"Upstream" Borders: An Ethnographic Approach to Control and Management of Immigration in Canada

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Introduction

In Canada, the management of migration through the interplay of inclusion and exclusion is the corner stone of the immigration system. Over the last decade, immigration and asylum policies have undergone significant changes. The tightening and reinforcement of conditions for admission to Canada, the intensification of border controls or their relocation (beyond geographical borders), as well as the emergence of spaces of confinement, constitute such obstacles that disrupt immigration towards Canada, in effect, sidelining "aliens", immigrants and asylum seekers alike.

This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out from within the sidelines of the migratory apparatus in Canada, in which I focused on the fabrication of non-persons (Dal Lago 2009) within this liminal space. How do apparatuses concretely operate and what are the effects thereof? These are some questions that need to be addressed.

It is crucial, in my opinion, to pay attention to these moving borders of exclusion and to examine, through anthropological inquiry, their institutional and political architecture and the technologies of government deployed within this realm. This paper builds on such an inquiry. I will highlight the generalization of control apparatuses in Canada and seek to appreciate how they were put in place through biopolitical technologies regulating time, space and discretionary power when dealing with immigrants. These control apparatuses are, in turn, subtly normalized as strategies of exclusion within the confines of the law. The result is the systematic sidelining of those populations being "targeted" and their reduction to the condition of non-persons. This process is happening just as the Canadian government maintains a discourse of neutrality in immigrant selection based on a point system to which all immigrants are equally subject.

The Anthropology of Apparatuses

The margins of the state or sidelines can be defined as spaces, practices, strategies and mechanisms through which the uncertainty of the law takes shape and where arbitrariness is deployed to make law certain (Das and Poole 2004). In other words, they are the "grey zones"[1] where exceptionality takes place and shapes subjectivities. It is within these grey zones that biopolitics operates.

In order to understand these spaces theoretically and empirically, I adopted an approach that I will call here an anthropology of apparatuses. Apparatus, a key concept in contemporary thought developed both by Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, has to be considered as:

> a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said

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[1] This notion has been developed by Primo Levi in *Survival in Auschwitz* (1958).

as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. (Foucault 1980:194)[2].

Empirically, the approach I propose focuses on the daily functioning, practices and strategies that take form within and shape these apparatuses, specifically those that concern immigration and the various elements that are at the heart of the apparatus, such as Canadian and Quebecois immigration institutions, laws, legislative and regulatory documents, policies, discourses, procedures, etc. In other words, my approach favours a micro and non-institutional perspective, which is based on daily functioning and which seeks to reveal what is a stake in the apparatus, notably the production of categories, classifications, subjectivities and borders, etc. that are central to the management of immigration and which shape and control the immigrant's conditions of existence. With the idea of biopolitics as a modality of the exercise of power, and acting as an analytical nucleus, such an approach opens up several possibilities.

It is important to note that the apparatus shapes the categorizations that assign to each a place in society. By extension, it allows for the fabrication of an individual typology and, in that case, an immigrant typology. Moreover, as Foucault has argued, the apparatus allows one to grasp how global strategies of power are embedded in micro-relations of power. (Foucault 1980:199) To analyze these micro-relations of power provides an opportunity to question the mechanisms of power, in other words, to show how power works and operates on a daily basis through relations giving form to exceptionality concretely.

This paper aims to highlight and to interrogate the sorting that takes shape during the immigration selection process and to understand the effects inherent to the immigrant categorizations developed in the framework of these arrangements. In short, it is to apprehend the way this apparatus is deployed and to examine the effects it produces.

Throughout the categorization of individuals and populations, an implementation of differential practices and strategies operates, which are articulated according to the category of individuals to whom they are addressed. Central to this reflection is the social sorting where inclusion and exclusion are the mechanisms that drive the selection process. Put differently, I attempt to highlight the predetermined conceptions of the Other which produce an essentialization of the immigrant articulated principally around a polarized representation – immigrant as "commodity" and immigrant as "threat" –, while showing how the different elements that are components of that apparatus allow for the implementation of control and subjectification processes which reduce immigrants to their more simple expression, that is, non-persons.

