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## EVANGELICAL WINGS AND THE ASSEMBLAGE OF PRISON GOVERNANCE IN ARGENTINA

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### 1. Introduction

In 1987, in the context of the transition to democracy, the first “evangelical wing” was established in an Argentine prison at the male Prison Unit No. 1 in Buenos Aires province<sup>1</sup>. Its establishment was closely linked to an individual initiative. When in 1983 a riot broke out in that prison, Juan Zuccarelli, a young evangelical, offered to mediate between the inmates and the prison authorities, but his offer was dismissed. In view of this, that same year he applied to join the Prison Service of Buenos Aires province, and started to work as a junior prison officer at that very same prison. His efforts – in his dual role as a guard and an evangelical activist – bore fruit and he succeeded in having a special wing created with a whole set of specific rules in order to accommodate inmates of the evangelical faith<sup>2</sup>. These evangelical wings multiplied rapidly in the same prison. In 1989, Zuccarelli was ordained an evangelical minister and was recognised by the authorities of the Prison Service of Buenos Aires province as the person responsible for the evangelical worship practice (R. Brardinelli, 2012, 15-8; J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 87-92; A. Vallejos, 2017, 288-90; C. Krmpotic, A. Vallejos, 2018, 57-9).

Since then, evangelical wings have proliferated in Buenos Aires province, always in male prisons. By 2013, Algranti and Brardinelli (2013, 70) estimated that 30% to 50% of the wings in these prisons were evangelical. One of the

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<sup>1</sup> Argentina is a federal state, with one Federal Prison Service and 23 provincial Prison Services. Federal prisons housed in 2019 14% of the prison population of the country. Buenos Aires Province has the biggest provincial Prison Service, with 45% of the national prison population in 2019. It is followed by the Prison Services of Córdoba and Santa Fe Provinces, with 10% and 6%, respectively, of the prison population of the country in the same year.

<sup>2</sup> Before then, evangelical ministers used to visit some prisons in Buenos Aires province, but they did not have any special prerogatives; they just went there during visiting hours on the weekly visiting days. There have been records of these visits since the mid-1970s (R. Brardinelli, 2012, 17; J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 93-5).

most significant outcomes of this development was the creation of Prison Unit No. 25, an “evangelical prison” within a prison facility complex. It was opened in 2002 and its first Governor was Daniel Tejada, who had started to work with guard-minister Zuccarelli in 1990. Guards and inmates – regardless of whether they defined themselves as “evangelical” or not – agreed to abide by a regime in which religion played an essential role for the construction of prison order. Tejada was in charge of this pilot experience until 2005, when he was replaced by another evangelical prison officer, Daniel Suarez. Due to different problems, Prison Unit No. 25 was eventually turned into a prison for over 60-year-old inmates with health conditions in 2010, thus putting an end to this peculiar experience (A. Vallejos, 2017; C. Krmpotic, A. Vallejos, 2018).

In Santa Fe province, the first evangelical wing was established as late as 2001 in Prison Unit No. 1 for men (M. Manchado, 2016b, 66; 2017a, 199; 2019, 18)<sup>3</sup>. Since then, these wings have also proliferated in this jurisdiction. At present, approximately 45% of the wings in male prisons are “evangelical” (M. Manchado, 2019, 18). In Prison Unit No. 2 for men, located in Santa Fe city, where we conducted our field work, 6 out of 10 wings are “evangelical”.

It is no coincidence that recent estimates about the expansion of this kind of wings in prisons located in these two Argentine provinces are imprecise. This is due to the fact that oftentimes these wings are not formally recognised by prison authorities. Thus, it is possible to meet prison authorities – as we did during our field work – who simply deny the existence of this kind of wings in a certain prison, sticking to formal language when it comes to name the different areas. But it is impossible to deny their currently strong presence in the prisons of these two jurisdictions, where this phenomenon has been studied more thoroughly by the social sciences in the last decade.

This expansion of the evangelical wings has been triggered by two different kinds of processes. First, the growth of Pentecostalism in social life, which manifests itself in a substantial increase in the number of worshippers, who mostly are part of the working class (F. Frigerio, 1994; P. Semán, 2001; D. Míguez, 2001; 2002; 2012; H. Wynarczyk, 2009; J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 110-1). From the transition to democracy in the 1980s onwards, some religious leaders, spurred by the evangelizing zeal of their religious doctrine, started to visit prisons to offer spiritual guidance to people deprived from their liberty, due to their growing relationship with the inmates’ relatives

<sup>3</sup> Likewise, in this province evangelical pastors have also visited prisons on weekly visiting days without any official special permits since the mid-1980s at the least. Early in the 1990s, one pastor managed to persuade the authorities of Prison Unit No.1 to grant him an additional day and a place to organise his activities (M. Manchado, 2016b, 65; 2017a, 196-8; 2019, 17-8).

outside. Although at first these efforts faced some opposition from prison authorities, they gradually gained greater acceptance through different means until they crystalized in cooperation and articulation agreements (R. Brardinelli, 2012, 14-20; J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 87-94, 109-27; M. Manchado, 2016b, 64-7; 2017a, 195-200; 2018, 102-3; 2019, 17-9).

This greater acceptance goes hand in hand with another key process: a significant increase in incarceration rates in the provinces of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe, especially as of the mid-1990s. In 1996, the incarceration rates in both provinces were 74 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants and 49 per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively. In 2005, said rates went up to 169/100,000 and 70/100,000, which meant a rise of 128% and 43%, respectively, in one decade. After reaching a plateau, they experienced another significant increase especially in the last five years. In 2019, the rate was 256/100,000 in Buenos Aires province and 184/100,000 in Santa Fe province, a rise of 51% and 163% respectively in a period of fifteen years<sup>4</sup>. As a consequence of this fast and steep increase in the incarceration rates, problems such as overcrowding and the deterioration of prisoners' living conditions worsened, and multiple kinds of violence and the undermining of order became commonplace in many correctional institutions in both regions, albeit to a different extent and periodization (M. Sozzo, 2007, 107-8). Under these circumstances, the evangelical wings were regarded by some political and prison authorities as a viable alternative to deal with this concatenation of problems that had sparked off a serious crisis, since it proved to be a relatively effective resource for the construction of order in male prisons (J. Andersen, A. Suarez, 2009, 1, 15, 16, 19; A. Daroqui *et al.*, 2009, 2, 9; R. Brardinelli, 2012; J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 101-4, 145-51; M. Manchado, 2016b, 65-7; 2017a, 198-9; 2018, 103; 2019, 18-9).

