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Changing Gender Representations in Politics of Belonging: A Critical Analysis of Developments in Switzerland

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Abstract

The literature increasingly recognises the importance of gender in defining the boundaries between national societies and migrants. But little is still known about the history and changes of mechanisms that shape the role of gender as category of difference. Based on a historical case study of Switzerland this paper examines how gender is implicated in the politics of migrant admission and incorporation and underlying notions of 'the other'. Drawing on theories of boundary work we show that gendered representations of migrants are mobilised by different actors to advance their claims and calls for certain forms of immigration control and migrant integration. Since the late 19th century gendered representations of Swiss nationals and migrant others shift from classical gender ideas to culturalized post-colonial interpretations of gender roles and, most recently, to normative ideas of gender equality. As part of these changes, migrant women moved from the periphery to the core of public and political attention. Concomitantly, categories of difference shift from the intersection of gender and social class to an intersection of gender, culture and ethnicity. Local particularities of Switzerland – the idea of 'over-foreignization' and the system of direct democracy – play a significant role in shaping categories. But Switzerland's embeddedness in transnational fields emerges as equally important. The paper expands on recent research and illuminates how changing dynamics of categorisation and othering facilitate the construction of nations and national identities in a transnationalized world.

Keywords

Gender, boundary work, identity, nation-building, Switzerland

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1 Introduction

Since the beginning of the 20th century, states and non-governmental actors have been scrambling to govern the presence of 'strangers' on their territory (Torpey, 2000). National migration regimes developed which are inextricably connected to the formation of the modern nation state and its (imagined) community of citizens (Anderson, 1983). Nation-state building involves boundary work as a result of which migrants have become paradigmatic 'others' (Anderson, 2013). The criteria deployed to categorize, govern, and judge migrants as welcome or unwelcome, however, vary over time and across national migration regimes. Previous research has shown that gender plays an important role in the making of migrant others. It has also been argued that gender relations and sexuality are crucial for defining the boundaries between national societies and those seeking to join these societies (Schrover and Schinkel, 2013; van den Berg and Schinkel, 2009; Yuval-Davis et al., 2005). Gender, as Scott (1999, p. 32) notes, 'becomes a way of denoting "cultural constructions" – the entirely social creation of ideas about appropriate roles for women and men'. Gender is fundamentally inscribed in ideologies, identities and institutionalized in laws and regulations (Connell, 1990), some of which revolve around immigration and the presence of foreigners in national societies. The othering of migrants by means of gendered cultural difference has developed new dimensions in the wake of 9/11 and growing Islamophobia. The perception of veiled Muslim women as victims of their authoritarian, patriarchal culture and notions of needs to save these women are at the heart of discourses in Europe and beyond (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Bilge, 2010; Meer et al., 2010; Razack, 2004; Roggeband and Verloo, 2007). Normative ideas of gender equality as an essentially western quality, juxtaposed with oriental chauvinism, have emerged as yardsticks of cultural difference. This is reflected in public discourse and implemented through immigration control and integration requirements across Europe (Foerster, 2015; Kofman et al., 2015; Rostock and Berghahn, 2008).

Current research remains unclear about how gender has shaped migration policies before becoming a signpost of cultural difference and before normative framings of gender equality became widespread during the past decade. Most contributions are based on the analysis of distinct incidents and historical moments, often focusing on the culturalization of Muslim women and men (Foerster, 2015; Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2009; Roggeband and Lettinga, 2014). Little effort has been made to trace historical trajectories that have led to shifting boundaries, and to illuminate changing roles of gender as a boundary marker (exceptions are Roggeband and Verloo, 2007; Schrover and Moloney, 2013). Our empirical analysis tackles the lack of attention paid to temporal dynamics. Based on the case of Switzerland we examine gendered boundary work in migration politics from a historical rather than a situational perspective. More specifically we ask: When and under what conditions did the gendered representation of migrants change and how has gender been used as a category of difference that distinguishes immigrant others from an imagined community of Swiss nationals?

We consider migration policies as fundamental to 'politics of belonging', a notion which stands for 'the maintenance and reproduction of the boundaries of the community of belonging by the hegemonic political powers' (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 205). Categorizations of 'who belongs (more)' to the national community influence national policies of migrant admission and incorporation (Block, 2014). To analyse the workings and implications of admission and integration policies and to

illuminate how public discourse affects these policies, we draw on theories of boundary work (Lamont and Molnár, 2002; Pachucki et al., 2007). While a focus on ethnic boundary work has been particularly salient in research on migration and migrant incorporation (Alba, 2005; Bail, 2008; Barth, 1969; Bauböck, 1998; Wimmer, 2013), we highlight the importance of adopting an intersectional perspective (Korteweg and Triadafilopoulos, 2013). In particular we identify a need to further scrutinize gender in the drawing and re-drawing of boundaries between 'national citizens' and 'immigrant others'.

