

SCHIZOCHRONICITY. DISPOSSESSION AND FRAGMENTATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS' TEMPORALITIES

di Enrico Fravega¹

Abstract

During the last two decades, within the cross-disciplinary fields of migration studies and refugees studies a growing corpus of research have focused on time and temporalities. This has happened parallelly to a growing attention to migrants and asylum-seekers life. Within this literature, at least two main issues can be highlighted: a) migration policies, and reception measures, are more and more focused on temporal containment; b) time is not the same for everyone. Focusing on temporal inequalities can, then, shed light on new conceptions of inequality, innovative policies, and new claims for rights. Against this background, drawing on an ethnographic fieldwork, in this paper I try to highlight the consequences on asylum-seekers lives, of the temporal control regime which is applied within reception centres.

Keywords

Asylum seekers, reception system, time, temporalities

¹ ENRICO FRAVEGA has a Ph. D in Social Sciences, and he is post-doc research fellow, and adjunct professor in Sociology of Culture and Communication at the University of Genoa.

E-mail: enrico.fravega@gmail.com – 115366@unige.it

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, within the interdisciplinary fields of migration studies, refugee studies, and the emerging field of border studies a growing interest has been registered on the issue of time and temporalities (Baas and Yeoh, 2018; Gabaccia, 2014; Mavroudi et al., 2017). A new research direction which is deeply intertwined with an increased attention to the biographical trajectories of migrants and asylum seekers (Fontanari, 2017; Fravega et al., 2023) and, more broadly, with a growing interest on the processual and nonlinear dimensions of the migration phenomenon. Thus, considering migration as a phenomenon shaped by the flow of time, what happens "within" this flowing shows the centrality of migrants' self-construction processes (Bissell, 2007; Khosravi, 2010) highlighting, at the same time, the imbalances, power relations and inequalities running through them (Rogaly and Thieme, 2012).

Moreover, in this perspective, temporalities – past, present, and future – are not arranged as distinct phases, ordered, or orderable, according to a linear and sequential pattern; they are, rather, entities intertwined with each other, which can be identified and distinguished only as a way of giving order to a story. Nevertheless, each one of these entities recursively produces effects on the others (Kallio et al., 2021). The past, and its reconstruction, is of crucial relevance for the result of the application for international protection. Indeed, the analysis of what happened in the country of origin, and the reasons for fleeing from there, are subject to investigation and, at the same time, through a narrative which the asylum seeker is recursively asked to perform, it is a matter of continuous elaboration (Giudici, 2021).

So, the past produces effects on the present time, and on the future. At the same time, the social, labour, and housing conditions experienced by the asylum seeker in the reception centre in the present are fundamental in orienting and constructing his, or her, future. In this sense, the present plays a fundamental role in defining the horizon of expectations motivating actions (Bosi et al., 2009; Jedlowski, 2017). Indeed, it is in the present time that what is thinkable, and possible, takes shape. Accordingly, in "The Man Without Qualities", Robert Musil (1998:chapter 4) writes: «if there is a sense of reality, there must also be a sense of possibility». In other words, it is reality that arouses possibilities, and impossibilities.

On the other hand, as Halbwachs (1996) has shown, the past cannot be considered as an archive to be freely drawn upon, rather it is something

which is continuously reconstructed through remembrance considering the demands of the present and in order to attribute meanings to contemporary time. It is, therefore, the dynamic linkages between past, present and future (Gasparini, 1994) that define the individuals' framework of existence by acting, both on the dispositions and principles generating practices and representations, which Bourdieu (2005) refers to in terms of *habitus*, and on the capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004) of asylum seekers.

However, the question of temporality in relation to the migration phenomenon also arises in a different sense. Almost two decades ago, Cwerner (2004) sensed the centrality of the temporalities governance in the management policies of migration processes. In this sense, the governance of the asynchronous temporalities of migrants' transit and containment, waiting and acceleration, as well as of settlement and relocation, results not merely aiming to halt migratory flows rather in incorporating them into the broader, often asymmetrical, social processes of receiving societies (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2014). A picture revealing how the fragmented time experienced by asylum seekers can be articulated in a multiplicity of social processes, with different operation logics. Thus, migrants contact with the apparatuses of border control and migration management (Marin, 2011) results in fluid legal conditions (Giudici, 2013; Zetter, 2007), characterized by different rights, circulation processes and their own temporalities producing different "categories of foreigners" (Cwerner, 2001). In other words, we can say that migrants are classified and stratified,

categorised in terms of the length of legal permitted stay, and of whether they are entitled to temporary or permanent residence. Once allowed into the host country, immigrants are often subjected to forms of control that set up temporal conditions for renewing permits and other legal documentation, and for seeking changes in their immigrant status (Cwerner, 2001: 10).

