CARCERAL JOURNEYS

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Carceral Journeys

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Abstract

Through the original concept of carceral journeys, Gill and Simon draw attention to the importance of coerced and constrained forms of displacement. In the context of recent work in carceral geography, they argue that the lens of carceral journeys brings into focus the increasing connections between state power, inter-institutional mobility and coercion. They discuss the visibilities and invisibilities of carceral journeys in particular, as well as the extent to which they are motivated by profit and exploitation. The second part of the chapter focuses on the case of extraordinary rendition, which not only highlights the viscerality of carceral journeys and the opportunities to resist coercive power that inhere even in the most violent journeys, but also the extent of the infrastructure required to facilitate them and the breath of people they affect.

Carceral Journeys

This chapter is concerned with carceral journeys, which refer to the transportation or transfer of anyone whose freedom is significantly and deliberately curtailed. An obvious example of such journeys are inter-prison transfers, which occur for a variety of reasons ranging from administrative convenience in the management of carceral populations across space (Moran, Gill, & Conlon, 2013) to the 'ghosting' of prison populations – that is, the movement of certain prisoners as a way to make them invisible to authorities and other inmates. Carceral journeys is a broader concept than simply prison to prison movement though. It also includes the historic transportation of convicts to the colonies of Western powers, the shifting of immigration detainees between detention centres, the within-prison transfer of inmates to different parts of the same establishment, the well-trodden city-block to prison circuit in the USA, the extraordinary rendition of terror suspects and the meandering routes of 'delinquent' individuals between different 'carceral' institutions like hospitals, schools, and factories.

Carceral journeys as a coerced form of displacement allows us to focus on the interstitial spaces between, surrounding and within these sorts of institutions. This connective tissue has traditionally been sidelined in prison studies, partly because *prison* studies is already conceptualised in institutional terms, and partly owing to the intellectual heritage of the discipline, which has tended to emphasise the prison's reified boundary via concepts such as Goffman's 'total institution' (Goffman, 1961). Geographers have argued that it is important to focus not just on the institutions that make up the carceral landscape, though, but also on the connections between them for various reasons. First, in reality carceral institutions are not isolated but crisscrossed by multiple practical and social networks (Moran, 2015; Moran & Keinänen, 2012). Second, the carceral system is showing signs of denser connectivity between disparate institutions. The *integration* of diverse carceral sites into a cohesive carceral system is part of the emergence of a profitable network of governing institutions that are increasingly coordinated in the management of populations that are seen as deviant or dangerous (Gill, Conlon, Moran, & Burridge, 2018). Third, inter-institutional carceral

spaces are in some ways less visible, even though they are outside the formal carceral boundary. The conditions of inter-institutional transfers of inmates, for example, are harder to monitor than prison conditions generally. Consequently, fourth, interstitial carceral spaces are sites of acute power asymmetry, which produce both a heightened sense of carcerality in the subject (the subject is often acutely aware of their incarceration during carceral journeys), and particular opportunities for the abuse of power by the carceral agent.

A focus on carceral journeys is a distinctly geographical approach that emphasises mobility, connectivity and lived experience. In what follows we explore carceral journeys both conceptually and practically. Conceptually, we emphasise the importance of attending not only to static forms of incarceration and exclusion, but also to forms that combine mobility and incarceration; we examine the enmeshment of carceral journeys into profit-making and exploitative systems; and we attend to the various visibilities and invisibilities that they entail. Practically, we reflect on the use of extraordinary rendition as a particularly controversial and hidden type of carceral journey that entails distinctive combinations of forced mobility and inertia. Through examining the case of extraordinary rendition, we are able to highlight further geographical aspects of carceral journeys including their viscerality and the opportunities for resistance that persist within even the most violent journeys. We also draw attention to the infrastructure required to bring carceral journeys about, and the effect that carceral journeys have not just on subjects, but a wide network of supporters. Overall, we argue that carceral journeys, as a particular form of displacement, are an increasingly key element of evolving global carceral circuitry.

