# Prison experiences and scales in history, between global paradigms and national contexts. Recent trends in historiography

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The publications examined in this article form the basis of a discussion on the extent to which the most recent historiography on prison experiences — civilian internment, in particular — has engaged with the so-called global turn and, at the same time, with the theme of scales in history. Through an analysis of a number of indicators that are present in the three selected works, I argue that the most important progress in historiographical terms depends not so much on the choice between traditional binomial pairs (e.g. micro/macro, local/global), but on the recourse to a micro-sociological approach aimed at avoiding the reification of both categories of analysis and periodisations, thus adopting a perspective that is never static.

**Key words**: Historiography, Internment, Detention, Global history, Scale in history

## Introduction

The historiography of prison experiences, as that of other topics, has recently started to engage with the so-called global turn and the closely related theme of scales in history. In recent years, the need to balance out the great binomial questions (e.g. macro/micro, local/global) has produced a number of theoretical proposals whose validity may perhaps be assessed only in a future moment, through constant empirical application.[1] The three publications under examina-

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[1] The most interesting recent contributions in this field include: Hans Medick, *Turning Global? Microhistory in Extension*, "Historische Anthropologie", 24, n. 2, 2016, pp. 241-252; Romain Bertrand, Guilllaume Calafat, *La microhistoire globale: affaire(s) à suivre*, *"Annales HSS"*, 73-1, 2018, pp. 3-18; Christian De Vito, Anne Gerritsen, *Micro-Spatial Histories of Labour: Towards a New Global History*, in C. De Vito, A. Gerritsen (eds.), *Micro-Spatial Histories of Global Labour*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 1-28. In 2019, the journal *Past & Present* dedicated an entire supplement to the relationship between microhistory and global history, with some particularly interesting contributions by: John-Paul A. Ghobrial, *Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian*, "Past and Present", suppl. 114, 2019, pp. 1-22; Jan de Vries, *Playing with Scales: The Global and the Micro, the Macro and the Nano*,

tion here have been selected because they are emblematic of some of the most significant responses offered in the field of the history of prison practices, in particular that of civilian internment. They will allow me to reflect on the limitations and strengths of the presented — collective or individual — research.

The first essay that I will examine is *Mussolini's Camps. Civilian Internment in Fascist Italy 1940-1943* by Carlo Spartaco Capogreco,[2] an updated translation of what is nowadays considered a milestone in the historiography on Fascist civilian internment in the years between 1940 and 1943. Published by Einaudi in 2004 and first translated in Croatian and Slovenian,[3] the English version came out in 2019 as part of a new Routledge series on *Studies in the Modern History of Italy*, instantly receiving wide international attention.[4] In an attempt to better understand a highly specific period as that of 1940-1943, the author reconstructs previous prison practices that circulated in the Italian peninsula from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards.

By contrast, Matthew Stibbe's essay, titled *Civilian internment during the First World War. A European and Global History, 1914-1920*,[5] focuses on the global dimension of internment during an equally crucial era: the Greater War.[6] Here, the focal length seems to increase while the shutter speed slows down, to use a metaphor dear to Jacques Revel.[7] Having published a number of important essays and monographs on the theme of internment in the past,[8] Stibbe decided to focus on its global dimension in

"Past and Present", suppl. 114, 2019, pp. 23-36; Christian De Vito, *History without Scale: the micro-spatial perspective*, "Past and Present", suppl. 114, 2019, pp. 348-372.

[2] Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, *Mussolini's Camps. Civilian Internment in Fascist Italy 1940-1943*, New York, Routledge, 2019.

[3] C.S. Capogreco, *Mussolinijevi Logori*, Zagreb, Golden Marketing - Tehnicˇka knjiga, 2007; C. S. Capogreco, *Fašisticˇna taborišcˇa*, Ljubljana: Publicisticˇno društvo ZAK, 2011.

[4] A case in point is the discussion of the book in February 2020, at the Centro Primo Levi and the Casa Italiana of New York, in the presence of the author as well as of Prof. Mary Gibson (CUNY Graduate Center-John Jay College of Criminal Justice), Prof. Silvana Patriarca (Fordham University) and Prof. Rudolf Mràzek (University of Michigan).

