

REFLECTIONS ON ETNOGRAPHY FROM WITHIN BRASILIAN PRISON

By: Laura Ordóñez¹

INTRODUCTION

When I remember all the prisons I have encountered, the first thing that comes to mind is the noise of the opening and closing of bared doors indicating the path of access to the interior. Closely fused with this memory is the smell of the prisons. The strong and penetrating smell, a smell of captivity, of a cage, is completely unforgettable. Only by entering a prison you can feel it. Its intensity would tell me, like a thermometer, what sort of emotions were lurking inside. In fact, when the environment was tenses, it became even more intense.

Another reminder that resists time is that of walking through the prison corridors for the first time, and becoming the target of multiple glances - strong, curious, skeptical or indifferent, at the same time the men and women deprived of freedom, became the target of my gaze, in a completely vulnerable and unwelcome situation to them, and it is an undesirable situation for anyone: to watch 'another' human living an inhuman situation creates an unforgettable feeling of embarrassment that came back each time I visited a prison, any of them.

When you enter a prison, the first thing people want to know is who you are and what are you doing there. Everyone at the prison is curious about the visit, including the officers at the entrance, the staff and technicians and, more than anyone else, the male and female inmates. For the latter, the first thing they want to know is if you are a lawyer and if you can help them with their legal situation. When you explain that you are not a lawyer, or a journalist, social worker, or policeman, and that instead you are an anthropologist, who has no authority to help them legally, or in any other way, and then you go on explaining what anthropology is in simple terms, and, to make matters worse, you go on to say you will perform an anthropological study on them, it becomes a difficult task to perform, and even more difficult for them to understand it.

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The present study brings some reflections of my doctoral research in social anthropology², on an institutional religious experiment, with a Catholic bias, in the field of Brazilian criminal policy: Associations for the Protection and Assistance to Convicted people - APAC - which have emerged as the revolution of prisons and present themselves as the opposite of all the "common system"³prisons in Brazil, due to their unusual characteristics before the common scenario of a Brazilian prison.

Based on the above, this paper explores the challenges, limits and possibilities inherent in prison ethnographies and their contribution to the contemporary methodological reflections about ethnography as the cornerstone to anthropological knowledge. In this work, prisons are taken as both microuniverses embedded in their own internal dynamics, and as key locations where the social, political and cultural process of a globalized world transect. The pages that follow then:

1. I provide a short description of what the APACs are to describe the fieldwork in three prisons that follow the molds from APAC and within three female Brazilian prisons, in the framework of previous research and experiences in the field⁴. I report the differences between both prison models and the similarities across any prison context, which offers researchers dilemmas on spaces of hyper surveillance, and put for the methodological and theoretical questions that are central to contemporary anthropological inquiries. These include reflections about researchers' access to institutions and criminal inmates, the transit between physical and symbolic spaces of social control, multiple relations and positionalities in the field, and the tensions between diverse actors, ethical-political points of view, personal and disciplinary motivations for research, which permeate the production of anthropological knowledge.

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³A common system prison is the way in which APACs' inmates and the other actors of this context use to refer to prisons of the dominant system in comparison with APACs jails.

⁴The first experience was between 2004 and 2005 in a Female Penitentiary of Brasilia, included as part of my master's degree research on the role of religion within this institution. The second field experience in prison contexts was between 2006 and 2008, during a research funded by the National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), on excessive institutional dispensing and the massive consumption of psychiatric drugs by women convicts within two female prison in the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil: Estevão Pinto Industrial Prison (PIEP) and in the female prison Joseph Abranches Goncalves (PJAG).

2. I reflect on the sociological, political and theoretical relevance that justifies the importance of conducting anthropological and ethnographic research inside prisons. I try to answer the follow questions: What brings the ethnography in prisons to the contemporary ethnography and in the production of anthropological knowledge? Which is or must be the impact of such studies in their potentiality for the transformation of social realities?

WHAT ARE THE APAC?

The news about the existence of a humanized prison came to me in a moment of extreme skepticism faced with the minimum probability of transformation of the prison system. A prison that had the objective of human appreciation of the men and women deprived of freedom was out of my horizon of thought and perception. A jail where there was a genuine interest in recovering convicted people could not exist, and less so, after researching in three female prisons that belonged to the common system. The possibility of getting to know a jail with those purposes challenged me to find it.

