

People in Total Institutions. The Case of Border Guard Functionaries and Employees in Guarded Centres for Foreigners

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to identify and analyse guarded centres for foreigners in Poland when considered as total institutions and the psycho-social consequences of such totalization on the officers and employees of the Border Guard who work in these centres. The above-mentioned consequences stem from their daily work in a total institution, primarily within the legal and socio-cultural conditions of the functioning of these centres and, secondly, in terms of the relationships between the staff employed in them, as well as between the staff and foreigners. In addition, they are also an effect of the simultaneous impact of the world outside the total institution on the officers and employees of the Border Guard.

Keywords: total institution, totalization, centers for foreigners, border guards

Preliminary considerations: total institutions and heterotopias

In the opinion of Erving Goffman (1961), total institutions are characterized by several constitutive features. First of all, their uniqueness lies in the relative lack of separation of workplaces, play, and leisure which are so characteristic of contemporary European

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culture. Although the physical dimension of this unity of space serving different forms of human activity is certainly relevant, it is more important to be subject to the same authority understood in a relational sense, i.e. being a consequence of the imbalances between the mutual influence of people upon one another. This unity of power is an essential feature of total institutions.

Secondly, these types of institutions usually reduce and limit the physical intimacy of the people staying in them to a minimum. Of course, it exists, but its scope is far from the standards adopted in the culture and civilization of the West. In other words, total institutions strongly limit the satisfaction of the need to remain alone, to be isolated from other people.

Thirdly, the characteristic feature of this type of institution is the ubiquitous planning of activities. Plans and schedules apply to practically all types of activities, regardless of how they are implemented in practice. Planning permeates all segments of the institution, applies to all their participants, regardless of their position and social status.

The fourth feature is the relatively greater separation from the outside world than in the case of other types of institutions. Limited external contact is one of the most clearly discernible signs of the functioning of a total institution. In order to include a person from outside the group of those employed or placed there, the fulfilment of certain, sometimes rigorous conditions is required. Moreover, the authorities of total institutions have the ability to regulate access to it by people from the outside world in a relatively discretionary manner.

Another feature of this type of institution is the binary division of the people acting within it into superiors and subordinates, managers and managed, staff and patients (Goffman 1961: 6–7). These two categories of people create different socio-cultural microworlds in the institution, although their coexistence, interdependence, and penetration are the essence of the social dimension of the functioning of total institutions.

The last of the basic features of total institutions, according to Goffman, is the omnipotence of the power prevailing in them. Furthermore, they blur clearly defined power relations. The hierarchies of power are usually not transparent, which means that every member of the world of personnel, managers, and superiors, regardless of their formal position, has power over every member of the world of subordinates, patients, and the managed.

According to Goffman, total institutions are clearly opposed to two principles which are characteristic of modern Western civilization. They lack the causal link between the effort we put into our everyday activities and the resulting effect in the form of the satisfying of needs. This discrepancy already appears at Bronisław Malinowski's so-called level of the charter i.e. the main rules and principles that bring people together in the institution and guide their conduct. Usually, members of the subordinate world meet certain needs without any effort or regardless of the actions

taken. However, regardless of their own efforts, they cannot satisfy other needs. For example, the general recommendation for personnel employed in guarded centres is to avoid establishing closer ties and building bonds with those who are placed in custody, regardless of whether they have the need to construct such relationships.

The second of the principles mentioned by Goffman concerns the freedom of family life. As with the previous point, this is undoubtedly violated at the level of the “primary principle”, either because the rest of the family remains in the outside world, i.e. it is outside the total institution, and contact with the outside are severely limited, or the family is inside the institution, but the potential to independently shape one’s own life is limited both formally and legally. Of course, this violation applies primarily to the foreigners placed in the centres.

Criticism of Goffman’s concept has primarily focused on charges that it over-generalizes when constructing its model of total institutions (Posluszny 2017). In particular, this charge is related to the lack of clear criteria for determining the degree to which specific institutions may be considered total and the need to find a more nuanced analysis between two extremes, i.e. between a permeable institution and a total one, which differ in terms of the length of stay, communication with the outside world, openness to the outside world, approach to security issues, transparency of the institutions, the social structure, organizational culture and relations between staff and subordinates (ibidem: 131).

Christine Davies (1989) highlighted the need for an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of total institutions which had been indicated in each empirical case analysed by Goffman. As a result, she proposed two model typologies of total institutions, differentiated by the institution’s purpose and the degree of openness to the outside, as well as the institution’s purpose and the compliance of its assumptions with their implementation (Ibidem: 89–90). In the first case, the degree of closure/openness makes it possible to distinguish between closed, semi-open and open institutions. In the second case, the adopted mode of compliance with the aims of the institution allows us to identify coercive, normative and remunerative types. Determining the degree to which an institution may be deemed total is therefore crucial since the attributes indicated by Goffman can take various forms and operate according to different internal procedures. Furthermore, they are also clearly influenced by the impact of the external environment in which the analysed institution operates.

