

Dipartimento di Sociologia

Dottorato di Ricerca in URBEUR ciclo XXXIV

“It is no longer the prison of the past”: narratives on prison governmentality

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ANNO ACCADEMICO / ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/22

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank who, in different ways, have accompanied me in these years of research.

I thank all the people who fight and resist every day against the prison institution. Without you, I wouldn't have anything to say, as it is you who give me the voice. I refer to the prisoners and their testimonies, from those I have met in person to those that, unfortunately, I will not be able to meet, at least in the short term. To the latter, I wish freedom as soon as possible, and the fullest possible freedom.

I thank the OLGa collective and all those collectives, groups, people who stand in solidarity with the prisoners. I also thank my family, my friends, my comrades.

Finally, I thank my tutor, the reviewers, and all the people who contributed and advised during the research.

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Introduction

“Resocialisation is always brought into play but, in the end, it only means to keep prisoners bound within a system of slave labour, inside and outside the prison and to treat them as exploited dependent and domesticated, kept under the constant threat of punishment and worsening of their situation. It should be stressed how much the system of prison punishment has changed in recent decades and how, in essence, it functions exactly as it did at the time of its introduction. Today in Germany there is less beating and torture in prisons, people in prison are deprived of whatever they have left. [...] The prison tries to break every gesture of free, rebellious, or simply “non-adaptable” people, it wants to educate them, i.e. punish them. Naturally, every form of social commitment, solidarity and organisation, particularly when taken together with others against daily injustices, is immediately defined as a “revolt”, an “uprising”, whether it concerns ridiculous trifles or fundamental rights. Prison uses solitary confinement not only as a punishment, but also in other cases, e.g. against political prisoners, who may be “dangerous” and have “dangerous movements” behind them; in general, those who “dissociate themselves from the perpetrators” are locked in punishment cells, while normal prisoners left in common cells are isolated from their fellow prisoners. [...] Prisoners are simply treated like pieces of shit, like pieces of shit that have no value have no value. The prison has its own order where nothing goes wrong, even if everyone’s humanity goes to ruin, as long as no one kills themselves, everything is fine. Laws, norms and rules in general are very strict, the rights granted are reduced to a minimum. This often leaves room for a gigantic tolerance of the prison guards, who are given room to act arbitrarily, according to their own will. In quiet phases often more room is allowed, but in this way the prisoners become accustomed to a relaxed execution of the sentence and consequently are more blackmailable, a situation in which they are often cancelled, in case they do not behave as desired by the prison system. [...] Power is continuously abused by those who have it at their disposal, thus exerting domination over the prisoners who are under incredible power. Powerlessness brings with it total submission and selfishness. Unfortunately, there are few prisoners who stand up in solidarity against this permanent injustice. Often these solidarity actions are hindered and broken by the transfer of the fellow prisoners to who knows where. That is why it is important to move intelligently through the harassment in order to know what consequences are tolerable, deserving and thus decide with greater care the initiative so that the person is not flattened. It is therefore important not to admit everything but rather to commit oneself and fight, because otherwise the serious human damage is not overcome. In general it is not easy to balance between these two lines. [...] It is very important to fight one’s own and the collective fear of this shitty prison system and to draw strength from experiences, survival and resistance, without ever falling into carelessness or unconsciously playing with one’s freedom. Life and struggle continue in prison and after prison. Quite frankly, it is often the hard experiences in our lives that most sensitise, radicalise and unite us, that give us strength and resolve, which we would never have had otherwise.”¹

¹ Booklet 130, January 2018, “Lettera dal carcere di Colonia (Germania)”, Lisa:

“Stabilmente viene tirata in campo la risocializzazione, ma infine ciò significa soltanto tener legate prigioniere e prigionieri entro un sistema di lavoro schiavistico, dentro e fuori dalle carceri e di trattarle/i come sfruttate/i dipendenti e addomesticati/e,

I wrote this thesis to describe a world, the one I got to know, which never reached the head of the national newspapers except when crime is made spectacular, becoming a consumption commodity. So I try to bring the prison closer to society describing what has happened inside it in recent years, giving relevant weight to a set of stories that some people would, perhaps, consider with a lower case s. While resisting the constant temptation to romanticise or idealise them, I cannot dampen the impact that their struggles have had on me, such as the emancipatory force of their lived experiences and the boundaries that they have to deal with. These stories do not embody any revolutionary moment. They deal, if anything, with the legacy of the prison 'of the past', now only the memory of oldest or most politicised prisoners. There is no collective subject, but a constellation of individualities with the most varied lives. They represent the opportunities and difficulties of resisting in the place of power *par excellence*, which in recent years has become more sophisticated and effective, especially with those who don't want to be normalised. Prison is a relevant point of observation where it is possible to find power and control strategies in their most punitive forms. I believe indeed that in order to elaborate on the enormous issue of power in the societies in which we live it is essential to deal with prison. So, I have tried to translate this drive into research. Prison is the place where the fate of those imprisoned takes

tenute/i sotto la costante minaccia della condanna e del peggioramento della loro situazione. Va sottolineato quanto il sistema della punizione carceraria negli ultimi decenni sia modificato, e come, nell'essenziale, esattamente funzioni rispetto al tempo della sua introduzione. Oggi in Germania nelle carceri si picchia e si tortura meno, alle persone in carcere viene tolto quel che loro resta. [...] il carcere cerca di spezzare ogni gesto delle persone libere, ribelli, o semplicemente "non-adattabili", vuole educarle, cioè punirle. Naturalmente ogni forma di impegno sociale, solidarietà e organizzazione, in particolare se adottata con altre contro le ingiustizie quotidiane, viene immediatamente definita "rivolta", "sommossa", sia che si tratti di ridicole piccolezze che di diritti fondamentali. I carcerieri ricorrono stabilmente all'isolamento non soltanto come punizione, ma anche in altri casi, per esempio contro i/le prigionieri/e politici, che possono essere "pericolosi" e che hanno dietro sé "movimenti pericolosi"; in generale nelle celle di punizione viene chiuso chi si "distacca dagli autori", mentre i prigionieri normali lasciati in celle comuni vengono isolati dai/dalle compagne/i di prigionia. [...] Le/i prigionier vengono semplicemente trattati come pezzi di merda, che non ha nessun valore. Il carcere ha un proprio ordine dove nulla va storto, anche se tutti umanamente vanno in rovina, fino a quando nessuno si uccide, tutto va bene. Leggi, norme e regole in generale sono molto se-vere, i diritti riconosciuti sono ridotti al minimo. Fattore che spesso lascia spazio a una tolleranza gigantesca concessa ai secondi-ni che così possono disporre di uno spazio per agire con arbitrio, secondo volontà propria. Nelle fasi quiete spesso viene ammesso qualcosa di più, ma così i prigionieri si abitua-no ad una esecuzione della pena rilassata e di conseguenza sono più ricattabili, situazione in cui spesso viene cancellato, nel caso in cui non si comportino come desiderato dal sistema carcerario. [...] Il potere viene continuamente adoperato con abusi da parte di coloro che ne dispongono, domina così sulle parti dei prigionieri che si trovano sotto un potere incredibile. L'impotenza porta con sé una sottomissione totale e l'egoismo. Purtroppo sono pochi i prigionieri che si oppongono con solidarietà contro questa ingiustizia permanente. Spesso queste azioni solidali vengono ostacolate e spezzate con il trasferimento chissà dove delle compagne/i di prigionia, divise ecc. Per questo è importante muoversi con intelligenza fra le angherie per conoscere quali siano le conseguenze tollerabili, meritevoli e così decidere con maggiore cura l'iniziativa affinché la persona non venga appiattita. È perciò importante non ammettere tutto ma piuttosto impegnarsi e lottare, per-ché altrimenti il grave danno umano non viene vinto. In generale non è semplice bilanciarsi fra queste due linee [...] È importantissimo combattere la paura (timore) propria e collettiva di fronte a questo sistema carcerario di merda e di trarre forze dalle esperienze, dalla sopravvivenza e dalla resistenza, senza cadere mai nella spensieratezza o nel giocare inconsciamente con la propria libertà. La vita e la lotta proseguono anche in carcere e dopo la carcerazione. Detto schiettamente, spesso nella nostra vita sono le esperienze dure che maggiormente ci sensibilizzano, radicalizzano, uniscono, che ci danno forza e risolutezza, che altrimenti non avremmo mai avuta."*

on the connotations of their relationship with power in its most pervasive way. Here, this experience is more evident because it can become the most intense point of life, where prisoners try to use their forces to oppose management or escape its traps (Foucault, 1997c, p. 83).

This research is based on the experiences recounted in a collection of letters that covers the last 15 years (2006-2021), ending one year after the turmoil of March 2020². It is a specific cross-section, produced within the broader path of the struggle against prison by the OLGa Collective, which has led to the encounter with hundreds of prisoners. Over time, these prisoners have published their testimonies in counter-information booklets. While attending the collective, I have contributed to the divulgation of information and publication of the letters. From these experiences I propose a view of the prison landscape that is neither casual nor representative of the general population. The different angles of this research concern the relationship between me, as researcher, activist and former university tutor in prison, and the content of the letters.

Engaging theories of carceral geographers and critical criminologists, in the first chapter I highlight the different nature of prison and the concept of carcerality; the use of space and time as dimensions for the observation of social and power relations. After presenting the definition of power on which this research is based, I describe the relationship between governmentality and conduct. I try to build a theoretical grid in which the prison is presented as the institutional crystallisation of contemporary rationalities of power, as a micro-ecological metaphor through which it is possible to understand how power works. The framework that will be defined can be summed up in the clash between the governmental strategies of those who want to maintain order in prisons, and the counter-conducts of the prisoners, in a dialectic relationship of mutual influence. I will describe how power draws its boundaries in relation to what constantly escapes from its control and on the basis of what the power foresees as a future threat.

The second chapter connects theory and narrated spaces and practises. It develops the notion of prison letters and the archive of booklets in which they are contained as a liminal counter-carceral space. Liminal, because this research is the result of the encounter between prisoners and the OLGa

² Since March 2020, with the execution of the COVID-19 restraining measures, which negatively impacted on the structural condition of prison spaces and, specifically, imposed a ban on prison visits, protests from prison flourished and involved thousands of inmates. During these uprisings 12 people died, 9 came from Modena prison. It was one of the most significant uprisings in Italian history, considering the coordination of so many inmates in the same period. Other revolts followed throughout the year, but the most intense moments took place on the 8th of March.

collective. Counter-carceral, because it comes from struggles which seek to demonstrate that possibilities to create connections through and beyond the walls remain. I also tried to describe who are the writers, their identities within the codified spaces of prisons. After the relation between the empirical material and OLGa, I elaborate on the narrative approach I engaged to analyse letters and my positionality as scholar activist and as ex-university tutor in prison. I largely describe the challenges concerning scholar activism in relation to my research and where do I stand in relation to abolitionism and prison struggles. What finally emerges from this methodological chapter is a guide for reflection constituted by my own experience and the multitude of who, in different ways, have helped me to comprehend this precious material.

The third is the thickest chapter. It briefly introduces the memories of the prison of “the past”, and then move to today's prison, describing particularly the differentiating logics coming from Seventies, and other Italian regimes peculiarities in relation to the international managerial prison logics. The chapter has a geometric structure. It is divided into two parts concerning, respectively, prison power in its punitive and deterrent logics and power in its softness, its reproductive capacity. Each part contains discursive and spatial practises which, in my view, build on each other. In the first part I describe the construction of the enemy and the spectacularised uses of crime and criminal phenomena. I then move to the regimes in which these discourses crystallise, such as 41 bis and Maximum security. The second part describes the reward mechanism as a soft power technique; the role of cooperation and individual treatment within the values of rehabilitation. I then describe the direct implication of these discourses within their spatialities, describing the “model-section” regime, where the concept of control and freedom will be discussed more in depth.

The fourth chapter leaves behind the specificity of the regimes to understand some general tendencies of the prison governmentality, starting from the strategies of differentiation. Describing old and new techniques aimed at maintaining order and expanding pervasive control, I show how prison governmentality has produced an increasing individualisation. I develop how governmentality eroded solidarity and collective identity among prisoners. The second part of the chapter underlines a feature of penology, the bureaucratisation of punishment, that creates a distance between society and prison. To do so, I describe videoconferencing as the new technology that bites the soul of prisoners instead of their flesh. Videoconferencing is the emblem of a punishment that renews its legitimacy while maintaining its logics and civilising its expression. Chapters 3 and 4 are inspired and contextualised through

the prison letters published by OLGa, the analyses are consistently contextualised with current academic works on prison studies and other books that could be sometimes defined “prison literature”.

Each section is characterised by the different perspective I assumed to analyse the letters. At times themes are taken as they are from the epistolary exchange: themes discussed through the years such as differentiation processes, reward mechanism, the harshest regimes of isolation. On a few occasions the critical streak on rehabilitation that I gained through my experience as a tutor prevail. Other times I just try to build a coherent discourse starting from the amount of letters I analysed, thematised, ordered, distinguished, connected and finally, like in a jigsaw, carefully assembled.

Part One

1. Prison governmentality, dialogue between carceral geography and critical criminology

In this chapter I will build a theoretical framework designed to guide me through the letters of OLGa and to circumscribe the themes emerging from their analysis. Such research, which belongs to prison studies, is inevitably interdisciplinary. For this reason, the mixture of disciplines must favour the possibility of encompassing different viewpoints. The advance presentation of this theoretical background represents the way in which the reader can understand the way I linked theories and practises. Theories of those who, before me, have tried to understand the cyclical repetition of certain social processes in history and all those sequential discontinuities that allow us to frame issues that are enigmatic, and, sometimes, to make them more intelligible. It certainly remains difficult to succeed in these intentions; much easier, instead, is to produce even more complex analyses that only jeopardise the understanding of the observed phenomena or even cage *a priori* the results within a deterministic perspective. This premise wants to explain how the theoretical framework has been developed: what follows will not be the construction of a theory, nor its confirmation or improvement, but a work of definition of some key concepts that can also be considered as tools.

The framework that will be defined can be summed up in the clash between the governmental strategies of those who want to maintain order in prisons and the counter-conducts of the prisoners, in a dialectic relationship of mutual influence. Before getting to this point it becomes necessary, first, to present the scholars from whom I mainly recognise my work, that is, carceral geography. I will first describe the concepts of space and time and how they have generally been considered separately in different disciplines. Then, I propose a definition of space-time and its potential to explain, through the analysis of lived experience, how power is produced and reproduced. The concepts of power and, specifically, of power relationships are then problematised in order to understand the governmental approach and the potential of counter-conducts.

1.1 Carceral geography: origins, influences and strands of research

Since reading the classics of prison studies, particularly *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977), I have always found it essential to avoid the disconnections between prison and society and between crime and power. For this reason, I started to do research on scholars and scientific communities that were

exploring the hypertrophy of these elements. Although I have a sociological background and grew up academically merging Goffman and Foucault, it is in a group of geographers that I found the discussion that best developed my research interests.

Carceral geography is a new subdiscipline of human geography developed by a working group of the Institute of British Geographers, the CGWG (Carceral Geography Working Group). This committee was founded in 2011 by the UK-based geographers Dominique Moran, Jennifer Turner, and Anna Schliehe, who subsequently disseminated their work among other scholars based in Canada and the United States.

The development of different strands of study is aimed at creating a forum for the working community and a network for early career scholars. The idea is to develop a “dialogue between carceral geographers and criminologists, prison sociologists and legal scholars also concerned with spaces and experiences of incarceration, and to support the cross-disciplinary dialogue”.³

This dialogue is aimed at fostering a fruitful production of methodologies, transformation of personal practice, research dissemination, exploration of a new pedagogy, “academic engagement within and beyond the academic community of geographers”.

As a field of research, carceral geography has developed from prison studies and other important scholars from different disciplines. It presents strong influence from post-structuralist critique, and in particular Foucault’s seminal book on prison studies *Discipline and Punish* (1977), and of the sociologist Goffman for *Asylums* (1961). Many other influential authors, such as Davis (1990), Sykes (1958), Clemmer (1958), provided important criminological and urban space concepts: the notion of prisonisation (Clemmer, 1958), which was articulated in the idea of “secondary prisonisation” (Moran, 2013b, p. 13) referring to the process involving family members who relate to a penal institution; the idea of “city of quartz” (Davis, 1990), transformed into the image of “safe utopia” by Scheer and Lorne (2017, p. 119-121); the “industrial prison complex” described by Davis and developed by Gilmore, which explores the factors that led to the spread of new prison complexes in California (2007).

Foucault’s theses are perhaps the most discussed and developed by the CGWG. Fundamental in this frame is the term “carceral” (Moran, Turner, Schliehe, 2018). The idea of “carceral space” comes from the notion of “carceral system” (Foucault, 1977, p. 271), a system that unfolds in a pervasive

³ Each quotation or reference up to the end of the subsection, unless otherwise specified, refers to the official website of CGWG, available in following link: <https://carceralgeography.com/about-3/>.

manner within and beyond the walls of prisons and propagates a disciplinary control driven by different “technologies of the body” (Foucault, 1977, p. 162). Through genealogy, Foucault demonstrated the historical provenance of some of these behavioural technologies. In particular, he showed how they did not necessarily develop in prison, taking as example the practice of confessional examinations and school discipline in Jesuit colleges (Foucault, 1977, p. 141-142) and the panopticism developed by the quarantine of the lepers and other forms of spatial divisions (Foucault, 1977, p. 199).

Another fundamental contribution to the concept of “carceral” carried out by post-structuralist authors is the analysis of the relationship between power, society and prison: “prisons are there to hide that it is the social in its entirety, in its trivial omnipresence, which is carceral” (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 9). This connection can be understood through the concept of circuit. A circuit connects society and prison: every time it ends its journey from one side to the other, discourses and knowledge passes, as well as objects, people, and new practices (Gill et al., 2016). The concept of carceral circuitry comes from Foucault’s idea of circulation. The intensity of circulation is closely linked to the question of political effectiveness and sovereignty: “circulation of ideas, wills, and orders, and also commercial circulation” (Foucault, 2007, p. 30). Circulation involves every area of society at various levels, from private to public, from domestic to urban, to social environments characterised by surveillance and control devices that refer to a prison model (Moran, Turner, Schliehe, 2017a, p. 677-678). In this sense, prison is a compact *dispositif*, as the heart of punishment, but at the same time it is widespread, because its logics are disseminated in other institutions and within the society. The study of prison must take into account the following precautions Foucault Invoked: to consider “punishment as a complex social function”; to assume “punishment as a political tactic” or punitive methods as “techniques possessing their own specificity in the more general field of other ways of exercising power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 23). Another author who provides a fundamental corpus of ideas to the CGWG is Goffman (1961), in particular on the individual dimension and subjective experience of detention. From Goffman (1959) and then Crewe et al. (2014), the concept of “backstage” and “frontstage” and the presentation of the self in the prison space have become fundamental lenses for understanding how social interactions work and how social and individual identities are shaped.

1.1.1 Discipline influences

Carceral geography is influenced by the heterogeneous contributions of authors from different disciplines. The theoretical approaches, primarily geographical and criminological, have been enriched by

perspectives from other disciplines such as architecture (Moran and Jewkes, 2015; Sheer and Lorne, 2017), economics (Gilmore, 2007) or reshaped from a feminist perspective (Schliehe, 2017).

Architecture and urban perspectives inspired the conception of prisons as cities. Through a series of interviews with prison architects, Scheer and Lorne (2017), have shown how the involvement of these experts in prison projects serves to legitimise the construction of new prisons, publicising and linking their work to rehabilitation rhetoric (Kozlowski and Scheer 2015). What emerges in these works is the creation of the prison-city as a static utopia which transforms all hope into a dystopia, similar to the computer game “Tetris”: a game in which blocks must be embedded and connected in a standardised way (Sheer and Lorne, 2017, p. 114). The prison was also analysed through the lens of economic profits in *Golden Gulag* (Gilmore, 2007) and in the mapping of *Million Dollar Block* (Kurgan, 2013). In particular, the first book explores the issue of privatisation, and how the involvement of several for-profit actors has turned the prison into a large business venture, as evidenced by the tendency to use prisons as a “geographical solution to the political economic crisis, organised by the State” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 26).

The feminist perspective has contributed to carceral geography in many ways even if women’s detention is still a particular and often underdeveloped phenomenon (Moran, Pallot and Piacentini, 2013). As underlined by Schliehe (2017, p. 82), the theoretical feminist background brings some intersectional criticism to the mechanism of “normalisation” of segregated women, “encouraged” to follow a probative rehabilitation path shaped by stereotyped and heteronormative observances: “on childcare, sewing, relationships between men and women, beauty contests” (*ibidem*). In summary, there are mechanisms of normalisation that produce a prison culture that imposes a desired and an unwanted femininity (Moran et al., 2009). Finally, the impact on the female body and the concrete experience of older women in prison has been observed to question the physical damage produced by the prison environment. In this perspective, detention plays a role as a corporal marker (Moran, 2012b), especially for older prisoners (Wahidin, 2004).

Carceral geography is also influenced by others subdisciplines of human Geography such as historical geography (Morin and Moran, 2015), animal geography (Moran 2015; Morin 2016), children geography (Disney 2015a; Disney 2015b; Schliehe 2015; Moran et al., 2016), and legal geography (Villanueva, 2016). In regards to historical geography, Morin and Moran (2015) emphasise different elements: the importance of studying the experiences of different individuals within “regulatory regimes and spaces of punishment”; the historical origins of prisons, “interpreting incarceration spaces as a

cultural artifact”; the analysis of “the spatial-distributional geographies of incarceration, particularly with respect to their historical impact on the community political-economic development and local geographies” (p. 2). Developing an historical approach means to construct a usable past through the analysis of three elements (cited in Story, 2015; Rosenzweig and Thelen, 1998): “(1) the past in particular events; (2) the past as embodied in particular people, (3) the past as memory materialised on the landscape” (Morin and Moran, 2015, p. 6).

Morin (2016) presented an interesting contribution to animal geography by illustrating the link between prison and animal detention: They are both based on disciplinary regimes and violent structures. Her work is based on the analysis of the execution chamber, the slaughterhouse of animals, and the sites of “laboratory testing of pharmaceutical and other products on incarcerated humans and captive animals” (Morin, 2016, p. 1318).

Carceral geography is a relatively new subdiscipline of human geography, but, as shown so far, it is influenced by many other disciplines and subdisciplines. What is common to all these scholars is the theoretical frame of the “carceral”. This concept can characterise different environments. Each empirical work has its specific interest, and it is difficult to provide a synthesis of the CGWG works. Generally speaking, their research perspective is developed on a common analysis of classics, such as Foucault and Goffman, and through the disciplinary lenses of geography, criminology and sociology. Nonetheless, it is possible to discern a common goal, a similar horizon: the desire of tracing the nature of the prison “both in terms of its theoretical purpose and intent, and its effect and experience” (Moran, Turner Schliehe, 2018, p. 683). This issue will characterise the subsequent paragraphs, but firstly I will present the state of the art of the current strands of research discussed within carceral geographers.

1.1.2 Current strands of research. Spatial turn and carceral turn

Carceral geographers developed two main “turns” in the current debate in prison studies: the “spatial turn” and the “carceral turn”. The first called for the return of space as a crucial dimension of analysis. Carceral geographers have expressed their dissatisfaction with a certain notion of space, generally marginalised in favour of the predominant temporal dimension (Moran and Schliehe, 2017). The second turn, in a transversal way, has characterised many analyses throughout the Western academic world. Criminologists and geographers have recognised the “carceral turn” as a generalised increase in securitisation (Philo, 2012) and in disciplinary and punitive control policies towards the poor (Wacquant,

2010). Carceral turn is the broader term that also involves the “punitive turn” coming from criminology, which involves the increasing imprisonment rates, the number of prison buildings, and longer sentences for the same crime.

Space has been reconceptualised according to the non-representational theory (NRT), which suggests exploring the prison in its distribution and in its spatial relations. Indeed, CGWG has begun to offer an increasingly sophisticated way of understanding personal experiences and the socio-cultural complexities of urban space/crime (Hayward, 2012; Campbell 2012; Kindynis, 2014, p. 232). Kindynis (2014) encourages to “focus on prisoners discussions of their spatialized tactics” (p. 232). The reason is that spaces and practises are closely linked, the former being constituted in the materialisation of the latter. Space production also implies the quality of the relationship that is established between practises and lived spaces:

“prison makes and re-makes itself continuously through a range of practices and relationships, many of which do not involve the prisoner directly, and which do not take place in sites of confinement” (Armstrong, Jefferson, 2017, p. 251).

Those who live in prison space tell us how practises are “co-produced” by non-neutral, situated relationships (Moran and Schliehe, 2017, p. 2). For this reason, most research explores the subjectivity of detention: how prison is lived differently depending on individual experience (Moran et al., 2009). Prison space is the crystallisation of power relationships that defines social practises and personal experiences in prison. That is why space understood as distance also has an indicative value in this analysis. Moran, Pallot and Piacentini (2013) in *Privacy in penal space: women's imprisonment Russia* describe the condition of being “out of region”, i.e. of being systematically transferred to remote detentions, often far from the city centre, in a structural condition of isolation (Pallot 2007; Moran et al. 2009, 2011). Nonetheless the prisoners' own agency can modify their conditions (Moran, Gill and Conlon, 2013) to create counter-carceral space, “transcending the bars and repurposing prison space” (Shabazz, 2014, p. 582). This has been described, among many other contributions, in the critical attitude and counter-conduct of migrants who started a hunger strike to claim their rights (Conlon, 2013). The same goes for creating a link with the community outside of prison, by writing letters, receiving books and visits (Shabazz, 2014, Moran, 2013a, 2013b). Other forms of adaptation to prison that have been studied are linked to the idea of “secondary adjustment” (Goffman, 1961, p. 32), or “minimum adjustment” (Hansen and Philo, 2017, p. 60), i.e. the minimum possibility for a disabled person to alter the structural condition to allow better social participation during detention. For carceral geography, these practises

of everyday life are linked to space and make the prisoner's movement a spatial act (Shabazz, 2014, p. 582).

Other strands of research concern the concept of prison as a “diverse” institutional form. This consideration is linked to a criticism of Foucault questioning his limited interest in the “generic qualities of space within the whole prison environment” (Philo, 2001, p. 479). Indeed, Marshal (1997), reported in Philo, underlines prisons as *places*, all of which are different. Prisons have “distinctive building structures, land and local environmental landscape contexts” (Philo, p. 479-480) which must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, Moran Turner and Schliehe (2017) argue that prisons change through space and time. In this sense it is important to consider the differences between country and country, place and place, between prison and prison and from historical period to historical period. Each analysis must consider the broader structural, political and institutional context, but also the intersectionality and transcalarity of the phenomena. This way different institutional nature reconsiders prison as an indicator of changes and differences in space and time and between culture and jurisdictions (Schantz, 2017; Moran, Turner, Schliehe, 2017a, p. 668-669).

The term “punitive turn” indicates another concept developed by carceral geography: specifically the analysis of prison spaces where there has been a clear increase of punitiveness, a “populist punitiveness” (Pratt, 2007). What emerged is the *hyperincarceration*, a phenomenon involving some “marginal” social categories (Wacquant, 2010; Peck, 2003; Peck and Theodore, 2008) and a deterioration of the living condition within the prison space. In the USA, this issue has developed into various conceptualisations, such as the “revolving door”, the “single carceral continuum” (Wacquant, 2000, p. 384), the “carceral continuity” (Harcourt, 2006). In Europe, and particularly in Italy, this process is not so visible, as the numbers on the other side of the ocean are incomparable. However, there is the same clear pressure that shifted the management of poverty from social policies to penal policies.

The expression “carceral turn”, compared to “punitive turn”, has a broader meaning, which calls into question the State as the main responsible for these turns. It is a concept developed inside the Ongoing discussion in criminology about the “carceral age” (Bosworth and Kaufman, 2011; Brown, 2014; Simon, 1998). “Carceral turn” shares a similar approach in policies and security measures, that have become increasingly repressive and extended to many more individuals. However, it considers the space dimension crucial. “Prison” and “carceral” are not synonyms: when I use the term prison, I refer to the core of the punishment, which is a concrete and compact object of study; conversely when I use “carceral” I refer to a broader sense, which is not limited to formal prisons but, rather, to the

spread of prison logic through the social body and its institutions. Thus, I consider prison as the “apotheosis of carceral power”, but also as part of a carceral continuum (Hamlin and Speer, 2018, p. 800). In this way, carceral geography research tries to understand prison and society as non-isolated matters and tries to link the diffused logic of confinement with classical analyses of penitentiary and legal (and illegal) systems, such as migrant detention spaces and other institutions, in a continuous process of observation between inside and outside (Lloyd et al. 2013; Morelle, 2015; Conlon, 2013; Gallagher, 2010). This phenomenon can be observed through the analysis of different “technologies of surveillance and control that are extensively used and developed beyond carceral spaces” (Moran, Turner and Schliehe, 2018, p. 668). In other words, there is an

“unprecedented fluidity between forms of confinement, be they state-sanctioned, quasi-legal, ad-hoc, illicit, spatially fixed, mobile, embodied or imagined, and in which the scale of deployment of carceral techniques and infrastructures demands critical attention” (Moran, Turner and Schliehe, 2017a, p. 4-5).

According to some scholars, there is a dominant narrative that tries to represent the prison population as a naturalised category, an “empirical phenomenon such as hurricanes or cancer” (Armstrong and Jefferson, 2017, p. 242). This narrative offers the opportunity to create increasingly effective and repressive solutions for this *surplus population* (Tyner, 2013), something to which the state must respond to defend society.

Carceral geographers works on this conceptualisation to *disavow* a certain dominant analysis of the prison. Latour (1999, p. 110) suggests to “sociologize” the object of one’s studies — the prison in my case — to make it more legible, create an erasure and “debunk the false beliefs” (Armstrong, Jefferson, 2017, p. 243).

1.2 Focusing the prison nature:

As described above, in recent years carceral geography has problematised the “carceral” and the “spatial turn”. The “carceral turn” denotes prison institutions as well as other forms of legal and non-legal, as well as the carceral logics inherent in society at large. It permits also to reconnect, in reverse, society in its carceral entirety (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 9). In short, by observing the “carceral” or “carceral archipelago” (Foucault, 1977) it is possible to observe the spread of prison disciplinary techniques throughout the social body, transmitted in a circular way between the “compact” core of the prison and the prison archipelago and vice versa (Moran, Turner and Schliehe, 2018, p. 669). In the same way, through the concept of space we can observe the prison institution as “diverse” since each prison has its own

history in different times and spaces. The experience of imprisonment is also “subjective” because every experience in every prison space is relative to the complexity of interactions and power relationships. These turns reveal the supposed nature of the prison as “compact”, “diffuse”, “diverse” and “subjective” (Moran, Turner and Schliehe, 2018). The use of the word “nature”, in particular the uncertain nature of the prison comes from the criminologist Christie (1978). This term does not want to allude to prison as natural, but it rather designates its purpose, its production and its meaning, all of which are uncertain.

The description of the nature of the prison has led to two tensions within the theoretical discussion. The first is the limit linked to the abuse of the concept of “carcerality”; the second is the limit of an exclusive analysis of formal prison — the prison space and the experience of life, practise, interaction within it — and total opposition to the idea of a prison space outside the walls. Particularly the notion of “carceral” for CGWG has often been accused of being too broad: a concept that wants to explain too much and sometimes explains even less than the mere study of intramural prison. This critique, brought by Jefferson (2014, p. 47), refers to what Christie (1978) refers to as “imperialist” tendency to call anything and everything prison, forgetting the specificities of prisons.

Effectively, the study of prison logic and the spread of prison discourse and practises succeed when one encounters forms of administrative detention that somehow become new tentacles of the penal system. Detention and expulsion camps for migrants and other detention spaces outside correctional institutions (Morin and Moran, 2015), for example, are the materialisation of this prison logic, although they maintain intrinsic differences with prison. Harcourt (2006) analysed the “carceral continuity” between prison and other forms of coercive imprisonment (Moran, Turner, Schliehe, 2018, p. 24) and showed that the number of prisoners over the decades has changed considerably thanks to the use of other institutions such as asylums and psychiatric institutions at different times (Harcourt, 2006, p. 6). The same analysis could be made for other carceral spaces in Italy, such as the migrant detention centres where former extra-European prisoners are often sent by administrative law in a carceral continuum of a sort. At the same time, it must be underlined that, on a philosophical level the concept of the camp (Agamben 1995), from which several studies on migration detention and expulsion centres have followed, excludes the prison as a space of exception because it is topologically different from a simple space of imprisonment. The camp, unlike the prison, includes the breaking of a link between location and order. From this point of view, the carceral concept tries to escape this ontological question, perhaps by sometimes using the concept of camp too easily.

This does not detract from the fact that, in recent years, carceral geography has introduced innovative thinking that reframes the classic concept of "prison" through the notion of the "carceral space" (Moran, Turner and Schliehe, 2017) to describe prison institutions and other forms of legal and non-legal detention, as well as the carceral logic inherent in the wider society. Carceral geographers reconnect society in its "carceral entirety" (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 9) and consider prison as "less total, more liminal, less delimited, more porous" (Armstrong and Jefferson, 2017, p. 258). On one hand, by observing the "carceral" or "carceral archipelago" (Foucault, 1976) we can note the spread of prison disciplinary techniques throughout society (Moran, Turner and Schliehe, 2017, p. 3). On the other, the study of carceral spaces views prison as both a privileged observation point from which to consider the complex dynamics that structure social order and power relations within our society (Vianello, 2018, p. 832), and as a laboratory of political theories (De Vito, 2014; Morin 2016; Anastasia, Corleone and Zevi, 2011) where practices are produced and tested (Gill et al., 2016, p. 3). Indeed, there is a circular relationship between carcerality and prison, an eternal interchange in which the concepts developed for one can be useful to understand the other. The carceral can include the logic and architecture of the prison in other guises. The same is true in reverse: for example, the prison can be studied in its liminality rather than as a completely isolated, monolithic institution.

Prison research has continually oscillated between context and object. As I will mainly be focusing on the inside, I must keep in mind the risk of losing the value of the context, as in, the interdependence between inside and outside. Thus I developed an analysis of what the prison does, how it acts, and how the actors within it act and perceive their action, and relate to each other within and outside the walls (Armstrong and Jefferson, 2017, p. 247). In this perspective, Foucault's ideas resurface again through the analysis of the "positive technical role" of the prison logics: the prison must be "useful", it has a role and transforms individuals (Foucault, 1977, p. 248). Through this conceptualisation it is possible to detect the spread of the 'prison effect' in society and politics, where "prisons act on more than prisoners, and shape more than individual" (Armstrong and Jefferson, 2017, p. 248). Here, we can see the prison again as a laboratory for society.

Thus, the theoretical nature of the prison is multifaceted. On the one hand, exclusively analysing the one institution can lead to a dead end; on the other hand, prison logic can be too dispersive. There is an eternal roundabout about these two tendencies that forces every scholar to consider this different nature in its complexity.

1.3 Is power embedded in space or time? a problem of definitions

The research interests of prison studies on time relate mainly to the experience of “the pain of imprisonment” (Sykes, 1958), the dark side of “doing time” in prison, in relation to issues such as ageing in prison (Wahidin, 2002, 2004), or detention rates and welfare of prisoners (Jacobs and Helms 1996; Stucky et al. 2005). Moreover, time is considered as the basic structuring dimension of prison life (Sparks et al. 1996, p. 350).

The notion of space is relatively underdeveloped, although constant in many fields of analysis. The development of the spatial turn has created, in abstract, two poles opposing criminologists and geographers, The former concerned with time, the latter with space. In both these fronts, there is a tendency to consider the relationships of power as constitutive of the privileged dimension and to exclude the other, as if the power and the excluded dimension had nothing to do with each other. As will be considered in the following paragraph the question of the prevalence of space or time depends mainly on their definition. I will start by approaching these two dimensions separately and construct a frame that can include all the possibilities deriving from their combination.

1.3.1 Space as the crystallisation of power relationships

In this first part of the paragraph, I will describe space as a central dimension for understanding carceral logics. In general, space is reminiscent of some old forms of punishment that were fundamental in the structuring of the penitentiary institution. Deportation, quarantine and exile, for example, are phenomena that demonstrate a certain historical continuity between today's prison and old penal colonies, such as, for example, “Devil's Island” in French Guiana (where prisoners were sent or transferred to the idea of detention was born). Today, inscrutable spaces can be created without the colonies, as spatial separation can be guaranteed in various other ways. However, prisons take on different connotations, depending on whether they are located within the city, in the most remote parts of state territories, in the suburbs, in the abandoned countryside or in the islands (Gill et al., 2014). The different use of space and mobility has been observed by several scholars, such as Milhaud (2017, p. 127) on *tourisme pénitentiaire*, or Moran, Piacentini and Pallot (2011) on disciplined mobility. Many of these analyses develop the relationship between space and punishment, and underline the effects of imprisonment, liminality, mobility and forced mobility (Moran et al. 2011; 2012).

However, although the traditional spatial conceptualisations can still be recognised in contemporary discussion, today's space and practises within it have taken on a more articulated definition (Moran

and Schliehe, 2017; Morin and Moran, 2014, Nocente, 2020). This passage is highlighted by Foucault by considering how the penal system has overcome the problem of the refusal and exile of leprosy, through a significant strengthening of the internal control of the quarantined (Foucault, 1977, p. 198). They were no longer a homogeneous mass: the internal control required their differentiation (*ibidem*).

The turning point of prison logics started from this last term, differentiation. At the basis of the quarantine there is the idea of a pure society, but although this ideal survives in some forms (such as exclusive racism, segregation, ethnic cleansing, contemporary lockdowns), today purity has been supplanted by the dream of a government of disciplined bodies and people's lives (*ibidem*). Foucault has given us new tools to reconsider contemporary prison deportation and the development of a certain rationality within the concept of anthropophagy, a sort of absorption that implies assimilation and neutralisation⁴. It is a process in which we see exile and imprisonment aimed at exclusion and transfer, and where, every time this process takes place, there is a simultaneous reactivation of the legitimacy of the prison or of the institution acting as a prison (Foucault, 2015).

At every point in history, prisons impose their rationality, like psychiatric hospitals:

“the psychiatric hospital is indeed the institutional site in and through which the expulsion of the mad person takes place; at the same time, and through the very operation of this expulsion, it is a center of the constitution and reconstitution of a rationality that is imposed in an authoritarian way in the framework of relations of power within the hospital, and that will be reabsorbed outside the hospital itself in the form of a scientific discourse that circulates outside as knowledge about madness” (Foucault, 2015, p. 4).

These rationalities spatially materialise mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, the creation of otherness, categorisations and hierarchies for the constitution of an order that divides evil from good, madness from normality (Elden 2001, p. 93; Philo, 1992). A change has taken place in history, a new articulation of the idea of prison space, which has gone from purity to normalisation. This strategy is aimed at ensuring the proper conduct of social life within its walls, implementing the internal control of prisoners and, at the same time, the separation of the surplus population, i.e. the particular individuals who put at “risk” the security of prison and society (Tyner, 2013).

⁴ Reported in Foucault (2015, p. 2):

“There is a passage in *Tristes Tropiques* where Levi-Strauss (1992) says that societies have ultimately found only two means for getting rid of a dangerous individual, of someone possessing a formidable and hostile force: one consists in assimilating the very substance of this power, neutralizing whatever is dangerous, hostile in it; this is the anthropophagic solution in which absorption allows both assimilation and neutralization of this force. The other consists in attempting to vanquish the hostility of this force, neutralizing whatever power it might possess”.

The definition of space goes well beyond the quantitative dimension. It has been sophisticated in a Foucauldian perspective in relation to the growing interest in geographical themes, such as population and territory, as pivotal objects of the art of government (Foucault, 2007), which has in turn developed into micro and macro analyses. This type of analysis underlines the emergence of a “spatialized ontology of the social world” (Philo 2004, p. 124) and makes space “a critical analysis tool” (Elden 2001, p. 119; Philo 2004). From *Discipline and Punish* to his earlier work on biopolitics, the French philosopher describes the importance of spatial strategies with which the population has become something to manage in a certain way. Thus, studying prison space means “knowing what relations of proximity, what type of storage, circulation, mapping ... and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation to achieve a given end” (Foucault, cited in Elden 2001, p. 116). This perspective has increased the importance of space in relation to power and knowledge. In *Questions à Michel Foucault sur la géographie* (Foucault, 1976) Foucault describe the convergence of concepts coming from political-strategic discourse such as territory, field, movement, sector, soil, archipelago and so on, commonly used in geography and in his approach to the archaeology of knowledge.

This approach allows us to understand how the political-strategic discourse is inscribed in space. Unlike time and its continuity, space metaphorises the points where discourses are transformed into social interactions and power relations. Space becomes the descriptor of the relationship between knowledge and power: it becomes crucial in the micropolitics of the prison institution to understand the production of practises; who operates and why, within which system, and how do the actors relate to others (Jefferson 2014, p. 249); how prison space is negotiated (Moran, Pallot, Piacentini, 2013, p. 2); what are the “complex relations of culture, power and difference” (Hubbard, 2001, p. 51). In Raffestin’s *Pour une géographie du pouvoir* (1980), his definition of boundaries as part of the wider question of *quadrillages du pouvoir*, or grids of power, presents several continuities with this relation between space and power (Fall, 2007). In prison, there is a series of fixed boundaries that change according to the relation of power that constitute them. At the same time, prison is a process, an eternal social project, the result of relations of production that reflects the ideological field and the means of production inherent in any given relation (Raffestin, 1980, p. 149). Thus, the process of territorialisation is aimed at crystallising a boundary and at differentiating, it is the sum of relations with both otherness and exteriority. Boundaries are not necessarily stable, they need to be redrawn each time to find new differentiation and to re-establish order (Raffestin, 1990, p. 300). Spatial analysis also assumes a combatant and resistance perspective because this dimension is the metaphor of a container of power that

usually forces — but sometimes frees — the process of becoming (Harvey, 1990, p. 231). The concept of “space” must be considered as a political category: “owned, distributed, mapped, calculated, bordered, controlled.” (Huxley, 2008, p. 1644). Here, I think it is relevant to consider the spatial turn that has been highlighted by carceral geography, as seen in the previous paragraphs.

Space, as mentioned, will allow to expand the understanding of the strategies of confinement and the practises within it, and to explore “material, symbolic and contextual spaces beyond the prison” (Moran and Schliehe, 2017, p. 270). In this way, the analysis can also be opened beyond “formal” prisons, revealing the logic that characterises “those forms of immaterial, widespread prison, which however refer to imprisonment and social control” (D’Este, 2005, p. 106-107).

The Agambenian concept of “camp” (Agamben, 1995) can serve as an example. “Camp” does not refer to prisons but to those spaces of exclusion where emergency becomes the rule (Agamben, 1995, p. 24) and where the life of the subjects becomes bare. The concept of “camp” manifests itself in purer forms as well as in prisons and in particular sections of them, but also in camps for migrants, or in more diluted forms throughout the national territory and beyond. I am not trying to superimpose “camp and prison” as if they were synonymous. Instead, my intention is to describe the prison logics partially through the paradigm of the camp. On the one hand, this allows to develop an analysis based on space as a central dimension; on the other hand, it allows us to emphasise that prison bears witness to the enormous state (or space) of exception that characterises the current relationship between political and legal order and territory (Minca, 2006, p. 388). In fact, the camp, as well as the banishment, refer to the *nòmos*, and therefore to the spirit of the laws (and, in this case, of the penal system), of which, in some ways, the prison is nothing more than an appendix. Therefore, questioning the 'carceral' or 'camp' logic rather than the 'prison' object means questioning the whole punitive system and the social order in general.

1.3.2 Experiencing time and time-discipline

The concept of time in prison has been developed by criminologists departing from several interpretations such as: the nature of the present and the process of becoming (Bergson, 1911); the reflexive relationship with time in everyday life (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1981); and, in particular, the punishment through time, the time-discipline (Thompson, 1967; Foucault, 1977).

In the same way as with the dimension of space, the origins of the prison can be traced through the dimension of time. It allows us to discern the link between prison and factory (Melossi and Pavarini, 1977). Both the Marxist and the Foucauldian can agree in recognising in these institutions the common exploitation through time. In the factory, through wage labour the worker will sell part of his life for a salary. The prisoner, in such a retributive logic, will have to pay with time his debt to society, as if to say: do you want to subtract your time and your body from wage labour? I put you in a place destined to annihilate the body and to turn time itself into punishment! This connection was even clearer in the era of the workhouse, where time, work, exploitation, and surplus value were central. Crucial in this process was also the link between punishment and capitalism (Melossi, 2017, p. 14), as there was a “kind of continuity between workshop clock, production line stopwatch, and prison calendar” (Foucault, 2015, p. 72). What prison and factory have in common, according to some scholars, is the discipline imposed (Foucault, 1977). In fact, discipline is closely linked to the theory of surplus value (Melossi and Pavarini, 1977, p. 15; Garland, 1990, p. 174). Prison time is calculated through disciplining time which, like wages, is still an abstract quantification evoking sciences such as economics and criminology. It is discipline, the time-discipline within production, that guarantees the extraction of surplus value and allows the capitalist to exist as such (Melossi, 2017, p. 15).

Another perspective inspired by the temporal dimension concerns the study of how the prison order is maintained, with what rationality, and how discipline is imposed. Criminologists and geographers have widely discussed the panopticon (Bentham, 1791; Foucault, 1977) and its logic, and how people are influenced by disciplinary power (Gallo, Ruggiero, 1989; Moran and Schliehe, 2017 p. 17; Alford 2000). The panopticon is a technology of power that induces in the prisoner a conscious state of visibility that ensures the automatic functioning of power (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). Bentham believed that criminal internalisation of productive labour habits could be possible only through constant surveillance (Davies, 2003, p. 46). This logic, extrapolated from Bentham's architecture (1791), is still considered as a both outdated and current way to understand how discipline is maintained in prison. Some criminologists, for example, believe that we have moved from spatial discipline to temporal discipline through a new idea of prison. According to Gallo and Ruggiero (1989, p. 6-7), the panopticon was progressively demolished and overtaken by the “Piranesian” prison. This is expressed, within the wider envisioned future of the immaterial prison, as a new form of prison that abandons the traditional space-physical torture, in favour of time-deformation and compression of the communication (*ibidem*). Seems that the Foucauldian movement of punishment from body to the soul (Hutchinson,

2006, p. 444) has been passed by the time and not the space⁵. The immaterial prison serves the role of imprisonment of the soul and the mind, while the old material prison is still traditionally anchored to the body. Giambattista Piranesi conceived the “prisons of invention” (Gallo and Ruggiero, 1989, p. 6), characterised by a different architectural imagination of punishment. In them, a fourth dimension emerged: the dimension of time. This fourth dimension is experienced, simultaneously, as a physical factor and as a metaphysical entity; the condition of transition (disturbing and necessary) from material prison to “immaterial prison” (Gallo and Ruggiero, 1989, p. 7). In the “prisons of invention” the space of confinement becomes infinite, and the way to get rid of it requires the internalisation of self-limits, self-enclosure. the boundary between the controller and the controlled becomes faded. The narrow spaces of the dungeons, traditionally linked to the material prison, leave room for the chains of the mind, the immaterial prison.

These two dimensions, spatial and temporal, portray the state-of-the-art of scientific research between geography, prison sociology, and criminology. At first sight, it might seem difficult to superimpose these antithetical analyses, but as said at the beginning of these paragraphs, the choice of superimposing one dimension on the other tends to be linked to the mutual argumentative depotentialisation of the two dimensions which, in truth, are really difficult to separate. What I mean by powerlessness is the action of emptying one or the other dimension of the power they encompass, i.e. of emptying these dimensions of the system of power relations that crystallise in them. The emptying of power relations embedded in time and space has led scholars to fall into the same mutual error of powerlessness.

This can be seen in the clash between material and immaterial prison, where the imprisonment of the mind is actually linked by the simultaneous experience of time and space conditioning. Undoubtedly, the fact of being in prison and being colonised (Goffman, 1961, p. 31) by a total institution changes the way prisoners experience time and the way they develop adaptation to detention (Warren et al. 2004; Thompson and Loper 2005). Nonetheless, the actual transformation of the nature of prisons, rather than shifting from spatial to temporal, changes in the way power is exercised and how new power relationships are experienced by all actors within the prison walls. This is how I see the shift from punishment of the body to punishment of the soul.

⁵ In the attenuation of penal punishment, Foucault recognises a shift in the quantitative phenomenon of corporal punishment, but also of cruelty and suffering. Overall, a more human approach has spread which is defined as the softness of punishment. Consequently, the body, as argued by De Mably (1789, p. 326), in no longer being the object punished by punishment, is replaced by the soul. Reference taken from *Discipline and Punish* by Michel Foucault (1976a, p. 6).

1.4 Space-time, experience, and power relations

In this paragraph, I want to continue the process of opening a discussion between human geographers dealing with prison space, and criminologists and prison sociologists dealing with prison time (Moran, 2012a).

The interaction between space and time can be better understood by thinking about the relationship between prison and society in the following way. The ideal-typical category of “free people”, i.e. those who have regular documents and sufficient economic opportunities, has a potentially unlimited space in society. For them, what is at fault is time, occupied by waged work and the countless tasks of everyday life. In prison, on the other hand, the space is limited to a few square meters (the cell, the corridor, the courtyard, the rooms for social activities, the visiting room); time seems to be there, available, but in reality it is a repetitive, homogeneous, immobile block. The prison, in fact, is made of social interactions just like society. Unlike society, however, the two dimensions, space and time, are somehow imposed, but also fought, continuously remodelled. This remarkable difference is certainly a pivotal element of prison discipline that, precisely, substantiates how the penalty is afflicted (Kalica and Santorso, 2018, p. 52-53). As one friend said, between the first and second detention there was an abyssal difference, as a 15-day detention in solitary confinement was much heavier than months of ordinary detention:

“The logic of adult memory is in the flow of time, proceeding according to a sequentiality that we derive from reading the calendar, the clock. The walls of the isolation cells are famous for the signs with which the passing of the days is recorded. Losing oneself in time is like losing oneself in space. Prisoners discover this ugly side of relativity: the longer the days are, the shorter the years that have passed, since if the physical space granted to us is restricted, time does not pass, but expands in the monstrosity of the moment that never ends (Guagliardo, 1997, p. 53)”⁶.

The spatial-temporal compression that substantiates the punishment, makes quantity a relative matter, unlike the scientific rigour with which the conditions for its application are defined. In the same way, the more general colonisation of the self (Goffman, 1961, p. 35) forces every prisoner to adapt through the complexity of socio-power relations in a condition of institutionalisation of their space and time. This (only theoretically) sophisticated temporal condition produces and structures prison life and culture (Medlicott, 1999, p. 216).

⁶ My translation: “La logica della memoria adulta è nello scorrere del tempo, procedendo secondo una sequenzialità che ci deriva dalla lettura del calendario, dell'orologio. I muri delle celle d'isolamento sono famosi per i segni con cui si registra il passar dei giorni. Perdersi nel tempo è come perdersi nello spazio. Il carcerato scopre questo brutto lato della relatività: più le giornate sono lunghe, più brevi sono gli anni trascorsi giacché se lo spazio fisico concessoci è ristretto, il tempo non vola, ma si dilata nella mostruosità dell'attimo che non finisce mai.”

This picture is well described in the article *Doing time in carceral space* (Moran, 2012a), where it emerges that space and time are linked to the way we see the world, in the way of “spatial relationships between objects and the temporal relationships we perceive between events” (Dodgshon, 2008, p. 1–2). There are overlapping temporalities, such as the time of the clock that measures sentences that lack a different sense of stasis (Moran, 2012a); the temporal repetition of the prison routine both imposed and sought; time perceived outside of time, where things flow differently; and, finally, biological time. Superimposed and embodied times (Wahidin, 2002, p. 182) change completely in relation to the spaces in which they are lived. On the reverse, the spatial relationship with objects and people constitutes the stratification that makes up a prison composed of detention circuits, isolation cells, courtyards, rooms with different purposes, such as educational activities, the meeting room and so on. These spaces continuously change their meaning over time: for example, the roof of a prison after an unpredictable protest can become the space *par excellence* where the demands are claimed. Space and time together compose the container or frame within which to observe the interactions and power relations in prison that are embodied in the lived experience.

1.4.1 Relations of power and resistance

In the last paragraph I stressed the importance of combining space and time and their embedding in the power relationship. What has remained underdeveloped so far is the definition of power relations. After introducing the different approaches with which power has been studied, from power as capacity to power as relationship, I will consider the concept of power that will be the basis of the theoretical framework throughout this research.

Power is a concept that has been discussed in all its definitions: power as a capacity and a thing that is exercised *over* others; exercised *with* others through associations and networks, something that flows; something that is everywhere, a relational effect of every generic and specific social interaction (Allen, 2003). All these different understandings imply that social sciences have a different overall view of phenomena according to the definition used. I will now present them briefly and dwell on the insights that can complete the definition of relations of power in a Foucauldian sense.

When I described the nature of the prison, I considered the “compact” one, as the central power of the prison, the “core of punishment”. With “central” I want to specify that I do not want to limit this conception to a centred power as described by Latour (1986). Power is not a “thing”, I do not want to say that “compact” power implies a capacity, a quantitative amount of power that is more or

less concentrated. Moreover, I do not consider power as something that can be held and exercised *over* others, running the risk of producing a deterministic view of power (Hindess, 1996, p. 26-27). In this vision, power as capacity leads us to a zero-sum game, where the question is whether we have power, and who, on the contrary, does not (Isaac, 1987), or whether we have a winning or losing condition. These are criticisms that mainly have been moved on Marxist and Weberian analyses of power that conceive of power as a domain, without considering the conditions of existence of power. Other authors, following this last interest, have expanded the study of the power exercised *with* others, developing the idea of networks (Giddens, 1977, 1981; Mann, 1986, 1993; Castells, 1996). Their approach opens a new discussion with respect to the previous concept of power. Power is constituted differently and has a different nature: power is exercised through the association of several people by forming networks. Moreover, rather than being solid, it flows through different nodes. This concept has exceeded power as a thing and tells us a lot about the transmission of power's resources and capabilities, and how power is controlled and coordinated *with* and *over* others. However, this viewpoint is still linked to a conception of power that moves from one point to another and does not lose its conception of power as transcendental (Allen, 2003, p. 64).

Poststructuralist critics have described power as an immanent affair (Allen, 2003). They develop their analysis trying to disconnect power from both the idea of just domination/repression (Foucault, 2001a), and the transcendental idea of a power external to us (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The novelty of this concept of power lies in its decentred or multicentred nature and becomes inseparable from its effects. The mechanism of power is produced and reproduced as in a circle. Deleuze and Guattari's definition of central power considers macropolitics and micropolitics, and, as a consequence, every society and every individual in a certain field, which is composed in turn by three zones (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The first is the zone of power, which refers to the segments of a solid rigid line of power: the molar power, for instance the State and its institutions. Molar power is the authoritarian centre of power, but power is not reduced to it: molar power is only what is easily visible, what is material and situated. The second is a zone of indiscernibility, relative to the diffusion of power through a microphysical fabric where power is distributed and transmitted through different centres of power, and where those who receive this transmission also receive the influence of power as footnotes of molar power. The third is the zone of impotence related to the flows and quanta which can be only converted, but not controlled or defined (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 226-227). There is always something that is beyond the control of the central power, something as small and indefinable as

desires and intentions that can coagulate and threaten the internal order. Power must therefore recalibrate its control strategies in order to better exercise its governmental power. In the space composed of these three zones, the state understood as central power tries to codify, control, and spread its power in the field of forces concerned. However, there is also a consistent mutant flow that always tends to evade or escape. Or, rather, there subsist a complex process in which the State controls and spreads its influence in the second zone of indiscernibility, but never manages to capture the quanta and flows of the third zone. Each time that a group or an institution tries to extend its powers by penetrating the surrounding social space, there is always some distortion and resistance.

The power relations are described by Ugelvick (2014) in this sense:

“As a minimum, there must, in order to talk about power, be a relationship between (1) an action and (2) another action (concrete or potential, your own or that of others) that this will affect. A relationship of power and resistance between (1) and (2) is the central defining characteristic that must be present in order to talk about power in a Foucauldian sense” (p. 42).

Thus, the condition of the existence of power is a relationship between individuals or multitudes, i.e. a condition present everywhere and that can never be completely avoided. This relationship gives resistance and power the possibility of existing: “where no ability to refuse or rebel exists, no power exists” (Foucault, 2000, p. 114). Moreover, forms of resistance are nothing more than different techniques of power. Even in daily life the actions and discourses of each individual or multitude are characterised by relations of power and, therefore, of resistance. These techniques of power can be exercised *with* and *over* and *against* others. However, the risks of finding power everywhere and of flattening the expression and consequent actions of agency and identity in the same occurrences regardless of their context should be stressed (Ugelvick, 2014, p. 97). Indeed, the study of these phenomena must be concerned with aim, proximity and presence of the constitutive forces (Allen, 2003, p. 190).

These abstract mechanisms of how power works and how it can be observed underline new ways to overcome some old fixities that used to characterise it. Nevertheless, classic studies such as Weber's power analysis are still extremely valuable, especially when the question at stake is: what kind of power do we mean? Indeed, the domain of power, a long-discussed chapter of Weber's *Economics and Society* (Hindess, 1996; Isaac, 1987), does not exhaust all the different facets with which the scholar spoke about power. For Weber, the possibility of long-term domination is closely linked to the question of legitimacy; power, in this sense, is not only *over* others but also *granted by* others. This conclusion implies two issues. The first is legitimacy, a fundamental matter when we talk, for example, about prison. Legitimacy is the institutional form *par excellence*, in which order is constantly at stake and cannot be

maintained by exclusively using force, as I shall describe in the next part of the research. The second issue is the fact that power, although asymmetrical, is never unidirectional; on the contrary, it takes different forms depending on the social relationship established, such as coercion, seduction, manipulation: “once inside its walls, the rhythms of activities, the lulls and outbursts, may generate their own coded style of authority” (Allen, 2003, p. 11).

