

Integration without Immigrant Policy: the Case of Switzerland

EFFNATIS Working paper 29

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November 1999

1. Introduction

In a famous lecture at the University of Zurich in the 1970s Karl Deutsch presented Switzerland as a "paradigmatic case of political integration": according to him, Switzerland, in spite of being a multicultural society divided by cleavages of religion, language, class and ideology, had become one of the most stable countries on the European continent. Deutsch identified two historical factors as the main reasons for this paradox: first, the Swiss peasantry's resistance to the building up of a feudal State from the 10th to the 12th century, which led to a strong municipal autonomy; secondly, a comparatively strong popular participation during the industrialisation process – the percentage of citizens with the right to vote being in Switzerland during the 18th and 19th centuries higher than in its neighbouring countries (Deutsch 1976). Other scholars puzzled by Switzerland's stability insisted however on different explanations: for example on the fact that the multicultural character of the country is recognised through its federal institutions (Schnapper 1997, 146) or on how the conflicts between different parts of society have become accommodated through proportional representation in political institutions and through the search of compromise (Steiner 1974, Linder 1999, 359-369), often called *consociational* or *consensus* democracy (Lijphart 1977); last but not least, certain observers see in the idea of forming a community of destiny – nourished by the Swiss citizens' feeling that they were threatened as members of a small country by the larger neighbouring nation-states – an important explanation of the country's stability (Kriesi 1995, 15-17).

Apart from being historically a multicultural society, Switzerland has during this century also become one of the European countries with the highest immigration rate: about one fifth of its population is foreign-born (Haug 1995, 28), a figure twice as high as that of the USA, and considerably higher than that of Canada, two classical countries of immigration. However, contrary to its multicultural character, Switzerland does not recognise the fact that it is an immigration country and has no real immigrant policy on the federal level. Another paradox concerning immigration is the fact that in spite of the absence of most of the problems other European immigration countries are confronted with – such as high unemployment-rates of migrants, ethnic segregation and social unrest (see Mahnig 1999) – the immigration issue has since the 1960s almost constantly occupied Switzerland's political agenda.

These paradoxes ask for an explanation, which this text will try to provide. Its central hypothesis is that the same patterns which can be considered as crucial for the political integration of Switzerland are also to a large extent responsible for the specific way Switzerland treats its migrants and their children. However, in the latter case they had a much more ambiguous impact than in the former. Today they cannot be considered anymore to guarantee the integration of migrants and to provide the necessary stability of society. That's why Switzerland's traditional modes of inclusion have in the last years been increasingly challenged and why new policies, deviating from historical traditions, begin to emerge.

In the following text we shall first sketch the immigration process to Switzerland during this century and present some data on immigrants and their children (2); secondly we shall insist on four factors explaining to a large extent the integration situation of migrants in Switzerland: federalism (3.2), municipal autonomy (3.3), consociational and direct democracy (3.4) and the specific character of Swiss national identity (3.5). However, the integration situation of immigrants and their children in Switzerland cannot be understood without two additional explanations: first the peculiarity of the Swiss immigration policy (3.1) and secondly the autonomous organisation of migrants themselves (3.6). In the conclusion (4) we will summarise the increasing contradictions of the traditional modes of integration and sketch the most recent evolutions which seem to announce new ways of inclusion.

2. Immigrants and their children in Switzerland: some demographic data

The transformation of Switzerland into an immigration country took place at the same time as the industrial take off during the second part of the 19th century: the part of foreigners in the total population increased from 3% in 1850 to 14,7% in 1910. In 1888 the migration balance reversed: immigration was from now on more important than emigration (Arlettaz 1985). At the eve of World War I about 600.000 foreigners were living in the country, which is 15,4% of the total population. However, during World War I and World War II the foreign population in Switzerland significantly decreased: in 1920 their part in the total population fell to 10,4%, and in 1941 to 5,2% (see table I).

Table I: Foreign residents in Switzerland (1900-1990)

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1941
Total population	3.315.400	3.753.300	3.880.300	4.066.400	4.265.700
Foreign population	383.400	552.000	402.400	355.500	223.600
% foreign population	11,6%	14,7%	10,4%	8,7%	5,2%
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Total population	4.715.000	5.429.100	6.269.800	6.366.000	6.873.700
Foreign population	285.400	584.700	1.080.100	945.000	1.245.400
% foreign population	6,1%	10,8%	17,2%	14,8%	18,1%

Source: (BFS 1997, 67)

Because neither its economic system nor its financial structure had suffered during the war, the demand of its neighbouring countries stimulated a rapid growth of Switzerland's economy after 1945 and the second immigration cycle began already at the end of the 1940s: since then a steady and massive flow of foreign workers have come to Switzerland. Their number increased from 285.000 in 1950 (6,1% of the total population) to 495.000 (10,8%) in 1960 and to 983.000 (17,2%) in 1970. From predominantly Italian during the 1950s and 1960s, their composition became more diverse until 1970: a bit more than half of them were still Italians, the other neighbouring countries – Germany, France and Austria – represented about one fifth; Spaniards were at 10% and Yugoslavs, Portuguese and Turks together at around 4% (see table II).

The international economic crisis of 1973/74 had an important impact on the number of immigrants living in Switzerland: from 17,2% in 1970 the total percentage of the foreign population fell to 14,8% in 1980 (see also 3.1). After the years of the crisis, the Swiss economy recovered and during the 1980s a renewed demand for foreign labour appeared which made the

number of foreigners rise steadily. Their part of the total population increased from 14,8% in 1980 to 18,1% in 1990 and 19% in 1997. During the 1980s a large part of the increase has however to be explained by family reunification.

