

# Waiting for the Lottery to Happen

## Migration Dynamics in Mexico following the End of Title 42

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**Abstract:** This article examines migration dynamics in Mexico in the summer of 2023, after the end of title 42, which allowed U.S. border officials to directly deport migrants on the grounds of protecting public health during the Covid-19 pandemic. It discusses the question how the introduction of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) smartphone app CBP One affects temporary migration dynamics. The data was collected through participant observation, digital ethnography, and interviews. The study period covers three months from June to August 2023. In Mexico, mainly in Tapachula and Tijuana, interviews were conducted with so-called extracontinental migrants who came from Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Ghana. Among other things, the interviews focused on their views of the CBP One app and how they felt on their journey through Mexico. This article concludes that CBP One is a new tool of the U.S. to control migration movements in Mexico, which fits into the picture of outsourced border controls and new technological measures that are also highly relevant in the European context. However, like other policies in the past, it is a fragile attempt to control migration movements. What is particular about it is the lottery character of asking for political asylum in the USA.

**Keywords:** Mexico, transcontinental migration, South-South migration, U.S. border regime, smart borders

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, border controls have been increasingly intensified and securitized, for example by erecting higher border fences, increasing military presence as well as using digital and biometric border surveillance systems (Kasperek/Tsianos 2013: 40, 43; ProAsyl 2014). Since then, the matter of (internal) security has increasingly shaped the design of national borders. In addition, migration controls often no longer take place on the territory of the respective countries, but increasingly in cooperation with other countries. This is intended to increasingly outsource the asylum application and asylum procedure to countries of origin and transit. National immigration authorities use the shifting borders to expand control over immigration into their own territory (Shachar 2007: 167; Hess et al. 2017: 7).

The development of such border regimes is particularly evident in Europe and North America (Hess et al. 2014: 25). Already in the wake of the long summer of migration in Europe (Tsianos/Kasperek 2015: 9), the EU signed a crucial strate-

gic agreement with Turkey in 2016 (ProAsyl 2016). After lengthy negotiations, the Council of the European Union was the last EU body to formally approve the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) on May 14, 2024. This is the latest step towards the externalization of border controls at the EU's external borders. In addition to the existing fences, walls, surveillance techniques and push-backs, people seeking protection are now increasingly being detained and isolated at the external borders. Besides, deals violating human rights are increasingly being concluded with autocratic governments (ProAsyl 2024).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, an important innovation—provided the reform remains in its present form—is that in terms of the evaluation of so-called ›safe third countries‹ it lowers significantly the standards. In legal terms, this has a considerable negative impact on migrants.<sup>2</sup> If they are stopped by such externalized border regimes before reaching their destination country, their status is no longer checked and they cannot, for example, claim their right to asylum in the first place (Schulze-Wessel 2012: 163; Hess et al. 2017: 6f.). As a result, it is becoming extremely difficult for migrants to reach the actual (territorial) border of their destination country.

Nevertheless, destination countries are increasingly concluding repatriation agreements with certain countries, usually with both transit countries and countries of origin (Schulze-Wessel 2012: 157; Hess et al. 2014: 21ff.). Like the EU, the USA is opting for reinforcing and externalizing its borders. In the case of the U.S., especially Mexico is increasingly becoming a country of waiting, return and deportation.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, Mexico has repeatedly given in to pressure from the U.S. to restrict undocumented (›illegal‹)<sup>4</sup> migration and has thus adapted to global migration man-

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1 | The EU-Turkey agreement was followed by agreements between the EU and Libya (2017), Tunisia (2023) and Egypt (2024), all with the aim of reducing migration to Europe.

2 | In public discourse, in various academic articles and in newspaper articles, the terms migrant, refugee and asylum seeker become blurred and are assigned different levels of legitimacy. In this article, no judgment is made about the reasons why people want to change their place of residence. In the following, I will refer to both migrants and asylum seekers, as presumably not all people will ultimately decide to use the CBP One app.

3 | Aside from Mexico, the USA has concluded agreements to restrict migration with Guatemala (July 2019), El Salvador and Honduras (both September 2019), among others.

