# Connected Singularities: Convict Labour in Late Colonial Spanish America (1760s–1800)

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## WHY CONVICT LABOUR?

Throughout history, the forced labour performed by individuals under penal and/or administrative control (i.e. convict labour) has been a seemingly ubiquitous phenomenon. At the same time, scratching below the apparently uniform surface of convict labour reveals fundamental differences related to the social construction of crime, 'the criminal'

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and punishment, and the role it had within distinct labour regimes. In a recent publication, Alex Lichtenstein and I have suggested that, rather than seeking to provide an abstract definition of convict labour, scholars may want to address 'the historical conditions under which convict labour has been produced and exploited in the larger process of the commodification of labour'.[1] In other words, we have proposed a move away from answering the question 'what is convict labour?' through a universal definition and taxonomy, and towards an interrogation of the function that convict labour played within specific contexts and amongst other labour relations—that is, 'why convict labour?' In our view, this approach presents a two-fold advantage: on the one hand, it foregrounds discontinuities in the role of convict labour in space and time; on the other, it allows for understanding convict labour as part of an integrated labour market, in dialectic with other (coerced and 'free') labour relations.

The shift from a 'universal' definition of convict labour to the study of its contextual and relational function raises broad epistemological issues. In particular, it highlights the tension between the universality of categories and the singularity of sites, and it foregrounds the dialectics between the specificity and connectedness of each site.[2] In other words, the double problem emerges of how to deal with the uncountable variety of historical circumstances and processes hidden beneath the apparently flat surface of the concept 'convict labour'; and how to fully acknowledge that prisoners performed their work in very diverse, yet connected, localities. In undertaking this task, two pitfalls seem inevitable: abstracting from historical complexity can marginalize the specificity of contextual configurations; conversely, focusing exclusively on singularities involves the risk of being trapped in localism, and losing the broader spatial scope of social processes. Joining the endeavour of this volume, this chapter suggests that both issues can be overcome by taking a micro-spatial perspective that integrates the following elements: a micro-analytical approach which highlights discontinuity intime and space, and implies the rejection of macro-analytical procedures of generalization and comparison based on predetermined categories and units; and a spatially aware perspective which foregrounds specific connections between contexts, instead of focusing exclusively on either the local or the global scope.

In this chapter I take up these issues by investigating the experiences of convict labour in the *presidios,* or military outposts, of Spanish Havana (Cuba) and Puerto de la Soledad (Malvinas/Falklands) in the four decades that followed the Seven Years' War (1754–1763). Prisoners in both sites were sentenced to the same punishments—penal transportation

and impressment in the army or the navy—and were first and foremost occupied in building and repairing military and non-military infrastructure. However, the two sites had distinct characteristics, were differently viewed by historical actors, and diversely connected with other places and regions within and beyond the Spanish dominions. Consequently, in each site convict labour took on a separate function, transported convicts entered into contact with distinct networks of free and unfree labour and penal transportation itself created multiple 'networks of Empire'.[3]

The distinct configurations and roles of convict labour in Havana and Puerto de la Soledad, described in the next section, warn us against the use of macro-analytical categories and methodologies. Indeed, if we contented ourselves with describing convict labour as a phenomenon with universal characteristics, we would easily categorize Havana as 'centre' and Puerto de la Soledad as 'periphery' in the geopolitics of Spanish American convict labour. Consequently, we would postulate the work of the thousand prisoners who rebuilt the fortresses of Havana in the early 1770s to be more representative of convict labour in Spanish America than the one performed by the twenty-two non-military convicts that forcibly lived in the Malvinas in the same period. In so doing, the diversity of the convicts' contributions to empire building and economic development would be lost. Micro-history provides an alternative perspective. In particular, Grendi's concept of the 'exceptional normal' allows us to acknowledge that each context is a unique configuration and that singular configurations construct the discontinuous fabric of history.[4] This means that the context of Havana was as exceptional as the one in the Malvinas; indeed, that every site of convict transportation was unique, and that the historical 'normality' of convict labour was made up of innumerable singular configurations such as those presented here. Paraphrasing what Schiel and Hanß have recently written about slavery, I am arguing that convict labour is 'a context-specific social relationship'[5]: convicts may have performed similar tasks across various sites, but the function of their work can only be understood by studying its entanglements with other labour relations within specific contexts. More generally, I contend that the concept of 'representativeness' and the 'centre'/'periphery' divide in historical research and social sciences should be questioned, as they imply the postulation of an abstract standard by which historical complexity is 'purified' from its specific determinations.[6] Radeff's suggestion to substitute the duality 'centre'/'periphery' with the concepts of 'centralities' and 'de-centralities'

offers an alternative way to addressing the shifting relationships that exist between the multiple nodes of extended networks, depending on time, changing power relationships and the specific object being researched.[7] Regarding the contexts discussed in this chapter, it highlights that both Havana and Puerto de la Soledad simultaneously played 'central' and 'de-central' roles vis-à-vis other sites of convict transportation and convict labour. This is arguably a more accurate conceptualization of the shifting relationship among sites, which additionally allows for a thorough analysis of their connected nature, as I will show in the third section.

## The 'Exceptional Normal'

In the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, the Spanish empire underwent major changes as a result of the growing threat foreign imperial powers posed to the Crown's dominions.[8] In particular, the shock caused by the British occupations of Havana (August 1762–July 1763) and Manila (November 1762–January 1764) triggered fundamental military reforms that encompassed the creation of local militias, considerable relocation of troops from peninsular Spain to fixed battalions in the Viceroyalties overseas, and the rationalization of the defense system in the borderlands. The need to prevent illegal trade along the Spanish American coasts and reduce the political power of monopolist merchants in the peninsula additionally prompted the gradual liberalisation of trade (*comercio libre*), that is, a de facto state-controlled system of trade permits which allowed for the multiplication of maritime routes and destinations. At the same time, voyages of exploration and colonisation by France, Britain, Russia and Portugal in the Pacific and the Atlantic, coincided with similar activities by the Spanish Crown. The latter included expeditions to Tahiti, Fernando Poo (Gulf of Guinea) and Australia, the occupation of foreign enclaves such as the former Portuguese Colonia do Sacramento (1777), and the creation of new settlements along the coasts of North California, Araucanía and Patagonia. Not only was the impact of these processes different in each site, but each locality also contributed distinctly to their making. Consequently, the work performed by prisoners also took on different functions, as the figures of standing convicts, their position in the workforce and the shifts in the composition of the workforce reveal.

Convicts in Havana were part of a dynamic urban site that by the late eighteenth century numbered approximately fifty thousand inhabitants

**Table 7.1**  Composition of the workforce in the construction sites of Havana, 1763–1777

| Date | Soldiers | Civilians (paisanos) | Convicts (desterrados) | Free mulattoes | Free blacks | King's slaves | Slaves | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1763 | | | | | | 795* | | |
| 1764 | | | | | | 1967* | | |
| 1765 | | | 538* | | | 1396* | | 2249* |
| 1766 | | | | | | | | |
| 1767 | | | 964* | | | 1158* | | 2309* |
| 1768 | | | 773* | | | 1072* | | 2004* |
| 20.6.1772 | 149 | 160 | 1130 | 24 | 31 | 447 | 8 | 1949 |
| 20.1.1773 | 152 | 155 | 1077 | 17 | 23 | 418 | 5 | 1847 |
| 26.6.1773 | 156 | 179 | 1065 | 15 | 26 | 383 | 5 | 1829 |
| 28.2.1774 | 168 | 132 | 995 | 17 | 28 | 346 | 7 | 1693 |
| 3.4.1774 | 174 | 145 | 974 | 16 | 26 | 343 | 7 | 1685 |
| 3.5.1774 | 176 | 145 | 903 | 16 | 26 | 339 | 7 | 1612 |
| 3.6.1774 | 172 | 137 | 905 | 17 | 27 | 339 | 6 | 1603 |
| 8.7.1774 | 176 | 145 | 903 | 16 | 26 | 339 | 7 | 1612 |
| 6.8.1774 | 169 | 166 | 1045 | 20 | 37 | 337 | 9 | 1783 |
| 1774 | | | 980* | | | 321* | | 1517* |
| 1775 | | | 837* | | | 319* | | 1318* |
| 8.11.1776 | 162 | 101 | 1131 | 12 | 33 | 289 | 6 | 1734 |
| 8.12.1776 | 172 | 101 | 1122 | 13 | 35 | 289 | 6 | 1738 |
| 6.3.1777 | 184 | 101 | 1159 | 13 | 28 | 282 | 5 | 1772 |

and had been shaped by nearly 300 years of colonial encounters and conflicts. The major fortresses and castles they (re)built in this period symbolized the importance of Havana as a hub for trade routes connecting peninsular Spain, the Caribbean and the Philippines (the *Carrera de Indias* and the *Galeón de Manila*). In those construction sites, convicts worked side by side with impressed and voluntary soldiers, free *paisanos*, slaves and king's slaves,[9] in overlapping and multiple networks of free and unfree migration. Table 7.1 integrates data from various sources:[10]