These two macroscopic processes did not translate into an automatic and immediate multiplication of evangelical wings, though. This outcome has been made possible specifically in these two provinces thanks to a series of struggles and negotiations involving different stakeholders, namely political and prison authorities, prison officers, evangelical pastors and inmates. The centrality of this mediation can be illustrated by the fact that although these two macroscopic processes affected the entire country, there was not a similar development in the federal prisons. The absence of evangelical wings in this prison service poses a very interesting question. It could be linked to different reasons. First, the fact that the increase in the incarcerated

<sup>4</sup> In both provinces, these rates do not include the number of prisoners held in custody at police stations. These were very large numbers during the beginning of the 2000s but experienced a strong decline in the last years.

population at the federal level was strongly correlated with the construction of facilities, especially during the first wave in the 1990s and 2000s, which reduced overcrowding and overpopulation to some extent (P. Hathazy, 2016, 173-178). Secondly, another factor may have been the adoption of “care and separation units” by prison authorities to accommodate those inmates who have, from the official viewpoint, co-existence problems in regular wings, as a “solution” to help maintain order. The precise date when such measure was first implemented is unknown but it was regulated in 2013 (J. Andersen, 2015; B. García, 2019). Thirdly, the presence of prisoners’ “representatives” – at least in certain federal prisons – acting as interlocutors and mediators between inmates, guards, and authorities could be regarded by prison authorities as a fairly effective and already existing mechanism to help maintain order. Finally, the development of evangelical wings may have been blocked by the widespread conception of the Federal Prison Service as a strong bureaucratic institution – in comparison with provincial prison services –, which means that its authorities avoid any change that may be considered as a “loss of control” over the life of the inmates (P. Hathazy, M. Muller, 2016, 122). Even more, we still do not know whether evangelical wings have had the same degree of development as in Santa Fe and Buenos Aires in the rest of the provinces in Argentina<sup>5</sup>.

The evangelical wing is an area within a male prison in certain provinces in Argentina which has a peculiar hierarchy and a set of rules and dynamics legitimised through religion. This area enjoys considerable autonomy from prison officers and authorities. However, there are limits to such autonomy which become evident in different ways and at different moments.

Due to its complexity – and in view of its recent expansion – this phenomenon takes on added importance in terms of the articulations it generates with regard to prison governance. This chapter revolves around this specific issue. To tackle it, we conducted field work in the male prison in Santa Fe city. Data collection took place from November 2018 to April 2019. Altogether, eleven in-depth interviews were carried out to inmates who

<sup>5</sup> For example, in Córdoba province the Prison Service denies the existence of evangelical wings, as it happens officially in other jurisdictions. From the data we have gathered through conversations with different researchers and activists who work in prisons there, we conclude that there would be two evangelical wings in two prisons within the Correctional Facility Complex No.1. Each of them would accommodate between 25 and 30 inmates, whereas each prison houses approximately 1200 inmates. This seems to be a very limited development. The novelty is that there would be an evangelical wing in the prison for women in this same complex (Prison Unit No. 3), with a similar number of female inmates; there is no such thing in the provinces of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe. We thank Rossana Gauna, Lyllan Luque, Jorge Perano, Paul Hathazy and Agustín Villareal for the data and their comments in this regard.

were or had been accommodated in one evangelical wing in particular. Out of the total number of interviewees, seven belonged to the evangelical wing hierarchy, three were living in that wing but did not define themselves as “members of the church”, and one had been expelled from it. Likewise, nine interviews were carried out to prison officers and authorities working at this prison: five junior officers and four chief or senior officers.

## **2. Hierarchy, Positions and Roles in the Evangelical Wing**

In the evangelical wing we studied, there is a hierarchy among the prisoners which bears several similarities with those described in the literature about this kind of wing in other prisons in Argentina (J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 185-203; J. Andersen, A. Suarez, 2009, 11-2; J. Andersen, 2014a, 205-10; M. Manchado, 2015, 284-5; 2016a, 43-4). Those who have different positions in this hierarchy assume diverse roles and are subjected to relations of command and obedience among them.

At the top of the hierarchy is a man who, paradoxically, is neither an inmate in the evangelical wing nor a Prison Service staff member, but he is recognized as an authority by those who do live in this wing. He is Pastor L., an evangelical minister who leads a church near the prison, and who has done evangelistic work in the prison for two decades now (G. Bosio, 2017, 7). He is referred to as the “external” pastor to differentiate him from the “internal” pastor, a position filled by a prisoner. The external pastor plays a key role in determining who can hold the position of internal pastor as well as other important positions within the evangelical wing hierarchy. Besides, he develops the general guidelines about the rules that inmates must abide by, and the different religious practices to be held in this area of the prison. He also has a say in decisions and actions aimed at maintaining order in the wing, as he is frequently consulted about this matter by the internal pastor. He discusses issues concerning the evangelical wing with correctional authorities, not only at this specific prison but also with the Prison Service Directorate of Santa Fe Province authorities. Finally, he is in charge of collecting “tithes” and “offerings” paid by the inmates housed in the evangelical unit, and uses this money to support the external church as well as to buy things and make improvements in the evangelical wing<sup>6</sup>. An inmate who did not define himself

<sup>6</sup> A tithe literally means a fixed ten percent (10%) to be paid by the inmate out of the money he receives from the Prison Service as remuneration for the work done at the prison or as public relief if he does not work. Unlike tithes, an offering is voluntary and the amount is determined by the worshipper. Only in very few cases will an inmate in the evangelical wing be exempted from paying these donations, namely, when he has no relatives to visit him and he is paid the lowest remunera-

as a “member of the church”, though he was housed in this evangelical unit, said to illustrate the relevance of this figure: “...The external pastor is like a custodial manager in here, a governor”. And the Security Supervising Officer of the prison described: “He has direct access to high-ranking officers, he speaks directly with the Governor, or the Prison Service Directorate authorities”.

The internal pastor also holds a high-ranking position in the evangelical wing hierarchy. Unlike in the case of Buenos Aires province (J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 124), according to the data we have gathered, prison authorities do not seem to participate directly in the decision of who should be appointed to that position; this decision is made by the external pastor. The inmate who becomes an internal pastor must have a religious background, which means that he has ascended the evangelical wing hierarchy ladder and may hold that his life is a successful testimony to religious conversion. A wing “leader” interviewed mentioned the requirements an inmate must meet to become an internal pastor:

He must prove that he is consecrated to God, devoted, free from sins, addictions and vices; his life story must be testimony to the transforming grace of God.

In the case of the wing we studied, it had taken the internal pastor two years to reach that position<sup>7</sup>. He should also be held in considerable respect inside the prison world for his knowledge of the dynamics of this context as well as for his previous criminal career “outside”. The Security Supervising Officer of this prison said in this regard:

He must be very clever, very sharp. In general, they are very quick-witted and street smart, as they have already been imprisoned, they are very smart, they can recognise problems; they can anticipate whether there will be a problem or not.

