

#DEEPLDIVERSITY

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

When people talk about migration and diversity today, it quickly turns towards stereotypical clichés such as „exotic“ food, headscarves and „foreign“ looking people. What one perceives as enrichment, another takes as a threat. On either side it seems to be clear what belongs to Switzerland and what is “foreign”. But are such conceptions of everyday life always to have a grip on Switzerland’s migration society? What does embracing everyday diversity mean in Switzerland and how can it be organized democratically?

RANDOM FACTS

- Swiss cuisine discovered zucchinis and peppers in the 60s, rocket in the 90s.
- Around every third marriage completed in Switzerland in 2015 was of mixed nationality.
- From the late 19th century on so-called “Human Zoos” were organised in Switzerland, where hundreds of thousands of visitors could amuse themselves viewing “exotic savages” from colonial areas, e.g. the “Nigger Village” in Zurich-Altstetten in 1925 or in Geneva at the National Exhibition in 1896.
- From In 1971 Thilo Frey became the first Black Swiss to be elected to the National Council.
- Rhaeto-Romanic was first recognised as an official national language in 1938 in the nationalist context of the so-called “Intellectual National Defence” (Geistige Landesverteidigung).
- In the first federal referendum of 1893 law prohibited the slaughter of animals for the first time. The vote was motivated by anti-Semitism and chiefly directed at Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe who were fleeing to Switzerland to escape pogroms in the Tsar’s Empire.
- Around a quarter of Switzerland’s resident population today speaks a main language that isn’t an officially recognised national language.

THE ARGUMENT

When people talk about migration and diversity today stereotypes quickly come into play: of colourful hands and of black sheep vs. white sheep. The alternatives seem to be: cultural enrichment or threat. Both conceptions do not do justice to the complex realities of the migration society that Switzerland surely is. Migration-related diversity is neither simply good nor bad, but a social fact, it’s not an opinion, but reality. In contrast to the officially acknowledged and legally effectuated multicultural diversity of the Swiss Confederation, with its various linguistic regions and denominations, migration-related diversity has not yet been

reflected in the institutions and self-images of Switzerland. The debates about minarets, headscarves and handshakes in schools show how quickly the mood in the country can change as soon as the topics of migration and diversity are linked with “cultural differences”. The recognition of migration-related diversity would only be truly sustainable if it were not based on cultural stereotypes and was instead accompanied by a democratic reorganization of belonging and participation on the legal, social, political, economic and symbolic levels. New possibilities of identification and institutionalized frameworks are urgently needed.

INES has launched the #DeepDiversity Project to probe into the ambiguous, complex, contradictory reality of everyday diversity in Switzerland: in pictures, words and narratives. Through participatory work on an image archive, a glossary and a story-platform, a collective discussion and reflection process will be initiated, in order to create new relevant spaces for practice.

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

According to an OECD study, more than half of the 15- to 34-year-olds had a migration background in 2013. Such statistical data can only provide a very limited depiction of the deep social, political and cultural changes that Swiss society is experiencing as a result of immigration. It is, however, clear: For many Swiss residents, migration experiences, transnational lives, multiple belongings and intercultural exchange are not something strange and scary, but normality – in their own biographies, in their families, in diasporic spaces, between friends, at the workplace, in the media or in popular culture. However, migration-related diversity experienced in everyday life is not adequately depicted in areas that influence social discourses, political decisions and institutional processes – such as in parliaments, editorial offices, administrations, cultural and educational institutions. On-going political and public discourses are unable to adequately reflect the pluralisation of society, not least because they continue to cling to the over-simplified distinction between “Swiss” and “foreigners”, locals and strangers.

For over a hundred years, the question of how migration, diversity, democracy and citizenship are connected in modern national states has been discussed in Switzerland and other countries. Actually, there’s a wealth of knowledge and experience to fall back onto today. But unfortunately, there is no public awareness for this history. Therefore, debates on the topic in the media and politics always seem to start from zero. At the same time, political ideas and reflexes from the 19th century, which cannot do justice to the complex reality of migration societies such as Switzerland, are constantly being reproduced in public.

