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Respecting the values of the constitution: Integration in the community of value(s)

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Current integration regimes increasingly require migrants to share constitutional values. Taking Switzerland as a case study, the paper analyzes this integration requirement based on the legal framework, problem-centred interviews among public authorities and street-level bureaucrats, case files and case law. It argues, first, that the requirement re/produces the social imaginary of society as a community of value(s), which in turn legitimizes aggressive integrationism. Second, the values concerned are to a very large extent an empty signifier that can be filled with almost any cultural stuff. This is the case, third, as long as the reference to abstract universal liberal principles is maintained, revealing a distinctly liberal boundary making. In conclusion, the value requirement turns out to be old-fashioned cultural assimilation in a contemporary liberal guise, positing liberal values as an achieved feature of modern societies, shared by all members of the community of value(s).

KEYWORDS

integration, liberal values, culturalization, boundary liberalism, integrationism, community of value, cultural assimilation, naturalization

1. Introduction

Europe is a garden. We have built a garden. Everything works. Most of the rest of the world is a jungle, and the jungle could invade the garden, by different ways and means. (EU High Representative Josep Borrell, 2022)¹

The community of value is hard to avoid once you start noticing it. (Anderson, 2013, p. 9)

“It all depends on inner values”. This slogan on a billboard claiming the exceptional quality of the Swiss national sausage—the *cervelat*—perfectly illustrates the quest of this paper to examine the role of values in current integration regimes. The notion of integration as treated in this paper refers to the idea of immigrant integration (Schinkel, 2018) and to what scholars have theorized as the injunction to integrate (Gianni, 2019), aggressive integrationism (Triadafilopoulos, 2011) and the civic integration paradigm (Kostakopoulou, 2010). These concepts refer to understandings of integration as achieved by coercing, testing, penalizing and, ultimately, excluding (Kostakopoulou, 2010). In recent years, both integration policy and research have been fundamentally questioned (for example Korteweg, 2017; Schinkel, 2018; Favell, 2019; Rytter, 2019). Scholars have argued that integration is a fuzzy concept that is

¹ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-diplomatic-academy-opening-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-inauguration_en (accessed 19.10.2022).

exceptionally unclear (Rytter, 2019) and amounts to little more than a floating signifier that works well first and foremost because it translates easily across academia and policy, popular discourse and common sense descriptions (Schinkel, 2018). According to this line of reasoning, there can be no scientific definition of integration that is independent of any policy concept (Penninx, 2019) or non-normative (Spencer and Charsley, 2021). Critical contributions on integration have thus called for research to understand and approach it as a phenomenon that reveals more about those who articulate ideas about it and decide on integration measures than it does about those who are the target of integration (the migrant Other) (Hadj Abdou, 2019). Against this backdrop, this paper stands in line with the proposal to study integration as a *category of practice* (Korteweg, 2017), rather than simply modify its use and definition as a *category of analysis* (Klarenbeek, 2019; Penninx, 2019). In the following terms *integration* and *values* are analyzed as categories of political, legal and administrative *practice*, as categories of self- and other-identification—for example as to who is (not) a subject of integration, rather than as categories of *analysis*. We can thus make these categories the *object* of analysis, rather than simply using them as a *tool* of analysis (Brubaker, 2013).

Switzerland is a promising case study to approach integration and the role of (liberal) values as a category of practice. As elsewhere in Europe, integration is celebrating its heyday. After almost a century of politics of “resisting over-foreignization” (*Überfremdungsabwehr*) and “assimilation”, these notions were gradually replaced by integration in discourse and policy during the second half and especially towards the end of the 20th century (Niederberger, 2004; Di Donato et al., 2020). In the recent revisions of the Swiss Citizenship Act (SCA) and of the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act (FNIA), two cornerstones of Swiss migration and citizenship law, the notion of integration is of crucial importance and even made its way into the name of the new law. No longer limited to the naturalization process, where it first appeared, integration is now also required for entry, stay and residency permits and an ascribed lack thereof might result in denied rights and status downgrading or withdrawal. Although the notion has continuously gained in importance since the turn of the millennium (Di Donato et al., 2020), it is only in the recent revisions that it has been specified and defined in the law and subsequent ordinances in the form of criteria for (successful) integration, with the explicit aim of rendering the integration of foreigners more binding (Di Donato et al., 2020).² Besides respect for public security and order, language skills and participation in working life, there is the criterion of “respecting the values enshrined in the Federal Constitution”, which is at the heart of this paper.

The idea that immigrants—typically, third country nationals—have to respect, adopt and share national and European values and fundamental norms is essential in European integration policies, both at the European and national levels (Guild et al., 2009; Dodevska, 2022). This value requirement is of interest in light of what has been theorized as boundary liberalism, namely the fact that the extent to which immigrants are believed to have acceptably liberal values has become a site of boundary making (Triadafilopoulos,

2011; Brown, 2016). Integration has become increasingly predicated on the adoption of liberal-democratic norms and practices and assumptions underpinning liberal personhood (Korteweg, 2017). Taking Switzerland as a case study, the following research explores how this integration requirement is understood and put into practice. Scholars have shown how integration promotes both specific conceptualizations of society and a problematization of immigrant minorities (Rytter, 2019), producing gendered and racialized non-belonging while failing to attend to the troubles of host societies (Korteweg, 2017). Less attention has been paid to the role of (liberal) values in integration discourse and practice (a notable exception is Brown, 2016) and how they produce society as a community of value(s). I argue that these values are an empty signifier that can be filled with almost any “cultural stuff” (Barth, 1969), as long as the reference to abstract universal liberal principles is maintained. However, this does not in any way weaken the boundary maintenance but on the contrary reinforces the social imaginary of society as a community of value(s).