Migration policies are increasingly characterized by temporal containment practices (Khosravi, 2010, 2021), and «the lens of the temporality of control enables seeing that time is not only object of mechanisms of control - control over time - but also a mean and a technology for managing migrant - control through time» (Tazzioli, 2018: 15). Along these lines, Rainey (2019) points out that the governance of asylum seekers' temporalities takes the form of a technology of deterrence, control, and exclusion. Reworking a concept introduced by philosopher Nina Power (2014) with regard to the UK criminal justice system, Rainey defines "weaponized time" as the set of practices of

lengthening the time of uncertainty through arrests, accelerations, even simultaneous ones, and prolongations of conditions of destitution, i.e., inability to provide for oneself (e.g., as a result of denial), noting that this contributes to the shaping/remodelling of asylum seekers' lives in harmful and cruel ways (Rainey, 2019). In this sense, asylum seekers experience a condition of "stuckness" or linking the temporalities to an experience of uncertainty that has legal, labour, and social dimensions and (Brun, Fabos, 2015; Della Puppa and Sanò, 2021). An experience which can also be considered a form of "slow violence" (Nixon, 2011).

In this text, however, I do not specifically examine the ways in which border policies unfold through the temporal dimension, nor do I focus on how the complex temporalities inscribed in the multiplicities of legal statuses, into which the contemporary migration phenomenon is decomposed, are to be considered in their relations to an economic system that is based on the exploitation and harnessing of the foreign labour force (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2014). Rather, I reflect on how the issue of the temporal border and temporalities reverberates at the micro scale, articulating a reflection on how control 'across time' is an integral part of asylum seekers' reception management practices, delineating moments of biographical caesura, even radical ones, and giving rise to disjointed spatiotemporal landscapes in which, often with difficulty, people try to make sense of their everyday lives. In this perspective, time, and space, although conceptually distinct and distinguishable, are linked by reciprocal relationships that constitute them reciprocally and define specific modes of inclusion and exclusion. For whoever has the power to define material and social practices, as well as the meanings of time and space, in fact sets the rules of the social game (Harvey, 1989).

2. METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH FIELD

The text of this article is based on the research work on the home-making practices of asylum seekers in the reception system that involved me from 2019 to 2022¹. However, this contribution is based on ethnographic research carried out in distinct types of reception centres found in a regional capital of the Italian North-West and run by the same organisation. There, I was granted free access as well as the possibility of meeting and interviewing the operators and asylum seekers, and the possibility of

¹ This article draws on the research work I carried out on behalf of the University of Trento as a member of the HOASI (*Home and asylum-seekers in Italy*) a research project funded by the Italian Ministry of Research, under the FARE scheme, led by Prof. Paolo Boccagni. Website: <https://homing.soc.unitn.it/hoasi/about-2/>

moving from one centre to another in total freedom. The fieldwork was therefore based on uncovered observation. The research, however, took shape in a context which was still characterised by the pandemic and its restrictions (compulsory wearing of a mask, 'social distance', prohibition to gather both outdoors and in the premises of the facilities); interpersonal contacts were still subject to severe restrictions and the possibility of moving around the facilities and spending time with the guests was rather limited.

For this reason, observation work was noticeably prevailing and only one interview took place during the fieldwork. So, almost all the materials collected are taken from informal dialogues with operators and guests of the centres, and from my field notes. In particular: the themes I focused on, during the fieldwork were: a) "bottom-up" home-making practices with a focus on temporal issues; b) forms of social control and disciplinary practices; c) social representations of migrants among operators. During the time I was carrying out my fieldwork I assumed a sort of "in-between" role – frequently present in the premises of distinct facilities, and often joining the daily visits in the flats of the so called *CAS diffuso* (see below), yet never directly involved in the daily activities of the operators; interested in the stories and daily lives of the centre guests but totally outside the administrative-disciplinary system of power on which the whole organisation of the centres was based – which allowed me to become familiar with both the centre operators and the guests.

