

Can't stop a movement!

Impressions from eight years of struggles against inner-European borders, the so called Dublin-deportations

At 15th of January 2011 more than 20 afghan refugees died, when their boat came into distress and capsized, while they continued their flight from Greece to Italy. A 16 years old young man, who was saved, asked us to write down this story not to get forgotten¹. The most of these dead people would be still alive if the Dublin-III-regulation would not exist. Most of them started their journey again and again after they have been deported back from other European countries. We dedicate this article to commemorate the forgotten dead people of the internal borders of EU. May this injustice - as it happens at the external borders of EU - as soon as possible become history.

The struggles against deportations back to Greece, Italy, Hungary or Bulgaria are strongly connected with the fights at the external European borders. The struggle against Dublin was significantly fought out along the Balkan route: first until the temporary deportation stop to Greece in the beginning of 2011 and in a second round mainly in Hungary with the break-through by the march of hope in September 2015.

Contested spaces - every centimetre progress tenaciously achieved from a multitude, which stood up individually and collectively to this regulation and still do it until today. Without listening to these manifold stories of resistance it seems to us impossible to understand the political conflict on Dublin. It was and is a social process of erosion and of continuous undermining the border regime, in which the not-granted right to freedom of movement was asserted. It was and is supported by structures, which exist everywhere in Europe in the meanwhile: an underground railroad for freedom of movement.

In February 2014 Eritrean and Somalian refugees announced in a public event the foundation of the selforganised initiative „Lampedusa in Hanau“. They mourned the dead persons and they reported about the bad experiences of their flight through the Sahara, through Libya and through the sea - and about their subsequent homelessness and non-protection in Italy. They wanted to resist against the threats of Dublin-deportations and they were in search of support from civil society: „Who is honestly mourning the death, should protect the survivors.“ A few months later the first church asylums have been established. All friends from Lampedusa in Hanau finally could achieve their right to stay and they formed the base for a sustained cycle of successful resistance against „Dublin“.

In reference to Greece and the Balkan route or to the central Mediterranean route and Italy - this article will try to tell the stories of resistance against Dublin-deportations. It's one of many narratives about struggles for freedom of movement, in manifold fragments and based on moments, in which we (with no one is illegal Hanau and with the network Welcome to Europe) were involved as supporters or testimonies.

Box:

The Dublin regulation was adopted already in 2003. In general it establishes the rule: the country, which „causes“ the entry of an asylum seeker - because its embassy has issued a visum or because it could not prevent the entry at its borders - should be responsible for the assessment of the asylum application. If a refugee applies for asylum in another country and s/he will be recognized in the fingerprint database EuroDac or because of other proofs, the deportation to this responsible country should be carried out. Obviously such a system cannot function and this regulation mainly should

¹Dublin-Deaths between Kerkyra/Greece and Bari/Italy (15th of January 2011), <http://infomobile.w2eu.net/2011/07/28/dublin-deaths-between-kerkyragreece-and-bariitaly-15th-of-january-2011/>

serve to the interests of the central-European governments to keep the refugees in the European border countries. All European countries enforce deportations to the border countries, which are overburdened with logistics and accommodation.

Greece:

Lesvos, October 2009

Our storyline starts in October 2009 on the Greek island Lesvos, at the fence of the infamous detention Pagani. Smog is in the air from the last revolts, which will finally wipe the slate clean from this prison at the external borders of EU. A few weeks before protests from inside and outside against the inhuman conditions have created images, which went around the world. At the fence - still before the release - next steps are in preparation. Everybody wants to go on as all know, that the situation in Greece will not offer a better life. They also know about the curse of the fingerprint, which all of them have been forced to provide and which burned in their bodies the risk of deportation back to Greece. Here at the fence they discuss with activists from other European countries, who hand over addresses through the wire, which can be contacted after arrival. The idea of w2eu.info is born in this situation, in the smog of the revolts and by the conviction that freedom of movement is the right for everybody.

The web guide w2eu.info

The idea was already developed during the nobordercamp, but these face to face encounters on the fence in Pagani in October 2009 became the final starting point for the web guide w2eu.info². Initially handed over as slips of paper through the wire, quickly it was clear that the need of information and mainly of reliable contacts is huge. In 2010 the web guide went online as an attempt to present a transnational quadrilingual guide for freedom of movement, first of all with contacts in all important European countries of destination and mainly including information about the chances to counter the Dublin-deportations to Greece successfully on a legal level. Step by step the website developed further and the network around have grown up to a more and more stabile structure as a backbone for daily struggles.