In the early 1770s, all categories of workers included in the table were employed in the construction of the fortress complex of San Carlos de la Cabaña, on the high ground whose seizure had proved essential to the British conquest of Havana;[11] after its completion in 1776, they worked in the fortification of the Castillo del Príncipe on the hill of Arostegui. As the priority shifted from one building site to another, convicts were moved too, and provided on average from one third to half

of the workforce in those building sites, which in turn employed more than half of the total workforce involved in the reconstruction program. Moreover, with the exception of some king's slaves and a few free workers from Campeche and Cuba, who were sometimes employed in the warehouses, on boats and as builders, the prisoners were the only group that performed all other kinds of works, such as other building operations (e.g. the Castles of Matanzas and Jagua), service work in the warehouses and on boats for transporting water, food and passengers, and skilled work (coopers, gunsmiths, postmen). Furthermore, approximately 8–9% of them were employed, on average, in timber extraction for the building process and c. 5–6% in the transportation of lime and other building materials—in the latter case they were employed by private contractors. At least until the beginning of 1777, prisoners held in the military fortifications also illegally worked for private employers during their free time, a job that was remunerated and apparently sought after, but also at the origin of considerable conflict with the authorities and among the convicts.[12] At the same time, prisoners provided the workforce for highly visible non-military public works, most notably the construction of the Alameda de Extramuros (today's Paseo del Prado), initiated by Governor Marques de la Torre and modelled after those of the European capitals.[13] Finally, when recaptured, escapees from the Havana fortifications, who amounted to approximately 4% of the total convicted workforce in February 1774, often ended up working in the sites across the island they had fled to, such as Matanzas and the new settlement named Filipina.[14]

As the table shows, by the early 1770s, *desterrados* were the most important component of the workforce inside the Havana military outposts, surpassing the number of the king's slaves that had formed its majority in the second half of the previous decade. Conversely, the number of privately owned slaves always remained marginal among this workforce, mirroring a division of labour that accompanied Cuba's irresistible rise to the rung of world leader in sugar cane production in the subsequent decades:[15] the division between privately owned enslaved labour, occupied in the growing agricultural (and the domestic) sector(s), and convict labour and state-owned slaves, employed in the defense and development of an urban centre that functioned as a hub for long-established networks of migration and trade. As I have suggested elsewhere, direct state control of prisoners and king's slaves allowed for a high level of spatial mobility during the relative short time of the sentence of the

former group (from 2 to 10 years on average) and made convict labour especially suited for military labour and the building of military and non-military infrastructures. Conversely, chattel slavery was a lifelong and hereditary legal status and labour relation that entailed the immobilization of the workforce on specific sites, and therefore responded better to the planters' economic needs.[16]

A close connection existed between convicts and those that were labelled as 'soldiers' in the official statistics. Indeed, descriptive sources indicate that these were military convicts themselves, who became part of the workforce of the Havana fortifications because of their repeated desertion from their battalions (Lombardy, Seville, Ireland, Louisiana and Havana, among others). Following a Royal Order dated 30 March 1773, they were assigned to the public works in the Cuban capital for a standard period of 6 or 8 years.[17]

In the same years, the prisoners transported to Puerto de la Soledad were similarly occupied in building and repairing military and non-military infrastructures. However, the presence and work of these *presidiarios* (or *forzados*) in that tiny Spanish colony on the Eastern Malvinas/Falklands were constructed out of the tension between the need to prevent foreign occupation and the growing awareness of the lack of economic relevance of that new settlement. Whereas the exploitation of convict labour in Havana was a means to maintain major infrastructures of commerce and defense, in the Malvinas it had the function to affirm the sovereignty on, and minimize the costs of, a settlement deprived of any economic significance but of great geopolitical importance.

As Buschmann has observed, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Malvinas became 'the gateway to the Pacific' for their strategic position along the important route of Cape Horn in a period that marked the end of the Pacific as a 'Spanish Lake'.[18] Convict labour played a major role in keeping that 'gateway' and the surrounding area in Spanish hands.

In April 1758, in the midst of the Seven Years' War, the Viceroy of Peru Manuel Amat y Junient called the attention of Secretary of the Indies Julián de Arriaga to 'the whisper that goes around in those territories, that an English settlement has been established and populated' in the Malvinas, and on the 'disastrous' military and economic consequences that such a colony might have had on the Spanish Dominions.[19] In the short term his fears were unmotivated, for no settlement existed

in the region at that time. However, in the aftermath of the conflict, the islands did become a target for competing powers seeking new areas of colonial expansion. Their strategies of colonization of that territory with no indigenous population differed greatly, and so did the role of convicts within them. No convicts were ever transported to the French and the British settlements in the islands. The former, founded on 17 March 1764 in Port Louis, Eastern Malvinas, was a settler colony with a striking non-military character; its population was largely formed by Acadians from Western Canada, descendants of the seventeenth-century French settlers and who during the Seven Years' War had been massively deported to North American territories, Spanish Louisiana and France after the British took hold on the region.[20] The British settlement founded in 1765 in Port Egmont, Western Malvinas, was a tiny military outpost, and totally dependent on the metropole: in December 1769, seventy-eight men lived there, all of them belonging to the crews of the frigates *Famer* and *Favorite*.[21] Conversely, the composition of the population in the Spanish settlement created on 2 April 1767 in Port Louis and renamed Puerto de la Soledad, mirrored the attempt to balance geopolitical and financial imperatives by mixing military and civil settlers, and free and unfree labour. In that context, convicts played an important role from the start, and their number—albeit relatively low—increased as the settlement became more stable. The available data are synthesized in Table 7.2:[22]

The constant presence of *presidiarios* reduced the financial risks involved in settlement, by providing a relatively cheap workforce for building and repairing the infrastructures. Due to the climate, the poor quality of the construction materials and the difficulties involved in procuring them, this was truly Sisyphus' work, which explains why, fluctuations, amnesties and releases notwithstanding, a bulk of prisoners were always kept in the settlement. Between April 1767 and March 1768, convicts contributed to the building of twenty-seven barracks and huts, including one chapel, two rooms and one kitchen for the chaplains, four warehouses, a ten-room hospital, two blacksmith's forges, two ovens, the houses of the officers and the military barracks that the convicts shared with soldiers, artisans and mariners.[23] The subsistence of those buildings, as governor Felipe Ruiz Puente noticed, 'was the result of perpetual care' and of relatively frequent periods of major works such as those undertaken in May and November 1771, and September 1773.[24] The military infrastructure, however, remained largely insufficient at least until April

**Table 7.2**   Population of Puerto de la Soledad, Malvinas, 1767–1785

|  | 24.2.1767 | 13.10.1768 | 19.6.1771 | 4.4.1774 | 15.2.1777 | 20.2.1781 | 22.5.1785 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Top officers | 5 | 13 | 12 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 8 |
| Lower officers* | 5 |  | 16 | 11 | 10 | 17 | 12 |
| Soldiers and artillerymen | 30 | 32 | 58 | 33 | 28 | 24 | 46 |
| Mariners |  | 16 | 12 | 18 | 8 | 27 | 23 |
| Artisans (*maestranza*) |  | 18 | 10 | 8 | 8 |  |  |
| Settlers (*havitantes*) |  |  | 2 |  |  |  |  |
| Domestic servants (*criados*) |  | 18 | 8 |  |  | 10 | 10 |
| Convicts (*presidiarios*) | 5 | 6 | 15 | 22 | 22 | 13 | 30 |
| King's slaves |  | 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Women |  | 20 | ? | 3 | 1 |  |  |
| Children |  |  | ? | 11 | 2 |  |  |
| Total population | 45 ** | 124 | 133 | 115 | 86 | 99 | 129 |
| Percentage convicts/total population (%) | 11 | 4.8 | 11.3 | 19.1 | 25.6 | 13.1 | 23.2 |

1774, when it consisted only of a 'ruined wall of turf'.[25] Probably as a consequence of the increased number of *presidiarios*, the state of the buildings considerably improved by 1777. By then, wooden military infrastructures had been built on three locations, and new stone houses, a warehouse and a hospital existed.[26]

In their correspondence with Madrid, colonial officers referred to the employment of *forzados* (convicts) and mariners as the 'common way' to perform those tasks in the islands.[27] The association between the two groups of workers points to the practice of impressment in the royal navy of smugglers (*contrabandistas*) and vagrants from the Rio de la Plata territories, often as a substitution for *presidio* sentences.[28] Impressment in the army, as a punishment in itself and as an alternative to a *presidio* sentence, was also an ordinary form of recruitment throughout the Spanish empire, and especially affected destinations like Puerto de la Soledad which were not attractive to voluntary soldiers.

