

*Lika Rodin*

## **BIOPOLITICS, BORDER MANAGEMENT AND THE FRAME OF HUMANIZATION OF 'TOTAL INSTITUTIONS': EXPERIENCES AND REPRESENTATIONS OF SWEDISH IMMIGRANT DETENTION**

This study addresses the issue of international migration and border management. Specifically, it focuses on the phenomenon of immigrant detention within a framework of humanizing closed institutions. With the help of structural semiotics, I examine the widely debated documentary 'Detained' (2015), which explores sociality unfolding in a detention centre in southern Sweden. I scrutinize four categories of film characters and their interrelationships. Giorgio Agamben's conception of biopolitics is used to interpret the study results. This theory highlights the fundamental vulnerability of detained non-citizens and explains this as a result of disruption in the linkages between 'natural life' and politics, which grounds the system of modern sovereignty. I argue the film should be recognized as a critique of biopolitical border regulation. It demonstrates that attempts to improve the detention system and its practices along the lines of a more civic model are both fundamentally undermined by the contradictory nature of the confinement ideology and insufficient as long as the very legitimacy of detention as a part of border control remains uncontested. On the one hand, custodial humanism is always fragmented by the organizational priorities of effectiveness and security. On the other hand, the sociality of staff-detainees is deeply framed by the overall regime of border management. As representatives of social activists, the film's producers are sensitive to the limited effects of the humanization project and attempt to mobilize public opinion to contest practices of policing irregular migration. The study concludes with an emphasis on the need for further research on civil society's response to the recent immigrant crises and its related policies.

*Key Words:* securitization of migration, semiotics, emotions, Agamben, documentary, social activism

---

Lika Rodin – PhD, Lecturer in social psychology, Institute of Health and Learning, University of Skövde, Sweden. Email: lika.rodin@his.se

The issue of international migration is currently at the epicentre of public debates and political measures in Europe and around the globe. People are on the move for various economic, political, environmental, and other reasons. Central and North European countries have been among the most popular migrant destinations in recent decades. Sweden can serve as an illustrative example in this context. According to statistics collected by the Swedish Migration Board (SMB), the number of individuals seeking asylum in the country rose gradually between 2000 and 2014 from 16,303 to 81,301, before shooting up in 2015 to 162,877 (SMB n.d.). Already in 2014, according to EUROSTAT, Sweden topped the list of European countries reporting the largest number of asylum seekers in relation to population size with 4,780 applications per million inhabitants and occupied second place in regards to the number of applications relative to national GDP with 147 applications made per billion PPS (Business Information Centre 2015: 15–17). A new wave of migration in 2015 triggered by conflicts in the Middle East has added to these figures.

Since the processes of decision-making can be lengthy and up to a half of the applicants can be rejected (SMB 2016), immigration management, both at the border and within the national territory, has become a pressing issue. To address this problem, a network of detention centres was developed in Sweden, along with other measures. Detention centres are closed units – or 'total institutions' as described by Erving Goffman (1982) – in which individuals are isolated from the community, restricted in terms of movement, and exist in a situation where their life is completely shaped by a particular institutional order. Detention constitutes an integral part of irregular migration management (Puthooppambal et al. 2015) and is apparently primarily used 'to ensure that a person is available so that a decision on the expulsion can be implemented' (SMB 2015).

There are several centres in different parts of the country. Their detention capacity increased from 185 places in 2009 (CPT 2009) to 235 in 2015 (Bruycker 2015). According to the Swedish Alien Act, several categories of non-citizens can be detained for a period from 48 hours to one year, depending on the specifics of the case. These categories are (1) aliens whose identity is undocumented or unclear at the border or at the moment of asylum application; (2) non-citizens whose right to enter or stay in the country is not approved or are subjects of a related investigation; (3) aliens assigned for removal for various reasons when there is a suspension of possible non-cooperation (Swedish Government 2005: 716; see also Khosravi 2009).

The premises of a detention centre typically include a dormitory (rooms for 2–5), a recreation area, a room for prayers, a dining hall, sanitary facilities, and an exercise yard with sports equipment. Unlike detention conditions in some other countries (see for example Hall 2012), the regime of movement within the centre is relatively free all day and neither detainees nor the staff are uniformed, although certain 'prison-like' security measures still exist. Detainees can receive a daily allowance, have access to means of communication (internet, mobile tele-

phone, visits by relatives and friends), medical care, interpreter and a public defence counsel. They can, furthermore, meet NGO representatives who come on a regular basis (CPT 2009, 2015; see also Khosravi, 2009; Puthooppambil et al. 2015a; Puthooppambil 2016; Swedish Government 2005).