‘Schengendangle`:

On the bottom side of a truck back to Europe, Igoumenitsa, Springtime 2010

When we reached after seven hours bus-tour from Athens in Igoumenitsa, it is cold and the darkness of the mountains gives a feeling of isolation. We see that small groups of people disappear in the hills, the wind carries their voices to us. Igoumenitsa is the second biggest ferry-port of Greece and thus also a starting point for all the invisibles, who try to continue their journey to northern Europe. ‘Schengendangle` they call it, when they clamp themselves on the bottom side of the trucks, between the tires, to arrive perhaps some day. It is not without risk and we see some people with broken arms and legs. The two prisons in the ferry-port are all the time overcrowded, because the control is strict and every day between 10 and 40 refugees are deported back from Italy. Who was deported might have bad luck. We listen to stories about detention camps at the albanian border, or about refugees, who have been kicked out 100 km away nowhere, and even about clandestine deportations back during the night to Turkey in the region of Evros. After a wave of raids this winter, when many nylon-tents and small belongings were burnt down, most people change the sleeping place every night: from a construction site to the forest and back to the street. Small tents out of nylon-tarps hidden under branches and everyday waiting on a good opportunity: that is the world of the invisibles in Igoumenitsa. Almost all people here were imprisoned in Greece more than one time and every second person we meet is a „Dublin-II-case“. Some refugees have been deported back to Greece already several times. J. was deported from Germany in March 2009. He shows us his expulsion order from Greece: ‘Since my deportation I was 10 times imprisoned and every time I get another order to leave Greece within 30 days. But where should I go?’ S. is coming from Palestine and he is already since six months in Igoumenitsa; ‘I forgot to be hungry, I am not thirsty anymore and i do not know, if I am tired.’ He wears a jacket, which is five numbers to big for him, on his three pullovers: ‘Everybody gets sick here. We try find food in the garbage cans. Warm water is not existing and nowhere a chance to recharge our mobile phones or to keep contact with my family.’ When we started to say good bye, a young Somali

²<http://w2eu.info/>

turned to us: 'Do not let us alone! Do not let us alone!' It sounds as if it is not directed to us personally but as a general appeal to the society.³

Athens, July 2010

Athens is the hub of transmigration in Greece, from the islands as well as from the Evros region. Usually Athens is the next station to organize the further journey. During last years Athens became additionally the hub for Dublin-deportations. From all European countries Dublin-deportees arrive in Athens, where they are imprisoned at the airport in inhumane conditions. Not a few people turn the loop several times and try to leave Greece again and again. And not a few end up in the streets of Athens, when they lost their hope some day and all options to get money. Many refugees in Athens are caught in a trap, often even a voluntary return is not possible anymore. Massive homelessness of refugees is an increasing problem. The precarious support system from NGOs collapsed in the course of the economical crisis. In summer 2010 the most staff of NGOs was not paid for months and subsequently they stopped their work entirely for some periods. Around the Attiki-square, where in the daytime many Afghan refugees stayed, massive racist attacks happened for several months. The situation of minors in Athens is particularly dramatic: countless young people are exposed - beside all other problems - to sexual assaults in the parks. In the same time the protests of refugees increase: 2010 several hunger strikes of refugees took place for their recognition and legalization, often sharpened as the strikers stitch up their mouths.⁴

These descriptions from the squares in Athens summarize the situation in summer 2010, the first report of the Infomobile in Greece was a „Dublin-II-deportation-diary“⁵, a report full with the voices of the Dublin-deportees from Athens. The documentation of all individual stories is a crucial method in this period. The documented cases have been used as written testimonies to prevent deportations to Greece in front of the courts in other countries and in general to illustrate the situation of Dublin-deportees and to scandalize the inhuman living conditions in the transit countries at the external borders.

Deportation stop to Greece in January 2011

In January 2011 the European Court for human rights decided in an individual case, that Greece violated the human rights of a person, who was imprisoned in inhuman conditions and became homeless after his release. This decision also affected Belgium as the deportation to the mentioned conditions in Greece also had violated the human rights there. As a consequence of this decision the deportations to Greece have been suspended in more and more EU-countries as probably hundreds of similar „Greek“ cases might have been decided in the same way. Thus the deportation stop was a court decision of last resort. But this temporary deportation stop, which lasted at least seven years, first of all was the result of the struggles of the refugees themselves and their supporters. After their deportation back to Greece they started again and again to go back to the places they want to stay. They themselves have documented over and over again the unacceptable conditions in Greece and pushed it into the public. Longterm lawsuits in each singular case and mainly the tenacity of the affected persons themselves led to a situation, in which the deportations had to be suspended. Just now, when we have to develop new strategies to stop again the deportations back to Greece, we should learn from these experiences. Since March 2017 it was announced in the frame of the overall roll back, that Dublin-deportations to Greece will be restarted.