Table II: Composition of foreign residents in Switzerland by country of origin and percentage of the total foreign population (1900/1930/1960/1990)

	1900	1930	1960	1990
Germany	43,9%	37,8%	16,0%%	6,9%
France	15,3%	10,5%	5,4%	4,2%
Italy	30,5%	35,7%	59,2%%	30,8%
Austria and Liechtenstein	6,4%	6,2%	6,8%	2,6%
Other European countries	3,9%	8,2%	7,1%	39,1%
Other countries	-	1,5%	5,6%	16,4%
Total foreign population	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: (Haug 1995, 31)

It is also during the 1980s that the immigration of asylum seekers – as everywhere in Western Europe – became increasingly important: from 9700 in 1985 their number rose to 16.700 in 1988 and 41.600 in 1991. After this highpoint the numbers fell to around 20.000 a year during the first half of the 1990s. In 1997 there was a renewed increase of asylum-seekers: compared to 1996 their number rose about one third, from 18.001 to 23.982. This increase continued in 1998: 41.302 persons were in this year registered as asylum-seekers.

The diversification of the countries of origin of the labour migrants – former Yugoslavia, Portugal and Turkey got increasingly important during the 1980s – as well as the immigration through the asylum procedure – mainly from Sri Lanka, but also from former Yugoslavia and Turkey – led in the last years to an increasing heterogeneity of the cultural background of migrants. However, in 1997 the most important foreign groups were the Italians (25,8%), the people from former Yugoslavia (23,2%), the Portuguese (10,2%) and the Spaniards (7,1%). The so called "traditional recruitment countries" are thus still the most important countries of origin

of migrants in Switzerland (see table III).

Table III: Composition of foreign residents in Switzerland by country of origin and percentage of the total foreign population (1997)

Nationality	Number	%
Total of Foreigners	1.340.000	100
Italy	345.166	25,8
Former Yugoslavia	311.194	23,2
Portugal	136.960	10,2
Spain	95.430	7,1
Germany	93.877	7,0
Turkey	79.609	5,9
France	54.432	4,1
Austria	28.087	2,1

Source: (BFA 1997, 81)

Most of the countries of origin of migrants in Switzerland are members of the European Union: in 1997 62,3% of the foreigners living in Switzerland came from EU member states (BFA 1997, 81). With the exception of Luxembourg, Switzerland is the European country with the highest percentage of foreigners. This is partly due to the comparatively restrictive access to citizenship (see 3.3). However, the proportion of foreign born persons in Switzerland – to stick to an indicator used by immigration countries – is, as already mentioned, about one fifth of the overall resident population and mirrors the fact that Switzerland has experienced a proportionally higher immigration since 1945 than many traditional immigration countries.

For the children of migrants the term "second generation" is commonly used in Switzerland: because of the restrictive access to citizenship the majority of them still have the nationality of their parents and are thus in fact "migrants of the second generation". Of all the foreigners living in 1996 in Switzerland with a one-year- or a permanent residence permit 22,8% have been born in Switzerland. This proportion is different according to their nationalities: it is 37% for Italians, 32% for Turks and 27% for Spaniards.

If one looks only at foreign children and youngsters under 20 years living in Switzerland in 1996 with a one-year- or a permanent residence permit, one gets the number of 353.900 persons; 205.262 of them, that is 58%, have been born in Switzerland.

From this group 61.300 or 29,8% are Italian, 49.300 or 23,9% come from former-Yugoslavia,

23.400 (11.4%) from Turkey, 22.000 (10.7%) from Portugal and 17.200 (8.3%) from Spain (see also table IV)¹

Table IV: Foreigners born in Switzerland according to age and nationality (1996)

	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35+	Total
EUROPE	77.490	50.835	34.471	30.024	33.062	29.951	19.905	15.325	291.063
EU/EFTA	40.497	30.631	23.605	24.003	29.886	29.056	19.728	15.108	212.514
Germany	2416	1444	937	1016	1380	1648	1550	2048	12.439
France	1863	1245	899	704	733	658	394	1096	7592
Italy	15.822	15.038	14.476	15.991	21.180	21.897	14.859	10.298	129.561
Austria	531	390	380	414	579	812	770	829	4705
Portugal	12.874	6772	1878	492	250	81	57	40	22.444
Spain	4719	4260	3875	4326	4750	3053	1585	174	26.742
Others	2272	1482	1160	1060	1014	907	513	623	9031
NON-EU/ EFTA	36.993	20.204	10.866	6021	3176	895	177	217	78.549
Eastern Europe	415	376	423	92	44	56	53	112	1571
Former Yugoslavia	28.637	12.580	5346	2713	1377	377	39	73	51.142
Turkey	7885	7240	5095	3211	1754	460	85	26	25.756
Others	56	8	2	5	1	2	0	6	80
AFRICA	1724	1090	581	132	64	22	18	16	3647
THE AME- RICAS	964	621	437	203	84	76	45	52	2482

¹ The information was provided by the Federal Office of Statistics

Northern America	432	209	126	75	55	63	39	40	1039
Latin America	532	412	311	128	29	13	6	12	1443
ASIA	3942	2032	950	354	88	57	36	21	7480
OCEANIA	51	15	9	12	3	6	4	6	106
STATE-LESS	14	40	19	4	0	3	3	16	99
TOTAL	84.185	54.633	36.467	30.729	33.301	30.115	20.011	15.436	304.877

3. Traditional integration patterns and their effects on migrants and their children

In this part we will now turn to six main factors explaining the integration situation of migrants and their children in Switzerland: after the description of the impact of the Swiss immigration policy (3.1) we will mention federalism (3.2), municipal autonomy (3.3) consociational and direct democracy (3.4) and the specific character of Swiss national identity (3.5), before finally insisting on the role the organisations of immigrants played themselves (3.6).

