

‘External Limbo’ – ‘Internal Limbo’. On the Detention of Immigrants in Polish Guarded Centres for Foreigners

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Abstract

For immigrants, a disruption of their migration biography as a result of detention, waiting to be granted the status of a refugee/asylum seeker, is tantamount to being in a state of suspension. Relevant literature often metaphorically refers to this situation as a state of ‘limbo’. In my article, I refer it to the institutional dimension of the total reality of the Guarded Centres for Foreigners (GCFs), calling it an ‘external limbo’ in which the individual is reduced to the rules of the controlling system. This situation evokes a state of alienation in the subject (immigrant in the role of a subordinate), who is strictly dependant on the officers (personnel) supervising their functioning. In effect, such conditions lead to different adaptation attitudes of the people detained in the GCFs, but above all, they do not promote their mental well-being. I call this last dimension of one’s stay at the GCF an ‘internal limbo’.

My reflections are concentrated on an analysis of official documents describing events concerning a young Woman detained in one of the six GCFs in Poland. I treat this material as an exploratory-explanative case study on the topic of the attitude of detention institutions to persons ‘in a mental/emotional crisis’ and I ask about the ‘external limbo’ as understood in psychiatric anthropology, focusing on sociocultural conditions legitimising institutional use of disciplining practices in relation to the people the personnel of GCFs consider as ‘raising concern’. In my interpretation, I refer to the context of the functioning of the guarded centres as a total institution and the ‘economies of morality’ that are disclosed there. As a result, my goal is to indicate the characteristic manifestations of the ‘external limbo’, which may affect the condition of the ‘internal limbo’, and I progress towards reflection on the sense of detaining persons who pose no threat to their surroundings in the

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GCF, which is connected with an answer to the question concerning the manner of functioning of the guarded centres (in view of the welfare of all the people who stay there, not only immigrants).

Keywords: detention of immigrants, state of suspension, psychiatric anthropology

A state of 'limbo' is a metaphor picturing the situation of immigrants whose migration biography was severed as a result of a forced detention in either a refugee camp or a Guarded Centre for Foreigners (GCF). In my paper, I propose to refer it to an institutional dimension of the total reality, i.e. the GCF. I call it an 'external limbo', in which the individual is reduced to the rules of the controlling system.

In such a situation, we might also talk about a specific alienation of the subject (immigrant in the role of the subordinate), being closely dependant on the officers (personnel) supervising their functioning. In effect, such conditions lead to different attitudes of the people detained in the GCFs: from establishing relations with other immigrants (Kellezi 2020), to a rebellion aimed at turning attention to them (Niedźwiedzki 2017:31), but above all, they may not facilitate the detainees' mental well-being. I call this last dimension of one's stay at the GCF an 'internal limbo', since it directly affects the autonomy of the individual – in particular one who, not posing a threat to the public, may, upon detention in the GCF, experience a mental/emotional crisis.

I concentrate my reflections on a series of events concerning a young Woman detained in one of the six GCFs in Poland. Her behaviour was described in nine official memos prepared by Border Guard officers. I acquired the said documentation as a part of my one-year long (2018–2019) research in these institutions (Niedźwiedzki, Schmidt 2020). I treat this material as an exploratory-explanative case study (Yin 2018: 41) concerning an attitude of detention institutions to people 'in a mental/emotional crisis'. I ask about the 'external limbo' as understood in psychiatric anthropology, focusing on sociocultural conditions legitimizing the institutional use of disciplining practices (Foucault 1961, 1972a, 1987b) in relation to people considered as raising concern by GCF personnel.² In my interpretation, I refer to the context of the functioning of the guarded centres, which I examined *inter alia* by interviewing the personnel and conducting extrospective observation. This approach³ makes it possible to take into account the perspective (1) of the total institution (see also Goffman 2011a) – one GCF should be considered – and the 'economies of morality' which emerge there (2) (Fassin 2009). In view of the above, I treat the terms 'external limbo' and 'internal limbo' as analytical tools for describing institutional practices used in relation to people 'in a mental and emotional crisis', manifesting themselves

² In the discourse of the GCF, this is most often tantamount to a disturbance of peace and a threat to the security of the facility itself as well as other people from its surroundings.

³ I describe the said results of my research in an article concerning the ethnography of guarded centres in Poland – a case of BG guards and sentry guards, which pends publication.

at the interface between the imperative of the securitisation of behaviours in a total institution (GCF) (Fijałkowski 2012, Legut, Pędziwiatr 2018, Stępa 2018) and individual interpretations of this situation (Archer 2013, 2015).

As a result, my goal is to indicate the characteristic manifestations of the 'external limbo' and I progress towards a reflection on the sense of detaining people who pose no threat to their surroundings in the GCF, which is connected with an answer to the question concerning the manner of functioning of the guarded centres (in view of the welfare of all the people who stay there, not only immigrants).

1. The analytical usefulness of the terms 'external limbo' and 'internal limbo'

limbo, in Roman Catholic church theology, the border place between heaven and hell where dwell those souls who, though not condemned to punishment, are deprived of the joy of eternal existence with God in heaven. The word is of Teutonic origin, and means a 'border' or 'anything joined on'. The concept of limbo probably developed in Europe in the Middle Ages but was never defined as a church dogma, and reference to it was omitted from the official catechism of the Church that was issued in 1992.⁴

Although frequently used in different contexts, the term 'limbo' (Latin *limbus*, i.e. edge; Polish abyss) was defined in the vocabulary of the Catholic theology (Ferrer-Gallardo, Albet-Mas 2016: 257). It currently expresses the idea of non-existence, confinement or, in other words, existence between two states (*ibidem*). Hence, it is a universally familiar metaphor expressing perceptions of trauma resulting from non-belongingness and clearly determined borders in identification, commonly shared in Western cultures (*ibidem*). As such, it appears in numerous texts devoted to migrant and refugees studies as well as the situation of people granted (or seeking) asylum. Basically, it is used to refer to: (1) a state of suspension, in which immigrants may be subjected to various disciplining policies of the authorities of a given state, shaping their identification (Mountz, Wright, Miyares, Bailley 2021; Nimführ, Sesay 2019), integrative measures (Daniş, Perouse 2006), and health policies (Jonzon, Lindkvist, Johansson 2015); (2) a long-term state of temporariness resulting in illusory stability (McNevin, Missbach 2018) and attempts at its normalisation (Brun, Fábos 2015; Castañeda 2012); (3) a state of uncertainty as to one's fate (Havrylchuk, Ukrayinchuk 2017; Esaiasson Lajevardi, Sohlberg 2022); (4) a state deepening stress and resulting in mental difficulties with adjustment to the situation (Solberg, Sengoelge, Nissen, Saboonchi 2021). It can also mean a 'legal suspension' (or 'legal limbo') (Perks, Clifford 2009).

In these cases, in view of its symbolic connotations, the term 'limbo' signals a troublesome stagnation, in which people attempt to accept their fate, are subjected

⁴ limbo | Definition & History | Britannica [access: 07.07.2022]

to various pressures, and risk stress and suffering. They were stopped, detained and their migration-related and existential plans were severed, while their future seems to be difficult to plan. Above all, however, the fact negatively affects their sense of agency. Moreover, the 'limbo' understood as a 'legal suspension' indicates a negative ethical sense of the purpose behind the detention of immigrants. It concerns a systemic dooming of people to trauma even when their stay in the GCF ends with a positive consideration of their legal situation, and the detainees are granted asylum (or the status of refugees).

