

## Chapter 2

# The Role of Information and Communications Technology in the Social Reintegration of Ex-Prisoners

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The development of information and communications technology (ICT) over the past few decades has been positively surprising. Prison development has also been surprising, in a negative way. Hardline policy positions towards crime and the expansion in the consumption of ICT products are contemporaneous. They are co-occurrences. What makes sense of this apparent contradiction is the way societies experience distinct dispositions depending on the issues they have to face. The same people are able to be optimistic, in relation to the positive use of computers, and pessimistic as to the possibility of the criminal-penal system being able to combat crime. Is it possible for society to experience a disposition in which punitiveness regarding prisoners is replaced by the hope of reintegration for those convicted of crime? The answer is: there can be a shift of the dominant disposition, but for that we must reshape the whole of this society into another.*

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***The Role of Information and Communications Technology in the Social Reintegration*****INTRODUCTION**

*(...) technical feasibility alone is not enough - political motivation is also essential. Patricia Fara (2009) Science: 421.*

The development of information and communications technology (ICT) over the past few decades has been surprising. It has decidedly altered our daily lives. And, is always the case with such phenomena, there are enthusiasts, techno-optimists, and conservatives, techno-pessimists. The latter, concerned with the growth of unemployment caused by automation and with the ecological consequences of industrialization for the survival of the human species.

Prison development has also been surprising (Wacquant 2016). The exponential increase in the number of prisoners and the growth of international institutions for the prevention of torture were not part of the imagination of those who, in the 1970s, anticipated the year 2000 as symbolizing the realization of the Western civilizational ideal. Also surprising in light of what was that ideal is the complicit popular indifference in relation to torture which has taken hold since.

In the modern imagination, ICT represents a revival of a joyful sense of progress that has been lost in other fields, such as energy and the economy. On the other hand, the prison situation elicits a depressive apprehension, even among defenders of the criminal-penal system.

Societies experience distinct dispositions depending on the issues they have to face. The same people are able to be optimistic, in relation to the positive use of computers, and pessimistic as to the possibility of the criminal-penal system being able to combat crime, without it compromising their intellectual or moral coherence and constancy

We do not need the results of a survey in order to know that, in recent decades, despite the evidence on climate change, modernism is the dominant disposition. Nor do we need special deductive powers to know that the target audience of this book seeks the answer to the question: is it possible for society to experience a disposition in which punitiveness regarding prisoners is replaced by the hope of reintegration for those convicted of crime?

*Table 1. Dispositions elicited by ICT and prisons*

<b>ICT Prisons</b>	<b>Techno-optimism</b>	<b>Techno-scepticism</b>
Tough on crime	Modernism	Reactionary
Hope of resocialisation	This book's target audience	New Wave

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The answer is: there can be a shift of the dominant disposition, but for that we must reshape the whole of this society into another.

By the 80's the digital revolution was impacting every sphere of social life, and ICT in particular was generating great enthusiasm. As symbol of late modernity, ICT became the focus of those energies that, in the 60's, had been applied to social revolution. During that same period, prisons turned from places where people were isolated from society for relatively short periods of time in order to be prepared for positive opportunities upon release, into warehouses where people are expected to do little other than what they can to survive longer and longer sentences in increasingly dehumanizing, overcrowded conditions.

Society and individuals are like that: of an unstable disposition. At one moment they blame the criminals, and at another the state which incarcerates them. Hence, for long periods of time the bulk of the blame was emphatically placed upon the state. Then the dominant disposition changed. This would lead us to believe it can change again in the future, even if things must get worse before they get better.

This chapter briefly discusses the resistance within organizations to the introduction of ICT, the type of organization built by the penal system over the last decades and the paradoxical ambiguity of the incarceration mandate pursued by the state and society. Social analysis will not be useful to clarify what is going on if it does not attend to the analysis of social dispositions: the previously mentioned macro dispositions and the micro dispositions which separate the uses of ICTs by the lower class (games) and the middle class (learning). Would the prison system accept becoming a school for its inmates as its objective? Experience shows that the introduction of ICTs into the prisons is very slow and often clandestine, driven by the efforts of the prisoners, not the teachers. For now, the dominant disposition does not support the use of ICTs for education in prison, except in isolated pilot studies – as modernist propaganda capable of masking the violations of human rights and the organizational consequences of the reactionary impulse which drives the hard-line policy positions towards crime.

## **BACKGROUND**

This is a reply taken from Durkheim's theory (1960), which posited the existence and study of the spirit of mechanical solidarity (existing in rural and simpler societies) and the spirit of organic solidarity (existing in urban societies). The author also proposed the study of sectoral solidarities in complex societies, such as the one that Garland (2001) described among the professionals in UK and USA prisons, which was in effect after the 1980s: the place of interventions aiming at social reintegration had been severely discredited.