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[2]   Giorgio Agamben considers the apparatus in a more wide sense. For him the apparatus is "literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings." (2009:14)

Control and Management of Immigration in Canada: A Brief Overview

By turning immigration and refugee issues into a security concern, since the last decade the Canadian government has initiated a series of measures designed to police borders and restrict access to Canada (Adelman 2002a, 2002b; Bhattacharyya 2002). One of these measures was the new *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) which came into effect in June 2002.[3] This Act contains reforms aimed at curbing the potential dangers that immigrants and refugees allegedly pose to Canada. For example, it expands the use of detention. While the motives for detention remain the same (flight risk,[4] danger to the public, and identity[5]), the new Act broadens the provisions whereby people can be detained at the port of entry and throughout the determination process.[6] It is also important to note that the IRPA allows Immigration officers to arrest and detain foreign nationals within Canada who cannot satisfactorily identify themselves. While it might be the most conspicuous, the IRPA is one among many control measures established in order to assess any security risks and to restrict access to Canada. These controls[7] include the imposition of visa requirements (in December 2001, Canada imposed visas on 8 new countries,[8] in order to "harmonize" its policies and practices with the U.S.[9]); the implementation of the *Safe Third Country Agreement*[10] (in effect as of December 2004, and signed by both Canada and the United States), which limits the number of refugee arrivals; the pre-screening of refugee claimants by the *Canadian Security and Intelligence Service* (CSIS) to ensure that they are not security risks[11]; and the use of *Advanced Passenger Information* (API) lists with full reservation details to facilitate interdiction at the airport by "disembarkation teams" whose responsibility is to detect and prevent entry of "unwanted" arrivals.

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[3] The new *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) is one example of this kind of measure already in mind before September 11, 2001. About the IRPA, Anna Pratt (2005:3) has noted: "When this legislation was first contemplated, its exclusionary concerns were animated by the linked threats posed to national security by crime and fraud ("criminal abuse") in the shape of organized crime. After the tragic events of 11 September 2001, this focus on organized crime was supplemented by the reinvigorated threat of terrorism." See also Arakelian (2008).

[4] The notion of "flight risk" is a legal term which indicates the probability that a person can flee persecution.

[5] When the identity of an individual has not been established by an officer or when an individual has been unable to prove their identity to the officer's satisfaction.

[6] See Gauvreau and Williams (2002). See also Crépeau and Nakache (2006), regarding detention for security concerns.

[7] See in particular Adelman (2002b).

[8] Moreover, as Lynch and Simon (2003:69) have noted, "Canada has made visas more difficult to obtain for visitors from countries who have a reputation for outstaying the time period for which they were legally admitted."

[9] A particular effort was made by the Canadian government to harmonize its policies with the U.S. government, especially with regard to the border. On this question, see Deborah Waller Meyers (2003), but also Howard Adelman (2002a), Fadwa Benmbarek (2009) and Anna Pratt (2005).

[10] Note that in November, 2007, the Federal Court of Canada invalidated the *Safe Third Country Agreement* but that on January 31st, 2008, the Federal Court of Appeal reached at the request of the Canadian government, so revalidate the Agreement and allowing to pursue its application.

[11] We can read in the Report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (2001:7): "Security checks that used to occur only in the context of a refugee hearing or following an application for permanent residence are now being conducted immediately upon initiation of a refugee claim."

The introduction of these new measures has been accompanied with the emergence of a constellation of government agencies whose mandate is to "safeguard" national security. One example is the creation of the *National Risk Assessment Centre* (NRAC) set up in January 2004. However, among those, the *Canada Border Services Agency* (CBSA), in operation since December 2003, is certainly the most important agency. Its establishment has resulted in refugees – as well as immigrants – being faced with "security" agents, whose first mandate is not to ensure the protection of the fundamental rights of populations that are already vulnerable, nor to uphold "the humanitarian obligations" of Canada. Rather, the goal of this agency is to preserve the physical security of Canada. The agents in place are "guards of national sovereignty", the "gendarmes" of the borders so to speak. As we saw, more than a symbolic space, the border is a place where state sovereignty is at stake. Borders are a central issue with respect to immigration.