[5] Matthew Stibbe, *Civilian internment during the First World War. A European and Global History, 1914-1920*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

[6] On the distinctive features of the Greater War paradigm with respect to the traditional periodisation of the First World War see, in particular: Robert Gerwarth, Erez Manela (eds.), *Empires at War: 1911-1923*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014. For an overview of national historiographies of the Great War, see Christoph Cornelissen, Arndt Weinrich (eds.), *Writing the Great War. The Historiography of World War I from 1918 to the Present*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn, 2021.

[7] Jacques Revel, *Micro-analyse et construction du social*, in J. Revel (ed.), *Jeux d'échelles: la micro-analyse à l'expérience*, Paris, Gallimard-Le Seuil, 1996, p. 19.

[8] See, among others: Matthew Stibbe, *Civilian Internment and Civilian Internees in Europe, 1914-20*, "Immigrants & Minorities", 26.1-2, 2008, pp. 49-81; Matthew Stibbe, *British Civilian Internees in Germany: The Ruhleben Camp, 1914-18*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2008; Matthew Stibbe, *Enemy Aliens, Deportees, Refugees: Internment Practices in the Habsburg Empire, 1914-1918*, "Journal of Modern European History", 12-4, 2014, pp. 479-499.

another, equally important work, again published in 2019 and co-edited with Stefan Manz and Panikos Panayi, in which each chapter is dedicated to a specific country or empire.[9]

Finally, the volume edited by Clare Anderson, *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*,[10] reconstructs events linked to the history of penal colonies, convict transportation and forced labour, drawing on a chronologically and geographically very broad range of case studies — from the Portuguese invasion of North Africa in 1415 to the dissolution of Stalin's gulags at the end of the 1950s. In this work, which presents the research outputs of an ERC Starting Grant, *The Carceral Arcipelago*, the shutter speed is prolonged and the focal length increased so as to find connections, similarities and discordances between spaces and practices that are worlds apart. In this case, the global perspective becomes a heuristic tool to understand a phenomenon whose contours are blurred by its complexity. Civilian internment is discussed in an analysis of the European case, co-authored by the historians Mary Gibson and Ilaria Poerio; along with the theoretical observations presented in Anderson's introduction, this chapter will be the main focus of my attention.

In these publications, the history of internment emerges in all its dimensions, whether the focus is on an individual case study, that is, the product of a purely internal evolution (Capogreco), on the variability of interconnected patterns during the specific historical moment of the Great War (Stibbe), or on a wider framework in which stable and mobile prison practices come together in a long-term perspective (Anderson). In sum, all texts offer essentially divergent analyses when considered from a scalar point of view. Is it possible to compare them in order to understand their real effectiveness in heuristic terms?

Already in 1996, Maurizio Gribaudi clearly stated that, from a historiographical perspective, it is useless to oppose the different scalar perspectives to one another. For him, it made much more sense to understand the type of analytical approach, that is, "les modalités différentes de la formalisation causale des phénomènes sociaux et des évolutions historiques".[11] Drawing on this specific criterion, Gribaudi argued that there are two different, even "incompatible" analytical models: a "macro-sociological" model (*approche macro-sociologique*), which implicitly acknowledges the existence of causal

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[9] Stefan Manz, Panikos Panayi, Matthew Stibbe (eds.), *Internment during the First World War: A Mass Global Phenomenon*, New York-Oxon, Routledge, 2019. As Richard Drayton and David Motadel have rightly observed, global history does not shy away from analysing historical experiences of internment on a national scale. Richard Drayton, David Motadel, *Discussion: The Futures of Global History*, "Journal of Global History", 13, 2018, pp. 2-3.

[10] Clare Anderson (ed.), *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, London-New York, Bloomsbury, 2018.

[11] Maurizio Gribaudi, *Echelle, pertinence, configuration*, in Revel, Jacques (ed.), *Jeux d'échelles: la micro-analyse à l'expérience*, Paris, Gallimard-Le Seuil, 1996, pp. 113-114.

hierarchies, inevitably forcing the scholar to search for the logical hierarchies that link individual actors to the macro-structural phenomena that he wishes to analyse; and a "micro-sociological" model, which rejects the idea of pre-existing causal hierarchies, rather seeking to reconstruct these hierarchies in the study of the interactions between individuals themselves. While the former reflects a deductive approach, in that it describes its empirical evidence on the basis of a predetermined global model, the latter is inductive, meaning that the causal construction is not anticipated but reconstructed through the sources of the object of study.