It was thus that, moved by curiosity, and I must confess, by the disbelief that this news had brought me, I took a plane from Brasilia to Belo Horizonte and later, a bus from Belo Horizonte to Itaúna, because it was in this small miners town, with 62 thousand inhabitants, located 90 km away from the capital of Minas Gerais, where this jail was located: the Association of Assistance and Protection to Convicted - APAC.

When I arrived, noticed that the prisoners were the ones that managed the multiple keys of the jail, including the keys of the cells up to the main doors that have exit to the street. Also, noticed that the discipline and safety was managed by the prisoners themselves and by the “residents” (trained employees that ensure the safety of the prisoners without weapons), dispensing the presence of prison staff and police. In addition to this, I was informed that this prison presented no deaths, ill-treatment, or physical violence.

I was struck also by the people of the local community and family members who work as volunteers by providing various types of assistance (medical, psychological, legal and spiritual) to the jailed population. These are the services that, in the prisons of the common system, are performed by so-called experts (lawyers, psychologists, social workers etc.). I also found a place that presented no overcrowding in the cells, there were good conditions throughout the physical space (soup kitchens, patios, cells), good food is

served and with cutlery. In these jails, visit journals are not oppressive. There, the people that make up the prison population are called “recuperandos” (people under treatment) and not inmates. Normatively, they all use a badge so they can be addressed by their given names and not by their surname.

In these prisons (I later found out there are other APAC prisons in other “mineiro” districts), the prisoners, according to the rule, leave the cells at 8 a.m. in the morning and go back to their cells at 10 p.m.; they don’t use uniforms, must always be clean, well-dressed, shaved and with their hair done. They also have to work and study. In APAC, the escorts to leave the prison (visits to the doctor, courts, etc.) are made by the residents, volunteers or by other APACs’ interns and the prisoners that belong to the semi-open regime are escorted without handcuffs, under the motto: Escorted by Christ and handcuffed by the Heart.

The execution of sentences is carried out by the civil society of the municipality or county where these prisons are deployed, having a monthly cost per inmate that is much less costly for the public purse, in comparison with the costs of the common system. Finally, in these prisons the penalty is exercised in establishments of small and minimum security that accommodate a maximum of 200 prisoners.

These exceptional characteristics of APAC prisons outlined a new scenario that surprised me in a positive way, and were the ones that motivated me, both personally and anthropologically, to perform another research within the APAC prison contexts.

THE FIELD INSIDE OF SOME BRAZILIAN JAILS

Performing field work in prisons presents a number of limits, opacities and restrictions that make it different when comparing it with field work in other social contexts. The access to the prison and people deprived of liberty is already the first obstacle that the anthropologist has to face in order to undertake his research. In the common system prisons it is necessary to start with an authorization from the judge of criminal executions. Then, it is necessary to have the acceptance of the principals of penitentiaries, followed by a process to ensure the availability of prison staff and the physical spaces to be able to access the women inmates.

In correctional contexts there is an institutional and explicit surveillance of the work of anthropologists in the field, under the argument of ensuring their safety. It is a constant that any researcher will encounter. In the same way, there is strict vigilance from the inmates of the presence and action of the researcher inside. Since this context is explicitly a binary organization that expresses in a basic division between the group of inmates and the staff team (Goffman, 1961: 19), in addition to the fact that it is clearly hierarchical and polarized, being on one side means being against the other. The great challenge of the anthropologist is to work with the various actors of a prison based on the confidence that should be built within a context that is marked by mistrust.

Another challenge that the researcher must face is the transit and movement through physical and symbolic spaces of penal institutions, which involve constant tensions and negotiations between the researcher and the various actors. In correctional female contexts of the common system, the transit of the inmates through the different departments was much more restricted and always supervised by prison staff, in comparison with the largest transit and easier contact I had with APAC inmates. In the prisons of the common system the difficulty was to get access to the prisoners. In order to meet them I had to face a series of permissions and perform prior negotiations. In addition to the fact that my presence required some logistics, like finding a prison agent to bring the prisoner, wait for her during the interview and bring her back to her pavilion, implied the availability of space and time.

In addition to the institutional restrictions, there were others that I imposed on myself. In the APAC of Santa Luzia, for example, I could stay only until a certain time in the prison. After five o'clock in the afternoon, when the employees had filled out the forms, I had to go out with them. I could not remain in the prison only with the interns and due to the fact that I am a woman, I could not sleep in the apartments of this APAC, or visit the prison during Saturdays, as a few men researchers who, at the same time that I was performing my field work, managed to receive authorization of the board of directors to stay inside and visit the prison during the weekend.

