



Canning, V. (2019). Keeping up with the Kladdkaka: Kindness and coercion in Swedish immigration detention centres. *European Journal of Criminology*, 1-21. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370818820627>

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Keeping up with the Kladdkaka: Kindness and Coercion in Swedish Immigration Detention Centres

Journal:	<i>European Journal of Criminology</i>
Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Article
Keywords:	borders, asylum, Sweden, Detention, Harm, Violence
Abstract:	<p>Unlike many of its neighbouring Northern European countries, Sweden has historically been reluctant to expand its use of immigration detention. Likewise, and similar to its use of prisons, it is a state which often favours architectural 'softness' in the structure and regime of detention. However, as this article contends, its reputation for hospitality and welfare is in contrast with the very existence of such spaces. Reflecting on interviews with detention custody officers and governors in two such centres, I demonstrate how 'hard' approaches to control are instead supplemented with dualistically 'kind' and coercive measures to obtain their ultimate agenda: the deportation of the unwanted immigrant Other. Considering the harms inherent to imprisonment, I argue that – although preferable to harsher conditions enacted by various other states – the negative impacts of confinement cannot be eradicated by 'soft' approaches, but rather by the eradication of border confinement itself.</p>

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Keeping up with the Kladdkaka: Kindness and Coercion in Swedish Immigration Detention Centres

Introduction

Like many of its Northern counterparts, immigration is an increasingly contentious issue in Sweden. As the so-called refugee crisis unfolded – specifically in late 2015 and early 2016 - so too did a discourse of welfare and humanitarianism. Whilst Sweden's neighbouring countries worked to ferment 'hostile environments' for the increasing numbers of people arriving to seek asylum, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven initially declared that 'My Europe does not build walls' (in Barker, 2018: 1). Civil society mobilised across parts of Sweden to offer blankets, tents, tea and food. Therefore when border restrictions were implemented through passport regulation on 24th November 2015¹ on the Oresund Bridge, the eight kilometre architectural feat facilitating free movement between Denmark and Sweden – it symbolised the ultimate disintegration of Sweden's seemingly open approach to migration north².

Figure 1: Border security guards at Kastrup airport train station, separating Denmark and Sweden, in December 2016.

However, as Khosravi has demonstrated in meticulous depth (2009; 2010; 2016) the practice of bordering has long been an integral aspect of Sweden's internal approaches to the migrant Other. One such practice is in the use of immigration detention. As the Global Detention Project notes, although relatively small, Sweden's use of immigration detention has continuously expanded over the past decade, and since 2009 specifically (Global Detention Project, 2016). However, Sweden's reputation as being fairly relaxed in such practices are bolstered by two key points. Firstly, Sweden comparatively detains far fewer people for less time than other countries, for example Britain and France. At around 3700 detentions per year, Swedish practice is dwarfed by the likes of Britain, which in 2015 held over 32,000 people in Immigration Removal Centres despite similar applications for asylum (or IRCs – see Silverman, 2017). Secondly, the conditions under which people are detained are arguably less reflective of punitive prison regimes, with 'softer' architectural environments and fewer mechanisms for physical controls (Pratt and Eriksson, 2013).

This article unpacks the tensions between the notion of *perceptively* soft forms of imprisonment (Barker, 2013; Ugelvik, 2013; Ugelvik and Dullum, 2016) and the challenge to civil liberties inherent to incarcerating people based almost exclusively on concepts of non-belonging and national identity (Anderson, 1991; Murji, 2018). It draws upon research in two immigration detention centres - or *förvar* - in Sweden in September and October of 2017. As part of a larger 24 month project researching gendered harms in asylum processes in Britain, Denmark and Sweden³, I gained access to two such spaces to undertake interviews with custody officers and governors working there, as well as one oral history with a woman detainee. Overall the project

¹On 24th November 2015, Sweden introduced a requirement for people travelling across borders between Denmark and Sweden to carry valid passports and/or visas at all times when crossing countries. This was highly contentious, since both are members of the Schengen Agreement and thus should remain as a passport free border.

²In addition, 'the temporary law' (*den tillfälliga lagen*) was implemented in July 2016 and shall stay until July 2019. Especially the new practice to grant almost exclusively temporary residence permits (for subsidiary protection 13 months), which is crucial when it comes to detain and deport rejected applicants.

³ Project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council grant number ES/N016718/1.

incorporates over 80 in-depth semi-structured interviews with psychologists, support workers, border agents, refugee rights activists and other such social actors working with people seeking asylum. This has been further enriched by oral histories with women seeking asylum which – at the time of writing - are still ongoing (see Author et al, 2017; Author, 2018a; Author, 2018b; Author, forthcoming). This article, however, reflects predominately on my research experiences in these two centres (which I have anonymised as Centre A and Centre B) and interviews with 11 staff working within them. Participants are termed by the prefix of ‘S’ (depicting Sweden) and number (for example, S24) for the sake of anonymity as well as consistency across forthcoming articles.

As the title suggests, I will focus on two primary mechanisms of social interaction and soft control: notions of kindness enacted by staff who aim to ensure the experience of incarceration is not inherently unpleasant, nor that the detainees view them as part of a system of oppression; and the embedding of coercive practices to ensure and enact the ultimate aims of the immigration detention centre. That is that, ‘our primary objective is to make sure they’re here, that they’re available for their deportation’ (S27, custody officer).

