About Waiting: A Reading from Social Policies and Emotions in the Context of a Pandemic

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The pandemic declared in 2020 has implied extreme transformations. In the Argentine case, measures were announced to provide relief to the sectors defined as the most affected, within which the so-called emergency family income (EFI) was established. The EFI's management, implementation, access and collection method underwent a digitalisation process, enabling access through official and nonofficial channels. The nonofficial channels include Facebook Groups, where the recipients of social policies exchange information, doubts and advice. This article, based on virtual ethnography, aims to explore the emotions linked to the management and perception of EFI. In particular, we address a practice that has become relevant in the aforementioned context: waiting. It has been observed that the barriers between registration and access to the EFI transfer have implied different types of waiting on the part of the receiving population. We conclude that waiting has become an operative element in the implementation of social policies.

Keywords: Waiting, virtual ethnography, social programs, pandemic, emotions.

Introduction

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic declared in 2020 has implied extreme transformations. These have had an impact on the ways in which the conditions of production and reproduction of life take place, including the global mobilisation of different sanitary measures and emergency income transfers. The Emergency Family Income in Chile and Argentina, checks in the United States for the amount of US$1200, the Universal Bond in Bolivia, the Family Bond in Guatemala, the Cura Italia, the Caixa Auxílio Emergencial or 'corona voucher' in Brazil are just a few examples in the Global South.[1] In the Argentine case, three days after the start of the *Preventive and Obligatory Social Isolation Act* (DNU[2] 297/ 2020) was declared on 23 March 2020, measures were announced to provide relief to the sectors identified as most affected. One of these measures was the so-called emergency family income (EFI).

The EFI's management, implementation, access and collection method underwent a digitalisation process, which enabled it to be accessed through official and nonofficial channels; the nonofficial channels include Facebook Groups, where the recipients of the social policies exchange information, doubts and advice.

The incorporation of information and communication technologies into social policies has been registered since the expansion of the *extended state* (Esteinou Madrid, 2001) and *electronic government* (Naser and Concha, 2011). This has taken place in a massive context of recipients participating in state interventions (De Sena, 2011), which has mobilised different channels of access to resources and information (Cena, 2014; Sordini, 2017; Dettano and Cena, 2020). Within these channels, Facebook Groups have gained prominence and popularity among the recipients of social policies in Argentina, being useful spaces for sharing doubts. Facebook Groups of recipients of social policies in Argentina have multiplied, developing a massive size in terms of the number of participants and the flow of daily interactions, which makes their analysis relevant (Dettano and Cena, 2020).

This writing, based on virtual ethnography, aims to explore the emotions linked to the management and perception of EFI. In particular, we address a practice that has become relevant in the aforementioned context: waiting. It has been observed that the barriers between registration and access to the EFI program have implied different types of waiting for the receiving population.

In this sense, we will deepen the ways in which waiting becomes an operative element in the implementation of social policies. Waiting implies a link with time; it affects the interactions between people and is unevenly distributed in relation to the place occupied in the social structure. Hence, the practice of waiting implies dispositions, knowledge and feelings regarding *what*, *how* and *in what way* the waiting occurs. In view of this, this article explores waiting within the framework of the reception of a social program in the context of a pandemic. This allows us to observe the configuration of sociability of the poor and/or unemployed sectors among the recipient population of social policies.

Social policies in the 21st century: the EFI in a context of crisis

Social policies allude to transformations that have taken place since the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century and that seem to have accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the state pandemic interventions correlated with four distinctive elements that we have identified in relation to extended conditional cash transfer programs (CCTPs):

- They are of a massive nature (De Sena, 2011): in the Argentine case, 25 per cent of the total population has participated in the CCTP, and at the regional level, the number of people living in households that received a CCTP in 2015 was 131.8 million, which represents 20.9 per cent of the regional population (Cecchini and Atuesta, 2017).
- They have acquired an important monetisation and banking aspect (Macías González, 2016), either due to the CCTP or due to food policies; both modalities imply the need to adopt the banking system by large sectors of the population.
- They have manifested the survival (Dettano, 2020) of certain persistent problems, which increase and overlap between the new/old characteristics of the social interventions.
- Their structuring profile has been evidenced in contemporary societies (Cena, 2020), as one of the main tools that states have used to respond to social problems exacerbated by the crises generated by COVID-19.

