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Life While Waiting.
Experiencing the Asylum Application in France.

Carolina Kobelinsky

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It is half past ten, Edona and Gazmadh Bashe¹ finish their coffee, sat around the small round table, next to the bed that was already made. Gazmadh goes downstairs to the first floor where the social workers' offices are, to look for his mail. He then goes to the ground floor, at the entrance of the reception centre for asylum seekers (CADA), where smokers sometimes group together. He meets Omar, corridor neighbor, and a "Russian of the fourth floor" whose name he ignores. They talk about the weather, go out to smoke, two cigarettes. They say hello to those who come in, to those who go out. Edona, on the other hand, goes to wash cups in the shared kitchen. I go with her. There is already a lady preparing the lunch. Back in the room, Edona turns on the television, mutes it, takes a small French dictionary and a paperback which she borrowed from the municipal library. She systematically looks for the definition of all the words she doesn't know, asks them to me "to be sure" and then writes them on a blue pad. Gazmadh comes back, Edona asks him if there was some mail. "No". He puts back the TV sound and stretches out on the bed. Edona continues to read. I go out. (...)

At noon twenty, I knock again at their door. Edona still reads and Gazmadh went down to smoke. She suggests preparing the meal, we then take onions, tomatoes, rice, some spices and we go to the common kitchen where three other people do the same task. We go back to the room, Gazmadh is back, we set the table and we eat while discussing entertainment activities organized by the CADA, and Albania football championship. Gazmadh prepares some coffee, we eat tangerines. He goes down to smoke and we sit in front of the television, Edona takes a look at all the channels, stops on an American TV series dubbed in French. When the broadcast is over, Edona goes to do the dishes in the kitchen, I prepare some tea. Edona comes back with Anna, Omar's wife, she sits down with us. They have been in CADA for three months and are in the room next door. She tells us the bad news that her husband received on his family who stayed in Palestine (...) She leaves, I go out with her (...)

Around four in the afternoon, I am back, Edona and Gazmadh are sitting around the small round table. What are you doing? "Nothing, as usual", answers Edona. I propose them figs that a Somalian resident had just offered me, we discuss. Gazmadh goes downstairs to smoke

¹ To preserve my interlocutors' anonymity and to keep their comments confidential, names and dates have been modified.

a cigarette, then goes back up. “The watch does not move forward”, he says staring at her. It is only five fifty. (field notes, CADA, 12/10/04).

This day of October 2004 is similar to many others. No much happens, no milestone, no particular activity. And nevertheless, this ethnographic vignette reports an essential dimension of the asylum application experience as lived by Edona and Gazmadh Bashe: the waiting and, more particularly, the experience of a motionless temporality.

In the following pages, I will explore Edona and Gazmadh Bashe’s waiting during the asylum procedure and their life in a CADA, situated in the Parisian suburbs where I met them in April, 2004. The chapter draws on four interviews carried out with Edona, and on numerous informal conversations with both spouses during afternoons in the shelter, dinners at my home or outings to the library located at the George Pompidou Center in Paris, which Gazmadh particularly liked. Instead of building the analysis around Edona and Gazmadh Bashe life story, I rather suggest operating a kind of cross section in their path and focusing on their waiting practices and experiences bounded by a precise time and space, but which go beyond CADA and the asylum procedure. Waiting is moreover recurring in migrants’ trajectories, every time in a different form and intensity, involving a singular relationship to time, but also to space.

The Bashe spouses perceive the pending decision concerning their refugee status and their life in the shelter, as the possibility to breathe again after a wandering period; then, as the boredom and inactivity’s daily experience, as well as an obstacle to the realization of their projects. But they will develop particular activities, out of CADA, to fight inactivity and shade off the imposed temporality. This multiple experience of waiting - sometimes lived as an advantage, at times heavy to deal with – meets the one of most of the asylum seekers I met during my ethnographical investigation, carried out during 26 months between 2003 and 2008, in CADA shelters around Paris. Two brief bends are imperative before exploring Edona and Gazmadh Bashe’s practices and experiences, one concerning what produces such waiting time - the asylum bureaucracy - and the other one on the place where it spreads - the reception center. Regarding the procedure, the one who requests asylum has to demonstrate that the motives which urged him or her to come in France are in agreement with those stipulated by the 1951’s Geneva Convention, which defines a refugee as a person who: “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unable to return to it”².