In this way, the current debates on migration and diversity continue to thrive on the more than one hundred year old demand for assimilation. The immigrant “foreigner” should adapt to Switzerland to the point of being unrecognizable. Everyone should be the same. Even if you say integration today instead of assimilation, the basic problem remains unresolved: To which of the different living realities within the country should “foreigners” actually adapt themselves? Like every modern society, Switzerland is richly diverse within itself, full of parallel worlds with its own values and ideas - not only due to its language regions. Some people shake hands upon greeting one another, others do not. The limits of the old assimilation logic are clear: What happens if new migrants adapt to the ways of life of the many Swiss people who themselves have migrant histo-

ries and multiple belongings? And how should one fit in if your own skin colour does not fit the dominant image of a “real” Swiss? The political demand to assimilate and / or to integrate is ultimately a long-standing paradoxical impertinence, which is above all aimed at discipline and dominance. Switzerland’s Europe-wide infamously stringent naturalization laws are the expression of these out-dated but still effective notions of assimilation.

Since the 1960s empirical migration research has shown that assimilation and integration processes do not follow a general rule, that they take place on very different levels and ultimately lead to a rich everyday diversity rather than social homogeneity. Nevertheless, in recent debates on migration over the past years, it has increasingly seemed as if there would only be one alternative: forced assimilation or parallel ethnic societies. In contrast to these ideological distortions, the migration-related diversity in Switzerland is actually based on a complex interplay of partial adaptation and difference - a process that follows a continuous evolution of new sociocultural mixtures. Diversity in Switzerland is neither good nor bad in this sense, nor is it a direct result of immigration. It is rather a historically created reality that was born out of the interplay of migration, selective avenues of inclusion and social marginalization. Yet, under the radar of the dominant society, a #NewSwitzerland composed of multiple identities and transnational life-worlds has emerged over the last fifty years, but this has not yet been reflected in official Swiss participatory structures, self-portrayals or institutions.

As a result of debates on integration and multiculturalism that have taken place since the 1980s, in cities especially, migration-related diversity is no longer perceived as a threat in Switzerland but also as enrichment. However, enrichment is understood in the Swiss public primarily in economic terms: Migration and diversity have to be worthwhile for the “host society”. Certainly, society profits from a pluralisation through immigration in many respects. But one also has to look closely at who benefits from migration and cultural diversity, and who does not? Is the economic exploitation of cultural diversity also accompanied by a political, social and legal opening up of participatory possibilities, or not? Simply put: eat pizza - Yes, naturalization of pizza bakers - no? And what happens if diversity does not pay off directly but entails costs, causes tension and creates problems?

Instead of dealing with sociocultural conflicts pragmatically, quietly and objectively, the call for isolation, assimilation and for the strengthening of a “dominant Swiss culture” (Leitkultur) is often heard. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the perceptions of diversity as a threat or enrichment in Switzerland are two sides of the same coin. For years, fears and racist prejudices have been mobilized against the “dangerous strangers”, which are deeply embedded in the collective consciousness in Switzerland. They extend far back to the time of European colonialism, in which Switzerland - even if this is mostly suppressed - was economically, logistically, scientifically and ideologically involved. One might think of the so-called Human Zoos, of race-based research or the first popular referendum of 1893 for a prohibition of animal slaughter, which was motivated by anti-Semitism. Against the backdrop of this historical legacy, which remains largely without discussion in the Swiss public, talk of cultural diversity can also quickly tilt towards an emphasis on unbridgeable cultural differences and intensify exclusionary tendencies. In this way social, political, legal and economic marginalization appears to be legitimated.

Nevertheless – or rather because of this global involvement - in the late nineteenth century Switzerland was, politically speaking, relatively liberal and even more cosmopolitan, than it is today. Immigration was an important factor for the success of founding Switzerland – and part of its political model. Political refugees from Germany founded the universities, Italians built the large-scale infrastructures like the Gotthard tunnel and ran the new factories in growing cities, and craftsmen from neighbouring countries pushed the trade forward. The varied voices of this Swiss history of immigration lie slumbering in archives, memories and family photo albums. Thus, Switzerland had critical cosmopolitan resources, which were mainly forgotten in the project of the *nation building* during the 20th century and its associated post-colonial amnesia.

