

**A NOTICE TO MOTION: EXPLORING STATES OF STILLNESS
WHILE WAITING ON THE ARRESTED VESSEL WBI TRINITY
AT THE PORT OF CAPE TOWN**

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The paper focuses on the theme of waiting during maritime arrest and the effect this has on the lives of men who are caught up in it. Here we present the case of WBI Trinity, a supply ship, arrested to foreclose a mortgage, at the port of Cape Town, during its voyage from Nigeria to Dubai. Focusing on a 'dialectic of stasis and movement' (Bissell and Fuller) and using moments of bodily stillness and movement as a trope, our research highlights a policy of waiting and shows how the sailors inhabit forms of stillness.

keywords: seafarers, mobilities, maritime arrest, waiting, stillness, humanism

We are not the first to observe that while money and goods are increasingly mobile, human bodies are subject to forms of border control that restrict, filter and stratify their mobility often by means of detention and delay. While the passage of wealthy travellers with the right passports is streamlined by biometric technologies and other forms of databasing, efforts to control the mobility of labour are redoubled by these same means. (Neilson and Rossiter, 2010, p 11)

“Waiting is something Castandes Lourdino is used to. In India,” he says, “if you go to a government office they make you wait for hours. Even at the train stations, you will see people waiting endlessly on the platforms”... then as an afterthought, “I am very comfortable sitting on my chair and keeping watch for hours.” (Castandes Lourdino, interview, July, 2014).

It was September 2014 and we were sitting on the deck of the *WBI Trinity*, a supply vessel which docked at the port of Cape Town one cold morning in June and had been stationary ever since. Or rather, had been in limbo as the ship and its all-Indian crew were enmeshed in a complex web of transnational economic shipping structures they had no control over. It had been four months and the men still had no idea when they would set sail again. From when I first encountered some of the crew members speaking in Hindi at the port, I became enmeshed in their story, their waiting. Having gained permission to access the port of Cape Town for my PhD research, I had spent a few months understanding the functioning of the port. I made journeys on tug boats and filmed the towing in of container ships, the workings of the container terminal, the constant flux of things arriving and leaving. Once I stumbled upon the case of the arrested vessel with the Indian seafarers, I decided to portray the gaps in the smooth flows of traffic at the port. While thinkers like Bauman (2000) have used “fluidity” and “fluid modernity” as the leading metaphor for the present stage of modern era, we must be aware that flows are not smooth in society. The idea that everything is connected and sails smoothly through these conduit points needed to be disrupted.

By proposing an alternative way of engaging with the metabolic flows of energy and the moments of interaction, where the global and local meet in myriad messy and magical ways, the paper focuses on the notion of suspended mobility and the effect this had on the lives of men caught up within this space. Being from India myself and based in Cape Town, I identified with the crew on board and it also allowed easy access which becomes visible through my filming and the writing. The men onboard trusted me and over a period of time they looked forward

to my visiting them onboard, almost like a family member visiting inmates in prison. As time passed, the visits became more than research; they became about anchoring each other in a city away from home. Not only did we share a common spoken language and culture but a nostalgia about everything Indian.

In this paper, I try to expand the writings within the 'new mobilities regime' that looks at "how the global mobility of people and things change the world today" and "how these movements are designed, formed and controlled" (Witzgall, 2013, p. xxv). I do this by linking the complexities surrounding contemporary oceanic mobilities to the concept of a 'post humanist condition' (Biemann, 2008, p.57). My research presents the case of the *WBI Trinity*, a supply vessel, sailing from Nigeria to its homeport Dubai, which was arrested at the Port of Cape Town for a period of six months from the 9 June to 6 December 2014. This is done through my engagement with the crew on board: eight Indians and one Indonesian man. The research focuses on problems of social isolation, uncertainty of movement and the erosion of temporal and spatial boundaries. This is presented in an analysis of observational footage, interviews with the seafarers, field notes, photo collages and legal facts provided by a shipping law expert, Graham Bradfield, head of the Shipping Law Unit, University of Cape Town.

The argument in the paper addresses two main themes. First, it shows how neo-liberal policies relating to the shipping industry immobilize people and how this immobility is linked to a broader subaltern experience. The shipping industry "needs workers from developing countries to compromise their employment conditions to remain competitive" (Borovnik, 2011, p. 59). Secondly it unpacks the period of waiting and how the 'men-in-waiting' inhabit forms of stillness. Reflecting on Jean Francois Bayart's (Bayart 2007) argument that waiting has become central to the subaltern experience, I borrow from the writings of Craig Jeffry (2010) on the idea of 'unstructured time' and the notion of 'timepass' amongst unemployed youth in North India. Following this I frame the experience of the Indian seafarers in waiting by using David Bissell's phenomena of the "variegated affective complex" where he suggests that the period of 'waiting' entails a "mix of activity and inactivity" and describes waiting as a "corporeal experience" (2007, p. 277).

