

An Ethnography of German immigration Bureaucracy (working title)

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In light of the increase in transnational migration processes, the research fields of both migration and bureaucracy as well as their intersection have recently gained socio-political and academic significance. It is within this intersection of migration and bureaucracy studies that this project takes shape by analyzing the bureaucratic process of immigration itself as well as the administrative sites in which immigrants are 'addressed' and 'processed'. Thus, the focus of the project is the institutional integration of immigrants in Germany.

The project focuses on three central stations of institutional integration that immigrants in Germany have to pass:

1. the Immigration Office
2. Integration Courses
3. the Naturalisation Office

The classification system used at the Immigration Office (Ausländerbehörde, 7 months of fieldwork) has momentous effects on the lives of immigrants. In addition to other criteria, the country of origin and purpose of residency determine the legal status of immigrants in Germany. These factors influence which course of action is available for immigrants. Nevertheless, certain activities, such as participation in a so-called 'integration course' are made obligatory for immigrants by the Immigration Office. On the other hand, standardized Integration Courses (Integrationskurse, 5 months of fieldwork) are part of a mandatory curriculum designed to teach immigrants about 'German society'. Upon completion of integration courses, standardised testing methods are applied to confirm the respective immigrant's degree of 'integration'. The final stage in the structural integration of immigrants in Germany is performed by the Naturalization Office (Einbürgerungsbehörde, 4 months of fieldwork). It is here that, after fulfilling certain requirements within a mandatory period of time, immigrants can apply for German citizenship. Once an application has been approved by the authorities, the 'integration' process is completed. In other words, the legal status of immigrants is then officially transferred from 'foreigner' to 'German citizen'.

The project examines the ways in which these three successive stations in the integration process are related to each other by:

- Analysing discursive and non-discursive practices from an ethnographic viewpoint. The project also takes into account the perspectives and perceptions of both
- Social actors of immigration (immigrants) and social actors of bureaucracy (German public servants).
- Furthermore, this dissertation project utilizes a multi-local ethnographic research approach on which the project is based.