This paper adds a timely case study to international debates. First, our historical perspective enables us to show that the implications of gender as a signpost of difference radically changed over time. Second, we enhance the visibility of Switzerland in international debates. There is a tendency for Switzerland to either remain absent from international comparative studies or to be treated as an exception. Given its multi-ethnic society which integrates local, cantonal, and linguistic identities Switzerland is widely assumed to deviate from general theories on nationalism and nation-state formation (Helbling & Stojanovic, 2011; Wimmer, 2011). Rather than constituting an exception we claim that Swiss politics of belonging have been shaped by mechanisms that are at work in states across Europe. Although embedded in and influenced by wider transnational fields, there are various aspects that make Switzerland exceptional, especially with regard to gendered politics of inclusion and exclusion. First, Swiss women only acquired universal suffrage in 1972, which reflects the conservative tradition of gender relations in Switzerland. Second, another particularity is the country's direct democracy and federal political arrangement. This system allows Swiss citizens to propose constitutional amendments at a federal level or to request a referendum to be held on any existing law. In addition Swiss citizens regularly vote on different issues at the cantonal and municipal level (see Kriesi and Trechsel, 2010). Third, the idea of *Überfremdung* (over-foreignization) constitutes a crucial element of Swiss immigration politics. Each of these specificities affects the construction of boundaries and the role of gender as a boundary marker as we will specify in the empirical sections of this paper.

In the remainder of this paper we first outline our research methods. We then present four historical turning points each of which led to a redrawing of the gendered boundaries between what we identify and refer to as 'genuine Swiss' and 'foreign others'. Each of these turning points is linked with specific representations of gender, which are institutionalized in the laws and policies governing migrant admission and integration. We conclude that a historical perspective is a useful first step to disentangling how particular local contexts like Switzerland are embedded in wider transnational fields in which gendered boundaries are produced and reproduced.

2 Methodology and Scope

Building on the principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) this paper engages theory of social representations (Moscovici, 2000), drawing on Wodak's historical discourse approach (Wodak, 2001) in particular. To implement the emphasis CDA places on triangulation we draw on a range of empirical data and literature, including legal documents, interviews and secondary literature. Starting with a review of secondary literature on the history of Swiss immigration and integration politics, we identified important legislative changes and key legal documents for primary analysis. In line with Smart (1984) we find that law reflects the biases of popular culture and public

discourse. This first analytical step is therefore well suited to identify anchors, where representations of others cristallize. The key materials are the Swiss Aliens Act and its concomitant guidelines for implementation, supplemented by selected transcripts of parliamentary debates and reports commissioned by the Federal Government.

To account for the socio-historical context of legislative developments, we conducted a comprehensive review of academic literature, examining the history of immigration to Switzerland and Swiss admission and integration politics from the late 19th century until today. Reflecting the importance of direct democracy in immigration and integration policy, we also consider secondary literature on public debates and popular initiatives relating to immigration and the presence of foreigners in the country. Four expert interviews with Swiss scholars and non-academic experts enabled us to clarify particular questions, which emerged from the analysis of legislative texts and secondary literature.

A few basic premises of discourse analysis became decisive for our empirical analysis. To specify the subject of investigation, we formulated a number of analytical questions, which we applied to both the literature and empirical material (1). We systematically coded the reviewed literature and our interview transcripts in Atlas.ti according to these questions and specific historical periods and events. It allowed us to identify and substantiate the four turning points and historical phases presented in the empirical section of this paper. Through these coding procedures we carve out the gendered connotations of Switzerland's immigration history, discern continuities and ruptures, and corroborate previously identified mechanisms (Tilly, 2001) that shape politics of belonging at certain points in time.

3 Exploring Turning Points in Swiss Immigration Politics from a Gender Perspective

Our analysis of four historical turning points shows that gender constitutes an important aspect of (im)migration governance in the Swiss context. Each of the historical phases presented is a poignant example for different gendered dimensions of migration governance in which both state and non-state actors are involved.

3.1 Classicial gender representations in early-stage immigration legislation

The late 19th century marks the beginning of large-scale immigration to Switzerland, which gradually shifts from an emigration to an immigration country (Wicker, 2003). During the 1880s, a period characterized by economic liberalism, prosperity increases and the economy grows. Large-scale infrastructure projects are initiated at the national level, which attract migrant workers from Italy, Germany and Austria (Piguet, 2013).

The period between the late 1880s and 1931 can be seen as a turning point because immigration control shifts from the local (cantonal and municipal) to the national level cumulating in the first National Aliens Act in 1931. This shift is linked to another important transformation: Founded in 1848, the modern Swiss state rests on a republican political concept (Jost 1998). However in the

late 19th century we observe a transformation towards a more ethnicity-based idea of the nation. This implies a redrawing of the boundaries between those who 'genuinely belong' to the Swiss nation and those who do not (Hoffmann-Nowotny, 1992; Kury, 2003; Piñeiro et al., 2015).

The analysis of this early period suggests that distinctions between native Swiss and foreign others are based on social class. Foreign-born in Switzerland are framed as temporary workforce (Niederberger, 2004) whose right of residence is coupled with employment. The integration of this temporary foreign labor force is mainly debated as a problem of social welfare. Municipalities and local communities are eager to ensure that their resident population is productive and able to contribute to the common good (Expert 1, personal interview, 2015). To prevent foreign residents from accessing public services, such as health care (Arlettaz and Arlettaz, 2004), assimilation in terms of compulsory naturalization is seen as a logical solution to potential issues of non-compliance (Schnapper, 1989).

