Waiting and/as Power

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Introduction

The powerless wait. The powerful enforce waiting. This relationship and its often devastating effects are at the centre of two texts that document and probe the experience of being unemployed in England: Paul Graham's photo series *Beyond Caring* (2010, 1984) and Ken Loach's film *I, Daniel Blake* (2016). Both present unemployed individuals struggling with a bureaucratical apparatus that either seems to completely neglect the subjective experience of those in waiting, as is the case in *Beyond Caring*, or is overbearing in its micromanagament of the unemployed's time as well as their physical and psychological resources. In this article I will discuss how waiting is both the result and a means of these bureaucratic powers. Despite the different political ideologies that underpin Thatcherism and Tony Blair's purportedly *Cool Britannia*, the control of the unemployed is, firstly, astoundingly similar and equally devastating. Secondly, I intend to show how New Labour's social reforms can be understood as a continuation rather than correction of neoliberal policies. After a short outline of the recent and growing interest in the temporalities of waiting and/as power and its implications for the analysis of power structures I will discuss the motif of waiting in *Beyond Caring* and *I, Daniel Blake*.

Why Waiting Matters

Waiting, naturally, takes many shapes and forms, not all of which are related to power. And embedded in different cultural perceptions and constructions of time, the respective understanding of waiting may differ based on variables such as socio-economic status, cultural background, education, gender, race, etc. Waiting may also be an essential part of (religious) ritual as well as the cultural performance of liminal rites that regulate transformations of social status. What these different realizations and experiences of waiting do have in common is that whether in religious or secular systems of temporal control, waiting is often as much a tool of power as it is an effect thereof. In the following discussion I will focus on waiting and its often intrinsic

connection especially to bureaucratic power-structures. The relationship can be simplified in the following terms: the more powerful one is, the shorter the waiting time will be, or in the words of psychologist Barry Schwartz: "the distribution of waiting time coincides with the distribution of power." (1974: 841) The powerful do not wait, the dependents do. Sociologist Joe Moran argues in a similar way:

> For the poorest members of society, waiting is simply a daily experience as they queue for public transport, state benefits and doctors' appointments. For the more affluent, waiting is less time-consuming and may be expected to come with compensatory props such as comfy chairs, bottomless coffee pots and reading matter. (2005: 4)

As Moran states, the extent of waiting is often related to socio-economic status. Time is not only money, in Benjamin Franklin's words. Money can literally buy time. This is the case when it comes to quicker access to health-care or to the ability of readily procuring goods by means of expensive overnight shipping of orders placed online. Waiting is as relevant for the mobility of goods as it is for the movement of people. Money affects the comfort and the speed of people's mobility: first-class passengers may not be able to reach their destination earlier than those on the cheaper seats in the back of the plane. Their pre-boarding wait-time, however, will certainly be more luxurious and comfortable provided they have access to their airline's fancy lounge. In overcrowded metropolises public transport may appear as fast, if not faster, than going by car. But depending on the infra-structure of a given city the willingness to pay money will reduce the wait-time spent in the car. One such example can be found on the metropolitan highways of Atlanta, Georgia. Here a so-called, and rather expensive, "Peach Pass" will allow commuters to choose fast lanes on their way to and from work and thus to reduce their wait-time in the daily traffic-jams.

Wait-times are also essential when it comes to interpersonal affairs. Being able to making someone wait is a clear indicator of the uneven power-relation at hand. A whole architectural history of ante-rooms and ante-chambers is a testament to this temporal power-play. Buildings like the 'Residenz' in Würzburg or the Louvre in Paris were furbished with rooms in which the dependent subjects were forced to bide their time amidst the gold, porcelain, paintings and mirrors that quite literally put the powerless subject in their place, a place beneath the rulers. Especially for the powerless and dependent these spaces become "a secular purgatory on those whose fate depends on the schedules of professionals and bureaucrats." (Fenn 2001: 66)

The combination of waiting and power does result in large body of social rules and regulations that govern the larger mechanics as well as the minutiae of social and cultural life. Social rules, e.g., regulate who gets to speak first, and who waits for and on

whom. As Monica Minnegal argues: "By strategic waiting, as much as by strategically making others wait, I argue, we give rhythm to social life." (2009: 90) Such temporal power plays are, of course, not unique to aristocratic systems of power, or specific historical realizations. During US-President's Donald Trump's 2018 visit to England there were numerous discussions whether his arriving late at Buckingham Palace, where Queen Elizabeth II was forced to wait for him standing in the blazing sun, was an intentional breach of protocol, bad timing or a conscious power play.

