

International Workshop

Carcerality in the Globalised Present: Prison Spaces, Forms and Imaginaries

18-19 June 2020 at the University of Amsterdam

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Prof. Máximo Sozzo (Sociology and Criminology, Universidad Nacional del Litoral, Argentina)

Dr. Jennifer Turner (Human Geography, University of Liverpool, United Kingdom)

In the context of globalisation, prisons appear anomalous. In a time of increased global flows and circulations of commodities, people and ideas, prison systems seem particularly preoccupied with immobilising and isolating specific groups of criminalised others. The most prominent material manifestation of this feat is the prison's function of providing enclosed walls, creating a space that is deemed separate from the rest of society. The exact boundaries of the prison system are, however, not so easily fixed (Turner 2016). Social scientists have argued that incarceration has become such a prevalent modality of punishment that we can speak of the existence of penal and carceral states (Garland 2013, Moran 2015, Wacquant 2000), while such states also increasingly seek to police and punish those deemed politically unwanted (Besteman, Biondi & Burton 2018, Fassin 2018). Surveillance systems, in their panoptic, synoptic, banoptic and postpanoptic tendencies, besides exacerbating the function of the prison itself, create increasingly harrowing parallels between incarceration as a method of punishment and other zones of confinement, for instance, in the context of migrant detention centres.

At the same time, forms of incarceration like the Super Max prison (Rhodes 2004, Ross 2012) as well as arguably more humane prison design (see [Videolab](#)) also travel between contexts as incarceration professionals share their knowledge and insights across the globe. Recent studies have furthermore flagged the relevance of analysing alternative spatial organisations of incarceration that differ from the dominant (theoretical) models. What, for instance, is the impact of the ecological on incarceration and how does the carceral function in places that are often overlooked in debates on globalisation, like the countryside (Krause 2013, Peeren 2018)? In terms of theory, the historical convergence of the panoptic model with the rise of the slave ship and plantation (Browne 2015), furthermore draws necessary attention to the racially differentiated discursive, social, psychological, and embodied effects these material forms have on those incarcerated.

Carceral forms, however, do not just influence those who come into daily contact with the prison, nor are they restricted to the material and the spatial. The globalisation of prison forms is also clearly discernible in popular cultural and aesthetic realms. Cultural expressions representing the prison abound and have always been part of popular culture, either as figurations of fantasies surrounding exoticising the prison and the criminal (Fludernik 2005), as influential testimonies and memoirs (cf. Mandela 1994, Sands 1981, Ho Chi Minh 1962, or Gramsci 1947, *Time: The Kalief Browder Story* 2017), or as a deterrent in architecture (Bender 1987). Research remains to be done on the circulation of prison imagery on social media channels. In cultural contexts where prisons are on the decline, like the Netherlands, depictions of prisons in popular culture are strongly influenced by globalised images of detainment and often rely on the spectacularisation of prison systems from different contexts. These expressions,

as a result, hide as much as they reveal about the prison realities they seek to depict, and thus need to be studied for the ideological and political import they (un)intentionally circulate. Gauging the influence these different settings exercise on each other is a first step in critically assessing an increasingly complex and globalised carceral sphere.

Themes connecting and/or questioning the carceral in the global that are welcomed for debate during this workshop include, but are not restricted to:

- regimes of global carceral surveillance, mobility and stasis;
- globalised processes, spaces, imaginaries or forms of confinement, and/or their localised expressions;
- the spaces, forms or imaginaries of ‘carceral states’;
- pockets and aspects of confinement that may be obscured by globalisation processes;
- the carceral and the rural / urban;
- prison ecologies and (globalised) effects of prison architecture and design;
- carceral affects, atmospheres, and sensory realms of confinement, also those travelling beyond the prison;
- the (global) rise of prison aesthetics in popular culture;
- the carceral and social media;
- prison memoirs and their (global) cultural / political circulation;
- (global) trends in political imprisonment and confining dissent.

This conference seeks to analyse the intersections between the carceral and the global in an interdisciplinary context. It explicitly invites scholars from different fields – including but not limited to the humanities and social sciences – to reflect on the interrelations between space, materiality, form, culture and the imagination. In order to achieve this, the conference organises a series of interdisciplinary panels according to theme rather than method. If possible, the workshop will include a visit to a former prison site. In order to foster in depth discussion, the panels will be based on participant’s written work. The most to the point conference proceedings will be selected for a special issue / edited volume.

Abstracts (max 250 words) and a short bio (max 100 words) are due on 31 January 2020. The full papers (max 3500 words) on 15 May 2020, so that these can be distributed to all participants in advance. The workshop has no registration fee.

Please submit your abstract to the workshop organisers: Hanneke Stuit (h.h.stuit@uva.nl) and Julienne Weegels (j.h.j.weegels@ccdla.nl). Feel free to email us with any questions.

This workshop is organized with the support of the University of Amsterdam Centre for Globalisation Studies (ACGS) and Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA), and co-organized by the Global Prisons Research Network.