These varying internal organizational solutions and the influence of the external environment means that the institutions initially defined by Goffman as total meet the assigned characteristics to differing degrees. Directly related to external relations, the issue of the closure/openness of these institutions has been the subject of a number of prison studies (Farrington 1992; Moran and Keinänen 2012; Peck 2003; Peck & Theodore 2009). Taking Goffman’s conception as his starting point, Farrington “extends and develops the notion of the prison as a ‘total institution’ by proposing a theoretical conception of ‘a “not-so-total” institution, enclosed within an

identifiable-yet-permeable membrane of structures, mechanisms and policies, all of which maintain, at most, a selective and imperfect degree of separation between what exists inside of and what lies beyond prison walls" (Moran and Keinänen 2012: 65). In turn, Baer and Ravneberg (2008) propose replacing the binary internal-external system for institutions with the notion of heterotopia. They believe that it is sometimes impossible to distinguish between the internal and external aspects of an institution's operations and functioning. By considering prisons as "heterotopic spaces outside of and different from other spaces, but still inside the general social order", they are referring to Foucault, who defined heterotopias as "real places, actual places, places that are designed into the very institution of society" (1998: 178). It should be remembered that heterotopic spaces may seem completely unrelated to others, despite their presence alongside one another.

Foucault defined heterotopias in opposition to utopias and distinguished two fundamental forms: "crisis heterotopias" and "heterotopias of deviation" (1984: 4–5). The former, considered characteristic of earlier societies, refer to "privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc." (ibidem: 4). Heterotopias of deviation, which are typical of modern society, refer to places whose style of life differs sharply from the normative model adopted (e.g. psychiatric hospitals, sanatoria, prisons). As a result, heterotopias are not available to everyone, despite functioning as "another space" in every culture and society. What is more, they perform particular functions within their host society whilst their place as culturally defined spaces is not permanent "for each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another" (ibid: 5). Heterotopia can combine numerous spaces that are in themselves incompatible into one real place. This is characterized by a connection with breaks in time, which Foucault called heterochrony. "The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time (ibidem: 6). Each and every heterotopia is subject to a system of opening and closing that separates it from the rest of the space, and at the same time makes it accessible. Access to it is based on ritual, duty, or coercion, therefore a heterotopia is accessible in a different way than public space (ibidem: 7). Finally, heterotopias function in relation to all the rest of the space that changes form between two fields: illusion and compensation. On the one hand, their role may be to create a space of illusion, one that shows how every reality, space, or places where human life is divided is even more illusory. On the other hand, their role is also to create a space that is different as possible to our own, one which is perfect, meticulous, and well-arranged whilst ours is messy, poorly constructed and confused (ibidem: 8).

Guarded Centres for Foreigners as total institutions

The Border Guard, as one of the so-called uniformed institutions, has a number of features that favour the processes of the totalization of its socio-cultural reality. The decisive role accorded to formal ties over personal ones, combined with a developed hierarchical management structure, limits decision-making and actions based on deliberation, dialogue, and the exchange of views. The formalization and bureaucracy of their functioning leads to the creation of a social environment with a layered system, in which it is easy to identify the division into superiors and subordinates, the managers and the managed, which is so characteristic of total institutions. Undoubtedly, the processes of institutionalization are favoured by the set of formalized norms and traditions prevailing in the Border Guard, as well as by the purpose of their establishment, which is the implementation of specific tasks in the area of ensuring security for the country and its inhabitants. The Border Guard is one of those total institutions that collects and organizes people who pursue specific instrumental goals. In addition, in institutions where we are dealing with a significant hierarchy of the world of personnel (e.g. in “uniformed services”, including the Border Guard), the opacity of power relations increases, in which a person higher in the hierarchy of formal positions (ranks) has power over everyone with a lower position. This state of affairs is well illustrated by the personnel policy in guarded centres for foreigners. Some of the full-time positions not only enable the employment of Border Guard officers, but also of civilian employees. According to the information obtained during the research,² this institution prefers to employ officers of the Border Guard, and civilian employees are only hired in the absence of suitable candidates among the Border Guard personnel. The official argument is to streamline the pro-

² The research project “*Organizacja przestrzeni w polskich ośrodkach detencyjnych dla cudzoziemców*”, which was carried out in 2018–2019, was conducted by a research team consisting of: Agnieszka Chwieduk, Dariusz Niedźwiedzki, Angelika Poniatowska, Jacek Schmidt, Maciej Stępka, and Przemysław Tacik. The main objective of the project was to identify and characterize detention centres as institutions with a specific organizational culture, and to describe and explain the socio-cultural aspects of the organization of space in these centres. Its implementation included an analysis of the sources of secondary data in the form of fourteen categories of documents identified by the researchers. The analysis of the retrieved data concerned the collected material in the form of photographs taken to inventory the space of the centres, empirical material collected using the technique of observation of the Border Guard officers and detained foreigners, as well as in-depth interviews conducted with officers and civilian employees of the Border Guard. The methodological foundations of the project were outlined in the SMiPP article entitled *Specyfika detencji cudzoziemców i jej badanie. Kontekst Polski* by Dariusz Niedźwiedzki and Jacek Schmidt. For more on this subject see Niedźwiedzki, Dariusz and Jacek Schmidt, 2020, *Detencja cudzoziemców w Polsce. Perspektywa teoretyczno-metodologiczna*. Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos; Niedźwiedzki, Dariusz, Jacek Schmidt, Maciej Stępka and Przemysław Tacik, *Strzeżone ośrodki dla cudzoziemców w Polsce jako kultura organizacyjna. Analiza prawna, politologiczna, socjologiczna i antropologiczna*. an expert opinion commissioned by the Migration Research Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Kraków – Poznań 2021. https://kbnm.pan.pl/images/EKSPERTYZA_PAN_2021_ośrodki_strzeżone.pdf

cess of filling vacancies by transferring officers on the orders of a superior. A less official belief is that, due to the doubling of the hierarchy determining the relationship between superior and subordinate (position and rank), officers are easier to manage than civilian personnel.