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Experience shows that societies transform themselves. Medieval times transformed into capitalistic times and, for Socialists, there is hope that this structural transformation will continue to develop. Be it as a result of technological development or moral evolution, societies change. They also change due to wars and class struggles. They experience periods of nostalgia or hope in the future. Conservatism or progressivism succeed or fail. Guessing the future is not for us, but we cannot ignore the fact that the future will be different from the present – as can be easily established by anyone with more than 20 years of memory.

In terms of incarceration, conservatism and punitiveness remain dominant since the 80s. Compared by contrast with the enthusiasm in relation to technological progress. New technological utopias compared with the return of torture and mass incarceration.

## **MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER**

Can the introduction of ICT in prison transform it? What does past experience tell us? What is the dominant disposition in the prison sector? How can the evolution of societies, or any possible revolutions that might come to take place in the future, change the structural place of prison in society? This chapter will consider some answers to these questions.

## **Issues, Controversies, Problems**

### **The Introduction of ICT in the Prison**

In the 1980s, there was hope that ICT could solve the challenge of making the schools for the masses able to meet the individual needs of each student, with nothing more than technological investment. Already then it was, to some, clear that it would be impossible to achieve that goal. But the enthusiasm for pursuing it was great. There were those who wanted to end schools (Illich 1971), those who wanted to save on the educational budget by reducing the number of teachers, those in favour of new teaching methods, tailored to the particular needs of each student. More importantly, there was drive for the idea from both sides of those most directly involved with the practical aspects of the issue: on the teachers' side by those involved in computer-in-school programmes, and on the parents' side, by those anxious to offer their children the skills with which to tackle the future (Dores 1996).

By contrast, there is no such enthusiasm for social reintegration as an objective in today's prisons, not even at the departmental level (Firouzi et al., 2016). But there

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are experiments in some French prisons with using ICT to combat digital-exclusion and illiteracy, and the installation of a university centre in an Italian prison, the operation of which makes computers and the Internet indispensable (Crétenot 2014). This same source also noted the existence of therapeutic prisons in Britain where individuals, on entry, were surprised to be treated as persons rather than prisoners. In Spain, in recent years, there was an attempt to generalize access to therapeutic prisons (Ministerio del Interior, 2018). However, before there was time to evaluate the impact of the shift, there was a reversal in those policies.

As it happened with schools, the resistance to modernization observed in prisons, in relation to new conditions arising from social changes, ends up generating spontaneous phenomena. In schools, with the evolution of the market for personal computers and mobile phones, the question has now become the ban on the use of laptops and mobile phones in classrooms. iPads subvert the logic of teaching, in particular to the extent that they constitute extensions of human memory and give access to the solutions to all the problems already solved.

The pedagogical notion of re-creating in each child and youth the cognitive history of humanity is very quickly becoming obsolete. Youngsters and even children are often able to teach teachers how to use ICT. Some basic schools and pedagogical thinkers imposing, as they can, throwback rules to recreate the ideal conditions for traditional teaching/learning, without ICT.

In prisons, besides the introduction of radios, televisions, CD players, Gameboys, sometimes admitted as perks and privileges, in the perspective of the effort to humanize prison services, there is also the illicit trafficking in mobile phones, with or without access to the internet. For prisoners with the resources to make these purchases, and for their friends, there is the possibility of overcoming the limitations imposed by the prisons on telephone contact with family and friends. At the same time there is the possibility of prisoners intervening in social networks. Arguing security concerns, prison services ineffectively prohibit the use of ICT in prison. In the process the space for a new market is created; one in which mobile phones and iPads found during security searches are resold to prisoners at exorbitant prices.

There is also the possibility of prisoners creating (authorized or not) newspapers and (forbidden) blogs. In one case or another, especially when there is a guarantee that such writing opportunities will not be used to reveal the intimacies of prison life, there is authorization for available ICT to be put to such uses, under the direct control of staff, of course. Yet, in practice there are no cases of continuity of such projects, especially since the temptation by the prisoners to claim freedom of expression – which theoretically is within their rights – is simply resolved by the authorities with the termination of the project.

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### **The Dominant Disposition in the Prison Sector**

At the moment, the punitiveness of criminal sentences is only discussed in politics in terms of making them more severe. The discovery of sex crimes (Wacquant n.d.), the fear of migrant workers (Palidda & Garcia 2010) and terrorism, leave the public confused and governments struggling with security hard line pressures coming also from progressives groups (Karam, 1996; Paladines, 2013). Although the situation may change at any moment, for we live unstable times, both sides, governments and oppositions, are impervious, at least publicly, to any notion of mercy. Political party platforms too are silent as to the problem of how to overcome the chronic situations of torture identified, in all countries, by the international bodies responsible for that work.