Hungary:

³Excerpts of a report by Salinia Stroux and Regina Mantanika, February 2010: „Schengendangle – Undocumented Refugees in the City of Igoumenitsa“, http://infomobile.w2eu.net/files/2010/03/schengendangle_small.pdf

⁴Infomobile report 2010 (in German language): <http://infomobile.w2eu.net/files/2011/03/Infomobil-Bericht-2010.pdf>

⁵<http://infomobile.w2eu.net/files/2011/03/deportation-diary.pdf> (englisch)

http://infomobile.w2eu.net/files/2011/03/athenbericht_dt_web.pdf (deutsch)

In Hungary the human right violations at first have been much less public - not because it was less massive but because it have been more hidden forms of violence. Imprisonment during the asylum procedure was and still is the norm and not an exception in Hungary. When we started to be engaged in the situation in Hungary, we mainly heard about the reports on the unbearable conditions of detention. The circulation of tranquilizer have been standard and many people were released after months of arrest with strong psychological problems and often also with addiction to pharmaceuticals.

First notices about the indefensible conditions inside the Hungarian prisons for refugees trailed away without attention. Already in December 2010 first considerations came up to research on the Hungarian situation as we could expect similar serious failings as in the Greek asylum system. First research journeys started and affected refugees have been informed about useful contacts in their destination countries through the web guide w2eu.info, while experiences about Dublin-deportations have been exchanged. Already in this stage many have told their stories. So one young Afghan man, 17 years old, gave us an interview by phone from inside a detention center.⁶ We never saw each other, but a friend of a friend brought us into contact. He felt very bad, he said, but he wanted to give testimony about the situation of refugees deported back to Hungary. He reported that he is arrested since nearly three month as a minor. He hoped, that the deportations to Hungary might end, when the practice of imprisonment becomes public. He said it is too late for himself, but perhaps it will help all others, who afterwards will go the same way, not to experience the same. In this period we made numberless interviews and many used these testimonies, which they had given still in Hungary, in their next attempt of continuous flight for the documentation in court cases and against another deportation to Hungary.

Already in 2012 and 2013 bordermonitoring.eu in cooperation with Pro Asyl tried to document in the German-speaking countries the general situation of refugees in Hungary „between homelessness and detention“ and thus to win influence on procedures in various courts.⁷ In 2016 another updated report on Hungary was published and got attention in several courts in Germany.⁸

Hungary for a long time was known only as place of quick transit. With increasing Dublin deportations many affected refugees could not keep their strength for a second or third attempt and mainly families with children stayed and tried to get organized in Hungary and to struggle for an improvement of their living conditions. From late summer 2012 until early summer 2013 mainly Afghan families went on protests in Budapest and Bicske, supported from the new developed group MigSzol⁹. But all efforts failed and the most families - even with a residence status - could not find any perspective, rather they were confronted with the eviction from the refugee camp and subsequent homelessness. Against this background they decided collectively to leave and more than 70 refugees together boarded a train at 12.06.2013. All of them had a protection-status in Hungary, so they could be controlled at the border, but with their documents they have been entitled to move through Europe and thus they reached their destination. At the train station in Munich they finally decided for the end city: Karlsruhe. There some of them had relatives and one of them got the information, that a chance might be given. In Karlsruhe they went to the first reception center, put all their Hungarian documents on the table and asked for asylum as in Hungary a live in humanity and dignity was not possible.

⁶<http://w2eu.net/2010/10/26/hungary-imprisons-minors-after-dublin2-deportation/>

⁷<http://bordermonitoring.eu/berichte/2013-ungarn>

⁸Gänzlich unerwünscht, Oktober 2016, http://bordermonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Web_Ungarn_Bericht-2016.pdf

⁹<http://www.migszol.com/who-we-are.html>

"We, the refugees previously living in the Bicske Reception Centre (Hungary) decided to leave Hungary and apply for asylum in Germany. (...) The fact, that approximately 100 of us left Hungary will not change anything in Bicske. The new people who will be granted the refugee status by Hungary will face similar problems. We saw no other choice than staying together and seek a common solution abroad. We have seen that the European rules on asylum are not working, there is no common treatment and care for asylum-seekers and refugees in Europe. We will not accept this system. Our political resistance is movement. We have to do that for our Children."¹⁰

This declaration was published together with a detailed list of all their attempts in Hungary to change and to improve their situation (in negotiations with immigration offices, camp administration, politicians and UNHCR, and by protest-actions in front of the parliament). It was the first collectively organized leave and the families organized common events also later in Germany. Until today nearly all of them still live in Baden-Württemberg (the federal state, in which Karlsruhe is located).