Indeed, if the Canadian government is struggling to control the movement of individuals arriving at its gates, it is, at the same time, seeking and developing strategic means "to act remotely". Over the last few years many changes have been introduced in Canada that seek to curb the number of "unwanted" immigrants. This has resulted in the reinforcement of legislative measures and administrative procedures that complicate and disturb migratory movements. Accordingly, the Canadian government has not only initiated a series of measures designed to police the borders and restrict access to Canada, but, more significantly, the control of migrants is increasingly carried out in countries of origin through embassies and consulates. These bureaucratic techniques are implemented in Canadian embassies in order to "prevent" the entry of the "unwanted" in Canada by closing the back door.

These kinds of strategies and practices reflect a global logic called the "externalization" of migratory control (Guiraudon 2001). It is a trend that can be traced back to the 1980s and 1990s as Western countries began developing new strategies for the containment of migratory flows (Guiraudon and Joppke 2001:13). Evocatively named "remote control" by Guiraudon and Joppke (2001:13), this strategy amounts to an outsourcing of control through the implementation of visa systems, the cooperation with countries of departure and countries of transit, the delegation of specific parts of this control process to airline companies, and so on. This type of control that is "upstream" allows for a decrease of controls at the ports of entry[12] while simultaneously facilitating the movement of "wanted" individuals, like tourists and businessmen (Guiraudon and Joppke 2001:14). Such a new form of policing (policing at distance), as Bigo and Guild (2005:1) have noted, "moves the locus of the controls and delocalizes them from the borders of the states […]."[13]

In Canada, this form of policing is called the "Multiple Borders Strategy"[14]. According to this logic, a border can be defined "as any point at which the identity of a traveller can be verified." (Auditor General of Canada 2003:8) The objectives of the Multiple Borders Strategy "are to keep the Canada-U.S. border open to legitimate travellers and goods, and to identify and intercept illegal and undesirable travelers as far away from North America as possible. The strategy

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[12] From an ethnographic perspective, the article of Josiah McC. Heyman (2004) presents a very interesting example of controls at the ports of entry. See also Lydia Morris (1998).

[13] On border management, see also Don Flynn (2005).

[14] This strategy echoes the notion of "Border in Motion" developed by Alison Mountz (2009). See also Côté-Boucher (2008).

proposes to broaden border control away from the shared land border with the U.S. to the many, more effective, 'borders' that a traveller will pass through before reaching North America." (Auditor General of Canada 2003:8) Furthermore, Citizenship and Immigration Canada "recognizes that it is easier and more cost-effective to stop travelers who are inadmissible to Canada from entering the country before they board an aircraft or ship than on arrival at ports of entry. It is more difficult and expensive to remove them after entry." (Auditor General of Canada 2003:9)