Conceptualising Carceral Journeys

At first sight it might seem as though 'carceral journeys' is something of an oxymoron. Surely to be incarcerated is to be immobilised and inert? And surely to be free is to be able to move and journey at will? Certainly many forms of incarceration do entail imposed stasis, and many forms of freedom afford movement, but the correspondence is not perfect in either direction and, as

geographers, it is important to be critical of the sometimes-assumed homology between freedom and movement (Gill, 2009). Many journeys, for example, are undertaken regretfully and grudgingly. The number of forced migrants fleeing the threat of violence in their home countries has increased markedly in recent years, for instance. As a result, many of these migrants, who often have to move multiple times and whose journeys can take many years, long for stillness as a form of freedom.

Although contemporary culture makes travel sound glamorous and adventurous (the travel industry has a vested interest in achieving this), it is often burdensome, tiring, disruptive, disorientating and frightening owing to its uncertainties and risks (Anderson, 2015; Favell, 2008). The horrors of the shipment of slaves from Africa to the colonies at the height of the slave trade indicate well the impositions of movement. Indeed, journeys have historically been systematically imposed on erstwhile prisoners as a form of punishment. 'Transportation' was a common sentence in the seventeen hundreds in Britain and other world powers, for instance (Woodward, 2006). The essence of the convicts' punishment when they were sentenced to transportation was precisely the ordeal of the journey itself: the difficult conditions, the dangers, the hard work, and the distance from loved ones and familiar surroundings.

In different ways, today's governments around the world also seek to enrol mobility in their attempts to control populations., The threat and reality of deportation of non-citizens from the sovereign territory of Western developed countries, for example, is reminiscent of the transportation of convicts in previous centuries. The difference is that deportation is not a legal punishment, but an administrative measure applied to those who are deemed 'out of place', despite the fact that it is often experienced as a bitter form of punishment by both those who are deported and their loved ones left behind (Khosravi, 2018). It's classification as administrative rather than legal in nature though, can mean that deportation is not subject to the sort of judicial oversight that would ordinarily govern state-sanctioned punishment and imprisonment. In turn this can mean that it is more arbitrarily used, as well as more poorly scrutinised and monitored. Another way states enrol mobility as a tool of social

control is through the requirement to keep moving as part of their regulation of urban spaces. The exclusion of socially undesirable sections of the population like homeless people, drug users, prostitutes and the mentally ill from cities in the USA, for example, has been achieved in part via the outlawing of prolonged immobility in city centres through laws prohibiting loitering as well as sleeping and camping in public spaces (Beckett & Herbert, 2010). These render personal mobility a legal requirement, and function as a pernicious form of socio-spatial regulation.

Another example of social control via movement concerns immigration detention (that is, incarceration for the purposes of migration control) The transfer of immigration detainees from one detention centre to another is used in some countries as a means to reward 'good', 'compliant' behaviour, by moving detainees to centres with better facilities like gym, library and IT access for instance, and punish 'bad', 'non-compliant' behaviour by moving detainees to centres with poorer facilities (Gill, 2009).

Turning to mainstream prisons, while prison sentences take into account the length of time that inmates will serve, they rarely take into account the distance that such inmates will be from their everyday lives and loved ones whilst completing their sentences. It makes a huge difference to inmates, though, if they are imprisoned near their families and other networks of support (including their lawyers) because they are likely to get more visits if they are nearby and impose fewer hardships on their loved ones (Comfort, 2008).