Immigration Detention vs Spatial Confinements in Contemporary Sweden

‘Although sterile, there is effort to *not* make this look like a prison. Tropical fish, gyms, an open kitchen (that detainees aren’t permitted to use), access to outdoor space to smoke. Widescreen televisions seem to keep no-one entertained, since no-one is watching them. Although I wonder what would be worse, abject boredom, or watching multiple re-runs of “*Keeping up with the Kardashians*”’. (Field Notes, October 2017).

Detention custody officer: ‘*We bake! We bake the hell out of this place! We make so many, like kladdkaka, I don’t know if you tried it, sticky cake?*’

VC: ‘No’.

DCO: ‘*Chocolate, super-sticky. It’s everyone’s favourite with vanilla ice-cream for example.... we make a lot! And they love it. Cinnamon buns [Kanelbullar] and typical Swedish stuff!*’ (S24).

As you can see from the above field notes and interview extract, and which will be discussed in more depth later, the title of this article come from two research reflections, one on the architecture and use of entertainment in Centre B, and one on the use of baking sweet goods as a means to both improve the experience of confinement and – arguably – pacify detainees.

Both centres are situated on the outer peripheries of two Swedish cities, one more isolated than the other, accessible only by semi-regular buses or car. In any case, they are highly secured, not by the barbed wire of centres I have visited in Britain⁴ or Denmark⁵, but by electronic passes which keep the centre in lock-down. As a visitor, even a trip from the reception to the bathroom required supervision. Once inside, however, the realities of incarceration are offset by the use of

⁴ IRC Yarl’s Wood, although I was not permitted access beyond the reception area. Mary Bosworth’s description and analysis of this centre are useful for anyone unfamiliar to it. See Bosworth (2013; 2014).

⁵ Denmark has only two formal immigration detention facilities (Udlændingecenter Ellebæk and Vridsløselille, a former prison), one of which I have visited and interviewed in. However, it has a range of other complex centres which enact less formal kinds of incarceration, namely its two deportation centres (Sjaelsmark and Kærshovedgaard, one of which I have visited and interviewed in), its reception centre (Center Sandholm, which I have visited and interviewed in) and its asylum centre estate.

gym facilities, of tropical fish, ping-pong tables and – as I will argue later – other mostly non-educational activities to entertain, provide ‘meaningful’ use of time, and help pacify detainees as well as pass time.

Immigration detention is thus arguably architecturally softer in these two centres than in other parts of Europe – a far cry from the physical manifestation of degradation in centres like Moria on Lesvos. In comparison to Britain, one of the other two countries focussed on in this project, Sweden has a disparately low use of detention in relation to the number of asylum applications it received (see Figure No. 1, below). However, as Barker points out:

‘The penal harms associated with mobility controls are extensive and intrusive. They inflict pain on others particularly on those who have been cast outside a shared moral universe... penal harms are oriented around but certainly not limited to the deprivation of security, the deprivation of autonomy, and the deprivation of liberty’ (2018: 115).

Figure 2: Asylum Applications and Number of immigration detainees in Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom, 2016⁶:

Unlike the United Kingdom, where tens of thousands of people are detained each year with many being eventually released (Women for Refugee Women, 2016), the function of detention is somewhat clearer in Sweden: it is a means to deport. One centre governor told me, ‘they [police] bring people in and we keep them put’. As we will see later, it is little more than a physical function to contain bodies who are thus readily available for deportation with limited opportunity to appeal in practice, if not in theory.

It is in the context of deportation drives that the Swedish state has received significant criticism. Although the detention estate is fairly small, in 2014, Sweden apprehended nearly 73,000 undocumented non-citizens; some 15,000 were ordered to leave the country; just under 7,000 were returned (Global Detention Project, 2016). It is worth noting that this was *prior* to the so-called closing of the border as the outside world had seen it. Indeed, in her comparative analysis of deportations per 100,000 population from 2014 statistics, Leanne Weber demonstrated that – using a per capita format - Sweden was a world leader in deportation, above the USA, UK and Australia (Weber, 2015: 162). Thus as Khosravi (2009) and Barker (2016; 2018) argue, the border was long engrained if somewhat differently enacted.

More recently, the surge in deportations, specifically the use of charter flights to Afghanistan, has drawn powerful protests both inside and outside of the centres (see Khosravi, 2016 for in-depth discussion). Fierce debates on the treatment of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan have been exacerbated by the suicides of predominately young men awaiting deportation (Madadi, in Norway Today, 2017). Likewise, anti-deportation campaigns led by detainees and their external supporters have counteracted centre right – and increasingly far right – discourses from commentators and politicians (Edwards, 2017).

As a final point before moving to the empirical data raised from this study, it is worth highlighting that immigration detention is only one facet of a more existential form of

⁶ This information is collated from the Global Detention Project (2016); Refugee Council (2016) and Migrationsverket (2017). Note that immigration detention includes all detainees, not only people seeking asylum, but as this is not kept consistently for all countries then those included are not asylum specific. Number of applications does not include dependents as countries monitor this in different ways.

1
2
3 confinement: the asylum centre. As of 31 December 2016, 63,063 asylum seekers were housed
4 through the *Migrationsverket* (Swedish Migration Agency), with 51% living in asylum reception
5 entre accommodation (Asylum Information Database, 2017). Thus many people awaiting
6 asylum live in large camps in isolated regions, and often with little access to urban facilities or
7 support infrastructures. Some camps are as far North as the Arctic Circle. Reflecting on his time
8 at one such Arctic camp, Khosravi recalls:

9
10 'Despite all the differences (not least in terms of economic resources) between my
11 Arctic camp and refugee camps in Asia and Africa, the logic of the camp, however,
12 was the same: to place undesirable people outside the society. The camp meant
13 both expelling and excepting refugees' (Khosravi, 2010: 70).