The detention employees are recruited from a pool of individuals with a minimum high school education or preferably graduate-level degrees from the human sciences and law, and often with a non-Swedish background that can facilitate interactions in the multi-cultural environment (Khosravi 2009; Puthooppambil et al. 2015b). Rather minor training in security methods is required and the employees are assisted in developing skills in communication and conflict management. According to the documentation special efforts are made to ensure that the confinement conditions are friendly, comprehensible and meaningful (CPT 2015; Khosravi 2009; Puthooppambil 2016).

International and national observers, as well as immigration policy analysts, frequently find the Swedish system of immigrant detention to be, with some reservations, a positive example of humanized treatment of non-citizens whose major fundamental and liberal rights are protected within the context of a detention establishment (e.g., CPT 2009, 2015; Flynn, Cannon 2009; Grant 2000). However, criticism from social scientists and civil activists has become increasingly vocal in discussions (e.g., Khosravi 2009) problematizing the success of the humanization project. The current study addresses the contradictory perception of the detention system by different stakeholders. I analyse cultural representations of experiences of detention and sociality unfolding in one of the detention centres in regards to the dominant discourse of humanization.

The article will begin by providing background information on the voluntary video project entitled *Förvaret* (Detained) (2015), which is followed by a theoretical framework built on Giorgio Agamben's conception of biopolitics, and an overview methodological considerations. After that, I will present an empirical analysis and a related discussion. As an outcome of the study, I argue the film should be recognized as a critique of biopolitical border regulation. It demonstrates that attempts to improve the detention system and its practices along the lines of a more civic model are both fundamentally undermined by the contradictory nature of the confinement ideology and insufficient as long as the very legitimacy of detention as a part of border control remains uncontested

### **'Detained'**

As material for empirical analysis, I utilize a 2015 Swedish documentary *Förvaret* (Detained), which was directed by Anna Persson and Shaon Chakraborty. The movie received a national prize as the best documentary of 2015 and triggered substantial public discussion. A journalist and an anti-deportation activist, Anna Persson has been engaged with the exploration of the issue of immigrant detention and deportation for several years; *Förvaret* was in fact

her second cinematic project on the topic. 'Detained' was described as an 'intimate and emotional film where you see the faces and follow events, a movie presenting perspectives of both detention personal and detainees' (Filmarbeten 2015: 5). When the documentary was finished, no additional editing was requested by the Migration Board.

The documentary consists of narratives on the destinies of two detainees: a young African man, Sami, and an elderly Chechen woman, Aina. Sami is fluent in Swedish and has been living in the country for some time; details of his legal case remain mainly unknown to the viewer. The young man seems to be disturbed by the uncertainty of the situation and becomes frustrated when he is suddenly released. Aina is accused of hiding from the authorities the true identity of both herself and her grown children. She is kept in the detention centre for eight months, mainly due to failing to cooperate with the police, and is subsequently deported back to Russia. Apart from detainees, the characters of two female staff members are outlined in the movie. Sophie and Solveig stand out from other detention centre supervisors with their informal and emphatic attitude towards the people being confined. This includes emphatic conversations, non-hierarchical styles of address, demonstrations of respect for the detainees' personal space, the aesthetization of daily life, alteration of organizational routines in accordance with the detainees' needs, and the organization of entertaining events. For this reason, the women are frequently criticized by the manager Ove, who demands that the staff play the role of 'officials.' At the close of the film, the viewer learns that Sophie and Solveig are no longer employed at the centre.

### **Biopolitics in total institutions and border management**

The detention centre as a total institution presents a case of biopolitical order. Here 'detainees bodies, health and physical state become thoroughly invested by politics – the responsibility of the institution and the site of multiple battles for control' (Hall 2012: 11; see also Goffman 1982). Moreover, contemporary studies on immigrant detention have demonstrated the embeddedness of the related discourses and practices within the wider doctrine of securitization of geographical mobility (Hall 2012; Giorgi 2010; Khosravi 2009). Giorgio Agamben's theorizing of biopolitics seems to be especially informative in this context. His notion of 'bare life' (1998: 88) as an essential basis of modern sovereignty – covers both biological 'natural life' (in Foucauldian terms) and its politicized counterpart (Patton 2007: 211). In the second instance, the meaning of bare life goes beyond plain materiality; it is the life marked by law, 'included' into the law that paradoxically proclaims its 'exclusion'. This is a 'life that may be killed but not sacrificed' (Agamben 1998: 83; see also Zembylas 2010). Initially associated with the image of a social outcast (*homo sacer*), bare life as politically invested corporeality has become a latent element of power regime in modernity.