Isolation

There is no doubt that the features attributed to total institutions by Goffman are clearly discernible in the guarded centres for foreigners in Poland, albeit not all to the same extent. Undoubtedly, a constitutive feature of guarded centres is the isolation of their space from the outside world. It has both a material aspect (walls, barbed wire, security booths, gates, etc.) and a non-material aspect, in the form of restrictive rules of access to the space of the centre for people from outside the institution. This isolation does not solely apply to the outside world beyond the SG. It also includes officers of this institution who are not employed in the centres since their access is also limited solely to necessary situations. Moreover, they usually do not know the characteristics of work and the specifics of the functioning of guarded centres. As one of our interlocutors recalls:

Although I worked for many years both at the branch headquarters and at the facility, I know this district very well, I associated the guarded centre with a fenced place with a three-metre wall, outriggers, barbed wire and a group of people who make sure that no one escaped from there³ (B-K-2-Z)

As he admitted, he had never been to the centre whilst he had been working in the other departments of the Border Guard and he experienced cognitive shock when he started working there.

The work of the administrative department, i.e. the return caregivers, the education department and everything that social caregivers do, was a complete shock to me. I can even say that one of my colleagues once asked him, (...) You, what are you doing there? He says – well, I’m in the education section. – So what does that mean? – I’m doing classes. – What classes? It was just... How someone outside the centre thinks about the centre is completely wrong... I was also very surprised that here it was about something completely different... (B-K-2-Z)

The isolation of guarded centres from the outside environment is relative. These specific microworlds do not have the value of self-sufficiency and therefore establish

³ The lack of a legend for the quotation marks stems from the rules of conduct adopted by the team regarding the protection of the anonymity of interlocutors. Placing a legend in which the actual names of the centres, position held, age or gender of the interlocutors would make it possible to identify the people we interviewed.

strictly regulated relations with their environment.⁴ These relations stem from the place of the centres in the structure of the Border Guard, the formal and legal rules of their operation and the goals they pursue. Firstly, they concern the hierarchical subordination to the authorities of the Border Guard Branches within which they are organized, to the General Headquarters of the Border Guard, and in particular to the Board for Foreigners of the Border Guard Headquarters which is separated within it. It is the Management Board that supervises the functioning of guarded centres and detention centres for foreigners and supervises the administrative activities conducted by organizational units of the Border Guard with foreigners.⁵ In practice, these relations consist in the transfer of orders and instructions from the General Headquarters regarding structural changes in the functioning of the centres as Border Guard units and the rules of conduct towards foreign prisoners. They are mostly imposed, and only occasionally consulted with the management of Border Guard Units and centres. External relations of a horizontal nature within the Border Guard concern contacts and cooperation with officers of other centres, essentially in three cases: during activities related to the relocation of foreigners between individual facilities; during training sessions dedicated to staff employed in detention centres organized by the central authorities of the Border Guard; and during annual meetings of the management of the centres with the Board for Foreigners.

Secondly, guarded centres enter into relations with external entities in connection with the goals pursued by the institution. This applies to courts, the Head of the Office for Foreigners, the prosecutor's office, the police, local government, health care institutions, schools, non-governmental organizations and other entities such as universities and cultural institutions. Among them, a special role is played by institutions with the right to control guarded centres in specific areas related to the broadly understood conditions regulating the stay of foreigners. Such powers apply, for example, to the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children or the Helsinki Committee.⁶ In many conversations, the topic of the influence of non-governmental organizations on the evolution of the centres, from functioning in a mode similar to

⁴ For more on this subject see Niedźwiedzki Dariusz, Jacek Schmidt, Maciej Stęпка and Przemysław Tacik, *Strzeżone ośrodki dla cudzoziemców... op. cit.*, pp. 86–101.

⁵ See <https://www.strazgraniczna.pl/pl/straz-graniczna/struktura-sg/komenda-glowna-sg/komorki-organizacyjne-k/zarząd-do-spraw-cudzozi/1909,Zarząd-do-Spraw-Cudzoziemców-Komendy-Główniej-Strazy-Granicznej.html> (accessed 15.08.2021)

⁶ Information on the results of such inspections can be found in the reports of the mentioned institutions. Office of the Ombudsman for Children, Information on the results of the visit to the Guarded Centre for Foreigners in Kętrzyn, carried out on July 26, 2018, Warsaw, September 6, 2018; Report of representatives of the National Preventive Mechanism on the visit to the Guarded Centre for Foreigners in Biała Podlaska, Warsaw, April 6, 2016; Report of representatives of the National Preventive Mechanism on the visit to the Guarded Centre for Foreigners in Lesznowola, Warsaw, June 8, 2016; Report of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture on the visit to the Guarded Centre for Foreigners and the Detention Centre for Foreigners in Przemyśl, Warsaw 7.02.2018.

the prison system to the relaxation of restrictive regulations towards foreigners, appeared in many conversations.