In every research it is not possible to grasp all the possible immanent relationships of power that compose a field. The state itself, for example, is composed of a multitude of different centres and forms that can be considered only on the stratum or layers in which it is analysed. This can be seen in relation to the multiplicity of power relations that are established in the multiplicity of fields and discourses that characterises prison:

“Take a thing like the prison: the prison is a form, the “prison-form”; it is a form of content on a stratum and is related to other forms of content (school, barracks, hospital, factory). [...] the form of expression is reducible not to words but to a set of statements arising in the social field considered as a stratum (that is what a regime of signs is). The form of content is reducible not to a thing but to a complex state of things as a formation of power (architecture, regimentation, etc.). We could say that there are two constantly intersecting multiplicities, “discursive multiplicities” of expression and “nondiscursive multiplicities” of contents” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 64)

This observation opens up, firstly, the issue of the relation between the researcher and the object researched, which will be described in the methodological part; secondly, the relationship between spatial and discursive practise, which will be developed in the analysis of the empirical material.

To sum up, in using the term power we must consider a multiplicity of power relations, inherent in the field in which they are exercised and constitutive of their organization (Foucault, 2001a, p. 64). In this framework, every prison space is “resource and means through which power is exercised” (Allen, 2003, p. 11). Here, we can understand the immanence of power, the immanence of power and its nature, which cannot be reduced to a fluid or a container, but must be instead understood in a combination of layers of analysis that the researcher must consider.

Prison is a privileged arena where it is possible to observe how forms of resistance are structured, as they are the extreme example of any other form of resistance to an imposed order. The power in action, exercised and embodied, assumes a different proximity and interaction of different forces that may be transversal and absent. On the one hand, it can produce torture, abuse of deprivation, violent power, and a model of repressive and authoritarian power. On the other hand, it is a disciplinary provision of normalisation: today, prisons act in a softer way, regulating the social body and avoiding the

use of force as the only demonstration of domination. It is therefore fundamental to define what kind of power we mean in relation to its immanent nature; to consider how it is formed, what is its aim, its closeness, its softness, its hardness, its new panopticism and sophisticated strategies of control.

1.5 Governmentality and counter-conducts

1.5.1 Power and “conducts of conduct”

“Governmentality” is a concept that Foucault developed while tracing how in Western history different models of power have overlapped. In particular, he argued that sovereign power moved towards disciplinary power, and then again towards the development of the art of governing populations and territories, i.e. the governmentality. These shifts have never led to the dissolution of one of these powers: in fact, in every field of analysis we can find that these different systems of power relate to each other. Nonetheless, since the 18th century, governmentality has brought new priorities in this triangulation of models of power: “[Governmentality] has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument” (Foucault, 2007, p. 144).

In some controversial — but partially useful — opinions, governmentality is the composition of “government” and “mentality” (Huxley, p. 1644; Senellart, 2007, p. 502). Governmentality means deploying space management strategies that ensure safe circulation and passage, isolation and classification through discipline, incorporation, risk calculation and distribution (Elden, 2006, p. 2). This concept has generated a variety of important studies, covering different disciplines such as critical sociology (see, for example, Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996; Dean, 1999; Lemke, 2001; Senellart, 2007; Walters and Larner, 2004, Carrabine, 2000; Macaulay, 2013) as well as some analyses in geography (Braun, 2000; Elden, 2001; Hannah, 2000; Huxley, 2007; Legg, 2005). As I will describe in the next chapter, this approach, has affinities with the critical criminologists who, since the 1970s, have built important links between Foucault and neo-Marxism and Durkheim, in their studies on social control and the problem of order (Corrigan and Sayer, 1985; Melossi and Pavarini, 1977).

There are two main conceptions of governmentality: the first considers as a historical analysis of the logic of state government; the second, as “an investigation of the forms of government of the other and the self, instantiated throughout society in institutions, organizations and self-care regimes” (Huxley, 2008, p. 1635).

The former is concerned with the analysis of government, as in “the art of government” of populations and individuals, the understanding of the population according to the biopolitical order, and the creation of autonomous subjects who become entrepreneurs of themselves in a liberal sense. I used the term “liberal” because Foucault himself developed governmentality by tracing the origins of liberalism, its ideology and techniques of government. This concept emerges for the first time in the lecture of 8 February 1978 (Foucault, 2007, p. 120), in which he defines that “techniques of segregation [are] to psychiatry, techniques of discipline (...) to the penal system, and biopolitics to medical institutions” (Foucault, 2007, p. 120). Through macro analysis, this first understanding brought into play the problem of the state and the liberal state in a domain of power relations.

The second understanding concerns governmentality as “conduct of conducts”, at the basis of the process of subjectification of others and the self. In this interpretation the concept begins to acquire a more general meaning as “analytical grid” for relations of power (Foucault, 2008, p. 186). Thus, governmentality takes on the connotation of govern of human conduct by linking possible fields that include microanalysis.

A first distinction must be made: governmentality is not government. Even if they seem to converge, governmentality is “a strategic field of power relations in their mobility, transformability, and reversibility” (Foucault, 2001b, p. 241). Unlike government, governmentality does not constitute a structure, but a singular generality. In other words: “Governmentality is thus the rationality immanent to the micro powers, whatever the level of analysis being considered” and “its only reality is that of the event (*événementielle*) and its intelligibility can only make use of a strategic logic” (Senellart, 2007, p. 504). What changes from a more historical or genealogical understanding of reality is that every power relationship becomes here an object of strategic analysis.

This approach has sometimes been criticised as too generalising and incapable of generating a sufficient framework of analysis (Huxley, 2008). Governmentality analyses the way people govern (themselves and others) and questions the concept of true and false, the production of truth, and social relations generally taken for granted (Huxley, 2008, p. 1636). Power and subjectivity are not considered as a “thing”, as described in previous paragraphs (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 113): power is immanent, and subjectivity takes shape according to the broader process of normalisation of the social body and the various resistances that oppose it. The strategies of the powerful concern the distribution of objectives and rationalities, and they must be studied and addressed either through political theory or through the observation of movements of resistance against them. All these struggles, often invisible, can be

observed through “mundane texts, rules, timetables, and spatial arrangements of schools, factories, prisons and offices” (Huxley, 2008, p. 1636). These constitute the cracks through which one can spy material or immaterial witnesses of how the mechanism of power works. I want to specify that this kind of description should not be interpreted to simplify the picture, thus reducing prison dynamics to an irresistible mechanism of power in which resistance is a shallow non-reproduction of docility that materialises in graffiti hiding in the cell wall. Actually, it is rare to find a plan of total control by the powerful, and such ideal goals and the rationality put in place to achieve them never occur:

“spaces, like subjects, are formed at the inter-sections of crosscutting powers and knowledges, imaginaries and practises, and only in exceptional circumstances [...] spaces, buildings, regulations and subjectivities coincide” (Huxley, 2008, p. 1647).

Using a classic example, “a real Panopticon was never built exactly to Bentham’s specifications” (Huxley, 2008, p. 1645). Daily life in prison, consisting of routines, confined spaces, laws, rules — and their interpretations — may not be entirely the result of a conscious process. The “strategic configurations [...] are often not very clear even to those who occupy a place and play a role in them” (Foucault, 2002b, 386). In this perspective, perfectibility, lack of correspondence between goals and accomplishments, mistakes, crisis, overlapping ideologies (for instance: punishment or rehabilitation; retributivist or consequentialist ideas of punishment), and resistances become a legitimate source and excuse for “problematizations and installation of more exacting programs” (Huxley, 2008, p. 1643). The reproduction of new prison models seems to conceal the intention to give meaning and legitimacy to prison (Scheer, 2016). For these apparatuses and logics there is no “unified subjects of some coherent regime of government that produces persons in the form in which it dreams” (Rose, 1996, p. 35). The understanding of the mentality of government does not always concern the study of the deprivation of freedom; rather, liberal thought promotes freedom, choice, autonomy, and self-responsibility as the main advanced liberal and democratic virtues. I am not claiming that liberal power and governing technology are freer than other manifestations of power. On the contrary, the government has entered human life with insidious intrusion now more than ever. What I am arguing is that the analyses originally appropriate for the study of disciplinary power, such as the investigation of social control, do not consider freedom as part of government, which is used to legitimise itself and to reward, divide, and justify “just” and “democratic” punishments. At the same time, the liberal forms of government make it possible to develop counter-conducts “by claiming subjecthood in the name of the very qualities by which they are simultaneously invoked and excluded” (Huxley, 2008, p. 1642).

According to Foucault, governmentality is not an ideology but a political rationality: “a way of doing things that was oriented to specific objectives and that reflected on itself in characteristic ways” (Rose, O’Malley, Valverde, 2006, p. 84). In the present chapter I do not mean to present either a theory such as the “interpellation” of Althusser, analysing how subject subjection take place (2014), or an ideal typification of reality; rather it is an orientation work that led us to empirically mapping governmental rationalities and techniques (Rose, O’, Malley, Valverde, 2006, p. 99). My goal for this research is to develop the governmental framework to understand prison as a micro-ecological metaphor with which it is possible to understand how power works, is produced and reproduced within a specific field of interrelated forces. Prison is the institutional crystallisation of modern forms of thought and political action. Its nature of laboratory and touchstone allows me to analyse processes present in prison and in society in more diluted forms. In Italy, Guagliardo (2012) identifies the penal system as a vanguard role in the cultural context that has favoured the socio-economic process within the social body (p. 35-36). The penal system has been able, with its technologies, to invade the private sphere and to allow the process of normalisation. A possible parallel process to the origin of the idea of liberal state was the emergence of a distinction between state and society (Foucault 1997b, p. 74-75). Additionally, according to Guagliardo, the penal system began to expand as civil society grew. I see in civil society an important ideological concept, from which it is possible to exclude those outside the social consortium without appearing repressive. Civil society is building a system of reforms that has the dream of finding the right or alternative punishment; instead, it does not see that it is only hiding a primordial spirit of revenge and is expanding the punitiveness of people. This is clear when we see reformism and criminal populism calling for new laws and regulations for both the rich criminal who pollutes the environment, and the anarchist who destroys a shop window. Although ideologically opposed, these two systems converge in building a penal apparatus that is gradually expanding, as neither seeks to make punishment. The governmentality of the penal system is a transversal process that assumes the tendency to maintain the monopoly of the principle of victimisation (Guagliardo, 2012, p. 36.) Another common tendency in the prison is atomisation, which I shall describe in the next paragraph. Atomisation has become extremely useful for the logic of risk and control to which every citizen is exposed, making the weaker the more punishable: the modern State and the modern individual intersect their rules “codetermine each other’s emergence” (Foucault 2002a, 2007; Lemke, 2001, p. 191).

The potential of such an analysis allows us to understand something different from other conceptions of neoliberalism and contemporary rationality. In particular, how liberal technologies have helped to structure society as much as the old disciplinary prison: the role of government is reconfigured as training, encouragement, incitement and, if necessary, coercion of individuals to adopt self-regulatory behaviour and to govern themselves as if they were free (Huxley, 2008, p. 1640; Gordon 1991; Hindess 1997).

To conclude, I want to clarify the insights that have been proposed so far. What is shown by governmentality is anything but a neutral field of forces. There are oppressed and oppressors, but the forms that these sides take are complicated in terms of the production, reproduction and interrelation of forces. The distinction between oppressed and oppressors can fade, as some oppressed reproduce some of the dynamics of the oppressors. I would not say, however, that the opposite is entirely valid, since, as long as there are several centres that overlap, there will also be cases in which those who formally stand on one side will take sides in favour of the oppressed. In any case, they are all part of a *dispositif* that aims to maintain the prison. Here, the government of the imprisoned population, the conflict, and the tension of the conflict are the engine of the governmental machine.

Governmentality is the constant attempt to make sense of the environment, to visualise the directions to follow and the goals to be achieved according to the social condition of one's existence (Rose, 2006, p. 99). It allows creativity to take a central position, even if the impulse and determination of ideals have to deal with the distortion imposed by the field or the resources and techniques available. This condition is common to those who have decided to oppose the field by forcing it from within internal opposition, by developing a counter-conduct, challenging the social order without counting on a territory, a space to administer, while generally creating new ones or “occupying” those of the powerful.

All these considerations that build my frame, concept by concept, are not intended to build a deductive method. They are instead a guide that suggests new questions that deserve an empirical investigation, which I will develop in the next chapters. According to the mechanism in which power is supposed to work, the dimension that will be observed, such as space and time, will be relevant to illustrate the governmentality of many micro-environments, e. g. prison power systems, bearing in mind the following questions suggested by Huxley (2008, p. 85): who and what is governed, and by

whom? how prisoners' conduct is produced and reproduced, fed or broken down, disciplined or released; who governs, what governs? What is the logic of power in this field? What are the power techniques of the different parties? And what are the aims?

1.5.2 Counter Conduct: Conceptualising resistance in time and space

In this paragraph, I want to decline the previous definition of governmentality by focusing on the role of counter-conduct, whilst concepts such as relations of power and resistance, and the distinction between strategies and tactics of De Certeau (1984).

The definition of Governmentality as “conduct of conducts” has some affinities with Deleuze and Guattari's micropolitics of the three zones that characterise each central power (section 1.4.1). I want to consider the prison and the carceral as the first and second zones. Specifically, the compact nature of prison as the first molar zone, and the diffused logics and other technologies of power as the second zone of indiscernibility. The third part of this conceptualisation of power centres are the quanta, which are everything that escapes from these logics, because of these logics. At the same time, each central power shapes its technologies, logics, and interwoven power relations. Each central power is exercised with others to create better ways to capture their escaping quanta in space and time. Space-time is where the three zones defined by Deleuze and Guattari relate to each other. Namely it is where and when the social field of forces interrelates and generates social interactions. Space and time deal with governmentality in terms of strategies and tactics.

The idea of strategy is the rational calculation of the powerful, which has a “proper” institution or a basis from which it generates relations with the outside world according to its purposes (De Certeau, 1984, p. XIX). Tactics are a “calculation that cannot rely on a property (a spatial or institutional location), the place of the tactic is within the centre of power. The tactic is linked to quanta, to the unpredictable flows of forces that “insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety” (De Certeau, 1984, XX). The victory of the visible central power is the space it administers. On the contrary, “tactic depends on time —it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized on the wing. [...] It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into “opportunities” (*ibidem*).

In summary, tactics and strategies are linked to the assembly of heterogeneous elements that build the central power in a certain space and time, which are everything but neutral. Even the practise of daily life is so strongly linked to space (and time) and makes the movement of the prisoner a (time)

spatial act (Sykes, 1958; Sparks et al., 1996). Regarding prison, the incorrigible inmate tells us stories of how power bases its strategies on everything that escapes it: “It is always from the depths of its impotence that each power centre draws its power” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 226). A similar argument can be glimpsed in the concept of the “space of exclusion” described by Agamben (1995), where emergency becomes the rule (p. 24) and where prisoners, in contrast to the prison order, are the first to be subjected to these policies. For example, Rosenberg clearly expresses her concern about the normalisation of criminal isolation units: “We always said that if they can do that to us... this will open the door to the use of these kinds of techniques and tactics for the rest of the population” (Story, 2015, p. 34; Rosenberg 2013). These assumptions would seem a bit functionalist if I did not specify that there is no space-time situation where there is only one central power. Moreover, as much as this understanding may shed light on how power is produced, it does not tell us anything concrete about a specific phenomenon. However, there are many questions that emerge from this conceptualisation. The first is the importance of the complexity within which what we have observed is immersed, the thousand plateaus from which everything is observable; the second is what remains of the elusive quanta, in other words, the type of resistance that I want to consider, which is, the counter-conduct; the third seeks to define the role of the counter-conduct within governability and how it is possible to understand its relationship with the power of these two immanent elements.

Firstly, institutions such as prisons are the result of the crystallisation of power relationship in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, and in social hegemonies. The State continuously tries to produce codes and representations in a process of re-territorialisation of each anomalous flow that is created. The flows, instead, like beliefs and desires, constitute the constant process of deterritorialisation from the central power. Prison, as a space, is the property of the State, and the strategies within it are aimed at preservation of both prison and state. In other words, strategies must maintain the social order of a given territory, in this case a nation. In fact, the prison, as a state apparatus, is closely linked to the origin of the nation and its construction (Brooks, 1918). Nonetheless, if a clear nexus exists between them, it is not possible to define every possible *plateau* from which this relation takes place, how many micro centres, power associations, resistance in the transmission and distribution of its qualities. Again, the only way possible, according to what has been said with the above, is to understand all the possible relations of power that take place in a field and how they materialise in a certain space-time.

Secondly, according to the previous paragraphs, power is immanent and is the condition of existence of resistance. As long as there is power, there will inevitably be resistance. For Foucault, the analysis of resistance and the several ways in which it takes form is strictly tied to the analysis of governmentality. In general, in any expression of resistance there is at least a refuse, “to say *no*” (Ugelvick, 2014, p. 8), a clear statement of autonomy and self-determination, even in a prison context characterised by the fact that most of the decisions are already taken for you. Speaking about carcerality, one of the main objectives that characterises the resistance of prisoners is to transform the top-down process of stigmatising the criminal, the felon, into something different (Goffman, 1963). There is a constant process of resistance intended to “challenge, alter or modify their prisoner status” (Ugelvick, 2014, p. 6): It can be an “indirect attempt to influence or evade the forms of objectification the power necessarily has as a by-product” (Ugelvick, 2014, p. 44); the actions and behaviours of the prisoners, directed to escape or to avoid control of the prison and the daily administrative system; the action of “coping” (Crewe, 2009, p. 97) which can be a way to escape from monotony and routine and, in some cases, can be considered a form of resistance.

Tactics of the detainees emerge when the aim is to question the institutional strategies and to refuse the process of deterritorialisation that characterises the different areas of central power, its codes, and a continuous struggle for the legitimacy of the prisons themselves, even when not visible. In fact, the apparent absence of conflict is nothing more than a continuous conflict faced by other means. What characterises daily life is actually a mix of hidden and visible processes, where you can discern the insurgency of a revolt, a protest, or, at the same time, an intervention of administrative repression. In Scott’s words: “[There is an] immense political terrain that lies between quiescence and revolt” (1990, p. 199). This issue was analysed by Sykes (1958), who considered the prison as an institution in a “permanent pendulous motion between crisis and equilibrium, where the predictable prison revolt is understood as a periodic result of a number of accumulated small crises (p. 110).

Then there are other forms of resistance that leave no room for misunderstandings and that, at most, can be criticised ideologically, politically, or tactically. I am referring to acts and discourses aimed at creating protests and revolts, transforming a personal trouble into a collective one. These forms of resistance are generally designed to unsettle the balance of power relations, either by denouncing a particular condition to which one is subjected, or by creating a bridge of cooperation between detainees and not only the outside, but also the inside (between detainees of different prisons). In a nutshell, seeking freedom by breaking the condition of isolation and creating resistance with other detainees

and people in solidarity. These expressions are the most feared by the prison administration because they are, intentionally or not, challenging the idea of social order, the legitimisation of the institution itself, and, in final analysis, the state legitimisation itself. Steven Box's theory about the power-threat is explicative in this sense. According to his hypothesis, "state repression will be directed not at the criminal per se, but at subordinated groups who are perceived (accurately or not) as likely to pose a threat to existing political order and power arrangements" (Box, 1983). The concept is linked to Max Weber's idea of monopoly of force in a given territory, and lets us understand the role of micro and macro politics: "break that monopoly and you break the state, or at least that particular state" (Day, 2014, p. 134-135).

In this research, I will elaborate on the concept of counter-conduct, a specific form of resistance that is immanent to governmentality. Foucault, talking about "conduct of conduct", traced the primordial forms of counter-conducts, namely "specific revolts of conduct" against "the pastoral direction, regulation and incitement of conduct" (Foucault, 2007, p. 194). Similarly, the governmental seed was cultivated, in the epoch of modernity "organized in terms of *raison d'État*", where new concepts became fundamental in the political agenda, such as "civil society, the population, or the Nation" (Senellart, 2007, p. 504). Counter-conduct, specifically, was preferred to resistance, insurrections, dissidence, and revolts, referring to the "struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others" (Foucault, 2007, p. 201). With this concept, Foucault put at stake the issues of being governed, of how to be governed, and of how to not be governed, which, since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, have developed in the population (Foucault, 1997b, p. 44).

The expression of counter-conducts presupposes the understanding that power and freedom are not "things" that can be taken from people, but are instead exercised through social relations and as a practise. It is expressed as "practical and performative freedom" (Ugelvick, 2014, p. 6), a creative power rather than a counterpower. In this case, resistance is understood in a negative sense: it is always a minority or lateral affiliation, in opposition to centralisms and hierarchical structures (Foucault and Deleuze, 1978, p. 122). It is not a singular heroic act and break of the order (Conlon, 2013, p. 142); rather, it is part of a continuum that can lead to events as such, but generally it remains less visible.

Counter-conduct is a clear opposition aimed at the recognition of the subject as political subjects. Becoming a political subject means that everything becomes political, therefore subjects are adversaries or allies. Nonetheless, defining adversaries is quite a complicated issue, because there are no longer heads to cut or kings to overthrow. Power is widespread and has no head.

What I will develop in this research is related to the “singular generality” (Senellart, 2007, p. 505), which means that

“Politics is defined by the whole sphere of state intervention, (...). To say that everything is political amounts to saying that, directly or indirectly, the state is everywhere. Politics is defined by the omnipresence of a struggle between two adversaries (...)” (*ibidem*).

This process can shape a range of more or less radical positions, from the rejection of the government to the “preoccupation about the way to govern and the search for the ways to govern” (Foucault, 1997b, p. 28).

It can be a total refusal of who governs, a refusal to be governed or “to recognize and realize the logic of governmentality while simultaneously refusing its form or means in a particular situation” (Conlon, 2013, p. 135). In this field there are soft and radical positions, reformist and abolitionist. The visible and the invisible politically discernible practises of dissent exist within and outwith the political register of attitudes against state and prison. In this condition, protest, rupture, and radical change cannot continue for a prolonged time, and always run the risk of reproducing the same conformation, or, according to Althusser (2014), the reproduction of the same relations of production. Therefore, the exception, the radical break that “instigates an entirely new politics” (Darling, 2009, p. 653) is not enough: there is no certainty on specific outcomes determined in advance.

In any case, there is a strict relation between counter-conduct and governmentality. They are embedded in each other because counter-conduct is inherent to governmentality. Counter-conduct is how resistance takes shape with and against the contemporary liberal government of society: it is the symptom of a “crisis of the apparatus of governmentality” (Foucault, 2008, p. 70). Moreover, the aim of governmental approach is to understand what forms of counter-conducts develop in the contemporary crisis on the orders of things, and what modalities of struggle or resistance are emerging that adopt the point of view of those who are struggling.

This chapter has constructed the theoretical framework that will accompany the analysis of the empirical material in the following chapter. I will develop the governmental framework, such as the “single generalities” that took place in different spaces and times in many Italian prisons. A mechanism of production and reproduction of the power relationship will emerge through the direct testimonies of the actors living in these spaces of power. By following the relationship between governmentality and counter-conduct, I will also problematise the latter in relation to the type of resistance put in place in opposition to the former. I will describe the different rationality and power techniques that this

dialectical relationship creates, taking the perspective of a certain type of prisoner, which for now we can consider as the fugitive quanta. To do this, I will use a completely different register, developing all these themes through whose narratives. I must now specify what my empirical material will be, how I want to analyse it, and how I position myself in relation to what I am describing.

2. THE RESEARCH AND THE RESEARCHER: PRISON LETTERS, METHOD, AND POSITIONALITY

In the last chapter I presented the theoretical approach that saw carceral geographers and critical criminologists engaging in a dialogue within the frame of governmentality. The exchange between these disciplines emphasised the different nature of prison, the concepts of carceral, space, time and space-time, relations of power, and governmentality approach to prison. I looked beyond the criminological concepts of crime and punishment, focusing on knowledge and power. For this reason, I set the foundations for a microphysics of power, i.e. “what is done to the body of the individual and what the individual does to his or her own body as an expression of knowledge and the will to power to control the body” (Agozino and Pfohl, 2003). What I have done so far is to construct a flexible analytical grid within which I will circumscribe the empirical material that follows.

I propose to analyse the prisoners' letters, gathered by the political collective of which I am part, as a “liminal space”: I consider the exercise of writing in prison as a “spatial act” (Shabazz, 2014, p. 582), and a form of communication that occurs within and through prison walls. From this perspective, I will develop the notion of prison letters and of the booklets' archives in which they are contained as a liminal counter-carceral space. Liminal, because they are the outcome of the encounter between prisoners and OLGa collective; counter-carceral, because they demonstrate that “authoritative control is not totalizing”, and that the creation of connections through the wall is indeed possible (Russel and Carlton, 2020, p. 308). Letters can act as tools to break down the walls that conceal the “spatial practice of containment, surveillance and isolation that the geography of prison engenders” (Shabazz, 2014, p. 582). They also overcome the conceptual distinction that can often lead to a binary dichotomy between “inside” and “outside”, which is roundly criticised by Baer and Ravneberg (2008) and Moran (2013). Indeed, letters provide a bridge to the outside that conveys a narrative mediated, on one hand, by the different backgrounds, conduct and counter-conduct, and relationships that prisoners establish, and, on the other hand, by the governmentality of prison management. The testimonies of those who try to escape from this control offer a privileged observation point of how relations of power interplay. I will consider the narrative on governmentality of these escaping quanta. The clash between control strategies and prisoners allows to understand two trends: on the one hand, the “conducts of conduct”, the set of subjects composed of the management, the staff, and the inmates, who produce and reproduce the prison order and its rationality. On the other hand, everything that escapes this desire for

control, which creates resistance and “counter-conduct” even when the margins of possibility are limited. Those resistant prisoners who push towards the process of capture and codification from the central power, and who resist from falling into the molar power zone, widespread carceral logics, and other interconnected logics. This research seeks to re-propose knowledge from below, fragments of representations that would otherwise be buried under official discourse on prisons. Rather than asking whether these narratives are truer than the official ones, I try to focus on the testimonies. They describe on a very local scale different fragments of discourses that can be joined in continuity between different prisons and specific historical moments recalled by the same testimonies.

This chapter is aimed at reducing the distance between theory and practise. It describes the method with which I built the research, how I want to study the prison governmentality, the approach I will use, the empirical material produced by the encounter between inside and outside, who is sending the letter from prison, and the positionality and reflexivity of myself in relation to the prison letters. My positionality as scholar activist will be largely described in relation to abolitionism and activism in prison struggles. The first set of questions related to the source of the empirical material is: what is the frame of the booklet in which these lives are reported? What is the relationship between the booklet and the prisoners? And finally, who are these prisoners who are challenging the prison order? I will present how the empirical material is the result of the encounter between the OLGa collective and the prisoners' struggles and how, with my own gaze, I decided to analyse it. I will also focus on the composition of the prisoners, and, although it is not possible to consider these prisoners as a homogeneous group, I will propose a definition of common identity that characterises them. Despite their differences, what these prisoners have in common is the way they position themselves and how they act in relation to power.

2.1 Prison letters and OLGa Booklets⁷

There are many forms of prison writings, for example letters, poems, diaries, novels, and creative writings. Letters occupy a dominant position in this category. Prison letters are a way of communication based on direct relationships, which involves a wide group of inmates. They can be

⁷ For this research I have chosen to report the names of those who have written to OLGa. This choice has been particularly hard fought. The reason to censor them lies in the impossibility to ask all the writers whether they agree to be published in research. Moreover, I didn't want to share research developments to the prison guards that could read the letters, and over-expose myself and the prisoners. Then I considered that all the letters, names and details was already public, and that prisoners, in some sense, had asked to foster their voices. This research could be done by everybody, because these letters are available on a public website. For this reason, I decided to maintain the names and surnames to people whose

characterised by reasons such as the need for connection with families, friends, volunteers, associations, political collectives, other inmates, magistrates, guarantors of prisoners' rights, politicians and other high authorities of the Italian State, the President of the Republic, the Pope and other high offices of the Church. This circulation is a fundamental daily activity to stay in touch with others (Maybin, 2000, p. 151). Many letters have been collected and published with great audience acclaim. Oscar Wilde, Gramsci, Fidel Castro, Martin Luther King Jr., Angela Davis, the Soledad Brothers, Eldridge Cleaver, and Jack Henry Abbott, to name just a few.

In Italy, collections of prison letters are traditionally associated with the left-wing (Gramsci, 1947; Malvezzi and Pirelli, 1952; Various authors, 2016). Others tell about the condition of people arrested for mafia crimes, who lived, and, in some cases, still live, in the harshest Italian prison regimes (De Feo, 2016; Fassone, 2015; Emanuello and Roveredo, 2019; Attanasio, 2018). For the latter, published books were composed letter by letter out of necessity, due to their detention conditions.

In literature, there is no shortage of analyses of prison letter collections, with their content mostly valued as testimonies (Alarid, 2000). There are also other studies in which letters are used to describe carceral spaces, for example the correspondence of women imprisoned in Spain and Brazil (Padovani, 2013). This chapter proposes to analyse the letters from prisoners engaged in struggle, which have been gathered by the political collective of which the author is part. I will examine a certain type of letters from prison: those which are a product of the relationship between the prisoners who witness their conditions and the regime imposed on them. In their script, there is a fragment of discourse that describes part of their reality (Foucault, 1997c, p. 82). Carceral scripts, as well as the genres of life history and life story, merge with the *testimonio*, “which speaks to the role of witnessing in our time as a key form of approaching and transforming reality” (Behar, 1996, p. 32). Additionally, they are scripts born within the walls, and they therefore assume the intrinsic criticalities that distinguish the prison. They discuss, crystallised in these writings, “how people experience the political world” (Prokkola, 2014, p. 446).

subjectivity is constantly denied in prison. I decided to do the same in my research. In order to protect the writers I want to specify that every direct quotation of the letters is taken by the already published booklets. Lastly, there is also an individualistic hope that this material will be appreciated, and that new research will soon follow.

The prison letters that will be presented here were sent to a collective that supports prisoners' struggles, by providing a platform for prisoners' voices. The letters were digitised and published online in a monthly booklet (March 2006–November 2020)⁸. Since 2006, these booklets have been deposited in the archive of the Milan-based collective. I have analysed 139 booklets and a total of 1024 letters sent from 102 Italian prisons, 2 identification and expulsion centres (CIE), 1 US prison, 18 European prisons, and from 10 prisoners under house arrest. La diffusione degli opuscoli è avvenuto maggiormente attraverso passaparola. The booklets are generally made up of two parts: the first includes a report of events concerning the struggle inside and outside prisons, and a chronology of world and national reports from counter-information journals; the second contains the prison letters. The two parts are merged by editorial choice. For this reason, the letters are not removed from their context. The booklets should be considered a preliminary framework, since they reflect the method used by the editors to bridge the gap between inside and outside.

OLGa was established to create outside awareness of what goes on inside, in order to sustain, unite, and strengthen support for the battle against prison. As the collective states:

“Convinced that prison is an institution functional to the maintenance of an unfair and oppressive social order, our struggle is not to embellish it but to get rid of it. Regarding it as an instrument of isolation and annihilation for thousands of prisoners, we believe it is important to act now to support the struggles as they arise and end the destructive isolation by the state.”⁹

OLGa's mission is similar to that of the “Prison Information Group” (GIP)¹⁰, in that it rejects a reformist horizon of action and shares the idea of conveying direct testimonies. Like the GIP, the role of the collective is to act as a conduit between the inside and outside for different individual experiences, and to funnel them into a shared body of knowledge and coordinated action (Foucault, 2001c). This work is largely conducted by activists and, in some cases, former prisoners.

On the backpage of the editorial work there is a series of ethical precautions followed when negotiating the exchange of letters (Gerber, 2006, p. 143). In OLGa's booklets, prisoners are invited to

⁸ The letters are collected within the 147 booklets available at the following link: <http://www.autprol.org/olga/> (last access: 11 March 2021). Throughout the text, OLGa's letters have been transcribed in italics to better distinguish the voice of the writer from that of the prisoners.

⁹ Introduction of the booklets. link: <http://www.autprol.org/olga/>.

¹⁰ The “Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons” (GIP) is a political group created by Michel Foucault, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, and Jean-Marie Domenach in 1971. This group works with prisoners, families, doctors, lawyers, and militants, and has produced five investigative booklets on prison conditions: <https://viewpointmag.com/2016/02/16/manifesto-of-the-groupe-dinformation-sur-les-prisons-1971/> (last access: 16 February 2021).

write about their struggles, and to report on “their daily experience of resistance”.¹¹ Every time OLGa opens correspondence with new prisoners, it specifies the collective's aims and asks them whether or not they wish to publish their letters. Their letters are then read and discussed within the collective. The publications are not always the result of a regular exchange of letters between two parties. Some are open letters from those who heard about the booklet in prison, in the manner of a letter to the editor of a newspaper: “*I would like to comment on what L.Q.P. from Poggioreale writes. I agree with him, in part*”¹². Sometimes the collective published letters taken from other journals and blogs¹³.

Unlike GIP, the OLGa collective did not constrain the prisoners' remarks within a questionnaire format, which demanded factual personal accounts (Brich, 2008, p. 30). Contributions always enjoyed complete stylistic freedom. In the collective experience, when asking about specific topics — such as the differentiation between prisoners, the reward mechanisms, or the experience of punitive regimes — we found the responses were rather stilted due to the difficulty of restricted communication. This stylistic freedom of expression enabled each prisoner to provide a unique perspective, since their experience was “filtered by emotional and cognitive understanding and reported in the personal language of each inmate's usage” (Vannier, 2018, p. 8; Dexter, 2006).

Letters varied in length. Some were written by prisoners with little command of the Italian language, while others were extremely fluent. Some prisoners were known to the collective; others were not. Those who wrote had generally heard about the exercise by word of mouth. Some wrote often, and others only once. Sometimes, the cost of sending letters became unaffordable in the long term if prisoners were unable to rely on support networks, or due to transfers, release, or personal choice: “*Due to others here in this section, I've had trouble with OLGa booklets*”¹⁴ or “*I said that I would bury the hatchet and I always keep my word*”¹⁵.

The language of the booklet is exclusively Italian, which arguably limited its dissemination. I must also acknowledge that the differences in class, origin and gender among the subjects had a decisive

¹¹ See note 9.

¹² Booklet 53, December 2010, “Lettera dal carcere di Carinola”, Mauro and. L.Q.P. (Liberi Quanto Prima) is the acronym by which a prisoner used to sign his letter, and it means “free as soon as possible”: “*Vorrei fare un intervento su quanto scrive L.Q.P. da Poggioreale. Concordo con lui, in parte.*”

¹³ The reason why OLGa republished this content lies with the differentiated networks of collectives which sometimes report letters from prison. Through time, the booklet has tried to keep together all the prison writings that come from this variegated network within the booklet. When I quote these letters, I also specify their source.

¹⁴ Booklet 130, January 2018, “Lettera dal carcere delle Vallette”, Cristiana: “*Grazie ad altre qui in sezione ho avuto dei guai per gli opuscoli di OLGa.*”

¹⁵ Booklet 98, December-January 2015, “Lettera dal carcere di Spoleto”, Maurizio: “*ho detto che sotterro l'ascia di guerra e mantengo sempre fede a ciò che dico.*”

influence. Prison letters, as a medium, privilege those who have received a school education, those who are native speakers, and those who are male. Furthermore, according to the letters, prisoners who consider themselves political prisoners generally have more communication skills. This can be seen both quantitatively and qualitatively. The number of letters from non-Italians and letters from women's prisons in relation to the total is small. The ratio of letters from women's prisons to the total is 6.4%. Moreover, many writers state in several letters the difficulty of maintaining epistolary continuity, citing linguistic and material costs. In fact, those who speak less well also tend to write shorter letters. In order to respect the right of privacy of those who take part in the collective writing less implies communicating less information and, therefore, it becomes more difficult to capture the nuances and details of what is being told.

Personal exchanges of letters are not analysed as such, but rather as open letters. Some prisoners occasionally state their desire to publish and circulate their writing, and either specify their full name or remain anonymous. In my research, I decided not to identify the writers by name due to the informality of the relationship between the collective and the prisoners, and the impossibility of requesting clarification from all the writers.

Where agreed, we publish the name and the address of the prisoners, so that those who read the booklet can open an exchange of letters, from both inside and outside. A signed letter implies that the prisoners explicitly accept responsibility for their content. In any case, as described by Vannier, the prisoners “chose to correspond with the knowledge that their letters could be read by the prison `censors” (Vannier, 2018: 11).

2.1.1 Who is sending the letters?

As witnessed during the fifteen years of publication of the booklet, a first look at the prison landscape can only start with one of the most recurrent phrases repeated by prisoners, “*it is no longer the prison of the past*”. This phrase has overlapping and divergent meanings. What is common to all is that the prison and/or the prisoners have changed over the years. Looking for the directions of these changes will be the leitmotif of the whole research and will be described in each chapter. The prison continues to be the container of the most marginalised categories of society. Most of the people locked up, as Antonio said, are locked up for drug “*ealing, thefts, or frauds*”; in other words, “*they are locked up for crimes directly or*

indirectly linked to the need and will to make money, most of the times to the need to survive".¹⁶ The research also identifies a precise function of the prison, which is that of a container for a portion of the population: the poor and the excluded. The ordinary prisoners are generally convicted for property crimes. The majority of inmates are convicted of drug production and distribution, theft, injury, and robbery. The testimonies published in the booklets tell the story of what lies behind these figures:

*"one boy was unscrupulously sentenced to a year and a half for one slipper, he had not even taken the second one; another was sentenced to a year for a bicycle; another was sentenced to eight months for two sausages and a Red Bull. Prisons are full of drug addicts, sick people and drug dealers sentenced to 2 years and 4 months for 0.6 of cocaine, not even a gram"*¹⁷; or *"stealing a packet of prawns at the supermarket and sentenced to 6 months etc."*¹⁸.

Another more daring testimony says:

*"I ended up in prison for complicity in attempted murder and robbery with a knife, actions that I carried out under the influence of 10 tablets of Poznak, 5 of Serupin (antidepressants), alcohol, 16 mg of subuxone, minias and cocaine in the vein, dragged around and used by a person I had just met, and without my capacity to understand and want. Everything happened in 24 hours of pure madness and all because we had no money for cocaine. At the trial, in summary judgement, I was given 12 years, then 8 years and 4 months for an attempted robbery [...]. I made it to the hearing and finally they gave us 1 year. 1 year for an attempted robbery for which the owner of the business didn't even want to report me, because he just didn't want to and also because he knew me, and I was so not aggressive that he thought it was a joke [...]"*¹⁹

Those who wrote to OLGa generally complain that they have been poorly assisted by lawyers, that they have had sham trials, and that, for various reasons, they have been or are being targeted by agents and prosecutors. This dynamic is valid across the board, from the robber to the person arrested for

¹⁶ Booklet 124, May 2017, "Lettera dal carcere delle Vallette (Torino)", Antonio: *"la maggior parte della gente rinchiusa qui dentro, lo è per reati di un certo tipo, direttamente o indirettamente legati alla necessità e volontà di fare soldi, il più delle volte alla necessità di sopravvivere."*

¹⁷ Booklet 60, August 2011, "Lettera dal carcere di Prato", Marius: *"un ragazzo condannato senza scrupoli ad un anno e mezzo per una sola pantofola, non aveva preso nemmeno la seconda; un altro condannato a un anno per una bicicletta; a un altro ancora 8 mesi per due salsicce e una Red Bull. Le carceri sono piene di tossicodipendenti, malati e spacciatori condannati a 2 anni e 4 mesi per 0,6 di coca, nemmeno un grammo."*

¹⁸ Booklet 49, August 2010, "Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore (Milano)": *"furto di una confezione di gamberoni" al supermercato e condanne di 6 mesi ecc."*

¹⁹ Booklet 130, January 2018, "Lettera dal carcere di Trieste", Fabio:

Io sono finito in carcere per concorso in tentato omicidio e di rapine con il coltello, azioni svoltesi sotto l'effetto di 10 pastiglie di Poznak, 5 di Serupin (antidepressivi), alcool, 16 mg di subuxone, minnias e cocaina in vena, trascinato ed usato da una persona appena conosciuta e senza la capacità mia di intendere e volere. Tutto è successo in 24 ore di follia pura e tutto perché non avevamo soldi per la cocaina. Al processo, in rito abbreviato, mi hanno dato 12 anni, quindi 8 anni e 4 mesi per una tentata rapina [...]. Ho fatto l'udienza e ci hanno dato 1 anno. 1 anno per una tentata rapina di cui il proprietario, in quanto non ne aveva voglia e per di più mi conosceva e non sono stato aggressivo tanto che pensava fosse stato uno scherzo [...]"

aggravated resistance during the eviction of a building. What seems to emerge is a confused and heterogeneous picture, which this section will attempt to put in order, first schematically, and then by looking in depth at some of the traits that unite the identities of the letter writers, looking at how the prisoners position themselves in “the belly of the beast”.

The geography of the letters depended on the physical proximity to the collective. Of the 1024 letters received, most came from Lombardy (214), specifically the Milan prisons of Opera (86) and San Vittore (58). The other Italian regions from which most letters arrived were Piedmont (134), Lazio (90), Sardinia (88), Campania (86), and Umbria (83), notably the prisons of Poggioreale in Campania (38), Velletri in Lazio (34), and Terni in Umbria (32). A total of 294 people wrote to us, including 20 from women's sections. Even if the letters can be sent without boundaries, across the nation at least, the physical proximity to the collective, namely, its system of territorial relations, has determined the intensity of the epistolary exchanges. For this reason, Milanese prisons are the ones from which most of the letters come. Other variables must be considered when reflecting on the prison writers coming from further afield. For instance, the presence of other collectives in the territories of the prisons, and the singular capacity of a prisoner to create interdependence with other prisoners. These elements are also related to the length of the prisoner's detention, as well as to national and international events that occur in the years.

Academics often divide and categorise inmates across the lines of gender, nationality, religious and political orientation, and social condition. Alternatively, they adopt the categories imposed by the management on the basis of the detention regime, such as medium security, maximum security, etc. The letter writers cannot be regarded as representative of the prison population. They are a heterogeneous but self-selecting group, whose struggles reflect the framework and the specific intentions of the booklet. They bear witness to the most severe Italian prison regimes in terms of physical and psychological deprivation. Some of the writers are incarcerated in maximum-security prisons. These regimes expose prisoners to limited sociality, sometimes consisting of fewer than 10 to 20 people living for many years in a regime whose primary objective is their neutralisation, rather than their re-education (Wacquant, 2013, p. 36). Other prisoners have written to the OLGa collective from the isolation cells provided for those whose conduct threatens internal security. There are letters from activists, left-wing militants, anarchists, or communists, arrested for both collective or individual political action and common crimes; some of them are also in maximum security. There are several prisoners who clearly state their political standpoint. For instance, some sign “*communist prisoner*” or “*W anarchy*”. These letters end with

slogans that leave little room for interpretation. Some are known to the collective, while the stories of others have been reported in national newspapers. Of the 294 prisoners who wrote to OLGa, 96 are such prisoners. Letters from prisoners with clear, although differing, political identities outweigh those from the rest of the population, even though other categories of prisoners are included. For example, there are letters sent by prisoners held in maximum security for crimes related to organised mafia. Since 2010, many letters have been received from people imprisoned on charges related to “Islamic terrorism” and detained in other maximum security cells, sometimes shared with the above-mentioned “political” prisoners. Other non-Italians are mainly undocumented migrants or migrants arrested for petty crimes related to conditions of poverty. The most common nationalities are Tunisian (17), Moroccan (9), and Algerian (6). Non-Italians number 52 and also include prisoners from Senegal, Egypt, Switzerland, Romania, Colombia, Turkey, Palestine, Spain, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, France, Brazil, and Iraq. Those Italians not detained for political or organised criminal activities are serving sentences for common crimes. Some are prisoners with psychiatric problems or drug addictions. Some writers are known at national and international level or are supported and represented by a network. These include those who are able to write books, or those who have seen their freedom supported by public demonstrations. Others, despite belonging to a political, religious, formal, or informal group, act alone, often without even the support of their families.

A distinction can be made between “ordinary” inmates and “political” prisoners. Scholars such as Shabazz (2014) have discussed the concept of the “political progressive” in relation to a specific political prisoner. His category of “political progressive” includes internationally renowned inmates, like Angela Davis or the Soledad brothers. The same concept has been studied in relation to Martin Sostre's letters (Schaich and Hope, 1977).

There is a substantial difference between the booklet's prisoners texts and the prison letters used in other analyses, which described, for example, Vannier's emotional experience of life without parole (2018), or recounted the last statements of death penalty inmates in the State of Missouri (Upton et al., 2017), or, again, detailed dialogues with death row penfriends (Maybin, 2000). Warr (2019) has studied how inmates sentenced to long prison terms must undertake “narrative labour” to cope with the prison identity imposed on them. Finally, Easterling, Feldmeyer and Presser (2018) described the narrative strategies of mothers who have to endure the threats to their identity that imprisonment presents to them. My archive differs in that only a few prisoners are nationally known. Furthermore, it includes a group of political and non-political prisoners who oppose prison management and, as a

result, bring different critical content to their struggles. Nonetheless, a common feature of those previously discussed narratives and of those in my archive is that they both respond to what Sykes (1958) called “the pains of imprisonment”. In the letters sent to OLGa, the prisoners struggle against this pain and contribute in a comparable way to the creation of a different narrative identity that runs through the booklet. An extract from one of the letters may help define the narrative identity of those who wrote to OLGa: *“I said: “Good evening prisoners, can I come in?” They answered me, saying: “You’re right, we are prisoners not inmates. Of course, you can”. They took me in, made my bed and fed me”*.²⁰

In this case, the use of the word “prisoner” (*prigioniero*) as opposed to “inmate” (*detenuto*) reveals the intentions of someone who feels critical of the ideology behind their treatment or, at least, of someone with a critical view of the penal system seeking solidarity with the prisoners:

“There are those who think, day after day and with all the risks they face, about how they can best use the free time on their hands [...] to seek out others like them and no longer depend on the rules of the game. I think of all of them and say to myself: ‘I’ll have to do my part, if only as a way to resist and come out with my head held high, in front of the “brothers” of today and tomorrow”.²¹

Moreover, within the detention of ordinary prisoners the processes of "elimination" described by Foucault (1974) and those of differentiation, as I will elaborate later, are part of a system of which political prisoners are also victims. This also applies in the opposite way, when it is the politicians who are first affected by new governmental techniques. These strategies involve both categories. As a result, a situation that all prisoners decide to struggle against becomes itself a political action. In fact, even if they must be considered beyond these formal categories, at most as prisoners, it could be a mistake not to emphasise their political contribution, which makes them, from this point of view, political prisoners. In summary, those who have written to OLGa are not just political progressives or merely traditional prisoners facing the pain of imprisonment, but prisoners fighting within a wider political network. In Italian language, it is usual to call an imprisoned militant or a person subject to the laws of war “a prisoner”. This is also common in national newspapers, as they refer to people arrested in other countries as ‘prisoners’, for example Patrick Zaki and the two Italian Marines who were arrested for killing

²⁰ Booklet 72, August 2012, “Lettere dal carcere di Prato”, Alessio: *“Ho detto “buonasera prigionieri si può”, mi è stato risposto “hai ragione siamo carcerati non detenuti. Certo che si può”. Mi hanno accolto preparandomi il letto e rifocillandomi.”*

²¹ Booklet 90, March 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Alessandria. Quello stesso formicolio (That same tingle)”. Niccolò, AS2: *“ma c’è chi ragiona, giorno per giorno e con tutti i rischi che corre, su come poter usare al meglio il tempo libero che gli rimane tra le mani [...] per cercare altri come lui e non dipendere più dalle regole del gioco. Io penso a tutti loro e mi dico: “dovrò pur fare la mia parte, fosse anche solo un modo per resistere e uscirne a testa alta, davanti ai “fratelli” di oggi e di domani.”*

fishermen in India. The implication here is probably that the jurisdiction of another state can be questioned, but not that of one's own. What is common in the narratives of those who wrote to OLGa is feeling somewhat like a “stranger”, at least in regard to the laws of the state in which they were arrested. Hence why I believe it is important to carefully use this distinction throughout the research.

The prisoners who contribute to the booklet share a general identity of being against prisons or, at least, share a comparable critical attitude that significantly changes in its expressions. Some are more confident with regard to institutional and legal actions, while others avoid any contact with institutions and representatives. Finally, there are those who move from one extreme to the other, depending on their experience. After 27 years of imprisonment, Emidio says: “*I don't mind if the prison is decongested, if the prison delivers improvements in the “life” of prisoners, but my thoughts, my struggle cannot stop with the achievement of these goals. I don't want a better prison, I don't want the prison as an institution, that's the point*”.²²

Although the neoliberal crisis has diminished political imagination (Story, 2019), in prison one can still find stories of people who have rediscovered interdependence in the times and spaces of struggle. They are like particles, lighting up when a beam of light hits them. Such is the contact between OLGa and their stories. Without these encounters, it would not be possible to know what is happening in a place where outsiders do not have access. If it were not for these fragments of discourse, these lives would never have existed: they are lives that have survived a collision with a power that wanted only to annihilate or erase them; lives that do not return to us, except for select cases (Foucault, 1997c, p. 84).

“THERE ARE NO LONGER THE PRISONERS OF THE PAST”

The recurring phrase “*there are no longer the prisoners of the past*” is a reference to a particular period of prison struggles, between 1960 and 1980. Since the early 1980s, changes have occurred in the prison community due to a series of incentives towards cooperation in exchange for rewards, such as early release. An irreparable rift has been created between prisoners, in some cases throwing the boundaries of the relationship between guards and prisoners into question. Between 1979 and 1982, Magnaghi (1985) already observed a different prison from that of the 1970s, as it was no longer seen as an extension of militancy, as the phase that followed the struggles triggered by social contradiction. Within the

²² Booklet 58, June 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Pescara”, Emidio: “*non mi dispiace se il carcere si decongestiona, se il carcere consegna dei miglioramenti di “vita” per i detenuti, ma il mio pensiero, la mia lotta non può fermarsi con il raggiungimento di questi obiettivi. Non voglio un carcere migliore, non voglio il carcere come istituzione, questo è il punto.*”

prison walls there was no longer an active, warm relationship with the outside community. Coming back to today, another 50 years have passed and this process has never been reversed.

However, in spite of the fact that access to the benefits of reduced sentences and alternative measures to detention have become increasingly attractive, the prison population is still composed of “irreducible” prisoners. I refer to a limited number who categorically refuse any form of cooperation with the prison: for example, the possibility of plea bargaining at trial, the request for home detention, as well as, in prison, any form of request that can pass through a question to the management or the supervisor of the rehabilitation.²³

*“What I have achieved with my struggles is to be in the cell alone, just that. Now there is the possibility of starting next year to go out sometimes on leave if things go well. But I'm still me, I haven't bent in 33 years in prison, and I never will, if I have the chance to get out great, if not I'm still the same [...]”*²⁴

For these prisoners, collaborating means “*leaving the field to more resignation, more indifference, more acquiescence*”; it means giving up “*attacking a monolith with a thousand veins like the prison institution*”.²⁵ In this regard, there are those who proudly resist, those who are willing to suffer abuses. Sometimes it is precisely the resistance to the system of oppression that gives the prisoner the strength to continue, to feel stronger than prison regimes. Davide wrote to the collective after his attempted escape from prison: “*I find myself in a smooth, sealed cell, without anything, I eat on the floor, but with the dignity of never having been subjugated by what the myths of infallibility impose, which are built on the perfection of prison power.*”²⁶

Among all those prisoners engaged in struggle who wrote to OLGa, the choice to maintain a critical attitude towards the system is more and more difficult. The difficulty of coming to terms, in prison, with one's own personal identity, as opposed to institutionalisation, is linked to the past and present characteristics of the prison community. From the wing of political prisoners, Magnaghi himself (1985) wrote, in this regard, of the “inaudible sense of a random, aleatory, but intensely, dramatically lived community” (p. 32). A condition where oppression and repression exalt the distance that

²³ Booklet 54 January 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Prato”, Domenico; Booklet 69, May 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore”, Marcelo.

²⁴ Booklet 71, July 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di Opera”, Antonio:

Quello che ho ottenuto con le mie lotte da solo, è stare in cella da solo, solo quello. Ora c'è la possibilità di iniziare il prossimo anno ad uscire qualche volta in permesso se le cose vanno bene. Ma sono sempre io, non mi sono piegato in 33 anni fatti in carcere, e non lo farò mai, se avrò la possibilità di uscire bene, se non l'avrò rimango sempre lo stesso [...].”

²⁵ Booklet 74, November 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di Prato”, Alessio: “*Lasciare campo ad altra rassegnazione, ad altra indifferenza, ad altra acquiescenza*”; “*la difficoltà di attaccare un monolite dalle mille venature come l'istituzione carceraria.*”

²⁶ Booklet 124, May 2017, “Lettera dal carcere di Augusta”, Davide: “*mi trovo in una cella liscia tutta sigillata, senza niente, mangio per terra ma con la dignità di sempre di non essere mai soggiogato da ciò che impongono i miti di infallibilità che si costruiscono sulla perfezione del potere carcerario.*”

separates us from a creative idea of freedom (*ibidem*). He goes on to argue that when hatred for the enemy is the only binding force of the community, this is subordinate to him: it is not possible to build one's own reason for existence in this symbiosis with the enemy. This dynamic creates a community that speaks a “poor” language: “infamous, dignity, true companions, hard, soft bellies, mafia rules; it is an old world that perpetuates itself with its language”.²⁷ This statement would seem to be cutting, compared to the idea of the prison 'of the past' that emerged just above and that appears

almost “romantic” while also making die-hard prisoners look like 'dinosaurs' in extinction in the prisons. However, in addition to his profound considerations, which still manage to be relevant today, Magnaghi's positionality should be considered. In those years, he was experiencing the decline of a decade of great political and social struggles that was gradually exhausting its revolutionary momentum. Thinking about today, I share much of his reasoning, but I do not think that in prison there is no space “for creative ideas of freedom”. From the letters received, it emerges clearly what has been pointed out about the symbiosis with the enemy and its consequences. This leads, for example, to anger towards the management as the “only” reason for struggle. Or one's own freedom as the only end, as Lorenzo wrote: “*everyone here understands it in their own way, but (amnesty-pardon-svuotacarceri or other) is really the only unifying thing between categories and sub-categories/groups between Italians and non-Italians, definitive and awaiting trial*”.²⁸

However, many do not limit their critique to the prison, because they are aware that it is an institution of the state aimed at maintaining the system of oppression that they experience every day. This passage is crucial because it allows them to break out of the dichotomy of oppressive prison and oppressed prisoner and thus creates other spaces of resistances. From mere opposition to the function of prison, solidarity can reach other struggles. To give an example, when there were several arrests in the No Tav movement²⁹, some wrote to OLGa solidarity letters to the new comers from their situated

²⁷ My translation of Magnaghi (1985, p. 33): “*La comunità parla una lingua povera: infami, dignità, veri compagni, duri, ventri molli, regole mafiose; è un mondo vecchio che si perpetua con il suo linguaggio*”.

²⁸ Booklet 84, September 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore”, Lorenzo: “*ognuno qui la intende a proprio modo ma (amnistia-indulto-svuotacarceri o altro) è davvero l'unica cosa unificante tra “categorie e sottocategorie/gruppi” tra italiani e non, definitivi e in attesa di processo.*”

²⁹ It is a protest movement born in the 1990s from various local, national and transnational realities united by criticism of the construction of high-capacity and high-speed railway infrastructures (TAV, 'High Speed Train'). In the years recounted in the letters, there were several people who wrote to us. Some of them were detained in maximum security regimes even on terrorism charges that never became final sentences.

position as prisoner against the State repression: “*Obviously they are all in solidarity with the No Tav movement, here we live the contradictions and the malice of the state, so no one takes its side*”.³⁰

Even more relevant to me is the creativity with which prisoners manage to carve out spaces of resistance: how they maintain their own identity or create a new one; how they manage to overcome the codified space of the prison, where the closest proximity to power is achieved and where power is perceived in its ubiquity. So, it becomes important to consider these emancipated identities in search for freedom as a metaphor for the existence of anyone struggling against power and control, in all its forms and places. Although, when thinking as an outsider, the possibilities of freedom are reduced, the freedoms carved out in these spaces become even more relevant. In fact, freedom is not an absolute concept, but definitely relative. However, I have to stress that, for a person who only reads the letters, this is an easy discourse; for an insider it is much more difficult than that. In fact, for most of these prisoners, resistance is often the only way to survive, as they wrote to us: “*we are all in it up to our necks, whether we want to or not*”.³¹

The prison has increasingly succeeded in extrapolating from the prison community those atomised individuals who are increasingly struggling to maintain their own independence from the institution. Francesco wrote to OLGa on this subject: “*Our words and writings alone do not make us any less accomplice in this mess. Putting on a label of anarchist, communist, or environmentalist does not make us any less complicit*”.³² A common discourse for those who do not have this kind of political background is that “*if you survive you come out with the diploma of a hardened and irreducible delinquent, otherwise you will always feel sorry for yourself*”.³³

However, there is no lack of collective struggles carried by prisoners who are unafraid of the consequences of denouncing certain abuses and willing to go beyond just “*pointing the finger*”.³⁴ Many have told us of their struggles, of committees set up, of national protests. Well, for all these cases, as told by Antonino, one of the most remarkable aspects of the ability to direct a struggle in the most

³⁰ Booklet 68, April 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore (MI)”, Marcelo: “*Ovviamente sono tutti solidali con il movimento No Tav, qui viviamo sulla nostra pelle le contraddizioni e la malizia dello stato, quindi nessuno si schiera dalla sua parte.*”

³¹ Booklet 59, July 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Vigevano”, Giovanni: “*dove ci siamo dentro tutti fino al collo "che vogliamo o non vogliamo", siamo dentro!*”

³² Booklet 36, June 2009, “lettera dal carcere di San Michele (Alessandria)”, Francesco: “*Mettersi un'etichetta di anarchico, comunista o ambientalista non ci rende meno complici.*”

³³ Booklet 49, August 2010 “Due lettere dal carcere di Cremona”, Andrea: “*se sopravvivi esci con il diploma di delinquente duro e irriducibile, altrimenti resterai sempre a piangerti addosso.*”

³⁴ Booklet 73, September 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di Perugia”, Marco.

total atomisation is that of being able to overcome “*sectoral battles that only concern certain categories of prisoners, because they risk turning out to be "lame" and to be easily recovered by people who make their own profit*”.³⁵ And he continues further: “*it is to be hoped that in the end we do not arrive at some “ad personam” benefit that would not, however, change the general conditions of the proposed objective*”.³⁶ It is therefore crucial that even the most specific struggles manage to fit into more general ones. Those who carry out collective struggles of this kind are also those who individually have had to deal with the difficulties of finding themselves increasingly isolated because of their attitude towards the system. The individual strategies with which prisoners create meaning in their prison path, even when having to give up part of the repertoire of initiatives of the prison of the past, become relevant as emancipatory forms of the times we live in today. To give a few examples, Valerio wrote to a comrade who had been particularly exposed in various struggles in those years: “*This is not a criticism of your actions, simply an advice for a strategy of camouflage. Sometimes you have to learn to pass under obstacles because if you jump over them you can break a leg*”.³⁷ Another example is the choice of exploring, of understanding and getting to know prison spaces, as “*an anarchist in prison is like an explorer in the middle of enemy territory*”.³⁸ Another has made detention a period of inner strengthening, while fighting as much as possible in everyday life³⁹. Finally, Claudio, a long-standing prisoner who has personally experienced the prison of the past:

*“what is anarchy? Is it the permanent search for freedom or not? Since it is impossible for me and the others to escape from this super-prison, I fight to make others escape through my writing... it is not a revolution, who knows, maybe it is useless, but no one can tell me that prison has managed to take away the essence of an idea at the basis of which there will always be freedom as an existential philosophy. It is my little revolution inside the prison!!!”*⁴⁰

It is clear how a more emancipatory identity is often linked to political associationism, which from the outside manages to give strength inside and vice versa. One of the crucial aspects that Magnaghi recalled was the passage of several demonstrations outside the prisons. Through this constant presence

³⁵ Booklet 143, July 2020, “Lettera dal carcere di Sulmona (AQ)” Antonino: “*Le battaglie settoriali, cioè, che riguardano solo certe “categorie” di detenuti, rischiano di rivelarsi “zoppe” e di essere facilmente recuperate da opportunisti di turno.*”

³⁶ Booklet 39, September 2009, “Lettera dal carcere di Carinola”, Antonino: “*si spera che in tutto non si arriva a qualche “contentino ad personam” che non cambia però le condizioni generali degli obiettivi proposti.*”

³⁷ Booklet 130, January 2018, “Lettera dal carcere di Agrigento”, Valerio: “*Non è una critica al suo agire, semplicemente il consiglio a una strategia di mimetizzazione. A volte bisogna imparare a passare sotto gli ostacoli perché a saltarli ci si può rompere qualche gamba.*”

³⁸ Booklet 65, January 2021, “Lettere dal carcere delle Vallette (Torino)”, Alessio: “*un anarchico in prigione è come un esploratore in pieno territorio nemico.*”

³⁹ Booklet 82, July 2013, “Lettera dagli arresti domiciliari (house arrest)”, Francesco.