The macro-sociological approach seems the most suitable approach for a global history perspective, especially when we are dealing with that "broad brushstroke history of multi-secular change" that is written "with the foot on the accelerator", which predominantly uses secondary sources so as to construct narratives focused mainly on the great turning points and transformations of the past.[12] In reality, this association conceals an underlying confusion that Christian De Vito has explained in recent years. Picking up and further developing Gribaudi's paradigm, De Vito in fact stresses how the distinction between micro- and macroanalytical levels "illegitimately overlaps" with the geographical scope of the research (local/global), to the extent that it "postulates the division of tasks between a macroanalytical level capable of grasping the structures and a microanalytical level aimed at understanding the agency".[13]

Hence, regardless of the applied scale, there is an important gap between these demonstrative discourses, and to understand which of these approaches has been used in the texts under examination here is not a speculative exercise with an end in itself. On the contrary, it allows me to reflect on the most recent historiography on prison practices, in particular that on civilian internment, and on its openness to the wider debate on the relationship between the global paradigm and national histories. In order to do his, I will analyse the three texts by focusing on a number of indicators that may help us to understand the adopted approach.

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[12] Francesca Trivellato, *Microstoria, storia del mondo e storia globale*, in Paola Lanaro (ed.), *Microstoria: a venticinque anni da L'eredità immateriale*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2011, pp. 122-123.

[13] Starting from this assumption, De Vito seeks to elaborate an epistemological paradigm in which the microhistorical approach is linked to the global through a renewed attention to spatial elements. This is what De Vito calls "microstoria translocale", which he translates as micro-spatial history, focusing mainly on labour history. Christian G. De Vito, *Verso una microstoria translocale (micro-spatial history)*, "Quaderni storici. Rivista quadrimestrale", 3/2015, p. 816; Christian De Vito, Anne Gerritsen, *Micro-Spatial Histories of Labour: Towards a New Global History*, in C. De Vito, A. Gerritsen (eds.), *Micro-Spatial Histories of Global Labour*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 1-28.

## Between the national and the global: new grammars for the study of the prison dimension

Anderson's study mainly focuses on the convict flows in a global context (Global Convict Flows). Such a broad categorisation — on which I will come back in the next section — aims to include the following: forced movement of convicts within the Western empires between 1415 and 1953 (i.e. from the use of convicts by the Portuguese empire in order to conquer the Moroccan *presidio* of Ceuta in North Africa until the closure of Europe's last penal colony, French Guiana); the penal labour camps and colonies that existed in Western Europe between 1750 and 1950; convict transportation, exile and collective resettlements in Imperial Russia and, subsequently, the Soviet Union. The co-existence of detention methods linked to mobility and other punitive measures and forms of forced labour is one of the most important novelties of this study, in which a desire emerges to write a new history of punishment that avoids separating deportation from imprisonment, in the words of two of the contributors to the volume, Sarah Badcock and Judith Pallot.[14]

In this case, the global dimension not only implies a geographical widening of the space of observation, but also the search for syncretic paradigms that allow us to discover new harmonies in the history of punishment. By focusing on convict transportation, the research group led by Anderson engages with the historiography of migrations and forced mobility, and with the more traditional historiography of prison systems, forced labour, prison experiences and internment. This tendency also characterised earlier works by Anderson and reached its full scientific maturity in *The Carceral Arcipelago* project.[15] Punishment gradually becomes a central element not only in the historiography of crime and prison systems, but also in colonial and postcolonial history, as well as in the construction and deconstruction of the great empires.[16] The latter perspec-

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[14] Sarah Badcock, Judith Pallot, *Russia and the Soviet Union from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, in Clare Anderson (ed.), *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, London-New York, Bloomsbury, 2018, pp. 298-300.

[15] In a co-authored article published a few years earlier, Anderson had already written the following: "We argue that across various global regions convict transportation can be located within complex webs of punishment, space and place." Clare Anderson e al., *Locating Penal Transportation: Punishment, Space and Place c. 1750-1900*, in Dominique Moran, Karen Morin (eds.), *Historical Geographies of Prisons: Unlocking the Usable Carceral Past*, New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 148. For an empirical application of this perspective, see: Clare Anderson, *Transnational Histories of Penal Transportation: Punishment, Labour and Governance in the British Imperial World, 1788-1939*, "Australian Historical Studies", n. 47-3, 2016, pp. 381-39.

