3 ‘They said wait, wait – and I waited’

The power chronographies of waiting for asylum in Marseille, France

Christine M. Jacobsen

Introduction

Turning the corner from the bustling Rue d’Aix in the centre of Marseille, with its many small North-African shops, I cannot but notice a shift in tempo. Every day, hundreds of men, women and children are queuing up in front of the ‘first reception platform’ for asylum seekers (PADA) to register their asylum application, to check for mail from the authorities or for an appointment with one of the case workers.¹ At the back of the building, under the ionic columns of Halle Puget, more people are sitting around, waiting for their appointment in the afternoon or for a friend or relative who are queuing. During the wait, information and goods are exchanged, services bartered and stories shared. The mattresses and stacked luggage reveal that some people also spent the night, turning what was historically the city’s fish market into a makeshift camp, which in French is paradoxically known as a *‘camp de fortune.’*

Spaces in which migrants wait proliferate, not only in border zones (Andersson, 2014), refugee camps (Agier, 2011) or asylum reception centres (Kobelinsky, 2010) but also within the urban fabric. As detailed in the introduction to this volume (Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2020), the waiting of irregular migrants and asylum seekers has, like that of other poor and marginalised subjects, often been analysed as an effect of power. As Bourdieu (2000: p. 228) contends in a much-quoted passage ‘Making people wait [...] is an integral part of the exercise of power.’ In his ethnography of irregular migrants in Paris, Le Courant (2014) draws on among others Bourdieu to argue that through the Préfecture, who decide on whether to regularise or to deport, migrants experience being made to wait as a particular form of power. Similarly, Kobelinsky (2010: p. 63), in her study of inhabitants of French asylum reception centres (CADA), writes that ‘waiting is certainly a way of experiencing power.’²

Extending this line of inquiry, this chapter draws on Sharma’s (2014a) notion of ‘power chronography’ to examine how the waiting time of irregular migrants and asylum seekers in Marseille is produced, managed and lived

at the intersection of a range of social institutions and differences. Power chronography draws attention to time as a form of power structured in specific political and economic contexts, a site of material struggle and social difference (Sharma, 2014a: p. 15; 2014b: p. 6). Against those speed-theorists arguing that globalisation entails a homogenous flattening of space–time, or a simple opposition between ‘fast’ and ‘slow’ classes, Sharma extends Massey’s (1991) seminal theory of ‘power geometry’ to explain variegated and intersecting social temporalities and their power effects on differently situated subjects. Rather than taking ‘acceleration’ as a given of contemporary societies, the notion of ‘power chronographies’ points to an uneven multiplicity of temporalities that are complicated by labour arrangements, cultural practices, technological environments and social spaces. This approach is useful also to unpack temporality in irregular migration, in which accelerated temporalities of migration control produce and distribute experiences of waiting in specific ways.

A complex composition of laws, built environments, services and technologies – what Sharma calls ‘temporal architectures’ – structures the time of irregular migrants and asylum seekers. In this chapter I am particularly interested in how migrants ‘recalibrate’ (Sharma, 2014a: p. 28) or synchronise their body clocks, their sense of future or the present, to the tempo, duration and directionality of such ‘temporal architectures.’ ‘Recalibration’ is about the micropolitics of temporal coordination and social control between multiple temporalities (Sharma, 2014a: p. 7). Expectations to recalibrate time permeate the social fabric differently for distinctive populations (Sharma, 2014a: p. 18). While the request to recalibrate by ‘waiting’ is ubiquitous for irregular migrants and asylum seekers, such waiting is configured in a broader regime of accelerated migration control. Recalibration stitches together what Barber and Lem (2018) have termed the ‘discrepant temporalities of migration’ – the ruptures between how migration is imagined collectively and individually, and how it is managed by states. Prying open such ruptures around reproduction, health and labour, this chapter explores the experience of waiting in asylum as produced within multiple, relational temporalities and power relationships.

The chapter is based on several periods of fieldwork conducted between 2012 and 2018 in Marseille. During this period, migration to France was marked by movements onset by the Arab Spring and protracted conflicts in Africa and the Middle East, particularly the war in Syria. I zoom in on migrants who had sought, were in the process of seeking or intended to seek, regularisation under the asylum law, and who had a precarious legal status. I conducted interviews with migrants and activists, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and public officials working with migrants. Participant observation was crucial to gaining a thicker understanding of how waiting is produced and experienced. Being-with migrants in time–spaces of waiting and accompanying them in their struggles to regularise their legal status or simply ‘get by,’ importantly attuned me

to the material and affective conditions of waiting. Thus, I base the following analysis on research processes grounded in reflexive contextualisation, co-presence and cooperation with the people whose lived experiences I examine.