Operationally, the fieldwork took place in two types of *Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria* (Extraordinary Reception Centres, aka CAS): a) two "traditional" CAS, where about forty and about thirty male persons, respectively, were housed; the first was inhabited by people half of whom came from Nigeria, and the remainder from West Africa (Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Ivory Coast); the second by people mainly from West African countries and, to a lesser extent, from the Horn of Africa, Bangladesh and Afghanistan; b) a *CAS diffuso*, that is a series of flats spread in the city which all together are considered a CAS, in which approximately forty people of various nationalities (mainly African, Afghan and Bengali) were housed. In all the facilities, the population was overwhelmingly composed of people between the ages of 18 and 30, with very few outliers.

All the 'voices' that punctuate this text giving it depth, and opening glimpses into the reality of daily life in reception are extracted from my field notes. In order to protect their privacy and identity, the people whose stories appear in this text have been named through pseudonyms. In terms

of time, this specific field work was carried out from October 2020 to mid-April 2021.

3. RECEPTION AS AN INTERRUPTED BIOGRAPHICAL TIME

The starting point of the argument developed in this article is that reception turns out to be an interruption of the transition path towards adulthood and/or a process of "minorisation" of a population mainly composed of young adults.

According to Eurostat data², asylum seekers in Italy are, for the most part, people between the ages of 18 and 34; we are, therefore, dealing with a noticeably young population. Migration, moreover, does not take place in the mere crossing of a border, nor it can be reduced to the arrival moment; rather, it takes the form of a process that can last many years and take shape in the passage through different countries, in which, the people on the move, live, dwell, work, etc. In other words, not only are asylum seekers predominantly young, but, very often, they have embarked on the migration path in their teenage years, if not before; then, experiencing autonomy (or semi-autonomy), as well as oppression or violence, even for long periods of their lives (Sadiddin, et al. 2019; Skeldon, 2021). The choice to migrate, therefore, can also be read as a path of transition towards a condition of personal autonomy; not only because it takes place in that indefinite time span linking adolescence to adulthood, but because it is permeated by the idea of the future.

Imaginariness of the future (Jedlowski, 2017; Pellegrino, 2013, 2019) have always nourished, and in part constituted, the migration phenomenon by opening windows of imagination on the possible transformations of the everyday life, in relation, for example, to well-being, work, or the possibilities of emancipation that may result from the choice to migrate to another country. "I left my home to make my own life", or "I decided to leave because I have to support my family" or, again, "I left my country because you can't live there" are statements that frequently emerged in the many of the encounters I had with migrants, in this as in other research projects; that stand for how migration also unfolds as a path of search of autonomy. In other words, in social contexts characterised by a widespread condition of violence, poverty and oppression, the possibility of migration and international mobility is intrinsically linked to aspirations for change and improvement of one's social condition and seems to be configured as a material projection of

²https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics/it&oldid=354233

the possibility of grasping a future located in another space (Cole, 2014; Kalir, 2005). Thus, the elsewhere - be it another African country, Europe, America, or a place yet to be discovered - transcends the mere geographical plane becoming what makes a condition of personal autonomy and self-sufficiency imaginable (Timera, 2001). In this perspective, migration is configured as a rite of passage structuring the transition to adulthood/autonomy of generations of young people from the *Global South* (Altin, 2021; Kaplan, 1982; Monsutti, 2007; Vacchiano, 2014; Della Puppa, 2014).

As van Gennep (1981) has pointed out, rites of passage – beginning with a separation, continuing through a crossing of the margin, resulting in a condition of temporary liminality, and finally fulfilled by an aggregation – often take the form of material passages; in entering a village, or a new home. Or, as in the case in point, in reaching another country. However, the experience of time spent in the reception system disrupts this passage, already rather bumpy, and in many cases seems to jeopardise both its outcome and its direction.

Generally speaking, the first element that can contribute to the disruption of this transition dynamic can be identified in the overall process of "minorisation" implemented by the reception system which, curiously enough, concerns both adults and minors. A process that, as Segato (2018) points out, relegates the subject it refers to, and the issues it brings, to a condition of marginality; that is, outside the public discourse, constituting it as a "residual"; and/or "minority" subject.