Despite the pervasiveness and ubiquity of waiting in daily life, waiting plays a relatively minor role as a subject of academic enquiry. Why is that? Considering the negative status of waiting in everyday culture and today's temporal regimes the lack of material on waiting is hardly surprising. Contemporary cultures often place productivity and self-improvement over leisure and boredom. Waiting, consequently, is coded in such negative terms that one tends to disregard it completely. This perception is not least occasioned by what Rolf Dobelli identifies as 'action bias', i.e. a human instinct to prefer taking action instead of remaining inactive, even if said action is futile or may have detrimental outcomes (2013: 128-30). And Andreas Dörpinghaus takes his cue from Theodor Adorno's theory of learning where the idea of waiting is regarded not only as positive, but as essential, and asserts that this positive perception did not translate into the present: "[g]egenwärtig erschöpft sich die Bedeutung des Wartens in seiner Geringschätzung und Bedeutungslosigkeit"[1] (2013: 128). Yet, this negative perception, according to sociologist Rainer Paris, paradoxically results in an inherent epistemic value of waiting: "Weil wir das Warten als verlorene, als nutzlose und 'enteignete' Zeit empfinden, wirft es unerbittlich die Sinnfrage auf."[2] (2015: 167-168)

Still, waiting, while all pervasive, tends to escape attention. This negative perception of waiting – read as time not spent productively – is of special importance for the discussion of the politics of unemployment. On the one hand, the unemployed are forced to endure their wait for a new job or for securing benefits. At the same time, especially the contemporary system installed by Tony Blair's New Labour and expanded by David Cameron's Conservatives forces the unemployed to spend their "free" time in useful ways: the unemployed need to complete workshops, improve their skills, and minutely document their search for a new job to remain eligible for social benefits.

Why is this lack of academic and political consideration so disconcerting and problematic? Considering who is actually forced to wait, repeatedly and endlessly, the urgency and importance of the theme becomes more obvious. It is usually the dispossessed and disenfranchised who endure existential duration of uncertain length.

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[1] "Currently waiting is seen as devoid of any value and meaning." (my translation)
[2] "Because we perceive waiting as time that is lost, useless and devoid of agency it forces us to ask for the sense of it all." (my translation)

Chronic and seemingly endless waiting affects those with the least amount of power. By chronic and existential waiting I mean the kind of waiting whose outcome is perceived by the waiter as existential and potentially life-altering. This includes the likelihood of obtaining a new job, the wait for a medical diagnosis with potentially (and often literally) life-changing repercussions, or the wait for a legal sentence that may radically alter one's biography. Waiting becomes chronic when the end of the wait is not foreseeable or even likely. A potentially indefinite wait for the manifestation of an anticipated event often renders the present unbearable and takes up the waiter's emotional and cognitive resources. Mundane waiting for a bus to arrive at a predicted point in time gives the commuter at the very least the impression of being in control – hence the London Tube's signs that indicate the arrival of the next train by the minute. Yet, a refugee's waiting for the government's decision whether or not he or she will be granted a visum for an extended stay in the country of destination is often rendered unbearable by the unpredictability not only of what the decision will be but also of when or whether it will be made in the first place (cf. Singer 2018).