Waiting and dilated time

In one sense, persons who demand asylum per definition find themselves in a waiting situation, waiting for the response from the authorities regarding their right to stay and participate in society (Kobelinsky, 2014). Having submitted an asylum application gives a temporary recognition of the person's right to wait on state territory and gives some protection against deportation. As Kobelinsky argues (2009: p. 228), waiting can also be considered the 'activity' *par excellence* of asylum seekers and asylum reception centres as time-spaces of waiting. Kobelinsky (2014) describes the everyday life of asylum seekers in asylum reception centres (CADA) in France as characterised by spatial retraction and temporal dilation. Even if CADAs are not closed institutions, they are characterised by certain measures of spatial confinement, such as the duty to report absence and demand authorisation to be absent for several days. When it comes to experiences of temporal dilation, Kobelinsky suggests they be read as a series of sequences, involving first, the halt created by the beginning of the waiting period and the arrival in the centre; second, the boredom which ensues and the need to fill up the time; and third, ways of avoiding waiting.

Importantly, Kobelinsky (2014) stresses that waiting time is not homogeneous or continuous. First, the rhythm depends on the asylum procedure and its production of occasional moments of urgency (for instance when a rejection arrives, and the asylum seeker has a limited number of days to file an appeal), and new beginnings (for instance waiting for the answer to the appeal). Second, the duration of the sequences varies depending on the individual cases, but the first one tends to be shorter (the beginning), while the others (boredom and ways to avoid waiting) extend in time. Third, the succession of sequences is not necessarily linear or uni-directional; there can be a back-and-forth in the experience of waiting, between periods of boredom and moments of activity. The features of heterogeneity and non-linearity that Kobelinsky mention are even more pronounced if we expand the scope to the majority of asylum seekers in Marseille currently, who are not offered accommodation in CADAs, and who are outside of the so-called normal asylum procedure.³ And even more so, if we take into account the broader context of waiting in migration, which may include waiting to leave, waiting to pass borders and to obtain legal stay in subsequent countries.

One example that troubles a sequential and linear reading of waiting is the experience of Lamin and Amina – a Nigerian couple I encountered regularly outside the 'first reception platform' for asylum seekers (PADA) during my fieldwork.⁴ They would either have spent the night, or, if they had been

lucky enough to get a few days accommodation in a cheap hotel, come in the morning to check for mail and pass time with other Nigerians, most of them from the Edo state. Lamin and Amina had arrived in Marseille from Italy a couple of months before we met and, when registering as asylum seekers, had been put under the so-called Dublin procedure.⁵ One day Lamin agreed to tell me more about their experiences as migrants with a precarious legal status:

I came to Italy without documents. It was not good for me. I spent one year, two years, three years, four years, five years, six years, seven years, without documents. All the time I waited. All the time they gave me temporary residency. They gave me six months, six months finished, renew, then no documents. For a long time, it was six months, six months, and then nothing. They said wait, wait – and I waited. Many years I waited and waited. I waited one year, two years, three years, four years, five years, six years, seven years, nothing. My wife [Amina] and I suffered too much, because I had no work and we had nowhere to live, and no money to buy baby things. So, we decided to come to Marseille so we could get a better future. Because in Italy we have no future. I think that we will have a better future here.

Lamin's incantation of the time they spent in Italy painstakingly foregrounds his experience of waiting. But rather than a series of sequences with a defined starting point and a predictable end, Lamin experienced waiting as a loop of temporary ends and beginnings. From the repetition of the term 'waiting' and the repetitive counting of years, transpires a feeling of 'stuckedness' related to temporariness, uncertainty and a continually postponed 'better future.' Rather than being stuck at a particular point in a linear waiting time, though, Lamin seems to experience this stuckedness as circular. After years of waiting in Italy for regularisation of their legal situation and, related to that, a less precarious socio-economic situation, moving to Marseille resuscitated the hope for a 'better future,' which had propelled Lamin and Amina to leave Nigeria for Europe in the first place. This time, however, pregnancy introduced a new sense of urgency to their waiting. As they had been waiting in Italy, lived time had not come to a stand-still. Rather, they had passed some of the main cultural markers of adulthood by getting married and making a baby. Consequently, a 'better future' could no longer be indefinitely postponed, the baby they were expecting would soon enough need diapers and a roof over the head.

