

BEYOND VICTIMHOOD AND STIGMATIZATION

Trauma, Ruptured Memories and Agency in the Context of Global Migration

Mapping migration detention, challenging pathologizing conceptions of traumatization. A proposal for simultaneity.

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Introduction

In the transformation of geographies via re-bordering, militarization, securitization and the production of necropolitical scenarios along migration routes, the figure of the refugee_migrant is often depicted and addressed as a *per se* traumatized figure. In this very context, the diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is omnipresent.

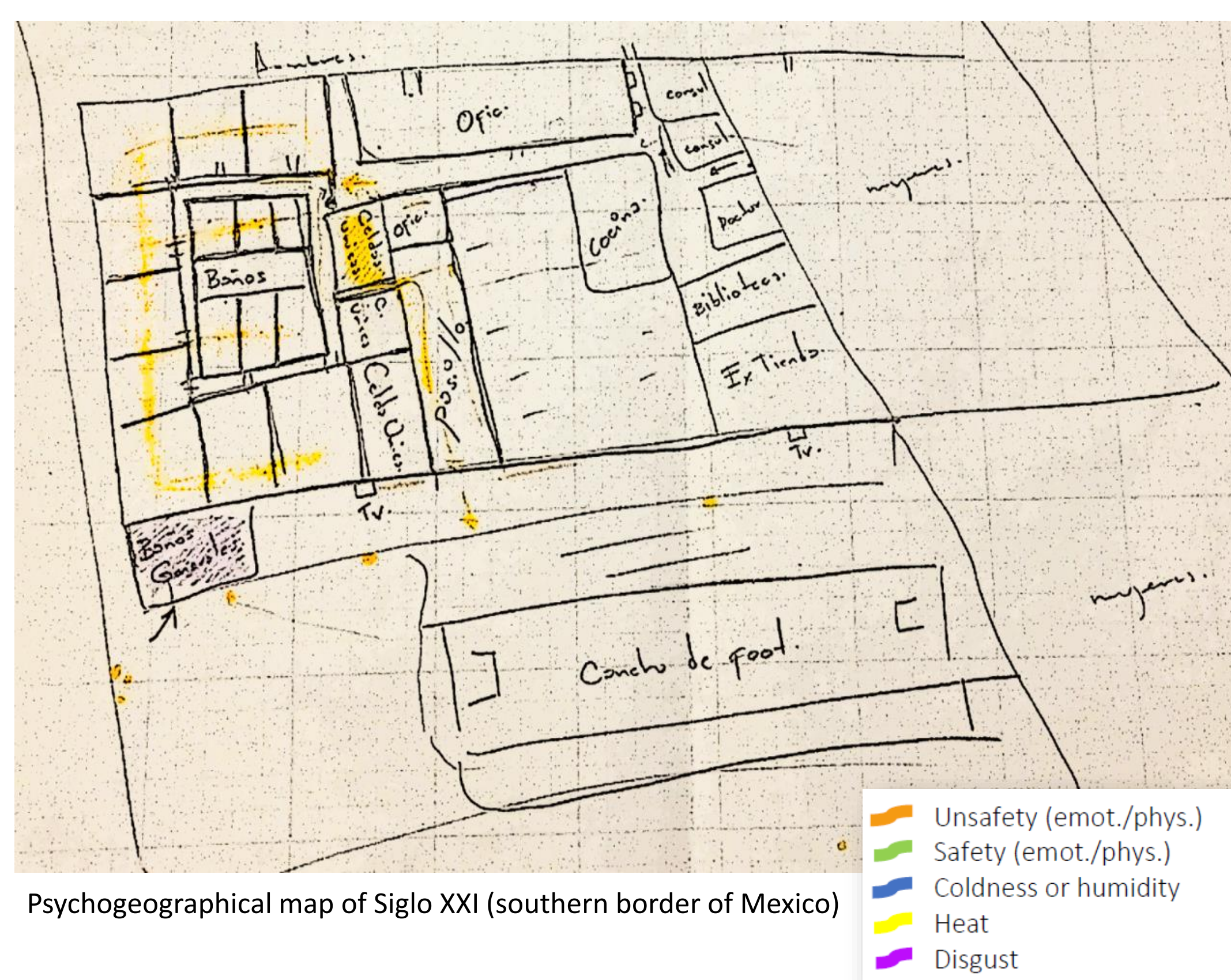
In today's landscape of migration politics, migration detention plays a crucial role in the regulation of illegalized migration – worldwide. Independently of its geographical place, there is multiple evidence that migration detention has a severe impact on detainees' mental health outcomes. Human rights organizations documented systematic torture in migration detention across the globe. Is there space for anything else than trauma?