Such chronic and existential waiting has discernable effects on those in waiting. As Sharhram Khosravi argues: "Waiting by the poor, the unemployed, asylum seekers, undocumented migrants or youngsters can result in a weakening of a sense of social function, and of their connections to the larger society, generating a feeling of purposelessness and rolelessness." (2014: n.p.) Conversely, not having to endure existential wait-time is, as argued, a privilege granted to few. Doreen Massey stresses that much "of life for many people, even in the heart of the first world still consists of waiting in a bus-shelter with your shopping for a bus that never comes." (1992: 8) Massey's statement can be understood literally and figuratively. Literally speaking, daily life consists of various situations that require waiting for a service, for help, etc. And in this regard the less powerful tend to wait longer. Massey's statement also works on a figurative level: especially in the neoliberal context, in the wake of an economic crisis, an overheated housing market, the impending automatisation of the work-place, a future that can be planned and predicted seems ever more uncertain. This is evidenced by a look at the contemporary European South. Here one finds whole generations waiting on stand-by and in a state of uncertainty and unpredictability. The high number of unemployed young people, especially in the south of Europe, who are waiting for a better future poses an urgent socio-political challenge, resulting in a prolonged period of adolescence termed "waithood" (Honwana 2014, Kremer 2015).

It is in this sense that one has to read Jeremy Stein's argument regarding the academic study of time-space compression: "interpretations of time-space compression typically rely on accounts of privileged social observers, and are thereby elitist." (2001: 107) Such privileged perspectives are myopic and tend to disregard as mundane and inconsequential experiences that for many are disruptive and existential. Vincent

Crapanzano argues that especially marginalized groups "wait for something, anything to happen. They are caught in the peculiar, the paralytic, time of waiting." (1985: 42) Very often, for them, any productive potential of waiting has vanished, and as Billy Ehn and Orvar Löfgren argue, frequently "the only way the poor can avoid waiting is by agreeing to settle for no service at all." (2010: 69) Ultimately, enforced and existential waiting seems to serve as a means of subjugation and intentional paralysation. As will be shown in the examples below, waiting is not just a by-product of an overworked bureaucratic system, waiting is not just an effect. Often it may as well be seen as a means to an end. The end of waiting as a tool of power is to keep the waiters occupied and hopeful while enduring a situation whose outcome is uncertain and unpredictable.

Paul Graham, *Beyond Caring*

A strong sense of subjugation and paralysation permeates Paul Graham's photo-series *Beyond Caring*. The photos were taken between 1984 and 1985 in waiting rooms all over Great Britain. These waiting rooms were run by the *Department of Health and Social Services* (DHSS), a department that was later shut down. The rooms were used to house the unemployed while waiting for an appointment with the centre's staff. Given the scarcity of jobs the unemployed were required to repeatedly return and spend extensive periods of time at the DHSS, which, given the infamous state of these waiting rooms, almost appears as a dystopian experience. This is certainly expressed by Graham's photos.

Paul Graham's series consists of photos that captured the unemployed in seemingly endless waiting, a kind of waiting Paul Graham himself only knew too well, having been unemployed and having frequented these waiting rooms himself as a client. Being aware that the government or the DHSS would not grant him permission to shoot photos on these premises, he proceeded without consent of either the government or the unemployed. Given the lack of governmental consent the secretive act of taking photographs in these waiting rooms may be taken as an act of civil disobedience with the goal of making visible those who have remained invisible in the eye of the public.

The lack of consent on the side of the depicted waiters, however, is problematic. The topic of voyeurism and consent is not merely an artistic concern but is directly related to my argument about the political relationship between power and waiting. Rather, the waiters' lack of power and agency is perfectly exemplified by their lack of consent when it comes to their being documented and framed as victims of the state. As such, on the one hand, one is confronted with an issue that is central to documentary photography, namely transgressing the thin line between observation and voyeurism. Paul Graham offers his viewers an insight into a space that is literally packed to the brim with some of

society's most vulnerable people. And in their public waiting, often for hours on end, they are exposed enough as it is. (This concern will also become important below in the discussion of waiting lines in Ken Loach's *I, Daniel Blake*.) The fact that the camera's documentary gaze is accompanied by a sense of intrusion is reinforced by the represented subjects. Many of the unemployed appear to be hiding in plain sight of those surrounding them: faces are directed towards the floors or walls, but certainly not at other waiters. Sitting bodies are often crouched or cowering as if they were trying to sink into the floor beneath. Some are hiding behind columns or in the darker corners of the waiting rooms. These people clearly do not want to be seen.