The main feature of bare life is its fundamental exposure to a ban that produces a 'state of exception', a domain where juridical rules are temporally disabled, 'an anomic space in which what is at stake is a force of law without law' (Agamben cit. in Minca 2007: 91). Initially emerging on the aspirations of crisis management, state of exception found its culmination in the model of concentration camps. The camp is a derivative of ban, a territory designed to be a 'permanent space of exception' where biopolitics is exercised in full scale. While in the camp, individuals are simply treated as biological bodies deprived of basic political entailments and, therefore, 'no acts committed against them could appear any longer as a crime' (Agamben 1998: 170–171). This is the point, according to Agamben, when biopolitics turns into 'tanatopolitics' (ibid: 122).

As with Euthanasia programs, the sovereign power that manifests itself in border regulation recreates the separation of biological and political and attempts to decide the destiny of the bare life of individuals perceived to be a threat to the nation (ibid: 142). This devotion is an especially effective means of exclusion since the concept of citizenship and its related system of rights is grounded in the body-law nexus and one's 'nativity' or natural affiliation. Immigrants who do not exhibit the 'birth-nation link' (ibid: 131) find themselves outside the major framework of liberal protection and regulation. It is argued that the humanitarian initiatives of the various organizations operating solely within the apolitical domains of charity and social aid are of minor help in solving refugees' problems. Instead, these activities reinforce the refugees' biopolitical status as a bare life within the global system of 'inclusive exclusion' (Agamben 1998: 7, 133; see also Zembylas 2010; Hall 2012).

### **The Methodology of the Study**

The study utilizes structural semiotics, one of the most appropriate tools applied in the analysis of literary and cinematic texts (Chandler 2004). The method 'deals with those general principles which underline the structure of all signs whatever and with the character of their utilization within messages, as well as with the specifics of the various sign systems and of the diverse messages using those different kinds of signs' (Jakobson cit. in Chandler 2004: 4). A sign is a linguistic, visual, sonic, spatial, or material entity that "'stands for" something else' (ibid: 2). It is constituted by complex and unfixed relationships between a 'concept' (*signified*) and its 'material form' (*signifier*) that make a variety of interpretations possible. However, as insisted by structural semiologists, certain objective regularities can be detected in social actors' preferences of certain compositions between a concept and its materialization. Semiological analysis then, is interested in the foundations of historically contextualized signification system(s) and how they play out in a particular text (ibid: 15–16).

In practical applications, semiotics differentiates between paradigmatic (vertical) and syntagmatic (horizontal) structures of cultural narratives. 'Paradigm'

refers to relationships of mutual exclusion between signs ('this-or-this-or-this'), while 'syntagm' presupposes the possibilities of the co-existence of signs ('this-and-this-and-this') (Jakobson cit. in Chandler 2004: 85). Both dimensions are part of a semiotic textual examination; a researcher may move between them in the processes of analysis. The paradigmatic domain is frequently imagined in terms of oppositions, since the 'binary principle' seems to be a typical cultural feature. Though, culturally opposed, signifiers do not necessarily reciprocally neglect each other; there is always the chance of finding a 'more-or-less' type of distinction (ibid: 91). This differentiation between 'contradiction/exclusion' and 'contrariety/opposition' grounds the analytical technique of the semiotic square proposed by Algirdas Greimas (ibid: 106).

In the current study, a semiotic square is constructed to scrutinize representations of social relationships in a detention centre (Figure 1). I relied on the insights of Goffman (1982) regarding the interactional order of a total institution. My examination of the paradigmatic structure of the documentary is supplemented by an analysis of its syntagmatic domain. The two central categories of the film characters were the detainees and detention centre staff and their variations are considered in the complexity of their mutual exchanges:

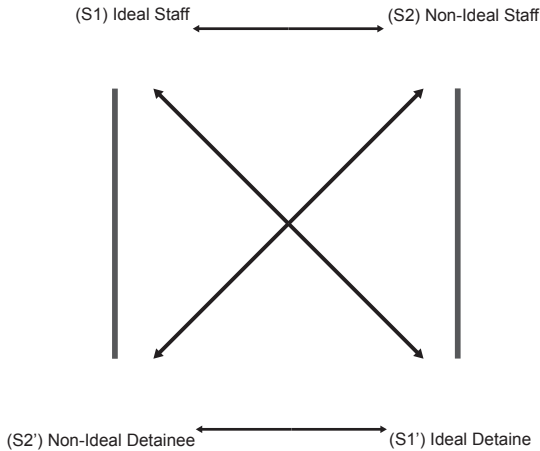


Figure 1. 'Detained': A Semiotic Square  
(based on Greimas in Chandler 2004: 107)