14
15 Although the structure and set up of camps have shifted from warehouse-like camps to centres
16 (Khosravi, 2016), I had many conversations with men seeking asylum in Malmö who had spent
17 months in such areas, some closer to cities, others in the rural, icy North. Salaad⁷, from Somalia,
18 reflected on the physical shock of living in -40 degree conditions, having himself been used to
19 +40 degrees at some times of the year. Raif, from Iraq, recalled finding a fellow football player
20 almost frozen having collapsed from the cold whilst jogging home from a friendly match.
21 Farjaad, an animated young Afghani, recalled his decision to leave Germany for Sweden. Having
22 walked through Europe in 2015, he decided after five days in Hamburg that the extent of racism
23 was too much to contend with, and called his sister in Afghanistan to tell of his plans to enter
24 Sweden. She warned that he could, but that the Swedish government were displacing migrants
25 to 'igloos and bears' in the Arctic circle.

26
27 The urban legend of bears and igloos aside, Farjaad's sisters' observation was not wholly
28 inaccurate: spatial peripheries of such centres can be as isolating and restrictive as the
29 detention centres. Like deportation practices, such spaces arguably facilitate the externalisation
30 of the migrant Other, albeit on a lesser spatial scale. Furthermore, and as Figure No. 2 shows, the
31 length of time spent in such centres averages at almost one year: not an insignificant length of
32 time for anyone hoping to rebuild a life.

33
34 Table 1: Average duration of stay:

35
36
37 Source: Asylum Information Database, 2017.

38
39 The isolation and uncertainty through the extended duration of the asylum process can take its
40 toll on the health of individuals, including women with children who are further limited from
41 travel or networks by school schedules and dependency (Women's Refugee Commission, 2016).
42 As one psychologist working with people seeking asylum and undocumented migrants across
43 Skåne told me: 'Isolation, a *huge* problem and the isolation tends to make people psychologically
44 feel very much worse. We have people who have developed trauma by being at the asylum
45 centres' (S17).

46 47 **Kanelbullar and Krimyoga: the hard and soft contours of confinement**

48
49 The significance of prison architecture has a literature base, particularly with regard to
50 reformist traditions (see Prison Reform Trust for archival materials). Whilst abolitionists argue
51 that prisons and spaces of detention are inherently sites of pain infliction (Davis, 2003; Scott,
52 2016; Sim, 2009), reformist traditions place emphasis on embedding reasonable living
53 conditions, access to healthcare, and meaningful activities as both a means to preserve
54

55
56
57 ⁷ All names are pseudonyms.

humanity and, in more psychosocial ventures, to reform and rehabilitate (see Jewkes et al, 2017; Liebling, 2005).

As outlined in the earlier reflection, Centres A and B embody 'soft' elements of prison life rather than openly punitive regimes (Khosravi, 2017). However, like more obviously punitive spaces, there was always the potential for further punishment, such as isolation for up to three days. Detainees receive small amounts of spending money per day (at present, 24 Kroner, or around 2 Euros) to buy confectionary or cigarettes. Smoking is permitted, unlike in Danish centre equivalents, and phones without cameras are allowed to be used. Internet is available almost 24 hours per day with access to news, Skype and Facebook⁸. This partly offsets other forms of relational harms (Author, 2017: 81-85) which affect people's ability to contact family or friends. However, S22 pointed out that 'there are very many who never has any visitors at all' while S19 stated, 'They are very much alone and they are living in some ... horrid place somewhere in the detention... They have TV and computer and washing machine and everything, but they are very isolated I think'. Furthermore, as former detainees in IRCs in the UK have told me, this feeling of isolation can compound other forms of depression or acute sadness.

Activities such as table tennis, chess, and multiple gym facilities were all aspects of the centres brought to my attention as being 'good things' for detainees to access meaningful activities (see also Khosravi's reflections on the Märsta centre, 2016). The concept of 'meaningful' is particularly important with regard to integration in many Nordic states, facilitating a sense of skills acquisition, community or shared values. For people living in detention, however, the concept of 'meaningful' is somewhat limited. As Mary Bosworth argues in the context of British IRCs, educational tools are limited due to the uncertain temporality of immigration detention so ongoing educational programmes are limited or non-existent (2014). As one officer told me:

'some people from the staff might have some aerobics class or boxing class or ... we have ping-pong tournaments and football tournaments and stuff, but yeah, nothing educational' (S24).

Instead, activities are geared toward two things, the passing of time, and the pacification of detainees. Take the following dialogue as one example of a pacification technique. The interviewee, a custody officer and activities co-ordinator at Centre A, referred to an activity she had recently introduced to detainees called 'Krimiyoga'. Having been to a workshop with the (White Swedish) instigator of the movement, she endeavoured to implement the activity into the centre:

'they wanted to have something to help the prisoners with their anger and everything, anger management ... so she has actually worked out the yoga thingy that they do here in Sweden within the prisoners... it worked out very well, the custody centre in the prisons, so I thought well we lock up people too...' (S22).

Two key points are worth picking up on. The first is the emphasis on anger and anger management. Yoga becomes represented here as a tool to *reduce* negative emotions, to *manage* anger. This is particularly interesting given that the complexity of emotions can range from uncertainty to depression, or anger at feelings of injustice (Bosworth and Turnbull, 2015). In any case, it individualises the management of a structural problem: that liberty has been removed, and autonomy over ones' own future significantly reduced or eradicated. Secondly, and perhaps more interesting to criminologists, is the conflation of criminality with people who are not in fact incarcerated for reasons of criminal conviction. Whilst the intent is clearly well meaning, the politics of such a practice are thus contentious.