The unemployed's longing to remain unobserved highlights one disciplinary element of being forced to wait: waiting for help in public is akin to a panoptic state of being where one is seemingly constantly surveyed and judged by others, which as a result may lead to surveying and scrutinizing oneself. It appears as if the prolonged periods of waiting lead to the waiters ultimately judging themselves rather than others or, which is even more problematic, the economic politics that may have contributed to their predicament. The following argument by literary scholar Laura Tanner may refer to medical waiting rooms, but the central aspect of surveillance still applies: "In the medical waiting room, the gaze that lingers on the abject bodies of others engages in a form of surveillance that is ultimately self-surveillance." (2002: 126)

In *Beyond Caring*, one exception to this attempt at trying to remain invisible, is a young toddler, dressed in pink clothes, who curiously observes the people surrounding her with an upward gaze (Graham 2010: plate 14). Placed at the centre of the photo, she is the focal point as opposed to the line of waiters to her left. The girl's curiosity and self-confident stance stands in stark contrast to everybody else in the room, who appears to be down-trodden and defeated. On the one hand, the girl represents a childish curiosity that has been lost by those around her. On the other hand, the waiters lined up on her left, who become increasingly older, seem to foreshadow her own possible future. Additionally, being forced to wait in often overcrowded rooms creates a quite paradoxical situation of proximity and distance. The spatial proximity necessitates an intrusion into the private space of others, while the individual situation of helplessness is clearly visible to everyone. Communal waiting is governed by a set of implicit societal rules and scripts that regulate a whole range of social behaviours from directing one's gaze to positioning oneself in relationship to others. Despite sharing a confined space the waiters are expected to maintain as much privacy as possible.

As voyeuristic as Graham's photos may appear, *Beyond Caring* does not present an unsympathetic or detached gaze. Paul Graham is no Martin Parr, whose documentary eye sometimes seems to mock and ridicule those who it observes. Graham's photos rather communicate a sense of compassion and invite empathy with those in seemingly

infinite waiting. This, for one, has to do with the camera's position at the moment a photo is taken: to remain undetected, Graham positioned himself amongst the waiters and placed his Pabel Makina camera on his lap while taking photos, rather than choosing a perspective from a above or from a distance that would imply a sense of documentary detachment. This choice of perspective results in images that are seemingly taken from the perspective of a person in waiting rather than the perspective of an outside observer. Additionally, as if to add to the sense of warped time in waiting, the camera's position often resulted in a strong focus on ceilings and floors, which appear slightly askew and tilted, as if to represent the suspended perception of linear time. In *Beyond Caring* one hardly finds doors or windows, and the few windows that are being shown are either small slits, covered with bars, or look out onto brick-walls on the other side. As such these windows don't offer any larger vistas as if to metaphorically express the hopelessness of the situation at hand.

Consequently, these visuals foreground the confining spaces that entrap those in waiting. The importance of foregrounding and defamiliarization is not only related to the subjects and the waiting rooms but to another important visual element that may easily be overlooked by today's viewers. Graham's use of colour photography was literally groundbreaking at the time, especially considering the genre of *Beyond Caring*. Belonging to documentary photography the expected if not required chromatic scheme would have been black and white as seen in the seminal work of Walker Evans in the US or Billy Brandt and Chris Killip in the UK. The choice of black and white was intended to support the seriousness of the subject at hand. Colour photography, on the other hand, belonged to the domain of either low-brow art forms or, even worse, advertisements. As a member of the so-called "New Colour"-movement Paul Graham thus played with and ultimately changed the perception of what the use of colour-photography could and should do.

Graham's use of colour thus achieves three things which are related to the experience of waiting: firstly, his use of colour photography can be understood as an attempt at subverting the audience's expectations and thus foregrounds the subjects and themes. Secondly, the use of colour actually only serves to show how colourless, dark and decrepit these waiting rooms actually are. Thirdly, Graham's attempt at subverting the rules and conventions, in short, the very identity of a given genre metaphorically expresses the very experience of chronic waiting: in waiting the unemployed undergo a suspension of their social identity. They are caught in a limbo where the main social identity they are being given is that of being 'the unemployed'.