Waiting and accelerated time

Reducing the 'waiting time' of irregular migrants and asylum seekers has been a target of recent migration policies in France. The temporality of migration control is characterised by efforts to 'speed up' the asylum process

towards regularisation or deportation, and by a multiplication of temporal borders (cf. Tazzioli, 2018). As in other European countries, acceleration is hailed to enhance migration control, and make the asylum system more ‘efficient’ (Cwerner, 2004; Sontowski, 2018; Eule et al., 2019). The ambition to ‘speed up’ has restructured the temporal architecture of the asylum system, with consequences for the tempo, duration and directionality of migrants’ waiting. With the record number of asylum seekers in 1989 and 1990, the French spearheaded the acceleration in the examination of asylum claims in Europe, with what some critics named ‘TGV procedures,’ which soon resulted in refusals without thorough examination of individual cases, and an increase in cases tried before the appeal court (Kobelinsky, 2010; Dembour & Martin, 2011; Akoka & Spire, 2013).⁶ Since the 1990s, the aim to accelerate procedures has been reiterated, notably in the asylum law reform of 2015 and the revised law for ‘controlled immigration, an effective right to asylum, and successful integration’⁷ of 2018. This latter law further strengthened the focus on ‘speed’ as a technique for controlling and governing migration, proposing to accelerate both procedures for treating asylum applications and its exclusionary counterpart in the form of procedures for deporting irregular migrants. As we will see later, the deadlines set by the law specifies new temporal borders that are crucial to the production of migrants as ‘irregular’ and produce new gaps and time–spaces of waiting. With the 2018 law, the time to apply for asylum was cut from 120 to 90 days, and the time to appeal the decision, from 30 to 15 days. On the reverse side, what De Genova and Peutz (2010) refer to as a ‘detention and deportation regime’ was expanded. The maximum length of stay in detention centres was doubled (from 45 to 90 days and in certain cases 135 days) and the time of detention by the police was extended (from 16 hours to 24 hours). In addition, the use of imprisonment for illegal entry or for using fake papers, as well as the possibility for issuing a ‘banishment’ from French territory, were extended.

The reform of the asylum law in 2015 established a new system for registering asylum applications in France, which was intended to accelerate the process and reduce waiting times to register asylum applications with the authorities. From then on, all asylum seekers were required to pre-register with ‘first reception platforms’ (PADA), who distribute appointments to the so-called single desk at the Préfecture, where claims are registered.⁸ One chilly November morning, as the queue outside PADA was thickening with men, women and children, I joined Bob, a Malian in his thirties who had worked his way through Libya and Italy and arrived a few months ago in Marseille. Bob had already been queuing since 5 am and had managed to put his name up among the first 15 on the list taped on the door, which meant that his odds for being received that day were good. We passed the time smoking, listening to old reggae hits, looking at some photos Bob’s wife had sent of their children and preparing for the registration of Bob’s asylum application – carefully noting down the full names and birthdays of

his children, as well as the major dates of his journey to France. Approaching midday, it was finally our turn. A case worker helped Bob fill out the pre-registration form and, by entering the information into the software SI-ASILE managed by the Préfecture and the French Office for Immigration and Integration, gave him an appointment at the Préfecture's single desk. I noticed that the appointment was in 60 days.

As noted by Eule et al. (2019), the pressure for acceleration rarely matches the everyday of migration control. While an appointment to register a demand for asylum should in theory be given within three working days, or ten in periods of exceptional influx, figures collected by Observatoire Asile Marseille (2018) showed the average waiting time in 2017 and 2018 to be 40 days after registration with the first reception platform (PADA).⁹ Interestingly, the Observatoire makes a point of counting not only working days but the full number of calendar days pointing thus to a split between the duration of waiting time from the perspective of those who make people wait and those who are made to wait. Asylum seekers do not take 'time off' from waiting during weekends and holidays in the same way employees who process their applications do. The fixing of appointments to the single desk is automated and computerised, the effect of which is both to put the waiting time of asylum seekers beyond the control of employees at the PADA and to produce a certain randomness in the distribution of waiting time. The Observatoire registered such randomness in waiting periods in their report, noting that individual appointments were given in '52 days, 28 days, 51 days, 25 days and then suddenly, 2 days, then again 54 days, 34 days, and 23 days.'