Screening Points

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2003)
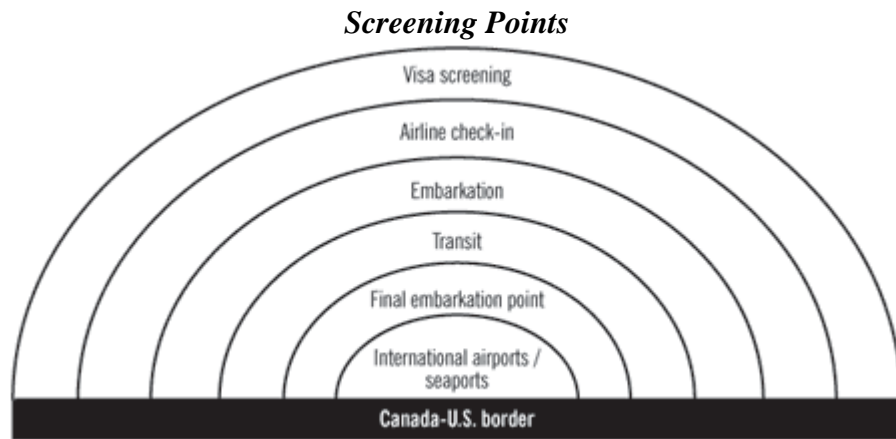
Canada began implementing the Multiple Border Strategy through a set of practices that have now been in place for several years. Known as "interception measures,"[15] these mechanisms are meant to control the arrival of immigrants by placing an obligation on airline companies and on immigrants to travel "legally," i.e. to provide authentic travel documents. The interception generally takes place in strategic points of transit, such as Paris-Roissy and London-Heathrow and is carried out by migration integrity officers (formally known as immigration control officers).[16] The objective of these practices is to prevent illegal immigrants – but not necessarily illegitimate – from arriving at the Canadian border.[17] Thus, Canada is devoting more and more resources to intercepting and turning back migrants before they arrive at their borders. These types of measures have the advantage of replacing both denials of admission at the border and

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[15] See Brower and Kumin (2003).

[16] "The Immigration Control Officer (ICO) Network was established in 1989 as an element of the immigration control strategy, which aimed at better protecting the integrity of the refugee determination process and the immigration program as a whole. ICOs were created to be key players in promoting and enhancing international cooperation to counter illegal migration. ICOs were to provide advice and assistance to airlines and local authorities and to gather information for immigration intelligence purposes. They were also to contribute to the interception of improperly documented travellers and to monitor organized smuggling networks." (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001) "In 2002, the Department also expanded the role of immigration control officers to include the gathering and use of intelligence and the identification of fraudulent visa applications – activities that officers at some posts had already begun. The Department now refers to those people as migration integrity officers. As at April 2002, the Department estimates that, in total, 86 full-time equivalent staff were performing this expanded role." (Auditor General of Canada 2003:9-10).

[17] As Janik (2004:75) has noted: "Since 1989, Canada practices what we call the interception of passengers at destination to Canada who do not possess valid travelling documents. […] Between 1996 and 2002, approximately 40 000 persons with fraudulent documents were intercepted." (my translation)

difficult and expensive procedures – such as removal procedures, deportation, extradition, etc. – by refusals to "embark" in countries of origin (or, at least, in countries of transit).[18]

Having said that, we could assert that embassies constitute a kind of "outpost" of the Western state policy of migratory control. In this context, how does Canada select the immigrants it "needs"? Here again, my ethnographic exploration of the "zone of passage" that is the Canadian immigration process was quite revealing as to how Canada selects the "perfect" immigrant.[19]

Entering the Bureaucratic *No Man's Land*: The Daily Management of Migration in Canada

At the heart of my analysis is the "making of the law". The law, as we know, is one of those instruments that allows the state to control individuals. It will be a question of highlighting, from the daily management of immigration, the various relations which are at stake in this precise framing. Three relations will be specifically examined in order to grasp the functioning of these institutions in charge of administering and managing immigration in Canada: 1) the relation to space; 2) the relation to time; 3) the relation to power. It is from an examination of these relations that it will be possible to identify or draw out the diverse ways in which immigrants are categorized in this administrative field.

We will see that these categorizations – from which the "subject-immigrant" takes shape – dehumanize and depoliticize immigration candidates such that they can then be included in pre-established categories that allow for the construction of the "perfect immigrant." In addition, various sortings operate in the immigration process and are inscribed, as well, in the rationale behind the fabrication of this "perfect immigrant."

Space, Spatialization, Division: Of the Banishment

The question of sidelining, even exclusion, is especially eloquent when looking at the relation to space. Throughout an observation of places where immigration is managed, and through an examination of the relations between immigration officers and immigration candidates, it becomes possible to understand how the question of space arises in such a context and how it testifies to the will to exclude.