So yes, most NGOs came here, they also probably drew some conclusions, and these changes are certainly caused by these organizations. Maybe Headquarters also noticed that some things should be changed. On the other hand, NGOs certainly had a huge influence. And the law changes. Organizations might also have had an influence on it (...), for example, there used to be such bans, and now it is completely different. Once foreigners had to clean everything themselves, and now there is a cleaning service, and they only have to take care of their rooms. In the past, they had to take out the rubbish, which was a huge problem for the Georgians, but now its different. It used to be an hour's walk, and now they can do as much as they want. So many changes like this. (B-KS-9-Z)

(...) There was also the perception, mainly from the outside, that there is a tough regime, that foreigners are treated badly, that some practices that should not be used are common. NGOs began to pay a lot of attention to this. Also, the general approach to a foreigner. For example, there was a roll call organized before going out for meals, roll calls were summoned using a whistle, the fact that, for example, going out for a meal was obligatory, that smoking rooms could not be used at night, even though there were people who smoked, that the time in the exercise yard was a maximum of two hours during the day, these were all very restrictive rules that greatly interfered with any normal functioning for a foreigner and gave rise to a lot of different conflicts. And they were very angry about it, worried, there were many conflicts. (B-K-2-Z)

A range of the external contacts of guarded centres stemmed from the need to enable the implementation of certain rights which foreign prisoners have in their possession. According to the statutory guidelines, they must be allowed contact with, among others: Polish state authorities, diplomatic representation or consular office of a foreign country, non-governmental or international organizations dealing with providing assistance to foreigners, contacting and visiting one's attorney in conditions that do not violate the right to privacy, and using medical care and hospital stay or a medical entity performing medical activity, if the state of health so requires.⁷ One of the rights of foreigners is to purchase specific products, of course, if they have the funds and through the Border Guard staff, which leads to contact between the institutions and commercial establishments.

Social exposure

An important consequence of social exposure is that it limits the physical intimacy of those residing in the centre. Perhaps primarily, this stems from the limited amount of space, which in the literature is referred to as "personal" (Hall 1978; Goffman 2011;

Little 1965; Sommer 1959). Similarly, the space in the centres is limited to a minimum, which Goffman (2011) defines as a “cabin”, i.e. a place to which a person can claim a temporary right of exclusive possession. The second reason is that they are constantly subject to camera surveillance. It covers all corridors and rooms in the building where foreigners reside, with the exception of foreigners’ living quarters, toilets and baths. As a consequence, foreigners and officers and employees of the Border Guard in the centre are subject to this monitoring. In our conversations, there were also opinions in which monitoring is largely directed at officers, not foreigners. *“But you know, security will say that monitoring is to watch over them – security of officers, not foreigners. They have such an opinion about it”* (P-P-22-1). The hierarchical observation conducted (Foucault 1979) means that a space is organized which allows constant observation of those who find themselves in it, enabling the tracking of relationships established within it. This functional surveillance is designed to minimize gaps where the observed could produce what is elusive to the staff, especially those holding managerial positions at various levels.

There is no doubt that a characteristic feature associated with social exposure (and not only of the guarded centres but of the entire Border Guard) is functioning in accordance with previously established plans and schedules. They cover virtually all aspects of operation. The employed officers carry out their duties in accordance with the guidelines of their superiors and the daily schedule. They perform certain actions according to weekly and monthly plans. They take part in planned training sessions and exercises. To sum up, if there are no emergency situations, each of the officers and employees knows what activities to perform during the working day, and his superiors know where he is and what he is doing at a given moment. Foreigners, on the other hand, are obliged to follow a daily schedule (e.g. curfew, meal times, access to medical services, of course, except in emergencies, access to specific rooms such as gyms, billiard rooms, libraries, etc.) as well as regulations related to with, among others, visits from outsiders, access to deposits, or the possibility of submitting a purchase request. According to the management of the centres, the almost ubiquitous monitoring of space and people, as well as operating in accordance with plans and schedules, is aimed at maintaining law and order, and is primarily motivated by the requirements of maintaining the safety of foreigners and the employees⁸.

