



"Continuity and disruption in Argentine prison statistics: a comparative exercise of the 1906 and 2006 National Prison Censuses"

This paper examines two prison censuses carried out, respectively, in 1906 and 2006: technical and methodological approaches, as well as some basic outcomes. It identifies certain similarities—incarceration rate, social background of the population, high number of inmates without sentences—and differences—aims, aspects worth surveying that were overlooked—between the two efforts. It also addresses what we call the *statistical inability* of the Argentine State regarding criminal issues, judging by the multiple official projects and initiatives to conduct a new census following the National Prison Census of 1906 which never came to fruition.

The context in which the first census was conducted is marked by the prevalence of a scientific conception held, to a large extent, by public officials and political decision-makers which underscored the importance of prison statistics in working and transforming the Argentine prison reality.

The year 2006 shows a new demand for information on security and the issue entering the public agenda. The State devises specific statistical systems that draw on previous nationwide prison censuses.

Based on this comparison and acknowledging the risks entailed by this exercise, this paper seeks to generate a discussion about an issue that continues to be relevant despite the passage of time.

Keywords: Argentina, prison, prison statistics, censuses.