This second aspect associates his role with that of “representatives” in regular wings within prisons in Santa Fe province. Our understanding

tion inside the prison, or when he must use this money to help a relative who is ill. Prisoners do not handle money inside the prison. To pay the tithe and offerings they must follow the same steps as when they want someone from the “outside” to withdraw money that belongs to them. First, they must fill out a form created by the Prison Service with their particulars, the information about the beneficiary and the amount to be transferred, and then they sign it. Then, the beneficiary – always the external pastor, in the case of the tithe and offerings – withdraws this amount of money in a prison office. Evangelicalism collects tithe and offerings in every evangelical wing and the external pastor is in charge of collecting it on a monthly basis.

<sup>7</sup> This would confirm the observations made in other prisons about the relative ease of upward mobility in the hierarchy of these evangelical wings (M. Manchado, 2015, 286; 2016a, 43-4), which could be linked to a general trait of Pentecostalism as a religion (P. Semán, 2010, 28-9).

of this other figure is still in its early stages<sup>8</sup>. It has experienced different levels of importance and formalization throughout time and at different correctional institutions (C. D'Amelio, 2019, 25, 36, 42-6), and by the time we conducted field work, it was declining rapidly in the male prison in the city of Santa Fe. Anyway, the crucial difference between the internal pastor and the “representative” – according to our work and the research previously conducted in Santa Fe province – apparently lies in the fact that the former does not resort to direct physical force when performing his duties, although this obviously does not preclude other forms of coercion (M. Manchado, 2016a, 48, 52-3; 2017b, 180; 2019, 22-3)<sup>9</sup>, and that he remains in his position for longer than the representative in regular wings, whose position has always been more unstable<sup>10</sup>.

The internal pastor sets out the rules to be followed by inmates housed in the evangelical wing taking into account the general guidelines laid down by the external pastor, and establishes the duties to be fulfilled by prisoners in different hierarchical positions and the faults or offenses for which anyone could be punished. Rules at the evangelical wing are partially similar to those formally imposed by prison authorities, for example: physical violence among inmates or disobedience and lack of respect for prison officers and authorities are forbidden. But there are other rules that deviate from those formally prescribed, such as those that prohibit inmates from being absent from worship practices, or from disobeying or showing disrespect for the evangelical wing authorities.

These rules aim at fulfilling two objectives at the same time. First, to bring order that materializes in the absence of conflicts among inmates housed in the evangelical wing, especially of a violent nature. This in turn results in the absence of coercive measures by the prison officers and authorities and in positive evaluations about the inmates that would enable their eligibility for parole or temporary release from prison. And secondly, to promote conversion, the abandonment of “worldly life”, a “change of lifestyle”

<sup>8</sup> For an exploration about the “*limpieza*” (cellblock runner) in the prisons in Buenos Aires province, who seems to have things in common with the “representative” in Santa Fe prisons, see D. Míguez (2007, 34; 2008, 146-8); L. A. Ángel (2015); J. Andersen (2014b, 266-70); I. Galvani (2010, 6-7, 12, 14); M. Montero (2018, 6-7, 15-6); N. Nogueira (2017, 98-101).

<sup>9</sup> In the context of Buenos Aires province, some authors have pointed out that direct physical force is still exerted by internal pastors in evangelical wings – though maybe less frequently or to a lesser degree – and in addition to other forms of coercion (A. Daroqui *et al.*, 2009, 9; J. Andersen, 2012; 200; 2014b, 272; 2015, 6-7).

<sup>10</sup> In recent times, the stability of “internal” pastors in the male prison in Santa Fe city seems to be even higher than the stability of its governors, who have been changed after short periods in office.

produced by the prisoner's embracement of religion that keeps him from reoffending in the future. This also gives a new religious zeal to correctional work that has been progressively secularized along the history of the modern prison in the country, as in other places of the world (M. Sozzo, 2007, 88-93). Following the guidelines established by the external pastor, the internal pastor also organizes the religious practices and the roles to be played by the different hierarchical positions in these activities. But, on top of religious practices, he also organizes general activities related to the wing daily routine, ranging from fridge organization to cleaning chores.

The internal pastor is assisted by two lower-ranking members of the evangelical wing hierarchy – “leaders” and “collaborators”<sup>11</sup>. “Leaders” may be defined as “middle management” (J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 192-3; M. Manchado, 2015, 284-5; 2016a, 43; 2018, 10) subordinated to the internal pastor but with some decision-making power over those under them in the evangelical wing hierarchy. There are between 5 and 10 leaders in the evangelical wing under study. They are inmates with a certain religious background and a high level of compliance with rules and religious dogma, who demonstrate great respect for the internal pastor. As one of them put it: “We must set the example, we are testimony. We care for testimony”. Leaders are appointed by the internal pastor after consultation with the external pastor.

“Collaborators” have a more “peripheral” position (J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 189; M. Manchado, 2015, 284-5; 2016a, 43; 2018, 10) and although they share “identity traits” for being “members of the church”, they have a more flexible attitude towards religious practices and rules, and are usually regarded by the internal pastor or the leaders as persons in the process of religious conversion. In this evangelical wing, there are 20 collaborators. Some of them are taking their first steps in religious matters, whereas others had already been leaders but had fallen in the hierarchy for different reasons. For example, the internal pastor told us about someone who had smuggled a mobile phone, which is prohibited by both formal and informal rules of this area within the prison.

And under these two categories are the inmates who neither define themselves as members of the church nor are they regarded as such by the rest. In the evangelical wing under study, they account for around 70 percent of the population. They must participate in religious services but not

<sup>11</sup> In the evangelical wings of the male prison in Santa Fe city, there also exists another figure, “*el segundo*” (“the second”) or “second pastor”, who is immediately under the internal pastor. In general terms, he is the right hand of the internal pastor, his person of utmost confidence. In the wing under study, this position was vacant.



on a regular basis. Some of them do not care much about showing interest in conversion. Despite this, as long as they do not get involved in serious disorder, their stay in the evangelical wing is not questioned<sup>12</sup>. One of the leaders said in this regard:

God always has a bunch of lost children, 40 out of 100 people, it is not the whole lot. But if somehow they abide by the rules of Christianity, if they are obedient, respectful, or even if they have vices and sins... God is working on them, He does not abandon them; someday they will make the decision to submit completely.

### 3. Strategies to Maintain Order

Different strategies are developed to maintain order which are basically implemented by the prisoners in the higher echelons of the wing hierarchy, though in certain cases prison officers and authorities may also be involved.

