

Tempered Tempos:
The Politics of Waiting for Public Services in Contemporary Cape Town

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PKLYON001

*A (Minor) Dissertation Submitted in (Partial) Fulfilment of the Requirements
for
the Award of the Degree of*

Master of Philosophy in African Studies

Department of African Studies

Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town

2019

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Abstract

This dissertation recognises that waiting for public services in South Africa is becoming an increasingly important point of contestation between the state and its citizens. Rather than exploring the spectacular expressions of this tension seen in ongoing service delivery protests, it foregrounds the everyday experiences of waiting for public services at three key sites in Cape Town: the dispersed everyday waiting for public transport at train stations; the queues at the Department of Home Affairs regional office for South African Identity Document applications; and the waiting room of the Chapel Street Community Health Clinic. In relation to each of these sites, it engages the ethnographic method to investigate who waits for what and for how long, what this waiting entails, and the meanings that those who wait draw from these lengthy and repeated experiences.

The dissertation consists of three chapters which put into conversation the connections between postcolonial infrastructural crises, socially fractured temporal experiences, and the everyday culture of interaction with the state. By tracing the history of how infrastructures and systems of delivery were designed to support first the project of colonial modernity, and later the project of apartheid, it explains why the experience of waiting is so prominent in accessing public services in this particular context. It then moves away from the contextual to focus on how these broad frameworks manifest in individuated everyday experiences of waiting. It finds that despite the fact that the modes of waiting vary significantly between sites, in all three, waiting is socially fractured and decidedly uneven, in both obvious and unseen ways. Lastly, it considers the diverse effects of waiting to conclude that although waiting can impel people to patiently endure, there are also moments when waiting is challenged, resisted, and redeployed in the popular domain to take on new and empowering meanings.

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Waiting for public services in South Africa has increasingly become a point of contestation between the state and its citizens. Since 2004 there have been sporadic and sometimes violent service delivery protests across the country. Waiting for service delivery has become a daily point of complaint in the context of limited resources and uneven distribution. These tensions are further exacerbated by the growth of modern technologies that aid access for some, but not others. The proliferation of speedy and efficient services in the private sector has informed a general monetization of time, in which waiting has taken on new and increasingly negative meanings. Whereas a small elite have smooth access to services and can thus overlook the experience of waiting, for the majority this repeated experience is of great significance. Waiting, although a liminal and often overlooked experience, is by no means neutral. The politics around who waits for public services, in what conditions, and for how long is particularly interesting in the notoriously unequal city of Cape Town. By exploring the unique yet varied experience of waiting for public services in Cape Town, this dissertation seeks to highlight the connections between postcolonial infrastructural crises, socially fractured temporal experiences, and the everyday culture of interaction with the state. I have identified three specific sites of waiting for different public services around the city – the dispersed everyday waiting for public transport at train stations, the queues at the Department of Home Affairs regional office for South African Identity Document applications, and the waiting room of the Chapel Street Community Health Clinic. At all three sites, the government provides essential services to the people living in its jurisdiction. Identification, healthcare and transport services are, according to the constitution, part of the fundamental human rights that those in power have a duty to provide, yet they are also notorious endemic sites of waiting. I will explore this contradiction by looking at how the inherited institutional and administrative structures of colonialism and apartheid, which were created for specific imperial purposes, combine and collide with contemporary fast-paced

urban systems to inform contradictory and uneven temporal experiences of the modern postcolonial city.

Through employing the ethnographic methodology of observing public waiting spaces and talking to people who wait in these spaces, this research explores the ways in which a diverse and unequal society creates order and compliance at the everyday level. It finds, however, that waiting produces not only submission, but also contingent, momentary solidarities and socialities where people wait in collectives, converse and share. Instead of focusing on how overtly political processes and assertions impact upon people's lives, it foregrounds the seemingly ordinary act of waiting in order to explore the everyday negotiations of power and the fashioning of socialities and subjectivities that often go unnoticed, yet are an integral part of the making of postcolonial modernity.

I investigate who waits for what and for how long, what this waiting entails, and the meanings that those who wait draw from these lengthy experiences of waiting. I recognize that there are differences in individual forms and experiences of waiting, and in the way waiting is present systematically in society. Through a comparative exploration and analysis of the different types, modes, and moods of waiting that occur at each of the sites, I challenge the taken-for-granted conceptualizations of what is a pervasive, yet overlooked, experience of time. My findings lead me to conclude that colonialism and apartheid are alive in everyday experiences of inherited infrastructure, which continues to be a fundamental site of interaction between citizens and the state. These negotiations however, do not follow the binary of submission versus agency, and do not only occur as active engagement. They also happen in the unobserved negative spaces of every day waiting, or 'paused time'.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Waiting pervades social life in multiple and various forms such that it is an accepted and expected part of living communally in any functioning society. Due to the ordinariness and everydayness of waiting, and its organic integration into the workings of urbanity, this phenomenon has to a large extent escaped academic inquiry and concern. Arguably, "the very familiarity of waiting has obscured it."¹

¹ Harold Schweizer, 'On Waiting', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 74: 3 (2005), 778.

However, recent studies that seek to understand the experience of waiting recognise that in spite of being a consistent part of the temporality of daily life, waiting is pregnant with meaning. Waiting is both shaped by, and shapes, socio-political relations.² As such, questions around waiting have the potential to yield fresh, interesting, and enriching analytical material on the everyday workings, complexities, and contradictions inherent in the multiple and uneven temporalities of modernity.³ Waiting, as the literature reviewed demonstrates, is both a daily expression of particular socio-political organizations and a productive time through which meanings can be made, subjectivities informed, and politics played out.

Experiences and understandings of waiting are informed by broader conceptualizations of time as an “intersubjective social reality”.⁴ Although experience of time is a “human universal”, the ways in which we perceive, measure, and use time are culturally informed.⁵ I will first engage with some of the well known literature that explores the important changes in the apprehension of time that occurred in the period of modernity when rapid technological, organizational, and social change was accompanied by a new interest in, and obsession with, quantifying and rationalizing time. With the proliferation of the mechanical clock in the eighteenth century, time could be measured and regimented in order to serve the labour needs of a newly industrialized economy. Through synchronizing, scheduling, and a clear separation of the day between work-time and free-time, time became a commoditized and carefully managed precious resource. In this context “children’s time had to be disciplined, women’s time had to be domesticated, and workers time in general had to be counted, supervised, and coordinated through timetables, schedules, clocks, bells, and whistles – the ritual- and routine – compellers of civilized society”.⁶

Within this schema whereby time could not be wasted waiting also took on new meanings. Calculations of how much time one needs to, and should, spend waiting became more rigorous. Waiting increasingly became a source of anxiety as it was juxtaposed with unprecedented experiences of speed brought by new technologies.⁷ Old forms and understandings of waiting were replaced by new ones, and notions of rush and delay became standardized and normalized. However, the relationship between waiting and postcolonial

² Ghassan Hage, ‘Introduction’, in Ghassan Hage (ed.), *Waiting* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴ Giordano Nanni, *The Colonisation of Time: Ritual, Routine and Resistance in the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷ Robin Kellermann, “Towards a Cultural History of Waiting” <https://t2m.org/publications/towards-a-cultural-history-of-waiting/> (accessed 1 January 2018)

modernity has not been extensively explored.⁸ To address this lacuna, I set out to explore how waiting in the specifically South African context is informed by broader conceptualisations and experiences of time.

In his seminal essay *Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism*, E. P. Thompson describes modernity's institutionalization of a meticulously timed everyday as a function of industrial capitalism. He argues that in Western Europe there was a fundamental shift in the sense of time which restructured working habits and 'inward notations of time' to create a new labour discipline.⁹ He describes how labour time went from being aligned to the seasonal rhythms and demands of particular tasks, to being measured as a currency 'not passed but spent'.¹⁰ Time was regimented through "the division of labour; the supervision of labour; fines; bells and clocks; money incentives; preachings and schoolings; the suppression of fairs and sports".¹¹ This process, however, did not go uncontested. Thompson argues that initially people fought *against* this new time and the labour exploitation it facilitated, but that over time the lesson 'time is money' was so well internalized that these battles took on the new form of fighting *about* time in, for example, disputes over work hours and holidays.¹² The temporal framework that was established in the period of modernity informs our understandings of self and others, our value systems, our expectations, and our frustrations. And more importantly, for the purposes of this dissertation, it also informs our understandings of what it means and how it feels to wait, to be slowed down, and to spend time 'unproductively'.

An important appendage to the meticulously timed everyday of modernity is the demarcation and division of work time and free time. Theodor Adorno sees the separation of the two times as a necessary function of time discipline, as labour efficiency depends on rest. Within the carefully quantified time schema of modernity, freedom ironically also becomes functionalized.¹³ All time, not only work time, is monitored and regimented towards efficiency and productivity. Furthermore, the distinction between free-time, inferring leisure, and work-time, inferring strain, has the effect of reducing these experiences. Adorno argues

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present*. No. 38. (1967), 57

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Theodor W. Adorno, 'Free Time', in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (Psychology Press, 2001), 189.

that it becomes difficult to find pleasure in work and to find meaningful ways to create in free time in the orbit of these distinctions.¹⁴

Waiting fits neither into free time nor work time. It floats unassigned, haunting our ability to spend each prescribed category of time productively. The meaning of waiting time within the time conception of modernity is unclear; its role in a society obsessed with functionality has remained unprecise. For the most part waiting has been overlooked as liminal and un-affecting, a mere residue of operative time, a blip in the otherwise seamless integration of carefully designated times. The haziness of the classification of waiting time is mirrored by an uncertainty about how it is to be intellectually understood. This is precisely what makes it such an exciting analytical terrain: how do we make sense of waiting historically and socially when we, as subjects of modernity, have ourselves been conditioned into regarding it as suspended time; a time outside the codes of signification offered by our episteme? There is a hope and beauty in trying to understand how these less obviously denoted moments are actually experienced. Of course, waiting *is* historically, culturally and socially constituted, but in modernity it has been constituted through negation. As a result its meanings are less tangible and more fluid.

Time was further standardized in the nineteenth century through the processes of nationalization and globalization. New apprehensions and imaginations of time are arguably what made “global imagination possible in the first place”.¹⁵ There was simultaneously an unprecedented need for commonalities in everything that had to do with trade, industry, and technology and a need to use time to measure and establish difference.¹⁶ Local times were abolished in favour of time zones, and the Gregorian calendar was adopted in many parts of the non-western world. In the same period conceptions of historical times were used to “create relations of difference by plotting the histories of nations and peoples onto a grid of universal, evolutionary time.”¹⁷ The rational, efficient, and disciplined time associated with progress proliferated and was cemented through institutions such as schools, factories, churches and the military. It also permeated the bureaucracies and administrations of states. Streamlining and scheduling were prioritized to ensure the smooth operation of new technologies, systems, and services according to the new laws of time.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁵ Vanessa Ogle, *The Global Transformation of Time, 1870 – 1950* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7, 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

Through imperialism the aforementioned shifts in the conceptualization of time in Western Europe also spread to other parts of the world, albeit in uneven and contested ways. Giordano Nanni argues that time, as a location of power and struggle, was used a “tool of colonization”.¹⁹ Through the processes of evangelization, education, and employment, and the imposition of ‘civilising’ rituals and routines, like for example the seven-day week, time became part of the story of Europe’s universalizing will.²⁰ The establishment of a dominant language and consciousness of time helped to both incorporate colonial subjects into the matrix of the capitalist economy, and to usher “superstitious ‘heathens’ into an age of modernity”.²¹ This was, however, by no means a straight forward process as the tempo of colonial society was also shaped by those colonized in fundamental ways. Through everyday struggles like, for example, the flouting of the Sabbath, new and old rituals of time keeping with negotiated and combined.²² Nanni ultimately argues that the time consciousness brought through colonization was incompletely imposed, establishing ‘dominance without hegemony’.²³ This raises interesting questions about the supposed universality and homogeneity of modern time consciousness.

This theme is explored in *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt*, in which On Barak traces the development, in the period between 1830 and 1940, of unique and distinctly modern practices of time keeping that subverted standardized notions of time. He describes how “in Egypt, newly introduced means of transportation and communication did not drive social synchronization and standardized timekeeping, as social scientists conventionally argue. Rather, they promoted... ‘counter-tempos’ predicated on discomfort with the time of the clock and a disdain for dehumanizing European standards of efficiency, linearity, and punctuality.”²⁴ The notion of counter-tempos challenges the narrative of a uniformly synchronized modern temporality and “exposes the otherwise tightly coiled spring that renders the modern world smoothly operative.”²⁵ Extended, repeated, or acute experiences of waiting can equally be understood as a kind of “counter-tempo” that is embedded within, and necessarily destabilizes the dominant narrative of time sense in

¹⁹ Nanni, *The Colonisation of Time*, 1; 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

²³ *Ibid.*, 20

²⁴ On Barak, *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

modernity. Following Barak, I endeavour to find out how those who frequently wait make meaning of time differently.

More recent explorations of the relationship between time and modernity, like Harmut Rosa's *A New Theory of Modernity*, reflect on how our apprehension and experience of time continuously updates in the context of increasingly rapid change. He argues that "modernization is not only a multileveled process *in* time but also signifies first and foremost a structural (and culturally highly significant) transformation *of* time structures and horizons themselves".²⁶ For him "the direction of alteration is best captured by the concept of social acceleration".²⁷ Accelerated transformation of social circumstances, institutions, and relationships is felt, he argues, both systematically and in individual lives because it occurs in a "multitude of intertwining chains of interdependence, which run through every single social function that people have to perform."²⁸ According to Rosa, this acceleration that characterizes the period of late modernity, is experienced paradoxically as "while time is saved in ever greater quantities through the ever more refined deployment of modern technology and organizational planning in almost all everyday practices, it does not lose its scarce character at all."²⁹ Barak observes a similar temporal phenomenon in the context of colonial Egypt. He argues that "As technology penetrated increasingly intimate spheres of life, with growing expectations that it would facilitate ever smoother and more immediate communication, Egyptians witnessed increasing frustration with and politicization of holdup and delay".³⁰ It appears that temporal concordance between the different layers of time (everyday, life times, epochs, and the sacred time of eternity), which define our sense of being in time, is in the multiple experiences of modernity increasingly hard to achieve.³¹

Furthermore, and of particular interest to a study of waiting, is the assertion that alongside the inter-societal, intercontinental synchronization brought through acceleration, almost all the intra-societal phenomena of de-synchronization appear to sharpen as "individuals and nation-states have grown too slow for the rate of transaction in globalized modernity."³² Acceleration thus is accompanied by delay, slowing down, hesitation, and ultimately experiences of inertia in those who are left out and left behind. As such, experiences of

²⁶ Harmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁰ Barak, *On Time*, 8.

³¹ Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 8.

³² *Ibid.*, 19.

waiting for public services can be understood as a residue of acceleration and as a part of the broader story of the changing time structures of modernity. My study of waiting will engage the question; how are the complex and changing time structures of modernity, the historical construction of which I have outlined above, experienced distinctively in a postcolonial setting?