Italy - the curse of the fingerprint

„We are escaping the whole time, you know? Our life is homelessness, we sleep on a big street of hope. We could not see any hope until now. We only live, breathe, sleep. They decided for us, that we have no rights. That's the meaning of Dublin for us. We should not have other options than to live on the street.“

O. from Eritrea, Oberursel (near Frankfurt) in July 2011

„Without Dublin it would mean that I would be a bird and could fly. I simply would continue my studies, I would marry and live a better life.“

S. from Eritrea, Oberursel in July 2011

The Italian islands Lampedusa and Sicily are the places, where the stories cumulate, in which refugees tried to resist from the very beginning against the hex/bane/curse of the fingerprints. Most people know before their arrival in Italy, that the fingerprint - sometimes even taken on the boats of the coastguards - will be a trap. Thus forms of resistance are manifold. If the opportunity is given, they escape directly after the arrival in the ports in Augusta, Pozallo or Catania. Some even could get away from Lampedusa, hidden in a truck in the ferry, to avoid the fingerprinting. Others treated their fingertips with glue before the arrival, or they vitriolized or burned them. Many opposed the taking of fingerprints and experienced massive violence by the Italian police, partly through counter insurgency units against refugees, who just were rescued from boats at sea. As testified people were broken their hands and fingers to force the fingerprint procedure, in several times electric shockers were used to break resistance. Often any food was denied, before people did not give fingerprints.

In July 2013 one of the collective protests has been finally successful:

In the last couple of weeks new boat people – refugees and migrants mainly from East African and Sub-Saharan countries – are arriving via Libya on the Italian island of Lampedusa. There they are detained in an overcrowded camp and registered before their transfer to Sicily or the Italian mainland, which includes having their fingerprints taken. Many of the persons involved know from friends and family who went through the same procedure, that due to these fingerprints their residence will be bound to Italy, that they may obtain a protected status there, but that socially this is worth nothing. This because in general they will then find themselves homeless and without an income on the street and any continued journey towards North-Western Europe is threatened with immediate deportation back to Italy in accordance with Dublin II.

Against this background impressive protest actions occurred on Lampedusa in mid-July. About 250 refugees, mainly from Eritrea, refused to give their fingerprints and demanded from the responsible authorities their immediate transfer. After protests and controversies with the police in the camp, they held a more than 2-hour demonstration in the streets of the small tourist town on 20 July 2013. “No

¹⁰<http://www.migszol.com/blog/-statement-of-the-refugees-who-left-hungary>

Fingerprints" was their main slogan, a collective protest against the Dublin II injustice. Then a 24-hour sit-in on the square in front of the church was organized and in self-determined negotiations with the local authorities they even could carry through their main demand to leave without fingerprints.¹¹

The fingerprint in Italy became also a trap for refugees, who continued their flight after the deportation stop in Greece via Italy as the story of N. demonstrate. It was an almost endless odyssey through the European Dublin-jungle.

"My flight from Afghanistan via Iran and Turkey to Greece took me several months. In late November 2011, I crossed the Evros River. But in Greece you can not survive as a refugee. In December 2011, I've been hiding in a truck to get onto the ferry to Bari / Italy. When moving out at the port Italian police caught us and deported us directly back to Greece with the same ferry - directly into jail. On the second try, I went by foot across the border to Macedonia and continued via Serbia to Hungary. I was there for six weeks in custody and then deported to Serbia. The Serbian police beat us, took our money away and pushed us illegally back at the Macedonian border. From the Macedonian police we were left in the forest and hunted with threats towards Greece. I went the same way to Hungary a second time - with the same result: imprisonment and illegal refoulement to Greece. The fourth time I went in a small boat with 72 people to Italy. After days at sea I arrived in July 2012 in southern Italy. Via France and Belgium, I tried to go to Germany. In Brussels I was checked by the police and taken to a detention center. Out of fear of deportation to Italy I went on hunger strike. They have silenced me in February 2013 with a sedative injection and four Belgian police officers accompanied me to Rome. After the deportation I did not get any accommodation and had to flee from Italy again. A couple of months I remained in France, without any support, then I tried to come to Germany. After a second deportation from Belgium I was sent back into homelessness at the airport in Rome. I went on a hunger strike in front of the airport in Rome. Eventually I gave up and lived again homeless with other Afghans in a kind of tent."¹²

N. escaped once more at the end of his odyssey through Europe, this time to Germany. He spent several weeks in a church asylum in Frankfurt until the transfer-deadline to Italy was over and he finally did not risk another deportation anymore. He is living and working today in Hanau.