The PADA represents the waiting time before people are properly enrolled in the asylum system, as well as the link between different parts of the asylum procedure. While official statistics show a reduction of average waiting times for the applicants at OPFRA from 7.4 months (or 226 days) in January 2015 to approximately 3 months (114 days) in 2017, these statistics do not count the days of waiting to register the asylum application.¹⁰ The 'gap' between the 3-day limit set by the law and the temporalities of the infrastructure that regulate actual access, produces an interstitial time-space during which protection from deportation is weak and access to welfare and healthcare extremely limited. During my meeting at the first reception platform with Bob, the social worker admonished Bob to hold on tightly to the piece of paper attesting his future appointment at the Préfecture: 'Do not lose the paper, it's important, it is your identity paper now.' For the two next months, this piece of paper would offer some protection against deportation, but it did not come with any offer of housing or economic support. Instead, the social worker presented Bob with some food stamps for a *resto du coeur*, since, as she said, addressing me rather than Bob, 'he looks a bit worn.'¹¹ My presence may very probably have influenced this decision, as single male asylum seekers were usually left to fend for themselves in the waiting time.¹²

Lamin and Amina were also experiencing this gap, and like many, struggled to find accommodation. They carried a letter from the French Office for Immigration and Integration stating that they were registered as asylum seekers and that in waiting for housing in an asylum reception centre (CADA) they must refer to the first reception platform (PADA). At the PADA they were told that there were no free places, so all they could offer was a few nights stay at a hotel. An employee at the PADA aptly captured the circular rhythm, reminiscent of Lamin's experience of waiting for papers in Italy, produced by this gap in access to rights:

Unfortunately both asylum reception centres and emergency shelters are full. The 115 [the emergency housing centre] proposes ten hotel nights to families and when the stay expires, they send them to us for a reassessment of the need to accommodation.¹³ Often, this creates around a weeks' gap where the family sleeps on the street because we are unable to find a place in a hotel.

The gap produced by the mismatch between a chronopolitics of speed and the slowness of the practical and material processing of asylum demands reorders the duration of the sequences of waiting in asylum identified by Kobelinsky (2014). Rather than a 'halt created by the beginning of the waiting period,' the beginning of the waiting period was itself dilated in time, in a largely rightless time-space of waiting before one can even start the wait as a recognised asylum seeker with some protection against deportation and social rights before the state.

The employees at the first reception platform (PADA) are part of the temporal architecture which makes irregular migrants and asylum seekers 'wait before the state.' Despite being employed by voluntary associations, their function as a 'first reception platform' which mediates access to the Préfecture and the French Office for Immigration and Integration make them crucial to migrants' experience of waiting as a form of power. This does not mean though that only asylum seekers are made to recalibrate to the waiting time and the way it is governed through deceleration and acceleration of various parts of the asylum procedure. Observing the pre-registration and follow-up process from the other side of the queue made me aware of how employees struggled to keep up the pace necessary to process the line of people who queued up in front of the PADA every day.¹⁴ Attending morning meetings was akin to being in the calm before the storm, as everyone knew that there would be no more breaks or slowdowns until lunch. Employees worked long days, under high pressure, worrying about many variables only partly within their control. In September 2018, less than a year after my visit with Bob, employees went on strike, supported by around 20 NGOs, and demanded a reinforcement of staff to absorb waiting lines and provide a more 'dignified reception' of asylum seekers.¹⁵

Waiting and managed time

Within these complex power chronographies of acceleration and deceleration, the reception structure, volunteer associations and migrants themselves develop ways of 'managing' and 'circumventing' waiting time. Laila, one of my interlocutors who worked at the PADA, distinguished between waiting in the asylum reception centre (CADA) and waiting in the first reception platform (PADA):

In the PADA, given that people have not yet had access to housing, or only to day-by-day housing in a hotel, they do not have any activities. They have absolutely nothing, they do not have the right to work, they do not have the right to go to school, except for French courses that hardly exist. This makes the waiting very difficult to manage. There is thus a problem of equality between asylum seekers, between those who live in a CADA where the waiting time is more manageable than for those in the PADA. I mean, NGOs will perhaps offer a gardening course or some computer training with ten places, and when that is filled up, the only thing left for people to do is to come to the [first reception] platform. Some people come in the morning even if they do not have any questions and know they do not have any mail, because it creates a relationship to us and to the other asylum seekers, and then it keeps them occupied for a while. So, there are many people to whom we spend a lot of time telling them that 'It's normal, you must wait, and it's long...'

Laila interestingly points to how asylum seekers must find ways to 'manage' the waiting time, and how the manageability relates to the 'temporal architectures' of waiting in various material reception structures. While the asylum reception centre (CADA) offers a certain 'rhythm' in the form of regular 'activities,' which as Kobelinsky (2009: p. 232) argues also implies a certain spatiotemporal subjection, the waiting time of asylum seekers who are not offered any such activities is seen as 'empty' and in need of being filled, given that they are also deprived of the right to work and thus excluded from one of the major temporal rhythms of contemporary society. As Laila makes clear, the employees at the first reception platform (PADA) are enrolled in 'normalising' the waiting time, both in instructing asylum seekers to wait and telling them that it is normal, and in being a node for the fragile relationships that asylum seekers establish with the reception structures and each other.

