Waiting, Daily Life, and Subjectivity in a Transmigrant Population on the Southern Border of Mexico

Espera, vida cotidiana y subjetividad en población transmigrante en la frontera sur de México

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ABSTRACT

This text focuses on the subjective constructions that people (transmigrants) develop in the city of Tapachula, Chiapas on their way to the United States. A qualitative content analysis is carried out based on in-depth semi-structured interviews to understand the ways in which individuals relate to social structures and try to subvert or transform them through strategies that allow them to cope with the waiting situation. Standby. Immobility within human mobility and how new subjectivities are woven into it represents the trait of originality of this article. It is concluded that the structural marginalization to which transmigrants are endured can be overcome through actions that, despite their innocuous appearance, have considerable symbolic potential to destabilize hegemonic discourses that strengthen a separation between ways of existing, conceptions and ways of proceeding in the world.

Keywords: 1. identity, 2. transmigration, 3. patience, 4. Tapachula, 5. Guatemala-Mexico.

RESUMEN

El artículo se centra en las construcciones subjetivas que las personas (transmigrantes) desarrollan en la ciudad de Tapachula, Chiapas, en su tránsito hacia Estados Unidos. Se realiza un análisis de contenido cualitativo a partir de entrevistas semiestructuradas a profundidad para comprender las formas en que los individuos se relacionan con las estructuras sociales e intentan subvertirlas o transformarlas por medio de estrategias que les permiten sobrellevar la situación de espera. La inmovilidad dentro de la movilidad humana y cómo en ella se tejen nuevas subjetividades representa el rasgo de originalidad de este artículo. Se concluye que la marginación estructural a la que son sometidas las personas transmigrantes puede superarse por medio de acciones que, a pesar de su apariencia inocua, cuentan con un potencial simbólico considerable para desestabilizar los discursos hegemónicos que establecen una separación entre formas de existir, concepciones y maneras de proceder en el mundo.

Palabras clave: 1. identidad, 2. transmigración, 3. paciencia, 4. Tapachula, 5. Guatemala-México.

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INTRODUCTION[2]

People in mobility are constituted as subjects in the heat of legal-political tensions with the authorities of the territories through which they cross, and in this constitution the conflicts of global capitalism play an important role (Cordero Díaz et al., 2017) as well as the transnational practices in which migrants participate, which are seen as a process of formation of more than one nation in which the established structures of the different nations with which they keep contact are disrupted and transformed (Coraza de los Santos, 2014).

The practices and contradictions within the "world-system" (Wallerstein, 2005, p. 40) have led to a planetary reorganization of societies. Such restructuring must be seen beyond a verticalist view, whether governmental or entrepreneurial, and reveal the background: the new forms of resistance that alongside the hegemonic rearticulation, configure new languages, practices, spaces, and forms of disobedience that seek to build an existence as it may be possible, moves away from the rules and logics of capital as a primary condition for the creation of a horizon of possibility.

The emergence of this horizon implies unveiling the tension existing in border territories between state nationalism and popular imagination (Grimson, 2000). It also invites us to look beyond the dichotomous analysis of the political-ideological by including solidarity in the construction of territorialities, a field in which friendship or couple relationships can be included (Coraza de los Santos, 2014). It is about making the leap to the conformation of a transnational identity that fights against the discrimination produced by that human invention called citizenship (Chomsky, 2014), which establishes a legal order that obliges people to remain within the political unit of birth, turning their presence illegal outside of it if not carried out through the channels established in the norm.

Migration can be conceived as an act of disobedience to the "global regime of borders" (Varela Huerta, 2019, p. 101). However, framing human mobility only in the economic sphere prevents us from observing a broader spectrum of what mobility represents. The focus on the economic perspective can also lead to the non-recognition of other elements that generate mobility, such as threats, different types of violence, political disagreements or traveling in solidarity with a family member or friend. But not only this, the economic approach limits the analysis to the recognition of only one type of border: the political-administrative one. As a result, dynamics, logics and tensions that develop beyond economic action are overlooked.

The practices, dynamics, relationships, and above all, the meanings constructed by people in mobility will tend to the recognition of principles that affirm their condition of humanity, which does not refer only to a legal situation or to a state ascription. Paraphrasing Melucci (2002) it can be affirmed that with their presence, these people seek to alter the dominant logic in the symbolic

field: they intend to question the definition of codes, the reading of *reality*. Through their existence they offer other ways of defining the meaning of individual and collective action.

They act as a means of communication by enlightening what the system hides from itself: its level of silence, violence, and irrationality veiled in the dominant codes. Migrants announce to society that something else is possible, a world where otherness does not imply discrimination or hierarchies; their displacement is an expression of struggle (De Sousa Santos, 2014), a struggle that is waged day by day in the field of everyday human relations, where spaces of "constitutive conflictivity" (Gandarilla, 2012, p. 197) are taking shape.