Important changes in the composition of the population took place in the Spanish settlement between June 1771 and February 1777: a shift in the model of colonization resulted from the growing awareness of the unproductive nature of the colony, and the deterioration of the living conditions in it. That transition had a considerable impact on the role of convicts in the settlement.[29]

Just a few months after the colony was established, it became clear that 'the soil and the climate offer nothing', as Ruiz Puente wrote in March 1768.[30] Indeed the 'sterility of the island' and the 'cruel' climate became a *leitmotiv* in the officer's correspondence with his superiors in Spain.[31] The climax was reached in a dramatic letter the governor sent to Arriaga on 10 February 1769, in which he referred to his presence in Puerto de la Soledad as an 'exile', and implored: 'Enough, my Lord, enough of the Malvinas… No similar outpost exists in the populated world; it's the most ruined and useless site that can be thought of'.[32] Geopolitical imperatives made it impossible to abandon the islands,[33] but living conditions in the settlement deteriorated. The Acadian families had all left by 1770.[34] Ruiz Puente and other officers did their best to be transferred to other postings, albeit with doubtful success in the short term.[35] In the autumn of 1771, facing the failure of the authorities in Buenos Aires to provide vital support, and as the first signs of an epidemic of scurvy appeared, all *presidiarios*, most of the troops and a few officers planned a mutiny: once discovered, they were punished with a transfer to the mainland that to most of them must have appeared a desirable outcome.[36]

A longer-term solution was set up jointly by the out-going governor Ruiz Puente and his successor Francisco Gil y Lemos at the end of April 1773, and was implemented one year later, on the eve of the British abandonment of Port Egmont.[37] The key points were that no formal settlement should be kept and that settlers and artisans were to be repatriated. All inhabitants were to be replaced annually, so that 'the consolation of the limited time [they will have to reside there] will dispel their terror for that navigation and destination'. The artisans would be substituted with mariners with skills as carpenters, blacksmiths and bricklayers, among others,[38] in a clear attempt to reduce the total costs of the settlement.

The 'new method'—as it was called in the official correspondence[39]—increased the absolute number and the percentage of non-military convicts and at the same time augmented the number and percentage of mariners and soldiers, both groups including a variable proportion of military convicts. All in all, the new system of colonization, which was shaped by the tension between geopolitical and financial imperatives, foregrounded convicts as a cheap and flexible workforce, in striking contrast with their absence in the French settler colony and the British military-only settlement of the second half of the 1760s. Accordingly, the system of annual replacement (*relevo*) did not apply to the convicts, whose length of stay on the islands depended on labour requirements as well as, and usually rather than, on legal motivations.

## Connections

The shortage of workforce in Havana and the need to populate the new settlement in the Malvinas activated distinct networks of migration. In turn, different migration flows affected the mix of labour relations that existed in each location. In the building sites, convicts therefore worked side by side with king's slaves in Havana and with sailors in Puerto de la Soledad: two diverse combinations that influenced the (self-)perceptions and representations of convict labour. Moreover, each local convict population had specific characteristics, depending on the multiple routes on which the provision of prisoners was based. Indeed, fundamental differences existed between the peninsular vagrants, the Mexican *bandoleros* and the Apache prisoners of war transported to Havana, and between them and the *contrabandistas* (smugglers) and the *indios pampas* deported to the Malvinas.

Acknowledging the contextual diversity of convict labour does not amount to accepting a post-modernist narrative of history as a juxtaposition of irreducibly singular fragments.[40] Conversely, in this section I view the unicity of Havana and Puerto de la Soledad, and of the experience of convict labour within them, as the result of the differentiated connections of each site.

Between the late 1760s and the early 1770s, a complex administrative process unfolded, with the goal to provide a constant flow of convicts to Havana and San Juan (Puerto Rico).[41] In peninsular Spain, this mobilization of hundreds of prisoners entailed the forced impressment of vagrants (*vagos*)[42] and the transportation of second- and third-time deserters and non-military convicts from inland barracks, prisons and arsenals to the coastal *depositos* of Cadiz, El Ferrol and La Coruña. Furthermore, it required accurate medical controls in all *depositos*, in order to select out prisoners 'of robust constitution and not of advanced age' for the Caribbean *presidios*, and send the rest to the North African military outposts.[43] Finally, it implied the organization of the seventy-days-long sail from Cadiz and El Ferrol to Havana and San Juan. Due to security reasons, an attempt was also made to differentiate the destinations of military and non-military convicts: the former were usually transported to Puerto Rico, for this 'island with a small garrison, and so close to foreign colonies' was not deemed apt to host 'thieves [*ladrones*], murders and other delinquents [*malhechores*]'[44]; the latter were mainly shipped to Havana, where 'sufficient troops, and good militia [existed] to restrain this people'.[45]

Deaths, sicknesses, desertions, budget shortages and the difficulty of finding war-, mail- and private ships considerably hampered the operation.[46] The consequences were especially felt in San Juan, where the number of convicts remained constantly well under the 600 that were considered necessary to attend the ongoing works.[47] As far as the availability of the workforce is concerned, things went considerably better in Havana, so much so that in January 1773, the Irish engineer Thomas O'Daly wrote an enthusiastic report on the progress of the works he supervised.[48] The difference between the two sites can be explained by looking at the distinct flows of penal transportation they were imbricated in. Whereas San Juan depended almost exclusively on local prisoners and convicts transported from peninsular Spain, the Cuban capital lay at the heart of a much larger network of convict transportation, including individuals sentenced by legal institutions in New Spain, Venezuela, Panama

(*Tierra Firme*) and Guatemala, and the (quantitatively less relevant) flow of natives deported from Northern New Spain as a consequence of military operations in those borderlands (see map 7.1).[49]

As the map shows, convicts were transported to Havana from various locations across the Spanish empire. The same holds true for the slaves, king's slaves, free blacks, free mulattoes and groups of *paisanos* they worked with in the Castle of San Carlos de la Cabaña and in the Castillo del Príncipe. Those labourers arrived there through different networks of free or coerced migration, as did the soldiers who oversaw them. The fact that those networks were more numerous and distinct from those that intersected in San Juan contributed to differentiate the two contexts, notwithstanding their mutual entanglements.

Havana was not only a destination of convict transportation from various sites across the Great Caribbean and beyond. It was also the origin of multiple flows of convicts. Among them, some connected the Cuban capital with the North African *presidios* of Ceuta, Melilla and, until 1792, Oran. Such flows tended to be quite infrequent though, and were usually
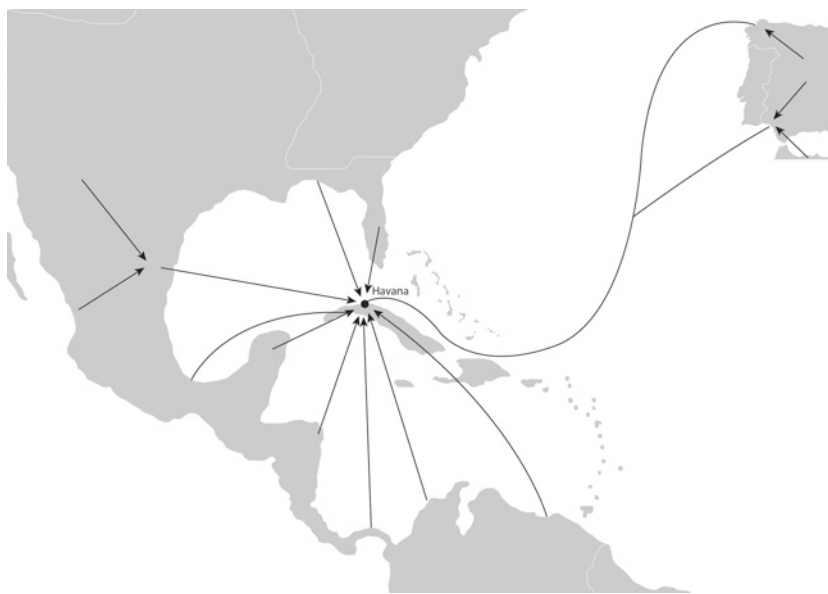


**Map. 7.1**   Connected Havana: Origins of the convicts, 1760s–1800s

limited to repeated deserters destined to the 'fixed' garrisons (*fijos*) that existed in those sites.[50] Conversely, convict transportation from Havana created more stable and quantitatively broader connections with the Caribbean. This was especially the case for the *presidios* of the territories that starting from 1753 directly fell under the military jurisdiction of the Havana 'fixed' garrison, the most important being the one located in San Agustín in Spanish Eastern Florida. Individual records (*filiaciones*) held at the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville, for example, list 950 repeated deserters being deported there from Cuba between 1784 and 1820—a noticeable figure and certainly one that does not include all those sent along that route in those decades.[51] Non-military convicts were the protagonists of the flows from Havana to Western Florida and Louisiana during the periods in which part of those territories belonged again to the Spanish Crown, respectively 1783–1819 and 1762–1800. They were present in tiny military outposts such as the one of San Marcos de Apalache, where a fixed quota of five *forzados* was established in 1794, and in the larger *presidio* of Pensacola, where their number fluctuated between 165 and 219 in the two years following April 1794.[52] In the latter location, between one fourth and one half of the convicts were employed in the works of Fort San Bernardo across that period, the rest performing a wide range of tasks for both the Crown and private contractors: among others, they were cooks and bakers, apothecaries and carpenters, blacksmiths and farmers, with a considerable number among them being involved in the riverine and coastal transportation and in the making of bricks. A dozen of *forzados* were additionally employed as servants of the Governor, the military engineer and other officers.

