12 Afterword

Waiting, a state of consciousness

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As I write these words, the whole world is waiting. Life on a global scale seems to be suspended in uncertainty due to the coronavirus crisis in early Spring 2020. Nearly everywhere, from East Asia to the American West, people are in self-isolation and/or imposed quarantine; everybody is waiting for 'normal' life to return. A large part of humanity now consequently shares a sense of *waiting*, a state of agitation about the unknown future. Naturally, not all people wait in the same way and under the same conditions. Some people cannot afford quarantine, which means they have to stop working. The reports from different corners of the world testify that poor and marginalised groups die at a disproportionate rates as compared with death rates of the privileged. While the pandemic affects everyone, disregarding class or race, the consequences of the outbreak are diverse. Social vulnerabilities, poverty, degraded health, lack of health insurance, overcrowded housing, all these influence the outcome of the pandemic, which manifests differently for different social groups. Needless to mention, the suspension of 'normal' life due to the pandemic not only aggravates vulnerabilities that have existed already but also engenders new ones. Differential distribution of insecurity makes the pandemic a political issue. Destabilising the socio-political conditions of some part of the population makes bodies, and therefore lives, more vulnerable. The political and legal regulations that have resulted in an unequal distribution of risk and hope during the current pandemic emergency are similar to the theme of this book.

While waiting is an inescapable part of life in modern societies, and we all, disregard class, gender or race, experience waiting in our daily lives – from waiting for a bus to waiting for a decision in contact with bureaucracies, or waiting for transition into the next phases of life – the consequences of waiting are different depending on the forms of vulnerabilities of those who wait. Indeed, the empirical studies on which the chapters in this volume are based show that all of us wait, but we wait differently. The groups that are the focus of this book, asylum seekers, confined people either in migrant detention centres or prisons, undocumented migrants, people stuck in

camps, all experience waiting differently from one who waits for her next job promotion or a waiting that constitutes love, as Roland Barthes (2002[1977]) put it. Waiting discussed in this book is a forced waiting, imposed by bordering practices with consequences of destabilising of lives and bodies.

This kind of border waiting refers to the waiting time not only at the actual state borders but to all waiting times that non-citizens and racialised citizens are often pushed towards. The unceasing practices of bordering (which include, but are not limited to, the requirement to obtain various permits to leave, to arrive, to stay, to study, to work, to be with one's beloved ones, etc.) lead to institutionalised delays. Thus, it becomes difficult to identify when exactly border waiting starts or ends. While in many studies the focus is on 'when' waiting seemingly ends (with resettlement, the granting of asylum status or deportation), less attention has been paid to when waiting *starts*. Migration is a process, which begins long before the actual movement from one country to another. If migration starts with desire (for a better life) or fear (of persecution), then who can determine when it starts? When does the search for the 'normal life' begin?

Vulnerable groups are exposed to multiple forms of waiting for different things at the same time (Hage, 2018). In the context of migration and displacement, different objects of waiting and different types of waiting go parallel to each other and overlap one another. We can rarely single out one form of waiting from other ones. The answer a researcher usually gets when asking undocumented migrants or asylum seekers what she is waiting for is 'I wait to start a normal life.' However, in the context of migration and forced displacement, the normalcy is waiting itself. When does a migrant's narrative of waiting end? After arrival, after receiving asylum, after so-called integration, after family reunification, after naturalisation, after returning to the homeland? After deportation? When do they stop waiting, in other words, before a *new* waiting starts? For instance, in some cases deportation does not mean an end to the migration cycle, but rather, it is only another phase of recirculation, and consequently of further waiting. In a similar vein, for minorities who are persecuted in their country of birth, a prolonged waiting for a 'normal life' may start perhaps already in childhood.

Thus, what we see is a temporal and spatial stretching of waiting from pre-departure, and transit, to post-arrival and even post-deportation. As elaborated in the introduction, waiting is constituted in and through multiple and relational temporalities. It means that waiting by migrants involves different geographies, other people and different phases of life. Thus, waiting is never an individual action. The consequences of prolonged waiting affect not only the individual migrant but many people around her, who remain in a state of waiting for material and non-material remittances, or for reunification.