'External limbo' – 'internal limbo'

In the above scope, the term 'limbo' is used to signal the purposefulness of the control of mobility, inter alia through a system of guarded centres. It therefore operationalises the 'level of the institution' in which both the detainees and the personnel who supervise them are entangled. In this approach, a single social actor is reduced to the structure and system. The subject's agency sphere, through which they express their autonomy, is strongly reduced despite the fact that they can perceive themselves as autonomous in relation to the systems they simultaneously (co) create, adopting various adaptation strategies. This happens since the subject acts/inter-reacts in reply to their existential concerns (Archer 2015, Domecka 2013) and searches for solutions in the already existing spheres and the spheres they create, thus becoming a multiple⁵ social actor. In the case of detention, the subordinates/detained (as well as their supervisors) may hence negotiate with the 'state of suspension' created by the institution. At the same time, they undertake, as a part of the institutional framework, their 'internal dialogue' with themselves, also negotiating their position in the group. It remains an open question how the system reacts to those who are in 'mental/emotional crisis' – and whether they should be at all detained in the GCFs?

Detention *per se* makes one wonder about the sense of its experience by the subjects whose life develops on its conditions: what features that life is taking on and where is it heading? It can be assumed that just as total conditions create total relations, and the latter an appropriate perspective of interpretation of the reality (Goffman 2011a), legal suspension treated as an 'external limbo' may generate the state of an 'internal limbo'. The autonomy (subjectivity) of the individual, in particular one who does not pose a danger to the public and may, upon being detained in the GCF, experience a 'mental/emotional crisis', is systemically omitted, ignored, and reduced to the categories appropriate to support the institution rather than the detainee's mental/emotional well-being, which may be lost or suffer deterioration as a result.

⁵ I assume on a working basis that being a social actor/actress is an ability to combine many social roles, sometimes extreme ones (a serial killer of children and a father looking after his family) or inconsistent with the subject's views on their role in the world (e.g. a conscripted pacifist).

Therefore, the ‘internal limbo’ is experienced by the individual subject/social actor because of the detention conditions in which they stay. The compulsion of the stay in the GCF and a considerable limitation of one’s personal freedom (Klein, Williams 2012) on the one hand, and attempts to leave the place in consistence with one’s own migration plans on the other, are extreme options – both of them outside the reach of the detainee’s agential actions. This is because, ultimately, it is the system rather than the individual who will decide about his/her case. And if this is so, what can the immigrant have any influence on? It is highly probable that their behaviour will take the form of ‘active’ (relational) adaptation (Kellezi 2020). However, it does not exclude the subject’s withdrawal from social life in the GCF towards some form of questioning of the facility. Literature from the area of psychology shows that the notion of the ‘limbo’ in the sense of suspension was used by people coping with results of deep trauma such as being sexually abused in childhood – they felt ‘the state of floating in time and space (...) [as a result of their earlier experience – A.CH.’s remark], a disintegration of the body, mind and identity, ultimately leading to chaos, exhaustion and frustration’.⁶ In the case of immigrants detained in the GCFs, it is the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which is the most frequently diagnosed state of trauma prior to one’s detention (Makara-Studzińska, Partyka, Ziemecki 2012: 111). It does not pass as a result of detention and placement in a GCF after undertaking therapeutic measures in relation to people with a diagnosed PTSD, or even after their being granted the status of a refugee.⁷ This is reflected in research supported with statistics: ‘As a diagnosed condition Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is by far the most common mental health problem among refugees and asylum seekers’ (Carta M. G. et al. 2005). Apart from the above, it should be assumed that the immigrants detained in the GCFs, just like EU citizens, may suffer from mental disorders and poor mental health, i.e. experience tension, impaired functioning combined with suffering, and display symptoms of diagnosed mental disorders (ICD) such as schizophrenia and depression. It is worth underlining that poor mental health, despite being defined rather broadly here, is a term rarely appearing in the narrations of sentry guards/guards or other BG officers from GCFs who assess the behaviour of the supervised immigrants. However, this term is meaningful for the case under analysis.

This is because the ‘internal limbo’ may be a context-related category indicating: (1) specific traumatising circumstances seen from the perspective of the subject, under which the absence of mental/emotional well-being may show or even be initiated; (2) moral injustice understood as ‘spiritual’ rather than only psychological abuse (Grimell 2019), experienced by the immigrant as a result of their detention and stay in the GCF. What is more, it may be helpful for the understanding of the cases as

⁶ Frontiers | *In Limbo: Time Perspective and Memory Deficit Among Female Survivors of Sexual Abuse* | Psychology ([frontiersin.org](https://www.frontiersin.org)), 2021

⁷ It should be pointed out that individuals who were granted the status of refugees did not have to previously be detained in the GCF.

a part of which the already mentioned adaptation (to relations) is questioned. The state of the 'internal limbo' paradoxically creates a chance for survival, but may also deepen the mental/emotional crisis, for example by the individual turning attention to themselves in a different – their own – way – one different from the conventions adopted in the GCF in relation to immigrants. However, what is necessary for this is a recovery of one's own autonomy and agency, which is strengthened in an act of rebellion or closing oneself to the outside world. It should be pointed out in advance that it is a dramatic situation – for at least two reasons. Firstly, in the case of my research, access to the way in which the GCFs extend mental and psychiatric help to the detained was – as explained later – very limited. A question appears here as to not only the transparency of measures in place in relation to people who find their way to the GCFs, but also the extent to which the system actually provides for the possibility of such help in the time of a potential mental/emotional crisis and whether it is at all able to extend it effectively. Secondly, the position of immigrants from the GCFs hits a social blind spot in the host country in view of the scant informative and practical value for the host society (which could hardly be called hospitable in this case) and a failure of the very GCF system, which is self-limiting due to the total nature of relations in the institution.

2. The case of a woman from a GCF – economies of morality

The quotations presented below concern a young woman detained in the GCF's Ward for Unaccompanied Minors.⁸ Her behaviour certainly raised the 'concern' of the sentry guards who guarded her, which was well remembered and reported. This is reflected in the content of their nine memos. I am quoting the memos in their original form. The absence of direct witnesses does not make this 'reported/written story' any less valuable or more mysterious, since – as it turns out – the official documents quoted below say a lot about it...

'Nine Days in the GCF' – memos

Day 1.

On 17 May 2019 from 08:00 hours until 20:00 hours, I was on duty as a Provost of the Centre with task 3. At 10:22 hours, the detainee sat down in the corridor in front of the window of the room of the Provost of the Centre⁹ and began to brush her teeth,

⁸ Unaccompanied Minors Ward – one of many wards for immigrants in the Guarded Centres for Foreigners; see D. Niedźwiedzki, J. Schmidt, *Detencja cudzoziemców w Polsce. Perspektywa teoretyczno-metodologiczna*, Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, Kraków 2020.

⁹ Provost of the Centre is one of the many functions fulfilled by BG officers in the GCFs; see *ibidem*.

spitting onto the floor; using her toothpaste, she wrote the word 'Iraq' and drew some unfamiliar characters. At 10:45 hours, Ms X, the detainee's social guardian, came to her. After a conversation, the detainee went to her room and began to take off covers from the mattresses and bed sheets. At 12:10, she switched off the power cable of the water distributor, and tried to tear off a poster from a wall. While staying in the dining room, during her lunch, she was trying to hide a metal spoon in a pocket of her jacket. At 13:35 hours, while staying in the sports yard, the detainee threw a plastic bottle through the fence. The sentry guard from the intervention team instructed her to comply with the rules and regulations of the Centre, after which she was eating her meals while sitting on the floor of the dining room. In each of the above situations, the foreigner was instructed to comply with the rules and regulations.'

[A note made in handwriting by the Shift Manager – SM] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo]. SM'

Night/Day 2.