On the one hand, there are proactive strategies aimed at preventing rules from being broken and prisoners housed in this wing from getting involved in conflicts, especially of a violent nature. One of the most important consists in deciding which inmates are taken to the evangelical wing. The internal pastor plays an essential role in deciding which prisoner is taken to his area, regardless of whether he is a newly-arrived prisoner – “*ingreso*” (a “new admission”) – or an inmate being transferred from another wing in the prison where he can no longer stay for various reasons – ranging from a change in his legal status from accused to convicted to his participation in a violent conflict. On Thursdays, when new admissions arrive at the male prison of Santa Fe city, the pastors are allowed to go to the holding cells where they are put or, if there is no room left there, to the corridors where they stand handcuffed to the bar of an elevated window waiting to be taken to their wing. In this context, the pastors interview the “new admissions” and try to determine whether they have a serious conflict with someone already housed in their own wing. If there is no conflict, the newly-arrived may request or be offered by the internal pastor to

<sup>12</sup> Previous studies mention the word “*ovejas*” (sheep) as the term used to refer to the people in this position within the evangelical wing structure (J. Andersen, 2014a, 185; L. A. Ángel, 2015, 45; M. Manchado, 2015, 284-5; 2016a, 43; 2017b, 182; 2018, 104). But we have not recorded the use of this term in our field work. As far as “non-church members” are concerned, some are referred to as “*refugiados*” (“refugees”), to make specific reference to the fact that they have come to the evangelical wing seeking security because they have had conflicts in other prison areas, a category which has also been recorded in previous research (J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 59-60; J. Algranti, 2012, 56; J. Andersen 2014a, 209, 225; J. Rosas, 2014, 13-4; M. Manchado, 2015, 292; 2016a, 57; 2017b, 183).

be accommodated in the evangelical wing. This agreement is then approved by the prison authorities who ask the “new admission” to sign a document stating his consent<sup>13</sup>. Something similar happens when an inmate is transferred from another wing. Nevertheless, the prison authorities may not approve of this agreement between the internal pastor and the inmate, or they may force the internal pastor to take an inmate against his will. This does not happen very often but we have been told stories during our interviews. A senior prison officer told us the following so as to reinforce his decision-making power:

The final decision whether an inmate is taken to a wing or not is ours. If they say everything is ok but I say no, he isn't taken there. If they tell me don't put him in the wing but I say yes, under my responsibility, he is taken to the wing. We always take responsibility, we have the final say.

In the process to be admitted to the evangelical wing, there is an important step called “the practice of forgiveness”, which is imbued with a deep religious connotation. When an eligible candidate has had problems with an inmate housed in this area which are not particularly serious in the internal pastor's opinion, both prisoners are asked to talk and ask one another for forgiveness, and reconcile so that they can live together in harmony. Now, if the inmate already housed in the evangelical wing is unwilling to offer or ask for forgiveness, he is threatened with expulsion by the internal pastor; this means that on many occasions this forgiveness results from coercion. This is what the pastor in the space under study told us in this regard:

Sometimes an inmate doesn't want to forgive another. We have seen this happening here. ‘Well, if you don't forgive him, you will have to leave and he will get in’, and he said, ‘no, it's ok, come on, because you gave me a chance’; because everybody has been given a chance. I haven't met a single one who hasn't had some kind of problem with somebody else, if not in this church maybe in another; yet everybody is given a chance, come what may.

Another key preventive strategy consists in keeping the inmates housed in the evangelical wing under permanent surveillance, mainly to gather information about the social relationships inside the wing in order to prevent violent conflicts from flaring up. This is achieved through conversations held by the internal pastor himself with the inmates. In his words:

<sup>13</sup> Even though being taken to an evangelical wing is presented as a voluntary decision, it is important to point out that there are limited options since a large number of the wings in this prison are evangelical. Besides, gaining access to a regular wing seems to be more difficult because the inmates housed there usually resist to receive “new admissions” due to the overpopulation problem.

We, as God involves a change of life, we speak to the heart of the people. When we speak to someone, we know how he feels. I am the pastor, I walk around and see the guys, see their faces; when they feel upset, when they feel fine, when they want to fight.

But leaders also have an active role in this task, and in certain cases so do collaborators, and even inmates who are not “members of the church”<sup>14</sup>.

This also means that everyday interactions are closely monitored by those who hold high-ranking positions in the evangelical wing hierarchy. A collaborator said in this regard:

- If you can sense a tense atmosphere, see strange moves, exchange of glances... You can anticipate who is going to get into trouble with whom. Besides, because a prisoner is predictable.
- For those who know...
- Of course, we already know. You can tell by the way they are dressed, if they are wearing a jacket... ‘Why are you wearing a jacket in this hot weather?’ You can tell by their gait, their looks. In here, we use the expression ‘hay *movida*’ (feelings are running high).

And an inmate who was not a member of the church pointed out:

- Everything... the pastor watches over everything, all the time. And if not him, the leaders.
- What do they pay attention to?
- Everything... who does drugs, who doesn’t, who does this or that.

This constant surveillance is also aimed at monitoring compliance by inmates housed in the evangelical wing with religious and non-religious activities organized by the internal pastor. Special attention is paid to compliance with the schedule, for example, making sure that inmates get in their cells before the official lock-up time, so that gatekeepers can proceed to lock them up, or that they get on time to religious ceremonies, especially the most important ones held at midday and in the evenings.

When the likelihood of a violent conflict is detected at an early stage, another preventive strategy to be deployed is a sort of mediation that involves the high-ranking positions in the evangelical wing hierarchy. This is connected with a distinguishing feature of this type of blocks, as observed

<sup>14</sup> In some interviews critical comments were made suggesting that some inmates act as informers of the internal pastor, and they are called “*infiltrados*” (“infiltrator”) or “*alcabuetes*” (“grass/snitch”).

by D. Míguez (2013, 14-5) and J. Algranti and R. Brardinelli (2013, 63-5), which consists in engaging in dialogue<sup>15</sup>. In this case, the internal pastor or the leaders try to speak with the parties involved in an attempt to reach a solution to pacify the situation. And only if this does not work out, do they respond with a reactive measure of a punitive nature. An inmate who was not a member of the church said in this regard:

Here if the pastor knows that two people have a conflict, he tries to make them talk, and he evaluates the situation to see if everything is ok; if the conflict cannot be resolved, he tries to transfer one to a different church to prevent the conflict from flaring up.

And a collaborator said:

When there are two people [arguing], the leaders move in to separate them, and when someone wants to meddle in, they tell him, 'stay out of this brother, can't you see we're trying to calm them down?'; they don't tell him, 'mind your own business, jerk!', that kind of abuse is no longer used, just love.