The world of superiors and subordinates

The world of subordinates is frequently invoked to refer to those people who are managed by a given total institution. This is the case with institutions which bring together people who are infirm due to age, illness or a disability (nursing homes),

⁸ More on the issue of safety in the centres can be found in Maciej Stępk'a's article which has also been published in this issue of the journal. The issue of the determinants of spatial organization in centres is analysed in an article by Jacek Schmidt.

incapable of independent existence and socially dangerous, although through no fault of their own (psychiatric hospitals, hospital wards of infectious diseases), people who, as a rule, are intentionally dangerous socially (houses of correction, prisons) or people withdrawing from society (e.g. religious orders, especially those which are enclosed). Meanwhile, in the case of the Border Guard, and in particular guarded centres for foreigners, the issue of Goffman's division of people into superiors and subordinates is more complicated. Of course, all foreigners belong to the world of subordinates, with all the consequences that this entails. It seems that the most important negative consequence of detention for them is being prevented from continuing a given journey, the resulting inability to achieve the goal of their migration. Regardless of how they are individually defined, their placement in a guarded centre and the accompanying threat of deportation to their country of origin are in opposition to that definition. Foreigners in guarded centres are subjected to the standardization, depersonalization, deprivation and degradation of their personality. They are lost in a culturally alien detention space, subjected to the incomprehensible rules of the functioning of the total institution. As a consequence, leads to psychosomatic and psychological disorders in many cases it.⁹

It is worth noting that the world of subordinates is also constituted by officers and employees of the Border Guard, the focus of the considerations in this article. This choice was dictated by access to data collected during the implementation of the project, in which the research primarily covered people employed in the Border Guard rather than foreigners.¹⁰

The formalized hierarchy prevailing in guarded centres means that the world of subordinates among the officers and employees of the Border Guard results from the division of personnel into those in power (management of the centre, management of individual sections and teams) and subordinates (the "rank and file" officers and employees). This is an extremely important observation, which points to the situational and contextual nature of the social positions held in the institution. Officers and employees who do not perform managerial functions, depending on the context, assume roles characteristic of superiors or managers (in relations with foreigners) or subordinates, those who are managed (in relations with management at various levels).

The key variable which shapes the world of subordinates is the phenomenon of their detachment from the mother culture in which their personalities were shaped before entering (whether by employment or placement) in the institution. As a consequence, we are confronted with the characteristic phenomena which are the direct

⁹ The problem of the mental well-being of foreigners placed in guarded centres is addressed by Agnieszka Chwieduk in an article published in this journal

¹⁰ As I have already mentioned, the in-depth interviews which were crucial for the project only concerned persons employed in guarded centres and did not include foreigners. For more on the justification for this methodological choice, see Niedźwiedzki, Dariusz and Jacek Schmidt, 2020, *Detencja cudzoziemców w Polsce. Perspektywa teoretyczno-metodologiczna*. Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos

consequences of becoming a subordinate within a total institution. One of them is the degradation of personality, which takes place through standardization,¹¹ treating everyone according to one model, albeit with the potential extension of standards to several types, and depersonalization, which is the result of joint activities, which can lead to a lack of a sense of one's own self, and consequently a feeling of separation and alienation. The phenomenon of personality deprivation, which occurs as a result of the loss of agency by subordinates, should also be mentioned as it subjects them to the influence of the group authority of staff, one which is highly sanctioning and which applies various types of restrictions on the potential for free action and movement. Deprivation is also a consequence of the sustained mental tension between members of the world of subordinates – it is the result of the lack of unambiguous norms of the new culture of the total institution. This is easily discernible in the case of the foreigners, who not only have to struggle with the differences between Polish culture their own, but also with the unique challenges of the total institution. It also includes persons employed in guarded centres who, on the basis of an order, may be delegated for a certain period of time to work in other centres or facilities responsible for guarding the state border.

In general, in the case of officers and employees assuming the role of subordinates, the issues concern standardization, depersonalization, degradation and deprivation of personality resulting from the principles of the functioning of a hierarchical institution such as the Border Guard. In particular, the disciplinary power exercised in it (Foucault 1979, Rose 1999: 22–23, Czyżewski 2012), which “orders in a detailed way how to act and introduces methods of managing large societies, communities and institutions by means of panoptic supervision in the economic field educational and military” (Czyżewski 2012: 117). The disciplinary mechanism of power, using both discursive (texts, speech productions) and non-discursive components (organizational rules, institutional solutions, the shaping of the architecture and space), precisely and in detail regulates behaviour, rewarding desired actions and sanctioning those that deviate from the normative principles. As a result, it causes a deficit in the subordinates' sense of freedom, agency and responsibility for themselves. On the other hand, it encourages the construction of an institutionally required identity in the form of a model of an “exemplary Border Guard officer”.

It is worth noting a unique aspect of guarded centres in terms of standardization and the related depersonalization of subordinate officers. As a so-called uniformed institution, the Border Guard generally provides its employees with a uniform. Meanwhile, in the case of some personnel of guarded centres, it is recommended that they wear “civilian” clothes while at work. This applies in particular to persons employed

¹¹ In the case of Border Guard officers, one manifestation of such standardization is, of course, uniforms. With regard to foreigners, an example is the so-called welcome pack given during admission to guarded centres. It contains a set of hygiene products and a set for eating meals, the same for all foreigners.

in educational sections/teams who, throughout the period of work, stay in the space where the foreigners placed in the centre are located, remaining in constant contact with them. The main reason is to foster the "warming" of relations between social carers and foreigners, since the former are obliged to primarily use deliberative measures in their contact with the latter. Another reason is to clearly distinguish this group of officers and employees from the personnel employed in security sections/guard teams. The latter also perform work in direct contact with foreigners, but by acting as a guard, they seek to foster respect for their actions, e.g. through uniforms clearly associated with the potential use of force.