Barak and Rosa's work complicates the ideal-type nature of state and industry where affects are uniform and even; infrastructures in real-life situations, particularly in the global south, often do not offer or operate on smooth, friction-free surfaces to create the desired effect of efficiency and minimal waiting. Thus, the specific nature of state and economy matters to the story of waiting for public services. The history of infrastructure building in the colonies was largely geared toward facilitating extractive economies and represented a pervasive disregard for the quotidian lives of citizens. In the case of South Africa, apartheid's racialised calculus doubly complicates the ways in which its inherited infrastructures and institutions actually function at an everyday level.

During apartheid in many instances racial segregation came before efficiency, rational functionality, and even productivity. This culminated in endemic experiences of waiting for services such as transport, healthcare, and the issuing of work permits. For example, a Commission of the South African Council of Churches reported in 1972 that "Apartheid is also appallingly time-consuming in its effect. African and Coloured people spend much time waiting in bus queues and in travelling to work. This leaves them little time for Church programmes or even for developing a Christian family life."³³ Similarly, in a 1976 UN publication on *Apartheid in Practice*, it was observed that "if there is only one waiting room in a railway station, it is lawful for the station master to reserve that waiting room for the exclusive use of white persons, and any black person wilfully entering it commits a criminal offence punishable by a fine of up to R100 or imprisonment for three months, or both."³⁴ As public services were unevenly provisioned on racial grounds waiting on multiple plains was a permanent feature of life for the majority under the apartheid regime.

Thus, we see how crucial it is to adopt a postcolonial analytic that unsettles the assumptions of first-world histories of modern states if we are to understand the particularities of waiting in the South African context. Although the technologies used, and infrastructures built, in South Africa during the colonial and apartheid periods were in all appearances 'modern',

³³ South African Council of Churches and the Christian Institute of Southern Africa, *Apartheid and the Church: Report of the Church Commission of the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society*, Johannesburg, 1972, 15.

³⁴ UN Publication: OPI/553, *Apartheid in Practice*, No. 109 (1976).

they did not in reality function to straightforwardly organize and synchronize society according to a rationalized temporality but rather signalled and enabled contradictory temporal behaviours. These infrastructures did not cater for and work to accommodate everyone equally, on the contrary, they were used to hold some back and in some cases to actively maintain and entrench non-white peoples' status as being out of sync and temporally 'other'.

The emergent field of infrastructure studies which explores the ways in which infrastructures can “enable, transform, or inhibit ways of thinking and living collectively” complicates this narrative even further by offering an extremely productive way of rethinking how states actually function in postcolonial contexts.³⁵ Whereas traditional studies of the colonial state often approach the building of infrastructure as a straightforward manifestation of the overarching logic of colonial rule, infrastructure studies recognizes that the ways in which infrastructures come to be used, and the socialities that they inspire in different contexts, are far more complicated.³⁶ Transport, communications, and energy systems are not simply “neutral conduits” but are “central to the constitution of modernity in a diversity of ways—fashioning socialities, subjectivities, and affective capacities”.³⁷ For example, in her study of electrification in colonial India Sunila Kale shows how the politics of economic rationality and colonial capitalist development did not determine the life of electrical infrastructures, but rather “the different ways in which populations, regions, and productive life were interconnected or isolated by an energy system shaped the very modes of government”.³⁸ She describes electricity systems as “technological terrains for debates” over the role of state, industrial and economic development.³⁹ The study both highlights “the colonial roots of some of India’s persistent unevenness in infrastructural development” and forces us to rethink “the relationship between new technologies and colonial governance”.⁴⁰

Similar work has been done in relation to South Africa around the evolution of the meaning and political significance of the prepaid electricity meter. Antina von Schnitzler describes how over time this small piece of technology has been used in ways other than intended, and how in a context where the formal political sphere (shaped by colonialism) is inaccessible to

³⁵ Timothy Mitchell, ‘Introduction: Life of Infrastructure’ *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 34: 3 (2014), 437.

³⁶ Mitchell, ‘Introduction: Life of Infrastructure’, 438.

³⁷ Antina von Schnitzler, *Democracy’s Infrastructure: Techno-Politics and Protest after Apartheid*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 9.

³⁸ Mitchell, ‘Introduction: Life of Infrastructure’, 438.

³⁹ Sunila S. Kale, “Structures of Power: Electrification in Colonial India”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 34: 3 (2014), 455.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 471 – 472.

many – infrastructure and technical objects become frameworks of politics. She uses the insight that “the administrative is a location in which the work of making liberal democracy occurs and where its fault lines and failures become apparent” to argue that through exploring the history of democracy in South Africa from the perspective of infrastructure we are able to disrupt the conventional story and periodisation of South Africa’s “transition.”⁴¹ Her ethnographic approach to the politics of infrastructure thus “opens up conceptual and methodological space for an exploration of forms of the political that take shape outside its conventional locations and mediations.”⁴² Waiting for public services, as an everyday experience mediated through infrastructure and administration, can be seen as one such unconventional, overlooked, and potentially narrative destabilizing form of the political.

In *Provincializing Europe* Dipesh Chakrabarty points at the ways in which the course of history was constructed since the Enlightenment as a linear trajectory from “primitive” to “modern”.⁴³ Together with imperialism this became the path against which all other experiences were and continue to be judged. This historicist “first in Europe, then elsewhere” structure of global historical time posited colonised people as not quite far enough in the historical trajectory towards modernity, and thus consigned them to “an imaginary waiting room of history”.⁴⁴ At the heart of the historicist consciousness, which today manifests in the rhetoric of uneven development, is a recommendation to the colonised and the previously colonised to patiently await the arrival of a fully-fledged capitalist democratic modernity. Chakrabarty posits that in postcolonial India much of the institutional activity of governing is premised on the day-to-day practice of historicism and the waiting that it prescribes.⁴⁵ The same is arguably true for all postcolonial societies. The larger imaginary of postcolonial societies ‘waiting for modernity’ informs and impacts everyday experiences and the perceptions of people who are made to wait. ‘The waiting room’ must be considered not only as a metaphorical concept but also spatially and temporally. The study of the day-to-day waiting of poor ‘not quite modern’ citizens reveals some of what it actually means to live in postcolonial conditions.

Having illustrated the need to historicize and culturally locate experiences of waiting I will do the same for the different *forms* of waiting. The queue is a fundamental site and social configuration of waiting in modernity. Queues can be understood as “material abstractions

⁴¹ Von Schnitzler, *Democracy’s Infrastructure*, 7; 8.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 4; 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

that structure relations between the one and the many”.⁴⁶ They take many forms and have different practical operational elements, but they are always based on the unifying imperative that one must “move but stay in line”.⁴⁷ “They are also a type of control architecture where a temporal/spatial position seems to override a social position” and in this way they have a decided moral dimension.⁴⁸ Queues are also political; a form of control that functions to regulate the blockages created by a shortage of resources. As Gillian Fuller argues, “[i]n a world of speed, queues configure time as space and make delay and stillness a political issue”.⁴⁹ The ways in which queues regulate the experience of waiting has been so naturalized that they have become sensory habits registered in the body that no longer require thought.⁵⁰

Indeed, the queue is the predominant form of waiting in urban society and queuing takes place in many different contexts, however not all queues are the same. The specific ways in which they function can tell us a lot about the different kinds of political negotiations involved in different kinds of waiting. In *Queue Culture: The Waiting Line as a Social System*, Leon Mann focuses on the formal and informal arrangements made to regulate waiting behaviour in the act of queuing for football tickets.⁵¹ He views the queue as an “embryonic social system” and a space in which an organic culture of regulation and order develops.⁵² Although his study reveals something about the specific dynamics of Australian societal organization around access to entertainment, he does not attempt to analyse how this particular form of waiting came to be and what it says about the society in a broader sense. Studies of queues and queuing in South Africa, like for example, ‘*The experience of cash transfers in alleviating childhood poverty in South Africa: Mothers’ experiences of the Child Support Grant*’, have similarly focused on the technicalities of the queue and how people negatively experience waiting within them, rather than how queues work to manage and negotiate understandings of civic duty, identity, morality, and distribution. In the three sites of waiting for public services that I investigate in this dissertation I try to interrogate how the queues designed to manage these experiences actively mediate the tensions between speed and delay, and need and scarcity in subtle and varied ways.

⁴⁶ Gillian Fuller, “Queue” in P. Adey, D. Bissell, K. Hannam, P. Merriman and M. Sheller (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 209.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁵¹ Leon Mann, ‘Queue Culture: The Waiting Line as a Social System’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 75: 3 (1969), 342.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 340.

Despite the theme of waiting being relatively neglected within the many analyses of time in modernity, there are a few specific volumes that explicitly and centrally deal with waiting. *Waiting* investigates what kinds of waiting are exhibited in a particular sociocultural practices or phenomena.⁵³ Waiting is in this case not the object of inquiry in its own right but rather is used as a tool to reveal new previously unrecognized perspectives on these various phenomena. The kinds of themes considered are not particularly unusual or neglected; the essays cover themes ranging from developmentalism, religion, migrant experiences to nomadic ways of life, pregnancy and the politics of nationalism.⁵⁴ The idea, however, is that by approaching each study through the lens of waiting new perspectives on the subject can be revealed that will extend our understandings of it.

The essays are divided in three different themes that exemplify the diversity in the ways that waiting can be understood. In the first section, ‘Between Social and Existential Waiting’, waiting is explored philosophically in relation to different social contexts and processes.⁵⁵ For example, ‘Temporal Horizons of Modernity and Modalities of Waiting’ traces the historical shift from the arrangement of the social world being decreed by “circular time, fate, tradition, or magic” to a relativisation of time where “the present becomes pluralized and the future becomes its horizon as ‘future presents, that is, as open-ended possibilities’”⁵⁶ Although the essay arguably romanticizes the time sense of the past and of cultures presumed to be distinctively ‘other’ it powerfully demonstrated how meanings and experiences of waiting are socially informed and historically constituted. The second overarching theme ‘Waiting, Agency and Politics’, explores waiting not necessarily as passive but as a conscious act and an expression of agency and therefore a “unique object of politics”.⁵⁷ The various authors explore the politics around who is to wait, around what waiting entails, around how to wait and how waiting is organized into social systems.⁵⁸

The last theme ‘Waiting Affects’ deals with waiting as an “affective mode of being” with ethical dimensions. The essay *The Shame of Waiting* explores the powerful and embodied emotion of shame that can be produced by the experience of waiting and the social determinations and functions of these affects.⁵⁹ The author carefully demonstrates how the immigrant experience of “waiting to belong”, which induces both chronic and acute feelings

⁵³ Hage, ‘Introduction’, 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁶ John Rundell, ‘Temporal Horizons of Modernity and Modalities of Waiting,’ in Hage (ed.) *Waiting*, 41.

⁵⁷ Hage, ‘Introduction’, 1, 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

of shame, can become “an orientation to the world”.⁶⁰ Through using the ethnographic method, the author makes tangible observations around how waiting is experienced politically and also emotionally on the everyday level. Through adopting a similar approach of using interviews to engage with personal accounts I also explore the way that the political and the emotional, the personal and the social, intertwine and merge in experiences of waiting.

Javier Auyero offers a nuanced, comprehensive and contextualized analysis of waiting in his political ethnography *Patients of the State: The Politics of Waiting in Argentina*. This sketch of the urban poor experience of waiting in Buenos Aires views time as a political arrangement and waiting as “a temporal process in and through which political subordination is reproduced”.⁶¹ Through the methods of participant observation and interviewing in the queues and waiting rooms of three specific urban sites where the urban poor await services from the state, the Registro Nacional de las Personas, where legal residents of Argentina apply for a national id card; the welfare agency of the city of Buenos Aires; and the shantytown of Flammable he sketches out a “tempography of domination”.⁶² He seeks to investigate how the dominated experience and perceive the particular temporality of waiting and how they act or fail to act on these perceptions.⁶³ He ultimately finds that through prolonged and delayed encounters with the state urban citizens who are made to wait receive subtle daily lessons in subordination and therefore learn to be ‘patients of the state’.⁶⁴

Like the essays in *Waiting*, *Patients of the State* treats waiting not only as an unfortunate burden but also as productive in that it influences behaviours, dispositions and the formation of citizenship in specific ways. Both works also recognize waiting as a unique object of politics in that it is inherently “a dimension of life where the problematic of our agency is foregrounded”.⁶⁵ However, whereas the essays in *Waiting* find that there are some cases where agency oozes out of waiting, Auyero finds that on the whole waiting as a strategy of state domination manifests submission and powerlessness and is bound up in the perpetuation of inequalities. This dissertation interrogates and complicates these binaries of agency and submission and state and citizen that are set up in Auyero’s work.

⁶⁰ Maree Pardy, ‘The Shame of Waiting,’ in Hage (ed.) *Waiting*, 200.

⁶¹ Javier Auyero, *Patients of the State: The Politics of Waiting in Argentina* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 10, 4.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Auyero understands the state as a “powerful site of cultural and symbolic production” that defines and creates “certain kinds of subjects and identities”.⁶⁶ He argues that the state’s power to do this lies not only in mechanisms of direct force but also in exercising power in the everyday through “offices and routines, taxing, licensing, and registering procedures and papers”, which he refers to as the state’s “invisible fists”.⁶⁷ Waiting for public services is undoubtedly one such site of the state’s day-to-day engagement with the poor. However, Auyero’s approach to waiting as a required - and therefore enforced - activity that necessitates its interpretation as an active and coordinated *strategy* of domination simplifies the complexities of the workings of power and governmentality.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The methodological approach of this study is primarily ethnographic. I use a combination of participant observation, anecdotal evidence gathered through casual interviews, conversations at specific sites, and more in-depth semi-structured interviews with people who are routine visitors to these sites. Due to the casual nature of the majority of my interviews most participants did not give their names. For this reason they will be referred to anonymously in my analysis. Where I use more formal interviews and participants wished to remain anonymous, I have changed their names in my description.

Together, the information gathered from each site builds a general picture of the interwoven network of the different kinds of waiting that occur across daily life in Cape Town as people try to access key public services. Through observing how people wait for transport, and asking them about how they perceive this experience, I seek to understand the everyday modalities of waiting; how routine and unpredictable waiting informs people’s lives and everyday interactions between citizens and the state.

Previous studies of the experience of waiting for public transport have not viewed this experience as either politically or socially relevant, but rather as an economic challenge that through research can be addressed. They focus on the cost of waiting to transport providers and explore how to improve customer satisfaction, either by reducing waiting time, making it more pleasant, or by transforming passengers' perceptions of its duration through distraction. Such studies are guided by the capitalist premise that waiting is one-dimensionally

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

“frustrating, demoralizing, agonizing, aggravating, annoying, time consuming and incredibly expensive.”⁶⁸ For example, *Sitting, Waiting, Wishing: Waiting Time Perception in Public Transport* uses field tests to explore the impact that the use of video game entertainment at train stations has on passengers' “ability to estimate the duration of waiting times”. In this case interviews and surveys are used as data to reflect on how public transport providers can “enhance” the waiting experience.⁶⁹ Similarly, *Waiting Time Strategy for Public Transport Passengers* approaches waiting as a cost. Times of journeys are meticulously calculated and cross referenced with transport schedules in order to quantify the problem of waiting and prescribe practical solutions for its reduction. Such methodological approaches treat waiting as a practical problem and fail to explore waiting as a culturally specific embodied experience with multiple meanings.