4 | Irregular migration is defined as when a person ›enters or lives in a country of which he or she is not a citizen, in violation of its immigration laws and regulations‹ (Castles et al. 2012: 117), whereby these can be the laws, regulations or international agreements in the countries of origin, transit or destination (IOM 2020). The designation as irregular is by no means neutral, but above all reproduces state logics and perspectives on migration (Bloch/Chimienti 2011:

agement. Mexico now plays a central role in the process of hollowing out the U.S. asylum system (Miranda/Hernandez 2022: 15; HRW 2022). It is not only part of the world's most heavily used migration corridor, but also a country of transit, destination and return all at once (CNDH 2020). At the same time, there is also significant internal migration<sup>5</sup> (IDMC 2023). Above all, Mexico is an unavoidable transit country for people who seek to reach the U.S. by land (Narvaez Gutiérrez 2015: 122). The border between the two countries has been making headlines for years, particularly regarding the treatment of people who attempt to cross the border without authorization. In the name of »orderly, safe and regular migration« (U.S. Department of State 2021), people have been prevented from crossing the border into the U.S. for years using various mechanisms (Miranda/Hernandez 2022: 3). To date, Mexico has also increasingly become a country of (involuntary) residence.

In the following, I will explore the question of how the introduction of the smartphone app CBP One affects the dynamics of temporary migration movements of migrants from Africa and Asia in Mexico. This paper derives from my dissertation project on the connection of changing migration patterns in Mexico and restrictive European border politics since 2015. The data was collected within an ethnographic fieldwork in the two Mexican border cities, Tapachula and Tijuana. Methodologically speaking, I used a mix of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The study period covers three months from June to August 2023. For this article, I used four interviews as well as data from private messages<sup>6</sup> from two other persons, and notes from the field research. I talked to people on the move from Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Ghana, five men and one woman. All of them had passed through Mexico in summer 2023.

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1277), according to which migrants are criminalized and presented as a danger to national security and as a general threat. »In principle, it is wrong to speak of »irregular migrants«—no person is »irregular« since all have human rights and dignity that should be respected« (Castles et al. 2012: 118). Rather, one can speak of an illegalizing practice, because migrants are even increasingly prevented by states from claiming their right to asylum through legal channels.

**5** | The IDMC puts the number of internally displaced Mexicans at 386,000 (as of the end of 2022).

**6** | Written or verbal permission was obtained for all interviews and included in the recorded interviews. Before the article was written, the passages were presented to my interview partners again for review.

## THE U.S. BORDER REGIME: RESTRICTIVE LAWS AND SMART SOLUTIONS

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is »charged with keeping terrorists and their weapons out of the United States« (U.S. CBP 2024). Regarding migration, the institution founded on March 1, 2003, pursues a »comprehensive approach to border management and control« (ibid.). The latest tool to be launched by CBP in October 2020 was a smartphone application called CBP One<sup>7</sup>. All individuals applying for asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border must now<sup>8</sup> use the application to schedule an appointment to arrive at any of the ports of entry<sup>9</sup> along the border to file their asylum application (Amnesty International 2024: 14). The app was introduced at a time when two migration policy regulations were already in place: the binational Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) agreement—also known as ›Remain in Mexico‹—and Title 42, a controversial health law enacted in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, which massively facilitated the deportation of migrants either to their home countries or—notably—back to Mexico. To date, the CBP One app has completely replaced both existing regulations (as of 2023). CBP One introduced a smart border system based on a lottery procedure for entry and the collection of comprehensive personal data, which also serves to monitor migrants.

From January 2019 to June 2022, the MPP ensured that »foreign individuals entering or seeking admission to the U.S. from Mexico [...] may be returned to Mexico and wait outside of the U.S. for the duration of their immigration proceedings« (U.S. DHS 2019). In fact, this meant that people had to wait in Mexico for months, and in some cases years, while their asylum cases were being processed on U.S. territory. Many pre-existing deficiencies have been intensified by this practice: the lack of access to legal counsel for court hearings, obstacles to legal representation, the lack of transparency in immigration procedures and limited legal protection (HRW 2022). The border between the U.S. and Mexico, particularly under the MPP, has become a »testing ground for mechanisms that complicate the application and processing of

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7 | Subsequent corrections: The CBP One app was renamed in CBP Home in March 2025.

8 | Subsequent corrections: On his very first day in office, Trump issued a decree shutting down the CBP ONE asylum app with immediate effect. As a result, thousands of migrants, some of whom had been waiting for many months at the US-Mexico border, had their appointments canceled (The White House 2025).