The pressure for acceleration of procedures was met with ambivalence by my interlocutors who worked in the reception structures. On the one hand, they saw prolonged waiting as creating a lot of anxiety, and as associated with deterioration of physical and mental health. On the other hand, they feared that the consequence of acceleration would be a further precarisation of migrants and entail an erosion of their rights. With the shortening of the

time limit for registering an asylum application, applicants would have less time to gather information, learn about the system and prepare their dossier. Accelerating the asylum procedure would also, some worried, make asylum seekers less prepared to start a 'new life' should they be granted asylum. In this perspective, waiting time was not only seen as 'empty time' to be filled but also as a time of preparation to learn to know the asylum system, to learn French, to get an education and to get to know the city and the society. While this understanding of the management of time privileges an understanding of 'integration' as the prospective future of asylum seekers, the current French policies of acceleration are geared primarily towards more effectively excluding those who are deemed by the state to be 'irregular migrants' and to limit access to refugee protection.

Lamin and Amina were among those who came every morning to the platform and stayed until midday. Recalibrating thus to the imposed waiting time of the asylum process, the space outside the first reception platform (PADA) was nevertheless also crucial to 'the circumvention of the imposed temporality' (Kobelinsky, 2014) through the creation of what Almer (2016) calls '*espaces de bavardage*' (gossip spaces). As Almer (2016: p. 14) writes, undocumented people are required to learn both to live with the tempo of administrative functioning and learn

how to use this time they spend in the 'waiting for...' to their advantage, namely inventing routines and benchmarks, invest and create spaces conducive to meetings that allow them to install themselves as good as they can in the temporality of the 'waiting for...' and to lead a life despite the uncertainty of its duration.

The space outside the PADA was crucial for Lamin and Amina not only to escape boredom and fill up the time, but more importantly, to acquire information about where and how to fulfil basic needs such as finding food and a place to spend the night. Also, encountering other young parents, they got information on possibilities for medical follow up during pregnancy, and on how to access the rights reserved for populations deemed vulnerable, including families with young children. This '*espace de bavardage*' was also challenging to navigate though, as people's efforts to install themselves 'as good as they can' would sometimes involve illegal commerce or attempts to manipulate others to their own advantage.

Waiting and dispossessed time

The question of *using* the time spent in 'waiting for' is even more complex if we do not see waiting time only as a dilated and empty time to be filled, but as intersecting with temporalities related to reproduction, health and labour in complex power chronographies. Here, we may pry open the 'discrepant temporalities of migration' – the ruptures between how migration

is imagined collectively and individually and how it is managed by states and institutions involved in the reception of asylum seekers (Barber & Lem, 2018). Bob's case is illustrative. For several years, Bob had been suffering from severe stomach pain, which 'ate him from the inside' and prevented him from working. Seeking healthcare upon arriving in Marseille, Bob was advised to register as an asylum seeker before the hospital could administer further medical examinations.¹⁶ Recounting his conversation with the doctor, Bob explained:

I said; but my problem is not primarily that [of needing protection as an asylum seeker]. Me, my problem, it is my health. At least, that is what I want first. But they told me, no, you must go and demand asylum first. So now, I will go and ask for asylum. But I am tired, and I want to go to the hospital first.

For Bob, finding out what was 'eating him' was a primary concern, not least because of the pain and fatigue he was experiencing. Despite the experienced acuteness of his health condition, of being prevented from normal social interaction, of getting thinner and less muscular every day, and not being strong enough to work, Bob had to 'recalibrate' to the temporalities of French migration management.

Bob's immediate concern to get medical treatment was not only related to his individual health but also to how his migration was collectively imagined, and its temporality relationally constituted. In Mali, Bob's wife and children were waiting for his remittances to arrive so they would be able to pay for subsistence, schooling and the house they were building. Haunted by the urgency of supporting his family back home, Bob waited every day at the roadside outside the primary site of informal labour in Marseille together with other migrants to be picked up for a day or more of work. It was vital to post in the early morning when entrepreneurs and private persons drove by to engage workers, and the risk of being detained and deported increased when the police started patrolling, usually by the late morning. Like the first reception platform, the informal labour platform was an important '*espace de bavardage*,' where migrants would build relationships and exchange information and services. The rhythm of informal work, however, was forcefully interrupted when Bob, prompted by his medical condition, recalibrated to the asylum procedure. As we were waiting at the first reception platform (PADA), an employer Bob worked for rang to offer him a job in construction work for the next few weeks. Hanging up, Bob explained to me that between queuing at the PADA, the *rendezvous* at the Préfecture, the appointments at the hospital, the waiting line at the emergency clinic and the regulations of entry at the emergency housing unit where he slept, he would not be left with any time to actually do the job.