The issue of how much time is spent waiting in public clinics has been well explored in the field of public health, because the time it takes for a sick patient to be seen can be of critical importance. Reducing these times is one of the key imperatives of improving health care not only because waiting time is an inconvenience, but because it can be the difference between life and death. Furthermore, waiting has been identified as an indirect cost to health services because long waits deter patients from using inexpensive preventative or curative primary care.⁷⁰ Waiting in this context is thus crucially tied to the quality of the service. There is a practical need to interrogate the impact of scarce resources and poor organization and assess the cause of long waits by using survey studies that combine qualitative and quantitative methods in order to find practical ways to reduce waiting time. As a result, how the experiences of waiting in this context affect individuals, some more than others and different people in different ways, has been relatively neglected.⁷¹ Instead of being guided by the goal of reducing clinic waiting time, my study attempts to understand the emotional and political landscape of waiting for health care.

The fieldwork conducted at each site involved not only observations of, and interactions with, those that wait, but also with those who mediate and manage the waiting experience. The views of the people behind the counters, the bureaucrats, clerks, receptionists, and security

⁶⁸ David. H. Maister, “The Psychology of Waiting Line” www.davidmaister.com. 2005, 1.

⁶⁹ Alexandra Millonig, Marek Sleszynski, and Michael Ulm, “Sitting, Waiting, Wishing: Waiting Time Perception in Public Transport”, 15th International IEEE Conference on Intelligent Transportation Systems. Anchorage, USA (2012), 1857.

⁷⁰ Max O Bachmann, “Why Wait So Long for Child Care? An Analysis of Waits, Queues and Work in a South African Urban Health Centre”, *Tropical Doctor*, vol. 27 (1997), 34.

⁷¹ Johann Daniels, “Assessing the Impact of a Waiting Time Survey on Reducing Waiting Times in Primary Care Clinics in Cape Town, South Africa”, Unpublished Public Health Master’s Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2015.

guards open a window onto the multiple subject positions that are involved and informed in experiences of waiting. The people who represent these institutions are not necessarily those who determine the modalities of waiting within them, as waiting is not informed by a straightforward relationship between institutions and the public. It is alive with subtle workings, interstitial negotiations and contestations of power. Although the three sites by no means exhaust the vast world of waiting that can be explored, they are indicative of the range of issues involved with the experiences of waiting for public services, and thus give me an opportunity to compare these different experiences. My intention is not to study each site as a repetition of the same story, but through putting them in conversation with one another to elucidate different aspects of the waiting experience.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation explores the connections between infrastructural legacies, unequal experiences of waiting, and the diverse ways in which waiting creates subjectivities in the City of Cape Town.

The first chapter describes the broad historical and material forces that shape the specific experiences of waiting for public services in South Africa. By tracing the history of how infrastructures and systems of delivery were designed to support first the project of colonial modernity and later the project of apartheid, I explain why the experience of waiting is so prominent in accessing public services in Cape Town. As von Schnitzler argues in *Democracy's Infrastructure*, in the absence of a formal political sphere, South Africans used infrastructural sites to express discontent in the apartheid era.⁷² I show how in the era of liberal democracy this connection between the infrastructural and administrative remains intact and is expressed in the everyday politics of waiting.

Having outlined the very particular institutional histories that have shaped the delivery of identification, transport, and healthcare the second chapter moves away from the contextual to focus on how these broad frameworks manifest in the everyday experiences of waiting. I use my ethnographic material to differentiate between the modes of waiting at my three different sites, and find that in all the sites experiences of waiting are socially fractured and decidedly uneven. In the healthcare system, diagnostic trajectories are used to regulate supply

⁷² Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure*, *passim*.

and demand and to decide who can afford to wait. In the delivery of Identity Documents, although waiting time appears to be fairly distributed through first come first served queues, some people are less able to navigate these queues and thus end up spending more time waiting. These people are also significantly those who are more used to, and accepting of, waiting. Lastly, experiences of waiting for trains are shaped in unseen ways by inherited infrastructures, which determine indirect routes for working class South Africans who continue to live in isolated townships. This chapter indicates the power geometries informing the experience of waiting for public services in both obvious and unseen ways.

The third and final chapter explores the affects of waiting and finds that waiting subjectifies in a diversity of ways. I seek to complicate the binary of agency and submission. I find that repeated and lengthy experiences of waiting impel people to patiently endure, while feeling anxious and insecure as they try to keep up with the temporal expectations of the modern city. However, none of this takes away from the fact that there are moments when waiting is challenged, resisted, and redeployed in the popular domain to unforeseen ends.

The Infrastructure of Everyday Waiting

In contemporary Cape Town, the systems of service delivery and the forms of everyday politics that occur around these services are rooted in specific “infrastructural modalities of power” created in the period of colonial modernity and entrenched in the period of apartheid which “operated at a number of distinct registers that ranged from the symbolic, to the biopolitical and the sensory.”¹ In this Chapter, I trace the evolving link between the administrative and the political by outlining and contextualising the institutional development of three key services, transport, health care and the issuing of Identity Documents at the Department of Home Affairs. In pointing at the historical “centrality of infrastructure as both object and medium of making claims on the state”, I wish to underscore the specificities of waiting for public services in the South African context.²

“From the nineteenth century onward, large technical systems were both tools and symbols of modernizing state projects that became increasingly linked to ideals of national progress and the integrated, networked city”.³ This modernist interest in governing sovereign citizens through the provision of networked municipal services took on very specific forms in the colonies.⁴ The construction of urban centres in particular was intimately bound to the project of colonial domination and key to the operation of the colonial state. In various ways infrastructures facilitated extraction and constituted colonial territories as unified and thus governable.⁵ In the colonial Cape for example, the first railways, built late in the nineteenth century, were designed specifically to support the early mining industry by reducing the cost

¹ Antina von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure: Techno-Politics and Protest after Apartheid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 12.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

of transport to the interior.⁶ White framers, who were politically over-represented in the Western Cape, were directly assisted in benefiting from the diamond boom by the layout of the railway routes which connected them to economic centres and thus enabled them to capture a large proportion of railway gains. On the other hand, black framers in areas like the Transkei or Basutoland, despite being relatively close to mining areas, through the layout of transport infrastructure were excluded from benefiting from the diamond boom.⁷ South Africa's colonial infrastructures thus "worked not merely to enable circulation—which is what we often think infrastructures are primarily designed to do—but as much to impede, prescribe, and prompt movement."⁸

The connection between infrastructures and political dominance in South Africa was again reasserted when the nationalist party came into power and began the political project of apartheid. Apartheid, like colonialism, "depended upon and was conjured into being by specific infrastructural modalities of power."⁹ In 1948, the people of colour were stripped of their citizenship and segregation was, for the first time, institutionalised.¹⁰ In cities like Cape Town apartheid policies such as the Group Areas Act of 1950 were enforced and made economically viable via infrastructures which allowed the government to police and channel mobility. For example, railway lines that were able to link townships to economic centres facilitated separation and control without compromising the availability of cheap black labour.¹¹ Similarly, the 1950 Population Registration Act, "the administrative and ideological cornerstone of apartheid", which required non-white South Africans in urban areas to carry a Dompas identity book, depended on the vast administrative apparatus of the National Population Register to be operative.¹² Indeed, "apartheid was unthinkable without the administrative power of large parastatals, the technical forms of accounting, measurement, and identification that defined the labour bureau system, and the techno-science of race and identity on the basis of which groups were often created and managed".¹³

Racial inequality was emphatically maintained through unequal allocation and access of infrastructure. In some areas huge investments were made, while in others there was strategic

⁶ Alfonso Herranz-Loncan and Johan Fourie, "'For the Public Benefit': Railways in the British Cape Colony", *African Economic History Network*, No. 30 (2016), 3.

⁷ Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure*, 4-5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹ G. H. Pirie, "African Township Railways and the South African State, 1902–1963", *Journal of Historical Geography*, 13: 3 (1987), 283.

¹² Keith Breckenridge, "The Biometric State: The Promise and Peril of Digital Government in the New South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31: 2 (2005), 276.

¹³ Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure*, 13.

underinvestment and neglect. For example, world-class health care was provided for white elites, counting among its laurels the world's first successful heart transplant, while the majority was denied access to appropriate health care services through systematic underfunding of the Bantustans.¹⁴ “Spatial segregation between populations was a prominent method to sustain inequality, with racially biased policies leading to the creation of “Black homelands” that detached the poorest areas from regions with better health care infrastructure”.¹⁵ Alongside this, by designating ‘white-only’ areas for amenities and services through the Separate Amenities Act of 1953 apartheid was not only enabled by but also powerfully symbolised via its infrastructures.¹⁶

However, although infrastructure clearly played a significant role in facilitating apartheid, this is not to say that the trajectory of infrastructural construction under apartheid was a straightforward and unmediated manifestation of the overarching logic of separate development. G. H Pirie investigates the conflicts around the provision of profitable transport service in a spatially disintegrated city from 1948 -1963 between local authorities, central government and the railways. He argues that “the image of state housing and transport policy harmonizing spontaneously or being orchestrated deliberately so as to create and perpetuate racially divided urban areas is appealing but deceptive”.¹⁷ He describes how the state was forced to make many compromises in the battle with the railways over financial compensation and economic guarantees on the one hand, and with the township residents protesting against unaffordable fees on the other.¹⁸ The relationship between railway infrastructure and ideology thus involved negotiation, contestation and compromise which meant that ultimately “railways came to play an ambiguous and variable role in the historical geography of African townships”.¹⁹

Pirie's work demonstrates that although infrastructures did certainly play a role in functionalizing apartheid policies, they were also sites for political negotiations around the implementation and use of these infrastructures that involved various stake holders. As Pirie puts it, “the harsh reality of transport costs in segregated cities brought a piercing light to bear on apartheid's ideological conundrum of how far apart should be – the answer was only as far

¹⁴ David Stuckler, Sanjay Basu, Martin Mckee, “Health Care Capacity and Allocations Among South Africa's Provinces: Infrastructure – Inequality Traps After the End of Apartheid”, *American Journal of Public Health*, 101: 1 (2011), 165.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure*, 13.

¹⁷ Pirie, “African Township Railways and the South African State, 1902–1963”, 283.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

as could be afforded by those who wished for apartness, or by those on whom it was imposed”.²⁰ The history of railway development in South Africa thus provides an example of how infrastructures can also be “technological terrain(s)” for debates over “the role of states in industrial and economic development”.²¹

In *Democracy's Infrastructure*, Antina von Schnitzler explores how South Africa's unique history of infrastructural development has influenced and continues to influence the formation of political subjectivities. She argues that because people were denied political rights and actively prevented from forming a (counter-) public under apartheid they “experienced and interacted with the state primarily via its administrative connections”.²² This meant that the everyday seemingly mundane spaces of service delivery used to control, oppress and exclude, in moments also became the terrains for the expression of oppositional habits and small acts of resistance.²³ The transport strikes and boycotts that took place in the 1940s and 1950s and again in the 1980s, during the key phases of apartheid development, are clear examples of this. Through small acts of defiance against everyday conditions faced in the township, such as increasing fares, people were able to, at least temporarily, repurpose the transport infrastructures designed to restrict their ways of moving through the city.²⁴

Although these protests had limited success in forcing subsidies and lowering the price of transport they were still remarkable.²⁵ By refusing to use the subpar services handed to them by the state and by occupying the streets in subversive ways ordinary people were able to test the infrastructural modalities of power designed to bind them. Significantly, it was in response to everyday injustices enforced through techno-politics that “disfranchised Africans employed slippery ways, such as passive resistance, counter- strategies, and non-compliance, in the face of a brutal political and economic environment”.²⁶ As von Schnitzler argues “bus and rent boycotts, the non-payment of service charges, the burning of passbooks, and small acts of sabotage” were not only “central in politicizing seemingly neutral, technical-administrative links to the state” but “were also sites for the cultivation of political subjectivities, not merely or even primarily in the form of ideology, but also in the production

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Sunila S. Kale, “Structures of Power: Electrification in Colonial India.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 34: 3 (2014), 455.

²² Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure*, 14.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁴ Meshack M. Khosa, “‘The Travail of Travelling’: Urban Transport in South Africa, 1930–1996”, *Transport Reviews*, 18: 1 (1998), 17.

²⁵ Meshack M. Khosa, “Transport and Popular Struggles in South Africa”, *Antipode*, 27: 2 (1995), 181.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 186.

of oppositional habits, affective attachments, and embodied stances of defiance against the state.”²⁷

The anti-apartheid struggle continued to unfold in the infrastructural domain in both mundane and spectacular ways, through the bombings of railway tracks and power stations and through rent boycotts and the non-payments of service charges.²⁸ This particular political trajectory meant that in 1994 when the newly elected democratic government came into power they faced very unique and substantial challenges in the delivery of services. The “affective registers and embodied stances toward the state lived on after the end of apartheid” and “re-emerged in a multiplicity of ways”.²⁹ This meant that the government not only had to rebuild the structures of delivery to redirect resources to the systematically deprived black majority, but they also had to govern citizens whose political identities were formed through the necessity of everyday defiance and disruption of state services.³⁰ The 1990’s thus “ushered in a transition from the politics of protest to politics of negotiation, and from exclusion to inclusion.”³¹ Significantly, at this juncture the previously politicised overarching waiting for liberation changed into a waiting characterised by a particular politics of “how citizenship and rights are claimed in the post-apartheid context”.³²

Through studying infrastructure von Schnitzler demonstrates how South Africa’s ongoing service delivery protests and the ways in which these protests have been cast as “apolitical, “irrational” and “criminal” by officials and the media are tied to a very particular historical entanglement of the material and the political.³³ The everyday dynamics of waiting for different services, public and private responses to holdup and delay and the particular formations of the boundaries of impatience in the city of Cape Town explored in this dissertation are also enmeshed in this history. Thus, the history of how South African’s have engaged with infrastructure as an everyday site of political struggle is key to understanding both the significance of and specific nature of waiting in Cape Town.

Unsurprisingly, service delivery was the immediate goal of the post-apartheid period. It was pursued through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which sought to address the inequalities of apartheid through accelerated economic and government

²⁷ Von Schnitzler, *Democracy’s Infrastructure*, 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Khosa, “Transport and Popular Struggles in South Africa”, 183.

³² Sophie Oldfield, ‘Waiting for the State: A Politics of Housing in South Africa,’ *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 47 (2015), 1104.