3.1. "National liberalism" or the influence of admission regulations

A first important feature for the understanding of the nature of the integration situation of migrants and their children is that Switzerland has been the European country which succeeded best in using foreign labour as an "economic buffer" during the international crisis of 1973/74. The Swiss immigration regulation goes back to the pre-war period: in 1931 the Federal Law of Abode and Settlement of Foreigners (*Bundesgesetz über Aufenthalt und Niederlassung der Ausländer – ANAG*) was enacted. It can be regarded as a "police-law" (Thürer, Kaufmann 1990, 48) aiming at border control and the defence of the national territory, profoundly inspired by the international political context of the time, the economic crisis and widespread xenophobia (Moser 1967, 358). Xenophobia was during this period directed against what was called "overforeignization" (*Überfremdung*), meaning a situation where society had become "strange"

to its own members because of immigration and establishing a causal link between the number of foreigners and the threat to Swiss identity (Misteli, Gisler 1999, 96) (see also 3.5).

The ANAG mirrors these fears of identity loss by mentioning the danger of "overforeignisation" as one of the principal issues the authorities should address in the implementation of their policy (ANAG, art. 16a). The law is also based on the assumption that it is not so much the *number* of foreigners which leads to "overforeignisation" but their wish *to stay* in Switzerland. In other words, according to the Swiss government there was "nothing to object to an influx of foreigners as long as they do not wish to settle" (Feuille fédérale 1924, 522-523). However, if after World War II the idea of "overforeignisation" remains a point of reference for the federal administration (Tanner 1998), the authorities are much more preoccupied by the fear that a new economic crisis could lead to wide unemployment and that the massive immigration could therefore cause social tensions. The aim to grant foreign workers only a precarious legal status, which allows to send them home without difficulties, was therefore now also nourished by economic interests (Cerutti 1994, 49). That is the reason why the recruitment treaties with Italy (1948) and later also with other Mediterranean countries granted a permanent residence permit to foreigners only after they had stayed for ten years in Switzerland.

When in the middle of the 1970s the international economic crisis hits Switzerland severely this regulation proves to be "efficient". Between 1974 and 1977, the Swiss economy loses 10% of its jobs. The primarily concerned are the foreign workers: 228.000 out of 340.000 dismissed persons, that is 67%, are foreigners. One estimates that about 35% of them went back to their country of origin between 1974 and 1976 (Haug 1980, 7-8). The decrease is, on the one hand, the effect of the Swiss authorities' policy: a lot of foreign workers had at this time only temporary permits and could be sent home by simply not extending them. On the other hand, many foreign workers did not have an unemployment insurance – which was at this time not compulsory in Switzerland – and preferred thus to return home (Schmidt 1985, 22).

The regulation of foreign labour through a restrictive admission system as well as the weakness of the Welfare State – Schmidt (1985, 111, 123-127) speaks of a "delayed Welfare State" and a "national-liberal" labour market policy – secured the country for a low unemployment rate of foreigners during the 1970s and the 1980s. It is more controversial if the same factors explain also the country's general low unemployment rate during the same period (see for example

Lambelet 1994, 144-159). However, even if during the short recession of 1981/83 the system did not work so well anymore (Schwarz 1986), at the end of the 1980s scholars could still affirm that in Switzerland "the foreigner residing and being unemployed is rare, its social identity non-existent" (Bolzmann et al. 1987, 62). Wider social problems linked to unemployment – as for example social exclusion, ethnic segregation and social unrest – did therefore not develop in Switzerland. In other words: the specific interplay of exclusion and inclusion through restrictive immigration regulation and market forces (see also Hoffmann-Nowotny 1985, 227 and Niederer 1967) is a first characteristic of the Swiss mode of integration of immigrants.

However this system does not work anymore today because its basis has been increasingly eroded: the first important change is the improvement of the residence status of foreigners which occurred mainly under the pressure of the countries of origin – primarily Italy – and on the basis of bilateral agreements. Nevertheless, these treaties do not give all migrants the same rights: if in principle the permanent residence permit (Niederlassungsbewilligung) is still given to foreigners only after they have passed ten years in Switzerland, most of the EU nationals have now the right to obtain the residence permit after already five years.² and to many other nationalities it is given after five years on the basis of administrative practice.³ The United States are the only non-European country which is part of this last group (Gutzwiller, Baumgartner 1997, 28-29). At the end of 1997, 73% of the foreigners living in Switzerland had a residence permit, and if one includes also the asylum seekers and the temporary workers (Saisonniers) the proportion is 67,5%. The second important change is the development of the Swiss Welfare State since the middle of the 1970s: in 1975 the unemployment-assurance was created by a federal decree, in 1976 the obligation to have an unemployment-assurance was voted by the Swiss population and since then other Welfare provisions have been introduced (see Wimmer 1998).

Therefore, when in the beginning of the 1990s the general increase of unemployment in Switzerland struck immigrants in a disproportional way, because they were often employed in economic sectors suffering from restructuring, they did not leave the country anymore. And even

² The countries concerned are Belgium, Germany, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. The persons with refugee status are treated in the same way.

³ The countries concerned are Andorra, Finland, Great Britain, Ireland, Island, Luxembourg, Monaco, Norway, San Marino, Sweden, and the Vatican.

if many older migrants decided nevertheless to return to their countries of origin (see Roselli 1998), social exclusion and segregation began now to develop. That is why claims for a federal integration policy have multiplied since the beginning of the 1990s: they are primarily made by Switzerland's larger cities where the social effects of unemployment tend to concentrate. However, these claims have to struggle against a strong political tradition in Switzerland: federalism.