Finally, there is a preventive strategy linked to the allocation of informal rewards that aim at influencing the behaviour of those housed in the evangelical wing, and in many cases they are successful. There are instant and deferred rewards. First, especially in the case of some high-ranking members within the hierarchy, these rewards translate into a concrete possibility of "tangible" improvements in their living conditions in the prison, such as having a cell of their own or being able to leave their wings frequently to visit other sectors in the prison. Secondly, for the far larger universe of inmates, the reward is "living in peace"; a fact that, in the eyes of many inmates housed there, is guaranteed by the regime of the evangelical wing by comparison with the regular wing, as evidenced by the reduced rate of conflicts of a violent nature. Thirdly, for many there is a real chance of a "penal" reward because their stay at the evangelical wing usually contributes to both their positive evaluation by prison authorities and officers, which makes them eligible for temporary release from prison and parole (M. Manchado, 2017b, 193-7; 2018, 107). Fourthly, for some of those housed in this wing there are also "emotional" and "spiritual" rewards related to religious conversion, improvement of health and wellbeing (especially in the case of addictions)

<sup>15</sup> During field work we have recorded instances in which dialogue was used to neutralize potential conflicts, without the mediation of the high-ranking positions in the hierarchy, by appealing to religious justifications. A collaborator said in this regard: "In the past I liked being armed, now I don't. For me the best weapon is the Bible and peace in your heart, and engage in dialogue".

and better family relationships (M. Manchado, 2017b, 189-91; 2018, 107). Finally, and also for the converts, there is a potential “economic” reward that does not necessarily materialise during confinement but afterwards, by which they may get a job in the future and build a life free from crime thanks to the networks of the church outside the prison (M. Manchado, 2017b, 191-3; 2018, 107).

On the other hand, besides these preventive strategies, there is a series of reactive strategies of a punitive nature to deal with infractions to the rules detected by the evangelical wing hierarchy. These informal disciplinary measures are similar, to some extent, to those imposed by prison authorities – temporary solitary confinement or transfer to another wing –, although they are not necessarily intended to punish the same kind of behaviour. Then, there are disciplinary measures peculiar to the evangelical wing, such as warnings and the performance of religious practices. Within this framework of informal disciplinary measures, there is no room for direct physical force, although there are coercive measures that eventually threaten the inmate with the loss of the chance to remain in the evangelical wing and enjoy the potential or actual rewards which are related to it. Leaders play a key role in the detection of an infringement of the rules and the imposition of disciplinary measures, but it is the internal pastor who decides the kind of disciplinary measure to be imposed, after consultation with the external pastor if the infraction is serious. Prison officers and authorities do not partake in the decision about disciplinary measures, but in certain cases their participation is central to their implementation. The internal pastor exercises a high degree of discretion in deciding the disciplinary measures to be imposed, which means that similar infractions committed by different inmates may be treated differently. Whereas this discretion is regarded as a source of flexibility with positive outcomes by some of the inmates, some others think it is illegitimate, especially when it translates into harsher disciplinary measures, as evidenced by the accusations of “arbitrariness” recorded during our field work.

In the event of minor infractions – for example, having a disrespectful behaviour towards a guard or an evangelical authority, listening to worldly music out loud or smoking marijuana in public –, especially when committed for the first time, the disciplinary measure amounts to a warning. The internal pastor or one of the leaders speaks with the person, warns him of the negative consequences of persisting in that behaviour, and tries to persuade him to abide by the rules of the evangelical wing. One of the leaders said in this regard:

Many times, we basically tell them the way things should be done, or we ask them why they are doing things wrong. Sometimes they are doing things wrong because

they are facing some problems with their family, their marriage or the case. When people have problems, they get in trouble; if not, they are at ease.

“Discipline” is usually exercised over those who repeat relatively minor infractions. In this case, the punished inmate is referred to as “*disciplinado*” (“the disciplined”). Being disciplined basically means having to perform some extra religious practices together with, in certain cases, cleaning chores in the evangelical wing. A leader described:

We have a discipline system in the church. The names of those being disciplined for different reasons are written on a blackboard, and they will have to do different activities during the week. One day they are called and gathered in groups, we try to explain to them what God’s discipline involves, and then they leave. Another day, they meet to pray and praise; another day, they clean the wing... these are the activities to be done by those who have committed an infraction.

In the event of more serious infractions, as defined on a case by case basis and at the discretion of the internal pastor, an inmate may be held in solitary confinement in special cells in another area of the prison. The period of time is defined by the internal pastor not straight away but a posteriori, thus leaving the possibility of being transferred to another wing open. The internal pastor informs the official guards of the evangelical wing that such-and-such needs some time to “reflect” in a solitary confinement cell. Sometimes, the internal pastor escorts the inmate in question – together with a guard – to the cell. Then, when and if the internal pastor deems it appropriate, he goes to the cell and tells the inmate that solitary confinement time is over and that he may return to the evangelical wing. In any case, this period of solitary confinement is not officially recorded by prison administrative staff as a formal disciplinary measure but as an instance of “segregation for self-protection”. Unlike the other informal disciplinary measures, this requires the active involvement of prison guards and authorities. An inmate who did not define himself as a member of the church said in this regard:

- You mentioned there are certain rules, such as to attend worship activities, not to listen to music... what happens if someone breaks those rules?
- Well, he is segregated, they have him segregated. And he is placed in “*buzones*” (“the hole/the box”) and may spend weeks there, then they see if they give him a chance.
- To come back to the block?
- Yes, to come back or go to another evangelical wing.
- Is the punishment imposed always the same?

– No, not always; sometimes they transfer you directly to another evangelical wing; sometimes they don't, sometimes you are placed in solitary confinement<sup>16</sup>.

Finally, the most serious disciplinary measure – that may follow solitary confinement or not – is expulsion from the wing. Once again, the boundaries between infractions punishable with this measure are blurred and muddled. As examples of these infractions we can mention physical fighting but also repeated and minor non-compliances with the rules. The internal pastor usually asks for the external pastor's advice before making this decision. His answer to a direct question in this regard was:

And the problem for which they can no longer stay in the wing is when they are so stoned or drugged out that they would respect no limits, or something went missing and everybody looks at the junkie. So for safety's sake, he is transferred to another wing. Or if we see that he is too stoned, he goes to "*buzones*" ("the hole/the box") until the effect wears off and then he either returns to the wing or is transferred to another wing.