By deconstructing the observational footage of the bodily movements of the arrested seafarers, I show how rhythms of physical activity are linked to human interaction with their environment and how activity and inactivity is linked to an emotional switching on and off to the world: emotions of numbness and despair combined with a forced injection of hope for movement. I conclude by showing how 'waiting' allows us to expand on the critique of neo-liberal policies within

the maritime world and how it links to the concept of the ‘posthuman condition/space’ that reflects on the paradoxical inhuman conditions offered under the name of globalization: “confinement within a world of systematized mobility” (Biemann, 2008).

The Arrest of WBI Trinity

My research began in June 2014 when I encountered a few crewmembers of the ship, speaking in Hindi as I made my way through the ‘Landing Wharf’ section of the port of Cape Town. For the crew on board, the trouble began the day they sailed into Cape Town and the vessel was served a ‘notice to motion’ - a court order barring it from continuing its voyage to Dubai. The notice stated:

Please take notice that the applicant intends applying as a matter of urgency to the above Honorable Court on the 09th day of June 2014 at 16h00 or as soon thereafter as counsel for the applicant may be heard for an order in terms of the draft delivered evenly herewith (Affidavit, 2014, p 1).

“A notice to motion is a request to the court to grant an order to authorize the arrest. When the court orders the arrest, that order is taken by the sheriff and served on the vessel followed by the vessel coming under the sheriff’s control” stated Bradfield, the Maritime Law expert. He further informed me “the port authorities are notified so they don’t let the vessel leave unless there is court order permitting that. The affidavit provides the legal requirements that have to be met in order to arrest a vessel” (Bradfield, interview, 2014). The company that owned the *WBI Trinity*, Work Boat International, owed another maritime entity, SIMGOOD, a Malaysian company, more than US\$4 million. And according to the law, maritime creditors can pursue claims anywhere the ship is located. Case No: AC 14/ 2014, the affidavit was addressed as a matter between: SIMGOOD 1 PTE limited and MV "WBI Trinity", Workboat International DMCCO, Master Of The MV "WBI Trinity" in the ‘High Court of South Africa, in the Western Cape Division. The captain of the ship, Maria John, told me:

Our company name is Workboat International. The company is based in Dubai. The owner is Indian but he is settled in Canada. This vessel is a supply vessel and operated in Nigeria. There is another party SIMGOOD, a Malaysian company, who has to be paid \$4.8 million with interest. They have some pending business and that’s why they have to pay. SIMGOOD filed a case in the court and until the

money is paid we cannot sail. That's why they arrested us. We don't know all the details. (Interview by MS, July 2014)

In the following six months, I spent time with the crew and discovered more about their situation and the background of their journey. Citing clauses from court affidavits and interview statements from the seafarers, I will show the ways in which the seafarers are torn between accessing their legal rights to demand their salaries and repatriation home and a sense of loyalty towards the company. There is increasing research in the area of seafarer abandonment (Couper et al 1998; ITF 1999, Alderton et al 2004). Describing the experience of stranded, unpaid, Turkish seafarers aboard the arrested vessel '*Obo Basak*' in a French port in 1997, Erol Kahveci in *Neither at sea nor ashore: the abandoned crew of the Obo Basak* (Kahveci 2005) throws light on the treatment of modern day seafarers who are frequently left unpaid and abandoned when a ship operator gets into financial trouble or is arrested pending legal proceedings.

Another affidavit the captain showed me further clarified the background of the arrest. It stated that the "applicant had chartered the MV '*SIMGOOD 1*' to Workboat International DMCCO, the Second Respondent in these proceedings" (Affidavit, clause 11). The payment of the charter hire was to be made within 30 days of presentation of the invoice (Affidavit, clause 13.6) but was not paid. Interest on all outstanding amounts was to be paid at the rate of 12% per annum (Affidavit, clause 13.7). Further it stated, "It will be noted from what is set out in the previous paragraphs and from annexure "TR3" that the outstanding hire totals USD 4,854,508.61 (Affidavit, clause 20). Emphasizing the debt, it stated "the applicant claims interest on the capital amount in the sum of USD 2,390,642.03 up to 31 May 2014 and interest will continue to run at USD 1,568.15 per day until date of payment (Affidavit, clause 28, 2014). Further, I noted that the two companies were officially registered and based in Malaysia and Dubai. The affidavit stated: "The applicant is SIMGOOD 1 PTE Limited, a company duly incorporated and registered in accordance with the company laws of Malaysia and carries on business, *inter alia*, as an owner of vessels at Level 15B, Main Office Tower, Financial Park, Labuan, Jalan Merdeka, 8700 Labuan F.T., Malaysia" (Affidavit, Clause no. 2, 2014). The second respondent is "Workboat International DMCCO, a company duly incorporated and registered in accordance with the company laws of the United Arab Emirates and carries on business, *inter alia* as a shipowner at Suite 116, AL Arti Piazza, United Arab Emirates" (Affidavit, Clause no. 2, 2014).