This paper tackles the following research question: What social imaginaries of society are produced by integration? The notion of social imaginaries refers to talk of and demands for integration in public and political discourse that produce and reproduce specific ideas of the society, the state, the nation and the relationship between majorities and minorities (Rytter, 2019).³ Rytter builds on Charles Taylor’s broader definition of social imaginaries as encompassing, fundamental ideas about the self and the wider social world and “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations” (Rytter, 2019, p. 679). Hence, the following analysis will not study the relationship between the “majority” and (migrant/icized) “minorities”, nor the incorporation of the latter into the former—as much of integration research does. On the contrary, in an attempt to de-migranticize (Dahinden, 2016) and de-nationalize (Anderson, 2019) integration research, the study intends to turn the telescope around (Hadj Abdou, 2019) and consider how the exclusionary Self is invented (Karagiannis and Randeria, 2018). This implies moving away from treating the migrant population as the unit of analysis and instead directing the focus onto (parts of) the whole population (Dahinden, 2016), and the state. The paper thus asks the question of the Self, rather than the question of the Other, including the constitution of the Self as a problem (Coronil, 1996). Schinkel (2022, p. 6) reminds us that “migration is always a technology that governs native populations, i.e. populations that get to recognize themselves as ‘native’ in and through the observation of people, living among them, as ‘migrants’, as people who might not have been there (‘here’), whose presence is under embargo, and precisely this conditionality is what ‘integration’ names”. To answer the research question, this paper analyzes the origins of the value requirement, its incorporation into the law and its application by street-level bureaucrats and courts.

The theoretical framework of the paper builds on critical contributions on current integration regimes. Analyzing the intersection of integration and (liberal) values, the concept of boundary liberalism (Brown, 2016) refers to a particular form of

2 As intended in the process of the recent revisions (Di Donato et al., 2020, p. 71), the “integration criteria” are almost identical in the Swiss Citizenship Act (art. 12) and in the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act (art. 58a) (accessed 19.10.2022).

3 The notion of *social imaginary* is here used synonymously with the concept of (migration) *ideations* (Parsons, 2007; Howlett, 2019; Zuber, 2022).

boundary making in the name of liberal values. According to Brown, the adoption of liberalism as a feature of national identity does not preclude the exclusion and stigmatization of outsiders. Rather, these actions are justified through assertions that host societies have the right to protect themselves from those who might not yet be enlightened enough to be trusted with membership. Cultural and religious racialization in debates over whether members of migrant groups are liberal and modern enough for inclusion has become a major boundary work mechanism (Brown, 2016, see also Fekete, 2006 on enlightened fundamentalism and Brubaker, 2017 on civilizationism). The term *boundary liberalism* describes the outcome of these discourses, which is the production and justification of political and social exclusion based on the belief that the target group is a carrier of dangerously retrograde ideologies. Finally, boundary liberalism calls attention to the creation of an in-group and the elucidation of its key values (Brown, 2016)—a community of value(s), as I will argue.

While the phenomenon of boundary liberalism is resurging in many integration regimes, the idea is far from new. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, concerning migration from Eastern and Southern Europe to the US, it was argued that these immigrants did not possess the Anglo-Teutonic conception of law, order and government and that it was the task of assimilation to break up these groups or settlements and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order and popular government, and to awaken in them a reverence for democratic institutions (Kostakopoulou, 2010). Roughly at the same time, similar voices were raised in Switzerland, such as the following, of a legal expert:

We must transform these foreigners into nationals; and it is a matter of the law to declare which of them should become part of our public body; but it is a matter of the soul to infuse these new citizens with a little of the civic love that animates us, to win them over to our ideas of tolerance and solidarity, to our democratic traditions. (Sauser-Hall, 1914, cited in Di Donato et al., 2020, p. 63)

In order to analyze the relation between integration and values, I further build on Bridget Anderson's *community of value*, defined as follows: "Modern states portray themselves not as arbitrary collections of people hung together by a common legal status but as a *community of value*, composed of people who share common ideals and (exemplary) patterns of behaviour expressed through ethnicity, religion, culture, or language—that is, its members *have shared values*" (Anderson, 2013, p. 2, emphasis mine). According to Anderson, the community of value both *has* (shared) values and *is* valued. Consequentially, it needs protection from outsiders, because "part of being an outsider is not sharing the same values—which easily becomes not having the 'right' values" (Anderson, 2013, p. 4). The community of value is defined from the outside by the non-citizen, but also from the inside, by the failed citizen, defined as those individuals and groups who are imagined as incapable of, or fail to live up to, liberal ideals (Anderson, 2013). As a way of claiming state legitimacy, the community of value often overlaps with ideas of the nation (Anderson, 2013); however, its range and content are not as clearly defined, as I will show. Still following Anderson, different groups and individuals can slip in and out of the community of value: sometimes accepted, sometimes marginal, sometimes examples

of the national values, and other times a threat to them. Those contingently accepted in or excluded from the community of value are not considered properly modern and are often depicted in terms of uncivilized and oppressive gender relations (Anderson, 2013). Finally, I draw on Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) in that the "cultural stuff" that is used to make and maintain the boundary (here: of the community of value) is itself not constrained by the boundary but can vary and change without any critical relation to boundary maintenance (see also Dahinden et al., 2014).

Building on this conceptual framework, I analyze integration discourse and practices in Switzerland, arguing that they produce the social imaginary of society as a community of value(s), along a distinctly liberal boundary. The next section will introduce the data and methodology of this paper. Then, the integration requirement of respecting the values of the constitution is introduced from a legal and historical perspective. The following analysis shows how the requirement produces imaginaries of a community both of *value* and of *values*, and how the values become empty signifiers filled with any cultural stuff, while the boundary making is a distinctly liberal one. The last section concludes that the value requirement turns out to be cultural assimilation in a liberal guise, positing liberal values as an achieved feature of modern societies, shared by all members of the community of value(s).

2. Data and methodology

For this article, I have analyzed the recent revisions of the law and official documents concerning the integration requirement of respecting the values of the constitution. Furthermore, I have conducted problem-centred interviews amongst public authorities at the national, cantonal and municipal levels. Lastly, I have analyzed specific cases and jurisprudence referring to the value requirement. The field of law covered involves both Swiss immigration and integration law (FNIA) and naturalization (SCA).

The interviews were conducted in 2020 and 2021 in both fields at the national level and in two cantons, whereas the interviews at the municipal level were limited to the field of naturalization (for reasons of jurisdictional competence). The two cantons were selected based on explorative interviews, regional, linguistic and political variations, and their historical connections to the notion of values in integration law and policy. One canton is German-speaking and more exclusive in terms of citizenship acquisition, the other is French-speaking and more inclusive.⁴ The municipalities were selected upon recommendation by the cantonal authorities and through snowball-sampling. The interviewees include public officials and street-level bureaucrats at the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) in the fields of immigration, integration and naturalization, cantonal migration and naturalization departments, and municipal naturalization authorities. The data analyzed for this paper consists of eleven expert and problem-centred interviews, selected case studies and court rulings referring to the value requirement,

⁴ According to the SWISSCIT Index on Citizenship Law in Swiss Cantons (<https://nccr-onthemove.ch/publications/swisscit-index-on-citizenship-law-in-swiss-cantons-conceptualisation-measurement-aggregation/>, accessed 19.10.2022). Note that, due to the small size of cantonal migration and naturalization authorities, where interviewees might be personally identified, the selected cantons are anonymized.

and official and legislative documents referred to directly in the analysis (if not indicated otherwise due to data protection and anonymization concerns).