9 | Crossings are available in California (San Ysidro, Calexico), Arizona (Nogales), and Texas (Brownsville, Eagle Pass, Hidalgo, Laredo, and El Paso), which can be selected in the CBP One app (CBP 2023).

asylum claims without meeting the international protection needs of people of different origins» (Miranda/Hernandez 2022: 16). In addition, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, Title 42 was enacted in the Trump era, de facto suspending the asylum application process in the U.S. for certain national groups. Title 42 allowed the U.S. border authorities to deport primarily Central American and Mexican migrants directly if they crossed the border illegally, without even considering their chances of obtaining asylum. The reason given was to protect the population and public health in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (CDC 2022; CDC/DHH 2020). In summary, in both cases, the wait-and-see mechanisms and pandemic-related restrictions meant that migrants had limited access to asylum in the U.S. (Miranda/Hernandez 2022: 16).

With the expiry of both the MPP and Title 42, the CBP One app has been the official tool for applying for asylum in the USA since May 2023. The use of the app has already changed several times since then. There are regular press releases about changes and updates to the app. It is currently available in three languages: English, Spanish and Haitian Kriol<sup>10</sup> (U.S. CBP 2023). At the beginning of 2023, migrants could only use the CBP One app if they registered through one of the migrant shelters or a relevant NGO. Since May 2023, they have been able to apply for political asylum in the USA independently via their own cell phone. The daily time window for filing an asylum application has also increased from one hour to 23 hours (American Immigration Council 2023). According to the U.S. authorities, 278,000 people have already successfully crossed the border through this process since January 2023 (U.S. CBP 2023).

Special humanitarian protection programs apply to people from Venezuela, Haiti, Nicaragua and Cuba, allowing them to apply for asylum in their countries of origin via the app under certain conditions (USCIS 2023)<sup>11</sup>. In the event of a positive decision, they may enter the USA directly by plane. All others must wait for an appointment to cross the border to apply for asylum in the U.S. (American Immigration Council 2023). To do so, they make their way north from South or Central America via dangerous land routes—most of them without an entry permit. The challenge in 2023 was that the asylum application in the app, which requires real-time biometric photos

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**10** | The website provides further information on the CBP One app in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Portuguese and Russian (U.S. CBP 2023).

**11** | Subsequent corrections: In June 2025, the U.S. Homeland Department announced the termination for the CHNV Parole Program, which the Biden administration had introduced in 2022. Parolees were encouraged to self-deport immediately using the CBP Home application (U.S. DHS 2025).

and the current location, could generally only be made north of Mexico City. Since August 23, 2024, non-Mexican migrants can also request and make appointments from Tabasco and Chiapas<sup>12</sup> (U.S. CBP 2024).

### »PLAY CBP ONE«<sup>13</sup>

The way the app works is like gambling. According to the website of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), appointments are largely allocated at random. In addition, an algorithm is used that gives priority appointments to those applicants who have waited the longest for an appointment (U.S. DHS 2023). For this reason, some of the people mainly from Uzbekistan I spoke to use the term »play CBP One«, which is indicative of the lottery nature of the app. In addition, only 1,450 appointments are allocated daily. Although the number of appointments available daily has already been increased in summer 2023—until May 2023, only 1,000 appointments were available daily (Abi-Habib et al. 2023)—demand is much higher.<sup>14</sup>

For the American Immigration Council, a nonprofit organization and advocacy group that works on the development of immigration policies, the app offers benefits: »[B]y allowing individuals to preregister, the agency can streamline in-person processing and reduce the time border agents spend entering individuals' biographic information, thus decreasing the time individuals are detained for questioning during processing« (American Immigration Council 2023). Amnesty International, on the other hand, criticizes what data is made available to border officials through the app: »The way in which the CBP One application works is deeply problematic. Asylum seekers are forced to install the application on their mobile devices, which enables U.S. Customs and Border Protection to collect data about their location by »pinging« their phones« (Amnesty International 2023). In addition, there is criticism—including from the U.S. government itself—that the app has access to people's current location. In fact, the American Immigration Council (2023) itself cites various concerns: 1) issues with photo submission leading to disparate outcomes, 2)

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**12** | Mexican nationals are able to request an appointment from anywhere within Mexico (CBP 2024).

**13** | Interview Zafar 2023

**14** | An article in the New York Times in May 2023 revealed that there was a demand of 62,000 for the available dates at that time (Abi-Habib et al. 2023). The numbers are likely to have increased significantly since then.

privacy concerns, 3) users are being forced to use CBP One, and 4) lack of transparency about future uses.