The clauses explain how the case was anchored in various international locations with a mix of international partners, creating a web of legal tentacles for

the seafarers to unravel. The applicant was a company registered in Labuan, an island in East Malaysia, an offshore financial centre and a tax-free haven. The applicant's legal representatives were based in Singapore as stated in clause 3.1: "Mr Raymond Ong, the principal of CTLC Law Corporation of Singapore, is the legal representatives of the applicant in dealing with enforcement of the claims to which this application relates". While the applicant's legal representatives were based in Singapore, the "dispute resolution between the parties was to take place in Mumbai, India and subject to the law applicable there (which is to say Indian law) (Affidavit, clause 13.8). *WBI Trinity* was based in Dubai while the port of its registry was Panama. Its details on official papers stated: "WBI Trinity, Reg. Owner: Workboat International DMCCO Dubai U.A.E, Vessel Type: Tug/Supply Vessel, Gross Tonnage: 1159, Date of Build: 26 Feb 2009, Port of Registry: Panama."

"Panama is notorious for registering ships for cheap. Ship registers are supposed to have a genuine link between the ship and the country of registry but there are many registers that don't require that link or require it in very tenuous forms and these are the open registers" (Bradfield, interview, 2014). Tony Lobo, the managing director of Workboat International told me that most of their business was in the Middle East and this was the first time that they had sent their vessel to Nigeria and "got into trouble". "Our company is based in Dubai because Dubai is a global financial centre, centrally located between the East and the West, providing tempting business incentives in terms of a no tax policy" (Tony Lobo, interview, December, 2014). Lobo further stated: "Nigeria has a quota for Nigerian workers onboard and we didn't get any work for two years and hence the vessel was on its way back to Dubai" (Interview, December, 2014). Sanjiv Kumar, the oiler onboard, was of the opinion that the company should have never let the vessel go beyond the Middle East. He stated, "It's best if the vessel is close to home" (interview, August, 2014). The Indian seafarers also agreed that they liked Dubai and that it 'felt almost like home'.

In an attempt to unravel this specific case, we need to understand the conditions or prerequisites for the arrest of vessels. Global shipping movements are easily tracked so once there is a legal maritime claim against a vessel there is 'no real running away'. Neilson and Rossiter write that according to the Port State Control and International Maritime Organization the convention on port state control allows the inspection of foreign ships in national ports to "verify that the condition of the ship and its equipment comply with the requirements of international regulations and that the ship is manned and operated in compliance with these rules". They further expand on this by stating, "Under the various

regional memorandums of understanding (MOUs) applying to port state control, states have the right to detain substandard ships” and are expected to “publish lists of detained vessels on the relevant MOU websites” (2010, p 15). Bradfield informed me that maritime creditors or the company that is owed money can pursue those claims anywhere the ship is located. He said that from a legal perspective there might be slight differences in the circumstance in which you can arrest from country to country and in that sense South Africa is what is termed an “arrest friendly jurisdiction”. “It is easier to get arrested here than many other jurisdictions but in this specific case of *WBI Trinity* would have been arrested in any port” (Bradfield, Interview, 2014). Writing about the different kinds of “diversions, stopovers and waiting” within “progressive linear forms of mobility” such as trade ship voyages, Gillam Fuller states:

Port state control becomes mixed with border control. Both employ detention or delay as the primary means of checking mobility and producing governable mobile bodies from seemingly ungovernable flows. Combined with logistical methods of operation that can slow as well as speed voyage times, the net effect is to create hierarchized zones of mobility. (Fuller 2007)

In analyzing the case further, Bradfield informed me that there were very few instances when ships were arrested and are not released immediately on provision of security. “Normally the owners put up a guarantee by a bank or a protection indemnity club undertakes to pay, if their clients are found liable. There is no real need to detain the ship under arrest since a substitute form of security is offered” (Bradfield, interview, 2014). He further speculated that Workboat International must be in “financial difficulty” or “heading to insolvency” or “their security must have lapsed due to non-payment of the premium” (Bradfield, interview, 2014). I was told that smaller vessels, mostly fishing trawlers, that do not have insurance or access to bank guarantees would normally be arrested. ‘The landing wharf’, a site of arrested vessels at the port of Cape Town, where *WBI Trinity* stands, is one of the main sections of the harbour. Rusting fishing trawlers that have been arrested surround *WBI Trinity*. One can extend the concept of Foucault’s ‘Heterotopia’ beyond the ship and the prison to the site of the entire ‘landing wharf’. During one of my visits to the ship, Sanjiv, pointed out of his cabin window and said:

Do you see all the ships on this jetty? They are all arrested vessels! They are all stuck like us! The Cape Town port authorities have delegated this berth for arrested vessels. There are a few times when vessels arrive and leave but mostly all the ves-

sels are arrested vessels! We cannot really communicate with the other seafarers. I went to ask them about the shore power and they said, “No English! No English!” We are prisoners who cannot even talk to each other! (Interview, August, 2014)

While Marx described the category of labour as ‘energy’, ‘unrest’, ‘motion’ and ‘movement’ (Nicholas De Genova, 2010), Neilson and Rossiter (2010) examine the role of logistics as an important factor in the “stasis” or “slowing” of maritime transport. The last century has seen ships become automated and crews on board diminish. The life of a seafarer at sea means extended periods of stasis but this is intensified by the “growing practice of slow steaming” (2010, p 5). Neilson and Rossiter write that “as a way of meeting the rising cost of fuel” the ships are made to take long haul “loops” or “delays” in their journeys and this creates the “presence of phantom ships parked in the world’s most affordable waters” (2010, p5).