The interview data has been recorded and transcribed with the informed consent of all participants, including data protection statements where requested.⁵ The same applies to the non-public case files and documents obtained from public authorities. All names have been changed and anonymized. All original data is in German or French and has been translated by the author. According to the methods and epistemology of grounded theory (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2012) and social constructivism (Flick, 2014), the overall data has been subjected to a global analysis (Legewie, 1994) before proceeding to a theoretical coding (Flick, 2009).

Regarding my role and positionality as a researcher, and in line with standpoint theory and its criticism (see Erdem, 2009; Wylie, 2012), I am aware that my perspectives are shaped and influenced by experiences and social markers and positions of unequal privileges, resources and relations of power along numerous and intersecting axes. These positionalities not only influence the way I, as a researcher, perceive and theorize the world, but also the interactions in field research and thus the data that is generated and analyzed. Concretely, the markers as a non-migrant white Swiss native, German- and French-speaking, educated, cis-gendered, heterosexual, married, able-bodied, secular researcher with an appearance, dress and manners that were apparently perceived as “typically Swiss” by my interlocutors, coming from a renowned Swiss university associated with a prestigious research project of the Swiss National Science Foundation (the NCCR—on the move), not only gave me privileged access to the field (which others might not have obtained), but also influenced the data gathered in the process. In the quotes below I was, for example, naturally included in the “we” as in “our culture”, “our democracy”, “our mentality” and in the “us” as in “do these people live like us?” and thus in the community of value(s) produced and reproduced in the discourse. The narratives, and as such the data itself and the analysis it substantiates, would certainly have been different had I been perceived and addressed differently in terms of social markers and positionalities.

3. Respecting the values of the constitution

In the Swiss context, respect for the values of the constitution is an integration requirement both in immigration and naturalization law (art. 58a FNIA and art. 12 SCA). The non-fulfilment of the requirement may, for example, lead to the revocation of a permanent residence permit or the rejection of a naturalization application. In immigration law, the evaluation of integration requirements is carried out by cantonal migration offices based on individual case files. For naturalizations, the evaluation of integration happens at the municipal, cantonal and federal levels. At the cantonal and federal levels, the decision is usually taken by the administration (cantonal naturalization offices and the SEM), although sometimes formally approved by the cantonal government. At the municipal level, the evaluation of integration usually involves both case files

⁵ In compliance with the local legislation and institutional requirements for interview-based research, oral informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to their interview.

and face-to-face interviews, and the decision is taken either directly by citizen assemblies or by elected, non-professional naturalization commissions (varying greatly in form and composition, due to the Swiss federal system, see Di Donato et al., 2020).

Based on art. 12 SCA and art. 58a FNIA, the respective ordinances specify the value requirement by referring to the following basic principles, fundamental rights and duties: the principles of the rule of law and the free democratic basic order of Switzerland; fundamental rights such as the equality of men and women, the right to life and personal liberty, freedom of belief and conscience and freedom of expression; the obligation to perform military or alternative civilian service (only for naturalizations) and to attend school.⁶ Finally, the SEM’s instructions define the requirement *ex negativo*, referring to specific examples of when the values are considered to be violated. The principles of the rule of law and the free democratic basic order are, for example, breached by public propaganda actions that may violate “Swiss concepts of order, to which adherence is to be regarded as an indispensable prerequisite for orderly human coexistence”, or by a lack of respect for the state’s monopoly on the use of force. A violation of fundamental constitutional rights is defined, for example, by commitments or a behaviour by foreigners which disregard or call into question fundamental rights: including lack of tolerance towards other groups and/or religions or advocacy of forced marriages, circumcisions or violation of personal freedom and integrity; blanket public denigration of minorities, members of a particular religion or people of a particular sexual orientation; and disregard for the equality of men and women. Lastly, the examples defining non-compliance with constitutional obligations refer to compulsory attendance at school including mixed-gender (school) physical education and swimming lessons; and the rejection of recognized forms of expressions of respect towards teachers or employees of public authorities.⁷ These very particular examples of the (non-)respect of constitutional values such as mixed swimming lessons, the handshake (see below) or forced marriage (see Dahinden and Manser-Egli, 2022) stem from highly mediatised and politicized cases and jurisprudence, targeting specific groups of (migrantized) minorities. Of course, this selection of examples (and not others) in the official instructions influences how the requirement is applied in practice; who is asked specific questions and who is not, as the following quote by a case worker illustrates:

You always have the other side of the political spectrum that will tell you but that’s discrimination, because he’s of a certain nationality. Now, to ask a German, are you for female circumcision, what’s the point of asking a German this question, if his father or great-grandfather is from Bavaria? Of course you can ask the question, but does it make sense? That’s the question. (Thomas)

Historically, the values of the constitution appear for the first time in the Foreign Nationals Act of 16 December 2005 (FNA, later renamed to Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, FNIA). Art. 4 FNA on integration states that “the goal of integration is the coexistence of the native and foreign resident population *on the basis of the values of the Federal Constitution* and mutual respect and tolerance” (emphasis mine). While this general objective of

⁶ Art. 5 BÜV and art. 77c VZAE (accessed 19.10.2022).