In continental Europe, the independence and autonomy of the judiciary have been used to exempt politicians and the legislature from taking any sort of position on what happens in the prisons. The Portuguese case, although particular, shows how it is possible for legislation to be completely and radically unrelated to actual penal practices. Despite the Portuguese situation comparing badly, in the sense of it being disproportionately harsh, with other European penal systems, and of its social reintegration services – created in 1982, to copy the institutions of the countries of the then EEC, which Portugal was preparing to join – having never, in practice, fulfilled the functions of providing effective support to ex-prisoners, the Penal Code of 2009 considers the social reintegration of the individual as the sole purpose of sentencing.

At the same time as the legislature enacts more judicial protections for prisoners and a singular, absolute priority for social reintegration, the penal system continues to function as if those laws did not exist or could be interpreted against themselves, at the whim of its officials. Officials immersed in a punitive culture of arbitrariness and impunity, which they apply to prisoners and is also applied to them. Generating what is called the prison secret, the fear of witnessing (Cordeiro, 2018). The separation between penal policy (officially shown as residing in legal texts and best political intentions) and penal practices (hidden from the public, professionals, prisoners and inspectors, with the collaboration of all parties, with the exception of the rare, largely ignored, whistle-blower).

The UK and USA systems' alternative is not the most favourable. There, they looked at the studies that revealed the virtually insurmountable difficulties of rehabilitating prisoners (Martinson 1974) as a basis for abandoning the efforts of the previous decades (after the Second World War) to reverse recidivism rates through specialized social work. Instead they have given priority to what they call prevention, that is, the incapacitation of the convicted. Namely, by resuming the broad use of the

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death penalty, or keeping individuals in prison for life and as isolated as possible, such as in solitary confinement that can last for years.

The frankness with which the Bush administration studied the legality of torture in US prisons hides the secret prisons of the CIA and what goes on in Guantanamo. All of it taking place under cover of public favour, which was surprised by Abu Grahیب's photos and strives to ignore that such practices were exported from the United States' own prisons (Perkinson in press).

How can the enthusiasm and hope created by ICT, the modernist spirit, infect the disposition of the criminal-penal system and the opportunities for ex-prisoners to reconstruct their lives? Despite the punitive focus of the penal system, does it make sense to be hopeful, regardless of current sentencing practices?

If you adopt the theory of dispositions, the answer is yes: two radically distinct dispositions can coexist and be experienced by the same people (although at different times). Then the question becomes another: what are the opportune times for the hope associated with ICT to enter the life of the prisoners?

### **The Structural Place of the Prisons, in Society**

We do not need the results of a study to state, with confidence, that 'though on crime', as a precept, occupies the social, individual, institutional and professional mind in such a way that the hope of reintegration is satisfied (or not) at the margin of the political and institutional representation of those who contribute to the successful return of prisoners to society. In fact, family members and friends the ones who are quietly charged with working for the reintegration of the prisoners. The success rates are slim, indicted by high rates of recidivism and the reproduction of detention dynamics within the family. Those sentenced to prison are much more likely to end up in prison again. The children of parents who have been incarcerated are much more likely themselves to end up in prison. Abandoned children, cared for by the state or philanthropic organizations, are also much more likely to end up in prison.

There is a recognized effectiveness problem with the organizations and professionals theoretically charged with the prevention of crime and social opportunity inequalities among abandoned children. As previously stated, the diagnosis of this situation did not lead to questioning the functionality of establishing social-assistance-criminal-penal circuits. By the contrary, it originated a disconnection of social assistance from the criminal-penal system, in the UK and USA, and a disassociation between legislative prescriptions and penal practices, of which the Portuguese case is a clear example. Other European countries, in their own way, suffer from the same problem: despite the obligation to comply with Council of Europe requirements and recommendations on prison management, to meet the

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statute of European Union countries, none of the eight prison systems studied by the European Prison Observatory takes them into account (Maculan et al., 2014).

The practical responsibility for the reintegration of prisoners lies with the part of the society most affected by the problems arising from the identified institutional, organizational and professional difficulties. To that end, that part of society, generally impoverished by the arrest of those who, lawfully or unlawfully, provided it with income, has to endure and overcome the hostility of organizations and professionals, at the margin of what is established to support said reintegration. This is very visible and evident in the arrogance and intimidation with which visitors (the future possible reintegrators) are received and treated in prisons.

This distance between relatives and friends of prisoners and the state is reinforced by the dominant disposition, characterized by the increasingly more evident distance between voters and their representatives (Oborne 2008). After the era of affirmation of human rights regimes, following the Second World War, effected by the anti-colonial and civic movements of the sixties, a gap developed between what politics and politicians can discuss (both in countries emerging from colonization and in the colonizing countries) and the realities of everyday life. There is an increasing distaste for politics, as conducted by the states and the media, and sense of alienation from decisions made within complex organizational networks (Castells 2004). At the same time, there is an imagining of alternatives in affinity networks (Castells 2012), at the margins of the states.