Everyday action can be considered as political by virtue of the challenge it represents to the main normative values of a society, in which a person of different origin is inserted. The everyday reveals the critical and political dimension of actions that by their nature are considered harmless in normalized contexts, but which acquire relevance in differentiated environments (global, regional, national, local, and personal). They reveal tensions, negotiations and struggles that tend to demand respect for human rights as a condition for a better life.

We start from a basic statement: the daily action of people in waiting situations parallel to other civilizing challenges, such as feminism and climate change, contributes to the destabilization of the *meta-narratives* of modernity that tend to make migrants invisible. This type of commonplace work has a fracturing capacity that is evident in the spaces of daily coexistence. Therefore, the objective is to understand the way in which migrants' subjectivity is transformed through daily actions, practices and discourses that take place in a situation of waiting, which temporarily interrupts their displacement.

The following work is structured through a combination of emotions expressed through human suffering, pain, frustration, impotence, rage and resignation, which are combined with hope, desire, courage, will, imagination, joy, yearning, and expectations for the future of the people who day by day swell the ranks of the multicultural group on the southern border and who carry out a nomadic struggle that does not surrender to forms of legal, socio-political, and economic organization that seek to encapsulate their existence.

The paper is structured in six sections: the first is a brief methodological note; the second section presents the theoretical frame of reference that will frame the analysis; the third section focuses on a brief description of the dynamics in Tapachula; the fourth section presents the accumulation of elements that influence the construction of the social experience of waiting; the fifth section focuses on the relationship between work and subjectivity as a formula that allows the opening of horizons of possibility; the sixth and last section is devoted to final reflections.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

Waiting situations are not only a lesson for those who suffer from them, but also for those who carry out their study. While dealing with people in this situation, it was necessary to develop a way of approaching the subject that tended to move away from the usual extractivist practice of the researcher who arrives, interviews and leaves. In this case, it was necessary to recover the aspect

of bonding with the other, for which it was necessary to learn about their concerns, to talk with people on many occasions, to share experiences, spaces, time, anguish and even food. It was necessary to wait until the migrants were confident enough to share their experiences in this process of building their life projects. This type of interaction with the participants was chosen in response to the fact that it was necessary to demonstrate the following: What do these people represent for the researcher? Why is what they experience important? How can we establish a research method that allows us to appreciate these people more than just as a simple object of study? Basically, the aim was to stop hiding the affective aspect in the research process.

To achieve this objective, in-depth interviews were conducted with 25 transmigrants[3] of different nationalities: three Salvadorans, four Hondurans, nine Haitians, five Nicaraguans, two Cubans and two Venezuelans. The interviews followed a semi-structured script, based on the following thematic axes built according to the research objective: 1) waiting time, 2) labor activity, 3) social ties, 4) migratory experience, and 5) survival strategies. The people had to comply with the following characteristics: have at least three months of residence in the city of Tapachula, have completed the regularization process and continue with it before the Mexican Commission of Aid to Refugees (COMAR), have an economic activity in the formal or informal sector, and have a place to stay other than the shelters that host the migrant population in the city.

In addition to the interviews, the study included a participatory observation at the three COMAR offices where the different stages of the regularization process are carried out, as well as at the facilities of the National Institute of Migration (Instituto Nacional de Migración [INM]). The study also included informal talks held outside the government agencies, as well as around the San Juan and Sebastián Escobar markets and in the Miguel Hidalgo and Bicentenario parks.

Theoretical Elements of Interpretation

On the subject of mobility—specifically that of transmigrants—one of its elements becomes relevant: immobility. Paradoxical as it may seem, the phenomenon of the displacement of people brings with it stages in which either by obligation or by choice, it is necessary to stop, to pause. This suspension of human displacement or waiting situation has become a key issue for the social sciences, by virtue of the consequences that this circumstance produces in the existence of human beings, either because it inhibits their capacity to respond; because it exalts the imagination, the main constituent element of modern subjectivity (Appadurai, 2013); because it affects the daily

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[3] Transmigrant is any person who enters Mexico during transit to a third country. A refugee is a person who is outside his or her country of origin for fear of persecution, conflict, generalized violence or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, consequently, require international protection. For the case study, it could be observed that transmigrants sought refugee status as a strategy to continue their journey, since accessing the procedure before the COMAR allowed them to obtain the Unique Population Registry Code (Clave Única de Registro de Población), which is essential for the National Institute of Migration (INM) to issue the visitor's card for humanitarian reasons.

practices and actions that are carried out, or because it links everyday life with broad processes of power (Wurtz, 2019).

This combination of waiting and subjectivity is relevant to have an analytical framework that makes it possible to understand the way in which people assume the situation of waiting, and how it shapes a specific type of subjectivity throughout their stay in order to be able to question the present sociopolitical, economic and cultural structures. It is in the exercise of politicization of everyday life that a challenge to the systems of domination expressed at the micro level can be observed. This affront opens the possibility of disputing the legitimacy of governmental measures.

