



## Call for papers

### **Confinement viewed through the prism of the social sciences: Contrasting facilities, confronting approaches**

An international symposium organized by the TerrFerme Research project  
*(Mechanisms of Confinement.  
A territorial approach to contemporary political and social control)*

**ADES (CNRS- University of Bordeaux)**

**Pessac (France), October 17 - 19, 2013**

Defined by a material enclosure and power relations that oscillate between domination and subversion, constraint by confinement is exercised in a variety of settings and institutions. It would be impossible to draw up an exhaustive list of all the places that match this definition: psychiatric establishments, custodial educational centres, centres for asylum seekers and refugees, retirement homes, penitentiary establishments, detention centres for non-nationals awaiting deportation, housing for foreign labour, etc. Contemporary ways of controlling populations by confinement, at least in western countries, are marked by a quadruple movement: an opening up of certain establishments (a notable reduction in the number of beds in psychiatric hospitals and the concomitant development of sectoral psychiatry); a multiplication and specialization in the types of establishment and "custody" (e.g. vis-à-vis migration, mental illness, juvenile delinquency); a diversification of forms of control through the use of "alternative" solutions (including electronic tagging or house arrest); and lastly, the increasing role of private stakeholders in the monitoring and assistance deployed. These dynamics, which vary in intensity depending on the institution and the national context, are as much indicative of across-the-board processes in the different establishments as of the maintenance of the features and heritages that are specific to each one.

At the same time, the academic literature concerning these various forms of confinement continues to grow and expand, nourished by the involvement of a growing number of disciplines. It sometimes appears to have specialized in an exclusive type of institution: the sociology of prisons and psychiatry, studies of international migration, the history of the habitat, worker or social housing. It may also emerge from scientific traditions that emanate from diverse cultural backgrounds which, as it happens, have been studied in a very unequal manner. However, some of this research now suggests that we can develop objects for across-the board study, or even highlight characteristics that are common to custodial settings: the existence of power relations between the forces of law and inmates, or the role of confinement in the production, reproduction and stabilization of categories

intended to organize the forms of deviance that confinement is designed to control, regulate or curb. The analytical (and geographical) comparison of custodial institutions seems today to invite questions concerning the way in which these transversalities are studied, or not, in the available literature on confinement. The richness of Goffmanian thought has often led social science research to apprehend confinement in the prism of the "total institution", and Foucault's work has lastingly transformed and complicated our comprehension of power relations (particularly in a carceral context). But we may also wonder to what degree the almost-systematic mobilization, in confinement research, of these two authors (there being no question of merging their respective contributions in a single movement) may possibly have led to a preference for certain angles of approach to the detriment of others.

This symposium therefore sets out to study the value, for analysis, of putting different types of custodial space into perspective. What does this comparison of visions of confinement produce, what awareness does it develop? What facets of confinement can it highlight that have received little attention from specialized fields? These questions can be broken down into several major fields of investigation, an exploration of which would seem to benefit from the dialogue between researches into the various custodial institutions.

### **1- Space and power relations**

Power relations inside establishments that deprive people of their freedom are one of the central themes of research into confinement. In line with Goffmanian work on total institutions, many analyses have concentrated on the power relations between inmates and the representatives of the institution, running the risk of a dichotomous reading of the custodial zone opposing, on the one hand, the inmates in a position of "servitude", "dependence" and "dispossession of self" and, on the other, members of the personnel monopolizing knowledge, power and freedom. However, Goffman's interest in "secondary adjustments" facilitates a complication of the reading of power relations in a custodial milieu by taking an interest in the techniques through which inmates attempt to circumvent or refute the roles assigned to them by the institution.

Space, which both sociology and geography view as a constitutive element of the social sphere, may be a relevant criterion for a renewed approach to the dynamics of these power relations. Its constructed dimension is often analysed by the sociology of architecture, which questions the use of space as an instrument of constraint. It remains to be explored how space, in its multiple dimensions (perceived, represented, symbolic, lived, appropriated, presented and instrumentalized), is both a central issue in the power relations that characterize confinement, and a vector for calling them into question. In addition, the symposium will question the scales of the custodial establishment, which is fractioned into multiple levels right down to and including the objects and bodies of the inmates. What role does space play in the multiple logics of adjustment to, or circumvention, denial and even questioning of the institutional authority? One of the objectives will thus be to explore the interactions between space and power inside custodial establishments and, more generally, in social relations between inmates, on the one hand, and between inmates and non-inmates (including representatives of civil society) on the other.

### **2- Control operators and institutions: private vs. public**

Custodial institutions have often been apprehended by existing research as the expression of the sovereign power of the state over its subjects. A growing number of them now involve private stakeholders. Thus, European states delegate more and more frequently to private companies the construction, maintenance and surveillance of penitentiary institutions or detention centres for non-nationals in an irregular situation. The running of certain facilities,

included in the framework of this symposium, is even more tightly linked to private providers: this is particularly the case for housing for migrant workers, which generally belongs to private entrepreneurs (whether they directly employ the labour or specialize in the construction and management of workers' housing). Although the sociology of private security has experienced a real upturn over the last twenty years, this symposium will be an opportunity to review the public/private dichotomy in order to analyse its possible repercussions on the power relations that prevail when people are deprived of their freedom. The question of the form of control (public/private), and its delegation or outsourcing will also be posed in the context of previously observed procedures to withdraw state funding. Who confines, why and for whom? The exercise of constraint on the public in question and the implementation of confinement may *a priori* seem more justified in the framework of establishments whose mission has been defined by public authorities and which have explicit recourse to forced confinement (prison, police custody, detention centres, psychiatric hospitals, etc.). But the existence of places whose operation is not subject to state authority calls into question the role of the acting power, whether public or private, in the design and forms of confinement implemented. This calling into question is particularly important when the confinement facilities are invested with a state mission to control populations and are increasingly placed in the hands of third parties (NGOs, associations, national and supranational control mechanisms, etc.): it is also important to question the impact of this constellation on forms of support for confined populations, and the dynamics governing the opening and closing of the institution.