² At the time Edona and Gazmadh Bashe asked for asylum, law n° 2003-1176 of December 10, 2003 laid down the Geneva Convention’s conditions for application and the granting of protection as conventional

After submitting a request to the administrative office, the person obtains a renewable residency until the end of the procedure. The file is examined by the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, which most of the time summons the applicant to an interview before giving its decision. If the request is rejected - what happens in most of the cases - it is possible to draft an appeal to what was called at the time of this study the Refugees Appeals Board³. This institution is in charge of examining the case and of summoning the applicant to a public hearing in front of three judges, before they take the decision. In case the initial rejection is confirmed, the person cannot renew his or her residence permit anymore and is from that very moment considered in an irregular situation, removable at any time from the French territory. There are few possibilities of turning the situation in favor of the applicant. If a legal problem is spotted - which is not frequent -, it is possible to present, through a lawyer, an appeal to the Council of State and to the Court of Cassation. During the review period, no residence permit is freed to the asylum seeker, the decisions of removal from the territory being able to be executed. In case of cancellation, the appeal is sent back to the Refugees Appeals Board for a new examination. It is also possible to ask for the case reopening to the administrative instance, but it requires the applicant to produce new elements in order to adduce fears in case of return in the country of origin. In this case, the Office delivers a certificate of re-examination and the Prefecture has to extend the residence permit. The case starts again the path towards the Office, then possibly towards the appeal's institution.

Funded by the French State, CADAs are daily managed by NGOs or companies which employ social workers, educators, lawyers, to take care of the social and legal follow-up of the candidates for refugee status, who are accommodated there for the entire length of asylum procedure. The hosting offered by CADAs can be "split" in isolated apartments, outside the building where the CADA administration sits, or "collective", in shelter type buildings. I conducted my field research in collective structures - more numerous than those offering a scattered accommodation. These structures were created in 1991, two months after the effective application of a circular forbidding *de facto* the right to work for asylum seekers.

CADAs are ambiguous institutions. They offer a particular form of hospitality that associate assistance, control and confinement. Professionals bring a legal advice allowing to work out the application, increasing asylum seekers' chances to obtain the refugee status or, at least, subsidiary protection⁴. They also take care of the necessary steps to reach the universal

asylum, or of what is now called « subsidiary protection ». This latter is allowed to individuals who may face inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in their countries, regardless of the persecution cause. A lot weaker than the refugee status, subsidiary protection is submitted to an annual reassessment from authorities of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons.

³ Since 2009, the Refugees Appeals Board became the French Court of Asylum (*Cour nationale du droit d'asile*).

⁴ This was highlighted in a report written by the General Inspectorates of Finances, Social Affairs and Administration in April 2013. It strengthens a statistical study conducted in almost sixty CADA by the *France terre d'asile* NGO at the time of my fieldwork. That study revealed that the average rate of the recognition of a

healthcare coverage⁵ and school the residents' children. They sometimes also bring support to people who share their sufferings with them. But on the other hand, the social workers have to control the asylum seekers' moves. Even if these ones can go back and forth from the shelter, according to the internal rules of these institutions, which newcomers necessarily have to sign, any absence of more than a day must be reported to the team of the CADA, and absences involving many days must be authorized by the direction. The asylum seekers' mail is monitored, as it transits to the social workers' office. A photocopy of all the official letters is kept, whether they are questions linked to the asylum procedure, to the renewal of their temporary residence permit, to their health coverage or to fines for fraud in transport. In certain shelters, the team organizes regular rooms "visits" to verify the current building condition and the good agreement between neighbors, but to also take a look at the cleanliness, the housekeeping and the residents' habits. In other shelters, inspection is replaced by meetings with a social worker acting as the "corridor advisor", who ensures, I will be explained, the "good relationship and the premises' respect". Besides, a more or less formal form of control is exercised on a daily basis. Comments expressed by social workers on the joke mode, such as "Ahh, sir, I'm pleased to see you, I had almost forgotten your face!" recall the residents' absenteeism during entertainment activities, or their lack of investment in the meetings organized by CADA. Other comments also informally expressed and on a playful tone, point the late arrivals to collect the mail or the tokens allowing getting to the laundry. They remind people staying in shelters that they are observed and their attitudes monitored. A more formal control is exercised towards the visits that residents can possibly receive in their rooms, which must in certain institutions, be announced in the entrance of the building or with social workers.

