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Waiting as institution. Notes for an institutional analysis of human waiting processes from a Discontinuous Materialism perspective

La espera como institución. Apuntes para un análisis institucional de los procesos de espera humana desde la perspectiva del Materialismo Discontinuista

Abstract

This essay proposes an alternative theory for analysing social and human waiting that breaks with the prevailing temporal approach. I suggest relocating waiting as a subject of study from the area of temporalities to that of social institutions. My approach draws on the theory of institutions offered by Discontinuous Materialism[1] (DM) to analyse waiting processes. I argue that this perspective overcomes the gnoseological problems that current temporal theories of waiting have in the material field of these phenomena. The essay analyses the categories and concepts related to DM, such as ϕ-components and π-totalities, anthropological space, and ceremony. It shows how they can be applied to waiting processes. This work also critiques two theoretical pillars on which current research is based: the idea that waiting is a fundamentally experiential and subjective phenomenon and the view that waiting constitutes ontologically negative (temporal) phenomena. The proposed institutional theory transforms waiting from a nebulous, liminal, and temporal phenomenon to one with materially visible and determinable contours. The essay concludes by demonstrating how the institutional character of waiting can further refine and delimit their specific field while also situating social and human waiting within a broad and diverse gnoseological field.

Keywords: Waiting processes; Institution; Anthropological Space; Ceremony; Discontinuous Materialism.

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[1] Discontinuous Materialism is a non-reductive materialism, which offers a notion of *matter* broader than tangible objects that the so-called "*material turn*" tend to limit itself. Gustavo Bueno conceives as a matter of tangible materiality and other realities, including non-tangible physical matter. According to Bueno's ideas, non-tangible realities are material due to their plurality and changeability; moreover, their existence depends directly on the physical matter that supports them without exhausting them (Pérez-Jara et al., 2022).

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Resumen

Este ensayo propone una teoría alternativa para analizar las esperas sociales, que rompe con el enfoque temporal imperante. Se sugiere reubicar la espera como objeto de estudio desde el ámbito de las temporalidades al de las instituciones sociales. Nuestro planteamiento se basa en la teoría de las instituciones que ofrece el Materialismo Discontinuista (MD), enfocado al análisis de los procesos de espera. Se argumenta que esta perspectiva supera los problemas gnoseológicos que las actuales teorías temporales de análisis de las esperas tienen en el ámbito material de estos fenómenos. El ensayo analiza las categorías y conceptos relacionados con el MD, como los φ-componentes y las π-totalidades, el espacio antropológico y la ceremonia, mostrando cómo pueden aplicarse a los procesos de espera. Este trabajo también critica otros de los pilares teóricos en los que se basan las investigaciones actuales sobre las esperas, tales como la idea de que la espera es un fenómeno fundamentalmente experiencial y subjetivo, y la visión de que la espera constituye un fenómeno ontológicamente negativo. La teoría institucional propuesta transforma la espera de un fenómeno nebuloso, liminal y temporal a otro con contornos materialmente visibles y determinables. El ensayo concluye demostrando cómo el carácter institucional de la espera puede refinar y delimitar aún más el campo gnoseológico específico de las esperas.

Palabras claves: Estudios de las espera; Institución; Antropología del espacio; ceremonia; Materialismo Discontinuista.

1. Introduction

Although widely used in social sciences, the concept of institution remains ambiguous and carries multiple meanings, creating challenges for scholars. The term's legal etymology has expanded into fields such as anthropology, sociology, political science, economics, and cultural studies, each with unique approaches to institutions based on different theoretical traditions.

Classical theoretical traditions like Spencer, Durkheim, Weber, Znaniecki, and Parsons have shaped anthropology and sociology's views on institutions. In sociology, distinct understandings of institutions appear in Selznick's organizational studies, contemporary neo-institutionalism, and rational choice approaches (Carabaña et al., 1999).

Herbert Spencer (1873) initiated the study of institutions inspired by biology (Bueno, 2005). Durkheim defined *sociology* as the "science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning" (Durkheim, 2001, p. 31). Weber (2019) considered institutions vital for characterizing society, while Parsons argued that they occur in integrating action and social systems (Parsons & Mayhew, 1982).

Other approaches have explored similar concepts, such as neo-institutionalists and organizational studies emphasizing adaptability (Nonet & Selznick, 2017; Terry, 1993), and the rational choice approach in political science focusing on individual interests (Shepsle, 1989).

Many analytical approaches to institutional studies focus on institutions' historically objectified nature. However, this perspective may overlook institutional articulation and its role

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in social evolution by assuming that institutions are predetermined within a specific time or social space.

Sociology provides comprehensive approaches to studying institutions. However, it can lead to reductionist interpretations that confine institutional reality to sociological phenomena, thereby restricting institutions to human-human relations within anthropological space. This perspective can sometimes narrow the scope of extra-somatic culture, reducing objective institutions (such as coins and buildings) to mere instruments or material parts of social institutions, rather than acknowledging their independent significance.

This essay explores institutions and their diverse meanings in social sciences. We will begin by discussing Gustavo Bueno's theory of institutions, which addresses the challenges of analysing connections between subjective (social) components and objectified components of "human culture." Bueno's theory considers non-social (biological, physical, chemical) influences on human culture and acknowledges human-nature relations, avoiding issues of categorical imperialism or sociological monism that can arise from an overly narrow sociological perspective. We will also explore Bueno's theory of ϕ-Components and π-Totalities, Anthropological Space, and Ceremonial and Non-Ceremonial Institutions.

We will then examine the cumulative characteristics of institutions and their usefulness for studying waiting times. Specifically, we will discuss the hylomorphic structure, morphological cultural units of systematic order, the coexistence of institutions, rationality, normativity, and axiological condition. These concepts provide a framework for understanding the interrelatedness of institutions and their role in shaping social systems.