⁴⁰ Booklet 7, November 2006, “Lettera di Claudio Lavazza dal carcere di Alboloté (Granata)”, Claudio: *che cos’è l’anarchia? È la ricerca permanente della libertà o no? Visto che per me e gli altri da questo super-carcere è impossibile evadere, io lotto per far evadere gli altri con la scrittura...non è la rivoluzione, chissà forse non serve a niente, però nessuno potrà dirmi che il carcere è riuscito a togliermi l’essenza di un’idea alla base della quale ci sarà sempre la libertà come filosofia esistenziale. È la mia piccola rivoluzione dentro la prigione!!!*

it was possible to feel one's detention as a continuation of militancy, and thus inside and outside came together. This happens to some extent even today: there are several prisoners who write in magazines and, through their writing, it is possible to reconstruct this identity. However, the passing of the years has witnessed a slow reflux of these movements, which can no longer guarantee the same outside support.

However, there remains a strong emancipatory tension, a resistance to the institutionalisation imposed by prison. These drives motivate not only those only to those who belong to political movements, but also all those prisoners who decide to oppose the daily injustices they witness. Marco, for example, after years of struggle has found his balance and switched to autopilot: *“Here with you I feel free, when I paint I feel free, when I compose songs, draw portraits [...]. This way I feel alive, what is good for us and enriches us in the heart and mind and body is life.”*⁴¹

These and other testimonies tell of how it is possible to build an existence starting from opposition to prison, but going beyond it, looking for one's own spaces of freedom. In all these cases, it must be stressed that individual resistance needs support, an exchange with someone similar. This identity fosters solidarity among prisoners, opposing a trend of individualisation and lack of mutual trust. The identity that emerges in the booklet shows that, despite these prevailing processes, there are prisoners united against that power which affects everyone, regardless of whether they are accused of different crimes, share political ideas or come from different backgrounds. For example, between them the dichotomy of good and bad is rejected:

*“To be ‘guilty or innocent’, ‘good or bad’, ‘violent or non-violent’, are moral definitions that do not belong to me, they are concepts of domination and ‘social relations’ that make them acceptable as symbols of power. Because I find that authority relies not only on force and messages dictated by the state order but also on compromise and acceptance of such relations. My violence is a drop in the ocean compared to the violence that the state uses and monopolises against the Val Susa, in ‘peace’ wars, in CIEs [migrant detention and expulsion centre] and prisons.”*⁴²

Nevertheless, in many cases, this common front excludes prisoners who cooperated with the justice system or who perpetrated sexual offences. These taboos could not be covered in this chapter but deserve consideration.

⁴¹ Booklet 79, March-April 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Terni”, Marco: *“Qui con voi mi sento libero, nella pittura mi sento libero, nel comporre canzoni, fare ritratti [...]. Così mi sento vivo, ciò che ci fa bene e ci arricchisce nel cuore e nella mente e nel corpo è vita.”*

⁴² Booklet 67, March 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di Spini del Gardolo (TN)”, Juan: *“Essere ‘colpevoli o innocenti’, ‘buoni o cattivi’, ‘violenti o non violenti’, sono definizioni morali che non mi appartengono, sono concetti del dominio e ‘delle relazioni sociali che li rendono accettabili come simbolo del potere. Perché trovo che l’autorità non fa solo affidamento sulla forza e sui messaggi dettati dall’ordinamento statale ma anche sul compromesso e l’accettazione’ di tali relazioni. La mia violenza è una goccia in mezzo al mare in confronto a quella che lo Stato utilizza e monopolizza contro la Val Susa, nelle guerre di ‘pace’, nei CIE e nelle carceri.”*

The identities of the writers are many, but they often present similar narratives. As mentioned in several letters, the identity of most is that of “*prisoner engaged in struggle*”:

*“Not having any cultural background, my education and my culture has been formed by street and jail. [...] I don't have any coherent political thought to guide me, only the passion for rebellion, for revolt, for the rejection of any form of coercion, which drives me to attain individual freedom. [...] my solidarity is unconditionally with all the men and women in chains who, while retaining their dignity, do not trade away their freedom or trample on the freedom of others. I feel no solidarity with those who, despite being in chains, accept and recognise the correctional treatment and do not hesitate to denounce others within the walls of the office of the commander, educator etc”*⁴³

The booklet's relative success in creating an exchange between the inside and the outside lies in the reinforcement this identity, under threat from the most recent changes in prison logic, spaces, and practises:

*“It is the prisoners who have changed radically at their core. Solidarity no longer exists and, in exchange for benefits, they are willing to play the game. Confiding in someone has become a risky option and you're forced to keep everything inside. Fortunately, through your booklet, I am glad to discover many fellow prisoners who think like me, and knowing that there are people out there who, in their own small way, can be of help to us, makes me feel better and full of hope [...]”*⁴⁴

The booklet succeeds in uniting and transmitting knowledge and experience that can be circulated between the inside and the outside⁴⁵. Sharing knowledge means creating a voice that represents the writer and those close to him or her. It is a dynamic representation that is acknowledged repeatedly in the booklets and that unites all those who are critical of the management. A voice that also speaks for those who cannot speak at that moment. It is not a representative voice of the Italian prison population as a whole, but reflects many in different prisons who have challenged incarceration. The booklet was also able to respect silence. When I talk of the “empowerment” of an oppressed group, I cannot limit myself only to giving voice (Crang, 2005, p. 231). While it may be virtuous to enable the silenced to speak, disregarding silence would turn a virtue into a vice. Giving voice to prisoners or to the content

⁴³ Booklet 58, June 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Pescara”, Emidio: *“Non avendo nessun bavaglio culturale, la mia educazione, la mia cultura l'hanno fatta la strada e la galera. [...] Non avendo nessun bavaglio culturale, la mia educazione, la mia cultura l'hanno fatta la strada e la galera. del rifiuto di ogni forma di coazione mi trascinano al raggiungimento della libertà individuale. Allora la mia solidarietà va incondizionata a tutti gli uomini e donne in catene che, mantenendo la dignità non barattano la propria libertà, calpestando quella di altri. Non voglio essere solidale con chi, pur essendo in catene, accetta e riconosca il trattamento correzionalista e non disdegna la delazione tra le mura dell'ufficio del comandante di turno, educatore ecc.”*

⁴⁴ Booklet 82, July, 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Opera”, Armando: *“sono i detenuti che sono cambiati radicalmente nel loro intimo. Non esiste più la solidarietà e, pur di ottenere i benefici, ne combinano una più del diavolo. Confidarsi con qualcuno è diventato un optional e sei costretto a tenerli tutto dentro. Per fortuna, tramite il vostro opuscolo con piacere scopro tanti compagni detenuti chela pensano come me; e poi sapere che fuori ci siano compagni/e che nel loro piccolo possono aiutarci, mi fa stare meglio e pieno di speranze [...]”*

⁴⁵ Booklet 77, February 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Pescara”, Elian.

of their narratives implies deciding what to make public. It is therefore neither "native and untouched" nor more "authentic" than others, but rather a narrative constructed together and complicit with the outside. This gives the narrative greater legitimacy — in my view and from my stance in writing this, as discussed below — than a truth interpreted by someone not involved in the creation of the booklet.

WHAT I WILL NOT COVER IN DEPTH, BUT NEEDS TO BE INTRODUCED

In order to conclude this first part concerning the material upon which the research was constructed, I have chosen to also include what I will not discuss. The material at disposal, as has already emerged, contains various, infinite hints that do not, however, construct a circumscribed discourse. Others, on the other hand, are discussions that can be explored in greater depth in future research, and it is precisely these that I think it would be useful to report on here, at least in some general terms. The themes represent the main topics dealt by the prisoners I have identified.

Firstly, the choice to focus on the positive function of the prison in terms of what it produces, of the prison as a laboratory in which to observe power, has excluded the study of its negative function. For the latter, I refer to the prison as a container for categories of the population for which the State today envisages social exclusion. I will not delve into the state of the prisons, the living conditions of the inmates and their daily life. I do not elaborate on the impoverishment of already marginalised groups in prison, or on the high cost of hygiene and a healthier diet, for which prices of board and lodging are double those found outside prison. Nor do I expand on the identical routine, shaped by prison regulations and abruptly interrupted by searches and the daily interactions between inmates or between inmates and police officers: *“it is a human vacuum, automatism repeated to the point of stupidity. It is an old world, or a world de/humanised to the point that the de/responsibility of the institution reaches the pathetic, were it not for the tragedies, the tragic, that permeate it.”*⁴⁶

I will not discuss the relationship of prisoners with the outside world, which, aside from visiting, consists of delivering packages, sending money, calling, and exchanging letters with family and friends. Nonetheless there are some aspects concerning the structural conditions of prisons that are worth introducing: notably, the structural overcrowding of prisons and health care in prison, the condition of foreigners, and deaths in prison. These four issues were problematic well before the arrival of the

⁴⁶ Booklet 65, January 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore (Milano)”, Maurizio. *“è vuoto umano, automatismo ripetuto fino all’istupidimento. Un mondo vecchio, oppure un ambito dis/umanizzato al punto che la de/responsabilizzazione dell’istituzione raggiunge il patetico, se non fosse per le tragedie, il tragico che lo compenetrano [...]”*

COVID-19 pandemic. In the years when the first letters were written, after the 2006 pardon, in Italy the prison population was 39005 inmates. After one year it was already back to 48693, and increased steadily until its peak in 2010, when it reached 67.961, dropping again to 52,164 in 2019. Finally, 60.611 in pre-covid 2020, and 53.697 post-covid (February 2021) on a maximum capacity of 50.779⁴⁷. A structural overcrowding has been emerging for years and is confirmed by many testimonies. In 2010, Fabio told of being in the Savona prison, with 8 or 9 people in cells of 3 square metres⁴⁸. The newspaper article attached to his letter reported that, in the Savona prison, the “maximum capacity” was 40 people, compared to the actual 80-90 prisoners. In the same year, in San Vittore prison, 4 people lived in 14 square metres with bunk beds that were not up to standard. The count included partition walls, kitchen, bathroom, table, and lockers⁴⁹. The same happened in the Prato prison where, in January of the same year, there were 700-800 inmates against a maximum capacity of 500⁵⁰.

The second aspect, that of health, exposes the prison as a place of suffering, unsuitable to deal with the health conditions of the prisoners. With health, I refer to both physical and mental conditions. The medicine trolley seems to be emblematic of the inadequacy of management. It is often devoid of medicines for diabetics, heart patients, HIV-positive people, epileptics, and of “*life-savers in general*”.⁵¹ All of the writers who mention this issue say that they receive nothing but antipyretics such as “tachipirina” or “brufen” to cure everything: “*from colds to headaches, from muscular pains to bronchitis*”.⁵² For these reasons, the stay in prison worsens all pathologies, even in the youngest inmates. The stories told illustrate the everyday life of seriously ill people, and the 'normality' whereby several prisoners die in prison from their illnesses or leave shortly before dying. Where health protections were already minimised and overcrowding had created ideal conditions for the spread of infectious diseases, COVID-19, a highly contagious virus, generated a powder keg. It was not possible to ensure social distancing and there was a lack of personal protection equipment, which had to be bought at the prisoner's expense⁵³. In addition, the compartmentalisation, which only applied to prisoners, did not

⁴⁷ See "Prison population numbers", Antigone: <https://www.antigone.it/quindicesimo-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-detenzione/numeri-della-popolazione-detenuata/>. Link: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14_1.page?facetNode_1=0_2&facetNode_2=0_2_10&contentId=SST327707&previousPage=mg_1_14#.

⁴⁸ Booklet 59, July 2011, “Lettera di Fabio da Savona”, Fabio.

⁴⁹ Booklet 49, August 2010, “Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore (Milano)”.

⁵⁰ Booklet 54, “Lettera dal carcere di Prato”, Davide.

⁵¹ Booklet 47, June 2010, “Lettera dal carcere di Poggioreale”, Giuseppe: “*salvanita in generale*”.

⁵² Booklet 78, March 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Rebibbia (Roma)”, Achille: “*dal raffreddore al mal di testa, dai dolori muscolari alle bronchiti [...]*”.

⁵³ Booklet 142, June 2020, “Lettera dal carcere delle Vallette (Torino)”, Enrico.

reduce the risk of infection because officers and other external figures moved freely, becoming vectors of contagion⁵⁴. In Vigevano there was a lack of important information on prevention, and, in an attempt to keep people calm, it was decided not to provide data on the number of positives⁵⁵. Or, as in Spini del Gardolo, it was not until two weeks after it was known that the first infections had occurred that the workers were swabbed, and in the meantime they continued to work in the section⁵⁶. As far as mental health is concerned, testimonies from inside speak of entire sections populated by

“robots”, “disarticulated automatons, pale ectoplasms, puppets gone mad”⁵⁷; “frothing at the mouth along the corridors or lying in bed asleep”, “people with whom we live in the same cells, and it is not pleasant to be in a cell with someone who shouts, talks to himself, pisses in his pants or periodically cuts himself or swallows batteries or even razor blades just because the accounts department has not granted him a subsidy to buy a packet of tobacco.”⁵⁸

Several people go into therapy, many of them are drug addicts and/or long-term residents in the most restrictive regimes. In general, the abuse of psychotropic drugs seems to be linked to a form of adaptation, which has been defined as “psychological absenteeism” (Ruggiero and Gallo, 1989, p. 29). This aspect is found in the testimonies of several prisoners who choose this state of constant daze, which “is partly induced by the prison and partly sought by all prisoners as a form of self-defence and escape” (Ruggiero and Gallo, 1989, p. 30). Therapy also plays a role in the production and reproduction of social order. This is an aspect that goes beyond the negative function, i.e. the prison as a device of marginalisation. It relates to the governmentality of the detained body, which deserves to be studied in future research. One of the most problematic aspects, in my opinion, is related to what a prisoner says in his letters: that his psychiatrist carries out his practise “with the purpose of inducing self-elimination”⁵⁹. In agreement again with Gallo and Ruggiero, one can interpret the “pharmacological truncheon” (1989, p. 31) as an integral part of that self-management of punishment to which prison today tends. In the letters, this is called the ““therapy” method”⁶⁰. It still seems to be the natural answer to the current composition of prisoners, both for the difficult social conditions that characterise them and for the

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵ Booklet 146, March 2021, “Lettera collettiva dal carcere di Vigevano”.

⁵⁶ Booklet 146, March 2021, “Dal carcere di Spini di Gardolo (TN)”.

⁵⁷ Booklet 78, March 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Rebibbia (Roma)”, Achille: “*in automi disarticolati, in pallidi ectoplasmi, in marionette impazzite.*”

⁵⁸ Booklet 133, July 2018, “Scritto dal carcere di Castelfranco Emilia (MO): “*lungo i corridoi con la bava alla bocca o stesi a letto a dormire.*”; “*gente con la quale conviviamo nelle stesse celle, e non è piacevole stare in cella con uno che urla, parla da solo, se la fa addosso o periodicamente si taglia o ingerisce pile se non addirittura lamette solo perché dall'ufficio conti correnti non gli hanno concesso un sussidio per acquistarsi un pacco di tabacco!*”

⁵⁹ Booklet 110, February 2016, “Lettera dal carcere di Rebibbia (RM)”: “*con il proposito di indurre l'autoeliminazione.*”

⁶⁰ Booklet 37, July 2009, “Lettera dal carcere di Iglesias”, Francisco: “*il metodo “terapia.”*”

atomisation induced by prison strategies, as well as for the absence of a reactive identity to these strategies of the prison “of the past”. The strength of therapy also lies in its reproductive capacity, “a sort of straitjacket that the prisoner puts on by himself” (Gallo and Ruggiero, 1989, p. 30). From this point of view, the prison has played a crucial role in absorbing people who would have ended up in the asylum, before they were abolished. Apart from the REMS⁶¹, the prison has managed to preserve itself because it is the place *par excellence* where certain social dangerousness can be legitimately controlled by force, a task that other reformed or abolished institutions can no longer perform.

A third aspect to consider is the prison in relation to institutionalised racism. This expression does not mean that practises within prisons are openly racist. Racism is found in its foundational mechanisms, it is an operating principle that no longer requires conscious or overtly racist acts to reaffirm it (Rodriguez, 1987). Building on a reflection of Rhazzali on the presence of Muslims in prisons (2021, p. 144), although the vast majority of Muslims are regular and a third of them have citizenship, in Italian prisons we find mainly people with irregular stays and without documents. From the letters collected by OLGa, it emerges how the condition of the foreigner implies more probability to be arrested or to have more problems with the law, and more difficulty in securing economic and legal support during the whole period of detention. This condition condemns the existence of the arrested person to exclusion and social marginality. The detrimental effect of entering the legal machine also affects the condition of the families of those arrested, as they were often the only source of income⁶². In fact, these people are denied alternative measures to detention, which are only granted to legal immigrants. They are swallowed up in the prison continuum, made up of prison, followed by identification centres and, finally, deportation. If they do return free, they remain in a condition of perpetual irregularity. Institutionalised racism is closely linked to social status: it is an intersection of class and race in institutional environments (Agozino and Pfohl, 2003, p. 204). The issue of gender is under-considered here, as the number of letters received from non-male foreigners is very limited. The condition of isolation often leads to individual protests – for example, hunger strikes or self-harm – which are practised even if only to obtain the possibility of contacting the defender who did not respond to the letters requesting visits⁶³.

⁶¹ “La residenza per l'esecuzione delle misure di sicurezza” (The residence for the execution of security measures), in acronym REMS, in Italy, indicates a health facility for the reception of mentally ill and socially dangerous offenders.

⁶² Booklet 65, January 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di Lucca”.

⁶³ Booklet 133, June 2018, “Lettera dal carcere di Firenze-Sollicciano”, Giovanni.

As far as the structural aspects of prisons described by prisoners are concerned, deaths remain a tragic constant. From the letters of OLGa dealing with the topic of general conditions, in particular of foreigners, overcrowding and health, what emerges is a prison institution as a “legal pain-factory” (“Dolorificio legale”) (Guagliardo, 1997). The set of facts here reported does not reflect a series of adverse episodes occurring in prisons, but, rather, adverse episodes determined by the very organisation of an afflictive system. People die more often and more alone in prison. In these spaces, the condition of physical and social isolation allows people to die, to be abused and/or killed. People die in indifference because their death is permissible. Many of these deaths have not even made it to the bottom of the news in the local newspapers; they have been reported by coincidence, by other prisoners in the wing, the cellmate, or the prison-worker on duty: “*they saw the body being taken away, hidden by a sheet. If they had not seen it, nothing would have been known*”⁶⁴. Those who are 'left to die' are often young people, who often die close to entry into prison or towards the end of their detention. They are often foreigners, whose families are sometimes not even informed⁶⁵. This is testified by the names of some of the dead people reported in the letters from the detainees: Hallowi, Mohamed, Athmini Haitme, Messaoudi, Adelalaja Aboduntin, Francesco Smeragliuolo, Dallow Fi Tarik, and Calersi Massimiliano. The latter, for example, died because of delayed hospitalisation: he had repeatedly complained of pain, weakness, and difficulty in breathing, and the doctors on duty had told him to stop pretending. One evening he was ill and they took him to hospital, but it was too late⁶⁶. In addition to those left to die, there are also several accounts of killings, or attempted killings, by the prison. In fact, as Ruggiero and Gallo (1989) wrote, violence is the first prison commandment (p. 27). In this aspect, it seems that, again, it is the prison itself that foresees the beating and eventually the elimination of people. In the Italian case there are several stories concerning abuse in general, and torture in particular⁶⁷. A declared lack of responsibility of prison officers and agents, which is not contemplated, but rather actually reinforced and protected by the law, remains a constant in these episodes (Camp, Heatherton, 2016).

⁶⁴ Booklet 115, July 2016, “Lettera dal carcere di Opera”: “*banno visto mentre portavano via il corpo, nascosto da un lenzuolo. Se non l'avessero visto, non si sarebbe saputo niente.*”

⁶⁵ The writer told us that the Alba prison had encouraged an Albanian citizen to commit suicide without informing his family. Booklet 78, March 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Alba (CN)”, Dayvid.

⁶⁶ Booklet 50, September 2010, “Lettera dal carcere di Castelfranco Emilia”, Orlando.

⁶⁷ In Italian prisons, there are many cases in which there have been suspected or proven abuses of power that have led to the death of several people. Think of the Cucchi case, the Uva case, the Lonzi case and more recently the case of Alessandro Gallelli, who died in 2012 and only in 2018 did the judge start the investigation into his death. With respect to the last case exposed, link: <http://www.ristretti.org/Le-Notizie-di-Ristretti/milano-quel-suicidio-in-cella-non-convince-i-legali-di-alessandro-gallelli>.

One such story in the booklet is written in memory of Claudio, a prisoner killed in the Asti prison. In 2004, this prison was better known among detainees as little Abu Ghraib, where beatings and violence were the order of the day, particularly by a 15-person 'squad':

“They took me to the isolation cell, they stripped me naked, it was December, the window panes were broken, they gave me an old blanket, without a mattress I was forced to lie on the floor, inside the room there was nothing, no bed, no chairs, no table. I knew that some of them used drugs and alcohol, I was terrified. They immediately started to beat me, I had long hair in a ponytail, after a short time I was in the hands of a guard, he had ripped it off with a hard blow, I was bruised, my ribs were broken, burns on my skin. Every time I heard the amphibious boots running along the corridor I would lie down on the ground, covering my head and crouching down to parry the blows, they never stopped, and then they came back and came back again, at night if I tried to rest for a moment from the peephole came screams and insults to keep me awake, they gave me very little water, and the food was just bread that I dipped in water.”⁶⁸

In this case, of the 15 guards prosecuted, 10 were acquitted and 5 received no sentence.

Even more significant are the deaths following the March 2020 riots. In the prisons of Modena, Alessandria Verona, Parma, Bologna, and Rieti 14 people died. Of these, 9 in Modena alone. Deaths that have all been overlooked despite the investigation into beatings in the Santa Maria Capua Vetere prison, which has brought attention back to torture and beatings in general by police officers.

Another aspect that I chose not to present in the research, even though it was initially included, is the issue of prison protests. The main reason is that it is a difficult phenomenon to understand and analyse. Considering the material in my possession, research on these issues would require further interviews and insights from the prisoners themselves. This is because in all uprisings it is common for detainees to be transferred, isolated or subjected to censorship, making it difficult to maintain a thread of their experiences. Moreover, uprisings are often followed by trials, which in many cases have not yet been concluded. Consequently, an in-depth study in this sense could be inconvenient for the prisoners themselves. Instead, I preferred to keep the letters as the main resource and leave room in the future for new research on this topic with new methodologies that can be integrated.

⁶⁸ Booklet 121, February 2017, *“In memoria di Claudio, torturato nel carcere di asti”*, Stefano: *“mi portano nella cella "liscia" accanto alla cella di isolamento, mi denudano, era il mese di dicembre, i vetri alla finestra erano rotti, mi danno una vecchia coperta, senza materasso sono costretto a stare sdraiato per terra, dentro la stanza non c’era niente, ne un letto, ne sedie, ne un tavolo. Sapevo che alcuni di loro facevano uso di droghe e alcool, ero terrorizzato. Cominciano da subito a picchiarmi, avevo i capelli lunghi stretti in un codino, dopo poco era tra le mani di una guardia, me lo aveva strappato di netto con un colpo fortissimo, a forza di botte ero pieno di lividi, le costole rotte, bruciature sulla pelle. Ogni volta che sentivo gli anfibi che percorrevano il corridoio mi stendevo a terra coprendomi la testa e rannicchiandomi per parare i colpi, non finivano mai, e poi tornavano e tornavano ancora, la notte se cercavo di riposare un attimo dallo spioncino arrivavano urla e insulti per tenermi sveglio, mi davano pochissima acqua, e il cibo era solo pane che intingevo nell’acqua.”*

OLGa has always supported the prisoners' struggles, as witnessed by the letters. In the booklets there is no lack of contributions concerning individual and collective struggles, whose scope reached its peak during the uprisings from March 2020 onwards. At the time of writing, the biggest revolts that have hit Italy in the last 50 years have just ended, or, rather, temporarily died down. Initially involving thousands of prisoners in about 30 prisons in the first month, they then continued on a national scale throughout the year. These protests also testified to the growing role of family members in supporting the struggles from within. The struggles witnessed in the booklets since 2006 had a much more modest scope, and often took different forms. For instance, it is worth mentioning the attempt to set up the "Coordinamento detenuti", which organised a nationwide strike in 2013 where each prison and each prisoner devised their own form of protest, through hunger strikes, refuses of the food trolley, beatings, and so on, while trying to involve as many people as possible. In the same period, there were also protests at the Buoncammino prison in Cagliari, which ended with the transfer of many inmates all around Italy. Or, again, there were the various struggles that gravitated around the figure of Maurizio. In this case, the booklet turned out to be a real bridge between inside and outside, through the various letters from prisoners who decided with him to denounce a series of abuses suffered in the prison of Opera. On a larger scale, there were also protests against life imprisonment. In this regard, there have been many mobilisations, also supported by the "Radicali" party. Finally, the campaign against 41 bis "*Pagine Contro la Tortura*" should be underlined. This campaign was born in opposition to the prohibition of a regulation of the D.A.P. to receive books from outside for those who are imprisoned in 41 bis⁶⁹.

2.2 *A narrative approach*

The method I pursued in my research draws on different sources: sociological classics, such as Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) and Wright Mills (1959) on sociological imagination; the more recent narrative approach developed in criminology, which contributes to the studies on how inmates use discursive resistance strategies in prison (Fleetwood et al., 2019; Vannier, 2018); the discussion in geography about a narrative turn in the humanities and social sciences, and the emphasis on narrative activity, i.e. how the narrative is constructed and what the different narrative environments are (Prokkola, 2014); insights into personal correspondences, the question of truth in narratives; the historicity of the material, and the limits and opportunities given by the specificity of epistolary exchanges in social history

⁶⁹ Link of the campaign available at: <https://paginecontrolatortura.noblogs.org/>.

(Elliott et al., 2006); the development from critical criminology and geography on the narratives of prisoners (Earle, 2019); and the narratives of political prisoners (Schaich and Hope, 1977; Shabazz, 2014).

As the editor of the booklet, I would often say, upon reading a letter, “They write as they speak”. Storytelling as an oral medium (Benjamin, 1992, p. 84) bears similarities with prison writing as described by Davies (1990). Like storytelling, prison writings are characterised by “art repeating stories” (Benjamin, 1992, p. 90): writing letters, rewriting space-time and experience, and placing an individual in a collective story. Writing from prison creates a space of atomisation that would otherwise be lived in solitude (Abbot, 1981; Abu-Jamal, 1995). The importance of rewriting has also been “deployed by feminist and postcolonial authors, as a method of reclaiming the experiences of marginalised groups” from their own points of view (March and Palmer, 2018, p. 35). Narratives are small literary truths, they can feed “the sociological imagination in ways that conventional socio-scientific writing is rarely able to do” (Earle, 2019).

This chapter seeks to underline the importance of narrative that combines OLGa intervention on prison and the “convict” knowledge of prisoners engaged in struggle: a hybrid knowledge that unites “intimate, visceral understanding about the loss of liberty, the meaning of confinement, the power of the state, the force of punishment, finding freedom” (Earle, 2018, p. 15), and a narrative that describes the experience of prisoners affected by the power of the prison management. This epistemological aspect is crucial. It is only in these relations of struggling and power, in the way things among things and men amongst men hate each other, fight, try to dominate one another, want to exercise power relations, that we understand what knowledge consists of (Foucault, 1997c, p. 18). I intend to contribute to an immanent story in opposition to that of power, of the winner who tells of victory. This archive thereby becomes a collective counter-narrative of unacceptable stories, such as those of blacks in new British prisons (Earle, 2019). This perspective does not seek to romanticise these prisoners by falling into the trap of glorifying all crimes of the poor as political struggles for liberation. Rather, its aim is to develop insights that allow us to appreciate their struggles, desires, difficulties, and limitations, and to understand the complexity of the prison system. This work seeks to contribute to the construction of narratives aimed at “disavowing” the “hegemonic and universalising idea of ‘the Prison’” (Armstrong and Jefferson, 2017, p. 238), and to build a bridge between prison and society in order to cast light on the opaque.

In this research I consider the prison letters as primary data collection. According to Harris (2002), the use of correspondence in qualitative research has traditionally been limited to a supporting role. However, there are conditions in which these data, as documentary sources in general, are not a partial solution to other methods but should be considered instead as data in their own right (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997). The methodology concerning documentary sources may be more or less useful depending on the goals and subjects of the research. Concerning the specific prisoners and the environment in which they are, in particular in relation to censorship and possible problems in disseminating some information, the “genuineness” of the empirical data is not something that must be sought. Indeed, for the prisoners this condition requires important skills of reflexivity and capacity to accurately choose the right words to use. Letters provide the time to properly think on it and maybe say something that in other methodologies would be avoided because it could be too tricky to be discussed face to face.

2.2.1 Methodological notes

I analysed the archive by reading and rereading the letters, insights, and contextualisation of the booklet. It is a circular process, as described by Morgan (2008); an ongoing analysis, in which new data emerge “so that both the research procedures and questions can be adjusted in an iterative fashion in response to what is being learned in the field” (Morgan, 2008, p. 246). Justifying this choice is the fact that I found no similar work at local or national level on which it could be based (Vannier, 2018, p.11; Peräkylä, 2005, p. 870). The booklet allows me to conceptualise the “narrative environments” of the letters (Prokkola, 2014, 442), without limiting them to simple textual end products. In addition, the letters are compared with other sources, such as legal and other documentary evidence.

The booklet's narrative environment, the content of the letters, and my reading as a researcher, formed a meta-archive. I began my work from my work from the original archive made up of the different booklets. On the one hand, I extracted quantitative information by sorting the material by the geography of the different prisons, the regimes, the origins of the prisoners, and the types of letters (when specified). On the other hand, I reorganised the original archive according to the narrative environment of the booklet and the content of the letters. Whenever possible, I connected events that united the different, sometimes divergent, points of view of the prisoners discussing the same subject but from a different prison, block, or cell, or simply from a different perception of reality. Letters from prisons and other forms of institutions outside Italy were considered when their writers described past experiences in the Italian prison system. In this circular process, I defined different thematic areas,

building up a new archive of letters, contextual insights, and academic references extrapolated from the material. Major topics such as differentiation processes, the reward mechanism, maximum security regimes and 41 bis have always been among the main interests of the collective, which is why I chose to include them in this research. In this way, I was able to make use of the original archive ordered chronologically, a small database of quantitative information, and another archive divided into thematic areas composed by pieces of letters. The analysis intersected with this differentiated source in parallel with discussions with the OLGa Collective and the prisoners, those with whom I have exchanged letters or other prisoners whom I had the pleasure to meet after their release. Meaning is co-created and co-constructed (Crotty, 1998), eroding the distance between “me”, as a researcher and activist, and the prisoners. The research reflects my determination to expand these counter-narratives into new areas, such as the academic circuit. It was conceived at a time when I felt that this material could become relevant: in fact I attended the collective even before I started the research. While this may limit my ability to understand the narratives, I think it is, for me, the only ethically respectable way, given my own position, to give full importance to the subjective realities of the letter writers. I brought general collective knowledge and a reflexive guide to the analysis of the letters: a guide acquired through the history and experience of past struggles described within the booklet and reiterated in each personal discussion with prisoners and activists.

This guide has been used to trace the past in order to understand the present (Story, 2015). This genealogical knowledge helped me to define “singular generalities”, the rationality expressed and described by those who are living in prison space, “the variables of which, in their aleatory interactions, correspond to conjunctures” (Senellart, 2007, p. 504). These conjunctures can be understood within governmentality in terms of strategies and tactics. For instance, when I focus on single events I do not present it in the aim of reaching a generality, but, rather, as specificity or an analogy that can clarify the line of my argument. In a more practical sense, it makes it possible to understand the prisoners' writings, especially those whose poor command of language is combined with unspoken considerations, that is, writers who can sometimes seem incomprehensible or well-known events that were major turning points in prisoners' narratives. This guide has also helped me to question analysis that I once took for granted, and to make the interpretative decisions that I did. Furthermore, this guide helped fill the silences with an explanation on why someone would disappear from the booklet; it serves as a commentary on delicate issues that have been made public; it recognises when silences are the most eloquent way to communicate in sensitive moments. In brief, it guided me in more fully emphasising

the voice and the silence described in the last section. My immersion in the world of the struggles against prison was crucial in order to understand the empirical material.

2.3 Who is speaking for whom? Spanning activism and academia

Some scholars assert that speaking on behalf of others “is arrogant, vain, immoral and politically illegitimate”. Moreover, the “indignity of speaking for others” (Foucault and Deleuze, 1978) often increases and strengthens the oppression of the group for which one speaks (Alcoff, 2008, p. 3). For this reason, some scholars believe that researchers should speak only for the groups of which they are members, even if the delimitation of their boundaries is variable and porous, and the delimitation of identity arbitrary (*ibidem*). In this section, I will conceptualise two main issues that characterise my approach: my positionality and my reflexivity in relation to prison letters and the narrative environment in which they originate.

Firstly, my positionality is derived from my participation in the collective. Writing in the 1960s, the sociologist Becker (1967) believed that a critical approach should address the question “Where do we stand?” (Hudson, 2000). With this question, on one hand, I want to stress the link between activist practise and academic studies; between the material produced by the OLGa collective and my own reflection and analysis. On the other hand, since I am an activist who works in the university sector and who speaks for those whose voices are silenced, I would under no circumstances renounce my “political responsibility to speak out against oppression”, precisely because this responsibility is based on my own privilege (Alcoff, 2008, p. 4). When I talk about silenced voice, I do not imply an interventionist posture, where I see the others’ victimisation without chance or future if not for my help. Rather, I think of the several prisoners who denounced their impossibility to reach any audience from their cell when they wanted to denounce certain conditions. Starting from the question of the indefinable boundaries of belonging to a group, I believe it is possible to produce valuable work even under these conditions.

I have never been incarcerated as a prisoner and, for this reason, I am able to consider the question as an activist and scholar, and not as a former prisoner. Nevertheless, my own specific position allows me to speak about prison, within the limits of my personal experience in constructing a bridge between the inside and the outside in order to support the struggle of others. This is acknowledged both by the editors of the booklet and the prisoners with whom I engaged. I entered a prison as part of my work

as a university tutor. After two and a half years spent with prisoners enrolled at university, I was suspended by management for two main reasons: my closeness and friendship with the prisoners, and my refusal to inform the prison educator about the individual behaviours of the prisoners through daily reports on our activity. For the management, our mandate was too uncontrollable, because we did not report the activities we conducted and none of us volunteers were part of the regular staff meetings. These and other complaints came from the prison police, from one of the coordinators of a university project within the prison, and from the manager, who did not appreciate the warmth with which we treated the inmates who came to the university where I was studying to present a feature film. When this behaviour was interpreted by several parties as ambiguous, it was decided to inform us of the suspension of our project.

It seemed senseless to me to report information about the lectures that were held in the prison classroom and about what the inmates were saying. I was supposed to produce material that would then be interpreted subjectively by my supervisor for the evaluation of the prisoners. I started to wonder: how is it possible to be part of a re-educational facility while keeping distance and with coldness? I could not continue to be a tutor if it meant being an appendage to prison surveillance. How is it possible to re-educate an aged person within the restrictions imposed by that regime? The people I met during my tutoring period had at least 20 years of detention behind them. These seemingly naive questions inculcated radical critical thought within me regarding the institution of the prison. But I think that, at least, I was not the only one to feel this way: before my participation with OLGa collective, I found a letter in the archive speaking of “the students of Bicocca and other schools”, to whom, according to Maurizio, the prison director was showing only the “humanitarian side” of the prison. It is interesting that both prison officers and university scholars could critique this work from the same point of view about the issue of distance. Some ethnographers claim that even between one subject and another the good practise is to maintain a certain distance between the researcher and the research, and not to get “too involved” or “too personal” (Behar, 1996, p. 20). This is also what the prison coordinator said before the suspension. All of these tensions probably prompted me to develop an interest in abolitionism and in the OLGa collective, extending my solidarity beyond those friends who I had encountered in my experience in prison, to encompass all the prisoners who suffer within a cage.

Right from the start, both as a volunteer and as an activist, I saw the paradoxical tension that lay in building a bridge between prisoners and society. Such activity can be portrayed as a threat to the

social order, but it was also the most spontaneous and honest path that was open to me. This contradiction was also fundamental in the development of the booklet, which was often hindered by official authorities. The prison censorship office defined the booklets as follows: *“They are not of the ‘permitted kind’, since they do not enter the commercial circuit outside the prison”*⁷⁰; *“The contents incite rebellion against the State and, more specifically, against prison facilities”*.⁷¹ For years, the attempts made by both me and OLGa to send the booklet to prisoners were rejected and censored by many prisons, on the grounds that security requirements exclude these types of connections between prison and society, and between different prisons.

The second issue is one of reflexivity: “claims of reflexivity can provide a platform for claiming an authenticity or realness of experience which is spurious” (Phillips, 2012, p. 54). Participating in the collective has given me a general understanding of the material, which I then developed into thematic areas. I developed a guide for reflection, a collective understanding of the phenomena, which helped me overcome the risk of investing in the meanings of writings (Carrabine, 2004, p. 56), and the risk inherent in the different perceptions that exist between “the analyst” and the disordered group, with respect to the intended shape of the research (Waddington, 1991, p. 228). My research attempts to bring to light the analysis of the encounter between OLGa and the prisoners within the booklet. This broadens the knowledge that can be discussed in an academic context and that can familiarise the reader with the activities underpinning the research. My intervention does not seek to identify best practises to be included in new policies; it is not intended for the prisoners, at least for now, because the majority of them do not know English. I try to give back the heritage of a collective and, in my own way, I try to order it, make it more readable, producing knowledge for social struggles. I try to contribute to the academic world, to prison studies, to the internal debate in carceral geography and critical criminology. I try to bring the academy closer to society, as I already do between society and prison through militancy. In both cases, I fight that discrimination that kills subjects, in exchange for research objects. The criticisms of the GIP made by Brich (2008) are particularly relevant in questioning my reflexivity. Although I assign a high value to the voices of the prisoners, and although these voices may be given looser reins than in a questionnaire, as in GIP’s case, it cannot be said that I am acting as a megaphone for the prisoners. That is the work of the collective. While it is also important to free from restrictions the prisoners’ voices, there is a risk that speaking on their behalf might obscure

⁷⁰ Booklet 114, June 2016, “Lettera dal carcere di Agrigento”, Davide: *“non sono del ‘tipo consentito’.”*

⁷¹ Booklet 129, December 2017, “Lettera dal carcere di Uta”, Maddalena: *“i contenuti incitano alla ribellione contro Stato e più specificatamente contro le strutture carcerarie.”*

their voices. My aim in researching the world of prisons is to describe the specific encounter between the outside (the collective) and the inside (the prisoners). It is not merely the collection of testimonies: I am acting here as a witness to this encounter. Truthfully, rather than me giving them voice, it is they who give me my voice and their stories. Indeed, I am not the master of these narratives. While I try to work for them, I am at the “mercy of others and the stories that others give” (Rose, 2016, p. 7). Here is where my vulnerability lies: on my reliance on others and on their stories. It is precisely my proximity to the environment that allows me to build up a “situated knowledge” on prisons and prisoners that could not be obtained from a safe distance (Haraway, 1988). Indeed, this work comes from a broader journey of struggle against prison and, consequently, all the personal considerations are influenced by the discussions that occurred in different contexts, be it during a demonstration, a presentation of a book, or at a congress. It is not, however, a choral work in all respects. It implies a series of subjective choices on the part of the researcher in directing a certain flow of discourse, interpreting the material with personal nuances, and choosing how to present it (McLafferty, 1995, p. 437).

2.4 Where do I stand?

In this section, I will specify my position in relation to abolitionism. The question “Where do we stand?” unmasks the rhetoric hidden behind political positions, sides, such as the canonical distinction between right and left, boss and worker, bourgeois and proletarian, expert and ordinary person. I did not write this thesis in order to reach conclusions on abolitionism, and my discussion of empirical data will not convince the reader that abolishing prison is right. Rather, abolitionism is a necessary premise that also allows for a better understanding of how this thesis was conceived.

As I will explain in detail in the following chapters, abolitionism for me is not an end but an unfinished process, a horizon to strive towards that cannot be reached. In a way, just like seeking for freedom. When developing this paragraph, it will be possible to discern the directions and intentions that pushed me to contribute to this theme, and, above all, the points of contact between my positionality and the testimonies of those who wrote the letters.

First of all, we should ask ourselves: what kind of abolitionism are we talking about? The most important references come from Northern Europe, in particular from Norway (Mathiesen, 1996, 2015; Christie, 1981, 2011), Netherlands (Hulsman and De Cèlis, 2001), and the United States (Davis, 2003). The scholars from these countries see in the abolition of prison, of the penal system, and of the system of relations that sustain these institutional and organisational forms, a liberation. In line with them, in

this paragraph I will try to expose good reasons to think that, counterintuitively, less or more criminal justice can bring more social justice. The abolitionist movement has within it differences that cover almost the whole range of opinions. There are, for example, those who defend partial abolitionism, that is, who provide abolition for those more deserving or less guilty, and provide for imprisonment limited to a hard core of deviants. Or again, there are those who reject prison for essentially ethical, humanitarian reasons. Others seek "alternatives" more compatible with modern cultures and societies (D'este, 2015, p. 104). Abolitionism is a necessary issue within any social critique for a freer society, yet it has little relevance in public discourse. It implies a society with less social exclusion, more distribution of wealth and proximity among individuals. An abolitionist perspective, in fact, could only be discussed in its radicality: between the Franciscan and the anarchist one would not find too many frictions in the respective ideas of rejecting prison and revising the vengeful spirit of punishment. Indeed, both agree that collective, punitive sentiments of the people can't be directly translated into punitive practise (Cavadino and Dignan, 2002). Prison is an apparatus of the state and of the penal system, and, as a place of execution of the sentence, it is a relatively young institution, which has existed for 200 years. However, it has been able, more than other institutions, to make itself natural, as if a society never existed without it. Prison is not external to society as much as one is led to think, but, rather, it takes the form of the current model of power. In the US, for example, the abolitionist movement of prisons is closely linked to the previous one, which concerned the slavery of blacks forced to work on plantations. In this country better than in others it can be seen the development of an internal colonialism, where imperialist reason applied the original repressive control repertoire of the colonies onto its own cities and towns. From this point of view, US prisons still today reproduce a racial discrimination that has survived for centuries in the United States (Alexander, 2020). Slavery before and prison after were the most efficient and most rational deployment of racist strategies: "convict labor was in many ways in the vanguard of the region's first tentative, ambivalent, steps toward modernity" (Lichtenstein, 1996, p. XIX). The same applies to the rest of the capitalist world outside of the US, "deviance control became essential for industrial development" (Christie, 1981, p. 23-24).

Today, according to several scholars, western states have replaced forms of social welfare to the criminalisation of poverty, addiction, homelessness, mental illness (Beckett and Herbert, 2009; Wacquant, 2013a); as well as for some categories of the population such as children and youth (Rios, 2011); women (Richie, 2012); migrants (Moran et al., 2013; Mountz and Loyd, 2014; Weber and Pickering, 2011). From a U.S. perspective, the State has experienced a gradual replacement of poverty

regulation through welfare by a welfare carceral continuum: “The prison has become a black hole into which the detritus of contemporary capitalism is deposited” (Davis, 2003, p. 16). This process has led the US in particular to hyperincarceration. To this problem, created by the state, the solution has been to build more prisons and exponentially increase the number of imprisoned population (Gilmore, 2007). In concert with this process, a machine made up of private individuals associated with the punishment industry collects profits from it (Davis, 2003, p. 16). Their interests go beyond just building prisons, to involve also taking care of their ongoing maintenance, turning them increasingly into a business. Mike Davis (1995) described this machine as a prison industrial complex.

From another point of view, the punishment has another economic connotation, or better econometry. According to Guagliardo, the retributive ideal of punishment is a utopian-senseless attempt to subdue pain to the laws of economics (1997, p. 66). Nonetheless, prison systems are still rooted on the idea that the detention of the offender should repay the victim of the pain. In this sense, the penal system makes the pain an exchange-value: pain for the offender to repay the victim of the pain administered. At the same time, retribution leans in a plan of legitimation, which follows the neoliberal and democratic fairy-tale according to which everyone competes in equality within an arena. And yet, this arena was created by the (white) bourgeoisie and for the bourgeoisie, and, in it, any structural inequality is recoded as individual failure and guilt (Hernes and Knudsen, 1976; Callewaert and Nilsson, 1978). In these critiques, particularly focused in the US on the condition of blacks and chicanos, a close relationship between neoliberal economic structure, racism, and detention has been established. With the concept of ‘neo-liberalism’, I mean something different from the word ‘liberal’ when applied to American politics. I mean, specifically, the practise of the neo-liberal states, “who are the most punitive out of the range of countries” from a global comparison. I want to underline here that neo-liberalism in the US showed that socio-economic development increases social deprivation: the criminals punished by the unequal system we live in are also created by it; the system produces the criminals it deserves, and uses them to its advantage to sanctify criminal law (Ruggiero, 2013, p. 81). Moreover, globalisation brought penal convergence and homogenisation of punishment across the world, and, particularly, the western world. Yet in recent years there has been an acceleration of these processes, even if “we are still a long way from global homogenization of punishment” (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006, p. 11). Nevertheless, I agree with the discussion on “correctional imperialism”, such as the standardisation of American-style prison facilities (*ibidem*). This development can be seen as “an

aspect of increasing modernization”, where the rule of law is a global ideology which every country interprets according to their context.

Prison, together with the penal system, has contributed to the construction of a "system of constraint, coercion and punishment" (Foucault, 1997c, p. 69). This form of power was structured at the beginning of the nineteenth century as a condition of functioning of the capitalist system, and represented the “concentrated, exemplary, symbolic form of all institutions of segregation” (Foucault, 1997c, p. 62). It is part of that set of power technologies with which capitalism has ensured the transformation of the body of men and women into a work force and their time into work time (Foucault, 1997c, p. 60). For these reasons, I have chosen to use the concept of governmentality, whose origins come from a critical study on neoliberalism (Foucault, 2007), but which can also be used for specific institutional and organisational forms such as prison.

There are different institutional forms that have arisen and declined in these 200 years, but the prison has not only endured, but also consolidated. For Foucault, prison survives for the following reasons: on the one hand, as a mirror of society, it absolves itself from being a prison because it is an institution like any other; on the other hand, it absolves all other institutions accused of being prisons. Therefore, it is its ability to fit into the already existing system of social panoptism within society that allowed it a relatively serene survival (Foucault, 1997c, p. 62). Other institutions removed some of the rationalities that characterise all institutional forms. Schools formally abolished physical violence, and there are no longer detention centres for the poor called *Hôpital général*. These lost panoptisms, which are a condition for modernity, are delegated to prison. It is hard work, but someone has to do it. The only panopticism that the prison has renounced over the years is exile. It has been absorbed or, at least, reorganised for certain categories of subjects in forms of administrative detention, such as detention centres for migrants aimed at deportation. Another form of internal banishment, without the use of cells, is the special surveillance, which prohibits the possibility of meeting with people considered "dangerous".

A facet of my research is the question of what prison social function is today. The answer is not simple, since it is always partial and often overlaps and clashes with other valid answers. In general, prison has a negative and a positive function. The negative one is social exclusion, a circular mechanism that, with each round, tries to eliminate more and more the existence of the subjects overwhelmed by the penal system. It is not enough, however, to argue that any society can function only on the condition that some of its members are excluded. The positive function of prison is instead less clear and

will be pursued in this thesis. What are its productive aspects? The penalties that developed in the nineteenth century had the following objective: not the general defence of society, but the control and moral and social reform of individuals (Foucault, 1997c). It does not lie exclusively in the negative act of prohibition, but includes the positive act of imposing prescriptions (Poulantzas, 1978). For this reason, an attempt will be made to understand prison as a social laboratory.

2.4.1 Between saying and doing: positionality and abolitionism

Crime takes the form of the marginalised social categories of the moment. An example is the criminalisation of blacks in the US in the last decades of the 20th century:

“The new Black Codes proscribed a range of actions-such as vagrancy, absence from work, breach of job contracts, the possession of firearms, and insulting gestures or acts-that were criminalized only when the person charged was black” (Davis, 2003, p. 28).

Another example is the criminalisation of robbery in the 1970s in the UK highlighted by Hall et al. (1978). It seems that the right of the state to punish has an unclear link with the variable concept of crime. The years of imprisonment change for the same crime over the years and in relation to the law, just as certain social practises can become new crimes (research on the internet) or old crimes can be exhumed from history and become punishable again (vagrancy, etc.). This problem is not only relegated to different sensibilities, more or less punitive with respect to what is a crime; it concerns the internalisation, by the affected person, of legal, social, and political labelling. As expressed by Goldman, the criminal is a microbe, an element that only becomes manifest when it finds the medium allowing it to ferment (2014, p. 25). From this point of view it is important to underline how the systems of criminalisation and punishment are linked to the “agendas of politicians, the profit drive of corporation and media representations of crime” (Davis, 2003, p. 112).

For these people who are then arrested in mass, nobody has any other solution than prisons: “why do prisons tend to make people think that their own rights and liberties are more secure than they would be if prisons did not exist?”.

In many Western countries, the number of prisoners is increasing or remaining stable while crime rates have generally decreased or have remained the same. The reason for this trend is related to the changes in laws and policies, and with sentences having become longer. As a result, once inside prison it is difficult to get out. In addition, there is a general increase in the prison population in other forms

of imprisonment, such as migrant camps and the prison archipelago made up of health facilities that host psychiatric patients or drug addicts who have committed crimes.

The prison seems to be a "university of crime" (Ward, 2013, p. 182), where delinquency is produced and made malleable through depersonalisation and psychophysical degradation. In addition to not lowering recidivism, those who return to prison usually do so because of a crime even more serious than the first offence committed. Moreover, deterrence does not eradicate crime; radical measures such as the death penalty have never increased or decreased the number of murders in a country (Kropotkin, 2014, p. 8; Christie, 2011, p. 22). In a much more modest way, it should be said that we are not capable of inventing any cure for crime, and that we have done nothing but maintain a bureaucratic, vengeful system aimed at removing individual conflicts and responsibilities by delegating it to a third party – the state.

Prison as part of the neoliberal ideology can be criticised by observing its perpetual crisis and the failure of penology. On one hand, goods and people circulate for the maintenance of the economy of a territory in the same way as prisoners circulate, functional to the production system – the previously recalled prison industrial complex. However, despite the legitimations that keep it alive, the prison does not meet the two essential objectives it is called upon to pursue: deterrence and social rehabilitation. In addition, prison lives in a perpetual crisis. It is consistently overpopulated, its spaces are squalid, structurally afflictive and degrading; management is in constant shortage of resources and of personnel, which is often demoralised and restless. Nonetheless, the number of prisons is growing because of the chronic crisis of the entire criminal justice system. The latter is able to incorporate its own criticism as part of the process of legitimation: the institutional crisis can be seen as a process of becoming a perfect machine which will never be possible, but will always be pursued. On the other hand, what is less intuitive but highlighted by several sociologists and criminologists is the effect of labelling theory, i.e., the difficulty for "criminals" to return to a life with the same possibilities as others once they have been tried by the criminal machine (Cohen, 1979, p. 342). Many of these concerns characterised the thinking of specialists who have been involved in prison since its inception. The discussion of these aspects, although still relevant, is at the same time part of a debate that leads to little results, if it is not contextualised within the forms of power relations of the present. Cohen was already concerned about these aspects in relation to the increasing ability of the rule of law to penetrate and proliferate into every corner of social life. This criminal machine increasingly takes on the appearance of a Weberian bureaucracy, established to maintain control of legality. For the very reason that the controllable intimacy of

the subjects is potentially endless, just as the concept of totalitarianism is an infinite horizon, the current system of control has a potentially infinite margin of work.

The criminal and legal machine is part of the liberal utopia, a euechronia (Mannheim, 1936; Wallerstein, 2001), and has the task of managing its waste and producing new forms of social control by developing an increasingly intimate knowledge of society's members. Not being able to see alternatives to this machine is the result of the ideology of an absolute justice, which is not, but which we believe to be, absolute. An ideology that considers a society without laws and prisons as condemned to chaos.

However, we also know that crimes in time and space change in a variable way, as people are still punished as homosexuals, drug addicts, blasphemers. The relativity of crime tells us that a criminal practise in one context is acceptable — and sometimes liberating — in another (Hulsman and De Cèlis, 1982, p. 29). The fact is that the crime has no common denominators, no general motivations, and, therefore, there is no panacea to prevent it. What is the common denominator between an aggressive behaviour within the family, an act of violence committed in the anonymous context of the street, the burglary of a private house, the printing of false money, aiding and abetting a man, fencing goods, an attempted coup d'état, etc.? (*ibidem*). These situations have only a perfectly artificial link between them, which is the formal competence of the criminal justice system with regard to them.

So, from one day to the next we stop being punished, after thousands of people have been punished before us. There are several situations in which even serious cases are not dealt with by the criminal code, while others are (Hulsman and De Cèlis, 2001, p. 33). For them, we speak of "accidents": for example environmental accidents, accidents in workplaces, all those cases in which the responsibilities are not so automatically assumed, but instead are sought (in some cases) in order to compensate the victims. The mismanagement of a climatic phenomenon that leads to numerous victims is handled in a completely different way from the case of a serial killer, where the focus is almost exclusively on the perpetrator. In addition, there remains a number of events theoretically subject to criminal law that are not prosecuted or evaluated. One only needs to think of that group of victims of police abuse, deaths in prison, or domestic violence. How is it possible that a punitive system which is far from neutral in its definitions of crime and which tends to punish already vulnerable social groups is acceptable even for those who do not disdain prison and punishment? Or, better, how is it so difficult to not see a proportionality of penalty in relation to the unequal social structure in which we live, where the privileged receive better protection and less severe sanctions than the rest of the population? This

proportionality is a benefit for those who will continue their exploitation of people and conserve their power, while we will be all focused on the mainstream representation of crimes.

Every time I find myself contesting prison and the penal system, I come up against the need that our society feels for it. Necessity is a concept that public opinion in some way determines, a public discourse that is naturalised and, in fact, conservative. Although public opinion is not conservative in itself, this discourse is conservative in that it has parameters on which it is based that cannot be questioned, such as the state and prison (Mathiesen, 2015, p. 32). As a result, one can potentially talk endlessly about prison, but it is practically impossible to question it once and for all under these conditions. For this reason, to adopt an abolitionist stance means to move consciously beyond these parameters.

When I say abolition, I mean the abolition of a society that could have prisons, "elimination of anything but abolition as the founding of a new society" (Moten and Harney, 2013, p. 114). Abolition is a long-term process that sees the end of crimes as understood and prosecuted today, the end of law and punishment. This is an epistemological limit, a "limit concept" (Brown, 2016, p. 14). In the same way, Mathiesen (2015) expressed this concept as a process of the unfinished: abolition as a continuous struggle for liberation and erosion of power. However, it is not merely a theory to be provided in a presumptuous way to non-intellectuals. By theory, according to Foucault and Deleuze on the role of intellectuals, I mean "a struggle against power" (1978). It is an inseparable relationship between theory and practise; it is not the application of an abstraction for a given social historical context, but "a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practise to another" (p. 74). By process of the unfinished I mean a relationship of continuous erosion of the system of forces that constantly structures itself, abolition, reconstruction, and re-abolition, and so on (Mathiesen, 2015, p.61).