3.2. Federalism

As already mentioned, Switzerland is a multicultural society: 75% of the country's Swiss population speak German, 20% French, 4% Italian and 1% Raetho-Romanic.⁴ It is primarily through the institutions of federalism that the country succeeded in accommodating its cultural diversity: Switzerland consists today of 23 cantons (three of them are divided in two half-cantons) who have a large autonomy in a variety of policy fields as for example education, police and taxes. According to the federalist principles, the Swiss parliament is divided into two chambers, the *Nationalrat* (the representatives of the people) and the *Ständerat* (the representatives of the cantons): in order to pass parliament, a law has to be voted by a majority in each chamber.

Besides federalism, the system of consociational democracy (see 3.4) protects autochthonous cultural minorities from detrimental majority decisions as well and so does the Swiss language policy. Article 116 of the Federal Constitution guarantees the defence of all four national languages. However, this does not imply that there are group rights for cultural minorities: only the languages themselves are protected, not the right of linguistic groups to speak them. Therefore, only *territorialised* linguistic minorities are recognised because each canton is free to choose its official language (in linguistically heterogeneous cantons, however, specific provisions for autochthonous cultural minorities exist). Furthermore, the learning of a second national language is an obligation in school and all linguistic groups – except the Raetho-Romanic – have a complete television and radio programme (Linder 1999, 40-45).

Concerning the inclusion of migrants, federalism has its most important impact in two domains: education and religion. The primary public school can be regarded as the most important agent

⁴ The Raetho-Romanic are a cultural minority speaking a Romance language. Consisting of about 50.000 persons, they live in the canton of Graubünden.

of the integration of young migrants because it is conceived as a school for all children (*Volksschule*), regardless of their social or ethnic background. Nevertheless the education system is organised by the cantons which means that migrants (from outside Switzerland as well as Swiss from other linguistic regions within the country) are required to adapt to the dominant cantonal language. During the 1970s, when because of the family reunification process a lot of migrant children entered school, cantonal education systems had however problems to take into account their cultural difference and to guarantee them at the same time equal educational opportunities. Many migrant pupils with language difficulties were sent – on the grounds of linguistically-based intelligence-tests (Schuh 1977) – to special classes for pupils with general learning difficulties, a treatment which was considered by their parents as a discrimination. Such problems still persist. However, since 1972 the federal education authorities (*Schweizerische Konferenz der kantonalen Erziehungsdirektoren – EDK*) – partly because they were urged to do so by the Italian government during the bilateral negotiations on immigration – publish regularly recommendations for the better integration of migrant children in public school. These recommendations stress the need of special support for migrant children and the necessity to struggle against discrimination. Since 1991 they insist also on intercultural education (Allemann-Ghionda 1997, 330-333). However, the implementation of these recommendations is left to the cantonal authorities which favour quite different solutions.

The differences between the cantonal responses correspond roughly to the linguistic cleavages: in German-speaking cantons, as in the neighbouring country Germany, one can observe the education system's tendency to set up specific and separated institutions for migrant children, whereas in French and Italian-speaking cantons the response is to integrate them into the mainstream institutions. However, the outcome of these different reactions of cantonal education systems on the integration of migrant children has so far not been analysed (Allemann-Ghionda 1997, 354). The same difference between linguistic regions can also be observed with regard to the treatment by the school systems of non-Christian religions, especially Islam. Compared to other European countries Islam has in Switzerland so far not become a politicised issue (Haenni 1994).⁵ Nevertheless the question if Muslim girls should have the right to wear a veil in class-

⁵ One estimates that today about 200.000 Muslims are living in Switzerland. Their immigration is a recent phenomenon and their national and social composition is regionally quite heterogeneous: whereas in the French-speaking part of Switzerland a lot of Muslims come from Arabic countries and belong to the middle-class, in the German-speaking part the majority of them are foreign workers with a low education coming from Turkey,

rooms has become a topic of discussion too: whereas German speaking cantons, as for example Zurich, prove to have a pragmatic way to respond to this question, tolerating the veil in most cases, in French-speaking cantons, as for example Geneva and Neuchâtel, an attitude inspired by republican ideas as in France – protecting public space from cultural and religious markers – is much stronger.

This leads us to the question of religion in general, the second important domain where federalism plays a crucial role for the inclusion of migrants. As a matter of fact, if the Swiss Constitution guarantees religious freedom – which obliges local communities to respect religious neutrality and to treat the different religious groups on equal terms –, the concrete relation between State and Churches is determined by the cantons. This means that there are twenty-six ways of defining the place of religion in public life, extending from a relative close relation between State and Church (mostly in German-speaking cantons) to a complete separation (as in Geneva and Neuchâtel) (Friederich 1995, 25-28). If the Muslim community has – because of its national and political heterogeneity – the same difficulties in Switzerland to establish a common organisation on the national level as for example Muslims in Germany (Heine 1997, 112-133) and France (Cesari 1997, 177-190), these difficulties are accentuated by the fact that religious matters are not organised on the national level. In 1989 has been founded the *Gesellschaft der islamischen Organisationen in der Schweiz* (Society of the Islamic Organisations in Switzerland) to which belong 25 organisations, but a union including all Muslim communities on the national level does not exist yet.

The federalist structure of the country incites Muslims therefore to address their claims – for example for the construction of Mosques or the setting up of Muslim cemeteries – to the cantonal authorities. One of the most important claims of Muslim communities is to be recognised as a corporation under public law (*öffentlich-rechtliche Körperschaft*), a status which gives the right to receive public subsidies and which has been granted in several cantons to Christian minorities – in the protestant canton of Zurich for example to the Catholics – or the Jewish communities (the latter being nevertheless only recognised as such in a small number of cantons). So far, there are no cantons which have recognised Islam in this form (see Fischli-Giesser 1995).