In contrast, in the Itaúna APAC, I had no institutional restriction in relation to staying in the jail overnight. However I chose not to do it, despite the repeated offer I received each time I arrived. Even if it was humanized and peaceful, it was a male prison. However, even if it had been a female prison, I would choose not to sleep there.

Despite all the limits and the opacities of the contexts of prison, I counted with favorable conditions of research both in the female prisons of the common system, as well as in the APAC, considering their differences. I performed formal interviews, informal discussions with the various prison actors and participated in different activities of daily living and ceremonies that were happening during the field work. I used the audio recorder and the camera when people and situations so allowed. I registered my experiences in my field diary, after each visit, including my impressions and events that I thought were relevant. I revised ethnographies performed by others, as well as a few autobiographies of people who had been in prison, to enrich my perception of prison contexts.

I negotiated, from the beginning, in all the institutions that I have mentioned, with the directors about some issues such as the use of a recorder, my exclusivity in relation to the content of the talks, the right to privacy during the interviews with the prisoners and, also, a relative permit to transit through the dependencies of the institutions. All of these conditions were granted in both types of prisons.

Within the APAC prisons I used a group methodology for the collection of information that I could not use in the prisons of the common system. I performed an activity that I previously called 'conversation workshops' directed to the inmates. The proposal of these workshops was to create spaces for dialog, provocation and reflection along with them based on fiction films and documentaries related to the prison system and to the world of crime, as support. The conversation workshops had as main objective that the prisoners discussed the issues, elements or specific topics that had drawn their attention, after each documentary or movie. I used this resource with the idea of establishing more reciprocal relations with the inmates, in order to touch something inside them, as well as to help me build richer references of the prison culture from their perspective.

For the performance of the 'conversation workshops', they appointed me a space reserved for lectures on Human Enhancement, all Fridays, an activity that is part of the prison routine and a proposal of the APAC method. After some weekly sessions, movies began to generate expectations among interns under treatment and they were curious about the movie I had brought each time. At the same time, I learned that the films were discussed between them during the week, which meant that they were having some kind of impact on them. This methodology proved to be very interesting for both the interns as

for me, as it proved to be the best way that I found, given the time available for the implementation of the research, the resources and the institutional access to perform my field work and immerse myself in this prison experiment.

In prison contexts you never know very well what will happen in every visit until you are there. In fact, each day is a surprise. At the beginning, I prepared everything I wanted to do before, but I quickly learned that this is a context marked by numerous uncertainties that may make the researcher not be allowed in the prison that day or on the contrary, have access to the most relevant information that he never imagined could be obtained. In terms of methodology it is a constant challenge for the anthropologist.

Within the possibilities that I had, I constantly tried to establish some kind of reciprocity with the inmates, in exchange for their time and their life stories. In this way, in all prisons I visited, I always carried cigarettes, a very dear good in any prison. My condition of smoker allowed me access to spaces and conversations that wouldn't have happened outside the smokers environments. I also carried books, as there were always people who wanted to read, and left them in the halls for them to be circulated. In female prisons, there were some books that were confiscated by prison officers. Almost all of them were left in the prisons.

However, it seems to me that the most important thing that I carried was my ears and the spaces for conversation. I can say that in all contexts, men and women who are deprived of their liberty have never been an obstacle for the field work inside the prisons. In the jails of the common system the difficulty was to get access to the inmates. But, when I was finally granted access and was able to meet the arrested population, they always showed great willingness to talk about themselves and their lives, and to be heard. At the end of the day, I was an outsider who brought newness, but, above all, that was prepared to listen to them and someone they could talk to.

In APAC, reaching the interns under treatment was always much easier than reaching the inmates of the common system. They were also very receptive and willing to talk, participate and collaborate with the research. On many occasions, the talks were abruptly interrupted, signaling my time out of prisons. Otherwise, I would have been able to stay during long hours talking with the men and women inmates. Despite the constraints of time inside the prisons, whatever I managed to achieve was extremely rich.