Analytical framework with regard to trauma

Criticism highlights that PTSD explicitly hides the historical and political context of traumatization and represents a dissociation between social process and individual suffering. On the subject level, trauma should be contextualized: traumatic reactions might be considered normal reactions to the abnormal repressive measures. Additionally, traumatization is never "obligatory", but a possibility: It is relevant to recognize the suffering that emerge in the framework of flight_migration – while simultaneously leaving space for other possibilities and narratives.

In the context of migration detention, detainees might be victims. At the same time, they might be subjects and possess forms of agency that are often not recognized. Resistant subjectivities might be actively hidden, or being embedded within relationships-networks. Anyhow, they might transcend the walls of the institution and its isolation.

Instead of merely focusing on the individuals, the political (institutionalization of) trauma production should be focused.



Psychogeographical map of Siglo XXI (southern border of Mexico)

Method: A Psychogeographical counter-mapping.

A psycho-geographical counter-mapping is proposed to look both at the subjectivation of formerly detained migrants and at the detention institution. N = 18 interview_mappings were made by former detainees of Mexican migration detention centres ("Estaciones Migratorias"). Emerging hypotheses of these maps and narrations were evaluated by a second group of formerly detained (N = 14).

(Research) Questions with regard to trauma & migration

Looking at the institution:

- How are the *Estaciones Migratorias* experienced by detained migrants on the physical and emotional scale?
- How are these experiences linked to the spatial structure of the respective local *Estación Migratoria*?
- What has the detention centre been doing to the migrants ...