Bosnia and the Kosovo (Fähndrich 1998, 249-252).

Federalism has furthermore also an impact on political rights of migrants in Switzerland, even if in this domain its influence is more anecdotal. If all the attempts to set up local voting rights for foreigners during the 1980s and the 1990s failed (Cueni, Fleury 1994, 15-17), there exist, nevertheless, two exceptions: the canton of Neuchâtel, where since the setting up of the cantonal Republic in 1848 all foreigners with a permanent resident permit and living there for one year can vote; the canton of Jura, the youngest canton of Switzerland, where the local voting rights were given in 1978 to all the foreigners having lived at least 10 years in the canton (Marquis, Grossi 1990, 24-25). However, for the understanding of the migrant's access to political rights through naturalisation, the crucial factor is not federalism but municipal autonomy (see 3.3).

Finally, the claims for an immigrant-policy on the national level have always been rejected with the argument that the integration of migrants was the cantons' duty. There is only one exception: in 1970, as an answer to widespread xenophobia (see 3.4), the Swiss government created the "Federal commission for foreigners" (*Eidgenössische Ausländerkommission – EKA*) which remains until today the most important institution for the integration of migrants on the national level. The resources of this institution are however very limited. Considered to be a place where problems concerning migration can be discussed, its function is purely consultative⁶ and the EKA – whose members come from labour unions, employer organisations, school authorities, churches, NGOs, migrant associations and from federal and local administrations – favoured itself a federalist approach of immigration by transferring the responsibility for the integration of migrants to the cantonal and the local level (EKA 1989).

In all the three above mentioned domains – school, religion and local voting rights – the federalist mode of integration has so far not really become challenged, even if in the field of education the EDK tries to reinforce its weight and even if in regard to religion the Federal Court has several times ruled against the decisions of cantonal authorities forcing them to respect the

⁶ The official self-definition of the EKA is the following: "Wichtigster Auftrag der EKA ist es, Möglichkeiten für ein besseres Zusammenleben von Schweizern und Ausländern aufzuzeigen, sowie entsprechende Initiativen anzuregen und zu unterstützen. Bei dieser Aufgabenstellung ergeben sich *zwei Hauptadressaten*. Einerseits hilft die EKA mit, dem Schweizer die Andersartigkeit des Ausländers und dessen Probleme verständlicher zu machen. Mangelnde Information und vor allem Desinformation schüren die Angst und Sorge um den möglichen Verlust der Existenzgrundlagen, der schweizerischen Kultur und Identität. Neben Bemühungen um eine bessere Information des Ausländers, unterstützt die EKA andererseits Anstrengungen, die dem *Ausländer* gezielte Gelegenheiten bieten, in die schweizerische Umgebung hineinzuwachsen, die ortsüblichen Denk- und Verhaltensweisen kennenzulernen und Kontakte zum Schweizer zu pflegen." (EKA 1989, 101)

rights of Muslims (see Kälin 1998). However, the federalist approach has been questioned in a wider sense because of the increasing integration problems since the beginning of the 1990s: even the EKA itself asked for a stronger commitment of the federal government (EKA 1996). The inclusion of an article on integration in the ANAG, voted by the parliament in June 1998, can be considered as a first deviation from traditional paths; nevertheless this article, which allows the federal government to subsidise integration measures, is not a far-reaching decision and the difficulties to make it pass parliament showed once more the strength of federalist traditions.

3.3. Municipal autonomy

As Stein Rokkan (1973, 81) showed on his conceptual map of Europe, Switzerland developed in the middle of the "dominant city network of the politically fragmented trade belt from the Mediterranean to the North". That is the historical reason for the still strong autonomy of its municipalities and for the fact that Switzerland is composed of a network of relatively small cities. Some scholars believe that this urban structure explains why, compared to other European countries, segregation indices of Swiss cities are low and why the spatial distribution of migrants has until a few years ago never been an issue of politics (Arend 1991): the possibility that in small cities specialised and homogeneous areas can form is quite limited. A comparative analysis of ethnic segregation in Switzerland and Germany insisted however also on two additional factors for low indices in Swiss cities: the relatively tight control of the housing sector in Switzerland, which reduces the opportunities for landlords to rent apartments of bad quality at extensive prices to migrants, and the fact that autochthonous habitants do not move even if the percentage of foreigners is increasing (Arend 1982, 361-372). Even if, as already stated (see 3.1) segregation has in the last years increasingly become an issue of politics, it seems that this is not necessarily the expression of an objective tendency towards higher segregation: as recent scientific analysis shows indices keep quite stable (Huissoud et al. 1999, 137-141).

The domain where municipal autonomy has to be considered as the key-factor for the inclusion (and exclusion) of migrants, is citizenship and naturalisation. As a matter of fact, the naturalisation procedure consists in Switzerland of three stages. The federal Constitution stipulates that in order to get the Swiss nationality one has to become first the citizen of a municipality and then of a canton. The candidate for naturalisation has first to ask a federal

authorisation for naturalisation from the federal Office of Police. Once he is in possession of this document, he has to ask the right of citizenship (*droit de cité*) of a municipality. The federal authorities intervene only at the first and the last stage when they are informed on the decision of the municipality (Centlivres 1990). If the Federal Constitution prescribes only that a foreigner, in order to apply for Swiss citizenship, has to prove that he has lived legally in Switzerland for 12 years,⁷ the municipalities have the right to establish additional criteria, which are frequently grounded on an ethno-cultural logic. Additionally, the naturalisation procedure is often very costly.