A concrete example of this splitting up, which operates to sideline strangers (or "aliens"), is in the Visas and Immigration Section of the Canadian Embassy in Rabat. As in most Canadian embassies, the Consular Section and the Visas Section occupy different and separate spaces. Yet, if in many embassies these two sections are in the same building, in Rabat, they are also geographically separated from one another. This separation marks not only a physical (or

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[18] In his article, Legoux (1999) demonstrates clearly this aspect by focusing on the French politic of asylum.

[19] The following ethnographic data was collected and analyzed before recent changes to immigration selection procedures were introduced by the government of Canada. In late February 2008 the Canadian government announced the introduction of new amendments to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) concerning immigration applications by federal skilled workers. These changes became law on June 18, 2008 and offer Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) more flexibility in processing certain categories of submitted applications.

material) border, but also a symbolic one; establishing a distinction between "them" (foreigners) and "us" (Canadians). This polarization corresponds well to what Trouillot (2001) qualifies as the "spatialization effect," that is, a mechanism that institutes a distinction, a border, a limit on which state effects can build on. Furthermore, if this sidelining is effective in most Canadian embassies, the sidelining in Rabat is here more marked because the chancellery is, on the one hand, located above the Visas Section and, on the other, this section is also "off-centred" with regard to the chancellery. This geographical "hierarchization" of spaces indicates as well a "hierarchization" of "clientele" to which this institution is addressed.

The building sheltering the Visas Section is surrounded with a wall about four meters in height and gives the impression of a fortress. There is only one door to enter inside the surrounding wall where the Visas and Immigration Section building is located. This huge apparatus has a significant symbolic content, evoking the impermeability (wished, but not inevitably real) of a border which separates immigration candidates from their "potential" new "home country" and effectively establishing a sidelining of some with regard to the others.

Inside this surrounding wall, those who are not wanted do not enter. A guard stands posted in a small reception hall situated just on the other side of the door. As for furniture, there is a simple desk and a chair, a telephone, as well as a series of lockers to deposit the personal effects of the "visitors" – they must be completely stripped, in a way, of all their personal effects, such as handbags, purses, mobile phones, etc. before being able to have access in the Visas Section. Adjacent to this small reception hall is a waiting room. This room may easily contain around fifty people, but most of the time, I was told, the room is empty. If previously it welcomed the candidates appointed by the Visas Section, at the time of my passage, all candidates were waiting instead on both sides of the pavement lining Hamza Street.

The Visas Section's building is set back from the entrance about twenty meters and to access the building there are stairs situated to the right. For strangers this is the only access – the employees use an entrance situated behind left of the building. Here again, a distinction is made between "some" and "others" and becomes materialized concretely through the thresholds which give access to the Visas Section. The stairs, thus, lead to a small waiting room; a confined space where a series of counters are aligned to surround the room and in which only few chairs are there for the convenience of visitors. At each counter a thick window separates the foreigners from the immigration officers, creating a physical separation between the two. At the extreme right of this waiting room there is another small room – which has all the appearances of an interrogation room – used for interviews. The immigration officers' offices are located behind the waiting room, which only they have access to. Indeed, to be able to reach these offices, it is necessary to pass by the "employees entrance" situated on the opposite side of the building. The daily work of immigration officers is shielded from the sight of immigration applicants, realized in a "behind closed door" manner while maintaining a distance from any outside glances.

These confined and compartmentalized spaces are common in those administrations in charge of the management of immigration. The diverse physical apparatuses set in place in immigration institutions are there to avoid any confrontation. Whether it is by crossing of various thresholds, the stripping of personal effects or even the reception in a room, which is similar to an interrogation room, all these procedures are organized to regulate "behaviours." The fragmentation of spaces – waiting room, interview room, offices of immigration officers –

contribute to a kind of "publics fragmentation," which also take part in the normalization of behaviours – obedience and a certain conformity to institutional norms being the objective.

The grasping of immigration places is essential to sense how these places say loud and clear what does not appear on the beautiful posters praising the Canadian El Dorado: Spaces that are rather violent, certainly not hospitable and which speak about power relations. The examination of these spatialization modes, as a sorting process, and the analysis of the places where immigration candidates are "welcomed" show in a concrete way in which way exclusion processes are at stake from the outset in the Canadian migratory apparatus.