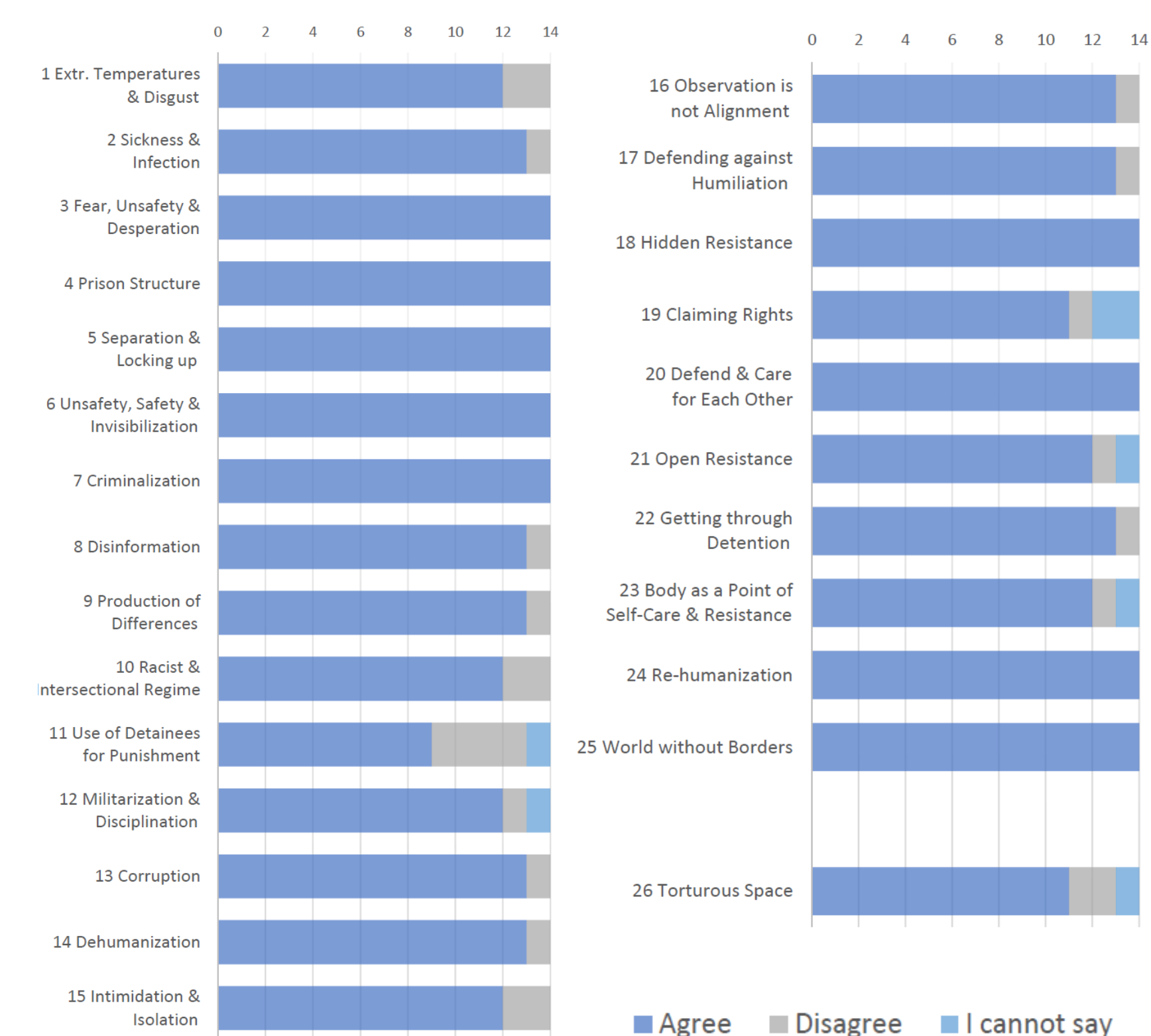
Subjectivation – looking at the detained:

- ...and what have the migrants been doing to the detention centre?
- What stories of subjectivation processes can be seen and heard?

Empirical findings

Although clinical studies have shown that migration detention leaves long-lasting psychic marks on the detainees, the study's participants recreated simultaneous stories of subjectivation in *Estaciones Migratorias*: Within a dehumanizing institution, the mapping focus on the emotional and the intimate highlighted also resistant subjectivities.

When the second group of participants evaluated the condensed narrations, they supported not only the perspective on the potential trauma produced by the detention institution (hyp. 1-15), but also on detainees' resilience (hyp. 16-25).



Within this simultaneity, it cannot be denied that people who are detained in an *Estación Migratoria* are systematically mistreated: On the one hand because of the degrading treatment by the guards (e.g. discrimination, threats, punishment), but also because of the inhumane infrastructural conditions (e.g. pathogenic food, lack of access to health, unhygienic bathrooms and cells, temperatures of cold or heat). For this reason, the *Estaciones Migratorias* can be considered *torturous spaces* (hyp. 26).

Input thoughts, impulses

- Does the perspective of the torturous space allow politicization of the "production of potential trauma" of the detentions institution?
- Must "trauma" be "reclaimed"? Trauma is political.
- Can trauma be a "linking" concept? The spatialized approach to torture e.g. gives way to considerations towards a theory of trauma geographies...
- Might a "mixed method" design that integrates individual measurements of trauma nevertheless be useful in specific (interdisciplinary) research, while not reducing migrants to traumatized victims?



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Bio

- MA Human Geography (Thesis "Processes of Subjectivation in Torturous Spaces – Mapping Estaciones Migratorias between the State of Exception and Resistant Subjectivities.")
- Member of the Grupo Impulsor Contra la Detención Migratoria y la Tortura (GICDMT)
- MSc Clinical Psychology, PhD student, focus on torture in the context of migration detention