The aforementioned focus on the unemployed is supported by an inconspicuous absence. Those who are never seen in any of the images are governmental workers. They are hidden in their stalls behind windows and bars. The employees are rendered

invisible. That, however, is not to say that the government itself is invisible. Rather, the government and its bureaucracy are represented by the spaces it provides for its most helpless citizens. And it is these very spaces – derelict, dirty and dark – that indicate that the government is 'beyond caring', as the title of the series has it. These waiting rooms, as Charles B. Goodsell claims, with regards to US-American waiting rooms – were intentionally derelict and decrepit. Goodsell offers a taxonomy of these welfare waiting rooms that is highly evocative in the metaphorical naming of the respective type of room: Goodsell identifies the "Dog Kennel" (1984: 470), the "Pool Hall" and the "Business Office" (472), the "Bank Lobby" (473) and the "Circus Tent" (474). These locations are a spatial manifestation of the welfare-politics behind them. David Chandler argues in regard to such rooms in England: "Often housed in neglected civic buildings designed for a different purpose, they were already cast-off spaces, hastily and cheaply remodelled, but still woefully ill-equipped for the human sensitivities of their new function." (in Graham 2010: n.p.) This type of governing the poor is reminiscent of what Henry Giroux calls the "the politics of disposability" (2007: 305). In a similar vein, Zygmunt Bauman refers to this treatment in terms of "the acute crisis of the 'human waste' disposal industry" (2007: 28). The unemployed masses are treated like a surplus to be disposed of rather than individuals that seek to be re-integrated into society.

As argued, the government in *Beyond Caring* is devoid of a human face, it is merely manifested in an architecture that becomes the temporary abode of those waiting for help. In no way does this kind of architecture express or represent responsibility for either the economic state of the nation or the precarious situation of the unemployed waiters. At times it rather seems to invert the question of responsibility. Especially the leaflets on the walls seem to imply that the unemployed are solely responsible for their own situation, expressing the neoliberal ideology of the contemporary government. One leaflet reads: "We have many vacancies each day. If your are still looking for a job, call again tomorrow." (Graham 2010: plate 40) The word "still" expresses a strong judgement on those who seemingly are not doing enough to find a new job. This implicit accusation is paired with the demand to "call again tomorrow" and thus prolongs the wait for employment for yet another day, maintaining a sense of hope. By demanding the waiter to come in "tomorrow", help needed in the present is relegated to an uncertain future, while offering a spark of hope. Hope in general could be read in a positive light, yet hope and its connection to waiting are a double-edged sword. On the one hand, hope offers relief; on the other hand, hope prolongs a painful present. Pierre Bourdieu argues, in sociological terms: "Absolute power is the power to make oneself unpredictable and deny other people any reasonable anticipation, to place them in total uncertainty [...]. The all-powerful is he who does not wait but who makes others wait." (2000: 228)

Ultimately, these waiting rooms under Thatcher's government are not only close to the German *Arbeitsnachweise* during the inter-war years (cf. Kracauer 1997), they

vividly express Thatcher's conviction that 'there is no such thing as society'. Years later, New Labour's new prime minister Tony Blair will resort to exactly these kinds of waiting rooms to make a case for a welfare reform. In 2002, Blair argues that:

> The state of most benefit offices was testament to the previous Government's approach – take your money and get out of our sight. In their view claimants were there because it was their fault – so it didn't matter if they had to wait in queues for hours on end, in tatty offices, having to shout their private business at staff through screens. How inspiring to be able to contrast that old picture with our new Jobcentre Plus. (2002: n.p.)