The division of the personnel of guarded centres into superiors, managers and subordinates, a division associated with the strong hierarchy characterizing the Border Guard, is conducive to the emergence of a patron-client relationship. In the tradition of sociological thought, this is a specific division of power among social actors, the defining element of which is the inequality of the parties to the relationship in terms of status and power (Gellner 1977; Scott 1977; Eisenstadt, Roniger 1984; Willerton 1992). This differentiation allows one of the parties to the relationship (the patron) to influence the behaviour of the other (the client) in accordance with their expectations. This is because the person taking the role of the client resigns from some of their freedom and makes the implementation of the goals related to their aspirations dependent on the will and actions of the patron, trusting in their competences and capabilities.

Patron-client relationships have existed throughout history in all cultures. They are related to the processes of emergence of permanent forms of social differentiation resulting from different access to socially desirable goods and services. In this sense, they are universal, widespread and permanent over time. "The universality of patron-client relationships can be sought in the rationality of human actions. Under a colourful, diverse, often exotic form, behind a variety of rituals, values and expectations, there is a core of rational actions through which the participants of these relationships try to maximize their individual, particular goals" (Tarkowski: 57). Nevertheless, these relationships can take different forms, appear in different places and perform different functions in particular institutions and social groups.

According to Gellner, clientelism is fostered by incomplete centralization, imperfect markets, and faulty bureaucracies. All of these features of institutional reality can be identified in guarded centres. Despite the hierarchy and omnipotence of power, the management is not able to control all aspects of the life of this collective entity in accordance with the applicable regulations, which leads to the emergence of people who control certain sources of goods and spheres of activity. There is no doubt that, as a hierarchical institution which totalizes reality, there is a deficit of specific, socially desirable goods in the Border Guard – prestige, social recognition, power, and financial resources are among the most easily recognizable. Prestige, social recognition, and power are rather strongly correlated with the position in the hierarchy of

institutions than with the achievement goods obtained as a result of people's daily activities. Financial resources, especially those additional to the basic salary, are also scarce.¹² A defective bureaucracy means particularization and individualization of the principles of operation of all public entities and institutions and is one of the features of our contemporary administrative reality. The environment of guarded centres is extremely conducive to the development of this phenomenon due to the tendency to regulate all aspects of its functioning. In our interviews, there were mainly elements about the appropriate "hanging onto" particular people in order to facilitate the course of a career. As one of our interlocutors stated:

I have never been, anywhere, to any commander or chief, to ask. I'm not part of that, it's not me. And most of the other officers are walking around and fawning. And the more they ass kiss, the more they get promoted. And that's why it's so political. It's not important what you can do, it's important who you know. That's a real shame. If the organization is a uniformed one, it should be non-political, and here there is a lot of politics. Loads of politics. And this is very bad in the uniformed services, where people are dealing with those who serve despite not serving themselves. Where people succeed in becoming so-called fast-track generals in the Border Guard. (B-KS-8-Z)

The aforementioned deficits, combined with the rigid social and institutional structure, mean that the basic function of clientist relationships in this institution is to strengthen the subjectivity and agency of people in realizing their own aspirations

To sum up, detention centres have a number of features that are characteristic of total institutions. In the case of the foreigners placed within them, we can discern a far-reaching unity in terms of the place of work, play and leisure. It is easy to distinguish a division into superiors, those in power, and subordinates, those who are managed, in guarded centres. At the same time, a specific feature of this social environment are the Border Guard officers who do not hold managerial positions, who situationally and contextually belong to both of the categories of people distinguished. Due to the hierarchy of this institution, we are dealing with the phenomenon of the omnipotence of power. The functioning of detention centres is based on detailed regulations and planned activities limiting the spontaneous behaviour of the people residing in them. Undoubtedly, the most visible feature is the separation of guarded centres from the outside environment. It is worth noting, however, that this insulation has a specific character. On the one hand, the centres are areas that are difficult to access for people from outside the institution. On the other hand, the goals they pursue means that contact with external institutions are both numerous and intensive. Conducting procedures towards foreigners (issuing a decision obliging

¹² Managers of centres for foreigners have, within their competence, i.a. the potential to grant special allowances and bonuses to selected subordinates on a discretionary basis, albeit with limited financial resources.