⁷ Instructions SEM on the SCA and the FNIA (accessed 19.10.2022).

integration refers to both the native and the foreign population, the respective ordinance refers to foreign nationals only. It specifies that the contribution of foreigners to their integration is demonstrated in particular in respect for the rule of law and the values of the Federal Constitution.⁸

The report by the Federal Council preceding the FNA elaborates on the notion of values as an integration requirement. The report states that the aim of all integration efforts is a coexistence characterized by respect and tolerance. It is stressed that foreigners are not required to give up their personal views of life or their origins, but that diversity is an essential element of any liberal order, which must be protected. However, as the report underlines, democratic principles and the rule of law are indispensable prerequisites for peaceful coexistence (Bundesrat, 2002). Note that according to the Federal Council, all integration efforts must be made by immigrants as well as by the host society. All the more interesting is the following paragraph in the report, referring to foreigners only:

All foreigners residing in Switzerland must therefore be expected to respect the legal system and the rules of conduct and principles that are fundamental to peaceful coexistence, such as the principle of gender equality, respect for those who think differently and believe differently, the state's monopoly on the use of force and the renunciation of violent conflict resolution. The state must defend these values also against culturally justified deviating claims. (Bundesrat, 2002, p. 3797)

The fact that, according to the report (and later the law), only foreigners must be required to respect the rules of conduct, principles and values—while stressing that all integration efforts must be made by immigrants and the host society—is an expression of the social imaginary of society as a community of value(s). It is not considered necessary to formally expect—let alone to legally require—the host society to respect these values, because it is already presumed that its members have shared values (Anderson, 2013).

The list of examples of to-be-respected values in the report (for instance gender equality, freedom of belief and conscience, the state's monopoly on the use of force) is remarkably similar and stable compared to the final provisions of the law almost two decades later. Interestingly, however, in the few instances when parliamentary debate explicitly addressed this requirement, it was always with reference to gender equality. In the words of one Member of Parliament, the requirement demands a commitment to equality between men and women. In her view, the idea of the requirement is that naturalization should no longer be possible for a man who prevents his wife from participating in public life. As a municipal councillor responsible for naturalizations, she would have been “very happy to have had this tool at hand on several occasions in the past”.⁹ Similarly, the Federal Council in charge highlighted that the value requirement “naturally includes the fact that women and men have equal rights here, that girls and boys get an education in our country”.¹⁰ Together with the report's reference to the “culturally justified deviating claims” against which these values

must be defended by the state, it becomes tangible who is—and who is not—the target of this integration requirement, as the remainder of this paper will show.

4. A community of value and of values

Let us now turn to the implementation of the value requirement by analyzing the discourse and practice of street-level bureaucrats, official documents and jurisprudence. The following quote is from Thomas, a case worker responsible for naturalizations at the SEM. Asked how the integration requirement of respecting the values of the constitution is understood and applied in practice, he responded:

When we naturalized Italians, we could ask ourselves the question, then what is the difference between an Italian and a Ticinese [resident of the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland]? We naturalized Spaniards, Portuguese en masse, with a Catholic culture, so we were on more or less the same foundation of values. Today, when you take Black Africa, you take the Middle East, the Near East, it's other cultures. There's no problem with that, but there are, there can be more sources of tension between our culture and this culture. From the moment they want to acquire Swiss citizenship they must finally really at that moment submit, I would say, to our democracy, to our system, yes to our liberal democracy, and then finally to what is contained in the constitution. With a C permit [permanent residency], of course they would be asked the question, but maybe a little less. So, there is really this notion of stairs—when you get to the very top you must be sure that you are on the same level. An applicant for citizenship, we should be sure to be able to live together on a common foundation of values. (Thomas)

According to this narrative, Swiss society is imagined as a community of value(s), that is, both of *value* and of *values*. The imaginary as a community of *values* is manifested by the idea that “we” live together on a common foundation of values, and, hence, applicants for citizenship should do so as well. In this imaginary, the values are assumed to be “simply present in those who are already here, absorbed with their mother's milk”, as Paul, another interviewee at a cantonal integration office, put it in a nutshell. The community of values is thus imagined as having shared values and a common foundation of values, as the following quotes by a cantonal and a municipal case worker further illustrate:

We always ask questions like, in a married couple with children, “who goes to the parents' meeting?” for example, to try to see their way of life. Are they people who understand that here in Switzerland, the man as much as the woman has the obligation to accompany, to provide for the needs of their children, for their education or is this load left only to the woman? Small questions that we ask just to try to understand how the person sees things. (Marco)

8 Art. 4 VIntA as of 24 October 2007 (accessed 19.10.2022).

9 <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=24686#votum17> (accessed 19.10.2022).

10 <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=24693#votum5> (accessed 19.10.2022).

For example, when we read in a police report that the children have been beaten because of disobedience, we told them [the applicants] that this is not our mentality, we do not do that here. (Karin)

Behind these questions and remarks there is the social imaginary of society as a community of values, *as if* childcare were evenly distributed between parents (of course it is not¹¹) and *as if* there were no corporal punishment among parents in Switzerland (of course there is¹²), because “we” all share these values and mentality.

At the same time, it is an imagined community of *value* in that, according to Thomas, it provides fewer sources of tension and an indispensable basis on which to live together. “Our culture” is imagined as homogeneous and cohesive, including Italians, Spaniards and Portuguese with a Catholic culture, as opposed to “other cultures”. Note, however, that these groups have not always been included in the community of value but rather were at the heart of over-foreignization anxieties during much of the twentieth century (Niederberger, 2004). Furthermore, the reference to a *Catholic* culture as a common foundation of values is interesting given that most of Swiss history was marked by culture wars between Catholics and Protestants, a boundary that has only been blurred in recent decades (Dahinden et al., 2014). In the context of the value requirement, any reference to religion in fact means Islam. While the culturalization of the value requirement goes back to its origins in the 1990s (Manser-Egli, 2022) and has been codified accordingly in the law (as seen above), most interlocutors consider the requirement to have been put in place due to the recent “strengthening of Islam” (Philip). It is supposed to target a “certain Islamism, as a certain way of living one’s religion” (Thomas), against “a parallel society [that] has developed or is developing” (Eva). According to this narrative, “if until now it was not necessary to remind applicants for citizenship that these values were important, now with new cultures, perhaps tensions between certain cultures and ours, at this point we must remind them of these issues” (Thomas).

Indeed the SEM is well aware of the risk of a culturalized application of the value requirement, meaning here: targeting Muslims disproportionately. An official questionnaire handed out to the cantons in order to support and harmonize the protocols of naturalization applications underlines that questions about religious affiliation or mosque attendance would not be permissible—only to then propose a range of questions concerning these very issues, such as: How do you live your faith?¹³ Although the examples in the instructions to the requirements are meant to be just that, examples, and as such are not exhaustive, they reinforce a culturalized understanding and application of the value requirement, as we

11 In 2020, mothers invested 22.3 h per week in childcare compared to 14.7 h by fathers (<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/catalogues-databases/press-releases.assetdetail.17124476.html>, accessed 19.10.2022).