The people with whom we talked during our field work were highly critical of the arbitrariness with which the internal pastor of the wing under study imposed especially this kind of disciplinary measure. This long extract of a conversation we had with a person expelled from the unit under study is worth reproducing:

Look, I used to live in the first cell upstairs and this bloke wanted me to leave that cell. I was on my own. He wanted me to leave the cell and move downstairs. (...) So when he told me he wanted to put another person in that cell, kind of forcing me to leave, I refused and we argued. Then I asked the guard if I had to leave the cell and he said that I didn't. So what did this dude do? He told me, 'aha, you will leave the cell by hook or by crook', and a few days later the same guard, the fatty, told me, 'get your stuff because we are going to get you out of the wing for safety's sake', and well, I was transferred there, handcuffed and all that. And they told me that I was being transferred because I didn't get along with a guy who was in the hole and was coming to the wing. I remember they told me, and everything was ok with that guy; he already lived in our wing (...) Because that's what pastors do, they get you out, they get you in, and they screw you up. And that bloke made up that story to get me

<sup>16</sup> We have already conducted empirical research into this dynamic related to the use of solitary confinement cells by the internal pastors of the evangelical wings in this same male prison in the city of Santa Fe, and we interviewed pastors, prison officers and authorities, and inmates in solitary confinement cells. One of the officers we interviewed said that the imposition of these informal disciplinary measures accounts for 80% of the use of solitary confinement cells (in 2014) (L. Ghiberto, M. Sozzo, 2016, 133-8).

out. Obviously, the following day after work I went to fetch a couple of things and railed at him, reproached him for getting me in trouble with the police and asked him what kind of pastor he was. And he denied everything before the police. Why would the officer lie to me, just get me out on a whim?

And even a collaborator in the wing said something similar:

In the wing I am housed, the pastor makes up stories against the boys. He has to pretend to be a pastor, but he is not. So, some people argue or he feels envious or jealous and he resents them. So, he goes there, speaks to the authorities, the senior officers or the officers and he tells them, 'so-and-so doesn't get along with such-and-such, please get him out'.

During our field work nobody mentioned anything about prison officers or authorities partaking in the decision-making process relative to this strongest measure, although they are likely to have some degree of influence because the expelled inmate must be accommodated in another sector in the prison, and this problem should be tackled by the prison administrative staff. Anyway, according to the extracts we have just reproduced it is evident that prison authorities and officers cooperate so that the measure may be implemented.

#### **4. The Assemblage of Prison Governance: Dislocation, Negotiation, Cooperation and Confrontation**

From this description of the production of order in the evangelical wing, emerges a picture in which certain prisoners – essentially the internal pastor, but also the leaders and collaborators to some extent – seem to govern other prisoners beyond the reach of the state agents. Therefore, it would be tempting to appeal to the idea of “self-governance”. Actually, this term has been incidentally used by some authors with reference to the evangelical wings in provincial prisons in Argentina (J. Algranti, 2012, 29; M. Manchado, 2014, 91; J. Andersen, 2015, 1, 8). However, this concept can make us lose sight of a series of crucial elements to understand this assemblage of prison governance.

The concept of “self-governance” has been recently introduced in the literature on prisons in Latin America to make reference to different situations in which apparently prisoners establish relations of power inside the prison, while prison authorities and officers step back and exclusively guard the borders between the inside and the outside worlds (F. Cerbini, 2012; 2017; S. Darke, 2013; 2014; A. Antillano, 2015; 2017; A. Antillano *et al.*, 2016; J. Weegels, 2017; F. Macaulay, 2017) In fact, this has led some authors to establish this “self-governance” feature as a general trait of prisons



in Latin America (C. Birbeck, 2011, 315-316; S. Darke. M. Karam, 2016, 461, 465; S. Darke, C. Garces, 2017, 4; F. Macaulay, 2017, 51-2; 2019, 253-5; D. Skarbek, 2020, 27-8), thus assuming there is an homogeneity of prison contexts in the region, which could be an overstatement. That also takes for granted that there is a radical divergence in the forms of governance between these prisons and the prisons in the Global North, which could be another exaggeration.

However, even in the most extreme examples of this kind in Latin American prisons – as evidenced by the creation and consolidation of prisoners' organizations like *Primero Comando da Capital* or *Comando Vermelho* (there is a vast literature on the subject, the chapters by Nunes Dias, Salla and Alvarez and Stegeman in this book truly stand out) in Brazilian prisons –, some decisions and actions by state agents are essential to the day-to-day assemblage of prison governance. In some cases, they take place within a context of collaborative relations with the highest reaches of the prisoners' hierarchy; for example the frequent smuggling of drugs and firearms in the prison requires the cooperation of (at least some of) the prison officers and authorities (even the police) in charge of guarding the borders between the inside and outside worlds. In some other cases, state agents' decisions position them in relations of confrontation with the highest reaches of the prisoners' hierarchy, such as, for example, when armed operations are carried out by riot squad officers inside the prison precisely to generate a change in the balance of power among the prisoners, as recorded by different social researchers who have worked in these contexts and situations. Eventually, it is always the state agents who keep prisoners in prison, obviously.

From our point of view, this complex dimension of the roles played by state agents – which may be more or less prominent depending on the different situations – could be obscured by the concept of “self-governance”. As far as the evangelical wings are concerned, the impact of state agents' actions and decisions is perhaps more evident than in other cases where certain prisoners assume governance roles in Latin America, because among other things they affect only some, not all, sectors within the prison, thus creating an “inside-outside” dimension within the boundaries of the prison context – as Manchado (2019, 20-26) has rightly pointed out –; this means recognizing that the exercise of governance by some prisoners over other prisoners is somehow subjected to some kind of geographical boundary line.

First, we should bear in mind that it is the prison authorities who approve, though not through a formal procedure, the daily functioning of the wing in accordance with the patterns of evangelicalism. In the prison under study, this is the result of a process of negotiation with the external pastor; and throughout the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the

number of blocks turned into evangelical wings, just like in the case of the provincial prisons more generally, as we pointed out in the Introduction. In our field work, we have not learnt of a single case in which an external pastor's proposal to turn a block into an evangelical wing has been turned down by the prison authorities; however, we cannot dismiss the possibility that this actually happens or may have happened<sup>17</sup>. Further and more specific research should be conducted into this matter to shed light on this dynamic through in-depth interviews to stakeholders specifically involved in this kind of negotiation. However, the experience of the rise and decline of an "evangelical prison" in the province of Buenos Aires briefly depicted in the Introduction is a clear example of the constraints that may hold back the expansion of evangelicalism in prisons, and of the way in which prison authorities may certainly block it<sup>18</sup>.