Abolitionism is a concept linked to utopia. In opposition to the concept of ideology — "complexes of ideas which direct activity toward the maintenance of the existing order" — Mannheim (1936) argues that utopia is "complexes of ideas which tend to generate activities towards changes of the prevailing order" (p. XXI). I consider abolitionism as a concrete utopia, which, unlike the general understanding of utopia, is anticipatory and not compensatory; what Bloch called "real possible" future (1986, p. 145), capable of anticipating and influencing the future at the same time. A libertarian utopia (Ruggiero, 2013), which is not external to social reality but immanent, created from within society itself, from its social practises and organisation. In this sense, according to Graeber, "the structure of

one's own act becomes a kind of micro-utopia, a concrete model for one's vision of a free society” (2009, p. 210). For this reason, my positionality wants to look towards direct action,

“a form of action in which means and ends become, effectively, indistinguishable; a way of actively engaging with the world to bring about change, in which the form of the action — or at least, the organization of the action — is itself a model for the change one wishes to bring about” (*ibidem*).

Prison represents a whole set of elements that make up society and that have become a necessary evil. Abolishing prison for me also means an unfinished process of continuous erosion of political power, hierarchy, authority, the State and its apparatus. According to Agozino and Pfohl for example, the critique of the actual spreading of the theory of the “authoritarian populism” is nothing more than a critique of an “excessive exercise of the state power under the ideology of law and order and the excesses suggest illegalities such as discriminatory decisions that disadvantage the marginalized” (2003, p. 121). This perspective, which has been revitalised with the mainstream concept of penal populism, cannot recognise that “state practice could be oppressive and popular at the same time”, and that it is still impossible to assert that “authoritarian state is a criminal state” that has also the monopoly of violence (*ibidem*). This tendency of considering state and prison as separate entities feeds our inability to make our criticism get too far, but there is nothing new in sustaining that State can and does commit crimes, and the same goes with prisons. Only then, when this other knot will be unravelled, will it be possible to take over the question(s) of power, punishment and the conduct of people.

So, is it possible to abolish the prison, at least? Following D'Este's answer, I say no (D'Este, 2015, p. 106), it is not possible to abolish it, or at least unlikely. However, it is necessary, and it is precisely this need to get rid of prison that drives a broader struggle for a society different from the one in which we live. In short, the prison itself cannot be abolished unless we can free our society from the need for it and the logic that makes it necessary. Abolition in this sense is a method from which I can see where new forms of prison are developing, new forms of authority and hierarchies. In short, prison allows us to observe from a privileged angle how power works. With the awareness raised by this perspective of struggle, the abolition of prison is necessary, thus becoming possible (*ibidem*).

My posture towards prison as an abolitionist lies on a politics of the unfinished, I always look for a horizon that is utopian, but arising from reflections and insights derived from the existing, within my own experience. In the specific case of this project, the letters will be the primary source of inspiration on this theme. However, this early discussion of the unfinished does not even want to get lost in the meanders of abstraction.

The abolition of imprisonment, punishment, and the system of relationships that it is composed of have been described as a premise and conclusion for an abolitionist struggle. Now I will try to systematise the previous points within different areas of a general "disavowal" of prison (Armstrong, 2017). From these tangles of suggestions from Northern Europe, North America and Italy on abolitionism, I will extrapolate a number of points which can be discussed. In other terms, I will ask myself some questions that I will subsequently answer during the research.

The first general consideration is that the prison field is potentially infinite and can be distinguished in different forms. One possible plan is the problematisation of the concept of crime and punishment, that the criminal system has the capacity of both producing crime and then manipulating it for its own purposes. No matter how much they have changed in history, the ways of combating crime still come from a society that does not act outside of a vengeful logic (Goldman, 2014, p. 26). Revenge as a founding principle of the prison form also helps to understand why more repressive forms, for example barbaric torture and other repertoires of prisons around the world, have never succeeded in reducing crime. Deterrence in this sense does not work. For this reason, it is necessary to respond to the punitive common sense that legitimises legalised revenge, those who seek revenge should be told that what they seek will not be found through the criminal system.

Another question that must always be asked is to what extent do alternatives to detention replace previous forms of detention, and to what extent do they become "supplementary appendages" (Cohen, 1979, p. 347). From this perspective, it is important to continually problematise the work of experts which has gradually proliferated in the criminal justice system.

I believe that everyone who has the prison issue at heart should intervene, even if the prospect of abolition is far away, because we know that any improvement in the conditions of those inside prison is fundamental, just like for a worker the possibility of earning a more dignified salary. I try to contribute to a questioning of current power relations, which see improvement as the first superficial effect of a struggle having a wider horizon. There are immediate scenarios that I doubt less: I know, for example, that a prison where torture occurs is worse than a maximum-security prison; that the latter is worse than a normal prison; that among normal prisons there are various degrees of tolerability; that house arrest or semi-freedom etc. are less bad than the best normal prison, and so on (D'Este, 2015, p. 107). At the same time, this positioning helps to better detect when a new reform implies a re-appropriation, a co-optation and a depotentiation of the margins for which any abolitionist demand can be moved. This is not limited solely to seeing repressive measures behind the reforms, but to

rejecting the hand of power when small crumbs of freedom are sold for more control as part of a strategy of individualisation among prisoners, or when the punishment becomes softer while the control mesh widens. For example, if I fight for the abolition of supermax prisons, I do not do it to legitimise "normal" prisons instead. If I fight for more benefits and general improvements of prison conditions for prisoners, I must not lose sight of the risk of new, more consolidated constrictions for those who do not fit the detention order.

There are several ideas that other authors have already illustrated in this regard. For example, it is always good to accept a cutback of prison population, a reduction of sentences, the abolition of life imprisonment, and whatever effort towards the reduction of pain.

The automatism for which, in an objective manner, a sentence is assigned that can be served only in relation to a reward logic should be limited; at the same time, one should not risk to move towards a subjectivity of the punishment that reflect a system of differentiation in which the most vulnerable would be left to themselves. Forms of criminalisation dictated by the political agendas of the time must be discredited. Prisoners must be freed from the yoke of those forms of daily deprivation with which, formally or informally, they are harassed. These abuses include the deprivation of sexuality, of communication with the outside world, and all those other activities that are part of the colonisation of the self. These characteristics of the total institutions will be discussed in more detail in the next chapters. This is not meant to be a program, but is instead a list of some contradictions of the prison system that can be acted upon and with which one can align oneself in order to achieve the end purpose of "removing the prison from the social and ideological landscapes of our society" (Davis, 2003, p. 107), and to try to problematise the "penal law as a social problem" (Christie, 1981, p. 99).

I believe that prison should not only be fought in relation to its internal contradictions, but also within the system of relations with which it is interconnected:

"[the prison industrial complex] is much more than the sum of all the jails and prisons in this country. It is a set of symbiotic relationships among correctional communities, transnational corporations, media conglomerates, guards' unions, and legislative and court agendas. If it is true that the contemporary meaning of punishment is fashioned through these relationships, then the most effective abolitionist strategies will contest these relationships and propose alternatives that pull them apart" (Davis, 2003, p. 107)

The abolition of prison is not to be mistaken for de-carceration. In fact, getting a defined number of prisoners out of prison, as through amnesty or indult, does not necessarily have to do with abolition.

Within the current system, amnesty, is more like getting rid of an immediate problem to maintain the state of things, as it may be for immigration policies a regularisation. Certainly, amnesty policies are a necessity to improve prison conditions in contemporary prisons, and, surely, de-carceration can be part of an abolitionist project. New forms of detention not relegated to the four walls do not necessarily represent a liberation, or a more acceptable form of freedom than others. For those who have read my project so far, to do without prison, is not only to destroy the molar power, the most visible, but to destroy the wider system of relations with society that composes it. In the end of the prison as a simple building there is nothing utopian. It can safely take place within the neoliberal system in which we live, from the moment the prison industrial complex becomes less convenient than some other new form of exploitation of the detained body.

In this chapter I have limited myself to present my positionality in relation to what has already been written and to my own experience. In the last sub-section I have presented my position in relation to abolitionism. I did not intend to present recipes that were directly exportable, but a series of connections and concepts that can be used in a rhizomatic way, both for prison and for other carceral forms in which it is possible to see prison logic. For this research, the study of the letters becomes a journey of discovery of the existing forms of resistance, of the evidence provided by those oppressed by the prison system, who opposed it and whose defeat has involved their elimination, if not physical, historical. An elimination from the history of prisons, according to the rule for which historical memory is written by the winners. What will follow will therefore be the result of the mixture of theory and practise, of academic knowledge, personal experience and prison letters. The points of contact in this triangulation will define the contribution of the research.

PART TWO

3. CARCERAL GOVERNMENTALITY: SPATIAL AND DISCURSIVE PRACTISES ACROSS OLGA'S LETTERS.

Introduction

“During these almost 3 years of prison I have found myself catapulted into a situation of the prison population that is quite complicated, where most of them are not afraid of ending up in jail, but once they are in here they become like lambs. Their main goal is to not give their imprisonment to the State, therefore they swallow toads that outside they would not even dream of, humiliations and warnings from the security apparatus, because they do not want to receive disciplinary sanctions and thus lose those days of early release [...]. All this feeds, to a large extent, the disunity present among the prisoners, and the guards are well aware of this [...].”⁷²

I began this chapter with a sketch of a letter that, in a few lines, introduces many of the topics that will be discussed in the following pages. This experience contains most of the questions posed in the previous chapter: the increasing difficulty of being in prison, where self-interest is preferable, and where the margins of resistance are those of preferring “*not give their imprisonment to the State*” or to stay as little time as possible in prison, even if it means swallowing “*toads*”. Prisoners are more often choosing re-educational paths to either avoid doing extra years because of their conduct, or serve fewer years in prison through early release, although the individual price of this choice weighs on the collective condition of the prisoners. Between the inmate's relative personal advantage, and what at first glance appears to be an absolute advantage of the prison in being able to create a prison order that comes to sustain itself, the “*prisoners engaged in struggle*” who emerge in OLGA's letters find themselves increasingly under threat.

This chapter presents an analysis of prison governmentality based on the letters published in the booklets. From the experiences of those who wrote to OLGA, and supported by the partiality imposed by the letter as a medium, I have chosen to report elements that I believe are fundamental to describing

⁷² Booklet 144, October 2020, “Sardinia no est italia” (Sardinia is not Italy), “Lettera dal carcere di Uta” Paolo: “*durante questi quasi 3 anni di carcere mi sono trovato catapultato in una situazione della componente prigioniera abbastanza complicata, dove i più non hanno paura di finire in galera, ma una volta che sono qua dentro diventano degli agnelli, il/ la loro principale consegna e quella di non regalare la galera allo stato, pertanto inghiottono rospi, che fuori non si sognerebbero neanche di pensare, umiliazioni e direttive della componente securitaria, perché non vogliono prendere rapporti disciplinari, e quindi perdere quei giorni di liberazione anticipata (30 giorni ogni anno di carcere scontato), tutto questo alimenta per buona parte la disunione presente fra i prigionieri, e di questo ne sono ben consapevoli i secondini che alimentano con misure diverse di comportamento gli atteggiamenti nei confronti di noi prigionieri.*”

the clash, their navigating or letting themselves be led into the prison governmentality. These experiences will be presented together with the author's personal analysis, which includes the guide for reflection described in the previous chapter, that is, a collective understanding of the experiences of those who, in different ways, have contributed to the work of the OLGa collective. The analysis is not limited to understanding only the productive capacity of the prison, in other words, the strategies that combine technologies and knowledge available to prison administrators. It also aims at comprehending the reproductive capacity, the ability to induce the prisoner body to contribute at various levels to the maintenance of order.

On a global scale, it should be noted that, according to the authors of two important comparative texts on penal systems (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006; Weiss and South, 1998), there is a trend towards managerialism in criminal justice. As pointed out by Simon and Feeley (1996), who were the first to speak of this “new penology”, the main characteristic of this technocratic managerial style is a progressive abandonment of the diagnostic, rehabilitative approach, which places the lens of observation on the individual. Instead, there is a preference for the control of aggregate categories of individuals, and the use of new and old technologies to facilitate the prison order. In Cavadino and Dignan's comparison, the nations that come closest to this governmental style are also the ones with the highest number of inmates. Again, in accordance with the latter, this governmentality has not actually supplanted modern and pre-modern forms of detention. Indeed, it coexists with “traditional” strategies that are more punitive, and approaches more related to rehabilitation. Moreover, these processes have been interpreted differently in different countries.

The Italian prison system is a hybrid of different managerial approaches. The state that is most similar is France, according to Cavadino and Dignan (2006). Both have an “idealtypical” form of conservative corporatism of a Catholic stamp. This implies that the church institution organises different aspects of social reproduction and corporatism, and “relies heavily upon the traditional institution of the family, including expecting the family to discharge some of the welfare functions that might otherwise be undertaken by the state itself” (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006, p. 18). These aspects influence the penology, such as the importance of rehabilitation, as well as the weight of welfarism and the family context of the offender. In fact, it should be noted that for many years the entirety of the treatment process was managed by the church (De Vito, 2009). Since the middle of the last century, the Italian prison has therefore been characterised by the reliance on a humanitarian approach when pursuing the

main objectives of rehabilitation of the prisoners in the individualised treatment model. A more justicialist period followed the 70s, which reversed the previous model in exchange for a model of “just deserts”, closer to a “just punishment”. At the same time, there was another strong trend in favour of a “restorative justice”, a strong reformism in clear opposition to the latter. Italy has never had an international or European record number of prisoners. What distinguishes it from other European or North American states is the different weight given to the concept of retributive punishment, where each crime is given a commutation in predefined prison time. In fact in Italy, the treatment approach has always been predominant. As stated in the Italian Constitution, the punishment must “tend to the re-education of the convicted person”⁷³. The result has been penal bifurcation, “with penalties for some offenders getting harsher (with the increase in longer sentences) but those for others becoming more lenient (with non-custodial measures replacing prison in some cases)” (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006, p. 144). In the 1990s, sentences lengthened on average, and these traditions were confronted with the international trends of managerialism described above. Pavarini argues that the shift towards longer sentences is linked to a compensation by judges towards the wide diffusion of new measures that allow a greater possibility of early release (Pavarini, 2001, p. 406-409). Discourses of new penology combined with national legacy have triggered a process “of flexibility and indeterminacy” (Ruggiero, 1998, p. 211): “It is the country where imprisonment does not rest on retributivist but on consequentialist ideals. In other words, punishment in Italy is allegedly justified by its contingent, instrumental contribution to the resocialization of the offender” (*ibidem*). What I want to emphasise in this chapter is the trend that has affected the prison since the 70s and is confirmed by the letters from the prison, namely, the process of differentiation of the prison population. A process that unites the history of Italian prisons, between individualised treatment and managerialism, between punishments and rewards, and between different categories of prisoners who find themselves increasingly isolated.

These processes of differentiation make it difficult to construct unitary analysis. I have chosen to focus on the experiences described in the letters of the individual prisoners. These experiences will allow us/me to describe the governmental style of the Italian prison towards a particular category of prisoners. Rather than focusing on the negative function, i.e. the function of exclusion, the idea of prison as a social vacuum cleaner of marginal groups, I try to capture the positive function. On the one hand, I describe the role of the prison within the penal system and society, that is, the relationship

⁷³ Italian Constitution, art. 27, “Le pene non possono consistere in trattamenti contrari al senso di umanità e devono tendere alla rieducazione del condannato”, my translation. Link: <https://www.senato.it/istituzione/la-costituzione/parte-i/titolo-i/articolo-27>.

between the materialisation of its detention regimes and the discourses that produce them. On the other, I highlight what purpose the prison seeks in the incarcerated body, what is produced by governmental strategies. In other words, the backbone of the research revolves around two issues: firstly, the study of the “economics” of punishing and controlling; and, secondly, the differentiation of prisons and between prisons. Punitive regimes such as 41 bis, 14 bis and other less punitive regimes, such as “model-section”, are integrated. Another trend is related to the weakening of solidarity and cohesion among struggling prisoners in favour of a marked individualisation. This process is linked to the reproductive aspect of power that has been mentioned above. Central, from this point of view, is the attempt to describe how the new managerial prison culture tries to get rid of the old habits of the prison. It is a clash between global and national processes on a local scale, where in each prison the centuries-old organisation, which in the letters emerges as the “prison of the past”, is being eroded.

The representation and the materialisation of regimes are two mutually sustaining processes. In this sense, spatial and discursive practises have produced a transformation of prison culture. In order not to appear functionalist, I would like to specify that by the concept of governmentality I do not mean only the art of governing that concerns the “powerful”, but the power relationships between the various subjects that exist in prison space. Instead, with spatial and discursive practises, as specified above, I refer to the production and reproduction of power.

The second part of the research is therefore structured in two chapters. The first chapter concerns the bifurcation described above, hence the harsher and softer detention regimes. I describe the “enemy penology” (Jakobs, 2008) and the representation of delinquency as an inexhaustible source for prison legitimacy. I focus on how discourses acquire a spatial dimension through the transposition of enemy penology into the harshest detention regimes. I then consider the logics of rehabilitation in relation to “being available to management” and, more generally, the “reward mechanism.” I will then describe how these logics take spatial form as described in the letters that were sent from more treatment-oriented detention regimes.

Finally, in the second chapter I will present some trends that characterise changes in the prison. This last part presents those processes that are common in all regimes, but that can be better understood after describing the peculiarities of the individual, differentiated ones. I will then describe the strategies of differentiation, and how struggling prisoners, immersed in this system of power that leaves very little room for resistance, live their prison condition. I will discuss the old technologies that are used to maintain detention order even today, such as the use of solitary confinement, transfer, and

ensorship, and new technologies, such as video conferencing and its implications in the criminal justice field.

Those just mentioned are issues largely addressed in OLGa's published letters that were selected by the author for the significance of their content. I will illustrate the transformations that have characterised the prison in recent years from the viewpoint of the writers themselves. However, some of these processes are more far reaching and come precisely from that prison "of the past", that historical memory to which the prisoners in the letters often refer.

THE PRISON "OF THE PAST"

The prison of the past described by OLGa's letters dates back to the decades 60s-70s, years of great struggles and social changes within and outwith prisons. The reference to those years is useful to understand in a dialectical way both how prisoners resisted and escaped the prison power, and how the prison power designed its own strategies on the basis of what eluded it. In this section, I argue that the differentiation of the 1970s is a key rationale for understanding today's prison.

First, prison logics and their materialisation were not limited to the management of only one specific type of prisoner and did not end in those years, but have been cascaded onto the rest of the population in differentiated ways. Within the walls, this trend led to an expansion of differential treatment, both at the top in the most punitive regimes, where internal security is the first commandment and prisoner neutralisation may be desirable, and at the bottom, through the control and selection of medium and low security inmates to be re-educated and redeemed or excluded. Since the 1970s, starting from the U.S. and then in several western countries the myth of rehabilitation was moving towards its end, in exchange for a "new correctionalism", "just deserts" ideas and the development of a pure retributive system. More punitive methods, special sections and new measures of incapacitation were extended. On the contrary, during the same years in Italy major reforms of the penal code were put in place that led to the revalorisation of treatment. In parallel to these processes there was also the difficult introduction, delayed by about ten years, of more retributivist and justicialist international trends. An evident result of those years was the differential treatment (Ruggiero, 1998, p. 211). At the same time, indefinite detention measures in punitive regimes on the level of the American supermaxes existed side by side with the improvement of internal conditions relegated to the treatment ideology. The hybrid character of this system has gradually adapted with the most recent modifications of the new penology (Simon and Feeley, 1992).

The prison of the 70's was characterised by a solidarity that found a wide range of expression through the platforms of claims of various groups of prisoners who followed one another, as the Prison Commission of Lotta Continua and then the NAP (Armed Proletarian Nuclei). These groups put together experiences of political militancy and of the “extra-legal” proletariat⁷⁴ in relation to the condition of violence and social marginalisation that was experienced inside and outside the prison. Since those years, the phrase “all prisoners are political prisoners” has had numerous echoes. There was a distance between the guards and the prisoner population, and the latter was more united and more willing to act in solidarity (Mau, 2020, p. 48). Support from outside was also crucial: it must be considered that, since the 70s, for more than a decade there were up to 200 groups that identified themselves in the armed struggle, with thousands of friends, relatives and solidarity nets attached to these groups, creating an external force, a relevant political, economic, emotional support (Curcio, 1993). From this point of view, prison could be seen as the continuation of militancy, rather than a capture, a detention, or a limitation of political activity.

The first effective differentiation between prisoners took place in 1977 through the creation of the maximum security circuit, designed initially for militants of armed political organisations, a thousand prisoners who were to become 3500 in just a few years (De Vito, 2009, p. XIV). From difference came homogeneity, and therefore, once the security sections were built, “homogeneous areas” were organised for those who, despite not having cooperated with the judicial authorities, had distanced themselves from and condemned the political organisations to which they belonged (*ibidem*). Before those years, the differentiation was only in its infancy: “*before that, differentiation hardly existed, at most the detainees were seen in two different ways, which could be “peaceful” or “rebellious”*”.⁷⁵ Until 1977 the more rebellious, where possible, were scattered among North and South, into “little prisons” or into the cells of

⁷⁴ In those years in Italian prisons there were a series of struggles involving revolutionary prisoners in concert with the “extra-legal proletariat”. The latter represented that part of the metropolitan proletariat that belonged to the small organised criminality which in the 1970s and 1980s coordinated with the political prisoners in a single committee of struggle, abandoning their exclusive organisation by “batteries”. Exemplary from this point of view can be the uprising in the Trani prison in 1980 in which a programme shared by all the prisoners in the special sections of “liberation and war on differentiation” (Liberazione e guerra alla differenziazione) was born. The prison was in fact organised by maintaining a strict division between “common” and “political” prisoners confined on different floors and where internal sociality was studied in order to preserve the prison order. Taken from “Comitato di Lotta dei prigionieri del campo di Trani” of February 1981. Link: <https://contromaelstrom.com/2011/06/19/diario-politico-della-battaglia-del-carcere-speciale-di-trani/>.

⁷⁵ Booklet 127, August 2017, “Lettera dal carcere di Massama (Oristano)”, Mario, AS1: “*La differenziazione prima quasi non esisteva, al massimo i detenuti erano visti in due modi differenti, che potevano essere “pacifici” o “ribelli”.*”

the “new arrivals”⁷⁶ (Mau, 2020 p. 44). As a result of various riots and escapes, the first “special prisons” appeared in those years. The social conflict reached its peak and, just as in the streets, the need for security in prisons also became paramount. From the outset of the struggles for the reform of the codes started in the 70s and partially recognised through what will be probably the most important reform of the penitentiary order in 1975, two years after its approval, the margins for an improvement of the detention conditions were already shrinking (De Vito, 2009). Art. 90 was to pave the way for the differentiation between politicised prisoners and proletarian extra-legal prisoners, who were also combative but not organised, with no relations with the outside world and therefore destined to be increasingly controlled (Mau, 2020, p. 84). The real qualitative leap in differentiation came with the application, in 1992 after the killing of judges Falcone and Borsellino, of the special surveillance regime under Art. 41-bis of the Prison Code to a wide range of offences related to organised crime, which replaced the previous Art. 90, which allowed the temporary suspension of the rules of ordinary treatment.

What broke this solidarity was not only the physical separation between prisoners, but also the substantial breach among prisoners caused by the use of collaborators of justice and dissociated ex-members. There have always been collaborators in history, but in this very moment a mechanism was constructed which favoured denunciation and distancing, rewarded it, and protected those who collaborated with the prison. We entered a field in which what had previously been a practise to be kept secret, not least because of the repercussions that it might have entailed, became a fundamental logic and assumed an institutional value. Thus, a repertoire of techniques was prepared to oppose and weaken the combatants of the various organisations. Repentance was a very effective attack on the combatant organisations, but dissociation opened the doors even more to a more effective for an ever more effective differentiation of the prison circuits on the basis of a mechanism of rewards and punishments⁷⁷.

The phenomena of dissociation and of acknowledgement of the first repentance from the armed struggle, as described by De Vito (2009), played an important role in favouring the conditions for the arrival of the “Gozzini Law”, which, in 1986, formalised the double circuit of the special institutes of maximum security: to conditions of internal and external isolation, discipline and security, were opposed, for deserving prisoners, the concession of alternative measures to prison, benefits and better

⁷⁶ “New arrivals” (“Nuovi giunti”) is the temporary regime in which newly arrested prisoners or prisoners from other prisons are kept, before the next disposition of the management.

⁷⁷ cfr. “La pentola e i coperchi”, una raccolta di materiali raccolti nell’“Archivio Primo Moroni”.

treatment. Mario Gozzini himself argued that “the phenomenon of dissociation was as exceptional in Italy as the terrorist phenomenon was: “this was the only country where former promoters of a revolutionary attempt promoted a deflationary policy of the same”⁷⁸ (Galfré, 2014). From the 1990s onwards, this process would expand further for members of mafia-type associations; as an example, the already mentioned Art. 41 bis is part of this law.

To summarise, it was the institution of a mechanism that favoured collaboration and dissociation that gave a *coup de grace* to organisations like the Red Brigades and that, a few years later, characterised the new regimes of 41 bis and the penalty of life imprisonment (life without parole), as the letters in the following pages will testify. Collaboration and dissociation open up and tie together several themes that I will address in this chapter. The first is the relationship between the state and the enemy, and how the state uses the enemy, when it can, to its advantage. The first law on collaboration was called the “Peci” law, from the name of the first repentant from the Turin column of the Red Brigades, as if to praise those who, defeated, passed onto the side of the law. Another aspect concerns the process that triggered the dissociation, the desolidarisation between prisoners, the real border almost more material than walls. It was precisely political prisoners who defined “desolidarisation” as the harmful effects of those different forms of collaboration that not only jeopardised the integrity of clandestine organisations, but also created a climate of suspicion among everyone in prison (De Vito, 2009, p. 105). Now desolidarisation does not only affect prisoners in struggle, but is a generalised trend. In the aforementioned book and in letters written to OLGa, Mau notes that, upon his return to San Vittore and then to Cuneo, everything he found in the prison of the past has been substantially wiped out, due to the destruction of class consciousness carried out by the State and by the information technologies (Mau, 2020, p. 43). Guagliardo, too, recognises that, although in solidarity practise many people used to escape that informal regulation between prisoners, today it has become very difficult “to escape that institutionalised hierarchy of rewards” (Guagliardo, 1997, p. 23). Finally, as I will address in the second part, the logic of collaboration has influenced the reconfiguration of re-education. In other words, this system of institutional values has been well inserted in a rewarding key, giving the prison today a new degree of complexity. Reward logic means that to make oneself available to the prison proves good conduct. Individualised paths are thus created to the detriment of solidarity between prisoners, which is now only the memory of a past history.

⁷⁸ My translation: “*il fenomeno della dissociazione è stato eccezionale in Italia come lo è stato il fenomeno terroristico: è stato questo l'unico Paese dove ex promotori di un tentativo rivoluzionario hanno promosso una politica deflattiva dello stesso*”.

TODAY'S PRISON

According to Feeley and Simon (1992), correctional strategies do not focus so much on the search for responsibility, guilt, and morality in order to prepare a targeted intervention to diagnose and treat the offender. Rather, they focus on techniques for identifying, classifying, and controlling groups of people defined as dangerous. This focus is managerial, targeting the prison population, rather than transformative and aimed at the individual. In other words, it seems oriented to regulate crime levels rather than intervening on the individual deviant or “social malformation” (Cohen, 1985; Garland and Young, 1983; Messinger, 1969; Messinger and Berecochea, 1990; Reichman, 1986; Wilkins, 1973). Indicators are therefore used, projections are prepared, and aggregate classifications are sought with the aim of surveillance, confinement, and control (Gordon, 1991). This epistemology of criminology materialises also in Italy, declining these tendencies within the prison differentiation.

Another national peculiarity necessary to understand prison differentiation and, in particular, the extension of increasingly punitive measures towards associative crimes is what Ruggiero has called “shifting powers” (Ruggiero, 1998, p. 213). According to the criminologist, “prison administration has interfered over the judiciary power to the supervision of prison regime, prison takes all the decisions regarding the treatment, resocialisation. It's an executive power which takes part on the judicial” (*ibidem*). This issue has always been raised in the letters. The prisoners wrote to OLGa that the D.A.P. (department of penitentiary administration), composed of about one hundred public prosecutors coming from the *Direzioni Distrettuali Antimafia* (District-level Anti-Mafia Directorates), has “*procuratizzato*” (transform in prosecutor office) the Ministry of Justice. Finally, Marta Cartabia, the current Italian Ministry of Justice, who comes from an important career within the Italian constitutional court, declared that the leaders of the department of prison administration (D.A.P) shouldn't be ex-magistrates of the anti-mafia⁷⁹.

The OLGa letters testify to these ongoing processes through the analytical contributions written by the prisoners in response to the booklet's editors. Even according to these testimonies the governmentality of the prison had become more and more managerial, however that individualised aspect of the treatment was not supplanted but rather integrated in a broader logic. The Italian regimes are divided into 41 bis, maximum security 1, 2 and 3, medium and low security. There are also other

⁷⁹ This statement was reported in few national newspapers. Nonetheless, the director and the vice director are still in charge. <https://www.ilriformista.it/dino-petralia-e-roberto-tartaglia-devono-dimettersi-alla-guida-del-dap-basta-ex-pm-233271/>.

regimes designed to separate certain prisoners or certain categories of prisoners, such as ex-policemen, collaborators of justice, sex-offenders, and trans persons. There are also some forms of solitary confinement, where prisoners are isolated from their regime for security reasons, such as 14-bis, and ex-art. 32 of the Penal Code.⁸⁰ For this research, I distinguish two different categories of detainees, although not entirely representative of the national detention reality: the enemy, who is detained in the 41 bis, AS1 and AS2 sections. The medium and low security regime, instead, is the regime of the “ordinary” offender. I will not be able to go into the other regimes in depth for lack of sufficient material. I therefore only consider the more polarised regimes, the more punitive ones (even if the condition of some isolation regimes could be even harsher) and the treatment-oriented regime. In these regimes, the enemy is separated into a homogeneous category, while the offender into correctable or incorrigible categories. Detention regimes thus appear to be a technocratic arrangement aimed at isolating the chaos of marginality into homogeneous categories. There is also a series of indicators to be monitored to limit exposure to risk. In this distinction, there are nuances between the different detention regimes and pressures that widen or narrow the boundaries of these regimes and give them shape and content. In fact, this is the field in which prison governmentality operates. Formal separations have in turn other separations of a more informal nature, not institutionalised but which could, one day, be implemented. To give an example, in 2018 the prison of Lucca, following a fight between two groups of inmates, one composed of Albanians, Sinti and Italians, and the other of Tunisians and Moroccans, decided to prohibit the meeting between these two self-selected groups. Thus the section was divided: the walk, the showers, and therefore all the sociality spaces were experienced one group at a time. This is just one example of the choices that individual prisons make temporarily, however, many of these choices are substantiated by becoming informal or formal rule. Moreover, as mentioned in chapter one, governmentality is not a machine that follows a single direction, but is the result of forces that have different scales: international directives, such as the management of terrorism, European directives, national laws, administrative and prison regulations.

Another issue I want to underline is how the presence, material and symbolic, of more afflictive regimes influences all the other regimes. I will try to understand the role of art. 41 bis, which can be

⁸⁰ Art. 32 O.p (penitentiary rules), "Assegnazione e raggruppamento per motivi cautelari (Assignment and grouping for precautionary reasons). This article is directed to prisoners whose behaviour requires special precautions, including for the protection of fellow prisoners from possible aggression or oppression. Upon the occurrence of this condition, they are assigned to specific prisons or wings where it is easier to adopt such precautions.

compared to that of the American supermax prisons, in relation to prison and other regimes. According to Bruno, “*any increase in isolation and differentiation*” worsens the general conditions of prisons.⁸¹ Where there is a prison with greater security requirements, there are more restrictive conditions even in the other regimes. This supports the theory that, as long as there is greater punishment for some, all other prisoners will suffer too. This rule also applies from a spatial point of view. That is, that the physical proximity to a regime such as 41 bis determines a significant change in the entire prison (Guagliardo, 2012, p. 55). At the centre is the substantial criticism of prison differentiation. The more differentiation there is, the more punitive treatment is justified for those who decide to stay outside the internal order. This also concerns the role of more rewarding regimes in relation to the prison system, i.e. differentiation as a logic that legitimises ever better and ever worse conditions, giving the penal system the possibility of expanding the boundaries of its field of intervention. Letters from different prisons testify that, within the medium and low security regimes, there exists a double standard: on the one hand, the regimes with model-section with more work possibilities, better detention conditions, more freedom of movement; on the other hand, structurally deficient regimes, often with closed cells throughout the day, for those who cannot be rehabilitated⁸². This is, in fact, a differentiation whose implications will be addressed in the discussion between editors and prisoners about rewarding.

In the course of the chapter, I initially distinguish and describe the different regimes and their peculiarities, and then I link them within a general and integrated logic. Through the study of the relationship between discursive and spatial practises, it emerges how governmentality became sophisticated in the years described by the letters. The enemy and the delinquent are treated differently, but they are not part of two separate discourses since the logics applicable to one or to the other can be interchangeable. For example, although authors such as Wacquant (2003) argue that the prison is nothing more than a “vacuum cleaner” and imprisonment is more like storage in a warehouse of abandoned marginal subjects, I think that there is still room to study how “correction” or “re-education” is conceived for both the enemy and the offender. When considering the paradigm of prison treatment, one speaks of the correction of the correctable. However, the other side of the coin is the one suggested by Franz von Liszt (1905, p. 173), namely the “incapacitation of the incorrigible”. For the latter, the offender is to be incapacitated precisely for the sake of defending the society that is considered correct or normal

⁸¹ Booklet 35, May 2009, “Lettera dal carcere di Opera”, Bruno: “*ogni aumento dell’isolamento e della differenziazione*”.

⁸² Booklet 81, June 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Terni” Mauro, EIV.

(Foucault, 1997a). Prison differentiates the rehabilitated from the incorrigible, normalising the former and excluding the latter. Prison has taken on a crucial function not only in terms of the simple exclusion of the criminal from the social consortium, but also as a function of treatment and rehabilitation of the excluded. In this way, the prisoner's choice not to be rehabilitated clashes with the principles of rehabilitation. As soon as the criminal can be rehabilitated, the incorrigible person becomes more and more dangerous to society, and it is therefore increasingly legitimate to take different measures against them. The offender and the enemy can therefore be punished on the basis of their conduct, but the incapacitation of the enemy takes on specific features that are not provided for the offender. Garland (1996) describes a bifurcation between the criminology of everyday life, which focuses on the ordinary problems of the public space, and the criminology of the “alien other”, for which more drastic measures, supported by a populist demand for punishment or detention, are necessary (p. 462). The “alien other” is the criminal who lives on the margins of society, poor, isolated and often a foreigner. I am also going to describe another idea of criminology, which is related to the Enemy Penology and which, in its developments, includes the concept of alien other but goes well beyond it (Jakobs, 2008). The “alien other” in many cases is forgotten by State institution, a treatment, that of abandonment, which seems to characterise ordinary detention in general because of structural deficiencies and a lack of political interest in substantial interventions to remedy them. Instead the “enemy” is captured, created, and used. The discourse around the enemy includes several efforts in terms of discourse and spatialisations.

3.1 Penology, discourse and regimes for the enemy

In 1985, Jakobs (2008) proposed the “enemy penology”, a theory that digs a furrow between the law of the citizen and the law of the enemy. In the former, the offender has to deal with the penal system and therefore an ordinary detention, with the possibility of treatment approach for his correction. In the latter, the correction is no longer an objective to be pursued: the security of society must be guaranteed, therefore incapacitation and coercion to de-personalise the offender may become necessary (Jakob, 2008, p. 416). The biopolitical discourse summed up by the phrase “let live and let die” is in its extreme cases approaching the enemy (Foucault, 1997a). In other words, let the citizens live and let die, isolated and forgotten, all those marginal subjects or subjects not referable to an idea of normality. Subjects whose death, in some cases, is considered admissible, and whose detention is desirable. Thus,

the enemy loses his status as an individual in society, but only as a temporary measure, until the perpetrators show themselves fit for society again; from that point, they can be subjected to ordinary laws. More precisely, it is not about “specific perpetrators” to be combated (Jakob, 2008, p. 419), but the criminal phenomenon. Furthermore, “combating” crime does not include a re-educational approach, but “harsh punishments” and “coercion” (*ibidem*). The developments of Jakobs' theory have taken different directions. Among the most appreciated critiques of Jakobs is that of Krasmann (2007), who emphasises the revival of sovereign power by the state in the name of population management. Her interest is in the cross-over of this theory into international criminal law and security policies, where a rearrangement of the relationship between law and state violence has taken place. She traces these trends in Germany, that have become more acute since the terrorist attacks of 2001. However, these processes come at least from the 1970s, where security has increasingly become a “state duty” in response to first “political terrorism”, then to “drug-related and organised crime”, and finally to the new “state of security” in the wake of the Schengen agreement (Krasmann, 2007, p. 302). The criminalisation of foreigners in European prisons has also been described by Wacquant (1999), who exhumed from Christie the definition of the enemy as a “suitable enemy” (1986b). The criminal law of the enemy has been explored in particular in the debate on criminal law, in Spain by Cancio Meliá (2011) and in Italy by Padovani (2015) and, from a criminological/sociological perspective, by Kalica (2017). It presents itself differently in the US and in Europe, as we are dealing with very different criminal and legal systems, and the criminal law of the enemy, as described, is only debated in the old continent. As far as my research is concerned, I will outline discursive and spatial dispositifs of the penal system envisaged for the enemy offender of crimes of association against the state (including terrorism) through the contributions of the letters. This type of analysis does not want to go into the procedural truths, although there is various material on the subject. Rather, I am interested in the conditioning, the discursive weapons at disposal to create the fight against crime, and the elements to deconstruct it. In drawing a connection between the materiality of differentiated regimes and the discursive use of criminality, I believe that the concept of the enemy *tout court* is a useful notion to understand prison governmentality. The relationship between the Italian penal system and the construction of the enemy can be understood in the regimes of 41 bis and maximum-security 1 and 2. Several letters were sent from these regimes, especially from AS1 and AS2. The number of letters from 41 bis is reduced because of the censorship to which those imprisoned there are subjected. These regimes were born out of the need for that new model of dealing with groups deemed dangerous to society, for which there was an

increasing reliance on forms of incarceration that took the ideas of custody and surveillance to extremes (Simon and Feeley, 1992, p. 449). They are the result of the materialisation of both physical, i.e. the spaces designated for “enemies”, and symbolic values, i.e. the historical moments when prosecutors announce a struggle against a criminal phenomenon (Christie, 1986a).

The enemy penology arises on the basis of the construction of typologies of perpetrators, and is thus investigated in relation to the group to which they belong. In continuity with the spirit of the new penology described by Simon and Feeley (1992), the strength of the threat of this enemy is that it is not an individual, marginal and so easily excludible from society, but an association, a group of people whose very presence, beyond the crimes ascribed to them, becomes a potential risk factor.

This aspect has several implications: when the existence of an association is established, then a whole series of conducts “acquire criminal relevance” and “are relevant to the organisation” (Kalika, 2019, p. 129). Emblematic was the detention of Mek's co-defendant, a supposed member of the alleged association, who was in custody for graffitiing walls. The same was true for Stefania, who was in prison awaiting trial and later acquitted. In that case, the prosecution had identified the anarchist space “Fuori Luogo” as the organisational headquarters of an alleged association that had committed a series of illegal activities. Moreover, some of the alleged offences had already been prosecuted or at least their procedures had already been initiated. All these offences were reused to build a list of illegalities in an associative guise⁸³.

The concept of association is not only a concept that can be used for investigation purposes because of its elasticity, but it is almost creative, since the definition of association in turn unfolds the search for elements to confirm it. As described by Juan, the prosecution had tried to attach anonymous practises to broader claims. This is evidenced by the ongoing trials against him, where, according to the investigation, the claims of some anonymous attacks committed are linked to an interview given to an anarchist newspaper by a supposed chief promoter. The latter, in the interview in question, allegedly dictated guidelines from above even though, in fact, the initiative appeared to be anonymous and carried out by a single person. This presents an attempt to superimpose association onto individual action, within an interconnected and hierarchically organised anarchist galaxy that do not need to be recognised by the offenders themselves⁸⁴. A certain affinity between the criminal law of the enemy and

⁸³ Booklet 56, March-April 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Bologna”, Stefi and Anna.

⁸⁴ Booklet 138, September 2019, “Lettera dal carcere di Terni”, Juan, AS2.

Italian criminal law for criminal associations (art. 270⁸⁵) in relation to the construction of types of perpetrators must be stressed. This affinity is recognised not only from a theoretical point of view, but at a legislative level. Both the European and the Italian definition of terrorism, the latter presented in Article 270 *sexies* of the penal code, focus on conduct with the purpose of terrorism and not on the definition of its offences. It is therefore an extremely broad concept (Padovani, 2014). It concerns any conduct that is typical within a phenomenon deemed to be terrorist: “it can be identified purely and simply in the aim of destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic and social structures of a country, these aims being intrinsically subversive and in themselves assimilable within the framework of terrorism” (*ibidem*).

A further related question consists in the “preventive” character capable of integrating emergencies into normal law (Jakobs, 2008, p. 421). The imperative of social security, in fact, surreptitiously justifies a violent approach to action (Krasmann, 2007, p. 302). In fact, preventive detention is established for all cases that fall under Article 270. From this point of view, the criminal law of the enemy meets the need to make the law capable of “orienting, also recognising exceptions from integration, and preventive detention, harsh punishment for the formation of a terrorist organisation, wiretapping, undercover investigations, etc. testify to such exceptions” (Jakob, 2008, p. 424). At the basis of this theory is the observation of the lack of agile instruments in criminal law to intervene rapidly and to prevent threats. In the case of some arrests of presumed members of presumed anarchist associations, at the trial stage reference is made to solidarity practises towards the prisoners, such as exchanges of correspondence and external initiatives in their support, which are instead considered as occasions for establish links with criminal relevance⁸⁶. Other prisoners tell of a varied toolkit consisting of surveillance, monitoring of their social network activities, searching of physical objects, examination of files on computers or personal hard drives⁸⁷. In the case of Jarmoune, accused of training on Facebook in the use of weapons and explosives, a hard disk containing “photos, videos, articles and military books, downloaded from the Internet” was brought as evidence in court. He continues: “*the wires of the car radio in the glove box of my car and two analogue clocks of the Renault are passed off [...] as preparations for a car bomb*”;

⁸⁵ Art. 270 of the Penal Code punishes “anyone in the territory of the State who promotes, sets up, organises or directs associations aimed at violently subverting the economic or social systems economic or social systems constituted in a State, or to violently suppress violently suppress the political and legal order of the State” and also punishes anyone who participates in them. See Padovani, 2014 in the reference list.

⁸⁶ Booklet 138, September 2019, “Lettera dal carcere di Bancali (Sassari)”, Robert, AS2.

⁸⁷ Booklet 103, May 2015, “Lettera dal carcere di Rossano, Jarmoune, AS2.

“a 60 cm handmade sword for decorative use that does not cut is being passed off as a weapon [...]”.⁸⁸ In another case, a Tunisian refugee was targeted for his “physical”, “telephone”, occasional or “very frequent” contacts, interventions in the mosque, money exchanged, houses visited, plane tickets. About this collection of data and following a trial for “*subversive association for the purpose of international terrorism*” and “*falsification of documents*”, the colonel of the Carabinieri told the public prosecutor that while in that case there was nothing “*criminally relevant*”, it was still “*relevant from a preventive-investigative point of view*”.⁸⁹

The accusation of this type of association justifies measures of incapacitation within the prison. Thus, in the case of anarchists, for example, correspondence with other persons that belong to that galaxy without necessarily being part of the alleged organisation becomes problematic. In prison, day-time solitary confinement and formal or informal censorship measures may be provided for the prisoner. Several wrote that even correspondence with family members and lawyers is hindered. Moreover, as Jarmoune again described the choice of not showing acquiescence during detention testified of dangerousness, and thus justified further deprivation:

*“I wanted to show that I was proud of my identity, but the tougher I acted, the longer my solitary confinement got, I always said I was fine and made no requests, no queries, no complaints, I was in my cell 23 hours a day [...], I had become a zombie, I had lost my lucidity and I was crawling on the ground”.*⁹⁰

The criminal justice system not only looks for evidence of the crimes committed, but also tries to reconstruct the enemy's way of thinking, acting and being. Italian law has developed the concept of “dangerousness”⁹¹, from which society must be defended. This category is very broad and variable, it is an “underdefined category in order to select offenders and, at the same time, to hide its own inconsistency” (Ruggiero, 1998, p. 214). In the absence of precise indications on what content is deemed dangerous, any sentence can appear “dangerous”. Those who monitor the conduct of “social dangers”

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*: “i fili dell'autoradio presenti nel cassetto della mia automobile e due orologi analogici della Renault vengono fatti passare dal nuovo pm come preparativi per un'autobomba quando gli stessi artificieri escludevano completamente manomissioni o presenze di esplosivo. Inoltre una spada artigianale di 60 cm ad uso decorativo che non taglia viene fatta passare come arma [...]”

⁸⁹ This contribution published in the booklet is the result of the re-elaboration of testimonies from trials involving several people accused of being “Islamic terrorists”. Booklet 41, November 2009, “*cronaca di un processo per “terrorismo islamico”*”: “*associazione sovversiva con finalità di terrorismo internazionale*” e *falsificazione di documenti*”. “*A tutta questa raccolta di dati che cosa è emerso in tanti anni di indagini? niente di “penalmente rilevante”; “come dice il 1 colonnello stesso che si affretta ad aggiungere assieme al pm “però rilevante da un punto di vista preventivo-investigativo”.*”

⁹⁰ See note 87: “*volevo dimostrare che ero fiero della mia identità, ma più mi comportavo da duro più allungavo il mio isolamento, dicevo sempre di stare bene e non avanzavo né richieste né domandine né lamentele, stavo in cella 23 ore su 24 e a volte non uscivo proprio, ma in seguito sotto consiglio di uno a cambiare atteggiamento e dovetti infine privarmi per tre giorni del sonno, ero diventato uno zombie, avevo perso lucidità e camminavo strisciando i piedi a terra.*”

⁹¹ See the penal code art. 203 for Social Dangerousness definition, and art. 133 describe the circumstances in which this definition can be interpreted by the judge. <https://www.brocardi.it/codice-penale/libro-primο/titolo-viii/capo-i/sezione-i/art203.html> and <https://www.brocardi.it/codice-penale/libro-primο/titolo-v/capo-i/art133.html>. Consulted on 10 November 2021.

are thus given wide discretion in their assessment criteria. This label as social danger sticks to the individual outside prison as well, as in the case of Pietro, whose 27 years of detention were followed by three years of probation because he was still considered a dangerous subject, for who he was and what he would be:

“It is preliminary to specify that the judgement on dangerousness, intended as a possible future commission of criminal hypothesis, is based on symptomatic elements referring both to past situations (previous criminal records, criminal proceedings, prison conduct), to current information (intra-mural conduct of the person concerned), and to future prospects (information referred to the socio-familiar environment, information of the police authorities).”⁹²

In this case, dissociation is a way of getting rid of this label: unless you deny your ideology you will continue to be a danger to society. In this regard, prison functions as a tool to break this identity, as reported in the letter in which Pietro transcribes the motivations of the “*surveillance proceedings (procedimento di sorveglianza)*” on him: “*It seems, in fact, that the experience of prison has not in the least affected the motivational core that underlies the delinquent acts of the subject, in which — as we read in the reports of prison functionaries — attitudes of “non-recognition” of the institutions remain*”⁹³.

The enemy's criminal law can be deciphered in the form of “state crime by juridical othering” (Jamieson and McEvoy, 2005), to observe how the state constitutes its power and, thus, how it acts in a space of quasi-legality, at the boundaries of the law (Krasmann, 2007, p. 309). The conventional boundaries of the state's action and its laws can hence be transgressed, shifted, and even used through the quasi-legal management of the emergency, which turns it into a norm. According to Krassman (2007), this process places the question of security on a hegemonic plane that sees a flexibilisation (differentiation) of fundamental rights. It is “a motor for the transformation of the democratic constitutional state” (p. 304).

In the orders of modern states, since the Treaty of Westphalia the figure of the enemy has referred to those who come from outside and from whom society must defend itself with instruments that belong to the regulation of war. Instead, the criminal who threatens society is to be handled with the support of criminal law (Krasmann, 2007, p. 304). However, in these orders the figure of the political offender was already perceived as a threat to society and its boundaries (ibidem). If with the emergence

⁹² Booklet 14, June 2007, Lettera dal carcere di Biella”, Pietro, EIV: “È preliminare precisare che il giudizio sulla pericolosità, intesa come possibile commissione futura di ipotesi delittuose, si basa su elementi sintomatici che si riferiscono sia a situazioni passate (precedenti penali, pendenze, vicende penitenziarie), sia ad informazioni attuali (condotta intra-muraria dell'interessato), sia a prospettive future (informazioni riferite all'ambiente sociofamiliare, informazione degli organi di polizia).”

⁹³ Ibidem: “Pare infatti, che l'esperienza del carcere non abbia minimamente intaccato il nucleo motivazionale che sta alla base degli atti delinquenziali del soggetto, nel quale — come si legge nelle relazioni degli operatori penitenziari — permangono atteggiamenti di ‘non riconoscimento’ delle istituzioni”.

of the modern state the enemy, e.g. the bandit, was transformed into a criminal and therefore subjected to state law, now state law can transform the criminal into the enemy and subject him to the criminal law of the enemy. Nowadays, if one thinks also of the change of scale introduced by globalisation, all three figures, the Mafioso, the political and the religious, can potentially be treated as internal and external enemies. The rights of the enemy can be seen as a belligerent policy of the interior:

“If military strategies, traditionally, seek to exclude the enemy at the border, risk-based criminologies tend to exclude the enemy from within. Enemy penology, in contrast, opens up a kind of third space aiming at externalizing the identified problem through the invention of an additional, quasi-legal system.” (Krassmann, 2007, p. 309)

The three categories described until now, i.e., mafiosi, political and religious enemies, have differences in this respect. Judging from the history of prison differentiation, since the 1990s in Italy the Mafia seems to be the type of enemy for which the repressive prison response has been most articulated. However, from the vicissitudes reported in the letters, the one typology of enemy that is treated according to the criteria of external enemy more than the others is the “religious”. The latter in turn facilitated the use of similar measures for the other two categories. This is due to the launch in several countries of so-called security packages after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Since then, these criminal phenomena linked to the label of terrorism were not only addressed in terms of a “national issue”, but now acquired a global dimension, a “just war” against the “drug mafia”, against international terrorism and so on (Steinert, 2003). The date of 2001 did not represent a breaking point with previous years, but was, according to Lepsius with (Lepsius, 2004, p. 436), part of a continual process. In the letters, an aspect which emerges from this global design of the terrorist phenomenon is the influence it assumes during detention. World news linked to the galaxy of terrorism, in this case Islamic terrorism, have repercussions in daily life:

“After the events that happened in Tunisia [18 March 2015: assault with shooting by, it seems, an Isis group, against tourists visiting a museum in Tunis, twenty-five killed, four Italians; ed.], hate crimes and controls against us have increased considerably”. In this case, Tunisian biscuits and sweets sent by a recently released prisoner were blocked and censorship was imposed for 2 months⁹⁴.

For Jakobs (2000), preventive intervention and the measures described must be permanent, as societies will always have forms of marginality to deal with. Furthermore, the presence of incorrigible

⁹⁴ See note 87: “Dopo gli avvenimenti successi in Tunisia [18 marzo 2015: assalto con sparatoria da parte, pare, di un gruppo Isis, contro turisti in visita ad un museo di Tunisi, le persone rimaste uccise sono 25, quattro italiane; ndr] l’odio e i controlli nei nostri confronti sono aumentati notevolmente.”

criminals not only implies challenging the entire social system, normative societal integration and eventually the legitimacy of, and thus the functionality of, the legal order (1985 p. 775; 2004, p. 93). At the root there is also a problem regarding the effectiveness of the measures that are introduced: the fight against terrorism during the Sixties and Seventies demonstrates that harsher punishments for what was considered terrorist crimes did not prevent them, rather they created new followers of terrorist organisations (Meliá, 2011).

According to Krassmann (2007, p. 305), the enemy penology uses the law as a reference for its legitimation, but it also functions at the same time as an instrument of de-regulation of the law, capable of suspending it. It is not so much a question of legality, but of legitimacy through the legal dimension, an issue that has much to do with the monopoly of force. In this way, a work of de-demarcation can occur, a confusion between inside and outside: the outside is brought inside and the boundaries of what is to be managed are redrawn, creating a State whose highest expression is the conception of an internal state of war as the only possible solution. Consequently, the criminal law of the enemy is based on an unlimited concept and assumes a potentially infinite scope. Moreover: “the worst thing about antiterrorism legislation is that it gives the incorrect impression that it will exclusively apply to terrorists” (Bustos Ramírez, 2004). The strength of this theory lies in its ability to integrate a posteriori into the law. Although these theories are not applied literally, they have implications especially in relation to how the configuration of criminal law changes for certain categories and how it legitimately integrates within them. For example, the distinction between a person and a non-person presents a number of problems in relation to national constitutions. However, as argued by Pulitanò (2006), normative differentiations of the kind evoked by the idea of a “special” law for the enemy (for not necessarily total, but also partial enemies), have been found across legal systems for a long time (Pulitanò, 2006). The transnational processes of securitisation present the same rationales without the word “enemy” being used. They pursue the notion that “existential threats become an intersubjectively shared fact opening up scope for indispensable and urgent measures” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23).

Whoever holds the capacity to set up the demarcation of the zone of application of the criminal law of the citizen, and the use of the instruments of the state of exception, holds the power of control over the subjects around whom the boundaries are drawn. Constructing these boundaries means defining people and, thus, creating enemies. In this sense, the use of the criminal law of the enemy should be understood in its creative capacity, in its performative sense. The definition of the type of enemy can acquire a normative value, there is a tendency to adapt what is to what should be, which in turn

quickly leads to the self-legitimation of practises identifiable as criminal law of the enemy that, in themselves, are illegitimate (Ferrajoli, 2006).

When we return to thinking about the legitimacy of the criminal law of the enemy, we need to look beyond the legal-criminological discourse. In fact, behind the perception of risks there are social constructions, there is a process that works on common sense (Dal Lago, 1998): “*The power assimilates this figure to that of terrorists, constructing a threat to create a consensus among the population, to reinforce its control and justify repression. This is why we are in prison today. It is the solution chosen by the state to manage illegalism and “populations at risk”*”.⁹⁵

In order to understand the mechanics of the criminal law of the enemy, I will therefore also present its symbolic side: how, through the spectacle of criminality, it legitimises itself and creates consensus.

3.1.1 Slap the Monster on Page One: the crime as spectacle

This section deals with the creation of the enemy and the spectacular use of crime. Prison constitutes a privileged observatory of the representations and perceptions that society has about crime. This aspect will be discussed precisely because the prisoners who wrote to OLGA at various times were captured, deluded, and entangled in this representation machine. Furthermore, in order to be able to talk about the construction of a counter-narrative of prison I think it is useful to mention how the discourse on crime and prison is produced and what role it plays overall.

Several letters received tell of the relationship between journalism and prosecutors in the writers' and other court cases. Journalists have often written news articles pursuing accusations of terrorism even before the sentences, which often end in acquittals or in important reductions of sentences without any implications of terrorism.⁹⁶ From Genoa a prisoner wrote: “*Terrorist? Ideologue? Student? Promoter? Follower? Philosopher? Here is a short list of categories and labels ready to be used*”⁹⁷. As Pasquale argues, the

⁹⁵ Booklet 23, April 2008, “Lettera dal carcere di Fresnes” e Villepinte”, Bruno and Ivan: “*Il potere assimila questa figura a quella dei terroristi, costruendo una minaccia per creare un consenso fra la popolazione, rinforzare il suo controllo e giustificare la repressione. È per questo che oggi noi siamo in carcere. È la soluzione scelta dallo Stato per gestire l’illegalismo [les illégalismes] e le “popolazioni a rischio”.*”

⁹⁶ Booklet 10, February 2007, “Lettera dal carcere di Palermo”, Ivano.

⁹⁷ Booklet 70, June 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di Genova”, Giuseppe: “*Terrorista? Ideologo? Studente? Promotore? Seguace? Filosofo? Ecco una breve lista di categorie ed etichette pronte all’uso e vomitate in fretta dallo stato e dai suoi mass-media.*”

mechanism of “*monstrification*” has become a normal tool of repression⁹⁸, as represented in the movie “*slam the monster on the front page*”.⁹⁹ The spectacle seems to be part of a pre-constituted mechanism.¹⁰⁰

Crime as a spectacle is articulate and suggestive, both true and false. Representations of crime proliferate, ranging from TV series to books, from science to novels, and coming from complete amateurs, from experts, or from former criminals who have repented and who, from time to time, report updates and news on a certain subject from time to time. The search for truth is re-proposed in a dichotomous key, in the sense that it distinguished between who is the good guy and who is the bad guy, and that it identifies crime as a social problem and a threat to society. This social problem is treated as an emergency, especially on a national or international scale, legitimising more and more talk on the subject and action from above to resolve it. Various figures then emerge to try to tame this never ending emergency, living on consecutive emergencies as an outgrowth of social life (D'Este, 1990 p. 7). As recounted in OLGa's letters, these outgrowths were first called “red terrorism” during the so-called “Years of Lead”, then Mafia terrorism from the 1990s, and then Islamic terrorism from the 2000s. The creation of these emergencies became “vital for the very existence of prisons in Italy” (Ruggiero, 1995, p. 67). Moreover, the fluctuation of these emergencies brings with it the proliferation of a series of measures which then remain emergency after emergency, category after category, and above all “had the effect of increasing punishment levels for offenders in general” (Cavadino and Dignan, 2006, p. 142). They are excrescences that never disappear completely; they can reappear just when the need for spectacular productions requires it and they coexist with each other.

This phenomenon also occurred during the year of the pandemic¹⁰¹. Despite the indication of the National Health Institute to favour the application of alternative measures to detention for all persons with serious pathologies that could be significantly complicated by COVID-19, the alarm was triggered by the release of Mafia bosses. At first, the government was setting conditions for many fragile prisoners, including those detained for mafia-related crimes, to be released to avoid complications or death from the virus. However, several newspapers and television programmes condemned this choice. The

⁹⁸ Booklet 103, May 2015, Letter from Massama Prison (Oristano): “Le barbarie della deportazione”, (“The barbarity of deportation”), Pasquale, AS1: “*Quando si eleva il meccanismo nella mostrificazione a “normale” strumento di repressione, la tortura di varia natura diventa burocrazia quotidiana.*”

⁹⁹ “*Sbatti il mostro in prima pagina*” is a 1972 film directed by Marco Bellocchio and starring Gian Maria Volonté. The film highlights the close links between the press, politics and law enforcement. It shows how a major newspaper can manipulate public information and the course of events to try to induce a specific reaction in the electorate.