On 17/18 May 2019, I was on duty as a sentry guard in command of the GCF's Unaccompanied Minors Ward. At 21: 47 hours, the detainee tore off a pictogram from the toilet door (room 032). I instructed her about the principles to be complied with at the GCF and the organisational and order-related rules and regulations. The foreigner did not react to my words, and seemed to be indifferent to the entire situation. Until the end of my duty, she behaved calmly. She walked down the corridor, looked at the extinguisher and information boards on the walls, laughed to herself and sat on the corridor floor for a longer time. The Provost of the Centre was informed about the information¹⁰ on an ongoing basis.

[A note made in handwriting by the Shift Manager] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo] (...). I have prescribed that the detainee be paid special attention. I provided information on the detainee to her social guardian'

[A note made in handwriting by the Provost of the Centre] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo]'

Day 3.

On 18 May 2019 between 8:00 and 20:00 hours, I was on duty as a sentry guard of the Family and Women's Ward. At 9:35, the foreigner was taking food remains from the bin in the food warming room. Sentry guards X and Y from the Family and Women's Ward instructed the detainee to stop taking food from the bin. The officers informed her that meals for foreigners are provided in the dining room at the times specified in the GCF's daily schedule. At 11:30, the foreigner returned to room 109 (where food is warmed up) and started to take food remains from the bin. A BG sergeant instructed the detainee about the appropriate behaviour and the necessity to comply with the rules and regulations in force at the GCF. The foreigner complied with the officer's order.'

¹⁰ The wording of the sentence reflects the original. The author of the memo may have used the word 'information' mistakenly, since it does not fit the context of the sentence.

[A note made in handwriting by the SM] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo]'

[A note made in handwriting by the Provost of the Centre] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo]'

[A note made in handwriting by the SM] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo] and ordered that the foreigner's behaviour is paid special attention.'

Day 4.

On 19 May 2019 between 8:00 and 20:30 hours, I was on duty as the commanding officer of the Unaccompanied Minors Ward with task 7. The detainee took a frying pan from the food warming room and was walking down the Family and Women's Ward, carrying the object. Sentry guards of the Family and Women's Ward asked the detainee several times to put the frying pan back to its place. She did not comply with their request and headed to the Unaccompanied Minors Ward with the pan, where I took it away from her. At 17:00, the detainee spilt some water onto the sluice passage door¹¹ by the Provost's office. She then tried to pour water into the mail box. At around 17:30 hours, she began to kick sluice passage No. 1. After being reprimanded by the officers, the foreigner went to the bathroom. Together with the Provost, I went to the room to find the foreigner trying to disconnect the professional washing machine from the three-phase power supply. The second washing machine in the room was knocked over. The washing machines in the bathroom did not show any external damage. At 18:30, the detainee closed herself in the toilet and was lying on the floor. Using toothpaste, she wrote 'Glass hate' on the toilet window pane.¹² The person was informed of the need to comply with the rules and regulations in force at the GCF in each case of her inappropriate behaviour. I was informing the Centre's provost about the above on an ongoing basis, and he ordered that the detainee be covered by particular attention.'

[A note made in handwriting by the Shift Manager] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo] (...).' 'I have prescribed that particular attention be paid to the Detainee'

[A note made in handwriting by the Provost of the Centre] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo]'

Day 5.

On 20.05.2019 between 8:00 and 20:30 hours, I was on duty as the sentry guards of the Unaccompanied Minors Ward. For most of my duty, the female foreigner behaved in ways inconsistent with social norms – during breakfast, she took four knives and used them to eat her meal; she spilt water in the corridor; she tore off signs from doors on the ground floor several times; she was shouting threats at me and I made a separate memo about it; she threw rubbish in the corridor under the common room; in the bathroom, she let water run from all the taps and did not turn them off; after talking to the psychiatrist, she threw a tomato and boiled eggs at the sluice passage door; she was sitting for a long

¹¹ Sluice passage: a protected passage dividing e.g. a ward in which immigrants are staying from the other wards in the GCF building.

¹² The words in quotation marks are provided in the original version.

time on the corridor floor; she did not react to the officers' orders her only reaction was laughter [written without punctuation marks]; she moved the bed in the common room; she stayed in the toilet in cubicle No. 3 and was eating there.'

[A note made in handwriting by the Shift Manager] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo] (...). I asked the sentry guard to pay more attention to the foreigner, and react firmly to her behaviours.'

[A note made in handwriting by the Provost] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo]'

Night/Day 6.

On 20/21 May 2019 between 20:00 hours and 8:00 hours I was on duty as a sentry guard of the Interventions Ward. At 7:50 hours, the detainee wanted to throw away two bags of rubbish, which she put by the door F4. I informed the detainee that rubbish needs to be thrown away into the rubbish container. She ignored me and went to her room. I felt concerned about the large volume of rubbish that she gathered. Having checked the content of the first bag, I found waste, while the second bag contained mattress covers. I took the latter to the general section. I informed the Provost of the Centre [about the above].'

[A hand-written note; the function of its author is written in an illegible way] 'In connection with the above situations, I ordered that attention be paid to the foreigner's behaviour.'

[A note made in handwriting by the Provost of the Centre] 'I ordered that attention be paid to the person. I ordered [name of the officer] to check the content of the bags.'

Day 7.

On 21.05.2019 between 8:00 and 20:30 hours, I was on duty as a sentry guard of the Interventions Ward with task Z12. During an external inspection, I noticed that the windows in room 041, Unaccompanied Minors Ward, bear the following inscriptions: 'Death to everyone always' and 'Bombs not food altera'. When I asked the foreigner about the reasons behind her making them, she did not offer any explanation. I informed the Shift Manager about the incident'

[A note made in handwriting by the Provost of the Centre] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo]. The detainee reacted with laughter when I prescribed her to wash the windows. I prescribed the sentry guards to pay special attention to the detainee's behaviour'

Day 8.

On 22 May 2019 between 08:00 and 20:00 hours, I was on duty as a sentry guard of the Interventions Ward. While supervising the foreigner outside the building, I noticed that she was picking mushrooms and fragments of plants, taking cigarette ends from the bin, and hiding them in her jacket pocket. I asked her several times not to take rubbish from the bin. Each time, the detainee disregarded my requests. I informed the Provost of the

GCF about the fact. After the detainee's return from the walk to the Unaccompanied Minors Ward, her outer clothes (pockets) were searched through following an order of the Deputy Head of the GCF. The above was performed out of concern for her safety, health condition and the possibility of accidental consumption of the plants she picked. Together with [BG officers – A. Ch.'s note], I went to the toilet of the Unaccompanied Minors Ward, where the detainee was. I requested her to empty her pockets. She disregarded my request and sat down on the floor. At 11:27 hours, together with another officer, I began to search through her jacket pockets. The search revealed mushrooms, cigarette ends, fragments of plants, and bits of plastic. The above objects were taken away and thrown into the rubbish bin. After the end of the activity, I instructed [the detainee] to behave in compliance with the law and the Centre's rules and regulations'.

[A note made in handwriting by the Provost of the Centre] 'I have acquainted myself [with the memo]. I ordered that the foreigner is paid special attention [illegible]'

Day 9.