Local communities implement these principles in different ways: in large municipalities a commission elected by the Municipal Council (the municipal parliament) is responsible for treating the naturalisation demands, whereas in small municipalities all the citizens decide on the requests. However, an important difference exists between two groups of cantons: in some of them only the citizens who have their origin in the municipality⁸ are entitled to decide on the naturalisation of foreigners, whereas in others all the habitants have this right (see EKA 1998). The canton of Zurich, for example, the most populated canton of Switzerland, belongs to the first group. Therefore, the naturalisation commissions in Zurich are only composed of municipal counsellors who have the citizenship of the municipality; and in small municipalities only the habitants who have the municipality's citizenship have the right to vote.

There is once more a dividing line between the French-speaking cantons which have more formalised naturalisation procedures and many German-speaking cantons which stick entirely to the principle of the citizen's participation. In this latter case the naturalisation procedure can of course easily be influenced by prejudice and as some recent cases seem to indicate, certain nationalities (for example persons from former Yugoslavia and Turkey) have much less chances to be granted the Swiss citizenship than others. However there exists so far no precise analysis of the question. Furthermore in municipalities with less formalised naturalisation procedures the candidates are often required to prove that they are assimilated to the "values and traditions of

⁷ The years spent in Switzerland between the 10th and 20th birthday are counted double.

⁸ It is also possible to acquire the *droit de cité* of a municipality after having lived there for a certain time. The municipality becomes then the municipality of origin.

the local community”. This means that in Switzerland naturalisation is to a large extent based on an ethno-cultural logic, even if the country is built on the idea of a political contract (Centlivres and Schnapper 1991) (see 3.5).

The idea that the integration of migrants in Switzerland has to be based on their previous inclusion in – and adaptation to – local communities, is not only valuable for naturalisation, but also in a larger sense. The Federal commission for foreigners (EKA) writes in one of its most important publications “The foreigners in the municipality” that “the integration of the foreigners has after all to be encouraged where autochthonous and foreigners live together. Reasonably, integration has to be promoted by municipality. Neither the Confederation nor the cantons can take over this task.” (EKA, 1989: 1). And making allusion to Swiss political traditions, the EKA insists that “in conformity with our democratic habitudes, solutions adapted to local conditions should be looked for. Each municipality has to find its own way” (EKA 1989, 7). The resulting heterogeneity of more than 3000 approaches – that is the number of municipalities in Switzerland – led some scholars to speak of the Swiss “integrationist federalism” (Cattacin 1996); it would be more appropriate to speak of “integrationist municipalism”.

However, it is not only the territorial decision level which makes the naturalisation procedure in Switzerland characteristic, but also the dimension of participation, which leads us to the peculiarities of Swiss democracy.

3.4. Consociational and direct democracy

Consociational and direct democracy, two characteristics of the Swiss political regime, are more important for the understanding of immigrant *politics* than immigrant *policies*. However, we would like to show that by shaping the former, consociational and direct democracy are responsible, on the one hand, for the high politicisation of migration in Switzerland and, on the other, for the exclusion of migrants from political rights (see also Ireland 1994).

Consociational democracy is based on two main characteristics: the proportional representation of different minorities (political, religious, linguistic) in the federal institutions and the search of a compromise between political forces which goes beyond the search for simple majorities

(Linder 1999, 359). Therefore the seven ministers of the Swiss government as well as the members of the higher administration are proportionally chosen according to their party affiliation, their linguistic and their regional origin: all the major political forces and all the linguistic groups (except the Raetho-Romanic) are represented and Swiss politics are characterised by a permanent process of compromise-building between these groups.

Direct democracy gives social groups more opportunities to participate in the political process than political systems of the representative type (Linder 1999, 236). The instruments which guarantee this direct participation are in Switzerland the popular initiative⁹ and the referendum.¹⁰ They exist on the national as well as on the local level. According to certain observers it is direct democracy which made the consociational system emerge, because each law voted in parliament can be submitted by the referendum to a vote of the whole population and needs therefore the support of the widest alliance possible within the political elite (Neidhart 1970).

In the domain of immigrant policy the two characteristics of the Swiss political system can be considered as responsible to a large extent for the high politicisation of immigration and the exclusion of migrants from political rights. First, consociational democracy often makes the decision-making process very lengthy because the different forces must negotiate a compromise. Concerning immigration the system led to long periods of "non-decision" because the interests concerning migration were often so divergent that a compromise could not be found (Mahnig 1997, 4-5). Secondly, the instruments of direct democracy make it possible to force the political elite to deal with a question it did not give enough attention to (Kriesi 1995, 90), because they can cause a general voting about the issue. That is why immigration became one of the central issues of Swiss politics during the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s: during this period a couple of small political parties gained a large support of the public opinion for their claim that Switzerland was "overforeignised" by the high number of immigrants. Using one of the instruments of direct democracy, these xenophobic movements succeeded in putting the government under pressure by launching several popular initiatives asking for a radical

⁹ The popular initiative permits the launching of a political idea in the form of a project for a constitutional article, which is then submitted to the Swiss people. In order to succeed, a popular initiative must gather the signatures of at least 100.000 voters in a period of 18 months. It is then followed by a popular vote (*Volksabstimmung*).

¹⁰ The referendum permits each law adopted in parliament to be submitted to a popular vote, if 50.000 signatures are collected in the three months following its adoption.

diminution of the number of foreigners living in Switzerland. If all these initiatives have been rejected in popular votes, they nevertheless urged the Swiss government to adopt a more restrictive admission policy in 1970 (Mahnig 1998, 178-179).