In the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, the population of the settlement in Puerto de la Soledad was entirely made of migrants, due to the absence of indigenous peoples in the islands. Behind the continuous presence of prisoners in the Malvinas stood a complex infrastructure of penal transportation that only partly overlapped with the flows of other settlers. The available royal or private ships transported weapons, cattle and all groups of the population at once in their voyages. However, the officers and missionaries usually came from peninsular Spain; the soldiers were detached from the garrison in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, originally recruited both locally and in Spain; the mariners and the skilled labourers mostly came from other areas within the Captaincy/Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata. Convicts were

equally transported along the only available route connecting Puerto de la Soledad with Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and the island of Martín García. Their origins varied significantly though, including inhabitants of the two main urban centres of the Captaincy/Viceroyalty (Buenos Aires and Montevideo)[53] and individuals from three other areas: the 'frontier of Buenos Aires' (*frontera de Buenos Aires*), that is, the line of military outposts that served as a defense against 'hostile' native populations to the south of the capital city; the settlements north of Montevideo, on the eastern coast of the river, which functioned as a *cordon sanitaire* around the Portuguese colony of Sacramento until its seizure by the Spaniards in 1777 and as a broader frontier with Portuguese Brazil after that date; and the fortlets in Tucumán, Chaco, and other internal areas, which defended that frontier from the equestrian native groups of the region.[54] At least one case of transportation to Puerto de la Soledad is reported from as far away as Charcas, La Paz and Cuzco in 1809, a few months before the May Revolution in Buenos Aires.[55] In addition to those flows within the Captaincy/Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata, impressment in the army and secondary punishment for deserters created a circulation of military convicts from peninsular Spain.[56] Map 7.2 synthesizes the main flows.

Each flow was mainly associated with distinct types of convicts, showing the multiple goals that penal transportation served even when directed to a tiny settlement such as Puerto de la Soledad. In particular, the Malvinas served as one of the sites for long-term and lifelong sentences for the perpetrators of those perceived as major crimes, such as murder, (attempted) insurrections, 'sodomy' and adultery.[57] This flow might include elite convicts such as don Felipe Gonzalez as much as black prisoners like Domingo Silva Ramon and the *moreno* Roque Sanchez, all transported between 1776 and 1781. At the same time, the removal and punishment of smugglers was the most frequent reason for deportation from the borders with the Portuguese empire. Conversely, transportation to Puerto de la Soledad from the frontier of Buenos Aires included a considerable number of 'barbarian Indians' (*indios bárbaros*), that is, native peoples hostile to the Spaniards.[58] The latter was the case of Manuel Garfios, considered a 'spy of his nation' and transported to the Malvinas in October 1779 in order to prevent his escape from the fortress of San Carlos in Montevideo, to which he had originally been sentenced; and of the *indio pampa* Lorenzo, who was sentenced to

**Map. 7.2**  Connected Malvinas: Flows of penal transportation, late-eighteenth century

the outpost of Puerto de la Soledad one month later for having been a 'guide during the invasion of the frontiers of Buenos Aires'.[59] For the same crime, another indigenous man named Felipe had been sentenced for life to that destination in 1774.

The geopolitical reasons that made the Malvinas a necessary site for settlement also made it a hub in the regional and imperial networks that gradually emerged in the last decades of the eighteenth century. The creation of these connections expanded the networks of penal transportation and simultaneously impacted on the status and function of convict labour within each site.

During the 1760s and early 1770s, the 'whisper' about the British presence in the area stimulated a constant activity of geographical exploration centred in the Malvinas and especially directed to the coasts of Patagonia, the Strait of Magellan and the *Tierra del Fuego*.[60]

Convicts and impressed soldiers and sailors were directly involved in these activities. Moreover, even after the British abandoned Port Egmont in April 1774, the need to prevent them from settling elsewhere in the region induced a process of direct colonization in the southern borderlands.[61] As a result, Puerto de la Soledad was gradually integrated in a network of tiny but strategic outposts spanning the southern coasts of the Atlantic and the Pacific, respectively, by the creation of four settlements along the coast of Patagonia (1779–1781),[62] the foundation of Osorno (1792), and the related 'pacification' of the region between Valdivia and Chiloé. Map 7.3 provides an overview of such new colonies.

Although some of those settlements were soon discontinued—most importantly, the one in San Julián/Floridablanca, the closest to the Malvinas along the Patagonian coast—others remained, and by the last decades of the century the Cape Horn route became a major trade route as part of the gradual process of trade liberalisation. Official sources now referred to the '*Carrera de Malvinas y Costa Patagonica*', implying a relatively regular maritime connection across the southern Atlantic.[63] Accordingly, not only did the ex-governor of the Malvinas, Juan de la Piedra, become governor of the settlement of Carmen de Patagones, but convict circulation expanded to these areas as well. For example, in 1780, Andres Ynzahuralde (or Ysaurralde) and Josè Cayetano de la Cruz, deserters of the military campaign in the region of Río Negro, ended up in Puerto de la Soledad after a brief incarceration in Montevideo. Similarly, when the settlement in San Julián was closed in 1784, prisoner don Josè de la Serna was transferred to the settlement in the Malvinas.[64]

The strengthening of the ties across the southern Atlantic was favoured by the continuing existence of the settlement in the Malvinas. In turn, it allowed for the consolidation of the outpost in Puerto de la Soledad. Indeed, the increasing connectedness of that settlement shaped work and labour within it. Between 1781 and 1784, major works took place there, involving the reconstruction of old buildings and the expansion of the number and specialization of the buildings.[65] This was first and foremost the work of convicts and depended on their multiple transportation routes. In fact, in May 1785, the non-military convicts formed nearly one fourth of the total 129 inhabitants, and made up virtually the whole manual workforce in the building sites and in the ranches. Their quantitative growth and the relative diversification of their occupations also accounted for differentiations among the
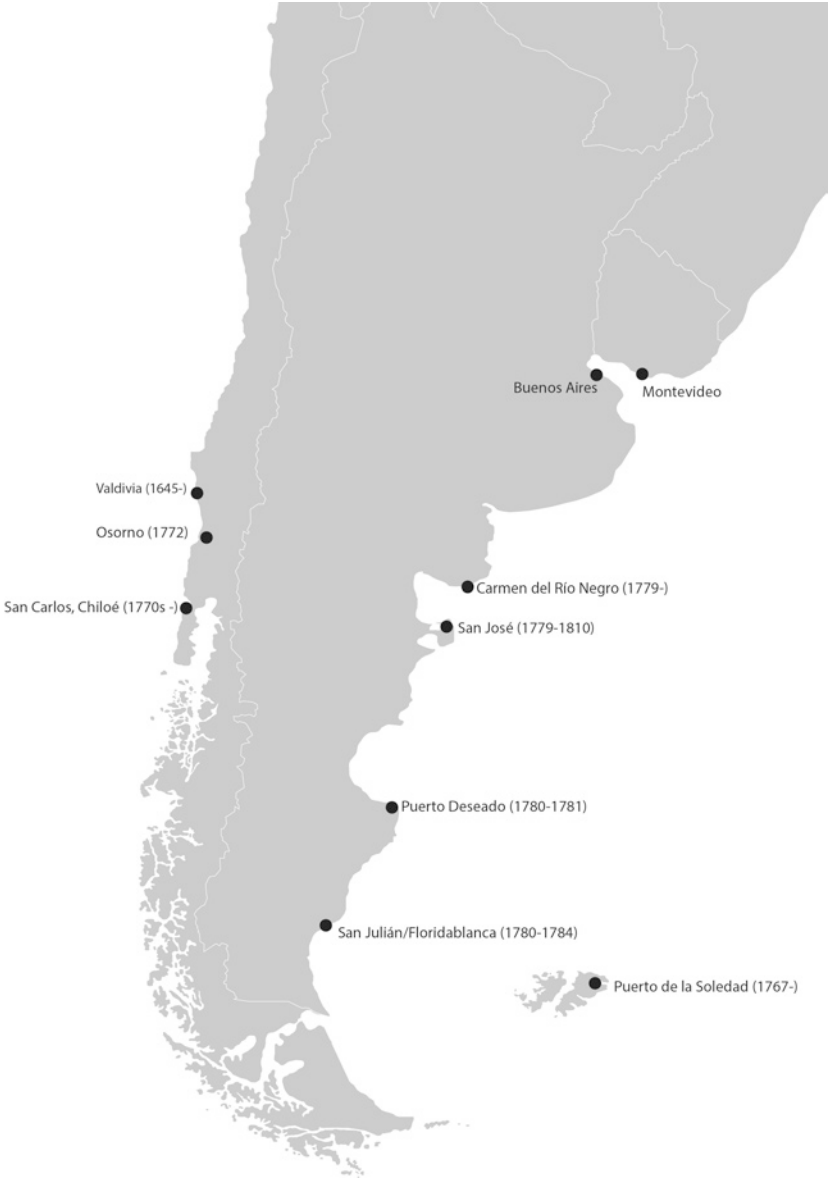
**Map. 7.3**   Connected Malvinas: New settlements, late-eighteenth century