As several chapters in the book demonstrate, fluctuation between different forms of waiting engenders a sense of being sent back in time, expressed in terms of being sent 'back to square one' (Khosravi, 2019), or 'going in a

circle' (see Jacobsen, this volume; see also Karlsen, this volume). A life in circulation is a position of being constantly delayed in what is supposed to be a 'normal life-course.' This constant delay is linked to the 'temporal violence' (Musso, this volume; also Machinya's chapter) individuals are exposed to, as issue which runs throughout all chapters in this book. The evidences throughout the book indicate a 'stolen time' (Khosravi, 2019), which leads migrants towards a sense of 'inability to project themselves forward in time' (Mbembe, 2013: p. 29).

However, in contrast to studies that approach border waiting in terms of emptiness, stillness and passivity, a life in circulation can be highly productive. It is productive in terms of control over labour force. Delaying migrants and keeping them in circulation is robbing them of their time. Border practices turn migrants' time into waste time, and thus steals their labour. Keeping people in prolonged waiting, constantly delaying them and repeatedly sending them 'back to square one,' generates a large amount of surplus time. One basic rationale for this temporal bordering (waiting, delaying and circulating) is the belief that the time of these people is less worthy than the time of citizens. Employers regard the time of asylum seekers or undocumented migrants as worthless and therefore it can be extorted more cheaply.

Waiting is racialised. Some groups are kept waiting longer than other groups because their skin is darker. This secures racialised inequality. The socio-economic disadvantages Somalis experience in Sweden compared with other groups, such as Bosnians, are partly due to the fact that they were exposed to longer waiting for residency permit and also for naturalisation than Bosnians (Behtoui & Olsson, 2013). Furthermore Somalis constituted the largest group in detention centres in Sweden in 2014. However, they were not among the first 20 most-deported migrant groups that year. In other words, Somali migrants in Sweden were detained even though they were largely not deportable. The question, then, is how the seemingly meaningless detainment of this specific non-deportable Muslim and Black group can be justified. Temporal bordering is a way to secure inequalities between social groups. Keeping Somalis in longer waiting for residency permit or for naturalisation has resulted in reinforcing a racial hierarchy in the Swedish labour market, wherein Somali labour force is valued less and therefore exploited more easily.

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As posed by Jacobsen and Karlsen in the introduction, the question is 'are there specific migratory forms of waiting?' While I totally agree with the arguments for the 'de-migranticising' (Dahinden, 2016) of migration studies, I think it is critical to expose the implication of bordering practices that lead to differential precarisation. So how to write to about waiting in the context of migration and not contribute to the image of migration as an exceptional experience (see Ramsay, 2019; Cabot, 2019)? Similarly, Rozakou in her chapter shares her concerns about how to avoid the risks of replicating the logic of bordering practices in academic research. The concerns

raised by these scholars are highly crucial since presentation of the image of non-Europeans in waiting for authorisation, for visa or for resettlement from the former colonialising countries reproduces the condition of colonality. So how to write about the victimhood of bordered people, yet avoid reproducing the image of colonial relationships between powerful white people who assumed to be able to keep black and brown migrants wait? How to write about migrants' suffering because of prolonged waiting without reducing them merely to *waiters* who *only* wait for the helping hands of the Global North?

One way to avoid such potential pitfalls – sometimes also discussed here in terms of methodological nationalism (in the introduction; also in Drangland's chapter) as this relates to the experiences of border waiting – is to pay attention to how migrants conceptualise waiting in their own languages. The absence of interest in the non-European concepts among scholars in this field may be rooted in an approach that focuses entirely on the migrant-hood and interaction with the temporal borders. How are experiences of waiting are formed by histories, religions and economies other than the Western ones? For instance, Persian-, Dari- and Arab-speaking people use two words for waiting – *entezar* and *sabr*. The former has connotations of expectation and anticipation, waiting with hope, while the latter refers to the act of waiting and suffering, a form of endurance, and of being patient. The one who have *sabr* endures pain and suffering. This is similar to the word *patience*, which comes from the Latin word *pati*, which means 'to suffer.' Awareness of suffering caused by bordering practices produces new subjectivities. As Dostoevsky famously puts it – 'suffering is the sole origin of consciousness' (2014[1861]: p. 32). Suffering may indeed lead to perplexity, an emotional reaction to facing all hostilities during border waiting, but it may also raise significant political questions and demands for understanding *what has happened* and *why*.