CADAs are not spaces of imprisonment as detention centers, waiting areas at airports or prisons. They can however be considered as structures of confinement which participate (with the mentioned spaces) in a migrants' containment device which has been developed for several decades in France as elsewhere in the European Union (Kobelinsky 2010; Kobelinsky and Makaremi 2009).

Time as a resource

In May 2003, Edona and Gazmadh Bashe decide to leave their home town, Korçë, in the South of Albania. "The violence had gotten out of hand", they were afraid. Edona's injury motivated their departure. Not knowing what to do, they first leave for Tirana, the capital of the country. Then, they spend a few weeks with some relatives in a remote village of the north, "to think and try to see more clearly", as Gazmadh explained to me during a

form of protection was above 70 % in CADA vs 16 % at the national level (FTDA 2005: 6). The skimming done at the moment of candidates' selection for the allocation of places in CADAs – because there are not many places for all the applicants – can also constitute an explanation for these achievements.

⁵ Social security benefit allowing the access to health insurance for any individual who has regularly resided in France for more than three months and who is not yet covered by the social security regime.

conversation years later. They will have gone “almost everywhere in Albania” before being able to find 5.000 dollars asked by the smuggler who helped them come in France. Hidden in a truck with about ten other people, they crossed Montenegro and the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina; then, always hidden behind the truck, they took the boat to the port of Bari. Once in Italy, they continued the trip for a few hours before taking another vehicle which drove them to Charenton-le pont in France. From their arrival in December, they especially remember the cold and the nights spent in the Parisian subway. One day, Edona calls out to a young woman in the street, she speaks to her in English, they discuss for a long time and the lady recommends them to call 115⁶ to find a place where to sleep. After three days of fruitless attempts, they are allowed to stay during some nights in a hotel. They tell me that they were then able to stay during two months in a hospital, sleeping in a “small bed”. They ask for asylum⁷ in January 2004 and arrive at CADA three months later, eleven months after leaving Korçë.

The social worker introduces me to Edona Bashe three days after their arrival at the shelter. She tells me she feels "light", since she arrived there she slept better, she felt "peaceful". She had tough times while trying to speak French, so we began to talk in English and Italian. A few months later, we meet to discuss in her room. She spoke French enough well to maintain a conversation, she learned it in self-taught. She could not attend the class proposed by CADA because she had to regularly go to the hospital. She had one recent surgery and was about to have two others.

“When we went the first time to Thérèse's office [their social worker], I told her that I needed a doctor for my face. She made calls, it was very good, I went to the hospital and everything is good, Gazmadh comes with me every time. I feel better” (interview with Edona Bashe, shelter, 10/14/2004).

Edona's long dark hair always covered the left-hand side of her face. She tried to hide a deformed eye, a swollen cheek and an impressive reddish scar, which was the reason that urged her to leave Korçë, she told me one day. She felt better since the first surgery and the regular treatments helped her a lot; she was relieved to be able to take care of her health. The arrival to CADA gave, indeed, to Edona and Gazmadh, ways to physically and psychologically recover from what they suffer on their path. They “were happy and relieved” to have a place where they can to sleep and get some money to meet their needs⁸. They had

⁶ Nation-wide emergency phone-number at the district level, for homeless people.

⁷ At that time, the Albanian Republic was not yet in the list of so called « safe » countries, established by the administrative board of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons. A country is considered « safe » if, by law, it « ensures respect for the principles of freedom, democracy and the rule of law, as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms ». Since December 2013, Albania was introduced in that list and its people can no longer apply to stay for asylum reasons. They can, however, request a study of their application in a priority procedure, which will then be evaluated in a period of 15 days after the application had been submitted. In addition, since June 2014, Albania is part of the European Union.⁸ It's a living allowance paid by CADA. Its amount varies according to the services given by the shelter and the number of family members. Edona and Gazmadh received 267 euros per month.

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a small room Edona carefully decorated. They shared the kitchen and the bathroom with other asylum seekers' families coming from Russia, Angola, Palestine, Cameroon and Sri Lanka. "We are happy to be here, of course it is not our house, but we are not anymore in hotels, in the hospital ... I do not know how long that is going to take but we stay here several months in a row, that is really good (...) We are lighter, relieved. We learn on the questions of papers, CMU [universal healthcare coverage], meetings, the asylum. Thérèse and all the advisors help us understand how all this work" (interview with Edona Bashe, shelter, 10/25/04).