This article aims to apply Gustavo Bueno's theory of institutions to social and human waiting, considered as social institutions. This work falls within the traditions that advocate for practical and useful philosophy, and the analysis of the categories and concepts of social sciences is part of that intention. Therefore, I will examine the categorical arsenal of waiting studies, exploring how some epistemological standpoints have shaped the gnoseological waiting field, conditioning the research until nowadays. By providing a comprehensive overview of the institution's idea and its significance in the waiting processes studies, this article seeks to contribute to the practical analysis of these social phenomena.

2. Gustavo Bueno's theory of ϕ-Components and π-Totalities, Anthropological Space and Ceremonial and Non-Ceremonial Institutions

DM employs Gustavo Bueno's theory of ϕ-Components and π-Totalities to distinguish between physical/natural and cultural materials and phenomena. This breaks with the traditional division between nature and culture and allows for operationalizing the phenomena within each category. Bueno proposes the differentiation between the ϕ-type and π-type totalities, or the conjugated parts of a complex, where the body as a spiritual body (πνευματικό σώμα) is related to itself through the mediation of the spirit of human culture (Bueno, 1978, p. 63). These categories group together corporeal phenomena (ϕ) and spiritual/cultural phenomena (π), respectively, and help us distinguish between what is truly anthropological and what is not.

In the first place, those of a corporeal type can be found (physical, morphological, physiological), denominated by Bueno as ϕ-*phenomena* because of the initial letter in Greek of the word *physis* (φύση), regularly translated as *nature*. Secondly, there are the *phenomena π* of a spiritual or cultural type (linguistic, artistic, religious, ideological), denoted by the initial Greek letter π of *pneuma* (πνεύμα) or *spirit*. In this way, it is said that "anthropological realities or concepts are either of a φ nature (as *genitor*) or of a π nature (as *father)*" (*Idem*).

By considering these relationships between components and totalities, Bueno clearly distinguishes between what is truly anthropological and what is not. As I shall try to show, this analytical scheme lies at the heart of my categorical construction. Furthermore, it is the technology with which I propose to study and analyse the waiting spaces. Based on this articulation between component parts, which are in no way dichotomous but complementary, the categories proposed below are structured based on the idea of *anthropological space* and the materials of which it is composed. These will be of type π or φ, whether related to the culture (π) or the physical (φ) characteristics of the space. As I shall try to show, this analytical scheme lies at the heart of my categorical construction.

Now, let's examine how Anthropological Space[2] functions in this context. This space is not a singular essence that existed beforehand, but rather a collection of various anthropological materials. As Gustavo Bueno stated, it should be understood as a "plurality of anthropological material" (Bueno, 1978, p. 59). This category assumes that humans exist in contexts encompassing other non-anthropological entities, and it serves as the gnoseological concept that envelops anthropological fields or materials within these contexts. The idea of Anthropological Space helps us understand the complex relationships humans have with various non-anthropological entities, illustrating the interconnectedness of human existence. That it means that individuals are not absolutes, since they are enveloped by realities other than themself (plants, animals, stones, stars, etc.). Human contexts are such because they are also given vis-à-vis other non-anthropic entities, contexts and material (Bueno, 1978).

To better understand the concept of Anthropological Space and its multidimensional nature, Bueno suggests a heuristic mechanism that uses a circular scheme to organize the space. This scheme is based on axes that represent the different relationships between humans and various phenomena. According to this, anthropological space is traversed by three fundamental axes. Namely, 1) the circular axis [C], 2) the radial axis [R], and 3) the angular axis [A].[3] These axes represent the relationships between human's anthropological realities with other non-anthropological terms.

The circular axis [c] represents relationships between humans, encompassing political, legal, economic, and other types of relations; this axis transcends subjective sociological or psychological concepts. Bueno terms this the "order of circular relations" (Bueno, 1978, 2009; García Sierra, 2021).

The second axis, the *radial axis* [R], establishes connections between anthropological realities and non-anthropological terms such as entities of nature such as the wind, the rivers, the

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[2] The term "anthropological space" is used in place of other terms, such as "human", in order to express a pluralistic, non-monist ontological conception. This opposes definitions that view anthropology as the study of a closed entity, separate from the phenomena that surround it.

[3] These axes can be dissociated but not separated. This dissociation is possible in the form of two by two and one by one, resulting in seven different types of figures. This includes three types of one-dimensional figures (C, R, A), three types of two-dimensional figures (CR, CA, RA), and one type of three-dimensional figure (CRA).

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plants, the rocks, etcetera. Bueno emphasizes the importance of considering these relations within other relevant contexts beyond the human-nature dichotomy.

The third and final axis in Bueno's theory of anthropological space is the *angular axis* [A], which deals with relationships between humans and non-human entities that exhibit behaviour beyond human control or prediction, which Bueno calls *numens*.[4] He argues that these numinous entities are at the centre of religious phenomena and that anything that falls under the framework of relationships between people and numens must have a religious aspect.

The idea of anthropological space is important because it can organize and classify materials, phenomena, and entities with which humans are linked in their historical and existential development. From this point of view, humans cannot be seen as isolated entities, apart from the constitutive links with other materials that surround them. This idea is crucial for studying waiting since these phenomena are also part of the evolving space of humans, and waiting can be categorized in their respective anthropological axis, as we will have the opportunity to demonstrate.

According to Gustavo Bueno, ceremonies are "figures of human action" subject to norms that imply operative sequences of a transitory nature that are internally closed from their configuration. In a few words, ceremonies are a particular kind of institution, ceremonial institutions. Ceremonies are framed in a certain process where operations of different kinds are concatenated following an order and a structure established a priori. Bueno distinguishes four moments for ceremonies, from which different ceremonies are configured and classified according to different criteria. Those are the *constitutive*, *distinctive*, *variational* and *contextual moment* (Bueno, 1984).

Bueno's theory identifies three types of ceremonies, *circular*, radial, and angular. *Circular* ceremonies correspond to the *agere* (to do), *radial* ceremonies correspond to facere (to make), and *angular* ceremonies are those in which human actors enter into play (in the strict sense of the Game theory) with animals, as beings with wills and intelligence and not, for example, as mere accumulations of protein. The *angular* ceremonies are also those related to non-human intelligence, similar to those devoted to certain religions.