Secondly, many decisions and actions affecting the daily functioning of the evangelical wing made by the highest reaches of its hierarchy are supervised by prison officers and authorities who may contest and reverse them – though oftentimes this does not happen –, thus creating a situation of tension and confrontation to a greater or lesser extent. In the previous section we mentioned this, especially in connection with new admissions and the imposition of disciplinary measures such as solitary confinement and expulsion. But there is a wide range of other everyday dynamics within the evangelical wing that trigger control measures by state agents, oftentimes implemented by the lowest reaches of its hierarchy such as "*celadores*" (gatekeepers). It is no coincidence at all that many of these dynamics are related to people or things crossing the boundaries of the evangelical wing. For example, every time the internal pastor or the leaders have to leave the evangelical wing for some reason, like on Thursdays to visit the "new admissions" or celebrate a worship service in another evangelical wing; whenever it is necessary to introduce into the evangelical wing goods bought with the money collected through tithes and offerings; when inmates housed in the evangelical wing submit conviction-related claims that require decisions to be made and actions taken by the prison administration staff or when inmates leave the evangelical wing to attend educational, labour or recreational activities<sup>19</sup>. In all these situations, the decisions taken by

<sup>17</sup> We have heard stories about people who oppose having the wing where they are housed turned into an evangelical wing. This opposition, especially when voiced in a collective and public way, may be a variable taken into account by prison authorities when it comes to approving whether a certain block is turned into an evangelical wing or not.

<sup>18</sup> See, in general terms and in this same sense, J. Algranti and R. Brardinelli (2013, 303; 2017, 185), and M. Manchado (2016a, 56, 58; 2017b, 200; 2019, 23).

<sup>19</sup> Unlike inmates housed in evangelical wings in other Argentine prisons, where they are re-

the highest reaches of the evangelical wing hierarchy may be contested and reversed by the prison officers and authorities. And this happens, though not very often. Besides, there are other control measures implemented by prison authorities and officers inside the evangelical wing and aimed at its population. Whereas some of them are mild and routine, such as the daily opening and closing of the cells or the headcounts performed during the day, some others are sporadic and potentially more controversial, such as searches. Although they do not take place too frequently and are sometimes agreed by the internal pastor, they must be done regularly. When these different situations arise, in the microphysics of everyday life the governance role of state agents re-emerges and becomes tangible<sup>20</sup>.

In line with Sykes' ideas in his classic book *The Society of Captives* (1958/1999), the reality of the evangelical wings demonstrates the fictional nature of total control by state agents of the sequestered life inside prison<sup>21</sup>, and makes evident, as the American author stated, a real dislocation of part of the exercise of power from captors to captives. As clear examples of this stand out the establishment of rules, the hierarchy and the specific activities, as well as the preventive and reactive strategies to maintain order implemented inside this kind of wing in the prison under study, which we have described in the foregoing section<sup>22</sup>. However, this dislocation has limits because, as we have just highlighted, state agents can make use of different resources and measures to govern the prisoners housed in these areas whenever they decide and circumstances so permit.

This dislocation in the exercise of power can be exclusively seen as the result of a "top-down" dynamic, as the term "outsourcing" used in some works on evangelical wings in Argentina seems to suggest. (A. Daroqui *et al.*, 2009, 2; J. Andersen, A. Suárez, 2009, 15-9; J. Andersen, 2012, 199-201;

quired to devote their time exclusively to worship practices or are imposed severe restrictions to other types of activities, inmates in the evangelical wings at the prison under study are not required to quit labour, educational or recreational activities performed outside the wing (M. Manchado, 2015, 293, 297).

<sup>20</sup> Similar observations have recently been made by M. Manchado (2019, 25-7).

<sup>21</sup> We have recently discussed the utility of Sykes' work to analyse the reality of evangelical wings in Argentine prisons (L. Navarro, M. Sozzo, 2020). For a more general consideration of the work of this classical author and Latin-American prisons, see M. Sozzo (2020).

<sup>22</sup> As Sykes also pointed out, this dislocation does not grant the same roles (and benefits) to all prisoners in the prison governance. As we have seen in the foregoing section, the complex hierarchical structure of the evangelical wing assigns different tasks (and rewards) to the inmates who hold different positions: the internal pastor, leaders, collaborators and non-church members. We also analysed the key role played by a stakeholder who does not live in the prison or belong to the Prison Service – the external pastor. This complex assemblage is established informally with the consent of prison authorities and guards, who make sure that this is not mentioned in the official records or given an official name.

2014b, 252, 258, 260; 2015, 2). In this perspective, it is the state authorities who transfer these governance roles to the highest reaches of the evangelical hierarchy, because it is instrumental in achieving their goal of maintaining prison order<sup>23</sup>. Besides, this interpretation gives the impression that evangelical wings are instruments fully controlled by those who set them up, that is, state authorities<sup>24</sup>.

Undoubtedly, this “top-down” transference effectively occurs in this kind of wings in Argentine prisons. However, it is essential not to lose sight of the “bottom-up” dynamic – and also “outside-in” – that has contributed to generate this dislocation as an outcome. From the viewpoint of those who foster their establishment but do not form part of the Prison Service structure – that is, external pastors and inmates –, evangelical wings may be considered a “conquest” whose creation and operation demanded and occasionally still demand overcoming certain resistance and obstacles mounted by prison authorities and officers. By rescuing this dynamic, it becomes evident that there are limits to the instrumentalization of evangelical wings by state authorities, which is undoubtedly always aimed at but is not always necessarily achieved. From our viewpoint, transfer and conquest may be regarded as the two sides of the same complex process, which has gained significant strength in contemporary prisons in Argentina precisely because it has succeeded in putting together the “top-down” and “bottom-up”, the “outside-in” and “inside-out” components<sup>25</sup>.

In the evangelical wings, negotiations between guards and inmates clearly play a significant and inevitable role to maintain order. Previous social research into this kind of blocks in Argentine prisons has described this feature and, in some cases, it has explicitly mentioned the term “negotiation” (A. Vallejos, 2017, 291, 296; J. Algranti, 2018, 562; C. Krmpotic, A. Vallejos, 2018, 51,

<sup>23</sup> It has been suggested that “outsourcing” is not exclusive to evangelical wings because it also takes place in regular wings, making reference to the role of the “*limpieza*” (cellblock runner) in the province of Buenos Aires (J. Andersen, 2014b, 266-70).

<sup>24</sup> In other works we can find the concept of “delegation” – or even “outsourcing” –, although it is not clearly connected with a strong conception of evangelical wings as a mere instrument of the state authorities (M. Machado, 2014, 91; 2015, 295; 2016a; 56; 2017c, 15; J. Algranti, 2012, 30; J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 45).