The output regarding waiting highlights different characteristics of this situation. Carenzo (2010) stresses the fact that this phenomenon is *culturally shaped* and is expressed in the creation of a particular time management. The time factor is supported by other studies that point to the existence of a temporality of waiting "based on the reciprocal relationship between imaginings of the future and the experience of waiting in the present" (Stasik et al., 2020, p. 2). A temporality of waiting forces a dialogue between the distant future and the essentially ordinary activities of the present. As people wait for imagined futures and dramatic events on the distant horizon, they act in ways that have unexpected consequences.

The characteristics and possible divergences of waiting combine doubt, disillusionment, and hope with long-term plans, forced stagnation and emergent change (Stasik et al., 2020). As a consequence of this waiting, people can build or consolidate interpersonal relationships that will lay the foundation for their understanding of the present and the future, a fact that will enable the creation of alternative paths by actively tempting fate through social and political action. Hence, waiting goes from being considered as a waste of time or blockage of action (Gasparini, 1995) to a situation where people show their dynamism by using their creativity to build new ways of being and interacting with the host society (Grabska, 2020). The restrictions to mobility imposed by power structures generate "everyday micropolitics of waiting" (Oldfield & Greyling, 2015, p. 1101) as a collateral effect, which are collectively forged forms of collaboration and exchange that can unlock future opportunities to access scarce resources by interpellating the prevailing legal-political order.

The practices that are developed daily build different levels of sociability. They express different forms of time and time management; they are efforts of self-determination that are defined as forms of agency that can be conceptualized as "Time Work" (Flaherty, 2002, p. 380). As a product of this working time, people can construct their own circumstances, since—contrary to considering themselves as individuals at the mercy of external forces—they can exercise measures of self-determination that shape the passage of time through the "micro-management of temporal experience" (Flaherty, 2002, p. 380).

As Debele (2020) points out, waiting as a temporary premise, both subjugates and gives rise to subjected individuals who are situated and constituted by practices considered as resistance to that which oppresses them and gives meaning to their situation. Consequently, any process of waiting does not exist outside the historical forms of interaction and global economy that underlie every

type of human relationship and subject formation. Waiting is considered as a field on which people carry out reflexive and modeling exercises of their new emerging experiences, that at the same time create different types of subjectivities. The process of construction of the latter is influenced by a "temporary anguish" as an emotional experience of the political subjects in the making (Debele, 2020, p. 57).

Encouraging exchange and reciprocity in waiting provides a *sense of belonging*, increases individual opportunities for progress, and creates spaces for shared political and economic practice (Ibrahim & Bize, 2018). The experience of people being forced into long periods of immobility— whether through *structural marginalization*, political oppression, or forced displacement—can ultimately also lead to protests and other forms of direct political action (Stasik et al., 2020). Subjectivities constituted in this temporality aim to mitigate *temporal distress* by narrating their lives from the standpoint of what it means to hope. Memories serve as *reservoirs of hope* for the future and solace for the present as they wait. This exercise is critical to overcoming temporal distress as it offers insight into the storing of past histories (Debele, 2020).

After their incursion into a territory, waiting leaves the subject under the will of the State, which makes the person's destiny available to them. This makes waiting a *scenario of confrontation* with the State bureaucracy and the administrative obstacles related to it (Auyero, 2016). At the same time this shapes personality, consciousness, emotions, and experiences, as well as methods of struggle that represent incentives for transformation and mobilization towards social change. People can be shaped by the dispositions of governments; however, through their actions, ideas, and images they reshape those same states and the international system as a whole (McEvoy-Levy, 2014). Waiting, in addition to creative attributes, possesses a transformative dimension (Akinyoade & Juius-Adeoye, 2017).

In situations of waiting, two elements become particularly relevant when constructing subjectivities: the notions of transition and path. The former focuses the analysis on temporality and sequence rather than direction. Transition implies directionality, transformation and generating community through a framework of shared experiences and expectations; it is literally *crossing* from one condition to another (Carling, 2015). On the other hand, the pathway suggests the existence of a multiplicity of options to choose from. However, it will be the interaction between the social and the individual level that influences the choice; thus, there will be a greater proclivity for routes that have been previously traveled by others.

Social change rests on the exploitation of paths that were traced in advance, suggesting that the *paths repertoire* is socially constructed and individually maintained (Carling, 2015). Previous experiences leave socially significant traces that allow opening the range of opportunities to have choices. This process is not exempt from negotiations, frictions, disappointments, and successes; on the contrary, it is the combination of all this that makes it possible for the panorama of pathways to be dynamic and responsive to changing contexts.

Suffering represents a consubstantial component of waiting. It can lead to perplexity, but it also makes it possible to generate transcendent political questions and demands to understand what is

happening and why. Border waiting generates *sleeplessness and vigilance*, it involves being expectant to any type of event that tends to diminish it and requires thinking permanently about the situation the person is going through (Khosravi, 2021). It also demands constant updating administrative procedures, institutions, legal instruments and conventions, collection of documents, generation of new resources, renewal of networks and, at the same time, being alert to the events of the environment and to a possible deportation. Waiting is constituted in and through "multiple and relational temporalities" (Khosravi, 2021, p. 203).