⁸ The main prohibition was pornographic websites.

Kindness as a way to 'see' the incarcerated Other

This brings me to the implementation of kindness in the two centres. Like the 'meaningful' passing of time, kindness serves multiple purposes. The Swedish immigration estate is managed and by overseen by *Migrationsverket* (Swedish Migration Agency) and run in collaboration with *Kriminalvårdens* (Prisons and Probation) for transporting detainees, but not all staff recognise themselves as guards. In fact, many rejected the idea that they should work as though the centre was a prison even when it was clear to them that their role was to contain, and thus to inherently incarcerate. Many thus see their role as providing comfort to those who, as some mentioned, had otherwise lost their families, homes, and now their freedom (see also Weber, 2005 for discussion on resistance to punitive securitisation).

To that end, an emphasis on *seeing the person* was clear in many discussions. As S18 stated, 'we have a certain way to behave here and everybody should follow that. *We see them*, we listen to them'. Meanwhile, S22 claimed, 'we at least *see them* and try to acknowledge them that they are here, and if they need anything'. Similarly, S25 saw the role as 'just to be with them and listen to them; I think it's very important to everyone here to just look in their eyes and say, 'Hi', at the morning and notice them, that they are here and that *you see them*' (own emphasis added throughout). Interestingly, one officer recognised the racialized identities inherent to the distinction between herself as the White Swedish custody officer, and the women she was employed to confine:

'when we get black women in here they always assume that I am racist, and so I try to break that as soon as I meet them. I really, really, really try to see them and really, really help them with a lot of things, and then after two or three days they approach me and say, 'You're nice! You're not racist!' And from there we can start actually working, so that is actually the first thing I do to make sure that they can see that I'm not against black people.' (S24)

The significance of *seeing* the person – of engaging in an interaction of acknowledgement and thus perceived *humanisation* – is central here. Immigration detention centres inherently facilitate the invisibilisation of migrant bodies, away from public view and – according to multiple lawyers I interviewed – largely away from legal support. Although more attention has been given recently due to the strikes and suicides mentioned earlier, many people I interviewed or spoke with, migrants included, were not aware of such practices or were unfamiliar with detention centre names. To quote S17:

'they speak more of detention now, the problem is that I don't think it's changed, I think it's been the same for many years, it's just more visible now because they speak of the detention centres more freely now, you never hear a politician talk about detention centres a few years back, they wouldn't even pretend as if we had any detention centres. There are plenty of Swedish people that don't even know there are detention centres.'

Thus the concept of *seeing* is a counteraction to the invisibility, indeed the dehumanisation, of the people confined.

This form of *seeing* – an intended act of kindness – is however juxtaposed with the role of un-freeing humans. The opposite of *seeing* is arguably *denial* (Cohen, 2001); of *listening* is *silencing* (Mathiesen, 2004). And yet both such aspects are structurally embedded in the role of the custody officer in such centres, since they are required to keep some level of *distance*. These acts of kindness can therefore in some ways be efforts to *themselves* be seen, as someone who, as S24

argued earlier, is 'not against Black people', as individually separate to the structurally nationalistic and thus arguably racist existence of immigration detention.

Furthermore, officers are not necessarily aware of each person's case (this is particularly the case in Denmark) and therefore separated from either the historic pains or, as this officer identifies, the potential for previous criminalised activities:

VC: *'Do you get to know people's case, why people have sought asylum?'*

S25: *'No, I don't want to know if they don't tell me, because it's very hard to me to go in and read their case because I want to meet them and I want... My picture of them, I don't want, if they are not violent, if they are not criminals. I want to talk to them like I talk to the friend, so if they don't tell me I don't ask because I think it's easier for me.'*

The imagined binary between 'good migrant' and 'bad migrant' becomes more easily defined, and ones' own concerns reduced. For officers who do know the histories of detainees, there remains an unknowing and unseeing of the future, when physical distance is inflicted through deportation. This was insinuated by one of the centres' nurses. When I asked how it felt to 'not know' what might happen to the people being treated in the centre, this reply came: *'You have to learn to live with it. You can't go and think, I wonder what happened to Mr X when... hopefully⁹ he will be fine, but you never know'* (S26).

Yet many of the officers I formally interviewed or informally spoke with went out of their way to ensure that people felt seen or listened to, even when they were otherwise structurally silenced. Like the kladdkaka introduced earlier, baking, developing activities, small acts of kindness were aimed to comfort:

'we try to bake cookies Saturday, Sunday, every time when we have time we want to do stuff, play football or volleyball or basket. It's good, it's good. The food is good and they serve coffee and we sit. It's hard for the closed building to make it beautiful but we try, maybe we change furniture and flowers <chuckles> and stuff so we can do it like a home atmosphere' (S25).

As Barker points out, the concept of 'the home' and homeliness holds particular significance which can be seen in this quote, and in other efforts to make immigration detention more comfortable. *Folkhemmet*, or the people's home, is a place for everyone (Stråth, quoted in Barker, 2018: 61), of equality and social security. Despite this, officers recognised that 'one of the ... hardest things you can do against another person, take their freedom' (S18).