[16] C. Anderson, *Introduction: A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, cit., pp. 9-10. Again, it is worth mentioning another previous publication by Anderson, where she examined the relationship between different regions of the British Empire with regard to the history of convict transportation and punishment: Clare Anderson, *Convicts, Carcerality and Cape Colony Connections in the 19th Century*, "Journal of Southern African Studies", n. 42-3, 2016, pp. 429-442.

tive links the history of punishment to the development of global capitalism through completely new holistic aspects; this reveals a substantial continuity with what Ann Laura Stoler has coined a "carceral archipelago of empire", drawing on and expanding Foucauld's concept of "archipel carcéral".[17]

This semantic broadening considers the forced mobility of prisoners as a social product, part of a broader phenomenology of punishment where each experience has a specific position that depends, among other things, on the level of deprivation it is subjected to ("degrees of unfreedom").[18] In this new epistemological grammar, the *global* character therefore resides in: 1) the re-evaluation of convict mobility as a structural element of the history of punishment, especially in a period — namely that between the end of the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century -usually perceived as being dominated exclusively by the "stability" of the new prison system that was gradually taking shape; 2) the attempt by all contributors to identify "common patterns and themes" from a chronologically and geographically "broadened" perspective; 3) a relationship between the global and the local, where *local* refers to a perspective that investigates the political choices made by different empires or nations. A microscale, which includes smaller perspective frameworks as opposed to the national context, does not seem to be a major factor.[19]

In line with Anderson's suggestion that we should broaden our outlook to find connections that have thus far received little scholarly attention, Stibbe places civilian internment within the broader spectrum of practices aimed at controlling those individuals who are present on the national territory and considered hostile by central authorities. In this case, the perception of dangerousness is one of the criteria through which to extend the analysis to other measures, such as transportation, repatriation, confiscation of property, and social and economic marginalisation.[20]

This common tendency to develop a broader viewpoint reveals two different perceptions of the global paradigm. For Anderson, the construction of a global view is necessary to find common patterns, permanent features and moments of rupture, even in a diachronic perspective — as far as possible — that spans

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[17] In 1975, Michel Foucault wrote the following on the matter: "[L]'archipel carcéral, lui, transporte cette technique [pénitentiaire N.d.R.] de l'institution pénale au corps social tout entier." Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison,* Paris, Gallimard, 1975, p. 305. On the concept of *Carceral Archipelago of Empire*, see : Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Commonsense*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 130-139. It is no coincidence that Stoler herself wrote an epilogue to Anderson's volume: Ann Laura Stoler, *Epilogue. In Carceral Motion: Disposal of Life and Labour*, in C. Anderson (ed.), *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, cit., pp. 371-379.

[18] A.L. Stoler, *Epilogue*, cit., p. 375.

[19] C. Anderson, *Introduction: A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, cit., pp. 9-11.

[20] This analytical necessity is described even more clearly in: S. Manz, P. Panayi, M. Stibbe, *Internment during the First World War: A Mass Global Phenomenon*, in S. Manz, P. Panayi, M. Stibbe (eds.), *Internment during the First World War*, cit., pp. 1-18.

a period of about five centuries. A similar research is possible only through a team effort, involving various experts of area studies. In contrast to this search for patterns, Stibbe proposes an investigation into connections. Here, the adoption of a global perspective is understood as the search for growing, often asymmetrical, interactions that emerge at a global level, with Europe being only one among many actors. These interactions appear to be multiple and diverse, thanks also to the analysed period: the First World War, considered an important watershed in the history of internment.[21] If it is true that the global character of internment was already visible in some colonial enterprises from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, such a massive co-existence of practices did not occur until during the Great War. The object of analysis is therefore the synchrony of different concentration models.[22] This "global but not totalising" perspective,[23] to use an expression by Caroline Douki and Philippe Minard, is typical of connected history, so attentive to the reconstruction of often ignored relationships and transferences. We are not dealing with the same battle that Sanjay Subrahmanyam waged against other versions of global history, but with a heuristic recomposition of the global, where new actors join those traditionally studied in order to produce a more complex picture of wartime civilian internment.[24] Although Stibbe does not mean to minimise the importance of the national framework, at the same time he relativises its significance by studying non-state agents, such as the International Red Cross or prominent individual activists who affect the impermeability of borders as they move between nations and empires.[25] The resulting, broad and unlimited international scenario highlights the importance of the transnational (or cross-border) turn for his research.[26]

[21] On the discontinuities in prison practices between what happened before and during the First World War, see: Tammy M. Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918*, New York, New York University Press, 2010, pp. 203-238. Some interesting historiographical interpretations of these differences emerge from the analyses of internment in the interwar period in: Panikos Panayi, *Prisoners of Britain: German civilian and combatant internees during the First World War*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2012, pp. 3-7.

