

**Das Netzwerk kritische Migrations-und Grenzregimeforschung**

## **Democracy Not Integration**

*Thilo Sarrazin, who had managerial positions in German state institutions, published a book with the title, Germany Is Abolishing Itself (2010). In the book, which became an instant bestseller and sold nearly two million copies, Sarrazin criticised the integration policies of Berlin and appealed to a directly racist discourse about the Muslim community in Germany. In his further remarks, he also used racist arguments in relation with the 'genetic' codes of Jewish people. The consequent public discussions underlined the fact that racism was not only reproduced by right-wing extremism but also by the political centre. The Critical Network of Studies for Migration and Border Regimes initiated a counter-campaign and their manifesto was signed by 3800 intellectuals. Here, we are presenting that campaign text (2010) as it remains still one of the most striking challenges to the discourse of integration.*

### **Democracy Not Integration**

The German Federal Bank is free of Thilo Sarrazin. But that is nowhere near the end of the story. While this financier's populist theories alone are disconcerting, we must also contend with the extent to which his remarks have been given credence by others. An alarming number of politicians, academics, and opinion-makers agree that whilst Sarrazinian biologism may be particularly ominous in Germany, in principle, the man's got a point. Many people are heralding this former Senator of Finance for Berlin as a taboo breaker with a visionary view for Germany's future. We ask: What taboo has he broken? The scandalising of migration is a standard feature of the political repertoire in Germany. There is no point in hoping to counter the inflammatory allegations of Sarrazin and others with scientific facts showing what migrants 'really' do or do not do.

This cannot be turned into a substantive debate because nothing about it is correct. We simply do not accept any stance that calculates social conditions according to cost-benefit analyses and declare the poor and the migrants are a surplus population. These unacceptable positions exist in the context of a global economic crisis in which it is obvious who are expected to bear the brunt of its consequences. We want to make one thing clear: we are a country of immigration. This means, if we want to discuss the conditions of this society and the way in which we live together, then we have to stop talking about

integration. Integration presumes that those who work in this country, have children here, and grow old and eventually die here, must adopt a particular code of conduct before they are allowed to belong. But democracy is not a country club. Democracy means that everyone has the right to determine for themselves and with others how they want to live together. The talk of integration is an enemy of democracy.

Until recently, migrants were accused of having a disregard for the rights of women. The current hysteria, however, shows once again that those critical of migration have little concern for equal rights. Within the debate, women are discussed only in terms of their capacity to have children. Women either produce too many or too few offspring. The issue, however, is that we need legal and political structures that allow migrant women to determine their own lives - and that includes, among other things, changing immigration laws. The self-appointed 'high performers' grant themselves an all but 'naturally-given' right to deliver judgment as to rights of migrants' and the poor's being here. This arrogance represents a new mixture of neoliberalism and racism. Up until now, the conditions in which migrant minorities live has been blamed on their language, culture, and religious customs. Now it is supposed to be in the genes. Up until now, self-initiative on the part of the migrant, a solid work ethic, and adapting to the mainstream were presumed to be the means by which migrants could secure a place in society. Now, it is not only the possibility but also the ability of migrants to do so which is being denied. It is not only the racism in the remarks of Sarrazin and his followers that is unacceptable. It is also their effort to portray the hierarchies of this society as immovable, and thereby suggest that politics itself is pointless - the conflict, the negotiation, and the struggle for a better life. It is political decisions that have resulted in impoverishment and the downwards social mobility of a growing proportion of society. Let's talk about how, over decades, this country has deprived migrants of their social and political rights. Let's talk about how the access to education, housing, employment, public institutions and agencies, as well as football and other clubs, has been systematically restricted. The problem is neither the poor nor the migrants but policies that produce poverty and racism. The problem is a society that partly defines itself through exclusion. It is impossible to ignore how many have quickly rushed to Sarrazin's side and called for the right to freedom of expression, as if he has had any problem in making his theories public. Criticism of him is being characterised as an attack on free speech. The aggressor becomes, through this process, the victim - another, unfortunately, very common orchestration. Those who adopt the agenda of Sarrazin's population policies contribute towards the division of our society. If integration means anything, it is that we are all in this together!

Kritnet.org, Critical Network of Studies for Migration and Border Regimes

You can find the original post of the text in this address:

<http://kritnet.org/2011/abschluss-demokratie-statt-integration>