- A. Relationships S1/S2 and S1'/S2' should be understood as contrariety: a non-ideal detention employee is not necessarily a bad employee; a non-ideal detainee is not necessarily a bad detainee;
- B. The pairs S1/S2' and S2/S1' present complementary cinematic figures: an ideal detention employee is not by definition opposed to a non-ideal detainee and a non-ideal staff member complements an ideal detainee;

C. The pairs S1/S1' and S2/S2' exhibit contradictory relationships, but in a somewhat differential way. In the first instance, the one who is not an ideal detainee is supposed to be an ideal staff member. In the second instance, a non-ideal detainee appears as a 'negation of the negation' and typically an 'absent' element (Jameson cit. in Chander 2004: 107–108), since, as can be argued, its actual presence might destabilize the very established order. As in the current case, if there is no longer proper/ideal staff and proper/ideal detainees, detention as a social institution acquires a different set of properties.

### **Semiotics of immigrant detention**

This section utilizes the above-presented scheme to obtain a detailed description of each category of the filmic characters and latent 'themes' (Jameson cit. in Chander 2004: 107) fashioning relationships between them.

#### **The Ideal Staff**

The detention centre appears in the movie as a closed-off ward that, like other types of total institutions, strives towards purposefulness, rationality, discipline, and efficiency (Goffman 1982; see also Hall 2010). In line with its goal of keeping non-citizens away from society until they are subjected to removal, the centre's design exhibits features of a prison environment with high fences, closed doors, restricted access to certain areas (e.g., supervisors' office), and an alarm system utilized by the staff (see also Puthooppambil et al. 2015a). A helicopter view of the centre reveals its squared form with an exercise yard situated in the middle being surrounded by four joined building units.

The manager Ove represents an ideal-type employee who complies with organizational objectives. Ove criticizes Sophie and Solveig for disrespecting the boundaries that fundamentally divide staff and inmates in a total institution. This boundary, based on the idea of 'moral careers', is supposed to be routinely (re)produced in daily interactions between the two groups and, thus, secure organizational operational effectiveness (Goffman 1982; see also Hall 2012). Ove insists that the informal relationships supervisors enjoy with the detained may produce a situation open to misunderstandings and manipulation (see also Puthooppambil et al. 2015b). The relaxed style adopted by Sophie and Solveig is seen to undermine the coherence of the system. It is claimed that detainees, after having experienced the more informal relationship, will then take a dim view of other teams who strictly follow standardized institutional routines. And indeed, as has been demonstrated by sociological analysis, supervisors and some detainees can find the discrepancies between different centres puzzling and at times annoying (Bosworth 2014; Hall 2012). In this way, the women's conduct deviates from the ideal-model of a supervisor who is both 'responsible to their own group' and 'professional towards detainees' (Hall 2012: 145).

What is unique about the work carried out by the staff of the detention centre is that the object of their efforts are individuals. Working with people comes with important considerations. First, they can be 'programmed' and activated to function according to a certain script for some time (Goffman 1982); that is how disciplining technologies (Foucault 1975) become possible. In a conversation with a detainee about lunchtime routines (Fragment 4), Ove refers to written directions that are provided to the detention center's newcomers in order to direct their daily activity. Such pedagogies regulating the organization of individual bodies in time and space are frequently found in securitized disciplinary regimes, such as immigrant detention centres and airports (Hall 2012; Hall 2007). However, there is always a risk of resistance and revolt: '[i]n prison and on "better" wards of mental hospitals guards have to be ready for organized efforts at escape and must constantly deal with attempts to bait them, "frame" them, and otherwise get them into trouble' (Goffman 1982: 76).

*Fragment 1*

Two employees (Sophie and Solveig) are in the exercise yard. It is a late evening and dark. Sophie checks around the yard and picks up some garbage. 'I think there will be an attempt to escape soon it has been very quiet for a while.' The women smoke while looking up at the sky. Suddenly, Sophie rushes back to the building; a detainee is about to get out. They forgot to close a door into the dormitory. Sophie softly, but determinately attempts to stop the man, talking to him and simultaneously blocking the exit with her body: he is not allowed to go out.