[22] Stibbe already made a reference to the co-existence of different internment models during the First World War in an article on the Habsburg Empire: Matthew Stibbe, *Enemy Aliens, Deportees, Refugees: Internment Practices in the Habsburg Empire, 1914-1918*, "Journal of Modern European History", 12-4, 2014, p. 496. Daniela Caglioti confirms this idea of differentiation in her analysis of the Italian case in: Daniela L. Caglioti, *Enemy Aliens and Colonial Subjects: Confinement and Internment in Italy, 1911-19*, in S. Manz, P. Panayi, M. Stibbe (eds.), *Internment during the First World War*, cit., p. 127.

[23] Caroline Douki, Philippe Minard, *Histoire globale, histoires connectées: un changement d'échelle historiographique?*, "Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine", 54 bis, 2007/5, p. 19.

[24] See, for example, S. Subrahmanyam, *Historicizing the Global, or Labouring for Invention?*, cit., pp. 329-334.

[25] See, in particular, chapter 5 on the relationship between internment and international activism: M. Stibbe, *Civilian internment during the First World War*, cit., pp. 183-238.

[26] M. Stibbe, *Civilian internment during the First World War*, cit., pp. 4-5. In this respect, there are some interesting similarities with Patricia Clavin, *Time, Manner, Place: Writing*

This reconfiguration of the national paradigm, so free from any kind of methodological nationalism,[27] also emerges in Capogreco's essay. The latter was published at a time when historians focused on the complex relationship between history and memory, a tendency that also affected the question of what distinguished Italy from Germany in terms of concentration practices.[28] Capogreco's modus operandi involves a specific investigation of these practices in order to spot any transformations and peculiarities as opposed to other European realities, but without turning the nation-state into an absolute frame of reference.

His approach to sources is consistent with this perspective of investigation. It is not the "found" documentary sources that decide when and how the research should be carried out; the author starts from the historiographical question to then go out and gather information from the different archival systems that reflect our contemporary national borders. This reconstruction process takes him to Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian archives, in search of "new codes of recognition", as Stoler wrote a few years later.[29]

For this reason, Capogreco addresses all Slavic populations that were imprisoned by the Italian government, not limiting himself to those residing in the north-eastern region, but also extending his viewpoint to the so-called "parallel internment" implemented by the Italian Royal Army through the establishment of camps in the Yugoslav regions that were occupied in 1941. He traces differences with the internment managed directly by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and similarities with colonial internment in the Libyan region, especially in the projects of Graziani and Badoglio in Sirte.[30]

*Modern European History in Global, Transnational and International Contexts*, "European History Quarterly", 40-4, 2010, pp. 624-640.

[27] The term "methodological nationalism", coined by Andreas Wilmer and Nina Schiller with particular reference to migration studies, indicates the process of "naturalising" the national paradigm in the social sciences and its consequences in terms of historiographical production. Andreas Wimmer, Nina G. Schiller, *Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology*, "International Migration Review", v. 37, n. 3, 2003, pp. 576-610.

[28] On the relationship between history and memory, it is impossible not to mention Filippo Focardi, *Il passato conteso. Transizione politica e guerra della memoria in Italia dalla crisi della prima Repubblica alla fine dei governi Berlusconi*, in F. Focardi, *Nel cantiere della memoria. Fascismo, Resistenza, Shoah, Foibe*, Rome, Viella, 2020, pp. 195-234 [initially published in Filippo Focardi, Bruno Groppo (eds.), *L'Europa e le sue memorie. Politiche e culture del ricordo dopo il 1989*, Rome 2013, pp. 51-90]. On the specific case of the relationship between Italy and Germany, see: Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano: la rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale*, Rome, Laterza, 2013.

[29] See, in particular, the chapter titled "The Pulse of the Archive" in: A.L. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, cit., pp. 17-53.

[30] C.S. Capogreco, *Mussolini's Camps*, cit., pp. 112 sgg.