Rather than just filling up the dilated and empty time of waiting, the temporal architecture of the asylum procedure governed Bob's time in a very

particular way. This may be analysed in light of Andersson's (2014) suggestion that irregular migrants are not simply 'put on hold' or slowed down. Rather, their time is devalued and usurped in endless bureaucratic procedures. A case in point is the use of short temporary permits, which requires people to redo queues at public offices at short intervals. As *Le Courant* (2014: p. 63) puts it, 'the undocumented are not only those who do not have the right to be present, they are also those who are dispossessed of the mastery of time.' While this situation of 'recalibration' is certainly an expression of the devaluation of the time of undocumented migrants, and can be read, as *Le Courant* does, as a form of dispossession, one should note that, 'recalibration' to economic and political dominant temporal structures is far from unique to those with a precarious legal status. Rather, we could see it as an uneven investment in time along a range of social differences, such as race, class, gender, labour and immigration status (Sharma, 2014a).

Waiting and being out of time

Unlike Bob, who was waiting to register his asylum claim, Bashir, a young man from Sudan who had just turned 23, was waiting to be sent back to Italy. In 2017, Bashir who at the time had recently entered France via Italy and was living in a '*camp de fortune*' in Paris, accepted an offer from French authorities: 'They said that they would give us housing and process our applications,' Bashir recounts. Together with a group of asylum seekers, he was sent to Marseille where he was moved between several reception structures only to end up in a so-called Hosting Program for Asylum Seekers (PRAHDA, *Programme d'accueil et d'hébergement des demandeurs d'asile*). The dismantlement of the informal camps in Calais and Grande Synthe, as well as certain parts of Paris in 2017, led the French government to create 241 CAOs (*Centre d'accommodation and d'orientation*) to accommodate those displaced. Soon after, the PRADHA was established to channel more effectively and speedily those who are 'Dublined'¹⁷ or on a 'a fast track' towards deportation. In the PRAHDA, asylum seekers are not accompanied by social workers. Instead, they are expected to report themselves regularly to the police station, lest they will be considered *en fuite* (absconding).¹⁸

Coinciding with efforts to accelerate the treatment of asylum applications and to speed up the return of those who fail, the creation of differentiated tracks has given rise to a proliferation of structures that organise the reception of asylum seekers, and configure the tempos, duration and directionality of waiting in particular ways. Compared to the CADA, the PRAHDA is characterised by the absence of investments into the lives of their inhabitants. There are no technologies of care or temporal infrastructures to keep them 'in time' (Sharma, 2014a). The absence of temporal investments leaves irregular migrants 'out of sync' with the temporal order(s) of French society, recalibrated instead to the temporal architecture of the asylum system and the Dublin agreement, and punctuated by the duty to report to the

police, a recurring intensification of uncertainty and awareness of one's own deportability.

Bashir experienced waiting time in PRAHDA as dilated, empty and repetitive.

There are no projects. There is no program for the day. You wake up, you eat, you sleep, you eat. You discuss with your friend, you pass time, you pass the evening, and the day passes like that. It's always the same routine. But little by little, you become disgusted by life...because you stay there, and you do nothing. We are bored. We are broken.

Time is empty, a repetitive eternal present, characterised by boredom and passivity, as in the second sequence of waiting for asylum described by Kobelinsky (2014). The object, duration and rhythm of waiting is nevertheless distinct for those who have been 'Dublined' and who are waiting for a hypothetical answer from the country responsible for their asylum application and for a possible expulsion to this country. This waiting time produces a 'gap' similar to the one discussed earlier in relation to the registration of the asylum application with the authorities, in which asylum seekers wait in extreme administrative and social precarity. The feeling of temporal dilation and spatial retraction was accentuated by the isolated location of the PRAHDA, which made it virtually impossible to participate in the '*espaces de bavardage*' that were crucial to migrants' management of waiting time.

Existing within an uneven multiplicity of temporalities and lived at the intersection of a range of social institutions and differences, temporal architectures do not produce homogeneous experiences of waiting time. Living further down the corridor from Bashir, was Tomas, an Ethiopian doctor who grew up in a cosmopolitical environment in the Arab Gulf. Due to restrictions in migration policies, he was deported to Ethiopia where he had never lived. He immediately re-migrated – first to Sweden and then onwards to France. In contrast to Bashir's naked room, and the dirt and degradation of the common areas, Tomas' room was decorated with a colourful carpet and a packed bookshelf. His economic, social and cultural resources had allowed him to install himself in the 'waiting for' in a manner quite different from Bashir and most other inhabitants at the PRAHDA. He passed his days learning French and reading literature, sometimes spending hours at the library in the city centre. At the time we met, Tomas had just received a letter saying that Sweden had answered French authorities' request to deport him back to Sweden under the Dublin convention positively. He had been given 48 hours to appeal the decision, a deadline it had been impossible to meet. Now, he was awaiting the day of his expulsion.