¹⁰⁰ Booklet 10, February 2007, “Lettera dal carcere di Palermo”, Ivano, EIV.

¹⁰¹ Booklet 144, October 2020, “Lettere dal carcere di Opera”, Giovanni, AS1.

newspaper “La Repubblica” headlined: “376 Bosses released, here is the confidential list that is alarming the Prosecutor's Office”¹⁰², informing the public that these “bosses” were released from 41 bis for health reasons. However, of these 376, 196 were awaiting trial and 3 were in 41 bis¹⁰³. In the end, only three were released. Beyond the numbers, it has become clear that the State in this case has preferred the execution of a prison sentence to the protection of individual health, a choice that has cost the lives of some who could not be released and fell ill. Moreover, the use of spectacular crime has temporarily shifted the attention gained on the prison issue during the March riots that followed the first containment measures for the COVID-19, placing the focus back on the focus back to the Mafia emergency. In fact, the fear of Mafia returned not only because of the releases, but also because of the initial investigations that associated the prison riots with covert organised crime associations.

The case of the deaths of some mafiosi in prison represents a real ingestion for the reinforcement of State legitimacy, an anthropophagy¹⁰⁴. Emblematic is the funeral of Cutolo, former boss of the “Nuova Camorra Organizzata”, who died while in 41 bis. The magistrate of Parma, who ordered the autopsy on the body of the former boss, forbid Cutolo's wife and 13-year-old daughter from approaching the body and from placing any object on the body, not a flower, not a crown, not a sacred image; he further dictated that the visit should be carried out at a distance and in the presence of several police squats. The visit of the wife and daughter to the deceased lasted only five minutes. A procession of police and Carabinieri cars left from Parma to reach the Ottaviano cemetery in the middle of the night, covering 700 kilometres. Even the priest who officiated the brief ceremony was picked up at his home and taken to the Ottaviano cemetery only a few minutes earlier¹⁰⁵.

In a more modest but significant way, Luca also recounted something similar:

*when they let us out of the station, everything was well prepared: sirens and flashing lights deployed for the photos of the miserable journalists posted along the road. I understood that the hunt for anarchists had been studied in the most infamous details, so as to be a sounding board for those at the top, whose anti-freedom speeches — now sadly supported by most of the exploited — are reinforced and propagandised in the spotlight”.*¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² La Repubblica, national newspaper: “I 376 boss scarcerati. Ecco la lista riservata che allarma le procure”, my translation. Link: <https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/05/05/news/i-376-boss-scarcerati-300899894/>.

¹⁰³ Il Foglio, national newspaper. Link: <https://www.ilfoglio.it/il-bi-e-il-ba/2020/05/08/news/i-boss-scarcerati-dal-41-bis-non-sono-376-sono-3-317076/>.

¹⁰⁴ See note 4.

¹⁰⁵ This information was reported in the journal article “Il Dubbio”, 14 May 2021. Link: <https://www.ildubbio.news/2021/03/02/presentero-un-esposto-in-procura-sullultimo-saluto-dei-familiari-a-cutolo/>.

¹⁰⁶ Booklet 136, May 2019, “Lettera dal carcere di Tolmezzo”, Luca: “Quando ci hanno fatto uscire dalla caserma, tutto era preparato per bene: sirene e lampeggianti spiegati per le foto dei miseri giornalisti appostati lungo la strada. Ho capito che la caccia agli anarchici era

When talking about the deaths in prison of figures like Cutolo, it emerges how the spectacle of the representation of imprisonment and violence is the last expressive expedient that has been put in place to continue public executions despite the need to make the torture disappear. According to Foucault (1976), public executions have gradually moved away from the people because they risked becoming an opportunity for those on trial to stir up the crowd and transform an exemplary execution into an opportunity to trigger new social unrest. This is why justice today prefers to act away from prying eyes, offering instead simulacra produced by the media and journalists. In this way, a “carnavalesque understanding of punishment” is achieved (Carrabine, 2012): an ambiguous feeling, a strange relationship between pain and pleasure. A contradictory representation, but today purely aesthetic, and therefore relatively harmless for the viewer if not directly concerned. In this regard Hulsman and De Cèlis (2001) argued that the state uses the numbers at its disposal to frighten people with the danger of crime. The State “takes over local events (in order to deal with them in the penal system)” and presents them as “nationalised” model cases (p. 49): if a lady has been robbed of her purse somewhere in Paris or Lyon, it is the whole of France that is afraid (*ibidem*). It seems therefore an inexorable continuation of the function of the chronicle of crime described by Foucault: “by its everyday redundancy, [it] makes acceptable the system of judicial and police supervisions that partition society; it recounts from day to day a sort of internal battle against the faceless enemy; in this war, it constitutes the daily bulletin of alarm or victory.” (1977, p. 286)

According to Cavadino and Dignan (2006, p. 47), the movement of penal systems towards a more neo-liberal direction has brought with it more populist policies and sensationalist mass media representations of crime. The spectacle works on the perception that society must be defended. This war on crime is ultimately a war against evil, and unites all the good people who want to live without fear. In this case, it was precisely the fear of the free mafioso, of the enemy within the city: “*prosecutors have a habit of creating sensational characters, emphasising monstrous qualities and underlining criminal depths in order to be regarded as those who free society from evil*”.¹⁰⁷ For this reason, the state of emergency is an affair of the state, which takes charge of its management and transforms the phenomenon into a state emergency. To employ a metaphor used by D'Este in the spectacular fight against drugs, the State and the justice

studiata nei particolari più infami, in modo da far da grancassa a chi sta in alto, i cui discorsi contro la libertà – oggi tristemente appoggiati da gran parte degli sfruttati – vengono rafforzati e propagandati sotto la luce dei riflettori.”

¹⁰⁷ Booklet 130, January 2018, “Lettera dal carcere di Agrigento”, Valerio, AS1: “*Le procure hanno l'abitudine di creare personaggi clamorosi, enfatizzano caratteri mostrificatori e sottolineano lo spessore criminale pur di venire considerati coloro i quali liberano la società dal male.*”

system stand against the emergency phenomenon as St George against the dragon. Or, as the operation named “*Prometeo*” suggests as God in front of the rebel Titan. In this case, in fact, the choice of name has an obvious symbolic meaning: *Prometeo*, as Natasha says, “*steals fire (knowledge) from the gods to give to men and is therefore punished. It is evident who in this representation appropriates and self-assigns the part of god.*”¹⁰⁸

These representations create a fallacious unity under the banner of populism, in this case criminal populism. It is not just a question of those who think it is right to kill in self-defence a burglar who has broken into their house but also of those who want even harsher measures for those who pollute, for those who rape, as if punishing more would make them feel better, or as if, somehow, they know what the right way is to deal with these conducts. At the same time, for the latter cases, it is normal to feel a sense of injustice when faced with a disproportion between the punishments provided for, for example, white-collar crimes and common crimes. What I am arguing, therefore, is that the fight against delinquency and deviance conceived in a punitive guise fulfils a sense of justice that cannot be satisfied in this system. On the contrary, the complex consisting of the penal system and entertainment is put together in such a way as to create this social perception. Punitivism therefore, although ineffective, is considered the only weapon against collective insecurity.

The climate of unity also strengthens those who resolve emergencies and delegitimises the guilty. All those who want to differentiate themselves from the reality produced by the spectacle are wiped out. Offenders are isolated from the context from which they originated, as denounced by political prisoners whose political stances had been emptied of their meaning, as if they were “*rootless and soulless*”¹⁰⁹. As for criminals and terrorists, they are denied any other political significance (Krassmann, 2007, p. 304). In this way, the spectacle empties certain practises of their meaning, the socio-political meaning is sold off in exchange for a simulacrum, where only “*good guys*” and “*bad guys*” exist¹¹⁰. The political and social isolation of the presumed enemies do nothing but stigmatise the latter, and offer the counterpart the opportunity to deprive their political dignity through their criminalisation. The emergency administrators also highlight the high moral value of the excrescence and select the most unobjectionable aspects, such as children dissolved in acid by mafiosi and child rapists. They associate offenders with groups or categories of criminals, without the need to provide a complete picture but

¹⁰⁸ Booklet 144, October 2020, “Lettera dal carcere Piacenza”, Natascia, AS3: “*il mito di prometeo e noto ai più: ruba il fuoco (la conoscenza) agli dèi per farne dono agli uomini, e perciò viene punito. Chi in questa rappresentazione si appropri della e si autoassegna la parte di dio, è evidente.*”

¹⁰⁹ See note 84: “*il revisionismo del passato è un’arma potente che gli stati utilizzano per depotenziare le varie forme di rivolta del presente e per creare il vuoto attorno ai rivoluzionari di oggi e lasciarli senza radice e anima.*”

¹¹⁰ Booklet 138, September 2019, “Lettera dal carcere di Rossano (Cosenza)”, Davide, AS.

inserting everything into the device of the described spectacle. From the letters, it often emerges how this labelling produces organised struggles, protests, positioning of the prisoners, “*in order not to risk being pointed at and instrumentalised*”¹¹¹. When the show tends to separate individuals into dichotomies, in favour of the Constitution or against the Constitution, for good or for evil, those who want to stand out find themselves immediately branded as friends of evil and, therefore, as a public danger.

Risk and uncertainty are neither real or not real, they are imagined (O'Malley, 2004, p. 15). Curious, from this point of view, is the phrase “the mafia does not exist”, a historical statement that has been interpreted as showing support for the mafia. Personally, however, in this sentence I want to underline the opposition to the spectacularisation, which creates a world that is upside-down, where the true is a moment of the false (Debord, 1979). Indeed, in the eyes of whoever delivered this sentence for the first time the Mafia existed differently. The person who uttered it wanted to distinguish themselves from that label of “mafioso”. Carmelo wrote to OLGa to defend himself from those who told him “*you are not honest if you only remember Khalid for his role as a fighter for Palestine, and not for the terrorism he enacted*”:

*“we have to get rid of the mediatic, political, religious, financial, intellectual, and business mafia and then lastly we can get rid of the shooting mafia, of the four fools who let themselves be used as cannon fodder by the powers because in the end they are all killed or sentenced to life imprisonment.[...] The mafia is very different from what you hear about in the TV parlours. [...] That is why I will always be on the side of the bad guys, on the side of Khalid. Good people have always beaten and beaten me since I was born, first the nuns and then the priests and finally the State. [...] That's why I am with the “social terrorists” and not with the state terrorists”.*¹¹²

Spectacular crime and the state are united even if they present contradictions. An example is the spectacularisation of mafias themselves through TV series. There are many media representations that pursue certain forms of crime and exalt them on a scale of values such as self-affirmation and the justification of personal enrichment to the detriment of others. In addition, the show acts on common sense, also contributing to an idea of normality in which prison is taken for granted. At the same time, other

¹¹¹ Booklet 145, February 2021, “Lettera dal carcere di Opera (Milano)”, Giovanni, AS1. See also booklet 26, September 2008, “Lettera dal carcere di Spoleto”, Carmelo, AS1: “*qui dentro siamo condizionati di fare una lotta organizzata perché siamo subito strumentalizzati.*”

¹¹² Booklet 38, August, 2009, “Letter from Spoleto Prison”, Carmelo, AS1: “*Però anche tu non sei onesto se ricordi di Khalid solo il suo ruolo di combattente per la Palestina e non per il terrorismo che usò*”; “*prima bisogna liberarsi dalla mafia mediatica, politica, religiosa, finanziaria, intellettuale, imprenditoriale e poi per ultimo ci possiamo liberare dalla mafia che spara, dei quattro scemi che si fanno usare come carne da cannone dal potere perché alla fine vengono tutti ammazzati o condannati all'ergastolo. [...] La mafia è molto diversa da quella che senti parlare nei salotti televisivi. [...] Per questo io sarò sempre dalla parte dei cattivi, dalla parte di Khalid. Le persone per bene mi hanno sempre riempito di botte e di legnate da quando sono nato, per prime le suore e poi i preti e per ultimo lo Stato. [...] Per questi “sto” con i “terroristi sociali” e non con i terroristi di Stato.*”

images of the prison proliferate: “the HBO programme *Oz* has managed to persuade many viewers that they know exactly what goes on in male maximum-security prisons” (Davis, 2003, p. 18). These fictional portraits narrate aspects that those who have been in prison hardly recognise, but above all, images that make prison natural, taken for granted. This is a key ingredient for our common sense. The visual consumption of the media plays a crucial role in building this ideological base. It organises a consensus aimed at the internalisation of repression (Poulantzas, 1978, p. 78). What emerges as real most of all is the fact that “people are really governed” (O'Malley, 2004, p. 15), really punished, so it becomes crucial to return to how the detention regimes that are produced by these discursive processes materialise.

3.1.2 The enemy's regimes

Governmentality is made up of discursive and material aspects. It is a continuous clash between discursive practises (international directives, national laws, local management) and materiality (the observable space where these discourses materialise, the different types of prisons, regimes, cells). The discourse on the criminal law of the enemy is based on extremely material elements, first and foremost the 41 bis regime. In this regime, as well as in the maximum security regime, it is possible to observe what has been described above regarding the creative potential of the enemy penology. In fact, the detention regimes envisaged for the enemy show how prison panopticism has been refined both in its logic and in its spatialisation.

On the basis of what emerges in the letters in this section I will firstly describe, through spatial observation, how governmental power shifts its mobile boundaries from time to time, crystallising emergencies. Secondly, I will try to understand what these spatialisations have to do with a new, more managerial governmentality that is structured around categories of risk. This way of thinking about prison strategies seems to add another issue to the normalisation of exceptional measures. There are always the conditions for the application of preventive measures, there is no necessity for a new war on the criminal phenomenon. The need to anticipate any form of attack to the state seems to be normalised. The regimes are therefore also conceived on the basis of “a kind of anticipated prevention”, a “*pre-emption*”, prediction and management of risk. In this section of the chapter, I will therefore describe two examples, one of the logics of normalisation of the emergency, and one of pre-emption. The diffusion of 41 bis best describes the first logic. For the pre-emptive logic, I use the restructuring process of EIV regimes to AS witnessed in the letters. This passage didn't take place in an emergency

manner. In the transition from EIV to AS, differentiation is the logic used to think about the social order. The conditions are created for differentiation to be possible, presenting prison spaces as more acceptable than a regime such as 41 bis and sometimes preferable to chaotic medium and low security regimes. 41 bis and AS should also be understood as two integrated regimes. The letters show an increasing interest in prescription, observation and monitoring of daily life. A discourse that is built on detail, within parameters unknown to the public, is gradually being consolidated to construct truths about prisoners. The prison laboratory emerges clearly in these regimes in the preference for intra-group homogenisation and for the separation of mafiosi, religious and political prisoners in order to better observe them. Just as the panoptic eye is never visible for the prisoners, these indicators look for secrets to reveal, radicalisation levels, resistance to the exhaustion that the institution seeks to induce, and, perhaps, attempt to define the notion of terrorism.

*41 bis*¹¹³

41 bis has been described by several prisoners who have experienced it first hand, many of them writing after their release, some while they are still under it. As found in the letters, it is difficult to talk about this regime without considering its relevance in regards to the “Southern Question” (*“Questione Meridionale”*). In fact, although this regime has recently been extended to crimes related to terrorism, kidnapping, sexual violence, and child prostitution or child pornography, the number of prisoners for mafia-related crimes is still the vast majority. There is no room, in this thesis, to trace the genealogies of the penal system from the unification of Italy. However, some aspects of its history, which have also been mentioned in the letters should be underlined, such as: the maintenance of unequal socio-economic conditions between North and South, which has transformed the latter into a reservoir of labour power at the disposal of the State; the use that the State has made of mafia associations in operations that would never have been possible otherwise; the studies of Lombroso into the nature of the criminal by birth, carried out through the observation of the skull of brigands, and the Pica law, which introduced the crime of brigandage the possible punishments for which were the firing squad, a sentence for hard labour for life, or several years in prison, but which also provided extenuating

¹¹³ See art. 41 bis of the Criminal Code: <https://www.brocardi.it/legge-ordinamento-penitenziario/titolo-i/capo-iv/art41bis.html>.

circumstances for collaborators of justice and for those who confessed their guilt.¹¹⁴ In short, the letters denounce a state discourse that has contributed to superimposing onto southern origins the criminal identity of the citizens.

These historical and socio-economic conditions have meant that today, in Italy, the category most affected by the penal system is of southern origin. The 41 bis is linked to another punitive measure almost exclusive to mafia prisoners, the life sentence. In agreement with De Feo, this is a colonial system that still works, and is particularly found in prisons (2016, p. 7). Introduced for the first time in the “Gozzini Law”, 41 bis was applied in exceptional cases of revolt or other serious emergency situations¹¹⁵. The Minister of Justice had the power to suspend the application of the normal rules for the treatment of prisoners in the institutions concerned by 41 bis or in part of them. The suspension had to be motivated by the need to restore order and security, and had to last for the duration strictly necessary to achieve that end. Since 1992, after the Capaci bombing in which magistrate Falcone lost his life, a second comma was added, the most widely considered when discussing 41 bis. I have always written 41 bis by convention, because it is part of the jargon of the letters. This article was therefore created as an exceptional provision to be used in cases of internal prison emergency with a rather wide margin of application, since it was based on the presence of serious threats to public order and security. Before its expiry in December 2002¹¹⁶, the regime that had been created as an exceptional article to deal with a particular need of the State was made a definitive instrument of the penal law. This passage is exemplary of that criminal law of exception, of that suspension of the norm which manifests itself through the so-called emergency laws issued by the executive power. The second comma just mentioned extended it further. Today, the number of detainees in 41 bis is gradually increasing, while the mafia phenomenon, as it was known in the 90's, appears to have been reduced. In Italy there are 759 prisoners, while in 1992 there were 498. The article can now be imposed as a temporary measure that can be renewed for several years. The first decree of 41 bis, if not immediately revoked, lasts four years.

¹¹⁴ Booklet 133, June, 2018, “Scritto dal carcere di Massama (OR) L’illegalità legalizzata (Legalised illegality)”, Pasquale, AS1.

¹¹⁵ Law No 663, October 10th, 1986: “Modifiche alla legge sull’ordinamento penitenziario e sulla esecuzione delle misure privative e limitative della libertà”. Link: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1986/10/16/086U0663/sg>.

¹¹⁶ Following approval by the Senate and the Lower House at the end of 2002, Article 41 became part of the prison regulations. Until then it had to be renewed yearly. Law No 279, December 23th, 2002: “Modifica degli articoli 4-bis e 41-bis della legge 26 luglio 1975, n. 354, in materia di trattamento penitenziario”. Link: <https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/02279l.html>.

After these four years, it is renewed every two years in relation to the conduct and judicial events of the subject¹¹⁷.

In OLGa's letters, 41 bis is addressed both in the memories of its first years, and in the testimonies of how today this regime has become more and more sophisticated. The stories on the “*Braccetti della morte*” (“regimes of death”) or, rather, on the isolation sections foreseen by art. 90¹¹⁸, the forerunner of 41 bis, describe sections entirely separated from the other prisoners: “*you did not see anyone, not even your family*”, it was in fact possible to write only to the lawyer¹¹⁹. The prison visiting allowance was one per month, and mandated the glass partition. Sending parcels was very limited, and shopping was forbidden. You could only eat prison food. Newspapers, wardrobes and TVs were not allowed. Books were only coming from the prison library. In 1992, the Asinara and Pianosa prisons had become Italy's most violent *Cayenne*¹²⁰, a tragic reality of torture and sadism, physical and psychological violence:

“One morning, while I was out for a walk, I was called by the guards, after I was handcuffed I was put in a jeep, they started the engine and we got out. They ordered me to keep my head down. Suddenly, a guard grabbed his gun and said, “You are going to die!” He pointed the gun at my right temple. I didn't blink an eye, of course I was scared, but there was nothing I could do. At that moment I was thinking of my family, when I heard the trigger go off ... a mock execution and the guards were laughing. As if that wasn't enough, they said to me: “Now run away, run across the countryside”. I nodded my head and said no. A torturer slapped me in the face and shouted, “Run away.” I didn't move. They took a rope and put it between my handcuffs and tied it to the jeep, they started the engine and dragged me behind, I tried to run as fast as I could, but I couldn't do it faster than the jeep, until my foot got caught in a hole, I lost my balance, I fell and was dragged for about 100 metres with the sound of the laughter and amusement of the prison guards (Matteo Greco, Pianosa prison, 1992)”.

“I was in the plain cell. I was in solitary confinement. I didn't see or talk to anyone. My cell looked like a sardine can. A handkerchief of concrete, with a cot planted on the floor. A small table a few inches high nailed to the wall.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁸ My translation: “In the event of serious and exceptional circumstances relating to law and order and security, the Minister of Grazia e Giustizia may suspend, in whole or in part, the application, in one or more prison establishments and for a specified, strictly necessary period, of the rules of treatment and of the institutes provided for by this law, which may be in concrete conflict with the requirements of law and order and security”. See: <https://www.brocardi.it/legge-ordinamento-penitenziario/titolo-ii/capo-iv/art90.html>.

¹¹⁹ Booklet 130, January 2018, “Lettera dal carcere di Sulmona”, Antonino, AS1: “*Il funzionamento dei braccetti era per spezzare i rapporti tra i detenuti e anche con la famiglia, perché non potevi scrivere ai famigliari, ma solo all'avvocato.*”

¹²⁰ The term Cayenne refers to the island of the same name in French Guiana and other islands, such as Devil's Island, located far from the mainland, where it was almost impossible to escape and people were forced to spend many years in inhumane conditions. The concept of Cayenne was later used by the Red Brigades, a famous photo was taken during the uprising in the prison of Asinara (a Sardinian island) on 2 October 1979, where a prisoner displayed the writing “Asinara Cayenna Italiana”: <http://www.osservatoriorepressione.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/asinara-caiennaitaliana.jpg>. Subsequently, the expression was recovered in Pasquale De Feo's 2016 book, “Le Cayenne italiane” referring to the islands of Pianosa and Asinara, sadly famous for the similarity of the abuses against prisoners.

A window with double bars, an armoured door a span thick. An open squat toilet with no privacy and, to the side, a small washbasin. The space in the cell was minimal. I could barely stand up to take a few steps back and forth. One night, it was New Year's Eve, after midnight, and the guards were noisily celebrating the New Year. They were drunk. They were kicking armoured vehicles and shouting insults at us. [...] They came over. They opened the cell and entered. They were laughing. They were drunk. I cursed at them, and they started to hit me with their fists. When I was on the ground, they started to hit me with their feet.”¹²¹

According to Carmelo, the torture regime of 41 bis is even worse today, “*and we know even less about what is going on, because those prisoners have stopped living, thinking, dreaming and hoping*”¹²². In a few decades, this regime has become more and more an expression of punitive exasperation. However, just like the immaterial prison (Gallo and Ruggiero, 1989), it acts above all on the mind. Techniques of psychological torture, including violent torture, aimed at incapacitating the inmate, have been refined. The purpose of 41 bis is to prevent the prisoner from actively participating in the activities of the alleged organisation existing outside. In order to make this possible, methods of torture and annihilation of the person are used, which today mainly affect mental integrity¹²³. According to several testimonies, the presence of a 41 bis section implies a more securitarian governmentality¹²⁴. In this sense, this regime constitutes the apotheosis of carceral power, where the physical proximity of power cannot but influence other regimes. Punitive regimes like 41 bis or the above described art. 90 are “society made durable” (Latour, 1990). They influence prisons over time and space, even after their apparent demise. Such a mechanism has been described for the prison of Alba, which was built as a special prison to

¹²¹ Booklet 122, march 2017, “Scritto dal carcere di Spoleto (PG)”, Carmelo, AS1:

“Una mattina, mentre mi trovavo al passeggio, vengo chiamato dalle guardie, dopo che mi vengono messe le manette vengo fatto salire in una jeep, mettono in moto ed usciamo. Mi ordinano di tenere la testa abbassata. Ad un tratto una guardia impugna la pistola e mi dice “Stai per morire!” Mi punta la pistola nella tempia destra. Non ho battuto ciglio, certamente la paura c’era, ma non potevo fare nulla. In quel momento pensavo alla mia famiglia, quando sento il grilletto girare a vuoto ... una finta esecuzione con le relative risate dei secondini. Come se non bastasse mi si dice: “Ora scappa, corri per la campagna”. Io con la testa faccio segno di no. Un aguzzino mi dà uno schiaffo e urla: “Scappa” io non mi muovo. Prendono una corda la mettono tra le mie manette e la legano alla jeep, mettono in moto e mi tirano dietro, cerco di correre il più forte possibile, ma non posso farlo più forte della jeep, finché con un piede entro in una buca, perdo l’equilibrio, cado e sono trascinato per circa 100 metri con risate e divertimento delle guardie carcerarie”. (Matteo Greco, carcere di Pianosa, 1992). [...] mi trovavo nella cella liscia. Ero in isolamento. Non vedevo e non parlavo con nessuno. La mia cella sembrava una scatola di sardine. Un fazzoletto di cemento, con una branda piantata sul pavimento. Un tavolino di pochi centimetri inchiodato al muro. Una finestra con doppie sbarre, una porta blindata spessa una spanna. un bagno turco aperto senza nessuna riservatezza e, al lato, un piccolo lavandino. Lo spazio nella cella era minimo. A malapena riuscivo a stare in piedi per fare giusto qualche passo avanti ed indietro. Probabilmente un animale, vivendo in quel modo, sarebbe morto. Io invece sono riuscito a sopravvivere. Una notte, era l’ultima dell’anno, era passata la mezzanotte e le guardie stavano festeggiando rumorosamente l’anno nuovo. Erano ubriachi. Davano calci ai blindati e urlavano insulti verso di noi. [...] Arrivarono. aprirono la cella ed entrarono. Ridevano. Erano ubriachi. Imprecai contro di loro, e loro iniziarono a colpirmi con i pugni. Quando poi fui a terra, iniziarono a colpirmi con i piedi.”

¹²² *ibidem*. “e si sa ancora di meno di quello che avviene, perché quei prigionieri hanno smesso di vivere, pensare, sognare e sperare.”

¹²³ Booklet 117, October 2016, “Lettera dal carcere di Massama (OR)”, Pasquale, AS1.

¹²⁴ Booklet 126, July 2017, “Lettera dal carcere di Novara”.

restrain armed political groups, and which still retains “*the absurd structure and rules (41 bis-like cells, external switches, no hoods, always binded books, etc.)*”: “*The guards still have the mentality of 41 bis, because, once, this prison was solely maximum security*”.¹²⁵

In its 40 years of existence, 41 bis has embodied the most punitive expression of punishment beyond punishment, a punishment that comes closest to revenge. This regime, together with life imprisonment, is inspired by enemy criminal law (Kalica, 2019, p. 178). Constitutionally, “punishments may not consist of treatment contrary to the sense of humanity”, and must aim “at the re-education of the convicted person”¹²⁶. In this regime, however, one recognises instead that theoretical strand which considers isolation as a “terrible shock”, from which the condemned person can return to himself and rediscover the voice of goodness in the depths of his conscience (Foucault, 1976).

The regulation of the DAP of November 2011 is in line with these ideas. It prohibits the reception of books, magazines, and prints to the detainees subjected to the 41 bis regime. It should be stressed that reading is one of the few exercises that allows the mind to move elsewhere, one of the strongest anchors to survival. For this reason, the regulation was contested by several subjects, in particular through the campaign “*Pagine Contro la Tortura*”,¹²⁷ which united some political collectives, associations, and prisoners all over Italy. However, after several appeals by prisoners and by some institutional subjects who opposed it, the final validation was approved by the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court, and the reception of books from outside was forbidden.

In a much more organic manner, the regulation issued in October 2017 provided for a real standardisation of 41 bis for all Italian prisons¹²⁸. In these rules, daily life and sociality have become two essential aspects to be regulated and monitored. The formation of social groups, which never exceed 4 persons, is subject to be programmed. These groups cannot be homogeneous, i.e. they cannot be composed of people from the same consortium or the same geographical origin. In addition, sociality thus codified determines the impossibility of communicating and exchanging objects between all

¹²⁵ Booklet 78, March 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Alba”, Dayvid: “*Alba è stato costruito per le BR e tiene tuttora l'assurda struttura e regole (blindi da 41 bis, interruttori esterni, niente cappucci, sempre libri relegati, ecc.)*”; Booklet 90, March 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Ivrea”: “*Le guardie hanno ancora la mentalità del 41bis, perché una volta questo carcere erasolo di massima sicurezza.*”

¹²⁶ See note 74.

¹²⁷ Link: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi327Ky9u_zAhXP-MewKHwBGCI4QFnoECAkQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fpaginecontrolatortura.noblogs.org%2F&usq=AOv-Vaw0hyAXw4bMMWZWd7v8vdJe9.

¹²⁸ D.A.P., circolare 2 ottobre 2017, n. 3676/6126, “Organizzazione del circuito detentivo speciale previsto dall’art. 41 bis O.P.” (Organisation of the special detention circuit provided for by Art. 41 bis penitentiary regulation). In Ristretti Orizzonti, link: http://www.ristretti.it/commenti/2017/ottobre/pdf/circolare_41bis.pdf.

inmates, even when belonging to the same sociality group¹²⁹. Other chapters regulate a totalising detention space, infinitesimally small and measurable thanks to depersonalising technological supports such as video surveillance, cameras and automatic gates. Inmates are monitored by specialised officers from the Mobile Operations Group (Gruppo Operazione Mobile)¹³⁰.

In this regime *“you totally lose control of your life, often of your thoughts. [...] You are stripped of your identity. You become in effect a ghost”*¹³¹. The detained body is colonised. Time is emptied of activity and becomes an infinite time; a space-time compression takes place: *“an eternal immutable present, inhuman, in an indefinite place”*¹³². From the letters, everyday life is engulfed in a sense of precariousness linked to the fact that one's routine can be attacked at any moment. For example: *“If they call you to come out of the cell, at times that had not been scheduled for walking, they never tell you where you have to go, even if it's for a medical examination”*¹³³. There is a constant invasion of privacy that is hard to bear, even more so when it happens regardless of one's conduct, such as during daily searches, in which the room's few furnishings are turned upside-down¹³⁴.

Detention spaces can be located *“underground, without windows, therefore without air or natural light”*¹³⁵. Mobility is designed in such a way that the prisoner never leaves the section. For example, the rooms for following trials “at a distance” and for phone calls, i.e. most of the activities allowed by the regime, are located in the same section of the prison. Thus, the only time the prisoner leaves the section for a moment is during visiting, which are, in any case, conducted using glass partitions. In addition, social groups are only allowed to gather in small spaces where no activities can be carried out and where there is no possibility of work apart from that of *“spesino”* and *“scopino”*¹³⁶. Two hours a day are spent in the courtyard, a space covered with iron and wire mesh with no direct sunlight; the remaining

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁰ The Gruppo Operativo is composed of about 585 special prison police personnel, 62 of whom are located at the Headquarters and 533 employed in custody, translations and surveillance of prisoners and inmates with high index of dangerousness and subject to the detention regime as per art. 41 bis, paragraph 2, O.P., as well as of collaborators of justice detained in some Penitentiary Institutions who hold crucial positions in trials. Taken from the website of the Ministry of the Interior: https://giustizia.it/giustizia/it/contentview.wp?previousPage=mg_14_7&contentId=ART149091#ra19.

¹³¹ See note 121: *“ti spogliano della tua identità. diventi a tutti gli effetti un fantasma.”*

¹³² Booklet 69, May 2012, “Lettera dal Carcere di Carinola (CE)”, Antonino AS1: *“Nel carcere non c'è futuro i carcerati sono condannati ad un eterno presente immutabile, disumano, in un luogo indefinito.”*

¹³³ Booklet 113, May 2016, “La galera sotto il segno del 41bis: memoria” (“Prison under the banner of 41bis: memory”): *“Se ti chiamano per uscire dalla cella, negli orari non previsti per il passeggio, non ti dicono mai dove devi andare, anche se si tratta di visita medica.”*

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁵ Booklet 117, October 2016, “Lettere dal carcere di Massama (OR). Le segrete medioevali (Medieval dungeons)”, Pa-squale, AS1: *“una sezione situata sottoterra, senza finestre, pertanto senza aria e né luce naturale.”*

¹³⁶ “Spesino” is the inmate responsible in the unit for buying groceries. A “scopino” is someone who cleans the wing. Reference on Booklet 91, April 2014, Lettera dal carcere di Sulmona (AQ), Antonino.

twenty-two hours waste away in enforced idleness¹³⁷. Boredom becomes one of the worst tortures, like a “paralysis”, resulting in the feeling of being stored and abandoned¹³⁸. The cell is equipped with essential furnishings, and only objects and goods of a prescribed number and size are allowed in the cell. Only essentials are provided, while products deemed unessential must be asked for daily; every item is counted, even clothing, and in the evening everything must be returned¹³⁹. Space-time becomes entirely managed by the institution. Just as the construction of the enemy has a symbolic as well as a legal value and is consistent with a certain securitarian ideology, so also permitted and non-permitted objects acquire these symbolic connotations, the so-called “thing power” (Bennett, 2010). As can be seen in the segregation of 41 bis prisoners in separate buildings from the rest of the prison, objects are also always perceived as vectors of contagion. The mirror is an example: according to Michele, it is an object that restores a minimum of humanity, “*it allows you to identify your self-consciousness in an image*”, restricting its use is a sign of a will to de-personalise¹⁴⁰. Or, even today, there are different limitations on the freedom to cook and buy food, in particular for spices and everything that gives flavour to food¹⁴¹. Even stronger is the choice of some prisons to place louvres on the windows to sever any relationship — even only visual — with the outside. A piece of plastic, with an opening of 15 cm above and 5 cm below, which does not actually allow you to look out of the window, but only lets in a minimal amount of light and air¹⁴². As described for Sassari's 41 bis:

“I am resigned and aware that this place intended for annihilation will not suppress my body, but will act on the psyche and through the conscience will make the soul the hell of the body. The institute is modern, not in an enlightened sense, but in a new, obscurantist re-proposition of torture as punishment. In practise, it is an “ecomonstrum” for subjects treated outside the canons of the ethical experience of human freedoms and rights. The apparent feasibility of the new hides the theological squalor of spaces reduced to claustrophobic, vertically ordered units so that the view is deprived of any horizon, as well as of the hope of freedom, life sentence has put an end to it. I only have a small sky that I can glimpse from the basement when I look up vertically: the sky of the promenade. A sky enclosed in a walkway and nothing else. Everything is coloured white and an almost turquoise green, colours which serve to mask

¹³⁷ Booklet 115, July 2016, “Scritto dal carcere di Sulmona (AQ) Sulla carcerazione sotto il regime 41 bis” (On detention under the 41 bis regime), Antonino, AS1.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁰ Booklet 20, December 2007, “Lettera dal carcere di Perugia”, Michele: “*uno specchio ti dà un minimo di umanità, permette di identificare la tua autocoscienza in un'immagine.*”

¹⁴¹ See note 137.

¹⁴² Booklet 71, July 2012, “Lettera Dal carcere di Cuneo”, Maurizio.

the macabre reality of the grey cement; everything is used against man. Shower in the cell, gym, that's it. I'm trying to adapt but for now the pathological aspects that plague me are prevailing."¹⁴³

The elements that have been underlined so far show a condition of sensory and emotional “fasting”. The colonisation of the self, in fact, implies a series of deprivations that determine a wear and tear of the detained person; it is not by chance that many inmates have psychiatric problems and physical diseases due to the regime and the years of isolation. However, those who have brought testimonies of resistance often point to the strength of those who “*live in spite of those who would have you dead*”¹⁴⁴. In solitude, they reckon with their conscience, and try to keep their spirit and body alive and strong by training them: exercise, gymnastics, running, and reading every day, especially books. Then they dream about life, always and in any case, and exchanges of constructive opinions among sufferers¹⁴⁵. The book, in particular, “*enriches you*” and “*asks nothing of you but your dead time in a cell*”. All those activities of escape from prison, of enrichment without blackmail, of rejection of the “*idle thoughts*”, which psychologically destroy and mostly lead to the debasement of the person, should be sought in this way¹⁴⁶.

The relationship with the outside remains the only aspect for which in which the space-time outside meets the space-time inside: [visits] “*are one of the main sources of happiness, mental health, physical well-being*”, “*it is more than just a dialogue, it gives meaning to life*”¹⁴⁷. However, precisely because of the focus of this regime on the lack of relationship with the outside world, the prisoner may experience the visit as both a relief and a further sanction. In fact, the affective limitation becomes a double punishment, since it is precisely because relationships keep families, friendships and affections together, when they are limited they create stress and a greater margin of blackmail. This discourse is valid in all regimes, but here the condition of “secondary prisonisation” (Comfort 2008, p. 28) of the relationship with the prison visitors, especially the elderly and with children, reaches its peak. For example, calls from family

¹⁴³ Booklet 104, June 2015, “Lettera dal 41bis del carcere di bancali (SS)”, Davide, 41 bis:

“sono rassegnato e consapevole che questo luogo voluto per l’annientamento, non sopprimerà il mio corpo, ma agirà sulla psiche e attraverso la coscienza farà dell’anima l’inferno del corpo. L’istituto è moderno, non in senso illuminato, ma di nuova riproposizione oscurantista del supplizio come pena. In pratica un “ecomostro” per soggetti trattati al di fuori dei canoni dell’esperienza etica delle libertà e dei diritti umani. L’apparente agibilità del nuovo nasconde lo squallore teologico degli spazi ridotti a claustrofobici, ordinati in senso verticale cosicché allo sguardo è tolto ogni orizzonte, così come alla speranza di libertà, la pena ostativa ha posto la parola fine. Ho solo un piccolo cielo che dal sotterraneo intravedo alzando lo sguardo in verticale; il cielo del passeggio. Un cielo chiuso in un passeggio e nient’altro. Tutto è colorato di bianco e un verde quasi turchese, colori che servono a mascherare la realtà macabra del grigio cemento e dell’impiego contro l’uomo. Doccia in cella, palestra, questo è tutto. Sto cercando di adattarmi ma per adesso stanno prevalendo gli aspetti patologici che mi affliggono.”

¹⁴⁴ Booklet 130, January 2018, Lettera dal carcere di Sulmona (AQ), Antonino, AS1: “*vivi a dispetto di chi ti vorrebbe morto.*”

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*

¹⁴⁶ Booklet 130, January 2018, “Lettera dal carcere di Sulmona (AQ)”, Antonino, AS1.

¹⁴⁷ Booklet 115, July-August 2016, “Lettera dal carcere di Sulmona (AQ)”, Antonino, AS1: “*sono una delle principali fonti di felicità, di salute mentale, di benessere fisico*”; “*è ben più di un semplice dialogo, dà il senso alla vita.*”

members of 41 bis inmates can only be made from a prison or from inside a police station or carabinieri station¹⁴⁸. Or, another example of this dynamic is the invasion of privacy and the sense of helplessness of those who are searched or who witness their child being stripped naked to check that they are not hiding objects that could compromise security¹⁴⁹.

In order to understand the degree of separation and the discipline imposed, I will report the case of Nadia, detained in 41 bis in L'Aquila prison. She is one of the few people to be detained in this regime for crimes related to 'political' terrorism. During the trial, Nadia was accused of having disturbed the internal peace of the prison, and 41 bis, daytime isolation, was envisaged for her as disciplinary measure. Isolation within isolation. This measure was adopted because Nadia had hit the cell door with a plastic bottle. In opposition to this accusation, in her intervention in the courtroom during the trial Nadia addressed the problem of not being able to know whether she was disturbing, because the other detainees who were not, in turn, able to talk to her, could not let her know. In 41 bis, even greeting is forbidden; a disciplinary sanction could have resulted from them pointing out that she was disturbing.¹⁵⁰ There are several types of interactions that can lead to a disciplinary measure;¹⁵¹ this also applies to saying thank you to the worker who brings the food. Communication and speech, and so also every single thought, must be kept to oneself or, at most, shared exclusively with the other three persons with whom the social interaction is carried out.

The 41 bis moves on a ground of legitimacy for another reason, besides breaking the prisoner's contact with the outside world. It seeks the inmates' cooperation, once they have been depersonalised. The development of this research is based on this last element. Cooperation is fundamental to obtain a release from the regime, it is a proof that is worth more than a good conduct. Cooperation is evaluated mainly in relation to the contacts with the outside. In fact, also normal correspondence with a person in 41 bis expressing words of solidarity can justify the annulment of the appeal to get out of the regime. Therefore, according to the writer: *"the essence of the 41 bis consists in annulling and psychologically torturing the person, making him/her become a collaborator of justice"*¹⁵²; *"breaking the will of individuals by making them used to have their rights denied"*¹⁵³.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁹ Booklet 117, October 2016, "Lettera dal carcere di Opera", Andrea.

¹⁵⁰ Booklet 134, August-September 2018, "Resoconto della giornata di lotta a L'Aquila", OLGa

¹⁵¹ See note 133.

¹⁵² See note 147: *"L'essenza del 41 bis consiste nell'annullare e torturare psicologicamente la persona, farla diventare collaboratrice di giustizia."*

¹⁵³ See note 133: *"per spezzare la volontà dell'individuo e l'abitudine alla negazione dei tuoi diritti."*

Taking up what has been said on the criminal law of the enemy, it emerges how crucial to the appeals for the exit from the regime are the act of abjuration and a full collaboration with the State to demonstrate an individual change. Therefore, the burden of proving links with organised crime is in the hands of the prison administration and not on the prisoner. This is how the theory of the enemy seems to be applied in 41 bis.

FROM EIV TO AS: PREEMPTION AND RISK MANAGEMENT

The transition from the EIV regime to its successor AS led to the consolidation of maximum security regimes in Italy. The introduction of the AS deviates from the empirical confirmation of the normalisation of the exception, and it is exemplary for the observation on how certain restructurings take place without there being an urgent threat. This passage echoes the differentiating momentum that has characterised prisons since the 1970s, when the urgency was to divide political prisoners from the rebellious, extra-legal proletariats. Today, three threats to the State and society have been identified and materialised in AS regimes: Mafia, Islamic terrorism and political terrorism. These categories have been both separated from the rest of the prison population and partially divided among themselves. Unlike in the 1970s, however, this has taken place in a period of general calm, coming from the top but also working on consensus, making a process such as differentiation in some ways preferable for the prisoners themselves.

Firstly, as suggested by Foucault, the study of a particular moment of reform allows, on the one hand, to grasp the intentions of a reform that is always lacking (Foucault, 1977, p. 93) and, on the other hand, to understand how it favours (if not creates) new processes that refine new strategies of isolation. Or, as described by Cohen (1979), certain reformist impulses do not turn into alternatives to punishment but rather become extensions of the penal system, aimed towards an ever greater pervasiveness of control. The EIV regime was the regime envisaged for all those prisoners who had offences of an associative nature, and for subjects who posed threats to internal security for the rest of the prison. It was initially called into question in the late 1990s, when it was planned to abolish 41 bis in exchange for three regimes: Medium Security, AS (High Security) and SS (Special Security). The reform did not occur, 41 bis was no longer questioned and instead, in 2009, a new regulation established the three AS regimes: AS-1; AS-2; AS-3.¹⁵⁴ This regulation responded to complaints submitted to the European

¹⁵⁴ The transition from the deployment of the EIV to the introduction of High Security can be found in D.A.P. Circular No. 3619/6069 of 21 April 2009. Link: http://www.ristretti.it/commenti/2009/maggio/pdf16/circolare_alta_sicurezza.pdf.

Court of Human Rights that denounced the EIV as an administrative measure that could not be challenged in court for revocation. Above all, the prison administrations changed the EIV because, as indicated in the new regulation, it did not sufficiently differentiate its content, treatment offers and management from the prison rules¹⁵⁵. It was also heterogeneous in terms of the type of inmates, and was therefore abolished. In exchange for it, in 2009 came a more rational management of inmates considered homogeneous in terms of high dangerousness, for whom the adoption of a single regime was envisaged. Thus, the EIV disappeared in exchange for the AS-1, for mafiosi, and the AS-2, which became the regime for crimes linked to terrorism of political or religious kind. In addition, the AS-3 was foreseen for crimes linked to the mafia but of minor relevance. Not only was 41 bis no longer abolished, but now, in these special regimes, further isolation was induced by creating sections of no more than 20 people, who were forbidden to communicate with all other prisoners. Before this moment political prisoners were allocated with the mafiosi, while religious prisoners were not many yet. OLGA's letters indicate that the correspondence with alleged "Islamic terrorists" has taken place since these maximum security sub-regimes were created. Initially, the EIV was heterogeneously arranged and, since it was an administrative measure that left a lot of discretion, each prison did its own thing¹⁵⁶. In this historical phase, i.e. from 1998 to 2009, the EIV regime was a continuation of a sort of Art. 90. The difference, however, was that opposition to this regime was not as strong as in the 1970s-80s, as prisoners were more inclined to adapt to it in order to be left in peace rather than oppose it and be sent *"to a prison that arbitrarily 'interprets' prisoners' rights"*.¹⁵⁷

In short, since the 2000s there has been a major reorganisation of prison regimes. In the transition to AS, the prisoners themselves did not understand how the prison would reorganise itself and where they would end up. It was clear that they wanted to split up the heterogeneous EIV block, but it was not clear how this would happen. In fact, during the year 2009, the prisoners were verbally told that the D.A.P. had issued a new regulation with new differentiations, and that some would be divided into the three categories, while all those who were classified as EIV — because of their conflictual conduct and not because of the nature of their crime — were going to be allocated to isolated sections in single cells¹⁵⁸. In this way, as in the case of Giuseppe, in restructuring the differentiated regimes the

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁶ Booklet 18, October 2017, "Lettera dal carcere di Parma", Pasquale, AS1.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁸ Booklet 46, May 2010, "Lettera dal carcere di Poggioreale (Napoli)", Giuseppe.

D.A.P. also removed all those individuals who were not part of any association but who were rebellious. Differentiation was sophisticated compared to the 1970s, where politicians and extra-legal prisoners were housed in the same special regimes. In some way, the previous mistake of having united people who, together, had already created problems for the prison order was recognised.

The transition from EIV to AS also showed governmental priorities, i.e. what had to be abandoned and what retained. What has certainly been strengthened are the levels of surveillance, of measurement, of categorisation beyond mere detention. Savona (2021), discussing about the monitoring of the risk of radicalisation in AS2 regimes, said that while AS2 is, in this way, a fertile ground, it is also a privileged ground to study, test and develop tools for their recognition, activities that need to be backed by an intense training activity of the prison police (p. 140). To put it simply, the governmentality of AS regimes has enhanced the prison as an instrument of investigation, somehow transforming the execution of the sentence into an extension of the investigative apparatus.

From this brief reconstruction of the evolution of special maximum security regimes, it emerges above all how, in delineating the boundaries of a regime, the persistent threat is included and the possibility of the occurrence of a state of emergency is preserved. On the basis of this possible scenario, the field of action is continually redrawn. Thus, prison governance is not so much concerned with prevention in the sense of “averting a more or less concrete danger”, but with a type of “anticipated prevention” or, in one word, “pre-emption” (Krassman, 2007). This approach to risk management, which comes from the military strategy of pre-emptive war, seems to have also spilled into the prison logic and, therefore, into the organisation of the detention spaces and into the arrangement of the interventions on the basis of risk categories.

In 2021, there were 8862 inmates in maximum security (AS). This regime provides for a compartmentalisation of enemies into homogeneous categories. The proximity in the hierarchical scale with the 41 bis detainees determines that even in the AS1 and AS2 regimes the balance between re-education and security leans towards the latter. Generally, conditions are better than in some medium security regimes, favoured by the reduced turnover. However, one has to deal with a higher spatial compression, linked to the fact that many of the spaces dedicated to activities that take place outside of the section (pedagogical area, gymnasium, theatre, social rooms) are not reachable for security reasons. In fact, for the prisoners there are no chances to meet others who are not in the same regime. They are therefore isolated from the rest of the prison, each one seeing 10, 15, 20 people at a time for the whole detention duration. As they wrote to us from Terni, *“the wing is divided into two small sections: in*

one there are four cells, while where I am there are five cells. In all, it looks like 9 cells and we are all in single cells, with showers inside".¹⁵⁹ Sociality in that prison is reduced to very few spaces inside the section: the socialisation room in the same prison has a small library, a foosball table and two tables with plastic chairs. This isolation from the rest of the prison makes it difficult to create any sense of unity, also because, as Niccolò wrote to us, what inmates in other wings "*know about us is told to them by the guards*"¹⁶⁰ or the newspapers. With regard to the former, we will see how the guards tend to set the prisoners against each other; it has already been discussed above how newspapers tend to represent the enemy. In AS regimes even when prisoners are temporarily transferred to other prisons they have to be kept in solitary confinement. As with 41 bis, the relationship with the outside world is closely monitored. For instance, before March 2020 it was usual to find in any prison a large number of family visitors with bags containing clothes and food. Family members often waited in the summer sun for two to three hours¹⁶¹, with only guards and police dogs as their company. At the maximum security prison in Parma, for example, prisoners wrote to OLGa that the prison visits were organised in such a way as to inevitably create discomfort. In that prison, family members of the detainees arrived from more than 1000 km away, leaving at least the day before and sleeping near the prison at their own expense¹⁶².

AS1

AS1 is for prisoners whose 41 bis has been revoked. They are prominent figures and therefore kept separate from the others who are part of associations in AS3. They are mostly Italians from southern Italy. In this regime, a large part of the inmates have received the art. 4 bis, i.e. life sentence. This condition mandates that those subjected to it are to be excluded from any form of benefit such as alternative measures to detention, probation, or premium permits, unless they cooperate with the justice system. Hence, unrepentant prisoners are sentenced to life imprisonment unless they change their mind. This article was introduced in continuity with the fight against the Mafia in 1992. The function of cooperation as the only way to declassification was declared unconstitutional by the ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) and then again by the Italian Constitutional Court in 2019. Nonetheless,

¹⁵⁹ Booklet 81, June 2013, "Lettera dal carcere di Terni", Mauro, AS2.

¹⁶⁰ Booklet 90, March 2014, "Lettera dal carcere di Alessandria. Quello stesso formicolio (That same tingle)". Niccolò, AS2.

¹⁶¹ Booklet 78, March 2013, "Lettera dal carcere di Opera (Milano)".

¹⁶² Booklet 104, June 2015, "Lettera dal carcere di Parma, Alta Sicurezza 1, diario da un luogo immobile ("diary from an immobile place").

the processes for exiting this penalty remain undefined and, in any case, difficult, for reasons that I will not discuss in this section. What I am interested in emphasising for the AS1 regime, which is an issue that comes up often in the letters, is how the penal system abolished the death penalty about a century ago, in exchange for the penalty of dying of old age in prison. There has been a shift from the death sentence to life imprisonment, from an immediate death and a short and emotional wait to a slow death and a monotonous wait; from a punishment of the body to a punishment of the soul. On the basis of the confession, it is decided to “let live or let die”. As described by Salvatore:

*“Your resistance takes place in a limited space. You will not see the colours of nature, but you will get used to the colours of the prison, white and grey. The spaces are very closed, with the passing of time you will lose your sight, your hearing will fail, and you will lose your hair. You will grow old thinking you are young. You will have no more contact with the outside world, you will get used to it, and you will live inside the prison in a limited and closed “social” condition.”*¹⁶³

And Maddalena added:

*“Living these days surrounded by the usual four walls, with a view deviated by bars and grates, with the usual procedures of psychophysical annihilation (because if the mind suffers, the body degenerates with it), where time, marked no longer by the clock but by the rules, stops and every day followed, studied, managed and organised, no longer by oneself, seems like a month (especially if you are isolated), it convinces me more and more how exhausting it is for a person to know that there is no end to all this dripping, if not with death itself!”*¹⁶⁴

In the AS1 regime there is a weaponry deployed against the enemy that, more than the other regimes, shows continuity with the 41 bis. In these testimonies, a hierarchy of lives emerges in an emblematic way: the life of a “lifer” is worth less than that of the free and of other inmates. In this sense, biopolitics expresses itself again in the anthropophagic logic of ingestion for reinforcement: the death of these people is included in their sentence, enacting a real revenge.

There are in fact thousands of inmates who have been in prison for 25-30 years in this regime, often elderly or sick. From a maximum security regime they wrote to OLGa that 70% of the prisoners are heart

¹⁶³ Booklet 129, December 2017, “Lettera dal carcere di Bancali (SS), il carcere-ergastolo ostativo”, Salvatore:

“La tua resistenza si svolge in uno spazio limitato del tutto. Non vedrai i colori della natura, ma ti abituerai ai colori del carcere, bianchi e grigi. Gli spazi sono molto chiusi, con il passare del tempo perderai la vista, l'udito viene dimeno, e i capelli non li trovi più. Invecchierai credendo di essere giovane. Non avrai più contatti con l'esterno, ti abituerai e vivrai all'interno del carcere in uno stato “sociale” limitato e chiuso.”

¹⁶⁴ Booklet 20, December 2007 “Da una lettera dal carcere di Bologna”, Maddalena:

“vivere queste giornate circondata dalle solite 4 mura, con vista deviata da sbarre e grate, con le solite procedure di annientamento psicofisico (perché se la mente soffre, il corpo degenera con essa), dove il tempo, scandito non più dall'orologio ma dal regolamento, si ferma e ogni giornata seguita, studiata, gestita e organizzata non più da se stessi, sembra un mese (soprattutto se sei isolata) mi convince sempre di più quanto sia logorante per una persona il sapere che un termine a tutto questo stillicidio non c'è, se non con la morte stessa!”

patients, diabetic invalids or have infectious diseases. It seems to be stressed by everyone that long detentions make prisoners seriously ill¹⁶⁵. In my experience as a university tutor, among the people I met in this regime I remember a man on crutches in his 40s, who had been in prison for 20 years and suffered from

Buerger's disease. The disease had already resulted in the amputation of one of his feet and caused him open wounds and sores. It was well known that his disease could strike him suddenly and kill him, and this was the case a few years after I met him. When he was alive, it was ironically said that if he was to get out, he would get piece by piece, that is, through the amputations performed on his body (before he died, they had amputated his leg up to the knee). In spite of several requests, he was never granted an alternative to maximum security detention because he was a lifer.

AS2

High Security 2 is a sub-circuit designed to contain prisoners convicted for terrorism, including international terrorism, or subversion of the democratic order through the commission of acts of violence. In this sub-circuit there are very different groups: as written in one of the letters, the detainees have ideologically in common, at most, opposition to imperialism¹⁶⁶. For this regime it can be argued that a differentiation based on homogeneous categories has not yet come to fruition. The definition of terrorist concerns, in fact, both the political and the religious, creating a homogeneity in the modality of action and organisation of the two categories. A forced juxtaposition which, in practise, has already led to a subdivision between the religious and the political.

AS2 applies a special protocol for Islamic prisoners, with more restricted regulations, while other political militants are divided by affinity areas. Those accused of Islamic terrorism are held in Bancali, Nuoro and Rossano Calabro. They are undoubtedly the most isolated category of enemy. Several letters testify of abuses, beatings and threats against them. The imagery of the world's worst prisons resonates in their letters. Over the years, the prison in Benevento, then Macomer, and now Bancali, have been called Guantanamo. This reference is made explicit both by the prisoners and the guards. A testimony recalls of a guard mentioning the American practises in the Abu Ghraib prison¹⁶⁷. One prisoner was beaten by four prison guards, his face covered by a rubbish bag, mocked for his long beard and threatened: "*You will end up like your brothers in Iraqi prisons*"¹⁶⁸. In Macomer, the AS2 section

¹⁶⁵ Booklet 16, August 2007, "Lettera dal carcere di Opera".

¹⁶⁶ Booklet 49, August 2010, "Lettera dal carcere di Siano solidarietà ai prigionieri di guerra arabi", Davide, Alfredo, Bruno, Claudio, Massimiliano, Riccardo, Vincenzo, Gianfranco.

¹⁶⁷ Booklet 88, January 2014, "Lettere dal carcere di Alba (CN)", Carlos Eduardo.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*: "*Farai la fine dei tuoi fratelli nelle carceri irachene*".

of 25 prisoners from North Africa had been converted from a wing originally intended for 41 bis, so both the space and treatment were influenced by it:

I have already been to six prisons in Italy and I have never seen treatment like this. After the search we were taken to cells in the same section as 41 bis: total isolation, armoured door closed 24 hours a day, we see no other prisoners, only guards; even the guards bring us food. Every time we come out of the cell, we are patted down, each one of us, by two guards. Even our clothes are counted, and they only give us five books.¹⁶⁹

Moreover, these problems are compounded by the poverty which in many cases accompanies these detainees, and the problem of being foreigners and therefore more vulnerable to the criminal justice system. In fact, as described by one detainee, his family became illegal 7 months after his arrest; they had been evicted from their home, they had no jobs and could not visit him in Sardinia without documents.¹⁷⁰

The AS2 regime for political prisoners is divided geographically in this way: in Alessandria and Ferrara for anarchists only, while communists tend to be in Terni and Latina. This is perhaps the least described regime and, although in fact its prisoners are more inclined than others to write, denounce and report on ongoing struggles, the conditions are not always discussed. In fact, it seems that the posture of the political prisoners is much more outward looking than the others. A substantial difference between political prisoners and mafiosi or religious prisoners is that the former claim as theirs the actions for which they were arrested. In one of the letters that OLGa received, for example, it is pointed out that the actions branded as “terroristic” are aimed at putting a spoke in the wheels of the system of oppression that is experienced on a daily basis, and are therefore, if anything, an act of freedom: “once again we welcome attacks carried out where a logic of exploitation of man over man is perpetrated”.¹⁷¹ They reiterate that the state is itself a terrorist for abuses, exploitation, environmental disasters, wars, etc.

The treatment in this regime tends to be better than in others, in the sense that no one has a life sentence, and it is also a less violent regime than that for religious prisoners. Again, it is the immaterial prison that does the work of the double penalty, because the existence of the prisoners is made up of

¹⁶⁹ Booklet 34, April 2009, “Lettera dal carcere di Macomer”, Amine:

“In Italia ho già girato sei carceri, mai ho visto un trattamento come questo. Dopo la perquisizione ci hanno portati nelle celle che si trovano in una sezione uguale al 41 bis: isolamento totale, porta blindata chiusa 24 ore su 24, non vediamo nessun’altro prigioniero, solo guardie; anche il cibo ce lo portano le guardie. Ogni volta che usciamo dalla cella veniamo perquisiti palpati, ognuno di noi, da due guardie. Anche i vestiti ce li danno contati, di libri ce ne danno soltanto 5.”