In the Italian reception system, as in other European legislations, age verification is fundamental to gain access to the greater protection provided by the law for unaccompanied foreign minors. Indeed, turning eighteen is considered a fundamental requirement for full participation in the social system, but the methods of ascertaining age of majority point to the uncertain connections of the legal framework with the disciplines of medicine and biology. However, as Netz (2019: 13) has pointed out, far from being an objective fact,

an individual's age is always the outcome of selections and contingencies. It is enacted by relating an individual body to specific historically and geographically contingent elements, including technologies, schemes, theories, standards, laws and assumptions (...) As it is not the body as such but a particular body, done in relation that becomes decisive in this practice of determining the way in which a migrant is categorised.

In other words, asylum-seekers body, in its relation to medical statistics and the practices of ascertaining biometric parameters, on the one hand

becomes something that can allow (or deny) access to a specific set of rights; on the other, in its proportions and measures, it is something that operates as a mechanism of certification, or dissipation, of the "capital of adulthood" accrued during the migratory journey.

If we consider the experience of migration as it appears from the migrants' accounts, it is difficult to think of these people - whether minors or adults - as individuals unable to take care of themselves, as is often the case when listening to the accounts of some of the operators. Many of the discourses about asylum seekers made by operators met during my research are, in fact, imbued with infantilising tones and permeated by a thought characterised by (neo)coloniality (Borghi, 2020). In the daily discourses of reception workers, asylum-seekers are often named and called by the term *ragazzi* (that is boys), regardless of their age. In this sense, *ragazzi* is a term homogenising and "crushing" in a condition of precariousness and incompleteness people in extremely different registry conditions. At the same time, the term *ragazzi* is ambivalent, affectionate and stigmatising at the same time; on the one hand, in fact, it recalls a condition of familiarity that matures from acquaintance and frequentation over time; on the other hand, it seems to be linked both to an idea of incompleteness in the pathway to adulthood of the guests of the reception centres, and to the not entirely human status attributed by European populations to the populations of colonised countries (Zavaroni et al., 2021). The process of minorisation, however, also takes shape in implicit ways.

The setting in which the admission meeting takes place is a large gym room. On one side there are six chairs arranged in a semicircle: three for operators, two for volunteers who do their civil service at the facility, one for the trainee. On the other side the chairs are twelve, arranged in three rows about two meters from each other, reserved for "new arrivals". The rightmost chairs are reserved for English speakers, those on the left for French speakers. When new guests enter the facility, they are distributed from one part to another according to the language they spoke. The coordinator of the structure knows English but decides to use Italian by having the two colleagues translating him, into French, by one, for the French-speaking group, and into English, by the other, for the English-speaking group. When he speaks, after greetings, he explains to them that they must apply for asylum and that there are three distinct types of protection. Although they have been in Italy for about a month and have already expressed their intention to apply for asylum, the new guests have absolutely no idea what the coordinator of the centre is talking about. On the quarantine ship, where they spent fifteen/twenty days, they had no information whatsoever. However, the operators do not explain to them the criterion of the law, or rather what "political asylum", "subsidiary

protection” or residence permits for “special cases” correspond to; rather, they set the whole conversation on the importance of “telling the truth”. Operators then explain that the three types of residence permit correspond to different lengths of stay: one has a duration of five years, one of three years and one of two. Then, the coordinator adds: “the more sincere you are, the more chance you have of having the permit for five years” (Field Notes, December 2020).

As this excerpt from the field diary shows, the process of minorisation can already begin during the first contact between migrants and the reception facility. Furthermore, the decision to place the emphasis on telling the truth, recalling the importance of a moral principle, evokes a principle structuring the relationship between adults and children, defining the terms of an asymmetrical relationship, considering migrants inhabiting the reception centres in a subordinate position. In this sense, this relationship is not just merely focused on the ambiguous definition of “truth” (Fassin, 2013; Griffiths, 2012) but it takes the form of a real framing action (Goffman, 2006), destined to permanently orient the image and the expectations weighing on the asylum seeker. Moreover, the articulation of a relationship that takes shape on a moral/moralistic level (“if you are good, you will be rewarded”) overshadows the fact that the whole structure of the reception system is not based on a mechanism of generosity, more or less organised; rather it regards the possibility of making a series of entitlements of the asylum seeker concretely enforceable (e.g.: Article 10 of the Italian Constitution).

By the way, the process of minorisation also passes through the social practices punctuating the daily life of asylum seekers. Indeed, in most of the structures, the combination of social control needs with the duties of accountability (knowing how many meals are provided, or the people who sleep in the structure every night) contribute to the regimentation of daily life of the asylum seekers.