However, the eve of the First World War sets an end to the era of liberalism. Nationalism is on the rise across Europe, including Switzerland. It forges protectionist attitudes among the political leadership and the population at large, which brighten the boundaries between nationals and foreigners. The idea of *Überfremdung* is rooted in this period (Kury, 2003). Originally coined by Carl Schmidt, who served the City of Zürich as municipal officer for the poor, the notion *Überfremdung* is used to flag the social costs, growing numbers of foreigners are feared to imply for the Swiss society. The very notion of fremd (foreign/alien), indicates that persons from abroad are different and not part of the Swiss society. Although not explicitly stated, the idea of *Überfremdung* is based on a static understanding of who does or does not belong to the community of Swiss nationals. The introduction of the so-called 'Aliens Police' (Fremdenpolizei) in 1917 and increasing restrictions to settlement and employment opportunities for foreign workers form part of this development (Niederberger 2004).

Our analysis shows that 'classical' gender representations prevail at that time, implying that men are seen as economic actors and women as natural guardians of the domestic and reproductive spheres (Ortner, 1974; Rosaldo, 1974). This classical dichotomization of gender roles is deeply rooted in Swiss society, reflected for instance by the absence of political rights for women and low rates of female labor market participation (Eidgenössisches Statistisches Bureau, 1926). Such representations of gender roles heavily influence debates on immigration: First, classic gender representations result in a male bias in the sense that female immigrants remained largely invisible – even though they form a significant part of Switzerland's foreign labor force at that time (Arlettaz and Arlettaz, 2004). The exclusion of Swiss women from political participation additionally amplifies the visibility of men and invisibility of women. Second, the predominance of Swiss men as political actors and full citizens shaped political concerns related to immigration and the presence of foreigners in Switzerland. Assumptions of prevailing natural differences between man and women are inherent to the first national Aliens Act (Bundesgesetz über Aufenthalt und Niederlassung der Ausländer (ANAG)) which is drafted from 1924 onwards and comes into force on 26th March 1931.

A closer examination of the ANAG reveals some insights to the substance of this intersection of class-based and gendered boundaries that separate Swiss nationals from migrant others. Individual articles of the ANAG largely revolve around the prevention of illicit residence and income

generation. Implicitly this is to ensure that foreigners are of greatest possible benefit to the Swiss economy without being a burden to the country's social security system (Ruth, 1934). It is in this context that contours of the universal representation of men as economic and women as reproductive actors become visible. Such representations intersect with class as the immigrant of reference is the unqualified male worker who comes to Switzerland in search for better income opportunities.

Article 10 of the ANAG specifies potential reasons for the expulsion of foreigners. At the same time it exemplifies the perception of the foreign man as head of family, which is tied to the assumption that he is in charge of dependent family members, who do not pursue paid employment themselves. Concomitantly, section (c) states that foreigners can be expelled from the country *'if he or one of his dependants is a burden to public or private beneficence or if there is certainty that he will become a long-term burden in the near future'*. This image of the male, breadwinning head of family is further substantiated in Article 11.2, where spouses and children of foreign workers are explicitly defined as dependants, who do not have any individual entitlements as far as social welfare, education, etc. are concerned. If a person's residence permit expires or he is subject to expulsion for other reasons, there are no grounds on which dependants (spouse, children or other next of kin) could claim residence rights independent from the respective head of family. The explicit mentioning of 'Ehefrau' (female spouse) in Article 11.2 suggests that foreign workers are generally defined as male. As dependants, however, spouses and children of foreign workers have the right to be included into the family father's residence permit. Such elements of legislation make explicit that foreigners have no rights to remain in Switzerland without a proven basis for economic subsistence, for which the male head of family is responsible.

The sole reference to economic activities of female foreigners appears in Article 18b, which requires cantonal authorities to limit the stay of foreigners working as maids or farm servants to five years. The article acknowledges female migrants as part of the Swiss labor force and the national economy. The guidelines for implementation corroborate the recognition of female labor migrants. Hence the ANAG not only reiterates definitions of men as economic actors and women as care-givers and guardians of the domestic sphere. It also channels men and women into different sections of the labor market as the rules and guidelines for implementation illustrate. Article 3.6., for instance, details the conditions underlying change of employment sectors. Alongside a range of professions with clear male connotations such as masons, carpenters and painters also female professions like maids or waitresses are mentioned, substantiating the gender segregation of the Swiss labor market.

The act also refers to other migrant groups, including refugees (Article 21) and persons coming to Switzerland for education or medical treatment. Student status, however, is limited to singles who are formally enrolled at a Swiss institution. Students cannot extend their resident status beyond their academic degree programme and the requirement to be unmarried systematically excludes certain immigrant groups – such as spouses of guest workers – from accessing higher education. It is noteworthy that women constitute the vast majority of foreigners coming to study in Switzerland (Expert 3, personal interview, 2015). Many female students are of Russian origin and enrolled for a degree in medicine. Yet their presence is not subject to distinct public or political debates and concerns. This is likely to be linked to the fact that female students have affluent family backgrounds and that their stay in Switzerland ends upon completion of their academic degree.