³³ Von Schnitzler, *Democracy’s Infrastructure*, 16.

intervention.³⁴ By 1996 However the RDPs approach of rapid and direct delivery of social goods, housing, healthcare and education was superseded by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) which favoured market driven growth and reduced government intervention. The new approach influence by the global forces of neoliberalism facilitated “a mode of administration that changes the role of government from being the principal vehicle of socio- economic development to one of guiding and facilitating that development...The characteristics of this new approach included the transfer of state-owned enterprises to the private sector, a reduction in the size of bureaucracies, the introduction of managerialism (and) decentralization.”³⁵ Over time waiting has become increasingly significant in relation to these policies as the state has remained “at the core of representations and expectations, especially of lower income residents” while at the same time the gap between aspirations and lived realities has widened.³⁶

Transport is a key area of service delivery where the gap between aspirations and lived realities has widened. Although the White Paper on National Transport Policy (1996) increased regulation and promoted strategic planning that involved various stake holders, and in 2007 the Cape Town metropolitan government’s stated policy committed to “improving public transport to provide a better service to current public transport users”, public transport is still failing to adequately provide for the majority of citizens.³⁷ The travel needs of low-income populations continue to be poorly served by “the pattern and distribution of land-use activities in South African cities and the transport systems that connect them.”³⁸ Although the Cape Town’s urban network has been extended to include five lines they intersect with one another at very few points. Furthermore, the Southern Line, which is the only line with a significant white clientele, continues to be the best provisioned. The network is not integrated; each line takes commuters into the city’s economic centre and traveling between suburbs, for the most part, can only be done indirectly. In 2013 the average travel time for users of public transport in Cape Town was 110 minutes, compared with a 70 minute global average, travel time for public transport modes ranged from 25% – 50% higher than that of

³⁴ Christopher Pycroft, “Democracy and Delivery: The Rationalization of Local Government in South Africa”, *International Review of Administrative Science*, 66: 1 (2000), 143.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

³⁶ Claire Benit-Gbaffou and Sophie Oldfield, ‘Accessing the State: Everyday Practices and Politics in Cities of the South.’ *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 46: 5 (2011), 445.

³⁷ G Hitge and M. Vanderschuren, “Comparison of Travel Time between Private Car and Public Transport in Cape Town”, *Journal of the South African Institution of Civil Engineering*, 57: 3 (2015), 35; Lisa Kane, *The Urban Transport Problem in South Africa and the Developing World: A Focus on Institutional Issues*, Urban Transport Research Group Working Paper 3 (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2002), 19.

³⁸ Roger Behrens, “Understanding Travel needs of the Poor: Towards Improved Travel Analysis Practices in South Africa”, *Transport Reviews*, 24: 3 (2004), 317.

the car, and the South African travelling public identified travel time as the most common detriment to transport mode choice.³⁹ Commuters' daily experiences of excessive waiting are thus impacted by the inherited material and spatial systems that still accord unequal 'packages' of rights and capabilities to various groups in the city.⁴⁰

On top of this the railway system is plagued by corruption and gross mismanagement which manifest in endemic delays, unpredictability and dangerous conditions. In 2017 the #UniteBehind Metrorail Monitoring Project published a report on the "leaked forensic investigations by the Treasury on about 200 leaked contracts worth R 15 billion at the Passenger Railway Agency of South Africa (PRASA)" which found evidence of "gross corruption which goes well beyond the bounds of financial mismanagement and maladministration".⁴¹ Currently, the network is running with a rolling stock of a maximum of sixty-eight trains when ninety-five is the minimum needed to run an efficient service and "on average over 73% of trains are late and around 7% of all trains are cancelled".⁴² This dire state of affairs has culminated in a 43% reduction in use over the past four years.⁴³ Metrorail attributes its failures to broader societal problems like theft, vandalism and crime which hinder its ability to operate. However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the transport crisis is also part of a broader story of state capture engulfing all major South African state institutions.

The health care system also struggles to provide an equitable and efficient service. The Reconstruction and Development Programme committed the new government to fundamental transformation "through the introduction of the District Health System to promote primary health care" that emphasized "community participation and empowerment, inter-sectoral collaboration and cost-effective care".⁴⁴ This programme saw fourteen fragmented and systematically underfunded, racialized Bantustan 'health departments' integrated into a

³⁹ Hitge and Vanderschuren, "Comparison of Travel Time", 36, 35, 39.

⁴⁰ Sophie Oldfield, "Waiting for the state: a politics of housing in South Africa", *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 47 (2015), 1100.

⁴¹ #UniteBehind Metrorail Monitoring Project, "Rig, Conceal, Destroy and Falsify: How State Capture Happened at Prasa." *Draft for Distribution and Comment*, (2017), 1: 6.

⁴² #UniteBehind Metrorail Monitoring Project, "Rig, Conceal, Destroy and Falsify: How State Capture Happened at Prasa." *Draft for Distribution and Comment*, (2017), 3; G Moegamat Adiel Hansloo, interviewed by Zackie Achmat, Ndifuna Ukwazi, Roeland Street, Cape Town, 30/09/2017, received from #UniteBehind.

⁴³ #UniteBehind Metrorail Monitoring Project, "Rig, Conceal, Destroy and Falsify: How State Capture Happened at Prasa", 3.

⁴⁴ Meshack. M. Khosa, *Infrastructure Mandates for Change, 1994-1999* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2000), 20.

national public health system.⁴⁵ However while, a strong private sector has remained intact, the promise of a functional state health system for all has not been fulfilled - thus continuing the historical legacy of fragmentation and inequality in access to health care in South Africa.⁴⁶

There are huge gaps in the quality of care, administrative services and resource availability between the two sectors. This is exemplified by the following statistics: in the 1990s, 66% of specialist doctors moved into the private sector, “less than 15% of the population are members of private sector medical schemes, yet 46% of all health-care expenditure is attributable to these schemes”, and there is an almost three-fold difference in infant mortality in Cape Town between middle-class areas, where residents can afford private health care, and squatter settlements, where residents are forced to rely of the public system.⁴⁷ Whereas the mostly white elite of Cape Town can pay for high quality and prompt treatment at all levels of care the public system with its focus on primary healthcare is “premised on the assumption that certain categories of people ‘can’ spend time waiting”.⁴⁸ In this system temporal trajectories of patient care are decided according to diagnostic hierarchies at multiple junctures which can ultimately jeopardize the quality of treatment.

The institutional problems that plague the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) are also rooted in the difficult transition to democracy. Apartheids decentralised and fragmented structures of public administration attached to different geographical areas had to be totally reconceptualised to run a new united nation.⁴⁹ There was no blue print for how to integrate the different areas that had been awkwardly kept apart for so long and the limited useful institutional memory that that had been created was lost as early retirement packages were offered to scores of white officials.⁵⁰ Furthermore, racial readdress in the public service implemented through the policies of Black Economic Empowerment, although evidently necessary, when “coupled with an acute skills shortage made it difficult in the ensuing years

⁴⁵ Johann Daniels, “Assessing the Impact of a Waiting Time Survey on Reducing Waiting Times in Primary Care Clinics in Cape Town, South Africa”, Unpublished Public Health Master’s Dissertation (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2015), 32.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁷ Hoosen Coovadia, Rachel Jewkes, Peter Barron, David Sanders, Diane McIntyre, “The Health and Health System of South Africa: Historical Roots of Current Public Health Challenges.” *Lancet* 374 (2009), 826: 824.

⁴⁸ Diana Gibson, “Negotiating the New Health Care System in Cape Town, South Africa: Five Case Studies of the Acutely Chronically Ill” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 15: 4 (2001), 515.

⁴⁹ Vinothan Naidoo, “Assessing Racial Redress in the Public Service” in A. Habib and K. Bentley (eds) *Racial Redress and Citizenship in South Africa* (Cape Town: HRSC Press, 2008), 101.

⁵⁰ Colin Hoag, “The Magic of the Populace: An Ethnography of Illegibility in the South African Immigration Bureaucracy”, *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2010), 8.

for the government to fill posts requiring technical or managerial skills”.⁵¹ This meant that crucial posts remained unfilled or were filled only by temporary, “acting” staff.

Over the years there have been multiple attempts at reform through “staff training, revised workflows and protocols, refurbished infrastructure, and better coordination” and countless new ‘service delivery plans’.⁵² However, constant updating and confusion between old and new systems have entrenched rather than alleviated endemic problems. Staff remain insufficiently trained and informed, there is a disconnect between policy and on the ground management, and different offices are unequally provisioned. The DHA’s latest ‘modernization programme’, the National Identification System (HANIS), which aims to create a single integrated identity database problematically echoes the apartheid governments visions of a high-tech surveillance system and an electronic public order.⁵³ Although there has been some success with this initiative in terms of streamlining the ID application process and bringing down waiting times, particularly in central offices, the success of this project is limited by the DHA’s limited institutional capacity. In 2015 live capture functionality for passports and smart card processing is only present at 26 out of 14 offices and the department failed to meet their target of processing 95% of identity documents within the very generous time frame of 54 days.⁵⁴

The challenges faced by the DHA in efficiently delivering Identity Documents to all South Africans is better understood alongside Lipsky’s famous notion of “street level bureaucrats” which breaks down the monolith of government or the state by pointing out the specific powers and capacities of the front-line public service employees who interact directly with citizens and capable of applying discretion.⁵⁵ These front-line bureaucrats can make access difficult, withhold information and make citizens wait for services. They also necessarily have different knowledge and experiences to policy makers of how administration and service delivery actually works. This dynamic results in the state and service becoming increasingly inaccessible to its citizens.

The kinds of waiting that occur around these three turbulent sites of service delivery are “a reflection of the ways in which apartheid’s intransigence is materialized in roads, pipes,

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 8.

⁵² Colin Hoag, “Dereliction at the South African Department of Home Affairs: Time for the Anthropology of Bureaucracy”, *Critiques of Anthropology*, 34: 4 (2014), 412.

⁵³ Nicolas Pejout, “‘Big Brother’ in South Africa?: Electronic Government and Panoptic Control under and after Apartheid.” *IFAS Working Paper Series* 8 (2006), 47.

⁵⁴ Department of Home Affairs. *Annual Report*. Johannesburg: 2014-2015.

⁵⁵ Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in the Public Services* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2010), 2.

bureaucratic forms, administrative fiat, and indeed in embodied forms of ethical and political knowledge.”⁵⁶ They also capture the subtle everyday negotiations of compliance and compromise between citizens and the state. Rematerializing and historicising post-colonial governmentality then, is essential to understanding both why uneven waiting presents so systematically in Cape Town and how waiting can inspire action or inaction, impact lives and inform political subjectivities in unexpected and complicated ways.

Understanding infrastructural histories and the systems which modulate the experiences of waiting for public services provides crucial context for the particular meanings of waiting in Cape Town. However, such understandings offer limited insight into how waiting is experienced in the everyday. In the following chapters I move from the structural to the experiential, through a discussion of my ethnographic material. In order to interpret the patterns of individuated experiences of waiting, however, I consider them in relation to the larger institutional networks and historical unfolding’s outlined in this chapter. This brings to the fore the historical residues that are carried in the singular experiences of waiting at each site.

⁵⁶ Von Schnitzler, *Democracy’s Infrastructure*, 30.

Modes of Waiting

This chapter will focus on the detailed everyday dynamics of how waiting is experienced at each site of service delivery. My ethnographic material allows me to distinguish between the modes of waiting that occur across the three sites. In exploring both the similarities and differences, I am able to show how the historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid are carried in diverse ways in repeated moments of uneven waiting. Through comparing various durations, situations, conditions, consequences, and economies of waiting, and how they relate to and overlap with one another, I build a picture of the deeper meanings and functions of waiting in contemporary Cape Town. I find that the inequalities of waiting are rooted not only in limited resources, but also in the differential abilities of those who wait to successfully navigate this experience.

THE TEMPORAL ECONOMY OF HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

The modes of waiting for public healthcare in Cape Town are crucially characterised by the importance of what is being waited for. The way in which medical care is delivered, and how the supply and demand for this service is negotiated, can literally determine life or death. For most, this is not an everyday wait but one that occurs intermittently across life and probably more regularly in certain phases - during illness, pregnancy, parenthood, and through old age to death. It is a waiting in which individuals and their families are often vulnerable, anxious, and in compromised physical and emotional states. This may exacerbate or temper the tensions present in this particularly unpredictable space of waiting.

I will describe the modes of waiting I witnessed at the Chapel Street Community clinic, a primary healthcare facility located in Woodstock, in relation to the waiting analysed by Diana Gibson in her article *Negotiating the New Healthcare System*. This paper investigates how acutely chronically ill patients “negotiate a hierarchy of spaces at the national level of transformation and policy and at community-, secondary-, and tertiary-level facilities” in and through the experience of repeated waiting for different stages of treatment to be mobilised.¹ Through this comparison of the modes of waiting that occur at the systemic and at the everyday micro level, I explore how everyday experiences of waiting weave into a broader temporal economy that has come to define the delivery of public healthcare in South Africa. I argue that in the public health care system time takes the place of payment and becomes a crucial resource that is carefully spent and traded amongst medical staff, and that patients’ bodies become a map of how much time will be spent waiting.

The Chapel Street Community Clinic is in some ways a success story of the post-apartheid transformations that occurred in 1997 with the passing of the White Paper for the Transformation of the Health System. The clinic has a good reputation. It is relatively small and quiet, run by a permanent staff of mostly female nurses who service a varying number of patients each day. Most of the patients are women, children and those with chronic illnesses such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. During apartheid, despite being central, Woodstock managed to resist being declared a ‘whites only’ area and remained a mixed residential area for working-class coloured and black people. Today it is a middle-income, up-and-coming neighbourhood with more and more white residents. However, the public clinic continues to service the old working- and lower-middle-class non-white communities of Woodstock and surrounding areas.

Durations and conditions of patient waiting time vary depending on the facility, its location, its capacity, and patient load. The Chapel Street clinic gets busy early in the mornings and the queuing system is relatively efficient. Patients first wait in order of arrival on benches in a big hall. Then they are called one by one to the reception to either create or retrieve a patient file and to be assigned a number. Once their number is called, they move into another queue in a narrow hall that opens into consulting rooms and wait to be seen by a nurse.² Although the waiting involves many stages, and sometimes minor bottlenecks, on the whole, it is not extreme and the atmosphere is generally calm, especially when compared to the notoriously chaotic clinics in poorer areas and day hospitals that service many more patients.

¹ Gibson, ‘Negotiating the New Health Care System’, 515.

² Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017, 07:30 – 14:00

However, despite the limited services offered and a relatively small clientele, the duration of patients' waiting time was still characterized by inconsistency. Most interviewees expressed feelings of uncertainty and anxiety over the kind of service they would receive. There was a wide variety of waiting experiences as some patients told me they had seen a nurse within fifteen minutes of arriving, while others recounted visits where they had waited for four hours only to be sent home without being seen.³ Traces of limited resources, uneven quality of service, and staff shortages appeared in signs that read "Notice! Please note that the waiting time will be longer due to a shortage of staff", and "Dear Client, City Health is committed to providing quality health services. Nobody should be turned away without seeing a professional nurse. If this should happen to you, report it immediately to the clinic manager or a professional nurse. Please get the name of the health worker who refused to help you or turned you away."⁴

The problem of indeterminable waiting times was acknowledged within the clinic, and certain provisions were made in attempts to guide patients positively through the possibility of an extended wait. Unsurprisingly, due to the sensitive nature of what was being waited for, even in this relatively well-serviced facility, the management of waiting was fundamental to the socialization of this space. Temporal unpredictability or inefficiency was defined as a wait beyond three hours as evidenced in signs that read: "If your waiting time at the facility has exceeded 3 hrs without being attended, please report to reception."⁵

The first woman I spoke to was distracted, consumed by trying to interpret the sequencing of the queue and her place in it; she tells me: "I have a lot of patience anywhere I go, whether it's a queue in a shop or whatever I have patience to wait, because I know that sometimes there are only a few hands to help ... no I don't complain".⁶ She is at peace with the fact that she must and will wait, and she is concerned with the fairness and efficiency of the queue she is in. A designated employee stands at the entrance to the hallway of examination rooms and communicates directly with those waiting to negotiate the allocation of files and the placement of each patient into the queue.⁷ A sign reads, "Please note that waiting time will be longer due to a shortage of staff. Thank you."⁸ A more audacious attempt to calm the atmosphere is expressed in a posters that read: "So come with me, where dreams are born, and time is never planned, just think happy things and your heart will fly on wings, forever in

³ Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017, 07:30 – 14:00.

⁴ Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017, 07:30 – 14:00.

⁵ Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017, 07:30 – 14:00.

⁶ Person 3, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017.

⁷ Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017, 07:30 – 14:00.

⁸ Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 16/11/2017, 07:30 – 14:00.

never-never land”.⁹ An unspoken agreement that balances the anticipation with acceptance of waiting and a certain expectation of how the waiting must occur, is evident in the layout, decoration, and signage of the space, and in the way in which staff are assigned to interact with the patients.

These provisions shed light on the systematic attempts to negotiate the delicate emotional terrain of managing delay in access to healthcare. Patients’ fears of being forgotten, of sacrificing a whole day of work, pay, and time with family, while remaining untreated, simmer beneath the surface of this regulated space. In many interviews patients recounted extremely emotional experiences they had had previously while waiting for healthcare. One woman explained how,

to see someone worse is always difficult, to see them worse than your child is kind of scary... I remember one child cried for two hours nonstop - it was just so painful in their heart. You just sit and watch...I also began to cry I couldn’t help it, I was helpless. I wanted to run away to get away from that place, but I couldn’t run away because I’m coming for my own child’s need, so I just sat.¹⁰

Another patient told me that “sometimes when things are not going well, you begin to cry”.¹¹ A 2011 study found that South African patients complained that clinics and hospitals are “often run in an incompetent, bureaucratic and unproductive manner which often leads to long waiting times.”¹² This finding was echoed in the perception of many of the patients I spoke to in other facilities they had visited. One woman struggled to make sense of the way in which the service was organised and felt that staff behaved unprofessionally. She told me, “When my child was small... I went to Elsie’s at twelve midnight, he was sick, then four in the morning I had to leave, because still no help. I don’t know, there was no long queue, I don’t know what was happening.”¹³ She described how “...at the clinic you sometimes see people who arrived first being seen last and then you don’t know what is going on. You are still sitting there, and they are calling other people...you get so stressed”.¹⁴ On another occasion when her son was sick the wait proved too long, the system too hard to navigate and she was forced to go to a private facility to receive treatment. Despite patients’ ability to understand the limitations of and pressures on the system, and their acknowledgment that

⁹ Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017, 07:30 – 14:00.

¹⁰ Person 1, Female, Interview by Yoni Pakleppa, Hansen Road Muizenberg, Cape Town, 06/10/2017.

¹¹ Person 5, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 16/11/2017.

¹² Daniels, ‘Assessing the Impact’, 32.

¹³ Person 1, Female, Interview by Yoni Pakleppa, Hansen Road Muizenberg, Cape Town, 06/10/2017.

¹⁴ Person 9, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 16/11/2017.

“people have only got two hands with ten fingers and you must be patient with them”, anxieties are exacerbated by their lack of knowledge of the management regimes within the system.¹⁵

This undercurrent of anxiety demonstrates that both patients and staff require more information and temporal certainty. A nurse explained that “the best way to help people is by giving them knowledge. If for some reason, there are delays we tell the patients what is going on and it makes them calm so it’s better”.¹⁶ The Chapel Street clinic was at the time of my research experimenting with an appointment system as a new approach to managing waiting and service delivery, however, with limited success. A young mother described how her usual strategy to avoid prolonged waiting was disrupted by the new system,

I try to come at 13.00 on a Friday because it’s usually quieter then, because everyone seems to come early in the morning, and it quietens down in the afternoon. The only reason I have come so early today is because they have given me a time... but I was not seen at that time.¹⁷

Patients develop their own coping strategies for avoiding long delays. These strategies not only concern the decisions made about when to visit the clinic, but also the amount of time allocated for this task in relation to the patient’s broader life. A mother with two small children and a baby waiting for a vaccination explained to me how she managed clinic visit:

You are never going to say, ‘I am going to the clinic [and] then I am going back to work’ - you know it’s a whole day of waiting. It’s a done deal. For a whole day at the clinic you have to take a whole day off, you can’t risk it...you don’t know what you are going to get there, they may be short of staff, there may be stuff you don’t know.¹⁸

The waiting at the Chapel Street Clinic does not happen in isolation, but is part of the broader institutionalized waiting that is premised on the assumption that certain categories of people can afford to spend time waiting.¹⁹ In relation to Gibson’s post-1994 analysis of the tragic waiting experiences of chronically ill patients, I will now explore how the waiting rooms of the various public healthcare facilities in community, secondary, and tertiary levels demonstrate different yet *interconnected* modes of waiting. Patients negotiate a hierarchy of

¹⁵ Person 8, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017.

¹⁶ Person 4, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017.

¹⁷ Person 6, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 16/11/2017.

¹⁸ Person 7, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017.

¹⁹ Gibson, ‘Negotiating the New Health Care System’, 515.

spaces and systems in and through repeated experience of waiting.²⁰ Gibson describes a system in which strategies are used to order and categorize masses of people by separating them according to assessments of how much time their needs require and how much time they can afford to spend waiting.

Through describing the journey of Mr. Njobe, an acutely terminally ill patient who died while waiting to receive appropriate care, Gibson demonstrates how people wait in order to be accorded full status as patients. Once a diagnosis is made the most cost-effective trajectory of care is decided and a new temporal trajectory is set.²¹

When Mr. Njobe had a stroke, his wife, son, and two other men waited in a long queue until a nurse found his file. They were given a number and sent to another room, where they waited until a registered nurse could attend to them. She took Mr. Njobe's blood pressure, blood samples, urine samples, and temperature, and told them to wait for the doctor.²²

In this system the body itself maps how long a person waits; “Waiting could be shortened or extended, depending on the category of urgency into which patients were slotted by staff”.²³ Furthermore, the method of care is to an extent decided according to “[i]nstitutional clock time”, which controls the timing of certain procedures.²⁴ For example, the cyclical dispatches of tests that have to be sent away on a “normal run” occurring only within particular time frames and during which a patient could die.²⁵ Gibson’s examples demonstrate how “[e]ven when the patient “qualified” for more costly procedures and tests, effective treatment could be contingent on time and timeliness.”²⁶

Gibson’s article powerfully demonstrates how waiting to receive treatment becomes functionalised as a tool to regulate supply and demand. The enormity of the task at hand, and the humanity necessary for its ethical delivery, sits in an uncomfortable marriage with the practical function that waiting comes to serve. Patients at the Chapel Street Clinic also feel the effects of temporally contingent categorizations of deserving and less deserving patients as evidenced in their interpretations of the waiting as being inconsistent, insensitive and unfair. One patient I spoke with lamented,

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 527.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 585.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 585.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Although there are some who really care...most of them don't, you see them sitting or going to eat. You have been waiting the whole day and they are going for break time, you came there at seven and now its ten and they are going for break time and you haven't moved in the queue and they haven't even said anything, and they are going for break time!²⁷

On the one side of this system of service delivery, the individuals who determine waiting are overburdened with the task of allocating scarce resources and deciding who will get what and when, and who lives and who dies. In addition they are restricted by bureaucratic time management regimes. On the other side, patients who wait navigate a system which does not reveal how and according to what logics it is being run.

There are tangible risks and negative outcomes involved in making those at the bottom levels of the healthcare system systematically carry the biggest burden of waiting, along with the highest degrees of uncertainty. The long waiting times at low-level facilities serve to discourage patients from seeking timely intervention. This in turn further overburdens the system. Furthermore, the repeated waiting that occurs between the levels of the system discourages the more seriously ill from going back to hospital. Gibson describes,

Securing timely clinical intervention could increase a sufferer's chances of survival, but their experience of the health services and the perceived lack of care manifested in time spent waiting for the doctor caused them to delay seeking care. For many chronically ill patients, feeling unwell was not reason enough to brave the structural obstacles of the institution.²⁸

With this perspective on the connected waiting that occurs across the levels of the health care system the meaning and function of the first come first served waiting of an orderly queue used in facilities like Chapel Street comes into stark relief. This is the first instance of waiting for health care, the point at which all can afford to wait and when all patients are in a sense equalised by the very act of waiting. These people waiting, not quite yet patients, queue unhappily, yet for the most part obediently, according to the unquestioned logic of 'first come first served' that comfortably adheres to bureaucratic logics as well as normative ethical codes. What remains unquestioned is how the "linearity of the queue renders even the most desperate need a matter of routine."²⁹ The convenience and polite neatness in how "the drama and passion of life's crises and emergencies are dissipated by linear coding and processing"

²⁷ Person 1, Female, Interview by Yoni Pakleppa, Hansen Road Muizenberg, Cape Town, 06/10/2017.

²⁸ Gibson, 'Negotiating the New Health Care System', 528

²⁹ Barry Schwartz, 'Queues Priorities and Social Processes', *Social Psychology*, vol. 41 (1978), 6

are a deceptive solution to the important and unanswered question of how resources in postcolonial states can be distributed in a truly equitable manner.³⁰

WAITING FOR IDs AT THE DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

The kind of waiting I observed at the Department of Home Affairs, specifically in the queue where citizens wait to apply for Identity Documents, was quite different to that which I observed at the Chapel Street Clinic. Although the outcome of this waiting is significant because Identity Documents are essential to accessing government services, employment and enabling travel, the immediate and tangible consequences of a slow-moving queue in this context do not have the same potentially immediate harmful impacts. The stakes are lower as the ticking of the clock is not directly related to the physical well-being of the person who waits.

Similar to healthcare however, Home Affairs clients are expected to wait and had set aside a good part of their day in anticipation of a temporally unpredictable service. This knowledge and preparation serve to alleviate tensions in the experience of waiting. I was told, “It’s quite calm, people aren’t impatient because I think everybody is expecting to wait the whole day so it’s quite relaxed”.³¹ Low expectations serve to create positive experiences of pleasant surprise. One woman explained, “I decided to come early because the word goes around that the queues can be quite long and that there could be a long waiting period but mine today was not.”³² Another described the queue as “quiet calm”, “not impatient” and “quite relaxed” because “everybody is expecting to wait the whole day”.³³ Experiences like these no doubt served to dissipate the tensions of waiting and to demonstrate how “routines established to limit clients’ demands on the system ironically serve to make the system better”.³⁴ Unlike waiting in the clinic I observed that those who wait at the DHA engage in strategies of distraction to pass the time like for example, reading a book, playing sudoku, or checking emails on their phones.³⁵

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Person 10, Male, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 14/11/2017.

³² Person 11, Male, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 14/11/2017.

³³ Person 12, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 14/11/2017.

³⁴ Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, 99.

³⁵ Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, 14/11/2017, 07:00 – 15:00.

On the whole the atmosphere of this waiting room, into which people slowly filter from an outside and less regulated queue, is tempered. The organization of the space exudes mediocrity, mundane routine, familiarity and vague assurance. Unlike the waiting involved in seeking healthcare, which can be frequent and routine for some and is for most an intermittent accompaniment through life, this waiting only happens occasionally, when an Identity Card is applied for, lost or stolen, or renewed.

The queuing system was described as “pretty straight forward”, “quite streamlined” and “easy to follow”.³⁶ The structure of the queue is aided by a ticketing system, a calling screen and temporary walls and signs that separate and demarcate the various stages of the processes. These ordering provisions have a settling effect on clients: “The fact that everybody gets a ticket means that it is sure that each person will go in the order that they came which is quiet fair”.³⁷ This together with the fact that short outburst of ““lady you are pushing in...lady you are jumping the queue” made it evident that fairness is so important that it is enforced by clients themselves.³⁸

However, the more I observed the more I came to question the apparent fairness of this system. In his seminal work *Street Level Bureaucracy*, Michael Lipsky describes how government services inherently impose non-monetary costs on the services they deliver as a way to regulate supply and demand and to maximize efficiency and that these costs are linked to the ways in which these services are arranged.³⁹ He points out that “even first come first served which is in accordance with universal principals of client treatment imposes costs unevenly”.⁴⁰ My interviews and observations which demonstrate how some people struggled much more than others to navigate and move through the waiting line at Home Affairs go some way to elucidate how exactly these costs of time are actually incurred. Whereas some clients, mostly young and mostly white, had begun their ID application process online and were just waiting to have their photographs taken to complete “the final bits” in “just over a half hour” and therefore experienced the process as “a huge improvement from the past”,

³⁶ Person 10, Male, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 14/11/2017; Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 15/11/2017.

³⁷ Person 13, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 15/11/2017.

³⁸ Person 15, Female, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, 14/11/2017, 07:00 – 15:00.

³⁹ Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, 95.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

others experienced greater difficulties and ultimately spent a lot more time waiting for their applications to be processed.⁴¹

An elderly black woman who was not from Cape Town was unable to negotiate the ticketing system or to make sense of the order in which numbers were called. She was unhappy about the service and lamented, “It doesn’t make sense because they don’t call us accordingly; I don’t know why they have the numbers if they are not going to call us in order... I don’t know this space very well... to me I thought they should have started with the senior citizens, so that they can go home eventually, here you just get a ticket and stay”.⁴² Similarly, an elderly coloured man told me how “they always keep old people waiting... did they call my number now? No, oh it’s coming there, this computer is very slow!”.⁴³ When I see him again later he tells me how his number was never called and he was sent back to the beginning of the queue to get a new ticket and wait again. He jokes about his new ticket pointing out that the date on it is wrong and chuckles “...why does it say priority on my ticket?! I’m not a member of parliament”.⁴⁴ Certain unseen barriers, ironically linked to efficiency enhancing and modernizing technologies, serve to extend the waiting time of the more vulnerable and less techno-literate members of the queue.

This is not the only way in which some are more likely than others to pay a bigger temporal cost in the process of applying for an Identity Document. I spoke to a young colored man who described his experience as follows:

ah let’s see, first thing is patience, it’s a little bit fast you know, I see papers coming in, ya its fast, fast, fast. So far, I have been waiting...since about 2005 I applied mos. Um some numbers they didn’t match with, I guess the date is 2009 here and then there it was filled in 2010 and there was the mix up, some codes that needed to be unlocked. It’s been a rough experience. You go through some stuff like you don’t believe ... I have been waiting since 2015, exactly... it’s important because first of all I need to work.⁴⁵

From his description it is evident that he is not clear about why his Identity Document application has been stalled and what exactly has gone wrong. He sat patiently in the queue

⁴¹ Person 14, Male, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 14/11/2017.