In addition, the real-time photos taken with the app often do not recognize people with black skin (Del Bosque 2023). Kocher argues that this kind of ›glitches‹ »are not merely technological, but also political in the sense that they do not arise in an apolitical vacuum, they do not affect everyone equally« (Kocher 2023: 11). As a result, many people with dark skin were unable to register. As Kocher further notes, this largely affects Haitian migrants, who make up a large proportion of the asylum seekers waiting in Mexico (ibid.: 8). People with dark skin are therefore at greater risk of being denied entry to the USA (Del Bosque 2023). Apart from that, Amnesty International criticizes that »it is entirely unclear whether asylum seekers have consented to having their faces transferred between various agencies« (Amnesty International 2024: 46).

## TAPACHULA—ALMOST THERE?

»[W]hen we came to Tapachula, I was thinking that ›Oh, thank God, we made it. We just need to cross Mexico, one state. So, it's not going to be a problem‹. But then it turned out to be a problem« (Interview Jamshid 2023).<sup>15</sup>

For most migrants, the south Mexican border town, Tapachula, in the federal state of Chiapas is the first stop and one of the most important entry points to Mexico (Cinta Cruz 2020: 96). The town has around 320,000 inhabitants and is located around 18 kilometers from the Guatemalan border town of Ciudad Hidalgo. Many of the people I spoke to came to Tapachula with the feeling that their journey was almost over. Once there, however, it quickly became clear to them that one of the biggest hurdles<sup>16</sup> of their journey still lay ahead, namely getting out of Tapachula in the first place. The U.S. border is still 4,200 km away and crossing Mexico means putting themselves in the hands of the human smuggling networks, the so-called coyotes.

Although the CBP One app does not yet work there, the city has visibly adapted to the new smart tool of the U.S. border regime: at the market and in the stores, there are offers to download and set up the app as well as SIM cards. The retailers also

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**15** | All names of people are pseudonyms to protect their identities.

**16** | Those who have crossed the Darién jungle between Colombia and Panama said it was just as bad as crossing Mexico.

know which cell phones are required, as asylum seekers need to meet certain technical requirements with their smartphones to use the app. For example, using the app requires a certain minimum amount of internal memory to run the installed applications smoothly. As newer devices generally have more memory capacity, the age of the phone automatically becomes a key factor in the functioning of the app. Furthermore, some asylum seekers are unable to use the application for financial, literacy and language proficiency reasons (Amnesty International 2024). There are also differences between the Android and iOS operating systems. The requirements for using CBP One are therefore correspondingly different. In addition, there are many misleading rumors circulating, which give rise to uncertainty as to exactly how the app works. However, not everyone is able to set up the app independently, which in some cases leads to migrants becoming more dependent on the coyotes and merchants.

On their journey from Tapachula to the north, migrants can always expect inspections and confrontations with officials from the Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM), the Mexican migration police. Countless checkpoints have been installed around the city. Corruption is omnipresent and unavoidable, as it became clear in a conversation with Zafar, a man from Uzbekistan, whom I met in Tapachula:

»If really a police officer ask me, I would offer some money. No, first I would show him my fake CBP. Second, I would offer him some money, third I would be arrested if he wouldn't accept. Yeah. And we go to the police officer, then I should pay more. Like it starts as I know from \$500 to be in freedom, to pay for your freedom.« (Interview Zafar 2023)

According to Zafar, migrants need to be adequately prepared for their onward journey and have enough money to get through the many checks. He has gathered information about what to expect when crossing Mexico from larger networks over a relatively long period of time: »I should go to, first of all, to Oaxaca, it's my first destination. I should withdraw my money for cash for 1,000 Peso by 200 paper, 200 nominals. And I should give this fee for every police checkpoint. My first exercise«. To cross Mexico, migrants have to resort to a variety of sophisticated strategies to get through the many controls and reach the north of the country. Another Uzbek, Jamshid, talks about his arrival in Tapachula and the difficulties of leaving the city:

»They [coyotes, note from the author] took us to Tapachula. Then we spent in a hotel like three or four nights. Then we had our first attempt to go by bus from Tapachula to Tuxtla. We failed because we had no visas to Mexico. We are here illegally and were stopped by immigration police, and they just sent us back to Tapachula. Thank God, they didn't



deport us. They just gave us our passports and said ›Go‹.» (Interview Jamshid 2023)

Ruslan from Uzbekistan had a similar experience when he wanted to leave the city. After a three-and-a-half-hour journey, he was just 50 km away from Tapachula, where he was pulled off the bus at his 5th checkpoint: »Turned back to Tapachuli [sic!] says go back where you came from, and they didn't let us go further. [T]he bus left, and we went through the houses and again went out onto the road, but I don't know how to go further«<sup>17</sup> (Chat conversation with Ruslan 2023). Aziz remains optimistic and keeps it short: »If they [migration<sup>18</sup>] won't stop us, we must reach tomorrow« (Chat conversation with Aziz 2023).

