3

Space, Time, Embodiment

3.1   The Prison as an Inhabited Time–Space

To explore long-term prisoners' ways of *being* and *doing* indefinite time, I propose refocusing the lens of prison studies away from the frequently used framework of power and resistance and using space, time and embodiment as key concepts instead. The main focus of the research thus shifts from human actors to the (most fundamental) non-human actors that structure all of our (embodied) experiences—whether we live in prison or any other condition—namely space and time.[1]

In the prison context, space and time are particularly important. Firstly, space and time are the main elements on which the 'modern' penal system, developed in the late eighteenth century, is built: the offenders are segregated in a particular place—the prison—from the rest of society for a certain period of time (see Foucault, 1975). Secondly, prison life is to a great extent characterized by spatial deprivation, in particular the restricted liberty of movement and mobility within the

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prison, limited connections to the outside world and separation of prisoners by sex (Milhaud, 2009, p. 146). Disciplinary sanctions are also primarily spatial in nature (e.g. solitary confinement, additional exclusion in the cell). Furthermore, as stressed by Matthews (2009, p. 38), 'although imprisonment is in essence about time', due to institutional constraints and the many prison rules, prisoners experience it 'as a form of timelessness, with prison terms often described as "doing" or "killing time"'. This is also linked to the sensory qualities of prison spaces in terms of their materiality, general lack of variation in colour and light (see also Cohen & Taylor, 1972, pp. 61–62) and typical (repetitive) sounds (Herrity, 2019).

Cohen and Taylor (1972, p. 87) point to a particular meaning of time for long-term prisoners, arguing that for these prisoners, time is basically 'a problem' because they have been given 'time as a punishment' (for long-term prisoners in the early phases of their sentence, see Wright et al., 2017, pp. 232–234). Therefore, in contrast to the outside world, where time is considered a resource, for long-term prisoners, time becomes 'a controller, it has to be served rather than used' (Cohen & Taylor, 1972, p. 89). However, Crewe et al. (2016, 2020) argue that prisoners—especially those who are further along in a long sentence—may find ways to use their time in prison constructively by actively managing the future and casting themselves beyond the immediate present (see also Flanagan, 1981). As I show throughout this book, the situation is slightly different for long-term prisoners sentenced to *indefinite* incarceration, who are preventively held in prison after having served their custodial sentence. Although release is possible, due to the punitive turn in most so-called Western countries since the 1990s mentioned above—and the more restrictive practice of release in the case of those designated as 'high-risk' offenders—it is possible that these prisoners will stay behind bars for the rest of their lives. Therefore, this prison population is suffering very particular 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1971 [1958]) and basically has to find new ways to deal with time—as well as space.

In this book, I explore the experience of long-term prisoners sentenced to indefinite incarceration by considering both space *and* time—that is, thinking about them together—to shed light on how space (and more precisely the various spaces constituting 'the prison') affects perceptions

of and ways of dealing with time, and on how time affects perceptions and ways of appropriating space for prisoners held in indefinite incarceration. Inspired by Moran (2012), I start from the idea that anything prisoners think or feel about the past or the future takes place in the present, in 'each successive now', and in the context of what the present is like. The 'now' comprises, therefore, both 'the time *and* the space—the TimeSpace—of incarceration, and is bound up with the corporeality of the individual whose now is being experienced' (Moran, 2012, p. 310). This means that the embodied experience of time is inseparably bound up with the embodied experience of space and vice versa. Being physically present in a carceral context hence determines the nature of the 'now', which further shapes prisoners' perceptions of the past, present and future, of the passage of time and of their sense of self.

While geographers in particular have long been inherently concerned with the relationship between time and space (Dodgshon, 2008; May & Thrift, 2001), as noted by Moran (2012), in the field of prison studies, criminologists and prison sociologists tend to look exclusively at the temporal dimension of incarceration, while carceral geographers primarily focus on the spatial dimension.[2] In looking at prisoners' lived