'Dynamic Security': Coercion in the absence of co-operation

The formal¹⁰ removal of freedom, however, is not the final step in the game of Nordic borders. As suggested by S27 (in the introduction), people are kept in detention to more easily facilitate their removal.

⁹ I find the use of the term 'hopefully' incredibly poignant here, especially considering the potential for persecution on a detainees' return. It reminds me of lyrics from a favourite song, by Foy Vance: 'There are two shades of hope. One the enlightening soul, the other is more like a hangman's rope... well hope deals the hardest blows' (Two Shades of Hope, 2007).

¹⁰ I say 'formal' here as I argue elsewhere that being free from detention does not necessarily facilitate freedom in all its ideals. Fear of further detention, deportation, a lack of personal autonomy, and issues around spousal visa dependencies (specifically for women) reduce both freedom and autonomy, as well as diminishing civil liberties for migrant bodies. See Author (2017).

1
2
3 It is here that the nexus between kindness and coercion begins to tighten. Most people staying
4 in immigration detention in Sweden do so for around three weeks. By this stage, short term
5 relationships might be formed, some aspects of trust built, but boredom has likely set in. From
6 here, the 'friendships' between staff and detainee facilitate more open discussions. As one
7 officer told me:

8
9 *'we have something that we call dynamic security which means that we always try to*
10 *get a relationship with them, not that we maybe show the pictures of our children, but*
11 *in a non-personal way we try to... You talk to them, you try to get them to talk what*
12 *they want to do with their lives' (S27).*

13
14 This concept of *dynamic security* is perhaps the epitome of difference between the Swedish
15 approach to removal, and the approaches in Britain and Denmark. As argued elsewhere (Author,
16 2018a), the Danish model is one of banality and semi-carceral realities – the languishing of
17 migrant bodies in deportation centres where access to anything meaningful is deliberately
18 eradicated as part of the Venstre-led governments' strategy for removal and deterrence. In
19 Britain, aspects of intimidation and punitive carceral imprisonment, combined with the threat
20 and reality of unlimited detention, as well as evidence of physical and sexual abuse in IRCs
21 (Bosworth, 2016; Bhatia and Author, 2016; Author and Bhatia, 2017) are manifestations of
22 physical control. Sweden, however, exercises its 'soft' power – the personal manipulation of
23 detainees to encourage voluntary – or perhaps coercively volunteered - removals.

24
25 From the empirical data collected, three quotes stand out in reflecting this strategy. Firstly is
26 S18, a long serving officer at Centre A:

27
28 *'Most of the times I'm starting to talk about the home country, about the families and*
29 *if they have parents, brothers, sisters, everything, and ... they normally then started to*
30 *think OK, I want to go home' (S18).*

31
32 Once trust is built, emotions become more easily engaged with and the personal history of the
33 detainee becomes exploitable. The role of family members and the missing of home comforts
34 are intertwined with feelings of isolation whilst being in the centres – again, often far from
35 friends or family.

36
37 This strategy becomes slightly more morose with regard to interactions with unaccompanied
38 minors. As mentioned earlier, the Swedish state has received significant internal and external
39 criticism over its treatment of young people, particularly those whose removal is often
40 expedited. As well as multiple suicides, the widespread coverage of *uppgivenhetssyndrom*¹¹, or
41 'Resignation Syndrome', in news outlets during 2017 drew negative attention to the mental
42 health impacts of uncertainty, fear and isolation that young people experience whilst awaiting
43 asylum in Sweden.

44
45 However, as S29 indicates below, emotionally coercive measures to encourage self-elective
46 removal are (for officers at least) preferable to the 'hard' alternative - the police:

47
48
49
50
51 ¹¹ According to Sallin et al (2016), Resignation Syndrome has been documented in Sweden amongst
52 young refugees, specifically those who have been refused residency where, "Typically a depressive onset
53 is followed by gradual withdrawal progressing via stupor into a state that prompts tube feeding and is
54 characterized by failure to respond even to painful stimuli. The patient is seemingly unconscious.
55 Recovery ensues within months to years and is claimed to be dependent on the restoration of hope to the
56 family' (Sallin, 2016, 1). The diagnoses stems from Bodegård's 2005 study, and was widely covered in
57 *The New Yorker* and other news outlets in 2017.

1
2
3 *'I have a strategy, most of the guys coming here are quite young. I ask them a little*
4 *about their family and their mother <chuckles> when you talk about their mothers*
5 *they usually want to see them quite soon again, so in most of the cases I manage to not*
6 *hand over the case to the police' (S29).*
7

8 The outcome of the culmination of these methods is predictable and palpable: *'we had some,*
9 *'Yeah, that's enough, I am tired of this and I want to go home, it's better back home' (S25).*
10

11 **Keep calm and... get deported anyway**

12
13
14 *'It's not human if you don't explain the rules in the beginning of the game, because this*
15 *is their lives' (S25).*
16

17 Like the objectives of krimyoga, kindness and coercion also facilitate a form of calm. The
18 Swedish word and concept – lugn¹² – perhaps fits comfortably here: to create a kind of still, like
19 an undisturbed pond. As one officer reflected, the main objective of her role was not simply to
20 control, but 'Keep it calm' (S19). With this in mind, let me reflect on one such strategy.
21 In late September 2017, I embarked on an oral history with Nour¹³, a woman detained in Centre
22 B. After the interviews finished, having had multiple breaks due to her distressed state¹⁴, Nour
23 asked the accompanying officer why she was being moved to another detention centre, worried
24 that her friends of 13 years in Sweden could not visit her from such a distance. She was
25 informed they would speak about it later, but not to worry, it would only be for a few days.
26