The theory of class struggle is not up to the task of explaining the function of prisons, given that the experiences of 'real socialism' have not been edifying in this respect. Nor, for that matter, are there among opposition parties, however fringe, any known political intentions to reform existing social-criminal-penal institutions. Sociological studies in this area use mainly the functionalist paradigm, through the concepts of anomie and social control, to explain the social-criminal-penal system in light of the theory of state reaction to contain the populations' sense of insecurity (Ferreira 1997).

Social control theory does not, however, explain the fact that it is often the state, and the media, who provoke and use the people's feelings of insecurity for their own ends (Roberts & Hough 2002). Neither does it explain the lack of reaction on the part of the state and public opinion to the inefficient crime prevention achieved by the professional practices of the social-criminal-penal system. Nor the absence of political and public scandal when collusion between state organizations and organized crime becomes evident (Woodiwiss 2001; Rabbit 2016).

Current social theory limits itself to working within its own self-imposed (national) constructions (Kuhn 2016). Following Durkheim's classic recommendation, it explains social facts through social facts. It has developed anti-biological and anti-ideological prejudices and feelings. It has, in fact, isolated itself from the natural



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sciences and abandoned the ambition to, one day, be able to compare to them from the point of view of cognitive rigor. It also isolated itself from doctrinal knowledge, relegating the relations between social theory and law or theology (as it does with science) to subspecialties. It refuses to mix methods and concepts with these other disciplines, although doing so is its tradition: there are social scientists working at the same time in two or more of these fields. But there is no epistemic place where such areas of knowledge can mix and influence each other.

The circumstances here briefly presented lead sociologists to predominantly adopt juridical narratives to describe what they witness in and around prisons. All at once, they distort reality, so that it conforms to such preconceptions, and subvert the declared principles of ideological neutrality, in the name of which they conform to the dominant doctrines.

Prisoners, for example, serve as criminal case studies, just because they were convicted. Without any attention being given to the widely known fact of the high level of criminal impunity shown by the comparison of victimization survey data and conviction rates (certainly less than 10% of the crimes declared by victims). And without taking into account instances of miscarriage of justice, whose numbers may be important, if, for example, we take into account reports of judicial error in death-penalty cases in the USA. There is no social theory on how to identify a criminal among the members of a society. Instead, there is a characterization of the penal population and, accordingly, the elaboration of a statistical profile of the average prisoner – young, poor, with little schooling, raised in an unstructured family, keeper of bad company – as bases for elegant but false justifications of how poverty explains the criminal mind (Merton 1970): the number of all living Portuguese who have been incarcerated should be no more than 150,000. Unfortunately, there are at least 2.5 million poor in the country. Therefore it must be that a logic which only affects an ultra-minority is being confused with an ideological problem of stigma contamination.

Objectively, the phenomenon of the revolving door, the high rates of recidivism, is used against a minority of the population, much more specific than the poor. A minority that is yet to be sociologically described. A minority that endure such a tough and disturbing life experience that its results are deeper and stronger than the best intentions of reintegration into society, as recidivism shows.

Social theory has obvious difficulties when it comes to addressing certain realities considered marginal. Its focus is the study of power dynamics (Lahire 2012: 125; Therborn 2006: 3). It disregards all that happens through, within and among social support networks (care). Using Mouzelis's (1995) diagnosis, current social theory reduces social reality (to the study of power) and reifies the descriptions of society. It recreates what has been reduced according to the prejudices of testimonies that use common sense to confirm, through questionnaires and interviews, the ideology

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of the authority of the day. It does so in favour of the nation state (Kuhn 2016), using ideal types fabricated to match prevailing ideologies, and continues to deny the existence of realities stemming from the practice of promoting social inequalities (Bhambra 2014: 146-150).

The role of the prisons is, possibly, structural and structuring (Foucault 1975; Wacquant 2000). But the precise characterization of that role has not been found.

## **Dispositions**

Information and communication technologies and prisons are consigned to mental and moral sub-paradigms. Although they share the same culture, like Rousseau and Hobbes, Kant and Machiavelli, technologies are assigned angelic references (techno-optimism) and prisons demonic references (Zimbardo 2007).

Positive and negative modernism are both human experiences known to us all. Some of us, few, have the opportunity to live immersed in the hope of ICT; but no one to the same level as Bill Gates or Steve Jobs. Others, also few, experience the hopelessness of prisons; but no one like those who are forced to live in isolation, for life. Many more live the hopelessness of being abandoned by fortune, like those who live in famine (Caparrós 2014) or are subjected to genocide. Although all can understand each other, because they are all human, the loss of contact between them produces isolation, alienation, forgetfulness, abandonment. There is a spontaneous inability to validate the behaviours that result from different living conditions, given that human attention is limited and focused on each individual's own survival – be it physical survival, in the cases of those who cannot assume to have access to basic resources from day to day; or the survival of identity, even for those who can take their day-to-day security for granted.