Superficially, Tony Blair may have been right. The newly introduced and fully rebranded Jobcentre Plus appears like the spatial and ideological opposite of the spaces depicted in Paul Graham's photo-series. From the 1980s to the 2000s the waiting rooms may have been re-designed and personal contact between the client and caseworker increased. Yet, the logic of the unemployed being solely responsible for themselves has actually increased and the ideology of self-care is manifested yet again by the waiting rooms. Sharon Hays' following assessment may be directed at the US-American welfare reform but applies in equal measure to England: "And all the public areas in that welfare office were newly decorated with images of nature's magnificence – glistening raindrops, majestic mountains, crashing waves, setting sun – captioned with inspirational phrases like 'perseverance,' 'seizing opportunities,' 'determination,' 'success.'" (2003: 3)

As seen in Ken Loach's *I, Daniel Blake* this redesign of jobcentres and their waiting rooms was equally implemented in Great Britain. As opposed to the Thatcher-years, the design, architecture and intended "feel" of these spaces changed drastically. The waiting rooms were transformed into light, open and transparent spaces. But it is especially this notion of transparency that not only retains a sense of panoptic surveillance but even increases the intrusion of bureaucracy into the privacy of the jobseeker's life, as will be illustrated below. It is important to point out that these changes were implemented under Bill Clinton's government in the US and under Tony Blair's New Labour-government in the UK. While neoliberal policies like these may more closely be associated with the Republicans and the Tories, the remodelling of the welfare-state, as seen in these examples, was a project of two parties that perceive themselves as leftist.

Ken Loach, *I, Daniel Blake*

Such a re-designed and 'motivating' waiting room serves as one of the expositional set-pieces of Ken Loach's film *I, Daniel Blake* from 2016. The film shows the bureaucratic odyssey of its titular protagonist Daniel Blake, a joiner-carpenter from Newcastle, who

after a heart attack is forced to apply for social welfare. While his doctors deem him unfit for work, the jobcentre's own Work Capability Assessment claims Daniel can and should work. Consequently, rather than applying for Employment and Support Allowance Daniel is forced to apply for Jobseekers Allowance. This application requires Daniel to spend 35 hours a week looking for a job and to minutely document his search, a journey that will result in a second, fatal heart-attack.

A comparison of the film with Paul Graham's *Beyond Caring* highlights a variety of ostensible oppositions in the representation of unemployment, but one similarity remains. The differences include the following: Graham shows the unemployed as nameless and unidentified masses while Loach's film is centred on a group of round and dynamic characters. Graham stresses the immobility of waiting in the DHSS's waiting rooms, whereas Loach depicts Daniel as constantly being on his feet and wandering through Newcastle to fulfil the Jobcentre's demands. Where Graham leaves the jobcentre's employees invisible, Loach not only uses them for his plot but almost exclusively vilifies them. (The fact that the employees are actually caught in a similar neoliberal logic of constant self-control and insecurity is of no concern to Loach.) Despite these differences both, photo series and film, share one theme, namely the incessant experience of waiting and the insecurity of whether this waiting will be worth it.

Superficially, *I, Daniel Blake* may appear as a film full of activity and mobility. Daniel Blake is constantly on his feet. But this frantic activity only hides his being repeatedly forced to wait. Between the heart attack that leaves him unemployed and the heart attack that will eventually cause his demise, Daniel Blake is forced to undergo and complete a number of bureaucratic tasks most of which come with extended periods of time. He is required to first see a health-care professional, then a physician, then he is forced to write letters, make and wait for several phone-calls, he has to apply for 'mandatory reconsideration', he repeatedly is mandated to visit the job-centre, work-shops, and so forth. The film depicts about twenty different bureaucratic steps in Daniel's journey to receive his welfare. And most of these steps come with extended periods of waiting: waiting for answers from the job-centres, waiting for job-interviews, waiting for phone-calls, waiting for a computer to unfreeze, etc.