Given that these female students do not correspond to prevailing gender representations or constitute a burden to Switzerland's welfare system, they escape public attention. In a similar vein qualified migration is neither subject to political debates nor does it appear in the ANAG. This reiterates the importance of class as a boundary marker in early-stage immigration policies.

We need to emphasize that gender differences are not (yet) labelled as important with regard to the distinction between native Swiss and foreign others. Gender works as a universal boundary marker, which distinguishes between active and passive members of society. The gendered representations of migrants which appear in the original ANAG reinforce taken-for-granted gender inequalities that are the state of the art in Switzerland at the time. Establishing hegemonic differences between men and women as social actors forges clear boundaries which shape and constrain the social roles of Swiss natives and foreign others alike (see Gerson and Peiss, 1985).

3.2 The gendered dynamics of post-war labor migration

We identify a second turning point in the aftermath of World War II. After a period of economic decline between the World Wars, the Swiss economy experiences unprecedented growth and a rise in prosperity from the late 1940s, which triggers a renewed demand for migrant workers. For the first time the Swiss government signs bilateral guest worker agreements with neighbouring countries, most notably Italy in 1948. Temporariness and a rotation principle are key to post-war labor recruitment. Seasonal workers – so-called saisonniers – form about half of the foreign workforce. They are allowed to work in Switzerland for a maximum of nine months. The other half holds annual work permits that are subject to renewal. This way the Swiss government strives to ensure that domestic employers are able to adjust their recruitment practices to business cycles and the country's economic performance.

The gender analysis of this episode carves out three mechanisms and effects of immigration control that are more fine-grained than the regulations stipulated in the ANAG. First, because of the rotation principle the era of post-war labor recruitment is a period of 'explicit non-integration' (Niederberger 2004, p.41) with gender being an implicit yet decisive element. Strictly gendered recruitment practices of mostly young, unmarried men and women and separate (group) accommodation for male and female workers (Niederberger 2004, pp. 43-46) are illustrative for the gendered mechanisms of such politics. By and large guest workers did not inhabit the same locations as the native Swiss population but were allocated specific accommodation. Housing of male and female guest workers is spatially apart and often linked to their employers (Niederberger, 2004: 44). These measures forge clear boundaries between migrants and the native Swiss labor force, which derive from immigration legislation in conjunction with the setup of work places and arrangements for accommodation. The otherness of migrants is reinforced by their legal entitlements and their limited social and spatial access to the wider Swiss society.

Second, early guest worker movements are composed of men and women alike. They perpetuate the trend of pre-war labor movements (Arlettaz and Arlettaz, 2004). Overall men form the majority but numbers of female guest workers are significant (Baumann 2015, Expert 2, personal interview, 2015), which reflects the high demand for domestic service personnel and workers in the textile and food industries (Piguet, 2013). Although the numbers of migrant women working in Switzerland are

consistently high throughout various stages of guest worker recruitment, it is striking that between 1949-1959 immigration of women exceeded those of men by 20 per cent (Piguet, 2005: 86). Yet neither researchers nor the general public pay much attention to migrant women as economic actors. Biased perceptions of men as economic actors prevail.

Also the labor market itself is strictly gender-segregated. In her work on migrant women in Switzerland Ley (1979) shows that around 70 per cent of female guest workers from Italy pursue occupations that traditionally have a female connotation. These include the textile and clothing industry, the care sector, the hospitality industry and domestic services. Ley argues that employment in such sectors was badly paid, particularly prone to recession and often hazardous with regard to worker's health. Although indispensable to the wider economy, such fields of employment are not promoted as indicators of economic development, as it is the case for sectors such as construction, which male guest workers dominate. Such differences in the symbolic value of male and female labor – in conjunction with classical representations of gender roles – are an important reason for the latter remaining largely invisible.

Third, the invisibility of migrant women comes to an abrupt end once claims for family reunification and political debates on this subject gain momentum in the early 1960s. Until then family reunification is met with deep-seated scepticism. The presence of strangers is perceived as irreversible once families 'put down their roots' (Niederberger, 2004: 48) in Switzerland. Such concerns are coupled with the persistent fear that guest worker families pose a burden on the Swiss state and society, should the country's economic performance slow down. Additionally, family reunification boosts the numerical presence of foreigners in Switzerland (Piguet, 2013). But also those in favour of family reunification put forward gendered arguments to support their claim. A circular note, disseminated by the Federal Aliens Police to its cantonal outlets, for example, raises the problem of keeping guest workers' children apart from their fathers' paternal authority (Niederberger, 2004: 48). Children growing up in permanently separated families *'...can suffer all life long from having been deprived of paternal authority when they would have needed it most. This is why one should avoid making decisions that will weigh heavily on the foreign worker and his family.'* (Circular letter of the Swiss Aliens Police, cited in Cerutti, 1994: 63). This is another indicator for the perception of guest workers as male actors whose needs are assessed in gendered terms with legislative amendments being proposed and implemented accordingly.

