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Sandrine Musso. Œuvre et posture en anthropologie politique, publique et impliquée

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Christine M. Jacobsen



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Temporality and the politics of the migrant body

Christine M. Jacobsen

- 1 This text is based on traces of Sandrine Musso in the archive of the project WAIT, in which Sandrine took part from 2017 to 2020. These traces attest to the originality and international reach of Sandrine's work, and her important contributions to the WAIT-project – some of which remained unfinished. The project *Waiting for an uncertain future, the temporalities of irregular migration* explored what temporality as analytic lens can offer into understanding complex and shifting processes of bordering, belonging, state power, exclusion and inclusion, and social relations in migration.
- 2 I first started collaborating with Sandrine when I did fieldwork in Marseille in the context of a previous project (The Provision of Welfare to Irregular Migrants, PROVIR), which pioneered a combined anthropological and legal approach to the provision of welfare to irregular migrants, importantly including access to health care. Sandrine's earlier studies of migrant's access to health care related to HIV/AIDS, and the so-called 'illness clause' – which gives foreigners with serious diagnoses that cannot be effectively treated in their home countries the right to apply for a temporary residence permit in France – spoke directly to the projects' comparative examination of irregular migrant's access to healthcare in different European countries. When we applied for funding to continue the research on irregular migration in the WAIT-project, we invited Sandrine to be a partner. Together with Sarah Willen (University of Connecticut) and Jo Veary (University of the Witwatersrand), she provided expertise in medical anthropology, and set out to study the consequences of prolonged waiting for irregularized migrant's health and well-being.
- 3 Through investigating time and temporality, the WAIT project produced new critical knowledge about the cultural prerequisites for, and implications of, contemporary migration. The project examined how laws, cultural norms, and power-relationships structure time in particular ways and how such temporal structures affect migrants' experiences and life projects, as well as societal processes of inclusion and exclusion. Studying time structures is particularly relevant to migration that tends to be labelled

irregular; referring to people whose entrance to and/or dwelling on state territory happens without formal authorization, since such forms of migration tend to be characterized by protracted waiting, insecurity, and temporariness (Jacobsen *et al.*, 2020). The WAIT-project focused on four European migration-hubs, notably Oslo, Stockholm, Hamburg, and Marseille – where Sandrine and I both worked ethnographically.

- 4 As an international network partner, Sandrine delved into the articulation and mutual implication of temporalities in migration and illness. Both experiences of migration and experiences of illness or encounters with health institutions are sites of subjectivation involving temporal frames. Sandrine noticed a certain parallel between the biographical rupture implied by migration trajectories and the biographical rupture that being diagnosed with a serious or chronic disease may represent (Musso, 2016). Experiences of both migration and of being diagnosed with a disease can destabilise the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life, its spatial and temporal orientations not least. Sandrine's interest was not only in exploring the parallels between these temporalities, but also their mutual implication. The intersection of multiple temporalities – different experiences of time and relations to the past, present, and future – shape the lives of migrants living with AIDS and other illnesses, she argued.
- 5 In a paper given while she was a visiting research fellow at the University of Bergen in March/April 2017, Sandrine noted that time and waiting is a constituting aspect of HIV/AIDS. The time between the moment of infection and the outbreak of the symptoms of the disease can be as much as ten years apart. The experience of the illness is thus importantly conditioned by its proper temporality. At a different level, the geopolitical situation may also condition the experiences of waiting for persons living with HIV/AIDS in so far as treatment available in the global North is often not available in many of the countries that migrants depart from, and risk being deported to, if they do not obtain a residence permit in France.
- 6 One of the topics that we explored in the WAIT project was how individual and collective relationships to the future are configured in and through migration and its governance. Sandrine followed this line of inquiry into the domain of illness. Contemporary politics of health in the domain of chronic viral diseases was less oriented towards curing patients in the present, and more attuned to an imminent future, focusing on prevention and preparedness. This, Sandrine argued, was due to the temporality of epidemics where expectations of a catastrophic future are central. How carriers of the virus are treated, is shaped by such (political and juridical) future visions. These temporal dimensions further shape and are shaped by the debate on migration, and on the future of French national identity. Sandrine's reflections on the temporality of epidemics and its relation to mobility gained, as we all know, and new and unexpected timeliness with the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 7 Medical temporalities intersect with temporalities of migration control in complex ways. One such changing intersection, which Sandrine and I were writing about but never got to publish, was how medical developments in anti-viral treatments changed the temporalities of migration trajectories. The impact of 'medical discoveries' on people's possibilities of regularization in France raises important questions about how migrants' experiences and life projects are shaped at the intersection of multiple temporalities. The arrival of antiretroviral therapies for HIV/aids in 1996, enabled

activists to successfully argue that the deportation of people living with HIV to countries where treatment was not available was an implicit death sentence for the person in question, and for the (temporary) regularisation of people in need of treatment (Salem, 2017). In contrast, the new treatments of Hepatitis C that became increasingly common from 2016 onwards, transformed what had previously been one of the most frequent grounds for temporary regularization under the ‘illness clause’ to an illness that could be effectively cured in a majority of cases, and which therefore no longer was a ground for regularisation.