In prisons, not only the prisoners are avid to speak. During my field work, all the other actors, including prison officers, technicians and officials were also eager to talk. In this way, the ethnography in prisons, despite the obstacles, is characterized by a social context whose actors, caught up in silence and social oblivion, have a huge need to speak and be heard. Thus, even if the ethnography in prisons does not reach the filigree of classical or canonical ethnography as it is understood and studied in anthropology, even if the observation of action and interaction, the daily close and spontaneous conviviality with the prisoners is more limited, presenting constant restrictions of time and space, the speeches and the narratives of the social actors on these actions and interactions always resulted extremely fruitful. Therefore, even with the limits and opacities of ethnography in prisons and its distance from classical ethnography, I believe that my curious and respectful successful and failed encounters with those 'others' allow this ethnography of a prison.

Multiple Relations and Positionalities

In the male APAC of Itaúna, Wilson, a young and timid recovering prisoner, in the midst of a group of interns under treatment, asked me with unusual curiosity to explain better about my research and my frequent presence inside. After having undertaken this arduous task, he replied: "but you'll never know what it is like to be in jail". Answering his relevant comment, I replied: "of course I will never know better than you about your experience in prison, nor about the meanings of being in jail. I don't pretend to be you. My intention is only to speak about you and these prisons from our successful and failed encounters.

With his intervention, this inmate unknowingly brought forward the discussion that taints the history of anthropology and questions its legitimacy and the scientificity of the production of knowledge from ethnography. At the same time, he brought forward the discussion about the "ethnographic authority", on the role of anthropologists, on relations and positions that are set during field work, between these and the contexts and subject targets of their research, and about the places from where the ethnographic knowledge is produced.

In the field work in prisons, the common characteristic of persons deprived of their freedom, as an ubiquitous element in the establishment of the relations and as the first marking element of our differences, is to be in an unwanted and undesirable situation for

any and in a position of explicit entry, violence and vulnerability. Ironically, the offender who occupies the place of victimizing and aggressor in freedom, in his condition of a person deprived of his freedom, becomes the victim of suffering, extreme restraint and degradation that is brought forward by imprisonment. This double condition of victim/victimizing crossed my encounter with these "others" both in the field and during ethnographic writing, bringing the reflection on the ethical position of the researcher in front of the subjects and contexts that were studied, and in my case, in front of the prisoners, and on the anthropological relevance of the study of "non-saints".

"There is no one here that is naive, my girl, nobody here", an inmate told me one day. To reduce prisoners to their current condition of victims, is both disrespectful to the other and anthropologically imprudent, but it also means that you ignore the fact that on the margins of the dominant power, there are emerging powers and parallel resistances, irreducible spaces of the being, from where it is possible to make choices, such as that the practice or not, of acts that are considered criminal, as well as the ways of dealing with the situation of confinement. All human beings have at their disposal, even if very reduced, this alternative to make choices and decisions. Studying "non saints" brings forward, in the strongest terms, that no "other" that anthropologists study can be regarded as naive.

James Waldram (2009:4), in his article, "Challenges of Prison Ethnography"⁵, says that the official discourse on the prisoners is extremely moral and difficult to avoid, and when bypassed, it might seem that the researcher is making a plea to crime. Waldram talks about the crossroads faced by the anthropologist who studies prisons, because it is difficult to connive with any of the sides. Generally, the anthropologists dress the shirt of "their" contexts and research subjects, such as, for example, indigenous people, women, black people, the poor and the children. As an anthropologist of prisons it is not easy to "wear the shirt" of the prisoners, or that of the State.

I don't agree with crime, but at the same time, I don't agree with compulsory imprisonment, nor with control or social eugenic mechanisms, having as main instrument the criminalization of the poor and the blacks, nor with the situation of imprisonment in conditions that are so extremely regrettable, precarious and inhumane. So, far from an

⁵<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/121660489/pdfstart>

apology of crime, as a researcher of prisons I place myself in the context of explicit vertical relationships and from a discipline of veiled vertical relationships, in favor of the establishment of relations that are respectful of the difference and with those 'others', and in this case, with the men and women that are deprived of their freedom.

With respect to me, I have a number of characteristics as a researcher that are inherent to my person that positioned me, in spite of myself (positively or negatively), in front of the various players in the establishment of relations. These were: being a foreigner –born in Colombia (Spanish-speaking), anthropologist (researcher, postgraduate student), a married woman and, subsequently, a pregnant woman. As a result of our distinct nationalities, my Brazilian interlocutors and me as a Colombian, the language was always the first mark of our differences. The arrested population spoke street Portuguese and I spoke the same language but with a loaded accent. There were some times that my accent generated so much strangeness that people took some time to understand that, even if full of an accent, I was speaking Portuguese. Despite the noise generated by the language, the inmates with whom I spoke repeatedly voiced their appreciation of Spanish or of the accent.

