

Externalised Borders in the European Border Regime: Border Knowledge and Domination in the Transnational Space of Migration between Tunisia and Switzerland (working title) *

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Abstract

The Europeanisation of migration control has led to new forms of border control practices in Europe: The most emblematic aspects of this development are the Schengen/ Dublin agreements, barbed wire high-tech fences at the Greek Turkish border or around Ceuta and Melilla, and the Frontex operations on high sea in the Mediterranean. Less visible, but nonetheless very powerful elements are the records of the border police, the Schengen Information System SIS, or the visa records of the Embassies, as well as other forms of human blacklisting. In this border spectacle, the border can no longer be conceived as a solid line, and border control practices are no longer exclusively linked to the proper geopolitical border. Instead, we can observe their deterritorialisation and relocation. This calls for a reconceptualisation of border and border control practices.

The PhD project is entitled “*Externalised Borders in the European Border Regime: Border Knowledge and Domination in the Transnational Space of Migration between Tunisia and Switzerland*”. It analyses, how the deterritorialisation and relocation of the border restructures the transnational space of migration. The project examines this deterritorialisation and relocation along the two main axes knowledge and power: Border knowledge and its circulation is a basic principle for the organisation of domination and subordination in a transnational space of migration, thus far the thesis.

The *ethnographic fieldwork* examines how the different actors in the European border regime generate and circulate knowledge on undocumented migrants’ border practices. To answer this at first sight contradictory question (How to document practices that are per definition undocumented?), document analysis, in-depth interviews and fieldwork are carried out within different organisations, previously identified as the key actors in the European border regime, and with regard to the case study (i.e. the transnational space of migration between Tunisia and Switzerland) the research design is focusing on. Doing ethnography within such organisations requires methodological tools beyond anthropologist’s key method, the participant observation. In addition, the research design develops a polymorphous engagement and adopts ideas of multi-sited fieldwork. Through this studying up of the European border regime, the project aims at developing patterns of domination and subordination through border knowledge in the transnational space of migration.

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