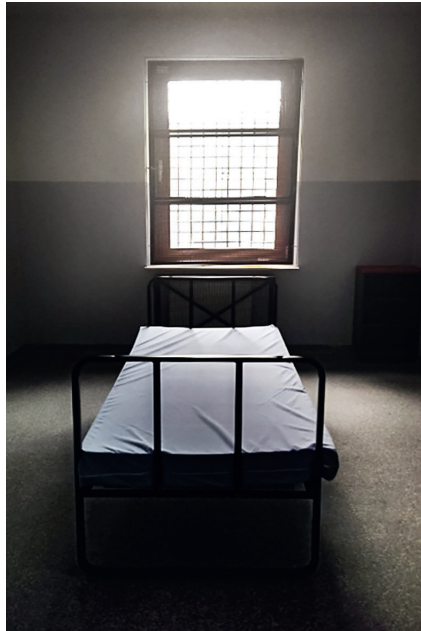
On 23 May 2019, between 08:00 and 20:00 hours, I was on duty as the Provost of the Centre. At 09:55 hours, the detainee began to tear away labels and information boards from the doors and walls of the Unaccompanied Minors Ward. At 11:35, the foreigner spilt some water and smeared the door of room F4, the wall and the floor in the corridor of the Unaccompanied Minors Ward, using breakfast food remains (jam and cheese spread). The detainee was instructed to comply with the rules and regulations in force in the GCF. [I informed] the GCF SM and the BG Deputy Head about the fact. In connection with the situation, the Head of the Centre ordered the sentry guards from the Interventions Ward to take away the food from her and intervene, i.e. check her clothes externally. The findings included pieces of paper, information labels torn off from the doors and walls and food remains. The external search of the clothes was performed by BG officers. I informed the GCF SM about the fact. A sentry guard from the Interventions Ward informed the detainee about the need to comply with the rules and regulations of the Centre, after which she went to her room. At 13:20 hours, in connection with her damaging the centre's property, the Head of the GCF decided to apply means of direct coercion in relation to the detainee and place her in the isolation room [for an example of an isolation room, see Photo 1 – author's note]. Before placing her in the isolation room, officers performed a manual search in order to take away any objects that could pose danger to her safety or maintenance of order during her stay in the isolation room. I informed the Shift Manager about the situations'.

[A note made in handwriting by the Shift Manager] 'I have prescribed the officer supervising the detainee's stay in the isolation room to control her behaviour every 15 minutes'.

The above description of events refers to the dynamic experience mediated by the appropriately composed text. It was acquired as a part of 'doing' ethnography in detention.

Photo 1

Isolation room. These rooms look almost identical in all GCFs in Poland – they only differ in the location of the beds and windows. Source: archives of the research team.



Discourse in the GCF – the context

These memos are a successive record made by the active participants of the events from their point of view, with the omission – which is significant – of the voice of the supervised person. Her perspective, however, is manifested through her behaviours, which reflect her poor mental well-being. Therefore, an interpretation of the sense of this event, which was available to the researcher discursively, requires a broader context. This measure aims at (1) the meeting of a condition of the definition under which discourse is not only the very narration but ‘text in context’ (Dijk 1992:2, 2008a, 2015b); (2) avoiding an exoticisation of the case when both sides of the described interactions are subjected to essentialisation concealing a complex mechanism of the functioning of the total system.

The rules determining the rhythm of life at the GCF are adequate for a total institution, and its personnel reproduces rules of the institution through their roles to which the detainees are subjected. In this sense, for the researchers, they were ‘difficult access groups’.¹³ Hence, basically, ‘doing’ ethnography at the GCF lay in

¹³ The author’s term defined for research purposes during the project.

negotiating with the above-mentioned conditions and acquiring information from three areas of interaction, in compliance with the methodology of the *Emic Evaluation Approach* (Förster, Heer, Engeler, Kaufmann, Bauer, Heitz, 2011).¹⁴ What is significant from the point of view of further analysis, also the discursive dimensions of the local realities were explored, including official documents related to the functioning of the institutions.

Hence, the context behind the case study under my analysis includes: (1) the platitudinous statements of the officers who were not direct witnesses to the events related to the Woman – this resulted from the declarations that I was dealing with a kind of retrospection mediated from other narrations and that the officers were not aware of the details of the events or able to describe the Woman's mental condition upon admission to the GCF; (2) information that conversations with the detainees are normally carried out via Google Translator – on this basis I could only assume that the contact with the Woman was based on this particular communicator; (3) documents related to the financing of inter alia medical needs of people from the GCF, the sphere of health of the people detained in the centres; (4) the absence of documents confirming the information provided in the memos that the Woman met her social guardian and a refusal to provide documentation from the Woman's consultation with a psychiatrist, which was justified by personal data protection (as mentioned above, the impossibility to become familiar with the manners of assistance in this scope is connected with the question of transparency of the system and the effectiveness of the support offered in the area of mental and emotional health). Therefore, the memos are the only accessible traces of the traumatic events experienced by the Woman detained in the GCF. Because of the above, the most important object of analysis is the narration on her mental condition documenting the subsequent events and the remedial measures specified in the centre's rules and regulations, which the personnel had to apply to ultimately isolate the person.

The acquired materials imply the use of specific methods of textual analysis, in which memos create the so-called corpus of texts. It is a qualitative analysis which enables the unveiling of the categories of attribution which are present in them, as well as their functions – as manifested by the 'external limbo'. In turn, what is significant in the quantitative dimension, is the identification of the most frequently used notions such as names and their contexts, which are equally important for the uncovering of the semantic layer of the documents.

¹⁴ Apart from acquiring data by way of extrospective observation, interviews were also conducted and an analysis of the structure of the detention of immigrants was performed, mapping the social actors and the hierarchies created by them and determining the majority of interactions in these places – both among the personnel and in their contact with the people they supervise.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis

The memos have an official character.¹⁵ Each of them shows the same elements: a stamp with data of the institution, notes, signatures of the officers who are obliged to provide a detailed description of the events, the related decisions taken, and to submit documentation, as well as signatures of their superiors.

Qualitative analysis. In eight out of the nine cases: (a) the author introduces the reader to the situation using one or two sentences containing information about their time of work as a part of the day or night shift, time of the event, and the full name of the Woman. What follows in the subsequent paragraphs is (b) a very brief report consisting in the enumeration of the actions initiated by the Woman, which caused the concern of the supervising officers and made them instruct the Woman. The memos normally end with (c) an assurance of having instructed the Woman about the need to comply with the rules and regulations of the GCF and of having informed the Provost about the incident. Each of the memos bears handwritten notes made by both the officer and the Shift Manager. Only in a single case (**Day 5**) is the memo worded in a different way: it contains the BG officer's assessment of the Woman's behaviours and information about her threats towards him.

The documents were prepared according to a single scheme (it is almost a 'stencil') and as such also have a unified structure, which displays two social attributions: the personnel are categorised as 'agential authors' diligently performing their tasks, while the Woman as a 'villainess' posing a threat to her own safety and the safety of others and as such having to be, under the rules and regulations in force, disciplined, i.e. subjected to isolation. Initially, the immigrant is mentioned in the documentation by her full name,¹⁶ which is always included in the memos and is an introduction to the situation. Further on, the Woman is only referred to as a 'detainee'. Moreover, the memos do not quote her utterances apart from single threats addressed to the BG officer. This only strengthens her difficult situation – she is featured solely as the author of disturbing behaviours, which are described in detail – from the officers' perspective – and are not accepted at the GCF. The reports contain no personal judgements of the actors of the interactions or their impressions, while containing, significantly, not only instructions and assurances of having informed the appropriate superiors about the situation, but also information about the actions supporting the Woman. What is significant here, is the mention on an ineffective (ultimately, the Woman did not change her behaviour) consultation with a psychiatrist.

The sequence of the memos clearly identifies two sides of the conflict in which the decision about its ending lies on the part of the authorities. The decision on the

¹⁵ Czerwińska B., *Dokumenty urzędowe i dokumenty prywatne jako środki dowodowe w postępowaniu cywilnym* (uni.wroc.pl), pp. 2–3. [access: 28.06.2022]

¹⁶ The data were anonymised by the BG personnel of the GCF.

isolation of the wrongdoer is preceded with a number of unsuccessful attempts at calming her with the help of 'the letter of the rules and regulations'. The qualitative reading of the memos also leads to a question: which of the Woman's behaviours were most dangerous – and for whom?