## The question of categories

The question of categories of analysis necessarily calls attention to the relationship between scientific research and the collected empirical data. From a macroanalytical point of view, the selection, classification and categorisation of phenomena must be functional to the interpretative model that has been adopted in advance. The empirical data essentially represent no more than examples that are illustrative of how the macro works and is implemented. This implies an adaptation of the fact to the model by radically reducing the complexity of reality.[31] In a microanalytical approach, instead, the categories emerge from an empirical research on the sources. In other words, they are not predetermined, and neither are their contextual use and evolution over time. Consequently, the categories reflect the constant variability of causal configurations.[32]

In his study on civilian internment in Italy, Capogreco almost obsessively seeks to find an order in the different forms of internment that come to overlap during the Second World War.[33] Thus he distinguishes between civilian, military and "parallel" internment, followed by the Slavic question, but he also expresses the need to differentiate between exiles and prisoners, especially when they all end up in the same detention spaces. The desire to construct categorical tools that perfectly fit the situations in which they originated urge him to find solutions to problems of terminological nature that are perhaps still unresolved at present — if not in the world of academic research at large, then at least in the field of collective memory. To give one example: the author's attempt to clarify the difference between labour camps, internment camps and concentration camps.[34]

The same attention to categories is present in Stibbe's work. In addition to making the necessary distinction between the various types of internment, the author offers a more elaborate description of the category of "convict": by deconstructing the stereotypical image of the white, male, European convict, Stibbe demonstrates that the practice was also extended to women, the elderly and children.[35] His wide-ranging analysis furthermore allows him to highlight

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[31] M. Gribaudi, *Echelle, pertinence, configuration*, cit., p. 128.

[32] M. Gribaudi, *Echelle, pertinence, configuration*, cit., pp. 114-115.

[33] I am drawing precisely on Gribaudi in my analysis of the great attention that the promoters of a microanalytical perspective pay to context. M. Gribaudi, *Echelle, pertinence, configuration*, cit., pp. 120-121.

[34] C.S. Capogreco, *Mussolini's Camps*, cit., pp. 50-51, 80-82. It is worth noting the author's effort to integrate himself into a broader process of categorisation. Thus, he explicitly adopts the categorisation that Simonetta Carolini formulated in reference to imprisoned political opponents: Simonetta Carolini, *Pericolosi nelle contingenze belliche: gli internati dal 1940 al 1943*, Rome, ANPPIA, 1987.

[35] On the difference between civilian and military internment, for example, he stresses the importance of the point of view adopted at the time: categorisation is necessary if it manages to faithfully reproduce the variety of experiences. M. Stibbe, *Civilian internment during the First World War*, cit., pp. 13-14.

the interethnic character of the interned population, thanks to a reading of the sources that goes beyond the simplistic study of the legal status of prisoners. A good example is that of the internment — by German and Austro-Hungarian forces — of black or Asian civilians with the nationality of one of the Allied countries: think of British seafarers from Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Yemeni territories and India, who were imprisoned in the same way as "white" citizens in the German camps. Stibbe's in-depth analysis of contexts and experiences allows him to explore the interreligious nature of the imprisoned population and its impact on the convicts' daily life in the camps, for instance by studying their different dietary needs. Their "allogeneic" character even becomes an element of political exploitation, as in the case of the propaganda used by German authorities in the Wünsdorf camp, near Zossen, specifically dedicated to the imprisoned Muslim population.[36]

The need to appropriately categorise the various phenomena becomes ever more problematic if we widen the field of observation. Anderson clearly states that, within the timeframe chosen for her research project, the broad range of locations to be included in the category of penal colonies is so wide as to make the term a "misnomer", also because those same places could change radically over time, and a clear definition is not able to explain such transformations.[37] Clearly, we must find suitable terms to distinguish different articulations of the same macro phenomenon, or at least to constantly clarify how these terms are understood.

In Gibson and Poerio's discussion of the European context, the main difference between penal colonies and other imperial contexts lies in the fact that they are "internal" to their respective national territories. In their attempt to discover the "roots" of twentieth-century penal colonies, the authors trace these back to the establishment, in modern times, of the first forced labour camps to replace the rowing of galleys as a punishment. They next analyse the penal colonies' transformations, highlighting their ability to adapt to different times and places — a flexibility that raises major definitional problems.[38] After all, as Stoler observes, it is the very category of colony — including that of the penal colony — that is intrinsically linked to a precariousness in space and

[36] M. Stibbe, *Civilian internment during the First World War*, cit., pp. 31-33 e 50-51.

[37] This difficulty to find an appropriate definition even regards the all-encompassing category of "convict", which the author considers to be equally "problematic". C. Anderson, *Introduction: A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, cit., pp. 12-13 and 15.