There are people, who became nomads, who go and return in Europe many times and many years to find finally a place to stay. We met a Somalian refugee, who had to give fingerprints in at least nine European countries. From everywhere he was deported back to Italy or he escaped before his deportation to a next country.

Also after the arrival in Germany many refugees vitriolize or burn their fingers, mainly in the years 2011 and 2012. But this kind of resistance soon went into space: the asylum procedures have simply been suspended, because of „non-collaboration in the identity verification“. Often the affected persons fall into the Dublin-trap years later, when they were not prepared in another fingerprint procedure. But many make it, they layaway from step to step until - for example - they get married by a friend, who already held a long term residency in Germany.

Resistance against Dublin-deportations in air planes

Several refugees defended themselves against deportations to Italy. Between 2011 and 2014 according the official statistics concerning the Frankfurt airport the most deportations have been interrupted by Eritrean refugees, who should have been forced back to Italy.

¹¹Kompass Antira Newsletter August 2013,

More reports can be found here: <http://siciliamigrants.blogspot.it/search/label/Lampedusa-de>

Short Video: <https://vimeo.com/70781121>

Italian YouTube-Clip:

http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=JFu0h8CYfUM&list=UUDsP5wVi6kSQUs5SzvICkww&feature=share&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DJFu0h8CYfUM%26feature%3Dshare%26list%3DUUDsP5wVi6kSQUs5SzvICkww

¹²Exhibition of the group Lampedusa in Hanau, <http://lampedusa-in-hanau.antira.info/austellung-2/>

K., an Eritrean friend in Oberursel near Frankfurt (who achieved after many years of struggle his blue passport and in the meanwhile even a flat), was one of them. After he prevented his deportation on 6.12.2011, he was detained in the prison in Frankfurt-Preungesheim. He said:

„I will not accept another deportation to Italy quietly and secret. If we remain silent, nothing will change. The situation of refugees in Italy is a constant violation of our human rights. I escaped as many other young people because of permanent human rights violation in Eritrea. Here in Europe we experience again, that we have to live in inhuman conditions.“

After his deportation to Italy he met there with a journalist from the magazine „Stern“¹³, who documented the story of K. at full length and as a representative example for many others.

In 2014 S. and two other Eritrean friends resisted against their deportations in scheduled flights even repeatedly. The responsible immigration authorities in Darmstadt decided to make an example of their case to try to discourage the Eritrean community. All of them should know that resistance will be broken by any means necessary and by any costs. The authorities chartered a small plane exclusively for the three Eritreans and they were deported like criminals and accompanied by policemen, one even sedated by an injection from a collaborating medic:

„On June 17th 2014 I was woken up at 6 clock in my cell in the deportation prison in Ingelheim. It was the third attempt to deport me back to Italy after I had resisted two times. I said that I did not want to fly to Italy and they then brought more forces. Six men in the whole entered the cell and I screamed for help. They have levered my left hand and kicked me repeatedly against the legs. They have tied up the hands with handcuffs on my back and also gave me leg irons and transported me tied up in the police car. Besides me two more Eritreans were deported. I was the first who was brought onto the plane. I have said already in the police car that the deportation I done against my will. On the stairs was the pilot and I told the police, I want to talk to him. When I was inside they brought the second man. I have only heard him scream from inside: "Uuyuuuyuy" - cries for help. He does not speak English and he would scream in this way for help. They carried him to the plane. The third Eritrean shouted in this way and fought back and they dragged him onto the plane. On the plane, we then cried all three, and the aircraft did not start about 30 minutes. The police squeezed my ear when I cried, I got scared because I should actually have an operation on the ear, which was not done because they have picked me up before for deportation. The police have tried to shield us from each other, so I could not see exactly what happened with the friend behind me. He certainly did get a shock and had foam coming from his mouth. There was a doctor with us in the plane she was very tall and thin. She gave him an injection and then we have not heard from him, he was made quiet by her injection. We started to fly and we continue to scream me and the other friend. The policeman next to me says ´Byebye Germany! Ciao!´ And I ask him how he can do in such a situation jokes, if he still has a remnant of humanity.“

A few weeks later all three were back in Germany - and after years of struggles and tenacious judicial conflicts S. today has his recognition as refugee.