In short, carceral journeys are important tools for governments who are seeking to control and manage populations - especially deviant, troublesome, threatening or undesirable ones - and can be experienced as an acute imposition and a painful form of punishment. It is all the more concerning, then, that carceral journeys are also profitable. The profitability of carceral systems has been identified by geographers as a key cause of the rise in rates of incarceration, especially, but not exclusively, in the USA (Bonds, 2012; Gilmore, 2007). Prison building has been viewed as a way to address high local rates of unemployment and there is evidence that justice systems themselves,

including the likelihood that certain minor crimes will carry a custodial sentence, are calibrated to ensure that prisons are filled with inmates in order to prop up prison economies (Gilmore, 2007). This approach to generating employment is flawed. Not only does it render justice contingent on factors other than the crime committed, but it eventually leads to either a higher unemployment rate because imprisonment often effectively dispossesses incarcerated individuals of future employability, or to spiralling imprisonment rates as more prisons are built to contain the unemployable (Western & Beckett, 1999). Unfortunately though the temptation to build prisons is heightened by the promise of a flexible, bored, exploitable labour force at low rates of pay, available to carry out work from electronics manufacture or recycling to call centre work from within prisons themselves (Nowakowski, 2013).

The global prison population swelled by nearly 20% between 2000 and 2015 leading to over 10 million people living in prisons in 2016 (Rope & Sheahan, 2018). Where there are more prisons, the connections between imprisonable populations and prison institutions is sustained by carceral journeys. (Massaro, 2015) describes the 'revolving door' of American prisons in which the circulation of poor, black African-Americans between city blocks and prisons is so common that communities have adapted to the high likelihood of repeated incarceration by sharing the burden of visits and bail payments. (Wacquant, 2001) has suggested that prisons and ghettos developed a symbiotic relationship in American culture towards the end of the previous century: a relationship bound together by carceral journeys into, around and out of carceral institutions.

Another reason why carceral journeys are becoming more common is because they are included by some prison authorities in rehabilitation programmes. As part of their sentences inmates in some countries are expected to re-learn how to play a 'useful' role in society, which often means travelling outside the prison to engage in education, work, community service, victim compensation schemes or paid employment. Scholars have argued that this form of carceral journeying is related to

a shift in the logics that underpin imprisonment in some countries (Mincke & Lemonne, 2014). No longer are prisons intended to simply confiscate time – rather they are intended to make prisoners' time more productive and active as a way to reconstruct an engaged liberal subject (N. Rose, 2000). Ironically, inmates who refuse this form of conditioning and show no interest in participating in their own improvement are *also* likely to be moved around under carceral conditions. They typically find themselves diagnosed as needing special treatment by experts, especially psychologists (Mincke & Lemonne, 2014). This results in what Martel (2006: 600) calls 'a perpetual loop-line' of passing-on: from juvenile delinquent institutions, to psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric prison wings (Schliehe, 2014), to local community parole officers.

Carceral journeys introduce particular forms of visibility and invisibility to the carceral landscape. In terms of visibility, parading prisoners serves not only to humiliate them, but to instil fear in the audience, thereby promoting compliance among the wider population. For this reason occupying colonial powers have historically been particularly fond of prisoner parades, but the practice is exclusive neither to the distant past, nor to colonies. In Arizona, Maricopa county sheriff Joe Arpaio created a tent prison, which remained open for 20 years until 2016, which required inmates to wear a humiliating pink colour (Fernández, 2017). Press were frequently shown around the facility as a way to broadcast the sheriff's 'tough-on-crime' political image, and prisoners also wore the colours outside the prison in chain gangs that had mostly been abandoned in the US since the 1950s. The pink colour made the prisoners look ridiculous and sexually inferior.

In terms of invisibility, in his detailed study of the 'dirty protests'[i] inside the notorious Maze prison in Northern Ireland, Feldman (1991) describes the tense and violent relationship between the prison guards and the inmate population in the context of the acute political tensions in the country during the late 1980s. Desperate to suppress the political will of the dissidents in prison, prison

authorities moved prisoners between prison cells and prison wings routinely as a way to sever their connections to fellow inmates, isolate them and break their resolve.