My place as a foreigner, then, was always present in the establishment of relations with the various people that make up the prison. It operated as an ubiquitous mark of our differences. This condition gave me a position of being 'doubly foreign', i.e. 'outside' of Brazil and 'outside' of the prisons, which generated curiosity and some sympathy. In prison, I was not only a foreigner; I was Colombian and this, ironically and exceptionally, worked in my favor within the contexts of Brazilian prisons. Being Colombian, in Brazil and in almost all places in the world, carries an indelible mark in the social imaginary, which is the automatic association with drugs, cocaine, Pablo Escobar or the FARC. This, in the same way, that Brazil is associated with Carmen Miranda, football and carnival. The stigmatization of Colombia and Colombians under these labels, paradoxically, opened several physical and symbolical doors for me inside Brazilian prisons. In a way, it made me depository of a certain empathy and complicity on the part of the various actors that shape the daily life of penal institutions, but especially on the part of women and men prisoners in all the penal institutions I visited. If I was Colombian, I could somehow understand and know the world of crime, at least in potential. Therefore, this condition placed me in a position that authorized and allowed me to enter the jails and speak with the people.

Thus, for example, an intern as soon as she heard that I spoke Spanish said to me: "Where are you from", I replied that I came from Colombia. To which, the woman replied: "I love the Colombian rascals, they are the best at theft, falsifying documents, producing fake money, they are the best!". She even told me in a friendly that she wanted me to interview her to talk about various issues. These and many other everyday events exemplify how my 'Colombian status' placed me in certain symbolic places and allowed me certain transits within the prisons.

In addition to being Colombian, I was a young woman anthropologist researching Brazilian prisons, characteristics that placed me in situations and specific positions in the female or male prisons. This particular field experience illustrates clearly how the production of ethnographic knowledge is genderized and more than that, it is located.

In the case of field work in women's prisons, the common denominator of being a woman prompted the establishment of very close and intimate relationships: the topics of the talks, the questions that could be carried out, the female narratives determined in specific and particular ways my insertion in the women contexts, especially in comparison with the male contexts.

In the case of field work with the male inmate population, I have to say that in the beginning I was very afraid and suspicious. However, the fact that they were prisons under the APAC model allowed me to untangle my fears and venture out into this universe. Clearly, my condition of a woman in a completely male context placed me in a very different position. I presented myself as a married woman, putting me from the start in a position that would not present me as an available woman, and was not untrue. Appealing to such a position in this context was really important to me in relation to the prisoners and the women of the prisoners who had direct contact with them. I did not want to generate evil feelings in my regard, mainly among the wives. Later, I got pregnant during the field work and this also changed the way I perceive and was perceived both by the people and the contexts.

In addition to the peculiarities inherent to my person that placed me in these specific places facing these people, which shaped our relations in multiple ways, there were also a number of everyday situations that I have mentioned before, which positioned myself in the context, sometimes despite my intention or will. On several occasions at women's

prisons, the prison officers and the inmates told me there were several interns wanting to talk to me. I remember also, a time in which a prison agent told me as soon as I got there: "today you're going to talk with Paula, because her son died yesterday and she needs to vent out her feelings". Suddenly, this prison agent positioned me as a psychologist or social worker of an inmate which was in an extremely delicate situation of profound grief, and had been unable to attend her son's funeral. Apart from being a researcher, I was often positioned as depository of their grief. As an anthropologist what should we do when faced with so much suffering?

The relations that took shape in the field work were permeated, as in any other field, by the differences and the multiple changing positions inherent in me as a researcher and in those who I researched. They were defined by the roles that, as researchers, we decide to play before the subjects and the contexts where we study, or by the roles and places in which we are positioned, whether this is for good or for bad. They were also influenced by the social circumstances in which these encounters were held with these 'others', gearing in multiple and unexpected ways our means to try to understand the "differences" that we study as anthropologists.

All jails are social spaces that, even if they are marginal in the urban, social and academic mapping they serve as caricatures of our societies. In them the characteristics and dynamics that occur in our society are amplified, reflected and condensed very clearly. In a similar way, as I have tried to show, the ethnography within the prisons brings forward the strongest and most condensed neuralgic issues of any ethnography: ethical, methodological, epistemological, political and emotional.

WHY PERFORM ETHNOGRAPHY IN JAILS?