27 On probing the officer, I was told that everyone in Centre B who was not from Afghanistan
28 would be moved to other centres. Simultaneously, citizens of Afghanistan residing at other
29 centres in Sweden would be transported to Centre B so that they could easily be contained and
30 collected in one place for deportation on a charter flight planned to leave the following Monday.
31 The flight would subsequently be stopping in Copenhagen to 'pick up' Afghani counterparts in
32 Denmark.
33

34 Like a game of chess, once detainees were appropriately moved or contained (depending on
35 national identity) they would be told on the Friday and transported to the airport by
36 *Kriminalvårdens* National Transport Unit – with two staff per detainee – by the Monday. Indeed,
37 once kindness, coercion and efforts to encourage self-removal fails, the prospect of physical
38 removal increases.
39

40 One particularly interesting aspect of this strategy is the effort taken to facilitate calm. Calm is
41 important in the face of detainee anger, and certainly preferable to any physical alternative, as a
42 governor at Centre B indicates here:
43

44 *'One of the best things to do is to keep yourself calm, to not be infected with his or her*
45 *anger, keep yourself calm and probably just leave him or her be for a while until the*
46 *one who's angry has come back to controlling him or herself' (S23).*
47
48
49

50
51 ¹² Thanks to Martin Joormann for introducing me to this concept after our long discussions on the
52 creation of calm in detention.

53 ¹³ This is a pseudonym.

54 ¹⁴ Having been subjected to multiple forms of domestic abuse and an account of false imprisonment, the
55 interview was incredibly distressing. I assured on multiple occasions that we did not have to continue,
56 and that she could terminate our discussion. She adamantly chose not to, perhaps a reflection of wanting
57 to herself be seen on the outside.
58
59

Likewise, the maintenance of kindness and the relationships already established facilitate a 'turning back' to the trusted officer if and when deportation orders evoke feelings of anger:

'They get angry. They do. And sometimes ... of course they get frustrated. And when we talk to them in the room and they go out and like ... bang something, OK ... let them do that, let them calm down, let them be! Just be around and then ... when they have calmed down then they come to you again because there's always a lot of questions' (S18).

Finally, if and when that does not work, 'problem detainees' would be dealt with in a specific way, as another officer suggests:

S28: but it's very many who is angry, aggressive and stuff like that, it's hard. But in those cases they usually split them up, send one to somewhere else or two to somewhere else, you know, making a big group small.
VC: Where to, where do they go?
S28: To other detention centres in Sweden.

It is here that the crux of my argument sits. Calm is no doubt preferable to physical force, and indeed often enacted with the best of intentions by people working under difficult conditions. But it also enables two things: the fracturing of solidarity, and the breaking down of resistance (see also Barker's discussions on benevolent violence, 2018). By moving people who are *not* from Afghanistan, as discussed in the scenario above, any resistance to deportation is no longer witnessed by those who might otherwise react. It does not matter if the Afghani detainees become angry or reactive – they are being deported, either 'voluntarily' or with the help of two guards each. Thus 'calm' is inherently maintained for those who are not immediately affected, and for those who are affected – *it no longer matters* because there are no other nationalities to witness reactive behaviours and thus perforate any future calm. By now, the potential for solidarity and resistance has been reduced by the fracturing of groups and moving of disparate nationalities to other centres.

Comfort in confinement?: when kindness and kladdkaka don't cut it

Thus far this article highlights the ways in which detention custody officers navigate their roles in a system which aims to hold migrants in confinement based predominately on notions of national identity and belonging. For some, kindness is key to ensuring comfort – both for the detainees and for themselves. Coercion through *dynamic security* is a deliberate strategy to enable the breaking down of migrants' resolve to continue their fight to stay. Notions of home are twofold: one for ensuring comfort whilst in the centre, despite the structurally violent nature of confinement by diminishing human liberty; the other, a conjuring of memories of a previous home to encourage people to miss loved ones and comforts otherwise resigned to the past.

This brings us to the penultimate focus of this article: the harms of incarceration in immigration detention centres. As argued throughout, the conditions people face in Centres A and B are less architecturally oppressive than counterparts in other parts of the world, Europe included. However, with the exception of one officer who likened Centre A to a 'hotel' for migrants, all participants identified emotional or psychological problems detainees displayed whilst living confined in the centre.

A key issue for most detainees that staff identified in both was the prevalence of sleeplessness or sleep distortion (see also Bosworth and Turnbull, 2015). Rather than adhering to the meal times and day time schedules set by the detention regime, many detainees stayed awake well

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3 into the night and slept late into the day. As S19 stated: 'it's awake during the night and sleeping
4 in the day. That we are working very hard with... that they should sleep at night. But it's very
5 hard'. This, staff argued, placed pressure on officers at night time, but also offset the agendas
6 being developed by activity co-ordinators to ensure the 'meaningful' activities highlighted
7 earlier. S22 in particular felt that:

8
9 *'I'm supposed to offer activities during the day because we want to encourage them to*
10 *be sleeping at night and up during the day to keep a normal rhythm. Many people tend*
11 *to swap, to be awake during the night and sleep during the day'.*

12
13 Suggested reasons for this were twofold: maintaining relationships through Skype or Facebook
14 were sometimes affected by different timezones, and stress or depression. As the nurse in
15 Centre B reflected:

16
17 *'They can't sleep, they are feeling stressed and I don't know what I should do, they are*
18 *sleeping all days and then they come to me and say, 'I can't sleep during the night.'*
19 *'Have you slept during the day?' 'Yeah, I woke up 4:00pm.' 'Then you can't go to bed at*
20 *11:00.' But you also have other kind of problems, high blood pressure and I should also*
21 *have high blood pressure, I'm locked in, listen, what should happen with my life' (S26).*

22
23 Depression was cited as a main contributor to sleeplessness and withdrawal, effectively
24 meaning that even with the activities offered, not everyone was able to participate. People are
25 not aware of how long they will be detained, nor told when their deportation is due until it is
26 imminent, as we see here:

27
28 VC: *'Do people know when they're gonna be deported?'*
29 S4: *'No, they don't know, this is kind of, they're asking all the time, to ask, 'How long*
30 *we gonna be here, what's going to happen, when am I going to go back?'*

31
32 As such, it is unsurprising then that uncertainty should take a mental and emotional toll
33 (Bosworth, 2014; Women's Refugee Commission, 2016). Furthermore, as the Nurse from Centre
34 B highlighted, it was not uncommon for detainees to disclose previous experiences of torture,
35 trafficking or abuse. Despite the harms evidenced in incarcerating survivors of such violence
36 (Shaw, 2016), this is still practiced (see also International Rehabilitation Council for Torture
37 Victims, 2016 for further details). As discussed earlier in relation to 'calm', interviewees often
38 referred to the anger and frustrations detainees felt, with S27 concluding that:

39
40 *'It's many different reasons I think. Sometimes they have a history of psychological*
41 *problems, sometimes they have been using drugs, sometimes people just can't stand*
42 *confined places, we even have staff that doesn't stay very long sometimes because even*
43 *though they have the key they just can't stand that they are locked inside all the time*
44 *and so I think it's many different variables'.*

45
46 This observation is particularly important in addressing the frustration of confinement itself:
47 whilst there are many reasons why individuals might be unhappy or depressed, the removal of
48 freedom is inescapable for all migrants held in immigration detention. Furthermore, concerns
49 for the mental health of detainees were specifically raised by one governor who felt that:
50 *'getting help from psychiatrists and/or psychologists is not that easy for the common man either*
51 *all the time, we have come a long way but mental health issues are not as easy to get recognised'.*
52

53
54 Similar to people incarcerated in prisons, quality and type of food was identified as a significant
55 site of contention, with S25 highlighting: 'That's mostly what we fight about here, with the
56 detainees, food'. Although trivial on the surface, food is incredibly important – it represents
57 having autonomy for what we put into our bodies, and what our bodies become. As Minke and
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3 Smoyer point out in their study in Denmark (2017), there is an added aspect of ethnocentricity
4 in confined spaces which do not cater to diverse demographics. Even with the best intentions to
5 comfort, kladdkaka and kanelbullar are, as S25 pointed out, 'typically Swedish'. This was a point
6 discussed by participants in both Denmark¹⁵ and Sweden, as was the lack of halal food for
7 people practicing Islam. However, the deeper aspect to this is the compounding of broader
8 eradications of autonomy, not only through the temporal denial of freedom through
9 incarceration, but the denial of autonomy over ones' own future, as the threat of deportation
10 looms:

11
12 *'They have often a negative decision, they cannot stay here, they are going back*
13 *somewhere that they don't wanna go back to, and often it's the small things, like the*
14 *food. The food is never good. But we have to understand that it's the frustration and*
15 *the situation, it's not personal' (S22).*

16
17 As such, the frustrations inherent to living in a situation which is unique to immigration
18 detention – uncertainty, spatial isolation and the threat of deportation – manifests further in the
19 denial of autonomy over how, when and what an individual eats.

20 21 22 **Conclusion**

23
24 The use of immigration detention in Sweden is limited, and when it is used the architecture and
25 nature of confinement is, at face value at least, fairly soft. As I've shown throughout, Centres A
26 and B incorporate homely furnishings to create a sense of comfort; activities are meticulously
27 thought up to help time pass; and friendly interactions are encouraged to avoid isolation for
28 detainees. Some detention custody officers go out of their way to make people feel comfortable,
29 exerting kindness with baked (Swedish) goods, and feeling genuine concern for the wellbeing of
30 people in their 'care'.

31
32 Beyond appearances, however, and as the analyses of these interviews and research
33 interactions indicate, is the constant spectre of coercive control. By embedding calm and
34 kindness in immigration detention centres, those facing incarceration are encouraged to build
35 trust with the agents working to enact confinement. Human agency and feeling is not
36 diminished here, and certainly the kindness of some detention custody officers shouldn't be
37 undermined, but the goal of detention is deportation, the preferred strategy of which is a
38 manipulated form of voluntary removal. Through this, calm can be maintained, and the
39 unwanted migrant Other removed without the state being reduced to exerting physical force.

40
41 To that end, I conclude with an interaction between myself and a nurse, a person whose role is
42 to support the physical wellbeing of people relegated to confinement in immigration detention
43 in the short term, but who recognises the precariousness of this wellbeing in the long term:

44
45 *S26: 'I had one person who, he should go back to Afghanistan and he had me to look at*
46 *the computer several times and showed me, 'Look at what they are doing in my*
47 *country.' You saw a lot of bodies who had been killed and he said, 'That will happen to*
48 *me also.'*

49 *VC: 'How does that make you feel as a professional here?'*

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54 ¹⁵ As well as this being a key point in interviews with staff from Danish detention and deportation centres,
55 I shared meals in a deportation with a woman who refused to partake in the scheduled system, instead
56 cooking her own food against the centre regulations – a micro act of resistance (Author, 2018a).