"Lightness" and "relief" about which Edona speaks - terms also used by other interlocutors - can only be understood according to their journey of forced circulation. From the day they leave their place of residence in Albania until their arrival at the shelter, their singular journey meets in many aspects, trajectories made of escapes and wandering of all the people I met. CADA offered to Edona and Gazmadh Bashe the feeling of being protected. First times in the shelter provide a temporary form of stability. As they have time ahead of them, this period is often perceived as the opportunity to learn the meanders of the French bureaucracy, as Edona said. The "know-how" of the social workers is well appreciated, as it covers a whole set of domains often underestimated by the newcomers in France: social rights opening, orientation towards healthcare professionals and, fundamental for the residents, the construction of the asylum narrative and, in addition for many asylum seekers, the language learning. If Gazmadh admitted to have more difficulty with French, Edona, in other hand, dedicated at least two hours a day to make grammar exercises with a borrowed book or to read and study the words she did not understand, as the vignette –at the beginning of this chapter- illustrates. She also watched TV to improve her understanding.

"We, we bought the TV cheap and it is very practical because I hear and I learn French. I improved a lot since we have the TV, I also listen to the radio, it also helps me but it is more for music!" (Conversation with Edona Bashe, shelter, 10/25/04).

Five months after their arrival at CADA, they are scheduled to attend an interview at the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons. Their application for asylum was rejected a few months later. Apart from the disappointment, it was urgent for them to appeal before the Refugee Appeals Board in thirty days after they received the notification of rejection. During these weeks, their social worker provided them with a "big moral and legal support", according to Gazmadh terms. She received them three times a week in her office to discuss and prepare the appeal. They had decided to follow her advice and to hire a lawyer to try to put all odds on their side. They had spoken to him by telephone. Once the appeal was submitted, a new stage of waiting started. Their social worker immediately warned them that they would not get a summons before 10 months or one year.

Time as constraint

Edona and Gazmadh met in the social services' office for Youth in the city of Korçë, where she worked as a receptionist and him as Section Chief of the governing party. She was 18

years old, him 23. A short time later, they got married. It happened two years before leaving Albania. At that time, they “worked a lot”, but they also “went out a lot”: meetings at friends, at parents, Gazmadh doing sport, she embroidered, as her mother did. Their life “was filled with activities”, Edona says, when she evokes her past, to react against the monotonous daily life she was living in the shelter.

“Since I am here, I have the impression that there are thirty hours in a day, and nevertheless I sleep a lot! [Laughs] Well, we do not have much to do (...) I do not go out a lot; I do not like going out, people look at me all the time. My husband goes to walk a little, but me, I do not do anything here. There is nothing to do. We get up late; we go to bed around midnight. We watch TV. We get up, I do the cleaning, and I cook. We speak, we fight, we watch TV or we listen to the radio, Chéri FM is very good. I go to the hospital or I stay here to read in French, they lent me some books. I do nothing, we have too much time here, we walk round and round, we are bored” (interview with Edona Bashe, shelter, 10/19/04).

The Bashe spouses’ lived their life between their room and the hospital, where Gazmadh took Edona for out-patient care twice a week⁹. Sometimes, Gazmadh also made brief strolls in the shelter’s neighborhood or stayed in front of the building’s entrance, just the time to smoke two or three cigarettes. The daily life of people met in CADA is structured by the impression of “doing nothing” and “go round and round”. The boredom about which Edona spoke reports a faintness caused by the dullness of the days out of a particular interest, that keep going again and again. This experience of a redundant temporality, of a time difficult to fill, reminds of the tramp’s face described by Bauman (1999), which lives *in the space*, a heavy space, resistant, untouchable, which encloses time and shields it from the control of these people. At CADA, this space is, most of the time, made of the domestic environment. Watching TV, listening to the radio, doing the cleaning, sleeping, reading, discussing with the neighbors, seem to be the only available activities. They are perceived as ways to “spend” time and as the symptoms of that time which does not move. Many interlocutors expressed how they felt to live days with “thirty hours”, as described by Edona, or as suggested by Gazmadh in the opening vignette, saying that “the watch was not moving forward”. This “time reifying” language (Gell 1992) underlines someone’s impression to find him suspended in an uncertain situation. As Elias mentions (1996 [1984]), time is often given certain properties of the processes’ evolutionary aspects. Speaking about a watch that does not move forward is first of all reporting a stagnating situation that finds itself to the antipodes - it is, at least, the way Edona and Gazmadh often express it, but also many interlocutors - about life in the country, before asylum, before CADA, before waiting.