convicts, and between convicts and other residents. In particular, those few prisoners who had special skills or were assigned to particular works were able to earn up to four or five times the basic cost of living of 25 *reales* and 13.5 *maravedís*. Although their income remained incomparably lower than the one of high rank officers—ranging between 221 and 2632 *reales* in 1779—it positioned them above the mass of unskilled convicts, soldiers and sailors, and allowed them to buy extra clothes (shoes, linen), food and drink (fat, garlic, wine, aguardiente, mate, tobacco), soap, and even gunpowder and bullets for hunting.[66] Parallel to this process, a spatial differentiation was gradually introduced between the unskilled convicts and the other inhabitants of the settlement. In March 1787, the prisoners completed the construction of the new barracks which, for the first time since the creation of the settlement, separated them from the troops at night.[67]

Convict transportation created links between diverse sites at the same time as it contributed to construct their very distinctiveness. No convict was directly transported from Havana to Puerto de la Soledad, or the other way round. Yet, the two distinct regional systems of penal transportation to which the Cuban capital and the Malvinas settlement belonged were not entirely isolated from each other either. Together, they were part of broader connected histories, such as those of the Crown's military and commercial reforms, and new expansionism, after the Seven Years' War.[68] From this perspective, Julia Frederick's analysis of the distinct paths of the Bourbon military reform in Havana and Spanish Louisiana[69] might be extended to include the Malvinas and foreground the forgotten role that repeated deserters and other military convicts played as agents of Madrid's new policies. In fact, the crew of the royal ships that temporarily dislodged the British from Port Egmont in 1770 was largely made of sentenced smugglers from the northern side of the Rio de la Plata.[70] This action nearly ignited a new military conflict between Spain and Britain, and as the Malvinas crisis unfolded in 1770–1771, in order to prevent a planned British attack to New Spain through Louisiana, recruits were sent from Havana to New Orleans, most of them deserters and military convicts previously transported from peninsular Spain.

Imperial careering also produced penal transportation-related links between Havana and Puerto de la Soledad and beyond.[71] After his return in Madrid in 1773, the first governor of the Malvinas, Felipe Ruíz Puente, became a trusted counsellor of the Secretary of the Indies for all

matters regarding those South Atlantic islands, including the management of their convicts. At the same time, in June 1774, he signed a letter that shows his direct commitment in the organization of the transportation of 132 convicts from Cadiz to Havana and Puerto Rico.[72] His successor in the Malvinas, Francisco Gil y Lemos, became Viceroy of New Granada in 1788 and Viceroy of Peru two years later: both were highly prestigious positions that entailed decision-making on the regional flows of penal transportation.[73] The networks of convict transportation eventually spread also beyond the border of the Spanish empire. Irish military engineers served in Havana and Puerto de la Soledad and were responsible for the works convicts were involved in.[74] Portuguese smugglers and deserters were frequently caught into the system of convict transportation based in Montevideo and Buenos Aires.[75] And the fifty-five military convicts held in the Castle of Santa Catalina in Cadiz in February 1771 awaiting their passage to Ceuta, San Juan, Havana and Buenos Aires were born in eighteen European polities.[76]

## Categories, Contexts and Connections

Understanding why convict labour has been produced and exploited in the larger process of the commodification of labour implies addressing, at the same time, the distinctiveness of the work of prisoners in each site and the multiple connections produced by convict transportation. From a methodological point of view, this means that 'convict labour' as a universal category has to be deconstructed and subsequently reconstructed as a history of connected singularities. In this chapter, I have taken a micro-analytical perspective and considered convict labour in Havana and Puerto de la Soledad as unique and equally complex within a discontinuous historical fabric. By explicitly avoiding postulating the homogeneity of the experiences included under the category 'convict labour', I have refused to construct a hierarchy between allegedly 'central' and 'peripheral' sites of convict labour. This move has allowed me to address each context in its own right, highlight the specific function of convict labour in each site and pay attention to (shifting) configurations of labour relations in each locality. The second section has foregrounded how and why convicts became necessary in Havana and Puerto de la Soledad. In the Caribbean urban centre, they served as the key workforce for the reconstruction and maintenance of the military

and non-military infrastructures; as such, convict labour additionally allowed for specialization of (privately and state-owned) slave labour in the growing agricultural sector. Conversely, in the economically deprived but geopolitically strategic new settlement in the Malvinas, convicts made up a considerable percentage of the total population and contributed to guaranteeing the material and symbolic presence of the Spanish crown in the region. Shifts in the strategies of colonization impacted on the role assigned to them as part of a highly mobile workforce.

Building on this micro-analytical deconstruction of the category of 'convict labour', in the third section I have taken a trans-local perspective to address the dialectics between sites and connections. Here, the need for labour and settlers in Havana and Puerto de la Soledad has been recognized as the starting point of multiple flows of people and commodities. In particular, convicts in those sites have emerged as imbricated in networks of penal transportation that spanned the Spanish empire, albeit with distinct characteristics and significant disentanglements. Moreover, I have foregrounded the role of those penal connections in constructing broader social processes, such as the Bourbon reforms and the renewed Crown's expansionism, and eventually in linking up Havana and Puerto de la Soledad themselves and beyond. Indeed, penal transportation contributed to construct connected histories of labour across distinct contexts, and this can be understood neither by addressing each site of convict transportation in isolation nor by adopting a universal definition of convict labour.

The theoretical and methodological framework of this chapter can be further expanded in three directions. First, empirical research on convict labour highlights the need to acknowledge both the wide scope of the connections produced by penal transportation and the substantial differences among those connections (e.g. various types of convicts and distinct duration of voyages) and among sites linked by means of convict transportation. Consequently, since any site of convict labour is both unique and imbricated in multiple networks, the analysis of any other site of convict labour in any other period can be approached through the methodology I propose in this chapter. Second, the points I have made here on convict labour may be applied to the study of any other labour relations, e.g. slavery, wage labour and indentured work. All labour relations are context-related social processes whose functions can only be understood vis-à-vis other labour relations within specific contexts, provided that, in

turn, contexts are understood as contact zones of multiple circulations rather than in isolation. As such, the question 'why convict labour?' that opened this chapter stands out as an example of where asking ourselves 'why slavery?' or 'why wage labour?' may lead us to in future research. Third, the need to address the history of 'connected singularities' is not specific to labour history, but regards the historical field as a whole. Similarly to the concepts of 'convict labour' and 'slavery', this chapter suggests that all seemingly universal concepts indicating historical processes, such as 'reform', 'war' and 'revolutions', may be usefully deconstructed and then re-constructed as histories of connected singularities. From this perspective, like the volume as a whole, this chapter has tested the potential of the micro-spatial approach in the field of labour history with the aim to indicate its broader relevance to other sub-disciplines as the basis for alternative paths to global history.

## Notes

1. Christian G. De Vito and Alex Lichtenstein, 'Writing a Global History of Convict Labour', *International Review of Social History*, 58, 2 (August 2013), 292. See also: Christian G. De Vito and Alex Lichtenstein, *Global Convict Labour* (Leiden and Boston, 2015).
2. Another possible direction, which is not taken in this chapter, is the study of how 'universality' itself was constructed. In the case of convict labour in the Spanish empire, for example, this would entail the investigation of legal and punitive pluralism across the empire, especially in connection with policies that favoured the coerced employment and migration of the convicted workforce. For a key reference on legal pluralism: Lauren Benton and Richard J. Ross, eds., *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500–1850* (New York and London, 2013).
3. Kerry Ward has referred to penal transportation and banishment as creating 'networks of empire' for the Dutch East India Company (VOC). See her *Networks of Empire. Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge, 2012).
4. The first use of the expression 'exceptional normal' (eccezionale normale) is in: Edoardo Grendi, 'Micro-analisi e storia sociale', *Quaderni storici*, 35 (1977), 506–522. Grendi used the concept to foreground the heuristic value of 'exceptional' sources and cases. In this chapter, I use it to highlight the discontinuous nature of the historical fabric, more generally. For other interpretations: Edward Muir, 'Introduction: Observing Trifles', in *Microhistory and the Lost People of Europe*, eds. Edward Muir

and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore, 1991), xiv–xvi; Matti Peltonen, 'Clues, Margins, and Monads': The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research, *History and Theory*, 40, 3 (2001), 356–358; Magnússon and Szijártó, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (Abington, 2013), pp. 19–20; Jacques Revel, 'Micronalisi e costruzione del sociale', in *Giochi di scala. La microstoria alla prova dell'esperienza*, ed. Jacques Revel (Rome, 2006), pp. 36–37.

