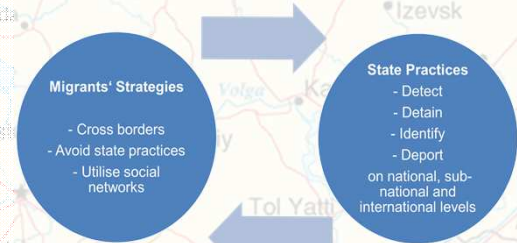


Contested Control at the Margins of the State

Irregular migration happens despite increasingly elaborate and intricate border control regimes, the notorious "Fortress Europe". There is a constantly evolving field of contested control in which state authorities and migrants engage in a reciprocal cycle of discipline and resistance, of law enforcement and avoidance. States install new hurdles to be cleared, and immigrants are forced to invent ever new and trickier strategies of avoiding and resisting control regimes, which, if successful, again provoke new sets of laws that re-refine the existing governance practices.

This research project aims to map this field, and to examine the patterns of producing and destabilising the power to reside illegally in a given state.



Fragmented Journeys of Young Migrants with no Chance of Admission in Europe

Subproject A is about migrants' journeys across Europe. Migrants with low chances of receiving a residence permit often exhibit a highly complex migration pattern:

- They are frequently in durable "transit".
- They must be very flexible.
- They often switch between different legal statuses (asylum seeker, illegal worker, detainee, etc.).

Research Questions

We understand irregular migrants neither as passive victims nor relentless perpetrators, but individuals who struggle for their autonomy and build capacity for realizing their own life choices. We ask

- What are migrants' strategies to circumvent the restrictive Dublin II regulation and other national as well as international control policies?
- How is the ambivalence between autonomy and profound hope- and powerlessness experienced by migrants and mirrored in their life plans and social networks?



Methods

We aim to explore the fragmented journeys of these migrants, by way of a multi-sited ethnographic approach. We will apply participant observation in different centres for asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers, and *sans papiers* in order to get access to the field. Additionally, we will conduct narrative-biographical interviews and we will follow certain key informants on their journey across Europe (via internet and telephone as well as follow-up interviews at their new destinations).

Government Responses to Irregular Migration in the Schengen Area

Subproject B focuses on state agencies trying to reclaim control over the defiant migrant populations. It seeks to capture the practices of detecting, identifying, detaining, and removing irregular migrants through ethnographic fieldwork in local migration offices and border police agencies.

Research Questions

Assuming that migration control organisations are aware of the failures of control systems and try to adapt their practices accordingly, we ask

- How do immigration agencies detect, identify, detain, and deport irregular migrants and determine their legal status?
- How do immigration officials reflect on and react to the Sisyphean task of controlling an uncontrollable population? How does their knowledge of this impact on their capacity to execute control tasks?



Methods

We compare the strategies and control practices of control agencies within four different member states of the Schengen Area: Switzerland, Germany, Italy and Sweden.

For this, we use an in-depth approach of participant observation, informal interviewing and the gathering of grey literature. We will spend six months working in different control agencies in each state.

In their combination, subprojects A and B will allow us to explain the failure of migration policies as a dynamic interplay of irregular migration within Europe and attempts to detect and contain these movements. And we will be in a position to test the strength of the

various explanations focusing on either migrant autonomy or the limits of state control. While either migration patterns or control policies have been extensively studied each for themselves, there is little knowledge on their interaction. This is the niche that this project seeks to fill.