What keeps the person awake in a situation of long waiting is not measuring "chronological time, chronos, but pursuing moments of potential openness, *Kairos*" (Khosravi, 2021, pp. 205-206). It is the constant interaction between the now and the not-yet-realized future that generates hopeful visions and practices; embodied even as reverie, these practices are agentive. As may be evident, waiting is both a process and a practice; it is a never-ending struggle to resist and demand the right to participate; it oscillates between activity and passivity, and between patience and impatience (Dobler, 2020). Those who wait may do so in competition with others, or sharing the same situation may be the germ of a critique of the prevailing social structure and a basis for social action.

The City of Tapachula

One way of locating the phenomenon to be analyzed is through the recognition of the historical conformation of the southern region of Mexico, which persists in the millenary experience of the population that integrates it (Fábregas Puig, 1990). A multiplicity of regions, languages, cultures, traditions, ways of social organization and economic production, different levels of education, and varied forms of territorial consolidation coexist and interact. It is in this scenario where the dynamics of mobility are found and, within this, migration in Tapachula. Transnationalism in this border city in the state of Chiapas (Martínez Velasco, 2012) is a new expression of the way in which this space has been constructed. This last fact is added to the features grounded in "historical, cultural, family, and social and economic relationships that date from pre-Hispanic to colonial and independence times and are still present today" (Coraza de los Santos, 2018, p. 29).

As a result, as Coraza de los Santos (2018) points out, the transnationalism experienced by Tapachula is not a recent fact but comes from a historicity of cross-border mobility and forced and unforced migration, which drew the profile of this city over the centuries. In this space, the norms of modernity unfold and interact with each other, and everyday actions and discourses are developed, expressed by people who imagine a better life through their daily actions. This type of interaction can produce a broader community agenda for collective empowerment by building a vision of the future with less uncertainty.

The lives of people in Tapachula are often crossed by situations in which they must or want to wait. The first circumstance is a product of governmental dispositions; the second shows their capacity for agency. Recovering time management allows people to organize their thoughts,

strategies, and ways of action to become active participants in the arduous process of waiting that they experience in the city.

Tapachula has been conceived as a transit point (Anguiano Téllez, 2008), a temporary stay and destination with diverse migratory profiles depending on nationality, age, and migratory status (Organización Internacional para las Migraciones, 2021). The city has socially marginalized spaces (Álvarez Velasco, 2010) such as Miguel Hidalgo Park, which also represents a site where an expanded transnationalism is manifested (Fernández Casanueva, 2012) "where institutionalized, regular and constant exchanges are not a precondition for the existence of involvements beyond the nation-State" (Fernández Casanueva, 2012, p. 141).

Recently, the city has been considered a prison both by people whose objective is to get to the United States and who find it impossible to do so, as well as by the representatives of civil society (Mendoza, 2021). This way of characterizing the city considers the dynamics that are evident to the eyes of any visitor in this part of Chiapas. However, there are perspectives that point in the opposite direction, recognizing that in adverse contexts such as those experienced in this city, certain dynamics can develop allowing migrants "an accommodation in the margins, in the non-place, in the non-dwelling" (Porraz Gómez, 2020, p. 124).

To show the magnitude of the problem experienced in the city of Tapachula, only some data provided by COMAR during the last three years is considered. Between 2020 and July 2022, the delegation with the most refugee requests made was the one located in the city of Tapachula. In 2020, 17 146 cases were received, which included 26 507 people. The following year, the number increased to 48 849 cases, which included 89 592 migrants; in 2022, during the first seven months, 27 057 requests were submitted for a total of 44 780 people (COMAR, 2022). The above data shows the difficult circumstances, both for authorities and applicants, in the timely processing of applications and the consequent lengthening of the waiting time in Tapachula (also known as the Pearl of the Soconusco). Usually, a person must wait between one and seven months to get an administrative resolution—whether favorable or adverse—from the authority. This involves securing resources for lodging, food, health, transportation expenses, payment of services, among others, which exacerbate their precarious condition.

The current context places the containment of the migratory phenomenon as a priority, for what has been constituted as the global north[4] and as a requirement for the governments of the south of the world. The interruption of human mobility as a consequence of a deteriorating economic scenario, as well as a sanitary circumstance intensified by the SARS COV-2 virus, worsened the waiting of people in Tapachula, a situation understood as a process in which life projects are

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[4] For example, since 1964 the next U.S. administrations conceived undocumented migration as illegal, and, in this sense, as a threat to both national and public security, it suppresses salaries, overloads public resources and, exposes migrants to exploitation and abuse. Similarly, it is argued that it undermined the rule of law by reducing the faith of the citizens in the government's capacity to enforce the law. In contrast, well-managed legal migration backed up the national economic competitiveness and promoted financial success and the assimilation of the new arrivals.

temporarily suspended by different circumstances, among them governmental policies that pursue the administration of displacements as a means for the management of the labor market and as a mechanism that raises its competitiveness against its geopolitical adversaries.