If direct democracy is therefore responsible that xenophobia could occupy the political agenda, certain observers believe also that because of the "very institutionalised and politicised nature of conflict" "there have been few instances of overt hostilities at the work place or in the streets" (Schmitter 1980, 191). Others state in a more general way that the fact that the extreme-right is not more strongly organised in Switzerland can partly be explained by direct democracy, which allows the expression of xenophobic claims and acts therefore as a safety-valve (Armingeon 1995, 55-57).

Direct democracy also had a strong impact in the field of political rights. First because the referendum makes it rather difficult to contain controversial questions in the arena of parliament: politicians cannot limit the debate – and often the decision – on granting rights to migrants to parliament. A strategy of making policy "behind closed doors", which according to certain authors is the crucial factor explaining why new rights have been gained by migrants in Europe (Guiraudon 1998, 293) – the most prominent example being probably the granting of local voting rights to migrants in the Netherlands (Rath 1988, 29) – is hardly possible in Switzerland. Secondly because – as Linder (1999, 60-62) argues in the case of voting rights for women (which were granted only in 1971 in Switzerland) – in a direct democracy, the decision on the political inclusion of denizens can be considered as a zero-sum-game. In a political regime of the representative type there are, on the contrary, inherent incentives for the political elite to promote voting rights for denizens because parties can reasonably expect that the new citizens will vote for the political organisations which defended their interests. Furthermore, parties can present the issue in their programmes together with other aims, which attract the votes of people not necessarily in favour of voting rights for a new group. In a direct democracy, on the contrary, "package deals" are not possible because important issues are voted upon separately.

Of course, the argument that granting political rights to migrants is a zero-sum game could be questioned on the grounds that inclusion of all members profits to all citizens of a society. Obviously this view is not shared by a majority of the Swiss population, which leads us to an explanation for the exclusion of migrants in liberal democracies proposed by Brubaker.

According to him, a society's attitude towards migrants is not so much the effect of institutions and political processes, but of cognitive structures and historical representations (Brubaker 1995). Let us therefore turn to the question of Swiss national identity.

3.5. National identity

In presenting this factor and its link to the attitude towards migrants we do not argue that Switzerland's national identity has a more important impact on the exclusion of migrants than that of other countries (which would be, in any case, difficult to show). We only want to insist on its particular form and the implication this has for the *perception* of migrants. Of course, the hostile attitude of the Swiss population towards migrants has been explained – as for other countries – on the ground of various variables as for example structural tensions caused through immigration (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1973) or "white backlash" and appeals to the national solidarity pact by underprivileged Swiss (Braun 1970, 332-426; Wimmer 1997) However, an important number of scholars also tried to link the "fear of overforeignisation" to the peculiarities of Swiss national identity (see Windisch 1978).

Defining what Swiss national identity means is rather difficult. The Swiss federal State was founded in 1848: it was clear that neither culture and language, nor religion and ethnicity could be the basis of the new political community, but only the recognition of the same liberal and democratic principles. That is why Switzerland is often called a *Willensnation*, a nation built on the will of its members (Linder 1999, 30). However these liberal and non-ethnic foundations came under heavy pressure at the beginning of the 20th century when the industrial revolution led to social eruptions and intensified class-struggle and when Switzerland's neighbouring-countries became dominated by ethnic nationalism. Around 1910 "overforeignisation" became the key-concept for the discussion of the "foreigners' question" (*Ausländerfrage*). At this time however, the presence of migrants was considered as a problem of political loyalty which should be resolved by a broad naturalisation policy (Romano 1996). Only in the 1930s "overforeignisation" received another signification: it meant now a threat to Swiss identity and was chosen because a positive racial or ethno-cultural definition was not available on the ground of the multicultural structure of the country (Tanner 1998).

Therefore, Swiss national identity is, on the one hand, dominated by the projection of local

particularities on the national level. In other words: the idea that cultural pluralism is one of the basic characteristics of Switzerland "allows every local and every particular manifestation, to understand itself as an element of national identity" (Kreis 1992, 788-789). On the other hand, Swiss national identity is reinforced by the use of "overforeignisation" as a concept which defines the boundaries of this identity. Recent sociological studies of Swiss media show, that the fear of "overforeignisation" developed every time discontinuities in social change lead to a crisis of collective identity; immigrants became then identified as the reason for the widespread social malaise (Imhof 1993, Misteli, Gisler 1999).

Other authors, however, link Swiss xenophobia more precisely to the inter-war-period: the so called "spiritual defence of the country" (*geistige Landesverteidigung*) which developed as an answer to fascism and nazism and changed into anti-communism during the 1950s and 1960s, has been considered as a pattern of collective consciousness responsible for xenophobia (Braun 1970, 379-385)

The impact of popular xenophobia on the integration of migrants is however difficult to evaluate: it was in the 1960s and 1970s directed against Italians (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1973), primarily the ones coming from the rural South of their country (Niederer 1967). A recent inquiry shows that this has clearly changed: Italians are not negatively perceived anymore, whereas other groups, as for example Turks, Tamils, Africans and persons from former Yugoslavia have become the object of prejudice (Hoffmann-Nowotny et al. 1997, 72-77).

Having presented five traditional patterns influencing the inclusion – and exclusion – of migrants in Switzerland, we have now to add a final factor without which the situation of migrants in Switzerland cannot fully be understood: their autonomous organisation.

3.6. The autonomous organisation of immigrants

Because the Swiss State can be regarded as comparatively weak (Kriesi 1995, 348-349) it has never succeeded in controlling the private association of its citizens: regulations on organisations have always been very liberal and immigrants have never been submitted to restrictions in this field, as for example in France, where they gained the right to set up associations only in 1981. Swiss associations and organisations of civil society, however, did not favour the integration of migrants: on the contrary, observers found in the beginning of the 1970 that there was little

interaction between them and Swiss organisations (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1973) and that Swiss associations were even important agents of their exclusion (Braun 1970, 341-355). The same has been observed for the churches and welfare organisations: "unlike their German counterparts, the Swiss welfare organisations and churches remained aloof from any formal involvement with the predominantly Italian migrants. They did not, by and large, provide any special services or train foreigners to take positions within their organisational structures (Schmitter 1980, 187). The observation can be extended to the labour unions, at least to their policy until the end of the 1960s (see Riedo 1976).