Thus, 'constant anxiety' becomes a typical feature of the detection phenomenology (Fragment 1). The idea of crises is routinely present in the work of the detention staff. At any minute, someone can attempt to break out, react abnormally, or become unmanageable in other ways. In the film, the theme of control includes the presentation of the related challenges. The entire environment incorporates a sense of a latent danger and shows traces of violence, such as a broken window with a damage resembling the form of a bullet hole. These prison-like characteristics peculiarly coexist in the custodial architecture with elements of a cozy hostel, which makes the entire concept of the detention center rather a puzzling one (see also Khosravi 2009). As previous studies have also disclosed, supervisors remain constantly in a state of suspicion and expectation of deviance (Puthooppambal et al. 2015b; Hall 2012). This regime of alarm may be even more pronounced in immigrant detention centres in comparison to prisons due to the shortage of knowledge on identities of the people confined and their related life stories (Hall 2010, 2012).

Language difficulties can play a certain role in the production of a fearful environment as well. In comparison to prisons where the population is typically more nationally homogenous, centres of immigrant detention are sites of high-cultural diversification that may feed feelings of alienation and dread between detainees themselves (Bosworth 2014) and effect their relations with



the staff (Hall 2012). In the movie, the role of language manifested itself in the scene of a meeting devoted to the issue of lunchtime (Fragment 2). The supervisor makes an attempt to explain the rationale behind a specific organizational routine, pointing to the demands from the higher authority and staff's need to have a lunch as well. However, those explanations are lost in translation and what the audience receives is just a direct refusal of its claim. In a similar vein, previous research found language to be a matter of concern in interactions between the staff and the detained, as well as an important factor affecting the health and wellbeing of the confined individuals (Puthooppambal et al. 2015).

### *Fragment 2*

A supervisor gathers detainees in a cafeteria for a talk. Someone had composed a letter protesting the very short time allocated for lunch (half an hour). The supervisor attempts to explain reasons of such a routine in English: the sanitation agency does not allow them to leave food out of the fridge for more than half an hour and staff need to have lunch as well. Many of the meeting participants do not understand English. Finally, a detainee comes who speaks Arabic and can translate what was previously conveyed by the supervisor. However, all he says is that the administration finds it impossible to satisfy the demand. All the reasons for the decision were omitted in his translation. People look disappointed with this message and start to leave the room.

As the detention architecture does not fully resemble a prison environment, the ideal-type supervisor is distinct from the image of a police officer. While supervisors employ discipline, social technologies and symbolic domination, the Police (and the supplementary service of security transportation) frequently appear as distant (available on telephone or invisible in a car) and attempting to pressure or to coerce.

### **The Non-ideal Staff**

Sophie and Solveig are atypical supervisors. They care about the detained, attempt to entertain them, recognize them as unique individuals and provide emotional support for those in need. Sophie seems to be especially engaged with the lives of detainees. Before leaving for a summer vacation, she even asks Solveig to text her if some of them are to be released or removed. These emotional contributions make certain positive differences in the daily existence of the inmates and are appreciated. However, the supervisors' input is simultaneously shown to be rather limited, as they have no influence on the major object of concern for detainees; the fate of their legal cases (Bosworth 2014). As a means of managing the detainees and their own emotions, the staff may adapt a 'here-and-now' approach (Fragment 3) that can be confusing for the detained whose life and thoughts unavoidably go beyond the premises of the establishment.

As anthropological studies have shown, a preoccupation with one's own destiny restricts people in detention from engaging in the various activities

provided by the institution, such as sports, plays, classes, and creative workshops. Bosworth (2014) showed that in spite of a wide range of options on offer in UK detention centres, many respondents preferred non-participation due to the cognitive and emotional states triggered by their subjectively and objectively difficult life situation. Time in the centre was frequently characterized as boring and depressing; activities sometimes were seen as irrelevant or 'infantilizing'. According to the official understanding, the majority of detained individuals are supposed to stay in a centre only in the short-term, making long-term educational or developmental programs difficult and even unnecessary to implement. Thus, within the Swedish detention system there is a ban on training in Swedish language as this is seen as an activity potentially 'offering entry into Swedish society' (Khosravi 2009). In this respect, Bosworth (2014) termed detention centres 'non-destinations' to emphasize how the authorities frame the organizational mission shaping the destiny of the confined non-citizens.

### *Fragment 3*

Sophie is talking to a detainee who states that he has been working at a restaurant. He would like to stay in Sweden; he has a good job. 'But you are not sitting at an airplane now,' Sophie replies and touches the man's hand, 'Do not stop the struggle! You just give up. One should not do this.' The man seems to be confused: 'Should I smile all the time?'