From time to time, Edona and Gazmadh almost reluctantly participated in activities organized by the CADA entertaining team: visiting a museum, preparing cakes during a cooking session, going to the Floral park. Gazmadh found those “outings” childish, “we are not children!”, he often repeated. The reason they participated was, above all, to fill that “empty”

⁹ Edona sometimes mentioned her husband’s patience and support, « another would have divorced with a wife like this », she told me once, pointing her injured faced.

time. One afternoon, sat around the small table in their room, Gazmadh tells me about the feeling of “getting stuck”: we are all the time here, we don't know what to do, days eternally last, always similar, we have too much time so far ... When are we going to have a normal life? We are stuck, we cannot do anything, I smoke downstairs and that's all, we are locked up here, we are sometimes treated as children (conversation with Edona and Gazmadh, shelter, 11/2/04).

The feeling of being “trapped” is shared by most of the interlocutors whom I met in CADA. It implies both a confinement in time - a present where one "does nothing" - and in space - a partially closed institution where the moves and visits are controlled, activities and daily routines are monitored, they sometimes feel to be treated childishly, as it leads to a loss, for the benefit of the institution, of the capacity of action and autonomy. That childishly experience sometimes motivated Gazmadh to convince his wife not to participate to the CADA entertaining activities. Many interlocutors used a prison's semantics to report their feeling to be "like in prison", "as prisoners", "behind bars".

The impression of Gazmadh to be "trapped" well translates the waiting temporality and the spatial confinement: they are blocked in (and because of) the waiting, just like they are blocked in the shelter (because of the containment it induces). The above piece also reports the perception to be in a situation considered abnormal. The hope to have a "normal life" was often evoked by Edona and Gazmadh.

We would like to have a house or an apartment, it is also good. Finish the treatment and be healthy. Stop with all this, have papers, find a work, for both. Have a stability, be busy, work as everybody, a normal life ... And then have children (conversation with Edona Bashe, cafeteria of the Pompidou Centre, 1/27/05).

The normalization for which Edona dreams depends on the material autonomy, the stability of a long-lasting legal status and the control of time. In other words, the waiting temporality also includes the hope of its end, of a "new life" with all that they did not have in their present life in CADA.

Accommodating to time

Ten months after her arrival to the shelter, Edona accepts an unexpected opportunity and begins to work off the books as cleaning lady. A young Russian woman living with her children on the same floor than the Bashe spouses, told her that she worked as a house keeper several times a week for a “French couple” she met thanks to the mother of one of her son's classmates. As she had to take care of her children, she could not work extra hours as she was offered, and suggested Edona to introduce her to a "couple of old French people". She encourages her to accept the job, telling her that it would allow her "to empty her head".

"I do not like to do that, but, well, at least I would be doing something. I do not want to stay anymore in the room in front of TV, sleeping, it is not good for me, for my head. I do not like to clean the house; I prefer to cook and iron clothes. But it's good, it has made me busy for one month now, I go there three times a week, they are kind. I do not do it for money, yes, money is good for later, to rent an apartment, but I do not do it for that, I have to do something

and, for the moment, I can only do the cleaning, then I do it" (interview with Edona Bashe, shelter, 2/23/05).

In spite of what is lived by Edona as a social downgrading, the most important thing for her is not much the salary she earns, but the impression of being useful and busy. One month earlier, Gazmadh had found an undeclared replacement on a construction site in a neighboring town to the CADA. He had worked during three weeks and that had made him "feel a lot better". After this first experience, he finds a dishwasher job in a Parisian bar where he works during four months. He is later hired as a construction worker.