Despite all the hurdles, nearly all my interviewees—like many others before and after them—made their way to the north of the country. The last part of their journey before entering the USA awaits them there.

## **WAITING IN TIJUANA—»IT'S JUST BEING IN PRISON«<sup>19</sup>**

Once they have arrived in the north, many migrants can hardly believe that they have really arrived, like Aziz from Uzbekistan: »You cannot imagine how I am happy that I am in Tijuana. I don't know how I will be happy when I pass the border« (Chat conversation with Aziz 2023). Tijuana is located directly on the border with the USA. The border wall is omnipresent and characterizes the entire cityscape. With two million inhabitants, Tijuana is the largest Mexican city located on the U.S. border. Many migrants, especially transcontinental migrants, are drawn to Tijuana (Cinta Cruz 2020: 90). There, they have the opportunity to wait directly at the border after their long journey to and through Mexico. Many people wait there. Either for their CBP One appointment or for another opportunity to cross the border. Bruno Miranda therefore describes Tijuana as a »prison city« (Miranda 2023: 22), an open-air space in which people settle, but which is determined by the practices of migration regulation. At the same time, he describes how the forced wait just before the border extends migration control from the spatial to the spatial-temporal dimension (ibid.). Ahmad from Afghanistan summarizes the difficult conditions in Mexico, which he

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17 | Original message translated from Russian.

18 | Colloquially, people simply refer to the officials from the Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM), the Mexican migration police as »migración« or »migration«.

19 | Interview Ahmad 2023

had to experience on his way to the USA, as follows: »Mexico is not a safe country, especially for migrants. It's not safe. In terms of food, it's okay. But living here is not easy. [...] It's just being in prison. Why I chose this to be, it's just for my safety« (Interview Ahmad 2023).

The cityscape is also characterized by migrants, who often do not want to move far from their accommodation for security reasons. Tijuana is home to one of the eight so-called ports of entry (POE), the San Ysidro border crossing. Just a few hours' drive from the city is another crossing, Calexico, both of which lead to California. As in most large Mexican cities, there are numerous non-profit or Church-run shelters for migrants in Tijuana. The shelters offer refuge to people travelling north with limited financial resources and support them during their stay in Mexico. People can stay there for a few nights or, depending on the house rules, up to several months. The shelters provide them with beds, food, clothing, psychological and legal advice and medical support. Some even offer further education opportunities, language courses and job placement.

Since the expiry of Title 42, several shelters now also offer workshops and advice on how to use the CBP One app—both for entering data and technical support. Many of the shelters are under video surveillance for security reasons and/or are monitored by the staff there, for example to protect residents from people organized in criminal networks (Flores 2020).

In Tijuana, the shelters offer space for 40 to 1,200 people, depending on their financial and spatial possibilities. Demand is high, as financial resources are often largely exhausted shortly before the border. Outside of the shelters, the prices for rooms in hotels and Airbnbs are very high. This is due to the proximity to the U.S., which also attracts many Americans, as well as the very high and constant demand from people in transit. Mavis from Ghana sums up her difficulties in Tijuana: »I have so many difficulties because of money. So, if your money finishes, you have to stay at that place. Somebody will help you before you could continue the journey« (Interview Amina 2023).

## **»NOW IT'S CBP TIME«<sup>20</sup>**

Among the many asylum seekers, it is not only the lottery-like character but also the recurring technical problems with the app and the associated uncertain waiting times

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<sup>20</sup> | Interview Zafar 2023

that cause a lot of frustration. On some days, the app does not work at all, sometimes the SMS code you have to enter every day to request an appointment does not arrive. In fact, the waiting times for an appointment vary greatly, ranging from a few days or weeks to several months. Those I have spoken to have spent between two weeks and five months in Mexico. They are patiently accepting these sometimes very long waiting times. Some have lived in hotels, some in one of the numerous shelters or alternately in both types of accommodation, depending on the duration of their trip and their (remaining) financial resources. After all, waiting in Mexico not only costs time and nerves, but also money.