The supervisors' major task is to assist detainees in the detention centre. Sophie and Solveig attempt to widen their formal role by engaging emotionally with other people's lives. After sometime in the centre, individuals are typically removed from the country. When a deportation operation fails, detainees are returned back. They may avoid greeting the staff, even if previous interactions were well maintained. People may feel betrayed, believes Sophie, as 'if we would send them to death.' Being associated with the system of immigration management at large, have to cope with effects of decisions made at another level of organizational structure (Hall 2012). In this way, detainee-staff relationships appear unavoidably mediated and fragmented by the logic of immigration enforcement. As was demonstrated in a sociological study conducted in another Swedish detention centre, supervisors may experience their assignments as being similar to the work of hospice staff: 'We help people endure their suffering before death' (Khosravi 2009: 44).

### **Ideal Detainee**

An ideal detainee is typically defined as 'passive,' 'grateful,' 'obedient,' 'childish,' and 'deserving' (to be isolated and removed); he can also occasionally become irrational, unruly, and destructive engaging in revolts and riots (Hall 2012: 123). The film does not portray such a model in the context of Flen, but instead focuses on mechanisms by which individuals are shaped into it. Entering a closed ward, the individual becomes treated as a child: irrational,

emotional, and with simple needs. In the detention centre, the supervisors address the inmates by their room numbers, which can be seen as a rational practice with a dehumanizing effect. Individual personal space is restricted and continuously violated for security reasons. For instance, the movie begins with a scene of a regular check-up of the dormitory: two supervisors in plastic gloves enter rooms one-by-one conducting an inspection of their interior. As studies on other disadvantaged social groups showed, the experience of fractured personal space and vulnerability to violations of personal boundaries may result in an eternal feeling of anxiety and a weak sense of existential security (Cahill 2001). Not surprisingly, the major registered experience of the detention is of constant control and disempowerment (Hall 2012; Puthoopparambil et al. 2015b) that facilitates the socialization of detainees into a passive role (Puthoopparambil et al. 2015a).

Unlike prison, physical enforcement of the order is not observed in the portrayed detention centre. Although variations of symbolic violence – a procedure 'when a person's outlook is inferiorized and an asymmetrical relationship is established between this individual's worldview and competing conception of reality' (Murphy et al. 2015: 119) – is present (Fragment 4).

#### *Fragment 4*

The manager, Ove, comes to the dining hall to invite Sami for a talk. Sami wrote a letter on behalf of several detainees with a request of prolonging the length of lunch. He happened to oversleep the scheduled lunchtime between 12.00 and 12.30 and was left hungry. He is not the only one facing this issue. Sami is annoyed and feels that the staff is messing with him: 'The food is in front of me, 10 centimetres from me, a lot of food, extra food that you are going to throw away or put in the fridge.' The manager interrupts Sami questioning what he himself did to ensure his attendance at lunch. Every detainee upon arrival is informed about times when food is served and even given a sheet with this information, so that it becomes everyone's personal responsibility. The supervisors are just following the rules. Sami replies that he is also a human being, just like the manager himself, and should be treated accordingly.

Sami, as well as some other detainees, finds it difficult to adjust his life to the established routines. Placement in a total institution radically disrupts an individual's reality, putting restrictions on when, how much, and what food or other resources are available. Inmates have to ask assistance from the staff to satisfy their ordinary needs (Goffman 1982) and must comply with the institutional schedule grounded in the demand for functionality and effectiveness. Ove reframes the situation in terms of the detainee's personal accountability for his troubles. The individualization of personal difficulties of detainees was shown to be employed as a technology of governing in the context of immigrant detention, allowing responsibility for the hazards associated with confinement and deportation to be shifted to the detainees themselves (Khosravi 2009).

### The Non-ideal Detainee

The logical opposition to an ideal-type detainee is 'the wilful, disobedient and underserving detainee' (Hall 2012: 169) represented by the image of Sami. The young man is acculturated (he speaks proper Swedish) and, therefore, undoubtedly fits the nationalistic expectations, turning him into an inappropriate candidate for deportation. Moreover, his claim to re-establish his own moral status (Fragment 4) and his persistent challenges to the established order (Fragment 4, 5) are framed in a 'civilized' manner and rely on rational argumentation. These features make Sami similar to supervisors; a person from 'a shared moral community' (Hall 2012: 145) and thus especially appreciated by them. Sophie and Solveig actively socialize with Sami and sympathize with him, even if he occasionally criticizes them for belonging to the dominant 'internally corrupted' group (Fragment 5).

#### *Fragment 5*

It is evening. Sami opens the fridge and takes out a banana. Sophie and Solveig are sitting at the table near the window. Sami joins them and a conversation starts. Sophie is going for a holiday to Spain; she plans to get a suntan. For Sami, due to his dark skin, getting a suntan is not an issue and women claim this to be somewhat unfair. Sami turns the talk to his major topic: 'Unfair... but it's everywhere... Someone from Sweden who has money goes there [to Africa], buys land, buys people, buys police, and utilizes system to do everything. This is ok.' Women listen to him quietly. 'Unfair. You don't notice this, you don't feel this, but we do. So it is.' He laughs trying to repair the situation. They sit together for a while and talk peacefully.