⁴² Person 16, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 15/11/2017.

⁴³ Person 17, Male, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 15/11/2017.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Person 18, Male, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 15/11/2017.

like everyone else despite the fact that he had waited for years with negative results. His waiting had become extreme and was impacting his ability to gain employment. He had travelled far and had waited a long time for the train, yet he made no fuss. This client seemed unaware that he was paying a much greater cost than most in his Identity Document application.

His experience speaks to different kinds of waiting experiences citizens have across the country in the process of applying for identity documents as reported in the press. In 2009, S'khumbuzo Douglas Mhlongo, 22, was found hanging in his shack in Durban. His suicide note stated that the reason he took his life was that he felt he could not continue waiting for and living without an identity card as it prevented him from taking a job and providing for himself.⁴⁶ Another shocking event occurred in 2005, when Kabelo Thibedi, 24, held a home affairs employee hostage with a toy gun for the six hours that it took for his identity card to be sent from Pretoria. Prior to this extreme action, he had reportedly been waiting for two and a half years.⁴⁷ These are of course exceptional cases; however, it is interesting to see the echo of such cases, a decade later, in the experience of an individual at the well reputed central Cape Town office.

Although all who wait are “forced to accept the functions of rationing: that cost bearing is necessary and agencies resources are fixed”, some are forced to accept this as a routine matter that informs many aspects of their lives.⁴⁸ Poor people who are used to receiving public benefits and to interacting with public agents end up receiving “a qualitatively different kind of treatment from the state”.⁴⁹ The subtle variations in how different people engage with the waiting system at Home Affairs reveal that a lot more lurks beneath the placid surface of this seemingly fair and even waiting experience.

Different kinds of people in the DHA queue have distinctly different perceptions of the quality of service they receive and expectations around how much waiting is acceptable. These differences coincide with differences in race, socioeconomic status, and the broader prevalence of waiting in people's daily lives. As in the clinic queue, the apparent fairness of the well-ordered ‘first come first served’ principle is undermined. The accounts of two white professionals working in the Cape Town Business District both demonstrated that those unused to waiting found it to be hugely stressful and emotionally taxing. One said,

⁴⁶ ‘Shame of the Home Affairs ID suicide.’ *IOL news*, 30 August 2009.

⁴⁷ ‘ID delay drives man to take a hostage’ *IOL news*, 1 December 2005.

⁴⁸ Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, 95.

⁴⁹ Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, 95, 11.

I feel like I'm wasting time sitting here. I think I got here at about 8.45 so I have been sitting here for maybe forty mins... well I do have a corporate job, so I need to get back to the office and I'm meant to get back at eleven and I'm freaking out a little ...my goodness, I'm feeling a bit anxious...⁵⁰

The other told me,

The system doesn't really make sense but I'm comparing in my head to what I'm normally used to. I prefer it organized... I'm an office manager and all my consultants are in Africa at the moment so this has been the best time for me to do it because I know that I'm going to have to wait. Otherwise it's not really possible because it's so unpredictable... Waiting for services is one of the reasons I choose not to take public transport, because I'm an on-time person so I'm not prepared to choose a system that's going to make me wait.⁵¹

In contrast a woman from Langa had a much more positive interpretation of the experience and her account highlighted her focus on the importance of receiving what was being waited for as opposed to the burden of the wait itself.

I'm feeling excited because I'm going to get my ID now, because I lost my ID, so now I will say my ID is very important in my life because anywhere you go, they ask you for an ID. Yes, the wait hasn't been too long you have to be patient... I think I don't have any problem because I'm waiting and waiting and waiting because at home what am I going to do nothing because I told myself that this day I'm taking my ID day and I have to wait.⁵²

For her, and her mother, the value of what will be delivered at the end of waiting clearly outweighs the value of the time lost. Waiting is not unusual but an accepted part of her daily routine. She described her journey to Home Affairs as follows,

When I came here I took a taxi from Langa to Cape Town, obviously in the taxi you have to sit and wait for people to get it and for it to be full... I think I wait a lot in my life. Everywhere you have to wait even if you go to the bank

⁵⁰ Person 19, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 14/11/2017.

⁵¹ Person 20, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 14/11/2017.

⁵² Person 21, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 14/11/2017.

open a new account you have to wait! In the train you have to wait until the train comes! Even in the bus you have to! Everything.⁵³

Behind equitable service delivery and apparently functionally fair queues lies a self-perpetuating cycle of routinised interaction whereby the time of a person who loses a lot of time waiting is considered less valuable precisely because the system assumes that they do not have the capacity to productively use the time left to build something of value in their lives. The “sense that it is more suitable for the poor to wait longer because they are foregoing less or that the opportunities forgone are less valued by society” is subtly built into institutions like Home Affairs through the ways in which certain conceptualizations of fairness proliferate through organizing systems which advantage some over others.⁵⁴ This is not to say that waiting for public services in South Africa is part of a deliberate strategy of oppression that deliberately forces socioeconomic inequalities.

Waiting is not just a residue of a striving for optimum efficiency but actively shapes assumptions of efficiency and who this efficiency serves when resources are limited. The distribution of resources and delivery of services is no small task, particularly in postcolonial states where demands are higher. There is an unavoidable gap between the policies that are made to oversee this process and the ways in which they are implemented. As a result, street level bureaucrats end up negotiating the sometimes conflicting demands made by citizens and policy makers about how to improve the service. As Lipsky puts it, “the decisions of street level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out”.⁵⁵ I witnessed what appeared to be the staff prioritizing certain clients, inserting people into the front of the queue without explanations, speeding up as lunch time approached and arbitrarily disappearing into back offices in the middle of serving customers.⁵⁶ These variations in the quality of service were not obviously demonstrative of any particular biases but can be seen as a part of the routine ways that discriminate treatment can potentially occur and feed into uneven waiting times. Thus, the actions of street level bureaucrats potentially exacerbate the unequal waiting experiences of Home Affairs clients.

The different experiences of waiting that I observed at the Department of Home Affairs can be interpreted as part of routinised strategies used to regulate supply and demand that on the

⁵³ Person 21, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, Cape Town, 15/11/2017.

⁵⁴ Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, 89.

⁵⁵ Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, xiii.

⁵⁶ Cape Town Regional Home Affairs Office, Barrack Street, 15/11/2017, 07:00 – 15:00.

surface seem to operate indiscriminately but in fact regulate the demands of some more than others. The way in which information is delivered, the use of certain technologies which create certain barriers to understanding specifically for older people, those less able to access online systems, and those who were not first language English-speakers not only serve to depress service demands but also to habituate expectations of different degrees of waiting as acceptable within certain categories of people.⁵⁷

UNPREDICTABLE WAITING FOR TRANSPORT

The uneven distribution of access to technology also impacts uneven experiences of waiting for transport. In Cape Town different travel times are linked to different modes of transport. On the whole travelling by road in a private vehicle is the most efficient way to move around the city. Thus, the bulk of waiting for transport is experienced by the working-class majority who use the train because it is the least expensive mode of travel. However, whereas in the case of Identity Documents applications this inequality is experienced intermittently, in the case transport, this inequality is enduring. Those who are financially barred from using the most efficient transport technologies are routinely exposed to more waiting than those who are not. The wait for transport in Cape Town is a recurrent and acute daily experience laced with frustration as commuters navigate a system on the brink of collapse. Of the three public services which I investigated this was the most poorly delivered one. Cape Town's railway service is in a state of catastrophic dysfunctionality in terms of its infrastructural capacity and the numbers of clients it can serve.⁵⁸

That services do not run according to schedules is a widely accepted and expected daily occurrence. The extent of delays on any particular day is impossible to predict. This makes this experience of waiting the most uncertain of all those I have explored. When I asked commuters how long they waited the response was not a figure but comments like "...it depends, you can't predict it, every day is different; it's very frustrating".⁵⁹ With loss of work hours and personal time the accumulated impact of such delays severely effect commuters' physical, emotional and financial well-being. One commuter reflects, "...you hold yourself

⁵⁷ Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, 82.

⁵⁸ #UniteBehind Metrorail Monitoring Project, "Rig, Conceal, Destroy and Falsify: How State Capture Happened at Prasa." *Draft for Distribution and Comment*, 2017.

⁵⁹ Salt River Train Station, Cape Town, 21/09/2017, 16:00 – 18.00

while you are there and then lash out at anything when you get home.”⁶⁰ Another explained how a job transfer to a new area “...isn’t going to cost me in my pocket but it’s going to cost me time with my family.”⁶¹

People who have jobs are at risk of being fired due to transport delays, “...employers don’t believe you anymore...all the employer says is leave earlier; the employer doesn’t understand that leaving earlier means that you still get to work late.”⁶² Furthermore, the health of exhausted commuters forced to sacrifice sleep is compromised and hundreds of thousands of hours a year that could be invested elsewhere – in family, in creative pursuits, and in personal growth – are lost: “...you know I was actually telling my wife the other day I think I get more tired travelling to and from work on the train... just the thought of travelling to work makes me more tired than work itself”.⁶³ Over time significant and unpredictable delays do not only bring irritation, but actually prevent the people from meeting the expectations of society structured around the clock, with the assumption that citizens can and should keep time. The train system does not function according to its own internal logics let alone according to the tempos of the rest of the city: “It’s 6 o’clock at night and there are no more trains but on your timetable you’ve got a train running on that line until 8. How can you not have a security guard at the station and how can your ticket box close at 5 o clock...?”.⁶⁴

The daily hold-up caused by the public transport crisis permeates through the delivery of other services as delays have a knock-on effect. Waiting creates chain reactions of more waiting in communities reliant on public services. Adiel lives in Ottery with his wife and children. He works at the Langa primary health care clinic and is responsible for opening the doors at 07.30 and for dealing with and directing the initial queues for appointments.⁶⁵ Timeliness is essential to his work. However, the public transport options available to him make it almost impossible for him to be on time. The fact that his waiting is unpredictable and more often than not causes him to be late for work impacts not only on him. Adiel explains,

every single day the same thing is said, you send a message to the boss the trains are late...it’s not just my colleagues that suffer, it’s the community that

⁶⁰ Sharone Daniels, Interviewed by Bruce Baigrie, UniteBehind Constitution House, Cape Town, 9/10/2017. Received from #UniteBehind.

⁶¹ Moegamat Adiel Hansloo, Interviewed by Zackie Achmat, Ndifuna Ukwazi Roeland Street, Cape Town, 30/09/2017. Received from #UniteBehind.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

we are serving that suffers, and service delivery gets affected, people in the community get upset and then they end of protesting because the services are not being delivered to them that have been promised by government and by government employees.⁶⁶

Chains of waiting formed through repeated short waits link together to create a shifted and strained temporality for public transport users in which much time must be spent catching up. The train stations across Cape Town display a mode of waiting quite distinct from the controlled waiting facilitated by the queues of structured waiting systems at Home Affairs and in health facilities. Not once did I witness an orderly queue developing at a crowded station where many people were trying to enter a full train. No infrastructure or staff was present to facilitate or encourage such behaviour. Furthermore, previous systems that mediated this waiting have broken down as one interviewee remembered, "...there used to be a conductor who used to stop you from getting on to the train when it was too full."⁶⁷

The remnants of the inherited infrastructure form the primary organizing principal that determines the quality of peoples' waiting. Adiel lives in Ottery and he works in Langa. He has two transport options for getting to and from work. Either to take the cape flats line from Ottery to Cape Town and then change onto the Central Line from Cape Town to Langa. On a good day, this takes one hundred minutes each way, one thousand minutes a week. On a bad day it can take up to one hundred and eighty minutes, nine hundred minutes a week. This is to travel a distance of 8 km. It would take fifteen minutes by car and three hours walking.⁶⁸ The second option involves three changes and three waits. He takes the Cape Flats Line from Ottery to Maitland, and then changes onto the central line to go from Maitland to Mutual, and then changes onto a different branch to go from Mutual to Langa. This takes a similar amount of time as the first journey. Both routes are indirect and would make a V shape on a map as opposed to a straight line.⁶⁹

Interestingly, when describing his journey, Adiel did not comment on the fact that more efficient routes that would allow him to travel directly to his destination are not available to him. When discussing his expectations and hopes for improvement he spoke only in terms of reliable schedules, more trains and increased safety.⁷⁰ Adiel's journey, and how he reflects upon it, demonstrates how the infrastructural and historical legacies of colonialism and

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

apartheid, which are alive in the placement of train tracks, regiment and structure the experience of waiting in fundamental yet unseen ways. It is not surprising that these legacies of disparity are invisible to commuters who are more focused on trying to navigate the daily chaos of simply boarding a train on time.

The wait for transport is deeply shaped by the infrastructural level. However, on the daily level this is the least regimented, least structured and most anarchic site of waiting. It is defined by the absence of the state rather than by its claims to providing fair and equitable access as demonstrated through the orderly ‘first come first served queues’ and reduced waiting times as seen at the Department of Home Affairs. As a result, the modes of waiting for transport in Cape Town are multiple and influenced more than at the other sites by the waiting public itself.

On different days of the week, at different times, on different routes, in different weather conditions, different modes of waiting come into being. At peak times in rush hour crowds, especially in the late afternoons after a long day at work, or when the weather is cold, windy and rainy, frustration with the irregular overburdened service is more likely to boil over into impatience and negative interactions between commuters. A daily commuter described how in rush hour “...it’s an extremely dangerous situation...I broke my bag once trying to get out at Cape Town station. My bag broke and literally got pulled into the train and I had to get back in the train to get my bag out.”⁷¹ At such times waiting strangers can turn against one another and easily abandon normal courtesies to safe guard a space for the passage home. “People are not going to open the way, you have to push anyone who is in front of you, you just have to push your way, you don’t care if a person complains, you just have to get a way out. In the train it’s like that, you just don’t care.”⁷²

At less congested times entirely different modes of waiting characterized by a sense of community and an acknowledgement of shared experience emerge. I witnessed people greeting each other with enthusiasm, chatting about the best routes to take, lamenting and laughing about announcements of another train cancelled, strangers sharing a newspaper, and even a musician practicing to an audience huddled and waiting in a seated alcove.⁷³ In such moments potential hostility is replaced by a recognition of common experience and the resulting solidarity. Along similar lines commuters utilize communication technologies to alleviate the waiting experience through sharing information by using Facebook pages and

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Person 1, Female, Interview by Yoni Pakleppa, Hansen Road Muizenberg, Cape Town, 06/10/2017.