Shortly after his selforganised return he held a speech during a demonstration against deportations in Darmstadt. Exactly in front of the building of the administration, who chartered his extra-flight and executed his deportation, he accused the responsible authorities for human right violations.

K. and S. both were arrested for several weeks in detention after they successfully resisted against their deportation in the air planes. But shortly after the deportation charter in June 2014 it became much more difficult for authorities to detain asylum seekers. After successful legal interventions it was forbidden to keep asylum seekers in the same prisons as criminals and most federal states had no capacities anymore. And longterm juridical efforts by lawyers could achieve decisions from higher courts, that particularly Dublin-refugees should not be detained anymore.

Mainly at the Frankfurt airport, the biggest deportation airport in Germany, but also at other airports support-groups developed to prevent deportations. They tried to intervene - by sensibilization of travellers and staff of air lines, but also by protests against deportation air lines. In March 2012

13Der Fluch des Fingerabdrucks, stern Nr. 43, 18.10.2012.

simultaneous actions took place at the five biggest German deportation air ports. In the common call it was written:

„Let us support this resistance! Let's take a look into the flights to Rome, Budapest or Valetta! Let's stand up against deportations! In its literal sense: because as passengers on board we can prevent deportations, when we refuse to belt on but stand up and bring our complaints to the pilot. The Dublin-II-system has to be abolished immediately! No deportations into the social misery at the margins of Europe! Asylum seekers should have the right to search for protection, where they want to do! For an Europe of welcome.“¹⁴

In several cities (the protests were different according to the different practices of authorities in different federal states and districts) groups developed blockades in front of refugee camps to stop deportations, which have been announced in advance. Mainly Göttingen and Osnabrück became strongholds to prevent deportations from outside - until the authorities decided: deportations should not be pre-announced anymore.

Germany and the places of struggle to stay

„Never before was the resistance against the restrictions of the freedom of movement for refugees and migrants and especially against deportations within Europe so loud and convinced. In Germany and all over Europe, initiatives call for self-organized resistance such as the „Lampedusa Groups“. European borders have never been more contested. Almost every week migrants collectively pass the borders in Ceuta and Melilla, thousands arrive on the shores of Sicily. On Lampedusa, hundreds of people reject their registration and in the Aegean Sea boats arrive daily on the Greek islands.“
*Time to Act. Dublin has to be abolished! - Call in June 2014*¹⁵

Lampedusa in Hamburg is the first group, which was founded in explicit reference to the first place of arrival. In difference to many following self-organized groups is Lampedusa in Hamburg composed by people, who already got documents in Italy and who now try to find a living and mainly a work in Hamburg.

„In Lampedusa we were 7000 persons in a camp, which was built for 900. Nevertheless the people there tried their best, but they did not get support from the EU. The Dublin-II-system - you have to stay in the country of first arrival - is violating our human rights. It forces us to live and die on the streets. After the recognition of our refugee status Italy kicked us on the street in winter 2012. They asked us to leave Italy. They said: the EU is big, go and find your way. Here is nothing for you. And so it happened and with nothing in snow and ice we set off to France, Scandinavia, Switzerland and Germany. We are recognized refugees from a war, in which the European states have participated, but they ignore our existence. When we show up and when we make our conditions visible, they want to deport us. In Italy we can beg, starve, steal, become guttersnipes or simply die. The main issue remains to keep the Dublin-II-system implemented. It is painful, after we could stabilize our life in Libya, that we once again have to struggle to survive - in countries, which name themselves as big democracies.“¹⁶

Lampedusa in Hanau was founded in March 2014, after more and more Somalian and Eritrean refugees in Hanau and the district around were threatened by deportations back to Italy:

„We escaped from a dictatorship with forced recruitment and political persecution in Eritrea and from a 23 years long civil war with forced recruitment and raping of women in Somalia. We survived to cross the desert with little food and too less water and we faced kidnappings for blackmailing our relatives or even to misuse our bodies for trade with organs. Arriving in Libya we experienced strong racism on the streets and systematic imprisonment, partly for years. Crossing the

¹⁴Aus dem Aufruf von März 2012: Aktionstage an den 5 größten deutschen Abschiebeflughäfen:
<http://dublin2.info/2012/04/459/>

¹⁵http://dublin2.info/files/2014/06/dublin-call-2014.de_.pdf
http://dublin2.info/files/2014/06/dublin-call-2014.en_.pdf