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[2] Moran (2012) shows that criminological studies dealing with time mainly focus on time as a given constant and axis of differentiation, for example regarding changes over time in terms of imprisonment rates or levels of overcrowding Jacobs and Helms (1996) as well as studies dealing with the individual experience and adjustment over time (Crewe et al., 2016; Zamble, 1992; Warren et al., 2004). Time has also been mobilized to look at imprisonment as a specific period in someone's life course, as a variable to explore the effect of the length of a sentence Aebi and Kuhn (2000) as well as prisoners' experience of the passage of time at different stages of their life course Biggam and Power (1997), and Aday (1994). Finally, there are studies that deal, among other topics, with the individual perception of time in prison, and prisoners' ways of coping with time (Cohen & Taylor, 1972; Cope, 2003; O'Donnell, 2014; Crewe et al., 2020). In contrast to this body of literature, the issue of space has so far mostly been researched by carceral geographers. Inspired by Foucault's (1975) work, some studies deal with the prison as a particular institution that regulates space and the 'docility' of bodies as well as prisoners' resistance and reclamation of space (see e.g. Baer, 2005; Dirsuweit 1999, and Sibley & van Hoven 2009). There are also studies focused on 'the distributional geographies of incarceration' (Moran, 2012, p. 306) and its effects on the experience of carceral spaces themselves, for example in terms of distance from home (Moran et al., 2011), as well as on the outside communities, for example regarding economic development Che (2005), and Glasmeier and Farrigan (2007). There is a smaller body of anthropological work regarding space and time in the carceral context. Some studies focus on the 'peri-carceral space of the institution' (Cunha, 2014, p. 222) and the effects of the 'penal stigma' of prison on the immediate spatial vicinity in the French context (see e.g. Combessie, 2002; Marchetti & Combessie, 1996). Cunha's research,

experiences by considering both space and time, I join scholars who wish to build a bridge between studies in carceral geography and criminology (see e.g. Crewe et al., 2020).

3.1.1 The Prison Regime: A Formal Set of Arrangements of Space and Time

From an institutional perspective, everyday life in Swiss prisons is divided into three basic entities or *time–spaces*: 'work time', 'resting time' and 'leisure time' (Art. 77 SCC) (see Fig. 3.1).[3,4] Yet, the prison's formal organization of daily life is shaped by the prison system's 'institutional logics' (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008; Thornton et al., 2012), which are profoundly contradictory, as prisons are subject to two conflicting goals, namely punishment and rehabilitation (Marti et al., 2017). The logic of punishment refers to the deprivation of a person's liberty and includes the principle of security (within and outside the prison). This logic is visibly expressed in the prison's architecture and design, for instance in its barred windows and steel doors, but also in its rigid daily schedule. The logic of rehabilitation is strongly linked to the principle of 'normalisation'. According to the law,

> [t]he execution of sentences must encourage an improvement in the social behaviour of the prison inmates and in particular their ability to live their lives without offending again. The conditions under which sentences are

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carried out in Portugal, centred on prisoners' experiences and representations of time in prison during different stages of imprisonment (Cunha, 1997) as well as on the networks between prisoners and people on the outside and how these relationships synchronize prison temporality with the rhythms of the outside world (Cunha, 2002, 2008). More recently, Chassagne (2017, 2019) and Chassagne (2017) have explored the experience of ageing and time among older prisoners in French institutions.

[3] The daily structure in the units inhabited by elderly and ill prisoners is slightly different: prisoners have shorter workdays and can spend more time outside their cells and in the courtyard.

[4] During weekends, prisoners are served breakfast at 7.45 am (Saturday) and 9.15 am (Sunday). On Saturday morning from 8.20 am to 11 am and in the afternoon from 11.30 am to 8 pm, the prisoners are allowed to spend time outside the cell. On Sunday, the cells are locked at 4.55 pm (JVA Lenzburg, 2010).

executed must correspond as far as possible with those of normal life. (Art. 75 para. 1 SCC)

The principle of 'normalisation' is inscribed in contemporary prison philosophy not only in Switzerland, but also in other European countries (although implemented in varied forms and to different degrees). At its core is the idea that 'prisons should […] aim to reduce the gap between the inside and the outside worlds and to mirror free society in central aspects of human existence (from civic to sexual aspects)' (Cunha, 2014, p. 221).