⁷³ Salt River Train Station, Cape Town, 21/09/2017 – 07/10/2017

WhatsApp groups. These are used to navigate unreliable schedules by delivering updates in real time.⁷⁴

As the sun rises, Ntsewa updates one of these groups... “Hasihambe lolo.” The reply, a familial recognition from a passenger who has just boarded one of the train’s carriages (like most of the WhatsApp group members, Ntsewa has never met them, and most likely never will) is almost immediate: “Thanks, I’m in skeem let’s go.”⁷⁵

These platforms are also used to socialize and share jokes like “how many stops between Pinelands and Langa? 5 or 15?”⁷⁶ Such communications connect people that would otherwise never come into contact or if they did may well be pitted against one another in a rush hour push. Thus, we see that very different modes of waiting co-exist and overlap in the multiple encounters that happen across the cities rail services every day.

Commuters have expectations around acceptable waiting behaviour. However, these notions are less clearly defined and more readily questioned in relation to this site of waiting than in relation to the other sites. For example, some reported outrage at seeing school children being prevented from boarding a train by grown men and at seeing women being forced to stand and watch a full train go by and wait for the next one.⁷⁷ However, the same people also recognized that waiting for the next train was “a choice people make” and understood that “a lot of people rather make the choice to force their way on to that train because they’re afraid of losing their jobs, because they’re afraid they might be the only one in the family putting bread on the table”.⁷⁸ Interestingly, notions of polite and fair waiting present in the queues for IDs and health care services were less well articulated in relation to waiting for transport. As a result commuters were more autonomously navigating their way through significant temporal instability. This is linked to the decay of the formal governmental systems that are supposed to regulate train use, and to the particular spatiality of the vast outdoor urban railway network, which is necessarily harder to monitor than the other sites of service delivery.

The ethnographic material has pointed to some clear differences in the modes of waiting present at each of the sites. Whereas the wait for Identity Documents and health care was generally approached calmly and with patience, the wait for transport inspired irregular responses. In some moments tensions arose between those who waited, and in others people

⁷⁴ Denis Webster, “A Day in the Life of a Metrorail Commuter.” *New Frame*, 19 November 2018.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Moegamat Adiel Hansloo, Interviewed by Zackie Achmat, Ndifuna Ukwazi Roeland Street, Cape Town, 30/09/2017. Received from #UniteBehind.

⁷⁷ Salt River Train Station, Cape Town, 21/09/2017 – 07/10/2017

⁷⁸ Person 1, Female, Interview by Yoni Pakleppa, Hansen Road Muizenberg, Cape Town, 06/10/2017.

were brought together by their shared experience of struggle. Another key difference between the waiting at each site was duration. The fact that the waiting involved in making an ID application only occurs occasionally made this kind of waiting much more tolerable than the repeated and enduring waiting that takes place in the use of trains. The feelings people had around waiting were not only linked to duration, but also to what was being waited for. I found that in the clinic the uncertainty of waiting led to particularly extreme feelings of anxiety. However, what is striking is that at all sites waiting was experienced unequally between different kinds of people. This is the case even with Identity Document applications where there is no alternative private service, and where inherited infrastructures impact all applicants equally. This indicates that waiting is not only unequal because resources are limited, and because inherited infrastructures channel uneven delivery, but also because those with higher means and greater technological access are able to employ strategies to bypass, side-step, and avoid waiting so that they have an advantage in accessing these limited resources. This shows how the overlooked experience of waiting powerfully dictates inequalities in unseen ways.

Waiting Subjects

*Time is more than a resource to be exploited, it is a terrain of lived experience... time stands still in moments of duress; races by in hindsight, is punctuated by the tick of a clock, the full moon, a traffic update.*¹

Waiting as an event should be conceptualized “not solely as an active achievement or passive acquiescence but as a variegated affective complex where experience folds through and emerges from a multitude of different planes.”² In this chapter I explore the everyday politics that develop in and around the experience of waiting. These interactions and expressions are not arbitrary, but speak to the intimate and subtle ways that subjectivities and citizens are made in and through socially fractured temporal experiences. Many previous studies of waiting explored in the literature review discuss the politics of waiting in terms of either submission or agency. This chapter however, takes a more nuanced approach that avoids dichotomies of action and inaction, citizen and state, and oppressor and oppressed to understand what these repeated and layered moments of waiting do within the individual and within communities. I view the waiting space and experience as shaped through a complex and messy articulation between the infrastructures, policies, and systems that make people wait and the individuals who do the waiting. I also explore how the seemingly mundane experience of waiting impacts significantly and sometimes contradictorily on the experience of personhood.

¹ Colin Hoag, ‘Dereliction at the South African Department of Home Affairs: Time for the Anthropology of Bureaucracy’, *Critiques of Anthropology*, 34: 4 (2014), 411.

² K. Bissell, ‘Animating Suspension: Waiting for Mobilities’, *Mobilities*, vol. 2 (2007), 279.

OUT OF SYNC AND LEFT BEHIND

This section focuses on how the interaction between infrastructure and the experience of everyday waiting constructs broader ways of being in the city. Because the learnt, repeated and performed activity of waiting is a continuous feature of everyday life in Cape Town it powerfully shapes peoples senses of who they are. This chapter brings together the previous chapters through acknowledging that “temporal structures form the central site for the coordination and integration of individual life plans and “systemic” requirements”.³

Cape Town, as a modern, entrepreneurial and cosmopolitan city with a powerful private sector is able to support a fast-paced life of minimized waiting and a high level of temporal efficiency for a small, established, mostly white, middle class. However, the repeated and prolonged waiting that occurs in the everyday lives of the majority who live in the city excludes them from this tempo. This however, does not mean that they unaffected by the tempo of the privileged as “ongoing acceleration of even one social subsystem can raise problematic temporal side effects for the other systems, and the individuals acting within them”.⁴ These “temporal side effects” can be traced in my interviews. Many participants expressed how their daily struggles to move timeously through the city led to deeper existential concerns over being left behind, being out of sync and having to constantly work at catching up. Naledi told me, “You feel like you don’t respect your work when you are frequently late”.⁵ She was also concerned by the fact that being late would appear ‘like I don’t like the job’.⁶ Aware of the racial stereotypes around tardiness and the expectations of punctuality that come with formal employment, Naledi was anxious about how the time lost in waiting would influence the ways in which she was perceived by others. This is an example of how taken for granted expectations of timeliness and efficiency which are part of colonial modernity dictate the temporal status quo and subtly inform not only the temporal qualities of social and economic interactions but also internalized expectations and senses self.

When asked about waiting, some interviewees responded defensively by giving very precise and detailed descriptions of their daily routines such as the exact time they got up, the time

³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵ Person 2, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, University of Cape Town Upper Campus, Cape Town, 06/10/2017.

⁶ *Ibid.*

they left the house, the time they caught the taxi and the time they got to the station. One interviewee went through all the possible times she could be embarking on the different stages of her journey to and from work, ‘I take that taxi at 06.20, and get to Mowbray at 06.35... sometimes I leave the house at 6.15, sometime 6.20, sometimes 6.25’.⁷ This detailed observance of time expresses her desire to conform to expectations of timeliness and being a responsible person. When speaking to her experience of the passing day she expresses an underlying anxiety: “You don’t feel like everything is ok or like life is fair to you...you feel unsafe, you feel insecure, you are not in control, you just want to know what is going and you are waiting for answers”.⁸

In his essay ‘Waiting Out the Crisis: On Stuckedness and Governmentality’ Hage argues that the social crises of modernity have led to a ‘proliferation and intensification of (a) sense of stuckedness’ and that this stuckedness is becoming increasingly normalized.⁹ This argument resonates with my findings on how the time lost in waiting for basic services in Cape Town impacts on the way that those affected feel about themselves in relations to time and in relation to their futures. Acute waiting leads to an overburdened attentiveness to the present and contributes to prohibit hopeful, empowered and explorative imaginings of the possible experiences of time in the future. One interviewee explained how the significant time lost in travel erased any time he had for himself: ‘Now where do you get time for your wife, never mind yourself? The time I get for myself is literally five minutes before bed before I close my eyes.’¹⁰ Another described how disempowered waiting makes her feel and how she had accepted it as an unavoidable part of life: ‘I get upset, very upset, helpless. Anyway, you can’t do anything, you just get upset and you accept the situation, it is what it is’.¹¹ These very real and negative effects of waiting occur when, as suggested by Rosa, different “levels of the individual’s experience of time can no longer be brought into accord with one another and with the systemic patterns of time.”¹²

The impact of navigating the inconsistencies between temporal expectations and realities has also been explored in the context of Meerut in India by Craig Jeffery in the article ‘Timepass: Youth, Class and the Politics of Waiting in India’.¹³ In this study he finds that the new laws

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Person 1, Female, Interview by Yoni Pakleppa, Hansen Road Muizenberg, Cape Town, 06/10/2017.

⁹ Ghassan Hage, ‘Waiting Out the Crisis: On Stuckedness and Governmentality’, in Hage (ed.), *Waiting*, 97

¹⁰ Hansloo, Moegamat Adiel. Interviewed by Zackie Achmat, Ndifuna Ukwazi Roeland Street, Cape Town, 30/09/2017. Received from #UniteBehind

¹¹ Person 1, Female, Interview by Yoni Pakleppa, Hansen Road Muizenberg, Cape Town, 06/10/2017.

¹² Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 31.

¹³ Craig Jeffery, ‘Timepass: Youth, Class and the Politics of Waiting in India’, *Journal of the American Ethnological Society*, 37: 3 (2010).

and public institutions that came with rapid capitalist development enshrined within young people's imaginations a specific European idea of how they should move through their biological lives according to life "stages".¹⁴ Interestingly, young unemployed lower middle class men in Meerut who were increasingly exposed via the global media to images of prosperity and quick success had a highly developed sense of temporal disjuncture and anxiety.¹⁵ Like the people I interviewed in Cape Town these men felt 'left behind' as they were unable to structure and make meaning of their daily temporalities within the context of rapid neoliberal economic change which encouraged 'investment' in specific 'modern' visions of the future. Jeffery argues that "It is this potent combination of extreme investment in particular modes of self-transformation and long-term exclusion from possibilities for real mobility that underpins feelings of waiting in many contexts."¹⁶

Some of my interviewees forced to forego some activities and compromise certain obligations by the uncertainties and delays caused by waiting clearly expressed feelings of shame. For example, Naledi's experiences of waiting were linked to her self-esteem by, to some extent, compromising her confidence both as a professional and as a mother. She told me,

You are always rushing to get home to cook and to be with the kids and help with homework on time but you always don't get there... normally I don't even help with my daughters homework... as soon as I am back I just go straight to the kitchen and just start preparing for the supper so that by eight o'clock she can be done eating, just rushing.' She concludes, 'It always affects me because I don't want to be late, and I'm always late.'¹⁷

This is an example of how "visions of linear time operating at different social and spatial scales commonly exert a symbolic violence on waiting populations, who often come to be labelled or label themselves as 'failures' or 'people left behind'."¹⁸ As Maree Pardy so aptly puts it, "Shame is like waiting, in the sense that it is about the feeling of not being in the right place or in the right relation to time and others... (it) is about not-belonging or not being 'in-time' with others; being out of step."¹⁹

Delay in the provision of public services is not only a practical problem but also causes deeper existential questioning as those who are commonly delayed are marginalised by the

¹⁴ Jeffery, 'Timepass', 467

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 954

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Person 1, Female, Interview by Yoni Pakleppa, Hansen Road Muizenberg, Cape Town, 06/10/2017.

¹⁸ Jeffery, 'Timepass', 467.

¹⁹ Pardy, 'The Shame of Waiting', 196.

images of progress and particular visions of future that surround them yet are practically unattainable. A fast and even tempo that can only be maintained by the minority shapes not only the temporal expectations of the economy but also the ways in which the majority internalise expectations of self in relation to time.

THE PRODUCTION OF PATIENCE

Often rather than being perceived as something one can challenge and change, every day waiting is normalised and to an extent internalised as an ‘inevitable pathological state’ to be endured.²⁰ This section will discuss the ways in which repeated and extended experiences of waiting, for certain kinds of people, have come to be normalised within our society and to an extent accepted by those that do the waiting. Auyero argues that acquiescent dispositions are born out of repeated experiences in “shabby waiting rooms, uncomfortable lives, endless delays and random meager delivery” which convey an important message, “wait, be patient, and you might benefit from my (reluctant) benevolence”.²¹ So also in South Africa the ways in which services are delivered play a significant role in shaping the subjects of waiting. In the previous chapter I discussed many examples of people patiently and passively waiting at all three of my research sites. There were many instances where, when I asked people about their experiences of waiting, they replied with general reflections on the necessity of patience. For example, one woman told me,

I have a lot of patience anywhere I go. Whether it’s a queue in a shop or wherever I have patience to wait, because I know there are only a few hands to help so you must just have patience. If you come to a place and it’s full and you don’t want to wait then you must just go home, that’s my opinion. No, I don’t complain. I learnt. You learn a lot...²²

It is certainly the case, especially at the Department of Home Affairs, that those more exposed to routine and repeated waiting are more likely to be accepting and understanding of delay, and that this in turn is linked to the social constructions around the ways time is valued differently for different people depending on how they spend their time.

²⁰ Hage, ‘Waiting Out the Crisis’, 97.

²¹ Auyero, *Patients of the State*, 154, 12.

²² Person 3, Female, Interviewed by Yoni Pakleppa, Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 17/11/2017.

However, this temporal value system which naturalizes waiting for some and not others is not only created through how this experience is curated within spaces of service delivery but also in the way that waiting is written about and understood in media and reproduced in popular opinion as “in the order of things”.²³ There are frequent news articles that report on the long queues across the country in hospitals, clinics, at home affairs, on housing lists, in SASSA offices and at train stations. However, the narratives of interest are normally those that report the extreme cases, the times when people wait for days on end only to be sent home, when the trains are so full that people fall out and die, when a person brings a gun into a state office to demand service or when a person passes away while waiting to see a doctor.²⁴

Furthermore, in media representations of the failures of service delivery waiting itself is never framed as the central problem, rather the conditions of the waiting and the lack of modern technology to mediate this experience is what takes center stage – inadequate infrastructures, temporal uncertainty, early mornings, repeated visits and dangerous conditions form the parameters of unacceptable waiting. The causes of “unacceptable” waiting are broadly framed as corruption, an unfortunate historical legacy and criminal activity. For example, recent articles about Cape Town’s metrorail crisis and the daily travails of traveling in the city tend to point fingers at PRASA (Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa) as a somehow isolated government body, at rouge and disgruntled passengers turned arsonists and at the general crime present in the city. Waiting is not explicitly linked to the failings of the systems of distribution or to uneven development.²⁵

At the same time there are reports that subtly hold those who wait accountable for the unevenness and unfairness involved in waiting. For example, vandalism on the trains and queue-jumping as well as the practice of paying someone to wait for you to hold a space in a service delivery queue are framed as ‘amoral’ acts that contribute to the chaos and inadequacy of service. What is not reported is the much more common, mundane, calm and sustained everyday waiting that accumulates into copious life hours wasted by those who are dependent on these services. These omissions construct patient endurance and self-regulation in a time of crisis as a normal act of a good citizen while at the same time constructing

²³ Auyero, *Patients of the State*, 14.