Frequently moving prisoners can also make them invisible to family and other supporters on the outside. Besides increasing the harm of immigration detention for the detainees, Mountz and Loyd (2014) demonstrate that the remoteness and frequent transfers of detained immigrants affect their families and legal advocates (see also Gill, 2009). Mountz and Loyd (2014:389) conclude that "remote geographic locations" of detention sites and the "frequent transfers of detainees […] have proven [to be] significant issues of concern for anyone who has tried to track down a loved one".

Extraordinary Rendition as a Carceral Journey

Having set out some of the features of carceral journeys, we now turn to an examination of extraordinary rendition as a particularly obfuscated example of carceral journeys (Paglen, 2011). We show how extraordinary rendition – the forced transfer of suspected terrorists without due legal process - highlights the viscerality of carceral journeys, the resistance that they encounter, the extent to which they need to be supported by a wide infrastructure, and the influence they have in wider society, beyond the immediate subject.

The empirical material presented in this section draws upon PhD research conducted by Oriane Simon: in particular archival work and interviews (Simon, 2017). The ten in-depth interviews were conducted over 2 years (between the end of 2014 and end of 2016) with Human Rights lawyers, who defended victims or investigated extraordinary rendition, as well as Human Rights investigators supporting NGOs, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch or The Rendition Project.

The prisoners' transfers across state borders constitute the most obvious, large-scale journey that is involved in extraordinary rendition. The extraordinary rendition victim El-Masri suffered two lengthy carceral journeys across state borders, which he describes in detail. Firstly, he was transferred

from Macedonia, where he was seized, to a secret prison in Afghanistan. Secondly, for his release, he was again transferred across state borders and flown first to Albania, where he was driven up and down the mountains for hours before eventually being set on a flight to his home in Germany (El-Masri, 2005, 2006; Watt, Dakwar, Turner, Goodman, & Wizner, 2008). As part of the transfer preparations to the prison, El-Masri underwent a 'medical examination' at the hands of US agents (El-Masri, 2006; European Court of Human Rights, 2012; Watt et al., 2008).

> As I was led into this room, I felt two people violently grab my arms, one from the right side and the other from the left. They bent both my arms backwards. This violent motion caused me a lot of pain. I was beaten severely from all sides. …finally they stripped me completely naked and threw me to the ground. My assailants pulled my arms back and I felt a boot in the small of my back. I then felt a stick or some other hard object being forced in my anus. I realized I was being sodomized. […] [Later] I was dressed in a diaper, over which they fitted a dark blue sports suit with short sleeves and legs. I was once again blindfolded, my ears were plugged with cotton, and headphones were placed over my ears. A bag was placed over my head and a belt around my waist. My hands were chained to the belt. They put something hard over my nose. Because of the bag, breathing was getting harder and harder for me. I struggled for breath and began to panic. (El-Masri, 2006: 9-10).

This quote illustrates the viscerality of certain carceral journeys and their punitive effect on the victim. In fact, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) asserts that the physical force and measures for this transfer were excessive, unjustified, and that they were used purposefully to punish, intimidate, and cause pain (European Court of Human Rights, 2012). The visceral and punitive aspects are further evidenced in the research interviews conducted as part of Oriane Simon's PhD thesis (Simon, 2017) and the centrality of mobility to the acheivement of disorietnation also becomes

clear. One Human Rights lawyer, for example, asserts that those practices are "prolonging the shock of capture" and aim at making victims feel "as uncomfortable as possible":

> Moving them to different locations is just another way of disrupting the person's way of thinking, making sure that they are never ever comfortable, they never relax, that they are always questioning what is going to happen. So putting a sack over someone's head, making sure that they are sensory deprived, is all part of the process. […] They take them to different locations for a number of reasons, but one of them is to keep the disorientation up.