Social theory has enshrined the conceptual distinction between social structures. The social positions that impose on each person a repugnance for certain dispositions. Be it as an assimilated way of avoiding social risks, or as sympathy for other dispositions, generally those recommended by those who are in a similar or dominant social position. As Elias (1990) has noted, historically, people tend to imitate dominant cultural practices. Civilization can be described, to a large extent, as the development of the opportunity to democratize the life of the Versailles aristocrats, in their capacity to control violence and in their cultural rituals, at the table or in the management of the home, for example. Or, as Foucault pointed out (2004), by learning to take care of the self, as the patricians in the classical era did, as a way of mystically representing social interests through self-presentation.

The stability of power is sociologically explained by the capacity of social structures for the violent, but above all empathic, rational and calculated, imposition

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of positive dispositions: according to Nietzsche (1997), the morality of the rulers. Negative dispositions express themselves discreetly (Scott 2013).

In the origins of social studies, this was not the dominant theory. Karl Marx, for example, described industrial conditions in the second half of the nineteenth century as favourable to the re-creation of the revolutionary spirit (Hobsbawm 1997). Engels (1975) described the repugnance provoked by bourgeois and aristocratic social insensitivity to the living conditions of the workers. At the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, Max Weber, in a Protestant version (Weber 2005), countered the Marxist theses with the hegemonic presence of the capitalist spirit. Novak (2001) added a Catholic version, Sennet (2006) a political version, Boltansky and Chiapello (1999) an intellectual version. In the 21st century, the American tycoon Warren Buffett confirmed Max Weber's version: referring to the class struggle, he said "the rich have won!" That is, hegemonic positive and negative feelings are the most experienced by those who are in a position to accumulate wealth and are, generally, shared by societies. Although with reserves, shifts, fracas, riots and revolutions.

Although Emile Durkheim noted how each individual's social position, according to age, marital status, religious belief, sex, etc. affects emotional state and the vulnerability of life (Durkheim 1973), and how human culture, as a means of facing the challenges of survival, evolves starting from simple models of solidarity (Durkheim 2002), Barbelet (2001) noted that current social theories fail to consider emotions, dispositions and the associated instability, in the study of social structures.

When we propose to anticipate what the encounter between ICT and prisons might be, we need to reconsider the essential dilemmas of modern understandings and feelings. ICT is an instruments of socialization suited to the higher classes. They have been democratized, but only in how they are offered, as consumer products. Rare are those who intervene in the industrial objectives of ICT, in the way electronic equipment and services are produced. Electronic equipment and services the functionalities of which are left to the private decision of the large international companies and, to a lesser extent, of the states. Conversely, prisons are forms of repression used primarily against the lower classes, although most of the poor have no problems with justice.

Understanding and being able to impact the developments of and surrounding ICT, or understanding and living in prison, or in sympathy with prisoners, are rare conditions. The importance of each, in its own way, stems from its ability to spread a particular disposition (of disgust or empathy) to the whole of society: trust in progress, confidence in the state security services to protect society.

We must guard against over-interpretations of the potential for diffusion of such dispositions. For example, although younger generations are more likely to use the new ICT tools, the hypothesis that such familiarity has negative cognitive effects in the younger generations cannot be dismissed (Desmurget 2012). Likewise, the preventive

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value of criminal sentences depends on their appropriateness, reasonableness, regularity and speed. Of course, the war on drugs, with its violations of procedural rules, such as the presumption of innocence (Maia and Costa 2003), did not prevent trafficking or consumption (LEAP 2016) and created difficult situations in the prisons, in the police itself (Machado in press) and in society (Woodiwiss 1988).

ICT can expand the empathy of the ruling classes to the prison, by making instruments of high moral, social and cognitive value (with their prestige) available. They may also stimulate the irreverence of the enthusiasm that machines and mathematics carry in modern societies – at least since Newton, modern culture likens those instruments and principles to God (Fara 2009: 264-272). As such, ICT will be well received by prisoners; as they are by the societies in general. But it also necessary to take into account the fact that most prisoners have experienced scholastic rejection and thus developed a distaste for social learning dynamics. The fear of not being able to learn can, and does inhibit learning.

As it happens with all that is proposed to those in prison, with attraction of having someone whose hand to hold and with whom to share an opportunity to socialize comes the fear of new betrayals, abandonments, frustrations, adverse criticism, which are the result of the social repugnance that guides, structurally, the relationship of the majority of the prisoners with society, since having memory of (not) being people.

It is possible to find people who are predisposed and interested in using ICT inside the prisons. In particular, people interested in occupying their time and keeping in touch with family, friends and others on the outside. There are those who want to take computer courses so they can become professionals. These activities require the creation of a sufficiently broad space for socialization to include the freedom of virtual travel on computer networks. The sentence of restricting ambulatory freedom to a prison does not, in itself, conflict with the freedom to use computer networks. What prevents the widespread use of ICT in prisons is the anthropological value of rituals associated with security and the priority given to them, even when contradictory to the fulfilment of the purpose of sentences: social reintegration and crime prevention.

