

THE HYBRID PRISON-HOSTAL, PRISON-DUNGEON, PRISON-SHELTER**Rafael Figueró, Brasil****Introduction**

With the failure of the resocializing discourse which marked modernity, post-modernity brings up other discourses on imprisonment, producing changes in the juridical-criminal systems. In this sense, and with the theoretical-methodological reference of institutional analysis, the present article realizes an analysis of the functions prison serves in post-modernity with relation to the public these equipments are targeting. Since our insertion in a prison unit of the complejo penitenciario de Rio Grande do Norte, we realized an observation participants of the work routine of the prison officials, apart from informal conversations with prisoners and managers of the penitentiary complex referred to. As a result, we present three analysis of prison concepts: the hybrids prison-shelter, prison-hostal and prison-dungeon. These analyses reveal that prison in post-modernity acquires a character of hybrid equipment, as it articulates punishment functions, provisional detention and management of misery, with total abandonment of any intention of rehabilitation.

The hybrid prison-hostal

The prison referred to is known by part of the prisoners and family members, as one of the best penitentiarias to be in. The narratives talk about good food, being outside in the sun is during nine hours daily, and the entrance of food is allowed for family members, there is no torture executed by officials, and additionally, the majority of prisoners have mobile phones and the use of drugs is common in the interior of the prison (apart from other privileges such as television in the cells, ventilators, water heaters, etc.). Similar to the lodging houses we know, the possibilities to inhabit them vary depending on the type of cliente: for the wealthier prisoners (heads of trafficking, bank robbers, members of gangs of robbery of cars, etc.), ventilades cells (as they are in superior plants), painted and with few prisoners. A good "lodging" can cost up to R\$ 1.500,00, money that is paid to certain prisoners who, following the local hierarchy have the control over cells and pavilions. For those who do not have the same privileges, crowded cells with bad salubrity conditions, and which quite often are not different from the living conditions of the of the homes of the arrested, as the big majority come from the outskirts.

The function hostal, hence, accomodates to the other functions already known in prison such as incapacitation (Garland, 1999) and production of delinquency (Foucault,

1975/2007). If the penitentiary structure is well known amongst us (heritage of modernity), its lodging function for persons, withdrawing them from circulation for a certain time without any rehabilitation project, becomes relevant and characterizes our post-modern criminal period.

The hybrid prison – dungeon: the “chapa”

The first time we entered a *chapa*¹, what called our attention in a decisive way was a prisoner suffering a psychotic outbreak who according to the cell-mates had not slept for several nights, threatening to kill them, touching his proper excrements and waste of the cell. This fact apparently is not infrequent. During the months in which we were in this prison unit, when the *chapa* was opened to serve breakfast, it was common to witness prisoners in similar situations. Pale, without sleeping, they talked disconnectedly, and what impacted us most, they refused vehemently to enter the cell again. The expression of terror, as they had to return to occupy a lowermost space, dark, hot, humid and without ventilation, composes a shocking impression which has the shape of a an AP which is compelling when you enter the cell. The entrance door of the cell was often closed with sentences like: “*Take him away, for the sake of God, he does not let anybody sleep!*” (Quote from on of the prisoners).

As if the punishment to have to spend more and more days inside a dark cell with other persons were not enough, the physical punishments are common here. This is one of the few spaces where the electronic monitoring system does not have camaras, which facilitates more coercive actions from the officials. Hence, the hybrid prison-dungeon denounces the failure of the modern project of humanization of prisons, and – what is worse – the return (or perhaps never left behind) of pre-modern practices (physical punishments), which hover over the prison routine as something absolutely natural, common and desirable. Even more só, the *chapa* reveals that the only project of rehabilitation which is maintained in the routine of prison is exactly that which lays the foundation of our criminal system: the punishment.

The hybrid prison-shelter: the wing of the “renegades”

In the space denominated “wing of the renegades”, the situation is very specific. The physical space is identical to the *chapa* (although located on the opposite side), with the only exception: the doors of the cells were adapted, and are made of iron (the same as the common cells), allowing the entrance of light and air (contrary to the *chapa*), depriving the “solitary” cells of the characteristics of punishment.

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Cell destined to punishment, without ventilation or natural light

In this wing, each cell has five or six prisoners who, in general, do not have any other space they can use in the interior of the prison. Expelled from other wings for different motives (affrays, trafficking debts, gambling, etc.) was is left for them forgotten ones is “live” in cells that were originally destined to the function of “*chapa*”. With regard to pavilion 1 (upper floor) there are painted cells, ventilated, with mattresses, pillows and bed linen, in the wing of the renegades three prisoners sleep in a double bed without mattress, and another three sleep on the floor. The level of abandonment with these prisoners surmounts all we had seen in diverse prison units. The prisoners of this space do not receive visitors, have no time at the open air or hygiene items amongst others. Many do not even have any type of family or community support which would allow minimum conditions to live outside prison. An example of this is, in one of the conversations of the prisoners who after serving his sentence gets in touch with the direction and asks to be allowed to stay in prison for some more days: “*I do not have anywhere to go...*”.

Hence, an image of the hybrid prison-shelter makes evident not only the perverse moment of time from a point of view of our socioeconomic functioning, but primarily the role a prison is occupying in our days, provide shelter for those who, outside prison do not find a place nor possibilities of existence, and converts into a form of socially responsible policy of the management of misery.

Some considerations

The picture we try to draw of the Brazilian penitentiary system, through the images of three hybrids (the prison-lodging, the prison-shelter and the prison-dungeon), brings up some important questions: the absence of a rehabilitation project, the supremacy of punishment as foundation and final purpose of the penal practices and the management of misery. We consider that the contemporaneity has been characterized by contradictory practices which on one hand progress in innovation in the field of penal practices (half-open regime, alternative punishments, etc.), and on the other hand are characterized by a return to pre-modern procedures.

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