¹⁶<http://lampedusa-hamburg.info/de/informationen/hintergrund>

Mediterranean Sea we again had to risk our lives in overcrowded boats. Some of us experienced shipwrecks and the death of relatives or friends on sea, before we arrived on the coasts of Lampedusa, Sicily or Malta. Most of us were forced to give our fingerprints in Italy or Malta, although we never want to stay in these countries. (...) In Italy we went through overcrowded camps with inhuman conditions and internal fights. We experienced homelessness and racist violence and sexual harassment on the street, we were without any income, perhaps one time per day food by caritas and without medical provision. Against this background we travelled to Germany to ask for asylum and protection. But here we face again insecurity and threat of deportation back to Italy and Malta. German authorities refuse to allow us the access to a fair asylum procedure. (...) We know that many of our friends and relatives from Hamburg to Frankfurt are in similar situations. (...)The system of Dublin cannot grant us the protection and safety we need. It stops us from building a future after all this hardship we had to go through. We are in solidarity against deportations and exclusion and for the rights of refugees and migrants in Germany and Europe. We need the freedom to choose the place to stay. We ask to delete our fingerprints from the European Data-System because these fingerprints are like a prison to us. No Fingerprints - no Dublin II and III. We are here to stay!¹⁷

Lampedusa in Hanau consisted mainly in a mutual promise: no one will be left alone with the fear of deportation. And even if we cannot prevent all deportations, we know: from Italy a quick travelling back to Germany is possible. In Frankfurt simultaneously the group Refugees for Change was founded. During manifestations against deportations affected refugees confirmed to each other in speeches: after they deport us, we will come back again.

Parallel the active refugees approached church communities and tried to get their direct support. Church asylum is one successful option against Dublin-deportation and many use it to overcome the transfer-deadlines. According the Dublin regulation the German authorities are obliged to deport the people back within six months (after the Dublin country got responsible). As soon as this deadline is over, Germany get responsible for the asylum procedure and the refugees can stay. Only if people disappear and go underground, the transfer-deadline can be prolonged to 18 months. But in church asylum the authorities are informed about the address of the refugees under protection, theoretically an access by police is possible and the people are not disappeared. But it is a political decision, if deportations will be executed against refugees under church groups protection and usually church asylum is respected by authorities in Germany. The few times, when church asylums have been broken by police, it brought even a boomerang effect. In the case of a Chechnyan family in Augsburg, who was hauled off by police from a church asylum, it led to a big scandal and even more churches offered their protected spaces afterwards. The established regional church was in full support of the local church group and finally even the interior minister of Bavaria had to row back.

Even if several hundred refugees - mainly against Dublin-deportations and to overcome the transfer-deadline - are in church asylum in Germany every year, these are still individual cases and not so many in comparison to the general numbers of Dublin-cases. Nevertheless the hardliner in the ministries and in the authorities try to push a debate, that church asylum should be classified as disappearance and thus to prolong automatically the transfer-deadline on 18 months in future. It is still and again a contested field.

In most other European countries the practice of church asylum to overcome the six months did not work, probably because the churches did not have enough negotiation power. In Sweden church communities support again and again refugees, but they have to hide for 18 months, before their procedure will be conducted in Sweden.

The Dublin-system collapsed in Hungary - in the summer of migration 2015

16.09.2015 Hanau - Welcome to trains of hope: in seven days from Izmir to Hanau
Still in August we countless times answered the question in Lesvos, what will happen with our fingerprints in Hungary, and now - only one month later - nobody is asking anymore. We said to the people: 'Go on, you will arrive. The route is hard, but never refugees and migrants have been quicker

¹⁷Declaration of Lampedusa in Hanau, <http://lampedusa-in-hanau.antira.info/uber-uns-about-us/>

than today. We have waved at the extra-ferries, about 2500 people in departure in direction to the macedonian border. They were as quick as never before. Record time was seven days from Izmir to Hanau. Ten days from Homs.

Now we stay in Hanau at the train station during nights and say welcome on a stage of the journey, together with many others from various communities and their associations. Many just want to say hello. Here in the emergency accomodation, in gyms and tents still for many refugees it is open, where the traveling will end. Also here is still not a serious registration, at least for some moments the old rules and restrictions have been suspended. Many will continue, to the aunt to Schwerte, to Leipzig to the bride-to-be or to Hamburg, because there are living more Afghans. Or from there to further north, some want to reach Sweden, Norway or Finland. After some days several people decide to stay, because they met friendly people, because the city is in the middle of Germany or because they are simply tired and finally want to arrive somewhere. Welcome!

About the break-through on the Balkan route, which led to such scenes in September 2015, a lot of other texts are published.¹⁸ It was not a sophisticated strategy, which pushed the Dublin-system into a temporary collapse. It was a vote by feet in its literal sense. It was courage of despair mixed up with experiences of resistance in the Syrian uprising combined with the right moment, that the decision had to be made to open the borders. It seems to us important to remember it, when today we want to counter the ongoing roll back.