Finally, I reflect on the sociological, political and theoretical relevance of conducting anthropological and ethnographic research inside prisons. What does ethnography in prisons bring to contemporary ethnography and to the production of anthropological knowledge? Which is or must be the impact of such ethnographical studies in their potentiality for the transformation of social realities?

In spite of the data that shows that the increase of incarceration does not reduce crime, of the analysis of the perversity of the crime industry, that hand in hand with the privatization of prisons transforms inmates into fixed customers, "the custodial sentences

are at the core of all punitive systems of the contemporary world" (Zaffaroni, 1991). Brazil, for example, occupies the fourth place in the world, in relation to the number of people in detention. Currently, each year, the Brazilian Prison System incorporates 27,533 prisoners, which means that the curve only changes in an upward direction. This figure is quite significant in demographic, economic, political and social terms and should not be neglected. It places us in front of an alarming social problem that is replicated in all Latin American countries, in the criminal justice systems for both juveniles and adults that, apart from presenting a need to study them, require urgent and consistent solutions.

Little is discussed in the public arena about the effects and consequences of compulsive imprisonment of detained persons, on their families and society. Nothing is said about the ideological positions of governments or the significant increase in the prison population in all the countries of Latin America. The deprivation of freedom involves and develops a very particular inside organization which radiates with power to the outside world, due to the high number of people who are or have been arrested. It transforms family and interpersonal dynamics on a large scale (for each inmate there are, at least, two family members directly affected by their imprisonment). Unlike the belief in prisons as an area of protection for the society that is outside prisons, jails produce more violent subjects that will eventually come out again into social life.

Therefore, ethnographic research within prisons serves as an effective tool to reflect critically. From case studies as the APACs, to the study of the panorama of security and criminal policies in Brazil and in Latin-America. As Waqquant (2002: 371) says about what he calls the 'ethnography of carceral', "only getting 'in and out of the belly of the beast' offers a unique vantage point from which to contribute to the comparative ethnography of the state in the age of triumphant neoliberalism". We should promote and ensure transfer mechanisms of empirical and theoretical knowledge produced within an anthropological point of view intended to ensure dialogs in the design and evaluation of security and criminal policies .In the end, jails are the final stronghold where all of these converge.

In the Brazilian case, the coexistence between hardening criminal policies and Public-Private Partnerships, along with more lenient or humane prison policies such as the APACs, where each one represents emblematic criminal policies that reflect the current world trend in front of social and criminal control. It is a paradox, since the solutions

presented for the problem of overcrowding prisons in Brazil has resulted in two diametrically opposed approaches that are not necessarily exclusive, reflecting on what some experts describe as a "process of bifurcation or dual repressive economy" (Cunha, 2002: 53 in Barbosa, 2005: 86). It has marked the recent developments of legislative treatment of crime, both in the European and North American contexts and its shadows upon Brazil are already evident. Ethnography in these prisons allows us to clearly understand the dilemma of current theories and criminal and security policies that oscillate between greater punishment and economic management of the risks that crime represents (Garland, 2001; Riveira, 2005).

The theoretical contribution of this ethnography on the APACs is that by addressing the changes introduced by these incarceration method, it allows the visualization of the less perceptible unfolding of any prison solution, including those most compliant and well-intentioned in terms of the law, on which our paradigm of power relies.

The characterization of these prisons as 'reformed prison units' is tied, precisely, to the regime of legality in which they fall. This is, in obedience to the Brazilian legal normativity concerning the execution of the sentence of imprisonment provided for by the Law of Criminal Enforcement (LEP) and by the international legal normativity promulgated by the UN, as for example, the document on the Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Ironically, the novelty of this prison, from which its status of alternative prison derives, is to put into practice the ideal prison, as it was formulated since its conception, in the 19th century. To materialize them as prisons where the reformist project acquires its concreteness, the APACs allow us to go a step further into the repetitive and not very innovative agenda of unattainable reform: what happens when the reform is achieved? Even when reformed, "will the prison will remain to be the detestable solution from which one cannot avoid?" (Foucault, 1987).

Finally, the prisons under the APAC model allow us to also go further Foucault's conception (1975) of prisons as "disciplinary machines", or as conceived by Wacquant (1999) as "exclusion machines". The APACs institutional experiment presents in a performative and efficient manner the possibility of analyzing prisons as "anthropological machines", that is, as spaces for the production of life, of the human being - a humanity that is not human, in the case of the common system prisons, and a humanity which pretends to be humanized, in the case of APACs.

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