### **Recursivity**

Prisons produce depressive situations and feelings. ICT produces expansive situations and feelings. History shows how it is practically impossible for contemporaries of a great discovery, such as writing or the press, to anticipate the social transformations that will follow over time. It is natural that today too it is impossible for us to see the current and future impact of the use and development of ICT.

Will the use of ICT in prison be what will help prisons become more capable of facilitating social reintegration, rather than being another way of incapacitating

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prisoners and their families? Will that process of prison transformation be political; one of dawning social awareness and construction of new institutional practices? Or, by the contrary, one whereby, gradually, prisons, open to various initiatives, including the introduction of computers into institutional daily life, adapt and recognize the advantages of giving priority to the expansion of existential opportunities for prisoners, as ways to facilitate reintegration?

Our personal desires, including those of legislators, as we have seen above, are not enough to transform reality. However, history shows how, through the prevailing disposition of the time, collective desires – what Durkheim called collective consciousness, a synonym for society and solidarity in his work – daily practices and institutional priorities change. What at a certain moment in history seems impossible, becomes banal after a short time. Something which happens without anything more than the individual or professional will to update behaviour to the disposition of the time.

For example, cheap full-time communication, even when people are not at home near a landline, are now a given. The idea of a woman requiring a man's authorization to travel, or to need to prove her marital relationship with a man accompanying her to spend the night in a hotel, is ridiculous and does not enter anyone's mind. In Portugal, 50 years ago, mobile phones and the liberation of women were unthinkable.

ICT, more than the invention of writing and of the press, have the potential to rapidly change societies. What direction will such change take? Or better, in what direction will they be used, by whom and for what purposes?

They have been used to make networks, as noted by Manuel Castells (op. cit.). Networks capable of making the global financial system a reality. A system which then failed a few years after its implementation. That is, ICT, the global structures of production, storage, and diffusion of information and accessibility to that data, works by becoming meshed in society, to serve the interests of its users. And they can be misused, not only in the moral sense – for example, in war, as denounced by the US soldier Manning – but in the economic sense – through corrupt practices – and in the political sense – as in the use of Big Data to incite antagonism toward foreigners, in the Brexit and Trump campaigns.

ICT is used in prisons. The question is whether they have been used in relevant and useful ways. And how new ICT initiatives in prisons can transform them into better organizations.

For the purpose of planning such actions it is, therefore, necessary to define what is meant by better functioning prisons. There are those who understand it as the more effective incapacitation of prisoners as to future criminal behaviour, and those who understand it as prisons serving only to reintegrate people with deviant behaviour, and to do so more efficiently. In practice, the incapacitation of people is a virtually impossible task. Even for the USA which has the capacity to invest lots

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of money into it. In fact, both in the USA and Europe, as positive results from such weighty investment become harder to come by, policies of reducing the number of prisoners are being implemented. Social reintegration is not done in prisons, in isolation. As the name of the process indicates, social reintegration takes place in society, when people, after the punitive imposition of isolation as punishment for the crimes of which they have been convicted, have the possibility to try to once more live with the people they choose and that accept them.

The confusion of purposes and interpretations of the law, which make prisons “separate societies”, does not help to rationally determine what might be a good intervention strategy for volunteers or reformers. Social theory’s inability to produce theories independently of doctrinal preconceptions about how and why prisons function stems from the difficulty in establishing the recognition that prison systems do not serve their legally prescribed purposes such as crime prevention, respect for the dignity of prisoners, protection and betterment of society.

Legislative and legal practice, on the other hand, tends to be so unrealistic that it serves as much to cover up and inhibit discussions about what goes on in the prisons as to help society take notice and responsibility, so as to participate in the penal system, what is in fact the social-criminal-penal system.

The practice of states, and also prisons, being open to civil initiatives is characterized by these being conducted in the form of projects. Periodically, for a given period of time, a year, for example, a group of people is allowed to practice their intervention in a prison. If things prove to be functional, authorization may be given for the group to grow and for the same intervention to be extended to other establishments. Throughout, such projects remain contingent on authorization and financing, circumscribers of the freedom of evaluation and self-evaluation of results and, particularly, the possibility of studying the expansion of best practices in a generalized way.

Therapeutic prisons, university satellite campuses inside prisons, the use of internet-based computers to combat illiteracy and digital-exclusion, are examples of consistent projects that may, or may not, transform prisons. We need only a social and political environment, a dominant type of solidarity, to use Durkheim’s concept, prone to the generalization of such programmes, so that they may become structural rather than marginal (Dores et al., 2016).