Besides the carceral journeys across state borders that are undertaken as part of extraordinary rendition, there are manifold smaller scale transfers, which enrol individual mobility as a technique in mental and physical coercion. Amongst others, for instance, Rose (2004), a journalist, points out the abusive qualities of forced cell extractions describing the manner in which one prisoner was "pepper-sprayed" in the face, which led the prisoner to vomit "five cupfuls [sic]" (D. Rose, 2004: 71). Another example is given by the extraordinary rendition victim Errachidi (2013), who recalls how Guantánamo Bay functionaries devised techniques of pretending to release prisoners by giving the detainees new clothes and bringing them near the airport just to then re-interrogate the prisoner because of supposedly novel evidence, and so playing with the prisoners' hopes (Errachidi, 2013).

A second point that extraordinary rendition illustrates about carceral journeys is that prisoners' forced mobility sometimes leads to unexpected forms of resistance. As Pain (2009) argues, manipulations are not simply absorbed passively by individuals. For one, carceral journeys provide the opportunities for communication and information exchange between prisoners (El-Masri, 2006; Errachidi, 2013). In the American Kandahar prison (Afghanistan), two prisoners were tasked to empty the toilet buckets of all enclosures every morning. While this task was meant to be punitive, the prisoners soon turned it into a means to exchange information (Errachidi, 2013). Similarly, the prisoners actively used the rotation of prisoners to different cell blocks within Guantánamo Bay to

exchange information and coordinate resistance actions (Errachidi, 2013; Hicks, 2010). Another example is that, at times, Errachidi was not allowed to go to the toilet and so he soiled himself. While this humiliated him, it also implied that he was seen by others as a fellow prisoner rather than a US spy (Errachidi, 2013). The guards' aim to punish prisoners by refusing them the opportunity to relieve themselves and forcing them to soil themselves was turned into a means to constitute solidarity amongst the prisoners.

The third point that extraordinary rendition reveals about carceral journeys is that they require an infrastructure and various actors. Extraordinary rendition's cross state carceral journeys rely on a large infrastructure spread across the globe, which necessitates various forms of direct and indirect support from different countries (Marty, 2006; Paglen & Thompson, 2006; Singh, 2013). Singh's study of torture (2013) delineates forms of involvement of 54 countries beside the US and a recent analysis adds another 15 countries (Cordell, 2017). El-Masri's comparatively short extraordinary rendition involved the Macedonian officials who originally arrested, detained and interrogated him for about two weeks before handing him over to the CIA (El-Masri, 2006; Marty, 2006); his transfer to the secret prison in Afghanistan, including a refill stop in Iraq (Marty, 2006); and eventually his release in Albania (El-Masri, 2006; Marty, 2006). It is noteworthy that owning a plane, organising a flight, and flying are different activities, for which different actors are responsible (Blecher, 2007; Paglen & Thompson, 2006). El-Masri's extraordinary rendition thus highlights the wide-ranging and complex infrastructure and actors involved in carceral journeys. The involvement of foreign states and state agencies are deemed a crucial means for avoiding responsibility. Carceral journeys are a major tool to involve various US agencies, foreign officials, countries and private contractors (Paglen & Thompson, 2006).

Finally, extraordinary rendition demonstrates that carceral journeys have wide-ranging effects that extend beyond the immediate victims to people commonly understood as either indirectly or

tangentially involved, such as the functionaries, detainees' lawyers, and all these actors' families and friends.

Prisoners' regular carceral journeys affect their bonding with functionaries like guards and other prison staff, for example. With regard to asylum seekers, Gill (2009: 193) outlines that as detainees are constantly moved they become a fleeting and ghostly presence and the lack of bonds with detention custody officers increases the likelihood of abuse (Gill, 2009). Bonding or the lack thereof not only renders the detainees' life easier or harder, it also affects the functionaries' likelihood "to support legal appeals, […] act as character references, […] secure good legal representation […] and block the transfer of detained asylum seekers" (Gill, 2009: 194). Gill (2009: 194) concludes that, "[g]iven the degree of influence wielded by management, the way in which detainees are presented to managers is of critical importance".

