



Dispersões digitais: da privatização móvel ao encarceramento móvel¹

Digital dispersions: From mobile privatization to mobile incarceration

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In recent years Sweden has seen a growing number of incarcerated and prison facilities are reaching full capacity. In times of challenges like overcrowded prisons, technology is as often imagined as an efficient and effective solution. In this specific case, ankle monitoring is proposed and introduced as an alternative way to serve a prison sentence. Like in the 1990s, when ankle monitoring was first tested in the Swedish context, it is now increasingly imagined solving the problem of overcrowded prison facilities. Instead of serving the prison sentence at state-owned facilities, offenders are incarcerated at home following a strict time regime of routine tasks including work or job training as well as therapy while being monitored and tracked constantly.

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This dispersion of punishment into the homes of the incarcerated themselves can be thought of as a kind of mobile incarceration, a form of incarceration that is not based on the fundamental idea of entrapping criminal subjects in a secluded space but capturing them in different places across the cities while highly constraining their movements. It is in that sense not the subject of the offender that is mobile and dispersed, but the prison itself. A mobility that is technologically enforced and enabled. Any home can accordingly be potentially turned into a prison. Drawing on and extending Raymond Williams' notion of mobile privatisation, our term of mobile incarceration captures the ambiguous phenomenon of being incarcerated while being at home. In 1975, Williams connected the emergence of broadcasting media that entered the homes via smaller and simpler receivers. The invention and spread of technologies such as the radio – or what Williams called consumer durables – included not only broadcasting technologies but also means of transportation such as motorcycles and motorcars. Trying to capture these technological developments, he writes

Socially, this complex is characterized by the two apparently paradoxical yet deeply connected tendencies of modern urban industrial living: on the one hand mobility, on the other hand the more apparently self-sufficient family home. The earlier period of public technology, best exemplified by the railways and city lighting, was being replaced by a kind of technology for which a satisfactory name has yet been found: that which served an at once mobile and home-centred way of living: a form of mobile privatization. Broadcasting in this applied form was a social product of this distinctive tendency (Williams 1975, p. 26).

Similarly, we can argue that tracking technologies such as the ankle monitor combine the deeply ambiguous tendency of hyper mobility and dispersion with entrapment and stasis. In this paper, we develop the concept of mobile incarceration using the rise of ankle monitoring as an example for a much broader tendency in digital culture that moves beyond corrections and the criminal justice system. For doing so, we draw on empirical material that documents experiments with ankle monitoring as well



as patent analyses that connect technologies for corrections with technologies for self-tracking in everyday contexts. We relate this material to contemporary studies of practices of and motivations for self-tracking (Lupton, 2016; Neff & Nafus, 2016). Ultimately, we argue that digital technologies that allow for constant tracking and surveillance lead to the emergence of an individual-centred, dispersed culture of mobile incarceration that is characterised by both hyper-mobility and connection *and* isolation and stasis.

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