5. Juliane Schiel and Stefan Hanß, 'Semantics, Practices and Transcultural Perspectives on Mediterranean Slavery', in *Mediterranean Slavery Revisited (500–1800). Neue Perspektiven auf Mediterrane Sklaverei (500–1800)*, eds. Juliane Schiel and Stefan Hanß (Zürich, 2014), p. 15.

6. Angelo Torre, 'Comunitá e localitá', in *Microstoria. A venticinque anni da* L'eredità materiale. *Saggi in onore di Giovanni Levi*, ed. Paola Lanaro (Milano, 2011), p. 55.

7. See esp. Anne Radeff, 'Centres et périphéries ou centralités et décentralités?', in *Per vie di terra*, ed. Angelo Torre (Rome, 2007), pp. 21–32.

8. On convict labour in the post-Seven Years war period, see esp. Ruth Pike, *Penal Servitude in Early Modern Spain* (Madison, 1983), Chap. 8. On military reform and the reconstruction of the defense: Allan J. Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753–1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (Knoxville, 1986); Juan Marchena Fernández, 'El ejército de América y la descomposición del orden colonial. La otra mirada en un conflicto de lealtades', *Militaria*, 4 (1992), 63–91, esp. Section 2; Juan Marchena Fernández, *Ejército y milicias en el mundo colonial Americano* (Madrid, 1992), Chap. 4; Carmen Gómez Pérez, *El sistema defensivo americano. Siglo XVIII* (Madrid, 1992); Celia María Parcero Torre, *La pérdida de la Habana y las reformas borbónicas en Cuba, 1760–1773* (Ávila, 1998). On the geopolitical consequences of the explorations in the Pacific, see esp. R.F. Buschmann, *Iberian Visions of the Pacific Ocean, 1507–1899* (Houndmills, 2014).

9. The King's slaves (*esclavos del rey*) were those slaves directly owned by the Spanish Crown. Their enslavement usually followed their capture as prisoners of war, or alienation from their masters as a consequence of punishment. For a detailed study of the role of the King's slaves in the works, see Evelyn Powell Jennings, 'War as the "Forcing House of Change": State Slavery in Late-Eighteenth-Century Cuba', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 62, 3 (2005), 411–440.

10. Data in the table and in the text are taken from the statistic tables held in Archivo General de Indias, Seville (henceforth AGI), Indiferente General, 1907 and entitled 'Estado que comprehende los Soldados de los Reximientos de Lombardia…q.e se hallan destinados en los travaxos y demas parages q.e se expresaran anexos a ellas'. Data marked with an asterisk are published in Powell Jennings, *War as the "Forcing House of*

*Change"*, p. 434, and are based on statistics in AGI, Santo Domingo, 1211, 1647 and 2129. For data on February 1774: AGI, Cuba, 1152, 'Estado que comprehende los soldados… que se hallan destinados en los trabajos de fortificación y demás parajes q.e se expresan anexos a ella', 28.2.1774.

11. Parcero Torre, *La pérdida de la Habana*, p. 102. Notes to the original tables in AGI, Indiferente General, 1907, clarify that only around 70% of those included in the statistics for works in San Carlos de la Cabaña were actually employed there. The rest were either hospitalized, employed in the other works mentioned in the text and in the construction of public roads, or leased out to private contractors as carriers.

12. AGI, Cuba, 1155, Marques de la Torre to Urriza, n. 1293, Havana 11 January 1777.

13. See esp. AGI, Cuba, 125, and Indiferente General, 1907.

14. For figures of escapes: AGI, Cuba, 1152, 'Estado que comprehende los soldados… que se hallan destinados en los trabajos de fortificación y demás parajes q.e se expresan anexos a ella', 28.2.1774. For two examples of the employment of recaptured convicts: AGI, Cuba 1155: Marques de la Torre to Rapun, n. 826, Havana 31 May 1775; Marques de la Torre to Urriza, n. 1074, Havana 29 April 1776.

15. See esp. Evelyn P. Jennings, 'The Sinews of Spain's American Empire: Forced Labor in Cuba from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', in *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, ca. 1500–1914*, eds. John Donoghue and Evelyn P. Jennings (Leiden and Boston, 2016), pp. 25–53. For a classic account of the later stages of this process: Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba. The Transition to Free Labor, 1860–1899* (Pittsburgh, 2000 [first ed. 1985]).

16. Christian G. De Vito, 'Precarious pasts. Labour flexibility and labour precariousness as conceptual tools for the historical study of the interactions among labour relations', in *On the Road to Global Labour History*, ed. Karl-Heinz Roth (Leiden and Boston, forthcoming). For a similar argument on the importance of the State in the mobilisation and migration of coerced labour: John Donoghue and Evelyn P. Jennings, 'Introduction', in *Building the Atlantic Empires*, pp. 1–24.

17. See especially: AGI, 1155, Marques de la Torre to Rapun, n. 756, Havana 4 March 1775.

18. Buschmann, *Iberian Visions*, p. 156.

19. AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, ff. 1–11, Amat to Arriaga, 8 April 1758. For an overview of the explorations and settlements in the Malvinas/Falklands between the 16th century and 1833, see: British Library, Additional Ms.

32,603, Papers of the Government of Buenos Ayres. Falklands Islands [BL, Falklands], Moreno to Palmerston, London, 17 June 1833. On the subsequent period of British rule: Stephen A. Royle, 'The Falkland Islands, 1833–1876: The establishment of a colony', *The Geographical Journal*, 151, 2 (1985), 204–214.

20. Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, *Voyage autour du monde par la frégate du Roi La Boudeuse et la flûte L'Étoile* (Paris, 1982), pp. 75–85.

21. See especially: AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, Ruiz Puente, Malvinas, 31 December 1769. On further exploration of Port Egmont, and the correspondence between the two captains: BL, Falklands: Letter to Arriaga, Buenos Aires, 31 January 1770 (and annex); Rubalcava to Bucareli, Malvinas, 4 March 1770; Rubalcava to Hunch, on board de Frigate Santa Cathalina, 20 February 1770; Hunt to Rubalcava, [Port Egmont], 21 February 1770. The same corrispondence is in: AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, ff. 345–346.

22. Legend of the table: * *Capitán, subtheniente, sargento, alferez, cavo, tambor.* ** Spanish population only. The table integrates all available demographic data held at the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville. Its sources are: AGI, Buenos Aires, 552: Ruiz Puente, Fragata Liebre en la Ensenada de Montevideo, 24 February 1767; Amat to Arriaga, Lima, 13 October 1768, n. 126; AGI, Buenos Aires, 553: Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Malvinas, 19 June 1771; Gil y Lemos to Arriaga, Puerto de la Soledad, 4 April 1774 (annex); Carassa to Galvez, Puerto de la Soledad, 15 February 1777 (annex); Vertíz to Galvez, Buenos Aires, 24 December 1781; Altolaguirre to Galvez, Malvinas, 20 February 1781; Clairac, Puerto de la Soledad, 22 May 1785. Additional data on the wage labourers (thus excluding the convicts) are in: BL, Falklands, Ruiz Puente to Bucareli, Malvinas, 25 April 1767 (annex entitled 'Presupuesto del Caudal de R.l Hacienda…').

23. AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, Ruiz Puente to Julián de Arriaga, 22 March 1768.

24. AGI, Buenos Aires, 553: Vertíz to Arriaga, Buenos Aires, 11 May 1771; Bernarani to Arriaga, Malvinas, 15 November 1771; Reggio, Ruiz Puente and Cartejón, Isla de León, 10 September 1773.

25. AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Ruiz Puente, Puerto de la Soledad, 4 April 1774.

26. AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Carassa to Galvez, Puerto de la Soledad, 15 February 1777.

27. See for instance AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Isla de León, 2 August 1774. In the same *legajo* see also: Ruiz Puente, Puerto de la Soledad, 4 April 1774.

28. AGI, Buenos Aires, 552: Arriaga to Madariaga, Aranjuez, 6 June 1769; Bucareli to Arriaga, Buenos Aires, 27 October 1769; Madariaga to Arriaga, Montevideo, 1 January 1770.