Temporality, Control and Subjectification

If the spatial frame produces effects on immigration candidates while establishing processes of subjectification, temporality, as well, plays a significant role in the immigration process. From a case study, it will be possible to see how the relation to time contributes both to the control and the subjectification of immigration applicants.

The story of Sofia is an eloquent example of the effects of temporality. Sofia is a young Moroccan woman around twenty who has completed graduated studies in management as a "foreign student" and whom I met for the first time in December 2006. Sofia made an application for a "Québec Selection Certificate (CSQ)" in December 2003. In November 2004, after waiting for 11 months, she obtained her CSQ following an interview with an immigration officer. It is important to underline that Sofia hired a lawyer specialized in immigration to assist her during the selection process. Having her CSQ in hand, in December 2004 she completed a file for Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), with the help of her lawyer, to apply for permanent residence. The application was sent to Visas Section in Rabat. Several months of waiting followed. In March 2005, Sofia received the forms for her medical exam, a prerequisite to the acceptation of her candidacy. At the same time, she had to send her "police certificates" to the CIC in order to complete the "criminal and security check."

Eight months went by before Sofia receives any response, in November, 2005, asking her, one more time, to send to the CIC her police certificates. Again, months came and went without any new developments as to the outcome of Sofia's application for permanent residence. This waiting weighed on her considerably, especially since it is impossible to speak with the officer in charge of the treatment of her file.

At best, immigration applicants can try to contact the Call Center of the CIC and can, with a little luck, be connected to one of the agents at the information center who will give exactly the same information as that available via the CIC website, namely, the status of the treatment of their file. Otherwise, immigration candidates only have access to an automated telephone service, where a pre-recorded voice informs them of the status of their application. In any case, direct contact between immigration officers and applicants are a thing of the past.

More and more worried by the waiting period for treatment of her file, Sofia contacted her lawyer in December 2006 to know if it is possible to do something to "expedite" the situation. Her lawyer informed her that he had just received a mail from the CIC asking her, for a third time, to

send her police certificates, as well as her fingerprints. Sofia was outraged as she did not at all understood why she had to submit, for the third time, her police certificates.

Months passed by without Sofia obtaining her permanent resident visa. I met her again in June 2007 when she obtained her university degree. Sofia was more than discouraged: She was angry. Sofia accepted with great difficulty the waiting, seeing that recently there had been problems with the transmission of certain documents and since she was waiting for a new form to redo her medical examination. When she had submitted her application in December 2003, she was far from imagining that she would still be waiting nearly four years later. She had taken the care of submitting her file at the beginning of her studies in Montreal in order to work once she got her diploma. She had planned everything, but her aspirations were reduced to nothingness. Sofia was, so to speak, in front of nothing. In front of this unbearable situation, she had thus made a decision to return to Morocco to wait for her "papers."

Sofia finally received her permanent resident visa in the fall of 2007 and returned to Montreal. During these months of waiting, her life saw itself "suspended" in the hands of an immigration officer from the Visas Section of Rabat. Powerless and resigning to put her ambitions "in brackets," the motivation of Sofia was tremendously tested by the waiting imposed by the bureaucratic decision process. As Alexis Spire has mentioned, "the time passed in waiting constitutes the support of a form of domination which foreigners accept more or less easily." (2008:97; my translation)

The story of Sofia, as with many others, clearly shows how waiting is a central element in the management and the bureaucratic treatment of permanent residence applications. What is at stake here is the "track stand" in the "immediacy" of the present, a perpetual present that underlies the impossibility to project oneself into the future. Moreover, immigration candidates see themselves confined in this suspended temporality where the past is evacuated, where the future cannot be anticipated and where the present cannot allow for any action. Evicted, in a way, outside of the dominant temporality, outside of time, applicants do not have the possibility to act because their existence is put "in brackets."