Lunch will be served in the dining room on the first floor, every day from 12.30 to 13.30. Dinner will be served in the dining room on the first floor every day from 19.30 to 20.30. Each person who, due to work, cannot be present must alert the operators in order to have their part left aside. The necessary for breakfast will be distributed every morning between 8.30 and 10, in the office. Those who have to leave before that time can ask for breakfast the night before (Field notes: sheet posted at the entrance to a CAS. February 2021)

However, in the same structure, the sanctions for those who do not follow the regulation are applied differently from case to case.

In the morning, when Mamadu enters the office to sign the presence sheet for the night before, Daniele (operator) rebukes him in a friendly way and, after reminding him that everyone must be home by 10pm, he shows him the presence sheet allowing him to sign it, even if he was late. The same thing does not happen to two other guests of the same structure. They arrive shortly after, claiming they forgot to sign in the night before but after a severe telling-off, they are not allowed to sign the presence sheet. They will therefore be registered as absent, and their pocket money will be reduced by a daily quota. (Field notes. January 2021)

Amadou, another guest of the structure, will explain to me that if you have to go out in specific time slots set by the regulations – namely from 21 p.m. to 6 a.m. – you must always ask for permission, even if you go out for work reasons. Even if your job requires you to go out regularly at night. He, for example, is a warehouse worker and every time he works the night shift – even four or five times a week – he must ask for permission; and it happened that sometimes an operator decided to deny it to him. In other words, reception seems to be permeated by a "reward" and discretionary logic, which severely limits personal autonomy and, to some extent, dispossess asylum seekers of the governance of their time.

In this light, the even minute regulation of the social times of reception - meal times, exit and/or return times, permission to go out outside the set times, etc. - and the discretionary power exercised by the operators in supervising the enforcement of these rules - which are, therefore, evaluated in the light of undefined and changing criteria of "sympathy", "adequacy", "respectfulness". etc. - refers to the staging of rituals of demeanour and deference (Goffman, 1971). Through the symbolic interplay of desirable, or undesirable, qualities (e.g.: "thoroughness", "pleasantness", "argumentative attitude" etc.) and of social status, a precise pattern of social interaction is staged, supported by both sides, contributing to the reproduction of a "vertical" relationship between reception operators and guests; between "whites" and "blacks". Where the former can choose the registry to apply, while the latter are only allowed to comply.

Thus, in the folds of daily interaction rites, people in reception develop the habit of not having their own time at their disposal, except by concession from others. Thus, through a sort of "disciplinary humanitarianism" (Vacchiano, 2011), a dispossession of asylum seekers' adulthood (and time) takes shape.

4. A FRAGMENTED TIME

Literature has recently focused on the condition of temporal injustice (Fontanari, 2017b; Thorshaug and Brun, 2019) experienced by asylum seekers, who are often forced into situations of existential immobility (Hage, 2009) and/or physical-spatial immobility (degli Uberti, 2021; degli Uberti and Altin, 2021). However, as Cwerner (2001, pp. 20-21) pointed out «some temporal aspects of immigration will be experienced as oppressive. They will typically affect closures of time in the lives of immigrants, and the ensuing feeling is one of temporal alienation. One's time will be perceived as lying beyond one's immediate control».

The assumption from which the argument developed in the following pages is based is that the events in the daily lives of asylum seekers in reception centres, and the frictions they raise, represent, as a whole, a repertoire of social interactions and representations, fundamental to understanding the unfolding of the most minute forms of temporal control. In this sense, the home-making practices enacted by asylum seekers living in reception facilities, which often manifest themselves as acts of rule-breaking, do not only concern the spatial dimension but are deeply connected to the sphere of temporality (Fravega, 2022; Fravega and Boccagni, 2023) and sociality. The result is a situation in which the times of 'homemaking' are spread across multiple and different spaces/places. The guests of the reception facilities do not have, otherwise said, the possibility of placing the times of sociality, intimacy, and cultural consumption in spaces within the perimeter of the reception. Or in appropriate spaces.

Thus time, or rather the reception times, and their governance, become the subject of micro-conflicts, i.e., they become the stakes of a confrontation - close but subterranean - between guests and operators, through which the asymmetry of relations between them takes shape.