²⁴ ‘Shame of the Home Affairs ID suicide.’ *IOL news*, 30 August 2009; ‘ID delay drives man to take a hostage’ *IOL news*, 1 December 2005; Zoe Postman, ‘Exclusive: Damning letter from PRASA manager described railway security meltdown.’ *Ground Up*, 5 October 2017; Ashraf Hendricks, ‘More civil society voices call for action by PRASA.’ *Ground Up*, 20 October 2017; Matthew Hirsch and Dineo Mogotsi, ‘OP-ED: Are train fires random cases of arson or sabotage.’ *Daily Maverick*, 25 August 2018.

²⁵ Matthew Hirsch and Dineo Mogotsi, ‘Op-Ed: Are Train Fires Random Cases of Arson or Sabotage’, *Daily Maverick*, 25 August 2018.

‘impatience’ in the form of everyday unrest or the abandonment of the normal rules of queueing as ‘uncivilized’ and a key part of the problem.²⁶ These public representations regulate demands made by dependent populations on the delivery of key services. Indirectly however, they also support and normalize the racially and economically aligned temporal hierarchy that makes it acceptable for some people to wait much more than others.

The relative values of time for different people in Cape Town are not only stratified along race and class lines but also according to gender. The layered and arguably more taxing impact of waiting on women was evident in my observations at The Chapel Street Clinic. The queue which I observed offered family planning services which included immunizations, the treatment of sick children and babies, monitoring of pregnant women and tests and treatments for sexual health problems. Unsurprisingly, ninety percent of the people I saw in the queue across the days I spent there were women and children. The only men present were those accompanying partners or partners and children, and all the staff were women except for the visiting doctor.²⁷ All the women had repeatedly waited in this space.²⁸ One woman told me that during her pregnancy, “Yo! I must have gone to the clinic more than ten times” and how usually it was without her husband. Now she frequently returns alone with her children. She explained,

...for me when I see other men there I feel jealous, like, how can I get my husband to come and do this? I wish he also come with me to see what it takes... but many men think, ‘this is not my thing; this is a woman’s thing’... maybe they think women are more patient.²⁹

These observations demonstrate not only how waiting is experienced disproportionately along gendered lines but also how different people’s times are assigned different kinds of values within the productive schema which then become internalised. In relation to the early period of modernity Thompson theorized that

the rhythms of women's work in the home are not wholly attuned to the measurement of the clock. The mother of young children has an imperfect sense of time and attends to other human tides. She has not yet altogether moved out of the conventions of "pre-industrial" society.³⁰

²⁶ Hage, ‘Introduction’, 7.

²⁷ Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 17/11/2017, 07:30 – 14:00.

²⁸ Chapel Street Clinic, Woodstock, Cape Town, 13/11/2017; 16/11/2017; 17/11/2017.

²⁹ Person 1, Female, Interview by Yoni Pakleppa, Hansen Road Muizenberg, Cape Town, 06/10/2017.

³⁰ Thompson, ‘Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism’, 79.

The temporal logic of modernity assumes women to be less productive due to their domestic commitments. Therefore, their time is perceived as less valuable, and as a result there is more acceptance of their time being wasted through waiting. The reality is of course that women are as acutely aware and attuned to the rhythm of the clock as men and they too are expected to adhere to its rhythms. The key difference is however that women who within this paradigm are thought to be better suited to waiting, are commonly assigned a bigger share of domestic tasks, the tempos of which are arguable harder to predict and synchronize, often in addition to their formal economic activities. The particular experiences that women have when waiting for public services thus construct and affirm gendered differences at the everyday level.

BEYOND THE BINARY OF SUBMISSION AND AGENCY

The qualities of the waiting experience are not only determined by top down strategies of the state but also by much subtler historically layered elements. In the South African context waiting has been powerfully legitimized as a key part of the national narrative of struggle, liberation, transition, and yet to be fulfilled promises. In 1994 the state promised to redistribute by building upon existing infrastructure to equitably deliver public services to its newly recognized citizens.³¹ The state established itself as a key provider and many people across generations continue to wait for these promises to be fulfilled. Waiting for these key services which ensure citizens basic rights has arguably become a normal and to an extent legitimized part of life for most South African's in the post-apartheid era: 'to wait for something is to believe it will deliver'.³²

The extent to which this logic of waiting has been accepted however is questionable. While in some ways previously disadvantaged South Africans adhere to the logic of waiting through for example placing themselves on RDP housing waiting lists for decades, in other ways they subvert the logic of waiting for services through the actions that they take in the meanwhile.

³³ In her exploration of the experience of waiting for housing in Cape Town Sophie Oldfield shows how waiting "as a process and a politics... shapes citizens encounter with the state in banal and profound ways."³⁴ She views waiting as key experience of citizenship that is both

³¹ Khosa, *Infrastructure Mandates for Change*, 14.

³² Nadeem Malik, 'Waiting for Imam Mahdi and Development: The Case of Pakistan', in Hage (ed.), *Waiting*, 56.

³³ Oldfield, 'Waiting for the State', 1101.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

normalized and legitimated through the socioeconomic rights specified in the constitution. She argues that when it comes to housing the politics of waiting is paradoxical as “citizens consider themselves responsibilities of the state, yet to live in the short and long term demands subversion, a provisional agency, more often than not out of sight, simultaneously contentious and legitimate”.³⁵ Through the process of waiting then, citizens are at once marked as legitimate wards of the state yet are actively forced to live subversively in the meanwhile by for example living in illegal settlement to secure temporary living situations.³⁶ For her agency is expressed in the ‘non-movements’ of small actions of defiance which take place alongside many routine acts of patience.³⁷ She argues that waiting in South Africa happens in ‘quiet encroachments’ through ‘the power of non-movements’ and as such is neither passive nor impotent.³⁸ The poor who wait are not only ‘patients’ of the state as Auyero theorizes in relation to Argentina. Rather they act in relation to the state and its inadequacies by in big numbers routinely simultaneously doing similar small subversive contentious and yet normalized things.³⁹

This challenges the notion that “waiting is the tension of subjects as they exist on a boundary between a present world that they cannot leave and a future one that they cannot automatically or immediately enter” and suggests rather, that waiting is a time that is fully inhabited, and that is carefully and purposefully navigated through acts of both patience and impatience.⁴⁰ The fact that the uneven conditions and durations of waiting for public services in Cape Town are to an extent strategically determined by state apparatuses and that at times those most affected by delay accept these conditions patiently does not mean that they do so without agency.

In the historical ethnography *Democracy’s Infrastructure*, Antina Von Schnitzler also addresses the complex forms of agency that take shape in South African in response to poor service delivery.⁴¹ Examining the life of the pre-paid water meter as a micro-political and mundane form of techno-politics, Von Schnitzler proposes that,

[i]n the aftermath of apartheid, the politics of infrastructure, basic needs, and life itself — forms of politics that were often articulated via and subsumed within the political languages of the nationalist movement during the

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1102.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1101.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1102.

⁴⁰ John Rundell, ‘Temporal Horizons of Modernity and Modalities of Waiting’, in Hage (ed.), *Waiting*, 44.

⁴¹ Von Schnitzler, *Democracy’s Infrastructure*, 5, 10.

antiapartheid struggle — have become sites for the negotiation of key questions of post-apartheid citizenship concerning local democracy, belonging, and the bounds of civic obligation and social rights.⁴²

Both these pieces reveal how modes of waiting, as the predominant experience of inadequate service delivery, have become a crucial terrain of a negotiation around “how citizenship and rights are claimed in the post-apartheid context”.⁴³ These discussions which recognise the role of citizens themselves in influencing the forms and meanings of waiting resonate with my own findings on the dynamic waiting that also takes shape around the delivery of Identity Documents, Health Care and especially transport.

At train stations I found the clearest examples of defiant waiting coinciding routines of ‘acceptable’ waiting behaviour. For example, one day I observed a group of more than ten people of different genders, races and varying ages being stopped by Metrorail security guards for not having valid tickets and being asked to pay a fine. They unanimously refused to pay a fine that would have released them from custody and were escorted to a holding room only to be released, free of charge, thirty minutes later.⁴⁴ Arguably, this can be interpreted as a moment of successful protest against poor service and delays. These people were delayed even further by not paying for their journeys. Thus, they subverted the meaning of patience through waiting out their punishment. They patiently spent their extra waiting time not in compliance with the law but to discredit ‘acceptable’ practices of train use. Fair evasion is becoming more and more common as commenters argue that they should not have to pay for a service that is so unreliable. Over the last two years, there has been a significant decrease in ticket sales that is not relative to decreasing number of users.⁴⁵ Waiting inspires reactions of lawlessness with waiters taking their experience into their own hands and navigating temporal uncertainty and delay on their own terms.

Furthermore, there has also been an increase in the improper use of the trains with many people riding in-between carriages, hanging out of doors and even on riding on roofs despite warnings, the dangers involved and the sometimes violent reactions of security guards. Dysfunctionality in service delivery in some cases then is met by dysfunctionality in service use. These everyday shifts in behaviour around the use of transport demonstrate that despite the normalisation of long waiting periods commuters do not uniformly accept the

⁴² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴³ Oldfield, ‘Waiting for the State’, 1104.

⁴⁴ Salt River Train Station, Cape Town, 27/09/2017, 16:30 – 18.00.

⁴⁵ #UniteBehind Metrorail Monitoring Project, ‘Rig, Conceal, Destroy and Falsify: How State Capture Happened at Prasa.’ *Draft for Distribution and Comment*, 2017, 6.

circumstances that they are forced to endure while waiting. Political subjectivities are shaped in relation to many different temporal scales. The experience of being surrounded by faster private services and others who are able to live more efficiently leads to increased frustration and the politicization of delay. Those who frequently wait are thus not solely fated to be passive and accepting. Instead, “in the context of everyday practices, temporal strategies like letting others wait, holding back, beating them to the punch, hesitating, changing the rhythm, varying the duration, etc., often lie at the centre of social contestation.”⁴⁶

Similarly, the WhatsApp groups that have emerged as alternative sources of information on train schedules now exist for each of the cities railway lines and have grown to have thousands of members who communicate with each other on a daily basis. In these autonomous social spaces claimed through use of modern technology light-hearted memes commenting on the struggles of a Cape Town commuter and breaking news reports exposing the corruption at PRASA are exchanged between complete strangers who are united by the common bond of waiting. The groups also inform their members of delays, suspected reasons for disruption and provide live updates of the locations of particular trains. The use of such technologies that function as responsive innovative forms of open time keeping, arguably go some way to subvert the trajectories of waiting dictated by the failures of service providers and by the colonial infrastructures upon which these services are built. These WhatsApp groups are significant because they are tools through the use of which commuters are able to influence the ways in which they engage with the experience of waiting. Unlike the state’s new partially online Identity Document Application system which provides unequal access these groups made by commuters and for commuters facilitate a very different kind of politics around waiting. They are self-organized and inclusive.

These new technological infrastructures provide a space of solidarity which is an alternative the aggressive venting of frustrations among the ‘victims’ of everyday waiting. They offer an empowering space where different experiences of waiting are created. Through outrage, humour and the use of a common language around issues of delay it is possible that new temporal norms, behaviours and meanings may arise. Messages like, “the 1042 will be by retreat *now now*” and “who knows, we could start moving again *right now*” are examples of emerging counter-tempos and conceptualizations of temporal units.⁴⁷ It is interesting that phrases like, ‘right now’, ‘now now’ and ‘just now’, South African colloquialisms used to indicate loose and relative temporal units, are used on these commuter groups. They are

⁴⁶ Rosa, *Social Acceleration*, 12.

⁴⁷ Whatsapp group, Southern Line, 13.03.2017

evidence of those who bare the biggest burden of waiting negotiating the fractured temporal scales of the city.

Although the majority of people in Cape Town are forced to wait for services to be delivered the fact that a small elite are able to access much more efficient services dictates social and economic expectations of timeliness in the city at large. New technologies however provide an opportunity for these expectations to be reformulated. As Cape Town's commuters explore ways of moving away from standardized notions of time keeping, in order to make their lives practically and existentially viable they contribute to, at least in some way, the resyncing of the modern time-scape.

This dissertation has explored the often overlooked experience of waiting. It focused on three specific sites of waiting for public services in Cape Town – the dispersed everyday waiting for public transport at train stations, the queues at the Department of Home Affairs regional office for South African Identity Document applications, and the waiting room of the Chapel Street Community Health Clinic. Through putting the infrastructural and institutional histories of these sites into conversation with experiential ethnographic accounts of daily waiting, it has tried to tease out the complicated and layered ways in which waiting creates and sustains inequalities. It also highlights the various ways in which repeated experiences of waiting inform subjectivities to inspire reactions which cannot be easily pigeonholed into either submission or agency.

Through a comparative analysis of the different modes of waiting present at each site, this dissertation finds that different socialites and subjectivities emerge out of different experience of waiting. Across all three sites waiting was a source of tension. However, this tension came to the surface in different ways and to different degrees depending on the specificities of the waiting experience. The wait for public health care was characterized by unpredictability and thus created feelings of anxiety in patients, despite the fact that the queue was closely monitored. The wait to apply for Identity Documents was similarly controlled, but on the whole, more predictable and more relaxed, due to the very different nature of what was being waited for. In both cases, although the queues appeared to evenly distribute waiting time, certain people were made to wait more than others. These unseen inequalities manifested along the lines of class, race and gender. Despite this, waiting at both sites was, for the most part, accepted and approached with patience. In this way an element of submission characterised the experience of waiting and thus informed a particular dynamic of everyday interaction with the state.

There were also clear inequalities in the repeated wait for transport. This experience of waiting was only endured by those who could not afford alternatives. Furthermore, a more hidden inequality lay in the infrastructural legacies which determined the routes available to commuters and thus the amount of time spent waiting on a daily basis. However, on the whole, this experience of waiting inspired different ways of being to the other sites. This was because it was the least monitored and controlled space of waiting, which was linked to the fact that, unlike the other experiences of waiting, which were housed in enclosed spaces, this experience occurred across vast interconnected open areas. The fact that this site contained the most varied examples of waiting behaviour, of both patient and defiant waiting, suggests that spatiality also crucially informs the relationship between waiting and agency in the everyday interactions between the state and its citizens.

On one hand, repeated and extended waiting is a broad and general experience because delays are endemic and impact the majority of people living in Cape Town. However, on the other hand, waiting is experienced very personally as it creeps into intimate lives and informs understandings of self in relation to time. These two realities of waiting are not contradictory but co-constituted as the historical processes and infrastructural legacies that have led to mass waiting for service delivery also crucially inform and shape individuated experiences of waiting, as people try to understand themselves in relation to unattainable temporal expectations. Although extended waiting is caused by broad evolving social and infrastructural processes, the costs of waiting are felt at the individual level. There is a constant individuation in the accountability for delay in a society and economy that expects timeliness despite the fact that it is only realistically attainable to a small elite minority.

Waiting in Cape Town is highly political precisely because of this tension and the way in which it works to produce patience. However, this dissertation finds that although patience is an important part of the daily experience of waiting, people do not only wait patiently. Rather, waiting is performed in a diversity of ways which supersede the binary of agency and submission so often present in analyses of everyday politics.

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