[38] "The longevity of the penal colony depended on its adaptability to different purposes and its shifting valence in public discourse. The flexibility of the penal colony and its employment in different national guises throughout Europe raises the problem of definition. Identification is easier in the imperial context, where all discrete sites outside the metropole in the modern era potentially qualify as penal colonies." Mary Gibson, Ilaria Poerio, *Modern Europe, 1750*-1950, in C. Anderson (ed.), *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, cit., p. 338.

time.[39] The authors seek to overcome this instability by creating categories for the characteristics that the penal colonies maintained, over time, in the Old Continent: located mainly in rural areas, with dormitories that were substantially different from traditional prisons (also from an architectural point of view), inhabited by people who had already appeared before a judge or were simply held in preventive detention and, finally, who had usually been forced into labour so as to maximise the profit of the central authorities. This attempt at creating a model never results in a "macro-sociological rhetoric", that is, the temptation — well-argued by Gribaudi — to match the empirical data with broader, general interpretative models. On the contrary, as Sandra Curtis Comstock suggests, we are confronted with a strong tendency to express the fluid and historically defined nature of the category through a description of the social functions expressed at any given time.[40] This attention to empirical data is also reflected in the conceptualisation of the genealogy of historical processes, by adopting specific causal and spatial-temporal patterns.

## Genealogies, historical temporality and the issue of space

In the specific case of internment, all authors under examination here agree on the importance of the First World War as a watershed. Stibbe draws our attention to the innovations that made it possible and economically viable to control a growing number of people (invention of barbed wire), to feed them for longer periods (development of high calorie canned foods), and to move them more easily even to remote regions (development of railways and steamships). This allowed a massive use of internment during the Great War, differently from what had happened not only in previous conflicts in Europe — as during the Franco-Prussian war, which had nevertheless shown important signs of breaking with the past — but also in previous colonial adventures.[41] From this genealogical perspective, the new power relations are shown to play a decisive role in the adoption of large-scale internment.

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[39] "[T]he colony (the penal colony, the military colony, [...]) is marked by the instability of both its morphology and the political mandates to which its architects and agents subscribe." Ann Laura Stoler, *Colony*, in John M. Bernstein, Adi Ophir, Ann Laura Stoler (eds.), *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2018, p. 47.

[40] For more details on this idea of "incorporating comparisons" see: Sandra Curtis Comstock, *Incorporating Comparisons in the Rift. Making Use of Cross-Place Events and Histories in Moments of World Historical Change*, in A. Amelina et al. (eds.), *Beyond Methodological Nationalism*, cit., pp. 176-197.

[41] On this matter, see: Daniela L. Caglioti, *Waging War on Civilians: The Expulsion of Aliens in the Franco-Prussian War*, "Past and Present", 221, 2013, pp. 161-95. On earlier examples in a colonial context, see: Sibylle Scheipers, *The Use of Concentration Camps in Colonial Warfare*, "Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History", n. 43-4, 2015, pp. 678-698.

Anderson discusses different temporal scales by focusing on a broader range of practices: each contribution makes context-specific periodisations without seeking an overall historical linearity, conforming only to the requirement to identify connections with other coercive measures often studied separately. In their chapter on penal colonies in Europe, Mary Gibson and Ilaria Poerio trace medium- to long-term trends to the backdrop of the First World War, which they consider the main watershed. A phase of experimentation, characterised by the co-existence of different types of penal colonies, was succeeded by a phase of stabilisation and consolidation of coercive technologies and methods.[42] This macro periodisation does not exclude other parallel temporalities. In fact, in Anderson's overview, the Great War does not seem to have the same prominence: in general, conflicts drive the growing adoption of convict labour for different needs and purposes.[43] The co-existence of forms of punishment is a permanent historical feature, with mobile configurations taking place in various places and times that do not challenge the book's micro-sociological approach.

At the same time, the presence of other internal temporalities is not excluded, for example with regard to the history of internal exile. As for all state organisations that lacked overseas possessions, in Italy too, exile represented one of the most important repressive instruments. Forced residence, as defined by the Pica law of 1863, and police custody, its direct emanation as of 1926, represent a "peculiarity" of the peninsula.[44] Neither of the two measures resemble the wide range of prison practices that were implemented from the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century; they were not, for example, designed to rehabilitate convicts or to obtain cheap labour force for public projects, especially in the case of forced residence experiences on the islands in the centre-south.[45] In his analysis of forms of internment during the Second World War, Capogreco goes a step further, trying to understand the transference between different management models. For him, the islands of confinement are the most direct reference point for the internment camps managed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs; likewise, the prisoner-of-war camps and prison experiences in colonised lands are good examples of what he defined "parallel" internment.[46]

[42] M. Gibson, I. Poerio, *Modern Europe, 1750-1950*, in Clare Anderson (ed.), *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, cit., pp. 338-339.