In this context, waiting – a central element in the management of immigration – becomes a tool of power which only immigration officers are able to use; immigration candidates do not have control on this imposed temporality. The waiting can also be thought of as an oppressive mechanism. In the immigration selection process, immigration officers are able to "short-circuit" – through procedures and strategies – the social temporality, which is "immediacy", to implement a bureaucratic temporality that drives the immigration process and where waiting is predominant. In this sense, with the imposition of waiting, not only do immigration officers exercise a control, but they also place immigrants in a kind of "offbeat" with regard to the dominant temporality. Thus, waiting has to be considered as a tool in the management of immigration.

In short, the procedures that are dragged and demultiplied show themselves as a strategy of control and subjectification. Indeed, the waiting time allows immigration officers not to have to make a decision. Because no decision has been taken, there is therefore no possibility of appeal for applicants. Also, the waiting and the long time of the process allows the implementation of practices that provoke the subjectification of immigration candidates that themselves become subjugated to bureaucratic norms because they do not have any control over their capacity to

anticipate. It is a kind of control that is not direct but diffuse and operates on a group of individuals and does not allow for the possibility of resistance. That is to say, this set of indirect procedures and practices allows for an effective power on immigration candidates.

Discretionary Power

The procedures, strategies and practices at stake in the daily management of immigration also bring us to the question of the relation to power. In this sense, it seems more fertile to envisage how the practices of immigration officers are part of a bureaucratic "ethos" where the discretion constitutes itself a form of power. (Pratt 1999) In the immigration selection process, discretion operates at several levels. Geneviève Bouchard and Barbara Wake Carroll (2002) have identified three levels around which discretion is articulated: procedural discretion, selection grid discretion, and final decision discretion. Discretion (or discretionary power) is an integral part of the bureaucratic process. Here discretion is enclosed in a juridical order, neither outside of the law nor a perversion of law. Discretion should be considered as a form of governance, a way to govern and a mode of action on actions. Conceptualized in this way, discretion, as a technology of government (Pratt 2005), can be seen both throughout the significative actions elaborated by immigration officers and throughout the effects on immigration candidates.

The decisions of immigration officers are determining, especially since, in the case of Canadian and Quebecois immigration officers, the chain of decisions is not split and the officer is the only one to rule on the file he has between his hands. While knowing that his decision can be knocked down with difficulty, the responsibility to implement immigration policies is nonetheless in the hands of these officers.

It is important to underline that the officers' decisions should be considered within a complex frame, where the dimensions are multiple. Several elements are at stake in the daily management of immigration. On the one hand, the legislative and regulatory framework affects the practices of immigration officers – that is laws, regulations, procedures guides, guiding principles, etc. On the other hand, some factors, external to the administrative realm, also produce effects on the work of immigration officers – that is the media, the political pressures, the place of work or the geopolitical context. Even if this is only an outline of the diverse elements that are at stake in the decision-making process of immigration officer, it is important to underline the fact that their decisions are themselves not taken in isolation.

If the decisions of immigration officers are framed by certain criteria established by a regulatory frame, the fact remains that these officers have powers allowing them to depart from these very criteria. This way of operating seems, indeed, to characterize the practices of officers in immigration institutions. As Alexis Sprire (2008:34) has underlined, the power of immigration officers goes well beyond their capacity to adapt or interpret the law. What can seem to be a simple interpretation of a regulation or a law can sometimes be transformed into a "transgression" of the law. A legitimate way, thus, to be "beyond" the law.

Discretion has also to be situated beyond the concrete actions of officers. As Heyman (2009) has argued, discretion not only concerns action, but also inaction. Discretion can also be used as a strategy not to take a decision – the case of Sofia being a good example. Furthermore, discretionary power can be spread more easily and without obstruction as the responsibility of a

decision tends to be increasingly relegated to the background. Indeed, immigration officers tend to evade any responsibility by arguing that they are only "following procedure." That is to say, in spite of laws, regulations, procedures and the practices established by immigration institutions, discretion is well and truly the way immigration management most affects the immigration selection process.

