

Prison at home ?
Experiences of convicts and housemates
with electronic monitoring

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2

Content

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- A. EM in Belgium
- B. The importance of experiences
- C. The experience of convicts
- D. The experience of housemates
- E. General conclusion

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3

A. Electronic monitoring in Belgium

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- Electronic monitoring (= EM) in Belgium
 - Definition
 - Form
 - Use



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B. The importance of experiences

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- EM-research
 - General research
 - Experience research: two tracks
- Why should we study the experiences:
 - of convicts?
 - of housemates?

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B1. Pay attention to convicts


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Assumptions concerning EM

- Policy:
EM is a more humane alternative for imprisonment that generates less harmful side-effects
- Public:
Convict bogey syndrome: EM is a 'soft' alternative for imprisonment

The experience of convicts

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B2. Pay attention to housemates

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Basic requirement in the ministerial instruction of 25 July 2008:

=> the agreement of the adult housemates


Hardly no attention to housemates in:

- policy and practice
- the academic world

Why is it important to pay attention to housemates?

1. EM is not a matter of the offender only
2. The important role of housemates in ensuring the success of EM

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C. The experience of convicts: methodology

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Population and sample

- Convicts living in Flanders, punished with EM

Contact and setting

- House of Justice

Qualitative interviews

- 27 open interviews about their experience with EM

C. The experience of convicts: results

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C1. General

C2. Social life

C3. Work and finances

C4. Freedom

C5. Emotional effects

C6. Technique of EM

C7. Conclusion

9

C1. Results: General

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EM vs imprisonment


An experience is unique

General view

- Punishment AND favor
- Advantages > disadvantages
- Preference: EM (sometimes prison)

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C2. Results: social life

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Biggest advantage: being at home

Family: being together with partner and children

- But: ↑ discussions because of EM

Relatives and friends

- Maintain relations with relatives and friends
- Contact new persons: difficult
- Sometimes: interruption of contact

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C3. Results: Work and finances

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- **Work:**
 - Ability to work: flexible system
 - Hard to find work
- **Finances**
 - Income
 - By working
 - By Justice
 - Costs because of EM
 - Telephone charges
 - Relocation costs

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C4. Results: Freedom

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They feel freedom because they aren't confined

- Freedom of choice
- At some moments, they may go outside

Difficulties: limited freedom

- Geographical restriction
- Keep regular hours to go outside
- Result: temptation

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C5. Results: Emotional effects

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The feeling of being watched

Stress

Fear

Visibility of EM

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C6. Results: Technique of EM

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Time schedule

NCEM

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C7. Conclusion

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Soft alternative?

- ET > imprisonment
- Advantages BUT also disadvantages
 - Pay attention to both
 - Now: no attention to the disadvantages

› Assumptions need to be refined!

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D. The experience of housemates: methodology

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Population

- Housemates of persons under EM

Sample (n = 25)

- *Gender*: female (22) – man (3)
- *Origin*: Belgian (21) – Dutch (1) – Indian (1) – Kosovar (1) – Turk (1)
- *Age*: between 17 and 74 - mean age = 37
- *Relationship*: partner (15), family member (9), close friend (1)
- *Children*: yes (20) – no (5)
- *Working situation*: employed (11) – unemployed (1) – searching for a job (4) – following courses (3) – getting a benefit (2) – retirement (3)
- *In terms of EM*: experience for ≤ 2 months (11) - experience between 2 and 3 months (7) - > 3 months (7)
- *In terms of imprisonment*: > 1 month (16)

Setting

- At their home

Qualitative interviews

- 25 open face to face interviews about their experience with EM
- Average duration: 1h17m15s

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D. The experience of housemates: results

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D1. The influence on their life

D2. The role housemates play during EM

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D1. Results: The influence on their life

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A. General

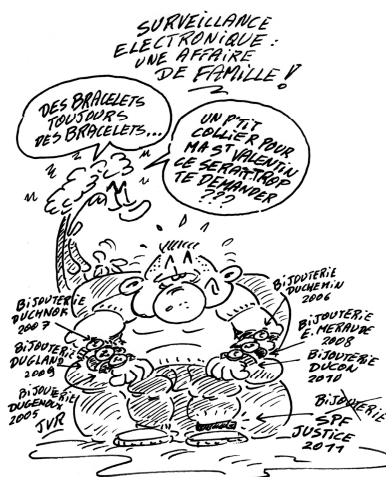
The fact that he was home, was more important to me than the fact a little box was standing here. So for me, there was no influence. In a nutshell, this [EM] does not play a role. (partner)

B. Advantages

Yes, this [EM] is most convenient. Because I don't longer have the stress of having to go to X (prison) on a visit and, of course, my brother is here... (sister)

C. Disadvantages

It was a lot easier for me when my father was imprisoned than when he was at home. Because when he was in prison, at least I didn't have to do everything, I wasn't burdened with everything. His son was with his mother, so... (daughter)



Cartoonist: J. Van Russelt
Journal: Journal du Droit des Jeunes n° 311, January 2012

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D2. Results: The role housemates play during EM

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19

A. Supervision

I checked his time schedule a lot... Because it is a man and they are more negligent ...

It [EM] was just for two months and I thought "I will take it over" [...] But it is a burden you carry, whether you think about it or not. Because you also have to be responsible for him. I have to make sure that everything goes well. (friend)

A. Moral support

We try to fob him off... When he says 'I cannot go over there', 'Yes, later you can go there', so motivate him a little bit. (partner)



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D3. Conclusion

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General conclusion: more benefits than harm

Two big influences:

1. Spillover effects
2. Back up work

A need for recognition of the influence

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E. General conclusion

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21



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