Quantitative analysis. The corpus of texts was subjected to frequency analysis (1) (see Table 1.), taking into account (2) the most frequently used word combinations (see Table 2.). In the first case, the most frequently used words in the documents are: *umieszczona/umieszczonej/umieszczoną* [inflected forms of the Polish word for a 'detainee'] (28 times), *cudzoziemka/cudzoziemkę* ['foreigner'] (13), *zapoznałem* [(I have) acquainted (myself)] (12), *ośrodk* ['centre'] and *SODC* ['GCF'] (11 times each), *śmieci* ['rubbish'] (10). Moreover, we may identify 4 groups of words concerning PEOPLE, ACTIONS, SPACES and OBJECTS. The group PEOPLE, apart from words designating the Woman, also includes such items as *wartownik* ['sentry guard'] (9), *profos* ['Provost'] (5), *SG* ['BG'] (4), and *KZ* ['SM'; Shift Manager] (3); ACTIONS – mostly verbs and verbal nouns: *zapoznałem* [(I have) acquainted (myself)] (12), *pełniłem* ['I was on (duty)'] and *przestrzeganiu* ['comply with'] (7), *zwrócić* ['be paid (attention)'] (6), *nakazałem* ['(I) prescribed'], *poinformowałem* ['(I) informed'], *polecitem* ['(I) ordered'] (5 times each), *udała* ['(she) went'], *zaczęła* ['(she) began'] (4 times each), *podgrzewania* ['warming up'] (3); SPACE – places of events are specified: *ośrodk/SODC* ['centre/'GCF'] (22 times), *ward* [oddziału], *małoletnich* ['minors'], *[bez] opieki* ['unaccompanied'] (9 times each), *pokoju* ['room'] (7), *pomieszczeniu* [room] and *podłozde/podłogę* ['floor'] (6 times each), *pokoju* ['room'] (4); OBJECTS – what emerges is above all the effect of the daily functioning in the centre, i.e. *śmieci* ['rubbish'] (as many as 10 times), *jedzenie/jedzenia* ['food'] (7), *wodę* ['water'] (5), *kawałki* ['pieces'], *kosza* ['bin'], *toalety* ['toilet'] (4 times each), and then a catalogue of furnishings to be found in the Unaccompanied Minors Ward: *drzwi* ['door'], *korytarz* ['corridor'] (6 times each), *kieszeni* ['pocket'] (5), *kurtki* ['jacket'], *odzieży* ['clothes'], *pokrowce* ['covers'] (3 times each). A separate category is created by time – the word *godz.* ['hours'] can be found 9 times – and features: *izolacyjnym* ['isolation'] (3), *rodzinno* ['family'], and *kobiecego* ['women's'] (4 times each).

As results from the above analysis, during the event, the Woman was referred to as a foreigner – a detainee placed in the Unaccompanied Minors Ward. She interacted only with the sentry guards, and they interacted with the Provost and the Shift Manager. The task of the former lies mainly in being on duty, which in this case is connected with making sure that the rules are complied with by way of disciplining narrations: reprimanding, prescribing, and informing. The task of the latter is to control i.e. acquaint themselves with the effects of being on duty. The Woman most often stays behind closed doors, in the ward, corridor, on the floor, in the room (where she is interested in the covers) and the toilet. Her behaviour consists in littering the space by using food remains/water. During the events, she has modest personal possessions: a jacket and some other clothes.

If we apply here the interpretative framework concerning the dramaturgy of daily life (Goffman 1981), then what strikes in the events under analysis is above all their microscale (Michalon 2015:1): a small group of interacting actors, the absence of any attempts at a conversation based on partnership (the adjectives from the corpus concern space rather than emotional states or judgements – which is understandable in view of the nature of the document) or the experienced emotions. What is visible is the participants' awareness of the scope and nature of their roles, picturing two opposite worlds: that of the correct BG officers and that of the incorrect 'foreigner' using a couple of modest props of the meagre decorum, in which she was placed. What therefore draws attention here is the almost claustrophobic space of interaction and the modesty of the means of communication between the personnel and the subordinate, with the contrasting, strong focus on the author of the memo, a BG officer, who reports the events using the first person narration.

Table 1

The most commonly used words in the corpus of texts from the memos

WORDS USED MOST OFTEN IN THE CORPUS					
<i>umieszczona</i> [detainee]	(13 times)	<i>zwrócić</i> [pay (attention)]	(6 times)	<i>izolacyjnym</i> [isolation]	(3 times)
<i>zapoznałem</i> [(I have) acquainted (myself)]	(12)	<i>cudzoziemkę</i> [foreigner]	(5)	<i>jedzenia</i> [food]	(3)
<i>ośrodka</i> [centre]	(11)	<i>fakcie</i> [fact]	(5)	<i>kobiecego</i> [women's]	(3)
<i>SOdC</i> [GCF]	(11)	<i>kieszeni</i> [pocket]	(5)	<i>kurtki</i> [jacket]	(3)
<i>śmieci</i> [rubbish]	(10)	<i>nakazałem</i> [(I) prescribed]	(5)	<i>KZ</i> [SM]	(3)
<i>godz</i> [hours]	(9)	<i>poinformowałem</i> [(I) informed]	(5)	<i>odzieży</i> [clothes]	(3)
<i>małoletnich</i> [minors]	(9)	<i>polecitem</i> [(I) ordered]	(5)	<i>pełniłam</i> [was on (duty)]	(3)
<i>oddziału</i> [ward]	(9)	<i>pomieszczeniu</i> [room]	(5)	<i>podgrzewania</i> [warming]	(3)
<i>opieki</i> [unaccompanied]	(9)	<i>profosa</i> [Provost]	(5)	<i>podłogę</i> [floor]	(3)
<i>służbę</i> [duty]	(9)	<i>wodę</i> [water]	(5)	<i>podłogę</i> [floor]	(3)
<i>umieszczonej</i> [detainee]	(9)	<i>zachowania</i> [behaviour]	(5)	<i>pokrowce</i> [covers]	(3)

Table 1 cont.

<i>wartownik</i> [sentry guard]	(9)	<i>jedzenie</i> [food]	(4)	Summary Out of 1,246 words in the corpus, 51 appear in the text at least 3 times.
<i>cudzoziemka</i> [foreigner]	(8)	<i>kawałki</i> [pieces]	(4)	
<i>uwagę</i> [attention]	(8)	<i>kosza</i> [bin]	(4)	
<i>cudzoziemki</i> [foreigner]	(7)	<i>polecenia</i> [order]	(4)	
<i>pokoju</i> [room]	(7)	<i>pomieszczenia</i> [room]	(4)	
<i>przestrzeganiu</i> [comply]	(7)	<i>rodzinno</i> [family]	(4)	
<i>regulaminu</i> [rules and regulations]	(7)	<i>SG</i> [BG]	(4)	
<i>drzwi</i> [door]	(6)	<i>toalety</i> [toilets]	(4)	
<i>interwencyjnego</i> [interventions]	(6)	<i>udała</i> [went]	(4)	
<i>korytarzu</i> [corridor]	(6)	<i>uwagi</i> [attention]	(4)	
<i>pełniłem</i> [was on (duty)]	(6)	<i>zaczęła</i> [began]	(4)	
<i>umieszczoną</i> [detainee]	(6)	<i>czym</i> [which]	(3)	

Source: author's own analysis using the programme *Voyant*¹⁷

In turn, an analysis of word combinations mainly revealed a scheme of perception of the situation from the perspective of the reporting persons (see Diagram 2). Above all, *umieszczona* ['detainee'] turns out to be the key word in the corpus. Out of its 13 appearances in the text, it is combined with other words with a specific frequency – most often with: *godz.* ['hours'] (10 times), *zapoznałem się* ['(I) acquainted (myself)'] and *SOdC* ['GCF' (8 times each), *[oddziały] małoletnich* ['Minors (Ward)'] and *cudzoziemka* ['foreigner'] (7 times each), *szuflę* ['duty'] and *[bez] opieki* ['unaccompanied'] (6 times each), *śmieci* ['rubbish'], *pełniłem* ['(I) was (on duty)'], *ośrodką* ['centre'], *oddziału* ['Ward'] and *cudzoziemkę* ['foreigner'] (5 times each).