What purpose, what justification, what justice, what law, could cover such a generalization?

Given the lack of legal definition for the purpose of sentencing, or, what amounts to the same, the unrealistic legal definition of the purpose of sentences, what can the purpose of the introduction of ICT in prisons be?

Positive psychology offers a justification: to combat the depression created by prison life, ICT may contribute to opening horizons, the possibility of progress,

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the opportunity for literacy, motivate toward education, and generally expand the sphere of activity of those with access to such instruments. Alberoni (1989) observes that from all depression, individual and social, comes an incipient state, where new opportunities to transform how we live are opened. Hulsman (1993), an author oriented by the abolitionist ideology dominant prior to the 1980s, urges his readers to not lose sight of the yet utopian horizon of one day society refusing inhumane practices, such as retaliation through the social-criminal-penal system. He notes that, locally, there are people and groups of people capable and more or less competent to feel the moral and humane repulsion that penal practices elicit and act accordingly. Even within the currently dominant punitive disposition, most professionals, at all levels of the state and social hierarchy, cannot help but act as abolitionists. That is, most human beings will attempt to prevent or hinder practices that they feel are inhumane. What they do not feel is the existence of conditions to do it in a systematic way and to demand from others morally appropriate behaviour. They know that they will not be protected, by the contrary, by their superiors.

ICTs are instruments whose progressive social prestige, as well as renown for openness and capacity to transform people and the world, can bring into the prisons (depressive) spaces of freedom capable of minimizing damage and increasing opportunities for the transformation of those prisons, in favour of the better civilizational values: the containment and prevention of violence and harm doing. But the larger struggle, which will at the same time define the possibilities for the transformation of prisons and societies, is organized around the decision to maintain the hegemony of the punitive disposition, which seeks whom to blame for collective and individual insecurities, or to have the courage and lucidity to face the problems, to solve them; problems as serious and different as the education of abandoned children, the reduction of harm caused by sexism, corruption, and xenophobia.

## **SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is desirable that prisoners take the time to improve their cognitive and decision-making skills. Nelson Mandela is an example of someone who, at least, did not lose determination and a sense of life well lived. But this is not the case with most prisoners.

For those who want to promote ways to counteract the hardening, dulling effect that prison tends to have on the individual, ICT is a useful tool. Electronic games, TVs, and access to music are, clearly, ways to make life in prison more bearable. It suffices to see how they are used to punish, and force compliance through confiscation or denial of access. In order to go further, that is to say, in order for sentences to cease being susceptible to being connected with torture, it is necessary to understand the

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reasons why torture persists in prisons, despite all the international agreements and commitments by states seeking to prevent this from happening. Including the way repression against prison inmates that try to follow sociability trends technologically driven is (or not) ill treatment.

The role of ICT in the social reintegration of ex-prisoners depends upon the dominant social disposition in relation to the political and social place of punishment. When punishment is used to reinforce social stigma, breaking the morale of individuals who already face difficulties in integrating society, good will cannot do much for them. When the time comes for society and the state to adopt a disposition of hope for the resocialisation of everyone, the ICTs, inside and outside of the prison system, will be able to cooperate to educate prisoners and reorganise the penal system in accordance with the applicable international norms, presently violated everywhere.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Dispositions inside a library, regarding a book, depends on the discipline of the library. It also depends on the discipline surrounding the library and the discipline that relates the library to other libraries, around the world.

Books and libraries are symbols of knowledge, wisdom and pacification, meditation and silence. Looking for compared discipline and dispositions on libraries, inside and outside prisons, and the way ICT uses relate to those, would be clarifying on the issues regarding the uses of technology inside prison system.

## **CONCLUSION**

Technologies are produced to serve specific purposes, including mass consumption. But also pleasure and pain. Information and communication technologies can be used to think more intelligently about how to solve problems through mathematical calculations that cannot be done on paper. They serve to present ideas that facilitate the transmission of knowledge in universities and businesses. Artificial intelligence optimizes the effort of thinking and can also take thought to another level of questioning.

Information and communication technologies specifically designed for prisons already exist: they are surveillance and security technologies. There are no emancipating technologies in prison. Prison establishments serve security purposes, and only metaphorically, idealistically, do they serve other purposes, such as reintegration or professional training, with all the practical limitations that recidivism rates reveal.



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In regard of torture issues, prison video monitoring systems have proved to be insufficient. The idea that open violence is the dominant mode of interaction between people, even criminals, does not fit with what we know about human nature (Collins 2008). According to Collins, few are those who, trained to exercise violence in a conscious and planned manner, can do so. Those who do, use a variety of self-perception manipulation techniques so as to be able to perform violent acts as if they were not that, at least at that moment. There are those who develop the ability to turn off spontaneous empathy, and to reinforce this process, focus on other things, such as the techniques of exerting violence – the use of clubs, Taser guns, techniques for hitting without leaving marks etc. Violence, in these terms, becomes an experiment. It serves to test the effects produced by well-planned and well-defined causes, such as a particular technique. As a young prison guard declared publically in relation to an incident that led to a criminal conviction, when the guards used a Taser on a defenceless prisoner in an effort to force him to comply, they had already tried a whole range of manual persuasion techniques, as it were, and they had not worked. With the Taser, he assured his audience, the prisoner's behaviour had changed. Thus proving the effectiveness of the action. Sufficient justification for its professional application.

