analysis of three small incidents from my own fieldwork in Ugandan prisons, the paper explores the register of roles oscillating between (im)potence, (in)competence and (in)dependence that the researcher takes on to obtain and retain access to the people that populate the inherently closed world of bureaucracies – and more specifically one of bureaucracy's more peculiar instantiations, the prison. It argued that the propensity to surrender to these shifting and contradictory roles is not simply a question of balancing personal ethics and methodological prescriptions and to keep traction and control of the research process. Rather, it propels the researcher into observing and participating in the field as not only a witness, but also an accomplice, which calls for a distinct form of reflexivity.

Kathryn Cassidy, Northumbria University
Confinement and Everyday Carceralities in the UK's Asylum System

In my paper, I will draw upon work I have recently undertaken with BAMER women in the UK, who have been or are currently seeking asylum as a result of flight from domestic violence. Formal incarceration in immigration removal centres in the UK is highly gendered, however I have argued elsewhere that the internal reach of the UK's border is now so extensive that everyday life has become a carceral site for these women. This raises fundamental questions about how we understand 'the carcer' and its relationship to both unfreedom and also confinement. It is this nexus of carcer/unfreedom/confinement that I will explore in my paper.

Julienne Weegels, University of Amsterdam
"So you see that we can be different". Prison moralities, change and 'doing' freedom in Nicaragua's prison system

This paper explores Nicaraguan prisoners' engagement in the re-educational (privilege) system and their efforts to present a *cambio de actitud* (change of attitude). Such a change of attitude is a prerequisite to qualify for an early release. It is also a moral requisite in a prison system that claims to re-educate prisoners for their social reinsertion. This way, 'change' is first of all informed by the authorities' ideological and legal frames and their institutional morality. At first glance, then, it appears to be imposed and as such performed merely vis-a-vis an institutional audience. The perceived necessity to change, however, is also internalized and appropriated in particular ways, and the authorities are by far not the only audience toward which change becomes performed. Performances of change, then, are revelatory of local moral assemblages at play. In order to peel apart the distinct levels and multifarious moralities that undergird both penal reeducation's and prisoners' own understandings of 'change' I deploy Zigon's (2010) moral anthropological analytical framework, which moreover allows me to develop a spatialized understanding of change. This paper suggests that both by performing change and appropriating re-educational spaces, prisoners manifest their desire to counter the social stigma attached to their legal status as convicts, offenders, delinquents and claim their own moral worthiness. Re-educational spaces figure prominently as spatial mediators of the violence otherwise produced by Nicaragua's co-governance arrangements, they present a distinct environment in which authorities, prisoners, and outsiders (facilitators) interact, and they engage prisoners in a (moral) world *beyond* the prison. It is not the re-educational programs themselves that do these three things though, but the way in which they are appropriated by the prisoners *against their stigmatization* that they potentially become arena's in which freedom can be 'done' (Ugelvik 2014). Throughout, I draw from my ethnographic engagement with two groups of male prisoners with whom I conducted my research through a long-term theater-in-prison program that was hosted at two different prison facilities.

Daniel Martins Pinheiro Maciel, UNL, Portugal.
The Ebb and Flow of Institutional Intensity: Imprisonment as an experience that is performatively made aware by the behavior of inmates and prison staff

Quite often, academic literature on imprisonment glosses over the everyday *feeling* of institutionalization from detainees and prison staff. One consequence of this is the reoccurring image of the ever-present, totalizing institution that subdues the prisoner to a strict, pervasive order. In this portrait, the prisoner is to the reader like a passive subject, and the prison like a place that *is as it is*, as if operating continuously and consistently. Drawing from prisoner accounts and from my own fieldwork experience in three Portuguese prisons, I will make the case that the prison is much more dynamic. I argue that everyday life in prison is about relating to an institution "at rest", and that it is *the threat of institutional action* that shapes the attitudes of prisoners and staff. The institution is therefore felt more intensely in some situations than in others. Heightened *institutional intensity* may be felt in violent disciplinary action – for example, during a cell raid – but also in recurring moments of institutional pride – as in a festive event or artistic performance. Work and leisure activities, furthermore, are often described as an "escape" or a way to "forget" that one is imprisoned. However, there's an ever-present uneasiness that the prison might act at any moment. I posit that strategically navigating a prison "at rest" is a conscious effort, learned from experience, for prison staff, prisoners and for myself as a researcher.

Liv Gaborit, Roskilde University & Dignity Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark
Researching terror from the closest possible vantage point"

It will draw on my experiences from doing research about prisons in Myanmar, without access to the actual prisons.

Ueli Hostettler, **with Irene Marti,** University of Bern, Switzerland

Reflections on the establishment of trust between researcher and prisoners

Gaining access to the field is crucial in any ethnographic fieldwork. Prison ethnographers face specific challenges since they have to obtain access to what is considered a "closed" and "sensitive" field. Moreover, the institutional logics inscribed in the prison put prisoners and prison staff in permanent opposition to one another. Ethnographic prison research is therefore always taking place within this specific hierarchical social order. Based on ethnographic data gathered in two high-security prisons in Switzerland, this paper will focus on the establishment of trust between the researcher and prisoners. It will be argued that by showing neutrality and empathy, and through a situational "fading out" of institutional ascribed (opposed) roles and individual status, it is possible to temporarily "normalise" the powerful and hierarchized setting and to foster encounters between simple "human beings" rather than between "prisoner" and "researcher". However, by drawing on examples from the field, we will critically analyse the potential as well as the challenges and limitations resulting from this particular approach. This allows revealing the fluidity and negotiability of power relations in prison.