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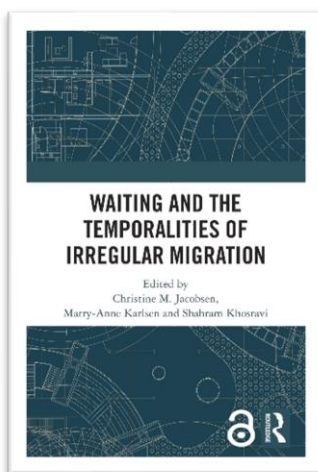
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(editors)

**WAITING AND THE TEMPORALITIES OF IRREGULAR  
MIGRATION**

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di *Andrea Calabretta\**

Among the general tendencies characterizing the current *age of migration*, it is possible to highlight both the complexification of migration flows and migration's increasing politicization (Castles, de Haas, Miller, 2013: 16), which has led to a growth of symbolic and material barriers set to counter the more and more numerous and composite migratory paths. In this frame, migration becomes less foreseeable in its outcomes and temporalities, unfolding new configurations of temporal rupture, waiting, and change of rhythm. Based on these premises, *Waiting and the Temporalities of Irregular Migration* embarks on the project of developing «more



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conceptually robust approaches to time and temporalities» (p. 1) within migration studies and so of overcoming their longstanding spatial bias. By focusing on irregular migration and by thinking about time (and waiting) not only as a social phenomenon but as an analytical perspective, the authors aim at opening new paths for the comprehension of how «different forms of waiting are shaped by multiple temporalities in migration process and control» (p. 7).

The need to scrutinize more in-depth the temporalities at stake in the government and experience of migration seems an increasingly shared concern in migration studies (Baas and Yeoh, 2019; Tazzioli, 2018) that has already produced interesting impacts on a methodological plan (Robertson, 2015). The authors participate in this “temporal turn” (Hassan, 2010) of migration research by focusing precisely on the concept of *waiting*, which is explored in its multiple facets as both produced by and productive of the irregularisation of migration; as both a situational and existential experience; as both specific of irregular migration and observable in the overall process of precarisation; as both a future expectation and an endurance in the present; as both time “wasted” and time filled up by migrants. Hence, in the authors’ perspective, waiting becomes the key «to critically investigate the temporal hierarchies and relations that are embedded in various migration and border regimes, as well as technologies that connect and synchronize multiple temporalities and power relations» (p. 7).

This ambitious analytical proposal, expressed in particular in the Introduction of the volume, seems consistently supported by a rich empirical section organized along three contiguous lines of argument. The first part, “The multiple tempos of waiting”, focuses on the experience of waiting, on its changing paces and significations during migration and asylum application. Katerina Rozakou highlights how the acceleration of asylum procedure in Greece during the summer of 2015, while being «an act of defiance towards the EU migration/border regime» (p. 35), remained nevertheless characterized by diverse applications and was soon subsumed in the border regime’s mechanism. A critical view of institutional procedures’ acceleration can also be found in the contribution of Christine M. Jacobsen that analyses how migrants “recalibrate” their practices and orientations in relation to the temporal architectures of the reception system, managing, exploiting, and navigating waiting time. Thomas Hylland Eriksen presents a study on the use of smartphones by migrants that - yet not overcoming the structural burdens and temporal instabilities of their condition - «represents an antidote to the empty time of waiting» (p. 60), allowing location, networking, and micro-coordination.