In addition to the delights of someone getting an appointment, there is also comparing among migrants in Mexico, as in the case of Ahmad from Afghanistan:

»They [the governments, note from the author] should see. Like besides as we have people from Honduras, people from Guatemala, from Venezuela. From all Latin American countries there and dozens. And we are minority. Few. So, comparing, comparing like those with us, we really deserve to have quickly CBP appointments than them. Because they have money. They have a good life. They know their language Español, Spanish. They can move around easily. There is no restrictions, problems by police whatever. But it is for us. But what we do? We are even worse than them. In waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting. And they're taking our time. They're taking our appointments. This is not fair, and it's not justice« (Interview Ahmad 2023).

Ahmad points out the difficulties for those migrants who, like him, have come to Mexico from distant regions and do not speak Spanish. His main criticism of the CBP One app is that its algorithm does not prioritize asylum seekers by country of origin. Jamshid on the other hand, is especially happy that the USA is offering a legal way to cross the border with the app: »We are trying to stick to the legal directions the Americans give. [...] We have some money left so we can wait. We're planning to wait« (Interview Jamshid 2023).

## CONCLUSION

The application CBP One fits into the picture of outsourced border controls and new technological measures as ultra-modern and digital border software is used, which promises more efficient border management. Like the EU, border procedures are outsourced to other countries. In this case, the U.S. authorities have shifted the border

procedure to Mexico. This ties in with the debate on the importance of safe third countries for border management in the Global North, smart borders, as well as the externalization of borders and border controls. Facial recognition measures are also becoming increasingly relevant in both the American and European context. This is demonstrated by the CBP One app, which has an experimental character on the one hand and a racial bias on the other. This means that asylum seekers have different chances of claiming their right to asylum. In addition to the CEAS reform, a new, ultramodern Entry/Exit System (EES) Regulation is being developed in Europe, which is due to start in 2025 (European Union 2024).

CBP One introduced a smart border system that brings with it new opportunities and risks and is the latest technical tool in the USA's previous attempts to predict and control migration movements. Like its predecessor policies MPP and Title 42, CBP One forces asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for an uncertain period of several weeks to months. Therefore, waiting times have also shifted to Mexico. During this time, the already vulnerable people are exposed to considerable risks, as they can easily be kidnapped and exploited or become the target of criminal organizations. What is new about it is the great personal responsibility that the asylum seekers themselves bear: they must enter all their personal data in advance. Depending on their technical skills, they run the risk of making mistakes when entering their data. This could exclude them from the subsequent asylum process—possibly without ever having seen a human counterpart. The lottery-like nature of the process is also new, requiring people to invest a lot of time and nerves while waiting for their asylum application. The fact that the application essentially functions as a lottery system (Amnesty International 2024) represents a significant difference to the European approach, which initially allows all people access to an asylum procedure, even if only some are granted a (widely criticized) fast-track procedure.

Just as it is unclear how exactly the CEAS reform will be implemented and applied and what this means for asylum seekers coming to Europe, it is uncertain how the use of the CBP One app will develop in the future. In both cases, additional digital barriers are being created, which represent a further step towards restricting the right to request asylum. What is certain is that the way the app works has already changed several times in the three months from June to August 2023 and beyond. Amnesty International points out that technological tools such as CBP One should at least not be used as the exclusive means of entry into the USA to apply for international protection. The introduction of the app has created significant obstacles, especially for people who do not have access to mobile devices or the internet or are otherwise unable to access the application (Amnesty International 2023). Nevertheless, it offers a legal way to cross the U.S. border and promises a safe transit—at least the short way

across the border to the USA. However, asylum seekers in Mexico are already reporting numerous checks and obstacles, regardless of whether they have an appointment or not. Interestingly, the actual crossing of the border from Guatemala to Mexico was never presented as a problem. Rather, the vertical border checkpoints were addressed, which do not run along the border, but northwards from Tapachula along the main routes to the north (Torre-Cantalapiedra/Yee-Quintero 2018). Major disinformation prevails, especially due to many constant, small changes to the application. As a result of the app, Mexico's northern cities in particular Tijuana are increasingly becoming »prison cities« (Miranda 2023: 22), which means that migrants have to wait in the open once again.

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