The spectator is provided with limited information on Sami's legal case; almost all of what is known is that he is not a criminal, as this is what the young man states himself repeatedly on several occasions. At the close of the cinematic narrative, Sami is abruptly released. This turn of events is experienced as a shock by the young man. When the door of the centre is closed after him, Sami sits on the ground, overwhelmed by a mixture of devastation and excitement.

### Conclusion: Biopower beyond the Security Fence

The reviews and public discussions on the 'Detained' seem to address the fundamental conflict between an authentic human emotionality of non-ideal staff, from the one side, and mechanical rationality of the bureaucratic structure (and its adherents), from another. As confirmed in the performed analysis, however, a non-ideal supervisor is not an antipode to an ideal staff, but rather a hybrid of a desirable institutional model and an emotional human actor. This inconsistency mirrors the complex organizational mission of immigrant detention combining 'efficiency/security/control' and 'care/social work' (Hall 2012; see also Goffman 1982; Puthooppambal 2015b). This contradiction can be partially solved by the gendered division of labour (Hall 2012); in the documentary,

male characters are those most likely to be associated with the maintenance of the formal order, while women engage in social work.

Overall, the film and anthropological research showed that supervisors – both men and women – do sporadically empathize and occasionally transgress their professional roles to address needs of the detained. There is, however, always an organizationally guarded limit to this emotional involvement, and care can be turned into a means of control (Bosworth 2014; Hall 2012; Puthoopparambil et al. 2015b). Shahram Khosravi employed the notion of 'hostipitality' to explain the peculiar nature of the Swedish system of detention:

The detention apparatus in Sweden does not operate in the form of simple acts of violence but as a complex and ambiguous set of regulations. Built of a 'hostile hospitality,' it is a partly carrying, partly punitive; partly endangering (deportation), partly saving (protecting deportees from police brutality); partly forced, partly empowering; partly a site of hospitality, partly a site of hostility. It sees a detainee as a child in need of guidance and at the same time as an adult responsible for his or her deeds and choices (2009: 53).

The detention centre resembles the camp model, even if the purpose is not the extermination but rather the isolation and removal of those considered to be undesirable, unknown, and just non-native (Khosravi 2009; see Hall 2012). Here, the division between individual corporeality and politics is reinstalled (Agamben 1998) to bring social-biological into focus while detracting detainees' opportunities to claim for political entitlements (Hall 2012). Thus, as previous empirical research demonstrated, immigrants confined in Sweden might perceive offered public defense useless and intermingled with power (Khosravi 2009; Puthoopparambil et al., 2015a).

The documentary revealed that improvements in detention organization and practices towards a more humane model are fundamentally undermined by the contradictory nature of the confinement ideology and particularities of the detained population. Furthermore, they are insufficient as long as the very legitimacy of detention as a border management technology remains unquestioned. The film should be viewed as a voice raised against the system of immigrant detention at large, irrespective of how (un)human it attempts to appear. The Swedish authorities were shown to be concerned with a search for substitutes to detention in the form of, for example, community placement for asylum seekers (Bruycker 2015). Such initiatives, however, do not necessarily cancel exclusion, stigmatization, anxiety, and other effects empirically associated with the status of 'deportable' (Debono et al. 2015) potentially translating 'alternative to detention' into 'alternative to release' (Kalhan 2010). Agamben's own idea was to deconstruct the global biopolitical order of power and domination as a radical way of dealing with the camp. It is currently perceived to be 'utopian' (Zembylas 2010) without a plausible alternative.

This study widens the academic discussion on the issue of Swedish immigrant detention that has been dominated by concerns over the material and

social-psychological conditions provided for the detained. Moreover, the project highlights the role of non-institutional actors in framing the detention debate. The film producers, as representatives of social activists, are sensitive to the limited effects of the humanization project and attempt to mobilize public opinion to contest the current order of border management. Further research would be needed to explore civil society's response to the recent immigrant crises and the related policies.