<sup>25</sup> Sometimes when discussing the establishment and expansion of evangelical wings, it is suggested that this dislocation of the exercise of power from the guards to the inmates has taken place quite recently. However, references to a past time when prison staff exerted effective control and surveillance of what happened inside the wings cannot be substantiated with solid historical data, and pose the risk of conveying a mythical picture of the situation. The work of E. Neuman and W. Irurzun (1968, 45-61) in the 1960s introduces a series of elements precisely in the opposite direction. (We thank Ramiro Gual for pointing this out). For a generalization along the same lines about prisons in Latin America, see C. Birbeck (2011, 315-6). Anyway, this is a subject to be more thoroughly researched in the future.

57, 64; M. Manchado, 2019, 14-5, 27)<sup>26</sup>. As we said, the establishment of an evangelical wing is in itself the result of a process of negotiation between the external pastor and the prison authorities. Negotiation is also present on many other crucial occasions in connection with the preventive and reactive strategies to maintain order we described in the foregoing section. For example, the decision concerning new admissions to the evangelical wing and the imposition of disciplinary measures such as solitary confinement or expulsion. These negotiations do not eliminate structural imbalances between guards and inmates, but it would not be an exaggeration to say that, in certain situations, such imbalance is somewhat redressed, especially when the internal pastor includes the external pastor in the process. Throughout our field work, we have heard different stories by “*celadores*” (gatekeepers) who felt impotent and resentful about being often overruled by the internal pastor with the help of the external pastor during negotiations, which ended up involving the highest reaches of the Prison Service and resulted in decisions and actions they considered inappropriate. As we moved upwards in the prison hierarchy, though, the stories presented an opposite view and emphasized the capacity of state authorities to eventually impose decisions as illustrated in several remarks reproduced in the foregoing section.

Finally, these relations of power marked by dislocation – between transfer and conquest – and by permanent negotiation – between guards and inmates – entail a continuum of relations between both parties, ranging from collaboration on one end to confrontation on the other one. Some researchers who work on prisons in Latin America have recently described some situations – to some extent as an alternative to the idea of “self-governance” – as a regime of “co-governance” between guards and inmates (S. Darke, 2018, 139-97, 279-321; J. Weegels, 2019; B. Bracco, 2020, 45-50, 95-128). In fact, this term – or similar expressions such as “shared governance” or “joint management” – has also been used in connection with evangelical wings in Argentine prisons, although incidentally in most cases and without defining the scope of its meaning (J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 44-6; 2017, 181; J. Algranti, 2018, 562; J. Andersen, 2014b, 259, 262; 2015, 2; M. Manchado, 2015, 295; 2018, 102; 2019, 21-2). This concept certainly helps

<sup>26</sup> The idea of “reciprocity” has been previously used in some texts on evangelical wings (M. Manchado, 2015, 295; 2016a, 50-6; 2016b, 71-2; 2017a, 182; 2017b, 200-1) – thus rescuing previous exercises to analyse the relations between inmates and guards in Argentine prisons, but without making reference to evangelicalism (D. Míguez, 2007, 28-35; 2008, 149-63) – to analyse the relations between the hierarchy of this kind of wings and the prison authorities and officers. Algranti and Brardinelli, for their part, have coined the expressions “intra-prison transactions” or “intra-prison transaction complex” as they paid special attention to the idea of “earning some profit” (J. Algranti, R. Brardinelli, 2013, 32, 47-9, 152-8).

avoid the problems posed by the idea of “self-governance” mentioned above, but it may lead us to think that the relations between guards and inmates are only of a collaborative nature. Cooperation between both parties can certainly be observed on a constant basis. This is strongly promoted by the evangelical sermons being constantly preached in the prison by the hierarchy of this kind of blocks. There are many examples of this, which have practical and symbolical purposes, among which we can mention: the fact that the internal pastor and leaders make prisoners get in their cells before the official lock-up time thus facilitating the gatekeepers’ duties; or when the internal pastor makes the decision that an inmate should be held in solitary confinement and informs the gatekeeper, who opens the unit so that both punished and punisher may leave the wing and make together, escorted by an officer, all their way to the confinement cells; or when the internal pastor shares with the gatekeeper (and vice versa) information about a newly-arrived at the evangelical wing relative to his “*broncas*” (grudges) and “*boletas*” (obligations of revenge); or when the prison authorities ask the internal pastor to welcome an inmate transferred from another sector because he has had a conflict there and the pastor accepts. On many occasions while conducting field work, we have come across references to this cooperation – including some criticism of the proximity with the prison staff that entails – voiced by inmates and prison authorities alike.

However, there are also situations of tension and confrontation, as we have already mentioned (M. Manchado, 2016a, 54-5, 58; 2017c, 15-7; 2019, 15, 28). When the internal pastor’s decisions are contested by the prison guards and authorities, situations of tension and confrontation crop up, and the matter may be resolved in favour of one party over the other depending on the circumstances, in the context of a process in which the conflict may or may not escalate as times goes by. In some cases, the internal pastor may come to the conclusion that insisting on the contested decision is not worth the effort and that it is better to give up. But he may also decide the opposite – thus generating new instances of dialogue with the prison stakeholders involved or with other ones – and involve the external pastor when he deems it necessary, thus opening up other possibilities of negotiation as mentioned before. For example, we have recorded in our field work several stories about a recent change in the attitude of this prison authorities towards the imposition of solitary confinement by internal pastors. They have adopted a more restrictive attitude, which has spurred tension and confrontation. This gives this assemblage of prison governance a certain level of instability and fluidity. Only if this aspect is included within the scope of the concept of co-governance, will it become pertinent to understand the phenomenon of evangelical wings in some provincial prisons in Argentina. Therefore, shared but also potentially contested governance.

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## Abstract

### EVANGELICAL WINGS AND THE ASSEMBLAGE OF PRISON GOVERNANCE IN ARGENTINA

Since the mid-eighties evangelical wings have proliferated in some provinces in Argentina. These wings are areas within male prisons which have a peculiar hierarchy and a set of rules and dynamics legitimised through religion. These areas enjoy considerable autonomy from prison officers and authorities. Due to its complexity – and in view of its recent expansion – this phenomenon takes on added importance in terms of the articulations it generates with regard to prison governance. In this article, we explore their governance assemblage. Firstly, we analyse the hierarchy, positions and roles generated inside these blocks. Secondly, we describe the different strategies used there to maintain order. Finally we present an interpretation of this assemblage of prison governance, as a form of “shared” but also – sometimes – “contested” governance, that includes strong levels of negotiation between state and non-state agents and generates dislocation of governance capacity between transfer and conquest.

*Key words:* Prison, Co-Governance, Evangelical Wings, Argentina.