Modu lives in a flat that is part of a "CAS diffuso". When I meet him, he is truly angry. He tells me that he got a 'fine' for taking his friend, a 'fellow villager', home. They were praying together in his room when an operator arrived for the daily check in the flats... and so they withheld his pocket money for a week. Modu explains to me that to take people home is forbidden. No one can enter the flats unless they have permission from the cooperative and he understands he cannot invite friends or girlfriends to the place where he lives. "They decide everything," he tells me, "and we have no freedom to say, 'then let's do this'". Above all, Modu cannot understand that he is subject to such tight control, since for him Europe was the country of freedom. (Field Notes. April 2019)

During my interaction with Modu, a 20-year-old Guinean, several interesting elements appear. First, the discrepancy between the lived condition and the future he imagined or dreamt of. Secondly, the veil of abstractness that characterises the figure of the asylum seeker is lifted, showing how under this label there are mostly young people, for whom sociability, friendships and the need to share of specific cultural practices - in this case it was religious practice, but it could be music, sport, etc. - are of crucial relevance. Finally, this anecdote reveals the limited degree of autonomy of asylum seekers dwelling in reception centres, which extend to the spheres of sociality and intimacy. Above all, in Modu's words, it is possible to trace the existence and relevance of an invisible boundary through which certain times of daily life - specifically the times of sociability, but also those of intimacy - are excluded from the perimeter of reception.

In the dialogues I have had with operators and guests of the reception centres where I have carried out my fieldwork, furthermore, the frictions between the guests' needs for sociability and the organisational device of reception are always on the agenda.

The centre where I spend most of my time doing ethnographic work it is a rather large structure, with where dozens of people are housed, and it is also an 'archive' of stories that are told, and passed down, between those who work and those who live there.

Everyone here remembers Lorenzo, a Gambian boy, who was in there until shortly before I arrived. He arrived in Italy at an early age, together with a group of other boys, all presumably minors, declaring his age of majority in order to be considered able to work. He was, then, aggregated at a centre for adults. There, he and some of his companions bring a great liveliness and in a fleeting time they make many friends - not only inside the facility and merely not among foreigners - who begin to frequent the centre regularly. With them he does Tik Tok videos in the facility's garden filming themselves singing and dancing to raps written by them.

One day arriving here I saw these four or five guys out here, making music videos,' an operator told me. "Who are you?" I asked. And they, candidly, replied: 'we are Lorenzo's friends!' So, we changed the rules. From then on, we decided that you can bring people into the facility but only at certain times, only one at a time, and saying who it is first. (Field notes. Interview with an operator. November 2020)

In this passage, it is easy to understand how the adolescent vitality of Lorenzo and his friends is not read as the expression of the incompressible need for sociality that characterises this phase of life, but

rather as an eminently transgressive phenomenon that must be sanctioned and regimented. It is not considered, in other words, that the emotional support provided by friendship networks is a valuable resource for identity recognition and the production of meaning, especially at an early age (Bagnasco, 1999; Bellotti, 2008). Even more for young foreigners among whom relational poverty is a particularly widespread phenomenon, especially among those who arrived in Italy when they were not young or who have been there for a brief time (Cvajner, 2015).

Moreover, the organizational devices regulating reception do not allow the manifestation within the perimeter of the structures of the times of free sociality. Let alone issues of intimacy.

In this regard, I happen to witness a discussion between the coordinator of the centre where I carry out my observation work and Lucky, a Nigerian boy, housed in a flat which was part and parcel of a *CAS diffuso*. The discussion is about the right to intimacy. Or, rather, on the fact that he would have liked to spend time with his wife (a compatriot woman, and an asylum seeker) and their son, who were, however, guests in another reception facility. Since it was not possible to do this in his accommodation, Lucky used to spend his weekends away from the flat where he lived, going to his wife's apartment, or elsewhere. The issue at stake concerns the obligation to sign the presence sheet for the overnight stays; an obligation which, of course, being absent, he cannot respect. From the point of view of the organisations running the reception centre, the verification of actual presence is particularly important because, in most cases, payments from the Prefecture are based on the count of actual presences, according to the agreed daily price per person in the contractual conditions. In this regard, however, it should be borne in mind that, generally, no fee is due in case of the absence (e.g., for authorised absences, hospitalisations, etc.). Yet, by not accepting the contestation of absences, Lucky puts in tension two different rules. Because spending the weekend away from the flat is (also) a way for not contravening the ban on inviting people into the accommodation. However, observing this rule implies another violation of the rules, which is not getting in the apartment by ten 10 p.m. Still, observance of both rules involves a severe limitation of personal autonomy and, more specifically, implies a denial of his right to intimacy.