12 In fact, there is no prohibition of corporal punishment in Swiss legislation if it does not lead to visible damage and it is not considered as physical violence if it does “not exceed a certain level accepted by society” (according to the jurisprudence of the Federal Supreme Court). See also <https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/koerperstrafen-von-kindern-sind-in-der-schweiz-nicht- strafbar-ld.1522804> (accessed 19.10.2022).

13 Questionnaire to assist cantons in preparing survey reports for naturalization applications as of 01.01.2018, SEM.

have seen above in Thomas’ quote about the great-grandfather from Bavaria.

The value of the community is further expressed by the implication that it is at “the very top” of the stairs. This is in line with the aim of harmonizing Swiss integration policy by introducing the integration stage model (Kurt, 2017) in which a better status depends on higher integration demands, citizenship being the last and final stage (see also Favell, 2022 on the linear paradigm of immigration, integration and citizenship). Accordingly, applicants for citizenship must submit to these values and get to the very top of the stairs in order to be on the same level and become part of the community of value(s). Overall, the social imaginary of the community of value(s) is thus characterized by strong homogeneity and cohesion, dichotomous culturalization, and clear hierarchy and superiority. Beyond these broad lines, the imagined community is quite malleable both in terms of its content and the values concerned, and in terms of its range, as will be shown in the following.

5. The culturalization of values

As we have seen in the law and subsequent official texts, apart from the very general clauses it is far from clear which “values” of the constitution need to be respected according to this integration requirement, let alone how they are understood and evaluated. This vagueness of the requirement is mirrored in the discourse and everyday practice of street-level bureaucrats. Civil servants referred to the requirement as “quite elastic” (Philip) and hard to assess.

The part of the above-mentioned SEM questionnaire referring to the requirement to respect the values of the constitution starts with the somewhat cryptic remark according to which “the verification of this naturalization requirement might not always be easy in practice”, since the questions proposed are “not about everyday life but about the Swiss federal state law, which will be difficult to answer for certain, if not the majority, of applicants”.¹⁴ To begin with, the questionnaire proposes open questions on the values of Switzerland: “What distinguishes Switzerland for you? What do you appreciate about Switzerland?”, followed by a list of possible answers. Similar to the law and instructions seen above, the list of proposed values is a mix of abstract principles, such as neutrality, “cohesion despite multiculturalism”, democracy, the welfare state, equality of opportunity, solidarity, the rule of law, the separation of state and church, the protection of property, equal rights, security and liberty; and particular, picture-postcard Swiss values such as the preservation of nature and historical monuments, cleanliness and waste separation, punctuality and reliability, and a well-developed public transport system. Subsequently, the questionnaire proposes specific questions about Swiss values. Here, the same pattern is apparent, starting with questions about freedom of opinion, gender equality, religious freedom, the right to life, democracy and personal freedom. The remainder of the questions refer to religion and gender equality more specifically:

What rights do your wife or children have? Have you noticed any differences between men and women compared to in your home state? How do you behave towards people of other faiths?

14 Questionnaire to assist cantons in preparing survey reports for naturalization applications as of 01.01.2018, SEM.

Have you and/or your family ever been confronted with difficulties in everyday life because of your religion? (Which ones? What are you doing about them?) Have your children ever had difficulties at school because of your religion? (Which ones? What are you doing about them?) The highest court has ruled that school-age children must attend swimming lessons. Is this a problem for you? In Baselland, a student did not shake hands with the teacher in greeting. What do you think about this?

This linkage of abstract values and very specific, concrete everyday practices considered to be part of a unique and essential Swiss culture—and, importantly, not of “other cultures”—reflects what I refer to as the *culturalization of values*. As we see in the questions above, this culturalization is most salient with regards to religion (meaning here: Islam) and gender equality (see also Dahinden and Manser-Egli, 2022). Linking these two issues, the most important symbol of this culturalization of values is probably the handshake: Shaking hands (with someone of the opposite sex) is considered a crucial element of Swiss culture and thus of respecting the values of the constitution. We have seen this in the instructions—referred to in officialese as “recognized forms of expressions of respect”—and in the SEM questionnaire, and it is reflected in the everyday practice and discourse of street-level bureaucrats:

There are ladies and gentlemen who have refused to shake my hand; this is typical, for example, of the cases that concern us today and that relate precisely to the application of the respect of the values of the constitution. I have had several cases where men have refused to shake hands with a female investigator. (Thomas)

The following quote illustrates how, although usually associated with gender equality (Kühler, 2018), the discourse on the handshake links religion, customs and habits, integration and the rule of law:

It is commonly accepted in Switzerland that we don't want people to start to hurt or put themselves on the margins of society due to religious issues, because they don't want to live according to our customs and habits. Respecting the values of the constitution is also the customs and habits, in Switzerland we shake hands, that's how it is. It's been like this for centuries; whether it is good or not, that's not the point of the debate, but simply that people who enter Switzerland have to make this effort to integrate, and you can't systematically want to put your religion above or in any case at odds with the principles that govern our rule of law. (Thomas)

Here, the handshake becomes a sign of whether someone wants to put his or her religion above the principles of the rule of law or whether someone lives according to Swiss customs and habits and thus respect the values of the constitution. This is what I call a *culturalization of (liberal) values and principles*: The mundane cultural practice of shaking hands becomes a decisive indicator of whether a person is considered to observe the rule of law and to respect the values of the constitution; of whether he or she is considered to be a *liberal person* (Joppke, 2008). Whether the requirement to shake hands is justified with reference to gender equality or, as in the second quote, to the rule of law and the secular, enlightened principle that religion must not be “put above”, the justification draws on an explicitly liberal register. Contrary to old-fashioned cultural assimilation, the invocation of tradition

and customs and habits (“that’s how it is”) is no longer enough to justify the requirement as part of a liberal integration regime. At the same time, universal principles such as the rule of law and fundamental rights and liberties are considered to be integral parts of Swiss culture—and therefore, not of all/other cultures. This paradox is what Joppke (2008) referred to as *particular universalism*, which he considers to be the main form in which Western states practice exclusion today.