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As a starting point, then, social policies are both processes in products and products in the process (Cena, 2018); that is, as interventions, they generate and are the result of certain models of society (Titmuss, 1974; De Sena, 2014) and social structures (Adelantado, 2000), implying links between the systemic order and the world of life (Barba-Solano, 1995).

That said, social policies' traditional approaches assign them a particular role in social cohesion and stability by intervening in the classic figure of the 20th-century formal worker. However, the traditional concept of social policy must be revised in light of what have been called new social risks (Bonoli, 2005). This concept recovers uncertainty as constitutive in relation to the processes of the unravelling of the wage society and the modes of state intervention linked to collective social protection. Contemporary social policies, marked by massiveness (De Sena, 2011) in the face of widespread situations of precariousness, family burdens, unemployment and informal employment (Bonoli, 2005), stage a reality with which we coexist; the individual's modes of social integration with society have been modified. This means that the centrality formerly occupied by the figure of the formal worker has metamorphosed, requiring other types of interventions that affect the conditions of production and the reproduction of life.

These interventions, as ways of addressing various problems of the social world from a scheme of shared values (Donati and Lucas, 1987), take up and redefine issues and identify subjects, possible courses of action and the goods/services to provide. They condense, as state policies, the possibilities of naming, signifying and doing. They include evaluations of the interventions (Horsell, 2017) and have a particular World Image[3] inscribed (Scribano *et al.*, 2015), establishing what is accepted, what is acceptable and the legitimate ways of achieving reproduction.

This is particularly visible in policy implementation processes, a moment loaded with moralities and pedagogies (Dettano, 2019). As pointed out by MacAuslan and Riemenschneider (2011) and Tonkens *et al.* (2013), this entails the study of the ways in which these interventions impact and produce feelings such as fear (Lolich and Timonen, 2020) or trust (Van de Velde, 2017).

Within this conceptual framework, we analyse the social policies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic and observe how different aspects and interactions have begun to take part in the digital world, which has implied a review of the theoretical and methodological approach to strategies. The EFI – as a social policy – since its creation has been traversed by digitalisation: its launch, registration and monitoring. This has had an impact on the ways in which people have linked and approached the process of registration and access and on the massive organisation of the program in virtual environments such as Facebook groups.

The EFI aimed to 'compensate for the loss or decrease in income of people affected by the sanitary emergency declared by the coronavirus pandemic' (ANSES, 2020: 4). A total of 8.9 million people received the benefits of the EFI, representing 44 per cent of Argentina's Economically Active Population (EAP) (ANSES, 2020). This figure was comparable with other social programs and some employment situations. The recipient population was made up of Argentines or people with legal residence status in the country of no less than two years and people between eighteen and sixty-five years old. Only one member of a family group was able to collect the benefit (ANSES, 2020). The amount transferred was $10,000[4] (59.3 per cent of the Minimum Vital and Adjustable Wage) and

could be collected by a member of the family group with proven conditions of exclusion, job insecurity, and/or socioeconomic vulnerability (ANSES, 2020).

The program had three discontinuous editions that were announced with the extension of the isolation/distancing measures. Therefore, there was no preestablished payment schedule, which generated great uncertainty among the population and, as we will see, created different situations and feelings associated with 'waiting'.

Methodological strategy

To meet the objectives of this article, we carried out a virtual ethnography of an observation environment of a Facebook group centred around the EFI. Like the measure itself, there was very little seniority among the members of the group (Creation date: April 2020). However, at the time of fieldwork between August and September 2020, the group had already reached approximately 200,000 members and had a high daily number of interactions, a significant aspect of a virtual environment (Dettano and Cena, 2020).

For the selection of this strategy, it has been considered that the interactions inside and outside cyberspace configure a single social life where they overlap, exceeding the geographical and in-person aspects of interactions, a set of worlds of life, sociabilities and experiences (Hine, 2004; Van Dijck, 2016; Scribano, 2017).

A virtual ethnography presents several advantages for the analysis in question: it is a methodology that, in 4.0 societies (Scribano and Lisdero, 2019), adapts to the transformations of the 21st century; it allows us to have updated and almost immediate information on the interactions related to social policies; and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it provides an opportunity to draw attention to and show the potential of 'other' tools linked to social policies.