From this point of view, the rules governing asylum-seekers life in reception centres push control and disciplinary power into the folds of what is normally considered a private space-time, deploying effects on the intimate life of the persons in reception. That is, on a sphere removed from public gaze and control, in which all activities of social reproduction

should develop (Boano and Astolfo, 2020; Giudici and Boccagni, 2022). Because, as Young (1983) observes, the formal regulation of intimate relationships destroys their nature.

Nevertheless, the dislocation in “other places” of some specific times in the daily lives of asylum seekers also concerns specific cultural practices. One evening, around nineteen o'clock, I am in the office at the entrance of the reception centre, and I happen to see Oba, a Nigerian boy of about thirty. We are about five metres apart, separated only by half an inch of glass, but he seems to be looking far beyond me. He has placed a table on the ground, resting it on one side as if to circumscribe a symbolic space within a larger, and undefined, space of passage (the atrium of the reception facility), and when he begins to bend on his knees and then to stand up uttering some words in Arabic, it becomes clear that he is praying. The practice of prayer punctuates the daily time of Muslim worshippers and by virtue of its bodily dimension, it makes possible forms of symbolic, cultural, and sensory continuity with the daily experience prior to migration. Through prayer, memories, and recollections of the country of origin are activated, comfort is felt, and meaning is given to everyday life (Beneduce, 2007; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh, 2010).

Whether one considers it a ritual practice, part of a structured religious belief, or an act of identity affirmation, or, alternatively, a social practice representative of a lifestyle, prayer is a channel of value expression (Premazzi and Ricucci, 2020). Moreover, prayer is also configured as a way of coping with the discomfort and condition of alienation that can be generated during migration processes.

But the context in which the religious practice takes shape is also important. In the case in point, the time of prayer is manifested in a space of passage. A space of transit, definitely unsuitable for prayer. Oba's choice to perform evening prayer time in the atrium of the facility, instead of the room he shares with three other people (also Muslims), as he was used to do, configures a transposition into public space (visible to all) of a practice that usually takes shape in a context occluded from the public gaze. While not manifesting itself in forms of conflict or protest, Oba's decision reveals the existence of a field of tension between what can be seen and what must remain behind the scenes. By deciding, therefore, to place the prayer time in the lobby, he breaks the pattern orienting the understanding of the situation, revealing the existence as well of a 'foreground' and a 'backstage'.

The backstage is the space in which the vital secrets of the staging of a performance become visible: when they are in this area, the actors

abandon their roles, and the stage mechanisms animating the performance are visible from here. It is therefore natural that the transition from the foreground to the backstage remains inaccessible to the audience, and that the backstage is kept completely hidden (Goffman, 1969). In the present case, however, we witness a passage that goes in the opposite direction. That is, the transition of Islamic religious practice from the backstage (the room where Oba is staying) to the foreground (the atrium). It is important to specify that Muslims' prayer time, in the reception facility considered here, is certainly not opposed. In the six months or so that I carried out my ethnographic observation work, I never witnessed any demonstrations of intolerance on the part of the operators working there, much less related to the sphere of religion. However, according to the unwritten rules structuring the modalities of coexistence in this shelter, religious activity seemed to be configured as a purely individual time, that is, enclosed where the public gaze could not reach; almost as if it were not entirely in line with the secular standards socially shared in that context. In reality, the architecture of the structure seems to tell a different story. The building in which the reception centre is found was formerly a convent. Traces of this intended use can be found in its architectural conformation. Of the three bodies forming the building, the central one is, in fact, occupied by a large consecrated chapel, which was accessible, at least until the outbreak of the pandemic, both by Christians guests feeling the desire to pray during the day, and for the celebration of collective services (such as Christmas Mass) open to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The architecture of the reception structure, therefore, reproduces on a spatial and material level the importance and centrality of the Christian religious rite for those who inhabit that space. Above all, it operates as a device that, on the one hand, places a specific time of life (prayer) in a precise spatial, but also cultural and historical context; on the other, it classifies and, indirectly, hierarchises those who adhere to this type of cultural and value representation (the Christians) and those who, for different reasons, such as adherence to a different religious denomination, do not conform to it (in this case, the Muslims). The former enjoys public recognition inscribed in the very architecture of the centre, while for the latter, the time of religious practice is concealed and adapted to inadequate, often ephemeral, and interstitial spaces.