Another example of this particular discursive linkage between supposedly universal principles and “cultural stuff” (Barth, 1969) is the case of a Turkish woman living in Switzerland since the age of 13, whose naturalization was rejected on the grounds that she had offended the naturalization commission because she refused to shake hands with the men. According to the municipality, greeting by handshake is considered part of the native culture in Switzerland and it is expected by society that someone who lives here or wants to obtain Swiss citizenship also adapts in this respect. Again, not only was the decision about not adapting to Swiss native culture, but it also referred to universal liberal principles such as “freedom of religion” and the separation of “state and religion”:

She is perceived as helpful, generous, open-minded and extremely interested in the Swiss way of life, although she is strongly rooted in the Muslim faith. (...) The naturalization council has voiced its concern that the family lives its affiliation to the Islamic faith so openly. Despite the freedom of religion, it is very strange that the mother does not adapt to local culture in her clothing and that the daughter has to attend school with a headscarf. (...) The naturalization council wishes the family to clearly separate state and religion and to increasingly integrate and represent the culture and values of Switzerland in their private lives. (Summary of the naturalization interview by the municipality)

Here, the strong faith of the applicant and its open expression are positioned as incompatible or at least at odds with Swiss culture, values and way of life. And this although she is considered well-integrated at the local level, according to the naturalization commission. Again, we see a culturalization of values in that particular cultural and religious practices—such as the missing handshake, her clothing and her daughter’s headscarf—are taken as indicators of the failure to respect abstract liberal principles and values (freedom of religion, the separation of state and church/religion). It is worth pointing out that the separation of state and *church* in the SEM questionnaire becomes the separation of state and *religion* in this quote, which is not necessarily the same, especially in a European context.¹⁵ At the same time, we have seen that Thomas refers to the *Catholic* culture as a common foundation of values. This underlines the malleability of the value requirement in practice.

Other examples of the reduction of the supposedly universal value requirement to random cultural stuff in everyday practice and discourse emerge in the following quotes. While the first refers to a well-known case in which a family from Kosovo was not naturalized for wearing training pants in public, the second is about a hypothetical example of a naturalization candidate being a firefighter. As fire brigades in Switzerland still largely rely on volunteers (rather than professionals), this is considered the ultimate proof of integration:

¹⁵ Many thanks to the anonymous reviewer for this thoughtful comment.

For example, a decision that has caused controversy in the [canton of] Basle-Country: We have a Kosovan citizen who walks around in training pants; this is upsetting, at least for the municipality's naturalization commission. So underlying these differences is indeed this question of respect for the values of the constitution: Do these people live like us? Because as such equality between men and women yes, okay, liberties yes, okay, but finally what is underlying is still: Do these people have a Swiss way of life? Afterwards, where is the border, again, between the fact of becoming familiar with the living conditions in Switzerland, that is to say walking around in suit trousers and a shirt—I know I'm caricaturing—and the fact of walking around in town in training pants, maybe a tracksuit and a cap. Of course we are not strictly speaking about gender equality, but... (Thomas)

It would be useless to spend most of our time on this question [of respecting the values of the constitution] when from the outset we realize he's a firefighter. You will say yes, but being a firefighter has nothing to do with respect for the values of the constitution. Of course, strictly speaking not, but he is a firefighter in his municipality, you see, it's a whole thing in the end, and when we have no clues with regard to all these elements [of respecting the values of the constitution], we'll say to him what do you think of equality between men and women, and then the guy who is really integrated in Switzerland, he's almost going to laugh, he's going to say, listen, I'm for it, here we are, men are equal to women, women are equal to men, and that's that. (Thomas)

Again, very specific cultural and mundane practices and symbols such as training pants or being a firefighter, are taken as indicators of whether or not someone respects the values of the constitution. Although according to Thomas these indicators cannot directly reveal whether someone respects the values or not, the values are considered as “underlying” these everyday practices and make “a whole thing in the end”. Note that the boundary is again drawn in explicitly liberal terms: by pointing out that “we are not strictly speaking about gender equality” in the first quote, and ridiculing the question about gender equality in the second, Thomas makes clear that training pants or being a firefighter are not considered as liberal values *as such*, but are taken as proxies for whether someone is considered a liberal person or not. What is remarkable when turning the telescope around is the (very consciously) caricatured imaginary of Swiss society as a community of value(s), where people supposedly wear suit trousers rather than training pants, are firefighters and, asked about gender equality, are almost going to laugh.

The randomness of what can be used as a boundary marker of the community of value(s), discursively linked to supposedly universal values and principles, is what Barth (1969) referred to as cultural stuff that is not constrained by the boundary but can vary and change without any critical relation to boundary maintenance. What I refer to as the culturalization of values is then the ascription of this varying and changing cultural stuff (for example the handshake) as expressions of specific liberal and universal values (for example freedom of religion or gender equality) to a given, unified, essentialized culture—be it *ours* or *theirs/others*. Note that all of the examples of the cultural stuff mobilized as boundary markers always necessarily refer to—and thus, draw the legitimacy of the boundary maintenance from—supposedly universal liberal principles

such as gender equality or the rule of law. In line with Brown's (2016) concept of boundary liberalism, the boundary making is thus a distinctly *liberal* one.

6. Boundary liberalism through de-culturalization

The following examples show how the value requirement is at times culturalized, at times de-culturalized, and how this reproduces and maintains the boundary of a liberal community of value(s) against the illiberal Other. I gained access to the first case because according to the responsible cantonal authority it touched upon my research question. The case concerns the application for naturalization of a North Macedonian (Albanian)¹⁶ couple with three children. The husband is in his 30s and has lived in Switzerland since the age of three, the wife for 15 years. According to the application form, they are Muslim;¹⁷ however, in the handwritten application letter—replying to the municipality's questions “What are your religious and ideological views? How do you practice your religion?”—the applicant states that he does not practice any religion (fieldnotes).

According to the case files, the naturalization commission wanted to reject the application at first, but eventually approved it. At the heart of the case, there was a police report concerning an act of domestic violence leading to minor injuries: after a verbal dispute the husband had grabbed his wife's neck and thrown her onto the bed. Both husband and wife stated that this was the first instance of violence in the relationship, and the wife did not want to file a complaint. At the naturalization interview six years after the incident, the applicant was confronted with the police report and affirmed that the violent act arose from a stressful situation with the children, everyday life and the family. He asserted that it should not have happened and will never happen again. The president of the naturalization commission made clear that he did “not like these points”: “We have a different understanding of values in Switzerland. These are cultural differences that we cannot understand. In Switzerland, there is zero tolerance on this issue. The man–woman power imbalance comes across clearly”. Accordingly, referring to the act of domestic violence, the commission finds that the applicants do not meet the requirements. In the words of the commission, “the reason for and nature of the act as well as its justification during the naturalization interview do not correspond to the local, culturally anchored image of women” (fieldnotes).