During my first few encounters with the seafarers on board I learnt that two of the team members had paid for their own tickets and flown back to India. The crew was upset with them for not showing camaraderie in a tough situation. The captain had signed a three-month contract but could not leave since he was party to the law suit against the company.

Writing about the forms of control and conditions of labour at sea, Neilson and Rossiter state that “a seafarer who begins work for a voyage ‘signs articles’ that oblige him to complete a journey from and to certain ports and to accept penalties if he willingly fails to do so. The terms of these ‘articles’ also place limitations on the seafarer’s right to strike and freedom of movement” (2010, p13). In the affidavit facilitating the arrest of *WBI Trinity*, the ship was cited as “the first respondent”, the company the “2nd respondent” and the “master of the vessel” as the “3rd respondent” in the case. The affidavit stated: “The third respondent is the Master of the MV “WBI Trinity” currently on board and in command of the vessel. The master’s name and particulars are not known to me or to the applicant” (affidavit, 2014, p. 1). The captain was the oldest member of the crew and the most stressed. He explained his situation to me: “The company office in Dubai only communicates with me and I am responsible for passing on the information to everyone else. However, the company doesn’t send us messages through the Internet since they don’t want these people to know our messages. They only call us to tell us things. I attend to their phone calls and pass on the messages to the entire crew (interview, August, 2014). The ship and the captain being indicted in the dispute between the shipping corporations is a distinctive

feature of admiralty jurisdiction. Bradfield explained why the ship is cited as a respondent in the case to me:

Outside admiralty you always cite parties who are natural persons or corporate entities in law suits. That idea of proceeding against a piece of property is that you pursue your claim against the property and that's your best chance to be paid under these circumstances. This arises because the ship incurs debts all along its trade routes by not paying suppliers and these organizations don't have the resources to pursue their claims but by going to the country of origin of the owners of the ship so it gives them an opportunity the next time the ship comes past to arrest it and have their claim settled (Bradfield, interview, 2014).

The main underlying problem for the seafarers who found themselves trapped in this fight for money between the shipping corporations was that their salaries had not been paid and they could not fly back home due to the lack of money. Also, they had left India with a plan for earning a monthly salary for the period of their agreed contract which was between six to nine months, varying from person to person. Their company had informed them that the sheriff who had arrested them was responsible for the payment of their salaries. The sheriff played an important role as the 'on-the-ground' person the crew interacted with. He was responsible for supplying the crew with provisions. Speaking of the sheriff's responsibilities, Bradfield informed me that "the sheriff is looking after the seafarers but he will recover his money. He works for a private company that runs this work as a business" (Bradfield, interview, 2014). If the ship were to be auctioned and sold, the sale price would form a fund and any claimant against that ship could claim money. Further, I was informed that if the money was insufficient to pay everyone in full, the claims would be ranked and certain claims would be preferred over others. Bradfield stated, "At the top of the ranking would be the sheriff's costs followed by the seafarers' claim to their salary" (Bradfield, interview, 2014). Even though the seafarers' salary ranked relatively high in the payment list, it was the private company and their employee, the sheriff, who would get paid first. If the seafarers were to even think of returning home, it would terminate their contract and they would return home without any money. Hence they waited endlessly in the vessel, not knowing when this indefinite period would end.

Post containerization, the maritime world has created passive environments in which collective voices of seafarers are muted, and acceptance and waiting become the norm. In questioning the "automated, accelerated, computer-driven, and monolithic maritime world" (Sekula 1995), Allen Sekula asks, "Are there,

even today, forms of human agency in maritime environments that seek to build a logical sequence of details, synoptic interpretation of observed events? Is it possible to construct such knowledge from below, or is this only the purview of elites?" (1995:133) All the seafarers on WBI Trinity came from working class families and bore the responsibility of sending remittances home. Sanjiv Kumar told me, "You see we are middle class people. We belong to a kind of family where even before the money arrives; the money has been allocated for things. And if the money gets stuck in the middle then the entire system gets blocked" (Sanjiv Kumar, interview, September, 2014).

The cook, Lopes Jeroni Socio, had a similar story to share. He told me he had worked for the company since 2005 when he met the owner in Qatar on a vessel and was asked to join Workboat International. Besides the captain, he was another person who had been instructed not leave the vessel and sail to Dubai. He expressed his stress about not having received his salary for three months:

Back home in Goa, I have a wife, an 11-year-old daughter and a 5-year-old son. My wife calls me from home. We don't even have money to call on the phone. We have asked the company for money many times or even an advance from our salary but they haven't given us any money. Our company tells us that SIMGOOD, the company that got us arrested, has to pay our salary but we haven't received any news from the sheriff who arrested the vessel. (Jeroni, interview, September 2014)

The crew could have pressurized the owner to fly them back home but they stayed due to a sense of loyalty towards the Indian owner and the company. Most of them had a long relationship with the company and had worked with the same one for several years. There is a sense of Indian brotherhood and camaraderie amongst the men and trust in their Indian employers. Gurjeet Singh, the electrician, told me that it helped to have all Indians on board. "We can laugh and joke with each other in our own language in this difficult situation. It provides some relief since we all understand each other" (Singh, interview, October 2014). The only person who complained about the company was Vikramjeet Singh, the boatswain. During a morning drinking sessions with three other men, he argued. "The company washed their hands of us when we got caught here. Have they checked on us? Have they bothered to make sure that we receive our salaries or to even check whether we have any cash to spend here?"