[43] Think, in particular, of the examples of the Russian, British and Spanish empires, mentioned in the introduction and further developed in the relative contributions.

[44] Ivi, p. 352.

[45] M. Gibson, I. Poerio, *Modern Europe, 1750*-1950, in Clare Anderson (ed.), *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, cit., pp. 342-343 and 352-355.

[46] C.S. Capogreco, *Mussolini's Camps*, cit., pp. 61-62. One of the most recent and innovative contributions on the Italian case is Daniela Caglioti's study on the First World War, especially her explanation for why the Italian authorities often preferred, for civilians, the flexibility of forced residence to the establishment of concentration camps. D.L. Caglioti, *Enemy Aliens and Colonial Subjects: Confinement and Internment in Italy, 1911-19*, in S. Manz, P. Panayi, M. Stibbe (eds.), *Internment during the First World War*, cit., pp. 131 e 135.

The same can be said for spatial conceptualisation. The examined texts convey a more complex and intrinsically dynamic meaning of the concept of space. Capogreco's analysis of the "stratification of functions that the concentration camps undergo over time" is accompanied by a focus on the circulation of internees throughout the peninsular area.[47] In the long term, a picture emerges of staff and convict mobility between the various internment locations that remain to be fully assessed, especially if we consider these places in terms of one great "concentration camp universe" that Italy gradually improved.[48] In the 1940s, this trend was overlapped — in the troubled times of war — by the unstable and precarious nature of the Italian strategies of internment, both in terms of the location of new camps and the type of convicts to be included.

This mobility is framed in broader trajectories in the contributions edited by Anderson, as the global convict flows affect not only the strategies of domination, but also the radicalisation of the "dominated" as well as the construction of relevant collective imaginaries.[49] Stibbe reinforces this concept by insisting that we must understand internment as a "migration-led process". It thus becomes clear that the global movement of convicts during periods of conflict is part and parcel of a broader acceleration in the movement of goods and people. Stibbe, then, disproves the traditional idea of conflict as a moment in which borders are tightened and mobility slows down.[50]

## Conclusion

A number of research trends emerge from my analysis of the three essays under examination here, which involve the historiography of prison experiences, in particular that of civilian internment. First of all, there is strong interconnection between very distant (until recently) strands of historiography. Clearly, the global turn has had a significant impact on this area, albeit not in a homogeneous way. The study of non-European contexts has made it possible not only to relativise the experiences that characterised the Old Continent, but also to see how Europe is connected to the rest of the world. The historiog-

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[47] "[T]he more complex set of issues tied to the stratification of functions through time experienced by concentrationary structures." C.S. Capogreco, *Mussolini's Camps*, cit., p. 4.

[48] I am using the concept that David Rousset coined in 1946, for I believe it is necessary to underline that — in addition to the gradual consolidation of prison practices as described by Gibson and Poerio — we must consider an equally important process of consolidation that regards the network of places of relegation, especially in the smaller islands; these places must be understood as a single detention organism, adapted to the political circumstances of the various historical periods. David Rousset, *L'univers concentrationnaire*, Paris, Editions du Pavois, 1946.

[49] A case in point is Christian De Vito's study, *The Spanish Empire, 1500-1898*, in C. Anderson, *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, cit., pp. 65-96.

[50] On these reflections see M. Stibbe, *Civilian internment during the First World War*, cit., p. 293.

raphy on forced mobility and migratory processes, in particular, seems to have played a considerable role in restoring the dynamism that seemed to be lacking in the study of internment. The examined publications demonstrate that new research perspectives focusing on the spatial element — rather than weakening the national paradigms — have encouraged a reconfiguration that, for the Italian case, has been a sign of unprecedented similarities both at a diachronic and a synchronic level.

Moreover, my analysis of the indicators used in these essays has allowed me to understand that the different strategies of investigating internment at the spatial-temporal level are not alternative to each other, but complementary. Even in their diversity, they all adopt a micro-sociological approach aimed at avoiding the reification of both categories of analysis and periodisations, through a perspective that is never static.