¹⁷⁰ Booklet 53, December 2010, “Lettera dal carcere di Macomer (NU)”, Adel.

¹⁷¹ Booklet 5, August 2006, “Lettera dal carcere di Vicenza, ancora una volta (once again)”, Juan and Mike: “una volta in più salutiamo con gioia attacchi portati lì dove si perpetra una logica di sfruttamento dell’uomo sull’uomo”.

a routine that is always the same. Sociality has its own times as well as meals and activities in the cell. As reported on several occasions by the guarantor of prisoners, in these sections there is a total absence of a treatment offer, so the time becomes empty except for the solidarity that comes from outside, which is censored in many cases

“These sections are really a reproduction of the current model of control outside! Even though we are left with a “free field”, because the cells are open from 8 to 20, equipped with spaces such as the sociality room, the library (well stocked, thanks to the management of comrade Rita), the gymnasium (which, however, lacks functioning equipment... bah!) and the courtyard, which is decorated with a garden and trees... there is a very high level of study and control of our every movement! There are cameras at every corner, in every room at least 2, just in the courtyard there are 7! Every fucking habit, every movement is monitored by this electronic eye! There is not the slightest corner of privacy... you are either watched or listened to... [...] At the beginning, seeing the open cells I felt “freer”, (it had never happened to me!), but after only two days you realise what it is all about! The game is not worth the candle. The few metres in which you are allowed to move around get you fed up straight away! This is a prison within a prison. Those who know penitentiaries know very well that it is you, the prisoner, who moves to reach the common rooms: the lawyer's room, the interview room, the matriculation room and so on; here, on the contrary: lawyer, interview room, infirmary are all inside these two small sections [...] you cannot move away from this space! Even if the matriculation office has to notify you of something, it is the guard who comes to you and it is not you who go to his fucking office! In short, it is really a mini-prison inside the prison!”¹⁷²

In AS2 wings some aspects related to differentiation are sometimes reproduced by the prisoners themselves. This issue, closely linked to the theme of the research, is highlighted by a good number of testimonies of prisoners who claimed incompatibility with some non-political prisoners. This aspect is an expression of a general change in the prison, which, especially for the most politicised, is no longer the place of conflict: since everyone is on their own, new forms of adaptation to prison must be sought. Although the enemy may remain “irreducible”, to use the language of the 1970s – that is to say, a

¹⁷² Booklet 57, May 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Rebibbia (Roma)”, Maddalena:

“Queste sezioni sono veramente la riproduzione del modello attuale di controllo che c'è fuori! Pur essendoci lasciato “campo libero”, per via delle celle aperte dalle 8 alle 20, con spazi come la saletta per la socialità, la biblioteca (ben fornita grazie alla gestione della compà Rita), la palestra (che comunque è sprovvista di strumenti funzionanti... bah!) e l'aria decorata con giardino e alberi... vige un levassimo studio e controllo d'ogni nostro movimento! Ci stanno telecamere ad ogni angolo, in ogni sala almeno 2, solo all'aria se ne contano 7! Vedete voi! Ogni cazzo di nostra abitudine, spostamento è monitorato da questo occhio elettronico! Non c'è un minimo angolo di intimità... o sei guardata o ascoltata... [...] All'inizio, vedendo le celle aperte mi sentivo più “libera”, (non mi era mai capitato!), ma dopo soli due giorni ti rendi conto del motivo di tutto questo! Il gioco non vale la candela. I pochi metri in cui ti concedono di circolare stufano subito! Questo è un carcere dentro al carcere. Per chi conosce i penitenzieri sa bene che le sale in comune: quella dell'avvocato, quella dei colloqui, la matricola e via discorrendo, per raggiungerle sei tu detenut a doverti spostare; qui invece no: avvocato, colloqui, infermeria sono tutte all'interno di queste due piccole sezioni (in tutto le celle sono 8, contando pure le nostre 3 dell'A2) da questo spazio non ti muovi! Pure la matricola se deve notificarti qualcosa la guardia a venire da te e non tu ad andare al suo cazzo d'ufficio! Insomma, veramente un mini-carcere dentro al carcere!”*

prisoner who will in no way come to terms with the management – it emerges that among the prisoners themselves it is increasingly difficult to create affinities with others who are different from them, both because compartmentalisation acts from above and because differentiation is reproduced from below. Thus, these regimes legitimise themselves on the basis that many prisoners prefer them, in order to be better off despite being in prison. Moreover, since the 1970s prison conditions have improved, although this improvement has also occurred in a differentiated manner: the relative well-being of those who are better off is often at the expense of those who experience it worse. Therefore, although the freedoms within the AS sections are more restricted, some prisoners would also have problems returning among “ordinary” prisoners, preferring to stay with their peers: *“I am “better”, the comrades here have received me in solidarity — as it should be done among prisoners, but every time it becomes more and more strange outside certain institutions — but I don't want to be pessimistic”*. *Of all the prisons I have been to in my prison experience, here it is “better”*. *Here among “political prisoners” we understand each other and there is an ethic of solidarity. It is true that this makes it easy, but it is not a direct choice for us”*.¹⁷³ This aspect was already described by Magnaghi (1985), who felt different from the majority of prisoners who did not see prison as a continuation of life. The same also emerges in the AS1 section when there is talk of declassification, i.e. the possibility of leaving the regime and joining the medium security wing. In AS2 too, there is a lack of that solidarity that is not only typical of the political prisoners, but more generally of the prison of the past, which has now gradually eroded in the medium security sections. I do not underline the issue in order to criticise these positions, as this would not be the place to comment on it. What I do wonder, however, is whether the conception of being in prison today is different, almost opposite, to that of prison “of the past”, particularly for political prisoners. Although even in the prison of the past the debate between political prisoners and convicts, as well as, outside, between proletariat and lumpen-proletariat, had produced boundaries, for many the phrase “they are all political prisoners” signified the struggle against any differentiation. Perhaps, today, because the relationship of political prisoners to the struggle is different or because they are in a homogeneous wing, in some ways it has become more difficult to carry on struggles for others but especially with others. It is difficult even to know the realities of others when you live in a regime of 10 people and are not allowed to meet these others.

¹⁷³ Booklet 138, September 2019, “Lettere dal carcere di Terni”, Juan, AS2.

“sto “meglio”, i compagni qui mi hanno ricevuto solidalmente — come si dovrebbe fare tra detenuti, ma ogni volta diventa sempre più strano, fuori da certi istituti ma non voglio essere pessimista. Anzi di tutte le carceri che ho girato nella mia esperienza carceraria, qui si sta “meglio”. Qui fra “politici” ci si capisce e c'è un'etica della solidarietà; è vero che così diventa facile, ma non è una scelta diretta nostra.”

In this way, it is difficult to understand whether the struggles will continue towards a differentiation without creating any form of unity — perhaps supporting only political prisoners and other popular prisoners — or whether the struggles will find a way to keep the focus on all these differentiated categories at the same time. I also wonder if the concept of being in prison today is different from that of the prison of the past for all other prisoners. Surely this aspect is even more crucial than the first one, and for this reason I will devote my attention to the flip side of the coin of the criminal law of the enemy, that of rehabilitating prisoners. In the middle of these two poles emerges a prison reality that no longer finds, if there ever were, pure identities, extremely coherent with their own ideals within a system of oppression of one's own personality that reaches its peak inside the prison. It is therefore a question of understanding how the prisoners in struggle, the subject of this research, manage the tension between the differentiation of the self and the differentiation imposed by the prison within a horizon of resistance.

3.2 Re-education is reward, cooperation and individualisation

This section discusses the narratives of the prisoners who wrote to OLGa about the alternative and complementary logic to the iron fist, i.e. the reward. In the letters, this logic is blamed for being one of the main reasons why prison is no longer what it used to be. It has made the life of prisoners increasingly individualised and oriented only towards personal improvement, which, as we shall see, is to the detriment of a climate of collective solidarity in many respects. As mentioned before, prison differentiation integrates both more security-oriented regimes that follow the theories of the criminal law of the enemy, and more treatment-oriented regimes, where prisoners are freer.

When the letters talk about the major reforms that characterise re-education, in addition to the one that changed the prison system in 1975 they also refer to the Gozzini Law, which dates back to 1986. This reform crystallises one of the most important moments for understanding how prison has changed today. In this law, differentiation was definitively structured, not only in regard to the logic of special circuits, but also to those oriented towards the re-education of prisoners. This reform came after a period of emergency for the penal system, a season of social struggles inside and outside prisons that began in the late 1960s and ended in the 1980s after intense state repression. This reform went on to normalise the new extensions of the penal system and to manage a prison that had become, compared to previous years and then even more so over time, a pacified prison.

Prison modernisation therefore took on two faces, reflecting, on the one hand, the rationalisation of special laws at the institutional level, by removing Article 90 in exchange for 41 bis and by transitioning from EIV to AS. On the other hand, prison modernisation facilitated the sophistication of ordinary detention, where alternative measures to prison were also thought of, although all in a rewarding key (De Vito, 2009). In other words, a double track was constituted where the legal power to punish was “naturalised” and, at the same time, the technical power to discipline was restructured (Foucault, 1976, p. 32). From then on, the rules of the penitentiary game were rewritten. However, it was a longer process of which the new law was both cause and effect, and which came to maturity in the years described in the letters.

The Gozzini reform and the introduction of prison benefits

The Gozzini Law was, as with every reform, the result of different tensions. At first more reformist and “left-wing”, the law was then reshaped for the current needs and for the new season of the war on terrorism that came in the 1990s. The war on “political terrorism” was reaching its final moments and the Gozzini reform was the last blow against it. In those years, the heterogeneous group “*Liberarsi dalla necessità del carcere*” (“to free yourself from the necessity of prison”) tried to retrace the process of de-institutionalisation that had invested the world of mental health in the previous years. Among them, hundreds of parliamentarians and members of local councils, activists of collectives and associations, representatives of *Psichiatria democratica* (democratic psychiatry), judges, prison, social and health workers, prison chaplains, etc. discussed abolitionist demands (De Vito, 2009). The perspective was to remove juvenile prisons and judicial psychiatric hospitals, before moving on to the rest of the penitentiary and penal system. Crucial was the position of those dissociated political prisoners in the homogeneous areas of the combatant groups, from which came an overall criticism of the prison as a total institution, and where a project of de-carceration was proposed. Unlike for the “irreducibles”, for these political prisoners the possibility of accessing benefits was extended, such as outside work, home detention, and permits for those with good conduct. A set of conditions that favoured future possibilities of early release (De Vito, 2009, p. 112).

If the 1980s were still driven by the reformist impulse that saw the institution as an archaic model and the alternative measures as a passage to de-carceration, the following decade, on the contrary, witnessed an even stronger reversal of direction. Therefore, the de-institutionalisation request was missing and that archaic model expanded by integrating those alternative measures, thus creating a new

continuity of the prison inside and outside the walls (De Vito, 2009, p. 132). From the 1990s, with the rise of mafia attacks and the consequent climate of war against this phenomenon, the law was subsequently emptied of more treatment-oriented offers.

The Gozzini law was essentially based on the same criteria as every prison reform since prison development: Criminal detention must have as its essential function the transformation of the individual's behaviour; prisoners must be isolated or at least distributed according to the criminal gravity of their act; punishments, the course of which must be able to be modified according to the individuality of the prisoners, according to the results that are achieved, progress or relapse (Foucault, 1976, p. 92). To these, it added work and education as a lever for change and for maintaining the prison. The figures responsible for this change are the professionals of the correctional continuum endowed with an extra-judicial and extra-disciplinary knowledge. The regime of the prison must be, at least in part, controlled and taken care of by specialised personnel, who must possess the moral and technical capacities to watch over the good formation of the individuals (*ibidem*).

This reform, as well as others that came later, followed what Mathiesen (1990, p. 139) called the “prison fiasco”, that is, the reproduction of the rehabilitation ideology within the public sphere, also perpetuated by the media, which matches the more justicialist instances. It is an ideology that, as in the past, concerns a public sphere smaller than that of the institutions directly engaged in crime prevention. From a discursive point of view, there is no lack of legislative seasons exclusively oriented towards a securitarian ideology. On the contrary, there have never been reformist seasons that have bypassed securitarian requirements. In the constant back-and-forth between opposite poles of treatment and deterrence, presented as such in the reform discourses on prison, the prison is given the legitimacy to punish without ever discussing real alternatives to punishment within the arena of democratic institutions.

It should be stressed however, that the result of these tensions, when not envisaging the reinforcement and tightening of the 41 bis and the definition of the 14 bis isolation, was to contribute to developing better living conditions in the prisons. Under the Gozzini Law, prisons were to be seen as places where offenders could be rehabilitated, and a general improvement in prison conditions was to be envisaged: cells that looked more like mediaeval dungeons were to be eliminated, and treatment activities were to be offered. In short, the prison system had to restructure itself, and it did so in a differentiated manner. At the same time, prison had to break up riots, which was achieved using the system of reward and punishment. After years of punishment and an iron fist, it was the reward system

that defeated the internal hierarchies in the prisons and the organisation of the prisoners who had participated in the political and social struggles of the 60s-70s. Again, it was the sophistication of the fight against the criminal phenomena of the moment that inspired the new prison tendencies. At all levels, there was a division of the types of prisoners that could be defined as treatable or not. Therefore, as said before, between the irreducible Brigatist and the dissociated, a hope of liberty was constructed only for the latter. It was a real novelty, since with the dissociation an alternative to repentance was created with all its consequences. This process also went on to isolate the unrepentant more and more, bringing a large number of ex-combatants to the side of the state. Meanwhile, in medium security the most rebellious and dangerous were distinguished from those who contributed to maintain order. In this case, the nuances are different and will be explored in the next pages.

For this new category, which I call the “treatable”, it has been made easier and quicker for prisoners to lodge complaints with the supervisory court, conditions have been improved for obtaining work inside and outside the prison, and provision has been made for “premium permits” to be granted to those who have behaved consistently. Special areas for visits have been provided (such as green areas and spaces for children), the number of phone calls has been increased, better medical care has been offered, or, as written in a letter:

*“open cells, at least to move around the floor and not stay closed 21 hours a day; having the possibility to do more courses that take up the day; the possibility to do visitation Sundays too for those who have children or a partner who works, it is very important that they treat you immediately, if you are sick on the weekend you have to wait until Monday”.*¹⁷⁴

But most important are the 45 days of early release every semester. With Gozzini there is an increasing involvement of treatment technicians. In prison, the right to punish and reward, and to judge the conduct of the prisoner, has become more and more widespread. A micro-power that operates within the prison has thus spread in addition to the simple retributive punishment, calculated more or less scientifically in terms of the number of years. Thus, permanent micro-courts will be created that will further complicate the vicissitudes of the prisoner and, especially, those of the prisoner in struggle.

The reform of criminal law thus becomes a reorganisation of the power to punish, a new political economy of punishment based on a different type of prison and prisoners. There are several main

¹⁷⁴ Booklet 69, May 2012, “Lettere dal carcere di San Vittore (Milano)”, Adamo: *“Riuscire a tenere le celle aperte, almeno per circolare nel piano e non rimanere chiusi 21 ore su 24. Avere la possibilità di fare più corsi che ti impegnano la giornata. La possibilità di fare colloqui pure la domenica (per chi ha figli o il partner che lavora, è molto importante che ti curino subito, se stai male il fine settimana devi aspettare lunedì.”*

innovations presented and discussed in this chapter. The treatment programme has become increasingly capable of involving prisoners who are now more and more interested in the benefits. A new internal organisation is thus created, which is presented as “a great progress” since the prisoner will only have to answer for his conduct towards the prison and not towards his section mates. As has been said from the AS circuits, the greatest strength of this governmental approach is that it succeeds in guaranteeing the *pax carceraria* in reward and punishment without intervention from above, since it is the prisoners themselves, consciously or not, who contribute to it.

From the letters we received, one of the measures that best showed the spread of this trend towards rewarding logic was the law that introduced a special early release in 2013. This was an additional deduction to the one provided for by law: from 45 days of sentence discount every single semester, it increased to 75 days. This was a temporary measure (until 2015) to deal with the overcrowding emergency¹⁷⁵. Although it was called “emptying prisons” (“svuota-carceri”), it did not provide for automatic release¹⁷⁶, but rather favoured the possibility of early release for the most deserving prisoners. This discounted sentence is an exclusive measure for those who, in addition to not having received any disciplinary sanction, received a positive assessment from prison staff during the observation period. The assessment also includes attendance at various “treatment” activities, such as school and courses of various kinds.

The introduction of new benefits has therefore improved the detention conditions in a differentiated way, and, in the same manner, the isolation devices have been refined. In fact, as already discussed regarding the Gozzini Law, a repertoire of secondary adaptations that belonged to old forms of solidarity between prisoners, even hierarchical ones, has disappeared. These adaptations have now become increasingly mediated by the prison in a rewarding form. This kind of attention has become progressively more important. On the one hand, the emergency approach to special regimes has favoured pseudo-legal interventions, where the intervention of the state goes to attack the enemy. On the other hand, prisoners seeking rehabilitation are taken care of by the prison, which offers the construction of a better and personalised detention path with “more freedom”, which is, however, only possible within a more codified power system, which is therefore more precise in controlling the prisoner.

¹⁷⁵ This refers to Decree Law No 146 of 23 December 2013. Link: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/12/23/13G00190/sg>.

¹⁷⁶ Booklet 88, January 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Rebibbia (Roma)”.

3.2.1 The post disciplinary prison: the reward logic

Some authors have defined the current prison system as “post-disciplinary” (Castel, 1981; Chantraine, 2008, p. 56). This model of power is identifiable by its being depersonalised, rational and technocratic, arbitrary and aimed at dividing and pitting punishable subjects against each other. At the same time, it is distinguished by its ability to enforce rights without exercising governmental power. To better understand how this interweaving of different logics has led to a coherent strategy, it is possible to consider the general phenomenon that has been described by Foucault as a shift of punishment from the body to the soul¹⁷⁷. In other words, power today acts in a *soft way*, disciplining the social body and avoiding resorting to force as the only demonstration of domination, conserving it as a possible measure to be used with precision in particular cases. This *shift* in the model of governmental power is part of the mechanics of differentiation.

This section will describe one of the logics that drives this mechanism: the reward logic. This is a logic in which punishment and rehabilitation are crystallised, a concept similar to what has been called the *candy system* by Chantraine (2008). This logic is based on a system of consensus that intertwines the disciplinary prison career and its moral evaluation and control within a system based on rewards and punishments. The result is the construction of a space in which prisoners themselves are the producers of the prison order or intramural practises.

The reward system is based on a logic of difference. Like the candy system, the daily game of negotiating privileges is granted to prisoner-leaders who, in turn, contribute to ordering a game of punishments and rewards (Chantraine, 2008, p. 60). The reward logic in Italy makes privileges its main resource. Privileges often create conditions of inequality between prisoners, allow them to enjoy the time available (think of the different activities provided in the detention courses), and at the same time create an atmosphere of corruption that makes each person only care about their own individual condition (Chantraine, 2008, p. 69).

The atomisation of the prisoner is achieved through the criterion of “*divide et impera*” and is aimed at inducing in the prisoner a conscious state of visibility that ensures the automatic functioning of power (Foucault, 1976, p. 69). Divisive strategies among prisoners are an old technique: “*As a response,*

¹⁷⁷ See note 5.

*the guards threatened the whole section (including people who were not present) with a disciplinary report, which was then given to me and two others for arguing! The classic method: hit-all to divide "good" from "bad".*¹⁷⁸

Once the separation has taken place, A and B categorised prisoners are created (but also other series that are distinguished by a supposed meritocratic criterion) within a system of unequal individual privileges (between different prisoners, between different sections, between different prisons). The candy system is thus an interlocking arrangement that conceals, through the individual production of their own rewards (or "candy"), a disciplinary regime aimed at maintaining prison order, control and self-control (Chantraine, 2008, p. 68). The stick is used less, either because there is a perception of receiving more "carrots", or because one believes, on some level, in the rules of the system. Discursive practises and spaces envisage a better prison. The management believes that through the offer of courses, jobs, and opportunities of various kinds, the inmate can be re-educated. There is a constant search for the model prisoner to be raised as an example and rewarded with benefits.

In OLGa's letters, rewarding is one of the topics that was requested to be discussed. In the stories, the same logics are described in a local way, although Italy and Canada have different penal systems. Firstly, there is general agreement that there has been an improvement in the treatment offered in the last 20 years. However, there is no shortage of criticism in the letters. Although this intervention has brought some novelties compared to the ordinary routine, the price to be paid for the way these activities are set up is often too high. One of these demands linked to treatment is differential, as in its strong selectivity. Specifically, some conditions have been gradually degrading, in particular with regard to those who do not benefit from non-custodial measures or alternative sentences. Moreover, because it is not the re-education values to be incorporated, but rather the reward ones, it seems that the imaginary around the re-education and the interest of the prisoner to re-educate himself only unite in the search of benefits for the early exit. As Marina from Bollate writes: *"yes, our future in prison is closely linked to the calculation of the time that passes and the speed with which it passes, (and) to the rewards, which also consist in certain quantities of "time consumed" granted by the judicial authority at its discretion in addition to the time already spent"*.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Booklet 74, November 2012, "Lettera dal carcere di Palermo", Maddalena: *"come risposta le guardie minacciarono tutta la sezione (comprese persone che non erano presenti) con il rapporto disciplinare che poi fu dato a me ed altre due per aver insistito! il metodo classico: colpire tutte per dividere "buone" da "cattive"."*

¹⁷⁹ Booklet 77, February 2013, "Lettera dal carcere di Bollate (Milano), Marina: *"Ebbene sì, il nostro futuro in carcere, è strettamente legato al calcolo del tempo che passa e alla velocità con cui farlo passare, ai premi, consistenti anch'essi in determinate quantità "di tempo consumato" concesso dall'autorità giudiziaria a sua discrezione in più a quello realmente già passato."*

Moreover, the possibility of spending qualitatively better time in a better space creates a certain consensus among prisoners. However, as Marina points out, prisoners make practical calculations rather than believing in a fairer prison system.

In another contribution, Elian recounts his entry into a reward scheme:

*“[...]In this new place of suffering I must admit that the living conditions have improved, here the living space and hygienic conditions are partially respected, the cells are fully furnished, plasma TV with built-in DVD, shower in the cell, etc. etc... For most this beautiful sight is satisfying and acts as morphine to see all that happens, and only the most acute can notice that this place is infested with cameras, intercoms in the cells, conditions and agreements to be respected to ensure that this shitty gate remains open from 8.30 to 18.30; that every minimum claim for what you care about is sanctioned with disciplinary reports, complaints and transfers. [...] You asked me why it is difficult to find complicity with my fellow prisoners. Well, it's simple, because they have a frightening fear of life, fuelled by the hypnosis of benefits, and this order of things does nothing but annihilate you as a person, reducing your pride and dignity to zero”.*¹⁸⁰

Today, the reward system is directly cause and effect of the prison environment, of the prison which is no longer what it used to be. In these conditions, among prisoners there is no longer a rejection of the prison system or a substantial distance between “guards and thieves”, to use an old expression. Even if it is not true for everyone, the reality of today's prison includes rebellious prisoners who, like the others, carry out the educational courses they prefer, who participate in the logic of rewarding, whilst always trying to live this process critically: *“I will not hide from you that I also entered the mechanism of rewarding, but if it happened, it was only to show these infamous people that even someone like me is able to obtain excellent results, and the prisons are full of people like me”*¹⁸¹. There are those who prefer to accept the system in order to get out as soon as possible, but without sharing the values imposed by the management. There are others who use the time to have relations with the outside world, and the number of volunteers who bring glimpses of the world outside, inside, is not insignificant. The problem is that, because

¹⁸⁰ Booklet 80, April 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Pescara”, Elian:

“In questo nuovo luogo di sofferenza devo ammettere che le condizioni di vivibilità sono migliorate, qui in parte vengono rispettati lo spazio vitale e le condizioni igieniche, le celle sono full-optional, televisore al plasma con dvd incorporato, doccia in cella etc... Per i più tutto questo bel vedere è appagante e funge da morfina per vedere tutto quello che accade e che solo i più acuti riescono a notare, oggi, che questo posto è infestato da telecamere, da citofoni in cella, da condizioni e patti da rispettare per fare in modo che questo cancello di merda rimanga spento dalle 8.30 alle 18.30, che ogni minima presa di posizione per rivendicare quello che in realtà ti tocca viene sanzionato con rapporti disciplinari, denunce e trasferimenti. [...] Mi chiedevi come mai con i miei concellini è difficile trovare complicità. Be' semplice, perché hanno una paura della vita che fa spavento, alimentata dall'ipnosi dei benefici e questo ordine di cose non fa altro che annientati come persona, riducendo il tuo orgoglio e la tua dignità a zero.”

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem*. “Non ti nascondo che anche io entrai nel meccanismo della premialità, ma se così è avvenuto, è stato solo per dimostrare a questi infami che anche uno come me è in grado di ottenere ottimi risultati e di persone come me le prigioni sono piene zeppe.”

of the way the reward system itself is set up, it is difficult to be part of it without contributing to reproducing it. This mechanism is in fact internalised because it is based on the granting of relative comfort rather than severe deprivation: “they must be given a lot so that they have a lot to lose” (*ibidem*). This aspect will emerge when discussing “model-sections”, i.e. how the set of benefits linked to greater mobility in the section also act as greater blackmail than in other sections¹⁸².

The reward system is one of the main defendants that has changed the prison and the solidarity between prisoners. The prison system has been able to create a legitimate mechanism of social reproduction and has contributed enormously to creating a process of individualisation of the prisoner, even and especially in the medium security wings. Prisoners experience shortcomings and abuses individually and without the perspective of a more general picture. As they wrote: “*in shopping, if you miss that sweet or that perfume then you beat against the bars of the cell; if you do it for your rights, then you are a pain in the ass (allow me the term)*”.¹⁸³

As far as the reproductive aspect is concerned, what legitimises the conscious or unconscious practise is mainly linked to what was said before about the development of the logics perpetrated by the Gozzini law, “*these 5 months benefits have created a perfect system*”¹⁸⁴. Rather, what happened in prison is nothing different from what happened outside: “*the prison reality slightly reflects society*”, “*the crisis with all its facets, here has also not fed anger, but instead total resignation as well as indifference*”¹⁸⁵. Fighting within a system in which one no longer perceives a sense of unity, risking paying more than anyone else, makes the choice to rebel alone against an abuse increasingly difficult.

The reward logic also manages to transform perceived reality, in that it is configured in such a way that what should be due to everyone is conceived as a reward or an individual privilege. From this point of view, there is no shortage of narratives that show the management and its collaborators extending a helping hand to the last of the lasts, always in an asymmetrical position, telling of small experiences of good re-education. All this emerges in Eddi's letters in the Padua prison, where he recounts the backstage of a television programme about his prison. According to him, the programme

¹⁸² Booklet 110, February 2016, “Lettere dal carcere di Opera (Milano)”.

¹⁸³ Booklet 136, May 2019, “Il carcere oggi: riguardo il rapporto detenuti-secondini (Prison today: about the prisoner-guards relationship)”: “*Però nella spesa, se manca quel dolce o quel profumo allora si può fare la battitura; se la fai per i tuoi diritti, allora sei un rompiscogliani (concedetemi il termine).*”

¹⁸⁴ Booklet 105, July 2015, “Da lettere di diversi prigionieri. Sui “ricatti” che aiutano a impoverire la socialità, la resistenza, la ribellione dentro le carceri (From letters of several prisoners. On the “blackmail” that helps to impoverish sociality, resistance, rebellion inside prisons)”: “*questi benefici di 5 mesi hanno creato un sistema perfetto per i nostri carnefici.*”

¹⁸⁵ *Ibidem*. “*La realtà carceraria rispecchia un po' la società*”; “*la crisi con tutte le sue sfaccettature, anche qui non ha alimentato rabbia ma rassegnazione totale oltretutto indifferenza.*”

was made by the priest and the prison manager, and the three prisoners interviewed did it in order to get some bonus time off¹⁸⁶. The same was described about the Opera prison:

“The torturer, Mr Siciliano [the prison director], has it easy when he says that Opera is a model prison. It is enough for him to show the pedagogical area (where only a privileged few have access). Then there are the various initiatives with the theatre, where performances are made for an audience of civilians, magistrates, politicians, and always the usual group of favourite prisoners. Then there are various amenities, including green spaces with kiosk-bars (run by the children of the prison police of Opera), a library with open space and a gazebo, five-a-side football with synthetic grass, seven-a-side football on grass, fitness courses etc. etc...”¹⁸⁷

The logic of the prize is palpable when it comes to work, where real episodes of exploitation take place, and which are taken for granted, perhaps in part because, at the basis of prison work, there is also that fee that the prisoner must pay regardless as a debt to the state, and which is evaluated as a disciplinary aspect: *“because in here to be a little free you have to volunteer, work for free, so it comes true that “work makes you free””¹⁸⁸*, as Marius wrote. Prisoners thus find themselves working inside the prison: *“cooking, storing, sweeping, etc. etc., work that is always paid 3 euros per hour and often for only 15 days a month”¹⁸⁹*. This means an average salary of 150 euro per month. Developing new opportunities are also a number of companies and associations around the prison that have created low-cost employment contracts or simply built their services on the basis of voluntary work carried out by prisoners. However, the labour and treatment offer are often scarce and intermittent because they are linked to temporary agreements that are not renewed or to funds that are no longer provided. In addition to this salary not being sufficient to pay for their own maintenance in prison, let alone that of family members, or to pay rent, work thus becomes a disciplinary tool at the disposal of the management in exchange for small concessions.

Work allows us to understand how prisoners compete in an arena where available resources are scarce, thus exacerbating an already competitive mechanism. As Marco wrote to us, the Oville cooperative, which for 20 years has been creating disparate educational pathways towards professions such

¹⁸⁶ Booklet 143, July 2020, “Lettera dal carcere di Padova”, Eddi.

¹⁸⁷ Booklet 125, June 2017, “Lettera dal carcere di Milano-Opera”:

“La fa facile l’aguzzino sig. Siciliano, quando dice che Opera è un carcere modello. A lui basta far vedere la zona lavorazione (dove solo pochi prediletti possono accedere). Poi ci sono le varie iniziative con il teatro, dove vengono fatti spettacoli per un pubblico di civili, magistrati, politici e sempre il solito gruppo di detenuti prediletti. Poi ci sono vari lavori comprendenti spazi verdi con chioschi-bar (gestiti dai figli della polizia penitenziaria di Opera), biblioteca con spazio aperto, con gazebo, calcetto a 5 con erba sintetica, calcetto a 7 su erba, corsi di fitness ecc. ecc... tutte cose che fanno apparire Opera un carcere modello, cose che fanno piegare la testa a quei detenuti deboli e indegni, che si vendono per un angolo di verde, peccato che anche loro vivono tra topi e scarafaggi in celle devastate dal tempo [...]”

¹⁸⁸ Booklet 60, August 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Prato”, Marius: *“perché qui dentro per essere un po' libero devi fare il volontario, lavorare gratis, così si avvera che “il lavoro rende liberi”.”*

¹⁸⁹ Booklet 133, June 2018, “Scritto dal carcere di Castelfranco Emilia (MO)”: *“lavori sempre pagati 3 ore all’ora e spesso per soli 15 giorni al mese”.*

as electrician, computer technician, etc., offers courses for inmates, but only 4 inmates can be awarded paid internship. Similarly, from Tolmezzo inmates have reported that the gardening course had 11 enrolled, but only 4 positions available¹⁹⁰.

Work is also a tool used by the management to buy the trust of the prisoners. As exemplified in an anonymous letter, the director of the prison offered one of the inmates a job to prevent them from denouncing the prison officers¹⁹¹. If, outside of the walls, these mechanisms are already rather ambiguous, it must be said that in prison, in conditions of general precariousness, the competition can become much more ruthless, making the prisoners willing to do a lot more for the management in exchange for, as we can see, much less in terms of type of work and pay.

The condition of blackmail is explained by all as a lever to make the prisoners move, to make them work and behave in a functional way to receive a good judgement by the re-educational sphere of the prison. This is why work possibilities are granted and removed, just as the opening of cells during the day. Consequently, the willingness of the prisoners not to lose what has been granted can only worsen the prison conditions: for obtaining a positive judgement, certain jobs and certain working conditions, such as unpaid hours after hours, as well as courses and other activities, must be carried out¹⁹². As Cristian wrote, *“You are quite free all day long; until 5 p.m. You can go to the courtyard, there are only single cells, and this is good, but this single cell costs you too much. If you don't go to school, you can't stay here. This prison wants all the inmates to be puppets.”*¹⁹³

So far, I have not made any distinction between maximum security and medium security. While, in fact, these realities present themselves in different forms, the conditioning that the prisoner undergoes towards the management for the purpose of evaluation is the same. In AS1 there is perhaps the borderline condition concerning lifer prisoners. The fact that they are excluded from access to benefits does not preclude them from participating in treatment activities. It may, however, sound paradoxical: why would a person with a life sentence want to work to apply for early release? As written before, their sentence is built on hope, on the remote, as in really difficult possibility of receiving a declassification and therefore having this limit released. The system of blackmail exists for them as well in the

¹⁹⁰ About Ovile cooperative, see Booklet 140, February 2020, “Lettera dal carcere di Reggio Emilia”, Marco. About Tolmezzo prison see booklet 136, May 2019, “Lettera dal carcere di Tolmezzo”, Rupert.

¹⁹¹ Booklet 146, March 2021, “Lettera collettiva dal carcere di Uta (CA)”.

¹⁹² Booklet 136, May 2019, “Lettera dal carcere di Tolmezzo”, Rupert.

¹⁹³ Booklet 121, February 2017, “Lettera dal carcere di Volterra (PI), Cristian: *“Si sta abbastanza liberi, tutto il giorno; fino alle 17 puoi andare all'aria, sono tutte celle singole, e questo è buono, ma questa cella singola ti costa troppo. Già se non vai a scuola, qua non puoi stare. Questo carcere vuole tutti i detenuti burattini. La maggior parte dei detenuti fanno le marionette”*.”

fact that if, for some reason, their processual condition might allow them to unlock certain benefits, they will not be granted access to them unless their conduct remains impeccable. This aspect has become even more consistent since the Constitutional Court expressed the unconstitutionality of the automatic suspension of the access to benefits, generating among the AS1 a new hope of exit that must absolutely pass the scrutiny of the evaluation document on good conduct. Carmelo wrote about the conditions of this regime regarding concessions and restrictions¹⁹⁴. Activities for AS1s become an alternative to socialising, so if a person wants to go for a walk, to the gym, to the sports ground, or to mass at the appropriate time, they will have to give up studying and vice versa. In this way, it clearly emerges how studying, one of the main alternative activities of the reduced re-educational offer in AS1, leads the prisoner to self-exclusion from the most spontaneous sociality. This self-exclusion is followed by a series of codified actions, which are limited to the repertoire provided by the activities. Thus, the “privileged” students described by Carmelo can use the computers — a total of four for the whole section — which are set up, however, for the use of only one writing programme. There is no possibility of writing and printing even a letter to family members; writing is limited exclusively to texts or study papers. Obviously this cannot be generally applied to all prisons. However, the logic emerging behind this system is, on the contrary, indicative of a national situation. These contributions underline how, within the reward logic, each reward also implies a higher level of control, and how the sociality programmed by the prison increasingly codifies the normal conduct of the prisoner.

In addition to what has been said so far, there is an aspect of rewarding which is still left in the background and which responds to what is implied to contributing to the prison order, that is, to be willing to inform about what happens in the section. In fact, as I will show in the next subsection, cooperation is among the values that the reward and punitive systems have increasingly pursued. As had already emerged for the criminal law of the enemy, the strongest proof that a person is on the side of the state is cooperation, whether he is an enemy of the state or a prisoner willing to work and show that he has changed, or whether he is irreducibly resistant to any torture he has suffered. For this reason, since the 1970s, more and more resources have been invested in this principle, not only because of its effectiveness (which could also be questionable, given the criticism levelled at penitence in the wake of the fight against the Mafia) but because of its creation of a climate of general individualisation, mutual suspicion, and functional isolation of the prison order. Internal collaboration has challenged the “hierarchies” within the prison. Bernawi, in this regard, wrote that those who cooperate with the

¹⁹⁴ Booklet 104, June 2015, “Lettera dal carcere di Parma”.

management in his prison work more: *“They make me work one month and I wait for six/ seven months, instead there are those who work permanently, there are those who work two months and one month off. I am one of the ten oldest inmates in the prison.... the priority! [priority for elderly]”*¹⁹⁵.

Opposing this tendency, some openly prefer to do all their years without ever getting a discount, and, in my experience, many do even more for their behaviour.¹⁹⁶ However, it is a minority against a mechanism that leads to denunciation: with equal conduct, those who cooperate are preferred. For some prisoners, this type of agreement, widely described in the letters, is formalised in what is called “responsibility pact” (*“patto di responsabilità”*). It provides for a certain degree of cooperation if “strange” or illegal situations are noticed in the section¹⁹⁷. This pact, to rekindle the discussion on the founding values of re-education, is considered fundamental to overcoming the system of reward and punishments. Security, for the prison administrators, should be based on the concept of a “responsibility pact”, an agreement with the Administration of acceptance of the rules laid down by the new regime¹⁹⁸. After an initial period of getting to know the detainee, useful for collecting data, promoting knowledge, measuring risks and suitability, the person can be directed towards the responsibility pact. This kind of pact becomes more and more acceptable as soon as one understands the climate of suspicion that collaboration spreads. In extreme cases, signing it means protecting oneself, taking a step to ensure that what one sees and thinks is credible to management. The truth of the matter is that the responsibility pact is an almost unilateral form of bargaining, because its conditions are only binding for the prisoner, and not for the management.

Over the years, the categorical rejection of any prison activity has disappeared for many prisoners. As Elian says, it has become increasingly difficult to try to rebel because there is a whole environment that works against you, *“your first enemies are those very people who share your suffering”*¹⁹⁹. So, it has

¹⁹⁵ Booklet 100, February 2015, “Lettera dal carcere di Ferrara”, Bernawi: *“Io non posso lavorare perché non sono infame, qui funziona così. A me fanno lavorare un mese e mi fermo per sei/ sette mesi, altri invece c’è chi lavora fisso, c’è chi due mesi sì e un mese no. Parlo io che sono tra quei dieci detenuti più vecchi del carcere... “la precedenza”...”*

¹⁹⁶ Booklet 110, February 2016, “Lettere dal carcere di Opera (Milano)”.

¹⁹⁷ Booklet 105, July 2015, “Da lettere di diversi prigionieri. Sui “ricatti” che aiutano a impoverire la socialità, la resistenza, la ribellione dentro le carceri (From letters of several prisoners. On the “blackmail” that helps to impoverish sociality, resistance, rebellion inside prisons)”.

¹⁹⁸ Reference is made to the document produced by the “Stati Generali”, a process envisaged by the Ministry of Justice to find a new model for penal enforcement. This confrontation between different professional figures, from prison officers to educators, social workers, and lawyers, and prisoners between 2015 and 2016 was supposed to precede the penal reform that never happened. The link to the final document produced follows. From the link: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_2_19_3.page;jsessionid=ghRiUORnigPQyNF0DBifuJJI?previousPage=mg_2_19. Consulted in June 2021.

¹⁹⁹ Booklet 80, April 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Pescara”, Elian: *“quando i tuoi primi nemici sono proprio quelle persone che con te condividono la tua stessa sofferenza”*.

become more and more normal to accept that there are informants as a structural part of the *quadrillage* of control.

The extremes of this process of reproduction, which shows how much prison power can do without needing to resort to the violence and iron fist of the prison police, is the use of prisoners chosen for the informal task of provocateurs and beaters. Here it is a matter of exploring the boundaries that collaboration breaks down between prisoners and guards. In one of Giuseppe's testimonies: following a squabble, an inmate worker bruised himself while trying to hit him through the bars. After the episode, the same worker reported to a guard that he had received a blow with a broomstick on his arm. Thus, a report was made to Giuseppe, thanks to the fact that another guard had confirmed the incident even though he was not present. Giuseppe, who ended up in solitary confinement for 7 days, had happened upon a section run by police officers flanked by other workers, who did the searches for the guards²⁰⁰. As this demonstrated, there are several prisoners explicitly on the side of the management and willing to do work for it; one can imagine how difficult it is to suffer the combined action of these two categories that build a system of control, provocations and punishments to ensure order²⁰¹. The employment of prisoners in carrying out prison beatings is present in numerous testimonies: it becomes increasingly difficult to be able to denounce an abuse of power by the police because every clash could be justified as a fight between prisoners. In other words, the disunity among prisoners is very clear to the prison officers and there are several cases where they fuel it.

“This is the third time these bastards have set me against the detainees, [...] I had gone to the warehouse to pick up a package that the comrades from Naples had sent me, there was a beautiful Nike tracksuit and a nice jacket, at the time the jacket had a hood and didn't fit, so I cut the hood, [...]. When I got back from the warehouse with the foreman (verme-infame-carogna) I told him that everyone had hooded sweatshirts and jackets, [... the police foreman] told me: Alfieri now I'm going to see the Moroccan's jacket and if it's the same as yours I'm going to go to the warehouse to argue and get your sweatshirt [...] so (that shitty person) goes up and I had my jacket in my hand, he calls the Moroccan, touches it and sees his jacket and hoodie, and tells me he's going to get my things... [...] In the meantime I go to make a phone call, I come back and the Moroccan (whom I defended from the beating of the guards) calls me, tells me that they have taken away his jacket and sweatshirt, and in the meantime another one in the opposite cell was muttering, but I shut him up, and I go down to the head of the post. I immediately tell him that he has to give the jacket to the boy and the sweatshirt, because he brought me in front of that boy and this I considered a bicicletta [NA. it means telling false things for devious reasons, my emphasis], so I threaten him in a black

²⁰⁰ Booklet 55, January-february 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Poggioreale”. Giuseppe.

²⁰¹ Booklet 134, August-September 2018, “Lettera dal carcere di Verona”, Eddi.

rage, because another one in the section had dared to say that it was my fault, and this I didn't allow neither to the police foreman nor to the other infamous one like him (because it was all organised by the police foreman). In short, I go upstairs and after ten minutes they bring him back his jacket, but they have cut the hood off the sweatshirt, I was about to get a new suit of mine to give to that poor guy, and instead that infamous guy from the opposite cell starts swearing and threatening me. [...] The next day, on my way back from the interview with the lawyer, they called for a walk at 11 o'clock and I had heard that the inspector had told him to beat me up on the stairs.”²⁰²

Those few forms of resistance are easily supplanted both by threats to the most blackmailable, and by the ability of prisons to spatialise, to create compartmentalised spaces for categories at risk. A system that irreparably leads to individualism and the desolidarisation of the detained population. In the difficulty of being able to build an effective resistance, in the impossibility of succeeding alone, often the only alternative is escape. In this case, the time of imprisonment no longer coincides with the biological time of the individual who is subjected to it, time becomes suspended in the wait made up of boredom and escape from reality, also through the use of psychiatric treatment. Time is lived on “*automatic pilot*”²⁰³.

Instead, aspiring to complete a re-educational path clearly means to want to get out of prison sooner and to be willing to give something in return. Many of them do not disdain the idea of being a “good guy”, even when they experience every day the contradiction of losing the ability to defend themselves against the harassment that they see daily in prison²⁰⁴. These detainees, as they used to say at Opera, get stuck behind the chimaera of prize or the fear of punishment. This problem was well

²⁰² Booklet 129, December 2017, “Lettera dal carcere di Napoli-Poggioreale”, Maurizio:

“Questa è la terza volta che 'sti bastardi mi mettono contro i detenuti [...]. Ero andato al magazzino per il ritiro di un pacco che mi avevano mandato i compagni di Napoli, c'era una bellissima tuta della Nike e un bel giubbotto, allora il giubbotto aveva il cappuccio e non entra, per cui taglio il cappuccio, poi mi dicono che è imbottito e staccano l'interno, la tuta mi dicono che non è consentita perché ha il cappuccio [...]. Al ritorno dal magazzino con il capoposto (verme-infame-carogna) gli dico che tutti hanno le felpe e giubbotti con il cappuccio, e poi tutti quelli che uscivano dai padiglioni il capoposto mi diceva: vedi Alfieri tutti hanno felpe con cappuccio, e il giubbotto come il tuo ce l'ha anche il marocchino che è in sezione con te, e (quel merda) mi dice: Alfieri adesso vado a vedere il giubbotto del marocchino e se è uguale al tuo vado al magazzino a litigare e mi faccio dare la tua felpe e l'interno del giubbotto. [...] Così (quel merda) sale su ed io avevo il mio giubbotto in mano, chiama il marocchino, tocca e vede il suo giubbotto e felpe con il cappuccio, e mi dice che va a prendermi lamie cose...[...]. Nel frattempo vado a telefonare, torno e il marocchino (che ho difeso dal pestaggio delle guardie) mi chiama, mi dice che gli hanno tolto giubbotto e felpe, e nel frattempo un altro nella cella di fronte borbottava, ma l'ho zittito subito, e scendo subito sotto dal capoposto. Gli dico subito che deve dare il giubbotto al ragazzo e la felpe, perché lui ha portato me davanti a quel ragazzo e questa la ritenevo una bicicletta, per cui lo minaccio incazzato nero, perché un altro in sezione si era permesso di dire che era colpa mia, e questo non lo permettevo né al capoposto e neanche all'altro infame come lui (perché era tutto organizzato dal capoposto). Insomma, salgo e dopo dieci minuti gli riportano il giubbotto, ma alla felpe hanno tagliato il cappuccio, stavo per prendere una mia tuta nuova da regalare a quel povero ragazzo, ed invece quell'infame della cella di fronte inizia a dire parolacce e a minacciarmi. Solo il giorno dopo mentre torno dal colloquio con l'avvocato chiamano per il passeggio alle 11 ed io avevo saputo che l'ispettore gli aveva detto di picchiarmi nelle scale...”

²⁰³ Booklet 79, April 2013, “Letter from Terni Prison”, Marco: “*pilota automatico.*”

²⁰⁴ Booklet 29, November 2008, “Lettere dal carcere di Opera (Milano)”.

described by Panizzari (2017, p. 143), who posited that inmates develop a double personality, the one with which they entered prison and the one that is the result of these negotiations of the self. To these I add a third one, namely the one that manages the relationship with prisoners once they have entered the reward mechanism. This set of elements that makes up the reward system described within the chapter creates progressively more individualisation and self-isolation:

*“resignation, indifference and mindlessness give most people the illusion of saving themselves, but every day they leave more and more room for the possibility of annihilating each one individually and all of us collectively, because of the fear of taking a stand”.*²⁰⁵

For the prisoners, re-education is built on a system that is criticisable in itself for the elements just described. However, the element that makes this mechanism even more convoluted is not only the maximisation of personal profit, but profit at the expense of others, or, in any case, in a climate of mutual control in which power, in its disciplinary forms, is internalised by the prisoners to repress each other. Moreover, the reward system does nothing but reproduce and shape the criminality of today and tomorrow, as Valerio wrote: *“I do not want to be re-educated by a system that teaches petty criminals to aim higher in the underworld, or even worse when it teaches them to be cowardly and devious through the deception of meticulous rewarding”.*²⁰⁶

To conclude, the laboratorial aspect of the prison emerges best within the reward logic. I repeat that this is not the only logic present, but it is the one that has been highlighted the most within the letters. The possibility of having direct testimony of the experience of those who suffer the applications of the criminal law of the enemy is not perceived, it sounds distant because in fact the prison, like society, has compartmentalised spaces. As reported by an anonymous writer:

*“The prison structure itself is the ultimate emblem and representation of the perfect society, in the form of respect for authority, of being diligent and good with good behaviour, helpful and confidential. What the prison wants to do today is something more than simply rehabilitate the prisoner, as an illegal component of society, on a behavioural level: it wants to turn him into a true friend and confidant of the guards.”*²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Booklet 138, September 2019, “Lettera dal carcere di Trieste”, Kasabu: *“mentre la rassegnazione, l’indifferenza e il menefreghismo danno ai più l’illusione di salvare sé stessi, ma lasciano quotidianamente sempre più spazio alla possibilità di annientare ciascuno individualmente e tutti collettivamente per la paura di prendere posizione.”*

²⁰⁶ Booklet 88, January 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Piacenza”, Valerio: *“Non voglio essere rieducato da un sistema che insegna ai piccoli criminali a mirare più in alto nel mondo della malavita, ma ancor peggio quando insegna ad essere vili e subdoli grazie all’inganno di una premialità meticolosa.”*

²⁰⁷ Booklet 136, May 2019, “Il carcere oggi: riguardo il rapporto detenuti-secondini (Prison today: about the prisoner-guards relationship)”:

“la struttura carceraria in sé è appunto l’emblema massimo e la rappresentazione della società perfetta, sotto forma di rispetto dell’autorità, dell’essere diligenti e bravi con buona condotta, servizievoli e confidenziali. Quello che il carcere vuole fare oggi è

The reward system has its historical roots in two fundamental elements of the investigation: that of the investigation conducted in secret by the judicial authority, and that of the act ritually carried out by the accused (Foucault, 1977, p. 39). In both, it is the body of the detainee that “assured the interlocking of these two mechanisms” (*ibidem*), and on which a truth-made-objective is produced. These elements of the investigation combined with the examination, i.e. the “hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination” (Foucault, 1977, p. 170), bring together within the prison space the entire decoding of the prisoner's existence.

In fact, the rewarding logic and the preliminary investigation are united by the confessional practise and by the consequent, final objective of obtaining a certain degree of cooperation. Confession is the strongest evidence of pre-trial investigation, which allows the recruitment of indicators and multiplies exchangeable denunciations, because by putting convicts in contact with each other it hinders solidarity and cohesion between prisoners. To collaborate in prison, in this sense, does not only mean to be an informer or to contribute to investigations; it also means espousing the set of logics described above that guarantees the prison order, believing to pursue at the same time a positive intramural moral career. One thus becomes a subject who has confessed and is capable of consenting, participating, negotiating, constructing and executing a correctional plan (Kaminski, 2006). Confession, cooperation with justice and being available to management are different aspects of a single value system embedded in the reward system.

Confession is one of the tools that the Christian West has used to sift through all errors, even imperceptible weaknesses, thoughts, intentions and desires of its believers. The ritual of confession involves stating the sin, which remains secret, and freeing the person from the sin itself through repentance and works of penance (Foucault, 1997, p. 86). Over the centuries, this mechanism has shifted from a religious to an administrative use (Foucault, 1997c), a concatenation no longer aimed at forgiveness but at registration and encasement, or *quadrillage*. Confession is one of the many ancient instruments developed in the guise of control, such as the denunciation, the complaint, the enquiry, the report, the investigation, the interrogation.

qualcosa di più della semplice riabilitazione del detenuto, in quanto componente illegale della società, a livello comportamentale: lo vuole trasformare in un vero e proprio amico e confidente delle guardie, in qualcuno che porta rispetto all'autorità.”

Collaboration with justice is thus distinguished from the single, secret voice of penitential confession. It is constituted by multiple voices, which are deposited in an enormous documentary mass for the production of profound knowledge. The fight against the mafia, as has been said before, has been characterised by an ever-increasing use of pentitism “*through promised concessions of untouchability, in order to achieve the objective*”²⁰⁸. Notwithstanding the effectiveness of this system in breaking the relations between the mafia consortia, an institutionalised mechanism aimed at denunciation has been triggered, which has led to various criticisms of the ethics surrounding the use of collaborators of justice. As Valerio wrote:

*“repentance [...] elevates the man who seeks to rectify his errors, and cannot be confused with cowardice, with the pusillanimity of those who shirk their responsibilities by saving their lives in a shipwreck, where the life preservers are the swollen bodies of their “Snacks companions”.”*²⁰⁹

To deliver an acquaintance to justice is the strongest proof of a repentance, of both dissociation from the past and a willingness to pass to the side of the state, which then erects and protects. The dissociation, in fact, can be useful to try to shake off the judgement of social dangerousness. It is however not enough, or, considering the legal procedures, it does not make the declassification from life sentences automatic. On the other hand, Article 58 Ter defines collaboration as the strongest test for determining that the enemy is subjected to normal criminal law and no longer to the criminal law of the enemy. It provides the collection of decisive elements for the reconstruction of the facts and for the identification or capture of the authors of the crimes. This is the element that allows access to benefits such as early release, semi-freedom and bonus permits for those who have the “never ending sentence”, or to be declassified from the 41 bis regime. In this regard, Liberato wrote to OLGa that among the lifers in Tempio Pausania there were several who, in order to be granted leave of absence, under the pretext of the restorative justice programme were urged to become confidants inside and outside the prison²¹⁰. There is no lack of criticism for this procedure beyond the narratives of the prisoners. In this way, the re-educational path is superimposed to collaboration in a rather instrumental way, because everything is reduced to a commodity to exchange (Bernasconi, 1998, p. 141). These assumptions are the foundations of the classic punitive system that underlies the reward system and

²⁰⁸ Booklet 119, December 2016, “Dalla “questione meridionale” al 41bis”, Calogero: “*a partire dallo storico buscetta, attraverso promesse concessioni di intoccabilità, pur di raggiungere l’obiettivo.*”

²⁰⁹ Booklet 82, July 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Piacenza”, Valerio, AS1: *il pentimento [...] eleva l’uomo che cerca di rimediare ai suoi errori e non può essere confuso con la pavidità, con la pusillanimità di chi rifugge dalle proprie responsabilità salvandosi la vita in un naufragio, dove i salvagenti sono i corpi enfiati dei “compagni di merende”.*

²¹⁰ Booklet 122, March 2017, “Lettera dal carcere di Tempio Pausania (OT)”, Liberato.

that reveals, through the necessity of confession, a structural problem that is impossible to deflect, namely its punitive assumption. Over the years, a mechanism of mutual distrust has increasingly been created, built on the fear that any thought uttered could be instrumentalised by other people and communicated to the management as information around one's crime (Kalica, 2019, p. 143). Moreover, as Valerio wrote:

“The infamous is not only the one who uses that state compromise in his favour and to the detriment of his co-defendants as a lucky beneficiary, facilitated by the law, in order to give the possibility to justice and law enforcement to delude public opinion that he has “cleaned up”, but is now too often only a pawn, guided by political and gendarmerie forces [...] or by “criminal” forces who use this weapon of the state against the state itself.”²¹¹

Being at the disposal of the management is another aspect of collaboration, a practise that is an expression of the most recent changes that have been especially exploited in the reward sections. If, as they wrote from AS1, it was understandable to become collaborators, in order to avoid the torture that the state reserved for its sworn enemies, now to make oneself available conscientiously and for convenience has become a further ratified step in prison strategies. Collaboration, in fact, becomes useful not only to break up organisations outside, but also solidarity inside. I recall, in this regard, the responsibility pact, that is the highest result of this stage, for which not only the informer is tolerated, but there are sections in which all prisoners are potential informers because they formally commit to make themselves available. The vector of power is completely reversed: instead of going from the top to the bottom, it goes from the bottom to the top, multiplying the points from which it stems and becoming more pervasive. The presence of spies makes prisoners prefer to avoid solidarity with other prisoners, isolating themselves in turn. This phenomenon is one of the most effective systems of deterrence, and works in a similar way to the logic of prisoner's dilemma in game theory²¹². In prison, prisoners often

²¹¹ See note 208:

L'infame non è solo colui che utilizza quel compromesso statale a suo favore e a discapito dei suoi coimputati come un fortunato beneficiario, agevolato dalla legge, per dare la possibilità alla giustizia e alle forze dell'ordine di illudere l'opinione pubblica di aver fatto “pulizia”, ma è ormai troppo spesso solo una pedina guidata da forze politiche e di gendarmeria, [...] o da forze “criminali” che partecipano usano quest'arma dello Stato contro lo Stato stesso.

²¹² The Prisoner's Dilemma is a standard example of a game. Albert W. Tucker formalised the game with prison sentence rewards and named it "prisoner's dilemma". Two criminals are accused of committing a crime. Investigators arrest them both and lock them in two different cells, preventing them from communicating. Each is given two choices: to cooperate, or not to cooperate. The best choice for both of them is not to cooperate because it would only mean one year in prison, the best choice for themselves is to accuse the other in the hope that the latter will not accuse him in turn. When the first one accuses and the second one does not cooperate, the maximum possible years of imprisonment go to the second one, while the first one is released. Finally, if they both cooperate, they still get many years because they take the full blame for the crime they committed. What happens in this game, as well as in prison, is that individuals often think only of improving their own condition and not the overall one, risking moreover to pay for the choice to cooperate even more than if they had refused any form of cooperation: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner%27s_dilemma.

choose to improve their own condition as much as possible by renouncing the well-being of others. Making oneself available seems to be the best solution to a structural problem. A set of collaborative attitudes towards detention becomes a safeguard to save oneself. Rather than hoping to get away with it or avoiding any form of pact with the management, one makes oneself available in order to be protected. In this regard, there are several letters in which the frustration of struggling prisoners is felt. It is the same mechanism that leads a citizen to call the police rather than try to manage a potentially dangerous situation. Those who “*snitch*” or “*collaborate*”²¹³ in some cases no longer create the same break with the inmate population, because they are the expression of a general atomisation among the inmates, whereby everyone is on his own. The logic of reward, considering the climate of individualised competition and the value system on which it is based, transforms the granting of benefits and the whole re-education into “*an instrument of mental subjugation of the prisoner*”²¹⁴. It produces, on the one hand, workers-volunteers who strive to have their good conduct recognised; on the other hand, those who simply become informers or make themselves available to the prison police for the most varied tasks in exchange for the reward. For example, in Cremona, the morning before the opening of the gates, individual cells were searched based on indications given by some informants²¹⁵.

The denunciation appreciable by the management is that exclusive to the personal evaluation of the conduct of the detainees, only in a pejorative sense and only when it reproduces the prison control. When Valerio and Maurizio were facing trial with the accusation of having threatened, offended and tried to beat up a collaborator of justice, their own testimony of beatings and various abuses by the officers were completely ignored by the magistrate of surveillance.²¹⁶

This system, outlined in this way, shows the values behind reward and re-education, how the criteria by which classifications take place and condition the prisoner to reproduce a climate of overpowering. Contributing to this process of desolidarisation there is a second discursive aspect to be considered, which is expressed through the so-called individualised treatment.