The list initially shows the framework of the event, which is precisely set in time (*godzina/godziny* – 'hours') and controlled as a part of the institution (*zapoznać, SOdC, oddział małoletnich bez opieki* – '[I] acquainted myself', 'GCF', 'Unaccompanied Minors Ward'), where it takes place as a part of 'duty', which is described because of the event (verbs in the first person – the supervising author and in the third person – the wrongdoer). In connection with the 'detainee's'/'foreigner's'

¹⁷ <https://voyant-tools.org/trombone?start=0&template=corpuscollocates2tsv&tool=corpus.CorporusCollocates&forTool=corpuscollocates&withDistributions=true&corpus=6dd50ea2d3f709a246bf3952d252e510&stopList=keywords-d994b9e2fffe3f875d91517228ac9a4e&context=30&query=umieszczona&sort=contextTermRawFreq&palette=default&categories=auto&view=CorpusCollocates&suppressTols=false> [access: 15 July 2022].

actions, rubbish appears in this space. Subsequently, when reading the table from top to bottom, we can see two sequences of similar interactions. The first one takes place when the detainee initiates her behaviours, as a part of which the main violations concern 'water', 'toilet', 'floor', and 'door' (4 times each), because the 'sentry guard' (4) 'reprimands' her (4) in view of the need to 'comply with the rules and regulations' (4 times each). The second sequence is similar: the violation concerns 'teeth' (3) and is performed against 'principles', and the 'team' (3 times each). Taking into account the object of violations, we may indicate two groups of words: (1) ones applying to the usable space of the GCF, which is connected with (2) body practices: disposal ('rubbish'), space of the physical movement ('floor', 'door'), hygiene ('water', 'toilet'). The violations (of rules and regulations) are followed by instructions ('principles', 'team').

Table 2

Word combinations in the corpus of texts from the memos

Key term	Frequency of the appearance of the keyword in the corpus	Word combination (phrase) [a term coexisting with the key term and creating a word combination]	Frequency with which a given word combination appears by the key term
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>Godz.</i> ['hours']	10
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>zapoznałem</i> ['(I) acquainted (myself)']	8
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>SODC</i> ['GCF']	8
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>maloletnich</i> ['minors']	7
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>cudzoziemka</i> ['foreigner']	7
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>szuźbę</i> ['duty']	6
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	[<i>bez opieki</i> ['unaccompanied]]	6
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>śmieci</i> ['rubbish']	5
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>pełniłem</i> ['(I) was [on duty]']	5
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>ośrodką</i> ['centre']	5
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>oddziału</i> ['ward']	5
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>cudzoziemkę</i> ['foreigner']	5
<i>umieszczona</i> ['detainee']	13	<i>zaczęła</i> ['began']	4

Table 2 cont.

Key term	Frequency of the appearance of the keyword in the corpus	Word combination (phrase) [a term coexisting with the key term and creating a word combination]	Frequency with which a given word combination appears by the key term
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	wodę ['water']	4
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	wartownik ['sentry guard']	4
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	uwagę ['attention']	4
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	umieszczonej ['detainee']	4
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	toalety ['toilet']	4
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	regulaminu ['rules and regulations']	4
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	przestrzeganiu ['comply']	4
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	podłogę ['floor']	4
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	drzwi ['door']	4
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	zębów ['teeth']	3
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	zespół ['team']	3
umieszczona ['detainee']	13	zasadach ['principles']	3

Source: author's own analysis using the programme Voyant¹⁸

This review of word combinations not only confirms the conclusions of the frequency analysis, but also indicates four significant issues, which are related to the main topic of our reflections. Firstly, as indicated by the narration of the memos, the system of the GCF requires that the personnel 'describe themselves', i.e. report their actions in a specific form, presenting solely their own perspective of events, as shown by the absence of any traces of the Woman's narration – her perspective is disclosed only in the unpredictable behaviours she undertakes, which are far from the daily routine. Secondly, the Woman staying at the GCF moves together with a very small number of supervisors around a very limited and modestly furnished space,

¹⁸ <https://voyant-tools.org/trombone?start=0&template=corpuscollocates2tsv&tool=corpus.CorporusCollocates&forTool=corpuscollocates&withDistributions=true&corpus=6dd50ea2d3f709a246bf3952d252e510&stopList=keywords-d994b9e2fffe3f875d91517228ac9a4e&context=30&query=umieszczo na&sort=contextTermRawFreq&palette=default&categories=auto&view=CorpusCollocates&suppressTols=false> [access: 15.07.2022]

which should remain orderly and clean – in the light of the memos, it seems to be the priority determining the use of the particular rooms. Thirdly, the personnel use a disciplining and very briefly expressed style of communication with the Woman. Fourthly, her reactions are to do primarily with body practices. Here, the last two threads are an answer to the question which arose as a result of the qualitative review of the content of the documents. It turns out that what is most dangerous to both the institution and the Woman is the disturbance of the rhythm of the functioning of the centre, and in particular the conventions ruling the management of space. Its littering, which contributed to the Woman's isolation, is symptomatic here.

The above procedure was conducted using the institutional perspective of the BG/GCF ('external limbo'). However, it discloses the position of the Woman ('internal limbo') – who is closed in the humble decorum of the centre, controlled by sentry guards and reacting in a specific way to these limitations of her freedom. What calls for attention is her condition: focusing on the space related to body practices and the body itself.

Economies of morality: violence for safety

The case described herein fits the area of insignificant social problems. After all, the problem of the mental (health-related) well-being of immigrants in all states of the European Union applies to a small group of people, and otherwise is of concern only for the people to whom it applies directly: the interested parties such as NGO activists, researchers, and, in a sense, also the Border Guard. As such, it is therefore suspended in a specific social vacuum, just like prisons, psychiatric hospitals and old age problems. These areas of 'non-existence' testify to the specific economies of morality, which, on the one hand, are typical for the societies of the West, and, on the other hand, for the local environments of the GCFs:

En paraphrasant la définition fondatrice de l'économie politique, on considérera l'économie morale comme la production, la répartition, la circulation et l'utilisation des sentiments moraux, des émotions et des valeurs, des normes et des obligations dans l'espace social. Cette définition appelle plusieurs remarques. Premièrement, elle accentue l'adjectif plus que le substantif. (...) D'une part, on peut s'intéresser aux économies morales d'une société, voire d'un ensemble de sociétés, dans un moment historique donné. D'autre part, on peut s'attacher plus spécifiquement aux économies morales de certains mondes sociaux ou segments de société. (Fassin 2009: 1238, 1257)

In the context of this definition, we may look at the question of the mental health of the people detained in the GCFs from the perspective of European societies (the Polish society) and the world of the GCF with its organisational culture. D. Fassin also turns attention to the fact that the economies of morality are constructed on a long-term basis, which in view of the character of this publication shall only be signalled.