## References

- Agamben G. (1998) *Homo Sacer*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Business Information Centre (2015) *Asylum Trends: Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands and Europe, August 2015*. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9uorQ> (accessed 23.03.2016).
- Bosworth M. (2014) *Inside Immigration Detention*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cahill A. (2001) *Rethinking Rape*, London: Cornell University Press.
- Chandler D. (2004) *Semiotics: The Basics*, London: Routledge.
- Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) (2009) *Report to the Swedish Government on the visit to Sweden carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 9 to 18 June 2009*. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9uosP> (accessed 02.01.2016).
- Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) (2015) *Report to the Swedish Government on the visit to Sweden carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 18 to 28 May 2015*. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9uosR> (accessed 02.01.2016).
- Bruycker P. de (ed.) (2015) *Alternatives to Immigration and Asylum Detention in the EU*. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9uos5> (accessed 15.12.2015).
- Debono D., Rönnqvist S., Magnusson K. (2015) *Humane and Dignified? Migrants' Experiences of Living in a 'State of Deportability' in Sweden*, Malmö: Malmö University.
- Filmarbeten (2015) *Förvaret: Intervju men Anna Persson och Anna Weitz*. Filmarbeten 1. 2015: 5–7. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9v9Rq> (accessed 02.02.2016).
- Flynn M., Cannon C. (2009) *The Privatization of Immigration Detention: Towards a Global View. A Global Detention Project Working Paper*, Geneva: Global Detention Project.
- Foucault M. (1975) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Random House.

- Giorgi A. De (2010) Immigration Control, Post-Fordism, and Less Eligibility: A Materialist Critique of the Criminalization of Immigration Across Europe. *Punishment & Society*, 12(2): 147–167.
- Goffman E. (1982) *Asylums*, London: Penguin Books.
- Grant M. (2000) *The Swedish Model of Detention*. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9uosb> (accessed 02.01.2016).
- Hall A. (2010) 'These People Could Be Anyone': Fear, Contempt (and Empathy) in a British Immigration Removal Centre. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(6): 881–898.
- Hall A. (2012) *Border Watch: Cultures of Immigration, Detention and Control*, New York: Pluto Press.
- Hall R. (2007) Of Ziploc Bags and Black Holes: The Aesthetics of Transparency in the War on Terror. *The Communication Review*, 10: 319–346.
- Kalhan A. (2010) Rethinking Immigration Detention. *Columbia Law Review*, 110: 42–58.
- Khosravi S. (2009) Sweden: Detention and Deportation of Asylum Seekers. *Race & Class*, 50(4): 38–56.
- Minca C. (2007) Agamben's Geographies of Modernity. *Political Geography*, 26: 78–97.
- Murphy J., Pardeck J., Sik Chung W., Min Choi J. (2015) Symbolic Violence and Social Control in the Post-Total Institution Era. *The Journal of Sociological and Social Welfare*, 21(4): 115–132.
- Patton P. (2007) Agamben and Foucault on Biopower and Biopolitics. M. Calarco, S. De-Caroli (eds.) *Georgeo Agamben: Sovereignty & Life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press: 203–218.
- Puthoopparambil S. J. (2016) *Life in Immigration Detention Centres: An Exploration of Health of Immigrant Detainees in Sweden and Three other EU Member States. Digital Comprehensive Summaries of Uppsala Dissertations from the Faculty of Medicine 1176*, Uppsala: Asta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Puthoopparambil S. J., Ahlberg B. M., Bjerneld M. (2015a) 'A Prison with Extra Flavours': Experiences of Immigrants in Swedish Immigration Detention Centres. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*, 11(2): 73–85.
- Puthoopparambil S. J., Ahlberg B. M., Bjerneld M. (2015b) 'It Is a Thin Line to Walk On': Challenges of Staff Working at Swedish Immigrant Detention Centres. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Wellbeing*. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9uotg> (accessed 20.11.2015).
- Puthoopparambil S. J., Bjerneld M., Källestål C. (2015) Quality of Life Among Immigrants in Swedish Immigration Detention Centres: A Cross-Sectional Questionnaire Study. *Global Health Action*. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9uotx> (accessed 20.11.2015).

Swedish Government (2005) *Swedish Alien's Act 2005: 716*. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9uou7> (accessed 02.01.2016).

Swedish Migration Board (n.d) *Inkomna ansökningar om asyl 2000–2015*. Available at: <http://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Om-webbplatsen/Oppna-data.html> (accessed 23.01.2016).

Swedish Migration Board (2015) *Förvar*. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9uouK> (accessed 02.03.2016).

Swedish Migration Board (2016) *Asylum decisions, 2015*. Available at: <https://clck.ru/9uouf> (accessed 28.03.2016).

Zembylas B. (2010) Agamben's Theory of Biopower and Immigrants/Refugees/Asylum Seekers: Discourses of Citizenships and the Implications for Curriculum Theorising. *Journal of Curriculum Theorising*, 26(2): 31–45.