them to leave Poland or granting them one of the forms of international protection) requires the formation of numerous ties with the Head of the Office for Foreigners, courts, diplomatic missions of foreigners' countries of origin, as well as lawyers representing their interests. The need to provide medical care requires frequent contact with external medical facilities. It is worth remembering that poor health may supply the basis for releasing a foreigner from the centre. From the conversations with the Border Guard staff and informal conversations with the placed persons, it appears that they learn about such a possibility in at least three ways. Firstly, from their legal representatives and people operating within non-governmental organizations involved in helping foreigners. Second, from other foreigners by word of mouth. Thirdly, while staying in the centres, they witness inmates being released for medical reasons. Since leaving the guarded centre is a goal pursued by all detainees, the rationality of their behaviour is evidence of poor health in numerous contacts with physicians of various specialties.¹³ Fulfilling the obligation to provide schooling for children in family centres also results in frequent contact with educational institutions and teachers. Finally, the organization of free time for foreigners, which, according to the staff of the Border Guard, contributes to the maintenance of order and safety in the centres by keeping the detainees satisfied, leads to numerous relationships with cultural institutions, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The above-mentioned features of detention centres lead to the conclusion that they meet the criteria of the definition of "heterotopias of deviation". Undoubtedly, a specific normative model prevails in them, leading to the formation of styles of conduct different from other spaces. In the centres, spaces that are incompatible with each other are juxtaposed, in which functioning is carried out according to different rules. On the one hand, there are those available to foreigners, while on the other hand there are those where only the employed personnel of the Border Guard operate. Nevertheless, an order of action prevails in them, largely determined by heterochrony, a specific time cycle. Its starting point is the admission of a foreigner on the basis of a court decision on placement, and the final point is when the foreigner leaves the centre, regardless of the reasons for such a decision. This heterochrony is correlated with the number of foreigners residing in the centres and affects the work of the staff employed. In the case of a small number of officers, some of the employed officers may be temporarily delegated, e.g. to border posts by the Commander of the Branch. Finally, as heterotopias guarded centres create the illusion of an orderly world whose function is to ensure the safety of the rest of society against foreigners who have illegally crossed the state border.

¹³ For example, in one of the surveyed centres in the spring of 2019, 49 foreigners (with about 70 placed in that period) made 68 visits to external medical facilities in one month. These were visits to specialist doctors because GP and nursing care is provided to foreigners in the centre.

The social-psychological consequences of totalization

The conducted research, and in particular the interviews and informal discussions, allow us to draw a number of conclusions regarding the impact of the above-described model of guarded centres as a totalizing, heterotopic institution on their employees. As I have already mentioned, the world of subordinates means that the personnel employed by the Border Guard in the centres find themselves in a particular social situation. They are subordinates in terms of their relations with the various levels of management, but at the same time they assume the roles of managers in relation to the foreigners housed there. It is worth noting, however, that these two types of social dyads are very different. In particular, the contact with foreigners is not based on the issuing of commands and orders (the exceptions are so-called emergency situations, primarily conflicts between the detained or between a foreigner and a Border Guard official), which they experience in relations with their superiors. They are expected to use soft forms of influence in the form of deliberation and negotiations. This type of conduct is even imposed by superiors in the aforementioned emergency situations. The use of verbal or physical violence is considered a last resort. Meanwhile, conflict situations are an inseparable element of the functioning of detention centres, especially those with a predominantly male makeup. Firstly, there are tensions and clashes between those placed from different cultural backgrounds. Secondly, conflicts are completely natural when the foreigners express dissatisfaction with their placement in various ways and want to leave the centre as soon as possible. This aspiration is obvious, since the goal of their journey is a more or less specific place, and being placed in a centre amounts to travelling without moving. In their contacts with foreigners, functionaries are meant to show calmness and patience in order to avoid any escalation of tension. According to many of our interlocutors holding managerial positions, a person engaged in direct contact with inmates should

definitely be resistant to stress. Have a high threshold of stress resistance. Coping with difficult situations, firmness in decision-making, absolutely no signs of discrimination against any nationalities, this is also above all. What else? Control, because it is known that officers are entitled to use direct coercion measures, so that there is no abuse and showing any signs of their power, because this is also unacceptable. (P-K-1-Z)

In our interviews, a frequently mentioned term used in relation to officers who have direct contact with foreigners (mainly members of the protection and education section) is that they should be “thick-skinned”, i.e. not react to verbal aggression from foreigners. At the same time, statements about provocative and unfavourable behaviour of foreigners were repeated many times.

They also know how they can harm us too... They know their rights, can harm us and that's it. Only it's not always the case that this... That they... Well, in general, they are not friendly towards security. (P-P-14-l)

As a consequence, regret was expressed in many interviews that foreigners do not respect Border Guard officers as much as they are respected by them.

The above-mentioned expectations towards officers appeared along with the evolution of the functioning of guarded centres from the prison model towards a more liberal one. According to people from the management of the centres, not everyone accepts this easily, in particular the officers of the security section who do not always understand the reasons for which they have been required to give up some of the trappings of power.

(...) The General Headquarters sent specific guidelines on how things should look, that tasers should be kept in service rooms, as well as batons. And here, of course, it was hard for the officers to accept it. (B-K-2-Z)

A consequence of the described situation of employees and officers who do not hold managerial positions is sometimes the use of an adaptive technique combining withdrawal with elements of rebellion. The former consists in relatively isolating oneself from the reality of a total institution while formally meeting the various expectations that are issued by superiors and managers. The tactic of rebellion, in turn, means opposing the rules of the functioning of a total institution, often extremely effective in obtaining various types of goods and meeting needs, because a total institution likes "peace and order", and all rebellions destroy its desired state of functioning. As one of our interlocutors recalled about such officers:

Very often they just aren't there. If, because of the nature of the service, they are given any official orders, they are really surprised – me again, why should I, and why should I do it? On this basis, and such general reluctance. You can see that if they have to do something, they do it with great pain, difficulty, it's hard for them to work in this environment. Well, but to some extent they have to fulfil these tasks there. And they are perfectly aware of it. This bare minimum is being met, but when that bare minimum is met, a thousand questions arise, starting with "why me again?" (P-K-3-Z)

As can be seen, the tactic of rebellion is used and adapted to the reality of a hierarchical uniformed institution.