29. Three considerations reinforce this point. First, data regarding 10 January 1767 include the Spanish population only. However, because no convicts existed among the French settlers, their percentage on the total population was considerably lower than what it appears in the table. Second, the figure regarding 23 February 1767 exclude the Spanish women and children, who were transported from Buenos Aires only after February 1767 (see BL, Falklands, Bougainville, Buenos Aires, 8 February 1767). Third, based on the correspondence, it seems safe to assume that on 19 June 1771 some women and children were also present in Puerto de la Soledad, thus lowering the ratio of prisoners/total population.

30. AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, Ruiz Puente to Bucareli, Malvinas, 22 March 1768.

31. See for instance: AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, 22 March 1768; AGI, Buenos Aires, Ruiz Puente to de Arriaga, 10 February 1769.

32. AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Malvinas, 10 February 1769. On the same date, in another note to the same recipient, the governor asserted that 'with the exception of the port and the pasture, this island is nothing, nothing worth'.

33. The abandonment of the settlement was discussed among high-rank colonial officials between October 1779 and January 1781, during the Anglo-Spanish War (1779–1783). The discussion is especially relevant for its being contemporary with the creation of the four settlements along the coast of Patagonia (end 1779–beginning 1781). Unsurprisingly, one of the main sponsor of the Patagonian colonization, the Count of Floridablanca, was the main opponent of the abandonment of the Malvinas. The motivations contained in his letter were finally accepted by the Viceroy of the Rio de la Plata, Vertíz, who had originally favoured the abandonment. For related documents see AGI, Buenos Aires, 553: Vertíz to Galvez, Buenos Aires, 8 October 1779; Floridablanca to Galvez, El Pardo, 10 February 1780; Muzquiz to Galvez, El Pardo, 4 February 1780; Vertíz to Galvez, Buenos Aires, 26 January 1781. For an earlier warning about the danger of a British invasion of the islands, and the state of that 'open, and almost undefended, settlement': AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Carassa to Galvez, Puerto de la Soledad, 15 October 1778.

34. AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, Vertíz to Arriaga, Buenos Aires, 13 May 1770. The two male adults are described respectively as 'carpenter/peasant' (*carpintero labrador*) and 'sawyer/peasant' (*aserrador labrador*).

35. For the insistent requests of transfer made by governor Felipe Ruiz Puente: AGI, Buenos Aires, 553: Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Malvinas, 29 March 1771; Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Malvinas, 24 July 1771; Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Malvinas, 14 November 1771. For request by the Extraordinary Engineer Esteban O'Brien: AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, O'Brien to Ruiz Puente, Malvinas, 12 February 1769. For the Second Captain Antonio Catani: AGI, 553, O'Reilly to Arriaga, Madrid, 20 October 1773 (and annex).

36. AGI, Buenos Aires, 553: Vertíz to Arriaga, Buenos Aires, 1 March 1772, 15 March 1772 (three letters); Arriaga to Vertíz, Madrid, 2 July 1772. On the state of the colony before the attempted mutiny: AGI, Buenos Aires, 553: Bernarani to Vertíz, Malvinas, 19 June 1771 (and the same letter to Arriaga on the same date); Bernarani to Arriaga, Malvinas 15 November 1771.

37. AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Ruiz Puente and Gil y Lemos to Vertíz, Buenos Aires, 30 April 1773. The plan was transmitted to the Secretary of the Indies in September 1773: AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Reggio, Ruiz Puente and Cartejon, Isla de León, 10 September 1773. The following report on the expenses of the colony arguably influenced the decision to elaborate a new system: AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Piedra to Arriaga, Puerto de la Soledad, 16 March 1773 (and annex). On the link between the British abandonment of Port Egmont and the implementation of the new method in Puerto de la Soledad: AGI, Buenos Aires, 553: Letter to Ruiz Puente, Aranuez, 12 April 1774; Ruiz Puente, Isla de Leon, 22 April 1774 (and annexed 'Plan de los medios que considero oportuno para la conserbacion de la Ysla, y Puerto de la Soledad de Malvinas'). The new plan was re-proposed by former governor Ruiz Puente, who had by this time been transferred in Spain, and was regularly consulted regarding the Malvinas. Ruiz Puente's plan was approved by the King on 6 March 1775, and the decision was subsequently confirmed by the Viceroy of the Rio de la Plata. See AGI, Buenos Aires, 553: Letter to the Governor of Buenos Aires, San Ildefonso, 9 August 1776; Vertíz to Galvez, Buenos Aires, 7 November 1776.

38. This point appears especially important for the colonial officers, since complaints about the shortage of skilled workers had been constant in the previous years. See for instance: AGI, Buenos Aires, 552: Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Malvinas, 22 March 1768 and 10 February 1769.

39. See for example: AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Gil y Lemos to Arriaga, Puerto de la Soledad, 3 June 1774. The governor refers to 'the colony's new method to subsist'. In the same *legajo*, see also: Vertíz to Galvez, Buenos Aires, 7 November 1776.

40. An explicitly post-modernist interpretation of micro history can be found in Magnússon and Szijártó, *What is Microhistory*, p. 115. Magnússon presented similar arguments in: ''The singularization of history': social history and microhistory within the postmodern state of knowledge', *Journal of Social History*, 36, 3, 2003, pp. 701–735; 'Social History as "sites of memory"? The institutionalization of history: microhistory and the grand narrative', *Journal of Social History*, 39, 2006, 891–913. For a discussion of the relationship between microhistory and post-modernism: Richard D. Brown, 'Microhistory and the post-modern challenge', *Journal of Early Republic*, 23, 1, 2003, 1–20; Magnússon and Szijártó, *What is Microhistory*, pp. 18–19 (for Szijártó's point of view).

41. Similar patterns to the one referred to in the text can be observed for Veracruz and its forts of San Juan de Ulúa. See for instance: Leonardo Pasquel, ed., *Forzados de Veracruz 1755* (Veracruz, 1969).

42. For the deportation of 100 vagrants from Galicia to the works in Puerto Rico in 1770: AGI, Indiferente general, 1907, O'Reilly to Ordeñada, Madrid 7th October 1770.

43. AGI, Indiferente general, 1907, Conde de Aranda to Julian de Arriaga, Madrid 18th December 1769.

44. AGI, Indiferente general, 1907, Communication of the Conde de Aranda, Madrid 19th May 1770. Here the record summarizes a previous communication of Alejandro O'Reilly.

45. Both citations in the text are taken from AGI, Indiferente general, 1907, O'Reilly to Arriaga, Madrid 10th August 1770.

46. For example, see the case of 400 convicts shipped to Puerto Rico in December 1769, 100 of whom died either during the transportation or during the first months after arrival. AGI, Indiferente general, 1907, Communication of the Conde de Aranda, Madrid 19th May 1770.

47. The 'banished' (*desterrados*) or 'forced labourers' (*forzados*), as the convicts were referred to, totaled 412 on 3rd November 1770, 463 on 7th April 1772, 480 on 7th January 1773, 463 on 1st July 1774, 515 on 1st July 1777 and 530 on 1st January 1778. All statistics are from records held in AGI, Indiferente general, 1907.

48. The report is attached to the letter of Muesas to Arriaga, Puerto Rico, 26th January 1773, in AGI, Indiferente general, 1907.

49. On prisoners transported to Havana from New Spain, usually called 'guachinangos': Jorge L. Lizadi Pollock, 'Presidios, presidiarios y desertores: Los desterrados de Nueva España, 1777–1797', in *El Caribe en los intereses imperiales, 1750–1815* (San Juan Mixcoal, 2000), pp. 17–28; Isabel Marín Tello, *La importancia de los presidios como lugar de castigo: el caso de Cuba en el siglo XVIII*, paper presented at the 22nd Simpósio Nacional de Historia, ANPUH, João Pessoa, 2003, available on-line

at: http://anpuh.org/anais/wp-content/uploads/mp/pdf/ANPUH.S22.474.pdf (consulted on 27 October 2016). See also: AGI, Cuba, 1152, 1156, 1190, 1207 and 1260. On the Tribunal of the Acordada, see esp. Colin M. MacLachlan, *Criminal Justice in Eighteenth Century Mexico: A Study of the Tribunal of the Acordada* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1974).

50. See esp. AGI, Cuba, 1155, n. 756, Marques de la Torre to Rapun, Havana 4 March 1775. For an individual example of transportation: AGI, Cuba, 1155, n. 1048, Marques de la Torre to Urriza, Havana 25 March 1776.

51. See AGI, Cuba, 365B. On the *presidio* of Saint Agustin, see especially: Juan Marchena Fernández and María del Carmen Gómez Pérez, *La Vida de Guarnición en las Ciudades Americanas de la Ilustración* (Madrid, 1992), Chap. 2; James Coltrain, 'Constructing the Atlantic's Boundaries: Forced and Coerced Labor on Imperial Fortificatons in Colonial Florida', in *Building the Atlantic Empires*, pp. 109–131.