Sanjiv Kumar, an employee of the company since January 2010 responded, "There is a delay but I hope the company will come up with a solution. Our salary isn't worth the amount of the boat. If we are stressed about our salary then

imagine the stress of the person who owns this expensive boat". The men slowly got more and more drunk on cheap Indian whisky and the discussions continued (Field note 2, November 2014). Even their stock of Indian whisky was depleting. This was something the men had brought along with themselves when they left India. Sanjiv wanted to maintain a good relationship with the company and not upset the owners. In a later private interview he told me, "If we go back to an agent in Mumbai we are required to pay the first one month salary to the agent. Now we have a relationship with this company. It's best we keep this relationship so we don't have to pay commission to an agent" (Sanjiv Kumar, interview, November, 2014).

It was a clear situation to analyse. The crew was not in the best position because they did not want to lose out on a relationship with their company. They believed there wasn't a guarantee that another company would employ them. Their concern was that the ship owner would label them as 'troublemakers' and tell other shipowners not to employ them. Also they were far from home with no financial resources. Their plight was desperate even though their conditions were relatively comfortable compared to their conditions elsewhere. Most of them had families to support back home. They were also aware of the many cases of seafarers being abandoned at foreign ports, having to make their way back home. Given the circumstances, they chose to wait.

Mobility/ Immobility

During one of my visits before dinner Abhi told us that this was not the first time he had been in a situation like this, on board an arrested vessel. "It happened to me once before," he said, "in Iraq. It was 2006, 2007, I had joined as a fresher and the owner of the ship was Iraqi. There was a problem with an agreement and they kept us there for six months. They didn't know English and we didn't know any Arabic. It was a huge problem. They used to serve us some bread and black tea. That was like a real prison. There was no one to help us. The crew consisted of 12 Indians and the captain was from Iran." Everyone nodded, listening to the story. "When they took us for the court hearing, they put handcuffs on us and they had more security for us than a prime minister. Six cars in front and six cars behind us and we were in the middle. They didn't even stop at the red light while driving. For the final hearing they arranged for an Arabic to Hindi interpreter. Our passports and seaman books were returned to us after two months. Then we came to Dubai and then I went home. After six months our

ship was released. That time I spent a total of 13 to 14 months on a ship.” (Abhi, interview, September 2014)

‘Borders’ as zones of control are a key consideration for research into mobilities. As the world gets more fluid in its movements, new forms of borders have been created and dispersed in a mobile and globalized world. According to Van Houtam et al (Houtam 2005) we need to revisit the “static notion of the container-border”. What exists now is instead a network of “complex and varied patterns of both implicit and explicit bordering and ordering practices” (p. 78). Expanding on the forms of ‘bordering practices’ they list other existing forms of border controls. They state these as “modes of location, tracking and surveillance, textual locatability in the form of ID cards, or more archaic devices such as the passport” (p. 79). Other historical and contemporary ways to filter movements can be seen through the various “toll systems”, “stopover” and “brakes” (Virilio 2006). These methods of controlling movement are increasingly seen in urban spaces but “extend beyond urban space into the larger-scale spaces of global migration through organisational techniques able to control fairly vast spaces” (p. 28-32). Adding to the set of contemporary bordering practices, other conduit points on the global map are used to check the speed of movement, be it acceleration or deceleration.

Graham and Marvin state that this control of speed is produced via “tunnel effects” (Marvin 2001). They describe these as “transit conduits connected at a variety of hubs (major seaports, teleports, railway stations, e-commerce hubs etc.) where adjustment occurs” (p. 27). While capitalism allows for the selective fluidity of borders, ‘power’ lies at the core of the emerging field of mobility studies as indicated by Sheller & Urry (Urry 2006). Urry further advocates that a “notion of power” and “social inequality” must be linked to “network capital” within mobility studies (Larsen 2007). There is literature to show that the people most affected by these disparities within the era of accelerated mobility are those vulnerable people who form a part of “the complex debates on migratory practices and refugee mobilities” (Martin 2011, 194). This state of waiting in undocumented migrants exists in many different contexts. In his editorial *Waiting*, Craig Jeffery (Jeffery 2008) writes about Finn Stepputat’s study of Guatemalan refugees and shows them trapped in a state of “infinite waiting”. Stepputat quotes C. S. Lewis’s description of grief to describe what he calls a period of unending, unstructured time: “like waiting: just hanging about waiting for something to happen. It gives life a permanently provisional feeling... almost pure time, empty successiveness” (1992, p 110).