It was also suppressed in the wake of this history that two forms of cultural diversity were differentiated in Switzerland and treated unequally in structural terms – on the one hand, the diversity of linguistic regions and confessions, which have officially been part of the nation since its republican foundation in 1848. This “diversity” is anchored in the political system, supported by cultural policy and defines Switzerland as a multi-ethnic nation. Then there is the other, the migrant diversity, which is also fundamental to the history of Switzerland but is marginalized by legislation on foreigners and integration policies. This diversity should not be part of the nation. A thought experiment: Portuguese and Albanian are now spoken by more Swiss than Rhaeto-Romanic. What speaks against an open debate on new official national languages in Switzerland? Migration and Swiss diversity are also linked to the fact that the language regions of Switzerland have been attracting immigration from linguistically related countries since a long time. For example, it has recently been shown that Rhaeto-Romanic has been strengthened through the immigration of Portuguese to Graubünden.

The question of social cohesion within the context of diversity is a challenge for every society - even without migration. What are the universal institutions, procedures, values, self-imageries and histories on which a pluralistic migration society can be built that claims to be democratic? And how would recognition of migration-related diversity look against such a background? Currently, there are no finished answers to this question.

But what is clear is that as long as the discourse on migration is based around the production of fears and images of the “enemy”, then one loses the chance of a social process that would be able to address this question for the specific conditions of today’s Switzerland.

The debates about migration and diversity are a struggle between who belongs and who does not. This struggle for inclusion and exclusion, belonging and participation, affects and acts not only on cultural, but also on legal, social, political and economic levels. In short: recognition of diversity, democracy and social justice are closely linked. If one wishes to shape democratic diversity in Switzerland’s migration society, it is not merely enough to rely on intercultural communication training or technocratic *diversity management*. One has to be willing to see Switzerland in a global historical context and to regard it as a permanent sociocultural construction site. Institutions and imaginations would have to take into account the fact that the “own”, i.e. the “we” of Switzerland, also continually shifts and changes through migration and political contestation.

INES would like to take an exploratory look at the complex reality of diversity in Switzerland within a global context to ask: What images, narratives, concepts,

concepts, institutions and legal regulations for diversity exist and what would we need to do to create a just post-colonial and post-migrant immigration society? And how is migration-related diversity linked to other forms of diversity, such as social origins, gender, sexual orientation, and physical capacities? Finally, how do we get from a superficial understanding of diversity to one with a depth, a #DeepDiversity, which allows us to imagine and, realize and build up #NewSwitzerland as it continues with its banal daily routine. Together with experts from the fields of culture, the sciences, education, media, law and other accomplices, INES is developing an image archive from autumn 2017 onwards using a participatory and experimental process, as well as a glossary and a story-telling platform, which are all intended to make visible the deeper layers of lived diversity in Switzerland. The critical and innovative analyses, as well as the production of images, concepts and narratives of diversity are intended to create new scope for practice.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included. Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke UP, 2012).
- Jutta Aumüller, *Assimilation. Kontroversen um ein migrationspolitisches Konzept* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009).
- Kijan Espahangizi, 'Im Wartesaal der Integration. Ankommen in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft', *Terra Cognita. Fachzeitschrift der Eidgenössischen Kommission für Migrationsfragen*, 27 (2015), 104-09.
- Naika Foroutan, 'Postmigrantische Gesellschaften', in: Heinz Ulrich Brinkmann und Martina Sauer (Hg.), *Einwanderungsgesellschaft Deutschland. Entwicklung und Stand der Integration* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016), 227–255.
- Nancy Fraser und Axel Honneth, *Umverteilung oder Anerkennung? Eine politisch-philosophische Kontroverse*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003) / *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, (London: Verso, 2001).
- Rohit Jain und Shalini Randeria, 'Wider den Migrationskomplex – Perspektiven auf eine andere Schweiz', in: Iwona Swietlik und Bettina Friedrich (Hg.), *Sozialalmanach 2015. Das Caritas-Jahrbuch zur sozialen Lage der Schweiz* (Luzern: Caritas-Verlag, 2015), 199-210.
- Patricia Purtschert, Barbara Lüthi und Francesca Falk (Hg.), *Postkoloniale Schweiz. Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012).
- Mark Terkessidis, *Interkultur*, (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010).