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S26: <Pause> 'I feel sad for the human rights, because what are we doing? We are all flesh and blood inside and we think different and act different but why? We should be intelligent. That was with a question mark'.

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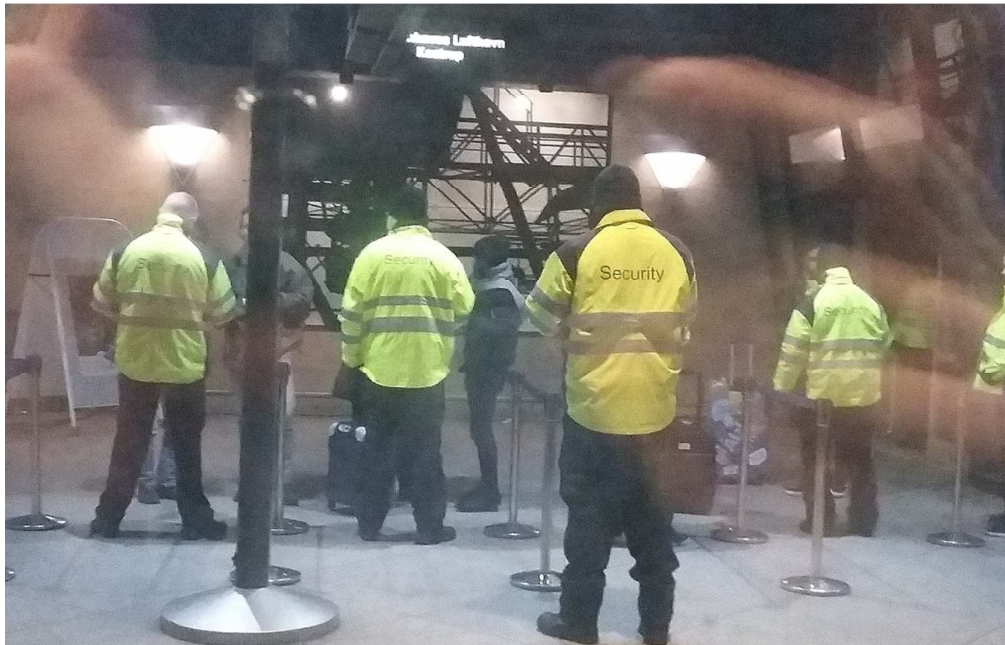
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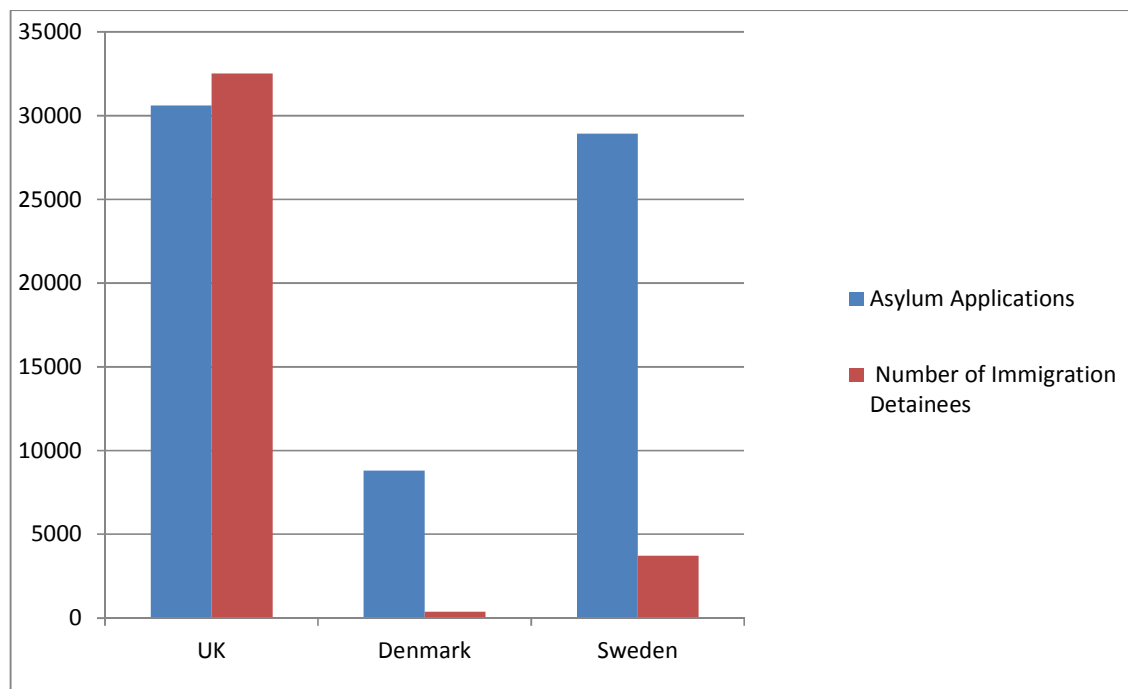
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Figure 1: Border security guards at Kastrup airport train station, separating Denmark and Sweden, in December 2016.



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Figure 2: Asylum Applications and Number of immigration detainees in Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom, 2016



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Table 1: Average duration of stay:

Average duration of stay in reception centres: 2016	
Category of applicant	Average stay (days)
Persons returning voluntarily	287
Persons forcibly removed	688
Persons absconding	388
Persons granted permits	464
Total average	344

Source: Asylum Information Database, 2017.

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