Drawing on Human Rights considerations both the Italian government and the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation press the Swiss government to provide better conditions for guest workers. An amended guest worker agreement between Switzerland and Italy is signed in 1964. Articles 12 and 13 of the agreement specify the conditions for family reunification. Guest workers whose employment situation is considered sufficiently secure and who are able to provide 'adequate housing' can bring their spouse and children under the age of 18 to Switzerland (Bundesrat, 1965).

Family migration policies are central to the maintenance and reproduction of the boundaries delineating the community of belonging. Hence, policies governing family migration are linked to broader processes of national boundary work (Bonjour and Hart, 2013). At the same time, policies and discourses relating to family migration are inherently gendered. The woman as the guardian of the domestic sphere now threatens to become burdensome to the Swiss society and welfare system. Hence, depending on the issues and interests at stake, classical representations of gender roles may

promote the invisibility of female migrants or serve to substantiate the problems she potentially poses as an economic burden to the Swiss society.

Overall this episode shows that gender plays a key role at the early stage of migration governance in Switzerland. However, different actors mobilize gender in different ways and with different political ends in mind. While gendered approaches to labor-recruitment are essentially state-led, mobilization against family reunification is largely forged from bottom up. This also applies to political mobilization against *Überfremdung* as the next section illustrates.

3.3 The culturalization of *Überfremdung* during the late 1960s and 1970s

We identify a third turning point in the 1960s when fears of *Überfremdung* move to the heart of unfolding debates. For the first time cultural differences are politically mobilized to substantiate perceived differences between native Swiss and foreign others. Article 16 of the original ANAG provides an anchor for the culturalization of immigration and to a redrawing of boundaries. The article refers to *Überfremdung* as an aspect that public authorities should consider when granting or denying entry and residence permissions to foreigners.

While the idea of *Überfremdung* itself goes back to the late 19th century, it is now re-appropriated by newly emerging populists, most notably the 'National Action Party', whose main emphasis is on the cultural dimensions of *Überfremdung*. In the 1960s the focus of debates on immigration shifts from concerns relating to the Swiss economy and trade cycles to cultural aspects and issues of national identity. At the core is the fear that too much or certain forms of immigration would compromise Switzerland's cultural identity, and integrity as a nation (Skenderovic, 2008: 35). Wicker (2003) refers to this phase as 'culturalization of the guest worker problem'. Gender relations in these debates are an important signifier of cultural difference.

Immigration and immigration control rank high on the agenda of right-wing populist actors. They use direct democracy and popular initiatives as political instruments. For the first time initiatives mobilize culturalized images of gender relations and gendered attributes of migrants to highlight essential characteristics of entire groups: Swiss nationals vs. foreign others. The newly culturalized notion of gender differences amends the classical idea of migrant women as reproductive agents and companions of a male breadwinner which continues to shape gender relations in wider Swiss society (Baumann, 2015; Ley, 1979; Expert 3, personal interview, 2015).

In 1967 the Federal Council publishes a report on a popular petition for a referendum against *Überfremdung*. The report assesses the demographic and economic effects, which the growing presence of foreigners is assumed to have on the Swiss society (Bundesrat, 1967). The report marks an important shift as far as the perceived effects of migration on Swiss society are concerned. It does not only flag the economic impacts but also draws attention to cultural consequences of migration and the presence of foreigners in the country. For the first time, also highly skilled educated foreigners working in leading positions are thought to have undesirable effects on the nation's intellectual heritage as a result of their influential positions. The report identifies another root cause of *Überfremdung* deriving from the immigration of people from countries whose mores and customs 'have little in common with what is considered typical for Switzerland' (Bundesrat,

1967: 90). It is assumed that these culturally different groups face significant challenges as far as their assimilation into the Swiss society is concerned. This shift in public and political discourse reflects nostalgic inclinations and an essentialized idea of nations as homogeneous entities in which gender relations are fundamentally engrained.

The so-called Schwarzenbach Initiative, launched in 1968, marks a culmination of populist mobilization of xenophobia. As head of the radically right wing 'National Action Party' party, James Schwarzenbach stages his political campaign around the cultural incompatibility of Italian immigrants and native Swiss. He initiates a referendum on restricting the number of foreigners to ten per cent in each canton, which is narrowly defeated in June 1970. Populist moves against *Überfremdung* – such as Schwarzenbach's initiative – rigorously draw on gendered images to substantiate cultural difference and the problematic nature of foreigners. Italians are represented as 'brown sons of the south' (Maiolino, 2010) and notorious womanizers that pose a threat to Swiss women and girls (Maiolino, 2010, 2012). Conversely foreign women are perceived as a driving force behind the rapid growth of Switzerland's immigrant population. They are framed as prone to having more children than native Swiss women, which is interpreted as a result of their carelessness (Skenderovic, 2008, p. 42).