Instead of withdrawing the application, as suggested by the commission, the applicant reacted to the decision by repeating that every day he deeply regretted his action, that it was the first and last time his wife would experience that, that he was not violent and still did not understand how he could have acted like that: “My wife and I talked about this incident for a long time. I have apologized to her and our children accordingly”. Reassessing the case at the SEM's request, the naturalization commission was now satisfied that the applicant very much regretted the incident; in addition the couple had confirmed that: it was an isolated incident that should be

16 The exact wording on the application form is “Macedonian” and “Macedonian (Albanian)” (fieldnotes).

17 The original wording in German is “Moslem” and “Muslimisch” (fieldnotes).

considered in the context of great emotional stress and demanding, hectic work and family life; that they had a strong partnership and in fact had had another child together since the incident; and finally they described how they divided roles in the household, especially since they both worked shifts. Hence, after a “differentiated consideration”, the commission concluded that the applicants meet the requirements for naturalization and that a rejection of the application would be “disproportionate” and “not appropriate”. Reporting the decision to the canton, the municipality wrote: “Whether the family respects the values of the federal constitution cannot be confirmed with 100% certainty in the present case. However, the couple has credibly explained that they have come to terms with the past described above” (fieldnotes).

What is interesting about this case is not so much what brought the commission to change its mind (or the SEM to intervene), but how the arguments in favour of or against the naturalization are constructed. The initial rejection of the application was justified in the name of a different understanding of values in Switzerland, cultural differences that “we cannot understand”, zero tolerance on this issue, the man–woman power imbalance and a local, culturally anchored image of women. The domestic violence and the alleged gender inequality and value differences are culturalized, drawing a clear boundary against an imagined Swiss community of value(s) where, apparently, there is no domestic violence and the local, culturally anchored image of women is gender-equal. After the reconsideration, the shift in the discourse of the commission is remarkable: the act of domestic violence is no longer considered in culturalized terms but in a universalist, individualized way “in the context of great emotional stress and demanding, hectic work and family life”. Furthermore, the commission now refers to the strong partnership and the division of labour in the household. In order to include the applicants in the Swiss community of value(s), the act of domestic violence is considered as unique and well in the past, and the couple is portrayed as gender-equal. The act of domestic violence is not only de-gendered and individualized, but also de-culturalized. Hence, the approval of the applicants’ acceptance into the community of value(s) through naturalization confirms and reproduces the social imaginary of Swiss society as gender-equal, and of domestic violence as culturally foreign (Khazaei, 2022).

The second case study consists of a comparison between two court rulings. In one case concerning a German citizen considered too close to the Reichsbürger movement,¹⁸ the requirement is applied in a de-culturalized and universalist manner. In another case, concerning an Imam from Kosovo who was expelled for not respecting the values of the constitution, there is a culturalized and securitized implementation of the same requirement.

In the first case, a citizen assembly rejected the application for naturalization of a German citizen for being “critically close to prominent figures in the Reichsbürger movement’s circle of influence

18 The movement is usually defined with reference to right-wing extremism and conspiracy theories. German authorities define it as follows: “Groups and individuals who reject the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany and its legal system with various motives and with various justifications, including with reference to the historical German Reich, conspiracy theory argumentation patterns or a self-defined natural law, who deny the legitimacy of the democratically elected representatives or even define themselves as being entirely outside the legal system” (Keil, 2021, my translation).

and sympathizing with their views”. The cantonal administrative court upheld this decision.¹⁹ The court referred to the report on the SCA, according to which the lack of respect for the federal constitution is particularly evident in political or religious extremism: Political extremism is understood to mean those political tendencies which reject the values of liberal democracy and the constitutional state. Therefore, persons who, for example, have joined an organization with an extreme political orientation and who profess their values through their behaviour or statements are to be excluded from naturalization on the grounds of insufficient integration.²⁰ According to the court ruling, the court had to decide whether the complainant’s convictions and connections to the Reichsbürger movement or to persons close to this movement were sufficient to exclude him from naturalization on the grounds of insufficient integration; or whether this was a legitimate political worldview protected by fundamental rights. Supporting the decision of the citizen assembly, the court found that it could not be denied that the complainant was close to people who fundamentally doubt the legitimacy of state actions and power, and that he sympathized with their attitude.

The second case concerns an Imam from Kosovo who was accused of domestic violence. However, there were no legal charges and so the responsible cantonal authority concluded that “taken on their own, the indications are not capable of providing strict proof of the exercise of domestic violence by the applicant against his wife. Conversely, however, they are also not able to speak for a successful integration. The files, on the other hand, clearly show the applicant’s strong conservative attitude to life” (case file). Here, a successful integration is positioned in opposition to and as incompatible with strong conservative attitudes. Turning the telescope around, this is a remarkable formulation, given that large parts of Swiss society do in fact hold strong conservative attitudes which are, for example, regularly expressed in popular votes and elections.²¹ However, the cantonal administrative court followed the argument of the migration office and confirmed the decision to expel the Imam:

His statements and behaviour clearly indicate that he is strongly attached to the traditional views of his cultural circle and his legal system. His views regarding his rights as a man and the duties of women are in marked contradiction to Swiss law and to local values [hiesige Wertvorstellungen]. He does not tolerate deviant behaviour from his wives. Moreover, the non-extension of the complainant’s residence permit is proportionate, especially since the spread of his “example” among Muslims (massive rejection of

19 Judgment by the administrative court of Grisons, first chamber, 11 March 2021 (U 20 72). Note that the Federal Supreme Court found that the formal requirement to substantiate the negative naturalization decision was violated by the municipality, which is why it had to consider the case again (decision 1D_5/2021, 26 April 2022).

20 A fact sheet by the SEM refers to the Algerian Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) as an example of an extremist organization (Fact Sheet: Aktuell massgebende Rechtsgrundlagen und Praxis zum Begriff der Respektierung der Werte der Bundesverfassung bei der Einbürgerung, see also decision by the Federal Supreme Court 1D_8/2010).