While some people, like Tomas, manage to 'install themselves' in the 'waiting for' in a way that makes time seem meaningful, and not only something to be passed or endured, waiting as a 'Dubliner' or in other 'fast tracks' is characterised by sudden ruptures in the form of events of

expulsion – a constant source of strong uncertainty and nervousness to most. Bashir told me:

You wait for the day of your expulsion. How much time before your expulsion? It could be tomorrow. Tomorrow they could send you to Italy. Of the four people I arrived with, two were already scheduled, and they expelled them to Italy. Three others who, given they did not want to go, ran away. So now, they are wanted by the border police. In the middle of winter, they ran away. Whether they find somewhere to sleep is up to them.

In this grim light, Bashir was incessantly contemplating his own options: to stay in the PRAHDA and wait for his sudden expulsion to arrive or to 'escape' and try to stay off the grid until his status as a 'Dubliner' was finally 'broken,' as he put it. Managing to live undetected by the authorities for 18 months would give him the possibility to file a new asylum application in France. This is due to the deadlines set by the Dublin procedure, which specifies a time limit for the authorities to contact the other country's authorities and a time limit to answer, as well as a time limit to 'transfer' – which in the case of 'escape' is set to 18 months. The question of 'timing' of staying or moving 'at the right time' was thus crucial to the considerations of those anxiously awaiting deportation.

While 'escaping and hiding' can be seen as a way to circumvent state management of waiting time, efforts to circumvent waiting can also imply political mobilisation. Bashir did not only 'recalibrate' to the tempo imposed by the administrative procedures of the asylum apparatus. Despite his experience of temporal dilation, emptiness and boredom, he managed to transform the waiting time into building up a social network, mobilising together with local activists to protest the conditions of living at the PRAHDA. At a series of public meetings, they denounced the politics of abandonment represented by these structures and called for migrants to hold French authorities accountable to their professed ideals of universal human rights. In an appeal co-written by migrants and local activists, they demanded the annulment of their Dublin procedures, a stop in deportations, the acceptance of their right to demand asylum in France, the demolition of the PRAHDA and access to education and vocational training. Solidarity and political mobilisation are difficult to build in haste, though. In the midst of his effort to change not only his own but also other migrants' waiting situation, the accelerated temporality of migration control suddenly caught up with Bashir. He was arrested during one of his weekly reports to the police station. The next morning, before his friends and activist network had time to mobilise, he was put on a flight to Italy, where yet another cycle of waiting for an uncertain future was about to begin.

Conclusion

Efforts to ‘speed up’ the treatment of asylum applications as well as the deportation of those who failed to obtain protection and are cast as ‘irregular migrants’ have restructured the temporal architecture of French migration control, with consequences for the tempo, duration and directionality of migrants’ waiting. Given the extensive critique of protracted waiting situations voiced by migrants and migrant-rights activists, one would perhaps expect ‘speeding up’ to bring migrants ‘in sync’ with the speed of contemporary society, reducing the stress associated with protracted waiting. In this chapter, I have tried to nuance this understanding of waiting by analysing ethnography from fieldwork with migrants with a precarious legal status in light of Sharma’s concept of ‘power chronographies.’ The accelerated temporality of migration control produces gaps and time–spaces of waiting (e.g. for pre-registering an asylum application, for being transferred to a responsible Schengen country, and for accessing health-care) during which protection from deportation is weak and access to welfare and healthcare extremely limited. The analysis has demonstrated how migrants with a precarious legal status ‘recalibrate’ to a composition of laws, built environments, services and technologies, synchronising their bodies and life projects to the tempo, duration and directionality of complex ‘temporal architectures.’ The time of migrants with a precarious legal status is not only devalued and devoid of investment but also usurped by the administrative temporality. ‘Gaps’ produced by the efforts to accelerate both the consideration of demands for asylum and the deportation of those who fail to obtain protection contribute to their precarisation. The analysis of power chronographies has also served to pry open the ruptures between how migration is imagined collectively and individually, and how it is managed by states. Temporalities related to reproduction, health and labour intersect with, and are recalibrated to, the temporalities of the state and its management of migration, while also opening up towards temporalities that escape the experience of waiting as a form of power.