Societies of the West have been treating immigrants instrumentally for years, usually fitting them into the category of 'aliens/the other' (e.g. in France in the 1970s), or trying to break it (e.g. The *Herzlich Willkommen* policy in Germany). In both cases these actions indicate the existence of a 'problem with immigration'. Its stark manifestation is the double marginalisation of this group: (1) firstly, through their social attribution (D. Maingana, quoted after: Pavot 2020; Ardener 1992) to the category of immigrants, i.e. aliens in a given territory. When talking about the people detained in the GCFs, their low social position is strengthened by the label of 'illegality' and isolation in institutions about which not much is commonly known.; (2) secondly, through a connection with a negative social reception of the phenomenon of mental disease. The trend marginalising mentally ill individuals has marked highly developed societies for centuries, as confirmed e.g. by the history of mental hospitals (Foucault, 1961, 1987b: 138, Castel 1977) in Europe. However, it also encounters their internal resistance – as for example testified to by data in the form of statistics concerning the undertaken research into the mental condition of, for example, citizens of the European Union. Analyses disclose some disturbing tendencies: Europeans are troubled not only by neurosis, but also depression. However, there are no broadly available statistics informing about the same issues among the immigrants from the GCF. This means that we are dealing with a specific rationing of the public interest in mental health. It becomes an important topic provided it is connected with people with a clear social/legal status, i.e. citizens or legal immigrants, whose stay in a given EU state has been officially settled and who – as such – are a safe group.

What emerges in this place is the evaluation being a symptom of the economies of morality, which manage the category of the immigrant on the sociocultural scale in Poland and other countries of the West (EU). Firstly, this includes a frequent belief that the alienness/otherness is awful. Secondly, it is certainly difficult, incomprehensible, worse than the familiar, and hence not worth much attention. Thirdly, it is synonymous with the unpredictable – just as in the case of madness. In any way, it is therefore worthwhile to protect oneself against it – and one should do it. As results from the observation of Polish guarded centres, it is the safety of the state, the institution, which was the significant value referred to by the officers, corresponding – according to them – with the idea of the detention of immigrants.

In turn, the 'local' economies of morality emerging in the GCFs not only draw on the broader area, i.e. the society, but also depend on the game between what is expected from the social actors (officers) from the GCF system, and what their individual agency tells them. On the basis of declarations acquired during interviews, spontaneous conversations with the supervising personnel and the staff looking after the immigrants (people representing medical services, psychologists), as well as an observation of their practices, we may assume that their attitude to immigrants who lost (not necessarily at the GCF) their mental/emotional well-being – who are in a mental and emotional crisis – is ambivalent. On the one hand, the BG personnel

reproduces the scheme of a self-describing and strongly hierarchised institution,¹⁹ documenting its own official actions hypercorrectly, while on the other hand – being limited by the rules and regulations – it is deprived of a chance to offer a creative approach when the situation calls for it. This means that the value of their work at the BG is reduced to the quality of documentation concerning their actions, while the individuation of the approach, which might turn out appropriate for the immigrants’ mental/health-related well-being – if taking place – is not connected with any systemic gratification. In effect, the attitudes of distance, indifference, discouragement, and fear dominate over empathy. Moreover, what additionally emerges in terms of the shared value – safety (of the country, but also all the groups from the GCF) – is a belief that it is a superior norm in relations with the immigrants, i.e. also in relation to the attitudes mentioned above. And if this is so, the mentioned value also becomes a justification for practices involving violence.

Violence

In the years 2016–2020, Polish Guarded Centres for Foreigners (GCFs) hosted 3,060 adults and 433 minors.²⁰ During this time, monitoring of the treatment of these people was conducted several times, mainly to exclude situations when immigrants are exposed to secondary trauma – inter alia due to being tortured. The data show that GCFs are regularly supervised by various subjects²¹ watching human rights. They also signal that in view of their detentive and total nature, these places are prone to various kinds of abuse towards the people who are detained²² there. Hence, this means that GCF spaces should be treated as areas generating relations marked by violence.

The very notion of violence may be understood in a variety of ways. I am adopting the definition, which (1) considers ‘all non-accidental acts infringing individual freedom, which contribute to the physical or mental harm of another individual and which extend beyond the social norms of interpersonal social contact’ as significant; (2) underlines the ‘purposefulness of the individual’s actions’; (3) and ‘a situation when they abuse their own social advantage (i.e. authority)’; (4) excludes ‘motivations which are hostile and difficult to be verified (...), as well as accidental behaviours and unaware harming of others’ (Pospiszyl 1999: pp. 16–17).

¹⁹ I am omitting here additional factors negatively affecting the ethos of work: the controversial preparation of the guards for their service in a multicultural environment, the 12-hour working day, problematically arranged timetables of duties, and issues related to the shortcomings connected with infrastructure.

²⁰ On the basis of the act on granting citizens protection, there were 1,010 adults and 664 minors in the area of the Republic of Poland in the same period, *Obcokrajowcy w detencji administracyjnej. Wyniki monitoringu KMPT w strzeżonych ośrodkach dla cudzoziemców w Polsce* (brpo.gov.pl) [access: 15.07.2022].

²¹ Ibid.

²² or placed.

As far as the GCFs are concerned, violent behaviours referred to in the first and the second items – in particular when safety as the norm and simultaneously the value is at play – are inscribed into the nature of this total institution. At the same time, abuse of the position of power seems to be a subject of control (the third aspect of the definition) (see also Kusy, Machińska 2021).

3. Discussion and conclusions

The above analysis allows us to look at certain symptoms of the 'external limbo', which generate the 'internal limbo'. At the same time, they illustrate the detentive, total and violent nature of the institution. It is connected with specific interactions initiated both by the Woman and BG officers as actors co-creating a given space of relations.

1) Categorisation. The nomenclature connected with detention expresses a division of people into certain categories locating them in the subordinate and marginalised position in the host country. The very names of the guarded centres should be signalled here. In Polish, just like in English, the name stresses the dimension of prevention and the provision of safety which should be guarded against aliens (foreigners). In turn, in French the name for GCFs – *Centres Administratives de Reception* – highlights the administrative nature of the detention of the migrating individuals. Generally speaking, the message behind such classification boils down to the host country legitimising practices involving the isolation and control of the mobility of individuals. In this way, the common belief that immigrants are undesired in a given territory is strengthened – which also results directly from the very fact of the existence of such institutions. Moreover, the detainees are systemically assigned to the following categories: (2) 'illegal immigrants', who are associated with crime; (3) 'foreigners', i.e. individuals usurping with their very presence the right to someone else's property, i.e. *patria* – the highest value in the state; (4) 'detainees', i.e. people treated in a different way than the 'imprisoned', which only camouflages systemic violence and hides the fact of isolation and marginalisation.

However, the most significant issue concerns the fact that the nomenclature expresses internalised identifications in the country of one's stay, dividing people into 'our own' and the 'other', and thus legitimising the existence of the system of detention. However, as such, it remains hardly clear to the people detained at the GCF. By the power of attribution, they step into the existing divisions and have no chance to negotiate them. They are simply fitted into the specific categories and the related practices.

2) Reduction of autonomy. This first takes place as a result of depriving the immigrant of their freedom. However, in practice, this is connected with depersonalisation. The use of the term 'detainee' by the authors of the memos reduces the individuality, the uniqueness of the Woman, which is expressed in her full name, to

a no-name category, via which she is further identified (Ardener 1992). From the Woman, she thus becomes an individual staying under supervision, in relation to whom ways of behaviour specified in the system of the GCFs, i.e. ones consistent with a given category rather than *ad personam*, may be applied. This is because in neither of the nine cases are there records reflecting the Woman's words, her motifs, or attitudes to the situation. Her only role in this official scenario is to initiate a number of behaviours, accepting or disregarding instructions and subjecting herself (?) to isolation. In this way, from a detainee who is depersonalised and subordinate to the system she becomes a subject of the supervision's actions, one reduced in her agency (Archer 2015, Domasławska 2013).