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The second part of the volume, “The social relations of waiting”, leaves aside the analysis of how migrants fill and signify waiting, focusing instead on how the experience of waiting and the socio-institutional frameworks of its production impact migrants’ everyday experience and their orientation towards others and future. For instance, Kari Ann Drangsdal presents the story of Mo – an Afghan man waiting for asylum in Germany – as a way of «opening the lens of waiting to temporal heterogeneity and relationality» (p. 90) and so of challenging superficial and normative readings of migrants’ temporalities which reiterate optics of “future integration” in the nation. The discrepancy between migration regimes’ temporal structures and migrants’ expectations also emerges in the contribution of Johannes Machinya. It deals with the fear of deportability of undocumented migrants in South Africa, a condition of “temporal uncertainty” that «adversely affects their everyday lives» (p. 109). In the chapter written by Marry-Anne Karlsen the impossibility for undocumented migrants of projecting themselves in the future fuels a resignification of their present «where the emphasis is on living through the present conditions rather than moving forward» (p. 118). In her study on undocumented migrants in Norway their temporalities seem therefore a complex intersection of endurance in the present and residual hope – or “cruel optimism” – towards the future. This section of the volume is complemented by a contribution of B Camminga that focuses on how migrants navigate conditions of temporal “stuckedness” by presenting the case of LGBTI asylum seekers in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. In this experience, the empty time of the camp is restructured by the launch of an online campaign centred on the very condition of waiting to which LGBTI asylum seekers are subject.

The third and last section of the volume, “Legal temporalities and waiting”, relates to the legal production of temporal uncertainty and waiting for migrants. Sabrine Musso discusses in her contribution how young migrants’ age is assessed in France to classify them as unaccompanied minors or ordinary migrants. In this context, the – often arbitrary – assessment of age bears important consequences on the subsequent migratory path, nurturing unexpected hopes to be considered as “a child” instead of “an adult”. Jessica Schultz observes how legislative innovations produce uncertain temporalities by analysing the reforms of asylum procedures introduced in European countries since 2015. In Norway these reforms have enhanced the possibility of withdrawing the refugee status, prolonging «insecurity for a potentially indefinite period» (p. 180). Nicholas De Genova closes this third section by developing some reflections on irregular migrants’ “detainability”, which is used as a form of

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disciplinary power with impacts on their temporal horizon: «waiting for a punishment that may or may not ever come to pass serves to condition the scope of illegalized migrants' subjectivity and imposes a grim horizon upon their relative freedom of action» (p. 193).

By combining these three lines of argumentation, the volume seems to achieve the objective of providing a comprehensive picture of migrants' temporalities, delving into the interplay between institutional temporal structures and migrants' resistances and resignifications of waiting. The choice to focus only on irregular migration bears clear heuristic advantages. In fact, undocumented migrants appear deeply subjected to institutional decisions and rhythms, while often being at the first stages of their "migratory career" where the pace of regularisation and settlement is intertwined with the temporalities of the migration journey. As Shahram Khosravi writes in the "Afterword": «the consequences of waiting are different depending on the forms of vulnerabilities of those who wait» (p. 202). Hence, the choice to focus on a migrant population particularly vulnerable has allowed observing the complex relations between time and power in migration.

The book's value lies in the presentation of cross-cutting insights on the multiple temporalities of migration. Firstly, time (and its management) is recognized as a field of power exercise. Hence, by analysing migrants' temporalities, it seems possible to understand the power relations in which they are entangled and the nature of the migratory regime itself. Secondly, time management seems to be torn between the imposition of an unproductive and empty time on migrants and their attempts to redefine and fill their present. Understanding the outcomes of these drives enlightens the functioning of the migration regime and the position of migrants in it. Finally, another pivotal dimension of analysis is that of the intertwining between time and space. In fact, without contrasting or trivializing the relations between the two terms, studying how immobility and movement in time and space are configured in migrants' experience seems to offer important elements for understanding their trajectories.

If there are any limitations to the work, they may lie in the formalization of these lines of analysis. Indeed, the ambition to develop «more conceptually robust approaches» (p.1) does not seem to have been brought to its final outcome, as evidenced by limited reference to general social theory dealing with time and the absence of a concluding chapter linking the various lines of argumentation. The risk, as is often the case with migration studies (Hollifield, 2020), seems to lie in undermining the formalization of the study, opening the possibility for a reiteration of similar analysis rather than of applying and generalizing the volume findings.

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In conclusion, *Waiting and the Temporalities of Irregular Migration* stands as a solid and influential work in current migration studies. However, to fully realize its potential there is still some work to be done, both in terms of theoretical elaboration and in terms of openness to new applications. In this sense it seems necessary to extend the volume's reflections to areas of study different from irregular migration but equally characterized by complex and contested temporalities, thus overcoming any residual risk of reiterating exceptionalist readings of migration.

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