- 8 Participating in the WAIT project inspired Sandrine to incorporate issues pertaining to time and temporality more fully into her research, and to reflect on what is at stake with regards to these issues. Together with colleagues at la Vielle Charité (EHESP, Centre Norbert Elias, LaSSA, Aix Marseille Université, Institut de recherche pour le développement and SESSTIM), she developed the seminar series *Frontières, temporalités, matérialités au prisme de la santé*, where we in 2017 together presented the WAIT project and our ethnography from Marseille.
- 9 In the frames of the WAIT-project Sandrine’s interest for the body led her to a fascination with questions related to the embodied temporalities not only of illness, but also of age. The threshold between being a child and an adult is crucial to the determination of migrants’ access to regularization and rights to welfare, as special legal and social provisions apply to minors. The occupation of the Saint-Ferréol Church, located at the Old Port of Marseille, by a group of unaccompanied minors and their allies in 2017, was a crucial point of departure for the analysis Sandrine was to develop of how the question of age had become a political stake in the governing of migration as the category of ‘unaccompanied minors’ coalesced into a new ‘humanitarian population’ alongside the ‘étranger malade’. In a way similar to how ‘illness’ became the only ‘mobilizable capital’ for those whose presence was legitimized purely on the grounds of their illness (Musso, 2000), age, and more specifically ‘minority’, was becoming a prime marker of vulnerability in public discourse. As engaged anthropologists, we both assisted during the occupation of the Saint-Ferréol Church, not only for purposes of observation, but also in support of the struggle of the unaccompanied minors to be recognized as rights-bearing subjects.
- 10 In the edited volume from the WAIT-project, Sandrine developed the ideas of the emergence of a new ‘humanitarian population’ in the chapter “The truth of the body as controversial evidence. An investigation into age assessments of migrant minors in France”, which was to be one of the last publications that Sandrine worked on and published. Based on an exploratory ethnographic survey in Marseille between September 2017 and July 2019, which involved interviews with lawyers specializing in the defence of unaccompanied minors, experts in determining bone age and social workers and activists working with minors, Sandrine dressed a nuanced picture of the interface of age and migration control policies.
- 11 One of the issues that caught Sandrine’s attention, as an engaged and positioned researcher often critical of governmental power, was the question of ‘deminorisation’ and the stuckedness it produced. “The term describes the fact that a person may have been recognized as a minor in one department but when he or she arrives in another department, that department no longer recognizes him or her as a minor. The threat of deminorisation may also be linked to investigations carried out after access to

- protection, leading to situations where people are ‘stuck between ages.’” (Musso, 2020 : 161).
- 12 Stuckedness in the context outlined above, refers to a temporal rather than a spatial dimension since it describes a ‘place’ between two ages. Unaccompanied minors are ‘stuck between ages’, at the ‘threshold’ between childhood and adulthood, in a liminal situation of waiting and immobility, subject to a judicial decision. In the case of age assessment of unaccompanied minors, waiting is directed not towards accessing adult status, which as anthropologists have noted is socially valued in many socio-cultural contexts, but towards accessing the status as minor. Accessing the status of a ‘minor’ will allow one to be recognised as still being a ‘child’ and thus a humanitarian subject. Such recognition involves forming an infantilising and victimising narrative, thereby erasing any form of agency, in order to obtain the right to stay in France, Sandrine argued.
 - 13 Sandrine was interested in, and explored with great ethnographic curiosity, the age assessment practices that are used to settle disputes over the age of unaccompanied minors in France, and the knowledges that such practices build on and produce. She showed how the social assessment practices rest on particular normative ideas about childhood and adulthood, which determine whether a person’s age claim is perceived as ‘credible’ and ‘coherent’. Sandrine also discussed the ‘temporal violence’ of ‘forensic’ age assessment, such as the measurement of bone age. ‘Age disputes’ related to the assessment of minority, Sandrine argued with reference to Smith & Marmo (2013), attest to the fact that the tools for age assessment have become biopolitical objects of, and procedures for, the government of borders (Musso, 2020 : 165).
 - 14 Concluding her chapter, Sandrine argued that age-assessment of migrant minors and deminorisation “are perfect examples of the plurality of forms of waiting and of temporalities : Waiting for shelter, for obtaining legal administrative status, for school or for professional integration is combined with social and legal timeframes, markers of differentiation and thresholds between childhood and adulthood. The entanglement of situational and existential waiting (Dwyer, 2009) is marked here by the ambivalence of the reverse rite of passage constituted by recognition as ‘minor.’ Social expectations of success that often characterises the migration journey in the eyes of those who remain in the country (Sayad, 1999), or expectations to ‘become a man,’ can weigh on the shoulders of these young people when the status of ‘child’ is at the same time the only one that is deemed deserving of protection.” (Musso, 2020 : 165).
 - 15 Sandrine’s chapter in the WAIT-book and her own presentation of the chapter are available here :
 - 16 [www.routledge.com/Waiting-and-the-Temporalities-of-Irregular-Migration/Jacobsen-Karlsen-Khosravi/p/book/9780367368470 ? gclid=CjwKCAiAlfqOBhAeEiwAYi43F3L4vFDDOIvedseXSRpCJOvxQmF6Xr3gMr072tL2fwiKjeFWbi7dERoCDuwQAvD_BwE#](http://www.routledge.com/Waiting-and-the-Temporalities-of-Irregular-Migration/Jacobsen-Karlsen-Khosravi/p/book/9780367368470?gclid=CjwKCAiAlfqOBhAeEiwAYi43F3L4vFDDOIvedseXSRpCJOvxQmF6Xr3gMr072tL2fwiKjeFWbi7dERoCDuwQAvD_BwE#)
 - 17 www.uib.no/en/skok/140071/waiting-analytical-perspective-provides-new-insight

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AUTHOR

CHRISTINE M. JACOBSEN

University of Bergen (Norway), Christine.Jacobsen@uib.no