Acknowledgements

I thank Marry-Anne Karlsen, Shahram Khosravi and Sarah Sharma for reading and providing constructive comments. Thanks to the WAIT-researchers who gave input to the chapter at earlier stages, in particular Thomas Hylland Eriksen.

Notes

- 1 *Plate-forme d'accueil pour demandeurs d'asile* (PADA) in Marseille, recently renamed *Structure de premier accueil des demandeurs d'asile* (SPADA), run by the NGO *Forum réfugiés-Cosi* on renewable annual contract, is responsible for pre-registering asylum seekers, administering appointments to the *Guichet Unique*, and for ‘accompanying’ asylum seekers in the asylum process.

- 2 *Centres d'accueil de demandeurs d'asile* (CADA) was established in France in 1991 after a regulation made it illegal for asylum seekers to work.
- 3 According to figures cited by *Observatoire Asile Marseille* (2018) of the 3,974 persons registered as asylum seekers in Marseille in 2017, 980 were put in accelerated procedure and 1,786 in the Dublin procedure. The term 'accelerated procedure' is somewhat of a strange misnomer, and unlike the privilege usually associated with fast tracking, it is reserved for asylum seekers who are considered a priori less legitimate and likely to succeed in obtaining protection. The Préfecture decides which 'track' a particular application follows.
- 4 I have altered all the names in this chapter in order to preserve the anonymity of my interlocutors.
- 5 The Dublin agreement makes the Schengen member state where one first demands asylum (or that issued a first visa or a residence permit or through which a person entered the EU and had their identity checked) responsible for examining the demand. If the Préfecture determines that another country is responsible, the asylum seeker can be 'transferred' back within a delay of 6 months.
- 6 TGV, *train à grande vitesse*, means high-speed train. In 1990, the TGV set a new world record in speed on rails, and as such it served as the ultimate symbol of speed in France at the time.
- 7 LOI n° 2018-778 du 10 Septembre 2018 pour une immigration maîtrisée, un droit d'asile effectif et une intégration réussie.
- 8 *Guichet Unique Demendeurs d'Asile*, (GUDA).
- 9 The Administrative Tribunal of Paris has deemed failure to register claims within the given time frame, and the legal 'gap' that results as violations of the right to asylum. The tribunal has repeatedly ordered the Préfecture to complete registration concerned applications within a strict timeframe. See: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/news/25-05-2017/france-authorities-under-court-order-register-asylum-applications>. Published online 25 April 2016 (accessed 17 March 2020).
- 10 <https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/fr/l-ofpra/actualites/les-donnees-de-l-asile-2017-a-l>. (accessed 17 March 2020).
- 11 The French *restos du coeur* are part of a broader landscape of charitable and humanitarian associations, offering food to migrants and others in a precarious situation (see Jacobsen, forthcoming).
- 12 At the time, asylum seekers received a subvention – the ADA (*allocation pour demandeur d'asile*). Yet, my interlocutors experienced numerous difficulties in accessing it. As noted by the *Observatoire Asile Marseille* (2018), asylum seekers must wait up to 45 days after registering as asylum seekers before the ADA becomes effective. In the meantime, they rely on assistance from various NGOs and friends and networks. Housing of asylum seekers is perhaps the biggest challenge in Marseille. In theory, once one is registered as an asylum seeker, one may have access to an asylum reception centre. In practice, however, waiting times remain long, and in the meantime, people move between emergency housing (115), squats, sleeping rough and staying with friends.
- 13 The social outreach service (SAMU social), which distributes access to emergency housing in Marseille, is usually just referred to by its phone number, 'the 115.' In addition to emergency housing centres, they dispose of some places in hotels. The capacity is critically low compared with actual demand.
- 14 In an interview I conducted with the head of the PADA in September 2017, she estimated that they received around 230 persons without appointments every day, of which around 30 were there to register for the first time.
- 15 <https://www.europel.fr/societe/greve-a-la-plateforme-daccueil-des-demandeurs-dasile-de-marseille-les-associations-inquietes-3765284> *Europel* France with Agence France Presse (AFP). Published online 27 November 2018 (accessed 17 March 2020).

- 16 The healthcare system for irregular migrants in France is generally seen as one of the most inclusive in Europe, but migrants nevertheless experience important obstacles to realising these rights (Laranche, 2012). Despite my efforts to assist, Bob did not manage to obtain proper medical care until after he had registered his asylum demand.
- 17 Asylum seekers placed under the Dublin procedure are commonly referred to, and sometimes also refer to themselves, as either ‘Dubliners’ or ‘Dublined.’
- 18 Asylum seekers placed under the Dublin procedure and subjected to a house arrest order can be placed in detention if they do not present themselves for their appointment at the Préfecture.

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