Withdrawal and rebellion are sometimes associated with the burnout of functionaries. Undoubtedly, it can be caused by the emergence of a certain trauma that appears as a result of direct contact with foreigners, or rather experiencing their problems.

Because if we go too far, we can deepen the trauma of this man, and secondly, we are going through a secondary trauma. We go through all this too. Anyway, I know how it used to be, how you talked to foreigners, how they tell you certain things, it's not like you completely forget about it. Sometimes it may stay in the head somewhere and when

you saw that a foreigner had a very difficult situation, e.g. he says that now he will return, who knows what will happen to him, that he may die, then later it wasn't so comfortable. (B-KS -9-Z)

Burnout can take various forms, also potentially limiting the potential of working further in the centre.

There is a statement that a person working in a centre involuntarily becomes a bit of a racist too. I say this in the context that people from certain countries, from certain social classes, come to us, and usually they are such low social classes, so these people somehow do not generally represent the higher culture of a given country, so there are often problems with them because of this, that they are uneducated, uncultured and we are convinced that after all they represent their country. (P-P-22-1)

Another consequence of the positions of subordinates and managers in detention centres is the combination of the adaptive technique of cold calculation with settling in. In the first case, this concerns the calculated behaviour resulting from the analysis of the "profitability" of one's own behaviour in terms of satisfying one's own needs. Settling in means looking for the good sides in the reality of a total institution and finding loopholes in the institution's formal, legal and moral system that can be used to meet one's own needs. As one of our interlocutors emphasized:

This is such a place, this centre, being in the section here, being a teacher in quotation marks, that there is no other place like this in the guard. Because it is an institution established for generally different purposes, to protect the border and such matters. But here is such an oasis. I found myself in it. Once a lot, and now a little less – let's face it. But I still think it's the best place for me that I could have. I can't imagine going back to the [border – author's addition]. (P-P-22-1)

Both of the aforementioned adaptation techniques are aimed at adapting to the system of rewards and punishments employed in the total institution. According to Foucault (1979), the normalizing sanction primarily applies to the subordinates in the employee group. It includes both micro-punishment in the form of minor physical punishments (e.g. performing previously unforeseen physical work), restrictions on rights (e.g. refusal to be granted leave within a specified period) and minor humiliations (e.g. ordering work that degrades one's position and status in an institution). In fact, what is punishable is the lack of conformity, which is to be corrected by the disciplinary practices of the authorities. Normalizing sanctions also mean micro-rewarding, i.e. rewards and privileges received for good conduct and practices. In the Border Guard and in its subordinate centres for foreigners, the basic instrument of micro-rewarding are the financial resources granted to subordinates by their superiors. In a total institution, maintaining proper relations with specific superiors can lead to the achievement of goods in the form of power and prestige that go beyond the

formal place in the staff structure. According to L. Coser (1974), “greedy institutions” are those that seek exclusive and undivided loyalty to the institution, where therefore there is competition for loyalty, which is usually normative in nature. On this basis, the already mentioned patron-client relationship develops in detention centres, which our interlocutors mostly mentioned in informal situations.

When it comes to the world of the employees, Goffman primarily pays attention to the specific moral climate and interpersonal norms. There is a fundamental difference between those in the world of a total institution and those in the outside world and the staff, of course, participate in both axionormative orders. The first problem is the objectification of other people, especially those from the world of subordinates, which is much greater in a total institution than in life outside it. Secondly, there is the use of norms and standards that are definitely different from what the staff uses in “civilian” life. A consequence of this are various types of mental problems, including “escaping” into various types of addictions. This axionormative difference can especially be seen in power relations. The fear of superiors is passed on to many staff members from the subordinate and managed world. The effect of this phenomenon that we observed during the research was the need to convince our interlocutors in all subsequent detention centres that our study visit was not a disguised form of control by the central authorities of the Border Guard. An extreme case of this phenomenon during the research was the statement of a person after an interview, to which she voluntarily agreed, that if she was transferred “to the border”, she would know that it was the result of the interview.

Conclusion

I have no doubt that detention centres for foreigners in Poland are institutions that totalize social reality and this leads to numerous psychosocial and cultural consequences. The ones indicated in this article only concern one of the categories of people participating in the institution, the world of subordinates and those managed recruited from among the employed personnel of the Border Guard. Although the conclusions regarding the characteristics of guarded centres as totalizing institutions and the indicated psychosocial consequences of such a state of affairs are of a generalizing nature, it is worth emphasizing that totalization applies to individual facilities to differing degrees, and the psychosocial consequences apply to persons in the surveyed centres to a varying extent. During the research, it transpired that, despite being part of a single structure of the Border Guard, individual centres create different microworlds in terms of their characteristics and functioning. Structural conditions were modified in a different way through the agency of the actors. Despite the totalizing nature of the institution, the organization of activities and interpersonal relations in these microworlds are ultimately determined by the people who reside within them.

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