Analyzing the waiting situation of people displaced to the northern part of the western hemisphere is useful to understand how these human beings move from a situation in which their social and symbolic capital seems suspended, to another where waiting becomes enriching because it allows the potential that mobilities hold in order to tense, challenge, and transform socio-political and legal structures to unfold (Coraza de los Santos, 2020). Thus, it entails learning about stoicism, persistence, perseverance, and patience, but also about boredom, apathy, the passing of time and, most importantly, understanding the ways in which people relate to social structures, how they try to subvert or transform them, how they develop strategies and forms of solidarity that allow them to live and cope with waiting (Jasso, 2021). It will be necessary to evidence buried discourses that reveal the special meaning regarding the waiting temporalities of migrant mobility and its generative and transformative potentials in the constitution of subjects. By doing so, it will be possible to glimpse how waiting can be the basis for future social change (Janeja & Bandak, 2018).

Experiences that Nurture the Temporality of Waiting

In the city of Tapachula, there are underground dynamics that can be called daily micro-practices of waiting (Oldfield & Greyling, 2015). These decisions are carried out by people who have found in the situation of waiting not only an obstacle to the fulfillment of their desires and life projects, but also an opportunity to rethink their existence, a strategy to achieve their goals, a means to build autonomy, a tactic to escape the institutionally established dynamics, as well as a mechanism of disobedience and resistance to the established order.

Because of these ways of acting in this space, a future orientation can be constructed (Dobler, 2020) directing people away from the lines of strict survival in which those who are economically dependent on a third party find themselves. The temporality of waiting (Stasik et al., 2020) that empowers these notions is drawn from different sources. One of them comes both from the social relations prior to leaving the territory of origin and from those constructed during the course of the journey. The purpose of recovering the contexts in which human existence took place is to indicate how imaginaries are shaped in the heat of the different scenarios of confrontation (Auyero, 2016) that must be overcome. This will act as a modeling instrument of the social and cultural universe of people in different temporalities, situations, and territorialities (Cangià & Zittoun, 2020).

The testimonies reveal how human beings experience transitional and transformative passages through multiple and relational temporalities (Khosravi, 2021).

> Everything changes [...] not all trips are the same. They are different because everything changes, you must be aware of everything. That's why you always have to be informed, look for someone, look for friends who are doing the same thing as you, well, mostly information, to guide other kids; maybe also to help them so they don't go through the same thing, to guide them and maybe make it easier for them, because the practice, the theory and the

practice are not the same. The difference is that you live it, and when you already have, it's not the same as when they tell you! (Arapey, personal communication, January 8, 2022).

When they arrive, well... they talk to people, they look around checking how to do something, that's also why they go around, before selling something, I go around looking, asking, "where can they sell that?", "and if they sell that, how much money will they earn, how will the thing be?", before they buy [...] they ask before, they talk to people to know what they can do, where they can find a job (Gussy, personal communication, November 14, 2021).

People begin to

develop their imagination in the exercise of their daily lives, this is evident in the way in which mediation and movement contextualize each other. As these people move, they carry with them the capacity to imagine and consider other ways of living (Appadurai, 2001, p. 9).

It is worth recalling, as Coraza de los Santos (2020) warns that "along with the mobility of people come objects, ideas, imaginaries and prejudices, as well as the perception of oneself and others, of one's place in the world and, therefore, the perception of identities, both individual and collective" (p. 134).

If you really think about it, it is not just making a decision, remember that we have a family, we have many things, we leave everything, well, to come to the unknown. Not anyone does that. So it is something to think about, to make that decision, to know what you are coming for, if you are going to sleep in the street, if you are not going to eat, if you are going to be assaulted, if you can be assaulted, there are many factors, many risks, but you are already aware, you make the decision when you come. There are even many who have died on the way and well, they don't come back, right? So, it is very painful, but that's how it is! (Anonymous, personal communication, Tapachula, 2021).

Another influential factor for the temporality of waiting is represented by episodes conceived as offenses to human dignity perpetrated systematically by the residents of Tapachula. In the national imaginary, the offenses and abuses committed by the authorities against people in mobility are conceived as the most significant in their experience of transit through Mexico; however, the systematicity of the offensive behavior of the civilian population has a decisive influence on the subjective constitution of migrants:

Well, we got here, um, we already had a rental where we were going to rent. Look, we arrived, they charged us 2 000 pesos for a room in very bad conditions, I mean a room as if it were a prison [...] it was an oven, it didn't even have a window, the bathroom was in very bad conditions to use it, very dirty, broken... we gave away 2 000 pesos (Capuchino, personal communication, December 19, 2021).

I got to a place too. I worked in a bar called Los Ejecutivos [...] there they paid me, bro, they paid me 150 pesos, from eleven in the morning until one am, I would leave until half past one in the morning, the next day, and sometimes I had to walk home, because sometimes the cab driver, you know that at night these cab drivers are shameless, because sometimes they

tell you: "look, it's 150 or 100 pesos", even if it is a few blocks or two blocks from where you live (Gaucho, personal communication, January 12, 2022).