In prison, the tensions created by the antisocial character of the environment, are regularly discharged in orgies of violence: repression or riots. The stupefying boredom of routines, explodes into action, from time to time, only to immediately return to the routine. When someone plans an act of violence, as it happens regularly in prisons, they sometimes do so in such a way as to permit the self-serving use of image and sound recording. In the case of the guards, for example, the images can serve to show how hard their work is and their operational capacity to maintain security. Sometimes they lose the ability to judge how their actions can be perceived by those who live outside the prison, as in the case of the recording of the use of the Taser that ended up in court. Other times, aware that certain acts are unlawful, they use spaces not covered by surveillance equipment, to act out their plans.

The ICT that we refer to in this chapter are those that may have re-socializing uses, not security ICT. Prison services and professionals, as a rule, resist the possibility of using the former, to improve the lives of the prisoners, and learn to use the latter, as professionals keeping up to date.

Technologies seduce people as consumer products. And they are boycotted in those aspects of life where their presence is inconvenient. For example, when they serve, in fact or allegedly, to reduce employment, they can be destroyed, as in the case of the Luddites. Technologies, they say, are neutral: their impact depends on who uses them. But firearms and canon (with all their modern derivatives), for example, while depending on who uses them, have shifted global equilibrium in favour of the West, which developed them and continues to produce them on a scale unmatched by any

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other civilization. ICT has a very different and equally transformative connotation: the knowledge society, which began to be established with the discovery of the press in the 15th century. At the same time that the Inquisition took hold in the Iberian Peninsula and the Age of Exploration launched Europe into the world. Technologies are part of the world and are at the same time used for the best and the worst that societies can offer.

There are libraries in prison. But their use is clearly different from the use of the same instrument in universities. Access to digital documents and books is the state of the art in the best libraries. In prison, differences in the use of libraries are to be expected. Both for security reasons – knowledge is an important part of the monopoly on violence – and the particular limitations that such institutions place on the organization of discussions conducive to the development of cognitive skills. Investment, always scarce, is directed to meet security problems.

ICT is transforming the world. That is, people and societies are using and experimenting with ways of interacting through the use of ever more flexible and miniaturized technologies. In innovative ways. In prisons, for example, the prohibited mobile phone business is, along with illicit drugs, practically unstoppable. They are used by prisoners to communicate with families and friends. And they can serve organizational purposes. However, there are no known instances of disputes about the way prisons function being organized.

The coevolution of societies and technologies will, undoubtedly, continue to characterize the future. In what way, is not known. But we do know that the uses of ICT will depend on the dispositions adopted by societies in each historical period, as it happens with fashion. In the 19th century, the enthusiasm for the penitentiary as a way to replace transportation (exile) and even more degrading sentences, such as public corporal punishment, came with the enthusiasm for modern machines, such as the automobile and airplane, for example. After WWII, in the West, enthusiasm for progress and substantial improvement in the living conditions of workers in the richer societies was accompanied by a reduction in the use of prisons, to the point where there was a widespread belief that prisons would be obsolete by the end of the century. Starting in the 1980s, however, the disposition in the most influential Western nations changed, hardened. They lost their faith in progress. Prisons have become institutions central to the, symbolic, imposition of an inconsequential moralism, like that of the War on Drugs, which, to the present, has not ceased to be increasingly influential. Could the introduction of more ICT in the prisons help reverse the current security hard line trend?

In fact, the security hard line trend and the expansion in the consumption of ICT products are contemporaneous. They are co-occurrences. There is no record of friction between the two.

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**KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Development:** Is a quantitative way of evaluating and describing change in time.

**Disposition:** Is a pattern of incorporated way of receiving and reacting into and to the environment.

**Dominant Disposition:** Is the pattern of incorporated way of receiving and reacting into and to the environment which used in priority in a determined epoch and society.

**Evolution:** Is a qualitative way of evaluating and describing change in time.

**ICT:** Devices and use of devices based of microelectronic processing of information and communication.

**Recursivity:** Human kind biological condition that imposes to people's mind to live in the past and in the future, to alternate dark and high concerns and prospects about self and humanity, rather than to live without reflexive references.

**Social Reintegration:** The process of personal change when someone experience freedom from prison.

**Prison:** Penitentiary system establishment.

**Punitiveness:** Disposition that uses scapegoats as main strategy in order to really or symbolically solve problems.