Such antagonistic representations are not specific to Switzerland. Previous literature has shown how perceptions of cultural difference are linked with perceptions of gender relations and that these ideas are mobilized to legitimate hierarchical boundaries between national or ethnic groups, be it globally or in the context of multicultural politics (Moller Okin, 1999). The policing of women's roles and behaviour is one of the main means of asserting moral superiority, as women become the signifier for the whole group (Anthias et al., 1992; Espiritu, 2001). The underlying logic draws on classical gender representations by defining women as care givers and educators of children, who are responsible for the maintenance of a group's cultural endowments and identity. In conjunction with images of dark skinned, sexually aggressive Italian men such representations correspond to post-colonial gender images (Nader, 1989). Classical gender representation applies to native Swiss and foreigners alike and places them on an equal footing as far as gendered ascriptions are concerned. Conversely, the emerging cultural bias implies a qualitative change of the differences established between 'us' and 'them'. As a marker of cultural difference gender contributes to a hierarchical and moral juxtaposition of qualities and characteristics perceived as genuinely Swiss with features considered as culturally different and inferior (see also Dietze, 2009; Roggeband and Lettinga, 2014). Being part of the characteristic features of an imagined community of Swiss citizens, gender and gender-relations become an implicit dimension of national and ethnic boundary work.

Regardless of the fact that Switzerland never acted as colonial power, historical analyses show that important Swiss actors were transnationally embedded in networks of colonial activities and imaginaries. The emergence and reproduction of orientalist representations of other cultures is part and parcel of such entanglements. In the light of their historical embeddedness post-colonial representations of cultural difference can be seen as a consequence of colonialism without colonies (Purtschert et al., 2013). While the terminology of the discourse revolving around *Überfremdung* is a Swiss particularity, it is substantiated with transnational images of migrants as post-colonial gendered subjects (Lavanchy, 2015; Montoya and Agustín, 2013).

3.4 Ethnicizing gender (in)equalities: Migrant admission and integration from the 1990s until today

In the 1990s the Federal Council launches a full revision of the ANAG and in 2005 a new act is ratified. In this context, three – partly overlapping – developments unfold, which prompt changes in the way gender amplifies the construction of migrant others.

First, Switzerland and the European Union sign a freedom of movement agreement, which liberalizes mobility, while reinforcing the culturalization of admission regulations for third-country nationals. Second, an increasing emphasis on integration has strong repercussions on admission and naturalization policies and enhanced attention to the role of migrant families. Third, since 2000, the right-wing Swiss Peoples' Party (SVP) garners unprecedented support. To a large extent political campaigning revolves around issues relating to immigration and the presence of foreigners. In this context, we witness a particular Swiss adaptation of the post 9/11 stigmatization of Muslims, which places gender inequality and oppressed Muslim women at the center stage (Baghdadi, 2010). In general, this phase is characterized by a movement towards first an ethnicization and later the Islamization of sexism (Durand and Krefa, 2008; Dustin and Phillips, 2008; Neubauer and Dahinden, 2012). We observe a discursive dichotomization where gender equality is presented as accomplished for Swiss men and women, while migrant groups are framed as victims of their culture or religion and hence are paradigmatic for gender inequality (see Rostock and Berghahn, 2008 for an analysis of similar developments in Germany).

In 1989 the Federal Council establishes a working group to revise principles of migrant admission and discuss what became known as the 'three-circles-model'. Persons from the first (European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Area (EFTA)) and the second (USA and Canada) circles are seen as culturally similar and thus assimilable. Conversely, those grouped in the third circle ('third-country-nationals') are seen as culturally distant and incompatible with Switzerland's economic needs and cultural values. The three-circles model features centrally in a report on 'the concepts and priorities of Swiss aliens policies', which the Federal Council presents in 1991 (Bundesamt für Wirtschaft und Arbeit, 1991). The underlying aim is to protect economic interests and cultural integrity at the same time. This development is noteworthy as culturalized ideas of *Überfremdung* are no longer restricted to populist initiatives but now taken up in official political debates at a parliamentary level leading to a reinforced ethnicization of admission and integration policy

In 2002 the bilateral agreement on the 'Free Movement of Persons' between Switzerland, the EU and the EFTA is ratified. It turns the hypothetical three-circles into a de-facto two-circles-model. Enhancing free movement within the EU implies a significant restriction of Non-European migration. Considered as economically useful, EU-migration is labelled 'mobility' (Faist, 2013). Conversely, legislation and concrete political interventions relating to migrant admission and integration are limited to Non-EU-migrants. The juxtaposition of economic requirements and simplistic ideas of cultural similarity (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1992) conflates cultural with geographical proximity and distance (Castles, 1993). In principle, immigration of Non-EU-migrants is only possible for highly skilled individuals, given that no Swiss or EU national is available for the position in question. For third country nationals, family reunification is the remaining gateway of entry, which is, however subject to narrowly defined conditions (Bundesversammlung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, 2005).

A second important element is the shift from a 'policy of explicit non-integration' towards an integration policy, which is rooted in the early 1990s. A revised Aliens' Act which is ratified in 2005 and comes into force in 2006 no longer contains explicit references to *Überfremdung*. Instead integration features centrally. According to Article 3 'sustainable' integration now constitutes a prerequisite for a person's admission to Switzerland. Articles 34 and 54.2 rule that the access to a permit of permanent settlement is linked to successful integration. The state's role extends from controlling the borders of the nation state, to controlling the borders of society. Similar tendencies can be observed across Europe, albeit to different extents (Schrover and Schinkel, 2013; Stolcke, 1995).

