

A Sicilian Diary of Nina Perkowski

Nina Perkowski came to Sicily to research the living situation of immigrants from Africa in Sicily for her PhD. For [borderline-europe](#), she reported the situation in Cassibile and Mineo, where there is a collective home for asylum seekers. Within ten chapters Nina wrote down her experiences and her monitorings.

Chapter One: Arrivata.

I finally arrived. After an eventful journey from Berlin to Utrecht, Edinburgh, London and Palermo, meeting wonderful friends at almost every stop, I have reached my new home in Catania. For the next month, I will have the pleasure to inhabit a stunning apartment at the roof of a building in the city centre.

At the moment, the city out there still seems chaotic - since my arrival a few hours ago, I have only ventured to the nearby supermarket and have no bearings of the cityscape thus far. Already in Palermo and now again in Catania though, I was welcomed by amazingly friendly and helpful hosts, who went out of their way to make me feel at home instantaneously. In an hour, I will leave towards Cassibile for the first time - a rural area where migrants are exploited working in the fields, and where I will be monitoring the human rights situation over the next month. I am curious to see the situation there, and very curious as well to finally meet my primary contact person in Catania, who will take me to the fields and explain the local context a little more.

It is somewhat surreal to suddenly be here. A little more than a month ago, I sent my first email to Judith from [borderline-europe](#), asking her if I could come to Sicily and follow her work, see the human rights situation of migrants on the island with my own eyes and assist with research and documentation on the ground. Then, everything went very fast. I left my job in Berlin, gave up my room, said my goodbyes and took off exactly one month after that first email contact.

Why did I end up here? Before I will begin my PhD in September, researching and writing about EU immigration policies, I feel that I need some more practical insights. I am very interested in – or rather outraged by - EU entry policies and methods of border control, and while I have read a lot about the topic, I never spent a longer period of time at EU borders myself. As I want my PhD to be practically relevant and informed, I decided that now was the time to pack my bags and explore, and expose myself to some of the realities of EU immigration policies on the ground. While I'll be here, I hope that I will not only gain valuable insights myself, but that I will be able to support local organisations working for migrants' rights with my research and writing. For [borderline-europe](#), I will report from the situation in Cassibile and Mineo, where there is a collective home for asylum seekers.

Right now, I am looking forward to the coming weeks with a mix of curiosity, elation, and apprehension. I wonder what might occur, whom I might meet, what I might see. I know that I will spend the next four weeks in Catania, visiting Cassibile and Mineo, and will then join the [Boats4People](#) project in Palermo. In the weeks to come, it will slowly become clearer what I will do in July and August, and where I will be based during those months. The weeks to come will hopefully also see significant improvements in my Italian language skills - while I had my first conversations in Italian today and was amazed that that was actually possible, it still takes an enormous effort to speak, I am slow in talking and often need to search for words.

To help me reflect on my own experiences, and to share my insights with all those interested, I will use this page as a blog, posting pictures, texts and impressions of my time here. I'd be delighted if you decided to follow my adventures, and will happily receive any comments or thoughts you might

have while reading!

Alla prossima!