52. For detailed figures on the standing convicts in both sites: AGI, Cuba, 126.

53. On 20 September 1770 the governor of Buenos Aires issued an ordenance (*bando*) prescribing that 'all vagabonds and individuals who do not live of their work, nor have a profession or Masters, leave this city by the third day; in case they are caught after this date, they will be legally punished, if not recidivists, to 4 year exile in the Malvinas islands'. Quoted in: Alejandro Agüero, *Castigar y perdonar cuando conviene a la República. La justicia penal de Córdoba del Tucumán, siglos XVII y XVIII* (Madrid, 2008), p. 231.

54. Together with Buenos Aires and Montevideo, the Malvinas islands are mentioned as a 'usual destination' of penal transportation from Córdoba del Tucumán in: Agüero, *Castigar y perdonar*, p. 182.

55. Quoted in Rossana Barragán, *Miradas a la Junta de La Paz en 1809* (La Paz, 2009).

56. For the Malvinas as destinations for deserters who failed to appear within three months from the issue of the Royal amnesties, see Rafael Salillas, *Evolución penitenciaria de España* (Madrid, 1918), vol. 2, p. 493. On p. 444 the author additionally reports the case of fifteen non-military convicts transported in 1803 from Cadiz to the Malvinas islands via Buenos Aires on board the frigate *Eulalia*, after having their sentences of transportation to the Philippines commuted.

57. For a rare list of prisoners including information on the crimes for which they were sentenced: Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires (henceforth AGN), 9.16.09.05, Altolaguirre, Puerto de la Soledad de Maluinas, 6 April 1782, 'Noticia de los Precidiarios que existen en el Precidio

de esta Colonia con las de sus Condenas el tiempo que tiene cada uno vencido, y el que les queda'.

58. AGI, Buenos Aires, 553: Gil y Lemos to Arriaga, Puerto de la Soledad, 4 April 1774 (and annex); Carassa to Galvez, Puerto de la Soledad, 15 February 1777.

59. In AGN, 9.16.09.05, respectively: Vertíz to the Governor of Malvinas, Buenos Aires, 13 October 1779; and Medina to Vertíz, Colonia de la Soledad de Maluinas, 14 January 1780. On the *indio* Felipe, see the same file, Altolaguirre, Puerto de la Soledad de Maluinas, 6 April 1782, 'Noticia de los Precidiarios que existen…'.

60. Among other sources: AGI, Buenos Aires, 552: Bucareli to Arriaga, Buenos Aires, 9 April 1767; Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Malvinas, 22 March 1768; Horozco to Arriaga, Ferrol, 16 October 1769; Letter to Ruiz Puente, Buenos Aires, 30 November 1769. AGI, Buenos Aires, 553: Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Malvinas, 29 March 1771. BL, Falklands: Bucareli to Ruiz Puente, 30 November 1767; Conde de Aranda to Bucareli, Madrid, 25 July 1769; Marques de Grimaldi, Buenos Aires, 22 February 1769 (and annex); *Relacion que hace el Theniente de Navio y Capitan de la Fragata Santa Rosa D.n Fran.co Gil*, March 1769. For an example of the circulation of 'whispers' about the British plan to settle in the Falklands: AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Principe de Masserano to the Governor of Malvinas, Madrid, 2 April 1776 (and annex). Another input for explorations came from the will to establish new settlement in the Tierra del Fuego, as different sources referred to the friendly attitude of the natives of the area: BL, Falklands: Bucareli to Ruiz Puente, Buenos Aires, 30 November 1767 (and annex); Pando to Arriaga, Buenos Aires, 30 January 1769 (and annex); Bucareli to Madariaga, Buenos Aires, 28 October 1769; Arriaga to Bucareli, Madrid, 7 February 1770; AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Malvinas, 19 June 1771. This continuous regional activity of exploration produced an extended maritime and cartographic knowledge, with considerable global political impact. See for example: AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, Arriaga to Ruiz Puente, Madrid, 16 July 1770; AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Malvinas, 29 March 1771.

61. For example: AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Carassa to Galvez, Puerto de la Soledad, 6 February 1777.

62. On the Patagonian settlements see esp.: Juan Alejandro Apolant, *Operativo Patagonia. Historia de la mayor aportación demográfica masiva a la Banda Oriental* (Montevideo, 1999, 2nd edition); Carlos M. Garla, *Los establecimientos españoles en la Patagonia. Estudio institucional* (Sevilla, 1984); Dora Noemi Martínez de Gorla, 'El primer asentamiento de colonos en el Río Negro en Patagonia', *Temas Americanistas*,

6 (1986), 42–56; Perla Zusman, 'Entre el lugar y la linea: la constitución de las fronteras coloniales patagónicas 1780–1792', *Fronteras de la Historia*, 6 (2001), 41–67; Maria Ximena Senatore, *Arqueología e Historia. Arqueología e Historia en la Colonia Española de Floridablanca* (Buenos Aires, 2007); Marcia Bianchi Villelli, *Cambio social y prácticas cotidianas en el orden colonial. Arqueología histórica en Floridablanca (San Julián, Argentina, Siglo XVIII)* (Oxford, 2009). The circulation of information had a still further reach, as for Governor Phelipe Ruiz Puente's letters for the Viceroy of Peru, transported to El Callao (Lima) by the frigates Liebre and Aguila: AGI, Buenos Aires, 552, Manuel Amat to Julián de Arriaga, Lima, 13 October 1768, n. 126.

63. AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Junta Superiore de la Real Hacienda, Buenos Aires, 1 March 1792.

64. AGN, 9.16.09.05, petition signed by Juan Josef Ysaurralde, to Vertíz, undated [1780]; AGN, 9.16.09.06, Vertíz to the Governor of Malvinas, Buenos Aires, 16 February 1784. See also AGN, 9.16.09.05, Altolaguirre, Puerto de la Soledad de Maluinas, 6 April 1782, 'Noticia de los Precidiarios que existen…'

65. See esp. AGN, 09.16.09.05, Altolaguirre, Maluinas, 8 April 1782, 'Estado que manifiesta… con respecto a la explicación de la adjunta Relación'.

66. AGN, 9.16.09.05, Ministerio de la Hazienda de la Yslas Maluinas, Año de 1779, Ajustam.to de Raciones de los Yndividuos de esta Colonia, Maluinas, 31 October 1779.

67. AGN, 9.16.09.06, Clairac to the Marques de Loreto, Soledad de las Islas Malvinas, 20 March 1787.

68. On connected history see esp.: Sanjay Subrahmanyan, 'Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies*, 31, 3 (1997), 735–762; Subrahmanyan, *Explorations in Connected History*. See also: Giuseppe Marcocci, 'Gli intrecci del mondo. La modernità globale di Sanjay Subrahmanyam', in Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Mondi connessi. La storia oltre l'eurocentrismo (secoli XVI–XVIII)* (Roma, 2014). The vision proposed here also connects to Sandra Curtis Comstock's 'incorporating comparisons': 'Incorporating Comparison', in *The Handbook of World-System Analysis: Theory and Research*, eds. Christopher Chase-Dunn and Salvatore Babones (Routledge, 2011), pp. 375–376; 'Incorporating Comparisons in the Rift. Making Use of Cross-Place Events and Histories in Moments of World Historical Change', in *Beyond Methodological Nationalism: Social Science Research Methodologies in Transition*. eds. Anna Amelina, Devrimsel D. Negriz, Thomas Faist and Nina Glick Schiller (Routledge, 2012), pp. 176–197.

69. Julia Frederick, 'In Defense of Crown and Colony: Luis de Unzaga and Spanish Louisiana', *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 19, 1 (2008), 389–422.

70. See: AGI, Buenos Aires, 552: Bucareli, Buenos Aires, 30 March 1770 (with annex); Bucareli to Madariaga, Buenos Aires, 29 April 1770.

71. On the concept of 'imperial careering': David Lambert and Alan Lester, *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2006).

72. AGI, Indiferente General, 1907, Ruiz Puente to Arriaga, Isla de León, 14 June 1774.

73. For another example, before becoming vice-governor of Puerto de la Soledad in February 1767, coronel Antonio Catani had: served in Granada; participated in a siege of Oran and the campaign in Nice and Savoy (1747); 'disciplined the troops' in Buenos Aires; guided three punitive expeditions against the natives of the Tucuman region (1755–1760); repeatedly 'dislodged' the Portuguese from the surrounding of Río Pardo; and fought in the Seven Year's War against the *indios infieles* in New Spain. See AGI, Buenos Aires, 553, Conde O' Reilly to Julián de Arriaga, Madrid, 20 October 1773 [annex].

74. Respectively, Thomas O'Daly and Esteban O'Brien.

75. For various examples, see AGN, 9.16.09.05.

76. AGI, Indiferente general, 1907, 'Relación de los reos que con asistencia del Zirujano Mayor de la Armada… fueron conducidos de Cartagena de Lebante en los Navios de S. Mag.d', attached to the letter of Marques de la Victoria to Julián de Arriaga, Isla de León, 7 February 1771.