The observation carried out was floating and deferred (Nadruz, 2010), which implied different degrees of participation throughout the fieldwork: from the recognition and identification of the components of the environment (Dettano and Cena, 2020), through the period of observation and recording of the interactions, until the in-depth interviews.

The observations consisted of a daily record of the selected group's posts during one of the EFI payment periods. Derived from the research design, a nonprobabilistic and/or directed sample was selected (Sampieri Hernández *et al.*, 2014), looking for 'diverse or maximum variation samples', since the purpose was to show different perspectives on the complexity of the phenomenon studied. There was a registration in the morning and another after 6 pm. In each shift, two posts were selected, and 10 per cent of the comments of each registration were archived according to gender parity criteria. The criteria for the selection of the posts were directly linked to the objectives of this writing: to describe the emotions associated with the management, participation and reception of the EFI. A daily record was made for a period of twenty-one days, which made it possible to create a grid of eighty-four publications and 454 comments; the observation record was considered complete once saturation of the categories was reached.

For the analysis – developed in the next section – we decided to work with the practice of waiting as an emerging feeling and to show the significance of the ways the recipients were constantly sharing information among themselves on a daily basis. The environment in which we worked was public and visible. For this reason, we eliminated any reference to the registration period and to the identity of those who posted comments. We assigned an identifying number, date of publication and gender to each participant so

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that the participation and interaction between different people could be analysed while protecting participant anonymity.

Some notes regarding waiting

In the Argentine case, the implementation of the EFI was a process that was quickly consolidated in the context of the sanitary emergency (ANSES, 2020). It involved the implementation of a large-scale intervention in a very limited period and came to deepen E-State, or electronic government processes, that had been in the process of being developed (Weinmann and Dettano, 2020).

International developments (MacAuslan and Riemenschneider, 2011; Tonkens *et al.*, 2013; Horsell, 2017; De Sena and Scribano, 2020) have found that social policies affect the ways of producing and reproducing living conditions, including cognitive-affective related dimensions. They are inserted and take place in specific contextual frameworks that affect the definition of the problem to be addressed, the population to be affected, the goods and services to be transferred, and the conditions required to make effective the 'being part' of the policy or program under analysis. At the same time, they produce effects and ways of feeling; they permit or prevent interactions and produce interpretations of and about the world. In view of this, we analyse waiting within the framework of the emotions and senses that appear associated with EFI implementation. In this regard, wondering about emotions and ways of feeling opens, articulates and allows the investigation of practices, their adjacent senses, and everyday life as well as the different modes of interaction with the State and its interventions.

Facebook Groups, as an observation environment for the realisation of a virtual ethnography, offer the possibility of exploring the daily exchanges of the recipients of different State interventions. The virtual ethnography carried out has allowed us to identify some analytical dimensions, including waiting. In this framework, it has also been observed how resorting to groups and interacting within them is part of staged practices that aim to mitigate everything that produces uncertainty and waiting as a way of being and experiencing this state intervention (Dettano and Cena, 2021).

The EFI was decreed in a situation marked by great uncertainty. In the process, there were various allusions to the waiting, such as *what must be done*, *what is convenient to do* and *there is no other option* to receive the benefit. Based on these observations, we will create a conceptual path that allows us to make an issue of the waiting endured as a result of the registration and management of the EFI.

Waiting is a practice that involves different analytical dimensions. To illustrate the breadth of the concept, four central axes have been selected: a) the practice of waiting, which implies a relationship with time and is linked to the experiences of the past and the expectations of the future; b) the related feelings to which it is linked, such as uncertainty, despair, endurance, fear, and mistrust, to name a few; c) the waiting has certain meanings in relation to context; that is, the wait generated while queuing to buy tickets to a concert, the religious wait, or the wait for public services are not the same; and d) the waiting involves relations of power and exchange, since making someone wait or being made to wait changes and is modified according to the interactions and one's place/position occupied in the social structure.