Gender plays an important role as far as official and conventionalized indicators of integration are concerned. An analysis of measures aimed at promoting integration makes this explicit. These measures tend to be oriented towards specific target groups. For instance, the role of women in private and professional life serves as an indicator for the extent to which persons are well or not so well integrated into Swiss society (Bundesversammlung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, 2005). Article 53 specifies

> *,The federation, cantons and municipalities […] create favourable conditions for equal opportunities and the participation of the foreign population in public life. A special emphasis is placed on the acquisition of language skills, professional advancement, health care and the facilitation of living together and mutual understanding between the Swiss and the foreign population. Particular attention is paid to the needs and integration of women, children and adolescents'.*

Similarly the 2007 decree for the integration of foreigners (Bundesrat, 2007) which accompanies the revised Aliens Act, emphasizes that integration measures should specifically consider the needs of women, children and adolescents (Article 2). In a similar vein, measures aimed at preventing crime tend to be oriented towards young men of migrant origin (Kofler and Fankhauser, 2009).

In addition, Article 5 of the revised Aliens Act states that residence permits for certain groups of third country nationals may be subject to so-called integration contracts between cantonal and municipal authorities and migrant candidates. Forging awareness of the basic norms and principles that ensure orderly coexistence in Swiss society is a central objective of these agreements. To obtain or renew their residence permit migrants can be forced to attend 'integration-classes'. These are designed to enhance migrants' familiarity *'with Switzerland and its particularities and conventions and to create awareness of [Swiss] norms, rights and duties of citizens, the [principle of] equality between men and women, the health care system, etc.'* (SEM, 2008). The mentioning of such norms and principles suggests that modes of living together can be more or less compatible with what is considered 'genuinely Swiss' and respecting Swiss gender equality.

As part of concerns about integration, family migration emerges as a discursive field where culturally determined ideas of gender equality become salient. First, one of the target groups for these integration-contracts are spouses coming to Switzerland through family reunification (SEM, 2008). Second, newly emerging debates about arranged or forced marriages as well as so-called marriages of convenience promote an increasing politicization of migrant families. Similar trends

can be observed in other European countries (Strasser et al. 2009). The public and politic narrative constructs gender subordination as integral to particular migrant groups and their 'culture'. Unequal gender relations among migrant groups are identified as incompatible with the values of Switzerland's liberal democracy (Dahinden et al., 2014). Following these debates, new articles combatting forced marriages are added to the Swiss Civil Code (EJPD, 2016) and to the Penal Law (Bundesrat, 1937) since 2005.

While the Federal Government promotes integration alongside restricted access for third-country nationals, populist actors employ gendered images to target the allegedly problematic presence of foreigners in Switzerland. Skenderovic and D'Amato (2008) describe continuous clashes of interest between the Federal Government and populist actors on the far right. In both cases similar gendered migrant representations are mobilized to back claims, demands and approaches. The Federal Government draws on gendered representations of migrants to substantiate the need for better immigrant integration. At the same time, right-wing parties, such as the SVP, mobilize gendered representations to support their demands for further restrictions to immigration and the presence of 'undesirable strangers' in Switzerland. The most exemplary events which illustrate these tendencies are the popular vote on a nationwide ban of minarets in 2009 and the popular vote on the deportation of criminal foreigners in 2010. The image of a veiled Muslim woman is used to support the ban of minarets, whereas those in favour of deporting criminal foreigners strongly draw on the image of the male villain from abroad. Such images strongly resemble gendered images of cultural others which have been studied and identified as boundary markers in other contexts (Bilge, 2010; Razack, 2004).

As a result the culturalization and ethnicization of immigration discourse develops a new quality with 'problematic characteristics' of 'strangers' in Switzerland being articulated in gender representations. Images such as subordinate, uneducated women who are victims of cultural traditions and dominant husbands illustrate how gender serves as an indicator of cultural proximity or distance (Kofler and Fankhauser, 2009). It is through such avenues that the transnationally diffused image of 'the oppressed Muslim woman' (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Meer et al., 2010; Roggeband and Verloo, 2007) enters Swiss discourses. Given continuous salience of '*Überfremdung*', this image falls on fertile ground. Seen as two sides of the same coin, culture and religion are deemed incompatible with Swiss spirit and culture (Dahinden et al., 2014). A key attribute of this new gendered boundary in admission and integration politics is the ethnicization of female subordonation and male chauvinism. Ethnicized integration policies further increase the visibility of migrant women by emphasizing their perceived backwardness (Roggeband and Verloo, 2007). At the same time disadvantaged positions of native Swiss women remain systematically eclipsed from public debates and policy making.

