
**Migration-related detention in Portugal:
Data from the field**

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Detention is proliferating as a governmental response to transnational human mobility in a global scenario characterized by concerns for homeland security (Hiemstra, 2014), and an increasing criminalization of migration (Ackerman & Furman, 2014; Stumpf, 2006). Yet, among scholars, activists, politicians, and members of civil society organizations, many have denounced this practice, defining detention centers as “sites of exception, where regimes of police prevail over regimes of rights” (Fassin, 2011, p. 219). In Portugal, the practice of confining people due to their migrant status has relatively recent origins, dating back to 2006, which saw the opening of the first detention center – called Temporary Installation Center (Centro de Instalação Temporária) - in the city of Porto. Despite much evidence has been provided about the consequences of detention on detainees’ mental health (see Bosworth, 2016), we still know relatively little about the life in these sites of confinement and the lived experiences of people inside them (Bosworth, 2014). Based on 20 months of fieldwork (July 2015 – March 2017), this contribution draws on 233 hours of participant observation, informal conversations, and 36 topic-focused interviews with detainees. An ecological community psychology framework has been adopted to guide the data collection and interpretation. This original empirical material sheds light on the nuances of everyday life in detention, and on how detained migrants struggle to cope with and give meaning to the experience of confinement. Based on these data, the nature and impacts of detention as a solution for managing mass migration are discussed.