In connection with waiting processes, Bueno's ceremonial theory could fulfil the current theoretical vacancy for describing human waiting processes in general and not just in specific terms. Several waiting processes could be described as circular, radial or angular ceremonies depending on what kind of human relations these processes encompass.

In summary, Bueno's theory provides a multi-dimensional perspective for understanding human culture (π) and its relations with non-anthropological (ϕ) realities through the concept of anthropological space and its axes. Moreover, his analysis of ceremonies offers a useful framework for describing phenomena, such as waiting processes, based on the kind of anthropological relations involved. Waiting processes could be described as circular, radial, or angular ceremonies concerning what kind of human relations these processes encompass. In the following section, we will explore how Bueno's theory can be applied to social and human waiting processes.

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[4] Bueno categorizes certain animals as numinous entities, which were regarded as sacred by primitive humans and were believed to possess genuine intelligence and willpower. Human behavior towards numens is not imaginary or phenomenological, but involves actual actions like flattery, deceit, struggle, hatred, or friendship.

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3. Cumulative characteristics of institutions and their usefulness for the study of waiting times

Another aspect to be taken into account in Gustavo Bueno's theory of institutions is that of the components of institutions. This compositional structure of the institutions is what Bueno (2005) calls the "cumulative characteristics of institutions". These cumulative characteristics also make possible to differentiate institutions from other materials, processes and phenomena in anthropological space, which may even be social but not institutional. This structure constitutes one of the fundamental pillars when constructing operational categories for the study of waiting from the perspective I propose here. In the following, some aspects that characterise these components will be pointed out and illustrated with examples that are useful for studying waiting.

3.1 Hylomorphic structure

According to Bueno's theory, the "hylomorphic [5] structure" is the first cumulative characteristic of institutions, indicating the complex nature of these phenomena and the impossibility of conceiving of them as simple entities. As "corporeal totalities in which matter and form can be distinguished" (Bueno, 2005, p. 21), their hylomorphism is not of an Aristotelian type. In this case, it does not refer to substantial matter and form, so they are not properly Aristotelian substances.

Gustavo Bueno proposes the principle of incommensurability of matter and form as a fundamental aspect of hylomorphism in the materialist sense. In this view, an institution imposes an order on a given matter, but the matter may not be willing to submit to this order, resulting in a structure that does not fully reflect the integrity of the institutionalized matter.

The principle discussed earlier is crucial for my proposal. Research on waiting often leans towards either an individualistic psychological stance or an objectivist one emphasizing the sociological aspect. These perspectives treat actors and social organizations as separate entities, using an oppressor/oppressed schema that fails to capture the complexities of institutionalized waiting. The distinction between phenomena ϕ and structures π can be helpful when applied to waiting. Palmer, Pocock & Burton (2018) argue that 'tactical waiting' in the business world consists of postponing certain operations to outmaneuver competitors. This form of waiting is managed and planned similarly to how a predator waits for its prey.

The hylomorphic distinction in institutions is crucial for identifying often overlooked differentiations. The question arises about how "tactical waiting" differs from other types of waiting. Although there may be formal similarities, they cannot be conceived as identical. The material distinction lies in the institutional character of human waiting. Strictly speaking, a predator does not wait institutionally as a human hunter does. Otherwise, we would be reducing a complex waiting process such as a business transaction, involving numerous economic, financial, sociological, political, and geopolitical factors, to something more simplistic.

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[5] Hylomorphism is Aristotle's ontological theory that every concrete substance is made up of both matter and form, with exceptions for prime matter and God(s). It was popularized in the 19th century and remains a relevant topic in contemporary philosophy (Pérez-Jara, 2022, p. 14).

It is important to recognize that instincts, emotions, and feelings may be present in the actors involved. However, the mentioned elements constitute determining contexts of social action that condition the manifestation of these subjective phenomena.

Incommensurability can also be observed in the institutional waiting during human maternal pregnancy. Biological phenomena (ϕ) such as foetal development stages or morphological transformations of a woman's body don't fully explain the social processes associated with pregnancy waiting. Additionally, institutional structures like maternal leave, ceremonies, prenatal exercise routines, and prescribed medication don't provide a complete understanding either.

To grasp the whole process, it's essential to analyze and relate different factors, since each factor can correspond to various social institutions within anthropological space. Institutions often extend beyond their forms. For instance, a growing belly could be attributed to other health issues, not just pregnancy.

Moreover, some ϕ phenomena may appear linked to π elements (certainty of pregnancy, preparing for the baby, nesting), but they could also be part of an "imaginary pregnancy." In such cases, a woman's behavior aligns with established ceremonies and institutional structures and may even cause limited physical changes, but the biological processes (ϕ) aren't fully completed.

When Analysing the hylomorphism of institutions, it's important to remember that the relationship between matter and form isn't always harmonious. Tensions between these elements are widespread; sometimes, those tensions are the real cause of institutional transformation. Referring to dialectics of this nature, Gustavo Bueno points out that such permanent conflicts between the "overflowing matter and the continent form" of institutions constitute one of the reasons for their failure. Hence, institutions cannot be eternal, and the conflict between them must be seen as being involved in the tension between the components of each institution (Bueno, 2005).

When studying waiting, it is not only possible but necessary to establish categories that reveal existing tensions as dynamic and formal parts of institutionalized waiting. An example of this is the institutionalized waiting at a border. As a regulated institutional process, it cannot fully encompass the interactions between the actors involved in waiting. The dynamics and conflicts between border agents and visa applicants, or even among members of the same groups, cannot be fully contained or regulated by this institution.