4 Conclusions

Gender has played an important role in shaping the social representations of migrants since the early days of Swiss immigration history. Based on the analysis of four historical turning points we have shown how different phases of immigration met concerns of specific actors. Similar to Scott (1999) we find that 'the foreigner' at the heart of concerns and political mobilization is inherently gendered. However, perceptions of gender and gender representations have changed over time,

shifting from classical representations of gender to a culturalized, post-colonial interpretation of gender roles and towards the normative of gender equality. The latter provides a fertile ground for the ethnicization of female subordination and male chauvinism, which has shaped public and political debates and policy making since the turn of the millennium. As part of these developments migrant women move from the periphery, to the core of public attention. Conversely, perceptions of Swiss women shift from classical gender representation to being equal and emancipated. To some extent these discursive trends are reflected in changing politics of migrant admission and incorporation. Here, we observe a shift of focus from concerns relating to admission and social welfare to concerns relating to tensions between immigrant integration and the cultural characteristics and integrity of Switzerland as a nation.

Gender is a salient boundary marker throughout the periods studied. Moreover it consistently coincides with categories of difference, most notably class, culture and ethnicity. The changing combinations of various categories of difference have implications for the social outcomes of gendered boundaries. Moreover, the variability of significance and implications of gendered classifications depends on the objectives of the state and non-state actors mobilising gendered representations as well as on transnationally diffused images and discourses. These findings underline the usefulness of an intersectional analytical perspective, which allows us to unpack against the backdrop of which circumstances and political aims certain categories of difference are mobilized (see Korteweg and Triadafilopoulos, 2013; Schrover and Moloney, 2013; Yuval-Davis et al., 2005).

Gendered representations of migrants are implicated in defining his or her properties as social actor, who is subject to legislation and political control in one way or another. The ‘foreigner’ as a gendered subject is linked to the political ends, which certain actors pursue in response to changing socio-historical circumstances. These links become visible when disentangling the combinations of concerns that move male and female migrants to the center stage of political attention and immigration legislation. Against this backdrop, we suggest that boundary work theory to consider the historical variability of boundary markers such as gender and – more importantly – illuminate the reasons and dynamics behind it.

Switzerland is an illustrative case study as far as shifting boundaries between migrants and non-migrants and the changing gendered underpinnings of these boundaries are concerned. But rather than being a unique outlier, Switzerland is deeply embedded in transnational dynamics which mark different phases of migrant admission and integration. The identified turning points in gendered representations of migrants are contingent on changing immigrant populations and changing interests and concerns of domestic actors. Equally important forces are the changing gender representations diffused by travelling transnational discourses. Classical gender representations, post-colonial imaginaries and the normative of equality are strong ideas which are not particular to the Swiss context, but which we find all over Europe (see Donato and Gabaccia, 2015; Schrover and Moloney, 2013).

However, the way these transnational imaginaries are adapted locally, is related to the particularities of Switzerland. We have shown that Swiss immigration policies evolve amidst a continuous tension between economically driven openness and liberalism and social closure, deriving from recurrent debates on and measures against *Überfremdung* (Piguet, 2013). Compared to other European

countries concerns relating to *Überfremdung* stick out as a Swiss particularity, which is deeply rooted in contemporary Swiss society. Explicit meanings of *Überfremdung*, however, are changeable and readily adapted to the travelling discourses that inform perceptions of migrants and that are ultimately reflected in immigration policies.

Besides recurrent debates on *Überfremdung*, direct democracy constitutes another Swiss particularity which is important in this context. It provides political opportunity structures (Tilly, 2001), which bolster the power of right-wing actors enabling them to push forward their political agendas. Often initiatives launched by the far right affect decision-making at a federal level, as the interplay between the latest round of debates on *Überfremdung* in Switzerland and recent changes to migrant admission policies illustrate.

Our study is a timely contribution to current research examining the relationship between Western societies and their respective migrant others. Illuminating the mechanisms behind the changing dynamics of categorization and othering brings us closer to understanding the issues at heart of constructions of a Swiss nation and a Swiss national identity. Since the onset of immigration to Switzerland migrants have involuntarily played an important role in defining what does or does not count as 'genuinely Swiss'. Wicker (2003) for instance argues that immigration to Switzerland has come to fundamentally reflect the idea of a Swiss nation, which the foreigner is entering. Such relational mechanisms of nation-building, however, are not unique to Switzerland. Future research should therefore expand on how travelling discourses affect the role of migration and gender play in shaping politics of belonging.

Notes

(1) These questions are: Out of which historical and political context does the text emerge? Does the text entail explicit or implicit references to gender? In which context and relating to which overarching issues do these references appear? Which attributes are – explicitly or implicitly – ascribed to male or female immigrants?

(2) Such concerns not only pertain to migrants but also to native Swiss who represent lower income groups and are therefore considered as a burden to their communities of residence.

(3) Mahnig and Piguet (2003) hold that despite its failure the Schwarzenbach-Initiative marks a turning point in Swiss immigration politics. It is followed by political moves to curtail immigration and presence of immigrants in Switzerland. It's setting an end to 'laisser-faire politics' of 1950s and 1960s and contributes to introduce different consecutive systems of annual quota for foreign workers (Piguet, 2013).

(4) Asylum is another possible entry route, which we do not consider within the scope of this article.

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Annex

List of Intervies

Expert 1, female informant. Interview conducted on 22 April 2015.

Expert 2, male informant. Interview conducted on 05 May 2015.

Expert 3, male informant. Interview conducted on 12 May 2015.

Expert 4, female informant. Interview conducted on 25 June 2015.