People often complain about the mistreatment they receive from the residents; these grievances materialize in the deliberate raising of prices for clothing, food, and transportation; in the low wages and exhausting workdays to which they are subjected; in the strict terms of rental agreements; in the charging of illegal fees for receiving money and in the indifference to their situation of vulnerability. These types of behaviors are linked to the system of power established by the authority and produce an order that limits the possibilities of choice, organization, and action of individuals. This ordering culturally shapes waiting (Carenzo, 2010) and makes people enter a state of temporary distress (Debele, 2020).

> Sometimes I try to find a way to feel calm, not to think about anything, not to think about problems, but there are times when I try not to remember that, but when I remember I feel awful, I feel bad, and psychologically sometimes I feel, I feel a little bad, I feel bad, stressed, you know what I mean, stressed by everything! Sometimes I feel that even my head hurts, but I know that many people advise me: "but you don't have to do that, stop that, forget about it, get over it!"; but sometimes, even if you want to get over things, you know, as a human being you can't (Nepo, personal communication, February 9, 2022).

> I have my wife, she is pregnant. So, when she wakes me up in the morning, she must eat something, imagine that. Me, me too, I have to eat and, besides, I have my family back in Haiti, who are having a terrible time: my mom, my dad, my brothers, they are waiting for me to send them something. Do you know how I feel? My head is about to explode! (Cork, personal communication, January 21, 2022).

Anguish increases when it is mixed with the micromanagement of the temporal experience (Flaherty, 2002) which is crystallized in the uncertainty policies of governmental agencies. The actions of public officials, another component of the social experience of waiting, aims to keep control over people's time, to wear down their will to struggle and to have constant surveillance over spaces (Hänsch, 2020). State guidelines possess an element that can be categorized as strategic ambiguity. This characteristic allows prolonging the uncertainty of people in mobility, in addition to functioning as an escape valve for the institutional system.

One of these manifestations has an implicit racial component, that is, by means of differentiated dispositions (by virtue of nationality, language, culture, religion, ethnicity, class, or gender), mechanisms were established to manage the response to individuals. Thus, those who showed confrontational behavior and challenged authority—whether through protests, blockades, or unauthorized entry to government facilities—were subject to immediate exit mechanisms (special safe-conducts) as a way of separating the *good migrant*[5] from the *other*, the undesirable one who constantly defies it. This is the specific case of people from Senegal, Ghana, Cameroon, Ethiopia,

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[5] Rhetorical form to express that under a legalistic conception there are good and bad migrants. The good ones are those who follow the indications.

Bangladesh, and Haiti. With this method, "the authority established hierarchical power relations based on racial markers" (Olmos Alcaraz, 2020, p. 4) as a level of civilianization.

Continuous change, lack of precision and free interpretation of official indications are a constant. Modifications are sudden, and cause people to move from one point in the city to another in a matter of minutes. Even the alteration of the dispositions causes the transfer of individuals to distant points of Tapachula—such as Comitán, Tuxtla Gutiérrez or San Cristóbal de las Casas—in a matter of hours.

> migration has not been clear; at no time have they said "look, we are going to assist you here", because if they really wanted to, they would say, "look, gentlemen, we no longer have buses, but here is your paper, this is the bus number you are going to take, here you go, go ahead, here you go", even with the printed card, without the need to send us to... to places we do not know and do not know, yes, but since they enjoy doing this, oh, they enjoy this! They like to mess around! (Cornete, personal communication, December 22, 2021).

> now that they are giving us that document, but no, they do not follow that order; they do not give an official explanation either; they come and say two words, if you hear them you're lucky, and then the one in front says one thing, and the one behind says something else, and the information does not arrive as the man said it. So, [if] others were them, they could come with a loudspeaker, a speaker, and explain: "look, gentlemen, this and this is going to happen," what can I know? an official explanation, but they do not say anything, they do not say anything, not any institution; that is to say, there is no official statement (Carusito, personal communication, December 19, 2021).

The mixture and interaction of experiences during the journey, experiences in everyday life and interaction with authority will enable people in mobility to carry out the process of transformation from entities in temporary distress (Debele, 2020) to "active participants in their migratory processes, who receive, interpret and exchange information, design strategies in their relationships with other actors, as well as with institutions and organizations" (Rivas Castillo, 2011, p. 9).

Building Emancipatory Possibilities

The accumulation of social interactions and experiences will forge subjectivities, understood as ways of perception, thought, affection and desire that encourage people to act (Ortner, 2006). Over time, the crystallization of subjectivities can produce moments of potential openness (Khosravi, 2021) that disrupt and modify the social structures that provoke the waiting situation. The questioning of power orders involves patience as a temporary, collective, and political practice against institutional attacks (Hänsch, 2020).

> What happens in all countries: to get started, you have to be patient, you know what I mean? Like now I am selling something in the street, and people pass by and buy [sic], you know what I mean? You have to be positive anyway, you know what I mean? Do not think that it's easy, it is difficult; yes, life is difficult, but you have to start somehow. Once you start, I

believe that you can progress, you can advance further (Pico, personal communication, January 10, 2022).