The reduction of her autonomy takes place – as could be seen in the example of the memos – as a result of a systemic limitation in the form of a certain convention of reporting – the less emotive and individualised the form of the message, the greater the care for its impartiality and the formal dimension. The subsequent events are analysed by the personnel from the point of view of the maintenance of order, because it facilitates the provision of the safety of the institution, for which the personnel should ceaselessly strive. The thread of securitisation turned out to be the leading one in many conversations with the officers and in this context the Woman who did not conform to the personnel's orders, obviously questioned the officers' effectiveness in ensuring order, and thus the system's ability to deal with a threat in the form of her unpredictable behaviour.

However, the paradox of this situation lies in the fact that the Woman experiences the situation individually and dramatically. A mention of her consultation with a psychiatrist in the memo has a double sense here. From the perspective of the system, it is a signal of appropriate care for the subordinate/immigrant (Enjolras 2009, Klaus 2012:28, Turrini, Purgato, Ballette, Nosè, Ostuzzi, Barbui 2017), and as such legitimises further actions directed at him/her. What is significant, it does not result from the memos whether the Woman was diagnosed earlier for any disorders. Additionally, it authorises the personnel to radicalise the situation further. What is more, it results from the content of the memos that it is the subordinate's resistance to persuasion – or perhaps its burdensomeness: the dirtied space, the disturbed rhythm of daily life, the strange gestures – which is the argument leading to isolation.

The dynamics of the Woman's behaviours impels the system to use a punishment pursuant to documents showing the transparency of actions. This is particularly significant when in effect they lead to the Woman's isolation, and in practice to the deprivation of her liberty in the name of safety and peace as the norm/value.

3) 'The immigrant is only a body'

In the situation under analysis, the state of the 'internal limbo' manifests itself through behaviours (this is where the said perspective of the Woman is disclosed) which resemble rebellion. It is impossible to conclude from the memos to what extent

this was a conscious choice. This is because the Woman is a 'subject of dispute', rather than 'her own voice in her own case'. Ultimately, her actions 'express her' as well as their 'interpretation' by the system. Descriptions of her behaviours show her dependence: a complete depersonalisation guaranteed by the rules of the system results in the sense of being incapacitated.

L'immigré n'est que son corps», ajoutant: «Parce qu'il n'a de sens, à ses propres yeux et aux yeux de son entourage et parce qu'il n'a d'existence à la limite, que par son travail, la maladie, par elle-même mais peut-être plus encore par la vacance qu'elle entraîne, ne peut manquer d'être éprouvée comme la négation de l'immigré. (A. Sayad, quoted after: Fassin 2009: 1258)

In the perspective of the supervising officers, the Woman – the antihero from the memos, is a threat to the safety of the institution and her own safety. However, her perspective is – or at least this is how it can be interpreted – entirely different. Above all, it is impossible to learn from the memos anything about the motivations behind her actions or what she thinks about her situation. The mentioned 'omission of her voice' is not an act of overlooking, but a consequence of her assignment to the above-specified categories. Symptomatically, the narration from the memos ends upon the 'pacification' of the burdensome detainee. Hence, we do not know the course of this isolation or its end. There is no mention, either, of the Woman's mental condition before the incidents and after their snuffing out in compliance with the rules and regulations. However, although the BG did not attempt to supplement them, the information gaps say a lot about both the 'external' and the 'internal limbo'.

The Woman's behaviour, as already specified, focused on the sphere of body practices. This focus is symptomatic. The entire detention system strongly reduces the space of the routines to which the immigrants got used to in the country of their origin, limits their property and is perceived as incomprehensible from the point of view of immigration goals. In the memos, the only message informing about the sense of the situation was the emotionless instructions, and the only 'quasi-dialogue' – the Woman's single act of oral aggression towards the officer. This means that the Woman has in effect a very small influence on her existence under detention. However, she seeks it in reference to her own body and the related spaces. Food, waste, hygiene, bed sheets, the space she selects freely. In fact, what the supervising officers considered burdensome and dangerous, is perhaps the Woman's manifestation of her own power and autonomy – which she expresses by breaking the conventions in force at the GCF and manifesting negative emotions. The turmoil she evokes has two aspects. For the Woman, it results in some attention and, paradoxically, some form of empowerment, even at the price of isolation. For the officers, it turns out to be an opportunity to meet the requirements of the system: while performing their difficult duty with its documented course, they are showing their usefulness.

The contents of the memos do not allow any conclusions concerning the Woman's mental disorders, if any, and their analysis was not directed at a diagnosis. The aim was to grasp the state of the 'external limbo', in which the individual experiences detention in the position of the 'internal limbo'. The Woman's solitude is one of its stark manifestations. The 'Ill mind', or 'ill body' from the perspective of the 'illegal', reduced, depersonalised immigrant under detention is a peculiar mark, *a rebours*, of the legitimate, the complete and the personified in them.

The state of the 'internal limbo' does not exclude experience which could be analysed in the category of the autonomy of the individual, who does not allow themselves to be reduced to the rules of the total institution – however, this cannot be proved because of the scarcity of data for analysis. Nevertheless, we may risk a statement that the system of the GCFs does not facilitate the well-being of the individual in mental/emotional crisis and may potentially lead to: (1) self-isolation – as a result of being separated, the Woman is simply removed from the active area of interaction; (2) deepening of mental traumas and emotional disorders – in the light of some other documents related to medical care, which were acquired from the GCF, we may conclude that such care is simply uneconomic, which is tantamount to leaving the immigrant on their own; (3) psychophysical suffering – the very fact of isolation should be considered brutal, but not 'violent' – in the light of the documents, the officers do not abuse their position of power here, because they act in consistence with the rules and regulations.

The case of the Woman whose mental condition is poor, as results from the memos, therefore allows us to ask about the sense of detaining in the GCFs people who do not present a threat, but are considered as if they did due to being categorised as 'illegal' immigrants. As such, although requiring broadly-understood care of their mental well-being, they stay in an institution, which systemically deprives them of their autonomy (subjectivity). The conditions generated by the detentive total system of the GCFs create hermetic circles of interaction, in which the necessity to describe the transparency of actions, hierarchy and supervision hides or even systemically excludes the humane sense of interpersonal relations. Both the detainees and the personnel who supervise them are doomed to this sort of community life. In the case of the former, the stay in such a structured closure does not prevent trauma, but provokes it. What is more, the securitization-focused profile of the GCF is an embodiment of the belief, shared in the cultures of the West, that people migrating from state to state in an 'illegal' way are a potential threat to the safety of the citizens of the target country of their migration. Therefore, in this context, the primary goal of the GCF lies in caring for the citizens of a given country rather than the detained. Such a priority of existence of these institutions causes a specific hierarchy of its internal actions – as a part of it, the cases similar to the one under discussion are on the margin of the systemic endeavours, as pictured in the state of the 'external limbo' and – in effect – the 'internal limbo'. People in 'mental/emotional crisis' who require an individualised and

perhaps long-term caring therapeutic attitude not only rarely pose a threat, but do not find a proper answer at the GCF, since, simply, it is not an institution directed at their needs. Hence, it remains an open question whether the needs for which it was actually established, are not magnified, and whether the institution itself is not overvalued.

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