According to this system, work, leisure and resting time in prison should, on the one hand, be organized to correspond to 'normal life'; on the other hand, everyday life in prison is highly regulated and constrained
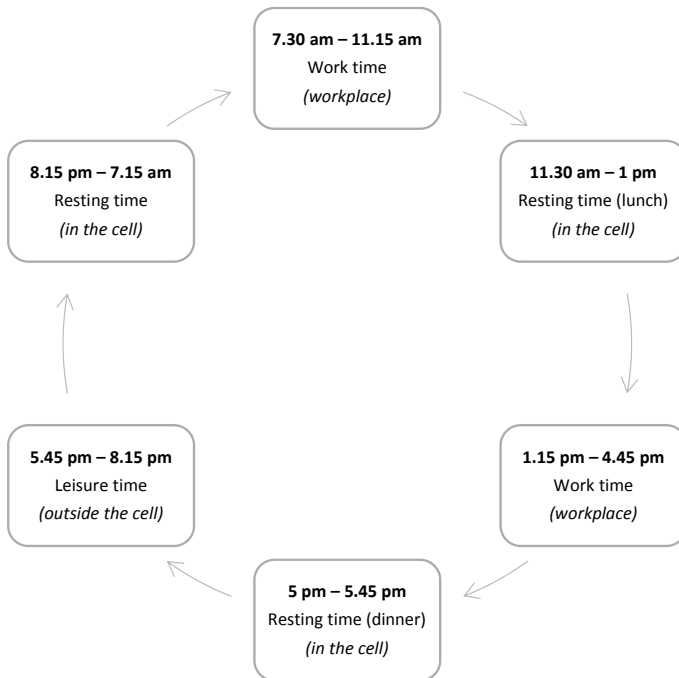

Fig. 3.1 The prison's daily routine (*Source* Author)

in the name of security. The prison hence imposes a particular *everyday life regime*.

The term 'prison regime' is commonly used to define the 'formal elements' of a prison environment, such as security measures, prisoners' programmes, medical and social services and the policies guiding staff–prisoner interactions (Sparks et al., 1996). In this book, however, I identify the prison regime as the institutional organization of everyday life, and more generally, as a formal *set of arrangements of space and time* through which a particular *spatio-temporal order* is established. This means that I conceive of the three entities—work time/resting time/leisure time—as particular arrangements of space and time that each organize the prisoner's body in a specific way and restrict his or her freedom of movement and autonomy (e.g. when he or she has to be in a particular location and for how long, with whom, under which conditions, engaging in which particular activity, etc.). This echoes the definition by Sibley and van Hoven (2009, p. 201), for whom the prison's carceral regime is 'a set of inflexible spatial and temporal routines which take place in strongly classified material spaces – cells, gated corridors, workshops, and so on' and therefore an instrument to 'regulat[e] movements in closed spaces'. However, in contrast to their approach, which primarily considers the spatial realm, I take the temporality produced by the prison regime into equal consideration by using the notion of *rhythm*, inspired by Lefebvre (2014). This allows me to look at the concrete realization of routines and their multiple forms of expression. For example, according to the prison schedule, the prisoners are locked in their cells at around 8.15 pm. Yet, as I was told by prisoners, some officers close the doors carefully, while others slam them shut. Some officers also use this moment of the day to have a chat with the prisoner he is about to lock in his cell, while others do not exchange a word with the inmates, or only what is required, and rush from cell to cell. Therefore, prison staff create different rhythmic variations and dynamics while carrying out the daily routine of locking the doors, strongly shaping prisoners' experiences of this particular moment of the day. After the nightly locking-up, there is a final inspection or walkthrough during which prison officers have to verify one last time the prisoners' presence in their cells. The implementation of this routine varies from one prison officer to another, in

particular with regard to the starting point. This final routine of the day also affects the experience and, more concretely, the activities of the prisoners, who can hear very well what goes on outside their doors. As I was told by prisoners, at some point they come to recognize the officers' individual routes and routines, and therefore schedule their private activities, such as using the toilet, accordingly.

The prisoners' everyday lives are therefore embedded in various (material and social) contexts, all shaped by the prison's spatio-temporal order. However, as I explain in more detail in the following, moulded by their individual and embodied perceptions of these contexts, prisoners also make use of time and spatial elements and thereby *rearrange* them during everyday situations.

3.1.2   Inhabiting the Prison: Prisoners' Lived Experiences

In order to grasp these prisoners' embodied experiences of space and time analytically, I use the concept of 'inhabiting', inspired by two theoretical approaches in particular. On the one hand, I draw on Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenological theory, which allows me to explore 'the prison' from the prisoners' perspective, through their emplaced and embodied experiences. On the other hand, the pragmatist perspective developed by Lussault and Stock (2010) allows me to explore prisoners' multiple ways of dealing with various contexts through their everyday practices.