As the refugees living in humanitarian government camps, the asylum seekers I met often expressed feelings of powerlessness and uselessness, linked to the professional inactivity (Agier 2008: 207). Begin to work had just allowed Gazmadh and Edona to feel "active" and to somehow avoid dealing with time any longer. The money they earned is undoubtedly a motive to work on jobs they would never have imagined to do in Albania. To feel "less dependent" is also an important motivation, even more important, according to my interlocutors. For Edona and Gazmadh, working is a way "to do something" while waiting. Other asylum seekers also fit into the underground economy – making their waiting time less boring - through the implementation of informal economic exchanges inside the shelter, as hairdressing salons and sewing workshops set up secretly in the rooms or selling cigarettes or perfumes in kitchens. Finally, for other asylum seekers, it is the associative voluntary work or the political activism that perform the same function. Although different, all these activities contribute to feel "less assisted" and to get back a positive feeling of oneself. They create obligations, allowing entering a temporality guided by specific constraints, printing a new rhythm in the days and an appearance of "normality". They finally open up the possibility of meeting people outside CADA, and existing in another way unrelated to the asylum claim. To be something else than an asylum seeker whose only activity is waiting. These activities can then be thought as tactics - in the sense of daily and tiny practices which take advantage of opportunities appearing at the moment (Certeau of 1980) – that allow to by-pass the heavy effects of waiting by injecting a new texture into their present.

"Getting out of the shelter for a moment, of all this, makes me feel good, to see other people, to take the bus to go to work, these things. I know we are not supposed to do it, well, we hurt nobody, and it is not theft. We really have no choice; it is to not become completely crazy!" (Conversation with Edona and Gazmadh, my apartment, in 3/29/05).

Gazmadh is aware that his activity is illegal. In theory, within the transposition context of the European directive laying down minimal standards for the reception of asylum seekers¹⁰, the candidates for refugee status can request a temporary working permit before the Departmental Division of Labor, Employment and Professional training, if the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons did not rule on their request after one year, or if they wait to be called in front of the judges who decide on the appeal. In this case, asylum seekers are subjected to the common legal rules applicable to immigrant workers for

¹⁰ August 23, 2005 decree (n° 2005-1051).

the delivery of a temporary working permit. The access to the employment market being firstly reserved for the French people, they will be authorized to hold a post only if, in the business sector and the geographical zone considered, the number of applications is not higher than the offer. Obtaining this permit is actually exceptional and, in most of the departments, the administration systematically refuses the right to work for asylum seekers, whatever the employment situation is (CNCDDH 2006: 147). This practical employment prohibition produces a "field for illegal practices" (Foucault 1975: 285). Neither Edona nor Gazmadh had asked for an authorization like that. I have never met an asylum seeker in CADA who did it. So, concretely, in spite of the directive, the asylum seekers' reality did not change, they fit into the economic market in an informal way.

While admitting that his activity was illegal, Gazmadh threw away the idea of being a thief and of people who "hurt" others. He justified himself by saying that he did not want "to become completely crazy", that he wanted to take care of himself.

On April 15th, 2005, Edona and Gazmadh did not go to work. They were summoned to the Refugee Appeals Board "to defend their application for asylum". They are accompanied by a CADA social worker. Their lawyer is not there when they arrive. They unsuccessfully try to contact him to his cabinet and on his mobile phone. They had spoken during one hour with him three days ago, they had paid him the 850 Euros he had asked, "everything was ready". Finally, the session had to be postponed, due to the lawyer's absence. The next day, they will learn that he was sick.

I believed that we were going to finish with that, that we were going to wait 21 days after which it was going to be over¹¹. Frankly, I was a little afraid this morning, I did not know how it would move, but that... How long are we going to wait to be summoned again? Still blocked with all this (conversation with Edona and Gazmadh Bashe, at a Coffee bar near the Refugee Appeals Board, 4/20/05).

If working had helped them to kill the waiting time, the hearing postponing had reminded them that they were still depending on a decision and, therefore, "stuck in waiting".

Rethinking time

Sometimes concealed, occasionally almost tangible, the waiting time crosses the life of the men and women who seek asylum in France. It is also the fate of "tramps" (Bauman 1999), "players" of globalization (Bayart 2004), "poor people" (Auyero 2011), "clandestines" (Laacher 2007). Waiting, however, shapes every time in a different manner. In migrants' journeys, we can think of waiting as people lining up in front of a consulate to obtain a visa, as waiting for a smuggler or for better weather conditions to cross the border. Each waiting period has its non-written but well-established codes, its rhythms and spaces.