### **3- Routes, circulation, mobility**

Since the 1960s American prison sociology has highlighted the necessity of considering custodial establishments in their relations with the exterior, with their environment. This position, which has been largely accepted in Francophone research, invites us to view confinement facilities not so much as "isolates" but as pieces in a social fabric that extends largely beyond the walls of the institution. One of the major contributions of recent prison sociology consists in its study of how the period in prison is worked into the socio-biographical history of prisoners and how this process influences the experience of confinement, and inversely. Subsequently, work devoted to the confinement of non-nationals has often resulted in an extension of this perspective not only to the biographical history of those detained but also to their spatial mobility. In line with these attempts to "decarceralize" the focus of analysis, the contributions proposed here will seek to analyse the effect of mobility on confinement. They may identify types of mobility linked to confinement, and the issues underlying them: migration routes and modifications thereof, linked to periods in custodial facilities, but also mobility linked to everyday life and the confined person, both inside custodial establishments (trips to the visiting room, movements to and from refectories, etc.) and outside (trips to court, to hospital, etc.). It is also important to consider the persons that move and those that cause them to move. How can the authorities, or the inmates, make mobility between places, but also inside of places, an instrument of power and/or knowledge? Can we consider the obligation to move as a new form of spatial constraint e.g. in cases of forced transfers (from one establishment to another, one country to another), or certain orders to move about inside the custodial establishments?

### **4- Custodial institutions and inequality**

Although different research trends in the social sciences have recently questioned the relationship between public institutions and inequality, particularly ethnic and religious inequality, this question seems to have received little attention in the literature on confinement. A comparison of different types of custodial facilities offers an opportunity to question institutional representations of inequality and their possible problematization by the

controlling operators in their daily interactions with inmates. It is important to examine the hypothesis whereby custodial institutions contribute to the construction of social relations, whether based on race/ethnicity, nationality, religion, age or gender. In other words, it is important to determine the effects of otherness (or of its construction by the authority) on the institutional methods of control, custody or support deployed inside custodial establishments, and even on the way inmates resist the processes of confinement.

### **5- Civil society and confinement: governing facilities, production and the circulation of knowledge**

For several decades, associations and NGOs have played an essential role in a considerable number of custodial establishments. This intervention is often part of a dual movement to legitimize the public authority (the intervention by associations being often presented by custodial authorities as a sign of transparency and "best practice") while simultaneously challenging the detention system (e.g. by providing legal aid to question the legitimacy of detaining non-nationals). This dual register in the role of associations thus invites us to question the role of civil society in the governance of custodial centres and particularly in the means of consolidating it, testing it but also its possible displacement. This implication of civil society also affects the production and circulation of critical knowledge concerning confinement. Reports by associations have sometimes led directly to the deployment of research work e.g. concerning the living conditions of inmates in custodial institutions, of non-nationals detained at frontiers or migrant labour confined in camps. These associations produce not only first-hand information but also form part of a sort of research-action, fulfilling a critical role as a (counter-) power. Moreover, in order to gain access to the custodial centres themselves, many researchers use associations and NGOs, a procedure that places them *de facto* in a position of *involvement* or *detachment*, to use Norbert Elias's terminology. This approach will thus aim to question the forms of transition between the world of associations and research into confinement. What are the bases of the collaboration between researchers and the world of associations, particularly at the time of the investigation? Although the links established are sometimes close and long-lasting, how do their respective aims (production of knowledge on the one hand and operational procedure on the other) combine? What consequences do they have for the researchers' apprehension of confinement, and for the interventions of associative and humanitarian players?

The contributions proposed in response to this call for papers will thus focus, from an historical and contemporary perspective, on how a comparison of research on confinement contributes to our understanding of power relations in custodial environments – especially in terms of the spatial, circulatory, institutional and diversity management dynamics that drive them. A preference will be given to papers that provide an empirical approach to these institutions, and collective contributions that include a comparative dimension between different types of confinement will be particularly appreciated.

This symposium closes the *TerrFerme* research project (*Mechanisms of Confinement. A territorial approach to contemporary political and social control*) financed by the French National Research Agency (Agence Nationale de la Recherche) and the Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine. It focuses not only on the three types of space identified by the team (prisons, detention centres and housing for migrant labour), but on an ongoing list of custodial institutions. Sensitive to different study contexts and terrains (authoritarian or democratic regimes, developed or developing countries), it seeks to promote a dialogue between disciplines and national traditions of research into confinement.

Abstracts shall comprise the following elements:

- The title of the paper;
- The name and first name of the author or authors, the institution or association to which they are attached (when applicable), their full personal data (email address, postal address, telephone number);
- An abstract of the paper (3,000 characters), clearly identifying a) the central argument of the paper, b) the research method used, and c) the main results presented.

Abstracts will be submitted in .rtf format. Deadline for submission is **February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013**, at this address: [colloqueterrferme2013@gmx.fr](mailto:colloqueterrferme2013@gmx.fr)

The working languages of the symposium shall be French and English (translation provided).

For any further information, please write to: [colloqueterrferme2013@gmx.fr](mailto:colloqueterrferme2013@gmx.fr)

### **Calendar:**

February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013: submission deadline for abstracts

April 2013: announcement of selected abstracts

September 10, 2013: submission deadline for the complete text of papers

The symposium shall take place in Pessac, close to Bordeaux, France, in the **institute ADES** (CNRS/University of Bordeaux) located at:

Maison des Suds

12, Esplanade des Antilles

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