



PRISONS OF THE WORLD

POLITICS AND PRACTICES OF CONTEMPORARY CONFINEMENT

20-21 JUNE, 2016, ENS DE LYON

A SUMMARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Organizing Committee : Frédéric Le Marcis (ENS de Lyon, Triangle, Ifé), Marie Morelle (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Prodig), Yasmine Bouagga (CNRS, Triangle)

Discussants : Yasmine Bouagga, Marie Morelle, Marie Vogel (ENS de Lyon, Centre Max Weber), Frédéric Le Marcis

PANEL 1. GLOBALIZATION OF PUNISHMENT

The first panel dealt with the diffusion of prison as punishment throughout the world, both from a historical and a contemporary perspective. To what extent can we talk about the existence of one or several penitentiary models? How are the prison's operating norms defined, how are they taken up, locally reinterpreted and invented?

Firstly, Laurence Bessières, a sociologist at the French National School of Prison Administration, presented her experience as an expert in a prison reform programme in Ivory Coast, with reflexivity. This mission led her to question the "idealization mechanisms" and the experts' ethnocentrism, in view of the cooperation realities.

Christine Deslaurier provided a historical view of the circulation issues, by talking about prison in Burundi over the past 100 years, retracing continuities and ruptures between the colonial and contemporary times. While the architecture remained the same, representations and practices changed. Political imprisonment can represent a test for the penitentiary model, but it also questions its limits, as many detainees are not locked in prison, but in undisclosed places.

Tomas Martin studied reform processes, change based on international human rights norms and the representations of security in Uganda: how "dynamic security" was set up in Ugandan prisons to reduce violence, by relying on the tradition "katikiro" system, i.e. detainees who are conferred a part of authority on detention.

Finally, Ipek Merçil presented, with the Turkish case, an example of an authoritarian prison reform oriented towards repressive objectives, rather than aiming at better conditions of detention. By retracing the way political prisoners are being treated in Turkey, she showed how the model went from a militarized management to a civil government relying on high security prison. So, even the European prison rules set up to improve the conditions of detention helped strengthen the control over detainees.

This panel provided rich case studies and stimulating analyses to study the circulation of norms, moral values and security techniques, but also question the frontiers of the carceral, and how the varied models of punishment can lead to the reconfiguration of these frontiers.

PANEL 2. DIVERSITY OF PUNITIVE PATTERNS AND ECONOMIES OF PUNISHMENT

Following through, the second panel studied the circulation of discourses and practices of justice and punishment in Africa (Aghi Bahi, Emilie Matignon and Fernand Bationo) and India (Mahuya Bandyopdhay).

It however called to a reflexion on the meaning of a prison sentence and its place within systems of mediations, punishment and reparations. How is the penitentiary institution inscribed in the various registers of justice? At the local and international scales?

Sentencing to prison is articulated to power games, benefitting several actors and territorial appropriations; echoing heritages as well as circulations (of ideas, of calls for judiciary reform). We can thus wonder to what extent sentences and punishment take part in the political structuration of local and national spaces? What do they tell us about the State's production and its domination? About the subjects' emancipation, or the qualification and distribution of their identity? The reflection remains open on the "imprint" left by penal prison, and its place in a broader economy of punishment and surveillance, in particular but not exclusively in Africa.

PANEL 3. MONITORING PRISONS

The issue of law and rights in prison is currently at the heart of state reform in the South. International agreements and national monitoring institutions have an influence on the functioning of prisons and the scale of punishment. External agents, such as NGOs and associations also take part in monitoring prisons. Through the study of prison, the nature of the state and power relations are being unravelled, bringing us to discuss the classification of political regimes, from authoritarian to democratic.

The discussion of prison monitoring and control usually shows a legal, state-centric and normative (based on a Northern model) polarization, in public discourses but also in academic analyses. From varied contexts and specific entries, the four talks given by Gavin Slade (reform, violence and prisons in the post-soviet region), Nicolas Fischer (the French Controller General of Places of Deprivation of Liberty, CGLPL), Natalia Corazza (prison as an institution of regulation of the migrations between Brazil and Spain), and Bernard Bolze (Monitoring by institutions and associations) offer a view of this discussion in contrast with this polarization.

Gavin Slade thus presented the effects of « occidentalization » reforms of the prison systems in Georgia, Armenia and the Kyrgyz Republic on the inmates' and prison staff experience. He showed that the circulation of information is the vector that helps produce internal order in the prison (or violence); Nicolas Fischer presented his on-going study on the concrete modalities of the CGLPL's activity to understand the conditions of production of their critical look and its limits; Natalia Corazza reconsidered prison as a place of mobilisation of specific resources for women's migration trajectories between Brazil and Spain; and Bernard Bolze underlined the specific and moving role of associations in monitoring and control, in the production of action and knowledge on carceral life.

Based primarily on a micro-sociological perspective, these talks highlight the diversity of actors and purposes that the notion of "control" can encompass. They invite us to move our attention towards what the different actors do or can do with the "rationalization" reforms and other controls, the way they navigate these new frameworks and possibly redefine them, lose some

resources or secure new ones. They also incite us to consider critically the practical effectiveness or social efficacy of the promoted devices, and of the models that circulate, at a time when the modalities of states' action are evolving.

Separately and combined, these four talks offer open questions on scales articulations, on the stakes of comparative analysis at a time of globalization. The decentering is brought about by the diversity of contexts, of penitentiary models but mainly of analytical frameworks. The crossed use of models and analytical frameworks (what remains of Goulag for instance, or prison as a space of migration trajectories) offer new avenues for our Northern prisons field, marked by analytical routine.

PANEL 4. HEALTH BEHIND BARS

This panel is emblematic and symptomatic of what has been said at this conference. It shows our will to overcome the usual separation between researchers, activists, NGOs in the carceral field. The presentations illustrated the questions we heard over these two days: the arguments invoked to decry the unfair, the intolerable, or to justify the contrary (acknowledging sexual violence and helping the victims, S. Gear – Just Detention International South Africa); the various justifications to develop healthcare in prison (C. Dromer – CICR), how ways to do and think the prison circulate (healthcare in prison, A. Laurent – Expertise France); and the ordinary negotiations enabling the production of care in prison (K. Traoré – Detention doctor, Maison d'Arrêt et de Correction de Ouagadougou).

This panel showed the heuristic dimension of health to think the prison, from international policies to the intimate experience induced by the carceral world. Health in prison means circulations, multiple actors at variable scales (international donors, NGOs, reform programmes, detainees). If the social actors of the prison (guards, detainees, administration, NGOs) are interested, then healthcare in prison happens – the same process can be seen with Human rights programmes. In this context health doesn't stand out as a universal value, but rather as a co-construction, a negotiation on multiple scales depending on historical, political and social logics, specific to each case. So, health appears as a contested notion, of which each actor develops his own definition and use. It is thus crucial to produce ethnographies of health, to understand both its practices and the ecology of care (Das, 2007) unique to carceral spaces.