



## Public Lecture

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**Thursday, 31 January 2019**

**Mobilization and Representation of the “Hidden Children”  
of Immigrant Workers in Switzerland (1970s-1990s)**

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**Prof. Kristina Schulz, Institute of History, University of Neuchâtel**

**Discussant: Prof. Gianni D’Amato, University of Neuchâtel**

18:15 – 19:45 h

Location: University of Neuchâtel, Avenue du 1er-Mars 26, Room B32

### **Abstract**

The Swiss economy in the Twentieth century has always relied on immigrant labor. During the boom years after second world war, bilateral agreements were concluded between Switzerland and many countries from the European south, beginning with Italy in 1946. With these agreements, foreign labor was to enter Switzerland on the basis of seasonal contracts. Those contracts excluded the possibility of family reunion. Over the years, immigrant workers, for several structural and personal reasons that we still have to get to know better, brought their children who then lived clandestinely in Switzerland. Without being officially registered, these children could not go to school and were exposed to the risk of being discovered and returned back to their home country.

Beginning by the 1980s, the situation of those “hidden children” began to preoccupy parts of the civil society, the Italian immigrant community in the first place, but also politically involved sociologists and social workers, many of them women, who were working on the “immigrant condition”. Mobilization took place on the local level around schools who would admit such children and refuse to report to immigration officers. Eventually, in the late 1980s, the unions and the movement for children’s rights engaged with the topic. The topic reached parliament in the course of debates around the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Gender and family issues combined with humanitarian but also economic considerations were at the very heart of those debates.

The public lecture brings into focus the interplay between local solidarity campaigns since the 1970s, eventually gaining momentum with the support of more powerful NGOs such as Pro Juventute and the UNICEF national Swiss office.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

Kristina Schulz is Professor for Modern History at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. She is a specialist of European and Swiss Migration History and Exile studies in the Twentieth Century. Together with André Holenstein and Patrick Kury, she co-authored the first comprehensive overview about Swiss migration history from the beginnings to the present (*Schweizer Migrationsgeschichte. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Baden 2018). She is also a specialist of Western feminist history in comparative perspective. Her works combine aspects of gender, migration, and social movement history.

### **Selected Publications**

- Schulz, Kristina, Patrick Kury, André Holenstein (2018), *Migrationsgeschichte der Schweiz von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Baden: Hier + Jetzt.
- Schulz, Kristina, Heike Klapdor, Wiebke von Bernstorff (2018, Editors), *Grenzüberschreitungen: Migrantinnen und Migranten als Akteure im 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich: Editions Text + Kritik.
- Schulz, Kristina (2017), ‘Eigenständig und verflochten: Schweizer Migrationspolitik im Europa der Nachkriegszeit’, *Terra Cognita* 31: 112–114.
- Schulz, Kristina (2017), ‘Exilforschung und Migrationsgeschichte: Berührungspunkte und Perspektiven’, in Matthieu Gillibert and Tiphaine Robert (Editors), *Phases d’exil: Des exilés de l’Europe centrale pendant la guerre froide*, Itinera 42: 21–47.
- Schulz, Kristina (2014), Die Schweiz der Anderen. Plädoyer für eine zeitgeschichtliche Betrachtung des politischen Asyls, *Revue suisse d’Histoire*, 64: 385–405.