Roll Back

Since the break-through in September 2015 we followed the attempts on all levels to win back control as we all know: The closure of the formalized corridor along the Balkan route, the EU-Turkey deal, the mass-internment on the Aegean islands, the increase of push backs between all the Balkan states.

Simultaneously the debate went on to reorganize the Dublin-regulation. Dublin IV will even include the abolition of the transfer-deadlines. It is not a surprise as the overcoming of these timelimits of deportations have been the main method for thousands of refugees to escape from the Dublin-trap.

Even the re-installation of Dublin-deportations to Greece is coming back now:

'One step forward, hundreds back...' seems to be the motto under which EU experts implement refugee policy, as currently also demonstrated in Greece. On 8 December 2015, the European Commission published its fourth recommendation on the resumption of Dublin Returns to Greece, this time stating that they could be gradually re-installed, as according to them, refugee rights would be adequately protected in Greece. At the same time, images of people who fled war and are now staying in tents covered in snow are spreading through the global media. Once more, the EU is using Greece to make a point: Dublin has to survive, not matter what, that's the plan. But in reality, this failed plan has significant consequences, causing one more massive human tragedy in Europe for thousands of people who are escaping war, conflict, disaster, hunger and poverty.¹⁹

Just before its starting the information circulate already in Greek refugee camps, in which way to deal and to respond against these new threads of deportation. Welcome to Europe published a detailed info sheet.²⁰

Outlooks:

¹⁸Especially we refer to a report by bordermonitoring.eu that follows the existance of the formalised corridor along the Balkanroute (unfortunately only in German language): http://bordermonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/report-2017-balkan_web.pdf.

¹⁹w2eu Statement 22.01.2017: No Dublin Returns to Greece!, <http://infomobile.w2eu.net/2017/01/22/no-dublin-returns-to-greece/>

²⁰w2eu.info on Dublin > Greece, März 2017, <http://w2eu.info/greece.en/articles/greece-dublin2.en.html>

Relatively simply to anticipate: Despite and against the reorganization of Dublin-deportation Greece will experience another vote by feet:

„But Dublin will fall again! Deportations to Greece were already once stopped back in 2011 following the decision of the European Human Rights Court in the case ‘MSS v. Greece’ – and as a result of a long struggle during which many, many refugees escaped from Greece, were deported and escaped again. Some had to flee through Europe 5-6 times. But finally it was over, they succeeded often, and stayed.

Dublin Returns to Greece will be strongly contested in national and international courts again now. As we have seen, the Dublin-regulation has been overrun many times before by the struggles for freedom of movement of individuals and groups.

Mouzalas had to correct himself. We politely suggest the European Commission to do the same.

Refugees are no numbers on a tent, no fingerprints, but people with faces, names and stories!

The Dublin Regulation has to be abolished now.

Human rights violations have to end now.

People have to join their families now.

People have to be in safety and in dignified conditions now.

We therefore demand:

Equal rights for all!

Freedom of movement to all refugees in Greece and elsewhere!

The right to stay for all!

Stop deportations!

No one is illegal!

w2eu – a network born out of the struggle against Dublin returns in 2009²¹

The struggles against deportations developed further all the time. Since in Osnabrück the deportations are not pre-announced anymore and it is not possible to stop it from outside mobilization of supporters, refugees inside the camps got self organized and took the prevention of deportations in their own hands. They patrol during the night at the entrance of the camp and with whistles the whole camp will be waked up as soon as police try to execute early morning deportations. Then hundred and more refugees approach the police cars - peacefully and whistling - and the police has to leave without having achieved anything.

The example from Osnabrück demonstrates a process of vivid learning and adapting to new challenges. It is impressive, what is possible, when people talk with each other and develop collective strategies. The whistle became already the new symbol for the resistance against Dublin-deportations. We created now a huge version - a two meters big whistle, which will be presented during the We`ll Come United parade at 16th of September in Berlin in front of the interior ministry. Then it will be carried further on to Oranienplatz and other places, where affected refugees will meet and gather, who are not willing to get arrested and to accept this injustice. A symbol to tell the (hi)story of resistance, that it will be retold and new ideas appear. That the right for freedom of movement and the right to stay will finally win through!

²¹w2eu Statement 22.01.2017: No Dublin Returns to Greece!, <http://infomobile.w2eu.net/2017/01/22/no-dublin-returns-to-greece/>.