Along these lines, a sort of imaginary encounter seems to happen between Clapham and Said, where the former brings into play the idea of *affordance*, understood as a reflection on the possibilities (and "impossibilities") that the built environment opens up to human use (Clapham, 2011: 366), while the latter, defining the concept of

Orientalism, states that every "oriental thing" must be placed in a classroom, a courtroom, a prison or a manual to analyse, study, judge or govern the Orient (Said, 2002). In this sense, the materiality of reception spaces contributes to regimenting and hierarchising the lifetimes of asylum seekers, dislocating them in specific perimeters or simply placing them elsewhere, in spaces outside the reception, impermanent, or inadequate. Thus, contributing to distinguishing even in the temporal sphere "what is Oriental" from the rest of society.

5. (UN)CONCLUSIVE REFLECTIONS: IS IT POSSIBLE TO THINK ABOUT A CONDITION OF SCHIZOCHRONICITY?

As I have tried to show in the previous pages, the temporal experiences of asylum seekers inhabiting the reception system turn out to be extremely complex. On the one hand, they are ceaselessly permeated by the power dynamics running through the relationship between asylum-seekers and institutions; on the other, they represent a highly relevant issue, contributing to the concrete definition of asylum seekers' horizons of expectations and possibilities, and drawing a picture marked by multiple limitations and forms of temporal closure.

The classifying and dispositional power of the institution, which operates through the management of reception facilities, acts on the temporalities experienced by asylum seekers, configuring a performative type of action, which produces the subject in reception, defining its greater/lower conformity with respect to the models implicitly 'envisaged' by the institutions. In this perspective, for example, the reception system 'minorising' the asylum seeker, enacts a pedagogical action that prepares him/her to enter the host society (Vacchiano, 2011) and operates a sort of optical illusion: «considering oneself as an educator to a group educated of adults (...); of looking at those not like ourselves as "diminished adults"; as protection from the totalizing logic of the institution (if those who are retained are ragazzi, then it is less distressing to witness their life suspension)» (Zavaroni et al. , 2021: 12).

However, it is the layering of frictions on temporalities that defines the scenario in which asylum seekers' sense of possibility (or impossibility) takes shape. Thus, the asylum-seekers attempts to inhabit the reception system within the meshes of the regulations regimenting their everyday life, a "hierarchised" temporal experience matures, opening up to questions about the possibility that the time spent in reception centres favours the development of subaltern *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1998).

In this framework, rather than drawing some conclusive reflections, I think it is necessary to try to elaborate a conceptual proposal contributing to the development of a greater attention on the phenomenon of temporalities experienced by asylum seekers.

That is to say, there is a possibility of identifying a construct allowing us to define the complexity of a temporal experience combining dynamics of dispossession and temporal fragmentation. Starting from the idea of the subject's splitting from his own time, it appears a condition that, I deem, can be expressed through the term “schizochronicity”. A condition which, however, does not refer exclusively to the dynamics of minorisation, “subalternisation”, and temporal fragmentation produced by a heteronomous time, but also includes the rupture/extension of transitions towards adulthood which, as we have seen, in many cases, are overlapping with the migratory path.

In this perspective, if migration, can be read as a rite of passage towards adulthood, the experience of spending an indefinite time in the reception system indefinitely prolongs the fulfilment of this passage and, through the imposition of a phase of *schizochronicity*, makes open ended the phase of liminality (Van Gennep, 1981) while ideas, and imagined futures of a geographical, and social mobility drift afar like remote dreams (Kallio et al., 2021).

If, therefore, the experience of time is lived and recreated since social position and subjective experiences, it not only matures in a relational context, but it is constituted within the framework of structural inequality dynamics that are produced over time.

Thus, “temporal border” is inscribed in people's biography, producing 'delayed' lives, and making the idea of the future – or rather of the possibility - imagined, or dreamt of, increasingly intangible. A picture that opens up critical questions on the dynamics of self-construction of migrants in the reception system, for whom waiting and subalternity become frames encompassing the entire life experience; but, above all, a picture revealing the emergence of forms of “slow violence”, which are expressed in attrition processes and frictional augmentative dynamics taking shape over wide chronological arcs (Nixon, 2011) and posing challenges regarding both the field of analysis and those of narration and representation.

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