21 More than one-third of voters have rejected same-sex marriage (2021) and a law against discrimination and incitement to hatred on the basis of sexual orientation (2020), for example.

the basic values of the Swiss constitution) with his obvious disregard for the Swiss legal system and the primacy of “Allah’s law”, as it is called by the complainant, could lead to massive social unrest in Switzerland and considerably endanger the internal security of the country. (Judgment of the cantonal administrative court)

In both case studies, the applicants are considered to not respect the values of the constitution due to political or religious extremism. Note that both applicants otherwise do not violate any integration requirements, such as employment, language proficiency or respecting the legal order and are even considered well-integrated on a local level (according to the court rulings and the case file). Given the comparability of the cases, the extent to which the argumentation differs is striking.

In the first case there is a sober, rational and universalist weighting between the complainant’s convictions and connections to the Reichsbürger movement and his political worldview protected by fundamental rights. Contrary to the second case, there is no reference to any cultural circle or local values whatsoever—although the Reichsbürger movement is very much inspired by what it considers to be German history and culture. The de-culturalized application of the requirement in this case is in line with the narrative that, in practice, the naturalization of Germans is “usually a formality”, because they are considered to come from “a similar cultural circle as we do”, as Andrea, a municipal case worker, put it. Indeed, in another case a woman of German nationality who was accused of being close to the neo-Nazi scene was naturalized despite, according to the municipality, being asked in the naturalization interview what her position regarding extreme-right worldviews was (fieldnotes).

In the second case, the views and attitudes considered to be an expression of religious extremism are not only culturalized with reference to the Imam’s attachment to the traditional views of his cultural circle, as opposed to Swiss local values, but also securitized, referring to the spread of his example among Muslims, massive social unrest and the internal security of the country. Again, there is no such securitization in the Reichsbürger case.²² The German citizen is positioned as individually (and as such, exceptionally) outside the Swiss community of value(s), whereas the Imam is culturally excluded, on a group level. This is made explicit by linking his behaviour to “the traditional views of his cultural circle and his legal system”, referring to the nation-state of Kosovo. Building the argument on liberal democracy and the constitutional state in the Reichsbürger case, and on gender equality in the Imam case, it is again a distinctly liberal boundary of the community of value(s) that is drawn against the illiberal Other. The underlying idea according to which the liberal state is only for liberal people is what Joppke (2008) identifies as the exclusive and identity-forging dimension of particular universalism. As in the case of the North Macedonian couple, gender equality is in fact *the* liberal value in the name of which the culturalized and migrantized boundary of the community of value(s) is maintained—a phenomenon that we have theorized as *gendernativism* (Hadj Abdou, 2017; Dahinden and Manser-Egli, 2022, see also Farris, 2017).

²² Note that the Reichsbürger movement is under surveillance by the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Keil, 2021).

7. Conclusion

In this article I have argued, first, that the integration requirement of respecting the values of the constitution re/produces the social imaginary of society as a community of value(s), which in turn legitimizes aggressive integrationism. By *re/producing* I mean that the social imaginary as a community of value(s) is both at the origin of the value requirement while also its product. Second, I have shown that to a very large extent the values referred to in the integration requirement are an empty signifier that can be filled with almost any cultural stuff, as long as the reference to abstract universal liberal principles is maintained. However, this emptiness—or rather, this malleability—does not in any way weaken the boundary maintenance but on the contrary reinforces the social imaginary of society as a community of value(s). Finally, the analysis reveals a distinctly liberal boundary making, which draws its legitimacy from any reference to liberal values and principles. These findings give rise to three conclusions.

First, the paper challenges the assertion that civic integration remains in a liberal register and does not imply a return to cultural assimilation (Joppke, 2017). It is true that ideas of old-fashioned cultural assimilation—the most important tool against *over-foreignization* for much of the twentieth century in Switzerland—have been replaced by progressive ideas of integration, standardized and harmonized with reference to universal liberal values since the turn of the millennium. However, this does not mean that integration requirements for citizenship acquisition have become “non-discriminatory, in the sense of shunning group-level exclusions on the basis of ethnicity or race” and “do not require a particular cultural identity” (Joppke, 2008, p. 543). As I have shown, civic integration still very much operates along the lines of culturalized and migrantized group-level boundary making. Although the values are defined as liberal, in practice they imply a return to—or rather, a continuation of—cultural assimilation. The value requirement in Swiss integration law is in fact nothing other than old-fashioned cultural assimilation in a liberal guise.

Second, the imaginary of society as a community of value(s) is not only problematic because of the inclusions and exclusions it entails along culturalized, racialized, gendered and migrantized lines. It also effectively obscures society’s troubles (Korteweg, 2017), or rather, its messiness (Meissner and Heil, 2021). It reproduces society as a bounded, stable, functional and homogeneous entity while it is in fact diverse, segmented, fluid and evolving (Spencer and Charsley, 2021). The danger of the community of value(s) and the boundary liberalism it brings with it is that it claims these values as concrete and achieved features of identity—an accomplished garden where everything works, in the words of Josep Borrell quoted at the beginning of this paper—while in fact they are processes: skills upon which one works, not things one has (Brown, 2016). Gender equality for instance is an important value of course, but not as an achieved feature of Swiss identity that immigrants can be compelled to submit to, but rather as a process on which society as a whole works. Yet, indeed it comes as no surprise that this boundary making is a distinctly liberal one, since it seems to be an intrinsic feature of liberalism to not only parade as universal (Dahinden and Manser-Egli, 2022)—but also always as already achieved—something one has, not upon which one works.

This leads me to the third conclusion. In his book *The Integration Nation*, Favell (2022) shows how actually only a tiny fraction of all (mobile) people are targeted by integration, which leads him

to the question: How do we get away with such a disintegrated society?²³ The answer proposed by this paper is: By imagining society as a community of value(s)—that is, its members *have shared values* (Anderson, 2013)—where only those outside of this imagined community have to be integrated. However, there is no such thing. Actually, societies are much more disintegrated than the imaginary as a community of value(s) suggests in the sense that their members do *not* share the same values. This does not mean we are doomed, as proponents of integration might argue. On the contrary, we actually do get away with disintegrated societies quite passably, one might say. It means, however, that we should acknowledge that modern societies are *not* communities of value(s), and stop pretending so, because that justifies aggressive integrationism in the first place. Instead, we should turn to their messiness.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the author.

Ethics statement

Ethical approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. In compliance with the local legislation and institutional requirements for interview-based research, oral informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to their interview.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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²³ The question was asked in a keynote lecture by Adrian Favell given at the Neuchâtel Graduate Conference, 7 July 2022.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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