Regarding the first of the senses, waiting implies a particular relationship with time. Waiting in modernity was associated with a project; it did not consist, as one might have

mistakenly understood, of stillness but rather was an attitude and an activity (Laín Entralgo, 1957). 'The expectation will not have been mere passivity, but real activity [...] the reception of the expected is never, as we have seen, pure mechanical addition, but living incorporation, appropriation; in short, "recreation". For the lottery prize to become effectively mine, it must be incorporated into my life, in favor of the projects that I will have to conceive in order to use it or keep it, and the same will happen with the letter I am expecting or with the answer to my question "What time is it?", when one and the other reach me. Neither expectation can cease to be active, nor is the reception of what is expected ever anything other than recreation' (Laín Entralgo, 1957: 519). The practice of waiting is closely linked to the idea of the future and to existence itself, since, in the future of people's lives, waiting is an inescapable element; life appears as devouring time, as a waiting in itself.

In the previously described context of a pandemic, the relationship with the future seems to be initially conflictive and uncertain. The parameters under which the world was organised in the past are now suspended or, at least, in tension. Hence, waiting marks a particular link with temporality when the future appears to be unpredictable, enabling various feelings such as uncertainty, despair, mistrust and fear.

In this respect, waiting is linked and dialogues with various ways of being in the world; hence, the second axis of the problematisation of waiting – the linked feelings. Waiting – as a practice – implies a trust-distrust dialogue; the expectation is trusted to happen, but a certain distrust that this might not materialise is admissible. Thus, 'waiting is made of promise and threat [...] that is why the emotion of waiting is and cannot fail to be ambivalent' (Laín Entralgo, 1957: 513). Bloch (2004 [1954]) associates the effects of waiting to a kind of daydream. It arises from a pursued, activating and stressing element in the search for a better life since, for the author, nobody escapes the desire and intention of improving. These daydreams, Bloch says, stem from a lack of something and have led people to set horizons and even make progress. Once again, waiting is linked to a present state but which claims something about the future. This future state, Bloch adds, that is expected, is not only something that is missing but is intuited and constitutes an improvement over the current state.

The ways of carrying out the wait require learning – that is, the development of dispositions that allow the acceptance of long and successive waits. Hence, the practice of waiting is linked, in some cases, with social bearability mechanisms (Scribano, 2010: 182): 'Waiting, as a practice, contains a set of dispositions, among which the following stand out: anxiety management, the posture of bureaucratic adequacy and being in parentheses. The time agents spend on standby endorses the ability to handle anxieties, to manage the pressure and the impression of being there, but without receiving what they were looking for. The agent learns the temporal and spatial difference between setting goals and achieving them'.

Third, the practice of waiting acquires sense and meaning in relation to the contexts; waiting does not always imply discomfort but can entail joy, the exchange of information and celebrations. Unlike the set of feelings involved in the waiting for the lover described by Barthes, Mann (1969), in his research on the lines to buy tickets to sporting events, shows how the line itself is a social system. The expectation that this waiting supposes does not necessarily imply displeasure and exhaustion, but it is experienced as an adventure; hence, the practice of waiting acquires sense and meaning in relation to interactions and the environment in which it occurs. At the same time, waiting is not a

homogeneous way of experiencing the passage of time. It comprises a diverse way of experiencing socially available times (Jacobsen, 2020): at work, in access to a sporting event, in the purchase of a product, in health services, in a loving bond, and in feeding (Gasparini, 1995).

Finally, the act of waiting involves and compromises relations of power and exchange among the affected people (Schwartz, 1974). Barthes (1993) associates waiting with falling in love, a certain anguish and loss of a sense of proportions. The waiting has 'a scenery' that is organised and manipulated, where the loss of what is expected is imitated. The time of waiting has its moments: it is occupied with assumptions and worries, the anguish of abandonment and anger. It also entails a kind of suspension, of nonmovement, if it gives in to the anguish of waiting in its purity, which 'wants me to remain seated in an armchair, within reach of the telephone, doing nothing' (p.92). The wait could also be read as an asymmetry, which Barthes illustrates with the position of the lover and which Bourdieu links to power relations (Auyero, 2012).

The practice of waiting implies raising awareness of the limits imposed on action (Dreher, 2019). What cannot be done immediately, enforcing temporal and spatial delays, imposes evidence of the subordination, dependence and inferiority of those who must wait. Therefore, the power dimension of making someone wait lies in the ability of others to control the resource of time (Schwartz, 1974). This implies that whoever waits cannot anticipate, so what will happen or what the other will do cannot be foreseen. The reference point to be able to act disappears; hence, dependence and subjection. Such experience of the passage of time as something that must be endured and not lived (Jacobsen, 2020) involves another series of practices and feelings, such as anger and despair.