3.1.2.1   Bodily Experiences of Space and Time

First, I analyse prisoners' ways of inhabiting the prison by examining their subjective *perceptions* and ways of making sense of the prison context, including things as well as other human beings and themselves, drawing on phenomenological theory. This perspective allows me to explore prisoners' lived experiences detached from (my own) pre-defined assumptions and concepts about imprisonment.

I am especially inspired by approaches that draw on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theory, which emphasizes the role of the body in the

human experience of the world—the bodily being-in-the-world. From Merleau-Ponty's (1962) perspective, the core of our being-in-the-world is *perception*, which he conceives of as a non-mental phenomenon; it is neither grounded in sensations (as argued by empiricists) nor a function of judgement (as argued by intellectualists), but a bodily phenomenon. As he argues, '[m]y body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my "comprehension"' (Merleau-Ponty, 1978 [1962], p. 235). According to Merleau-Ponty, 'the world is what we perceive' (1978 [1962], p. xvi) through sensory experience, such as hearing and seeing – whereby 'synaesthetic perception is the rule' (Merleau-Ponty, 1978 [1962], p. 229), but also through corporal movement and activity. Hence, from this perspective, the body is the 'existential null point' (Simonsen, 2007, p. 169) from which we engage with and understand the world, things, others and ourselves—it is 'our general medium for having a world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1978 [1962], p. 146).

In Merleau-Ponty's thinking, the body is not *in* space; it 'inhabits' space (Merleau-Ponty, 1978 [1962], p. 139). Space is not conceived as 'the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the position of things becomes possible' (1978 [1962], p. 243). The same goes for time. As Merleau-Ponty argues, '[m]y body takes possession of time; it brings into existence a past and a future for a present, it is not a thing, but creates time instead of submitting to it' (1978 [1962], p. 240). In sum, according to the author, 'I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them' (1978 [1962], p. 140).

Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Casey (1996) emphasizes the role of *place* and our *emplacement* as the starting point for our understanding of space and time. More concretely, it is through our experience of place that space and time arise. Therefore, space and time are 'contained in place rather than vice versa' (Casey, 1996, pp. 43–44). As Casey argues, place is nothing static; it is an 'event'—constantly changing but sufficiently coherent to be 'considered as the *same* (hence to be remembered, returned to, etc.)' and to be classified into certain 'types' (workplace, home, etc.). These types of place often become the locations for, or

the subjects or objects of, ethnography (Casey, 1996, p. 44)—as in the present book.

To conclude, a phenomenological perspective allows me to grasp *the prison* through prisoners' emplaced and embodied experiences. As Merleau-Ponty has argued, 'the world'—and the prison—'is not what I think, but what I live through' (1978 [1962], pp. xvi–xvii).

3.1.2.2   Doing with Space and Time

In addition to this perspective, I am interested in prisoners' ways of *arranging* their daily lives. I start from the idea that prisoners' everyday lives are never fully determined by the institutional order, but that they use, appropriate and constantly (re)arrange the institutional spatio-temporal order through individual practices. Such practices allow them to attribute (new) meanings and values to various prison contexts, create personal and intimate spaces and redefine carceral rhythms.

Inspired by the pragmatist approach of geographers Lussault and Stock, inhabiting is here understood as both a general *relation to the world*, expressed through practice, and a way of concretely *residing* (Stock, 2006) in prison. Like Merleau-Ponty, Lussault and Stock challenge Heidegger's definition of being-in-the-world. From their perspective, being in the world is not (only) about 'being on Earth' or 'being in space' but about 'coping with space' (Lussault & Stock, 2010; Stock, 2015, p. 430). They argue that the expression 'in' (or 'within') space suggests that there is a 'pre-existent spatial volume or *res extensa*, a conception of space as container or as a substance'—completely separate from the practices of individuals (Lussault & Stock, 2010, p. 14). Indeed, the authors prefer the terminology 'doing with' instead of 'coping with' space; from their perspective, the expression 'to cope with space' makes sense when space is considered a problem, which is certainly not always the case. The authors propose a shift away from the idea of 'being in space' towards that of 'doing with space', arguing that (individual as well as collective) actors may encounter and mobilize space either as a 'problem' or as 'empowerment' (Lussault & Stock, 2010, p. 13).