Dynamics and conflicts may occur between migrants who wait and compete for limited interview, processing, and visa quotas granted each day, month, or year. Conflicts can also arise between border agents over control of certain economic activities related to waiting, such as influence peddling, selling positions in queues, and improving waiting conditions. In Bueno's words (2005), "an institution, in terms of its form, cannot (...) entirely incorporate all its parts (to its matter), and this is as much as to say that institutions do not exhaust the matter they organize and that this matter always overflows the institutional form" (pp. 21-22).

3.2 Morphological cultural units of *systatic* order

The second characteristic involves institutions as morphological cultural units of *systatic order*[6]. According to Bueno (2005), institutions are "observable corporeal structures" (p. 22), highlighting their explanatory and rational nature. This means that institutions can be understood not only from an external viewpoint (*etic*) but also from the perspective of the actors involved (*emic*), albeit to varying degrees. In essence, institutions exhibit a certain logic for those connected to them.

From an *emic* perspective, using Pike's (2015) classical terminology, institutions must incorporate at least the relevant components of elementary institutions.[7] This *emic* perspective can have different levels of precision, ranging from direct operational (technical-practical) awareness, essential to carry out the institution, to the knowledge of its more complex implications with other institutions in the system.

Javier Auyero provides an advantageous example of this when he analyses the waits for government assistance among families and individuals in poor neighborhoods in Argentina. In this regard, one interviewee notes:

> I'm used to waiting," (...) "I have to wait everywhere. But the worst thing is that they make you go here and then there. (…)"I came two weeks ago; they told me to come back in three days. I came back and the office was closed. I returned the next day, and they told me there were no funds in the program. (...) "you have to wait, because that's how things are here. You have to come many times because if you don't show up, you don't get anything. (Auyero, 2012, p. 20)

This example shows chains of operations established in an institutional manner, the "logic" of which is recognised by the actors involved in an *emic* sense. It should be noted that this rationality must be set out in principle, which does not mean that it is not more or less variable in terms of its exact fit with the *etic* logic that the institution presents. The fact that there are variations (even contradictions) of scale in the rationality of the interacting actors for a given institution does not eliminate its institutional condition. In fact, it does not eliminate the possibility of success of the different actors involved in the institutionally prescribed processes. An institution can be poorly rationalised by an actor who otherwise participates in it most efficiently.

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[6] *Systatic totalisations* are attributive constructs of parts that interact following an internal law, such as a circumference or a helium atom. Do not confuse with '*systematic totalisations*', which are totalisations that group parts without causal codetermination or structural intersection, such as the functional system of conics or the third period of the Mendeleev table. Both types of totalities are gnoseological constructs, but while *systatics* refer to immediately phenomenal terms, *systematics* must refer to third-level relations. Both can interweave in more complex structures, and the difference between them could be presented as effects of a "reflexive recurrence", that is, *systematics* as re-totalisations at another level of the *systatics*. See: https://filosofia.org/filomat/df050.htm

[7] *Elementary institutions* are complex entities that cannot be broken down into other institutions, while complex institutions are combinations of different elementary or complex institutions. Identifying an elementary institution can be challenging as it requires recognizing its emic components, especially when agent subjects are involved and not separated from the institution.

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Consider the case of a footballer shooting at the goal, with the goalkeeper waiting to stop the shot. The waiting goalkeeper may know very little about the physical processes at work in the ball's trajectory or the mathematical equations applicable to it. He may even be completely unaware of the historical logic or cultural context behind the rules of the game governing that particular operation. However, this does not prevent him from executing the action of stopping the ball accurately.

Similarly, on an *etic* level, the player's ignorance does not prevent a physicist, mathematician, or game commissioner from applying the laws and regulations associated with the action in their terms. This last point, concerning the causality of institutional processes, is crucial because while actors immersed in waiting processes may have their feelings, reasons, logic, discourses, and perspectives, scientific thought is not bound by them, even when it takes them into account.

This reasoning does not imply that the *emic* viewpoint should be dismissed as "irrational." Instead, its rationality is attributed to the place it occupies within the phenomenon as a whole. That is, it has to be "enclosed" within the researcher's *etic* research categories.

Several researchers frequently incur this mistake in their research on waiting today. The reasons for this error are many and varied, but at least one of them lies in the gnoseological perspective followed by most of the waiting studies that have been discussed. In the same vein, when many research studies claim to be analysing processes of social waiting, in reality they are investigating only a part of these: the experiences that the actors have of them, but not the process as a whole. This occurs due to a hypostasis of subjective experience as the sole heuristic entity for the objective analysis of waiting processes.

Researchers often make the mistake of focusing solely on actors' subjective waiting experiences instead of Analysing the process as a whole. This behaviour is due to a limited gnoseological perspective that treats subjective experience as the only entity for objective analysis. It is striking that this categorization is used at the *etic* level without further critical-analytical qualification by the researcher, who incorporates *emic* criteria as the essential foundation of their ontological concept of waiting.

It can be concluded that these gnoseological problems lie in the absence of a systematic theory that equates the (*emic*) perspective of the actors with the objectively given material phenomena of waiting. In other words, a theory that coherently integrates the subjective rationalities of the processes involved in the analysis without reducing the complexity of the phenomena to the *emic* dimension.

3.3 The coexistentiality of institutions

As a third cumulative characteristic of waiting, Bueno points to the coexistent nature of institutions: "To exist is to coexist and, therefore, institutions, if they exist, it is because they coexist with others" (Bueno, 2005, p. 23). This statement, however, does not mean that any institution has to be connected with all of the others. The set of institutions of the anthropological material cannot be considered a total institution. On the other hand, if the set of all institutions is not an institution, any random subset of institutions is neither an institution, which does not mean that there are no complex institutions or even complexes of institutions. In other words, sets of institutions that are linked together in some, but not all, of their parts.

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Just as the subjects of a group are interdependent in some aspects between them, but not with each one of the group members, this occurs particularly in complex societies. In DM terminology, this specific type of connection is referred to as sinecoidal connections.[8]

Bueno distinguishes between complex institutions, such as a tenement house made up of various institutions, and families of institutions, such as musical instrument families, which are not themselves institutions. He also notes the existence of systems of institutions, such as the system of elementary institutions of kinship or the intrasystatic system of vowels in Romance languages (2005, p. 24). For waiting analysis, these subtle distinctions are of great interest, and various authors have recognized this, at least in practice. When discussing specific waiting situations, they have highlighted the institutional amalgamation that these processes exhibit.