Other parallel descriptions of waiting within this context include Greta Uehling’s (Uehling 2004) research among Crimean Tatars living in Uzbekistan

to uncover a somewhat similar culture of suspense-filled waiting. She uses the term “suitcase moods” to describe the condition of women who sat on their suitcases the whole day, waiting, unsure of the possibility of returning home. Giorgio Agamben uses the term “space of exception” to describe the space of the “camp” (Agamben 2005), which for him represents “a space of suspension where stillness is produced through the construction of permanent mechanisms to lock out” (Martin 2011, 195). Writing about the emotional state of the “encapsulated undocumented migrant”, Martin uses the term “turbulent stillness” to describe this state of stasis. He states:

Stillness in these situations is divested of its cosmopolitan connotations of respite and calm: for these people are locked-into a violent trajectory where the apparently stilled space of the lorry or container is a form of capsularization, but one in which the protective functioning of the capsule is manifestly absent. Perhaps more readily this is stillness as incarceration. The body remains still to circumvent detection. These travel conditions inflict a form of violence on the stilled body of the migrant in movement – what might be termed turbulent stillness. (2011, 199)

Adding to these debates on refugee ‘lock-outs’, is the invisible world of labour mobilities, in which workers endure the period of “chronic waiting”, a term used by Craig Jeffery (2008, p71) to describe how people have little control over their movement.

Trapped in a period of waiting

“The very familiarity of waiting has obscured it” (Schweizer 2005: p. 778).

While everyday practices of waiting in the Third World countries are accepted as a part of the everyday ‘corporeal experience’, one must highlight a slow passive violence inflicted on the subaltern body beneath the mask of a progressive global mobility. In the case of the *WBI Trinity*, most of the crew onboard stated that they joining the shipping industry because it would give them a chance to travel see the world, to be free... The hidden side of the dream to move freely around the world forms an antithesis of the stasis in which the crewmembers of *WBI Trinity* found themselves. In a country like India, large populations are used to the phenomenon of ‘waiting’. It forms an unquestionable part of the everyday lives of people especially in smaller cities, towns and rural India. Bissell states: “waiting is a specific kind of relation to the world” (2007, 284). Most of the seafarers accept the period of endless waiting as a familiar experience. To frame ‘waiting’ as a subaltern experience is to question and understand the inherent

acceptance of waiting. Writing about the “dilemma of chronic waiting” (Martin 2011), as a dominant experience in the global south, Martin quotes Bayart (2007) and Appadurai (2002) in stating the reason behind such an experience:

The liberalization of national economies in the global south, often in the context of donor-led structural adjustment programs often leaves people in a situation of limbo. Neoliberal economic reforms have also triggered disinvestment in the social welfare state, and, in turn, vast “floating populations” are forced to wait for food, shelter, education or health care. (p. 195)

Craig Jeffrey writes about the effects of waiting on the numerous excluded individuals and groups who are forced to reside in a state of indetermination. In his book, *The politics of waiting*, he examines “situations in which people have been compelled to wait for years, generations or whole lifetimes, not as a result of their voluntary movement through modern spaces but because they are durably unable to realize their goals” (Jeffrey, 2010: 3). Examining the problem of “unstructured time” he analyses the behaviour of unemployed young men aimlessly hanging around waiting in Uttar Pradesh, North India. He writes, “Trapped in an endless present” enduring “feelings of heightened suspense”, the young men spoke of their activities as “timepass”. Some even labelled them as “timepass men” (Jeffery et al, 2008). Within this context of waiting as a subaltern experience, he writes:

Waiting must be understood not as the capacity to ride out of the passage of time or as the absence of action, but rather an active, conscious, materialized practice in which people forge new political strategies, in which time and space often become the objects of reflection, and in which historical inequalities manifest themselves in new ways. (2008,p.957)

The waiting process for the crew of WBI Trinity

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 (Bissell, 2007, p. 277)

Borrowing from Bissell’s conceptualization of the waiting period as a time period of activity and inactivity and not a dead period of stasis or stillness (Bissell 2007), I analyse the experience of the *WBI Trinity* crew through the lens of the

'variegated affective complex'. Expanding on the VAC, Dastur states, "The enacting of a variegated affective complex is a mixture of activity and agitation to the world, and conversely a deadness-to-the-world" (Dastur 2000). There exists the possibility of rupture that "intimately threatens the synchrony of transcendental life or existence" (2000, p. 182). Given the nature of the combination of stillness and agitation, the period of waiting can be viewed as an 'embodied corporeal experience' allowing for a 'renewed focus on the body' (Bissell 2007, p 279). By viewing the crew's activities under the theme of both 'corporeal engagement' and 'withdrawal', I traced a path of the various activities and in activities to portray the experience of 'being-in-waiting'. Drawing from my field notes and observational camera footage the recurring activity that stood out during the research period was that of the men pacing up and down, in small groups or alone, during the day and at night. My notes stated:

Hanis Kotze, the port security in charge dropped me at the ship. I walked up the small bridge connecting the key side to the ship and stepped onto the deck. Abhi, Vikramjeet and Sanjiv were pacing up and down the deck. I saw them pointing towards a ship coming in and discussing whether it was a tanker. "A routine evening activity for most of the crewmembers", I was told by the cook on the first day. "We don't go out much but like to walk on the deck every evening." (Field note 3, 11/10/2014)