CONSERVING INDIVIDUALISED TREATMENT WITHIN PRISON GOVERNMENTALITY

The evolution of prisons, as it often happens in history, is characterised by different discontinuities, as some moments seem to be more ahead of their times and some others more behind. I have described

²¹³ Booklet 64, December 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Sanremo (IM)”, Adriano: “*non condanno chi collabora o chi se la canta.*”

²¹⁴ Booklet 90, March 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Perugia”, Alessio: “*si rivela uno strumento di soggiogazione mentale del detenuto.*”

²¹⁵ Booklet 134, August-September, “Da alcune lettere dal carcere di Cremona”.

²¹⁶ Booklet 82, July 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Piacenza”, Valerio, AS1.

this phenomenon when talking about the Gozzini Law, where it was seen that the very tensions of an “innovative” reform actually followed an old adage that have resonated from the very birth of the prison. The same could be said of the origins of individualised treatment. Experiments with model prisons have never been lacking, especially in times of appeasement. In fact, as described for the passage between EIV and AS, it seems that moments of calm have always created opportunities for the disposition of new technologies of power. Thus, in 1958 the prison-laboratory was born, where a minimum number of inmates (on average thirty to forty) were imprisoned, selected on the basis of their evaluation carried out by the directors of the institutes of origin. In addition to the officers, in these model prisons there would also be a psychiatrist, a psychologist, social workers and educators. These formed the team that carried out the scientific observation of the prisoner on which to build an individualised treatment plan (De Vito, 2009, p. 42). The prison model *par excellence* was built in the space that would later become Rome's Rebibbia prison, and it was called “*Istituto nazionale di osservazione (INO)*”. Biographical information and notes on the clinical history of inmates and close relatives were sought, and experts continuously investigated the origins and every aspect of the life of each individual inmate, from the physical to the psychological-behavioural to the social. At the end of the 60-day observation period, the team proposed individualised treatment and indicated to which institutions the prisoners should be sent. That experiment, which was intended to be part of a larger plan to create a network of observation and treatment facilities in all prisons, has survived in some forms until today. The novelty of its intellectual contribution with respect to treatment theories is still applied: experts saw in crime the manifestation of a deviation of the personality, and in the prison a “clinic” where the personality of each prisoner should be studied (De Vito, 2009, p. 45).

This was a real innovation because the personality of the offender was now placed at the centre, rather than their crime. There was also no lack of “surgical and chemical treatments on individuals considered to be “irrecoverable”, whose behaviour was believed to be entirely determined by biological and physical factors” (De Vito, 2009, p. 46).

This brief digression puts the contributions of prisoners into context in two respects. The first concerns the merging of this spreading of scientific knowledge with the retributive function of punishment. It was no longer just a question of the amount of time to be served in proportion to the offence committed. The role of the prisoner was passive, the prison was treating prisoners without differentiated methods. The time spent in prison, moulded around the trial, was replaced by the dissemination of knowledge about individuals that came from observation and analysis of their behaviour.

In prison, as in all institutions where subjects are imprisoned, clinical knowledge such as that of psychiatry, psychology, psychosociology and criminology found a large ground for investigation. The knowledge produced constituted those micro-tribunals aimed at judging the behaviour and personality of the prisoner, the foundation of which is the idea of punishment as medicine. A general feature of treatment logic, as described by Goffman, is that, for every social circumstance, for every nature of the disorder, a certain action is expected. Recognising the bad social behaviour as a visible organic pathology confirms the applicability of the medical model (1961, p. 145). This is one of the most unresolvable paradoxes at the heart of rehabilitation, and one that, together with collaboration and the reward logic, tends to make its mission suspect (Bryant, 2014). Secondly, the role of this knowledge also goes to legitimise rehabilitation itself, because it is based on scientific assumptions that, in fact, justify forms of de-personalisation, as we have also seen for the enemy penology. It is an area in which detention is not only an attempt to codify and manage conduct on the basis of risk categories, but also to make conduct normal, thus forcing the internalisation of prison governmentality. These processes add to the sentence a qualitative aspect made up of differentiated spaces and practises, and of a detention time that is no longer defined but can be modified on the basis of individual conduct. Prison governance is organised on the basis of population categories, and individualised treatment is integrated within this model of power. Indeed, according to Agozino and Pfohl, guilt by association never disappeared within the criminal justice system, and neither did the individualised correction treatment (Agozino, Pfohl, 2003, p. 125). The function of the treatment is to break the organisation of the prisoner's body, and the relationships it brings from outside: treatment re-territorialises the body. Treatment technicians produce a discourse configured in such a way as to attribute imprisonment to an individual and personal psychological problem.

The use of the treatment approach is more tangible in the medium and low security areas, where deserving prisoners are differentiated from undeserving, the “conciliatory [concordanti]” from the conflictual ones²¹⁷. In other words, those who follow specific paths of reintegration are separated from those who pass the time and, at most, try not to lengthen it with disciplinary sanctions. Sections are thus organised by security codes:

“Code white will be used to identify prisoners who have not committed crimes of violence, who have maintained good behaviour and responded to treatment. Code green will be used to identify offenders who have committed crimes of violence, have responded well to treatment and have maintained good behaviour. Code yellow is for prisoners who

²¹⁷ Booklet 66, February 2012, "Letter from Carinola Prison", Mauro.

*have committed disciplinary offences. Code red is for prison offenders and escape attempts. Code whites will be kept in open cells, and code greens will tend to be as well. Code yellows may be kept in open cells after observation. Code reds should be kept in closed cells”.*²¹⁸

This description seems to be a spatial transposition of the system described by Wacquant (2003, p. 26) of coloured uniforms to distinguish the prison population in the US: blue uniforms for the general population, orange for those under medical supervision, blue with white sleeves for gang members, and green for trustees. In Italy, codification is the responsibility of the prison staff who, through periodic meetings, may review the assessments of the level of dangerousness of inmates in a positive or negative sense. In the softest regimes the relationship between conduct and treatment of prisoners becomes more and more stringent. The detainee is subjected to an “uninterrupted examination” (Foucault, 1977, p. 186), and the assessment is made using a file known as “*documento di sintesi*”²¹⁹. The purpose of this document is to update the observation and the hypothesis of intra or extra mural treatment. This document is then sent for approval to the competent Surveillance Magistrate. This is the construction of a document of truth, which has a stronger sign than the value of the detainee himself. It contains a set of measures from which the assessment of the criminal individual is reached: these measures are diagnostic, prognostic, and normative (Foucault, 1977, p. 19). This assessment has taken its place in the armoury of criminal judgement through the dragging of the prisoner into the correctional continuum (*ibidem*). Although this document applies to each individual, the value of the treatment judgement becomes less important if the prisoner opposes the logic of imprisonment or if he is considered as an enemy. In this regard, the condition of lifers is emblematic. Those subject to art.

²¹⁸ Booklet 66, February 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di Carinola”, Mauro, AS2:

“Il codice bianco verrà utilizzato per individuare i detenuti che non sono stati autori di reati di violenza e chi al tempo stesso abbia mantenuto una buona condotta ed abbia risposto al trattamento penitenziario. Il codice verde potrà essere individuato per identificare i soggetti autori di reati di violenza, che abbiano risposto bene al trattamento e che abbiano mantenuto buona condotta. Il codice giallo è per i detenuti resisi responsabili di violazioni disciplinari. Il codice rosso per gli autori di reati in carcere e tentativi di evasione. I codici bianchi dovranno essere tenuti a celle aperte e tendenzialmente anche i codici verdi. I codici gialli potranno essere tenuti a celle aperte dopo l'osservazione. Al codice rosso dovranno essere mantenute le celle chiuse.”

²¹⁹ My translation: “The “Documento di sintesi”, as indicated in the D.A.P. circular of 2005, is the document in which the stages of the execution of the prisoner's sentence are marked, starting from the beginning of the observation, and which, through regular updates, accompanies the subject in the evolution of the treatment process. Its aim is to obtain an image of the static contextual reality with respect to the subject and to the characteristics/spaces/opportunities of the prison, trying at the same time to give a dynamic and projectual reading”. Link: [https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_8_1.page;jsessionid=-wMGPKh4IVkP0gRV5uWa3ag-?facetNode_1=1_1\(2005\)&facetNode_2=1_1\(200506\)&contentId=SDC31304&previousPage=mg_1_8](https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_8_1.page;jsessionid=-wMGPKh4IVkP0gRV5uWa3ag-?facetNode_1=1_1(2005)&facetNode_2=1_1(200506)&contentId=SDC31304&previousPage=mg_1_8).

4 bis have a life sentence (or a sentence expiring on 31/12/99);²²⁰ therefore any good summary document drawn up in their regard does not correspond to any reduction in their sentence. They can, if anything, aspire to declassification, even though there is very little chance of success.

Another example concerning the extremes of the individual treatment logics, and the overcoming, in some ways, of the shift from crime to personality judgement, is the Workhouse. Although these institutions are reduced in number, they still house a few administratively imprisoned persons. In fact, following imprisonment and a series of offences, if the judge considers the person to be a “*dangerous person*” or a “*habitual offender*”, this measure of imprisonment may be imposed. The minimum length of stay is one year; two years for habitual and professional offenders and four years for serial offenders. However, the period may be extended in the event of any minor disciplinary offence. Exit from this regime is no longer linked to the original offence, but to intra-custodial conduct and social conditions, thus to an overall assessment of the person signed by the operators. This regime is renewed annually until positive summaries are provided. There are, however, several cases of a real life sentence (“*ergastolo bianco*”), where the “internees”, and no longer “detainees”, are unable to leave the regime for several years, without being able to redeem their condition. The following is the judge's opinion of a prisoner who signed his name Mr Nobody in 2018:

*“Since Mr Nobody has been charged with a number of offences, mainly against property, since 1997 (January 2014), and since there has been no verifiable work activity during that time, it is considered that he has been living off the proceeds of the offences he has committed for the past 16 years, and it is therefore considered appropriate that he serve two years.”*²²¹

Mr Nobody was thus obliged to “*self-determine through work activity*” that he was no longer dangerous.²²² The prison space of the workhouse is emblematic, if one thinks of the weight of personal evaluation in continuity with the consequential ideal that characterises Italian penology. In this case, too, we can see how the rigidity of the law is overcome by the administrative measure that can be used to regulate the treatment of a person, shifting the issue at stake from the crime to the person again, in a different way but in continuity with the enemy penology.

²²⁰ This is the wording that appears on the detention certificates of convict sentenced to life in prison.

²²¹ Booklet 133, June 2018, “Scritto dal carcere di Castel Franco Emilia (MO)”:

“Risultando a carico del sig. Nessuno numerosi reati prevalentemente contro il patrimonio dal 1997 ad oggi (era gennaio 2014), e non risultando in quest'arco di tempo nessuna attività lavorativa controllabile, si ritiene che il suddetto negli ultimi 16 anni si sia mantenuto dei proventi dei reati da lui commessi, e perciò si ritiene opportuno che affronti 2 anni... minimo 2 anni di Casa Lavoro.”

²²² *Ibidem*: “perché possa autodeterminarsi attraverso l'attività lavorativa.”

Back in prison, the “*documento di sintesi*” is drawn up by the internal prison team, a micro-court that assesses the personality of the prisoner. The team is composed of administrative staff (pedagogical officers, social service officers, prison police) and external professionals, such as experts in criminology, psychology, psychiatry, all of whom work under the coordination of the director of the institution. In addition to this group, there are also other figures who deal with the prisoners inside the institution, such as volunteers and chaplains. Firstly, the choice of the experts can be seemingly traced back to the centralisation of their professions in work aimed at controlling individual conducts. Secondly, the experts organise the treatment, but from a rewarding perspective. As for the model-prison described above, there is no lack of places where specific programmes are the flagship of re-education. For example, in San Vittore prison there is a wing called “*Ship*” (“*Nave*”), where inmates with drug addiction problems are held. In several letters, prisoners have recognised a very different treatment compared to other prisons, and stress the importance of the work of professionals. The following contribution underlines how what I earlier described as additional punishment, that is, internal discipline in prison, is, for those who decide to undertake a treatment pathway, an opportunity to show that they are different from the crime that they are associated with:

*“Here you can attend some very interesting activities, about fifteen in total. We are followed daily mostly by psychologists, doctors and professional educators [...]. Besides the legal and juridical issue, I think I will have a couple of years to understand where I went wrong and why, then I also have to face the problem of drug addiction. In short, I am attending a lot of activities and interacting with the group because I would like to do, for the first time, a community path suitable for me.”*²²³

In the same wing, there are those who denounce the logic of rewards and normalisation more critically. Adamo wrote about the compulsory participation in courses such as “*education to legality*”, “*mediation*”, “*alternative measures*”, and that, in addition to those, “*you have to suffer a lot of bullshit that they tell you, and as soon as you try to counter, they tell you that you have not understood the purpose of the “Nave” and do not want to cure yourself of drug addiction*”.²²⁴

²²³ Booklet 49, August 2010, “Lettere dal carcere di San Vittore (Milano)”:

“Qui si possono frequentare alcune attività molto interessanti, una quindicina. Siamo i più seguiti giornalmente da psicologi, dottori ed educatrici professionali. [...] oltre alla questione giuridica e legale penso che avrò un paio d'anni per capire dove ho sbagliato e perché, poi devo anche affrontare il problema della tossicodipendenza. In breve, sto frequentando molte attività e interagisco con il gruppo perché vorrei fare per la prima volta un percorso comunitario adatto a me”.

²²⁴ Booklet 72, August 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore (Milano)”, Adamo: “*dove devi subire una marea di stronzate che ti dicono, ed appena provi a controbattere, ti dicono che non hai capito lo scopo della “Nave” e non ti vuoi curare dalla tossicodipendenza.*”

The management is looking for true adherence to the programme. Santo wrote to OLGa, quoting the notes in the assessment document that prevented him from accessing the early release days:

*“the detainee appears to be a person of difficult management in terms of relationships with the treatment operators, and his conduct is only “formally regular”, as he is not sufficiently committed to the internal activities in place. The overall conduct, as it emerges from the preliminary investigation, taking into account the modalities of perpetration, the reasons and the single contexts in which it took place, appears to be particularly serious, and a manifestation of the persistence of a deep-rooted attitude of opposition and rebellion to the rules of penitentiary coexistence, and, in any case, to the values of the order. The regularity of the conduct in the semesters indicated by the prisoner was merely superficial and apparent [...], that is to say that such formal regularity did not correspond to the inner and real, even if only partial, adherence to the treatment that the benefit of early release presupposes”.*²²⁵

From this discourse emerges a system that prevents the individual from staying outside the institutionalisation of prison. In these examples, the treatment aspect makes it increasingly difficult for good behaviour to be merely “performed” (Panizzari, 2017, p. 143). The growing interest in the treatment path, which is manifested in terms of adherence to activities, is evidenced by a set of prisoners who think of using the new opportunities to have benefits while maintaining their own autonomy with respect to the management. There are several attempts of individual adaptation whilst participating in these paths, which demonstrate, however, that a certain degree of collaboration with the management is necessary.

Beyond the prison models where the rehabilitation discourse is actually verified in the organisational practises, the same cannot be said of the rest of the prisons, where the completion of the “*documento di sintesi*” is often delayed, due to the number of pedagogical coordinators and other professionals not meeting the prison's demand. In this backstage of the treatment discourse, staff try to acquire knowledge of the conduct of each convict and get a personal idea of it, a task of extreme discretion given the non-existent relationship between those who assess and those who are assessed. In many prisons, one has to wait several months to have an interview with the educator. Received letters describe that “*one arrives at the crazy paradox of wanting a disciplinary measure that gives one the opportunity to get to*

²²⁵ Booklet 76, January 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di San vittore (Milano)”, Santo:

“il detenuto risulta persona di difficile gestione sul piano relazionale con gli operatori del trattamento e che la sua condotta è solo “formalmente regolare”, non impegnandosi sufficientemente nelle attività interne preposte. La complessiva condotta quale emerge dall'istruttoria espletata, tenuto conto delle modalità di perpetrazione, dei motivi e dei singoli contesti in cui è maturata, appare di particolare gravità e manifestazione del permanere di un radicato atteggiamento di opposizione e ribellione alle regole di convivenza penitenziaria e, comunque, ai valori dell'ordinamento. La regolarità della condotta nei semestri indicati dal detenuto ha avuto carattere meramente superficiale e apparente [...] ovvero che tale regolarità formale non corrispondeva a quella interiore e reale, anche se solo parziale, adesione al trattamento che il beneficio della liberazione anticipata presuppone”.

know one's pedagogical coordinator!"²²⁶ Instead, it is much more frequent that assessments are made in the face of deadlines and only at the request of the person concerned: for example, before an application for declassification or before leaving prison²²⁷. In my small experience as a university tutor, during what can be defined as an orientation period, I was able to witness this practise of evaluation through interviews that lasted ten to fifteen minutes, too short a time to be able to understand a person, even for a professional. For some, exit from prison is postponed because their evaluation is not yet finished. Beyond those wings that produce the imaginary of rehabilitation, ordinary prisons look very different:

*"despite the fact that I've been here in the same wing (g9) for more than 7 years, according to the coordinator, whom I've only seen 5 times in all these years (she hasn't spoken to us for 4 years), she told me that they haven't completed my observation yet and that there isn't a jot of evaluation made! Theoretically, it is now seven months since I became eligible to apply for early release! The coordinator, without knowing me, told me that it is too early because I still have 9 years to go! So whatever! Without even considering that in all these years I have never had any sanctions!"*²²⁸

This aspect let emerges the limits of the treatment: The inefficiency in many Italian prisons calls into question its legitimacy and consequently its ability to discipline the prison population.

Discursive and spatial practises are self-feeding. So far, I have spoken of the reward logic, which is characterised by a distinct value system and which is capable of producing a general climate of atomisation amongst prisoners, a formidable tool in the hands of prison management. Prisoners are differentiated: first they are categorised by risk codes, and then on the basis of their individual conduct through treatment. This section has explored the discursive practises around prison that are produced and reproduced by the prison spaces, which, as I have shown, are very different. There are grey areas, like the workhouses, and the flagships, like the San Vittore "Nave". At this point, I will go further into the description of some treatment-oriented spaces, to try to understand their role within prison differentiation.

²²⁶ Booklet 92, May 2014, "Lettera dal carcere di Rebibbia (Roma)", Giampaolo: "si arriva ai folle paradosso di desiderare un provvedimento disciplinare che dia modo di conoscere la propria educatrice/ore!"

²²⁷ Booklet 104, June 2015, "Lettera dal carcere di Parma".

²²⁸ Booklet 124, May 2017, "Lettere dal carcere di Roma-Rebibbia", Roberto:

"appreso che nonostante io sia qui allo stesso reparto (g9) da più di 7 anni, a detta dell'educatrice che in tutti questi anni ho visto solo 5 volte (per 4 anni non ci ha mai parlato), mi abbia detto che non mi hanno ancora chiuso l'osservazione e che non c'è un minimo di una sintesi fatta! In teoria da ormai sette mesi sono rientrato nei termini per richiedere i permessi premio! L'educatrice senza conoscermi, mi ha detto che è presto solo perché mi mancano ancora 9 anni! così a prescindere! Senza tener conto che in tutti questi anni non abbia mai avuto sanzioni ecc."

“MODEL-SECTIONS”: THE RELATION BETWEEN FREEDOM AND CONTROL

In moving towards the less punitive differentiated regimes, it will become possible to understand the last element that this research considers in the relationship between discourse spaces and prison logics. The world of re-education, as already mentioned, refers to imaginaries and best practises that are represented externally as on a stage, while entailing far less pleasant existences and conditions backstage. In recent years, several testimonies have told of the construction or renovation of new sections aimed at making them the central stage of re-education. In Viterbo, for example, the wing for prisoners-workers was ironically called “Beverly Hills”, because it hosted the “privileged of the prison”²²⁹.

This general climate works on consensus and on the very legitimacy of the prison: *“The section is often presented to regional councillors [...] as a model-section, for the fact that it demonstrates how prison serves, how it works, precisely, to reintegrate... because, in fact, that is what makes you a good cog (the conscious or unconscious acceptance of the prison routine)”*.²³⁰

There are few prisons that best reproduce the idea of the model-sections, from the point of view of the logics and values of rewards and individualised treatments. They can be found in both low and medium security. Within them, treatment-oriented courses are advertised in order to show progress in the field of the penal system.²³¹ The same applies when some politicians visit those prisons where working prisoners have repainted and cleaned the building before their arrival²³²

In these buildings, structural overcrowding has been resolved by programming the number of inmates in a more balanced way. In addition, opening the cells for a good part of the day solves the problem of limited private cell space²³³. When I discuss model-prison, I am not merely referencing open-cell regimes, but all those regimes with concrete structural improvements over the others. In fact, in their letters prisoners compare open-cell regimes to these other, more advanced treatment-oriented ones. Although open cells were originally an ameliorative reform solution, these new spatialisations often lacked the necessary funds to reorganise daily intra-mural life. As a result, only in a few cases did the

²²⁹ Booklet 80, April 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Viterbo”, Marzouki.

²³⁰ Booklet 57, May 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Roma (Rebibbia)”, Maddalena: *“La sezione spesso viene mostrata a consiglieri regionali. [...] quale sezione modello per il fatto che dimostra come il carcere serve, funzioni, appunto, a reinserire... perché in effetti è quello che ti fa tornare un buon ingranaggio (grazie all'accettazione conscia o inconscia della routine carceraria).”*

²³¹ Booklet 77, February 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore (Milano)”, Santo.

²³² *Ibidem*.

²³³ Booklet 84, September 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Monza”, Busota e Baslotto. Open cells became widespread following the “Torreggiani sentence”, when on 8 January 2013, the Strasbourg Court condemned Italy for violating Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) European Court of Human Rights, *Sez. II, Causa Torreggiani e altri c. Italia*, 8 gennaio 2013. <https://www.giurisprudenzapenale.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Corte-EDU-Sentenza-Torreggiani.pdf>.

changes described above occur. On the contrary, in all those open-cell regimes that did not pursue an improved treatment offer, further problems for the management of internal security were triggered. For example, there have been riots in open-cell regimes due to the fact that prisoners are all together, rather than locked up in cells, and guarded by a small number of officers. There have been several protests from the prison police unions, as the reduced number of officers in open cells gives them no protection.

From Cremona to Cuneo, from Spini del Gardolo to San Vittore, OLGa had read testimonies about new pavilions being built while existing one have been kept in the same, degrading conditions.²³⁴ These model-sections have brought several innovations in terms of quality of prison conditions. Generally speaking, these sections offer better, cleaner space, warmer in winter and cooler in summer; the cells are larger and better equipped, with table tennis and foosball tables.²³⁵

The new building at Cerialdo (Cuneo), that was described to OLGa in 2012, comprises 4 floors and 18 cells per floor, each with 4 places (288 places). Inside, care is taken not to overcrowd, to leave some cells empty. It is not a grey concrete block, it looks more like a school:

*“the cells are paved, tiled: there is a kitchenette with a long washbasin, hot and cold water, a bathroom with shower; the window, even if barred with a perforated iron sheet, is a rectangle whose long sides are placed horizontally and within elbow reach when seated. Nothing to do with the dark, pestilent cell, resembling a one-room social housing apartment. Here the sheets are changed once a week, in San Vittore once a month”.*²³⁶

There is less and less time left for idleness because there is a different treatment offer, with many activities and, above all, the possibility to move freely in the section and in the educational areas for several hours during the day. Better conditions also favour the treatment process and, therefore, it becomes possible to access benefits without slipping on “banana peels”, as one prison pedagogical coordinator used to say.²³⁷ By looking at this section through prison differentiation, the materialisation of the propagation of the reward logic becomes immediately intelligible. Better conditions are granted in exchange for discipline and control, which are in turn guaranteed by the inmates themselves.

²³⁴ Booklet 95, August 2014, “Da una lettera dal carcere di Cremona”.

²³⁵ Booklet 72, August 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore (Milano)”, Adamo.

²³⁶ Booklet 71, July 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di Cuneo da San Vittore al Cerialdo di Cuneo”, Maurizio:

“Le celle sono pavimentate, piastrellate: c'è un angolo cucina con il lavabo lungo, acqua calda e fredda, un bagno con doccia; la finestra, seppur sbarrata anche con una lastra di ferro forata, è un rettangolo i cui lati lunghi sono messi in orizzontale e a portata di gomiti quando si è seduti. Niente a che vedere con la cella buia, pestilente, somiglia ad un monolocale di edilizia popolare.”

²³⁷ Booklet 106, August-September 2015, “Lettera dal carcere di Opera (MI)”.

These sections better represent the evolution of the immaterial prison, which has been described by Gallo and Ruggiero (1989). In overcoming, through technology, the logic of architectural panopticism, they become a kind of technocratic regime that is increasingly impersonal. It is a post-disciplinary regime (Castel, 1981). The panoptic eye is not guaranteed by the architectural perspective but by the sets of cameras. The whole system is run by the head officer from a single control room.²³⁸ The automatic opening of the cells, operating without the presence of a guard, reminds you that you are being watched and listened to constantly by a watchful and distant eye that regulates the boundaries of the prisoner: *“When a prisoner, for example, has to/wants to go to the courtyard, the guard from the box calls the prisoner; in each cell there is a microphone, through which the signal [of the guard] is received, and through which it is possible to communicate the decision to go to the courtyard”*.²³⁹

This is how the transition to a prison of the mind took place, without violence and without conflict. It should be stressed, however, that the technocratic regime does not in itself mean a more afflictive regime than the previous one. The arrival of technology in these regimes has also favoured the loosening of certain measures. Instead, I believe that the combination of this innovation with good conduct and reward logic has increasingly complicated the conditions of the prisoner “engaged in struggle”.

The guards in the Nave wing of San Vittore are three and not six as in other regimes. They are seen less often, and their presence is no longer essential either for control, thanks to the cameras, or for daily opening and closing requests, as they are no longer the “*key holders*”. Their absence has meant that the first level of confrontation in relation to daily discontent has disappeared: *“the fact that you don't see them helps avoiding possible conflict with the “nearest enemy”*”²⁴⁰. From another point of view, Claudio wrote from Spain that there is less hostility with the guards because you do not associate them with your imprisonment, and guards circulate, in reduced numbers, in the section together with the other prisoners. For him *“the guards respect you more, also because, unlike the FIES [the Spanish maximum security], they are close to you, around you, without the protection of armoured glass or various bars, in short, you can talk face to face, man to man...”*²⁴¹

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²⁴⁰ Booklet 57, May 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Rebibbia (Roma)”, Maddalena: *“il fatto che queste non le vedi aiuta ad evitare possibili conflitti con il “nemico più vicino”!*”

²⁴¹ Booklet 7, November 2006, “Lettera di Claudio Lavazza dal carcere di Alboloté (Granata)”, Claudio: *“le guardie ti rispettano di più, anche perché, a differenza del FIES, sono vicino a te, intorno a te, senza protezioni di cristalli, blindati o sbarre varie, insomma ci puoi parlare a quattr'occhi da uomo a uomo...”*

It emerges that there is an ever-changing relationship, and one that is never crystallised in the us/them dichotomy, as described by an anonymous prisoner:

“Sometimes, the difference between the two figures seems to almost disappear, and, instead of living in constant opposition, they become almost mutually supportive. Of course, good behaviour, rewards, familiarity with the guards in order to put other inmates in a bad light, or what I call “infamery” (infameria) (i.e. going to the infirmary after the evening drug trolley, which becomes an excuse to go and report the facts to supervisors or inspectors...) can certainly be recorded, even from behind closed cells regimes, but the percentages are probably lower, also because in a closed regime you have less to lose. [...] You greet the guard as if he was your friend, [...] you joke with him, you confide in him, if you have problems in your family maybe you talk to him rather than to a prisoner. You consider a guard more loyal than a prisoner, because the guard does you favours if you behave well, maybe he paints you in a good light in the work list, he allows you to pass food from the package that otherwise would not enter [...]”²⁴²

Therefore, in certain conditions, the “prisoner-guard” relationship seems to be cancelled, the figure of the “cop” is not anymore associated with one's own condition of imprisonment: “you humanise them by saying the usual phrases: “it's a job like any other”, or “these guys do more time than us”, almost to the point of offering them coffee or letting them into the cell.”²⁴³

And he concludes: the prison “is psychologically exhausting, it tries to put across the idea of accepting the equality of those behind bars and those who close them in every night, those who control and monitor us, those who authorise us to go out in the courtyard, etc...”²⁴⁴

One of the most characteristic elements of internal pacification is the constant blackmail to which prisoners are subjected. In many prisons, open and closed regimes coexist. In this case, the coexistence is used to blackmail the “good guys”, by threatening to move them back to closed or mixed

²⁴² Booklet 136, May 2019, “Il carcere oggi: riguardo il rapporto detenuti-secondini (Prison today: about the prisoner-guards relationship)”:

“talvolta pare quasi annullarsi la differenza tra le due figure che al posto di vivere in contrapposizione costante diventano quasi solidali a vicenda. Certo, la buona condotta, la premialità, la confidenza con le guardie per mettere in cattiva luce altri reclusi o quella che io chiamo l'infameria (ovvero andare in infermeria dopo il carrello serale, che diventa una scusa per andare a riportare i fatti a preposti od ispettori...) possono sicuramente registrarsi anche da dietro i blindati chiusi, ma magari le percentuali sono probabilmente più basse, anche perché a regime chiuso hai anche meno da perdere. [...] Il fatto che saluti la guardia come fosse un tuo amico [...] ci scherzi, ti ci confidi, se hai problemi in famiglia magari parli con lui piuttosto che con un detenuto. Consideri più leale una guardia di un detenuto, perché la guardia ti fa i favori se ti comporti bene, magari ti fa inserire bene nella lista del lavoro, ti fa passare cibo dal pacco che altrimenti non entrerebbe. Insomma, si annulla il rapporto carcerato-carceriere [...].”

²⁴³ *Ibidem*: “li si umanizza dicendo le solite frasi: “è un lavoro come un altro” o “questi si fanno più carcere di noi”, fin quasi a offrirgli il caffè o farli entrare in cella.”

²⁴⁴ *Ibidem*: “Lavora ai fianchi, in maniera psicologica, cercando di far passare l'idea dell'accettazione dell'uguaglianza di chi sta dietro le sbarre e di chi le chiude ogni notte, di chi ci controlla e monitora, di chi ci autorizza a scendere all'aria, ecc...”

wings with other prisoners in transit or new arrivals²⁴⁵. In spite of the widening of material boundaries and the improvement of conditions, coercion does not diminish and control becomes more and more accurate. Constantly monitored conduct thus becomes either a stimulus or a second penalty, which is expressed in the constant submission to indicators of judgement: one does not expect punishment but seeks for a reward. At Velletri, in the regime for those who have sentences of less than 2 years and who have demonstrated good conduct, prisoners described to OLGa a climate of “resigned waiting”. Such an attitude attacks the solidarity between prisoners, directing all their efforts towards release and towards being awarded alternative measures.²⁴⁶ Moreover, in the wings dedicated to advanced treatment, as in San Vittore, these de-solidarisation dynamics lead to the complete elimination of any form of internal organisation that is in conflict with the management, not only from fear of the classic methods of punishment/reward, but also and above all

*“from accepting the prison and its routine, from submitting oneself (thus annihilating the person) by accepting and camouflaging that direct discomfort, which was once perceived as harsher and without a mask, and which, in the past, led individuals to revolt in order not to have their spirit broken”.*²⁴⁷

Prisoners wrote that the most efficient method to prevent any form of rebellion and/or “internal discomfort” is to rely on the prisoners themselves, who become their own controllers²⁴⁸. On the contrary, in closed cells there subsist a general distancing from the officers:

*“usually, in closed sections there is a different or more conflictual relationship with the guards than in open ones, since, trivially, if you need information from the jailer about, for example, a call or a visit, you have to shout, scream, wait, call back screaming and, maybe, even slam doors... So, establishing a confidential relationship with the key-holders [porta-chiavi] (as they call themselves) is more complicated...”*²⁴⁹.

In another contribution:

²⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁶ Booklet 77, February 2013, “Dal carcere di Velletri (Roma)”, Salvatore.

²⁴⁷ Booklet 74, November 2012, “Lettera dal carcere “Pagliarelli” (Palermo)”, Maddalena: “*soprattutto dall'accettare il carcere, la sua routine, sottomettendosi da sé (quindi annientando la persona stessa) accettando e camuffando quel disagio diretto che si percepiva più forte e senza-maschera in passato e che portava gli individui a rivoltarsi per non farsi intaccare lo spirito.*”

²⁴⁸ Booklet 57, May 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Roma (Rebibbia)”, Maddalena.

²⁴⁹ Booklet 136, May 2019, “Il carcere oggi: riguardo il rapporto detenuti-secondini (Prison today: about the prisoner-guards relationship)”:

“a regime chiuso c'è sempre un rapporto differente o comunque più conflittuale con i secondini rispetto a quelle aperte dato che, banalmente, se ti serve avere informazioni dal carceriere riguardo, ad esempio, una chiamata o i colloqui, devi gridare, rigridare, aspettare, a richiamare urlando e magari pure sbattere porte o blindati... Quindi, instaurare un rapporto confidenziale con i porta-chiavi (come loro stessi si autodefiniscono) è più complicato...”

“the initiatives to make something move all come from the section of the so-called “bad guys”, because they rightly do not accept a different treatment from the other prisoners, and because being locked for many hours in a cell in a rigid climate makes people rebel more”²⁵⁰.

The model-prisons are the materialisation of new models of post-disciplinary control and differentiation logics. These latter are envisaged in prison on the basis of the selection of a homogeneous prison population that ensures security while orienting treatment towards re-education within a depersonalised and technocratic regime. In this way, the prisoner becomes functional to the management, accepts the prison routine more easily, and adopts a behaviour that tends to erode the no-longer-solid internal organisation among prisoners. To give an example, in 2012, in Cuneo, at the appointed time the cell doors had to be locked manually by the inmates themselves. These prisoners reported that these “rules” and technologies were gradually making the cell itself less and less of a “den”, but rather a place as impersonal as the management of the sections themselves: *“I felt like I was in a rented apartment, foreign to me”²⁵¹.*

Central among the novelties of this model is the question of mobility. An anonymous detainee perfectly described the difference between open and closed cell regimes’ uses of disciplined mobility:

“To be in open regime means that you can freely walk around the section from morning until closing time, which varies from prison to prison according to the regulations established by the management and by commanders and inspectors: [...] there is no common criterion, different prison different routines! Having the open cell, one can go into other people’s cells to play cards, have a coffee, go to the shower or to the “little room” at any time, to the courtyard at any time (while it is usually 9-11 / 13-15)...[...] In a closed regime, on the other hand, you are usually always in your cell and you have fixed times for going to the courtyard (as already mentioned, approximately 9-11 and 13-15), plus time for sociality (16/16:30-17:30/18:00 or so), as well as the inevitable stroll to the shower (if you have it in your cell, not even that) or to the phone call (where, even if you called the day before, you do the same thing to avoid the boredom of being locked up).”²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Booklet 112, April 2016, “Lettere dal carcere di Milano-Opera”: *“Le iniziative per far muovere qualcosa vengono tutte dal reparto dei cosiddetti “cattivi”, perché giustamente non accettano un trattamento diverso dagli altri detenuti e perché lo stare chiusi per molte ore in cella in un clima rigido porta le persone a ribellarsi di più.”*

²⁵¹ Booklet 71, July 2012, “Lettera Dal carcere di Cuneo”, Maurizio: *“Mi sono come sentito dentro un appartamento in affitto, a me estraneo.”*

²⁵² Booklet 136, May 2019, “Il carcere oggi: riguardo il rapporto detenuti-secondini (Prison today: about the prisoner-guardians relationship)”:

“Essere a regime aperto vuol dire che si può liberamente girare in sezione dalla mattina fino all’orario di chiusura, che varia da carcere a carcere in base ai regolamenti stabiliti dalla direzione e da comandanti e ispettori. [...] Insomma, non c’è un

From the women's section of the Vallette prison someone once wrote to OLGa that, following a protest against the unsanitary conditions in which one of the prisoners had been left, the management had given a collective sanction by closing the cells during the day. *“With the introduction of the device “sorveglianza dinamica” (open cells and reduced presence of guards), discipline is imposed through the blackmail of the prisoners, affected by collective reprisals such as the subtraction of the greater mobility otherwise granted in the section”*²⁵³. In fact, it seems that greater mobility is excellent for maintaining order, both as a reward and as a punishment: *“The fake freedom of movement achieved through the opening of the cells, in which the prisoners are led to self-control themselves, their actions (therefore their emotions), and therefore led to avoid behaviour that is hostile to the imposed rules, knowing, in fact, that they are constantly observed by a thousand electronic eyes.”*²⁵⁴ While mobility and freedom are often associated, this combination is not so obvious, especially if one considers that the prison space is codified in every metre and compartmentalised through rigid and limited boundaries. This emerges when looking at home detention, which is presented as a softer measure (Gill, 2013, p. 28) because it is associated with a concept of greater freedom of movement, in contrast to the immobility of prison. However, it is clear how control systems have been refined to the point of breaking this automatic juxtaposition between the concepts of freedom and mobility. The latter are therefore limited and disciplined (Moran, Piacentini and Pallot, 2012). In sections with “more” mobility there is no conflict; but without conflict there is no negotiation and no space to appropriate, there is only the mobility desired by the management.

By looking at model-prisons, it emerges how the dichotomy of security and re-education always has an inextricable self-sustaining link. The idea of separating the good guys from the rest of the prison population is the same as the idea of separating the bad guys from the rest of the population. The prison is less and less tolerant of any form of contamination, seeking to homogenise the divided categories, as we have seen especially in the transition from EIV to AS, and creating many small worlds in

criterio comune, carcere che vai orario che trovi! Essendo aperti, si può dunque andare nelle celle degli altri a giocare a carte, bersi un caffè, andare in qualsiasi orario in doccia o in “saletta”, risalire all'aria (solitamente 9-11/13-15) a qualsiasi ora...[...] A regime chiuso, invece, solitamente si sta sempre in cella e si hanno gli orari d'aria per uscire (come già detto approssimativamente 9-11 e 13-15) più la socialità (16/16:30-17:30/18:00 o giù di lì), oltre all'immancabile passeggiatina per la doccia (se ce l'hai in cella, neanche quella) o la telefonata (dove, anche se hai chiamato il giorno prima, ci provi uguale per sviare la noia di star chiusi).”

²⁵³ Booklet 94, July 2014, “Lettera dal carcere le Vallette (Torino)”: *“Con l'introduzione del dispositivo della “sorveglianza dinamica” (celle aperte e minor presenza di secondini), la disciplina si impone attraverso la ricattabilità dei prigionieri e delle prigioniere, colpiti da rappresaglie collettive come la sottrazione della maggiore mobilità concessa in sezione.”*

²⁵⁴ Booklet 74 November 2012, “Lettera dal carcere “Pagliarelli” (Palermo)”, Maddalena: *“Un esempio è la finta libertà di movimento tramite l'apertura delle celle in cui il detenuto è portato all'auto controllo di sé, delle proprie azioni (quindi delle proprie emozioni) quindi portato ad evitare comportamenti ostili al regolamento imposto, sapendo, appunto, di essere costantemente osservato dai mille occhi elettronici montati in questi casi.”*

which all are reduced to one and treated in the same way. The severing of contacts with the outside world was already evident in the case of 41 bis. In fact, in this regime all activities are carried out without the prisoner leaving the section²⁵⁵. Hence, the fact of closing the door by themselves is a great proof of responsibility, of re-education, which, however, becomes possible only on the basis of blackmail, one of the most important foundations of re-education: *“not closing the door behind oneself leads to warnings, then to reporting and, finally, to isolation”*.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁵⁶ See note 233: *“Non è un'ovvietà, non chiudersi la porta dietro comporta le diffide, poi il rapporto e infine l'isolamento.”*

4. REFLECTIONS

4.1 *Differentiation and the prison continuum*

In moving towards the less punitive differentiated regimes, it will become possible to understand the last element that this research considers in the relationship between discourse spaces and prison logics. The world of re-education, as already mentioned, refers to imaginaries and best practises that are represented externally as on a stage, while entailing far less pleasant existences and conditions backstage. In recent years, several testimonies have told of the construction or renovation of new sections aimed at making them the central stage of re-education. In Viterbo, for example, the wing for prisoners-workers was ironically called “Beverly Hills”, because it hosted the “privileged of the prison”²⁵⁷.

This general climate works on consensus and on the very legitimacy of the prison: *“The section is often presented to regional councillors [...] as a model-section, for the fact that it demonstrates how prison serves, how it works, precisely, to reintegrate... because, in fact, that is what makes you a good cog (the conscious or unconscious acceptance of the prison routine)”*²⁵⁸

There are few prisons that best reproduce the idea of the model-sections, from the point of view of the logics and values of rewards and individualised treatments. They can be found in both low and medium security. Within them, treatment-oriented courses are advertised in order to show progress in the field of the penal system.²⁵⁹ The same applies when some politicians visit those prisons where working prisoners have repainted and cleaned the building before their arrival²⁶⁰

In these buildings, structural overcrowding has been resolved by programming the number of inmates in a more balanced way. In addition, opening the cells for a good part of the day solves the problem of limited private cell space²⁶¹. When I discuss model-prison, I am not merely referencing open-cell regimes, but all those regimes with concrete structural improvements over the others. In fact, in their letters prisoners compare open-cell regimes to these other, more advanced treatment-oriented ones.

²⁵⁷ Booklet 80, April 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Viterbo”, Marzouki.

²⁵⁸ Booklet 57, May 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Roma (Rebibbia)”, Maddalena: *“La sezione spesso viene mostrata a consiglieri regionali. [...] quale sezione modello per il fatto che dimostra come il carcere serve, funzioni, appunto, a reinserire... perché in effetti è quello che ti fa tornare un buon ingranaggio (grazie all'accettazione conscia o inconscia della routine carceraria).”*

²⁵⁹ Booklet 77, February 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore (Milano)”, Santo.

²⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

²⁶¹ Booklet 84, September 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Monza”, Busota e Baslotto. Open cells became widespread following the “Torreggiani sentence”, when on 8 January 2013, the Strasbourg Court condemned Italy for violating Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) European Court of Human Rights, *Sez. II, Causa Torreggiani e altri c. Italia*, 8 gennaio 2013. <https://www.giurisprudenzapenale.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Corte-EDU-Sentenza-Torreggiani.pdf>.

Although open cells were originally an ameliorative reform solution, these new spatialisations often lacked the necessary funds to reorganise daily intra-mural life. As a result, only in a few cases did the changes described above occur. On the contrary, in all those open-cell regimes that did not pursue an improved treatment offer, further problems for the management of internal security were triggered. For example, there have been riots in open-cell regimes due to the fact that prisoners are all together, rather than locked up in cells, and guarded by a small number of officers. There have been several protests from the prison police unions, as the reduced number of officers in open cells gives them no protection.

From Cremona to Cuneo, from Spini del Gardolo to San Vittore, OLGa had read testimonies about new pavilions being built while existing one have been kept in the same, degrading conditions.²⁶² These model-sections have brought several innovations in terms of quality of prison conditions. Generally speaking, these sections offer better, cleaner space, warmer in winter and cooler in summer; the cells are larger and better equipped, with table tennis and foosball tables.²⁶³

The new building at Cerialdo (Cuneo), that was described to OLGa in 2012, comprises 4 floors and 18 cells per floor, each with 4 places (288 places). Inside, care is taken not to overcrowd, to leave some cells empty. It is not a grey concrete block, it looks more like a school:

*“the cells are paved, tiled: there is a kitchenette with a long washbasin, hot and cold water, a bathroom with shower; the window, even if barred with a perforated iron sheet, is a rectangle whose long sides are placed horizontally and within elbow reach when seated. Nothing to do with the dark, pestilent cell, resembling a one-room social housing apartment. Here the sheets are changed once a week, in San Vittore once a month”.*²⁶⁴

There is less and less time left for idleness because there is a different treatment offer, with many activities and, above all, the possibility to move freely in the section and in the educational areas for several hours during the day. Better conditions also favour the treatment process and, therefore, it becomes possible to access benefits without slipping on “banana peels”, as one prison pedagogical coordinator used to say.²⁶⁵ By looking at this section through prison differentiation, the materialisation

²⁶² Booklet 95, August 2014, “Da una lettera dal carcere di Cremona”.

²⁶³ Booklet 72, August 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di San Vittore (Milano)”, Adamo.

²⁶⁴ Booklet 71, July 2012, “Lettera dal carcere di Cuneo da San Vittore al Cerialdo di Cuneo”, Maurizio:

“Le celle sono pavimentate, piastrellate: c'è un angolo cucina con il lavabo lungo, acqua calda e fredda, un bagno con doccia; la finestra, seppur sbarrata anche con una lastra di ferro forata, è un rettangolo i cui lati lunghi sono messi in orizzontale e a portata di gomiti quando si è seduti. Niente a che vedere con la cella buia, pestilente, somiglia ad un monolocale di edilizia popolare.”

²⁶⁵ Booklet 106, August-September 2015, “Lettera dal carcere di Opera (MI)”.

of the propagation of the reward logic becomes immediately intelligible. Better conditions are granted in exchange for discipline and control, which are in turn guaranteed by the inmates themselves.

These sections better represent the evolution of the immaterial prison, which has been described by Gallo and Ruggiero (1989). In overcoming, through technology, the logic of architectural panopticism, they become a kind of technocratic regime that is increasingly impersonal. It is a post-disciplinary regime (Castel, 1981). The panoptic eye is not guaranteed by the architectural perspective but by the sets of cameras. The whole system is run by the head officer from a single control room.²⁶⁶ The automatic opening of the cells, operating without the presence of a guard, reminds you that you are being watched and listened to constantly by a watchful and distant eye that regulates the boundaries of the prisoner: *“When a prisoner, for example, has to/wants to go to the courtyard, the guard from the box calls the prisoner; in each cell there is a microphone, through which the signal [of the guard] is received, and through which it is possible to communicate the decision to go to the courtyard”*.²⁶⁷

This is how the transition to a prison of the mind took place, without violence and without conflict. It should be stressed, however, that the technocratic regime does not in itself mean a more afflictive regime than the previous one. The arrival of technology in these regimes has also favoured the loosening of certain measures. Instead, I believe that the combination of this innovation with good conduct and reward logic has increasingly complicated the conditions of the prisoner “engaged in struggle”.

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are close to you, around you, without the protection of armoured glass or various bars, in short, you can talk face to face, man to man... ”²⁶⁹

It emerges that there is an ever-changing relationship, and one that is never crystallised in the us/them dichotomy, as described by an anonymous prisoner:

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Therefore, in certain conditions, the “prisoner-guard” relationship seems to be cancelled, the figure of the “cop” is not anymore associated with one's own condition of imprisonment: “you humanise them by saying the usual phrases: “it's a job like any other”, or “these guys do more time than us”, almost to the point of offering them coffee or letting them into the cell.”²⁷¹

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²⁶⁹ Booklet 7, November 2006, “Lettera di Claudio Lavazza dal carcere di Alboloté (Granata)”, Claudio: “le guardie ti rispettano di più, anche perché, a differenza del FIES, sono vicino a te, intorno a te, senza protezioni di cristalli, blindati o sbarre varie, insomma ci puoi parlare a quattr'occhi da uomo a uomo...”

²⁷⁰ Booklet 136, May 2019, “Il carcere oggi: riguardo il rapporto detenuti-secondini (Prison today: about the prisoner-guards relationship)”:

“talvolta pare quasi annullarsi la differenza tra le due figure che al posto di vivere in contrapposizione costante diventano quasi solidali a vicenda. Certo, la buona condotta, la premialità, la confidenza con le guardie per mettere in cattiva luce altri reclusi o quella che io chiamo l'infameria (ovvero andare in infermeria dopo il carrello serale, che diventa una scusa per andare a riportare i fatti a preposti od ispettori...) possono sicuramente registrarsi anche da dietro i blindati chiusi, ma magari le percentuali sono probabilmente più basse, anche perché a regime chiuso hai anche meno da perdere. [...] Il fatto che saluti la guardia come fosse un tuo amico [...] ci scherzi, ti ci confidi, se hai problemi in famiglia magari parli con lui piuttosto che con un detenuto. Consideri più leale una guardia di un detenuto, perché la guardia ti fa i favori se ti comporti bene, magari ti fa inserire bene nella lista del lavoro, ti fa passare cibo dal pacco che altrimenti non entrerebbe. Insomma, si annulla il rapporto carcerato-carceriere [...]”

²⁷¹ *Ibidem*: “li si umanizza dicendo le solite frasi: “è un lavoro come un altro” o “questi si fanno più carcere di noi”, fin quasi a offrirgli il caffè o farli entrare in cella.”

²⁷² *Ibidem*: “Lavora ai fianchi, in maniera psicologica, cercando di far passare l'idea dell'accettazione dell'uguaglianza di chi sta dietro le sbarre e di chi le chiude ogni notte, di chi ci controlla e monitora, di chi ci autorizza a scendere all'aria, ecc...”

One of the most characteristic elements of internal pacification is the constant blackmail to which prisoners are subjected. In many prisons, open and closed regimes coexist. In this case, the coexistence is used to blackmail the “good guys”, by threatening to move them back to closed or mixed wings with other prisoners in transit or new arrivals²⁷³. In spite of the widening of material boundaries and the improvement of conditions, coercion does not diminish and control becomes more and more accurate. Constantly monitored conduct thus becomes either a stimulus or a second penalty, which is expressed in the constant submission to indicators of judgement: one does not expect punishment but seeks for a reward. At Velletri, in the regime for those who have sentences of less than 2 years and who have demonstrated good conduct, prisoners described to OLGa a climate of “resigned waiting”. Such an attitude attacks the solidarity between prisoners, directing all their efforts towards release and towards being awarded alternative measures.²⁷⁴ Moreover, in the wings dedicated to advanced treatment, as in San Vittore, these de-solidarisation dynamics lead to the complete elimination of any form of internal organisation that is in conflict with the management, not only from fear of the classic methods of punishment/reward, but also and above all

*“from accepting the prison and its routine, from submitting oneself (thus annihilating the person) by accepting and camouflaging that direct discomfort, which was once perceived as harsher and without a mask, and which, in the past, led individuals to revolt in order not to have their spirit broken”.*²⁷⁵

Prisoners wrote that the most efficient method to prevent any form of rebellion and/or “internal discomfort” is to rely on the prisoners themselves, who become their own controllers²⁷⁶. On the contrary, in closed cells there subsist a general distancing from the officers:

*“usually, in closed sections there is a different or more conflictual relationship with the guards than in open ones, since, trivially, if you need information from the jailer about, for example, a call or a visit, you have to shout, scream, wait, call back screaming and, maybe, even slam doors... So, establishing a confidential relationship with the key-holders [porta-chiavi] (as they call themselves) is more complicated...”*²⁷⁷.

²⁷³ *Ibidem*.

²⁷⁴ Booklet 77, February 2013, “Dal carcere di Velletri (Roma)”, Salvatore.

²⁷⁵ Booklet 74, November 2012, “Lettera dal carcere “Pagliarelli” (Palermo)”, Maddalena: “*soprattutto dall'accettare il carcere, la sua routine, sottomettendosi da sé (quindi annientando la persona stessa) accettando e camuffando quel disagio diretto che si percepiva più forte e senza-maschera in passato e che portava gli individui a rivoltarsi per non farsi intaccare lo spirito.*”

²⁷⁶ Booklet 57, May 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Roma (Rebibbia)”, Maddalena.

²⁷⁷ Booklet 136, May 2019, “Il carcere oggi: riguardo il rapporto detenuti-secondini (Prison today: about the prisoner-guards relationship)”:

“a regime chiuso c'è sempre un rapporto differente o comunque più conflittuale con i secondini rispetto a quelle aperte dato che, banalmente, se ti serve avere informazioni dal carceriere riguardo, ad esempio, una chiamata o i colloqui, devi gridare, rigridare, aspettare, a richiamare urlando e magari pure sbattere porte o blindati... Quindi, instaurare un rapporto confidenziale con i porta-chiavi (come loro stessi si autodefiniscono) è più complicato...”

In another contribution:

“the initiatives to make something move all come from the section of the so-called “bad guys”, because they rightly do not accept a different treatment from the other prisoners, and because being locked for many hours in a cell in a rigid climate makes people rebel more”²⁷⁸.

The model-prisons are the materialisation of new models of post-disciplinary control and differentiation logics. These latter are envisaged in prison on the basis of the selection of a homogeneous prison population that ensures security while orienting treatment towards re-education within a depersonalised and technocratic regime. In this way, the prisoner becomes functional to the management, accepts the prison routine more easily, and adopts a behaviour that tends to erode the no-longer-solid internal organisation among prisoners. To give an example, in 2012, in Cuneo, at the appointed time the cell doors had to be locked manually by the inmates themselves. These prisoners reported that these “rules” and technologies were gradually making the cell itself less and less of a “den”, but rather a place as impersonal as the management of the sections themselves: *“I felt like I was in a rented apartment, foreign to me”²⁷⁹.*

Central among the novelties of this model is the question of mobility. An anonymous detainee perfectly described the difference between open and closed cell regimes’ uses of disciplined mobility:

“To be in open regime means that you can freely walk around the section from morning until closing time, which varies from prison to prison according to the regulations established by the management and by commanders and inspectors: [...] there is no common criterion, different prison different routines! Having the open cell, one can go into other people’s cells to play cards, have a coffee, go to the shower or to the “little room” at any time, to the courtyard at any time (while it is usually 9-11 / 13-15)...[...] In a closed regime, on the other hand, you are usually always in your cell and you have fixed times for going to the courtyard (as already mentioned, approximately 9-11 and 13-15), plus time for sociality (16/16:30-17:30/18:00 or so), as well as the inevitable stroll to the shower (if you have it in your cell, not even that) or to the phone call (where, even if you called the day before, you do the same thing to avoid the boredom of being locked up).”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Booklet 112, April 2016, “Lettere dal carcere di Milano-Opera”: *“Le iniziative per far muovere qualcosa vengono tutte dal reparto dei cosiddetti “cattivi”, perché giustamente non accettano un trattamento diverso dagli altri detenuti e perché lo stare chiusi per molte ore in cella in un clima rigido porta le persone a ribellarsi di più.”*

²⁷⁹ Booklet 71, July 2012, “Lettera Dal carcere di Cuneo”, Maurizio: *“Mi sono come sentito dentro un appartamento in affitto, a me estraneo.”*

²⁸⁰ Booklet 136, May 2019, “Il carcere oggi: riguardo il rapporto detenuti-secondini (Prison today: about the prisoner-guards relationship)”:

“Essere a regime aperto vuol dire che si può liberamente girare in sezione dalla mattina fino all’orario di chiusura, che varia da carcere a carcere in base ai regolamenti stabiliti dalla direzione e da comandanti e ispettori. [...] Insomma, non c’è un criterio comune, carcere che vai orario che trovi! Essendo aperti, si può dunque andare nelle celle degli altri a giocare a carte, bersi un caffè, andare in qualsiasi orario in doccia o in “saletta”, risalire all’aria (solitamente 9-11/13-15) a qualsiasi ora...[...] A regime chiuso, invece, solitamente si sta sempre in cella e si hanno gli orari d’aria per uscire (come già detto

From the women's section of the Vallette prison someone once wrote to OLGa that, following a protest against the unsanitary conditions in which one of the prisoners had been left, the management had given a collective sanction by closing the cells during the day. *“With the introduction of the device ‘sorveglianza dinamica’ (open cells and reduced presence of guards), discipline is imposed through the blackmail of the prisoners, affected by collective reprisals such as the subtraction of the greater mobility otherwise granted in the section”*²⁸¹. In fact, it seems that greater mobility is excellent for maintaining order, both as a reward and as a punishment: *“The fake freedom of movement achieved through the opening of the cells, in which the prisoners are led to self-control themselves, their actions (therefore their emotions), and therefore led to avoid behaviour that is hostile to the imposed rules, knowing, in fact, that they are constantly observed by a thousand electronic eyes.”*²⁸² While mobility and freedom are often associated, this combination is not so obvious, especially if one considers that the prison space is codified in every metre and compartmentalised through rigid and limited boundaries. This emerges when looking at home detention, which is presented as a softer measure (Gill, 2013, p. 28) because it is associated with a concept of greater freedom of movement, in contrast to the immobility of prison. However, it is clear how control systems have been refined to the point of breaking this automatic juxtaposition between the concepts of freedom and mobility. The latter are therefore limited and disciplined (Moran, Piacentini and Pallot, 2012). In sections with “more” mobility there is no conflict; but without conflict there is no negotiation and no space to appropriate, there is only the mobility desired by the management.

By looking at model-prisons, it emerges how the dichotomy of security and re-education always has an inextricable self-sustaining link. The idea of separating the good guys from the rest of the prison population is the same as the idea of separating the bad guys from the rest of the population. The prison is less and less tolerant of any form of contamination, seeking to homogenise the divided categories, as we have seen especially in the transition from EIV to AS, and creating many small worlds in which all are reduced to one and treated in the same way. The severing of contacts with the outside world was already evident in the case of 41 bis. In fact, in this regime all activities are carried out

approssimativamente 9-11 e 13-15) più la socialità (16/16:30-17:30/18:00 o giù di lì), oltre all'immancabile passeggiatina per la doccia (se ce l'hai in cella, neanche quella) o la telefonata (dove, anche se hai chiamato il giorno prima, ci provi uguale per sviare la noia di star chiusi).”

²⁸¹ Booklet 94, July 2014, “Lettera dal carcere le Vallette (Torino)”: *“Con l'introduzione del dispositivo della ‘sorveglianza dinamica’ (celle aperte e minor presenza di secondini), la disciplina si impone attraverso la ricattabilità dei prigionieri e delle prigioniere, colpiti da rappresaglie collettive come la sottrazione della maggiore mobilità concessa in sezione.”*

²⁸² Booklet 74 November 2012, “Lettera dal carcere ‘Pagliarelli’ (Palermo)”, Maddalena: *“Un esempio è la finta libertà di movimento tramite l'apertura delle celle in cui il detenuto è portato all'auto controllo di sé, delle proprie azioni (quindi delle proprie emozioni) quindi portato ad evitare comportamenti ostili al regolamento imposto, sapendo, appunto, di essere costantemente osservato dai mille occhi elettronici montati in questi casi.”*

without the prisoner leaving the section²⁸³. Hence, the fact of closing the door by themselves is a great proof of responsibility, of re-education, which, however, becomes possible only on the basis of blackmail, one of the most important foundations of re-education: “*not closing the door behind oneself leads to warnings, then to reporting and, finally, to isolation*”.²⁸⁴

NORMALISATION PROGRAMMING

The process of normalisation of the prison tries more and more, albeit in different ways, to “*teach you the rules to be a good citizen*”²⁸⁵, to naturalise certain limitations, obligations, prohibitions, and labels associated with one's condition of imprisonment. What Pasquale described happens within the logic of both the material prison, physical truncheon, and the immaterial one, which acts on the mind thanks to the extension of the meshes of control onto the most minute aspects of life. The immaterial logic creates a prison space that codifies conduct and tries to shape the individual in a way that is functional to the governmentality.