> When the unhoused or underhoused millions in Mumbai - or Delhi or Calcutta or Capetown or Johannesburg or Durban - mobilize to demand better housing, they know they will endure an unknown period of waiting: waiting for policymakers to agree on a plan, for funders to shake up the complacency of local and national governments, for builders and contractors to construct new housing, for their own turn at the head of the queue. (Appadurai, 2013, para. 25)

Here the *coexistentiality* of the institutions to which I am referring is clearly observed. In the fragment, Arjun Appadurai gives an account of the interconnections and coexistentialities of multiple institutions around which a process of waiting is also institutionalised. These complexes of institutions include institutions that can be both simple and complex. At the same time, they not only intersect and interconnect at different points objectively with each other but also articulate the very actions of multiple social subjects. In this respect, the author goes on to point out that due to a wait that can take years or even decades, families and actors involved in this process must not only become familiar with these institutional articulation mechanisms- i.e. modulate in their systemic ordering, as it was seen earlier - but also have to adjust their particular situation. According to Appadurai, it is this articulation that forces them to "learn to regard their own temporary dwellings (institutions too) as parts of a temporary condition which is sure to change" (Appadurai, 2013, para. 19).

Sophie Day, in her research on hospital waiting within the NHS in London, introduces the concept of "triage (trier: to separate, sift, select)" (2019, p. 179) to analyse waiting and its components. Triage can serve as a classification tool for examining waiting processes and as a mechanism by which other institutions carry out triage. "Waiting constitutes one prospective view of triage, which exceeds the linear order of a queue (ordinality) in processes that rearrange and sift the assembly" (Idem).

Similarly, waiting at an airport is a complex institution interacting with multiple others. These interconnections can be analysed from different viewpoints and objectives. For example, a sociological perspective might focus on the relationship between social class and airport waiting time or consumption behaviour. This complex institution involves waiting lists, information

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[8] The term "sinecoidal" or "sinechoidal" refers to the relationship between a term and a group of terms, where the term is connected to some terms in the group but not all simultaneously, allowing it to be "free" with respect to a specific term while still dependent on the entire set. (García Sierra, 2021).

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boards, clocks, telephone applications, boundary gates, VIP lounges, shops, and cafeterias, among other elements.

If the research focused on the appropriation of space and group dynamics of waiting at the airport from an anthropological perspective, the approach would need to be different. It would be necessary to analyse the circular institution of the waiting room, which is a complex institution and part of a family of institutions, including airport lounges such as waiting rooms for international or domestic flights, VIP lounges, and transit rooms, among others. The researcher would need to differentiate between these various institutions while considering their similarities based on their familiarity.

3.4 Rationality

The fourth characteristic of institutions highlights their intrinsic rationality, independent of individual subjects' particular conceptions. However, this does not mean institutions are absolute entities detached from time or space. Instead, they are objective processes materialized through the operations of multiple actors who may be more or less conscious of them. This rationality is a distinguishing element of humans from other animals.

It is essential to clarify that this rationality is not understood in a strictly Aristotelian sense; instead, it is interpreted institutionally, differentiating it from other rationalities found in nature. According to DM, human rationality operates dialectically through a process consisting of three moments:

1.   The moment of the operative position of parts, involving composition and decomposition (or destruction) of parts concerning others, serves as the primary institutional structuring.

2.   The moment of counter position with the environment or surrounding parts.

3.   The moment of controlled re-composition of counterposed parts in the initial totality.

Gustavo Bueno (2005) uses an extended example to illustrate the movement of rationality in institutionalized waits. However, few explicit attempts have been made to establish the rationalities behind such waits. Ambiguity attributed to waiting often prevails because of the subjective perceptions of social actors immersed in waiting processes. Vincent Crapanzano (1986) describes waiting as a holding action where the present loses focus, and the world slips away (p. 45). John Wiseman, quoted by Kevin Gray (2009), suggests that queues/waiting manifest a congruence between individual and collective rationality (p. 90). Wiseman sees queues as possessing collective rationality when compared to the alternative chaos in circumstances where individuals perceive queuing as a rational alternative for themselves.

However, these concepts could be problematic as they attribute rational qualities to actors without establishing the origin of this rationality. Is the rationality of the wait due to biological,

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maybe spiritual, waiter rational nature? They pose a challenge because they assume rationality precedes the institution itself without clarifying its essence or origin.

From a materialist standpoint, the thesis attributing rationality to individual or collective actors cannot be accepted. If we observe rational processes in institutional waiting, such as a queue, it is because this rationality is already implicit in the institution itself, constituting an essential condition for its existence as a social institution. In line with my position, Barry Schwartz points out that "In an integrated network of queues, the output of one unit becomes the input of another, one might assume that a perfectly integrated system would eliminate delay altogether" (Schwartz, 1978, p. 5). In other words, as I have noted, the process has an internal logic independent of the particular interpretations of the actors involved.

While insightful, Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of waiting treats waiting as a homologous phenomenon, limiting our understanding of the processual totality. Other scholars, like Alicia Lindón, Kevin Gray, and Javier Auyero, offer different perspectives on waiting, highlighting the importance of meaning, cultural structures, and internal rationality in waiting processes. However, each approach has limitations and challenges, such as the difficulty of understanding the origin of rationality in the waiting process. From a materialist standpoint, institutional rationality is an essential condition for social institutions independent of individual actors' interpretations. The waiting processes' internal logic plays a crucial role in shaping actors' perceptions and interactions, regardless of whether they perceive waiting as rational. The more rationally structured waiting processes become, the more conflict arises due to the disruptions they create in relation to the rationalities of the involved actors.