¹¹ Following the convening to the French Court of Asylum (previously the Refugee Appeals Board), the waiting time has a clear duration, as the decision is posted on the lobby of the Court's building exactly three weeks after the hearing.

Edona and Gazmadh Bashe's practices and perceptions report various ways to make and conceive this imposed temporality, drawing three main sequences:

- The temporal gap between the submission of the asylum application and its outcome appears first, as an opportunity, as it introduces a break in CADA and the possibility of reconstructing oneself after a circulation and wandering trajectory.
- Waiting time is lived as a constraint which manifests by a retreat, a sense of emptiness which is added to a sensation of uncertainty. Uncertainty related to the result of the application and for projects in the future. On this stressful daily life, it is often also inevitable to think about the suffering of a past of violence which caused the decision to exile.
- Waiting time is by-passed by doing activities outside the shelter - in this particular case, working - which imply new temporal frames, new networking, new spaces.

These sequences must not be thought as a uniform and linear chronology. They are, on one hand, punctuated by the phases of the asylum procedure and, on the other hand, there may be comings and goings in the temporal stages, thus moving from a period where waiting is hidden under other temporal constraints, to another one where it comes back and is translated by the confinement in the shelter. It is in these moments of boredom that the double dependence - institutional and economic - of candidates for refugee status, established by the ban *de facto* to work, is felt most deeply. Sometimes waiting was not only due to the asylum claim, but also to the waiting of the news from the parents with whom contact was lost, the waiting of a political change in the country of origin, or the hope of a "new life". To wait and to hope were then both articulated in the same temporality¹².

In Edona and Gazmadh Bashe's experience, waiting appears at the same time as a break in their trajectory, which they perceive as an unsettled putting, and as a continuity as they sometimes experience a stretching temporality which seems permanent.

If waiting experiences of poor people subjected to the Ministry of Social Development's decisions in Argentina « persuade the destitute of the need to be patient, thus conveying the implicit state request to be compliant clients » (Auyero 2011: XXX), thus associating the waiting with a disciplinary dimension (see Schwartz 1975: 189), those of the asylum seekers met in reception centers in France rather bring together waiting and confinement.

The normalized waiting is here aggravated by the particular life conditions in CADA - assistance and control, support and vigilance, protection and childish acting - where people who only share the experience of asylum seeking live. This alienation of time is more an effect of the bureaucratic practices than a political objective, but it certainly is a way to test the administration. Waiting "durably changes", that is to say, during all the time that the expectative lasts, the behavior of the person being, as we say, suspended to the awaited decision" (Bourdieu 1997: 270).

¹² The Spanish language is here very explicit because *esperar* means both to wait and to hope. This double meaning can be found in the etymology of the French word *attendre* which takes to the latin *tendere*, meaning « lay our spirit toward. » The focus here is on the dimension of hope and expectative held by waiting. This dimension can be found in the French Academy dictionary, edition of 1762 where the verb *to hope* appears within the acceptations of waiting.

The public hospitality offered in CADA entails a close relationship between time, space, and the exercising of power. As with most of the interlocutors I met during my fieldwork, Edona and Gazmadh Bashe experienced a contraction of space and an expansion of time. The waiting of asylum seekers can be understood both as a form of government and as a daily (social and relational) activity that involves many practices engaged in so as to pass time. Contrary to what seems to be suggested by often-used expressions such as “it is an empty time” or “it is a complete void”, waiting is not in fact absence. Rather, it is populated by a multitude of everyday activities that contribute to filling it.

It is through these activities – from the most ordinary and trivial to the more inventive – that the possibility of freeing oneself (at least partially) from the imposed temporality is likely to emerge. In other terms, it is in this capacity to find ways of coping with the waiting process that the possibility of agency lies. It is about the possibility of (once again, at least partially) choosing, deciding, in a present characterized by uncertainty and doubt.

Edona and Gazmadh Bashe will wait a year for the new summons to the Refugee Appeals Board. Anxiety fills in the three weeks that follow the hearing. The waiting ends up when they have the result of their appeal. They are dismissed. They have four weeks to leave the CADA. Last time I heard from them, two years later, they were still in irregular situation and shared an apartment with two other couples near Lyon, she did the cleaning in private homes, he worked on a construction site. They were expecting a baby.

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