Waiting for the EFI: recurring paths and feelings

The recipients' experiences in the EFI implementation process can be thought of around three analytical axes. These axes are resignified and represent dialogue in terms of the waiting (see Figure 1). a) The present where waiting takes shape implies activities as carrying out the procedures, searching for information, sharing doubts and concerns with other members of the group. b) The past signifies and feeds the wait, considering a certain trajectory of participation in social programs, which seems to have given them knowledge on how to proceed, since 'waiting' in this context is a kind of know-how. c) Finally, the future of waiting, where the most obvious, although not only, horizon is to receive the EFI. This wait is fraught with uncertainties and doubts.

As we said at the beginning, the wait to receive the EFI appears as what must be done, what is convenient to do, and what there is no other option but to do. The analysed group was developed in light of these different waits. This lapse of time that the recipients designated as waiting is marked, contrary to what common sense would indicate, by a large number of tasks: the repetition of actions and procedures as an active waiting mode. The wait, thus, becomes a task that ranges from the publication of screenshots, sharing doubts and advancements, to the socialisation of information, the collection possibilities and new government announcements.

[...] there is a standing current bank payment since July in my [social security profile] ANSES[5] ... I went to the bank and there is nothing, and they asked me to talk to the people of [social security] ANSES ... until now I do not know what that current payment is about, and

> I did not receive the second payment of IFE. They told me to wait, they told me that I don't need to do the paperwork because they would pay me the same as the first time, and I am still waiting (10/08/2020, Woman1)

Waiting concentrates attitudes and activities (Laín Entralgo, 1957), involving a series of actions that connect the past, present, and future. Waiting converses with a horizon that is presented as desirable, which is tolerated because 'it is known that this is the way it is and there is no other option'. It is organised by initiating different actions, such as institutional consultations and dialogue with other recipients via the Facebook Group.

In addition to these actions, waiting presents linked feelings, such as frustration, tiredness, and anger, which reflect what is felt when these situations produce few or no results at all. This can be observed when the waiting is sustained over time, when the uncertainty takes hold of the present or when the delay between the proposed goal and its potential attainment is experienced.

> Yes, the truth is I also got tired of finding out and waiting, although I truly need that money, I won't do anything else; it is just too frustrating (10/08/2020, Woman2)

> I am just like you!! Many of us go through the same things; nobody helps us. I cannot change the bank account number. I have been waiting for more than a month (11/08/2020, Woman3)

Tiredness, frustration, and sadness are expressed as feelings linked to the waiting. In turn, as seen in the previous quotations and many others, if we consider the context of this wait, there appears to be the need, the urgency, and the desperation to access the allowance. Achieving what is expected is linked to supplying something that is needed, replacing income and paying rent, for instance. The relation between waiting and the expectation, which is desired and has been set as a goal, also implies recreation (Laín Entralgo, 1957).

The wait is also experienced in these cases as conditions of subordination, dependence, and inferiority (Dreher, 2019); since you need to pay the rent, you need to pay for utilities, you despair over not having an income, but there is no choice but to wait. The dimension of power and domination that makes someone wait entails focusing on a central point: it lies in the capacity that others have to impose space-time delays to control the resource of time. The characteristics that waiting assumes, the waiting times, the dates of the money deposits, the registration dates and the dates of access to the money, imply a particular way of organising the dependency (Dreher, 2019).

Those who participate in the group seem to know that they must wait, that the operation, often arbitrary, of the social program is like this, that 'there is no other option', that 'if you do not like it, you know what to do'. This allows establishing a certain link to the past as a moment of the unfolding of the trajectories. Those trajectories were organising particular viewpoints and feelings, which implied a certain acceptance of the externally imposed temporary delay. Waiting finds its meaning in the past, as acceptance in the present subject to a potential future event. This acceptance lies in the fact that things have worked like this in the past. Waiting is a practice loaded with knowledge; it implies dispositions and practices that become significant: *we must wait, there is no other choice*.