3.5 Normativity

The fifth characteristic of institutions refers to their *normativity*, understood as certain identical transformations produced by those fundamental factors from which the institution derives. This means that institutions can replicate based on rational patterns. Normativity is linked to logical or formal universality, which does not necessarily entail a material homologation of concrete manifestations. An institution's repeatability relies on a normative formal model, meaning that even if material manifestations differ, they still qualify as an institution if they share the same formal, normative structure. For example, a Maori "hongi" greeting may vary in its material manifestation, but as long as it follows the same formal, normative pattern, it can be considered an institution.

Institutions are normative phenomena, attached to their own internal purpose or telos, and their normativity is immanent rather than imposed from outside. By entering into composition with other institutions, the formal model adapts to the situation while maintaining its telos. For example, an improvised violin and piano concert may have cultural value but cannot be considered an institution since it cannot be repeated according to a normative formal model. The normativity of institutions is not based on material universality but on logical or formal universality, allowing for morphological diversity. Institutions have their own norms that cannot be reproduced by following the norms of other institutions.

Concerning waiting, it is possible to exemplify it in the following way. A waiting, even if it is as a group (inserted in the circular and even angular axis), cannot be classified as an institutionalized waiting by the mere fact of being a social phenomenon unless it complies with

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the normative criterion both in its monitoring and in its implementation. Nor does this mean that it is irrational in whole or in part, but simply that it does not conform to rules that permit its repetition, at least formally. This case is what is called "spontaneous waiting" or "*ad hoc* waiting" which, for various reasons, can occur in social environments. These waiting processes might be part of operational chains that require specific pauses, but they don't need to be repeated or considered in future iterations of these chains.

An example of spontaneous waiting is when a Cuban friend had to pause and wait inside heated stores during a Canadian winter as she could not endure the harsh weather. Similarly, foreigners in Cuba seek air conditioning to cool down during the summer. These behaviours do not necessarily constitute institutions as they are *ad hoc* strategies agents implement outside a given social space. However, practices like drinking mulled wine or a Cuban mojito to heat or cool down are institutions indeed.

Waiting in the senses above, although perfectly social and even plagued by rationality and operational calculation -does not last too long so the itinerary at hand is not interrupted, or alternatively one can consume something simple in the air-conditioned place in order to justify one's presence there- is not strictly regulated. Here, the pattern is entirely punctual, as it responds to concrete (sometimes radial) stimuli, where the morphologies are open and present as many possibilities as the real situations where this type of waiting process is generated. Hence, the waiting mentioned above does not strictly constitute an *institution* or a *ceremony*.

However, some waiting comply with the normative characteristics that have been pointed out, allowing their repetition in different geographical and temporal spaces but also for the very reproduction of the institution and its durability over time.

In the analysis of queues as a waiting process, various researchers have observed normativity. Kevin Gray identifies a "normative structure" in queuing, which "requires each member to continue standing in line for the time needed to reach the service point at the head of the queue" (Gray, 2009, p. 174). Gray notes that queues/waiting "belong to a form of normative order that exists because there is a common, largely shared understanding of the right way to behave".[9] Gray's analysis tends more towards a principle of rational choice of those involved, who are inclined towards a shared social rationality as a more convenient "alternative" (Gray, 2009, p. 194).

The issue is that institutional normativity, as understood in Gray's terms, becomes attributed to factors like moral values or individuals' decisions. This perspective is articulated on a quasi-Kantian idea, in which such factors seem to function in regulating subjects' actions during waiting processes. According to the DM theory, normativity is in the institution itself, not in the waiter's mind or any rational consensus reached because of the process.

Barry Schwartz (1978) argues that waiting processes are objectively produced by social processes, articulated by the organization's workers. However, other authors, such as Brady (2002), Gray (2009), and Larson (1988), suggest that waiting norms respond to ethical or economic structures. Waiting processes can be regulated by different normative structures related to moral, cultural, status, situational, proxemic, and organizational norms. In Cuba, for example, queuing orders are based on moral priorities, while in some travel waiting lists, those who have received news of the death of a close relative or must travel for a medical appointment are given priority. Normativities can be classified as implicit or explicit, and organizational or non-

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[9] MacCormick, cited in Gray, 2009, p. 168.

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organizational, depending on their integration with the organizational functioning of social institutions.

Brady's (2002) investigation into the waiting process and queues associated with consuming a particular film product reveals explicit and implicit non-organizational normativities. People recognized mechanisms to generate and preserve these rules and regulations, such as having friends hold their spot in line, taking turns representing their group in the line, forming groups, and deciding how many tickets each person could buy. Another example of explicit normativity is seen in the testimonial of a respondent from Grand Rapids, where the theatre gave away wristbands with a number on them two weeks before tickets went on sale, and the line started based on the selected number.

In conclusion, waiting norms respond to socially established institutions, and their regulation can be explicit or implicit and organizational or non-organizational. These norms can relate to different factors, and their application can vary across contexts. While Schwartz (1978) suggests that social processes produce waiting processes objectively, other authors point out that waiting norms are not always based on the first-come-first-served principle and are influenced by various ethical and economic structures. With these examples, I have tried to account for some of the various genres of normativities possible in waiting processes. In what follows, I will analyse the last of the cumulative characteristics that institutions present in the light of the analysis of social and human waiting, as I have been conceiving it so far.

3.6 Axiological condition

The last characteristic of institutions to be analysed is their axiological condition (Bueno, 2005). Institutions can possess both values and counter-values, but they are not neutral. This characteristic does not imply that value is constant; an institution's value may change over time (Bueno, 2005). In the case of institutional waiting, this characteristic is fulfilled and evident, like a few others. Here, more than in any other quality, the axiological dialectic in symploké is present in waits as institutions stand out (Bueno, 2005).

Regarding the origin of the particular valuations of waiting, different authors have proposed different phenomena as the basis, and some point to cultural or socio-historical mechanisms (Day, 2019). In this regard, Sophie Day notes that waiting is often associated with "the other" side within the British NHS, and in a society that perceives itself as just and potentially democratic, people should strive to leave such processes behind (Day, 2019).