Observing these processes is possible by looking at relatively “small” issues, which seem as minor as a football pitch. As reported in some letters, football pitches have disappeared in a number of prisons. In some cases they have become the foundations of new buildings, while in others they have simply been reduced to yards and five-a-side football pitches²⁸⁶. The prison football pitch has played a significant role in history. In the 1950s, Father Ruggero, chaplain of the *Le Nuove* prison in Turin and responsible for the re-education of the inmates, managed to set up a stadium with stands and bleachers: “On the day of its inauguration, the inmates in Juventus and Inter jerseys watched in amazement as the helicopter carrying the Minister of Justice and the Cardinal landed in midfield. On another occasion, the *Togni* circus performed at the same venue: there were some problems with the entry of the twelve horses and, above all, the five elephants into the prison, but in the end about a thousand prisoners and a few dozen prison officers were able to watch the unthinkable show. A contortionist in a bikini even performed on the high platform”²⁸⁷ (De Vito, 2009, p. 37).

²⁸³ *Ibidem*.

²⁸⁴ See note 233: “*Non è un'ovvietà, non chiudersi la porta dietro comporta le diffide, poi il rapporto e infine l'isolamento.*”

²⁸⁵ Booklet 133, June, 2018, “Scritto dal carcere di Massama (OR) L'illegalità legalizzata (Legalised illegality)”, Pasquale, AS1: “*Il carcere invece di insegnarti le regole per essere un buon cittadino.*”

²⁸⁶ Booklet 110, February 2016, “Lettere dal carcere di Opera (MI)”; Booklet 115, July-August 2016, “Lettere dal carcere di Milano-Opera”; Booklet 61, September 2011, “Lettera dal carcere di Carinola”, Antonino.

²⁸⁷ I translated in English this quote to respect the accuracy of the description made by De Vito. The quoted research can be found in the reference list.

The construction of new pavilions above football fields has taken place over the last 20 years: *“In Catanzaro, as in other prisons, a new pavilion is being built. The same happens in Carinola, Secondigliano, Nuoro, Pavia and elsewhere. This is usually to the detriment of common spaces, such as sports fields, as in Pavia and Nuoro, i.e. further restricting the spaces of sociality”*²⁸⁸.

The stadiums and the bigger fields gathered together a lot of prisoners, thus allowing an unplanned sociability, a real sociability that is not directly functional to re-education. The strength that 22 people can muster when they organise themselves in a common activity should not be surprising. Marcelo, referring to a five-a-side football pitch, succeeds in clarifying the issue:

*“weeks ago I was playing football with other prisoners, after fifteen minutes of play the ball went out. The guards didn't let anyone go out to fetch it and told us the game was over [...]. The response was immediate and spontaneous. We all started kicking the football goal and shouting and insulting the guards, they came in a bunch and bullied us to ask who it did, the answer was ALL. The guards panicked and went to report everything to their boss on duty who returned with the ball after 10 minutes.”*²⁸⁹

Smaller, more controllable social spaces are preferable, not only for the number of players but also for the audience. In fact, the stadium is more than a field: it beckons spectators to come and take part in the unpredictable collective ritual that is a football match. At the same time, smaller spaces are preferable to no spaces at all, because physical activities are key to both breaking up the prison routine and maintaining order. Prison spaces such as football pitches must therefore, in the eyes of the management, be a collection of individuals, and no longer a crowd of intertwined bodies with little inclination towards docility. In the more codified sections, such as in the open cell wings, the original field has been at time closed down and replaced with a smaller one²⁹⁰. The stadium is therefore no longer used, while access to the small field is only granted to deserving individuals and denied to the others, as it happened in Rossano and Alessandria where AS2 prisoners were excluded²⁹¹. This attention to space planning characterises the new buildings of both the most rewarding and the most punitive regimes:

²⁸⁸ Booklet 50, September 2010, “Lettere dal carcere di Siano (CZ)”, Bruno: *Anche qui a Catanzaro si sta costruendo come in altre carceri un nuovo padiglione. Lo stesso avviene a Carinola, Secondigliano, Nuoro, Pavia e altrove. Di solito a danno di spazi comuni, quali i campi sportivi, come a Pavia e Nuoro, cioè restringendo ulteriormente gli spazi di socialità.*

²⁸⁹ Booklet 68, April 2012, “Lettere dal carcere di San Vittore (MI), Marcelo:

“Settimane fa giocavo a calcio insieme ad altri detenuti, dopo quindici minuti di gioco la palla è andata fuori. Le guardie non hanno fatto uscire nessuno per andarla a prendere e ci hanno detto che la partita era finita. [...] La risposta è stata immediata e spontanea. Tutti abbiamo iniziato a prendere a calci la porta e a gridare e a insultare le guardie, queste sono arrivate in branco e hanno chiesto con prepotenza chi era stato, la risposta è stata TUTTI. I secondini sono andati in panico e sono andati a riferire tutto al loro capo di turno che dopo 10 minuti è tornato con la palla e ci ha fatto un discorso patetico sul rispetto e altre fesserie.”

²⁹⁰ Booklet 88, January 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Milano-Opera”.

²⁹¹ Booklet 86, November 2013, “Lettera dal carcere di Rossano (CS)”, AS2, Mohammed.

“A fellow prisoner, who was transferred to Oristano, writes to me about the permanently closed cell doors, the limited amount of clothing that can be kept in the cell, the sections with a number of inmates not exceeding 50, the tele-mechanised control in all its security procedures; you do not go out anymore, even for the shower (since it is present in the cell)”²⁹²

Prison governmentality, taking its cue from this example of reorganisation of sociality, is also characterised by this intention to sterilise or flatten all forms of spontaneous solidarity. In the spotlight it is not just the issue of spatial proximity, but the concern with the production of any form of collective identity that can be developed through sociality, such as a football match, and that has the potential of generating a collective body, hard to control. Prison considers as non-functional any aspect of daily life that does not pass through its approval and control. Spontaneous sociality thus becomes a constant threat of chaos. In a nutshell, from the study of the issue of football pitches, it emerges that, in general, various aspects of social reproduction are increasingly hindered, when they are not supervised and organised by the prison itself. This is not surprising if one considers that prison treatment, however much focused on the “subject”, tends to turn the prisoner into an object through the dependency that it establishes in the process of institutionalisation. The effects of these governmental strategies lead to the growing acceptance of the fact that the rights of prisoners have been dwindling in a differentiated way. Their reconquest no longer takes place in a collective and generalised manner, but can instead be achieved in the form of rewards for the individual or for the small group, accepting even the possibility that one's own relative well-being may be at the expense of that of other wing mates.

This prison-induced posture facilitates peacemaking in times of conflict through differentiated rewards for those who back down:

“Convincing the prisoner that she is in the wrong even when she is ill, convincing her that she can live her imprisonment by accepting the rules imposed on her, since she can get benefits or concessions, is a system that has always been used and is functional. What is then being applied are the new models of voluntary submission, obtained on the basis of repressive experiences accumulated over the years, (these flanked and/or substituted for punitive methods that would show the prison for what it really is). [...] The prisoner, on the other hand, does not realise that her movements, her friendships, her habits are constantly being studied... in order to be held in the palm of the prison's hand and moulded at will, or, if necessary, to strike her with the knowledge of her most intimate details. At Pagliarelli

²⁹² Booklet 90, March 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Alessandria. Quello stesso formicolio (That same tingle)”. Niccolò, AS2: “Un compagno di detenzione che è stato trasferito a Oristano, mi scrive dei blindi delle celle sempre chiusi, del limite ridotto a pochi pezzi per quanto riguarda il vestiario che si può possedere in cella, delle sezioni con un numero di detenuti non superiore alle 50 unità, non si esce più neanche per la doccia (dato che è presente in cella)”.

there is a reason why the management wants to achieve the opening of the cells: having already studied, applied and obtained with punitive methods the submission, the domestication of a section, to take the next step is a must."²⁹³

The prison community has increasingly lost the strength to maintain a system of interdependence between prisoners. The quest for control and the evolutions of the panoptic gaze are increasingly succeeding in setting the stage for those who observe the lives of individuals, in all their depths. One by one, they become subjects who inform but do not communicate, especially with each other. The crowd is reduced to a collection of individualities. The implication of this governmental style is that “individualised benefits have definitively eroded the feelings of solidarity that could have been a barrier against discomfort and a sort of immune defence against the onset of prison illnesses” (Gallo and Ruggiero, 1989, p. 52).

As has already emerged at various times in this research, there is an increasingly strong process of erosion of even petty solidarity between prisoners, and the same applies to rebel consciousness. This is a process similar to what De Dardell and Söderström (2018) report regarding the threat afflicting the “criolla culture”, a traditional organisation of Colombian prisoners that has clashed with the much more recent trends of prison management, which followed pro-American global directives. Criolla means “typical of our own land” or “distinctive of our culture”; prison is characterised by a series of “culturally-embedded practices forged over the decades that considerably improve quality of life behind bars by limiting the depersonalisation and the desocialisation inherent to imprisonment” (De Dardell and Söderström, 2018, p. 26).

Criolla culture has been described through four distinctive aspects: the prisoners' communal and self-managed lifestyle; a significant margin of dialogue and negotiation between the prison population and prison management; the preservation of regular and intimate contact with family; the geographical location of the prisons in accessible sites within urban areas (De Dardell and Söderström, 2018, p. 27). In my opinion the heterogenous prison culture in Italy contains some of these elements. I would argue that the dialogue between prison population and prison management is not characteristic of the “prison of the past”. As already described, one of the main issues brought by the recent changes in prisons is the erosion of the monolithic separation between guards and prisoners. Other elements, such as the connection with families and the self-managed lifestyle, were crucial in the same way as in

²⁹³ Booklet 74 November 2012, “Lettera dal carcere “Pagliarelli” (Palermo)”, Maddalena:

“insomma arrivare a convincere il detenuto che è in torto pure quando si ammala, convincerlo che può farsi la carcerazione accettando le regole imposte dato che può arrivare a benefici o agevolazioni, è un sistema usato da sempre e funzionale. Quello che poi si sta applicando sono i nuovi modelli di sottomissione volontaria, ottenuti sulla base di esperienze repressive accumulate negli anni, (questi affiancati e/o sostituiti ai metodi punitivi che mostrerebbero il carcere per quello che realmente è).”

criolla culture. The new managerial prison style has radically worked, on the one hand, on the elimination of any form of spontaneous organisation, and, on the other, on the sophistication of spatialisation techniques aimed at isolation. In the same way, “Criolla prisons were certainly designed to punish penal offenders, but not to radically exclude them from society” (De Dardell and Söderström, 2018, p. 28). This process of isolation also implied “the destruction of “permissive” criolla habits” (*ibidem*). It operated on different scales: “regional (location of the prisons in or outside of urban areas), local (transformations of the space of the prison itself) and micro-spatial (social interaction, practices and regulations of everyday life in prisons)” (*ibidem*).

These policies in Colombia were emulating Coleman prison in Florida, as a model for new upcoming prisons. There is no space here to underline the relation between US prison models and Italian prisons, but its presence is not surprising, given the already mentioned imperialism of the US on the international prison landscape. Italy is a nation that maintained its national specificities, but it also evidently underwent the two previously described processes of isolation and recodification of social interaction. While, as in Colombia, certain forms of internal organisation among prisoners have not disappeared, the radicality with which a certain degree of functionalism and isolation characterises prison spaces remains emblematic. When I speak of the reproduction of prison power, I am referring to these tendencies. Today the condition of many undocumented prisoners, marginalised by the prison is perhaps one of the most critical issues. In fact, several foreigners, for instance who was protagonists in the riots that began in March 2020, are part of the quota of prisoners who, not being able to access the reward mechanism, and therefore having nothing to lose, obstruct the governmental logic.

However, among the prisoners this functionalism has completely reshaped daily life and social organisation. What seems evident is that every choice has its direct consequences, and there is no straightforward conduct one way or the other. There can be no revivals of the prison “of the past”, for both the prisoner culture and the specific habits of the political prisoners. This reflection was expressed by Antonino, “*In Italian prisons there are inmates, many inmates, who struggle every day to survive, so there is also a big difference between one type of inmate and those prisoners who struggle and suffer every day to live with dignity*”²⁹⁴. Therefore, with regard to long-term prisoners, whose release depends on their conduct and is perhaps linked to re-joining a family outside, it becomes difficult to choose to fight without considering the ifs and buts. This dynamic emerges clearly when discussing work: “*it is a delicate matter — and*

²⁹⁴ Booklet 138, September 2019, “Lettera dal carcere di Sulmona (AQ)”, Antonino, AS1: “*nelle carceri italiane ci sono detenuti e molti carcerati che lottano ogni giorno per sopravvivere, quindi c’è anche una grande differenza fra un tipo di detenuti e quei carcerati che lottano e soffrono ogni giorno per vivere con dignità.*”

*you cannot tell people not to work without a valid reason, because their problems are different, especially for those people who have been in prison for 20-30 years. And many have material needs*²⁹⁵. I wanted to underline this aspect because the Criolla culture, as well as the Italian convict culture or, even more generally, any popular culture that is crushed by the new forms produced by the modifications of capitalism, cannot be just a nostalgic and romantic idea. Critical positionalities must be analysed in today's context in order to understand how to resist this system. It must be said that I do not bring up these issues in order to sing the praises or formalise a way of living in prison. It is impossible to categorise each person in the dichotomy “irreducible” and “lumpen” or “treatable and untreatable”. The complexity of being in prison creates an increasingly blurred positioning. Being part of re-educational activities, choosing to work or simply maintaining good behaviour is not the same as espousing the rules of the prison system.

The traditional resistance of political prisoners takes on different connotations when prison is no longer what it used to be:

*“I must say that for some days now I have been demoralised because I am constantly trying to be a good comrade but I don't always succeed. I am referring to the fact that I have decided a priori to refuse any work inside the prison if it is offered to me, I would consider it incoherent to accept in prison what, while free, the State has done everything to prevent you from doing. For the same reason I intend not to take advantage of the benefit of early release (art.54 op); I have nothing to be forgiven and my conduct is linear, therefore correct with my ideas. It will certainly not be an institution — a fascist one at that! — to evaluate it. However, it is not easy to remain consistent with oneself and, sometimes, one risks falling into the traps of the enemy; this demoralises me a lot and it is very dangerous, it makes me feel like a perfect amateur.”*²⁹⁶

To give another example, in the previous chapter on the identity of prisoners I spoke of Claudio, a long-term prisoner who concluded his letter by saying that, since he could not escape from super-prisons, the only alternative left to him was to help others escape through writing:

“And what do I do, you may ask, to combat the destructive daily routine of prison? [...] You see... it's simple, here even the biggest loser is thirsty for freedom (of course, an individual freedom for them only), [...] I write for them, I

²⁹⁵ Booklet 117, October 2016, “Lettera dal carcere di Sulmona (AQ)”, Antonino, AS1: “Il discorso dei lavori nelle carceri è una cosa delicata – e non si può dire alla gente di non lavorare senza una valida motivazione, perché le problematiche sono diverse, soprattutto per quelle persone che hanno 20-30 anni di carcere. E tanti hanno bisogni materiali.”

²⁹⁶ Booklet 53, December 2010, “Lettera dal carcere di Cremona”, Andrea:

“Devo però dire che da alcuni giorni sono demoralizzato perché costantemente mi metto alla prova di essere un buon compagno ma non sempre ci riesco. Mi riferisco al fatto che ho deciso a priori di rifiutare il lavoro all'interno del carcere semmai mi fosse offerto, riterrei incoerente accettare in carcere ciò che in libertà lo stato ha fatto di tutto per impedirti di svolgerlo. Per lo stesso motivo ho intenzione di non usufruire del beneficio della liberazione anticipata (art.54 op); non ho niente da farmi perdonare e la mia condotta è lineare quindi corretta con le mie idee. Non sarò di certo un'istituzione a valutarla, peraltro fascista! Non è però facile restare coerenti con se stessi e a volte si rischia di cadere nei tranelli del nemico, questo mi demoralizza tantissimo ed è pericolosissimo, mi fa sentire un perfetto dilettante.”

make applications for them... I must tell you that I often succeed. In eight years of solitary confinement, I have read a lot of books on the prison legal system, I have managed, with my work, to obtain several exit permits (four) and definitive releases [...]. In this sense, my struggle, in here, is to give freedom (to those who deserve it) using the methods of the bourgeoisie, their own codes and regulations; a sort of lawyer of lost causes.”²⁹⁷

While this research overrepresents the prisoners in struggle, in truth there is no lack of situations in which solidarity is not even considered:

“there are even those who have no qualms — even out of ignorance — to further condemn those who, like themselves, have been condemned (an example: two months ago, several female inmates had the courage to collect signatures to send another inmate to the OPG (judicial psychiatric hospital)!”²⁹⁸

Moreover, although choice is always at the prisoner's disposal, it should be noted that prison is one of those places where, beyond the reproduction of power, there are forms of domination, from the top to the bottom, that are difficult to find outside of it:

“Here, if you try to differentiate yourself from the others (too much of a rebel) you are immediately identified as aggressive and dangerous and catalogued “high surveillance”. If you don't justify why you stopped working they report you. Here they go on with disciplinary reports, special surveillance, and sometimes some detainees, and it has happened before, were banned from the whole section without anybody doing anything to avoid it.”²⁹⁹

The power produced, or reproduced, therefore eliminates all sources of the unexpected by systematically removing variety and complexity. The prison is the place *par excellence* where social life is totalised in a field of strategies. In its most general meaning, the idea of strategy, in fact, presupposes perfect knowability of a physical and figurative space, in order to foresee possible behaviour in all the potential situations (De Matteis, 1985, p. 157). For this reason, on the one hand, the prisoners in this codified field are always enveloped in error, they can be considered deviant and problematic when necessary. On the other hand, any form of local resistance becomes a problem for the management, who would like to see a flattening of those programmatic tendencies. One can use the metaphor of globalisation

²⁹⁷ Booklet 7, November 2006, “Lettera di Claudio Lavazza dal carcere di Alboloté (Granata)”, Claudio: “E cosa faccio, vi chiederete voi, per combattere la quotidianità distruttiva del carcere? Vedete...è semplice, qui anche il più sfigato è assetato di libertà (chiaro, una libertà individuale per lui solo), [...] quindi io scrivo per loro, faccio domande di ricorso per loro...Devo dirvi che mi riesce bene. In 8 anni di isolamento mi sono letto un sacco di libri del sistema giuridico penitenziario, sono riuscito, con il mio lavoro, a ottenere vari permessi di uscita (quattro) e una libertà definitiva.”

²⁹⁸ Booklet 20, December-January 2008, “Da una lettera dal carcere di Bologna”, Maddalena: “E c'è persino chi non si fa scrupoli — anche per ignoranza — a condannare chi, come loro stesse è stata condannata (un esempio: è il caso di due mesi fa, quando diverse detenute ebbero il coraggio di raccogliere firme per mandare un'altra detenuta all'OPG (ospedale psichiatrico giudiziario)!”.

²⁹⁹ Booklet 132, June 2018, “Lettera dal carcere di Lucca”, Mauro:

“Qui se tenti di differenziarti dagli altri (troppo ribelle) vieni subito catalogato aggressivo e pericoloso e catalogato “grande sorveglianza”. se non giustifichi il motivo perché hai cessato di lavorare ti fanno rapporto. Qui vanno avanti di rapporti disciplinari, sorveglianze particolari e a volte succede che qualche detenuto, come è successo, è stato dato il divieto a tutta l'intera sezione senza che nessuno abbia fatto niente.”

to explain how power direct its practises: if spaces were homogeneous and hierarchically ordered, by increasing the scale of representation internal differences should diminish (*ibidem*). Fortunately, this is not yet the case: the global fails to simplify reality, there is still resistance and these letters bear witness to this throughout the booklet.

4.2 The bureaucratisation of punishment:

In the course of the research it emerged how the modifications of prison spaces and discursive practises, which are interdependent, allow us to observe some logics linked to specific regimes and to more general others. The picture I have drawn shows how prisoners engaged in struggles have to reckon with a process of “flexibility and indeterminacy” (Ruggiero, 1998, p. 211), which subjects them to a continuous blackmail between the choice of fighting, of renouncing all benefits, and the choice of maintaining a good conduct, trying to avoid stumbling along the way and managing to obtain to spend less years in prison. On one hand, this indeterminacy is created by the intersection of old and new governmental practise; on the other, it is the expression of the tension between individualisation process and past forms of solidarity between prisoners. Guagliardo (2012, p. 7) considers that the penal system has freed itself from the guise of law by replacing it with the logic of the prize in both punitive and reward regimes. As I showed above, this logic is among the founding values of governmentality, and is the one that has most generated differentiation among prisoners. The reward finds its strength in the reproduction of technologies of power by those who are themselves controlled. Prisoners, consciously or not, do not look beyond their own regime or even their own individual path, leading to the erosion of any form of collective improvement. For this reason, a proud bicycle thief can serve more years in prison than a “repentant” murder (Guagliardo, 1997, p. 7). The introduction of the individual prison benefits has further complicated the relationship between crime and punishment by taking the consequential logic to the extreme. Once in prison, in many cases the prisoners are not granted minimum rights unless they are willing to be cooperative and to make themselves available to the management. In this way, the prison becomes completely autonomous from the world of those who have judged. The reward, as the most efficient technology of power, in many cases is used by prison to replace punishment and duties. Prison, thus, acts as a vanguard for other institutions in society in the area of development of rewarding logics, which are integrated and, sometimes, substitute laws and regulations. The shift from the rights of the prisoner to the rights as a reward also accompanies the shift from the judgement of the crime to the judgement of the person. Thanks to these transformations

that have been widely observed in the previous sections, the reward system legitimises isolation and punishment for all those people who are outside these logics, precisely because they are judged as irretrievable and “enemies”.

If the previous section answered the question of how prison makes reward and differentiation possible even with the use of violence or of old measures of confinement, in this one I consider how prison has made punishment desirable and even more feasible. I will focus, in particular, on the evidence of videoconferencing, i.e. hearing the trial at a distance, from prison, and I will relate it to the “spectacle of the scaffold” (Foucault, 1977). Both issues, namely how differentiation, reward and punishment are possible, respond to a more general question on how the prison is renewing itself over the years in relation to the society in which we live. The reward mechanism has certainly had an easier time emerging in a capitalist society, which, as an ideology, counts meritocracy among its values, fundamental to legitimising social differences. It is more difficult, however, to continue to punish at a time when, in a democratic system, States formally repudiate war and condemn violence. Beyond the gusts of populism that have brought back old adages such as “throw away the key” and “let's reintroduce the death penalty”, the use of violence does not have an easy time being represented, let alone materialising, in our society. Newspapers talk about the decompression of the insurgent crowd more than about truncheons and beatings; images of police violence are not daily occurrences, contrary to what prisoners have written to OLGA, or to what is reported in certain city districts in the US. Instead, in the newspapers these representations tend to be considered as isolated episodes, sometimes mistakes to disassociate from, as in the video of George Floyd's death by suffocation, or the beatings occurred in Santa Maria Capua Vetere. The internet offers more and more occasions to observe these brutal forms of violence, especially in moments of crisis of the state and its institutions like the ones we are experiencing now. However, the general discourse on violence continues to be based on a legitimising basis. The notion of Prison as a legal pain factory has already emerged in this research, both for its structural conditions and for the material and immaterial violence that characterises it. Rather than describing how physical torture is a daily occurrence, I am now describing how the machinery of justice builds its punitive strategies on the image of a more civilised prison, capable of maintaining the logic of torture without physically striking with an iron fist. In other words, I continue the analysis of the disappearance of torture in the public eye by looking at what has replaced the chain and the “police carriage” (Foucault, 1976), and what has remained intact since then.

Even today, in criminal justice, there remains a “torture background”. The punishment to be administered by the prison system is, however, no longer on the body but, instead, on the soul. Technologies aimed at the pervasiveness of control, at risk management, have contributed to this process (Feeley and Simon, 1992). Criminal development has, in fact, renewed the tendency towards bureaucratic rationalism through rationality, scientific knowledge and efficiency. However, these tendencies must be observed in relation to the “expressive, emotionally driven and morally toned currents” (Garland, 1990, p. 202). The governmentality of the penal system has come to terms with these trends and countertrends, which have played a crucial role in the reformulations of the penal system in setting the boundaries of possible punishment.

In the society in which we live, common sense leads us to think that justice no longer has to deal with corporal punishment, with arbitrary punishments based on pre-modern conventions; there are no longer public executions, the community no longer lynches the condemned. From the pre-modern to the modern period, the emergence of professionals in the penal field has served to eliminate these practises, considered inhuman and without any rehabilitative purpose. At the same time, it justified the administration of pain as a means of healing, such as electric shocks and cold water douches, both of which were proposed by Enrico Ferri (1906), one of the most important criminologists of the last century. These ideas were portrayed as a “shift from corporal to carceral punishment”, as a “triumph of enlightenment humanitarianism over pre-modern barbarism” (Pratt, 2000, p. 187). These expectations, which are expressed in the various historical passages of how the penal system has transmuted between the pre-modern, modern and postmodern eras, show instead different continuities. It almost becomes difficult to distinguish what is pre-modern and what is contemporary if not for the expressive forms of violence and the legitimising repertoire. Pratt (2000) explains this phenomenon by likening it to Elias's processes of civilisation (1939, 1984), which should not either be interpreted in the sense of progress or invoked as a value judgement. It seems, therefore, that prison between the pre-modern and modern eras played the role of reproducing forms of domination and objectification that were useful for maintaining continuity of prison among both other institutions and existing models of reproduction of social life. The logic is the same that determined the end of public executions, where justice was often questioned in front of everyone by the perpetrator in front of the guillotine, obtaining the opposite result of wanting to give an “exemplary punishment”. The death penalty was replaced by the punishment of an endless detention, exemplified by the life imprisonment still in force in Italy.

It therefore becomes fundamental to question and problematise the role of contemporary technologies aimed at achieving this result, how they manifest themselves and how the same logics are continuously renewed. In this case, I want to focus on the role of a specific technology, that of videoconferencing some prisoners considered “at risk” within the process of bureaucratisation. The new technologies at the service of punishment justify the existence of the prison and re-propose the punishment in forms that are more appropriate to the social structures that characterise contemporary society. Punishment is thus kept as a bulwark against large scale collapse of the existing social order. These new technologies are part of the apparatus of punitive justice that must bite into a reality without “flesh”. They bite the soul: a simulacrum of the body is created in order to be offered to the public without observable physical consequences. Clearly, there are bodily implications, which I will further explain in the next section.

What I want to underline now is that, in the first place, the process of bureaucratisation of punishment has created a distance between its action and the public’s knowledge of this action, therefore making the prison’s behaviours difficult to criticise because they remain unknown. It should be specified that this “distance” does not preclude the proximity of observation and control to which prisoners are subjected. Bureaucratisation of the legal and penal machine (Hulsman and De Cèlis, 2001, p. 27) is the best, or rather the most efficient way to continue to punish. Milgram’s experiment (1965) showed the same thing: without seeing the person in front of them, “few were hesitant to apply punishment, even when they thought the voltage was dangerously high. But they became hesitant the closer the victim was brought to them” (Christie, 1978, p. 84).

This distance created by bureaucratic centralisation also runs into an opposite tendency: the increase of the public visibility of punishment. This, however, occurs in certain forms and, in any case, does not limit the rise of new punitive, destructive, incapacitatory forms, such as in the regimes of the enemy.

From outside the prisons there is a new intrusion of community participation, which comes closer and closer not only to Cohen’s Punitive City (1973), but also to public attention regarding the risks posed by particular categories of offenders, such as those who pose a threat to environmental justice. In this relative and fragmentary narrative about the reforms that have characterised the modern and postmodern eras, Simon (1995, p. 42) argues that:

“the hypothesis of the postmodernization of punishment does not suppose that traditional modern penal goals simply go away, but only that they become increasingly difficult to understand within the scope of modern penology and

increasingly disconnected from the social conditions that originally provided modern punishment with coherence and external referents.”

Today, crime and punishment have become “regular features of public and political debate” (Pratt, 2011, p. 230). They are not only discussed by experts, exemplified by the topic of social insecurity, which has become of public and political interest, as I described in the previous sections regarding the representation of the “enemy”. So, on the one hand, to maintain the justness of punishment, distance had to be created between individuals and the world of punishment (*ibidem*). At the same time, as described in the previous section, it was necessary for every respectable citizen to feel that they were the presumed or potential victim of the offender (Guagliardo, 1997, p. 75). These global effects have led to other opposing processes, such as the increase of “supermax” prisons, institutions that provide the most extreme forms of segregation and sensory deprivation. And again, just as “penal populism” has spread in recent years, so has the “restorative justice movement”.

Bureaucratisation has also taken away every form of conflict, which is useful for the very constitution of a society that has delegated every task involving the management of public affairs. The state has become the third party that deals exclusively with the conflict between two parties, dividing and labelling them as “the offender” and “the victim” (Hulsman and De Cèlis, 2001, p. 38). In this sense, the process of bureaucratisation has been continuous since modern times.

VIDEOCONFERENCING

In these final pages, through the testimonies of prisoners who wrote to OLGa from maximum security regimes, I will highlight the punitive logic that characterises the technology of videoconferencing and its adherence to these other processes described. Just as civilised punishment has become an important bulwark against the collapse of the existing social order, so, too, videoconferencing comes as a bastion for the legitimacy of prison in civil society. The following narrations have to be contextualised in relation to the critical position of the writers towards detention. It is precisely because of this posture that they usually experience the use of videoconferencing and other technologies before other inmates (Story, 2013), even when these are not perceived as a repressive tool for the rest of the prison population. Videoconferencing is a technological tool that enables the defendant to take part in a trial without being present. They participate from inside the prison in which they are being held via a screen in the courtroom. Beside this, the courtroom remains the same. The only other variable is the defence lawyer, who can choose whether to participate alongside their client in prison or in the courtroom.

Those who have written to OLGa on this issue come from maximum security regimes and are accused, or convicted, of mafia-related or political crimes. Additionally, they are all Italian men who are incarcerated in different prisons. This homogeneity is due to the fact that, before the introduction of the regulations for the containment of COVID-19, most of those who participated in videoconference hearings came from these regimes. For example, in April 2014, it was reported in the booklet:

*“Videoconferencing applied to trials is now rapidly gaining ground for all prisoners who deserve, from the point of view of justice, to have an “eye” on them. This is the case of Maurizio Alfieri, a rebellious robber not inclined to prison domestication; it is the case of Gianluca and Adriano, anarchists accused of various actions against ENI, waste magnates and other poisonous consortia. It could be, or at least it already is, in the will of the Turin Public Prosecutor's Office, the case of Claudio, Chiara, Niccolò and the writer, accused of an act of sabotage against the Chiomonte High Speed Train site”.*³⁰⁰

Videoconferencing, as observed for the 41 bis regime, was an exceptional measure introduced for the most “at risk” prisoners and then normalised for all other categories of prisoners. The peculiarity of this technology is that it did not become the rule for one regime, but instead extended to every prisoner, in every regime. The recurrence of emergencies, such as the mafia phenomenon, first, and then the COVID-19 pandemic, underpinned its spread. Introduced in 1992, following the Capaci bombing, remote justice procedure was aimed at assuring the security of persons admitted to protection programmes³⁰¹. Extended in 1998, this procedure now allowed for the judge to decide to hold the hearing at a distance for the following reasons: a) serious threats to security or public order; b) in order to avoid delays and postponements in particularly complex hearings. Outside the above-mentioned cases, participation by videoconference also takes place during proceedings against a detainee subjected to the regime of Art. 41 bis³⁰². In 2001, the use was extended from the 41 bis regime to all prisoners accused of political, mafia or religious terrorism.

³⁰⁰ Booklet 91, April 2014, “La prigione degli sguardi: note sul processo in videoconferenza. Dal carcere di Alessandria”: *“la videoconferenza applicata ai processi sta ora rapidamente prendendo piede per tutti i detenuti meritevoli, dal punto di vista della giustizia, di un “occhio” di riguardo. È il caso di Maurizio Alfieri, rapinatore riottoso non incline alla domesticazione carceraria; è il caso di Gianluca e Adriano, anarchici accusati di diverse azioni dirette contro l’Eni, magnati dei rifiuti e altri consorzi veleniferi; potrebbe essere, quantomeno già lo è nella volontà della procura di Torino, il caso di Claudio, Chiara, Niccolò e dello scrivente, accusati di un atto di sabotaggio contro il cantiere dell’Alta velocità di Chiomonte. Una deroga speciale al “diritto di difesa”, che prevede la presenza fisica dell’imputato accanto al difensore durante il processo, giustificata con il solito pretesto della “sicurezza” e dell’“ordine pubblico”.*

³⁰¹ Reference to Article 7 of Decree-Law of 8 June 1992, no. 306, converted with amendments by Law no. 356 of 7 August 1992.

³⁰² Art. 146-bis Code of Criminal Procedure. It is the article which regulates videoconference trials within the collection of rules governing the Italian criminal trial.

Maximum security regime or 41 bis can be seen as the spaces where practises are tested, as described for off-shore sites: they are circuits “where policies and practices are fine-tuned before being rolled-out closer to home and are thus recognizable both as obscure carceral spaces and as components of a larger system” (Gill, Deirdre, Moran, Burridge, 2016, p. 11). They are circuits that make their way from one point to another, for each cycle elaborating and carrying a new security measure. Initially, these steps are introduced through special security measures for “at risk” categories, such as the Mafia prisoner in 41 bis or the terrorist affiliated to ISIS. From time to time, a new device is implemented, tested and, if effective, made permanent. Before the exceptional health-related measures linked to the containment of COVID-19, which have extended the possibility of procedural debate by videoconferencing to all detainees, a judge's order confirming the proven threats to security and public order was already no longer necessary. Videoconferencing had become an automatism in the presence of specific *status detentionis* of prisoners³⁰³.

From the letters it emerges that the main reasons for establishing videoconferencing are three-fold: efficiency, economy and security. It is considered efficient to guarantee the economic savings of transportation from prison to court, as prisons are often thousands of kilometres away. One of the writers from Sicily was, for example, imprisoned in Abruzzo, approximately 700 km away; another imprisoned in Terni was 400 km from home; yet another, though arrested in Sicily, was transported to Sardinia. The efficiency that videoconferencing guarantees is that of being able to take part in several trials in the shortest possible time: “if a defendant in a large mafia trial has two or three other trials at the same time, one of these trials is actually blocked, because the prisoner is elsewhere”³⁰⁴. From an organisational point of view, every prison can equip itself for videoconferencing: “*It does not take much to set up rooms with screens, microphones and telephones*”³⁰⁵. The main economic reason is linked to the prison industrial complex (Davis, 1995), i.e. the set of economic interests that create relations between private

³⁰³ There was no longer a need for a judge's order (or a request to that effect) that verified the existence of serious reasons of security or public order or the particular complexity of the hearing, when remote participation was necessary in order to avoid delays in the proceedings. Even if it was a discretionary choice of the judge, who had a very wide margin of manoeuvre in view of the lack of determinateness of the application prerequisites, it still required, depending on the case, a decree or an order to motivate his decision (binding, to some extent, the discretion). Now, instead, an automatism is provided for in the presence of a *status detentionis* in the cases of crime indicated in Art. 51, para 3-bis, and in Art. 407, para 2, letter a) No. 4 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. This automatism, as we shall see below, creates a strong tension with certain constitutional principles. From: <http://www.ristretti.org/Le-Notizie-di-Ristretti/riforma-del-processo-penale-dibattimento-a-distanza-da-eccezione-a-regola>

³⁰⁴ Interview with lawyer Caterina Calia on videoconference trials (my translation). Link: <https://prisonbreakproject.noblogs.org/2014/06/10/lavv-calia-sui-processi-in-videoconferenza-da-radiocane-info/>.

³⁰⁵ Booklet 91, April 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Ferrara”, Adriano: “*Non ci vuole poi molto ad allestire stanzette con schermi, microfoni e telefoni.*”

companies and prisons³⁰⁶. In security terms, however, videoconferencing would avoid the possibility of defendants meeting, or prisoners escaping during transportation³⁰⁷.

In addition to criticising the “*non-neutrality of technological advances*”, the prisoners who wrote to OLGa believe that videoconferencing presents several contradictions, and consider it a punitive measure³⁰⁸. The spread of this technology, as described for the “zeromail” service, which gives the possibility to scan and send letters by email, runs the risk of facilitating a further level of control. Increased convenience and efficiency often bring with them increased surveillance. This is what Giovanni wrote to OLGa about this service, which involves handing over the text of the letter to the guards, who then scan and send it as an email. He is aware that paper letters can also be read, but, unlike emails, they have to be unglued and re-glued, which can be a hassle for those who check them³⁰⁹. The remote hearing is also the solution to a problem created by the system itself: “*the prisoner should not be placed in a prison more than 300 km away from his residence*”³¹⁰. Again, according to the principle of territoriality of punishment, considering that

“in general those who commit crimes do so close to the place where they live, or better, those who commit crimes do so within a radius of 100 km from their place of residence, and (considering that) the trials take place in the competent courts, it is shown that, if the first conditions were met, videoconferencing would not be necessary, because for a maximum distance of 300 km 4 hours would be sufficient”.³¹¹

Concerning spaces, the room in the prison where videoconferences take place is often a technologically equipped cell with a guard inside. This is how it was described in a testimony: “There are several video cameras filming the judge, the injured parties and the defendants with their lawyers, and four screens that then transmit the footage. The image of Claudio occupies a very small portion of the screens and remains muted for a long time.”³¹²

³⁰⁶ Booklet 130, January 2018, “Lettera dal carcere di Sulmona”, Antonino, AS1.

³⁰⁷ Booklet 92, May 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Sulmona, Antonino, AS1.

³⁰⁸ See note 295: “*Non neutralità dell'avanzata tecnologica.*”

³⁰⁹ Booklet 146, March 2021, “Lettera dal carcere di Milano-Opera”, Giovanni, AS1.

³¹⁰ Booklet 93, June 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Terni”, Valerio: “*Il codice penale afferma che il detenuto non dovrebbe essere allocato in un penitenziario distante oltre 300 km dalla residenza dello stesso.*”

³¹¹ *Ibidem*:

“Considerato che in genere chi delinque lo fa in prossimità del luogo in cui vive o meglio, chi commette reato lo compie nel raggio di 100 km dal luogo di residenza ed i processi si svolgono nei tribunali di competenza, si dimostra che se la prima condizione venisse rispettata la videoconferenza non sarebbe necessaria sicché nel percorrere al massimo 300 km basterebbero al più 4 ore.”

³¹² Booklet 90, March 2014, “Lettera dal carcere di Ferrara”. Introduction in OLGa's booklet on Claudio's videoconferencing trial: “diverse sono le videocamere che riprendono il giudice, le parti offese e gli imputati con i loro avvocati e quattro gli schermi che ne trasmettono poi le riprese. L'immagine di claudio occupa una piccolissima porzione degli schermi e rimane a lungo muta”.

The screen shows a room furnished with desks and chairs. Communication does not run smoothly: the video is sometimes disconnected, the sound is not heard or the audio is so delayed that it is difficult to keep track of the debate.

Video conferencing is efficient, but it does not allow interaction and it imposes a system of glances, from a prisoner's account:

*"I had thought about what to do, what to say. I greet with a raised fist, because I like to greet like that. Then I pay attention in the courtroom, the TV is on the judge's side and that's it. What an idiot I feel, I only greeted the judge. [...] On the TV there's me in a small frame and then you can see the courtroom, 10 seconds on the judge and 10 seconds on his comrades, lawyers and the prosecutor [...]."*³¹³

The description continues in an interview with a lawyer who defended political prisoners in 41 bis:

*"The defendant sees the trial from a distance, [...] when the lawyer speaks, he is the one who is framed, and the same when the judge speaks, without there ever being an overall view. A trial is made up of various stages: it is possible for the defendant to make statements whenever he feels he has to, or to intervene when a witness is making statements, and also to challenge them directly. All this cannot take place with videoconferencing, where there are a whole series of filters. One asks: "May I speak?", the officer at the other end calls the chairman and tells him: "the defendant wants to say something", then the chairman authorises, and only at that point, once authorised, the lawyer may confer".*³¹⁴

In their letters, the prisoners denounce a technological exaggeration of the prison's exclusionary function, a progressive disembodiment of the individual kidnapped by the State. *"Videoconferencing is the synthesis of the denial of physicality"*, in their case justified by social dangerousness³¹⁵.

The technological development that involves Italian prisons allows us to reflect on certain forms of disciplined mobility (Moran, Piacentini, Pallot, 2011). With videoconferencing we are dealing with a material immobility and a dematerialised mobility. Videoconferencing, in fact, makes it possible to prevent the prisoner from leaving the prison: *"the latest upgrade for "transport for reasons of justice" is the videoconferencing process, where transport simply does not take place, except in immaterial form"*³¹⁶. As in *Discipline and Punish*, quoted by the prisoner himself, in the transition from

³¹³ Booklet 90, March 2014, "Lettera dal carcere di Ferrara", Claudio:

"avevo ragionato su cosa fare, cosa dire. Saluto col pugno alzato, perché mi piace salutare così. poi presto attenzione in aula, la Tv è rivolta dalla parte del giudice e basta. Che cretino mi sento, ho salutato solo il giudice. [...] Sulla Tv ci sono io in un riquadro piccolo e poi si vede l'aula, 10 secondi il giudice e 10 secondi compagni, avvocati e la pm [...]."

³¹⁴ See note 294.

³¹⁵ See note 300: *"La videoconferenza è la sintesi della negazione della fisicità."*

³¹⁶ Booklet 91, April 2014, "La prigione degli sguardi: note sul processo in videoconferenza. Dal carcere di Alessandria", Mattia: *"L'ultima frontiera nel campo dei "trasporti per motivi di giustizia" è il processo per videoconferenza, dove il trasporto semplicemente non avviene, se non in forma immateriale."*

the “chains” to the “police carriage” (“*vettura cellulare*”) (Foucault, 1976, p. 88), “*the introduction of videoconferencing marks a passage that sums up in itself a paradigm shift*”³¹⁷. Videoconferencing seems, in fact, a technology that accompanies the process of distancing the body of the tortured from the public; a sophistication of punishment on the body, a bureaucratisation of punishment: “*what kind of trial is it, if the judges do not even dare to look you in the eye when they give you the sentence?*”³¹⁸

Mattia talks about it again, comparing the videoconference to Victor Hugo's scaffold:

*“The bourgeois modesty of the reforms transports without showing anymore how it punishes, without offering any spectacle. No more eye contact between the people and the criminal; the only glance to be tolerated is that of the guardian on the imprisoned penitent. [...] Videoconferencing, unlike the scaffold, is not a mechanism that carries out an already decided punishment, even less so a punishment by death, which is no longer provided for in the penal code. But, even more than the scaffold, articulated as it is with microphones and cameras, it is a “structure” that “sees”, a “machine” that “hears”. Of course, it does not “eat” the “flesh”, but in its own way it “disembodies” the accused, dematerialises their body, reduces it to a set of bits, producing a certain visual impact and a certain sense within a process that is not to be underestimated: through it, the presence of the accused, although distant, becomes spectral, his body is treated as a video interference to which the word can be granted or taken away with a simple “click”. It is the triumph of the reforming modesty that had already cleaned the streets from the human chains of the forced and that, now, through the new technologies, “frees” the courtrooms from that uncomfortable and jarring presence, so that the abstraction of law appears undisturbed. Also denied is the embrace between co-defendants, who cannot even see each other on that occasion. There is no emotional exchange with the public, who do not even appear on the screen. No complicit glances, no greetings to family and friends. Once in prison, even when on remand, one never leaves, not even for the trial. Untouched, cemented. The jury themselves are led to consider you so dangerous that you cannot be brought before them. Somehow, your guilt is already implicitly designated in the manner of your “presence”. [...] Videoconferencing is the technological ally that perfects the “prison of glances”. Cowardly, it multiplies the eyes that scrutinise those who have offended the boundary of the law, but no longer find the courage to look them straight in the eye. A cybernetic metaphor for a blindfolded justice that is equipped with mechanical eye prosthesis but is still blind.”*³¹⁹

³¹⁷ *Ibidem*: “Come il passaggio dalle “catene” alla “vettura cellulare”, l’introduzione della videoconferenza segna un passaggio che riassume in sé un cambio di paradigma.”

³¹⁸ Booklet 18, October 2017, “Lettera dal carcere di Palermo”, Bendebka, EIV: “Che razza di processi sono ove i giudici non osano guardarti negli occhi quando ti danno la condanna?”

³¹⁹ See note 306:

“Il pudore borghese delle riforme trasporta senza più mostrare come castiga, senza più dare spettacolo. Niente più gioco di sguardi tra popolo e criminale, l’unico sguardo tollerato è quello del guardiano sul penitente recluso. La videoconferenza, a differenza del patibolo, non è un dispositivo che esegue una pena già comminata, tanto meno quella di morte che non è più prevista nel codice penale, ma ancor più del patibolo, articolata com’è di microfoni e telecamere, è una “struttura” che “vede”, una “macchina” che “ode”. Certo, non “mangia” la “carne”, ma a suo modo “disincarna” l’imputato, smaterializza il suo corpo, lo riduce a un insieme di bit producendo un impatto visivo e di senso all’interno di un processo che non è da sottovalutare:

The removal of the prisoner's body prevents all those exchanges that were known to take place in court: the embraces, the glances, but also the possibility of speaking privately with one's lawyer during the trial.

“The only sign of his [the detainee's] “presence” then comes from the ringing of one of the telephones in the courtroom, which is answered by the lawyer on the instructions of the guards. At the other end is Claudio, who, having obtained permission from the guard next to him, leaves the scene and goes to the back of the room to telephone his defence lawyer. We thus realise that his image is deferred and that everyone in the courtroom can hear what the lawyer is saying to his client.”³²⁰

Efficiency excludes intimacy and confidentiality, both in emotional and procedural matters.

Various resistance tactics have been used to disrupt or cancel the trial, or to take advantage of the trial in order to bring from outside demands to the court or show solidarity with the prisoners, and to avoid that the prisoner undergoes the trial without agency. On the part of the institutional front of the lawyers, attempts have been made to raise instances of unconstitutionality. This was unsuccessful³²¹. Another possibility to obstruct the trial is for the prisoner to refuse to appear. However, according to one of the testimonies of the initial stages of the introduction of videoconferencing: *“the trial went on; there was nothing to do, because there were no more rights to call for. In addition, those who rebelled were isolated or transferred to another prison in solitary confinement. [...] If the prisoners were sick they had to participate anyway.”³²²* As one prisoner put it, the decision not to participate in the trials also carries with it: *“the sadness of not*

per suo tramite la presenza dell'imputato, ancorché lontana, diviene spettrale, il suo corpo viene trattato come una interferenza video cui la parola può essere concessa o sottratta con semplice “clic”. Trionfo del pudore riformatore che già ripulì le strade dalle catene umane dei forzati e che ora, attraverso le nuove tecnologie, “libera” le aule di giustizia da quella presenza scomoda e stridente perché vi appaia indisturbata l'astrazione del diritto. Negato è anche l'abbraccio tra coimputati che neppure in quella circostanza possono rivedersi. Nessuno scambio affettivo neppure con il pubblico, che neanche appare sullo schermo. Nessuno sguardo complice, nessun saluto ai propri familiari e amici. Una volta entrati in carcere, seppure in via preventiva, non se ne esce più, neppure per il processo. Intombati, cementati. La giuria stessa è portata a considerarti così pericoloso da non poter essere tradotto al suo cospetto. In qualche modo la tua colpevolezza è già implicitamente designata nei modi di quella tua “presenza”. [...] La videoconferenza è l'alleanza tecnologica che perfeziona la prigione degli sguardi. Codarda, moltiplica gli occhi che scrutano chi ha offeso il confine della legge, ma non trova più il coraggio di guardarlo dritto negli occhi. Metafora cibernetica di una giustizia bendata che si dota di protesi oculari meccaniche, ma rimane sempre cieca.

³²⁰ See note 303:

“L'unico segnale della sua “presenza” arriva allora da uno squillo di uno dei telefoni presenti in aula cui, su indicazione delle guardie, risponde l'avvocato. Dall'altro capo c'è Claudio che, ottenuto il permesso dal secondino che lo affianca, esce di scena e si reca in fondo alla stanza per telefonare al suo difensore. Ci si accorge così che la sua immagine arriva in differita e che in aula tutti possono ascoltare quello che l'avvocato dice al proprio assistito. Non molto a dire il vero, perché la conversazione non dura un granché, il giudice la interrompe infatti dopo poco ricordando che non stanno svolgendo un colloquio.”

³²¹ See note 297.

³²² *Ibidem*: ma il processo andava avanti; non c'era nulla da fare, perché non c'erano più diritti. In più, chi si ribellava veniva isolato o trasferito in un altro carcere in isolamento. [...] “se i detenuti stavano male dovevano partecipare lo stesso”.

*being able to see, and perhaps be able to hug, the people I care about and to feel the warmth of supportive comrades*³²³. With regard to prisoners incarcerated for political offences, these trials were sometimes characterised by a large and noisy presence of sympathisers disrupting the process. These interventions try to break the isolation, to transform the environment of the courtroom into a stage where certain demands can be made. A counter-prison acoustemology (Russel and Carlton, 2018) is possible when the prisoner is able to intervene for a limited time before the microphone is turned off; when slogans and words from the sympathisers, present in the court audience to make their voice heard, reach those inside through the microphones, even if it is difficult for their voice to arrive given the distance of the prisoner from the audience. However, while these trials are often poorly attended, prisoners find themselves in a public execution in a deserted courtroom, unable to see clearly who is in the courtroom other than those who make up the court³²⁴.

As described in the previous section, the best, or rather the most efficient way to continue to punish passes through the bureaucratisation of the legal and penal machine. In parallel with the removal of torture, this process also removed the prisoners' bodies from society and made it easier to punish them. Distance is produced between the accused and the court, between the accused and the public, and between the prison or court and the city. In fact, prisons and courts are far from the daily life of citizens, located in the administrative centres of the city or outside of it. Trials by videoconferencing can take place in bunker rooms and, in any case, for security reasons the judge can prohibit public access to the hearing. Although videoconferencing is, in fact, public, bureaucratisation has made it and the presence of the audience in trials increasingly less popular. Justice thus acts by renewing itself in relation to technological possibilities and to the functionalism underlying changes in prison and judicial practises. Just like the open cells and all those moments when prison becomes a stage for the society outside, videoconferencing shows how the prison has renewed itself for the public while offering a distorted image of its functioning.

Prison governance has to deal with the impossibility of biting the body and, thus, with the need to find a ploy: the man and woman become interactive images but controlled, *“(their) gift of speech, thanks to a button miles away”*, being granted or withdrawn at will³²⁵. It is a fictitious spectacle, in which the prisoner undergoes a process that becomes less and less characterised by emotions, expressiveness and

³²³ See note 295: *“Non nascondo la tristezza di non potere rivedere e magari riuscire ad abbracciare le persone a cui tengo e sentire il calore di compagni solidali.”*

³²⁴ *Ibidem.*

³²⁵ See note 300: *“è concesso il dono della parola grazie ad un pulsante lontano km.”*

sensoriality, to the point of being called a “*limitation*” of human rights³²⁶. A “*progressive disappearance of the accused*” seems to be taking shape³²⁷. This simulacrum underlies the exclusionary function of prison. For these reasons, the trial becomes highly restricted, appearing almost as an administrative practise, and the possibility of defence is reduced³²⁸. In video, all the violence of prison resonates, all those acceptable and reproducible forms of prison that are based on control and isolation. In the courtroom, the presence of several defendants provided an opportunity for solidarity and strength, both among themselves and with the public. This has now disappeared, in exchange for a few images offered to a public that is left to watch the new legitimate spectacle of punishment.

³²⁶ See note 297.

³²⁷ See note 306: “*si vede una progressiva scomparsa dell'imputato.*”

³²⁸ See note 297.

CONCLUSION

In this research I proposed a second academic life for the prison letters collected by OLGa. I have shown their potential to construct knowledge and realities that are different from the dominant ones (Prokkola, 2014, p. 445). Each of these contributions represent prison narratives that differ from the many published works, data, and knowledge production that reflect the rhetoric of prison management and that are limited by “security levels, state or federal systems, or regional jurisdictions” (Ross et. al, 2011, p. 160). The archive produced by OLGa is in Italian, it is freely accessible and available for further analysis, either with text analysis software or based on new themes and interpretations. My wish is that the direction I have taken in constructing a counter-narrative of prisoners and people standing for their struggles will continue to be explored in new studies and projects.

About this research, the choice of circumscribing the themes around governmentality is only one of the possible ways to enhance the archive. This choice has led me to renounce many valuable testimonies. For instance, what the reader might have expected, when reading the thesis, is to find a section about the resistance and protests of the prisoners. In fact, governmentality was described in the spaces and discourses produced and reproduced by prisoners and prison management. However, while great weight was given to the strategies of the powerful, counter-conduct, the resistance tactics deployed by the prisoners, was not addressed at all. The reasons for this exclusion are linked to the limited time available for this research and to the conditions of production of knowledge, which do not encourage writing tomes of several hundred pages on governmentality. Nonetheless, the choice of prioritising a discussion on governmentality strategies rather than on counter-conduct tactics is related partly to the historical period in which we live, and partly to the level of confidence with which I would have approached these topics. For lack of time I also did not develop many topics that, while mentioned here and there, have remained rather sketchy. The possibility of contacting the prisoners who wrote to OLGa for further specifications cannot be taken for granted: although certainly some of them would have been delighted to contribute, some are no longer contactable and others have no interest in saying a word more than what they have written. In any case, the choice to only talk about what has already been published is not at all accidental, and allowed me to write freely about the issues without running into mistakes or underestimations that could have harmed the writer, certainly, but above all the prisoners themselves.

As mentioned on several occasions, the abolition of prison is the premise, the horizon that has directed the writing of this thesis. In each chapter of the research, an attempt has been made to create

an armoury of valid arguments to disavow prison and the ideas that circulate around its function, as well as the dominant narrative around crime. From a theoretical level, the decision to continue the work of carceral geography scholars is linked to the ambition of wanting to find continuity, to transfer the analyses carried out here from prisons to the carceral, and to compare other prison specificities with those of the Italian prisons. Throughout the research, I have always tried to hold together a critique of the conditions of existence of prison logics, of that set of relationships and social processes that materialise in the prison regimes. I therefore found the analysis of governmentality to be the most effective framework to achieve this end. As for the method I used, the most important thing was to be able to use and display the multiple voices that left a mark in the booklets, the voices of those who are fighting against prison in solidarity with other prisoners. I want to emphasise my dependence on the stories of the prisoners and the merits of OLGa in producing collective knowledge through the archive. Concerning the analysis I proposed in this research, I do not imagine a rosy future for abolition and the punitive foundation on which society is based. We are not experiencing a period of radical criticism of the existing system, one which, as in the past, would make the prison walls shake and tremble; instead, we are living in a normalised state of crisis, which makes us accept the status quo and drives us to asking even less than what we deserve. In prison this crisis is felt even more strongly, as exemplified by the ongoing processes of individualisation. Several questions remain, according to what emerges from the letters. On the one hand, differentiation is ever growing. From a punitive point of view, more and more afflictive and differentiating regimes are emerging, with both old and new technologies that try to depersonalise and flatten every bug perceived by the prison system. The 41 bis regime, maximum security for the enemies, but also other measures of isolation for those in medium security regimes, are being developed and elaborated with the emergence of penal populism. We are witnessing the harmonisation of western criminal punishment systems, with increasingly austere policies. In addition, in Italy it is becoming more and more justified to punish those who are deemed untreatable. In fact, it has to be underlined how the progressive improvement of the detention conditions for some, the flourishing of new possibilities and paths of treatment, always risks justifying the use of strong-arm measures on those who, by refusing these opportunities, "deserve" them. Prison is always trying to find more civilised punishments without changing its founding values. As I have shown when discussing the videoconference, biting the soul rather than the flesh does not make revenge, the reckoning, acceptable and, therefore, does not exempt the prison from the legitimacy of abolition claims. Moreover, the basic problem of this system can be seen by observing the soft forms

in which its power is exercised. In fact, a picture capturing a prisoner refusing the prison's helping hand, which is offering them a new chance during the execution of their sentence, does not frame those who stand behind the prisoner: the mass of prison population that is left behind. The choice to save oneself is bound to personal gain; this mechanism that seeks to reduce many individualised subjects to one and the same, is the most radical criticism underlying this research. Re-education, if conceived only for a few and, above all, if generating individualisation, is classist and racist, and serves to maintain the existing conditions by being able to legitimately draw from a reservoir of subjects who, in order to save themselves, will always be available to the management. The fate of those who are in a better social condition and who decide to cooperate with the prison tends more and more towards the attainment of permits and alternative measures to the sentence. If I were to end up in prison as an ordinary prisoner, I would most probably end up in a nicer, cleaner prison. On the contrary, those who are poorer, perhaps homeless, and decide to fight to change their own existence and that of those around them, mostly find themselves alone and in hardship. In other words, punishment in all of its expressions cannot be acceptable, and re-education cannot avoid the problem of normalisation, individualisation, and flattening of social reality and personal integrity. Re-education is even a source of legitimisation for prison and the spirit of punishment. This is a very clear reflection of the society in which we live, an identical mechanism that we reproduce every day and which I am trying to break, in my own small way, in this research. The narratives of those who fight every day in prison, of those who, in the physical and mental battle against power where every space is codified and where control is so pervasive, manage to build a resistant identity, thus become a testimony that reaches beyond prison, and allows us to understand how power works and how it is possible to combat some of the most sadistic aspects of our society.

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