[You must] try to take advantage of every opportunity, every little window of opportunity in which you can advance to take advantage of it, because here nothing is certain. COMAR exists today, tomorrow it may no longer exist, because they are organizations, um, this exists today, tomorrow it may no longer exist; [they may say] "ah, we are no longer going to provide this service, no more," in other words, this is how it is, you have to take advantage of every little window that may exist and see the possibility of moving forward (Pliminusve, personal communication, November 17, 2021).

The subjectivities that are forged in the city of Tapachula have an additional element that contributes to their transformation: work. The performance of an activity that allows people in transnational mobility to have a constant income, places them in a sort of *moratorium* in the face of—and in contrast to—a social framework plagued by temporal discourses that reflect social acceleration (Cuzzocrea, 2019). Paid labor makes the link between aspirations for the future and existing conditions of physical and economic immobility by changing the way the social world is inhabited and how one conceptualizes one's social role within it (Wurtz, 2019). Work generates the perception of stability, which was impeded by the situation of waiting.

When we talk about living it means that you have food in your house; you have what you need, you have a bed to sleep in, you have a job, right? Then you are already living, you have your job, you have your stability, you know what I mean? And if we talk about surviving, maybe we earn 200 to 300 pesos a day, that is surviving and that only covers you for the same day, that is, for the same day's food [...] because money now, everything is expensive. So, as I tell you now, we come to survive and not to live, the simple truth (Alceo, personal communication, January 10, 2022).

This is what I want, yes I want to live, I want work, work, yes I want to work; I want to eat, I want to help someone else who also has needs, many people need to work, they also want to work, they need help; if I work I help someone else; if I do not work I not help me or someone else (Ñato, personal communication, February 17, 2022).

The anguish produced by the urgency of moving to the north of the continent can be reduced—even controlled—by means of labor activity. The labor experiences in the formal labor market have left some disappointments due to the actions of the owners, managers, or people in charge of the businesses, either because of low salaries, unpunctuality or even the lack of payment for the services rendered. In addition, access to the formal labor market is legally closed to people with a migratory status not recognized by the State. This leads to the need to seek, in the informal sector, the way to generate conditions to continue with the interrupted life project. This possibility created by people gives them the opportunity to build perceptions, arguments, and languages challenging the existing order, such as respect for their humanity regardless of their legal origin.

Look how I am selling things on the street, in front of a square, do you understand me? If I did not have the right to sell that, I am going to believe that I am locked up, I mean, yes, I

have the right, do you understand me? I have the right like everyone else, even though I am not in my country, even though I am still without a document, do you understand me? I have the right, not to do bad things, but the right to do good things, to respect people, to respect the police, because I have rights, because I am a person, I do have rights! (Pompón, personal communication, January 25, 2022).

This leads to a "phenomenon that short-circuits theories that depend on the continuity of the nation-state as the fundamental arbiter of major social changes" (Appadurai, 2001, p. 7). People in mobility with their actions, outline spaces of disputes and symbolic negotiations in which their plans, objectives, interests, individual, family, or group aspirations coincide to a lesser extent with state guidelines. In them, imagination organizes the field of social practices; it is "a form of work both in the sense of performing a productive, transformative task and in the fact of being a culturally organized practice, and a form of negotiation between positions of agency and globally defined spectrums of possibilities" (Appadurai, 2001, p. 29).

For example, I always say: the help is always 30%; 70% is from your part, you should always have the base; if you don't have the base, the help is not very useful. If you help a person, a person who is asking for 100 pesos in the street, he is always asking! because what you give to that person is never enough! That's why he will always be begging. For example, I personally don't like to go around in the street begging, and to come here to do strange things to have money, no, I don't like it; I prefer to work or look for a place, to work and support my family (Sux, personal communication, January 7, 2022).

I had to say no; I'd better come here. Whether I sell something or not, I'm going to stay here. I am going to work hard. If I have something, if I am going to eat a loaf of bread, I am going to do it with my own effort. For that same reason I didn't go there in UNHCR, I didn't go to look for any help, I didn't receive anything, I didn't go, no, I didn't want any of that; I don't want, I don't want, I don't want anything to be given to me as a gift. As I was telling you, I like to do things myself, because they might help you, but you don't know for how long; you don't know [where] that pay comes from; I don't know, I don't know where that money comes from, I don't know who it was from, I don't know how they got that money. I don't want any of that! (Zapi, personal communication, January 24, 2022).

Similarly, the search for a reconfiguration of human relations of all kinds (cultural, religious, affective) is what challenges the notion of a linearly delimited territory. The choices of subjects "impose themselves on territorial constraints; it is dynamic, direct and immediate relationships that prevail over static, indirect and mediated ones, creating boundaries that are spatially flexible and mobile, no longer rigid and immobile" (Cuttitta, 2009, p. 66).

Well, the government has to let us, emigrating is not a crime, I think, you know? that the rights that we all as humans have is the same in all countries, not only in one's country, for the sole right to be human, to be a person (Chac, personal communication, February 18, 2022).

> Absolutely everyone is free to do that [migrate] and no government can demand that the people [...] detain them as if they were locked up like dogs. No, everyone can move because we all have the right and we all have objectives in which we think for our benefit (Pipiol, personal communication, January 13, 2022).