In other cases, the axiological condition of waiting has been associated with the internal structure of the waiting process. "In active waiting, there is a calculated cost that is connected to how long people are prepared to wait. As long as waiting is meaningful, people willingly wait" (Brun, 2015). According to Kevin Gray, the regulations established in some waiting lines, such as the FCFS, are irreplaceable tools given their "ethical simplicity" (Gray, 2009, p. 168). Gray argues that the principle of ordinality evidence "a profoundly equalitarian character" of social processes, making waiting processes "one of the great levelers of humankind" (Idem).

Concerning the axiological quality of waiting, it should be noted that the very idea of currently used waiting entails a negative conceptualization due to the particular historical evolution it has undergone. This notion has a close relationship with the eschatological idea of

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Hope and with the temporal concept present in Calvinist Puritan Protestantism, which, in turn, has a particular relationship with the ethos of capitalism and modernity itself (Weber, 2001). In this context, Sophie Day highlights that for those who wait, waiting is generally considered "dead time," a form of entrapment that emphasizes inferiority and consumes one's life, while for managers, it can be quantified and audited like other commodities (Day, 2019).

These assessments have been taken in many cases as the factors that make institutionalised waiting processes of social control by particular groups, entities, and social segments. The fear of waiting in this sense, makes actors' behavior predictable and manipulable in various ways (Auyero, 2012; Schwartz, 1975). The axiological condition of waiting is linked to the conditions (spatial, temporal, operations, etcetera.) existing where people wait (Brun, 2015).

4. Waiting as a ceremonial and non-ceremonial institution located in anthropological space

When studying waiting, it is essential to differentiate between ceremonial and non-ceremonial institutional waits as they differ in their defining dimensions of time, space, and operations (Bueno, 2005). The analysis of waiting is useful in structuring research based on gnoseological interests. Additionally, some authors have recognized the ceremonial nature of particular waits even without adhering to the proposed coordinates. For example, Barry Schwartz uses the term "ceremonial waiting" to emphasize the symbolic dimension of some waits and the operations they involve. He suggests that a willingness to wait can symbolize deference to the authority that imposes the wait (Schwartz, 1975, p. 41).

Similarly, Ferrie & Wiseman (2019) argue that waiting can sometimes generate euphoria or gratitude towards the person causing the wait rather than being a detriment to the one waiting. By making others wait, the person demonstrates that their conduct is not subject to others' desires, reinforcing that access to them is a privilege. Those receiving attention should be grateful, even if it involves a delay. Similar waiting processes are found in sports, scientific activity, religion, and other fields, generally framed within the convergence of radial and circular axes in the anthropological space.

We can also find well-structured ceremonial waits. Some authors have recognized the ceremonial nature of certain waits, even without adhering to the previously proposed coordinates. Barry Schwartz, for example, uses the term "ceremonial waiting" to emphasize the symbolic dimension of some waits and the operations they involve. He suggests that a willingness to wait can symbolize deference to the authority that imposes the wait (Schwartz, 1975, p. 41).

Similarly, Ferrie & Wiseman (2019) argue that waiting can sometimes generate euphoria or gratitude towards the person causing the wait rather than being a detriment to the one waiting. By making others wait, the person demonstrates that their conduct is not subject to others' whims, reinforcing that access to them is a privilege. Those receiving attention should be grateful, even if it involves a delay.

The key difference I establish with the "ceremoniality" described by these authors is that I emphasize its institutional nature while situating it within a specific axis of the anthropological

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space. Waiting processes are analysed according to their condition as institutions embedded in the circular, angular, or radial axes.

Ceremonial waits on the circular axis can include waiting in halls adjacent to government offices, where explicit and implicit normativity governs the process dynamics. Movement in queues and service prioritization occurs for established reasons (age, illness, physical condition, etcetera.). Ceremonial guidelines dictate behaviour in specific space areas, such as when and how to present identification and documents.

Ceremonial waits on the angular axis appear in initiatory, liturgical, and curative rites. Waiting is often integral to scheduled operations within a larger ceremonial institution. For instance, the angular ceremonial waiting during the "vigil of Saint Lazarus" in Cuba is liturgical. Attendees wait hours until midnight, participating in scheduled rituals[10] like dances, religious songs, prayers, masses, conversations, and food distribution. When midnight arrives, the waiting ends. During the vigil, participants pray to the Saint for the healing of the sick, preserving family health, luck, and even the care of household pets, particularly dogs (Cribeiro, 2014; Murphy, 2017).

The distinctions between ceremonial and non-ceremonial components within institutions are noteworthy. Several institutions, such as the mentioned ceremony, encompass both ceremonial and non-ceremonial parts. While the ceremony is generally regulated, some aspects, like the order of operations, are more flexible. In other social waits, this phenomenon can also be observed. Thus, it is essential to identify the ceremonial components of a wait (rites, routines, cyclical behaviours) and distinguish the non-ceremonial parts (operational or otherwise).

These concepts can be relevantly applied to canonical waits, for instance, those of Odysseus and Penelope. Odysseus' waiting on the island of Ogygia, hosted by the nymph Calypso, is institutional. Although the island is governed by a deity with established rules, there are dynamics and rules governing relations between gods and men. However, the waiting is not ceremonial. Calypso did not impose any sequential rite on Odysseus, even as he was seen "afflicted by his fate, shedding abundant tears every evening gazing out to sea" (Homer, 1887, bk. V. Vers.148).

Penelope's waiting on the island of Ithaca, amidst strong political tensions, is a circular and ceremonial institutional waiting in multiple aspects. The mortuary weaving ceremony exemplifies this. It required her to observe strict political-administrative regulations, such as considering a substitute for her husband and abiding by the council of elders' decisions.