What it is important to note is the fact that Daniel is represented as a 'good waiter': he never lets his impatience get the best of him. Rather, he endures the endless duration of time. What is more, as said, he makes the most of the time he is forced to wait: either he helps others, such as Katie and her kids. Or he spends the time waiting by working in the household while listening to classic radio. This 'ability to wait' matters, because the unemployed subjects' subjugation to the jobcentre's temporal politics is of central importance: any failure to adhere to the jobcentre's imposed schedules leads to

immediate sanctions, as in the case of Katie, the film's female protagonist, and her children's late arrival for an appointment. Katie had to move with her two kids from London to Newcastle. Being new to the city she is late for her first appointment at the Jobcentre Plus. This appointment is crucial for her, since the welfare that is paid out depends on it. Yet, as she is late, the jobcentre's responsible case-worker punishes her with sanctions. As the exasperated Katie loudly vents her frustration, she is evicted from the waiting room by the security service. Where Paul Graham shows a waiting room in which the unemployed are seemingly stuck forever, Ken Loach shows a waiting room that is actually exclusive rather than inclusive. All of which is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's claim that the "more life is regulated by administration, the more people will have to learn to wait." (qtd. in Ehn & Löfgren 2010: 35) *I, Daniel Blake* shows that the idea of neoliberal de-regulation is partially a myth. The lives of the powerless are actually regulated extensively.

In Katie's case the subsequent sanctions not only lead to more waiting but to hunger and public shaming. Without money to spend on food and bare necessities Katie is starving herself to feed her children. At one point, money is so scarce that Daniel convinces Katie to visit, for the first time in her life, a food bank. The respective scene is set at the Benwell food-bank in Newcastle.

This scene of waiting is significant for a number of reasons: firstly, the long line of people waiting for admission to the food bank impressively illustrates the effects of austerity politics. Loach shows a whole cross-section of citizens that depend on the help of a non-governmental agency. Secondly, the waiting line turns into a scene where those that are waiting are being shamed. Since the queue is so long the high number of people waiting places most of them outside in the cold and clearly visible to any passers-by.

With this depiction of the waiting line, Ken Loach refers to a history of political iconography. One is, for example, reminded of the Conservatives' campaign poster from 1979, designed by the advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi. The poster depicts a line of people waiting in front of an unemployment office. The poster's slogan, printed in bold, black letters, reads: "Labour isn't working." Ken Loach's inversion of the poster turns the message upside down by arguing that the "Conservatives aren't working" either. The waiting line at the food-bank is also reminiscent, intentionally or not, of UKIP's infamous "Breaking Point" poster with the slogan "The EU has failed us all." The poster depicts a line of immigrants marching in a single file which evokes a waiting line. As such the campaign not only evokes the fears of a Great Britain awaiting the arrival of these 'invaders', but also the xenophobic fear that these immigrants will make finding a job even harder.

While, on the level of the plot the film repeatedly stresses the repeated experience of waiting, Ken Loach does not translate this theme to the level of the film's structure and

its aesthetic representation the film never attempts to slow down the narrative or the viewer's experience of time enough to force the audience into waiting as well. Ken Loach's *I, Daniel Blake* is more interested in the effects of austerity politics that are manifested in a bureaucratic apparatus which is shown as absurdly ineffective and terrible inhumane. Still, waiting, as the film seems to be aware, is more than just a side-effect of unemployment. Waiting is essential to the film's representation of this apparatus. Like Graham, it highlights that waiting is more than just a side-effect of unemployment. It is a tool of power. Waiting is all-consuming and can become a burden on the mind and body of those in waiting. After all, in Daniel's case, the stress of a future delayed results in a second and fatal heart attack.

Conclusion

Waiting is more than just a side-product of power structures. Rather, I argue, it is a central tool of power as well as an unsettling effect thereof. The powerful do not wait, whereas the powerless are constantly waiting. What makes this kind of waiting so effective as a means of power, however, is not a sense of hopelessness. Rather the opposite is the case. By providing just enough hope or motivation to move on bureaucratic power structures invite the dependent population to keep calm and to carry on. It is that spark of hope, of a constant delay of the anticipated event that prolongs waiting and, ultimately, thwarts meaningful political action on the side of those in waiting. Rather than fighting the powers-that-be the waiting subject feels caught in a perpetual present, in which, in the words of Daniel Blake, one is "going round and round in circles."

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