Thus, this perspective allows me to look at prisoners' practical engagement or ways of dealing with imprisonment without necessarily labelling these 'resistance', 'coping' or 'adaptation' to the prison context, as other research often does (Cohen & Taylor, 1972; Crewe, 2009; Ugelvik, 2014).

More concretely, following Lussault and Stock (2010), by encountering places, actors make use of spatial elements and thereby get 'playfully or in a constrained way […] over distances, transgress boundaries and […] arrange and […] rearrange things, and, through discourses and other kinds of acts shape the quality of places' (Lussault & Stock, 2010, p. 15). Space is therefore both a *condition* and a (material as well as immaterial) *resource* for practices (Lussault, 2007, pp. 215–218). Individuals' approaches to space are thereby strongly linked to the different 'competences' (perceptive, cognitive, linguistic, technological and relational) that they mobilize in order to deal with space (Lussault & Stock, 2010, p. 16). Lussault and Stock further argue that space and action are co-constructed. On the one hand, practices create spatial arrangements and define qualities of places. On the other hand, spatial discourses and imaginaries with spatial content as well as spatial elements (e.g. physical accessibilities and limits) are present in individual practices (Lussault & Stock, 2010, p. 16). However, as later added by Di Méo (2014), who draws on phenomenology, actors not only deal with *space*, but also with *time*, as 'every emplacement corresponds to a position in time, in a particular present, in a singular moment of duration' (Di Méo, 2014, p. 64, my translation).

Lussault and Stock's (2010, pp. 11–13) 'pragmatics of space' approach is anchored in four different theoretical approaches. First, it is inspired by de Certeau's (1990 [1980]) theory of '*arts de faire*' (arts of doing) that focuses on individual counter-hegemonic 'tactics' for coping with space. Second, it incorporates Foucault's (2001) approach that emphasizes the social as spatial ordering in order to perform discipline and surveillance. Of particular importance is the argument that 'in order to get things done', it is necessary to use space. Third, it draws on Schütz's (1932) phenomenological approach to conceptualize practice not as a purely corporal engagement but to understand the multiplicity of relationships present in action—not only the bodily co-presence of actors

(here the authors reference Schütz's notions of '*Mitwelt*', '*Umwelt*' and '*Nachwelt*')—as well as the engagement of different 'competences' within a situation. Finally, it mobilizes a 'situated action' approach (Goffman, 1963, 1964; Popper, 1972; Thomas, 1927). The situation is thus the unit of analysis. Yet, in contrast to authors who use this concept exclusively to examine face-to-face interaction on the micro-level, Lussault and Stock's (2010, pp. 13, 17) definition of the situation takes into account 'the mobilisation of elements that are physically absent', i.e. those other spaces to which individuals are connected, by tools or imagination. Therefore, as the authors argue, to look at situated actions allows for the detection of ephemeral 'assemblages' (Latour, 2005) that are constructed within a situation and then deconstructed. I use the situation as my unit of analysis as well. I consider *situations* to be meaningful moments in prisoners' everyday lives, always embedded in a particular *carceral (material and social) context* and framed by the *prison regime*. Yet, as I actively engaged in prison life through participant observation, I also defined (or tried to define) situations during prisoners' everyday lives.

3.1.3 Conclusion

Combining a phenomenological and pragmatist approach allows us (1) to understand the prison not as a space in the sense of a (predefined) static container that holds people, but as a formally established 'set of arrangements of space and (clock) time' that is *lived*—that is, individually perceived, used, appropriated and (re)arranged. Further, it enables (2) the exploration of prisoners' embodied, agentic and practical engagement with imprisonment without necessarily labelling it 'resistance', 'coping' or 'adaptation' to the prison environment, as has often been done in previous research (Cohen & Taylor, 1972; Crewe, 2009; Ugelvik, 2014). As mentioned above, from a pragmatist perspective, space and time can not only constitute a 'problem' but also be mobilized as a 'resource' (Lussault & Stock, 2010, p. 15). Finally, it also allows for (3) consideration of the apparently insignificant and banal aspects of everyday prison life, which are perhaps less 'spectacular' but by no means less existentially important for these prisoners' lives. This facilitates a

broader understanding of 'the prison' that takes into account not only its materiality, regime or culture, but also the 'ambiance' (Thibaud, 2011) produced by its (social) environment, everyday routines and rhythms, as well as its surroundings.

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