In the context under study, people incorporate the temporal-spatial difference between setting a goal and achieving it (Scribano, 2010). Waiting is what has valence in these contexts: time, insistence, and perseverance. This makes sense in that according to official reports (ANSES, 2020), 28.4 per cent of the recipients are holders of other social programs, so they have a certain track record with them. Furthermore, advice and information about registration and payment circulate, evidencing a population with socialisation in the reception of these social policies.

As Scribano (2010: 180) points out, 'the wait and patience generate forms of social relationships that intersect and exasperate one another. The agents of patience interchange and appear in rotating ways: once some are objects, other times they are instruments, we all make the other wait, and we all reproduce the place of the chromatic classifier of domination. Our skin, shoulders, legs, and hands reflect the colours of suffering turned into patience. In the morning, you are the one who is waiting; in the afternoon, you are now who says to another "that is how things are, be patient"; later someone else tells you, "You know how it is, you have to be patient."' What we aim to emphasise about this knowledge is that waiting and patience are not only presented as the appropriate sociabilities but also, if they are not known, they are recommended: others are taught about the management of anxiety, about the correct ways to act – to respect each other a little – as ways of going through the waiting.

> It looked like this to me at noon. I called [Social Security] ANSES. They told me that the bank has to notify [Social Security] ANSES that they did not receive the money. Then, the ANSES is updated. I was just updated today, so you have to be patient (10/08/2020, Woman4)

> Let us try to respect each other a little . . . some people are receiving just the third [EFI] and it ends on September 10 . . . After that we'll see about the fourth [EFI] . . . What an anxiety! . . . If you do not like it, make empanadas[6] [Cornish pasty] and sell them sister . . . (28/08/2020, Woman5)

Continuing with the analytical division, the future becomes significant in at least four meanings. First, the object of the uncertainty is variable: nobody knows when the message announcing that the money is available in the bank account will arrive, when the change of the bank account number will be accepted, whether the EFI will continue or not, or whether a new social policy will appear. It is a space – like the present – full of doubts, which also drives debates and extensive intragroup conversation threads.

Second, the active wait is linked to a future that, mediated by hope, appears to be potentially better. That is, today we must wait and tomorrow everything might improve. In this regard, waiting and its connection with the future involve hope and, as such, can also be potentially disappointing (Anderson and Holden, 2008) because it is oriented, it is directed towards a future that appears indeterminate – even more so in the previously illustrated context.

The passage of time – between past, present, and future – which involves the waiting is experienced heterogeneously. In the context of EFI implementation, three payments without monthly continuity were announced in March, June, and July (Decree 310/20 of March, 511/2020 of June and 626/2020 of July 2020) to be collected in April–May, June–July and August–September with a differentiated collection system when belonging to other social programs (AUH and AxE[7]) according to the last digits of the DNI[8] and/or for holding a bank
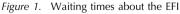
account. Each of these announcements was made without a uniform periodicity and even without the assurance of the program's continuity. The implementation of a new EFI item was confirmed by a new decree, creating a situation devoid of certainty:

- What changes must be made to access the basic income?? the next one?? (11/08/2020, Woman6)
- The minister of economy said that there would not be a universal basic income (11/08/2020, Man7).
- There are a couple more EFIs... and the basic income will follow... (11/08/2020, Man8).
- We'll have to sign up for the 17 thousand [referring to the amount of the possible new program]? (14/08/2020, Man10).

Third, waiting is experienced as a lapse that is constantly renewed and redefined as a recurrence of beginnings and endings. Facing a continuous and changing horizon, waiting is flooded with uncertainty, the lack of certainty, and distrust, postponing and suspending the possibility of a better future (Jacobsen, 2020).

Finally, the wait and the uncertainty linked to the future – not too distant – mobilise the presence of information and unofficial communication channels on platforms other than Facebook, such as YouTube and WhatsApp groups, where videos, tutorials and files are shared. These sites share information about different programs and their possible creation or continuity and become spaces where the wait is contained. That is, they specify and give shape to the wait during a pandemic: from being the object of consultations, access to information, and even confrontations.