A contemporary example is evident in F. Neil Brady's (2002) investigation of queuing processes. Brady identifies the first-come-first-served (FCFS) principle as a generative element of social ordering, which prevents pure competition from taking over a queue. This principle could be considered a ceremonial institutional waiting. While Brady attributes an "abstract" individual character to the FCFS principle, it works in these circumstances because it is an institution responding to another established institution. Waiting is an interconnected institution with elements such as behavioural norms, organizational systems, and structuring objects or instruments. This process is not spontaneous or abstract, as it may appear at first glance like the lines animals form when crossing a river. Although there may be formal similarities between human and animal lines, the material distinction is significant.

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[10] See explanation of the ceremony "exit of cars stopped at traffic lights" in Bueno, G. (1984), p. 15.

The presented theory's significance lies in providing a systematic structure for comprehending waiting processes without resorting to metaphysical assumptions or reducing behaviors to psychological traits. Rather, it acknowledges the institutional nature of waiting and its inherent rationality, hylomorphism, and systemic ordering as characteristics of institutions.

However, this ordering is not fixed; waiting must adapt to various contexts, undergo changes, and subject its rational articulation to other institutional logics. Waiting is always correlated with the real material conditions of the contexts in which it is manifested. This dialectical confrontation occurs in social action and includes participants from external logic, individual or institutional, and natural factors such as physical or biological elements. Moreover, the dialectic intertwining with other existing institutions could affect the institutional waiting in its morphology.

These interweaving are the field of work for social analysts. Grasping waiting as institutions in symploké, intertwined with other human institutions, is crucial. In this context, dialectical materialism (DM) is an invaluable tool for critical analysis.

5. Conclusion

The main objective of this essay was to offer a perspective from the analysis of the processes of social expectation, which constitutes an alternative to what is currently used by the vast majority of studies on this subject. My proposal consisted of relocating the gnoseological field of social waiting. Specifically, processes as a subject of study, moving it from the area of temporalities, where it is currently located in the social and human institutions field. In other words, I have proposed that social waiting should be reinterpreted as fundamental social institutions, and not as mere temporal processes that traverse social subjects or groups of subjects.

To reinterpret waiting processes as social institutions an analysis has been made from several interpretations and theories on social institutions. After this conceptual review, I have disembarked in the theoretical corpus proposed here to carry out the analysis of waiting. Specifically, this essay offers to use the theory of DM institutions for the institutional analysis of the waiting process.

Moreover, this essay has analysed some concepts and categories related to the DM theoretical perspective. These were necessary to understand the system proposed as a substantive theory in this essay. Specifically, the categories ϕ-components and π-totalities, "anthropological space", and "ceremony" were analysed. All these notions, essential in the anthropological theory of DM, were coordinated with processes of social waiting to prove their relevance in these studies. In the same way, these categories were interwoven with each other in the light of examples also related to social waiting processes. Through this coordination, it was possible to confirm the relevance of the categories, components ϕ and totalities π, in classifying the different materials that make up the waiting field. This distinction constitutes a fundamental factor in establishing the localisation of the waiting in one of the axes of the anthropological space. Similarly, it allows us to clearly and distinctly expose whether part of the materials and

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phenomena were found to correspond, and in what way, to a ceremonial or non-ceremonial institutional waiting, according to the established classification.

Once all the theoretical aspects mentioned above were clarified, an exposition and analysis of the theory of DM institutions were carried out.

The presentation of the theory was made by reconstructing the idea of waiting from an institutional perspective. With this re-exposition of the idea of waiting, my aim has not only been to offer a theory of social and human waiting, but also to critique two of the theoretical pillars on which current research is based. On one hand, we refer to the conception of expectations as fundamentally experiential and subjective phenomena; and, on the other hand, to the idea that expectations constitute ontologically negative (temporal) phenomena. From the proposed institutional theory, expectations cease to be phenomena that are subjective and empirically evident only through the testimony of the subjects involved in these processes and become objective entities recognised as such. The aim here is not to deny the psycho/phenomenological position of the acting subject (or patient) in these processes. Instead, the primary outcome has been to relocate these subjective and perhaps personal interpretations within an adequately structured scheme of analysis which is based on an external objective phenomenon on which this subjectivity is effectively constructed.

Moreover, the institutional classification of the waiting could provide an ontological positivity which is often lacking in the current studies. In this sense, the waiting will go from being an undefined, nebulous, liminal, etc., (temporal) phenomenon to having materially visible and determinable contours. Besides, this perspective could show that temporally, spatially and operationally, the waits find their rationality in the institutional framework that sustains it and not in the mind or psychology of the individuals who interact within it.

Having finished the exposition of the institutional theory of DM applied to waits, it was necessary to analyse each of the "cumulative characteristics of institutions" in accordance with this theory. This exercise was done by coordinating specific materials and empirical waiting cases analysed by the social sciences. This coordination has made it possible, on the one hand, to present the theory of DM institutions in their particular aspects and, on the other, to demonstrate their relevance when applied to the study of the waiting processes.

Finally, after detailing the institutional character of the waits, analysed in terms of an internal aspect of the theory of institutions, we refer to the ceremonial or non-ceremonial structure of institutionalised waits. This aspect is vital in that it further refines and delimits the specific field of the waits. This perspective would make it possible to establish concrete classifications of institutional waiting processes while differentiating one process from another clearly and distinctly.

In short, this essay has attempted to establish coordinates that allow to situate social and human expectations within a gnoseological field that is sufficiently broad, diverse and defined to admit the multiple materials that expectations encompass. With this, we do not intend to enclose the analysis of expectations within an institutional fence that does not acknowledge waiting processes as other types of phenomena that are not institutional. On the contrary, the intention here has been to materially define a type of waiting process that is not subject to ambiguities. From this platform, it is possible to analyse other phenomena that could also be classified as waiting, where only the specific waiting is different from institutionalised waiting. The thesis that we have defended here is that through this perspective of analysis, where expectations could acquire what Gustavo Bueno calls an actual "gnoseological status" from the point of view of the

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Social and Human Sciences. In this sense, this should be the next necessary step that research in this fascinating field must take.

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