> let us be free, as we are, free human beings. Unfortunately, there is a border and there are rules to respect, and we are willing to respect them, yes, but what we want is to live in a healthy way (Ok, personal communication, December 21, 2021).

The actions of people in everyday life aim at an "open territoriality" (Cuttitta, 2009, p. 65), a space of coexistence of a plurality of expressions with different origins that fights against the encapsulation of life, that resists the different manifestations of power in border territories and breaks the "closed territoriality" (Cuttitta, 2009, p. 65) for representing a homogeneous area where there is only a fixed, immovable and continuous border that does not make room for the other within it. The respect for humanity upheld by people in transnational mobility responds to the fact that borders are no longer limited to the control of territories, but primarily to the dominion over the human flows that run through them.

The situation of waiting in people underlines the dynamic character of the subjective plane, it highlights the search for other symbolic elements that orient the existential plane, and evidences the relevance of intersubjectivity in the construction of future scenarios and moments of potential openness (Khosravi, 2021) that can be collectively appropriated. Also, waiting highlights the transcendence of the sense of participation—not only of belonging—of human beings. Lived as a process and strategy, it allows the construction of horizons of possibility in which patience, imagination, wakefulness, and vigilance represent an individual and collective way of inhabiting temporality.

> Look, fear is—I know well how they make the caravan—. So before getting into something, you have to investigate. So I tried to do everything, to walk with the money, with all the people [...] because I say, in the caravan sometimes the police, or even the National Guard, can grab you, or mistreat you. That's what I was thinking, but on the contrary, there is that in the caravan, but no, not so much, you know what I mean? Not so much! That's why I go (Zif, personal communication, November 16, 2021).

To inhabit, as Musset (2015) points out, not only implies living in a territory, but also fostering relationships with society and the world; it is to be and to participate in it. Mobility, even in situations of waiting, represents a modern form of inhabiting in which foreign places are appropriated daily to give back to life a portion of the stability, everydayness, and hope that has been taken away.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The approach to the migratory phenomenon must be socio-historical, since migrants are affected not only by the ideals and social norms in which they were socialized in previous cultural contexts, but also by the discourses available in the present that offer them new ways of subjectivation and positioning vis-à-vis authority. Waiting for people in transnational mobility does not begin with being confined to a territory for prolonged periods of time. This situation stems from the interruption of life projects resulting from economic insecurity, social or political violence, family reunification, the longing for a better life, and the desire to access higher levels of education, among other causes.

The structural marginalization to which people in mobility are subjected when entering a territory other than that of their original legal status can be overcome by means of actions that, despite their harmless appearance, have considerable symbolic potential to destabilize the hegemonic discourses that establish a sharp separation between ways of existing, conceptions and ways of proceeding in the world. The paths traced by the daily actions of individuals allow us to rethink the situation of waiting not only as a restrictive existential condition and a mechanism of oppression, but as a strategic device that, placed at the service of the personal and collective life project, allows us to alleviate the anguish and suffering derived from immobility and opens the possibility of generating unexplored strategies and paths, which can serve as a heritage for the collective practice of patience.

Waiting, when combined with labor activity, makes it possible to use patience as a political practice that tries to respond to the determinations made by both international organizations and national States in migratory matters. This practice seeks to demonstrate the obsolescence of regulatory frameworks that restrict and place containment as the fundamental pillar of human displacement management. The ability to make this strategic adjustment within the accelerated dynamics experienced in border territories gives people the opportunity to partially regain control over time; by recognizing it as an instrument for the exercise of power, people identify the resistance contained in this temporary control as a privileged instrument to avoid wear and tear, anguish, and the abandonment of their desires.

Everyday practices are the response to a situation of waiting generated by different legal-normative logics of transnational, state and local nature that intend to establish a process of desubjectivation tending to cancel the personal and collective symbolic appetite, to move people away from their desire for connection and action in the public space, to concentrate them on the satisfaction of basic needs. What is political in this case? It is any manifestation that tends to increase the desire not to abandon one's own humanity (whether by preparing a caravan, a road blockade, the search for food or shelter, the setting up of improvised kitchens in the street, the management of language, the adaptation of lifestyle, the confrontation with local authorities or the installation of recreational places on public roads). It is every act that seeks to integrate a temporarily ephemeral or perennial "we" that could open emancipatory horizons in the future.

Waiting offers a field of exploration of social phenomena that makes it possible to identify the series of resistances that are generated at the micro level of human relations in mobility against

hegemonic discourses. The creative confrontation that occurs against the encapsulation of life is only one of the pedagogical instruments of transformation against the apparatuses of ideological control. Migrants, faced with the uncertainty of waiting, show that it is necessary to have faith in the completely unknown, in what is neither controllable nor organizable. They reinvent politics as a practical necessity that cannot be postponed by turning mobility into a disruptive element of the prevailing socio-political order. Thus, they show the rest of humanity that we must fight, even if there is no full certainty about the shape that victory will take.

Translation: Yahaira Nava.

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