Present
-Waiting as an activity (sharing doubts in the FB Groups, calls to ANSES, online consults, check and recheck all the actions);
-Implies associated emotions: anger, tiredness, sadness;

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Future
-Management of the uncertainty;
-Doubts about the continuity of the program and the creation of the new programs (basic income)
-Growth of non institutional channels of information;

Past
-Knowledge about waiting;
-Acceptance;
-Teach to the others how to wait;
-Wait as a way of dependency;

Source: author's own

Figure 1. Waiting times about the EFI

Conclusions

The pandemic modified the modes of organisation of life on a global scale, which raised and will continue to elicit views and analysis to understand what happened and is still

happening in relation to the emergency. In this context, the State has been a central actor, creating and regulating ways of living in isolation and, by its different interventions, the large-scale social policy that we have analysed, called EFI.

The analysis and study of the EFI is of great interest, mainly in contexts where social policies assume massive importance and where the population is mainly female and young. In this framework, the EFI presents some continuity in the pre-pandemic world, given that 61.5 per cent of the population is younger than thirty-four years old. However, the policy studied has a high proportion of men, which is a novel aspect for continuing to problematise the links between gender and social policies. In this direction, it is necessary to continue researching what the EFI meant in terms of recognition of job insecurity, unemployment, and poverty.

In this way, one of the central implications to observe is the possibility of recovering more continuities with the pre-pandemic world than ruptures. At a national level in 2018, 10.5 million people received the social programs (Consejo Nacional de Coordinación de Políticas Sociales, 2018). The IFE, in its first disbursement, reached almost 9 million people (8,857,063). The pandemic made it possible to show that the massiveness of the interventions is not new, nor is the participation of its recipients in social media.

The last element that we want to mention here is reciprocal collaboration. In the 'while waiting' status, during active waiting, different socialisation platforms – YouTube, WhatsApp groups – have been created by unofficial channels to access information and interact with others concerning the EFI. Within these platforms, Facebook Groups have multiplied, giving rise to a series of exchanges and interactions that make up social policy without being foreseen in it – that is, without being part of its design. From this viewpoint, the collaborations and exchanges on these platforms are an expression of the way people put together the operation of the program; they make their own public policy within the framework of successive episodes of waiting. These spaces function as annexes to the E-State and/or electronic government, which in the pandemic context has meant an acceleration of its implementation.

Throughout this study, we have observed that waiting involves different analytical dimensions, with the object of waiting being a central one. In the case of the EFI, the object is the collection of the benefit, which is linked to the conditions of production of life in the contexts of job insecurity, unemployment, poverty, and inequality. The wait emerges as something that must be done to access and remain in the EFI – the expected object. At this point, if we previously said that the object of the wait was linked to the conditions of production and reproduction of life and that there is no alternative but to do it in that way, then life itself becomes subject to that time that is not managed or arranged by the subjects autonomously. The practice of waiting is incorporated; it 'is embodied' as a condition of possibility of access to the social program. In this direction, past, present, and future are resignified and reconnected through the act of waiting, as a recurrence of beginnings and ends.

Finally, the waiting as a daydream constitutes a longing for a better tomorrow. In this sense, what are the objects of the wait among the population in situations of unemployment and job insecurity? The social policy studied acts both as a potential and a limitation. It is presented as the possibility of paying the rent, buying food, or paying for utilities, although the amounts are considered insufficient; at the same time, it is a limitation, in which the payments are presented as a ceiling, as an acceptance of what is socially possible and desirable. Even though it is little and insufficient, it is awaited.

Notes

1 We take this category from de Sousa Santos (2016), understanding it as a structural and moral geography and an asymmetry of power. For de Sousa Santos, it is not a geographical south, but an epistemic one, referring to social groups that have suffered systemic injustices caused by capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. For example, the descendants of North African magrevines who live in France and suffer discrimination, because there they are a south within a north.

2 The DNU is a Necessity and Urgency Decree, which is a special kind of order issued by the President of Argentina.

3 A world image implies a way of classifying and dividing the social world. These classifications and divisions become imprinted on the content of social policies (Scribano *et al*., 2015).

4 US$ 138 According to the Central Bank of the Argentine Republic.

5 Reference to the National Social Security Administration (ANSES). ANSES oversees the administration of benefits and national services of Social Security in the Argentine Republic.

6 Kind of traditional food generally made like a little pie.

7 Reference to the Universal Allowance for Child (AUH) and the Universal Allowance for Pregnancy (AxE).

8 Reference to the National Identity Document.

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