Hence, it is no accident that, etymologically, the origins of the word 'wait' indicate 'to watch' and to 'be awake.' Border waiting engenders wakefulness and vigilance. Waiting is being in a state of consciousness. The person in a state of waiting constantly thinks about her or his waiting. Border waiting means constantly updating oneself about legislations, new legal openings and conventions. It also means tirelessly collecting documents, finding new resources, updating networks and at the same time be watchful about one's own deportability or the risk of missing a deadline. Wakefulness makes border waiting similar to insomnia, that is a compulsion to be vigilant and pay attention to what is happening around oneself. Similar to the one who waits, the insomniac thinks about the reasons for her insomnia and seeks salvage from it. This aspect of waiting is even more palpable in the French verb *attendre*, which means 'to direct one's mind toward.' As also mentioned in the introduction, one of the main contributions of the book is the lending of an analytical lens through which we can explore waiting in irregular migration as a form of navigation through 'an ever-shifting terrain of laws,

built environments, technologies and bodily materialities' (Jacobsen and Karlsen, this volume). A waiting-towards the not-yet is attentive and oriented.

What keeps the person in prolonged waiting awake is not measuring the chronological time, *chronos*, but chasing moments of potential opening, *kairos*. Approaching waiting as a state of wakeful navigation and vigilance here refers to the qualities of time, what Greeks called *kairos*, that is, critical moments when things can happen and openings for changes may ensue.

Lack of mobility in time and space associated with border waiting (usually expressed as '*going nowhere in life*') does not mean lack of mobilisation. Navigation through the spatio-temporal contexts of waiting might create openings for new political orientations. Protests by migrants and refugees – from Moria camp in Lesbos in Greece (see Rozakou's chapter) through Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya (see Camminga's chapter) and the occupation of the Saint-Ferréol Church in Marseille (see Musso's chapter) to sit-in protests in main European cities – may thus trigger a subjectivity through the actions of politics. Border waiting is being in a state of wakefulness engaged with potentialities for a different future.

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Machinya (this volume) writes that undocumented Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa who 'have no time left' and the risk of deportation becomes omnipresent live in a 'borrowed time;' they borrow time from the future. The future is not a section of a linear timeline, which will come after the present, but rather is in a constant dialectical relation with the present. All struggles, strategies and tactics, navigations and wakefulness of border waiting are animated through the constant interplay between the now and the not-yet. Waiting (the now) is not suspended time oriented through a temporal progression towards a future (end of waiting), but rather, the now and the not-yet constantly make and remake each other. Dialectical wakefulness between the now and the not-yet generates hopeful visions and practices. Even in the form of daydreaming, these practices are agentive. Daydreaming, orienting oneself towards not-yet fulfilled promises, is pre-eminently a political act by which migrants claim their right to potentialities that make prospects for a better future possible.

Approaching border waiting this way, then, we can avoid the pitfall of reproducing the coloniality of power. Migrants, refugees, blacks and browns are not waiting for a chance to *belong* but rather to *participate*. Unlike the concept of 'belonging,' which has connotation to possession (custody, control) and to the desire of an outsider waiting for permission to enter (to be accepted and tolerated), the will to participate is the opposite. It is not a request for benevolence. Rather the contrary, it is a refusal to 'belong,' that is, 'to be the property of' someone else.

Like acts of citizenship, border waiting is not a static condition but rather a process and a practice. Waiting as wakeful navigation through material

struggles in the present and ‘directing one’s mind toward’ the not-yet is a daily practice. Like the act of citizenship, the act of waiting, as it is experienced by precarious groups, is a constant struggle to have the right to participate. This struggle is perhaps what De Genova writes about in terms of ‘doin’ hard time on planet earth.’ Thus, for people who are exposed to bordering practices, there is no end to waiting but rather endless struggle to withstand and to demand the right to take part.

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