In a different way, however, the possibility to organise freely had an important impact on the integration of migrants in Swiss society: migrants used the opportunity for auto-organisation, especially the Italians who were before World War I the most important immigrant group and became so once more after 1945. As certain scholars have observed, the "*associazionismo italiano*" is particularly well developed in Switzerland: if only 10% of all the Italian emigrants in the world lived in Switzerland during the 1970s, about one third of all their associations were established here (Leuenberger 1984, 5). The strong associative structure of Italians can be explained by the fact that, on the one hand, the Italian immigration of the end of the 19th century had already laid the ground for their various organisations which developed after World War II (see Morach 1979) and that, on the other hand, the Italian State as well as Italian parties and labour-unions actively tried to organise "their" emigrants.

One of the most important institutions for support of Italian migrants became the *Missione Cattolica Italiana* which was already founded in 1898 (Ciapparella, Gatani 1997). Led by the congregation of Salesians, the *Missione Cattolica* continued its religious and social support of the Italian migrants after World War II and actually there is still a network of about ninety *Missioni* in Switzerland (Von Ah 1999, 62). The most important association, the *Colonie Libere Italiane in Svizzera*, has its roots in the 1930s, when Italian antifascists of different political orientations tried to escape the ideological control of the Italian State by setting up their own organisations. In 1943 they founded a federation of ten associations, the *Federazione delle Colonie Libere Italiane in Svizzera* (FCLIS). Their aim was to pursue the antifascist struggle for a new democratic Italy, on the one hand, to defend the interests of Italian migrants, on the other (Leuenberger 1984, 136-137).

Because of its class-struggle orientation and because of the membership of many of its leaders

in the Italian Communist Party the FCLIS became during the 1950 and 1960s the object of official control. The Swiss authorities considered the association during the period of the Cold War to be a menace for social freedom. Nevertheless the FCLIS adopted during the 1960s a civil rights perspective and tried increasingly to work together with representatives of other migrant communities, labour unions, Christian groups and left-wing organisations and launched several petitions for the social and political rights of immigrants. Since the 1970s the FCLIS started also to commit itself to the question of education: as in other countries, the school became therefore one of the issues which brought the migrants into a close negotiation process with the authorities of the country of settlement (see Layton-Henry 1990, 100-102).

Therefore one could argue that the autonomous organisation of Italian migrants played to a large extent the same role in Switzerland as that observed by the Chicago school in the USA: they are intermediary institutions between country of origin and country of settlement which allow the individual migrant to pass from one society to the other without being uprooted (see Park et al. 1925). The struggle of migrants for their civil, social and political rights in the new society are part of this integration process; the best example being some of the leaders of the FCLIS who became representatives in Swiss labour-unions.

However, in this field too, important changes have taken place: in the last decades churches and Welfare organisations have become increasingly committed to the integration of migrants; so have labour unions, mostly because of the simple reason that a large part of their members are migrants. On the other hand it seems that the strong autonomous organisation of the Italians was a historical exception; most of the new migrant communities do not seem to have the resources to assist their fellow nationals in the same way. As the EKA states it in regard to these groups: "In contrast to what happened previously with the Italians, Switzerland will have to bear in the future the costs for the integration of migrants alone (EKA 1996, 14).

4. Conclusion

The traditional Swiss way to include migrants consisted for a long time of a "national liberal" labour-market policy, which made it possible to use foreign workers as an "economic buffer", but which guaranteed migrants who stayed a good integration into the labour market. The public school, in spite of many difficulties to adapt to linguistic and cultural difference, can be regarded as the main agent of the integration of migrant *children*. Because education is organised by the cantons, there is however no national integration strategy in this field. In most other domains of

society migrants were initially excluded. Some groups, especially Italian migrants, could compensate this situation by a strong network of homeland-institutions and autonomous ethnic organisations, which assisted newcomers in the foreign society.

However, because of Italy's and other emigration countries' pressure and on the ground of constitutional politics, resident status and social rights of migrants improved increasingly as time passed. Also the attitude of civil society and its institutions – labour unions, churches, associations – became more open towards migrants (at least towards the one having lived in Switzerland for a long time). Nevertheless, with the exception of the EKA, no national institution in charge of immigrant policy has developed and the integration of migrants is still considered to be a local matter. The peculiar mixture of federalism, municipal autonomy and direct democracy which are tightly connected to national identity, explain why in the field of political rights Switzerland can be considered one of the most exclusionist countries in Europe.

However, because one of the main elements of the Swiss mode of integration has become eroded – most of the migrants have settled and cannot be used as "economic buffer" anymore – the other traditional patterns also got under pressure, even more strongly in a period of economic restructuring and increasing unemployment. Twice already municipal autonomy in matters of naturalisation has been challenged: if in 1983 the project of increasing the weight of the Confederation in the naturalisation procedure of the second generation has been rejected by 54,3% of the voters, it has been adopted in 1994 by 52,8% and was only rejected because a majority of cantons voted against it. The decision to set up an article on integration in 1998 can be regarded as a first step in the direction of a national immigrant policy and a deviation from traditional federalist principles.

The traditional Swiss mode of integration, thus, is changing. One can guess that municipal autonomy, federalism and national identity will continue to be challenged in the future, but one can also be sure that because of consociational and direct democracy the changes will take their time.

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