

## Acknowledgments

---

This study was only possible because of the many people working in the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) who generously allowed me to gain insights into their work and thoughts. I was impressed by the good spirit and welcoming atmosphere I encountered in the office and in the three sections in which I conducted field research. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the openness of everyone involved and for their – far from self-evident – readiness to invest substantial time and efforts to introduce me to the ‘arts of asylum decision-making’, for sharing their experiences and thoughts with me, and for embarking on critical and instructive exchanges with me. Six people stand out for having enabled my research in the asylum directorate of the SEM: Stephan Parak, quality manager, Matthias Keusch († 20.11.2014), senior legal advisor, and Pius Betschart, vice-head of the SEM and responsible for the asylum directorate and the three heads of the sections in which I conducted research, who remain anonymous. I thank all them for their invaluable support and sustained interaction with me and my research.

This book derives from my doctoral dissertation, carried out under the auspices of the Department of Geography at the University of Zurich. I am especially indebted to my supervisors Susan Thieme and Ulrike Müller-Böker but also to the further members of my promotion committee, Christin Achermann and Christian Berndt for their support and feedback during the research and writing process. On my journey inside the asylum administration, I met two considerate and inspiring researchers who shared both my enthusiasm and worries about doing research in the Swiss asylum office, Jonathan Miaz and Laura Affolter, whom with I had the pleasure to collaborate extensively. Exchanges with a few people from both inside and outside academia have been particularly helpful and inspiring for this research: Samuel Häberli, Sämi Graf, Jennifer Steiner, Benedikt Korf, Alison Mountz,

Joao Costa, Samuel Peter, and Pauline Maillet. A substantial set of people at the Department of Geography in Zurich and beyond have either directly contributed to this study or sustained an intellectual and social environment in which it could come to flourish. Thanks to all of those who read and commented on smaller or larger bits and pieces of the book manuscript along the way: Katharina Pelzelmayer, Timothy Raeymaekers, Simon Noori, Elisabeth Miltz, Roger Keller, Daniel Wolfe, Olivia Killias, and Esther Leemann. For the careful and attentive language editing of the book manuscript I would like to thank Jennifer Bartmess.

During my fieldwork, I had the luck to meet Fabrizio: I am grateful for all the thought-provoking and enlightening debates with you – and that you have become a good friend. I am greatly indebted to Rony for being an extraordinary friend and long-time intellectual sparring partner: without your encouragement and sustained critique this book would maybe not have been written and surely not be what it is today. My extended family – Manuel and Leandra, Barbara, Simon, Cornelia, Fränzi, Susi and Daniel – has been a vital support: thank you for always being there when I need you. It is difficult to adequately acknowledge the most important source of happiness and sanity during the eventful times of researching and writing this book: Anne-Käthi, I am forever grateful for your intellectual inspiration, incessant support, and love, thank you so much. Lastly, I am unspeakably joyful and inspired by your vibrant presence and curiosity in the world, Karl and Zora – this book is for you and for your mother.

*Ephraim Pörtner*  
*Zurich, April 2020*