Similarly, Rose (2004) stresses that the guards' rotations in Guantánamo Bay made it more difficult to get to know their prisoners: the guards were explicitly watched and prohibited from bonding with their wards. Building a relationship with prisoners is discouraged in that the guards "assigned to each block were changed every day" (D. Rose, 2004: 67). In addition, the former Guantánamo Bay guard Hickman (2013) recalls that Guantánamo Bay functionaries were further discouraged from bonding with other US officials outside their small units[ii].

Besides the remote location, all of the interviewees who participated in the research Oriane Simon conducted who were on the island, reported that Guantánamo Bay isolates functionaries in that there is a bad internet connection, that there is basically no cell phone coverage and only an expensive public phone (see also Mountz & Loyd, 2014; D. Rose, 2004). In other words, functionaries are affected by what they do and experience. The very geographical location itself isolates functionaries and shields them from public outcry. As another interviewee, a Human Rights lawyer, points out "[t]he people who did the torture, […] they suffer". She cites a guard saying "'I have PTSD

[posttraumatic stress disorder], not for what happened to me but for what I did to people'". Their experiences in Guantánamo Bay in turn affects their family and their later work on the mainland (Corsetti, 2013; Lakemacher, 2010a, 2010b; Walls, 2015).

Travelling to faraway places takes a toll on the body and mind of the lawyers, activists, journalists, and investigators (Simon, 2017). One interviewee, a lawyer, explains that at first it is exciting to go to Guantánamo Bay, but then it becomes: "Oh, I need to go to Gitmo; I'm going to be eating crap food, and it will be 90° [Fahrenheit]" (Simon, 2017). Guantánamo Bay also employs tedious regulations, as one of the investigator explains: "When you arrive you are assigned a minder, who escorts you wherever you want to go during your time there, including to buy groceries, to get food, to go everywhere. And, you have to travel in groups." In these and similar ways, the prisoners' carceral journeys also affect less directly involved people.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the characteristics of carceral journeys as a particular form of displacement. It has argued that carceral journeys are a by-product of expanding carceral circuits, which integrate various types of institution into an overall carceral system. This circuitry is increasing in complexity as the number of prisoners and other types of detainees increases, driven in part by profitability. Carceral journeys affect the visibility and invisibility of carceral practices, exposing and displaying certain inmates, punishments and conditions, whilst obfuscating, hiding and isolating others.

The case of extraordinary rendition, as a particular type of carceral journey, highlights the physical and forceful viscerality of carceral journeys as well as the burdens they can impose not just on detainees but on other actors tangentially involved in the carceral system. This said, carceral journeys can also expose carceral systems to forms of resistance that would not otherwise be possible: extraordinary rendition victims have documented the unexpected ways in which they and other prisoners have responded, which have defied efforts to catalogue them.

A key advantage of thinking about and with carceral journeys is that the experience of the journeyer is foregrounded. Carceral systems are often dehumanising (think of prison numbers that replace names during custodial sentences). Paying attention to carceral journeys, on the other hand, facilitates a focus on the individuals concerned, as well as the interstitial, inter-institutional spaces that they occupy. As such, the lense of carceral journeys offers an important epistemological window onto the nature and effects of the recent development of carceral systems. For all these reasons, carceral journeys are a conceptually innovative way to approach and understand the intersection between displacement and carceral space. Carceral journeys can be experienced as an acute imposition and a painful form of punishment, and their proliferation is the logical result of the expansion and evolution of global carceral systems. Carceral journeys illustrate that displacement can be a form of social

regulation and control. This implies that an awareness of carceral journeys is necessary in order to

reckon with the complexity of today's many forms of state power.

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[i]

    So named to refer to the practice adopted by Irish republican prisoners of daubing their own faeces on the walls of their cells in protest against their treatment.

[ii]   Nonetheless bonding between prisoners and functionaries occurs. In the extraordinary rendition victim Al-Hajj's words "I was always glad to see the familiar faces of our military escorts, who became like old friends over the months. They always greeted me with happy smiles or hugs. 'Long time!' they'd joke sarcastically" (Khan 2008: 202).