Here what stands out it is the fact that the decisions of immigration officers have many implications on the future life of candidates because the officer is the one who gives to the immigrants the right to live in Canada – a right to exist in a way. The immigrant-candidate exists as subject only in the terms of the process whereby they are attributed a political status – conditional, certainly, but a status which testifies to their existence as a political subject. In this way, the immigration officer has a palpable power over the life of immigrants.

Moreover, the immigration process is a discretionary space in which social relations are marked by a balance of power between the officer and the immigrant. The power conferred to the officer and the discretionary role he or she possesses, creates a hierarchical organization of relationships between him or herself and the immigration candidates. In the immigration process, the applicant's status becomes central to the relations that are taking shape between immigration officers and "future immigrants." Throughout this process the applicants see themselves stripped, little by little, of their life history.

It is also important to note that this type of "depersonalization," (desubjectification/resubjectification process), which is at stake during the immigration process, continues well after the granting of the permanent resident visa; these mechanisms are not the simple product of the moment or a precise and temporary situation – i.e., the immigration selection process. If they are effectively put in place during that process, they come to structure the set of relations that immigrants will have with the state and to determine the existing conditions of immigrants in their new "home country."

Concluding Remarks

What is clear is that in this "zone of passage," a bureaucratic no man's land, it is the integrity of the individual that is called into question since the immigration candidates are gradually stripped of their identity and individuality. And, the further they advance in this process, the more they are reduced to a simple file number. In this sense, bureaucratic control operates through the sorting and the categorizations realized by the immigration officer. This sorting, set in place through relations to space, time and discretion, is inscribed in a rationale that seeks to completely "neutralize" the "real" immigration candidate and to produce a "perfect immigrant" who will not be a threat, but a useful commodity for the Canadian state. So, through a series of procedures and practices upon which a set of categorizations are developed, immigration officers are able to shape those who can be included. Put differently, procedures and practices are at the same time a mode of action allowing one to govern and tools for regulating collectivities or populations, previously constituted as such.

These categorizations, created by immigration bureaucrats, come along to establish what should be a "perfect immigrant." They have, as their effect, a homogenizing of proper individualities, of

stripping, in a way, the immigration applicants of their personal history in order to allow their subjectification – e.i. the production of subjectivities shaped to be governed. Also, this informal social sorting allows for the categorization of immigration candidates along a continuum between two poles in tension, namely, that of a threat and that of a commodity. Throughout these categories, immigration officers have, at the same time, the power to include immigrants inside the "social norm" or to exclude them definitively and permanently.

The immigration candidates who are in the middle of this process and whose "route" has not yet been completed do not have any status with respect to the Canadian and Quebecois governments. They are nothing. They are simply an ND2 who corresponds to the file number X or Y. They are, in theory and in practical terms, nothing more; they do not have any effective power and their future is entirely dependent on the decision of the immigration officer. They are an individual without rights and without power, whose future, "possible status," and even life, are in the hands of only one person, the immigration officer. In a word, they are a being whose political existence is denied.

Throughout this process, the immigrant finds him or herself arbitrarily exposed to an abstract classification that does not take into account the complexity of the identities that define them as individuals. Candidates who enter the process as historical beings, characterized notably by their social, economic and family condition, thus see themselves reduced to a "labelled individual," in essence, put in a box determined by the administrative authorities in which he or she may or may not fit. Thus, through the process of immigration, a "dehistorization" and a "dehumanization" of the person takes place. This dehumanization is, in fact, a prerequisite to the deployment of discretionary power, to the implementation of arbitrariness and the constitution of the "subject-immigrant."

The ethnographic case I have presented here is a concrete example of the construction of subjectivities, or what Dal Lago (2009) calls non-persons. For Dal Lago (2009), non-persons are those immigrants seen as having no social or personal history and are reduced to administrative categories, to the sub-human. In the immigration process, the reduction of an individual to a non-person is a normative statement. It is through the bureaucratic process that these categories are established and, by extension, justify a social and legal differentiation between "them" and "us."

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