Writing about "transformations in bodily activity" such as "walking-sitting-walking, sleep-slumber-wake, stasis-activity" Bissell states that these "thresholds that frame the experience of waiting" are determined by "the degree of certainty or uncertainty about the length of the wait" (2007, p 290). The motion of pacing up and down enhances the mood of anxiety on the ship. The relentless motion of moving up and down within the limited space of the deck of the ship forms the symbolic action of what it means to wait indefinitely. My notes further read:

I climb up to the topmost section of the ship, the bridge area. I find the captain sitting alone in the dark. The sharp light of the computer screen lights up his face as he stares at it. The screen saver has the *WBI Trinity* as its background image. He looks stressed and anxious. He gets up and goes outside to smoke a cigarette. He goes down one level and stands outside staring at the container terminal lights. The wind is strong and the smoke and sparks fly back towards his face. He then paces up and down the length of the balcony. I have watched the captain pace up and down several times now. Inside the bridge area, outside the bridge, staring at

the oil rig, staring at the mountain, staring at the rest of the arrested vessels. He shakes his arms as he walks at times. Perhaps that is his idea of getting some exercise to stay fit. (Field note 3, 11/10/2014)

Writing about the slow passage of time and an intrinsic “corporeal awareness of duration” (Buetow 2004), Buetow states, “Perceived duration is postulated to be highest through time passing slowly, when individuals are highly conscious of themselves and their situation” (p. 22). The captain’s actions of switching between sitting still and walking up and down exhibit this intrinsic awareness of the slow passage of time while enacting a variegated affective complex that we are discussing here. These acts being active or acquiescent to the world also point towards Levinas’s notion of patience as a “combination of urgency and delay” Writing about Levinas’s notion of patience within these situations, Fullagar (Fullagar 2004) suggests that his concept of patience describes “patience as a mode of being detached from the self, but at the same time it involves a particular temporal quality of being with self” (p. 16). The last paragraph in my notes from that evening further reiterates the activity of constant pacing up and down. It states:

Another person enters the bridge area. It’s Lobo, the boatswain. His job is to keep watch. He sits on the chair and stares out of the window. The captain joins him, they exchange a few words and both of them stare out of the window. I walk towards them to see what they are staring at. Closer from the window, I look down at the deck of the ship and see Abhi pacing up and down, talking on his cell phone, going in and out of my sight. (Field note 3, 11/10/2014)

The other activity that allows for social interaction takes place every night in the recreation or television room. My notes describe the first time I observed the men watching a film:

Jeroni, Sanjiv and Vikramjeet are sitting on the L-shape green leather couch and watching a Bollywood film. Abhi joins them on the couch and Sanjiv moves to sit on a white plastic chair next to the couch. The four of them greet me and go on to watch the film. They tell me that they can’t remember how many times they have watched the same film. It’s a comedy and it makes them laugh. (Field note, 15/11/2014)

Writing about activities people undertake to kill time while they wait, Jain states, “The myriad forms of mundane activity that people may enact while waiting, vary from drinking and eating to reading, talking and listening to music” (2006). Technology plays an important role in providing some relief from the

bodily engagement of the wait. Jain further writes, "Various mobile technologies are also frequently enlisted during the period of waiting perhaps through the action of texting or WAP-ping, or even gaming through mobile phones for example" (Jain 2006). Along with staying in touch with family via Whatsapp and Skype, the crew downloads films through their phone connection to entertain themselves. My notes from that evening further state:

Abhi tells me that they were bored of standing on the deck every evening and watching the same scenery. Instead he tries to "download pirated films from the Internet and watch those in the TV room." He says "from 11pm-7am you get 1 GB for R10 so I download films at night. I have created a wifi hotspot. Every night I download about five-six films. We connect the laptop to the TV through a HDMI cable and so sit and watch till midnight every night." (Field note, 15/11/2014)

Later that evening, I witnessed a surge in aggression and a bout of anger from Sanjiv, one of the crewmembers while they were watching the film. Highlighted as one of the moments of outburst, my notes stated, "Sanjiv looks at me and says that there are a lot of Hindi movies being filmed in Cape Town. 'We have recently watched four five Hindi films that were filmed in Cape Town! We have developed an allergy towards the name Cape Town! The next time I watch Cape Town on the TV screen, I will break the screen!' He expressed his anger about the fact that they had been in Cape Town for four months and could not really enjoy what all Cape Town has to offer.(Field note, 15/11/2014).

Writing about the event of waiting as "not the immobile being-in-the-world that it first appeared" Bissell writes about the various emotions that resonate during the period of waiting making it a corporeal engagement. He states that the event of waiting is both "active and intentional" and emotions such as "impatience, anger, aggression, and cessation, such as tiredness, fatigue and hunger" make it a state of engagement and withdrawal at the same time (2007, p 294). Further Bissell states that these "heighten feelings of aggression and anger displaying affective intensity" demonstrates well how "waiting could be considered in a more transhuman form" (2007, p 291). The 'inactivity' or withdrawal for the crew involved staring blankly out of the window, long periods of sitting motionless and doing nothing, sitting in the dining room alone, playing with their phones and even walking on the deck alone. This disengagement from activity involves the body not being involved in any ongoing performance. Diski recognises this particular disengagement with the world, of the body held in suspense while waiting comparing it to be a form of desirable acquiescence (Diski 2006)

while Harrison views these “moments of suspension” as corporeal phenomena “which trace a passage of withdrawal from engagement” (2008). My notes under the heading ‘lingering gazes’ read:

Its Diwali and I visit the crew with a box of Indian sweets. Not seeing anyone on the deck or below, I go upstairs to the bridge of the ship. I see three men staring out of the main window. Muhammed Rizvan is sitting on a chair in front of the computer screen with his back turned to the screen. Sanjiv and Vikramjeet are standing against the window and looking out at the port. Muhammed turns back to look straight at the computer screen and looks down at his mobile phone. He starts playing with his mobile phone. He switches between playing with his phone and gazing at the screen. Sanjiv turns away from the window and starts playing with his phone and Vikramjeet sits on the main chair looking out at the port and starts texting on his mobile phone too. Their movements seem to be orchestrated—first they all looked out of the window in the same direction and then all three fiddle with their mobile phones. (Field note, 23/10/2014)

Writing about “corporeal attentiveness” and “how bodies are perhaps more highly attuned through stillness” Bissell suggests how “the act of bodily stillness through waiting is instrumental in heightening an auto-reflexive self-awareness: of attention to the physicality of perception of the body itself” (Bissell 2007). Besides the physical stillness of doing nothing and staring out at sea for long durations, the stillness took another form and that was seen in the behaviour of the men towards each other. In different spaces of the ship but especially the dining room, I witnessed that the men avoided each other’s gaze so as not to engage with each other. Bissell writes, “through this stillness, the strategies involved in averting the gaze so as not to engage in interaction effectively intensifies corporeal relations, producing a wholly active and co-managed interaction, an act that has become almost cliché when thinking through collective waiting situations” (2007, p 285) My notes on the interaction between the men in the dining room state:

Down the long corridor, we see a figure coming towards us. The time is 12.30 on the dining room clock and the captain is the first person to come down for lunch. The captain serves himself a plate of food and sits down at one of the two tables in the room. The tables seat four. The plastic covers on the chairs are peeling off. I see another man walk in and serve himself food through the camera screen. The second person to walk in is Vikramjeet Singh. He sits next to the captain at the same table and they both face the wall. They sit next to each other but don’t ever look at each other. They sit and eat. As they eat, a third crew member, Lobo, walks in. Untroubled

by the camera or me, he picks up a steel plate and serves himself some lunch. He proceeds to sit on the second table, facing the opposite wall to the other two men and eats. The camera records three men sitting in silence eating. Not once within the duration of the 20-25 minutes do they make eye contact with each other or the camera. Lobo, the first to finish, gets up, washes his plate, stacks it back on the pile of plates and leaves. He gives me a knowing nod as he exits the room. (Field note, 12/07/2014).

This asociality of waiting through acquiescence is described by Bissell as “a particular relationship without context that eludes the traditional definition of the social” (2007, p 289). This behaviour of the crew in the dining room also relates to what Harrison writes about in the context of conduct of people in the most public, ‘traditionally social’ spaces from “the waiting room to the platform, to the train itself” (Harrison 2008). He states “the ‘asocial’ implications or a tendency towards withdrawal, disengagement, and acquiescence” exist in the sphere of the social (2008, p. 433).

Reflections and conclusions

In this paper, I have drawn attention to the theme of waiting as a space occupied by not only by migrants and refugees within the mobility paradigm but suggested how waiting can be considered a specific subaltern experience. While we are aware of the temporal and spatial ruptures that maritime labour at sea endures due to processes of neoliberal economic policies, the papers points to the politics of waiting. Adding to Ursula Biemann’s notion of the ‘post human space’ that constitutes in-between spaces at the border where people are stilled, I would like to introduce Rob Nixon’s notion of ‘slow violence’ (Nixon 2011) to this period of endless waiting. He describes it as:

By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility but we urgently need to re-think-politically, imaginatively, and theoretically what I call “slow violence.” (P.2)

The term has been used to highlight “pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects” on the environment and eco-systems but extends to passive forms of invisible violence such as posttraumatic stress and domestic abuse. I propose to extend the use of the condition and apply it to period of indefinite delays and hidden threats

that were faced by the crew of WBI trinity. The slow emotional breaking down of a man takes time and in this I have shown what it does to the body and human relations in terms of a physical and social acquiesce. By rethinking our accepted assumptions of violence created by we need to search in spaces that are invisible to society. To borrow from Kevin Bales, I would conclude by stating that “turbo-capitalism” exacerbates the vulnerability of so called “disposable people” and we need to understand the politics within the period of forced waiting (Bales 1999).

Figure 1.1 and 1.2 Screenshots from Arrested Motion (Meghna Singh, 2015)



Figure 1.3 and 1.4 Screenshots from *Arrested Motion* (Meghna Singh, 2015)



Figure 1.5 and 1.6 Screenshots from *Arrested Motion* (Meghna Singh, 2015)



Figure 1.7 and 1.8 Screenshots from *Arrested Motion* (Meghna Singh, 2015)



Figure 1.9 Screenshots from *Arrested Motion* (Meghna Singh, 2015)



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